THE ULTIMATE SEO CHECKLIST

stikky media

Search Engine Optimization:
Useful Tools From Google

Google Analytics

Google Analytics tracks and reports on the traffic your website is getting. It allows you to determine how much traffic is due to search engines, which pages are getting the most traffic, what's the bounce rate, and many other useful metrics. The core application is free, with the option to purchase various add-ons. If desired, the Google Analytics 360 Suite subscription service is available for enterprise analytics needs.

Resources:
Google Analytics (base): https://www.google.com/analytics/#?modal_active=none
Google Analytics 360 Suite:
        https://www.google.com/analytics/360-suite/#?modal_active=none

Google Search Console

Google Search Console is a free web service provided by Google for webmasters. It allows you to check the indexing status of your site, giving you data and feedback on how your site is performing. It also allows you to optimize your site's visibility with regards to search engines

Resources:
Google Search Console: https://www.google.com/webmasters/tools/search-analytics

Google Tag Manager

Google Tag Manager manages JavaScript and HTML tags (also known as tracking pixels or web beacons). Tags such as these are used to perform analytical analysis and data tracking for websites. With Google Tag manager you can add and manage multiple tabs to tracking codes to your site without needing to edit the site's code.

Resources:
Google Tag Manager: https://developers.google.com/tag-manager/

Other Tools

Yoast

Are you using Wordpress? Install one of several Yoast SEO plugins! These plugins provide overall optimization to your Wordpress site, or you can install more specific plugins. Yoast can assist with your video content, boost your local visibility, gather new content from Google News, and improve your e-commerce performance.

Resources:
Yoast: https://yoast.com
Yoast SEO: https://yoast.com/wordpress/plugins/seo/
Yoast Wordpress Plugins: https://yoast.com/wordpress/plugins/
SEO Training: https://yoast.com/academy/courses/

Additional Tasks

Perform Keyword Research

People who use Google use keywords and phrases to find websites that match their needs. By knowing and understanding these keywords, you can increase your search engine visibility and bring more traffic (and thus, customers) to your website.

Resources:
Google AdWords:
      https://adwords.google.com/home/tools/keyword-planner/#?modal_active=none
KWFinder: https://kwfinder.com
SEMrush: https://www.semrush.com
WordStream SEO Keywords: https://www.wordstream.com/seo-keyword

Place Keywords in URLs

When creating new content try to place appropriate keywords in the page URL. However, keep such usage to a minimum -- one or two per URL, for example, Stuffing a URL with keywords can backfire -- analytical examinations of search engine rankings shows that shorter URLs place higher on the results page than long URLs. In addition, try and avoid changing a URL that has been indexed by search engines, doing so may severely impact page ranking!

Resources:
Moz Blog (in depth examination of URLs): https://moz.com/learn/seo/url

Add Compelling Keywords to Title Tags

While keywords in the URL can help with search engine results, it's not enough. You need to create a compelling title tag so people will *want* to go to your site. The more people who go to your site, the higher the clickthrough rate and the higher your rating in search engine results.

Resources:
Google SERP Simulator: https://technicalseo.com/seo-tools/google-serp-simulator/
Moz Blog (in depth examination of title tags): https://moz.com/learn/seo/title-tag
Search Engine Watch (how to write meta tags):
    https://searchenginewatch.com/2016/05/16/how-to-write-meta-title-tags-for-seo-with-good-and-bad-examples/
Title Tag Tool: http://ezlocal.com/tools/meta-title-counter/

Add Keywords to Meta Descriptions

A meta descriptions is an HTML tag of up to 320 characters that summarizes your page's content. If a phrase entered into a search engine matches your meta description, then your description will be displayed on the search engine results page.

Resources:
Kissmetrics Blog (meta description article):
    https://blog.kissmetrics.com/meta-description-magic/
Moz Blog (meta description article): https://moz.com/learn/seo/meta-description
Moz Blog (SEO meta tags): https://moz.com/blog/seo-meta-tags
Yoast (creating meta descriptions): https://yoast.com/meta-descriptions/

Add Keywords to Your Headers

Make sure you have an H1 tag on each page, and that it appears before any other heading tag. Place one (and only one) primary keyword in the H1 tag. You can place keywords in H2-H6 tags, but the value of this is questionable. Use your keyword three times per page -- if possible -- and have at *least* 100 words per page (but *500* or more is ideal). In addition, don't create new content for your site unless you have at *least* 100 words of content to upload.

