

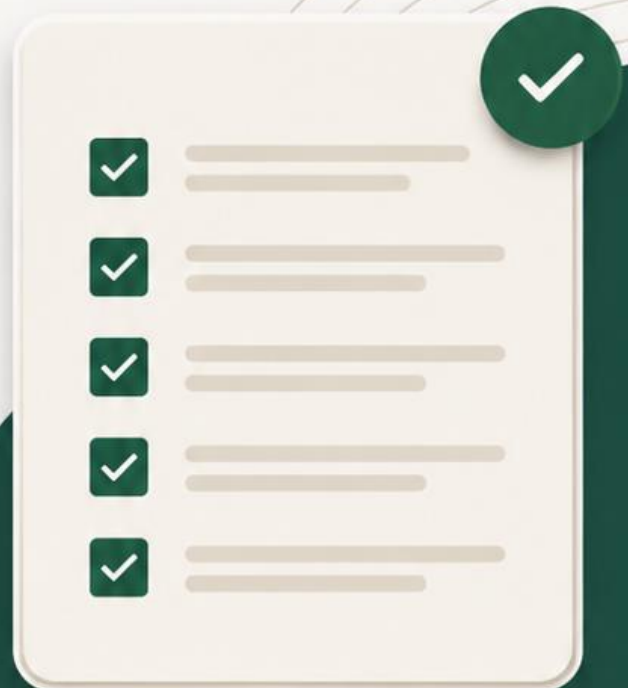
SEO Checklist

2026

The Practical SEO Checklist
Every Website Should Complete
Before Chasing Rankings

Rankings rarely fail because of one big mistake — it's usually a dozen small issues quietly limiting visibility.

Work through all nine stages of this checklist, from technical foundations to AI search readiness, and tick each action off as you complete it.



9 Stages
Complete Roadmap



130+ Actions
Practical Checklist



Save Time
Get Better Results

The 9-Stage Audit Roadmap

STAGE 01 Website Foundations 10 actions	STAGE 02 Technical SEO 18 actions	STAGE 03 Keyword Research & Search Intent 14 actions
STAGE 04 On-Page SEO 20 actions	STAGE 05 Content Quality & Helpful Content 15 actions	STAGE 06 Local SEO & Google Business Profile 18 actions
STAGE 07 Authority Building & Link Acquisition 15 actions	STAGE 08 AI Search & Answer Engine Optimization 15 actions	STAGE 09 SEO Monitoring & Ongoing Maintenance 15 actions

How to use this checklist: every action includes a short note on why it matters. Tick the box once complete, then use the score bands at the end of each stage to see where your website stands.

01

Website Foundations

Before worrying about rankings, keywords, or backlinks, make sure your website gives search engines everything they need to crawl, understand, and index your pages correctly.

- ☐ **Install Google Search Console**
See indexing issues, performance, and technical problems before they escalate.
- ☐ **Install Google Analytics 4 (GA4)**
Understand where visitors come from and what they do once they arrive.
- ☐ **Verify your website with Search Console**
Unlocks full reporting and confirms you as the verified owner.
- ☐ **Submit an XML sitemap**
Helps search engines discover and prioritize your important pages.
- ☐ **Review your robots.txt file**
Prevents accidentally blocking important pages from being crawled.
- ☐ **Make sure your website uses HTTPS**
Builds user trust and is the standard for modern websites.
- ☐ **Check that important pages are indexed**
A page can't rank if Google hasn't indexed it — use a site: search to confirm.
- ☐ **Test your website on mobile devices**
Most visitors browse on mobile; every page should work flawlessly there.
- ☐ **Create a logical website structure**
Clear hierarchy helps visitors and search engines understand your site.
- ☐ **Make sure every important page is reachable**
Pages with no clear path in are less likely to perform well.

Website Foundations Score

0–4 Needs work	5–8 Good foundation	9–10 Excellent
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02

Technical SEO

Technical SEO doesn't directly persuade customers to buy from you, but it helps search engines crawl, understand, and trust your website — the foundation for every other effort.

