

Technical SEO Checklist

A complete, priority-ordered audit guide covering 80+ technical checks across crawlability, Core Web Vitals, indexation, schema, security, mobile, and local SEO.

PRIORITY KEY

CRITICAL

Must fix immediately — these directly block indexing or rankings.

HIGH

Fix as a priority — significant impact on performance and visibility.

MEDIUM

Important improvements — tackle after CRITICAL and HIGH items.

STANDARD

Best practice — apply when time allows for ongoing optimization.



Your Partner in Search Engine Success

HOW TO USE THIS CHECKLIST

Step 1 — Start with Sections 1 and 2

Crawlability and indexation issues are the most damaging. If Google cannot reach or index your pages, nothing else in this checklist matters. Fix these first.

Step 2 — Move to Page Speed (Section 4)

Core Web Vitals are a confirmed Google ranking factor. Check both mobile and desktop scores in Google Search Console Lab Data.

Step 3 — Review Sections 3, 5, 6, and 8

Architecture, mobile, security, and on-page technical elements form the structural layer of your site.

Step 4 — Apply Schema and Fix Duplicate Content

Structured data (Section 7) and duplicate content cleanup (Section 9) improve how your content appears in search results and prevent ranking dilution.

Step 5 — Run Local SEO Technical Checks Last

Section 10 applies to location-based businesses. These checks directly affect your Google Map Pack rankings.

Step 6 — Document Failures and Prioritize Fixes

Note the priority level of each failed item. Start with CRITICAL, then HIGH, then MEDIUM. Share the fix list with your developer using the item notes as context.

Pro Tip: Run this checklist alongside a crawl using Screaming Frog (free up to 500 URLs) and Google Search Console. For a full professional audit with prioritized reporting, visit seospecialistusa.com/seo-audit

01 CRAWLABILITY AND SITEMAP

	robots.txt file exists and is accessible at the root domain (domain.com/robots.txt) <i>Confirm it loads in a browser and is not returning a 404 or disallowing Googlebot.</i>	CRITICAL
	No critical pages or directories are accidentally disallowed in robots.txt <i>Check especially for /wp-admin/, /products/, or any live page path that should be crawlable.</i>	CRITICAL
	XML sitemap exists and is properly formatted with no syntax errors <i>Use Google Search Console > Sitemaps to check submission status and indexing.</i>	CRITICAL
	Sitemap is submitted to Google Search Console and Bing Webmaster Tools	HIGH
	Sitemap contains only indexable URLs (no 404s, 301 redirects, or noindexed pages) <i>Run the sitemap through Screaming Frog to detect crawl status issues on listed URLs.</i>	HIGH
	All priority pages (service, product, blog, landing) are included in the sitemap	HIGH
	Sitemap auto-updates when new content is published (check plugin or config settings)	MEDIUM
	No unexpected Excluded from Index spike in the Google Search Console Coverage report <i>Review excluded URLs to confirm they are intentionally excluded.</i>	HIGH
	URL parameters that generate duplicate pages are handled via GSC parameter config or canonical tags <i>Common for filtered e-commerce pages and internal search result pages.</i>	MEDIUM
	Crawl budget is not wasted on low-value URLs such as session IDs or sort parameters <i>Add noindex or disallow rules for parameter-heavy URLs with no unique content.</i>	MEDIUM
	Pagination pages are handled correctly with canonical tags pointing to the first page	MEDIUM
	Faceted navigation does not create infinite crawl paths for search engines <i>Test filter combinations to confirm they generate a manageable number of URL variations.</i>	MEDIUM

