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SEO Checklist

Basic SEO
Technical SEO
Keyword Research
Content
ON-page SEO
Link Building

Essential steps for ranking in Google

Basic SEO (One Time Tasks)

The following 7 pages explain in detail

1. Set up Google Search Console
2. Set up Bing Webmaster Tools
3. Set up Google Analytics
4. Install an SEO plugin
5. Create and submit a sitemap
6. Create a robots.txt file
7. Set up Webmaster Tools



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Step 1 = Set up Google Search Console

Free tool for tracking your site's organic search performance.

See the keywords you rank for

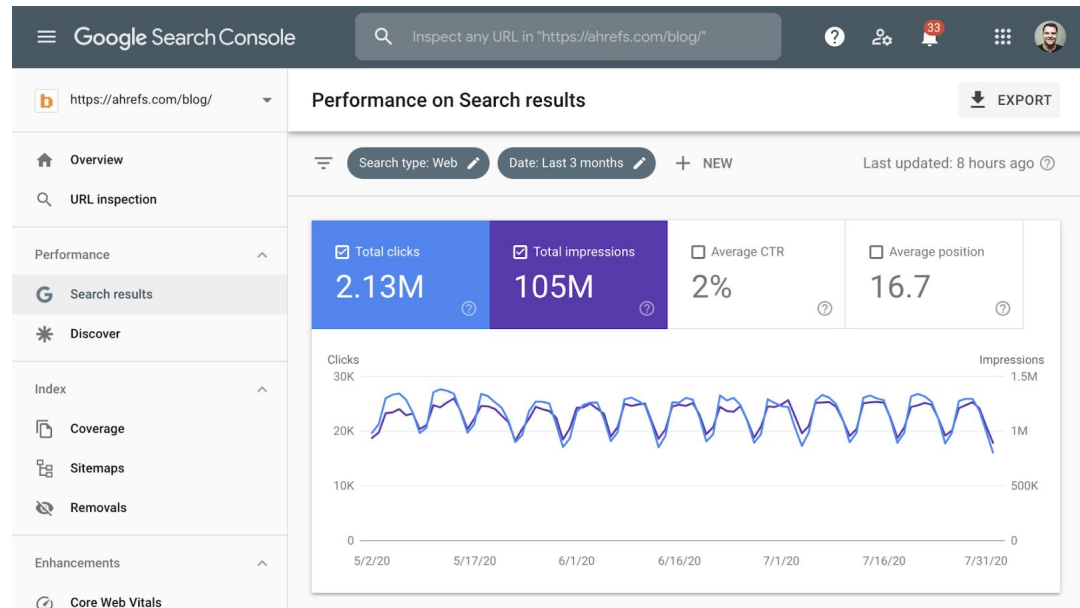
Check ranking positions

Find website errors

Submit sitemaps



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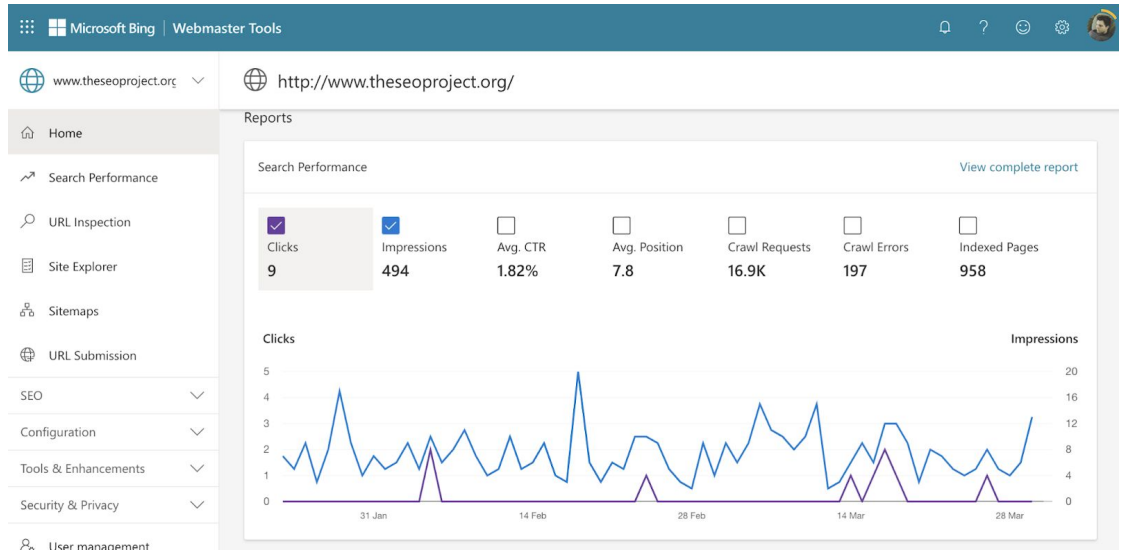


Step 2 = Set up Bing Webmaster Tools

- Essentially Bing's equivalent of Google Search Console.
- Free tool for tracking your site's organic search performance.
- See the keywords you rank for
- Check ranking positions
- Find website errors
- Submit sitemaps



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Step 3 = Set up Webmaster Tools (We like [Ahrefs](#))

Ahrefs Webmaster Tools (AWT) is a free tool that helps you improve your website's SEO performance and get more organic search traffic.

Scan your site for 100+ SEO issues
See all your backlinks
See all the keywords you rank for



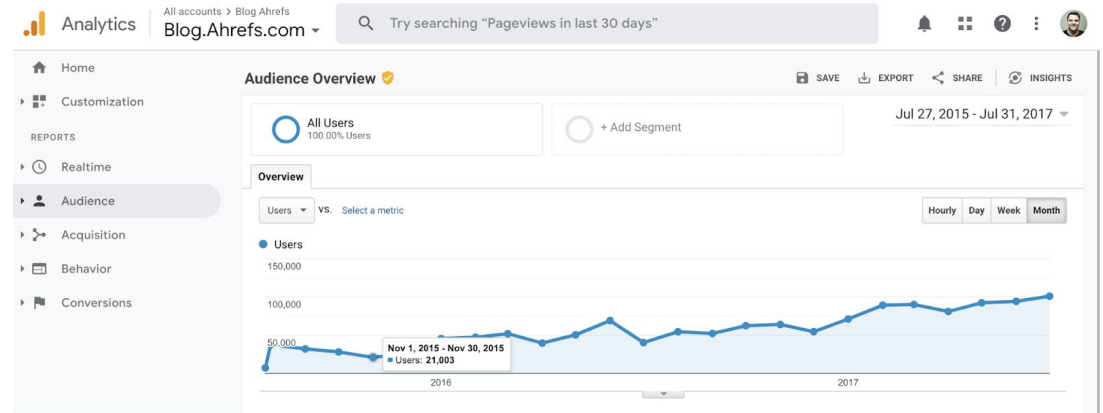
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Step 4 = Set up Google Analytics

Free tool that lets you see how many people are visiting, where they're coming from, and how they're interacting with it.

Sidenote: It's worth linking Google Search Console with Google Analytics



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Step 5 = Install an SEO plugin

Using Wordpress, you'll need an SEO plugin to help you optimize things like sitemaps and meta tags.

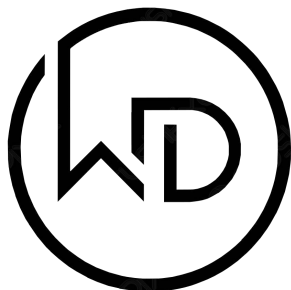
Here are a few good options:

SEOPress Pro

Yoast SEO

Rank Math

The SEO Framework



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SEO title

Insert variable

4 Simple Blog Post Templates (And When To Use Them)

Slug

blog-post-templates

Meta description

Insert variable

Use these templates to beat writer's block, write great content faster, and stand the best chance of ranking in organic search.

Close snippet editor

Step 6 = Create and submit a sitemap

Sitemaps tell search engines where to find important content on your site so they can easily **crawl and index** your pages.

You can usually find your sitemaps at one these URLs

`/sitemap.xml`

`/sitemap_index.xml`

`/sitemap`



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XML Sitemap

Generated by **YoastSEO**, this is an XML Sitemap, meant for consumption by search engines.