Resources:
Adding Keywords to WordPress:
    http://www.wpbeginner.com/beginners-guide/how-to-add-keywords-and-meta-descriptions-in-wordpress/
SEO Basics (adding keywords to your site):
    https://blog.halfabubbleout.com/blog/bid/263765/seo-basics-how-to-add-keywords-to-a-website

Use Synonyms in Your Site Content

Google, and other search engines, use a synonym ranking system to display relevant content. In addition, Google's Hummingbird search algorithm looks not only at the word itself, but intent and usage. Thus, using synonyms on your site means you can get search hits that aren't exact matches, but still are relevant to your site's content and purpose.

Resources:
Cognitive SEO (article on synonyms):
https://cognitiveseo.com/blog/5370/941-traffic-increase-exploiting-the-synonyms-seo-ranking-technique/
Webtexttool Blog: https://www.webtexttool.com/the-importance-of-synonyms-in-seo-content/

Use Latent Semantic Indexing in Your Site Content

Latent semantic indexing, also known as Latent semantic indexing (or LSI), is a mathematical formula used to determine relationships between words. Thus, by including keywords that are synonyms of your primary keyword(s) can help search engines understand your page's content.

Resources:
LSIGraph (keyword generation tool): https://lsigraph.com
Shout Me Loud (article on LSI keywords):
https://www.shoutmeloud.com/use-synonyms-for-ranking-higher-in-search-results.html

Add Descriptive ALT Tags and Filenames Your Site Content

Search engines can't "see" images and other files uploaded to your site. In order for them to collate your relevant content, you want to add ALT tags to image and file names. Be descriptive, not cryptic, with your ALT tags -- descriptive tags will register better with search engines and will help your site appear in relevant searches.

Resources:
Mox Blog (ALT tag article): https://moz.com/learn/seo/alt-text
Yoast (image tag optimization): https://yoast.com/image-seo-alt-tag-and-title-tag-optimization/

Use Content-relevant Keywords In Your Anchor Text

When creating internal links to content within your site, make sure the text used in the hyperlink contains relevant keywords relating to the link's destination. Google looks at the language used in hyperlinks and having descriptive links helps determine what the linked content is about.

Resources:

Anchor Text Guide: https://www.gotchseo.com/anchor-text/
Moz (anchor text article): https://moz.com/learn/seo/anchor-text
Moz (guide to internal links): https://moz.com/learn/seo/internal-link
Off-Page SEO Checklist: https://altitudemarketing.com/blog/off-site-seo-checklist/
Wordstream (anchor text article): https://www.wordstream.com/anchor-text

Use Ahrefs To Analyze Your Links

Subscribe to Ahrefs and use their tools to determine what keywords drive traffic to your competitors. With Ahrefs you can research keywords, backlinks, site content, and ranking of both you and your competitors.

Resources:
Ahrefs Pte Ltd.: https://ahrefs.com

Evaluate Your Competitor's Links

By using various tools you can examine your competitor's site links and their content. This will allow you to see what keywords they are using, how their links are anchored, and what backlinks they have. All of this will help you develop similar links of your own.

Resources:
Ahrefs Pte Ltd.: https://ahrefs.com
ClearVoice, Inc.: https://www.clearvoice.com
Link Explorer: https://moz.com/link-explorer
Majestic: https://majestic.com

Going Forward

Technical SEO Checklist

Using Google Search Console you can check your site for crawl errors, duplicate content errors, missing titles, and other such issues. It will also allow you to see data showing your search rankings, site visibility, click-through rate, and more. Once you have found any such errors, correct them immediately.

Resources:
Google Search Console: https://www.google.com/webmasters/tools/search-analytics

Identify Bad Redirects

When creating internal redirects, you want to use 301s instead of 302s. A 301 redirect is permanent and passed along almost all of the SEO values from the old page to the new one. A 302 is a temporary redirect

and it is used for such things are time-specific promotions and pages or site maintenance. The SEO values of the older, redirected page, is *not* passed on to the new page.

Simply put -- replace all 302s redirects with 301s.

Resources:
Browseo (application for browsing web pages for SEO content): http://www.browseo.net
Moz Blog (redirection article): https://moz.com/learn/seo/redirection

Check Your Site For Broken Links, Errors, And Crawl Problems

No matter your site's size, any of these factors is an issue. And, the larger the site, the larger the issue will be. Broken links, errors in text (be it links, headers, and metadata) and other crawl errors make it harder for search engines to find the relevant content in your site, index it, make it available for searches, and direct traffic to you.

