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Digital Notes

Module 4: Search Engine Optimization

Learn how to optimize websites, rank on search engines, and drive **organic traffic** that converts



Keyword
Research



On-Page
SEO



Off-Page
SEO



Technical
SEO



SEO
Analytics



Content
Optimization



Site Speed
Optimization



Local
SEO



Higher Rankings



More Traffic



Better Visibility



More
Leads

SEO Overview

Organic Traffic

25,430 +18.6%

Keywords Ranked

1,248 +12.4%

Backlinks

3,562 +15.3%

Traffic Over Time



Top Channels



SEO Checklist

- ☒ Keyword Research
- ☒ Optimize Content
- ☒ Technical Audit
- ☒ Build Backlinks
- ☒ Track Rankings



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Module 4

Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

Module Overview

Search Engine Optimization, commonly called SEO, is the process of improving a website so that search engines can discover, understand and present its pages to relevant users.

SEO is not limited to adding keywords to web pages. Practical SEO involves:

- Understanding what people search for
- Matching content with search intent
- Making pages easy for search engines to crawl and index
- Improving website structure and user experience
- Building the website's authority and reputation
- Measuring performance and making continuous improvements

Google describes SEO as helping search engines understand content and helping users discover a website and decide whether they should visit it. No technique can guarantee the first position in search results. [Google SEO Starter Guide](#)

Learning Objectives

After completing this module, students should be able to:

- Explain how search engines work.
- Perform keyword research using suitable tools.
- Identify search intent.
- Map keywords to appropriate website pages.
- Optimise titles, headings, URLs, content and images.
- Conduct a basic technical SEO audit.
- Use robots.txt, XML sitemaps and canonical tags correctly.
- Identify and resolve common indexing problems.
- Develop an ethical link-building strategy.
- Optimise a business for local searches.
- Set up and use Google Search Console.
- Prepare an SEO audit and performance report.
- Develop a practical SEO strategy for a website.

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1. Introduction to SEO

1.1 What Is SEO?

SEO is the process of improving a website's visibility in unpaid or organic search results.

A search engine may display:

- Standard organic results
- Images
- Videos
- Local business results
- Featured snippets
- News
- Shopping results
- Frequently asked questions
- Other enhanced results

SEO aims to attract visitors who are genuinely interested in the information, product or service offered by the website.

1.2 Example of SEO

Suppose a training institute offers a digital marketing course in Delhi.

Potential customers may search:

- Digital marketing course
- Digital marketing course in Delhi
- Best digital marketing institute in Delhi
- Digital marketing course fees
- Digital marketing course with placement
- How to start a career in digital marketing

The institute can create and optimise suitable pages for these searches.

1.3 Organic vs Paid Search Results

Organic results

Organic visibility is earned through relevance, quality, accessibility and authority. A business does not pay the search engine for each organic click.

Paid results

Paid search advertisements appear through advertising campaigns. The advertiser generally pays according to the campaign's bidding and charging model.

Organic SEO	Paid search
Results normally develop gradually	Visibility can begin quickly
No direct payment for each organic click	Budget is required
Can create long-term traffic	Traffic may stop when the campaign stops
Requires content and technical improvement	Requires campaign and bid management
Position is not guaranteed	Placement depends on auction and quality factors

SEO and paid search can be used together.

1.4 Main Types of SEO

On-page SEO

Optimising content and visible page elements.

Technical SEO

Improving crawling, indexing, performance and technical accessibility.

Off-page SEO

Improving reputation and authority through external references, mentions and links.

Local SEO

Improving visibility for geographically relevant searches.

Content SEO

Planning and producing content that satisfies audience needs and search intent.

2. How Search Engines Work

Search engines generally perform three major processes:

1. Crawling
2. Indexing
3. Ranking and serving results

2.1 Crawling

Crawling is the process through which search-engine programs discover pages and resources.

Search engines may discover URLs through:

- Internal links
- External backlinks
- XML sitemaps
- Previously known URLs
- Redirects

A search engine cannot normally evaluate a page it cannot access.

2.2 Indexing

Indexing is the process of analysing and storing information about a page.

A page may not be indexed because:

- It contains a *noindex* instruction.
- It is blocked or inaccessible.
- It is considered a duplicate.
- It redirects elsewhere.
- It returns an error.
- It offers insufficient unique value.
- The search engine has not discovered or processed it yet.

Not every page should be indexed. Login pages, internal search results, duplicate filters and private pages may intentionally remain outside the index.

2.3 Ranking

When a user searches, the search engine selects and orders results according to relevance and quality signals.

Possible considerations include:

- Meaning of the query
- Search intent
- Content relevance
- Content quality
- Website accessibility
- Page experience
- Location
- Language
- Device
- Context and freshness
- Authority and reputation

SEO professionals do not control rankings. They improve the website's ability to satisfy users and be understood by search engines.

