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### How to Perform the World's Greatest SEO Audit

June 6th, 2012 - Posted by [Steve Webb](#) to [Technical SEO Issues](#)

This post was originally in [YouMoz](#), and was promoted to the main blog because it provides great value and interest to our community. The author's views are entirely his or her own and may not reflect the views of Moz.

Now that tax season is over, it's once again safe to say my favorite A-word... audit! That's right. My name is Steve, and I'm an **SEO audit junkie**.

Like any good junkie, I've read every audit-related article; I've written thousands of lines of audit-related code, and I've performed audits for friends, clients, and pretty much everyone else I know with a website.

All of this research and experience has helped me create an insanely thorough SEO audit process. And today, I'm going to share that process with you.

This is designed to be a **comprehensive guide for performing a technical SEO audit**. Whether you're auditing your own site, investigating an issue for a client, or just looking for good bathroom reading material, I can assure you that this guide has a little something for everyone. So without further ado, let's begin.

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## SEO Audit Preparation

When performing an audit, most people want to dive right into the analysis. Although I agree it's a lot more fun to immediately start analyzing, you should resist the urge.

A thorough audit requires at least a little planning to ensure nothing slips through the cracks.

## Crawl Before You Walk

Before we can diagnose problems with the site, we have to know exactly what we're dealing with. Therefore, the first (and most important) preparation step is to **crawl the entire website**.

## Crawling Tools

I've written custom crawling and analysis code for my audits, but if you want to avoid coding, I recommend using [Screaming Frog's SEO Spider](#) to perform the site crawl (it's free for the first 500 URIs and £99/year after that).

Alternatively, if you want a truly free tool, you can use [Xenu's Link Sleuth](#); however, be forewarned that this tool was designed to crawl a site to find broken links. It displays a site's page titles and meta descriptions, but it was not created to perform the level of analysis we're going to discuss.

For more information about these crawling tools, read Dr. Pete's [Crawler Face-off: Xenu vs. Screaming Frog](#).

## Crawling Configuration

Once you've chosen (or developed) a crawling tool, you need to configure it to behave like your favorite search engine crawler (e.g., Googlebot, Bingbot, etc.). First, you should set the crawler's user agent to an appropriate string.

### Popular Search Engine User Agents:

- Googlebot - "Mozilla/5.0 (compatible; Googlebot/2.1; +http://www.google.com/bot.html)"
- Bingbot - "Mozilla/5.0 (compatible; bingbot/2.0; +http://www.bing.com/bingbot.htm)"

Next, you should decide how you want the crawler to handle various Web technologies.

There is an ongoing debate about the [intelligence of search engine crawlers](#). It's not entirely clear if they are full-blown headless browsers or simply glorified curl scripts (or something in between).

By default, I suggest disabling cookies, JavaScript, and CSS when crawling a site. If you can diagnose and correct the problems encountered by dumb crawlers, that work can also be applied to most (if not all) of the problems experienced by smarter crawlers.

Then, for situations where a dumb crawler just won't cut it (e.g., pages that are heavily reliant on

AJAX), you can switch to a smarter crawler.

## Ask the Oracles

The site crawl gives us a wealth of information, but to take this audit to the next level, we need to **consult the search engines**. Unfortunately, search engines don't like to give unrestricted access to their servers so we'll just have to settle for the next best thing: webmaster tools.

Most of the major search engines offer a set of diagnostic tools for webmasters, but for our purposes, we'll focus on Google Webmaster Tools and Bing Webmaster Tools. If you still haven't registered your site with these services, now's as good a time as any.

### Helpful Videos:

- [How to Register Your Site with Google Webmaster Tools](#)
- [How to Register Your Site with Bing Webmaster Tools](#)

Now that we've consulted the search engines, we also need to **get input from the site's visitors**. The easiest way to get that input is through the site's analytics.

The Web is being monitored by an ever-expanding list of analytics packages, but for our purposes, it doesn't matter which package your site is using. As long as you can investigate your site's traffic patterns, you're good to go for our upcoming analysis.

At this point, we're not finished collecting data, but we have enough to begin the analysis so let's get this party started!

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## SEO Audit Analysis

The actual analysis is broken down into five large sections:

1. Accessibility
2. Indexability
3. On-Page Ranking Factors
4. Off-Page Ranking Factors
5. Competitive Analysis

### (1) Accessibility

If search engines and users can't access your site, it might as well not exist. With that in mind, let's make sure your site's pages are accessible.

#### Robots.txt

The [robots.txt file](#) is used to restrict search engine crawlers from accessing sections of your website. Although the file is very useful, it's also an easy way to inadvertently block crawlers.

As an extreme example, the following robots.txt entry restricts all crawlers from accessing any part of your site:

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

Manually check the robots.txt file, and **make sure it's not restricting access to important sections of your site**. You can also use your Google Webmaster Tools account to identify URLs that are being blocked by the file.

## Robots Meta Tags

The [robots meta tag](#) is used to tell search engine crawlers if they are allowed to index a specific page and follow its links.

When analyzing your site's accessibility, you want to **identify pages that are inadvertently blocking crawlers**. Here is an example of a robots meta tag that prevents crawlers from indexing a page and following its links:

```
<head>  
  <meta name="robots" content="noindex, nofollow" />  
</head>
```

## HTTP Status Codes

Search engines and users are unable to access your site's content if you have URLs that return errors (i.e., 4xx and 5xx HTTP status codes).

During your site crawl, you should **identify and fix any URLs that return errors** (this also includes [soft 404 errors](#)). If a broken URL's corresponding page is no longer available on your site, redirect the URL to a relevant replacement.

Speaking of [redirection](#), this is also a great opportunity to **inventory your site's redirection techniques**. Be sure the site is using 301 HTTP redirects (and not 302 HTTP redirects, meta refresh redirects, or JavaScript-based redirects) because they pass the most link juice to their destination pages.

## XML Sitemap

Your site's XML Sitemap provides a roadmap for search engine crawlers to ensure they can easily find all of your site's pages.

Here are a few important questions to answer about your Sitemap:

- **Is the Sitemap a well-formed XML document? Does it follow the [Sitemap protocol](#)?** Search engines expect a specific format for Sitemaps; if yours doesn't conform to this format, it might not be processed correctly.
- **Has the Sitemap been submitted to your webmaster tools accounts?** It's possible for search engines to find the Sitemap without your assistance, but you should explicitly notify them about its location.
- **Did you find pages in the site crawl that do not appear in the Sitemap?** You want to make sure the Sitemap presents an up-to-date view of the website.
- **Are there pages listed in the Sitemap that do not appear in the site crawl?** If these pages still exist on the site, they are currently orphaned. Find an appropriate location for them in the site architecture, and make sure they receive at least one internal backlink.

## Helpful Videos:

- [How to Submit a Sitemap to Google](#)
- [How to Submit a Sitemap to Bing](#)

## Site Architecture

Your [site architecture](#) defines the overall structure of your website, including its vertical depth (how many levels it has) as well as its horizontal breadth at each level.

When evaluating your site architecture, identify how many clicks it takes to get from the homepage to other important pages. Also, evaluate how well pages are linking to others in the site's hierarchy, and make sure the most important pages are prioritized in the architecture.

Ideally, you want to strive for a flatter site architecture that takes advantage of both vertical and horizontal linking opportunities.

## Flash and JavaScript Navigation

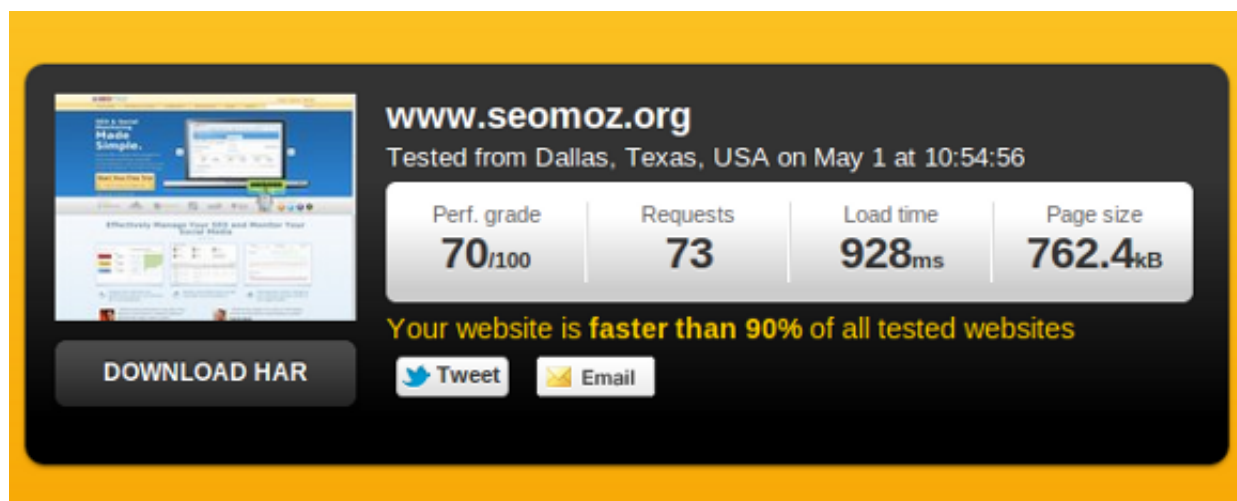
The best site architecture in the world can be undermined by navigational elements that are inaccessible to search engines. Although search engine crawlers have become much more intelligent over the years, it is still safer to avoid Flash and JavaScript navigation.

To evaluate your site's usage of JavaScript navigation, you can perform two separate site crawls: one with JavaScript disabled and another with it enabled. Then, you can compare the corresponding link graphs to identify sections of the site that are inaccessible without JavaScript.

## Site Performance

Users have a very limited attention span, and if your site takes too long to load, they will leave. Similarly, search engine crawlers have a limited amount of time that they can allocate to each site on the Internet. Consequently, sites that load quickly are crawled more thoroughly and more consistently than slower ones.

You can evaluate your site's performance with a number of different tools. [Google Page Speed](#) and [YSlow](#) check a given page using various best practices and then provide helpful suggestions (e.g., enable compression, leverage a content distribution network for heavily used resources, etc.). [Pingdom Full Page Test](#) presents an itemized list of the objects loaded by a page, their sizes, and their load times. Here's an excerpt from Pingdom's results for SEOMoz:



These tools help you identify pages (and specific objects on those pages) that are serving as bottlenecks

for your site. Then, you can itemize suggestions for optimizing those bottlenecks and improving your site's performance.

## (2) Indexability

We've identified the pages that search engines are allowed to access. Next, we need to determine how many of those pages are actually being indexed by the search engines.

### Site: Command

Most search engines offer a "site:" command that allows you to search for content on a specific website. You can use this command to get a very rough estimate for the number of pages that are being indexed by a given search engine.

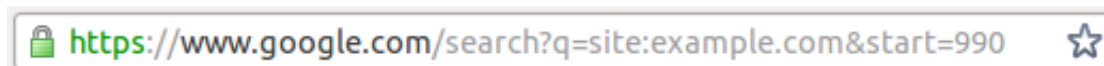
For example, if we search for "site:seomoz.org" on Google, we see that the search engine has indexed approximately 60,900 pages for SEOmoz:



Although this reported number of indexed pages is rarely accurate, a rough estimate can still be extremely valuable. You already know your site's total page count (based on the site crawl and the XML Sitemap) so the estimated index count can help identify one of three scenarios:

1. **The index and actual counts are roughly equivalent** - this is the ideal scenario; the search engines are successfully crawling and indexing your site's pages.
2. **The index count is significantly smaller than the actual count** - this scenario indicates that the search engines are not indexing many of your site's pages. Hopefully, you already identified the source of this problem while investigating the site's accessibility. If not, you might need to check if the site's being penalized by the search engines (more on this in a moment).
3. **The index count is significantly larger than the actual count** - this scenario usually suggests that your site is serving duplicate content (e.g., pages accessible through multiple entry points, "appreciably similar" content on distinct pages, etc.).

If you suspect a duplicate content issue, Google's "site:" command can also help confirm those suspicions. Simply append "&start=990" to the end of the URL in your browser:



Then, look for Google's duplicate content warning at the bottom of the page. The warning message will look similar to this:

*In order to show you the most relevant results, we have omitted some entries very similar to the 670 already displayed.  
If you like, you can [repeat the search with the omitted results included](#).*

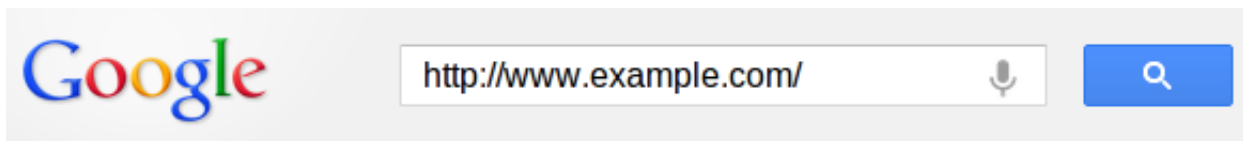
If you have a duplicate content issue, don't worry. We'll address duplicate content in an upcoming section of the audit.

## Index Sanity Checks

The "site:" command allows us to look at indexability from a very high level. Now, we need to be a little more granular. Specifically, we need to make sure the search engines are indexing the site's most important pages.

### *Page Searches*

Hopefully, you already found your site's high priority pages in the index while performing "site:" queries. If not, you can search for a specific page's URL to check if it has been indexed:



If you don't find the page, double check its accessibility. If the page is accessible, you should check if the page has been penalized.

Rand describes an alternative approach to finding indexed pages in this article: [Indexation for SEO: Real Numbers in 5 Easy Steps](#).

### *Brand Searches*

After you check whether your important pages have been indexed, you should check if your website is ranking well for your company's name (or your brand's name).

Just search for your company or brand name. If your website appears at the top of the results, all is well with the universe. On the other hand, if you don't see your website listed, the site might be penalized, and it's time to investigate further.

