



SEO CHECKLIST

for launching your new or
redesigned website

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SEO TIPS FOR BETTER RANKINGS AND VISIBILITY

Plan for SEO success with our quick-start guide to URLs, 301 redirects and more optimization essentials.

You've invested a lot in your brand-new or redesigned website — now make sure people see it. No matter what kind of business you're in, these essential tasks will help you put SEO features in place that increase your online visibility.

SEO FOR THE HEADER SECTION: KEEP YOUR </HEAD> ON STRAIGHT.

Phone numbers should be in text, not images.	Any phone number used in the header should be: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• In text, both for search engines and mobile friendliness• Easy to edit to allow for schema.org markup
Write meta title and meta descriptions for every page.	Editable meta content is important for users and search engines. Several popular CMS platforms have built-in SEO fields for this content or an SEO plug-in can be installed. (Yeast has this for WordPress sites.)
Copy Google Analytics code and place it before the </head>.	If you aren't using Google Analytics then it's hard to measure how your website is performing. If you already have it installed then make sure it's put in place before you go live to keep all that valuable data consistent.



MARKETING TIP! DISPLAYING LOCAL PHONE NUMBERS ARE ESSENTIAL IN LOCAL SEO.

SEO FOR MENUS: STAY ON COURSE WITH ACCURATE NAVIGATION.

Make all menus easy to update.	Change your website's navigation as you add new content or if analytics point to poorly performing pages. This is for the benefit of both users and search engines.
Avoid Ajax menus.	Search engines have a hard time crawling Ajax navigation links, and it's critical that search engines understand your website's hierarchy. use HTML navigational links instead.



MARKETING TIP! SEARCH ENGINES ARE HANDLING JAVASCRIPT LINKS BETTER, BUT IT'S BEST TO OPT FOR HTML.

SEO FOR URLS: PUT YOUR WEBSITE'S ADDRESS IN GREAT WORKING ORDER.

Use descriptive terms in all URLs. Example: domain.com/plumbing-service	This simple change can have a major impact on your search engine rankings.
Make all URLs editable.	This allows you to add descriptive terms to each page's URL. For WordPress sites, set the permalink structure to /%postname%/.
Avoid default URL naming conventions that add /index. Example: domain.com/index	The default addition of this extension to your home page URL can cause duplicate content issues since domain.com and domain.com/index will show the same page.
301 redirect all /index pages to their respective root folders. Example: Redirect domain.com/index.php to domain.com	301 redirects tell web browsers and search engines that a site or page has permanently moved to a new location. 301 redirects usually include the address to which the resource has been moved.
Set up a 301 server redirect after launching a redesigned site.	If you're redesigning your website and the current URL structure is changing, set up a 301 server redirect after the site is launched to redirect the former URLs to their respective new URLs.
Review popularity signals of both www and non-www versions of your site when choosing a canonical domain.	Your canonical URL is the "official" or most authoritative address of your site. Even though www and non-www naming conventions look like they are for the same website, they're actually unique domains to a search engine. Identify and use the most popular address as your preferred, or canonical domain for search engines.
Use no-index meta tags on every page of your staging or development site.	Blocking your staging site from search engines prevents the duplicate content issues that arise from, in effect, having two sites online. This method of preventing the search engines from crawling your staging site is preferred over the use of a robots.txt file.



MARKETING TIP! PLAN AHEAD IF YOU'RE RUNNING PPC

One week before your site launch, give your PPC manager the new URLs that adsshould point to. Pause all PPC/SEM campaigns during the launch of your site as well.

SEO FOR BODY CONTENT: MAKE IT EASY FOR SEARCH ENGINES TO READ.

Ensure text is readable.	Google can't read images, so any text you've used as part of a graphic or image file won't be "seen" — keep as much of your text as visible as possible.
Avoid Flash.	Adobe Flash can cause a range of issues, from usability problems to making your content uncrawlable by search engines and your site unusable by some mobile devices.
Remove all lorem ipsum placeholder text.	Used by designers to denote where to-be-written text will be on a page, it's often inadvertently left in place.
301 redirect all /index pages to their respective root folders. Example: Redirect domain.com/index.php to domain.com	301 redirects tell web browsers and search engines that a site or page has permanently moved to a new location. 301 redirects usually include the address to which the resource has been moved.
Delete unused demo pages.	Purchased website themes usually come with demo data and pages preloaded. Even if you don't use them, the pages will appear in automatic sitemap utilities and be crawled by search engines. Because the demo content isn't relevant to your business, it can drag down your SEO performance.

SEO FOR FOOTERS: FAR BELOW THE FOLD, BUT HIGH IN IMPORTANCE.

Avoid excessive links.	Keep footer links to a minimum
Display name, address and phone with Schema Markup.	Important for local businesses, this allows search engines to display name, address and phone (or NAP) information in results, including maps. It also tells the search engines that the address shown is the proper business address, which is a factor for companies, such as real estate agencies, that may need to list various addresses on their sites.

SEO FOR BLOGS: GOOD FOR SEARCH ENGINES, SITE VISITORS AND YOUR BUSINESS.

Set up a blog now.	Even if you're not yet ready to maintain a blog, build it in to your new or redesigned site. Blogs are great tools to make SEO campaigns more effective and you'll want to have it set up when it's time to create the fresh, unique content that can improve SEO performance and serve to educate your site visitors.
Omit dates from your blog posts.	Unless you have a news website and need to conform to Google News requirements, don't display dates on your blog posts. This lets you keep your blog content evergreen.
Use tags or categories.	Choose either tags or categories for your blog posts to avoid duplicate content issues that arise from taxonomy issues.

SEO FOR MOBILE USABILITY: A TREND THAT CAN'T BE IGNORED.

Make your site responsive.	The use of mobile devices to search the web has overtaken use of the desktop, and search engines are increasingly "rewarding" responsive, mobile-friendly sites. Once a nice-to-have feature, it's now required to reach vast numbers of people who are looking for your business.
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