02 INDEXATION CONTROL

	Pages intended to rank have no noindex meta tag applied by accident <i>Filter a Screaming Frog crawl by noindex to audit this site-wide before anything else.</i>	CRITICAL
	All canonical tags point to the correct, live, indexable URL <i>A canonical pointing to a 404 or redirected URL is a silent ranking blocker.</i>	CRITICAL
	Self-referencing canonical tags are present on all key pages <i>Include a canonical on the canonical version itself to prevent alternate versions being treated as canonical.</i>	HIGH
	Canonical tags do not conflict with noindex directives on the same page <i>A page cannot be noindexed and canonical at the same time. One signal must be removed.</i>	HIGH
	Valuable content pages are not accidentally canonicalized to a different page <i>Check service pages, product pages, and blog posts in particular.</i>	HIGH

	X-Robots-Tag HTTP headers are checked for PDFs and other non-HTML resources <i>Use httpstatus.io to check response headers for file-type assets.</i>	MEDIUM
	Noindex is applied intentionally on thank-you pages, login pages, and staging environments	MEDIUM
	Google Search Console shows no unexpected drop in Indexed pages in the last 90 days <i>A sudden index drop often signals an accidental noindex rule or crawl block pushed to production.</i>	HIGH

03 SITE ARCHITECTURE AND URL STRUCTURE

	URL slugs are clean, short, and include a primary keyword where relevant <i>Avoid dynamic parameters in URLs meant for indexing such as /page?id=452.</i>	HIGH
	All changed or deleted URLs return a 301 redirect to the new or most relevant URL <i>Every orphaned old URL loses its accumulated ranking signals.</i>	CRITICAL
	No redirect chains with more than 2 hops exist on the site <i>A to B to C to D is a 3-hop chain. Consolidate to A to D directly.</i>	CRITICAL
	No redirect loops exist on any URL <i>A redirecting to B which redirects back to A is a loop. Crawlers detect these and abandon the URL.</i>	CRITICAL
	No broken internal links returning a 404 or 410 status code <i>Broken internal links waste crawl budget and create a poor user experience.</i>	HIGH
	Priority pages are reachable within 3 to 4 clicks from the homepage <i>Pages buried deeper receive less crawl frequency and pass less PageRank.</i>	HIGH
	Breadcrumb navigation is implemented site-wide and matches URL hierarchy	MEDIUM
	Trailing slash usage is consistent across all URLs on the site <i>/about/ and /about are treated as different URLs without a canonical to unify them.</i>	MEDIUM
	No critical content is hosted on a subdomain without a clear SEO justification <i>Subdomains are treated as separate sites by Google. Prefer subfolders for main content.</i>	MEDIUM
	URL structure reflects a logical content hierarchy such as /services/local-seo/	STANDARD

04 PAGE SPEED AND CORE WEB VITALS

	Largest Contentful Paint (LCP) is under 2.5 seconds on mobile <i>LCP measures how long it takes for the largest visible element to load. Hero images are the most common cause of failure.</i>	CRITICAL
	Cumulative Layout Shift (CLS) score is below 0.1 <i>CLS measures how much the page shifts visually as it loads. Always reserve space for images and ads.</i>	CRITICAL
	Interaction to Next Paint (INP) is under 200 milliseconds <i>INP replaced FID as the Core Web Vitals interactivity metric. Check in GSC Lab Data.</i>	CRITICAL
	Time to First Byte (TTFB) is under 800ms (ideally under 300ms) <i>Slow TTFB usually points to server performance, lack of caching, or unoptimized database queries.</i>	HIGH
	All images are compressed without quality loss and served in WebP or AVIF format <i>Uncompressed hero images are the most common cause of poor LCP scores on business websites.</i>	HIGH
	Images are served at the correct display size (not a 1600px image for a 400px container) <i>Use the srcset attribute to serve correctly sized images based on device resolution.</i>	HIGH
	Lazy loading is applied to all images and videos below the visible fold	HIGH