## Search Engine Penalties

Hopefully, you've made it this far in the audit without detecting even the slightest hint of a search engine penalty. But if you think your site has been penalized, here are 4 steps to help you fix the situation:

### *Step 1: Make Sure You've Actually Been Penalized*

I can't tell you how many times I've researched someone's "search engine penalty" only to find an accidentally noindexed page or a small shuffle in the search engine rankings. So before you start raising the penalty alarm, be sure you've actually been penalized.

In many cases, a true penalty will be glaringly obvious. Your pages will be completely deindexed (even though they're openly accessible), or you will receive a penalty message in your webmaster tools account.

It's important to note that your site can also lose significant traffic due to a search engine algorithm update. Although this isn't a penalty per se, it should be handled with the same diligence as a true penalty.

## ***Step 2: Identify the Reason(s) for the Penalty***

Once you're sure the site has been penalized, you need to investigate the root cause for the penalty. If you receive a formal notification from a search engine, this step is already complete.

Unfortunately, if your site is the victim of an algorithmic update, you have more detective work to do. Begin searching SEO-related news sites and forums until you find answers. When search engines change their algorithms, many sites are affected so it shouldn't take long to figure out what happened.

For even more help, read Sujan Patel's article about [identifying search engine penalties](#).

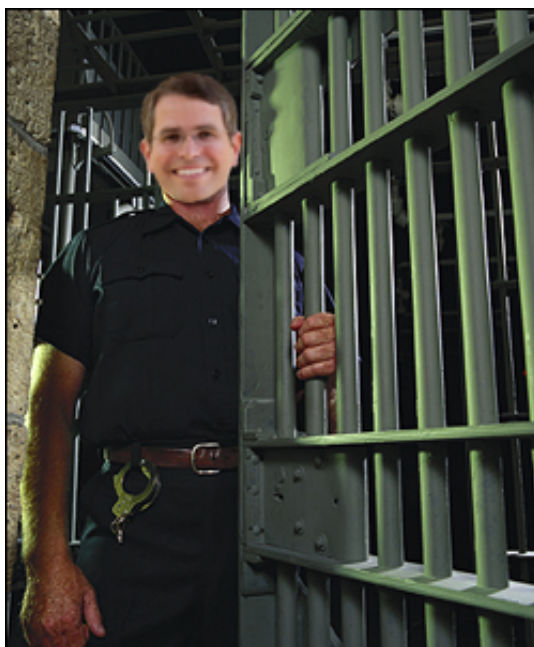
## ***Step 3: Fix the Site's Penalized Behavior***

After you've identified why your site was penalized, you have to methodically fix the offending behavior. This is easier said than done, but fortunately, the SEOmoz community is always happy to help.

## ***Step 4: Request Reconsideration***

Once you've fixed all of the problems, you need to request reconsideration from the search engines that penalized you. However, be forewarned that if your site wasn't explicitly penalized (i.e., it was the victim of an algorithm update), a reconsideration request will be ineffective, and you'll have to wait for the algorithm to refresh. For more information, read Google's guide for [Reconsideration Requests](#) and Bing's guide for [Getting Out of the Penalty Box](#).

With any luck, Matt Cutts will release you from search engine prison:



## **(3) On-Page Ranking Factors**

Up to this point, we've analyzed the accessibility and indexability of your site. Now it's time to turn our attention to the characteristics of your site's pages that influence the site's search engine rankings.

For each of the on-page ranking factors, we'll investigate page level characteristics for the site's individual pages as well as domain level characteristics for the entire website.



In general, the page level analysis is useful for identifying specific examples of optimization opportunities, and the domain level analysis helps define the level of effort necessary to make site-wide corrections.

## URLs

Since a URL is the entry point to a page's content, it's a logical place to begin our on-page analysis.

When analyzing the URL for a given page, here are a few important questions to ask:

- **Is the URL short and user-friendly?** A common rule of thumb is to keep URLs less than 115 characters.
- **Does the URL include relevant keywords?** It's important to use a URL that effectively describes its corresponding content.
- **Is the URL using subfolders instead of subdomains?** Subdomains are mostly treated as unique domains when it comes to passing link juice. Subfolders don't have this problem, and as a result, they are typically preferred over subdomains.
- **Does the URL avoid using excessive parameters?** If possible, use static URLs. If you simply can't avoid using parameters, at least register them with your Google Webmaster Tools account.
- **Is the URL using hyphens to separate words?** Underscores have a very checkered past with certain search engines. To be on the safe side, just use hyphens.

### Additional URL Optimization Resources:

- [11 Best Practices for URLs](#)
- [SEO URL Optimization](#)

When analyzing the URLs for an entire domain, here are a few additional questions:

- Do most of the URLs follow the best practices established in the page level analysis, or are many of the URLs poorly optimized?
- If a number of URLs are suboptimal, do they at least break the rules in a consistent manner, or are they all over the map?
- Based on the site's keywords, is the domain appropriate? Does it contain keywords? Does it appear spammy?

## *URL-based Duplicate Content*

In addition to analyzing the site's URL optimization, it's also important to investigate the existence of URL-based duplicate content on the site.

URLs are often responsible for the majority of duplicate content on a website because every URL represents a unique entry point into the site. If two distinct URLs point to the same page (without the use of redirection), search engines believe two distinct pages exist.

For an exhaustive list of ways URLs can create duplicate content, read Section V. of Dr. Pete's fantastic guide: [Duplicate Content in a Post-Panda World](#) (go ahead and read the entire guide - it's amazing).

Ideally, your site crawl will discover most (if not all) sources of URL-based duplicate content on your website. But to be on the safe side, you should explicitly check your site for the most popular URL-based culprits (programmatically or manually).

In the content analysis section, we'll discuss additional techniques for identifying duplicate content (including URL-based duplicate content).

## Content

We all know content is king so now, let's give your site the royal treatment.

To investigate a page's content, you have various tools at your disposal. The simplest approach is to view Google's cached copy of the page (the text-only version). Alternatively, you can use [SEO Browser](#) or [Browseo](#). These tools display a text-based version of the page, and they also include helpful information about the page (e.g., page title, meta description, etc.).

Regardless of the tools you use, the following questions can help guide your investigation:

- **Does the page contain substantive content?** There's no hard and fast rule for how much content a page should contain, but using at least 300 words is a good rule of thumb.
- **Is the content valuable to its audience?** This is obviously somewhat subjective, but you can approximate the answer with metrics such as bounce rate and time spent on the page.
- **Does the content contain targeted keywords? Do they appear in the first few paragraphs?** If you want to rank for a keyword, it really helps to use it in your content.
- **Is the content spammy (e.g., keyword stuffing)?** You want to include keywords in your content, but you don't want to go overboard.
- **Does the content minimize spelling and grammatical errors?** Your content loses professional credibility if it contains glaring mistakes. Spell check is your friend; I promise.
- **Is the content easily readable?** Various metrics exist for quantifying the readability of content (e.g., Flesch Reading Ease, Fog Index, etc.).
- **Are search engines able to process the content?** Don't trap your content inside Flash, overly complex JavaScript, or images.

### Additional Content Optimization Resources:

- [SEO Copywriting Tips](#)
- [The Ultimate Blogger Writing Guide](#)

When analyzing the content across your entire site, you want to focus on 3 main areas:

### *1. Information Architecture*

Your site's information architecture defines how information is laid out on the site. It is the blueprint for how your site presents information (and how you expect visitors to consume that information).

During the audit, you should ensure that each of your site's pages has a purpose. You should also verify that each of your targeted keywords is being represented by a page on your site.

### *2. Keyword Cannibalism*

Keyword cannibalism describes the situation where your site has multiple pages that target the same keyword. When multiple pages target a keyword, it creates confusion for the search engines, and more importantly, it creates confusion for visitors.

To identify cannibalism, you can create a keyword index that maps keywords to pages on your site. Then, when you identify collisions (i.e., multiple pages associated with a particular keyword), you can merge the pages or repurpose the competing pages to target alternate (and unique) keywords.

### *3. Duplicate Content*

Your site has [duplicate content](#) if multiple pages contain the same (or nearly the same) content. Unfortunately, these pages can be both internal and external (i.e., hosted on a different domain).

You can identify duplicate content on internal pages by building equivalence classes with the site crawl. These classes are essentially clusters of duplicate or near-duplicate content. Then, for each cluster, you can designate one of the pages as the original and the others as duplicates. To learn how to make these designations, read Section IV. of Dr. Pete's duplicate content guide: [Duplicate Content in a Post-Panda World](#).

To identify duplicate content on external pages, you can use [Copyscape](#) or [blekko](#)'s duplicate content detection. Here's an excerpt from [blekko](#)'s results for SEOmoz:



**blekko** seomoz.org /domainduptext x

seo: seomoz.org/  
cached page | html source

⚠ Data includes combined results for seomoz.org and www.seomoz.org

**Content duplication for domain: seomoz.org**

Domains that duplicate content from this site: 1,000 (998 offsite)

Duplicated sections: 40,889 (39,506 offsite, 1,383 onsite)

## HTML Markup

It's hard to overstate the value of your site's HTML because it contains a few of the most important on-page ranking factors.

Before diving into specific HTML elements, we need to validate your site's HTML and evaluate its standards compliance.

W3C offers a markup [validator](#) to help you find standards violations in your HTML markup. They also offer a [CSS validator](#) to help you check your site's CSS.

## Titles

A page's title is its single most identifying characteristic. It's what appears first in the search engine results, and it's often the first thing people notice in social media. Thus, it's extremely important to evaluate the titles on your site.

When evaluating an individual page's title, you should consider the following questions:

- **Is the title succinct?** A commonly used guideline is to make titles no more than 70 characters. Longer titles will get cut off in the search engine results, and they also make it difficult for people to add commentary on Twitter.
- **Does the title effectively describe the page's content?** Don't pull the bait and switch on your audience; use a compelling title that directly relates to your content's subject matter.
- **Does the title contain a targeted keyword? Is the keyword at the front of the title?** A page's title is one of the strongest on-page ranking factors so make sure it includes a targeted keyword.
- **Is the title over-optimized?** Rand covers this topic in a recent [Over-Optimization Whiteboard Friday](#).

## Additional Title Optimization Resources:

- [Are Your Titles Irresistibly Click Worthy & Viral?!](#)
- [How to Write Magnetic Headlines](#)

When analyzing the titles across an entire domain, make sure each page has a unique title. You can use your site crawl to perform this analysis. Alternatively, Google Webmaster Tools reports duplicate titles that Google finds on your site (look under "Optimization" > "HTML Improvements").

## *Meta Descriptions*

A page's meta description doesn't explicitly act as a ranking factor, but it does affect the page's click-through rate in the search engine results.

The meta description best practices are almost identical to those described for titles. In your page level analysis, you're looking for **succinct** (no more than 155 characters) and **relevant** meta descriptions that have **not** been **over-optimized**.

In your domain level analysis, you want to ensure that each page has a unique meta description. Your Google Webmaster Tools account will report duplicate meta descriptions that Google finds (look under "Optimization" > "HTML Improvements").

## *Other <head> Tags*

We've covered the two most important HTML <head> elements, but they're not the only ones you should investigate. Here are a few more questions to answer about the others:

- **Are any pages using meta keywords?** Meta keywords have become almost universally associated with spam. To be on the safe side, just avoid them.
- **Do any pages contain a rel="canonical" link?** This link element is used to help avoid duplicate content issues. Make sure your site is using it correctly.
- **Are any pages in a paginated series? Are they using rel="next" and rel="prev" link elements?** These link elements help inform search engines how to handle pagination on your site.

### **Additional Resources:**

- [Google Explains the rel="canonical" Link](#)
- [Google Explains the rel="next" and rel="prev" Links](#)

## *Images*

A picture might say a thousand words to users, but for search engines, pictures are mute. Therefore, your site needs to provide image metadata so that search engines can participate in the conversation.

When analyzing an image, the **two most important attributes are the image's alt text and the image's filename**. Both attributes should include relevant descriptions of the image, and ideally, they'll also contain targeted keywords.

For a comprehensive resource on optimizing images, read Rick DeJarnette's [Ultimate Guide for Web Images and SEO](#).

## *Outlinks*

When one page links to another, that link is an endorsement of the receiving page's quality. Thus, an important part of the audit is making sure your site links to other high quality sites.

To help evaluate the links on a given page, here are a few questions to keep in mind:

- **Do the links point to trustworthy sites?** Your site should avoid linking to spammy sites because it reflects poorly on the trustworthiness of your site. If a site links to spam, there's a good chance that it's also spam.
- **Are the links relevant to the page's content?** When you link to another page, its content should supplement yours. If your links are irrelevant, it leads to a poor user experience and reduced relevancy for your page.
- **Do the links use relevant anchor text? Does the anchor text include targeted keywords?** A link's anchor text should accurately describe the page it points to. This helps users decide if they want to follow the link, and it helps search engines identify the subject matter of the destination page.
- **Are any of the links broken?** Links that return a 4xx or 5xx status code are considered broken. You can identify them in your site crawl, or you can also use a [Link Checker](#).
- **Do the links use unnecessary redirection?** If your internal links are generating redirects, you're unnecessarily diluting the link juice that flows through your site. Make sure your internal links point to the appropriate destination pages.
- **Are any of the links nofollowed?** Aside from situations where you can't control outlinks (e.g., user generated content), you should let your link juice flow freely.

#### Additional Link Optimization Resources:

- [The Importance of Internal Linking](#)
- [Internal Link - Best Practices for SEO](#)

When analyzing a site's outlinks, you should investigate the distribution of internal links that point to the various pages on your site. Make sure the most important pages receive the most internal backlinks.

To be clear, this is not [PageRank sculpting](#). You're simply ensuring that your most important pages are the easiest to find on your site.