- ☐ **Improve Core Web Vitals**
Fast, stable, responsive pages reduce bounce rate and support rankings.
- ☐ **Improve page speed**
Compress files and cut unnecessary scripts — slow sites lose visitors.
- ☐ **Compress and optimize images**
Oversized images are the single biggest cause of slow-loading sites.
- ☐ **Write descriptive image alt text**
Improves accessibility and helps engines understand your images.

- ☐ **Use SEO-friendly URLs**
Clear, readable URLs beat cryptic parameter strings, every time.
- ☐ **Write a unique title tag for every page**
One of the strongest on-page signals — becomes your search headline.
- ☐ **Write unique meta descriptions**
Doesn't affect rankings directly, but strongly drives click-through rate.
- ☐ **Use only one H1 per page**
Clearly communicates the page's primary topic.
- ☐ **Structure content with H2 and H3 headings**
Makes pages easier to scan for readers and engines alike.
- ☐ **Fix broken links**
404 errors hurt user experience and waste crawl budget.
- ☐ **Remove redirect chains**
Multiple hops slow pages down and waste crawl efficiency.
- ☐ **Add canonical tags**
Tells search engines which version of a page to index.
- ☐ **Add internal links between related pages**
Helps visitors explore further while passing authority across your site.
- ☐ **Eliminate orphan pages**
Pages with no internal links are harder for engines to discover.
- ☐ **Implement schema markup**
Structured data helps engines understand your content and enhance results.
- ☐ **Check for duplicate content**
Duplication confuses engines and dilutes the authority of key pages.
- ☐ **Ensure every important page can be crawled**
Search engines can't rank pages they can't access.
- ☐ **Review Search Console errors monthly**
Catch indexing, crawling, and security issues before they hurt rankings.

Technical SEO Score

0-6 Needs work	7-13 Good, room to improve	14-18 Strong
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QUICK TOOLS

Google Search Console · PageSpeed Insights · Rich Results Test · Screaming Frog (Free) · GTmetrix · Ahrefs Webmaster Tools

03

Keyword Research & Search Intent

Ranking isn't about the keyword with the highest volume — it's about understanding what your audience is actually trying to achieve when they search.

- ☐ **Define your primary business goals**

Decide what success looks like before researching a single keyword.

- ☐ **Identify your ideal customer**
Target the phrases customers actually use, not your business's internal terms.
- ☐ **List your core products or services**
These become the foundation of your entire keyword strategy.
- ☐ **Research primary keywords**
Every important page should target one primary keyword matching user intent.
- ☐ **Find long-tail keywords**
Lower competition and higher intent because they're more specific.
- ☐ **Understand search intent before creating content**
Learn, compare, buy, or find locally — match the content to the intent.
- ☐ **Group similar keywords together**
Build one comprehensive page instead of several near-duplicates.
- ☐ **Review the current search results**
Study page one — the existing results show what Google believes users want.
- ☐ **Target questions people actually ask**
Improves your odds in featured snippets, AI answers, and voice search.
- ☐ **Include local keywords where relevant**
Add cities, regions, or service areas naturally within your strategy.
- ☐ **Avoid keyword stuffing**
Use your primary keyword naturally — write for people first.
- ☐ **Create one primary topic per page**
A clear, single purpose beats splitting relevance across topics.
- ☐ **Build a content plan around your keywords**
Organize keywords into blogs, service pages, and guides before writing.
- ☐ **Review keyword performance regularly**
Search behavior shifts — revisit rankings every few months.

Keyword Research & Search Intent Score

0–5 Needs direction	6–10 Right topics, room to improve	11–14 Well positioned
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QUICK TOOLS

[Google Search](#) · [Search Console](#) · [Keyword Planner](#) · [Google Trends](#) · [Ahrefs Keywords Explorer](#) · [Semrush Keyword Magic Tool](#) · [AlsoAsked](#) · [AnswerThePublic](#) · [Keywords Everywhere](#) · [Ubersuggest](#)

PRO TIP

Don't choose keywords simply because they have the highest search volume. A page that attracts 100 highly relevant visitors often delivers more business value than one that attracts 10,000 with no buying intent.