You can find more information about XML sitemaps on sitemaps.org.

This XML Sitemap contains 266 URLs.

URL	Images	Last Mod.
https://ahrefs.com/blog/archive/	0	2020-07-31 11:07 +00:00
https://ahrefs.com/blog/black-hat-link-building/	17	2016-03-01 10:44 +00:00
https://ahrefs.com/blog/going-viral/	35	2016-10-27 23:03 +00:00
https://ahrefs.com/blog/incredible-content/	23	2016-10-27 23:07 +00:00
https://ahrefs.com/blog/freelance-seo-career/	6	2016-10-27 23:19 +00:00
https://ahrefs.com/blog/seo-freelancing-lessons-learned/	6	2016-10-27 23:21 +00:00
https://ahrefs.com/blog/google-webmaster-forum-questions/	1	2016-10-27 23:23 +00:00
https://ahrefs.com/blog/public-data-sets/	20	2016-11-26 14:52 +00:00
https://ahrefs.com/blog/asking-for-tweets/	18	2017-01-25 08:50 +00:00
https://ahrefs.com/blog/the-ultimate-guide-to-reverse-engineering-your-competitors-backlinks/	16	2017-03-27 06:45 +00:00
https://ahrefs.com/blog/not-million-visit-organic-seo-case-study/	12	2017-03-29 13:51 +00:00
https://ahrefs.com/blog/whats-new-ahrefs-may/	10	2017-05-31 08:18 +00:00

Step 7 = Create a robots.txt file

Robots.txt is a plain text file that tells search engines where they can and can't go on your site.

It's always good practice to have a robots.txt file, but it's a must if you need to prevent search engines from crawling pages or sections on your site. For example, if you run an ecommerce store, you might not want them to crawl and index your cart page