### *Other <body> Tags*

Images and links are not the only important elements found in the HTML <body> section. Here are a few questions to ask about the others:

- **Does the page use an H1 tag? Does the tag include a targeted keyword?** Heading tags aren't as powerful as titles, but they're still an important place to include keywords.
- **Is the page avoiding frames and iframes?** When you use a frame to embed content, search engines do not associate the content with your page (it is associated with the frame's source page).
- **Does the page have an appropriate content-to-ads ratio?** If your site uses ads as a revenue source, that's fine. Just make sure they don't overpower your site's content.

We've now covered the most important on-page ranking factors for your website. For even more information about on-page optimization, read Rand's guide: [Perfecting Keyword Targeting & On-Page Optimization](#).

## (4) Off-Page Ranking Factors

The on-page ranking factors play an important role in your site's position in the search engine rankings, but they're only one piece of a much bigger puzzle. Next, we're going to focus on the ranking factors that are generated by external sources.

### Popularity

The most popular sites aren't always the most useful, but their popularity allows them to influence more

people and attract even more attention. Thus, even though your site's popularity isn't the most important metric to monitor, it is still a valuable predictor of ongoing success.

When evaluating your site's popularity, here are a few questions to answer:

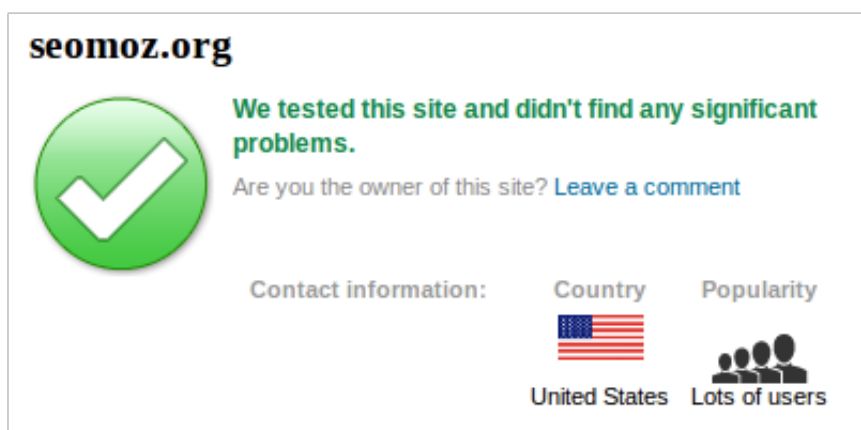
- **Is your site gaining traffic?** Your analytics package is your best source for traffic-based information (aside from processing your server logs). You want to make sure your site isn't losing traffic (and hence popularity) over time.
- **How does your site's popularity compare against similar sites?** Using third party services such as [Compete](#), [Alexa](#), and [Quantcast](#), you can evaluate if your site's popularity is outpacing (or being outpaced by) competing sites.
- **Is your site receiving backlinks from popular sites?** Link-based popularity metrics such as [mozRank](#) are useful for monitoring your site's popularity as well as the popularity of the sites linking to yours.

## Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of a website is a very subjective metric because all individuals have their own unique interpretation of trust. To avoid these personal biases, it's easier to identify behavior that is commonly accepted as being untrustworthy.

Untrustworthy behavior falls into numerous categories, but for our purposes, we'll focus on malware and spam. To check your site for malware, you can rely on blacklists such as [DNS-BH](#) or Google's [Safe Browsing API](#).

You can also use an analysis service like McAfee's [SiteAdvisor](#). Here is an excerpt from SiteAdvisor's report for SEOMoz:



When investigating spammy behavior on your website, you should at least look for the following:

- **Keyword Stuffing** - creating content with an unnaturally high keyword density.
- **Invisible or Hidden Text** - exploiting the technology gap between Web browsers and search engine crawlers to present content to search engines that is hidden from users (e.g., "hiding" text by making it the same color as the background).
- **Cloaking** - returning different versions of a website based on the requesting user agent or IP address (i.e., showing the search engines one thing while showing users something else).

### Additional Web Spam Resources:

- [Web Spam Taxonomy](#)
- [Cloaking and Redirection: A Preliminary Study](#)

Even if your site appears to be trustworthy, you still need to evaluate the trustworthiness of its

neighboring sites (the sites it links to and the sites it receives links from).

If you've identified a collection of untrustworthy sites, you can use a slightly modified version of PageRank to propagate distrust from those bad sites to the rest of a link graph. For years, this approach has been referred to as BadRank, and it can be deployed on outgoing links or incoming links to identify neighborhoods of untrustworthy sites.

Alternatively, you can attack the problem by propagating trust from a seed set of trustworthy sites (e.g., cnn.com, mit.edu, etc.). This approach is called TrustRank, and it has been implemented by SEOmoz in the form of their [mozTrust](#) metric. Sites with a higher mozTrust value are located closer to trustworthy sites in the link graph and therefore considered more trusted.

#### **Additional Trust Propagation Resources:**

- [Combating Web Spam with TrustRank](#)
- [Propagating Trust and Distrust to Demote Web Spam](#)

## **Backlink Profile**

Your site's quality is largely determined by the quality of the sites linking to it. Thus, it is extremely important to analyze the backlink profile of your site and identify opportunities for improvement.

Fortunately, there is an ever-expanding list of tools available to find backlink data, including your webmaster tools accounts, [blekko](#), [Open Site Explorer](#), [Majestic SEO](#), and [Ahrefs](#).

Here are a few questions to ask about your site's backlinks:

- **How many unique root domains are linking to the site?** You can never have too many high quality backlinks, but a link from 100 different root domains is significantly more valuable than 100 links from a single root domain.
- **What percentage of the backlinks are nofollowed?** Ideally, the vast majority of your site's backlinks will be followed. However, a site without any nofollowed backlinks appears highly suspicious to search engines.
- **Does the anchor text distribution appear natural?** If too many of your site's backlinks use exact match anchor text, search engines will flag those links as being unnatural.
- **Are the backlinks from sites that are topically relevant?** Topically relevant backlinks help establish your site as an authoritative source of information in your industry.
- **How popular/trustworthy/authoritative are the root domains that are linking to the site?** If too many of your site's backlinks are from low quality sites, your site will also be considered low quality.

#### **Additional Backlink Analysis Resources:**

- [71 Technical Factors for Backlink Analysis](#)
- [Anchor Text Distribution: Avoiding Over Optimization](#)
- [The Professional Guide to Link Building](#)

## **Authority**

A site's authority is determined by a combination of factors (e.g., the quality and quantity of its backlinks, its popularity, its trustworthiness, etc.).

To help evaluate your site's authority, SEOmoz provides two important metrics: **Page Authority** and **Domain Authority**. Page Authority predicts how well a specific page will perform in the search engine rankings, and Domain Authority predicts the performance for an entire domain.

Both metrics aggregate numerous link-based features (e.g., mozRank, mozTrust, etc.) to give you an easy way to compare the relative strengths of various pages and domains. For more information, watch the corresponding Whiteboard Friday video about these metrics: [Domain Authority & Page Authority Metrics](#).

## Social Engagement

As the Web becomes more and more social, the success of your website depends more and more on its ability to attract social mentions and create social conversations.

Each social network provides its own form of social currency. Facebook has likes. Twitter has retweets. Google+ has +1s. The list goes on and on. Regardless of the specific network, the websites that possess the most currency are the most relevant socially.

When analyzing your site's social engagement, you should quantify how well it's accumulating social currency in each of the most important social networks (i.e., how many likes/retweets/+1s/etc. are each of your site's pages receiving). You can query the networks for this information, or you can use a third party service such as [Shared Count](#).

Additionally, you should evaluate the authority of the individuals that are sharing your site's content. Just as you want backlinks from high quality sites, you want mentions from reputable and highly influential people.

### Additional Social Engagement Resources:

- [Tracking the KPIs of Social Media](#)
- [How Authorship \(and Google+\) Will Change Linkbuilding](#)
- [AuthorRank Could be Bigger than all Panda Updates Combined](#)

## (5) Competitive Analysis

Just when you thought we were done, it's time to start the analysis all over for your site's competitors. I know it sounds painful, but the more you know about your competitors, the easier it is to identify (and exploit) their weaknesses.

My process for analyzing a competitor's website is almost identical to what we've already discussed. For another person's perspective, I strongly recommend Selena Narayanasamy's [Guide to Competitive Research](#).

---

## SEO Audit Report

After you've analyzed your site and the sites of your competitors, you still need to distill all of your observations into an actionable SEO audit report. Since your eyes are probably bleeding by now, I'll save the world's greatest SEO audit report for another post.

In the meantime, here are three important tips for presenting your findings in an effective manner:

1. **Write for multiple audiences.** The meat of your report will contain very technical observations and recommendations. However, it's important to realize that the report will not always be read by tech-savvy individuals. Thus, when writing the report, be sure to keep other audiences in mind and provide helpful summaries for managers, executives, and anyone else that might not have a working knowledge of SEO.
2. **Prioritize, prioritize, and then prioritize some more.** Regardless of who actually reads your



report, try to respect their time. Put the most pressing issues at the beginning of the report so that everyone knows which items are critically important (and which ones can be put on the back burner, if necessary).

3. **Provide actionable suggestions.** Don't give generic recommendations like, "Write better titles." Provide specific examples that can be used immediately to make a positive impact on the site. Even if the recommendations are large in scope, attempt to offer concrete first steps to help get the ball rolling.

---

## Additional Resources

Just in case 6,000+ words weren't enough to feed your SEO audit hunger, here are a few more SEO audit resources:

[Technical Site Audit Checklist](#) - Geoff Kenyon provides an excellent checklist of items to investigate during an SEO audit. If you check off each of these items, you're well on your way to completing an excellent audit.

[The Ultimate SEO Audit](#) - This is a slightly older post by The Daily Anchor, but it still contains a lot of useful information. It's organized as three individual audits: (1) technical audit, (2) content audit, and (3) link audit.

[A Step by Step 15 Minute SEO Audit](#) - Danny Dover offers a great guide for identifying large SEO problems in a very short period of time.

[Find Your Site's Biggest Technical Flaws in 60 Minutes](#) - Continuing with the time-sensitive theme, this post by Dave Sottimano shows you just how many SEO-related problems you can identify in an hour.

---

## What Do You Think?

As the old saying goes, "There's more than one way to skin a cat." And that's especially true when it comes to performing an SEO audit so I'd **LOVE** to hear your comments, suggestions, and questions in the comments below.

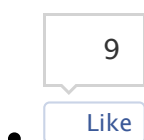
I'll respond to everything, and since I probably broke this year's record for longest post, I encourage you to **break the record for most comments!**

**About Steve Webb** — Steve Webb is an Internet marketing consultant at [Web Gnomes](#). Before he became an [SEO audit](#) junkie, he was a code monkey at Google, a Ph.D. graduate from Georgia Tech, and a professor in New Zealand. Find Steve on [Google+](#) or [Twitter](#).

## Do you like this post?

[1843](#)

## Get your social on



1,562

Tweet

125

Visits Pageviews Avg. Time on Page Direct Traffic Search Traffic Referral Traffic

N/A N/A N/A N/A N/A N/A

Yikes, looks like something went wrong. Please try again later.

[Post Analytics](#)

280 Comments

+ Add Comment

E-mail me when new comments are posted

Sort comments by popularity



[a year ago](#)  
[Dan Speicher](#)

TLDR. Just kidding Steve! It's definitely much easier to do an on-site analysis when you have a process laid out. Your article (and the resources you listed) will be helpful for someone wanting to create their own process.

There are so many ways to perform an on-site audit. Find what method is best for you.

[Reply 6 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Haha... I'm surprised I haven't seen more "tl;dr" lately since my last 3 blog posts have all been > 4,000 words.

Thanks for making it through to the end ;-). Echoing what you said, I'm hoping my process helps others identify a process that works well for them. And I would love to hear what other people are doing differently to help make my own audits even better...

Edited a year ago by Steve Webb

[Reply 6 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[TarjKailey](#)

None the less it was an awesome read, up till the very end Steve. I bookmarked your post through my web browser just in case if someone would ask me a good reference in making SEO audit. I would be very glad to share your post. Everyone has its own unique way to do an SEO audit; your checklist would definitely help them, specially the newbie's. Good luck for your next blog.

Edited a year ago by TarjKailey

[Reply 1 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks Tarjinder! I really appreciate the support, and I'm glad you enjoyed the post :-) Thanks again for reading and commenting!

[Reply 1 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[Bibiano](#)

Note to reader: If you've scrolled directly down here to to see if some comments say this post is TL;DR-material or not worth your time, GO BACK TO TOP AND START READING THE WHOLE THING! Or bookmark/evernote it. Thank me later.

Awesome piece, Steve! This definitely goes into my weekly hey-everyone-you-should-read-this list. By the way, I thought including Dr. Pete's 25-point Website Usability Checklist ([usereffect.com/topic/25-point-website-usability-checklist](http://usereffect.com/topic/25-point-website-usability-checklist)) in your Additional Resources list would make it glorious. Cheers!

[Reply 5 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Hi Bibiano!

First off, thank you for your extremely kind words... they mean a lot :-)

And I agree... Dr. Pete is amazing so let's give him a proper link to the resource you mentioned:

[25-point Website Usability Checklist](#)

Thanks again for the comment!

[Reply 3 0](#)

■

[a year ago](#)  
[Dr-Pete](#)

I agree, too. I AM amazing ;) Seriously, great review of the key components of an audit, and I really liked that this was accessible for beginners. Diagnosing complex problems isn't just for seasoned pros - it's essential for any SEO task. The worst thing you can do is fix the wrong problem.

[Reply 3 0](#)

■

[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Haha... I'm glad we're all in agreement that you're amazing (in all seriousness, you are :-P)

And thanks for the feedback! I'm an equal opportunity SEOer... beginners... pros... they're all welcome to the party ;-)

Thanks again for the comment!

[Reply 1 0](#)

●

[a year ago](#)  
[Stuart McHenry](#)

4,000 words on site audit and you still didn't tell me what the magical keyword density is? (just kidding Steve)

This is why I love seomoz so much good content!