	CSS and JavaScript files are minified and unused code is removed	HIGH
	Render-blocking JavaScript and CSS are deferred, async-loaded, or inlined <i>Render-blocking resources delay First Contentful Paint and LCP directly.</i>	HIGH
	Browser caching is enabled with correct expiry headers for static assets	MEDIUM
	A CDN is in use for static files to reduce load times for distant users	MEDIUM
	Third-party scripts such as chat widgets and tag managers load asynchronously <i>Third-party scripts are among the top causes of INP and LCP degradation on business sites.</i>	MEDIUM
	Google PageSpeed Insights and GSC Core Web Vitals are reviewed for mobile and desktop separately	HIGH

05 MOBILE USABILITY

	Site is fully responsive and renders correctly on all major mobile screen sizes <i>Google uses mobile-first indexing. The mobile version is what Google crawls and ranks.</i>	CRITICAL
	No horizontal scrolling occurs on mobile screens <i>Horizontal scroll usually means content or images are wider than the viewport.</i>	HIGH
	The viewport meta tag is set correctly: content="width=device-width, initial-scale=1"	HIGH
	Tap targets (buttons, links, form fields) are at least 44x44 pixels and properly spaced <i>Targets that are too small or too close together trigger a GSC mobile usability error.</i>	HIGH
	Body text is readable without zooming (minimum 16px recommended for body copy)	HIGH
	Intrusive interstitials or pop-ups do not block the main content on mobile devices <i>Google penalizes pages where interstitials make content hard to access immediately after load.</i>	HIGH
	Mobile Core Web Vitals are checked separately from desktop in Google Search Console <i>Mobile and desktop scores often differ significantly. Both need to pass.</i>	MEDIUM
	All functionality available on desktop is also available on mobile touch screens	STANDARD

06 HTTPS AND SITE SECURITY

	The entire site is served over HTTPS with no mixed content warnings <i>Mixed content means an HTTPS page loads HTTP assets. Check in Chrome DevTools Console tab.</i>	CRITICAL
	HTTP pages return a 301 redirect to the HTTPS version automatically	CRITICAL
	The SSL certificate is valid and has at least 30 days before expiry <i>Set a renewal reminder. An expired cert causes browsers to block the site entirely.</i>	CRITICAL
	The www and non-www versions resolve to a single canonical version <i>www.domain.com and domain.com must redirect to one version, not both serve separate content.</i>	HIGH
	HTTP Strict Transport Security (HSTS) header is configured on the server <i>HSTS instructs browsers to always use HTTPS for this domain.</i>	MEDIUM
	Security headers are present (X-Frame-Options, Content-Security-Policy where relevant)	STANDARD
	No sensitive files or directories are accessible to search engines or the public <i>Verify that .env files, wp-config.php, backup files, and database exports are not publicly accessible.</i>	HIGH

07 STRUCTURED DATA AND SCHEMA MARKUP

Organization or LocalBusiness schema is implemented on the homepage <i>Include: name, URL, logo, sameAs profiles, address for local businesses, and contact info.</i>	HIGH
Article or BlogPosting schema is on all blog and news content pages <i>Include: headline, author, datePublished, dateModified, and publisher organization.</i>	HIGH
Product schema is on all product pages with price, availability, and review data <i>Missing or incorrect Product schema prevents rich result eligibility in search.</i>	HIGH
FAQ schema is implemented on pages with question-and-answer format content <i>FAQ schema can expand your SERP listing and improve click-through rate significantly.</i>	HIGH
BreadcrumbList schema matches the visible breadcrumb navigation on the page	MEDIUM
All schema passes Google Rich Results Test with zero errors and zero warnings <i>Validate at: https://search.google.com/test/rich-results</i>	HIGH
WebSite schema with SearchAction is implemented if the site has internal search	MEDIUM
Schema data matches only what is visibly present on the page <i>Google may penalize schema that describes content not visible to the user.</i>	HIGH