On-Page SEO

The goal isn't to add more keywords — it's to create pages that answer the user's question better than competing websites.

- ☐ **Give every page one clear purpose**
Pages targeting several topics rarely rank well for any of them.
- ☐ **Write a unique SEO title for every page**
Often the very first thing people see in search results.
- ☐ **Write a compelling meta description**
Doesn't affect rankings, but strongly influences whether people click.
- ☐ **Use one H1 heading**
Accurately describes the page's primary topic.
- ☐ **Organize content with H2 and H3 headings**
Improves readability and helps engines understand structure.
- ☐ **Include your primary keyword naturally**
In the title, headings, and body — never forced into every paragraph.
- ☐ **Include related keywords naturally**
Demonstrates comprehensive coverage of the topic, not just exact matches.
- ☐ **Match the user's search intent**
Give visitors exactly what they came looking for.
- ☐ **Write a strong introduction**
Explain what the page covers within the first few sentences.
- ☐ **Make your content easy to scan**
Short paragraphs, headings, bullets, and white space.
- ☐ **Answer common customer questions**
FAQs expand content while matching real search queries.
- ☐ **Add internal links**
Guide visitors toward more of your relevant content.
- ☐ **Link to trusted external sources**
Strengthens credibility when referencing stats or research.
- ☐ **Optimize every image**
Descriptive file names, compression, and meaningful alt text.
- ☐ **Include clear calls to action**
Guide visitors toward the next step, every single page.
- ☐ **Avoid thin content**
Pages with very little useful information rarely perform well.
- ☐ **Keep content up to date**
Outdated information erodes trust and rankings over time.
- ☐ **Improve readability**
Simple language and shorter sentences help readers and engines alike.
- ☐ **Demonstrate real experience**
Case studies and first-hand insight build credibility and trust.

- ☐ **Check every page before publishing**
Catch spelling, broken links, and formatting issues first.

On-Page SEO Score

0-7 Needs stronger optimization	8-15 Good, room to improve	16-20 Well optimized
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PRO TIP

Don't optimize your page for Google's algorithm. Optimize it for the person sitting behind the search — that's already aligned with what modern engines reward.

05

Content Quality & Helpful Content

Publishing more content doesn't automatically improve rankings. Search engines increasingly reward content that demonstrates expertise and provides genuine value.

- ☐ **Write for people before search engines**
Content that genuinely helps people is far more likely to perform well.
- ☐ **Answer the main question early**
Don't make visitors search for the answer — lead with it.
- ☐ **Demonstrate real expertise**
Share insight someone without experience couldn't easily provide.
- ☐ **Cover the topic thoroughly**
Go beyond the basics so readers don't need to return to Google.
- ☐ **Support claims with credible sources**
Back statistics and factual claims with trustworthy references.
- ☐ **Make your content original**
Add your own perspective instead of repeating every competitor.
- ☐ **Keep paragraphs short**
Long blocks of text discourage reading, especially on mobile.
- ☐ **Use visual elements where appropriate**
Images, diagrams, and comparison tables simplify complex topics.
- ☐ **Remove unnecessary filler**
Every sentence should provide real value to the reader.
- ☐ **Keep information current**
Review important pages periodically as facts and regulations change.
- ☐ **Include practical examples**
Makes advice concrete, applicable, and memorable.
- ☐ **Answer related questions**
Anticipate the follow-up questions readers are likely to have.
- ☐ **Maintain a consistent tone**
Builds familiarity and trust across your entire website.
- ☐ **End with a clear next step**

Guide the reader toward an appropriate action.

- ☐ **Refresh high-performing content**
Updating what already works often beats publishing something new.

Content Quality & Helpful Content Score

0–5 Needs more depth	6–10 Useful, room to improve	11–15 Well positioned
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PRO TIP

Before publishing, ask: “If this page didn't belong to my business, would I still find it truly useful?” If yes, you're creating content that earns trust and performs.