[Reply 4 0](#)

○

[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Haha... the next 4,000 words were going to be dedicated to that ;-)

I'm really glad you enjoyed the post... thanks for the comment!

[Reply 3 0](#)

●

Associate  
[a year ago](#)  
[gfiorelli1](#)

On the contrary of what David wrote here above, I think you give me more hints in order to provide an even better service to my clients and myself :).

Well done, great post worth the promotion on the main blog.

Edited a year ago by [gfiorelli1](#)  
[Reply 4 0](#)



o

[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks Gianluca!

I couldn't agree more. Once upon a time, there was a show on television called, "Breaking the Magician's Code: Magic's Biggest Secrets Finally Revealed." As we know, [SEO isn't magic](#), but the masked magician's message is still relevant (paraphrasing): "I'm revealing these secrets to force other magicians to step up their games and create newer and bigger illusions."

Similarly, I'm all about disclosing SEO best practices because (1) it will hopefully help improve the usefulness of the Web for everyone and (2) it will help us all collectively come up with newer, more effective strategies.

Thanks again for the comment!

[Reply 2 0](#)



•

[a year ago](#)  
[BenRWoodard](#)

Wow! Had this one bookmarked since it was first published. I just spent the afternoon going to school!

It's going to take me a lot longer to break this down and get it into my current workflow. I've been doing bits and pieces of this but to see an expert view of the whole process is a game changer for me and my clients.

Are you speaking anywhere? Would love to see bits and pieces of this explained in even greater detail.

[Reply 3 0](#)



o

[a year ago](#)

[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks Ben!

I speak at a lot of seminars around Texas, but I'm not scheduled to speak at any upcoming conferences. If someone wants to put me on a conference agenda, I'm always ready to present ;-)

[Reply 1 0](#)

[9 months ago](#)  
[SEONewGuy](#)

AWESOME! For a newbie like me this post is so valuable. Thanks for the easy to read information and the meaningful additional links. I'll be using this as a reference for a long time to come.  
THANKS STEVE!

[Reply 3 0](#)

[9 months ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

You're very welcome :-) I'm really happy this post is helping you!

[Reply 1 0](#)

[9 months ago](#)  
[NasirA](#)

No mention of keyword research on the entire page?  
Very helpful list otherwise.

[Reply 3 0](#)

[9 months ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Hi Brian,

I explained a little more about keyword considerations above in a [previous comment](#).

I don't include keyword research in my SEO audit because the audit evaluates a site's level of optimization for existing keywords. Specifically, the audit answers the first question mentioned in the previous comment (i.e., "Is the site correctly targeting the keyword

phrases that the client intended to target?").

Now, after the audit is finished, clients frequently request keyword research. However, that is a strategic activity that (in a lot of ways) is independent from the audit process.

Thanks for the comment!

#### [Reply 1 0](#)



[9 months ago](#)

[Philip Murphy](#)

I can not tell you how many times I have used this post. I just switched from an agency to an in-house position where I am forming their web marketing department. Of course the first thing that I did was hit this post and figure out where their site is at. I realized I have never commented before, so just wanted to say thanks.

I do enjoy that hard working, smart, and thorough people work in the SEO industry and are willing to share a comprehensive and detailed breakdown of how they accomplish a task like a technical audit.

Thanks so much again, super helpful

#### [Reply 3 0](#)



[9 months ago](#)

[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks for your incredibly kind words Philip! I'm really glad you've been able to put the post to good use :-). And congrats on your new position!!

#### [Reply 2 0](#)



[Associate](#)

[a year ago](#)

[Dave Sottimano](#)

I think you might have just put me out of a job with this one - probably one of the most comprehensive audit checklists I've seen. So I'll leave you with two things, great job on the post & stop giving away all of our secrets ;)

#### [Reply 3 0](#)



[a year ago](#)

[Steve Webb](#)

Haha... I love it! Thanks for the comment Dave :-)

And you can always spin the post this way...

"[Potential client], you want to know what I do for you?! Here's just a taste of my SEO goodness... [link to crazy SEO audit post that will convince client to hire you due to all the work involved]"

Thanks again for the comment!

#### [Reply 2 0](#)



Member

[a year ago](#)

[Mark Ginsberg](#)

Thanks Steve - I had built a checklist of a quick site audit based on Danny Dover's book - your post is pretty helpful for the longer, more in depth audits I've been doing. Definitely gonna reference this when going over site audits with beginners - thanks!

#### [Reply 3 0](#)



[a year ago](#)

[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks for the comment Mark!

Danny's book is one of the many resources I used when I started putting my process together; it has a lot of really solid insights.

Hopefully, this post will save you some time when explaining things in future audit wrap-ups.

#### [Reply 1 0](#)



[9 months ago](#)

[terramar1](#)

@Mark what do you typically charge to do SEO audits? Or do you charge at all? As a new SEO, I'm trying to figure out what is reasonable to charge a customer for a good audit before the full services are proposed. Thanks!

#### [Reply 1 0](#)





Member

[a year ago](#)

[UnderRugSwept](#)

Wow, this post is stinking awesome! Everything in one place. My boss always wants to know exactly everything that SEO entails. Seeing as I do SEO AND Web Design, there is now no better reference to give him, since every single aspect of that checklist is my responsibility. I don't know if his attention span will last until the end, but he can stagger it. Nice pic of Matt Cutts on the jailer's body!

Edited a year ago by UnderRugSwept

[Reply 3 0](#)



o

[a year ago](#)

[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks Marisa!

You can always cut it up and deliver it to your boss in bite-sized pieces :-)

I'm glad someone mentioned the Matt Cutts picture... that might be my favorite part of the post.

[Reply 1 0](#)



o

[a year ago](#)

[Ayesha Kazmi](#)

I agree with the stinking awesome :) Nd yeah i just finished preparing the summary out of this article! Let me know if you need it.

[Reply 1 0](#)



■

[a year ago](#)

[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks Ayesha :-)

[Reply 1 0](#)



•

[a year ago](#)

[jminkler](#)

Hey Steve! What's up? :)

How much do you think the "cross domain duplicate content" effects things, as I have heard straight from Matt that "Google expects some amount of duplicate content" and that a site should have added value in addition to the dup content (I assume such as a way to interect with it in some manner, or other content that related to the content in a different manner)

True? Crap?

As an aside, I reached PR 2 in a couple weeks with pure dup content drips ..

Edited a year ago by jminkler

[Reply 2 0](#)



o

[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Minkler! I'm about to hit you up on LinkedIn, but first...

My opinions about Panda (which is at least partially about identifying duplicate content) and Penguin are very similar. Google clearly wants to minimize the existence of Web spam (where "spam" is obviously defined internally at the Googleplex to include duplicate content, over-optimized anchor text, etc.), and they are aggressively deploying updates to accomplish this goal.

With that in mind, I absolutely believe "cross domain duplicate content" effects things. But quantifying its exact influence is incredibly difficult since it is only one of the undisclosed number of signals that appear in these Panda Updates. To your point, I'm sure plenty of scraper sites are still doing well in the SERPs, but that's not because Google endorses those sites - it's because Google is still searching for the "perfect" algorithm (pun intended :-P).

I have much more detailed thoughts about this, but I'll share them offline...

[Reply 1 0](#)



•

Member  
[a year ago](#)  
[CristianGuasch](#)

Woah! this is the new bible for the SEO newbies! thanks a lot Steve :)

[Reply 2 0](#)



o

[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks Cristian! I'm really glad you enjoyed it :-)

[Reply 1 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[Chris Irwin](#)

Thanks Steve, spent hours here going through the article and related tools! as a reletavely new SEO I found this guide invaluable, Iv read and seen it all before but now its all in one place on my favourates!

[Reply 2 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

You're welcome Chris! I'm glad the post was useful for you :-) Thanks for reading and commenting!

[Reply 1 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[GyanSingh](#)

Great post... Very nice. Thanks Steve for sharing fanstatic guide.

[Reply 2 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks Gyan! I'm really glad you enjoyed the post :-)

[Reply 1 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[Jonathan Schikowski](#)

Thank you for recommending Browseo. It's an exciting time for us as more people use it every day!

Cheers,

Jonathan

[Reply 2 0](#)

o

[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

You're welcome Jonathan. I'm really glad to hear the tool is gaining popularity :-) Good luck with future updates!

[Reply 1 0](#)

[a year ago](#)  
[stuart01](#)

Hi there, This is the definite Great source of information and I have solved out many problems after to reading it and I have completely gained knowledge of SEO audit and I want to know about SMO audit. Please can you provide us SMO audit? I am awaiting your side reply. Please keep it up excellent knowledge.

[Reply 2 0](#)

o

[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks Stuart! I'm really glad you enjoyed the post :-)

As for SMO, I am not a social media expert so I'd also love to see a post about SMO... from someone with stronger social game ;-) But if one of the experts doesn't step up, I'll go into crazy research mode and put something together in the next few weeks.

Thanks for reading and commenting!

[Reply 1 0](#)

[a year ago](#)  
[Priya Singhai](#)

Hello,

Thanks for posting this. Recently I am working in SEO company so this posting is very useful for me.

again thanks and Good Luck.....

[Reply 2 0](#)

o

[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

You're very welcome Priya, and I'm really glad the post was useful :-)

Thanks for reading and commenting!

[Reply 1 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[Dataextraction](#)

It was a bit lengthy i guess! But i really liked the information provided it will help us to figure out the problems and rectify it to some extend and rest is on Matt cuts hands whether he releases or not.

[Reply 2 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

I'm really glad you enjoyed the post :-)

Good luck fixing your site!

Edited a year ago by Steve Webb

[Reply 1 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[Jason Kamara](#)

Great post, Steve. As a data junkie, I can easily get distracted by the details when doing an audit so it's great to have a structure (or checklist) in place to help stay on track without spending too much time in any one area.

With all the organic and local algo updates already this year, I've found myself continually trying new tools to check accuracy. Do you also have a report structure that you use as a template for creating your audits? I end up spending as much time writing an audit report as I do on analysis.

Edited a year ago by Jason\_Kamara

[Reply 2 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks Jason! It's always great to meet a fellow junkie ;-)

I do have a general template that I like to use for audit reports; however, each client is unique, and as a result, each report gets tailored to each site's unique situation.

I already mentioned this in the post, but it's worth repeating: write the report for multiple audiences. You want the report to be accessible for decision makers and actionable for technical implementors.

To accomplish this duality, my reports get more and more complex as you get deeper into them. The first few pages are extremely high level and offer a broad overview of the site's problems (and most important next steps). Then, as you get deeper into the report, the observations and recommendations become increasingly more technical.

Thanks again for reading and commenting... your comment was #200!

#### [Reply 2 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[Chozo](#)

I've been working on a lot of different SEO tactics on my new site, Channel Zero (<http://thezerolevel.com>), and I've yet to run a crawl diagnostic on it.

Would this help me to understand the best ways to uprank my site?

I was thinking of trying the Crawl Diagnostics available with SEOMOZ, but it's new to me. :/

#### [Reply 2 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Hi Chozo,

Before you do your own crawl, I recommend checking for crawl-related errors in Google Webmaster Tools and Bing Webmaster Tools. Then, after you've addressed any issues found in those accounts, you can perform your own analysis with Screaming Frog, SEOmoz, or your own tools.

Also, if you need additional information about SEOmoz's Crawl Diagnostics, check out the tool's [help page](#).

Thanks for reading and commenting!

#### [Reply 1 0](#)



Member

[a year ago](#)

[JC56](#)

Very relevant post. I like the way you perform a SEO audit. Is it a problem if I translate this article to my french blog for the french public ?

Edited a year ago by JC56

[Reply 2 0](#)



o

[a year ago](#)

[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks!

I don't have any objections to a French translation (as long as SEOMoz is cool with it). As long as you attribute the original version, I'm sure everyone will be happy :-)

[Reply 1 0](#)



•

[a year ago](#)

[SunitaBiddu](#)

That's SO thorough. Huge but comprehensive guide Steve. I was expecting keyword analysis check at pretty beginning though..

Very helpful

[Reply 2 0](#)



o

[a year ago](#)

[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks Sunita!

I explained a little more about keyword considerations above in a [previous comment](#).

Thanks again for the comment!

[Reply 1 0](#)



•

[a year ago](#)

[satyendrakum](#)

Hi Steve,

I have never seen (Read) Such article before, It is a very very very Good article , I have ever read on SEO. Thanks for your wonderful effort for providing us such a GREAT article.

Edited 3 months ago by satyendrakum

[Reply 2 0](#)



o

[a year ago](#)

[Steve Webb](#)

Hi Satyendra,

You're very welcome. I'm really glad you enjoyed the post :-) Thanks for your kind words!

[Reply 1 0](#)



•

[a year ago](#)

[Mark Hailes](#)

Excellent post :)

I have made this post mandatory reading for all of my team.

[Reply 2 0](#)



o

[a year ago](#)

[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks Mark!

Let me know what your team thinks about it :-)

[Reply 1 0](#)



■

[a year ago](#)

[Mark Hailes](#)

Hello Steve,

I emailed the team asking them to read over the weekend. The feedback so far has been very positive, especially from the junior analysts.

Mark

[Reply 1 0](#)





[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Hi Mark,

Thanks for the update! I'm really glad to hear the team is enjoying the post :-)

[Reply 2 0](#)



Member  
[a year ago](#)  
[iCrossing UK](#)

Great piece of work Steve!

What I've found amazing is the fact you you've published it around the same time with the excellent and [complete post](#) you did about the Penguin update.

[Reply 2 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks Ian! I actually wrote this post first, followed by the free SEO tools post and the Penguin Update post. This one just happened to get published a little later, which made it look like I rattled it off right after the Penguin one ;-)

[Reply 1 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[YiSen](#)

Is there one more h1 Label in one page ok ?