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```
User-agent: *  
Disallow: /cart/
```

Technical SEO

One Time Tasks

1. Plan your website structure
2. Make sure your site is crawlable
3. Make sure your site is indexable
4. Make sure you're using HTTPS
5. Make sure your site is accessible at one domain
6. Make sure your site loads fast
7. Make sure your site is mobile-Friendly
8. Install an image compression plugin

Repeat Periodically

9. Fix broken pages
10. Fix duplicate content issues



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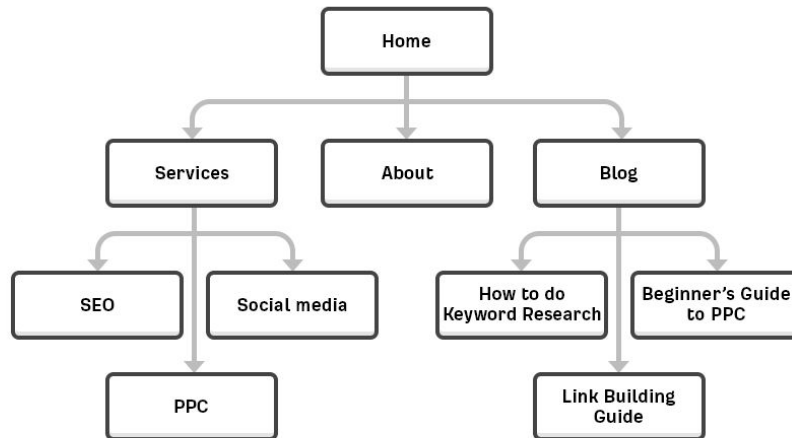
Step 1 = Plan your website structure (New sites only)

It's Crucial that visitors and search engines can easily navigate your website.

Sketch out a simple mind map.

Each branch on the map should be an internal link to allow search engines and visitors to navigate between pages.

Use a Mind Map to Create Your Site Structure



→ Internal links



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Step 2 = Make sure your site is crawlable

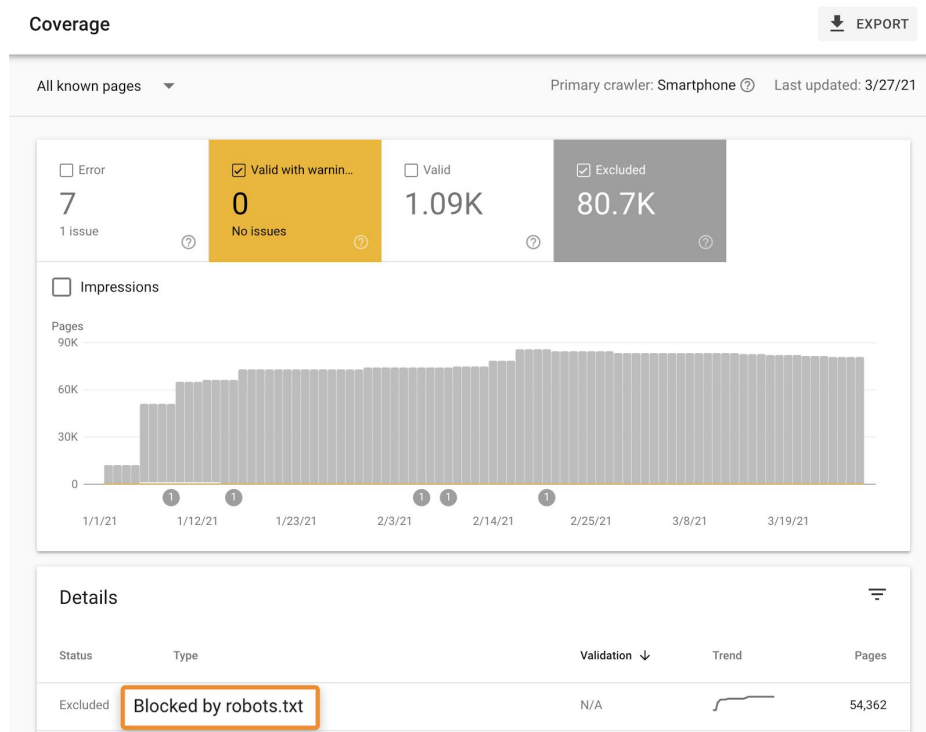
Google can't properly index content that isn't crawlable, so it's worth checking the coverage report in Google Search Console for any warnings or exclusions relating to robots.txt

If you want Google to make sure Google indexes any of the the blocked pages correctly, you should remove the rule that's causing the block from your robots.txt file.

Recommended reading: [Robots.txt and SEO: Everything You Need to Know](#)



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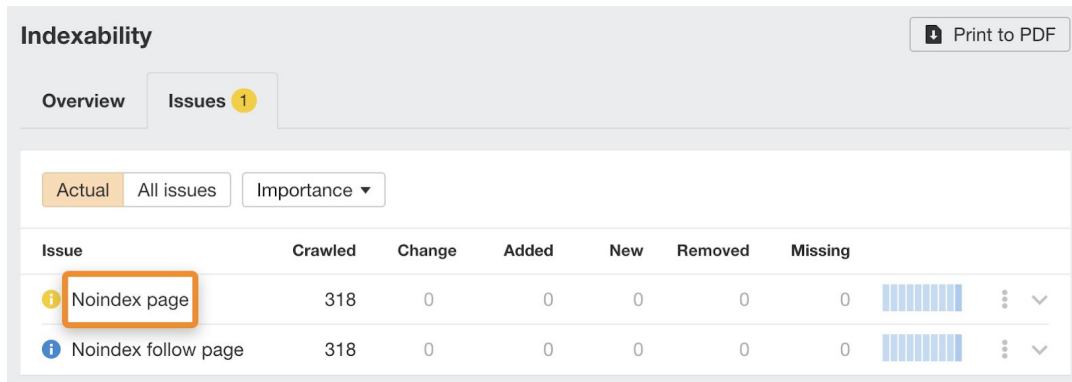
Step 3 = Make sure your site is indexable

Indexing and crawling are two different things. Just because search engines can crawl a page doesn't mean they can index it. If there's a 'noindex' [robots meta tag](#) or [x-robots-tag](#) on the page, indexing isn't possible.



Google tells you about noindexed URLs in the Coverage report.

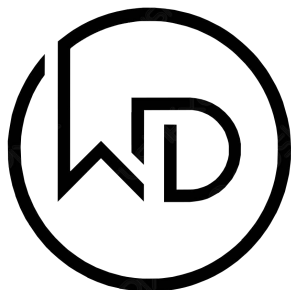
If you have 'noindexed' pages that should be indexed, remove the 'noindex' tag.

Recommended reading: [Robots Meta Tag & X-Robots-Tag: Everything You Need to Know](#)



The screenshot shows the 'Indexability' section of Google Search Console. It has tabs for 'Overview' and 'Issues' (with a yellow badge showing '1'). Below the tabs are filters for 'Actual', 'All issues', and 'Importance'. A table lists the issues:

Issue	Crawled	Change	Added	New	Removed	Missing	
Noindex page	318	0	0	0	0	0	 ⋮
Noindex follow page	318	0	0	0	0	0	 ⋮



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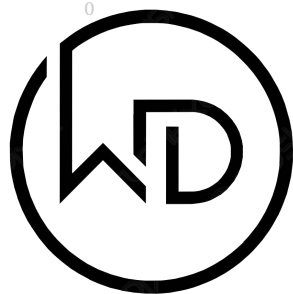
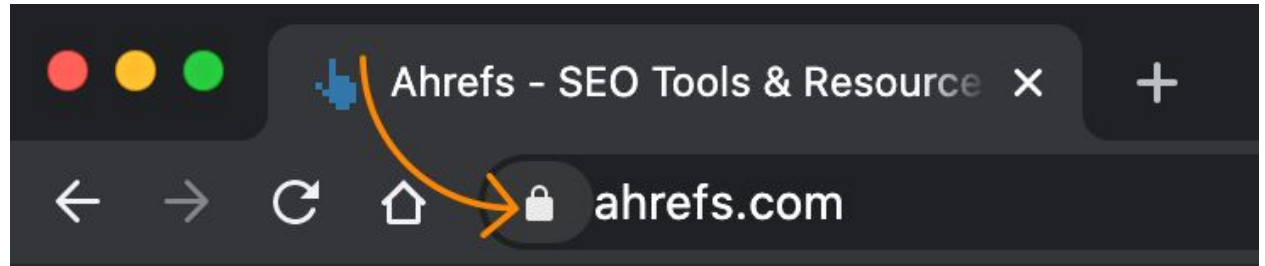
Step 4 = Make sure you're using HTTPS

HTTPS is a **confirmed** lightweight ranking factor.

If you're not using HTTPS today, it's time to make the switch. Potential ranking boosts aside, HTTPS will protect your visitors' data. This is especially important if you have any contact forms on your site. If you're asking for passwords or payment information, then it's not just important; it's an absolute must.

How do you know if your site uses HTTPS?

Look for a padlock in your browser's search bar:



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Step 5 = Make sure your website is accessible at one domain

Visitors shouldn't be able to access your website at multiple locations. It can lead to crawling, indexing, and security issues. To check that everything's in order, plug these four URLs into <httpstatus.io>:

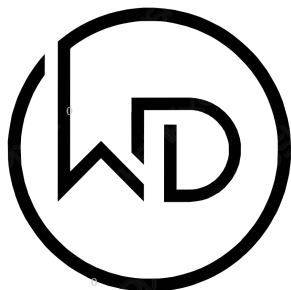
<http://yourdomain.com>
<http://www.yourdomain.com>
<https://yourdomain.com>
<https://www.yourdomain.com>

If everything's good, three of them should redirect to the fourth. If that doesn't happen, you need to set up a permanent **301 redirect**.

If you're using HTTPS (you should be), it's also important that the accessible version of your website is the secure version. That's either <https://yourdomain.com> or <https://www.yourdomain.com>.

Recommended reading: [301 Redirects for SEO: Everything You Need to Know](#)

	Request URL	Status codes
>	http://ahrefs.com	301 200
>	http://www.ahrefs.com	301 200
>	https://www.ahrefs.com	301 200
>	https://ahrefs.com	200



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Step 6 = Make sure your site loads fast

Page speed has been a ranking factor on desktop since 2010 and mobile since 2018.

It's easy to see why. It's frustrating to click on a search result and have to wait for it to load. That's why the probability of a bounce increases as page speed decreases.

You can use tools like [PageSpeed Insights](#) and [GTMetrix](#) to see how fast your web page loads.

Ahref's [Site Audit](#) also works.



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Latest Performance Report for:
<http://ahrefs.com/blog/website-traffic/>

Report generated: Mon, Aug 3, 2020 8:30 AM -0700
Test Server Region: Vancouver, Canada
Using: Chrome (Desktop) 75.0.3770.100, PageSpeed 1.15-gt1.3, YSlow 3.1.8
Additional tips: Optimize WordPress

Performance Scores

PageSpeed Score A (97%) ^	YSlow Score A (92%) ^
------------------------------	--------------------------

Page Details

Fully Loaded Time 4.3s ^	Total Page Size 739KB ^	Requests 27 ^
-----------------------------	----------------------------	------------------

ahrefs Dashboard Site explorer Keywords explorer Site audit Rank tracker Content explorer More joshua.hardwick...

Site audit / Ahrefs / 31 Jul Segment New crawl

Overview All issues 17 To-do Crawl log Bulk export

tools Page explorer Link explorer BETA Structure explorer

Performance

Overview Issues 1

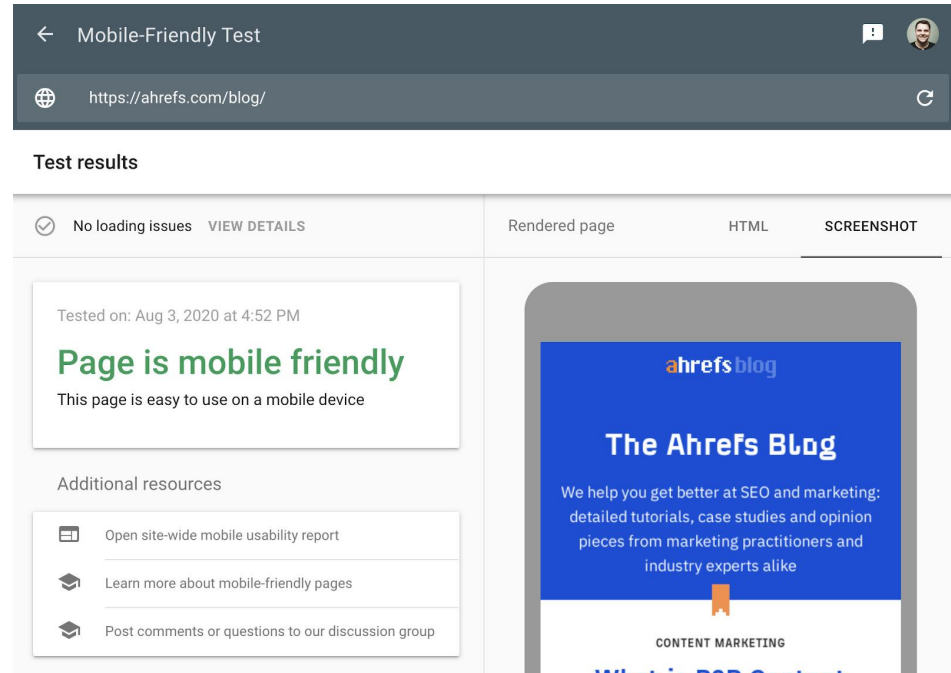
Actual All issues Importance

Issue	Crawled	Change	Added	New	Removed	Missing
1 Slow page	43	29 ▼	38	0	67	0

Step 7 = Make sure your site is mobile-friendly

Most searches happen on mobile devices, so having a mobile-friendly website is more important than ever.

Check whether your site needs work with Google's **Mobile-Friendly Test tool**.