2.4 Practical Index Check

A quick manual check can be performed using:

site:example.com

To check a specific page:

site:example.com/page-url

This check provides a rough indication only. Google Search Console's URL Inspection tool should be used for a more dependable diagnosis.

3. Search Engine Results Page

A Search Engine Results Page, or SERP, is the page displayed after a search.

It may contain:

- Organic listings
- Advertisements
- Local map results
- Featured snippets
- Image results
- Video results
- Related questions
- Knowledge panels
- Product results

Practical SERP Analysis

Before selecting a keyword:

1. Open a private or incognito browser window.
2. Set the correct country or location where possible.
3. Search the keyword.
4. Record the types of pages ranking.
5. Identify the dominant content format.
6. Note special SERP features.
7. Examine the top-ranking pages.
8. Determine whether your planned page matches the results.

Example

Search:

how to do keyword research

If most results are detailed tutorials, a short product page is unlikely to match the dominant intent. A step-by-step tutorial would be more appropriate.

4. Keyword Research

4.1 What Is a Keyword?

A keyword is a word or phrase people use when searching for information, products, services or websites.

Examples:

- SEO
- SEO course
- SEO course in Bangalore
- How to learn SEO for free
- Best SEO tools for beginners

A keyword represents a search need. SEO professionals must understand the person and purpose behind it.

4.2 Why Keyword Research Is Important

Keyword research helps identify:

- What the audience searches for
- How people describe their problems
- Which topics deserve pages
- Which searches have commercial value
- What content format may be required
- How competitive a topic may be
- Which topics belong together
- Which keywords should target separate pages

4.3 Types of Keywords

Short-tail keywords

Broad and usually short.

Examples:

- SEO
- Shoes
- Insurance

They may have high search volume but unclear intent and strong competition.

Long-tail keywords

Longer and more specific.

Examples:

- SEO course for beginners with practical projects

- Waterproof running shoes for women
- Health insurance for students in India

They often have clearer intent and may be easier to target.

Branded keywords

Contain a brand or product name.

Example:

- Google Search Console
- Nike running shoes

Non-branded keywords

Do not contain a particular brand.

Example:

- Free website performance tool

Local keywords

Contain or imply a geographic need.

Examples:

- SEO agency in Pune
- Dentist near me

Question keywords

Examples:

- What is technical SEO?
- How long does SEO take?
- Why is my page not indexed?

Commercial keywords

Show comparison or purchasing interest.

Examples:

- Best SEO tools
- Semrush alternatives
- SEO course fees

Transactional keywords

Indicate that the user may be ready to act.

Examples:

- Buy SEO course
- Book SEO consultation
- Hire SEO expert

5. Practical Keyword Research Process

The following process can be completed using a combination of:

- Google Search
- Google Trends
- Google Keyword Planner
- Google Search Console
- Semrush Keyword Magic Tool
- Ahrefs keyword tools
- A spreadsheet

Tool metrics are estimates and should not be treated as exact future traffic numbers.

Step 1: Understand the Business

Before opening a keyword tool, record:

- Products and services
- Target audience
- Service locations
- Business model
- Customer problems
- Revenue-generating actions

- Unique selling points
- Competitors

Example business

A training institute offers an offline and online digital marketing course in Hyderabad.

Its primary conversion is a counselling enquiry.

Step 2: Create Seed Keywords

A seed keyword is a basic phrase used to begin research.

Possible seed keywords:

- Digital marketing course
- SEO course
- Social media marketing course
- Google Ads course
- Digital marketing institute
- Digital marketing training

Create seed keywords using the following formula:

Product + Audience + Problem + Location + Feature

Examples:

- SEO course for students
- Digital marketing course in Hyderabad
- Marketing course with internship
- Weekend SEO training

Step 3: Use Google Suggestions

Enter a seed keyword into Google without completing the search immediately.

Record autocomplete suggestions.

For:

digital marketing course

Possible suggestions may include:

- Digital marketing course fees
- Digital marketing course duration
- Digital marketing course with placement
- Digital marketing course online
- Digital marketing course near me

Also examine:

- Related searches
- People Also Ask questions
- Words used in ranking page titles
- Search-result formats

Do not copy suggestions blindly. Confirm that each phrase is relevant to the business.

Step 4: Use Google Keyword Planner

Google Keyword Planner is available through a Google Ads account.

Procedure

1. Sign in to Google Ads.
2. Open the tools section.
3. Select Keyword Planner.
4. Choose **Discover new keywords**.
5. Enter one or more seed keywords.
6. Select the target country and language.
7. Review the suggestions.
8. Examine average monthly searches, competition and bid-related data.
9. Add relevant keywords to a plan or export them.
10. Organise the exported file in a spreadsheet.

Important interpretation

Keyword Planner's competition primarily relates to advertising competition, not necessarily organic SEO difficulty.