[Reply 2 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

As long as you're not abusing the h1 tags, it's fine to use more than one on any given page. As Matt Cutts describes in this older video, you just want to make sure you're using them to denote page headings:

[More than one H1 on a page: good or bad?](#)

Edited a year ago by Steve Webb

[Reply 1 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[bronxpad](#)

This has been an extremely helpful article. Thanks for all the info.

[Reply 2 0](#)



o [a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks Joel! I'm really glad you enjoyed it :-)

[Reply 1 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[abdufahad66](#)

Hello Mr Steve I have found Your Knowledge in SEO marketing Really Appreciable I am currently an SEO worker at Odesk and i am sure that i can get quick and proven ranking if i keep things in mind +1 to you ;-)

[Reply 2 0](#)



o [a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks Abdul! I'm really glad you enjoyed the post :-) Good luck with your work at oDesk.

[Reply 1 0](#)



Member  
[a year ago](#)  
[Designbysoap Ltd](#)

Phenomenal post - clearly a lot of work and research has gone into this and it's a worthy

promotion to the main blog. Well done Steve!

[Reply 2 0](#)



o

[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks John! I'm really glad you enjoyed it :-)

[Reply 1 0](#)



•

[a year ago](#)  
[Priya Singhai](#)

**Awesome post!**

**I can call this one a complete guide for SEO Audit**

**great review of the key components of an audit**

**Thanku so much for this posting and useful information and tips**

[Reply 2 0](#)



o

[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

You're very welcome Priya!

I'm really glad you enjoyed it :-) Thanks for reading and commenting!

Edited a year ago by Steve Webb

[Reply 1 0](#)



•

[a year ago](#)  
[Modesto Siotos](#)

Indeed John! Another great post by Steve straight after he nailed the Penguin update with the ['Everything We Know About The Penguin Update'](#).

[Reply 2 0](#)



o

[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks Modesto! And I really appreciate the mention for the Penguin Update post :-)

As you already know, I'm a big fan of a lot of your SEOMoz posts (some of them are referenced in the aforementioned Penguin post).

Thanks again for the comment!

### [Reply 1 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[swapnil kulkarni](#)

Dr. Steve!!! Really nice post on Website Audit.... I was not aware of "&start=990".... What are the other possible parameters that I can use in " http:www.google.com/search?q=<any query like keyword search, site:, link: etc.> " Any Idea?

### [Reply 2 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks Swapnil!

Here's a good resource from SEOMoz that might help you find what you're looking for:

[The Professional's Guide to Advanced Search Operators](#)

Thanks again for the comment!

### [Reply 1 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[steve9090](#)

Bravo Steve A very indepth guide on how to do a great audit for a web site. You have a great (and relevent) surname, too. I usually use my own guide that I have perfected over the years and it is very close to your guide. I did enjoy reading yours, and to find out that I am not missing anything. You write well. Keep up the fab work.

### [Reply 2 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks Steve! I really appreciate your kind words :-)

I'm also a big fan of your name ;-)

Thanks again for reading and commenting!

### [Reply 1 0](#)

**PROTECH**  
NICHOLE S. SULLIVAN



[a year ago](#)

[Zachary Russell](#)

This is a killer post, giving great insights to the world of professional SEOs. As an SEO myself, I perform at least one audit per week, maybe not on this massive scale, but at least general audits.

I would really like to see an update on this with the new Bing Webmaster Tools

### [Reply 2 0](#)



o

[a year ago](#)

[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks Zach! If there's a big demand for a post about audit-related activities using the new Bing Webmaster Tools, I'll happily oblige :-). In the meantime, I definitely recommend the latest Whiteboard Friday about BWT.

### [Reply 1 0](#)



Member

[a year ago](#)

[Shell](#)

This is a very thorough and intensive audit. I'm wondering what someone would charge to do this. It seems beyond the budget of many smaller sites, but then each site will need a different focus in terms of what needs to be checked. BUT, if someone were to do all of this, what would the price range be I wonder. We do extensive SEO Audits and our costs are usually around \$5,000. Just wondering how this would compare.

### [Reply 2 0](#)



o

[a year ago](#)

[Steve Webb](#)

Hi Shell,

Our company offers audits that are explicitly priced for smaller businesses. For smaller sites (i.e., those with around 5-10 unique page types), we typically charge \$1,500-\$2,500.

For slightly larger sites, the audits are around \$3,500. Then, for much larger sites, the price just depends on the site's size (obviously, we also do audits for smaller subsets of large sites using the smaller site prices).

If anyone else is interested in more pricing information, please let me know.

Thanks again for the comment!

### [Reply 1 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[rhenajoy](#)

This is great! I already read the article by Geoff Kenyon and the older audit post but this is really comprehensive and worth to be noted. Im currently documenting my SEO process for my company and this is a great help for my audit. Can't wait for the world's greatest SEO audit report. Thanks Steve!

### [Reply 2 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

You're very welcome Rhena! I'm really glad you enjoyed the post :-)

Good luck with your documentation effort, and thanks again for reading and commenting!

### [Reply 2 0](#)



[7 months ago](#)  
[Luke Kirk](#)

I'm liking this post just for the picture of Matt Cutts opening the jail door. I'm joking :) But that did make me laugh. Good job on the comprehensive guide.

### [Reply 2 0](#)



[7 months ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks Luke! I'm really glad you enjoyed the post (and the Cutts picture).

### [Reply 1 0](#)



[7 months ago](#)  
[Debbie Gartner, The Flooring Girl](#)

thx so much. I'm going to try that other free crawler for the first 500 URL's. (bookmarking this). And, you finally helped open my eyes on that duplicate content that SEOMoz crawler identified. I solved most of the issues, but I still have 25 pages showing as duplicate so now I might try some 301 redirects. Thx.

### [Reply 2 0](#)



o

[7 months ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

You're very welcome :-) I'm glad to hear the post is helping you diagnose site issues. Just stick with it, and you'll get everything resolved.

Thanks for the comment!

Edited 7 months ago by Steve Webb

### [Reply 1 0](#)



•

[8 months ago](#)  
[Yoav Vilner](#)

Now here's a keeper!perfect work.Thanks.

### [Reply 2 0](#)



o

[8 months ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks for the comment Yoav!

### [Reply 1 0](#)



•

[9 months ago](#)  
[rehan09](#)

Awesome content and a very easy to read guide! Thanks for sharing!

### [Reply 2 0](#)



o

[9 months ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks for the comment Rene! I'm really glad you enjoyed the post :-)

[Reply 2 0](#)

9 months ago  
[cobwebseo](#)

It is very tough to measure a site with all these criteria. In my working life i had never found a site that passes those test. I think 70% score in these test is fine.

Edited 9 months ago by cobwebseo

[Reply 2 0](#)

9 months ago  
[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks for the comment Ajay! Obviously, there is a certain degree of subjectivity associated with some of these tests, but for the most part, they all represent SEO best practices. So I agree that a 70% score is a good start; however, a site with a solid SEO foundation will score much closer to 100%.

[Reply 1 0](#)

5 months ago  
[Maria Kristina](#)

Nice information i use this to my site apartments-bookings.com and discountcityhotels.com

Thanks buddy

[Reply 2 0](#)

5 months ago  
[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks for the comment Maria! I'm glad the post was useful :-)

[Reply 1 0](#)

5 months ago  
[nazre](#)



I will call it a complete package. You have done a brilliant job and have mentioned every important aspect for SEO Audit. I am sure, if we follow all the mentioned point, we will be able to get the complete analyzed report for that particular website.

### [Reply 2 0](#)



o

[5 months ago](#)

[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks Nazre! I really appreciate the support :-)

### [Reply 1 0](#)



●

[3 months ago](#)

[Hammadh](#)

Steve you just make it look more easy to do SEO Audits properly for newbies in SEO's like me. Thanks A Lot.

### [Reply 2 0](#)



o

[3 months ago](#)

[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks for the comment Hammad... I'm really glad you enjoyed the post :-)

### [Reply 1 0](#)



●

[2 months ago](#)

[Christian C. Taylor](#)

Very helpful information, thank you very much.

### [Reply 2 0](#)



o

[2 months ago](#)

[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks Christian! I'm really glad you enjoyed the post :-)

### [Reply 1 0](#)



●

Member

[4 months ago](#)

[HeatherPhysioc](#)

Steve, great post and I refer back to it often. I've been doing SEO audits for quite some time, but I am always trying to beef mine up - especially on the technical side of the audit which I feel is my weakest area where I need to provide more value to my clients. Geoff and Dave's technical audit posts are also great choices to link to for that side of things - really thorough. Appreciate your hard work putting this together. Did you ever end up putting the "world's greatest SEO audit report" post together?

[Reply 2 0](#)



o

[4 months ago](#)

[Steve Webb](#)

Thank you for those kind words, Heather :-)

Unfortunately, my writing has fallen off the map recently (too many actual audit reports to finish). I'll try to do better in the coming months, but in the meantime, I recommend Aleyda Solis' recent post about actionable SEO audit reports.

As for beefing up the technical depth of your own audits, one suggestion is to include "structured data" analysis (e.g., schema.org markup, correct authorship implementation, etc.). That topic is one of the biggest omissions from this post, and it's an area that should be covered in all technical audits.

Edited 4 months ago by Steve Webb

[Reply 1 0](#)



■

[2 months ago](#)

[HeatherPhysioc](#)

Story of my life. Real work always seems to find its way in front of my personal writing priorities. ;) Great idea to add the structured data portion to my audit. One of my favorite topics right now. I'm starting to build out my CRO audit checklist now, too.

[Reply 1 0](#)



•

[4 months ago](#)

[djkarlc](#)

As usual always quality content here at the Moz

[Reply 2 0](#)



o

[4 months ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks for the comment Karl!

[Reply 1 0](#)



[5 months ago](#)  
[Vaspers](#)

Great article. I wonder why you did not add "Check if website is registered with Google Analytics and Google Webmaster Tools".  
I would also recommend automatic SEO audit tools like SEOquake toolbar.  
Thanks for this list.

[Reply 2 0](#)



[5 months ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks Vaspers :-)

Google Webmaster Tools is mentioned above under the "Ask the Oracles" section, and that section also highlights the importance of consulting a site's analytics (Google Analytics isn't the only option).

SEOquake is definitely a useful toolbar, but I wouldn't call it an "automatic SEO audit tool." It gives a high-level overview of important metrics, but it doesn't provide the level of detail you'll find in a professional-grade audit.

Edited 5 months ago by Steve Webb

[Reply 1 0](#)



Member  
[9 months ago](#)  
[melen](#)

Great article! Did you ever get around to writing the "greatest SEO audit report" post?

[Reply 2 0](#)



[9 months ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks Nathan! I haven't written that post yet, but I'm planning something even better.

Stay tuned :-)

### [Reply 1 0](#)



• [9 months ago](#)  
[loki](#)

Great article.

Strictly speaking usability is not SEO... BUT, Google will look at time on site/pages visited as one of their metrics, and time on site/pages visited is greatly influenced by usability.

I will be very keen to hear your thoughts on this.

### [Reply 2 0](#)



○ [9 months ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Hi Craig,

I absolutely believe usability plays a large role in SEO, and that role will become even more important over time (as search engines identify more reliable indicators).

You already hit the nail on the head with your comment. Ultimately, the purpose of your site is to attract visitors and give them what they're looking for. If your site provides a terrible user experience, it doesn't matter how valuable your site's information/products/etc. are because no one will stay there long enough to view that content.

If Google's users consistently click through to your site and then immediately bounce back, Google will obviously want to demote your site in favor of sites that provide a richer user experience (and give users what they want). Thus, your work isn't done once you've attracted searchers -- you have to keep them engaged after they've arrived!

Thanks for the comment!

### [Reply 1 0](#)



• [a year ago](#)  
[eververs](#)

Hi Steve, I really like your take on ways to present results to clients. I've talked to a couple of people about this recently and found that it helps a lot to visit the client and go through the report together. By doing so, not losing their focus and eventually their interest in your business.

I have to be honest I didn't read it all, but that's more because I'm already familiar with these practices. Other than that the writing style is great, it's nothing short of amazing how you are able

to write in a fairly high level, not ending up falling into details for one subject until the reader loses his/her overview.

Edited a year ago by eververs

[Reply 2 0](#)



o

[a year ago](#)

[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks Rick!

I definitely agree that going through the report with the client is useful. It's also much easier to address questions as soon as they arise :-)

Thanks again for the comment!

[Reply 1 0](#)



•

Member

[a year ago](#)

[Shredward](#)

Thanks a lot for this outline Steve. I am getting into doing SEO audits and your post has proven to be a very useful, detailed guide.

I was engaged the whole time and surprised to see that it is 6,000 words. I felt like it wasn't that long at all - which is the sign of a truly great read.

Cheers!

[Reply 2 0](#)



o

[a year ago](#)

[Steve Webb](#)

You're very welcome, and I'm really happy to hear the post was useful and engaging :-)

Thanks for the comment!

[Reply 1 0](#)



•

[a year ago](#)

[bilderberger](#)

Steve,

this is a great article, thanks a lot for the insight into your thorough audit methods - was really very helpful for reassessing my own audit approach.

You said at the end of the article "Since your eyes are probably bleeding by now, I'll save the world's greatest SEO audit report for another post."

My eyes are in fact very keen to see more - any indication of when we might get a glimpse of how you present your report?? :)

Martin

Edited a year ago by bilderberger

[Reply 2 0](#)



o

[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Martin,

Thanks for the kind words; I'm really glad you enjoyed the post :-)

If people are interested in a post about the actual audit report, I'll definitely put one together. At the moment, I'm really busy cranking out reports for clients, but once I get more free time, I'll write something on SEOmoz or on our blog.

Thanks again for reading and commenting!

[Reply 1 0](#)



■

[a year ago](#)  
[bilderberger](#)

I'd definitely like to see that, when you have time! (this week?) :)

[Reply 1 0](#)



■

[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

I'll definitely put something together when I have time, but unfortunately, it won't be this week ;-)

[Reply 1 0](#)



●

Member

[a year ago](#)  
[Blue Moon Works](#)

I've been conducting SEO audits for nearly 10 years and this is the most comprehensive post I've seen on the subject. Nice job!