06

Local SEO & Google Business Profile

Many customers aren't searching for the best company in the country — they're searching for the best business nearby. Your Google Business Profile drives that visibility.

- ☐ **Claim and verify your Google Business Profile**
Unlocks control over your listing, information, and performance insights.
- ☐ **Keep your NAP consistent**
Same name, address, and phone number everywhere builds trust.
- ☐ **Select the most relevant business categories**
Helps Google understand when your profile should appear.
- ☐ **Write a complete business description**
Explain what you do and who you help — naturally, not keyword-stuffed.
- ☐ **Add high-quality photos**
Genuine photos of your premises, team, and work drive more engagement.
- ☐ **Keep business hours accurate**
Incorrect hours create frustration and reduce customer trust.
- ☐ **Add every service you offer**
Improves your chances of appearing for relevant local searches.
- ☐ **Collect genuine customer reviews**
One of the strongest trust signals for any local business.
- ☐ **Respond to every review**
Shows you value feedback, both positive and negative.
- ☐ **Publish Google Business Profile updates**
Keeps your profile active with news, offers, and events.
- ☐ **Add questions and answers**
Help potential customers find information directly on your profile.
- ☐ **Build local landing pages**
Dedicated pages for each city or service area you serve.
- ☐ **Build local citations**
List your business on reputable local and industry directories.

- ☐ **Optimize for “near me” searches**
Use natural location references throughout your website.
- ☐ **Embed Google Maps on your contact page**
Makes it easy for customers to find your exact location.
- ☐ **Add Local Business schema**
Helps engines understand your address, hours, and service area.
- ☐ **Earn local backlinks**
Links from local organizations strengthen your local authority.
- ☐ **Monitor Google Business Profile insights**
See how customers find and act on your listing.

Local SEO & Google Business Profile Score

0–6 Missing opportunities	7–13 Solid, can strengthen	14–18 Well positioned
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PRO TIP

For local businesses, your Google Business Profile is often a customer's first impression — sometimes before they even visit your website.

07

Authority Building & Link Acquisition

Search engines want to recommend businesses they trust — and one of the strongest ways they measure trust is through authority, earned over time.

- ☐ **Earn backlinks from relevant websites**
Links from trustworthy, related sites act as a signal of confidence.
- ☐ **Prioritize quality over quantity**
A few strong backlinks beat hundreds from unrelated or weak sites.
- ☐ **Create content worth referencing**
Original research and useful guides naturally attract links.
- ☐ **Publish original case studies**
Real results give journalists and publications something unique to cite.
- ☐ **Build relationships within your industry**
Partnerships lead to valuable mentions and referrals over time.
- ☐ **Contribute guest articles to reputable websites**
Builds visibility, backlinks, and reputation at once.
- ☐ **Reclaim unlinked brand mentions**
Turn existing mentions into links with a polite request.
- ☐ **Build strong author profiles**
Clear authorship builds expertise and reader confidence.
- ☐ **Showcase reviews, testimonials, and success stories**
Real proof reinforces credibility with new visitors.
- ☐ **Keep your business information consistent**

Reinforces trust and legitimacy across every platform.

- ☐ **Participate in industry communities**
Forums, podcasts, and events build visibility and partnerships.
- ☐ **Avoid buying backlinks**
Paid link schemes can violate guidelines and harm long-term performance.
- ☐ **Monitor your backlink profile**
Track valuable new links and catch harmful ones early.
- ☐ **Build internal authority across your website**
Internal links distribute authority to your most important pages.
- ☐ **Be consistently mentioned across the web**
Even unlinked mentions strengthen brand presence and recognition.

Authority Building & Link Acquisition Score

0-5	Needs stronger signals	6-10	Building, room to strengthen	11-15	Strong authority
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PRO TIP

Think beyond backlinks. The strongest links are usually a result of becoming a recognized authority, not the starting point.

08

AI Search & Answer Engine Optimization

People increasingly ask questions directly to AI assistants before visiting websites. The fundamentals haven't changed — accurate, well-structured, trustworthy content still wins.