Use it to understand:

- General demand
- Related terminology

- Location differences
- Commercial interest
- Seasonal patterns

Step 5: Use Semrush Keyword Magic Tool

Semrush's Keyword Magic Tool accepts a seed phrase and produces related terms, question keywords, topic groups, estimated volume, difficulty and SERP information. Features and limits depend on the subscription. [Semrush Keyword Magic Tool documentation](#)

Procedure

1. Open Keyword Magic Tool.
2. Enter the seed keyword.
3. Select the target country.
4. Review broad, phrase, exact and related variations.
5. Open the **Questions** filter.
6. Use topic groups to identify clusters.
7. Apply filters for intent, volume and difficulty.
8. open the SERP for promising keywords.
9. Add suitable keywords to a keyword list.
10. Export the selected keywords.

Do not select only by volume

A keyword with lower volume but strong business relevance may be more valuable than a high-volume, general keyword.

Step 6: Use Ahrefs

Ahrefs provides keyword-research workflows covering search intent, ranking difficulty, long-tail terms and keyword selection. [Ahrefs Keyword Research Course](#)

A typical workflow is:

1. Enter the seed keyword.
2. Select the correct search engine and country.
3. review matching terms and questions.
4. Check estimated volume and traffic potential.
5. Examine the keyword-difficulty estimate.
6. Open the SERP overview.

7. Study the strength and type of ranking pages.
8. Identify relevant long-tail variations.
9. Export suitable terms.
10. Validate them manually.

Keyword difficulty is a tool-specific estimate. It is not a guarantee that a page will or will not rank.

Step 7: Use Google Trends

Google Trends is useful for comparing relative interest over time.

Procedure

1. Open Google Trends.
2. Enter a keyword.
3. Select the country.
4. Choose a suitable time range.
5. Select the category if needed.
6. Select Web Search, YouTube Search or another available type.
7. Add comparison terms.
8. Study the interest-over-time graph.
9. Review regional interest.
10. examine related topics and queries.

Use Trends to identify:

- Seasonality
- Rising topics
- Regional differences
- Terminology preferences

Google Trends shows relative interest, not exact monthly search volume.

Step 8: Analyse Competitor Keywords

Identify three to five search competitors.

A search competitor is a website competing for the same queries. It may not be a direct business competitor.

Manual process

1. Search an important keyword.
2. Record the domains ranking on the first page.
3. Open their relevant pages.
4. Record page titles and headings.
5. Identify topics and questions covered.
6. Examine internal links.
7. Note content formats.
8. Identify missing or weak areas.

Tool-assisted process

In an SEO tool:

1. Enter a competitor domain.
2. Open its organic keywords or top pages report.
3. Apply the target country.
4. Filter for relevant topics.
5. Export suitable keywords.
6. remove irrelevant branded terms.
7. Compare these keywords with your website.

Step 9: Record Keyword Metrics

Create a spreadsheet with columns such as:

Keyword	Intent	Volume	Difficulty	Relevance	Funnel stage	Target page	Priority
Digital marketing course	Commercial	High	High	5	Consideration	Course page	High
Digital marketing course fees	Commercial	Medium	Medium	5	Decision	Fees section/page	High
What is digital marketing?	Informational	High	Medium	4	Awareness	Blog guide	Medium
SEO course in Hyderabad	Transactional /local	Medium	Medium	5	Decision	SEO course page	High

Volume and difficulty will differ between tools, databases, countries and dates.

Step 10: Remove Unsuitable Keywords

Remove or deprioritise keywords that:

- Are unrelated to the business
- Have the wrong location
- Have an intent the website cannot satisfy
- Refer to a product the business does not offer
- Are misleading
- Are too broad for the current objective
- Would require an entirely different content type

Step 11: Group Keywords into Clusters

Keywords with the same meaning and intent can often target one page.

Example cluster:

- Digital marketing course in Hyderabad
- Best digital marketing institute in Hyderabad
- Digital marketing training Hyderabad
- Digital marketing classes in Hyderabad

Before combining them, inspect their search results. If similar pages rank for the terms, one strong page may target the cluster.

Step 12: Prioritise Keywords

Use a simple opportunity score.

Rate each factor from 1 to 5:

- Business relevance
- Search intent
- Conversion potential
- Ranking feasibility
- Content capability

Priority Score = Relevance + Intent + Conversion + Feasibility + Capability

A keyword with a score of 23 out of 25 should generally receive higher priority than one scoring 12.

Keyword Research Deliverable

Students should produce:

- Seed-keyword list
 - Export from at least one tool
 - Cleaned master keyword sheet
 - Search-intent classification
 - Keyword clusters
 - Competitor keyword observations
 - Keyword-to-page map
 - Priority list
 - Recommended content topics
-

6. Search Intent Analysis

Search intent is the main purpose behind a query.

6.1 Informational Intent

The user wants to learn.

