

# On-Site SEO ✓

- *Checklist* -



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## QUICK ON-SITE SEO AUDIT CHECKLIST

Let's do a quick reality check together.

Launch Google and search for products or services you offer. Use a non-branded keyword though, a generic term you think potential customers would use to find you.

Now tell me, what's the first thing you see?

Thousands, perhaps many more websites competing with you for the targeted audience's attention. For me, the number exceeds 155 million...

*Yikes!*

Now consider that every single one of them tries to beat you to the top. Or if they're already ranking well, maintain their positions, preventing any competitors (including you) to take their place.

If you've been trying to rank your website for some time, you already know that its health plays a significant part in the process.

You know that to achieve good rankings, a website must meet various criteria, from optimized content to a technical set up and a lot in between.

**But you're not so sure whether your site comes even close.**

You might not know how to find that out either. Or even whether you have enough expertise to audit a site on your own.

So we decided to help.

We prepared an on-site SEO audit checklist to help you identify potential site issues that might affect traffic and rankings.

And that's the document you see in front of you right now.

## WHO IS THIS EBOOK FOR?

### BEGINNER SEOS

If you're new to SEO and need to brush up your skills, this eBook is for you. It'll give you a solid foundation to start auditing websites on your own.

### CONTENT MARKETERS / NON TECH ONLINE MARKETERS

If you primarily focused on content or other non technical aspects of online marketing but would like to learn about technical SEO, read this checklist too. It'll introduce you to various key concepts of on-site SEO.

### WEBMASTER AND BUSINESS OWNERS

If you lack knowledge to assess your marketing team's actions, keep on reading. This eBook will help you understand what's involved in improving a website's search performance.

## QUICK RECAP: WHAT'S AN ON-SITE SEO AUDIT AND WHY YOU NEED TO PERFORM IT?

According to the definition:

*SEO audit is a process of analyzing a website to assess its setup, performance and identify potential issues that might prevent it from ranking.*

To put it in simplest terms, you conduct an on-site audit to find out if your site meets all of Google's search ranking criteria.

It helps identify what pages might need fixing, what content you should improve and if any technical problems prevent your site from achieving higher rankings.

And here's a handy checklist to help you assess the most common website issues.

# ON-SITE SEO

## - Checklist -



### Site Structure

- XML sitemap**  
The website has complete and up-to-date XML sitemap
- Robots.txt**  
Robots.txt file is created and submitted to Google and Bing Webmaster Tools
- Redirects**  
Proper 301 redirects are used



### Page Structure

- Titles and meta description**  
Short, focused titles and unique meta descriptions with targeted keywords
- ALT tags**  
Images have descriptive ALT tags and titles
- URLs**  
URLs are user-friendly and SEO-optimized



### Usability

- Mobile-friendliness**  
The website is optimized for mobile devices
- Load speed**  
Page load speed is less than 3 seconds
- Flash/Frames**  
The website does not use Flash or Frames



### Health check

- Broken links**  
The website doesn't have internal or external broken links
- Duplicate content**  
No duplicate content; proper redirects and canonical tags are utilized

Powered by  **SEMRUSH**

# A QUICK ON-SITE SEO AUDIT CHECKLIST

## 1. ROBOTS.TXT FILE

Robots.txt is a little text file located in your site's root folder that you could use to give instructions to web robots. For instance, denote which pages or folders on the site they should exclude from indexing. Even if the file is empty, you should still assess if web crawlers can access and index it properly.

## 2. URLS

Make sure that your URLs are unique to each page, constructed to meet the search engine's criteria and user-friendly. Some of the URL best practices include using dashes instead of underscores, canonicalizing multiple URLs that serve the same content, excluding dynamic parameters, limiting URL redirects among others.

## 3. SITEMAP

Sitemap lists all pages accessible to both users and web crawlers. It allows visitors to locate content they're looking for and helps search engines index your content faster.

Your website should feature a up-to-date user-friendly HTML sitemap as well as a XML version that serves the search engine information about your site's content.

## 4. KEYWORDS

Assess keywords you want to rank for. Map them to individual pages and posts. Check if every page is optimized for a specific and unique keyword. Targeting the same keyword with multiple pages might result in your content competing for rankings with itself.

## 5. REDIRECTS

Redirects help send traffic from old, unused pages to newer versions and help fix broken links. As part of the audit, assess if you've used the right type of redirects when forwarding traffic to new pages (i.e. if you want to redirect traffic permanently, use a 301 redirect. For temporary redirects make sure it's 302). Also check if all redirects work and send traffic to correct pages.

