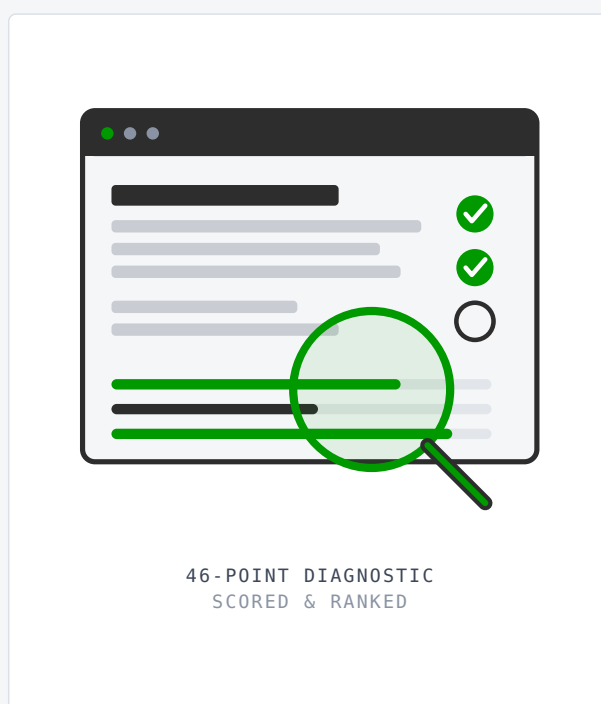


SEO / GEO DIAGNOSTIC TOOLKIT FOR
BUSINESS OWNERS

The Ultimate SEO Audit Checklist.

A 46-point, self-graded audit for business owners and startups who want to find out — in under an hour — exactly where their website is losing traffic, rankings, and revenue.

46-POINT DIAGNOSTIC
SCORED & RANKED

46

AUDIT
CHECKPOINTS

5

RANKING
CATEGORIES

1

SCORECARD

BEFORE YOU START

Why most business websites fail their own audit

Search has quietly split in two. Google still crawls, indexes and ranks pages the way it always has — but a growing share of buyers now get their first answer from an AI Overview, ChatGPT, or Perplexity before they ever click a blue link. An SEO audit that only checks meta tags and backlinks is auditing half the picture.

This guide covers both. It's built around five categories that mirror how Google — and AI answer engines — actually evaluate a website: technical health, on-page relevance, AI/GEO readiness, off-page trust, and user experience. Work through each section, tick what's already true for your site, and total your score on **page 8**.

How to use this guide: Set aside 45–60 minutes. Have Google Search Console, Google Analytics (GA4), and your Google Business Profile logged in before you start — most checkpoints take under two minutes to verify once you're in the right tab.

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01 Technical SEO Audit

If Google can't crawl and index your site cleanly, nothing else in this guide matters yet.

- ☐ **Site is fully HTTPS with no mixed-content warnings**
Check the padlock icon on every key page — not just the homepage.
- ☐ **robots.txt doesn't block pages you want indexed**
A single misplaced Disallow line can de-index an entire section.
- ☐ **Canonical tags are set correctly on every page**
Prevents duplicate-content confusion across similar or filtered URLs.
- ☐ **Redirect chains are flattened to a single 301 hop**
A → B → C redirect chains leak ranking value and slow crawlers.
- ☐ **Core Web Vitals are in the "Good" range** CRITICAL
LCP under 2.5s, INP under 200ms, CLS under 0.1. Check PageSpeed Insights.
- ☐ **An XML sitemap exists and is submitted in Search Console**
Search Console → Sitemaps. Confirm it was fetched successfully, not just submitted.
- ☐ **No orphan pages — every page is reachable via internal links**
Pages with zero internal links rarely get crawled or ranked.
- ☐ **No 404 errors on pages that should still exist**
Search Console → Pages → "Not found (404)". Redirect or restore.
- ☐ **Site passes Google's Mobile-Friendly Test**
Google indexes the mobile version of your site first, always.
- ☐ **Structured data (schema markup) is implemented and error-free**
Validate with Google's Rich Results Test — Organization, Product, or Article schema at minimum.

Why it matters: Technical issues are invisible to visitors but fully visible to crawlers. A beautifully written page that Google can't crawl, index, or render quickly simply won't compete — no matter how good the content is.

02 On-Page & Content Audit

This is where relevance is decided — does each page actually deserve to rank for what it targets?