- ☐ **Answer questions clearly and directly**
Lead with the answer early before expanding into detail.
- ☐ **Structure content with clear headings**
Helps AI systems identify your most relevant sections quickly.
- ☐ **Cover topics comprehensively**
One thorough resource beats several thin, overlapping pages.
- ☐ **Demonstrate real experience**
First-hand insight is harder to fake and far more trustworthy.
- ☐ **Support claims with credible sources**
Strengthens trust for both readers and AI systems alike.
- ☐ **Keep content accurate and up to date**
AI systems aim to surface reliable, current information.
- ☐ **Use natural language**
Write the way people actually ask and answer questions.
- ☐ **Include frequently asked questions**
Matches conversational, AI-style search queries.
- ☐ **Implement structured data**
Gives search engines extra context about your content.

- ☐ **Build topical authority**
Multiple strong pages on a subject build confidence in your site.
- ☐ **Strengthen your brand reputation**
Reviews and recognition build trust with users and engines alike.
- ☐ **Write for people first**
Still the most effective way to earn visibility in AI search.
- ☐ **Monitor how search is evolving**
Stay informed so your strategy adapts as behavior changes.
- ☐ **Optimize for featured snippets**
Shares many of the same principles as strong AI-search visibility.
- ☐ **Review your content regularly**
Keep pace with shifting behavior and user expectations.

AI Search & Answer Engine Optimization Score

0–5 May struggle in AI search	6–10 Right direction	11–15 Well positioned
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PRO TIP

AI search is changing how people discover information — not what makes content valuable. The fundamentals of good SEO remain the foundation for success.

09

SEO Monitoring & Ongoing Maintenance

SEO is an ongoing process. Search engines, competitors, and customer behaviour change over time — regular review is what sustains results.

- ☐ **Review Google Search Console every month**
Track impressions, clicks, and indexing issues over time.
- ☐ **Monitor organic traffic**
A steady rise often signals your SEO efforts are working.
- ☐ **Track your important keywords**
Ranking shifts flag pages that are winning or need attention.
- ☐ **Review your highest performing pages**
Keep top performers accurate, relevant, and current.
- ☐ **Update older content**
Refreshing existing pages often beats always publishing new ones.
- ☐ **Check for broken links**
Review both internal and external links on a regular basis.
- ☐ **Monitor website speed**
Performance can shift after updates, plugins, or new content.
- ☐ **Review mobile performance**
Confirm pages stay usable and fast across screen sizes.
- ☐ **Audit technical SEO regularly**

Catch indexing, redirect, and crawl issues as they develop.

- ☐ **Monitor your backlink profile**
Track new, lost, and potentially harmful links.
- ☐ **Review Google Business Profile performance**
See how customers find and engage with your business locally.
- ☐ **Compare your website with competitors**
Spot content gaps and new keyword opportunities.
- ☐ **Measure leads, not just traffic**
Track enquiries and sales — the outcomes that actually matter.
- ☐ **Stay informed about search updates**
Adapt to real change without reacting to every rumor.
- ☐ **Schedule a full SEO audit each quarter**
A regular deep review keeps you aligned with best practice.

SEO Monitoring & Ongoing Maintenance Score

0–5 Needs more monitoring	6–10 Good routine	11–15 Actively maintained
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You've Built the Checklist. Now Build the Results.

Some businesses use this checklist to manage SEO in-house. Others use it to evaluate agency performance. Either way, if you'd like expert support implementing these recommendations, we're here to help — starting with a free, honest look at where your website stands today.

How Lucien Solutions Can Help

- Search Engine Optimization (SEO)
- Answer Engine Optimization (AEO)
- Local SEO & Google Business Profile Optimization
- Google Ads & Paid Media
- Website Design & Development
- Content Marketing
- Social Media Marketing
- Custom Software Development

FREE WEBSITE SEO AUDIT

Not sure where your website stands? We'll review your website and identify opportunities to improve its search visibility, technical performance, content quality, and local presence. Request your free SEO audit today.

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