Resources:
Screaming Frog SEO Spider: https://www.screamingfrog.co.uk/seo-spider/

Check Your Site For Duplicate Content

Having duplicated content can confuse search engines and prevent any of your pages from being ranked first in a search. Remove duplicate content, install 301 redirects, add canonical tags, or use any number of tools (such as Google's Webmaster Tools) to fix the issue.

Resources:
Google's Webmaster Tools: https://www.google.com/webmasters/#?modal_active=none
Siteliner (check for duplicate content and broken links): http://www.siteliner.com
Yoast (duplicate content check): https://yoast.com/diy-duplicate-content-check/

Check Your Site's Speed

Research has shown that visitors have no patience for a slow-loading site. Sites that are slow to load have high bounce rates, as visitors (and thus, potential customers) lose patience with the loading process and leave to find their desired content elsewhere.

Resources:
GiftOfSpeed: https://www.giftofspeed.com
GTmetrix: https://gtmetrix.com
PageSpeed: https://developers.google.com/speed/pagespeed/insights/
Pingdom: https://tools.pingdom.com

Ensure Your Site is Mobile Friendly

More and more web traffic comes from mobile devices (such as smartphones and tablets). You need to have a site that is responsive, allowing it to adapt to different screen sizes and shapes. Otherwise, your site will lack usability on mobile devices and this will have a negative impact on searches and visits from mobile device users.

Resources:
Bing's Mobile Friendly Test: https://www.bing.com/webmaster/tools/mobile-friendliness
BrowserStack: https://www.browserstack.com/responsive
Google's Mobile Friendly Test: https://search.google.com/test/mobile-friendly

Create An XML Sitemap

An XML sitemap allows search engines to understand the underlying structure of your site. It also allows search engines to find all of the pages on your site that you want (or need) indexed. Once you have created the XML sitemap, submit it to Google Search Console.

Resources:
Google Search Console: https://www.google.com/webmasters/tools/search-analytics
Wordpress Sitemap Plugin: https://wordpress.org/plugins/google-sitemap-generator/
XML-Sitemaps: https://www.xml-sitemaps.com
Yoast SEO: https://yoast.com/wordpress/plugins/seo/

Create A Robots.txt File

A robots.txt file determines what a web robot (also known as a crawler, spider, or wanderer) is allowed to do with regards to each page on your site. Installing a robots.txt file in the top-level directory allows you to control how crawlers search and index your site. You can even establish different protocols for different search engines.

Resources:
Google's robots.txt Specifications: https://developers.google.com/search/reference/robots_txt
Google's robots.txt Tester: https://support.google.com/webmasters/answer/6062598?hl=en
Moz (article on robots.txt): https://moz.com/learn/seo/robotstxt
Vary.com (robots.txt explained): https://varvy.com/robottxt.html
Web Robots Page: http://www.robotstxt.org

Everything Else

Claim Your Brand Name On Social Media And Networking Sites

Your brand name needs to belong to you. Your domain and social media profiles all need to reflect your brand name. If you're a new company or website, staking your claim early means you can own all of the results on the first page of any search about your or your brand.

Resources:
Namechk: https://www.namecheck.com

Use an SEO Audit Tool

Use automated SEO audit tools to speed up the process of examining your site for errors. This will simplify the process of performing an audit, allowing you to spend more time working on content and marketing strategy.

Resources:
Ahref's 16-step Auditing Process: https://ahrefs.com/blog/seo-audit/
SEO Auditor: https://zadroweb.com/seo-auditor/
Seoptimer: https://www.seoptimer.com

Setup Bing Webmaster Tools

Bing is what Microsoft uses as their search engine. It is the default search engine used with Microsoft's browsers Internet Explorer and Edge. Currently, some reports state that Bing owns upwards of 33% of the browser market in the United States. If you wish to tap into this user base, you will want to install Bing's webmaster tools.

Resources:
Bing Webmaster Tools: https://www.bing.com/toolbox/webmaster

Glossary

Backlink: A hyperlink that links from a webpage back to your website or a specific page in your site.
CTR: Click-through Rate
LSI: Latent Semantic Indexing
SEO: Search Engine Results
SERP: Search Engine Results Page