The screenshot shows the Google Mobile-Friendly Test interface. At the top, the browser address bar displays "Mobile-Friendly Test" and the URL "https://ahrefs.com/blog/". Below the address bar, the "Test results" section shows a green checkmark and the text "No loading issues VIEW DETAILS". The main result area displays "Tested on: Aug 3, 2020 at 4:52 PM" and "Page is mobile friendly" in green, followed by "This page is easy to use on a mobile device". To the right, there are tabs for "Rendered page", "HTML", and "SCREENSHOT". The "Rendered page" tab is active, showing a mobile view of the ahrefs blog homepage with the title "The Ahrefs Blog" and a blue header. Below the header, there is a paragraph of text: "We help you get better at SEO and marketing: detailed tutorials, case studies and opinion pieces from marketing practitioners and industry experts alike". At the bottom of the rendered page, there is a section for "CONTENT MARKETING" with the text "What is PDR Content".



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Step 8 = Install an image compression plugin

Compressing images makes image files smaller and improves page speed. That's important because page speed is a [Google ranking factor](#).

If you're using WordPress, there are plenty of plugins for this. We like [ShortPixel](#). It lets you compress up to 100 images per month for free.

If you're using another website platform, search Google for a suitable plugin or use [ShortPixel's web app](#).



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Step 9 = Fix broken pages

Broken links can negatively impact user experience and break the flow of ‘authority’ into and around your website.

To find broken links on your site, use [Ahrefs Webmaster Tools](#).

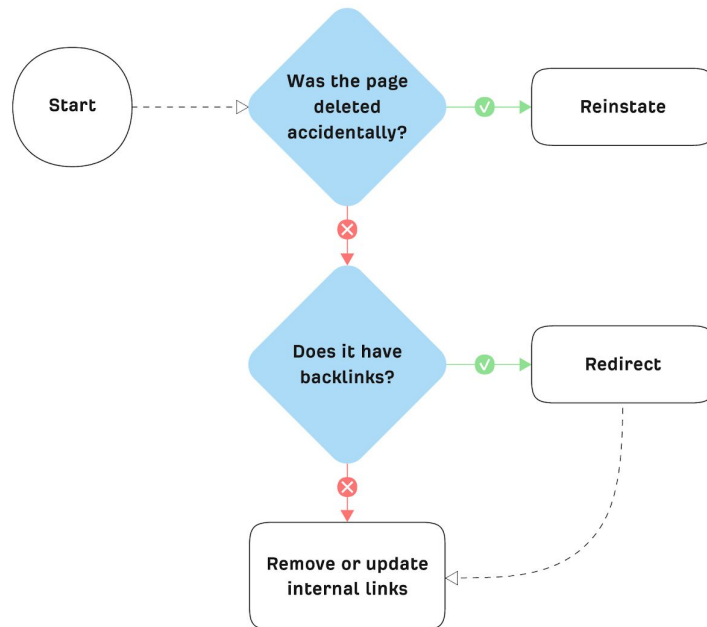
Crawl your website with [Site Audit](#)
Go to the Internal pages report
Look for “404 page” errors

Recommended reading: [How to Find and Fix Broken Links \(to Reclaim Valuable “Link Juice”\)](#)



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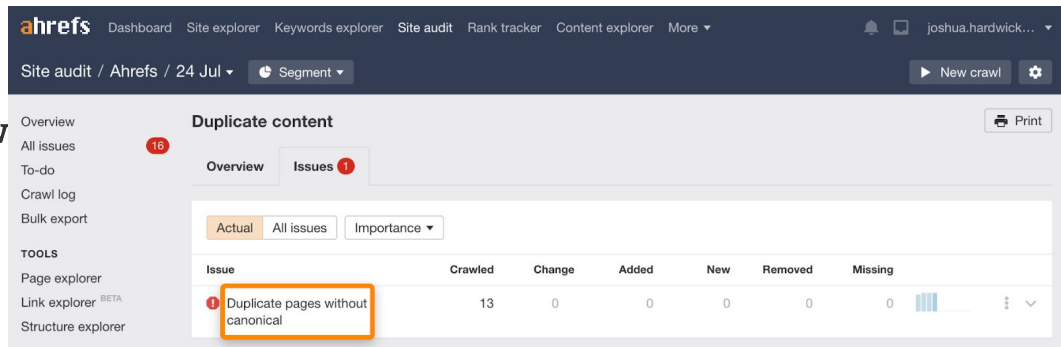
How to Deal With Broken Links



Step 10 = Fix duplicate content issues

Duplicate content is exact or near-duplicate content that appears on the web in more than one place. It's a common **ecommerce SEO** issue thanks to faceted navigation. That alone can cause hundreds of duplicate content issues. You can find duplicate content issues for free with Ahrefs Webmaster Tools.

Crawl your website with **Site Audit**
Go to the Duplicate content report
Hit the "Issues" tab

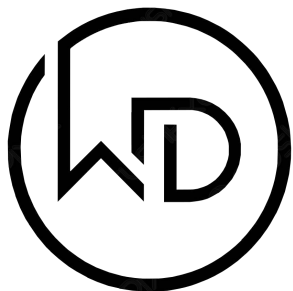


The screenshot shows the Ahrefs Site Audit interface for a duplicate content report. The navigation bar includes 'ahrefs', 'Dashboard', 'Site explorer', 'Keywords explorer', 'Site audit', 'Rank tracker', 'Content explorer', and 'More'. The current page is 'Site audit / Ahrefs / 24 Jul' with a 'Segment' dropdown and a 'New crawl' button. The left sidebar lists 'Overview', 'All issues' (with a red '16' badge), 'To-do', 'Crawl log', 'Bulk export', and 'TOOLS' (Page explorer, Link explorer BETA, Structure explorer). The main content area is titled 'Duplicate content' and has tabs for 'Overview' and 'Issues' (with a red '1' badge). Below the tabs are filters for 'Actual', 'All issues', and 'Importance'. A table displays the following data:

Issue	Crawled	Change	Added	New	Removed	Missing
Duplicate pages without canonical	13	0	0	0	0	0

Fix these by **canonicalizing** the affected URLs where necessary.

Recommended reading: *[Duplicate Content: The Complete Guide for Beginners](#)*



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Keyword Research

Keyword research is the most crucial piece of the SEO puzzle. If you don't know what **keywords** people are searching for, how can you possibly optimize your content for search engines?

Repeat for each page you publish

1. Find a primary keyword
2. Assess search intent
3. Assess your chances of ranking
4. Research what people want to know



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Step 1 = Find a primary keyword to target

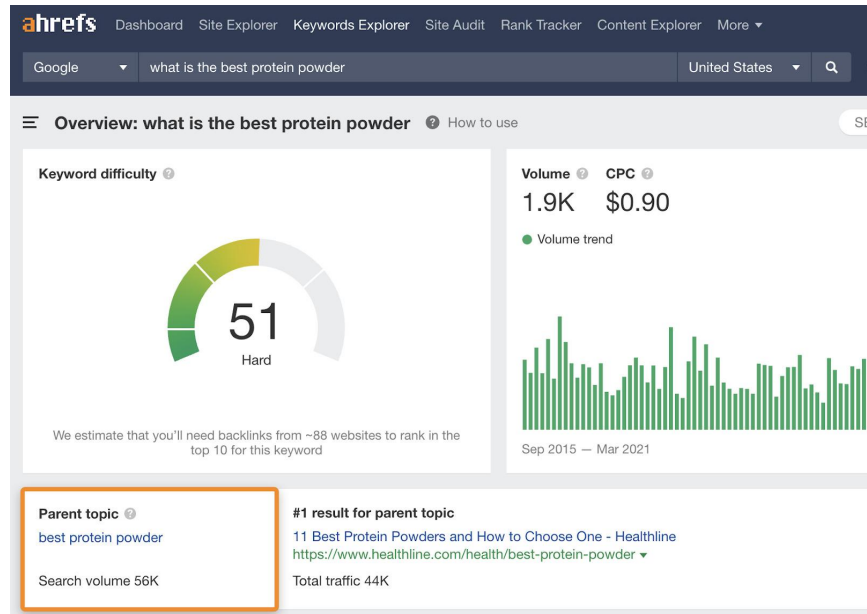
Each page on your website should target one main primary keyword. You should do [keyword research](#) periodically to find keywords to target, but you should also make sure you're targeting the best keyword each time you publish a new page. How do you know which is the best keyword? It's the one that represents the most popular way of searching for the topic.

Just search for your topic in Ahrefs' [Keywords Explorer](#) and look at the Parent Topic. This is usually a more popular way of searching for the same thing.

Recommended reading: [How To Do Keyword Research for SEO](#)



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Step 2 = Assess search intent

Search intent is the reason behind a searcher's query. If your page doesn't align with this, your chances of ranking are slim to none.

How do you assess search intent?

Look at the types and format of pages ranking in Google for your primary keyword.

For example, we can see from the URLs and titles of the top-ranking results for “marketing skills” that they're all blog posts. As for the format, they're mostly **listicles**.

Recommended reading: [What is Search Intent? A Complete Guide for Beginners](#)



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marketing skills



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50 Essential Marketing Skills You Need to Be Successful in ...

Another basic skill that should be on the resumé of every marketer is maintaining the attitude of lifelong learning. As marketers, we're always taking in new ...

[Why Do You Need to...](#) · [Basic Marketing Skills...](#) · [Killer Content Marketing...](#)

<https://www.thebalancecareers.com> › ... › [Listed by Job](#) ▾

Important Marketing Skills That Employers Value

More [Marketing Skills](#) · [Aesthetic sensibility](#) · [Analyzing consumer survey data](#) · [Collaborating with designers to create logos](#) · [Completing analyses of competitors ...](#)

[What are Marketing Skills?](#) · [Communication](#) · [Analytical Thinking](#) · [Negotiation](#)

<https://lumen5.com> › [learn](#) › [marketing-skills](#) ▾

17 Marketing Skills Every Marketer Needs - Lumen5 Learning ...

5 Jun 2019 — The [Marketing Skills](#) You Need to Master · #1. [Customer Knowledge](#) · #2.

[Storytelling](#) · #3. [Creativity](#) · #4. [Delegating](#) · #5. [Copywriting](#) · #6. [Listening](#).

Step 3 = Assess your chances of ranking in Google

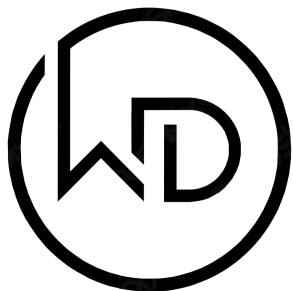
Understanding the ease or difficulty of ranking for a keyword helps you to prioritize the opportunity and set realistic expectations.

For an initial rough estimate, use the **Keyword Difficulty** score in Keywords Explorer.

