

# SEO Audit Checklist

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## Why use a SEO audit checklist?

A technical SEO checklist and audit can help. Search engine algorithms from Google or Bing send crawlers to your site to analyze the HTML code, JavaScript, performance, structure, and more. This will require that your website be fully optimized and need more than just keyword density and useful content for successful SEO results.

## What is a SEO audit?

SEO Audit. An SEO audit is a process of analyzing how well your web presence relates to best SEO practices - it is the first step to creating an SEO implementation plan that will have measurable results. The purpose of the audit is to identify as many foundational issues affecting organic search performance as possible.

## Quick SEO Overview

- Check indexed pages
  - Perform a website search for your organization name
  - See how many pages are returned
  - Is the homepage showing up as the first result? On the first page?
  - If the homepage isn't showing up as the first result, there could be issues, like a penalty or poor site architecture/internal linking, affecting the site.
- Search for the brand and branded terms
  - Is the homepage showing up at the top, or are correct pages showing up.
  - If the desired pages are not showing up as the first result then this is an issue.
- Check Google's cache for key pages
  - Is the content showing up?
  - Are navigation links present?
  - Are there links that aren't visible on the site?

## Content and SEO

- Homepage content
  - Does the homepage have at least one paragraph?

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- Landing pages
  - Do these pages have at least a few paragraphs?
  - Is it template text or is it completely unique?
- Site contains real and substantial content
  - Is there real content on the site or is the "content" simply a list of links.
- Proper keyword targeting
  - Is the intent right?
  - Are there pages targeting head terms, mid-tail, and long-tail keywords?
- Keyword cannibalization
  - Do a site: search Google for important keyword phrases.
  - Check for duplicate content/page titles in the SEOmoz Pro Campaign App.
- Formatting
  - Is the content formatted well and easy to read quickly?
  - Are H tags used?
  - Are images used?
  - Is the text broken down into easy to read paragraphs?
- Good Headlines on Blog Posts
  - Good headlines go a long way. Make sure the headlines are well written and draw users in.
- Amount of content vs. ads
  - Since the implementation of Panda, the amount of ad-space on a page has become important to evaluate.
  - Make sure there is significant unique content above the fold.
  - If you have more ads than unique content, you are probably going to have a problem.

## Duplicate Content and SEO

- There should be one URL for each piece of content
  - Do URLs include parameters or tracking code - This will result in multiple URLs for a piece of content.
  - Does the same content reside on completely different URLs?
- Do a search to check for duplicate content

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- Take a content snippet, put it in quotes and search for it.
- Does the content show up elsewhere on the domain?
- Has it been scraped? - If the content has been scraped, you should file a [content removal request](#) with Google.
- Subdomain duplicate content
  - Does the same content exist on different sub-domains?
- Check for a secure version of the site
  - Does the content exist on a secure version of the site?
- Check other sites owned by the company
  - Is the content replicated on other domains owned by the company?

## Accessibility

- Check the robots.txt
  - Has the entire site, or important content been blocked? Is [link equity](#) being orphaned due to pages being blocked via the robots.txt?
- Turn off JavaScript, cookies, and CSS
  - Use the Web Developer Toolbar
  - Is the content there?
  - Do the navigation links work?
- Now change your user agent to Googlebot.
  - Use the User Agent Add-on
  - Are they cloaking?
  - Does it look the same as before?
- Check the SEOmoz PRO Campaign
  - Check for 4xx errors and 5xx errors.

## Site Architecture

- Hierarchy
  - Are category pages set up in the appropriate way to flow link equity to key pages?

