ARKCES

PRINTABLE CHECKLIST

Technical SEO Checklist

68 checks across 9 areas, with the free tool to use for each. Tick them off as you go.

Free resource from Arkces, a South African digital agency.
Edition: November 2026. Latest version: arkces.co.za/resources/technical-seo-checklist/

How to use this checklist

Work through one area at a time. Each check names the tool that answers it. Free tools cover nearly everything: Google Search Console, Bing Webmaster Tools, PageSpeed Insights, the Rich Results Test and the free version of Screaming Frog (up to 500 URLs).

Fix in this order: anything stopping pages being indexed, then speed on mobile, then structure and content, then the rest. For scoring and priorities, use the Technical SEO Audit Workbook, which contains the same checks.

Crawling and indexing

- [ ] robots.txt loads at /robots.txt and does not block pages that should rank
  Browser, Search Console robots.txt report
- [ ] XML sitemap exists, is submitted, and lists only indexable 200-status URLs
  Search Console > Sitemaps, Screaming Frog
- [ ] No important pages marked noindex by mistake
  Screaming Frog (Indexability column)
- [ ] Search Console Pages report reviewed: reasons for "not indexed" understood
  Search Console > Pages
- [ ] Canonical tags point to the preferred URL on every page
  Screaming Frog (Canonicals)
- [ ] One version of the site resolves (https, www or non-www); others 301 to it
  Browser, httpstatus.io
- [ ] No redirect chains longer than one hop on internal links
  Screaming Frog (Redirect chains)
- [ ] No internal links to 404 pages
  Screaming Frog (Response codes)
- [ ] Custom 404 page returns a real 404 status
  Browser dev tools, httpstatus.io
- [ ] Thin archive pages (tags, attachments, internal search) are noindexed
  Screaming Frog, Search Console
- [ ] Paginated lists link to every page and are crawlable
  Manual check
- [ ] JavaScript-rendered content visible in the rendered HTML
  Search Console URL Inspection > View crawled page

Site structure and internal links

- [ ] Every important page is within three clicks of the homepage
  Screaming Frog (Crawl depth)
- [ ] No orphan pages (pages with no internal links pointing to them)
  Screaming Frog + sitemap comparison
- [ ] Service and money pages receive links from relevant blog posts
  Screaming Frog (Inlinks)
- [ ] Anchor text describes the target page (not "click here")
  Screaming Frog (Anchor text)
- [ ] Breadcrumbs on deep pages, with BreadcrumbList markup
  Rich Results Test
- [ ] Clean, readable URLs without parameters for core pages
  Manual check
- [ ] Main navigation links to all core service pages
  Manual check

Speed and Core Web Vitals

- [ ] Largest Contentful Paint 2.5s or less on mobile (field data)
  PageSpeed Insights, Search Console Core Web Vitals
- [ ] Interaction to Next Paint 200ms or less on mobile
  PageSpeed Insights
- [ ] Cumulative Layout Shift 0.1 or less
  PageSpeed Insights
- [ ] Images served as WebP or AVIF and sized for the screen
  PageSpeed Insights, Screaming Frog
- [ ] Images below the fold lazy-loaded; hero image not lazy-loaded
  Browser dev tools
- [ ] Fonts self-hosted, limited weights, font-display: swap
  Browser dev tools (Network)
- [ ] Unused plugins and third-party scripts removed or delayed
  Browser dev tools (Coverage), plugin list
- [ ] Page caching and a CDN in place
  Host panel, response headers
- [ ] Server response time (TTFB) under 0.8s
  PageSpeed Insights

Mobile and accessibility

- [ ] No horizontal scrolling on a 360px-wide phone
  Browser dev tools device mode
- [ ] Tap targets at least 24 by 24 px with space between
  Lighthouse (Accessibility)
- [ ] Text contrast meets WCAG AA (4.5:1 for body text)
  Lighthouse, WebAIM contrast checker
- [ ] Every meaningful image has descriptive alt text
  Screaming Frog (Images missing alt)
- [ ] Headings in order: one H1, then H2, H3 without skipping levels
  Lighthouse, HeadingsMap extension
- [ ] Site usable with a keyboard; focus visible
  Manual check
- [ ] Content identical on mobile and desktop (mobile-first indexing)
  Manual comparison

On-page

- [ ] Unique title tag on every page, roughly 50 to 60 characters
  Screaming Frog (Page titles)
- [ ] Unique meta description on key pages, roughly 140 to 160 characters
  Screaming Frog (Meta description)
- [ ] One clear H1 per page that matches search intent
  Screaming Frog (H1)
- [ ] Each page targets one main topic; no two pages competing for the same query
  Search Console (Queries by page)
- [ ] Answer to the main question appears in the first two sentences
  Manual review
- [ ] Service pages state price signals, process, timeline and next step
  Manual review
- [ ] Content shows first-hand experience: examples, data, named author
  Manual review
- [ ] Dates visible and accurate on articles; old posts updated or merged
  Manual review
- [ ] Duplicate or near-duplicate pages merged or canonicalised
  Screaming Frog (Near duplicates)

Structured data

- [ ] Organization markup with name, logo, URL, contact and sameAs profiles
  Rich Results Test, Schema Markup Validator
- [ ] Article or BlogPosting markup on posts, with author and dates
  Rich Results Test
- [ ] LocalBusiness markup if you serve customers at a location
  Rich Results Test
- [ ] Product or Service markup where relevant
  Schema Markup Validator
- [ ] Markup matches what users can see on the page
  Manual comparison
- [ ] No structured data errors in Search Console enhancements reports
  Search Console > Enhancements

Security and trust

- [ ] HTTPS everywhere with a valid certificate; no mixed content
  Browser, Why No Padlock
- [ ] CMS, theme and plugins up to date
  WordPress dashboard
- [ ] Security headers set (HSTS, X-Content-Type-Options, frame protection)
  securityheaders.com
- [ ] Login protected against brute force; admins use strong passwords and 2FA
  Security plugin or host
- [ ] Privacy policy and POPIA consent on every form that collects personal data
  Manual check
- [ ] Contact details, company information and About page easy to find
  Manual check

AI search access

- [ ] Search crawlers allowed: Googlebot, Bingbot, OAI-SearchBot, Claude-SearchBot, PerplexityBot
  robots.txt, server logs
- [ ] Training crawler policy chosen on purpose (GPTBot, ClaudeBot, Google-Extended, Applebot-Extended)
  robots.txt
- [ ] CDN or firewall not blocking AI crawlers by default (check Cloudflare AI settings)
  CDN dashboard, server logs
- [ ] Key facts (services, location, prices, founder) stated in plain text, not only in images
  Manual review
- [ ] Brand described the same way on the site, Google Business Profile, LinkedIn and directories
  Manual comparison
- [ ] AI visibility baseline recorded for a fixed set of buyer questions
  AI Visibility Tracker workbook

Analytics and tracking

- [ ] Google Search Console verified for the preferred domain property
  Search Console
- [ ] Bing Webmaster Tools verified (feeds Copilot; AI Performance report)
  Bing Webmaster Tools
- [ ] GA4 installed once, with consent mode where required
  Tag Assistant
- [ ] Leads tracked as GA4 key events (forms, calls, bookings)
  GA4 > Admin > Events
- [ ] AI assistant traffic separated with a custom channel group
  GA4 > Admin > Channel groups
- [ ] Monthly report shows leads and revenue, not only rankings
  Monthly SEO Report workbook

Keep going

This guide is free to use and share inside your business. Updates are published at arkces.co.za/resources/technical-seo-checklist/.

- SEO services
- Website design and management
- All free resources

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