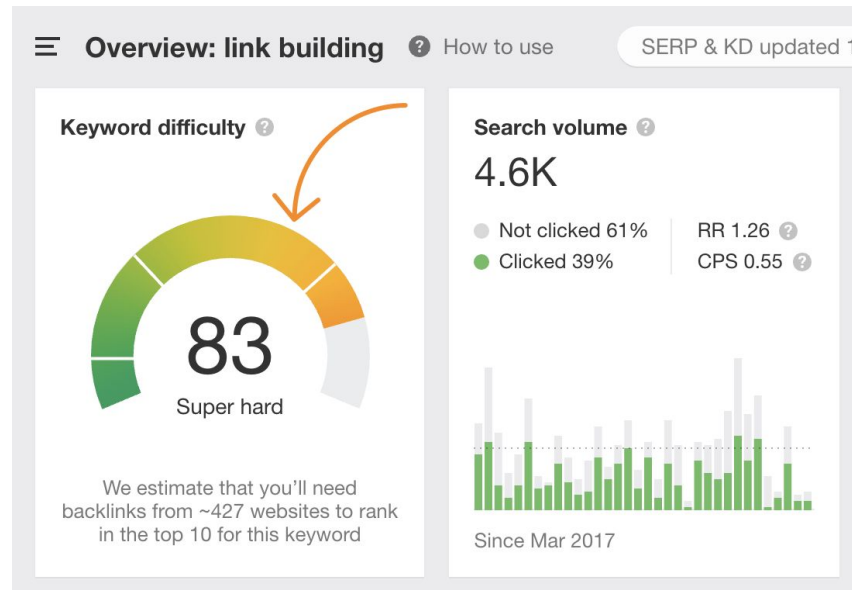
Just don't rely on this entirely. Check the results yourself for things that may indicate a hard keyword to crack, like:

- High-quality backlinks to the top-ranking pages
- Predominantly big brands in the top 10
- High topical relevance of the top-ranking sites

Learn more in [this tutorial](#).



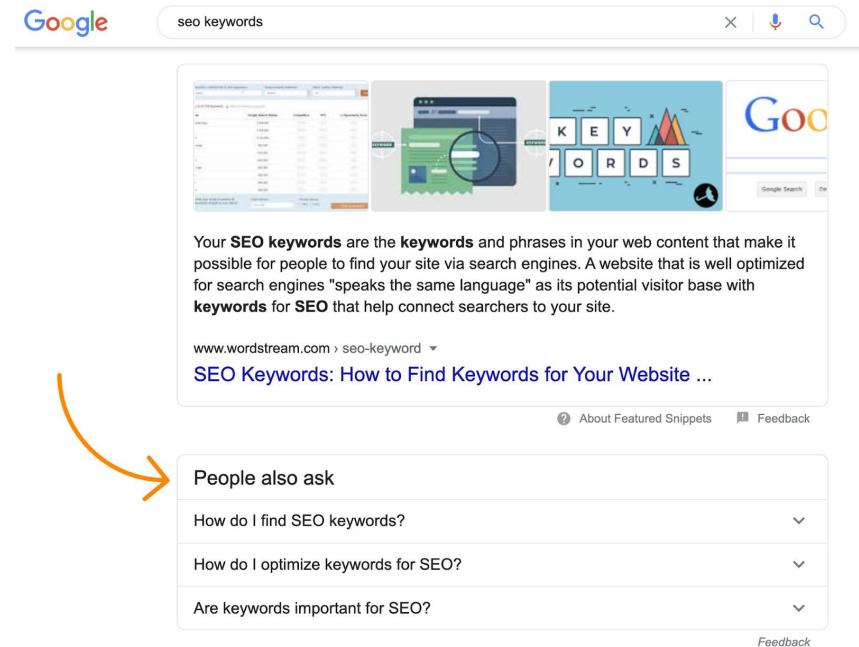
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Step 4 = Research what people want to know

Say that someone searches for “SEO keywords.” You can see from analyzing search intent that people are looking for a definition of the term, but what other questions do they have? And what other information should you include in your content?

Google’s “People Also Ask” box gives some insight into this:



The image shows a Google search interface for the query "seo keywords". The search bar at the top contains the text "seo keywords". Below the search bar, there are three small image thumbnails: a screenshot of a software interface, a magnifying glass over a document, and a graphic with the words "KEYWORDS" in a grid. To the right of these thumbnails is the Google logo. Below the thumbnails is a featured snippet with the following text: "Your **SEO keywords** are the **keywords** and phrases in your web content that make it possible for people to find your site via search engines. A website that is well optimized for search engines "speaks the same language" as its potential visitor base with **keywords** for **SEO** that help connect searchers to your site." Below this text is the URL "www.wordstream.com > seo-keyword" and a link titled "SEO Keywords: How to Find Keywords for Your Website ...". Below the featured snippet is a "People also ask" section with three questions: "How do I find SEO keywords?", "How do I optimize keywords for SEO?", and "Are keywords important for SEO?". Each question has a downward arrow to its right. At the bottom right of the "People also ask" section is a "Feedback" link.



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Step 4 = Research what people want to know

For more ideas, take three top-ranking pages and paste them into Ahrefs' [Content Gap tool](#). This will show you the keywords that one or more of the pages rank for.

Content Gap How to use

3 targets

Show keywords that the below targets rank for

https://www.wordstream.com/seo-keyword	Prefix
https://backlinko.com/hub/seo/seo-keywords	Prefix
https://moz.com/learn/seo/what-are-keywords	Prefix

+ Add target

At least one of the targets should rank in top 10

But the following target doesn't rank for

<input type="text"/>	*.domain/*
----------------------	------------

Show keywords

Keyword	Volume ↓	KD ↓	CPC ↓	SERP ↓	Highest position		
					https://www.w...	https://moz.co...	https://backlin...
keywords	19,000	93	—	SERP	4	3	10
seo keywords	5,100	91	7.00	SERP	1	3	5
key words	3,100	93	1.70	SERP	3	10	13
what are keywords	900	65	—	SERP	6	1	12
seo keyword	600	95	10.00	SERP	1	3	5
keywords for seo	400	90	6.00	SERP	1	3	5
seo words	250	94	10.00	SERP	4	3	14
website keywords	250	94	5.00	SERP	1	5	20
keyword search engine	250	95	5.00	SERP	4	6	12
web site keyword	200	96	7.00	SERP	1	6	27
websites keywords	200	94	7.00	SERP	1	8	19
keyword examples	200	61	—	SERP	3	14	11
web site key words	200	94	7.00	SERP	1	5	19
web site keywords	150	94	7.00	SERP	1	5	19
keywords seo	150	91	8.00	SERP	1	2	5
keyword seo	150	95	—	SERP	1	2	5
examples of keywords	100	56	0.80	SERP	6	12	11
search engine keywords	100	86	8.00	SERP	2	1	5
how to use keywords for seo	100	78	6.00	SERP	5	4	12
what keywords should i use	100	79	1.20	SERP	3	6	12



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Content Checklist

Repeat for each page you publish

1. Solve the reader's problem
2. Write a winning intro
3. Use subheadings to create hierarchy
4. Break things up with images
5. Use short sentences and paragraphs
6. Add a Table of contents



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Step 1 = Solve the reader's problem

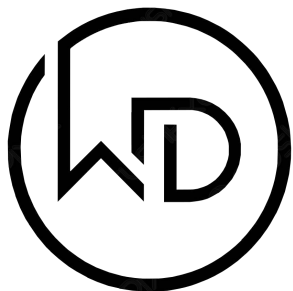
Understanding search intent is the first step of solving the reader's problem because it tells you what kind of content they're looking for. Research is another important step.

But to create truly great content, you need to go further and really consider the visitor's problem.

For example, take a query like "productivity tips." It's clear from assessing search intent that searchers want a listicle-style blog post. And if we research the top-ranking posts, we see common advice like "take breaks" and "put things down on paper."

Although there's nothing wrong with these tips, people searching for "productivity tips" probably want more practical ideas they can implement right away.

So you'd probably want to go beyond simple advice like "take breaks."



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Google

productivity tips

All News Images Videos Shopping More Settings Tools

About 254,000,000 results (0.88 seconds)



8 Productivity Tips That Will Improve Your Workday

- You're more productive when you **take breaks**. ...
- Tackle your hardest to-do first thing in the morning. ...
- Find a productivity methodology that works for you. ...
- **Put it all down on paper**. ...
- **Focus** on why you're doing something. ...
- Think about tomorrow, today. ...
- Block out your own **focus** time to boost productivity.

More items... • 23 Jan 2020

https://www.formstack.com › resources › blog-productivit...

8 Productivity Tips That Will Improve Your Workday ...

About featured snippets • Feedback

https://www.scienceofpeople.com › productivity ▾

14 Unique Productivity Tips: How to Be More Productive with ...

Table of Contents · #1: Use Your Rhythms to Be More Productive · #2: Learn to Work & Read Faster · #3: The Weirdest Productivity Tip You'll Hear Today · #4: Use A...
3: The Weirdest Productivity... · 4: Use A Domino to Be... · **8: Create a Break List**

https://karenapp.io › articles › how-to-be-more-product... ▾

42 Unique Productivity Tips: How to be more Productive with ...

28 Feb 2020 — 1. Create lifetime goals. The human brain is a goal-seeking organism, the goals of the subconscious mind are always achieved. · 2. Mindful Eating.

https://dariusforoux.medium.com › my-20-best-product... ▾

My 20 Best Productivity Tips Of All Time | by Darius Foroux ...