08 ON-PAGE TECHNICAL ELEMENTS

Every page has a unique, descriptive title tag between 50 and 60 characters <i>Duplicate or missing title tags reduce click-through rate and confuse ranking signals.</i>	CRITICAL
Every page has a unique meta description between 140 and 160 characters <i>Meta descriptions directly affect click-through rate even though they are not a ranking factor.</i>	HIGH
Each page has exactly one H1 tag that is descriptive and includes a target keyword <i>Multiple H1 tags or a missing H1 weakens content structure signals.</i>	CRITICAL
Heading hierarchy is logical (H1 into H2s, H2s into H3s, no levels skipped)	HIGH
All images have descriptive, keyword-relevant alt text (not empty or keyword-stuffed) <i>Alt text helps Google understand images and is critical for image search visibility.</i>	HIGH
Internal links use descriptive, context-relevant anchor text (not click here or read more)	HIGH
No broken external links on key pages <i>Use a crawl tool to detect outbound links returning a 404 status.</i>	MEDIUM
Open Graph and Twitter Card meta tags are set on all shareable pages <i>These tags control how content appears when shared on social media platforms.</i>	MEDIUM
hreflang tags are correctly implemented for multilingual or multi-regional content <i>Incorrect hreflang is one of the most common international SEO errors.</i>	HIGH

Canonical tag on every page matches the intended indexable URL exactly

HIGH

09 DUPLICATE AND THIN CONTENT

No duplicate title tags exist across any two pages on the site <i>Sort a Screaming Frog crawl by title tag to identify duplicates.</i>	HIGH
No duplicate meta descriptions exist across any two pages	MEDIUM
No two pages share substantially identical body content <i>Even 60 to 70 percent content similarity can dilute ranking signals across both pages.</i>	HIGH
Thin content pages (under 300 words with no unique value) are improved, merged, or noindexed <i>Thin content pages drag down overall site quality in Google quality evaluations.</i>	HIGH
Printer-friendly or AMP versions of pages are canonicalized to the main URL	MEDIUM
Session ID parameters do not create separate indexable URL versions of the same content <i>Session IDs are common on older e-commerce platforms. Block via robots.txt or canonical.</i>	HIGH
Paginated pages have distinct enough content to warrant separate indexation	MEDIUM
Category and tag archive pages are optimized or noindexed to avoid thin content <i>Common issue on WordPress sites with auto-generated taxonomy archive pages.</i>	MEDIUM

10 LOCAL SEO TECHNICAL CHECKS

Google Business Profile is verified, fully filled out, and actively managed <i>GBP is the single most important local ranking signal. Incomplete profiles lose Map Pack positions.</i>	CRITICAL
NAP (Name, Address, Phone) is identical on the website, GBP, and all directory listings <i>Any inconsistency in NAP across directories creates trust conflicts in Google local algorithm.</i>	CRITICAL
LocalBusiness schema is on the homepage and location pages with full address details <i>Include geo coordinates, opening hours, and service area where applicable.</i>	HIGH
Separate location or service-area pages exist for each target city or region <i>Each page must have unique, locally relevant content — not just a city name swapped in.</i>	HIGH
Local citations are consistent and audited regularly across major directories <i>Key directories to check: Yelp, Bing Places, Apple Maps, Foursquare, and industry-specific sites.</i>	HIGH
Mobile page speed is specifically tested for local search users <i>Local searches are predominantly mobile. A slow mobile experience loses direct calls and walk-ins.</i>	HIGH
Google Business Profile posts are updated at least twice per month <i>Regular GBP posts signal activity and can improve local pack visibility over time.</i>	MEDIUM
Reviews are actively requested from customers and responded to within 72 hours <i>Review volume, recency, and response rate directly affect Google Map Pack rankings.</i>	HIGH
Google Business Profile primary and secondary categories are set correctly <i>The primary category is the most powerful local ranking signal in the GBP.</i>	HIGH



Need Professional Help With Your Technical SEO?

Finding issues is one thing. Knowing how to fix them in the right order, without breaking anything else, is a different skill entirely. SEO Specialist USA provides full technical SEO audits with prioritized findings, developer-ready fix lists, and follow-up verification.

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