FREE DIY PLAYBOOK

The Technical SEO Checklist Playbook

Speed, mobile, indexing and site health for small business websites. No coding required.

- 50-point checklist
- Search Console walkthrough
- Redesign and migration safety plan

SmallBiz Marketing
Written by the SmallBiz Marketing team · smallbizmarketing.net
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Technical SEO without the jargon

Technical SEO makes sure search engines can find, read and trust your website. If something here is broken, great content will not rank. The good news: modern website builders handle most of it, so a small business owner mainly needs to check, not build.

Work through this playbook once now, then repeat the monthly checks.

Chapter 1: Can Google find your pages?

Sitemap

A sitemap is a file that lists your pages. Most builders create it automatically at yoursite.com/sitemap.xml. Submit it in Google Search Console under Sitemaps, and check that the status says Success.

robots.txt

This file tells crawlers what they may visit. Open yoursite.com/robots.txt and make sure it does not contain "Disallow: /" for all crawlers, which blocks the whole site.

The Pages report

In Search Console, open Indexing > Pages. It lists indexed pages and the reasons others are not indexed.

Status	What it means	What to do
Discovered - currently not indexed	Google knows the URL but has not crawled it yet	Link to it from important pages; request indexing for key pages
Crawled - currently not indexed	Google read it and chose not to index it	Improve the content or merge thin pages
Excluded by noindex tag	The page tells Google not to index it	Fine for thank-you pages; fix it if it is a real page
Not found (404)	The URL no longer exists	Redirect it if it had value or links
Page with redirect	The URL redirects elsewhere	Normal after a move
Duplicate without user-selected canonical	Google sees near-copies	Merge pages or set a canonical

> NOTE
> Search Console reports run a few days behind. Use the URL Inspection tool to see the live status of one page.

Request indexing for important new pages

1. Paste the page URL into the URL Inspection bar at the top of Search Console.
2. If it says URL is not on Google, click Request indexing.
3. Use this for important pages only; there is a daily limit.

Google Search Console

Chapter 2: Speed and page experience

Slow pages lose visitors, especially on phones. Test your key pages in PageSpeed Insights and focus on the mobile result.

PageSpeed Insights

Core Web Vitals in plain words

Metric	What it measures	Common fix
LCP (Largest Contentful Paint)	How fast the main content appears	Compress the hero image, remove heavy sliders
INP (Interaction to Next Paint)	How quickly the page responds to taps	Remove unneeded apps, chat widgets and scripts
CLS (Cumulative Layout Shift)	Whether things jump around while loading	Set image sizes, avoid pop-ups that push content

Quick speed wins

- [ ] Compress large images (aim for under about 300 KB each)
- [ ] Remove apps, widgets and embeds you no longer use
- [ ] Avoid autoplay video backgrounds on mobile
- [ ] Limit custom fonts to one or two families
- [ ] Use your builder's built-in image optimization

Chapter 3: Mobile-friendly

Google indexes the mobile version of your site, so the phone experience is the one that counts.

- [ ] Text is readable without zooming
- [ ] Buttons and links are big enough to tap
- [ ] Nothing is cut off or overflows the screen
- [ ] Forms are easy to fill in on a phone
- [ ] Pop-ups do not cover the content on arrival

Chapter 4: Security and trust

- [ ] The site loads on https with a valid certificate
- [ ] http and non-www versions redirect to the main version
- [ ] Contact details and policies are easy to find
- [ ] No spammy or hacked content (check Security & Manual Actions in Search Console)

Chapter 5: Duplicate and thin pages

Small sites often collect duplicates over time: test pages, old versions, copied location pages, tag and category archives. They split your signals and waste crawling.

- Delete or noindex pages with no purpose (old drafts, test pages, placeholder products).
- Merge pages that cover the same topic, and redirect the old one.
- Make each location or service page genuinely different, or combine them.

Chapter 6: Structured data

Structured data (schema) describes your business in a format machines understand: LocalBusiness, Service, Product, FAQ, Review. Many builders add basic schema; you can add more through your SEO settings or a plugin.

Test with the Rich Results Test

> KEEP IT HONEST
> Only mark up information that is visible on the page. Fake reviews or hidden FAQ schema break Google's guidelines.

Chapter 7: Redesigns and migrations

A redesign is the most common time small businesses lose rankings. Follow this before you launch:

1. Export a list of every current URL (from your sitemap or Search Console).
2. Note which pages get traffic and links.
3. Keep the same URLs where possible.
4. Map every old URL that changes to its new URL and set 301 redirects.
5. Keep titles, headings and content on pages that rank well.
6. After launch, submit the new sitemap and watch the Pages report for 404s.
7. Compare traffic weekly for the first month.

Chapter 8: Broken links and redirects

- Crawl your site with a free crawler to find broken links. Screaming Frog SEO Spider is free for up to 500 URLs.
- Fix internal links that point to deleted pages.
- Avoid redirect chains (A to B to C); point straight to the final page.

Screaming Frog SEO Spider

The technical SEO checklist

Crawling and indexing

- [ ] Sitemap submitted and showing Success
- [ ] robots.txt does not block the site
- [ ] All key pages indexed (URL Inspection)
- [ ] No important page set to noindex
- [ ] Thank-you and private pages set to noindex

Speed and mobile

- [ ] Mobile PageSpeed checked on top 5 pages
- [ ] Images compressed, sizes set
- [ ] Unused apps and scripts removed
- [ ] Text readable and buttons tappable on a phone

Security and duplicates

- [ ] https everywhere with one main version of the domain
- [ ] No duplicate or placeholder pages left live
- [ ] Location pages are genuinely unique

Structure

- [ ] Every key page reachable within 3 clicks of the homepage
- [ ] No broken internal links
- [ ] Redirects point straight to the final URL
- [ ] Basic LocalBusiness schema present

Monthly 15-minute check

1. Search Console: Pages report for new errors.
2. Search Console: Security & Manual Actions.
3. PageSpeed on your homepage and best service page.
4. URL Inspection on any page you published this month.
5. Click through your main menu on a phone.

Keep going

More free DIY playbooks from the SmallBiz Marketing team:

The Small Business SEO Playbook (start here)

The Keyword Research Playbook

The On-Page SEO Playbook

The Content & Blogging Playbook

The Links & Citations Playbook

The SEO Tracking & Reporting Playbook

The SEO Budget & Hiring Playbook

All free DIY playbooks

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The SmallBiz Marketing team builds fast, search-ready websites and sets up Google for small businesses. Get in touch through our contact page and tell us what you need.

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