My 20 Best Productivity Tips Of All Time · Always Cut To The Chase · **Record All Your Thoughts And Ideas** · Say No More Often · **Take A 5 Minute Break Every 30 To ...**

Step 2 = Write a winning intro

If you can't convince readers that your page offers what they want within a few seconds, they'll hit that back button faster than you can say "**dwel time.**"

Your best defense against this is a compelling intro.

Good introductions should do three things:

Connect with the reader

Build trust

Promise a solution to the user's problem

Remember, if visitors never get past your introduction, they never read your content. And if they never read your content, they won't convert, share, or link to it.

Learn one way to write a winning intro [here](#).



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Step 3 = Use headings to create hierarchy

Headings like **H1** and **H2** help to create hierarchy and break your content into logical sections. This makes your content easier to skim and digest.

For example, the list that you're reading right now is broken into five distinct sections.

- SEO basics checklist
- Technical SEO checklist
- Content checklist
- On-page SEO checklist
- Link building checklist

Under each of these, we have sub-sub headings for each checklist item.



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Step 4 = Break things up with images

Nobody wants to read a big wall of text. It's overwhelming and can lead people to [bounce](#).

Images help solve this by breaking up your copy and aiding visual comprehension.

But don't just throw images in for the sake of it. Make an effort to find or create images that improve the reader's experience.

For example, we often use graphs, charts, and screenshots to help illustrate our points.



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Step 5 = Use short sentences and paragraphs

50% of the US population [read below an 8th-grade reading level](#).

So unless you want to alienate half of the population, don't overcomplicate things. Stick to short sentences and paragraphs.

You should also:

Use simple words and phrases

Avoid jargon

Write in an active voice

[Hemingway](#) is a free, browser-based tool that can help with this. It tells you the current grade level of your copy and suggests improvements.



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The screenshot shows the Hemingway Editor interface. The main text area contains the following content:

What Are Sitelinks? How to Influence Them
Sitelinks are links to other pages (or sections of a page) that appear under some Google search results. They help users navigate to relevant information on a website quickly. Sitelinks first appeared in 2005 and were [officially announced in 2006](#).

Here's an example:
Sitelinks are one of the most common search features. They appear in 1.8% of [SERPs](#) in Ahrefs' US database. Nearly every branded term has sitelinks and they also appear on many other queries like informational queries. In fact, nearly 67% of all organic keywords for Wikipedia.org contain sitelinks.

The right sidebar shows the readability analysis:

- Readability** (highlighted with an orange box)
- Grade 7
- Good
- Words: 101
- Show More ▼
- 4 adverbs. Aim for 1 or fewer.
- 0 uses of passive voice. Nice work.

Step 6 = Add a table of contents

A table of contents provides jump links to different sections on the page. Although you can add a table of contents to any page, they're best-suited to lengthy content that might otherwise be difficult to navigate. As most of our posts are 2,000+ words, they make a lot of sense for our visitors. A table of contents can also help you win [sitelinks](#) in the SERPs. Recommended reading: [What Are Sitelinks? How to Influence Them](#)

<https://ahrefs.com> › [blog](#) › [canonical-tags](#)

Canonical Tags: A Simple Guide for Beginners - Ahrefs

What is a **canonical tag**? A **canonical tag** (rel="canonical") is a snippet of HTML code that defines the main version ...

14 Apr 2020 · Uploaded by Google Search Central

[What a canonical tag looks...](#) · [Why canonical tags are...](#) · [Canonicalization best...](#)



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Contents

- What is a listicle?
- Why do people like listicles?
- How to write a listicle
- Examples of listicles

Listicles don't have to be clickbait. Those mind-numbing posts about the best potato chips or most ripped celebrities that you see on Facebook give listicles a bad name.

It's perfectly possible to write a great listicle about... well, pretty much anything.

In this post, you'll learn how to do just that.

- [What is a listicle?](#)
- [Why do people like listicles?](#)
- [How to write a good listicle](#)
- [Examples of listicles done well](#)



Joshua Hardwick

Head of Content @ Ahrefs (or, in plain English, I'm the guy responsible for ensuring that every blog post we publish is EPIC).



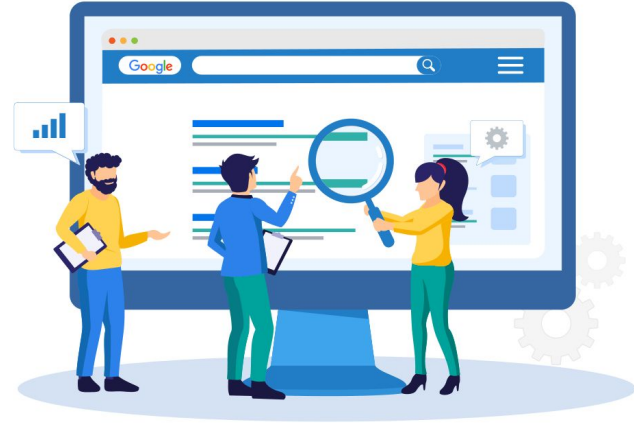
Article stats

1,111 views · 1 share

On-page SEO Checklist

Repeat for each page you publish

1. Use short, descriptive URLs
2. Write a compelling title tag
3. Write a compelling meta description
4. Link to relevant resources
5. Optimize your images
6. Add schema markup
7. Add internal links



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Step 1 = Use a short, descriptive URL

Short, descriptive URLs help searchers to understand what the page is about in the [SERPs](#).

For example, these two pages are about losing weight...

<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/322345>

<https://www.dietdoctor.com/how-to-lose-weight>

... but you wouldn't know it from that first URL.

Most of the time, the simplest way to create short, descriptive URLs is to set your primary keyword as the URL slug. We do this with most of our blog posts.

ahrefs.com/blog/on-page-seo/

ahrefs.com/blog/link-building/

ahrefs.com/blog/free-seo-tools/

Keeping URLs short is useful because long URLs tend to truncate in the SERPs.

<https://www.bloggingbasics101.com> › [how-do-i-start-a-...](#)

[How To Start a Blog in 2021 - Easy to Follow Guide for ...](#)

5 Jan 2021 — Step 1 – Choose your preferred blogging platform · Step 2 – Self-hosting or a free alternative? · Step 3 – **Start a blog** on your own domain (if you ...

[Blog Design: Keep It Clutter...](#) · [Advice for Blog Design and...](#) · [Blogging Resources](#)



