

WUNDERLANDMEDIA

Blog Post SEO Checklist

15 things to check before you hit publish. The only checklist you'll actually use.

By Kemal | wunderlandmedia.com

15

Items That Matter

5

Phases

0

Filler Items

A Before You Write a Single Word

Why This Phase Matters Most

The biggest SEO mistakes happen before you type a single sentence. Getting items 1-3 right saves you from writing a post that was doomed from the start. A post targeting the wrong keyword or ignoring search intent is wasted effort no matter how good the writing is.

1. KEYWORD RESEARCH

- ☐ **1a Pick ONE primary keyword**
Not five, not ten. One. This is the term you're trying to rank for. Everything else supports it.
- ☐ **1b Find 2-3 related/supporting terms**
These appear naturally in your content to show topical depth. For "blog post SEO checklist," related terms: "on-page SEO," "publish checklist."
- ☐ **1c Verify the keyword is specific enough to win**
"SEO" is not a keyword you can rank for with a blog post. "Blog post SEO checklist" is specific enough to actually compete.
- ☐ **1d Check keyword difficulty and search volume**
Use Ahrefs, Semrush, or free tools like Ubersuggest. Aim for keywords where you realistically have a chance given your site's authority.

2. SEARCH INTENT ANALYSIS

- ☐ **2a Google your target keyword and study the top 10**
Are they how-to guides? Listicles? Product pages? Videos? Your post needs to match that format.
- ☐ **2b Match the content format to what's ranking**
If the top 10 are all listicles and you're writing a 5,000-word essay, you're fighting the algorithm.
- ☐ **2c Check "People Also Ask" for related questions**
These are sub-questions your content should address. Each one is a potential H2 or H3 section.
- ☐ **2d Note the average word count of top results**
Don't write 3,000 words if every ranking page is 800. Don't write 500 if competitors are at 2,000. Match the depth.

3. UNIQUE ANGLE

- ☐ **3a Identify what's missing from current results**
Maybe nobody covers the AI angle. Maybe they all skip practical examples. Maybe they're all generic and impersonal.
- ☐ **3b Define your unique value before writing**
Your angle is your reason to exist. Without it, you're another post saying the same things. First-hand experience, proprietary data, or a contrarian take.

STRONG ANGLE

"15-item checklist from auditing 100+ client sites. Here's what I actually check, not what tool companies want you to buy."

NO ANGLE

"A comprehensive guide to blog post SEO best practices for beginners and experts alike in 2026."

B The Content Itself**80%**

of your ranking power comes from content quality. Google's passage ranking lets individual well-structured sections rank independently, which means every H2 is its own mini opportunity.

4. TITLE / H1 TAG

- ☐ **4a Primary keyword in the H1**
This sounds obvious, but I still audit sites where the H1 is clever but keyword-free. Clever doesn't rank. Clear does.
- ☐ **4b H1 matches search intent (not just the keyword)**
If people search for "how to," your H1 should frame it as a how-to. If they want a list, frame it as a list.
- ☐ **4c Exactly one H1 per page**
Multiple H1s dilute topical focus. Your CMS should handle this, but verify.

5. HEADING STRUCTURE

- ☐ **5a Every section gets an H2, subsections get H3s**
Never jump from H2 to H4. This helps readability, accessibility, and SEO. Screen readers and crawlers rely on this.
- ☐ **5b H2s are scannable and contain related keywords**
A reader should understand the entire post from headings alone. "The Thing About SEO" tells nobody anything.
- ☐ **5c 40-55 word answer block after each H2**
A direct, concise answer right after the heading. AI search engines and featured snippets pull from these. This is the 2026 difference.

GOOD H2 + ANSWER BLOCK**## Why Most SEO Checklists Don't Work**

Most SEO checklists are built by tool companies trying to sell you something. They pad to 40+ items so it looks comprehensive... [direct answer continues]

BAD H2**## The Thing You Need to Know**

So I was thinking the other day about how people approach this topic, and it reminded me of something... [no clear answer]

6. WRITING QUALITY

- ☐ **6a Short paragraphs (max 3-4 sentences)**
Walls of text kill engagement. White space is your friend, especially on mobile where 60%+ of readers are.
- ☐ **6b Mixed sentence lengths**
Short punchy sentences. Then a longer one that explains the nuance. This creates rhythm. Read it out loud to check.
- ☐ **6c Keyword used naturally, 3-5 times total**
If it reads like SEO content, you've already lost. Keyword stuffing has been dead for years.
- ☐ **6d Concrete examples, not vague advice**
"I tested this on three client sites" beats "studies show." Specificity builds trust and E-E-A-T signals.