[Reply 2 0](#)



o

[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks Bryan! Coming from a fellow auditor, that really means a lot :-)

[Reply 1 0](#)



•

[a year ago](#)  
[Naescent Adam](#)

Whew I made it to the end of the comments!!

I'm new to the business and currently doing my homework, I'm amazed at the length of this. Normally its in piecemeal bits and its hard to weight it all. To have someone go through in such depth, I find myself at the end shouting "more more more!!!"

Congrats on the 200th post,

Adam

[Reply 2 0](#)



o

[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Adam,

Thanks for the comment! I'm really glad you enjoyed the post :-)

If there's a topic you'd like me to elaborate on, send me an email or hit me up on Twitter (@webbstuff). I'm always looking for new blog suggestions.

Thanks again for reading and commenting!

Edited a year ago by Steve Webb

[Reply 1 0](#)



•

[a year ago](#)

[Parvesh Sareen](#)

Thumbs Up for this post.

I am gonna bookmark it and keeping it me for forever. :)  
Nice composition of meaningful factors.

These can be effective if taken into consideration.

[Reply 2 0](#)

o

[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks for the thumbs up Parvesh! I really appreciate it :-)

[Reply 1 0](#)

Member

[11 months ago](#)  
[EmarketedTeam](#)

This is by far one of the best SEO audit posts I've read. Very lengthy but incredibly detailed. I just summarized the whole thing and will definitely use for the backbone of our audits going forward! Thanks for sharing!

[Reply 2 0](#)

o

[11 months ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

You're very welcome! I'm really glad it was useful :-)

[Reply 1 0](#)

[9 months ago](#)  
[davidfarrell](#)

Hi Steve

I am only starting out in the world of SEO and this article has helped me understand a lot. However I notice that you this audit relies on the client having both webmaster tools and analytics installed.

If the client does not have these installed at time of starting the audit how long should I wait before starting the planning/analysis phase once they have been installed

ThanksDavid



[Reply 2 0](#)

o

[9 months ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Hi David,

You can do a lot of analysis without any access to Webmaster Tools or Analytics accounts (e.g., crawl-related activities, on-page investigations, etc.) so I recommend doing that work while you wait for access (or installation).

I initially conduct most of my audits without ever looking at data from those accounts. Then, I go back and compare my findings with Google/Bing findings (e.g., server errors I found vs. server errors they found, duplication I found vs. duplication they found, backlinks I found vs. backlinks they found, etc.).

So the bottom line is that you can knock out a lot of analysis while you wait for access/installation :-)

Thanks for the comment!

[Reply 1 0](#)

•

[10 months ago](#)  
[matbennett](#)

Just stumbled back over this post. Must have missed it back in June. Properly useful and with enough references in it to keep me busy all day. Always love seeing what other people put in their audits. I'm updating my own checklist at the moment (hence finding this post). Mine is a bit heavier on microformats and opengraph snippets. Thought I'd mention that in case audit junkie Steve wanted to add a few more points to his list!

[Reply 2 0](#)

o

[10 months ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks for the comment Mat! I'm glad you brought up microformats and other forms of rich snippets (e.g., Facebook's Open Graph, Twitter Cards, etc.) because they have become an important consideration when investigating a site's markup.

We include this analysis in our audits, but it didn't make it into the post so I really appreciate you highlighting it! Good luck with your checklist, and thanks again for commenting :-)

[Reply 1 0](#)



• [10 months ago](#)  
[kpottinger](#)

awesomely informative post Steve - I have really enjoyed reading and learning! I am still a novice and this is also so very timely.

Also, kudos to you - your quote below clearly shows your integrity and I am very thankful for people like you :) you can talk the talk but you walk the walk so eloquently!

"Similarly, I'm all about disclosing SEO best practices because (1) it will hopefully help improve the usefulness of the Web for everyone and (2) it will help us all collectively come up with newer, more effective strategies"

Karen

[Reply 2 0](#)



○ [10 months ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Karen,

Thanks for those incredibly kind words :-) I'm really happy the post was useful, and if you have any questions, feel free to hit me up on Twitter (@webbstuff).

Thanks again!

Edited 10 months ago by Steve Webb

[Reply 1 0](#)



• [10 months ago](#)  
[aiplooffice](#)

very helpful article for novices I like it

[Reply 2 0](#)



○ [10 months ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks :-) I'm glad you enjoyed it!

[Reply 1 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[Austadpro](#)

Very thorough list and a good primer for anyone looking to audit a site. I definitely you have to do your research before you take on a customer so you know what you're getting into.

[Reply 2 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

I couldn't agree more! Without an accurate assessment of a site's current level of SEO, it's very difficult to give truly actionable advice. You can always suggest best practices, but an audit allows you to construct a strategy that is unique for a given site.

Thanks for reading and commenting!

Edited a year ago by Steve Webb

[Reply 1 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[Niles Pansuriya](#)

Hi Steve,

Awesome Article on SEO Audit, also please point suggest for audit like as Google PR, and current site meta and .htaccess file for redirection and also rel=canonical tags for Duplication issue and also check www and non www URL, Hosting Performance and Browser compatibility check

Thanks steve very Help full Article

Edited a year ago by Niles Pansuriya

[Reply 2 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks Niles!

I actually trust the Moz metrics more than TBPR (primarily because they're updated more frequently).

I absolutely agree that you should evaluate the .htaccess file (for Web servers that support

its use for redirection).

I didn't go into great detail about rel=canonical or www/non-www canonicalization because Dr. Pete's duplicate content post (linked at least twice above) already does an incredible job describing them.

Hosting performance is somewhat addressed by tools such as Pingdom, but ideally, a client has a monitoring service of some sort in place (Pingdom offers such a service, but there are numerous others - including diy approaches). Then, you can evaluate the performance over an extended period of time. GWT is also somewhat helpful for this task since you can see how long it takes the Googlebot to access your site's content.

I agree with you about browser compatibility. And even if you don't exhaustive check every browser version, you should definitely check the most popular browsers being used by the site's visitors.

Thanks again for reading and commenting!

### [Reply 1 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[pramodpv](#)

Excellent work Steve.. Nice checklist, let me see if i can use my coding skills to translate your checklist into code. If it works out i will let you know.. would be nice to be able to run these against sites and get a report before starting work. :-)

### [Reply 2 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks Pramod!

And definitely let me know how the development goes :-)

### [Reply 2 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[AMG Group](#)

Excellent and very nice work in Deep on Greatest SEO Audit, found very helpful

### [Reply 2 0](#)



[a year ago](#)

## [Steve Webb](#)

Thanks! I'm really glad the post was helpful :-)

### [Reply 1 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[dergal](#)

Odd that an SEOMoz post doesn't mention the fantastic SEOMoz Custom Crawl! providing your website isn't TOO big, in which case Screaming Spider is my preferred choice... <http://www.seomoz.org/help/crawl-diagnostics>

### [Reply 2 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Hi Gerry,

Thanks for mentioning the SEOMoz custom crawl! As I mention in the post, all of my crawling is done with custom tools so I completely overlooked the SEOMoz crawler. Nice catch!

Thanks again for the comment :-)

### [Reply 1 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[dergal](#)

For doing what you doing on a frequent basis - I love <http://nielsbosma.se/projects/scotools/> I have a one pager that does the following - site:with www site:without www (returning the numbers), Page rank (which I tend to ignore), Dmoz ranks (mr,sd,pa,da & links) then the homepage analysis of metadata (inc robots meta), checks the headers on the sitemap.xml / robots.txt and a random page to see if it is properly a 404 (it also looks at code to text ratio but I haven't actually got into my head what a good number is!) once printed this doubles up as my note paper for it all the rest of the audit!

### [Reply 1 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks for the resource Gerry! I'll definitely take a look.

A few weeks ago, I posted a list of 33 free SEO tools that also includes a lot of helpful audit-related tools. If anyone's interested in the link, hit me up on Twitter (@webbstuff).

[Reply 1 0](#)



• Saforweb Design

[a year ago](#)

[Safor web Design](#)

With this post you have become a dealer... a very good dealer, and I love your drug... Great job!!!

[Reply 2 0](#)



o

[a year ago](#)

[Steve Webb](#)

Haha... I love it! An SEO audit drug dealer... I might need to redesign my business cards ;-)

Thanks for the comment!

[Reply 2 0](#)



•

[a year ago](#)

[Robin Moore](#)

Great post. Lots of actionable stuff and links to tools. I guess those audits you run take quite some time to compile and produce.

Do you find yourself repeating the same findings and recommendations to a number of different clients? i.e. Do you find the mix of SEO issues vary across clients but the recommendations for fixes remain consistent and therefore repeatable?

[Reply 2 0](#)



o

[a year ago](#)

[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks Robin!

My first few audits were somewhat time consuming because I was still figuring out the best way to present all of my findings. But once I nailed down a format I really liked, my turnaround time dropped dramatically.

I actually see a surprising amount of variety in the observations for each individual client. There are obviously a few big things that a lot of clients consistently overlook (e.g.,

correctly handling WWW vs. non-WWW canonicalization), but for the most part, I always tend to find at least a few issues that make me say, "Whoa... I can't say that I've seen that before" (for better or worse :-P).

Most of the fundamental SEO recommendations stay consistent from one client to the next (particularly the on-page optimizations). The variety typically comes into play when discussing larger strategic decisions (e.g., revising the site's information architecture, creating new techniques for acquiring high quality backlinks, generating more social engagement, etc.).

Thanks again for the comment!

[Reply 2 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[sunshinebizz](#)

After Panda and other updates, i think there are many people who are looking at their sites and looking for ways to improve ranking.

Lets be honest here, many of us tried the link building services and maybe were spending less time looking at sites internal ranking factors.

Good post, thank you.

[Reply 2 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

You're very welcome :-)

The recent updates have definitely put additional emphasis on high quality content and backlinks, but regardless of the algorithm changes, it's always a good idea to have a comprehensive view of your site's overall SEO health (both on-page and off-page).

[Reply 1 0](#)



Member  
[a year ago](#)  
[MattBarker](#)

Outrageously useful! Thanks!

[Reply 2 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Outrageously useful... I love it! Thanks for the comment Matt :-)

[Reply 1 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[Vipul Makwana](#)

Its Really Informative Post and easily and well explained by **Steve** ....

Thanks a Lot :)

[Reply 2 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

You're very welcome Vipul! I'm really glad you enjoyed the post :-)

Thanks for the comment!

[Reply 1 0](#)



Member  
[a year ago](#)  
[xoffie](#)

Wow

Honestly, this is awesome, just got over half way thru going thru my site with this and all the tool suggestions. Bookmarked and thoroughly well done! Thanks so much for creating this, top job.

[Reply 2 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

You're very welcome! I'm glad to hear you're putting it to good use on your site :-)

Let me know if you run into any problems, and thanks for reading (and commenting)!

[Reply 1 0](#)





[a year ago](#)  
[Jims pat](#)

Since last 2 days I am finding the missing point for the audit report so that I can say "aha!!! Steve you have missed that", but I failed :-).

You have done really a great job, this can be the great check list for the on-page analysis. Very much helpful for the beginners.

Again, Salute from my side steve.

[Reply 2 0](#)



o [a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Haha... I really appreciate the thorough audit of my audit :-)

Thanks for the kind words... I'm glad you enjoyed the post!

[Reply 1 0](#)



Member  
[a year ago](#)  
[letsnurture](#)

superb steve.. your efforts are paying back in comment flow :)

you mentioned pretty good resources as well.. so ultimately it turns out like.. why to save 10 different bookmarks instead let's just save Steve's this post :)

And about seo auditing .. it is going to be one of the important factors.. Internet is maturing . the way websites are being developed and deployed . .. site performance, seo audit will be prime focus for online business

[Reply 2 0](#)



o [a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks Ketan!

I wasn't kidding... I genuinely want to break this year's comment record ;-) I've seen a few with 200+ comments so we still have an uphill climb, but I'm game if the community is!

I completely agree with you about the importance of an audit. It establishes an important baseline, which can help you make valuable decisions (and then evaluate those decisions in the future).

Thanks again for the comment!

#### [Reply 1 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[vinod.duvasi](#)

Hey Steve

As your post title says World's Greatest SEO Audit. But I would love to say World's Greatest SEO Audit Blog Post.

Truly Awsome Steve.

Keep the Good Work on : )

#### [Reply 2 0](#)



o [a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Thank you Vinod; I really appreciate that :-)

Thanks for reading and commenting!

#### [Reply 1 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[Siddu-Hosageri](#)

Good check list,

The best practice note to SEO learners. Thanks a lot steve

#### [Reply 2 0](#)



o

[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

You're very welcome! Thanks for the comment :-)

[Reply 1 0](#)



Associate

[a year ago](#)  
[evolvingSEO](#)

Steve... well done and thoroughly put together! I should definitely be a bit more mindful of user agents when using Screaming Frog.

I also think I'll show this to clients when they don't seem to comprehend how long an audit can take :)

[Reply 2 0](#)



o

[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks Dan!

Speaking of user agents, I've run into a WordPress plugin that returns a 403 if you make an HTTP request with a search engine user agent (but not an approved search engine IP). Needless to say, as an auditor, I'm not a fan :-P

I really like that client strategy... "Why is the audit taking so long?!" [link to obscenely long audit post] KNOWLEDGE BOMB!

Thanks again for the comment :-)

[Reply 1 0](#)



Associate

[a year ago](#)  
[richardbaxterseo](#)

Very nicely done! Just distributing this round our offices :-)

[Reply 2 0](#)



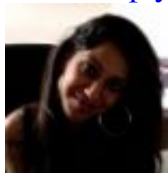
o

[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks Richard! That really means a lot to me.