- ☐ **Every page has a unique, keyword-led title tag under 60 characters**
No two pages should share a title. Duplicate titles confuse Google about which page to rank.
- ☐ **One clear H1 per page, followed by a logical H2/H3 structure**
Headings should read like an outline — not a keyword list.
- ☐ **Each page matches real search intent for its target keyword**
A commercial "buy" query needs a product/service page — not a blog post, and vice versa.
- ☐ **Internal links use descriptive, keyword-relevant anchor text**
"Our pricing plans" beats "click here" — for both users and crawlers.
- ☐ **Top pages have been refreshed or expanded in the last 12 months**
Stale content is one of the most common — and cheapest to fix — ranking leaks.
- ☐ **Meta descriptions are written to earn the click, not just describe the page**
Under 155 characters, with a clear reason to click over the competitor above you.
- ☐ **No keyword cannibalization between pages**
Search Console → Performance. If two of your own pages compete for the same query, merge or differentiate them.
- ☐ **Content demonstrates first-hand experience (E-E-A-T)**
Author bios, credentials, original photos, or case data — not just rewritten summaries of other articles.
- ☐ **All images have descriptive alt text and are compressed**
Alt text supports accessibility and image search; compression supports page speed.
- ☐ **No thin or duplicate content sitting in the site's index**
Pages under ~300 words with little unique value quietly drag down topical authority.

Why it matters: On-page signals tell Google — and now AI answer engines — exactly what a page is about and how well it answers the query. Weak signals here mean even technically flawless pages struggle to rank.

03 AI Search & GEO Readiness 2026

Generative Engine Optimization: making sure AI Overviews, ChatGPT, and Perplexity can find, trust, and cite you.

- ☐ **Key pages open with a direct, quotable answer**
Lead with a 2–3 sentence summary an AI engine can lift and cite, before the supporting detail.
- ☐ **Content is organized around real questions customers ask**
Conversational, long-tail phrasing matches how people prompt AI tools, not just how they type into Google.
- ☐ **Business entity is consistent and verifiable across the web**
Same name, description, and details on your site, Wikipedia/Wikidata (if applicable), and major directories.
- ☐ **Brand is mentioned (even unlinked) on reputable third-party sites**
Unlinked brand mentions increasingly function as trust signals for both Google and AI models.
- ☐ **FAQ schema is implemented on service and product pages**
Structured Q&A markup is one of the clearest signals answer engines use to extract content.
- ☐ **AI crawlers are allowed in robots.txt**
Check for GPTBot, ClaudeBot, and PerplexityBot — blocking them removes you from AI answers entirely.
- ☐ **Site publishes original data, research, or first-hand insight**
AI engines favor citing primary sources over content that summarizes what's already been said.
- ☐ **Author and organization schema clearly identify who's behind the content**
Machine-readable authorship helps establish the credibility AI systems weigh before citing a source.

Why it matters: By 2026, a meaningful share of research-stage traffic never reaches a search results page at all — it starts and ends inside an AI answer. If your site isn't structured to be understood and cited by these systems, you're invisible for that entire buyer journey.

04 Off-Page & Local SEO Audit

Trust signals from beyond your own website — and, if you serve a local area, the checks that decide whether you show up on the map.

- ☐ **Backlink profile has grown or held steady over the last 6 months**
A sudden drop often signals expired links or a manual/algorithmic penalty worth investigating.
- ☐ **You've identified link gaps against 2–3 top competitors**
Sites linking to competitors but not you are your highest-probability outreach targets.
- ☐ **Name, Address, and Phone (NAP) match exactly across all directories**
Even small inconsistencies (a suite number, an abbreviation) can weaken local trust signals.
- ☐ **Review volume and rating are competitive with local rivals**
Both quantity and recency matter — a great rating from 2023 is weaker than a good one from last month.
- ☐ **LocalBusiness schema is implemented, if you serve a local market**
Reinforces the same NAP and category data Google already sees in your Business Profile.
- ☐ **No toxic or spammy backlinks flagged in your link audit**
Low-quality links can suppress rankings site-wide. Disavow only where clearly warranted.
- ☐ **Google Business Profile is claimed, verified, and fully complete**
Category, hours, services, photos, and description all filled in — incomplete profiles rank worse.
- ☐ **Business is listed on core local directories relevant to your market**
Google Business Profile, Bing Places, plus category- and country-relevant citation sites.
- ☐ **You respond to reviews — positive and negative — within a few days**
Response rate is a visible trust signal to both prospects and Google's local algorithm.
- ☐ **You've earned at least one relevant press or industry mention this year**
Digital PR remains one of the highest-value, hardest-to-fake trust and authority signals.