7. INTERNAL LINKS

- ☐ **7a 3-5 relevant internal links per post**
Internal links distribute link equity, signal topical depth, and keep readers engaged longer. The cheapest SEO win available.
- ☐ **7b Descriptive anchor text (never "click here")**
"Our guide on keyword research" tells Google and readers what the target page is about.
- ☐ **7c Link TO older related posts AND update older posts to link BACK**
Every new post should strengthen existing content. This is the step everyone skips.

C Technical SEO (5 Minutes Total)

Quick Wins

These items are fast. Five minutes total for all four. But skipping them is like cooking a great meal and forgetting to plate it. Don't let lazy meta tags waste good content.

8. URL STRUCTURE

- ☐ **8a Short, descriptive, includes keyword**
/blog-post-seo-checklist is good. /2026/05/the-ultimate-complete-blog-post-seo-optimization-checklist-guide is not.
- ☐ **8b No dates in URL (unless genuinely time-sensitive)**
Dates make your content look stale the moment the year changes. News articles are the exception.
- ☐ **8c Lowercase, hyphens only, no parameters**
Google treats hyphens as word separators. Underscores are joined into one word. Keep it clean.

GOOD URL

/blog-post-seo-checklist
/keyword-research-guide

BAD URL

/2026/05/article-id-4829
/p?id=138&cat=seo&ref=home

9. META TITLE

- ☐ **9a Primary keyword near the front**
Keywords closer to the start of the title tag still correlate with better rankings. Front-load, don't bury.
- ☐ **9b Under 60 characters total**
Google truncates beyond ~60 chars. Check with a SERP preview tool before publishing.
- ☐ **9c Compelling enough to click**
Formula: [Primary Keyword] + [Year/Qualifier] + [Brand]. Example: "Blog Post SEO Checklist (2026) | Wunderlandmedia" (46 chars).

10. META DESCRIPTION

- ☐ **10a Under 155 characters**
Google truncates beyond this. Too short and you're wasting SERP real estate. Aim for 140-155.
- ☐ **10b Include a reason to click (don't just summarize, sell)**
"15 things I check before publishing every blog post" tells you exactly what you're getting. Implies practical, personal experience.
- ☐ **10c Primary keyword included once**
Google bolds matching terms in the description. This visual cue increases click-through rate.

5.8% higher CTR from well-written meta descriptions. Google rewrites 63% of them, but when yours shows, it matters. On 10,000 monthly impressions, that's 580 extra clicks. Worth 60 seconds.

11. IMAGE OPTIMIZATION

- ☐ **11a Descriptive alt text on every image**
"Blog post SEO checklist being reviewed before publishing" not "image1.jpg." Accessibility first, SEO second.
- ☐ **11b Images compressed (WebP, under 100KB)**
Large images kill page speed. Use Squoosh, ShortPixel, or ImageOptim. Quality 80-85 is visually identical to 100.
- ☐ **11c Descriptive file names**
blog-post-seo-checklist-keyword-research.webp tells Google more than IMG_4829.jpg. Takes 5 seconds per image.
- ☐ **11d Lazy loading on below-the-fold images**
Add loading="lazy" to every image except the first. Free performance win. Native browser support.

D

The 2026 Layer: AI Search & Trust Signals

40%

of informational queries are now handled by AI answer engines without sending a click to your site. This is what separates a 2020 SEO checklist from a 2026 one. If you're not optimizing for AI search, you're optimizing for a world that no longer exists.

12. ANSWER BLOCKS FOR AI EXTRACTION

- ☐ **12a 40-60 word direct answer after each H2**
AI search engines (ChatGPT, Perplexity, Google AI Overviews) pull structured answers. This is your mini-abstract for each section.
- ☐ **12b Self-contained paragraphs that answer specific questions**
Each paragraph should deliver a complete answer. AI systems extract clean, standalone passages for citations.
- ☐ **12c Include specific data: numbers, percentages, examples**
"63% of meta descriptions get rewritten" gets cited. "Most meta descriptions get rewritten" does not.
- ☐ **12d Concise, factual sentences**
Shorter statements are easier for AI to extract and attribute. One fact per sentence when possible.

The Answer Block Pattern

H2 heading (contains keyword) > **Direct answer** (40-60 words, self-contained) > **Supporting detail** (examples, data, explanation). The answer block is not a summary at the end. It's a clear, direct answer at the beginning that AI can grab and cite.

13. SCHEMA MARKUP

- ☐ **13a BlogPosting schema with author, datePublished, headline**
Table stakes for 2026. This is how you make your content machine-readable for search engines.
- ☐ **13b Person schema for author with credentials and social profiles**
Google's core updates put increasing weight on trust signals. Author identity matters.
- ☐ **13c JSON-LD format (not Microdata or RDFa)**
Google's recommended format. If your CMS doesn't add this automatically, set up a template once and reuse.
- ☐ **13d HowTo schema for step-by-step posts**
Google can display individual steps directly in search results. Use when your post has a clear sequential process.
- ☐ **13e Validate in Google Rich Results Test before publishing**
search.google.com/test/rich-results. Fix errors before the post goes live.

