

Content Optimization Checklist

SEO Content Audit & Improvement Guide

A practical, people-first workflow for improving content quality, search visibility, and user experience — built around Google's helpful content principles.

8 Sections • 67 Action Items • Printable Format

How to Use This Checklist

This checklist is built for optimizing new and existing content — not just chasing keywords. Work through each section for a page you're auditing or writing. The goal in every section is the same: make the page genuinely more helpful, accurate, and easy to use for the people reading it. Search visibility should follow from that, not replace it.

1 Content Planning

- Identify page purpose**
Clarify what the page is meant to achieve for the reader and the business before editing begins.
- Confirm target audience**
Define who the content is written for so tone, depth, and examples fit their needs.
- Review current performance**
Check existing traffic, engagement, and conversions to understand the starting point.
- Check organic traffic trends**
Look for upward or downward trends over the last few months to spot problems early.
- Review ranking changes**
Track how target keywords have moved in search results over time.
- Analyze search queries**
Review the actual queries driving impressions and clicks to the page.
- Check search volume**
Confirm the demand behind target keywords is still relevant and worth pursuing.
- Identify content gaps**
Find missing subtopics or questions the page should be answering but isn't.
- Review competitor content**
See how top-ranking pages approach the topic and where this page can do better.
- Confirm content matches user intent**
Make sure the page delivers what someone searching the topic actually expects to find.

2 Keyword & Search Intent

- Confirm primary keyword**
Verify the main target keyword is still the right focus for this page.
- Review keyword relevance**
Ensure the keyword genuinely reflects the page's core topic.
- Add secondary keywords naturally**
Weave supporting terms into the content where they fit the flow of writing.

- Include related terms and synonyms**
Use natural variations so the content reads well and covers related language.
- Avoid keyword stuffing**
Prioritize clear, natural writing over repeating keywords unnecessarily.
- Match search intent**
Make sure the content format and depth align with what users expect from the query.
- Cover important subtopics**
Address the related questions and angles users commonly search alongside the main topic.
- Review entities related to the topic**
Include the people, places, tools, or concepts closely associated with the subject.

3 Content Quality

- Answer the main question clearly**
Make sure the core question behind the search is answered early and directly.
- Improve topical depth**
Expand thin sections so the page thoroughly covers the subject.
- Add original insights**
Include unique analysis, opinions, or data that can't be found elsewhere.
- Include practical examples**
Use real examples, case studies, or scenarios to make ideas concrete.
- Update outdated information**
Replace old facts, references, or screenshots with current information.
- Improve accuracy**
Double-check facts, figures, and claims against reliable sources.
- Add expert perspective**
Include input or review from someone with relevant experience or credentials.
- Demonstrate E-E-A-T**
Show experience, expertise, authoritativeness, and trustworthiness throughout the content.
- Remove unnecessary information**
Cut filler, repetition, or tangents that don't serve the reader.

4 On-Page SEO

- Optimize title tag**
Write a clear, compelling title that includes the primary keyword naturally.
- Improve meta description**
Summarize the page in a way that encourages clicks from search results.

- Check H1 heading**
Confirm the page has one clear H1 that reflects the main topic.
- Review H2/H3 structure**
Use headings to organize content logically and make it scannable.
- Optimize URLs**
Keep URLs short, descriptive, and consistent with the page topic.
- Improve internal linking**
Link to and from other relevant pages to strengthen site structure.
- Add relevant outbound links**
Reference credible external sources where helpful to the reader.
- Review anchor text**
Use descriptive anchor text instead of generic phrases like "click here".

5 User Experience

- Improve readability**
Simplify sentences and language so the content is easy to follow.
- Use clear paragraphs**
Break up long blocks of text into short, scannable paragraphs.
- Add table of contents when useful**
Help readers navigate longer pages by jumping to relevant sections.
- Improve navigation**
Make sure menus and links help users find related content easily.
- Check mobile usability**
Test that the page is easy to read and use on smaller screens.
- Ensure responsive design**
Confirm layout, images, and text adapt properly across device sizes.
- Review page speed**
Check load times and fix issues that slow the page down.
- Reduce unnecessary distractions**
Limit pop-ups, ads, or clutter that pull attention from the content.

6 Visual Content

- Add relevant images**
Include visuals that support and clarify the written content.
- Optimize image filenames**
Use descriptive, keyword-relevant filenames instead of generic ones.

- Add descriptive alt text**
Write alt text that accurately describes each image for accessibility and search.
- Compress images**
Reduce file sizes to keep the page fast without sacrificing quality.
- Add screenshots when helpful**
Use screenshots to illustrate steps or examples where relevant.
- Add diagrams or infographics**
Use visuals to simplify complex ideas or processes.
- Review visual hierarchy**
Confirm images and design elements guide attention in a logical order.

7 Technical SEO

- Confirm indexability**
Make sure the page is not accidentally blocked from search engines.
- Check canonical tags**
Verify the canonical URL points to the correct, preferred version of the page.
- Review schema markup**
Add or update structured data to help search engines understand the content.
- Check structured data**
Test structured data for errors using validation tools.
- Fix broken links**
Find and repair broken internal or external links on the page.
- Review Core Web Vitals**
Check loading, interactivity, and visual stability metrics for the page.
- Check mobile-first experience**
Confirm the mobile version of the page meets the same quality standards.

8 Content Refresh

- Update statistics**
Replace outdated numbers and data points with current figures.
- Refresh examples**
Swap in more current or relevant examples where needed.
- Improve outdated sections**
Rewrite sections that no longer reflect best practices or current information.
- Expand missing topics**
Add coverage for subtopics that have become relevant since publishing.

- Update internal links**
Make sure internal links point to the most current, relevant pages.
- Review competitors**
Recheck top-ranking pages to see what has changed since the last review.
- Improve search intent alignment**
Adjust the content if user expectations for the query have shifted.
- Monitor ranking changes after updates**
Track performance after publishing updates to confirm improvement.