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Step 2 = Write a compelling title tag

Like URLs, title tags show up in Google's search results and help searchers understand what the page is about.

Common advice for [title tags](#) is to include your target keyword.

Although that's good practice, don't sweat it if it doesn't make sense. It's much more important to write something compelling that will make people want to click.

Most of the time, your post or page title will work well.

Recommended reading: [How to Craft the Perfect SEO Title Tag](#)



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Step 3 = Write a compelling meta description

Google shows meta descriptions in the SERPs roughly $\frac{1}{3}$ of the time.

Here are our best tips for creating a compelling meta description:

Expand on the title

Double down on search intent

Use an active voice

Keep it under 120 characters

Include your primary keyword (where it makes sense)

Recommended reading: [*How to Write the Perfect Meta Description*](#)



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Step 4 = Link to relevant resources

Linking to other internal resources helps visitors to navigate your website.

But what about external resources?

Here's what Google's John Mueller [says](#):

Linking to other websites is a great way to provide value to your users. Oftentimes, links help users to find out more, to check out your sources and to better understand how your content is relevant to the questions that they have.

John Mueller, Search Advocate [Google](#)



Does this mean you have to force internal and external links into your content?

Nope. Just add links if and when it makes sense.

Recommended reading: [Internal Links for SEO: An Actionable Guide](#)



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Step 5 = Optimize your images

If you're following the checklist in order, you should have already installed an image compression plugin. But there are a couple of other image optimizations you should do on a page by page basis:

Name images descriptively.

Don't use generic image filenames like IMG_875939.png or Screenshot-2021-06-01. Use descriptive filenames like black-puppy.png or eiffel-tower.jpg.

Add descriptive alt text.

Alt text replaces an image on the page when it fails to load. It's also helpful for those using screen readers. Learn more [here](#).

Recommended reading: *[Image SEO: 12 Actionable Tips for More Organic Traffic](#)*



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Step 6 = Add schema markup for rich snippets

Schema markup helps search engines to understand your content better. But it can also dramatically affect how your page shows up in the [SERPs](#).

Here's a page with schema markup that currently ranks for "pizza dough recipe:"

www.bbc.co.uk › [food](#) › [recipes](#) › [pizzadoughbase_70980](#) ▾

Pizza dough recipe - BBC Food



★★★★★ Rating: 4.5 - 145 votes - 2 hrs 30 mins

Ingredients. 650g/1lb 7oz '00' flour (or strong white flour), plus extra for dusting. 7g dried easy-blend yeast. 2 tsp salt. 25ml/1fl oz olive oil. 50ml/2fl oz warm milk. 325ml/11fl oz warm water. passata and other toppings, for baking.

Here's what it would look without schema markup:

www.bbc.co.uk › [food](#) › [recipes](#) › [pizzadoughbase_70980](#) ▾

Pizza dough recipe - BBC Food

Ingredients. 650g/1lb 7oz '00' flour (or strong white flour), plus extra for dusting. 7g dried easy-blend yeast. 2 tsp salt. 25ml/1fl oz olive oil. 50ml/2fl oz warm milk. 325ml/11fl oz warm water. passata and other toppings, for baking.



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Step 7 = Add internal links

Internal links help Google understand what your page is about. They also help search engines and users to navigate your website.

We already covered the importance of linking to relevant internal and external resources in your content. But it's also worth adding internal links from other relevant pages whenever you publish new content.

Here's how to find relevant internal link opportunities:

Create a free [Ahrefs Webmaster Tools](#) account

Crawl your website with [Site Audit](#)

Go to the Link Opportunities report

Add a "Target page" filter and set it to your new page



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Internal link opportunities [How to use](#)

Filter Hide filter ^

AND OR

Previous Current Source is canonical Yes

Previous Current Source is noindex No

Previous Current Target page = <https://ahrefs.com/blog/seo-best-practices>

+ Rule + Group

Apply 24 results matching Reset

All filter results 24 Lost from filter results 0 Lost 0 [Manage columns](#) [Export](#)

PR	Source page	Source total traffic	Keyword	Keyword context
82	https://ahrefs.com/blog/seo-tips/	3.1K	seo best practices	For example, if we wanted to add internal links to a newly-published post about SEO best practices, we'd search for something like site:ahrefs.com/blog "seo best practices".
36	https://ahrefs.com/blog/how-to-create-a-sitemap/	1.5K	seo practice	This is bad SEO practice.
35	https://ahrefs.com/blog/wordpress-seo/	1.2K	seo best practice	SEO best practice is to customize them for every page and post.

Link Building Checklist

Repeat periodically

1. Replicate your competitor's links
2. Reclaim lost links
3. Pursue unlinked mentions
4. Publish guest posts
5. Pitch resource pages

Repeat for each page you publish

1. Find people linking to inferior c
2. Tell more people about your cor.....



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Step 1 = Replicate your competitors' links

If a page is mentioning and linking to multiple competitors, but not you, it might be a link worth pursuing.

Here's how to find these websites:

Go to [Content Explorer](#)

Search for (“competitor 1” AND “competitor 2”) -“your brand”

Hit search

Toggle “One page per domain”

This will search our database of over seven billion pages for those mentioning both your competitors, but not you.

The screenshot shows the Ahrefs Content Explorer interface. The search query is "mailchimp AND aweber" - convertkit. The results are filtered to show 16,759 pages, with the "One page per domain" option checked. The top result is a page from tutstplus.com titled "Best Mailchimp Templates to Level Up Your Business Email Newsletter...". The page has a Domain Rating (DR) of 88, 496 page traffic, and a page traffic value of \$1.9K. The page content mentions Mailchimp and Aweber.