FAQ Schema Deprecated (May 2026)

Google removed FAQ rich results from Search as of May 7, 2026. The FAQ search appearance, rich result report, and Rich Results Test support are being dropped in June 2026. API support removed August 2026. **Do not add FAQPage schema to new posts.** Use HowTo or Article schema instead. If you have existing FAQ schema, it won't hurt, but it won't generate rich results anymore either.

14. E-E-A-T SIGNALS

- ☐ **14a Author byline with real name and credentials**
Google wants to know a real person with real experience wrote this. Anonymous content ranks worse.
- ☐ **14b First-person experience in the content**
Not "studies show" but "I tested this on three client sites and here's what happened." In a world of AI content, human signals win.
- ☐ **14c Author page linked with bio and social profiles**
Google's systems look for author entities. An author page connects your content to your expertise.
- ☐ **14d Real examples with specific numbers**
"47 plugins installed" not "lots of plugins." "Jumped 5+ positions" not "rankings improved." Specificity is credibility.

E After You Hit Publish

15. SUBMIT, SHARE, AND REVISIT

- ☐ **15a Submit URL to Google Search Console for indexing**
Don't wait for Google to discover it. Request indexing immediately after publishing.
- ☐ **15b Share on social channels**
LinkedIn, Twitter/X, relevant communities. Social signals don't directly rank, but they drive initial traffic and engagement.
- ☐ **15c Verify indexing after 24-48 hours**
Check Search Console to confirm Google picked it up. If not indexed, investigate: is the page blocked by robots.txt or noindex?
- ☐ **15d Schedule content refresh every 3-6 months**
Google rewards freshness. A post accurate in May might need updates by November. Put it on your calendar now.
- ☐ **15e Update internal links from existing high-traffic posts**
Go back to your top-performing posts and add links to this new content. Most people forget this step entirely.
- ☐ **15f Monitor performance at 30, 60, and 90 days**
Track impressions, clicks, and average position in Search Console. If position is stalling, revisit content depth and internal links.

Content Refresh Schedule

30 days: Check if indexed, review initial rankings and impressions.

60 days: Analyze which queries are driving impressions. Adjust title/content if targeting wrong terms.

90 days: Full performance review. Add new internal links from recent posts. Update stats if needed.

6 months: Refresh content, update examples, verify all links still work. Re-submit to Search Console.

BlogPosting Schema Template (JSON-LD)

```
{
  "@context": "https://schema.org",
  "@type": "BlogPosting",
  "headline": "Your Post Title",
  "author": {
    "@type": "Person",
    "name": "Author Name",
    "url": "https://yoursite.com/about"
  },
  "datePublished": "2026-05-11",
  "dateModified": "2026-05-11",
  "image": "https://yoursite.com/image.webp",
  "description": "Meta description here"
}
```

Quick Reference: All 15 Items

#	Item	Phase	Time
1	Keyword research: one primary + 2-3 related terms	Before	15 min
2	Search intent: Google your keyword, match the format	Before	10 min
3	Unique angle: what's missing from current results?	Before	10 min
4	H1 with primary keyword, one per page	Content	2 min
5	Heading hierarchy (H2/H3) + answer blocks after H2s	Content	During write
6	Human-first writing: short paragraphs, natural keywords	Content	During write
7	3-5 internal links with descriptive anchor text	Content	5 min
8	URL: short, descriptive, keyword-rich, no dates	Technical	1 min
9	Meta title: keyword first, under 60 chars, compelling	Technical	2 min
10	Meta description: under 155 chars, sell don't summarize	Technical	1 min
11	Images: alt text, compression, descriptive file names	Technical	2 min
12	Answer blocks (40-60 words) for AI extraction	AI Layer	During write
13	Schema: BlogPosting + Person (JSON-LD, no FAQ)	AI Layer	5 min
14	E-E-A-T: author bio, first-person, real examples	AI Layer	During write
15	Submit to GSC, share, schedule refresh	Post-pub	5 min

"I used to have a 40-item SEO checklist. Color-coded spreadsheet, separate tabs, dropdown menus. I used it exactly twice. The problem wasn't discipline. The problem was that most of those 40 items didn't actually move the needle. This 15-item checklist covers everything that actually matters."

Kemal, Wunderlandmedia

The Two Rules

Rule 1: If it's not on this list, it either doesn't matter enough or your CMS should handle it automatically.

Rule 2: Publishing isn't the finish line. It's the starting gun. Google rewards freshness, and a post accurate in May might need updates by November.

Read the Full Post

wunderlandmedia.com/blog-post-seo-checklist

Need someone to handle the whole process? That's exactly what I do. wunderlandmedia.com