Examples:

- What is on-page SEO?
- How do search engines work?

Suitable pages:

- Guides
- Tutorials
- Articles
- Videos
- Glossaries

6.2 Navigational Intent

The user wants a specific website or page.

Examples:

- Google Search Console login
- Semrush Keyword Magic Tool

6.3 Commercial Investigation

The user is comparing solutions.

Examples:

- Best SEO tools for students
- Ahrefs vs Semrush
- Best SEO course in Mumbai

Suitable pages:

- Comparisons
- Reviews
- Case studies
- Feature pages
- Detailed course pages

6.4 Transactional Intent

The user is close to completing an action.

Examples:

- Buy SEO course
- Book SEO audit
- Hire SEO consultant

Suitable pages:

- Product pages
- Service pages
- Booking pages
- Landing pages

6.5 Local Intent

The user wants a geographically suitable result.

Examples:

- SEO agency near me
- SEO course in Chennai

Practical Intent Analysis

For each keyword:

1. Search it.
2. Examine the first ten results.
3. record the dominant page type.
4. Identify the dominant content format.
5. Observe the level of detail.
6. Note local, video, image or shopping features.
7. classify the intent.
8. Decide which page type you need.

Important principle

Intent should be identified from the actual search results—not only from the wording of the keyword.

7. Keyword Mapping

Keyword mapping assigns target keyword clusters to specific website pages.

7.1 Why Keyword Mapping Is Needed

It prevents:

- Multiple pages targeting the same intent
- Important keywords having no suitable page
- Unnecessary page creation
- Content duplication
- Confusing internal competition

7.2 Keyword Mapping Spreadsheet

Page	Primary keyword	Secondary keywords	Intent	Funnel stage	CTA
SEO course page	SEO course in Pune	SEO classes Pune, SEO training Pune	Transactional	Decision	Book counselling
Keyword guide	How to do keyword research	Keyword research process, tools	Informational	Awareness	Download template
SEO tools comparison	Best SEO tools	SEO tool comparison	Commercial	Consideration	View course

7.3 Keyword Cannibalisation

Keyword cannibalisation may occur when multiple pages compete for the same search intent.

Identification process

1. Search:

`site:example.com target keyword`

2. Check Search Console queries and pages.
3. Identify whether several pages receive impressions for the same query.
4. Examine whether the pages serve the same intent.
5. Decide whether to:

- Keep both because their purposes differ
- Merge them
- Redirect the weaker page
- Change the keyword target
- Improve internal linking
- Add a canonical only when technically appropriate

Several pages appearing for the same keyword is not automatically a problem. It becomes a problem when they unnecessarily compete or confuse search engines and users.

8. On-Page SEO

On-page SEO improves individual pages so users and search engines can understand them.

8.1 Title Tag

The title tag describes the page and may be used in search results.

Example:

`<title>Practical SEO Course in Hyderabad | Brand Name</title>`

Good practices

- Make it unique.
- Describe the page accurately.
- Include the main topic naturally.
- Match search intent.
- Put important information early.
- Include the brand when useful.
- Avoid keyword repetition.
- Avoid identical titles across pages.

Search engines may rewrite displayed titles when another description better represents the page.

Practical title-writing exercise

For each page:

1. Identify the main keyword.
2. Identify the intent.
3. State the main benefit or subject.
4. Add location if essential.
5. Add the brand if useful.
6. compare it with ranking titles.
7. Check that it accurately represents the page.

8.2 Meta Description

The meta description summarises a page and may be used as the search-result description.

Example:

```
<meta name="description"
content="Learn SEO through practical keyword research, on-page
optimization,
technical audits and live projects. Book a counselling session.">
```

A meta description should:

- Explain the page clearly
- Match intent
- Include a benefit
- Use natural language
- Contain an appropriate CTA
- Be unique for important pages
- Avoid unsupported claims

A meta description is not a guarantee of improved rankings, and search engines may display different text.

8.3 URL Structure

Good URL:

example.com/seo-course-hyderabad

Poor URL:

example.com/index.php?id=472&cat=19

Good URLs are generally:

- Descriptive
- Concise
- Lowercase
- Hyphen-separated
- Stable
- Free from unnecessary parameters

Do not change established URLs without a reason and a redirect plan.

8.4 Headings

Use headings to organise content.

H1: Practical SEO Course

H2: Course Curriculum

H3: Keyword Research

H3: Technical SEO

H2: Projects

H2: Fees

Best practices:

- Use one clear main heading where practical.
- Maintain a logical hierarchy.
- Make headings descriptive.
- Do not use headings only to enlarge text.
- Avoid forcing keywords into every heading.

8.5 Content Optimisation

A high-quality page should:

- Satisfy search intent
- Answer the main question clearly
- Cover important subtopics
- Demonstrate practical knowledge
- Include original examples
- Use reliable evidence
- Avoid unnecessary repetition
- Be easy to scan
- Provide the next action

Practical content optimisation process

1. Select the keyword cluster.
2. analyse the search results.
3. Identify the required page type.
4. Record common subtopics.
5. Identify missing information.

