SkillNewton

SEO Audit Checklist

A complete website SEO audit checklist: crawling, architecture, on-page, content, Core Web Vitals, links, local and tracking.

This checklist walks you through a full SEO audit of a website, in the order problems usually need fixing: first make sure search engines can crawl and index the site, then check structure, pages, content, performance and links, and finally confirm that measurement is working. Use it on your own site, a client site or a practice project. Tick each item, note what you found and turn every failed check into a prioritised task.

How to use it

1. **Gather access and tools.** Get access to Google Search Console, analytics and the CMS, and run a full crawl with a crawler such as Screaming Frog or Sitebulb.
2. **Work through the sections in order.** Start with crawling and indexing, because a page that cannot be indexed gains nothing from on-page fixes.
3. **Record evidence for each item.** Note the affected URLs, a screenshot or report export, and whether the item passes, fails or needs review.
4. **Prioritise the fixes.** Rank issues by impact and effort; problems that block indexing of important pages come first.
5. **Re-check after changes.** Re-crawl and use URL Inspection in Search Console to confirm fixes, then repeat the audit every few months.

Crawling and indexing

- [ ] Check that robots.txt does not block important pages, CSS or JavaScript
  Open yourdomain/robots.txt and test key URLs with the robots.txt report and URL Inspection in Search Console.
- [ ] Review the Page indexing report in Search Console
  Look at why pages are not indexed, for example "Excluded by noindex tag" or "Crawled - currently not indexed", and check the affected URLs.
- [ ] Find pages with an unintended noindex
  Filter your crawl for meta robots and X-Robots-Tag noindex on pages that should rank.
- [ ] Confirm an XML sitemap exists and is submitted
  It should list only canonical, indexable URLs that return 200, and be submitted in the Sitemaps report.
- [ ] Compare indexed pages with the pages you expect
  A big gap either way suggests blocked sections, duplicate URLs or thin pages being indexed.
- [ ] Check canonical tags on key templates
  Each page should point to its own preferred URL; URL Inspection shows which canonical Google actually chose.
- [ ] Look for crawl traps
  Endless calendars, filter combinations and session IDs in URLs waste crawling; the Crawl stats report can reveal them.

Site architecture and URLs

- [ ] Keep important pages within about three clicks of the homepage
  Use the crawl depth report in your crawler; deep pages tend to be crawled less and receive less internal link value.

- [ ] Find orphan pages
  Compare the crawl with the sitemap and analytics landing pages to find URLs that no internal link points to.
- [ ] Use one consistent URL version
  HTTP, HTTPS, www and non-www, and trailing-slash variants should all redirect to a single version.
- [ ] Check URLs are short, readable and lowercase
  Use words separated by hyphens and avoid unnecessary parameters and IDs in public URLs.
- [ ] Review navigation and breadcrumbs
  Main categories should be linked from the menu, and breadcrumbs should reflect the real hierarchy.
- [ ] Check faceted navigation and parameters
  Decide which filter combinations deserve indexing; canonicalise, noindex or block the rest consistently.

On-page elements

- [ ] Give every indexable page a unique, descriptive title tag
  Filter the crawl for missing, duplicate or very long titles; put the main topic near the start.
- [ ] Write a unique meta description for important pages
  It is not a ranking factor, but a clear summary can improve clicks; Google may still rewrite it.
- [ ] Use one clear H1 and a logical heading structure
  Headings should describe the sections that follow, not be used for styling.
- [ ] Match each page to one main search intent
  Check the current top results for the target query to see whether searchers want a guide, a product, a list or a tool.
- [ ] Check images have descriptive alt text and file names
  Alt text helps accessibility and image search; decorative images can use an empty alt attribute.
- [ ] Look for keyword cannibalisation
  If several pages target the same query, merge them or give each a distinct purpose and link between them.

Content quality

- [ ] Identify thin or near-empty pages
  Sort the crawl by word count and check pages with little unique content, such as empty tag archives.
- [ ] Find duplicate and near-duplicate content
  Use your crawler's near-duplicate report; consolidate or canonicalise copies.
- [ ] Check content is original and genuinely helpful
  Ask whether each page offers first-hand experience, clear answers or detail that competing pages lack.
- [ ] Review outdated content
  Update facts, screenshots, prices and dates, or redirect pages that are no longer useful.
- [ ] Show who wrote or reviewed the content
  Author names, bios and an About page support trust, especially on health, finance and legal topics.
- [ ] Prune or improve pages with no traffic or links
  Use Search Console and analytics data; improve, merge or remove pages that serve no purpose.