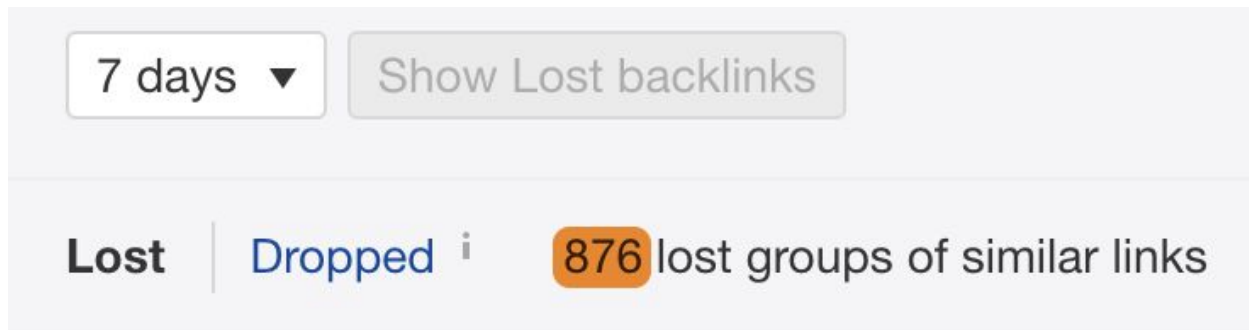


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Step 2 = Reclaim lost links

Backlinks don't last forever.

For example, if we check the Lost Links report in Ahrefs' [Site Explorer](#) for the Ahrefs Blog, we see hundreds of lost links in the last 7 days.



This happens for all kinds of reasons. Sometimes they're gone for good. Other times it's possible to reclaim them. Recommended reading: [Link Reclamation: How to Easily Find \(and Reclaim\) Lost Backlinks](#)



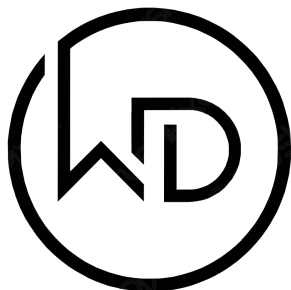
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Step 3 = Pursue unlinked mentions

People will sometimes mention your brand without linking to you. These are known as [unlinked mentions](#). Here's an example of one:

- **Get access to the right tools** like SEMrush, Keyword Planner, **Ahrefs** etc. These tools not only save your time but also give you accurate search metrics such as search volume, keyword difficulty score, backlink analysis etc.

Recommended reading: [A Simple Guide to Turning \(Unlinked\) Brand Mentions into Links](#)



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Step 4 = Publish guest posts

Guest blogging is where you write and publish an article on another site in your industry.

For example, here's [a guest post by Ryan Stewart](#) on the Ahrefs Blog: Most people let guest authors link to their website from their author bio.

There are many ways to find guest blogging opportunities, but a simple method is to search for sites that have already written about relevant topics. Why? Because those sites are likely to be interested in a guest post about a similar topic.

Here's how to find these sites:

Go to Ahrefs' [Content Explorer](#)

Enter a relevant topic (e.g., "keyword research")

Choose "In title" from the drop-down

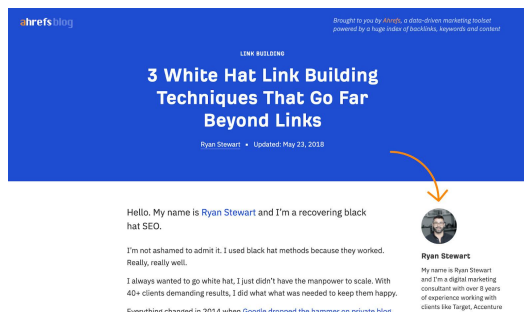
Hit "Search"

Go to the "Websites" tab

Look through the list and reach out to any relevant sites.



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Pages	Authors	Websites	Languages		
Top 100 websites					
Website	Total pages	Last 30 days	Authors	Total traffic	Traffic value
wordtracker.com	30	0	0	61,634	\$169K
spyfu.com	51	1	0	52,046	\$121K
moz.com	203	0	4	49,526	\$134K
ahrefs.com	15	0	4	36,893	\$114K
ads.google.com	18	0	0	32,148	\$92K
erank.com	1	0	0	27,523	\$15K
neilpatel.com	13	0	0	17,649	\$30K
backlinko.com	7	0	0	12,342	\$31K
keywordkeg.com	2	0	0	9,506	\$0
keyword.io	3	0	0	8,397	\$3K
answerthepublic.c	11	0	0	8,242	\$29

Step 5 = Pitch resource pages

Resource pages are pages that curate and link to resources about a topic.

You can find relevant resource pages using [Google search operators](#) like:

`[topic] intitle:resources inurl:resources.html`

`[topic] intitle:links inurl:resources.html`

`[topic] inurl:.com/resources`

`[topic] inurl:resources intitle:resources`

For example, here's a resource page listing digital marketing resources



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SEO resources

Some of the links below open in a new window - iADControl is not responsible for the content of external websites.

[SERP University](#)

[Beginner's guide to SEO](#) (Moz)

[How Google search works?](#)

[SEO mistakes to avoid for better ranking](#)

[What is organic and paid search?](#)

[Why organic traffic is important?](#)

[Google algorithms vs Google penalties](#)

[What are meta tags?](#)

[SEO starter guide](#)

[Quality copywriting for SEO](#)

[Google algorithm guide](#)

[Optimise your video for search](#)

[SEO strategies](#)

[14 steps to successful SEO](#)

[10 SEO phrases translated](#)

[WordPress SEO plugins](#) (iADControl)

[Top 10 tips for improving SEO](#) (iADControl)

[Web tools to optimise your website](#) (iADControl)

Accessibility and UX resources

[Introduction to Web Accessibility](#) (W3C)



SEO Mythbusting 101 by Google Webmasters



The SEO Checklist - Whiteboard Friday by Moz



It would make sense to pitch an SEO resource for that list.

Step 6 = Find people linking to inferior content

If you've put some effort into creating the best piece of content about a topic, there should be countless posts that aren't as good as yours.

People linking to these posts are perfect link prospects.

For example, here's a post about long-tail keywords with an inaccurate definition (it has nothing to do with length):

Long-Tail Keywords: A Better Way to Connect with Customers

Long-tail keywords are longer and more specific keyword phrases that visitors are more likely to use when they're closer to a point-of-purchase or when they're using voice search. They're a little bit counter-intuitive, at first, but they can be hugely valuable if you know how to use them.



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Step 6 = Find people linking to inferior content

If we plug the post's URL into [Site Explorer](#), we see it has links from over 1,000 websites.

Long-Tail Keywords: What They Are & How to Use Them | WordStream

www.wordstream.com/long-tail-keywords ▾



So we could easily reach out to those people, explain the issue, and suggest they link to our post about [long-tail keywords](#) with an accurate definition instead.



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Step 6 = Find people linking to inferior content

How do you find similar posts with lots of backlinks?

Follow these steps:

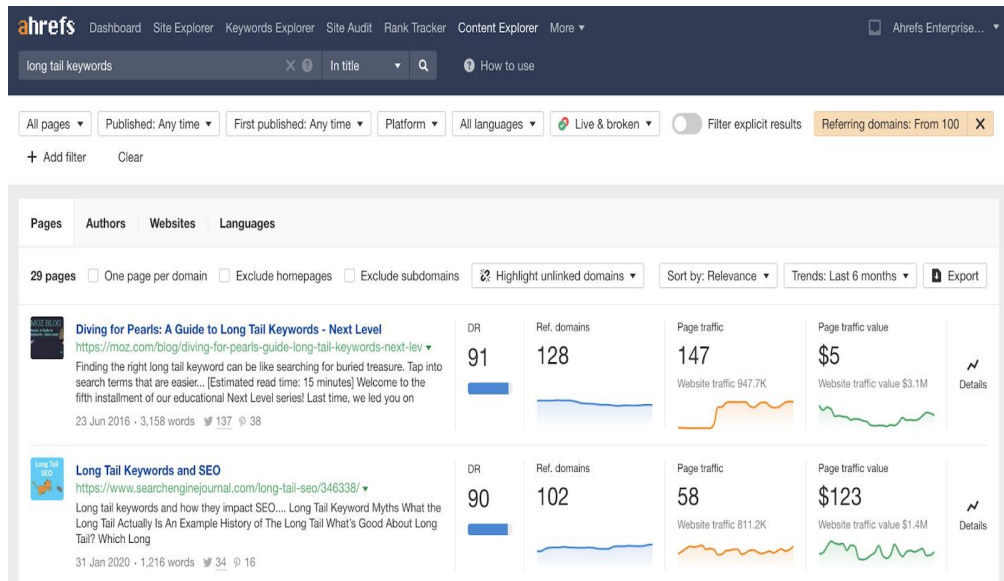
Go to [Content Explorer](#)

Search for your topic (e.g., long tail keywords)

Choose “In title” from the drop down

Filter for pages with lots of referring domains
(linking websites)

Then it’s just a case of finding a compelling reason why someone should link to your page over theirs.



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Step 7 = Tell more people about your content

People can't link to content if they don't know it exists. That's why you should make a conscious effort to tell the *right* people about your content.

But who are the “right” people?

They have two attributes:

They are interested in your content

They have the power to link to you

Learn how to find the right people to contact [here](#), and how to reach out to them using [this outreach advice](#).



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