05 UX, Speed & Conversion Audit

Ranking is only half the job. The other half is what happens after someone actually lands on your page.

- ☐ **Homepage loads in under 3 seconds on mobile**
Test on real 4G, not just office Wi-Fi — PageSpeed Insights simulates this for you.
- ☐ **Primary call-to-action is visible without scrolling**
"Call now," "Get a quote," or "Book a demo" shouldn't require any effort to find.
- ☐ **All forms have been tested and submit successfully**
Broken forms are one of the most common — and most costly — issues we find in audits.
- ☐ **Key actions (calls, form fills, WhatsApp clicks) are tracked as conversions**
Traffic without conversion tracking tells you almost nothing about ROI.
- ☐ **Navigation is clear and consistent across every page**
Visitors — and crawlers — should reach any key page within 3 clicks of the homepage.
- ☐ **Contact information is easy to find on every device**
Phone number and email in the header or footer, tap-to-call enabled on mobile.
- ☐ **GA4 and Google Search Console are both installed and verified**
Without these, every other fix in this guide is impossible to measure.
- ☐ **Text has sufficient color contrast and pages are keyboard-navigable**
Basic accessibility improves usability for everyone and is a growing ranking consideration.

Why it matters: Google increasingly uses engagement and satisfaction signals as a proxy for quality. A page that ranks but bounces visitors immediately rarely holds its position — and it's converting almost none of the traffic it does earn.

SCORECARD

Tally your checkmarks, category by category

Count how many boxes you ticked in each section and mark it on the scale below. One point per checked item — 46 possible in total.

01 · Technical SEO		___ / 10
02 · On-Page & Content		___ / 10
03 · AI Search & GEO		___ / 8
04 · Off-Page & Local		___ / 10
05 · UX, Speed & Conversion		___ / 8
TOTAL SCORE		___ / 46

WHAT YOUR SCORE MEANS

- **0 – 15** **Needs urgent attention.** Foundational gaps are likely costing you visibility every single day.
- **16 – 27** **Solid foundation, real gaps.** The basics are in place; a few fixes could unlock meaningful gains.
- **28 – 38** **Well optimized.** You're ahead of most competitors your size — focus on the remaining gaps for full advantage.
- **39 – 46** **Best-in-class.** Your site is performing at a level few businesses your size reach. Protect it.

Note: This scorecard tells you *where* to focus — it isn't a substitute for a full technical crawl. Items you're unsure how to verify are usually the ones worth a professional second opinion.

BEFORE YOU GO

7 mistakes that quietly sink website rankings

These don't show up as a single checklist item, but we see them derail more business websites than almost anything else.

01

Redesigning the site without a redirect plan

A new website launched without 301-redirecting old URLs can wipe out years of accumulated rankings overnight.

02

Chasing rankings with no conversion tracking

Traffic is a vanity metric without knowing which pages actually produce calls, leads, or sales.

03

Writing for keywords instead of the person searching

Content stuffed with a target phrase but light on real answers rarely holds a position for long.

04

Letting the Google Business Profile go stale

Outdated hours, no recent posts, and unanswered reviews are an easy local-ranking advantage for competitors.

05

Publishing content and never updating it again

Search engines and AI answer engines both favor content that shows signs of being actively maintained.

06

Blocking AI crawlers by default in robots.txt

Some security or CDN presets block GPTBot and similar crawlers automatically — often without anyone noticing.

07

Treating SEO as a one-time project

Competitors keep publishing and building links. A site that stands still is, relative to the market, falling behind.

+1

Not knowing where you actually stand

Which is exactly what the checklist in this guide just fixed. Now you know your score — let's talk about what's next.



TURN YOUR SCORE INTO A PLAN

Know your score. Now let's fix what's holding you back.

Book a free 20-minute audit call. We'll walk through your results, flag the two or three fixes that will move the needle fastest, and tell you honestly whether it's a DIY job or worth outside help.

BOOK YOUR FREE AUDIT CALL →

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