SkillNewton

On-Page SEO Checklist

Check every important page before publishing: title, meta description, headings, URL, intent, internal links, images, schema and E-E-A-T.

This checklist covers everything you control on a single page to help it rank and earn clicks. Use it before publishing a new page or when refreshing one that is underperforming. Start with search intent, because a well-tagged page that answers the wrong question will not rank, then work through the title, headings, content, links, images and trust signals. It suits blog posts, service pages and product or category pages alike.

How to use it

1. **Choose the target query.** Pick the main keyword and a few close variants for the page from your keyword research.
2. **Check the search results.** Look at the current top results to understand the intent and format searchers expect.
3. **Work through each section.** Review the page against every item and edit it directly in your CMS.
4. **Publish and inspect.** After publishing, request indexing with URL Inspection in Search Console and check the rendered page.
5. **Review after a few weeks.** Use the Performance report to see which queries the page ranks for and refine the content.

Search intent and content

- [ ] Confirm the page matches the dominant intent of the query
  If the top results are guides, a sales page is unlikely to rank, and vice versa.
- [ ] Answer the main question early
  Put a clear, direct answer or summary near the top, then expand on it.
- [ ] Cover the subtopics searchers expect
  Check related searches, People also ask and competing pages for gaps in your coverage.
- [ ] Add something competitors do not have
  First-hand examples, original screenshots, data you collected or worked examples make the page more useful.
- [ ] Use natural language and related terms
  Write for readers; use the main keyword and variants where they fit, without repetition for its own sake.
- [ ] Make the content easy to scan
  Use short paragraphs, lists, tables and descriptive subheadings.

Title tag and meta description

- [ ] Write a unique title that describes the page
  Include the main topic, ideally near the start, and add the brand name if space allows.
- [ ] Keep the title concise enough to display fully
  Long titles are truncated on the results page; check how it looks with a SERP preview tool.
- [ ] Write a unique meta description
  Summarise what the page offers and why to click; it can appear as the snippet but is not a ranking factor.

- [ ] Avoid keyword stuffing and clickbait
  Titles that over-promise or repeat keywords are more likely to be rewritten and can reduce trust.

Headings and structure

- [ ] Use one H1 that states the page topic
  It usually closely matches the title tag but can be written more naturally.
- [ ] Use H2 and H3 headings in a logical order
  Headings should outline the content so readers and search engines can follow its structure.
- [ ] Make headings descriptive
  A heading such as "How to fix a soft 404" is clearer than "Step 3".
- [ ] Add a table of contents to long pages
  Jump links help readers and can appear as links in search results.

URL

- [ ] Use a short, readable URL slug
  For example `/seo/on-page-seo/` rather than `/page?id=4821`.
- [ ] Use lowercase words separated by hyphens
  Google recommends hyphens rather than underscores to separate words in URLs.
- [ ] Avoid changing URLs of established pages
  If you must change one, add a 301 redirect from the old URL and update internal links.
- [ ] Set a self-referencing canonical tag
  This tells search engines which URL to index when parameters or duplicates exist.

Internal links

- [ ] Link to the page from relevant existing pages
  New pages need internal links to be found and to receive link value; add links from related, well-linked pages.
- [ ] Link out from the page to related content
  Point readers to the next logical step, such as a deeper guide or a service page.
- [ ] Use descriptive anchor text
  Anchor text should tell readers and search engines what the linked page is about.
- [ ] Check all links work and avoid redirects
  Link straight to the final, canonical URL.

Images and media

- [ ] Write descriptive alt text for meaningful images
  Describe what the image shows in context; use empty alt for purely decorative images.
- [ ] Use descriptive file names
  For example `robots-txt-report.png` rather than `IMG_0042.png`.
- [ ] Compress images and use modern formats
  WebP or AVIF files are usually smaller than JPEG or PNG at similar quality.
- [ ] Set width and height on images
  This reserves space and prevents layout shift (CLS).

- [ ] Do not lazy-load the main above-the-fold image

  Lazy-loading the LCP image delays it; load it normally or with `fetchpriority="high"`.

Structured data

- [ ] Add schema that fits the page type

  For example Article for blog posts, Product for product pages and BreadcrumbList site-wide.

- [ ] Use JSON-LD format

  Google supports JSON-LD, Microdata and RDFa, and recommends JSON-LD as the easiest to maintain.

- [ ] Validate with the Rich Results Test

  Fix errors before publishing and review warnings for missing recommended properties.

- [ ] Mark up only content that is visible on the page

  Hidden or misleading markup goes against Google's structured data guidelines.

E-E-A-T and trust signals

- [ ] Show the author and their relevant experience

  Add an author name linked to a bio page that explains their background.

- [ ] Show when the page was published or updated

  Visible dates help readers judge freshness; update them only when the content really changes.

- [ ] Cite reliable sources for facts and figures

  Link to official documentation, research or primary sources.

- [ ] Make contact and business details easy to find

  An About page, contact details and policies support trust, especially for shops and YMYL topics.

- [ ] Include first-hand evidence

  Original photos, test results or worked examples show real experience with the topic.

Online version, with the matching free guide: skillnewton.com/resources/templates/on-page-seo-checklist/

Learn this hands-on: SEO Foundation & Practical Implementation – skillnewton.com/courses/seo-foundation-course/