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- Landing pages
  - Do they have landing pages high enough in the architecture to receive enough link equity to compete for competitive terms?
- Number of category pages
  - How many category pages are there?
  - Have they been scaled out too much?
  - Category pages should be built out only when there is enough demand for new or sub category pages.
- Pagination/Faceted Navigation
  - Is pagination or faceted navigation more appropriate? Or, should they be used in tandem?
  - Does pagination exist to help long tail content get indexed?
  - Is the pagination prohibitive to crawling (uses JavaScript).
- Number of clicks to content
  - Pages targeting really competitive head terms should be one or two clicks from the homepage.
  - Pages targeting moderately competitive keywords should be 2 or three clicks from the homepage.
  - Pages targeting the long tail should be 5 clicks away (obviously exceptions must be made here for sites with a ton of content).
- Prioritized content
  - Most important content should be higher up in the pagination

## Technical Issues

- Proper use of 301's
  - Are 301's being used for all redirects?
  - If the root is being directed to a landing page, are they using a 301 instead of a 302?
  - Use [Live HTTP Headers](#) FireFox plugin to check 301s.
- Use of JavaScript
  - Is content being served in JavaScript?
  - Are links being served in JavaScript? Is this to do PR sculpting or is it accidental?

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- Use of iframes
  - Is content being pulled in via iframes?
- Use of Flash
  - Is the entire site done in flash, or is flash used sparingly in a way that doesn't hinder crawling?

## Site Speed

- How long does the page take to load - Is it significant for users or search engines?
- What improvements can be made?
- Alt text
  - Is alt text present?
  - Does the alt text use keyword phrases?
  - Does the alt text reinforce the topical themes presented in the content?
- Check for Errors in Google Webmaster Tools
  - Google WMT will give you a good list of technical problems showing up on your site that they are encountering (such as: 4xx and 5xx errors, inaccessible pages in the XML sitemap, and soft 404's)
- XML Sitemaps
  - Are XML sitemaps in place?
  - Are XML sitemaps covering for poor site architecture?
  - Are XML sitemaps structured to show indexation problems?
  - Do the sitemaps follow proper XML protocols?

## Canonicalization

- Canonical version of the site established through 301's
- Canonical version of site is specified in Google Webmaster Tools
- Rel canonical link tag is properly implemented across the site
  - Make sure it points to the correct page, and every page doesn't point to the homepage.
- Uses absolute URLs instead of relative URLs
  - This can cause a lot of problems if you have a root domain with secure sections.

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## URLs

- Clean URLs
  - No excessive parameters or session ID's
  - URLs exposed to search engines should be static.
- Short URLs
  - 115 characters or shorter – this character limit isn't set in stone, but shorter URLs are better for usability.
- Descriptive URLs
  - Get your primary keyword phrase in there.

## Internal Linking

- Number of links on a page
  - 100 is a good target, but not a rule.
- Vertical Links
  - Homepage links to category pages.
  - Category pages link to subcategory and product pages as appropriate.
  - Product pages link to relevant category pages.
- Horizontal Links
  - Category pages link to other relevant category pages.
  - Product pages link to other relevant product pages.
- Links are in content
  - Does not utilize massive blocks of links stuck in the content to do internal linking.
- Footer links
  - Does not use a block of footer links instead of proper navigation.
  - Does not link to landing pages with optimized anchors.
- Good internal anchor text
- Check for broken links
  - Link Checker and Xenu are good tools for this.

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## Title Tags

- Unique title tags
  - Every page should have a unique title tag.
- Keyword rich
  - Pages should contain the primary keyword phrase.
  - Is possible to use the secondary keyword phrase in a non spammy way?
- Primary keyword phrase at the beginning of the title tag
- Page titles include branding
  - In most cases the brand should be included at the end of the page title to help build a brand or entice users if you are a well known brand
- 65 - 70 characters in length
  - If the title is longer than this, the entirety will not be displayed in the SERPs.
- Have they been keyword stuffed by someone else?

## Meta Tags

- Meta keywords tag used
  - This data should be removed as competitors can scrape this data.
- Meta description is appropriate
  - Each page has a unique meta description.
  - Meta descriptions are representative of the content and entice users.
- Rewrite meta descriptions for key pages
  - For key landing pages, write meta descriptions by hand instead of systematically implementing.
- Meta robots tag
  - Noindex pages only appropriate pages.
  - Not blocking important pages.

If you run into trouble just give us a call (303) 351-1645 or [set up a meeting here.](#)