Let me know what the office thinks about it :-)

[Reply 1 0](#)



Member

[a year ago](#)

[ally biring](#)

This a great post! I have a review of my first Audit coming up so I will be referencing this to see if I have missed out anything.

Thanks for this!

[Reply 2 0](#)



[a year ago](#)

[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks Ally! I'm really glad you enjoyed it.

Good luck on your first audit... let me know how it goes :-)

[Reply 1 0](#)



[a year ago](#)

[nico86](#)

**Awesome** post! One of the best I've ever read! Useful and complete!

[Reply 2 0](#)



[a year ago](#)

[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks Nicola!

This might be the nicest comment I've ever read :-) I'm really happy you enjoyed the post.

[Reply 1 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[Pawel Rabinek](#)

Steve, this is very good article with all important aspects of SEO audit! I would add a mention of h1-h6 headings, and their proper implementation on the page. There is also free tool "Seoptimer" for most important on-page SEO check.

[Reply 2 0](#)



o

[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Pawel, thanks for the feedback! I discussed h1 headings, but you're right: I should have at least mentioned the others.

I agree about Seoptimer; I actually wrote this post before my recent free SEO tools post (and I only found out about the tool AFTER that post). That's a lot of before and afters :-P

Thanks again for the comment!

[Reply 1 0](#)



•

[a year ago](#)  
[onjon](#)

I am delighted to start my day reading this article. Very good resource to bookmark and read it again.

[Reply 2 0](#)



o

[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks Sanjoy; I'm really glad you enjoyed it! Hopefully, it'll be even better the second time around :-)

[Reply 1 0](#)



•

[a year ago](#)  
[jamesagate](#)

Incredible post Steve - really helpful to anyone wanting to do an audit and in all fairness just as useful for seasoned pros looking for a solid checklist.

[Reply 2 0](#)



o

[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks James!

Coming from someone that's about to be rocking an SEOMoz t-shirt, that feedback really means a lot :-)

[Reply 1 0](#)



•

[a year ago](#)  
[Jolora](#)

Thanks Steve! That's a brilliantly thorough checklist and actually bought up a few things I had never even considered before (e.g. keywords in image file names)

[Reply 2 0](#)



o

[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

You're very welcome Joe!

Thanks for the kind words; I'm really glad the post was useful for you :-)

[Reply 1 0](#)



•

[a year ago](#)  
[Marshall Sontag](#)

Total Cost of Implementation: **\$43,956.13**

[Reply 2 0](#)



o

[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Haha... Marshall, I want royalties!!!

;-)

[Reply 2 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[Crimson Penguin](#)

Thank you very much for sharing this with us Steve. You've already given me some great tips to improve my auditing process. I look forward to implementing your advice in my next audit! Many thanks. Adam.

[Reply 2 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks for the comment Adam! I'm really glad the post was useful :-)

Good luck with those future audits!

(By the way, I love your username: "Crimson Penguin" - it's extremely timely.)

Edited a year ago by Steve Webb

[Reply 1 0](#)



Member

[a year ago](#)  
[Jamie Hands](#)

Great post and a lot of hard work has gone into this report. What I may consider adding is ensuring that the seo strategy is actually targeting the key phrases that support the business objective of the seo campaign. So many times I see seo audits but there is little attention based on the actual objective of what is trying to be achieved and the roadmap of how they will get there. I personally see the business objectives and key phrases as the foundations of the strategy. Afterall, if the wrong key phrases are targeted then you run the danger of attracting the wrong visitors and all else is in vain. Great post and well done.

[Reply 2 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Jamie, I couldn't agree more!

To your point, there are at least two considerations here:

**(1) Is the site correctly targeting the keyword phrases that the client intended to target?**

This question is easily answered by the audit. If the client wanted to target X but the site actually targets Y, there's obviously a disconnect.

**(2) Do any of the targeted keywords (intentional or unintentional) actually have commercial value for the client?**

If the client isn't already leveraging appropriate analytics (e.g., goal tracking), this question is much more difficult to answer during the audit. Many of our clients don't have analytics (on any level) installed before they hire us. In those cases, the technical SEO audit quickly morphs into a much larger strategic audit.

Thanks again for your comment... it brought up an extremely important point!

[Reply 1 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[juliensimon](#)

Great post! This is pretty much my process as well so it's good to see that I have been doing things right. I didn't know about the "&start=990" trick so thanks for that!

[Reply 2 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks Julien! Let me know if your process includes things that I overlooked in this post; I'm always looking for new ideas to incorporate :-)

[Reply 2 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[juliensimon](#)

There are a couple of tools that I find useful when doing an SEO audit:

builtwith.com: I do this first to know what I'm dealing with.

gtmetrix.com | similar to pingdom tool but it has two different tools in one + shows history of page speed (if you have run the tool before) so you can compare easily with past data.

ragepank.com/redirect-check/: find duplicate version of the home page

spyonweb.com: am I sharing hosting/ server IP with "shady" sites that could bring me down

One thing I look at (although not obsess about it) is the code to text ratio. Other than that, I have a few plugins that I use. Do you use these tools? I read that you posted a



list of 33 SEO tools. I would be interested to know which ones you use. I have a spreadsheet as well that I could share if interested. you can touch base with me here or on twitter: @julien\_simon

Thanks Steve!

[Reply 1 0](#)



■ [a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Hi Julien,

The list of free SEO tools that I recently posted has half of the ones you mentioned so I need to look at those other ones :-)

If you search "33 free SEO tools," it should be near the top at the moment... but I'll also send you a link on Twitter.

Thanks for your comments... I really appreciate the feedback!

[Reply 1 0](#)



■ [a year ago](#)  
[juliensimon](#)

don't want to get backlinks from the comments here? :) Found it, thanks.

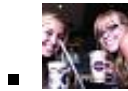
[Reply 1 0](#)



■ [a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

I'd love the additional backlink... I just don't want to be even more self-promotional than I already have been ;-)

[Reply 1 0](#)



■ [a year ago](#)  
[CourtneySheets](#)

Hi Julien,

I'm interested in seeing your spreadsheet if you'd allow me to. If you could, send it to my email that is shown on my profile, that would be great! I'm going to look through your little list of SEO audit tools. However, I am somewhat new to SEO and am curious, doesn't SEOMoz PRO include a tool for the type of crawling the article mentions?

Thanks

Great article Steve, this sort of all-inclusive information is a Godsend!

[Reply 1 0](#)



■ [a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks Denise!

To answer your question, yes... SEOMoz PRO includes a crawling tool (someone linked to it in a comment below). Since I do all of my crawling with custom tools, I accidentally overlooked the SEOMoz crawler :-)

Thanks again for reading and commenting!

[Reply 1 0](#)



● Member  
[a year ago](#)  
[zumiez](#)

Great post. Any posts that you can recommend on how to perform a site audit on a site that has not indexed, not submitted to search engines and has yet to be launched?

[Reply 2 0](#)



○ [a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks Matt!

Just to make sure I understand your question, is the site still under development (and protected by a login wall)?

[Reply 1 0](#)



■ [a year ago](#)  
[zumiez](#)

Yes, the site is still under development and has disallowed crawling. Any tools or additional audits that you can recommend for a development site? I've used all your

recommendations to the extent at which we can :)

### [Reply 1 0](#)



■ [a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

I'm not sure if Screaming Frog has functionality that would let you crawl behind a login wall :-/

So unless you have custom code (like the stuff I use for my audits), you might have to do some manual investigations.

Does anyone know if Screaming Frog supports importing pages directly (i.e., bypassing the actual crawling and just performing the analysis)? If so, that could get you much closer to your ultimate goal.

Unfortunately, I'm just not a Screaming Frog guru because I usually use my own stuff. I suggest reaching out to Dan Sharp on Twitter (@screamingfrog); he's a great guy, and I'm sure he could also help answer some of your questions :-)

### [Reply 2 0](#)



■ [a year ago](#)  
[Microsys](#)

Well,

A1 Website Analyzer can be configured to login, but it won't work with all sites.

(Hit me up if you need help. Be sure to check the help page concerning login)

A1WA is a tool much like xenu/frog, i.e. broken links, duplicate url, see internal link juice distribution, search for custom code/text search etc.

Another more general solution. Add some custom code that checks against user agent which is white-listed. Then just change the user agent string in A1WA/Xenu/Frog/whatever. (It is really the simplest solution in many cases.)

Edited a year ago by MiriamEllis

### [Reply 1 0](#)



■ [a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks for that information! I haven't heard anything from Matt so I'm hoping that means he found a solution :-)

### [Reply 1 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[gpag](#)

Great checklist. In my bookmarks now for the next audit.

[Reply 2 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks! I hope it's helpful when you're performing your next audit :-)

[Reply 1 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[disalevikas](#)

Awesome Post. You really shared lots of quality resources for further read. I really like to try some tools you mentioned. Just Bookmarked your post and shared on twitter as well.

Edited a year ago by disalevikas

[Reply 2 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Thank you Vikas!

I'm really glad you enjoyed the post, and I really appreciate you sharing it with your followers :-)

Thanks again!

[Reply 1 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[Anne Webb](#)

Awesome article. Well done. You really presented an article with a wealth of information, written in a fantastic format. Can't wait to read more of your articles.

[Reply 2 0](#)

o

[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Oh, snap... the family members are coming out of the woodwork! Now, it's a PARTY!!!

Thanks for the support :-)

[Reply 1 0](#)

•

[a year ago](#)  
[hv0404](#)

Great post and will def bookmark for future reference.

[Reply 2 0](#)

o

[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Thank you! Hopefully, it's even better on the second (and third) read-through :-)

[Reply 1 0](#)

•

[a year ago](#)  
[blu42media](#)

Good stuff indeed! Like Mark, I use Danny's list as a reference. It looks like I'll be expanding the reference list with tips from your post now too. Awesome job!

[Reply 2 0](#)

o

[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks for the kind words!

I'm really glad the post is helpful :-)

[Reply 1 0](#)



• [a year ago](#)  
[motwguy](#)

Good write up. I would add check the 404 error page. In the course of auditing websites I have found several that had poor or non-existent 404 pages. One customer's host displayed a random, but genetic (you had no idea what you had landed on) page with ads on it.

The 404 page should provide feedback that identifies the business, explains that the page is missing, and provide suggestions for alternate content and navigation!

### [Reply 2 0](#)



◦ [a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks John!

You're absolutely right... checking the 404 page is very important (and I also have crazy stories involving 404-related "adventures" with client sites). If I could give you multiple thumbs up, I would ;-)

Thanks again for the comment!

### [Reply 1 0](#)



• Member  
[a year ago](#)  
[Ewan Kennedy](#)

Hi Steve,

I just thought I'd help you get to that record-breaking comment count by adding another.

As with all the SEOMoz posts I read, I read every word of this one, including the comments.

This was a mammoth effort. I enjoyed reading it and learned a lot.

One thing that struck me was the precision with which you write. I don't think there's a comma, misspelling or space out of place in the whole article which makes it all the more impressive.

I was half way through a very short post on my own blog when notification of this one landed in my inbox and a link to this one will round it off nicely tomorrow.

Cheers.

[Reply 2 0](#)

o

[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Haha... Ewan, you caught me! I proofread everything way, WAY too much. It's one of the many reasons I rarely sleep ;-)

I genuinely appreciate you helping me smash the comment record... we're slowly creeping up there.

I'm really glad you enjoyed the post (and even more pleased that it taught you something).

Thanks again for your support!

[Reply 1 0](#)

•

[a year ago](#)  
[Labolong](#)

Hi Steve

You give me enlightenment about SEO Audit

a very useful article

Best Regards

Ahmad M

[Reply 2 0](#)

o

[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks Ahmad! I'm really glad you enjoyed the post :-)

[Reply 1 0](#)

•

Member  
[a year ago](#)  
[Takeshi Young](#)

Thanks, that's a very comprehensive checklist!

### [Reply 2 0](#)



o

[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

You're very welcome; I'm glad you enjoyed it :-)

### [Reply 1 0](#)



o

[a year ago](#)  
[King Rosales](#)

I agree! very comprehensive guide. Bravo Steve, it must have been a monster to write.

### [Reply 1 0](#)



■

[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks for the comment!

I spend a lot of time writing up audit reports so this was a pleasure to write :-)

Thanks again for the support!

### [Reply 1 0](#)



■

[9 months ago](#)  
[terramar1](#)

How much do you think a reasonable SEO audit would cost for a typical website? What would you charge to do an audit like this one?

### [Reply 1 0](#)



■

[9 months ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Hi Russell,

I answered a similar cost-related question in [another comment](#). For more details about our prices, check out our [SEO audit page](#).

We tend to charge less than many agencies because my process is more efficient than most. This is also one of the reasons why other agencies



outsource their audits to us.

If you have any other questions, shoot me an email, or contact me on Twitter.

Thanks for the comment!

[Reply 1 0](#)



Member

[a year ago](#)

[calindaniel](#)

Awesome, awesome, awesome - this needs to be converted into an ebook. Thanks for sharing your process Steve.

[Reply 2 0](#)



[a year ago](#)

[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks, thanks, and thanks some more :-)

And I love the eBook idea!

Thanks for reading and commenting!!!

[Reply 1 0](#)



Member

[a year ago](#)

[Saijo.George](#)

Thanks Stevo

this is something that I will be coming back to from time to time. Great write up

[Reply 2 0](#)



[a year ago](#)

[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks Saijo! I'm really glad you enjoyed it :-)

[Reply 1 0](#)



• [a year ago](#)  
[rodrigompaz](#)

Thanks Steve, a very helpful post for those who are starting their consulting business (like me) and still don't have the process well incorporated.

Keep writing this kind of megaposts!

Thanks.

[Reply 2 0](#)



○ [a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Hi Rodrigo,

You're very welcome! I'm really glad you enjoyed the post.

