



2026 RESOURCE GUIDE

THE 2026 SEO CHECKLIST

A practical guide to stronger search visibility

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1. SEARCH INTENT & USEFUL CONTENT

- ☐ Define one clear search intent for every important page.
- ☐ Answer the main question early, then add useful supporting detail.
- ☐ Write for people first; use AI as an assistant, not a substitute for expertise.
- ☐ Show first-hand experience, original insight, and accurate information.
- ☐ Review outdated pages and improve, consolidate, redirect, or remove them.
- ☐ Avoid mass-produced, copied, or thin pages created only to attract clicks.

2. ON-PAGE CLARITY & NAVIGATION

- ☐ Use a unique, descriptive page title and a clear main heading.
- ☐ Write an accurate meta description that earns the click.
- ☐ Use descriptive URLs, headings, and internal-link anchor text.
- ☐ Link important related pages together so visitors and search engines can find them.
- ☐ Add useful image alt text and compress images before upload.
- ☐ Check that navigation and essential content work on mobile.

3. REPUTATION & AUTHORITY

- ☐ Make authorship, business credentials, and contact information easy to verify.
- ☐ Earn relevant links and mentions through genuinely useful work and relationships.
- ☐ Keep important business information consistent across trusted platforms.
- ☐ Avoid buying links, link exchanges at scale, or manipulative guest-post networks.
- ☐ Build topical depth with connected, high-quality resources—not keyword-stuffed filler.

4. TECHNICAL FOUNDATIONS

- ☐ Keep key pages crawlable, indexable, and linked from the site.
- ☐ Submit an XML sitemap and monitor indexing in Google Search Console.
- ☐ Use HTTPS, sensible redirects, accurate canonical tags, and helpful 404 pages.
- ☐ Add only valid structured data that matches visible page content.
- ☐ Test Core Web Vitals at the 75th percentile: LCP ≤ 2.5 seconds, INP ≤ 200 milliseconds, CLS ≤ 0.1.
- ☐ Remember: a PageSpeed score of 85+ can be a useful internal goal, but it is not a Google ranking threshold.

THE 2026 SEO CHECKLIST • CONTINUED

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5. LOCAL SEARCH — WHEN APPLICABLE

- ☐ Fully complete and verify the Google Business Profile.
- ☐ Keep the business name, address or service area, phone, hours, and categories accurate.
- ☐ Add current photos, services, products, and attributes.
- ☐ Ask real customers for reviews and respond professionally.
- ☐ Build local relevance through community involvement, local resources, and consistent citations.
- ☐ Track calls, website visits, direction requests, and qualified leads—not rankings alone.

6. AI-ASSISTED SEARCH VISIBILITY

- ☐ Make important facts explicit, concise, and easy to understand.
- ☐ Use descriptive headings and logical sections so pages can be interpreted quickly.
- ☐ Support claims with evidence, examples, dates, authorship, and trustworthy sources.
- ☐ Keep organization, person, product, service, and local-business details consistent.
- ☐ Use high-quality images and videos where they genuinely help the visitor.
- ☐ There is no special AI-search markup or separate AI file required; standard SEO fundamentals still apply.

7. MEASURE & IMPROVE MONTHLY

- ☐ Connect Google Search Console and Google Analytics 4.
- ☐ Configure key events for forms, calls, bookings, purchases, or other real outcomes.
- ☐ Review queries, landing pages, click-through rate, conversions, and indexing issues.
- ☐ Compare branded vs. non-branded search performance.
- ☐ Annotate major site changes and measure impact before making more changes.
- ☐ Prioritize improvements by business value, not vanity metrics.

A 30-MINUTE MONTHLY CHECK

- ☐ 5 min: Check indexing and manual or security alerts.
- ☐ 10 min: Review top queries and landing pages.
- ☐ 5 min: Check key-event and lead performance.
- ☐ 5 min: Test one important page on mobile.
- ☐ 5 min: Choose the single highest-impact improvement for the month.

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Updated for 2026. Based on current Google Search documentation, established SEO best practices, and optimization principles for AI-powered and LLM search experiences.