Performance and Core Web Vitals

- [ ] Check the Core Web Vitals report in Search Console
  It groups URLs by field data from real Chrome users and shows which templates are poor or need improvement.

- [ ] Largest Contentful Paint (LCP) at or under 2.5 seconds
  Google's "good" threshold, measured at the 75th percentile of page loads. Optimise the hero image, server response time and render-blocking CSS.
- [ ] Interaction to Next Paint (INP) at or under 200 milliseconds
  INP replaced FID in March 2024. Reduce long JavaScript tasks and heavy third-party scripts.
- [ ] Cumulative Layout Shift (CLS) at or under 0.1
  Set width and height on images and embeds, and reserve space for ads and banners.
- [ ] Test key templates in PageSpeed Insights
  Compare field data (real users) with lab data (Lighthouse) and fix the largest opportunities first.
- [ ] Serve modern, compressed images
  Use WebP or AVIF where supported, correct dimensions and lazy loading for below-the-fold images only.
- [ ] Check server response time and caching
  A slow Time to First Byte delays everything else; use caching and a CDN where appropriate.

Mobile

- [ ] Confirm the mobile version has the same content as desktop
  Google indexes the mobile version of pages, so content, links and structured data missing on mobile may be ignored.
- [ ] Check the viewport meta tag and responsive layout
  Test in Chrome DevTools device mode and Lighthouse; Google retired its Mobile-Friendly Test in December 2023.
- [ ] Make tap targets and text easy to use
  Buttons and links should not sit too close together, and text should be readable without zooming.
- [ ] Avoid intrusive interstitials
  Full-screen pop-ups that hide the main content on mobile give a poor experience.

Structured data

- [ ] List which schema types the site uses
  Typical types include Organization, BreadcrumbList, Article, Product and LocalBusiness.
- [ ] Validate markup with the Rich Results Test
  It shows errors and warnings for rich-result types; use the Schema Markup Validator for general schema.org checks.
- [ ] Check the Enhancements reports in Search Console
  Each detected rich-result type gets a report listing valid items and errors.
- [ ] Make sure markup matches visible content
  Marking up information users cannot see breaks Google's structured data guidelines and can lead to a manual action.

Links

- [ ] Find and fix broken internal links
  Filter the crawl for links to 4xx and 5xx URLs and update them to the correct destination.
- [ ] Remove internal links that point to redirects
  Link directly to the final URL to save crawling and avoid redirect chains.
- [ ] Use descriptive internal anchor text
  Anchors such as "technical SEO checklist" explain the target page better than "click here".

- [ ] Review the backlink profile
  Use the Links report in Search Console and a backlink tool to see which pages earn links and spot unusual patterns.
- [ ] Check pages with backlinks still work
  Linked pages returning 404 waste earned links; redirect them to the closest relevant page.
- [ ] Check outbound links to paid or user-generated content
  Use rel="sponsored" for paid links and rel="ugc" for links in comments or forums.

Local SEO (if relevant)

- [ ] Claim and complete the Google Business Profile
  Check category, hours, services, photos and that the website link is correct.
- [ ] Keep name, address and phone (NAP) consistent
  The details on the website, profile and major directories should match exactly.
- [ ] Create useful pages for each location you serve
  Each location page needs unique content, such as address, directions and local details, not swapped city names.
- [ ] Add LocalBusiness structured data
  Include name, address, telephone, opening hours and geo coordinates.

Analytics and Search Console

- [ ] Verify all versions of the site in Search Console
  A Domain property, verified by DNS, covers every protocol and subdomain in one view.
- [ ] Check analytics tracking fires on every template
  Use GA4 DebugView or Tag Assistant to confirm page views and key events are recorded once.
- [ ] Link GA4 and Search Console
  This lets you see search queries next to on-site behaviour.
- [ ] Set up key events for business goals
  Track enquiries, sign-ups or purchases so SEO can be judged by results, not just traffic.
- [ ] Check for manual actions and security issues
  Both reports are in Search Console and should show no issues detected.
- [ ] Record a baseline before making changes
  Export clicks, impressions, indexed pages and Core Web Vitals so you can measure the effect of fixes.

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

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