Good luck with the new consulting business :-)

[Reply 1 0](#)



• [a year ago](#)  
[Michelle Berkey](#)

Steve, I'm one of those small business owners who wears a zillion different hats. And this summer, I need to review one of our old websites (that's still key to our business). I can't tell you how grateful I am this morning to find your audit post and links. It will really be a huge benefit to me in the upcoming weeks. Thanks very much for making it available.

[Reply 2 0](#)



○ [a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Michelle, I'm right there with you. Web Gnomes is also a small business (with a huge heart :-P).

I'm really happy that this post can help you improve your site.

Thanks for the comment!

[Reply 1 0](#)

[a year ago](#)  
[blakethomas](#)

Well done, Steve.

[Reply 2 0](#)

[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Cheers Blake! Thanks for stopping by; I really, really appreciate your support :-)

[Reply 1 0](#)

Member  
[a year ago](#)  
[Nick Stamoulis](#)

"I can't tell you how many times I've researched someone's "search engine penalty" only to find an accidentally noindexed page or a small shuffle in the search engine rankings."

I've run into the same situation time and time again. That's why it's so important that site owners don't panic. An SEO audit is no quick or easy task, and if you do the whole thing only to find you weren't actually penalized then it was a waste of time.

[Reply 2 0](#)

[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks for the comment Nick!

I agree that site owners should absolutely stay calm (even during the recent wave of Penguin and Panda updates), but I don't think audits are ever a waste of time (if done correctly). Even if a site wasn't actually penalized, having an accurate account of the site's SEO is incredibly valuable for establishing a baseline that can be used to evaluate future SEO experiments.

Thanks again for reading (and commenting); I really appreciate the discussion!

[Reply 1 0](#)



Member

[a year ago](#)  
[mklofurno](#)

Thanks - as others have posted..its nice to have the process laid out. Intrnally speaking, I do it in pieces and have to assign importance to what should be fixed first, as there is always a fight for resources.

Best Regards,

Mary Kay Lofurno

[Reply 2 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

You're very welcome Mary Kay... thanks for reading and commenting :-)

And you're absolutely right: prioritization is key! Especially with larger sites that require a significant overhaul.

Thanks again for the comment!

[Reply 1 0](#)



Member

[a year ago](#)  
[George LaRochelle](#)

Great post, good flow, easy to read and even better details. Saving to pocket for reference.

[Reply 2 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks George! I'm really glad you enjoyed it :-)

[Reply 1 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[figurehead](#)

thanks for this great article! I want to excel in site audits and you gave me a great shortcut. This was the missing link between all the bits and pieces i've collected so far on the web and by experience.

[Reply 2 0](#)



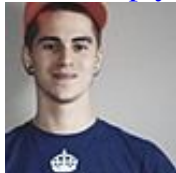
o

[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

You're very welcome! I'm glad I could help you fill in the gaps :-)

Good luck on your audits, and thanks for the comment!

[Reply 1 0](#)



•

[a year ago](#)  
[G-Force](#)

Wonderful post, good job! I'll definitely bookmark this page.

[Reply 2 0](#)



o

[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks Guillaume! I really appreciate the support :-)

[Reply 1 0](#)



•

[a year ago](#)  
[ricksekhon](#)

Thanks for sharing a great stuff here, quite a lengthy but very useful, detailed and complete post. Enjoyed reading it.

[Reply 2 0](#)



o

[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

I'm really glad you enjoyed it! Thanks for reading and commenting :-)

[Reply 2 0](#)

• [a year ago](#)  
[iceman007](#)

Today I learned a lot from this Post and definitely I will be going to apply all the stuff. Thanks man for this. ;)

[Reply 2 0](#)

◦ [a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

You're very welcome! I'm really glad you learned from it!

Good luck incorporating the tips in your own SEO work, and thanks for commenting!

[Reply 1 0](#)

• Member  
[a year ago](#)  
[derrickkuhn](#)

Whoa - what an article...post...book! This was incredible and highly useful. Rarely do we see this much information provided in one area. Usually we're subjected to finding all of this information on our own. So, I just want to throw some appreciation your way - SEOMoz definitely did some good to promote this one to the main blog! Bravo!!

[Reply 2 0](#)

◦ [a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Thank you Derrick for those incredibly kind words :-)

I'm really glad you enjoyed the post... and I'm also quite happy that SEOMoz promoted it ;-)

Thanks again for reading and commenting!

[Reply 1 0](#)



• [a year ago](#)  
[rstarost](#)

Very impressive. Sure it was long but well written and extremely helpful with supporting images and links. Really nice job!

[Reply 2 0](#)



○ [a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks for making it all the way through (and for leaving a comment)! I'm really glad you enjoyed the post :-)

[Reply 2 0](#)



• Member  
[a year ago](#)  
[bluelynxmarketing](#)

Steve,

I am very grateful that you took the time to put something this comprehensive together. The fact that you may be publishing a follow up post that includes the details of the audit report is awesome to hear. Again, thank you so much for sharing something that you totally could have charged for.

[Reply 2 0](#)



○ [a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Kevin,

I'm really glad to hear you enjoyed the post :-)

If there's a big demand for it, I'll absolutely put together a post about the actual audit report.

Thanks for reading and commenting... I genuinely appreciate it!

[Reply 2 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[Max Holloway](#)

This really is an absolute behemoth!

I wish Blekko et al would update their indexes more often.

Edited a year ago by Max Holloway

[Reply 2 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Behemoth was what I was shooting for so... SUCCESS!

And blekko's still growing... give them time, and I'm sure their index will get better and better. I have nothing but praise for them, primarily because they're one of the only engines that's willing to publicly reveal SEO information about any site in their index.

Thanks again for the comment Max; I really appreciate it!

[Reply 2 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[bradkrussell](#)

Woah - I first saw this and thought 'WALLOFTEXT'.

But then I started reading. And then I read some more. And then I finished.

The most comprehensive and useful article on site audits I have seen. Great job Steve!

[Reply 2 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks for hanging in until the end Brad :-)

I'm really glad you enjoyed it!

[Reply 1 0](#)





- [a year ago](#)  
[humili](#)

It is indeed how Seo audit should be. On the other hand, it doing the submission bit by bit somehow becomes a tedious chore, alternative choice is to outsource the report of the seo work to seo services professionals.

Edited a year ago by KeriMorgret

[Reply 1 0](#)



- [a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks for the comment!

Outsourcing audits is definitely a viable option... and I know of at least one guy that does a lot of them ;-)

Edited a year ago by Steve Webb

[Reply 1 0](#)



- [a year ago](#)  
[Keyword Search Pros](#)

Great write up. As noted by several other commenters this style of auditing best fits the writers needs, this not dont mean it will work well for every site.

If your like most business owners you don't have the time to audit your SEO or therefore audit the company or person conducting the SEO. This requires businesses owners to choose a parter they trust, like SEOmoz or www.KeywordSearchPros.com. Which ever route you take make sure the underpinnings of a great business relationship have been established.

[Reply 1 0](#)



- [a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks for the comment!

[Reply 1 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[Brad Dalton](#)

You recommend Google Webmaster Tools yet its common knowledge thier data is insanely inaccurate so why are you promoting them?

[Reply 1 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[jamesagate](#)

Hi Brad,

I'm with Steve on this one because it makes sense to understand how Google views your site (or your client's site) by using their tools since you are likely optimising for Google.

I will quote Julie Joyce on this one: "if you plan to count on Google for anything at all, you need to be in sync with how they view your site, period." (taken from <http://searchenginewatch.com/article/2182078/Link-Building-From-Scratch>)

I take your point though Brad about some inaccuracies so we always find GWT more of a starting point that the complete thing :-)

James

[Reply 2 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

I'm just going to +1 James and pretend I wrote that response... he really nailed it :-)

As James explains... if you're going to play Google's game, you need as much information from them as possible. And even if their information is inconsistent (or inaccurate), monitoring GWT is still important for the simple fact that it's the interface Google uses for sending out notices (e.g., unnatural links notices). As Matt Cutts explicitly stated at SMX, if you're being penalized (i.e., a manual action has been taken against your site), you will generally receive a notice about it in GWT.

Another important point I tried to make in this post (and have emphasized elsewhere) is that multiple data sources are necessary for truly insightful observations. With that in mind, I already mentioned Bing Webmaster Tools, but today's Whiteboard Friday dives into the new features of that recently overhauled tool:

[Phoenix Rising: Bing's New Webmaster Tools - Whiteboard Friday](#)

[Reply 1 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[Abby Daniels](#)

Awesome bro! Jsut what I needed...Bookmarked! If any can give me some info on good opportunities, lets chat on Skype. Skype ID is... AbiiDaniels

[Reply 1 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks Abby! I'm really glad you enjoyed it :-)

[Reply 1 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[Imby](#)

Great stuff, learned a lot from this article, thanks for posting Steve

Imby Paul

Edited a year ago by KeriMorgret

[Reply 1 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[TimLCooley](#)

I was curious how you go about using a video from vimeo or youtube without using the iframes?

[Reply 1 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Hi Tim,

When you click the embed button on YouTube, you'll see the iframe code and a few checkboxes. Check the box that says, "Use old embed code," and the iframe code will be replaced with the old embed code.

When you click the share button on Vimeo, you need to click the "+Customize embed options" link at the bottom right of the share screen. Then, from the area that drops down, click on the link that says, "Use old embed code" (this will replace the iframe code with the old embed code). But be forewarned that Vimeo no longer supports the embed code.

I hope that helps :-)

#### [Reply 1 0](#)



Member

[a year ago](#)

[CristianGuasch](#)

I suggest to include the meta canonical on the Crawl/Indexation part, because it's not related to on-page ranking factors. It's more related to indexation of that page. If you misspell or link incorrect to another page on the href of the canonical tag it will drop your page from rankings... I will add another few things to the audit, one is the HTTP cannoincalization, another is internacionalization (languages, domains, folders, alternate tags, etc), and domains (ccTLD redirecting to the .com or whatever, www. and non-www., etc).  
Thanks for the post :)

#### [Reply 1 0](#)



[a year ago](#)

[Steve Webb](#)

Hi Cristian,

Thanks for the feedback!

Feel free to put your link checks in the indexation part of your audits. The important thing is that you actually do those checks :-)

Just to clarify one point, you shouldn't be worried about a non-canonical page dropping from the rankings because as soon as you label it as such, that is a potential outcome.

You're using the canonical tag to protect the canonical page from duplicates (not to protect the duplicates).

I completely agree with you about HTTP canonicalization and internationalization. I touched on the former a little in previous comments (and Dr. Pete covers it really well in his duplicate content post that I linked to). As for the latter, if you're working with a site that targets multilingual visitors, international SEO considerations must be included in the audit.

Thanks again for the comment!

Edited a year ago by Steve Webb

[Reply 0 0](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[Shivbhadra Gohil](#)

I can call this one a complete guide for SEO Audit!

I want to inform you that the subfolder and subdomains are now considered same in the eye of GoogleBot.

**"Is the URL using subfolders instead of subdomains?** Subdomains are mostly treated as unique domains when it comes to passing link juice. Subfolders don't have this problem, and as a result, they are typically preferred over subdomains."

Checkout Google's official announcement:

<http://googlewebmastercentral.blogspot.com/2011/08/reorganizing-internal-vs-external.html>

Thanks Steve.

[Reply 2 1](#)



[a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

Thanks for the comment Shivbhadra!

I want to clarify what that Google announcement says:

"Most people think of example.com and www.example.com as the same site these days, so we're changing it such that now, if you add either example.com or www.example.com as a site, links from both the www and non-www versions of the domain will be categorized as internal links. We've also extended this idea to include other subdomains, since many people who own a domain also own its subdomains—so links from cats.example.com or pets.example.com will also be categorized as internal links for www.example.com."

The announcement is saying that Google will treat backlinks to your various subdomains as "internal" links instead of "external" links (from a reporting standpoint). This is to give you more useful information as a webmaster.

However, from a link analysis standpoint (particularly as it relates to PageRank), subdomains are still treated differently than folders.

If that is still unclear, please let me know, and I'll try to explain it differently :-)

[Reply 6 0](#)



- [a year ago](#)  
[pramodpv](#)

Oh my head is reeling!! i would love the explanation....

[Reply 1 0](#)



- [a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

The announcement above is only about how Google Webmaster Tools (GWT) reports backlinks... not how Google treats domains for the purposes of calculating PageRank (or any other link-related metrics).

Prior to the announced change, GWT was being very strict when differentiating between internal and external links. As the announcement explains, "Previously, only links that started with your site's exact URL would be categorized as internal links: if you entered `www.example.com` as your site, links from `example.com` would be considered external because they don't start with the same URL as your site (they don't contain `www`)."

The announcement is simply stating that GWT will report your subdomain links as "internal links" (not external links). The announcement is NOT saying that all subdomains will be treated the same when it comes to calculating PageRank (or any other link-related metrics).

[Reply 3 0](#)



- [a year ago](#)  
[pramodpv](#)

Thanks for the information, i was just about planning to move my blog currently hosted on my subdomain to a folder. Whew!! it would have been a waste of time.. Thanks ShivBhadra

[Reply 1 0](#)



- [a year ago](#)  
[Steve Webb](#)

If you've already started posting on your blog (and acquiring links), I wouldn't worry about it. But if the blog is brand new (and hasn't had time to gain any authority), you might want to consider hosting it from a folder.

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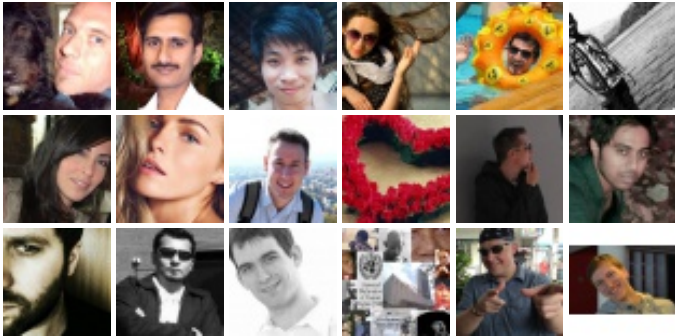


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