## 6. META-TAGS

Title and description meta tags send a strong relevancy signal to search engines about the topic of a page. But for them to work, both meta-tags must be unique per page and shouldn't exceed the recommended length (title should be between 30 and 65 characters long, description however could include around 100-150 characters).

## IMAGES

Images help send relevancy signal to Google too. At minimum, they should include descriptive ALT tags and filenames. Image descriptions should contain relevant keywords and/or keyword phrases associated with the page.

## SITE SPEED

Site load speed affects rankings, user experience and conversions. So when assessing your site's health, you should also measure the site speed. If your pages take longer than 3 seconds to load, you should investigate and fix issues slowing the site down.

## HEADINGS

Just like with the meta-tags, each page on your site should have a unique heading that contains the main keyword or phrase your target. It should also be short, maximum 65-70 characters to achieve the best effect for both users and the search engines.

## BROKEN LINKS

A broken link points to a page or domain that no longer exist. For Google, broken links equal to a bad user experience and thus, the search engine counts them as a negative ranking factor.

Therefore, test your site to identify and fix any broken links, both internal and external. A good way to achieve it is to redirect broken links to other page relevant to the missing one. Or create a stunning 404 page that could wow visitors while providing them with ways to find information they seek (here's an example [how EmailCenter does it](#)).

## DUPLICATE CONTENT

Featuring several pages serving identical content or multiple URLs pointing to the same page might have a negative effect on your rankings. So check your site for duplicate content and use canonical tag to mark the original content.

## TIMELINESS

To rank, your site must go with the times. For one, it should be void of any ancient technology like Flash or Frames. During the audit, pay attention to any outdated scripts or technology and replace with up-to-date counterparts if possible.

## MOBILE FRIENDLINESS

Mobile friendliness is now a ranking factor. A website that's not optimized to display on mobile devices has less chance of ranking in relevant search results.

And so, test if your site is mobile-friendly. Also find out if Google displays a mobile friendly label for it in mobile search results.

## SITE AUDIT BEST PRACTICES

When conducting an audit, you should always remember to:

### ALWAYS LOOK AT THE SERPS RESULTS

Never conduct an on-site audit separately without monitoring rankings too. Make sure that you gather the information in context of what you're trying to achieve in the search results.

### ANALYZE YOUR COMPETITORS

Don't conduct an audit in a vacuum too. Remember, your competitors are trying to improve their rankings as well. So when assessing your site's health, benchmark it against competitors too. It would help you identify the most pressing issues to focus on first.

### FOCUS ON MORE THAN ON-SITE CRITERIA

Getting your website to the highest standard is only half of the battle. With on-site audit concluded, you need to look at off-site factors you could improve to gain better rankings.

### REMEMBER ABOUT USER EXPERIENCE

For one, because Google won't. The search engine pays equal attention to your site and the experience it provides. So make sure you always keep your visitors in mind when improving issues on the site.

### OPTIMIZE FOR PEOPLE, NOT SEARCH ENGINES

And lastly, always put users first. For instance, don't write content just to satisfy the search engine's criteria. Provide the information user's need and your site will stand a much greater chance to rank better.

## ON-SITE SEO AUDIT TOOLS

I bet that having read all this content, you're now wondering:

*"Do I have to do all this work by hand? Is there no software that could audit the site for me?"*

And you know what, there is! Here are a couple of tools that could help you:

### GOOGLE WEBMASTER TOOLS (GWT)

The most popular, 100% free and a must-use SEO tool allowing you to manage your site in the search engine. With GWT you can identify problems with the site, individual pages, search index and review other data about it.

### SEMRUSH SITE AUDIT TOOL

Our very own tool that helps find and fix any on-site issues and boost your site's SEO optimization.

### SCREAMING FROG SEO SPIDER

A tiny program you can install on your computer and use to crawl and analyze your website and its links, images, CSS, script and apps from an SEO perspective.

### COPYSCAPE

Although devised to help identify content plagiarism, the tool also helps to identify duplicates of your content on the web and prevent any issues it might cause.

### RAVEN SITE AUDITOR

Another website reporting tool that helps to analyze and reveal various on-site issues that might hurting your rankings.

## AND, THAT'S IT

Hopefully now you know what to look at when assessing your site's health.

What's left to do then is to begin auditing the site.

Good luck!