6. Create an outline.
7. Write for the user first.
8. Add the primary term naturally.
9. Add relevant related terminology.
10. Include examples, evidence and visuals.
11. Add internal links.
12. Add a suitable CTA.
13. proofread.
14. Check mobile presentation.
15. Publish and request indexing if appropriate.

8.6 Keyword Placement

A primary keyword may appear naturally in:

- Page title
- Main heading
- Introduction
- Relevant subheadings
- URL
- Image context or alternative text where appropriate
- Body content
- Internal-link anchor text

Do not repeat keywords unnaturally. Keyword stuffing creates poor content and may violate search-engine spam policies.

8.7 Internal Linking

Internal links connect pages on the same website.

Practical internal-linking process

1. Select the page you want to strengthen.
2. Search your website for related pages:

[site:example.com related topic](#)

3. Open relevant pages.
4. Find a sentence where the target page is genuinely useful.
5. Add a descriptive link.
6. Avoid using the same exact anchor repeatedly.
7. Ensure the target page is not broken or redirected.
8. Record important links in the audit sheet.

Weak anchor text:

[Click here](#)

Better anchor text:

[practical keyword research process](#)

8.8 External Links

Link to reliable external sources when they help the user verify information or obtain additional detail.

Do not add links merely to appear authoritative.

8.9 Image SEO

Practical process:

1. Select a relevant image.
2. Resize it to the displayed dimensions.
3. Compress the file.
4. Use a suitable format.
5. Rename it descriptively.

Example:

[keyword-research-spreadsheet.webp](#)

6. Add useful alternative text.

Example:

```

```

Alternative text should explain the image's purpose for users who cannot see it. Do not insert keywords into unrelated images.

8.10 On-Page SEO Checklist

- Unique title
- Clear meta description

- Descriptive URL
 - Logical H1–H3 structure
 - Intent-matching content
 - Useful examples
 - Natural terminology
 - Internal links
 - Relevant external references
 - Optimised images
 - Descriptive alternative text
 - Clear CTA
 - Mobile readability
 - Correct canonical
 - Indexability verified
-

9. Technical SEO

Technical SEO helps search engines crawl, render, understand and index a website efficiently.

9.1 Technical Audit Tools

Useful tools include:

- Google Search Console
- PageSpeed Insights
- Chrome Developer Tools
- Lighthouse
- Screaming Frog SEO Spider
- Site-audit features in SEO platforms
- Rich Results Test
- Manual browser checks

Tool reports should be interpreted. Not every warning is equally important.

9.2 Practical Crawl Using Screaming Frog

A typical crawl process is:

1. Install and open the tool.
2. Enter the website homepage.

3. Start the crawl.
4. Wait for completion.
5. Review response codes.
6. Filter 3xx, 4xx and 5xx URLs.
7. review missing and duplicate titles.
8. Review missing and duplicate descriptions.
9. Review headings.
10. Check canonicals.
11. Check indexability.
12. Review image sizes and missing alt attributes.
13. Export the required reports.
14. Prioritise findings by business impact.

Before crawling a website you do not own, ensure you have permission and use a responsible crawl rate.

9.3 HTTP Status Codes

200: Successful

The page loads successfully.

301: Permanent redirect

The resource has permanently moved.

302 or 307: Temporary redirect

The move is intended to be temporary.

404: Not found

The requested page does not exist.

410: Gone

The resource has been intentionally removed.

500: Internal server error

The server could not complete the request.

503: Service unavailable

The server is temporarily unavailable.

9.4 Fixing Broken Pages

For every important 404:

1. Identify links pointing to it.
2. Decide whether the page should exist.
3. Restore it if removed accidentally.
4. Redirect it to a closely relevant replacement if one exists.
5. Update internal links to the final URL.
6. Do not redirect unrelated pages to the homepage.
7. Leave a genuine 404 when no replacement exists.
8. Create a useful custom 404 page.

9.5 Redirect Chains

A redirect chain occurs when one URL redirects through several URLs.

Page A → Page B → Page C

Update links and redirects so Page A points directly to Page C where possible.

9.6 Robots.txt

The robots.txt file gives crawling instructions.

Example:

```
User-agent: *  
Disallow: /admin/  
Disallow: /internal-search/  
Sitemap: https://example.com/sitemap.xml
```

Important:

- Robots.txt controls crawling, not guaranteed removal from search.
- Do not block essential CSS, JavaScript or images without a reason.
- Do not use it to protect confidential content.
- Test changes carefully.

9.7 Meta Robots

Example preventing indexing:

```
<meta name="robots" content="noindex, follow">
```

Common uses:

- index, follow
- noindex, follow
- noindex, nofollow

To process a noindex instruction, the crawler generally needs access to the page. Blocking it in robots.txt can prevent the search engine from seeing the directive.

9.8 XML Sitemap

An XML sitemap lists important canonical URLs.

Practical process

1. Locate the sitemap.

Common examples:

example.com/sitemap.xml
example.com/sitemap_index.xml

2. Open it in a browser.
3. Confirm it loads successfully.
4. Verify that it contains:
 - Canonical URLs
 - Indexable URLs
 - Successful 200-status pages
 - Important current pages
5. Remove:
 - Redirected URLs
 - 404 pages
 - noindex pages

- Duplicate URLs
6. Open Search Console.
 7. Select the correct property.
 8. Open **Sitemaps**.
 9. Enter the sitemap URL.
 10. Click **Submit**.
 11. Review the status and errors.

Google's Sitemaps report allows owners to submit sitemaps and review processing errors. [Search Console Sitemaps documentation](#)

9.9 Canonical Tags

A canonical tag indicates the preferred version among duplicate or very similar pages.

```
<link rel="canonical" href="https://example.com/preferred-page/">
```

Practical checks

- Does every important page have the correct canonical?
- Is the canonical URL accessible?
- Does it return 200?
- Is it indexable?
- Does it point to the intended version?
- Is it included in the sitemap?
- Do internal links use the canonical version?

Canonical tags are signals, not commands. Do not point unrelated pages to one URL merely to hide duplication.

9.10 Duplicate Content

Common causes:

- HTTP and HTTPS versions
- WWW and non-WWW versions
- URL parameters
- Print pages
- Product filters
- Session IDs
- Repeated category pages

- copied descriptions

Possible solutions include:

- Consistent internal URLs
- Redirects
- Canonical tags
- Noindex where appropriate
- Unique content
- Parameter management
- Improved site architecture

9.11 Mobile Friendliness

Practical test:

1. Open the website on a phone.
2. Test the navigation.
3. Read body text without zooming.
4. Test buttons and links.
5. Submit forms.
6. Check whether content extends beyond the screen.
7. Check intrusive pop-ups.
8. Test page speed on a mobile connection.
9. Use browser responsive mode for additional devices.
10. Fix mobile layout and functionality problems.

9.12 Page Speed

Common causes of poor speed:

- Large images
- Unnecessary scripts
- Excessive plugins
- Poor hosting
- No caching
- Large fonts or videos
- Render-blocking resources
- Third-party widgets

Practical performance process

1. Open PageSpeed Insights.

2. Enter a page URL.
3. Run the test.
4. Review mobile and desktop results.
5. Distinguish real-user data from laboratory data when available.
6. Identify the largest problems.
7. Compress and resize images.
8. Remove unnecessary scripts and plugins.
9. Configure caching.
10. Improve server response.
11. Retest.
12. Verify that changes did not break the page.

Do not optimise only to obtain a perfect tool score. Focus on a fast and stable user experience.

9.13 Core Web Vitals

Core Web Vitals evaluate important aspects of loading, responsiveness and visual stability.

They should be monitored using:

- Search Console
- PageSpeed Insights
- Browser performance tools
- Real-user monitoring when available

Treat performance as one part of SEO, not a replacement for relevant content.

9.14 Structured Data

Structured data helps search engines understand certain types of content.

Common types may include:

- Organisation
- Local business
- Product
- Breadcrumb
- Article
- Course
- Event
- Video

Practical implementation

1. Select a type appropriate to visible page content.
2. Read the search engine's documentation.
3. Add JSON-LD markup.
4. Include only accurate information shown to users.
5. Test with Rich Results Test.
6. fix errors.
7. Publish.
8. Monitor enhancement reports in Search Console.

Valid markup can make a page eligible for enhanced results, but it does not guarantee that an enhanced result will appear.

9.15 HTTPS

All website versions should resolve consistently to the preferred HTTPS version.

Check:

<http://example.com>
<http://www.example.com>
<https://example.com>
<https://www.example.com>

Non-preferred versions should redirect to the chosen version.

10. Google Search Console

Google Search Console helps website owners monitor their presence in Google Search.

10.1 Setting Up a Property

1. Open Search Console.
2. Sign in with the appropriate Google account.
3. Click **Add property**.
4. Select:
 - Domain property, or
 - URL-prefix property

5. Complete the verification method.
6. Ensure all authorised team members have suitable access.
7. Submit the sitemap.
8. Review indexing and performance reports.

A Domain property generally covers protocols and subdomains, while a URL-prefix property covers the specified prefix.

10.2 Performance Report

The Performance report provides data including:

- Clicks
- Impressions
- Click-through rate
- Average position
- Queries
- Pages
- Countries
- Devices
- Search appearance
- Dates

Google notes that results can be filtered and grouped by query, page, country, device and date. [Search Console Performance report](#)

Practical Performance Analysis

Find high-impression, low-click queries

1. Open **Performance** → **Search results**.
2. Select clicks, impressions, CTR and position.
3. Choose a suitable period.
4. Open **Queries**.
5. Export the data.
6. Filter for high impressions and low CTR.
7. Check whether the page matches intent.
8. improve the title and description if appropriate.
9. Compare performance after enough time.

Find pages losing clicks

1. Select **Compare** date ranges.

2. Open **Pages**.
3. Sort by click difference.
4. Open the affected page.
5. analyse queries.
6. Check:
 - Ranking changes
 - Search demand
 - Competitor improvements
 - Content freshness
 - Technical problems
 - Title changes
7. Update the page based on evidence.

Find content opportunities

1. Open Queries.
2. Filter for a topic.
3. Identify relevant queries with impressions.
4. Check the ranking page.
5. Determine whether:
 - The existing page needs expansion
 - A separate page is justified
 - An FAQ should be added
 - Internal linking should improve

10.3 URL Inspection

Google's URL Inspection tool shows information about Google's indexed version of a page and allows live testing and indexing requests. [URL Inspection documentation](#)

Practical process

1. Paste the complete URL into the top inspection bar.
2. Review whether the URL is on Google.
3. Open indexing details.
4. Check:
 - Discovery
 - Last crawl
 - Crawl permission

- Indexing permission
 - User-declared canonical
 - Google-selected canonical
5. Click **Test Live URL** if the page changed.
 6. Fix any reported issue.
 7. Request indexing after meaningful changes.
 8. Recheck later.

“URL is on Google” means it is eligible to appear; it does not guarantee that it will appear for a particular search.

10.4 Page Indexing Report

Use the report to understand why pages are indexed or excluded.

Common statuses may relate to:

- Redirects
- Not found pages
- Crawled but not indexed
- Discovered but not indexed
- Duplicate pages
- Canonical selection
- Noindex directives
- Server errors

Investigation process

1. Open the Page indexing report.
2. Choose a status.
3. Review sample URLs.
4. Inspect individual URLs.
5. Determine whether exclusion is intentional.
6. Fix only genuine problems.
7. Use validation when appropriate.
8. Monitor the result.

Excluded pages are not automatically errors. Google’s documentation explicitly notes that blocked, noindex, duplicate and redirecting URLs may appropriately remain unindexed. [Page indexing report](#)

11. Off-Page SEO

Off-page SEO improves a website's authority, reputation and visibility outside its own pages.

11.1 Backlinks

A backlink is a link from another website to your website.

A useful backlink is generally:

- Relevant
- Editorially placed
- From a credible website
- Located within useful content
- Capable of sending suitable visitors
- Earned without manipulation

11.2 Link Quality Evaluation

Before pursuing a link, ask:

- Is the website relevant?
- Is it credible?
- Does it publish genuine content?
- Is the linking page useful?
- Is the placement natural?
- Could the link send relevant visitors?
- Is the website created mainly to sell links?
- Would the link still be useful without ranking benefits?

11.3 Practical Link-Building Methods

Resource creation

Create something worth referencing:

- Original research
- Statistics
- Templates
- Calculators
- Detailed guides

- Industry reports
- Free tools

Guest contribution

1. Identify credible relevant websites.
2. Study their audience and content.
3. Develop an original topic.
4. Prepare a personalised proposal.
5. Write useful content.
6. Include links only where relevant.
7. Avoid mass-produced guest posts.

Broken-link outreach

1. Find a relevant resource page.
2. Identify a broken external link.
3. Confirm that your resource is a suitable replacement.
4. Contact the page owner.
5. Explain the broken link.
6. Suggest the useful replacement.
7. Avoid demanding a link.

Digital PR

Develop newsworthy material such as:

- Original research
- Expert analysis
- Industry data
- Useful public resources
- Significant business announcements

Partnerships and associations

Seek legitimate references from:

- Professional associations
- Suppliers
- Educational partners
- Local organisations
- Event websites
- Clients where appropriate

11.4 Outreach Email Structure

Subject: Broken resource on your [topic] page

Hello [Name],

I was reading your resource about [specific topic] and noticed that the link to [resource] no longer works.

We recently published [brief description], which may be a useful replacement: [URL]

Either way, I wanted to let you know about the broken link.

Regards,
[Name]

Personalise every message. Do not send misleading or excessive outreach.

11.5 Link-Building Practices to Avoid

Avoid:

- Buying links for ranking manipulation
- Automated link creation
- Comment spam
- Private link networks
- Irrelevant directory submissions
- Excessive reciprocal linking
- Keyword-rich links across unrelated websites
- Mass-produced low-quality guest posts

The objective is to earn reputation, not manufacture artificial popularity.

12. Local SEO

Local SEO improves visibility for searches connected to a geographic area.

It is important for:

- Restaurants
- Clinics
- Training institutes
- Retail stores
- Salons
- Repair services
- Local agencies
- Professional services

12.1 Google Business Profile

A business should create or claim its legitimate Business Profile.

Practical optimisation process

1. Use the correct business name.
2. Select the most accurate primary category.
3. Add suitable secondary categories.
4. Enter the correct address or service area.
5. Add phone number and website.
6. Set accurate hours.
7. Write a clear business description.
8. Add services or products.
9. Upload genuine, high-quality photographs.
10. Keep holiday hours updated.
11. Answer customer questions.
12. respond to reviews professionally.
13. Monitor profile performance.

Do not add keywords to the business name unless they are genuinely part of the registered and publicly used name.

12.2 NAP Consistency

NAP stands for:

- Name
- Address
- Phone number

These details should remain consistent across:

- Website

- Business Profile
- Social profiles
- Important directories
- Industry websites

12.3 Local Website Optimisation

A local page should include:

- Business name
- Service
- Location
- Address where applicable
- Phone number
- Hours
- Service-area details
- Directions or map
- Local testimonials
- Relevant photographs
- Clear CTA
- Local structured data when appropriate

12.4 Location Pages

Create a separate location page only when the business genuinely serves that location and can provide unique, useful information.

Avoid creating hundreds of nearly identical city pages merely to rank.

12.5 Reviews

Ethical review process:

1. Ask real customers for honest feedback.
2. Provide a direct review link.
3. Do not require positive reviews.
4. Do not purchase reviews.
5. Respond politely.
6. Address genuine complaints.
7. Never reveal private customer information.

12.6 Local Citation Audit

Create a spreadsheet containing:

Platform Business name Address Phone URL Correct? Action

Correct important inconsistencies and duplicate listings.

13. SEO Audit

An SEO audit is a structured review of a website's search performance, content, technical condition and external visibility.

13.1 Audit Preparation

Collect:

- Website URL
- Business objectives
- Target audience
- Target locations
- Important products or services
- Search Console access
- Analytics access
- Website CMS access, if authorised
- Previous SEO reports
- Known problems

13.2 Technical Audit

Check:

- HTTPS
- Preferred domain version
- robots.txt
- XML sitemap
- Indexability
- Canonicals
- Status codes
- Broken links

- Redirect chains
- Mobile usability
- Performance
- Structured data
- Duplicate URLs
- Orphan pages
- Site architecture

13.3 On-Page Audit

Check:

- Page purpose
- Search intent
- Titles
- Descriptions
- URLs
- Headings
- Content depth
- Keyword targeting
- Internal links
- Images
- CTAs
- Trust elements

13.4 Content Audit

Classify pages as:

- Keep
- Improve
- Merge
- Redirect
- Remove
- Create new content

13.5 Off-Page Audit

Review:

- Referring domains
- Link relevance
- Strongest linked pages

- Suspicious link patterns
- Lost links
- Competitor link opportunities
- Brand mentions

13.6 Local Audit

Review:

- Business Profile
- Categories
- NAP consistency
- Reviews
- Local pages
- Citations
- Local content

13.7 Prioritisation

Classify recommendations by:

Impact

- High
- Medium
- Low

Effort

- High
- Medium
- Low

Priority examples

Issue	Impact	Effort	Priority
Important service page is noindex	High	Low	Immediate
Main navigation links are broken	High	Medium	Immediate
Ten duplicate meta descriptions	Low	Low	Later
Important page has wrong intent	High	High	High
Large unused image	Medium	Low	Medium

13.8 SEO Audit Report Structure

1. Executive summary
2. Business objectives
3. Current performance
4. Technical findings
5. On-page findings
6. Content findings
7. Off-page findings
8. Local findings
9. Prioritised recommendations
10. Implementation plan
11. KPIs
12. Limitations and assumptions

14. SEO Reporting

SEO reports should connect activity with business outcomes.

14.1 Common SEO KPIs

Visibility metrics

- Impressions
- Average position
- Number of ranking queries
- Search visibility

Traffic metrics

- Organic users
- Organic sessions
- Landing-page traffic
- Engaged sessions

Engagement metrics

- Engagement time
- Key page interactions
- Downloads
- Scroll depth where configured

Conversion metrics

- Form submissions
- Calls
- Bookings
- Sales
- Revenue
- Organic conversion rate

Technical metrics

- Indexed pages
- Indexing errors
- Broken links
- Core Web Vitals
- Crawl issues

Authority metrics

- Relevant referring domains
- Earned backlinks
- Brand mentions

14.2 Organic CTR

$\text{Organic CTR} = \text{Organic Clicks} \div \text{Organic Impressions} \times 100$

If a page receives 8,000 impressions and 320 clicks:

$$\text{CTR} = 320 \div 8,000 \times 100 = 4\%$$

14.3 Organic Conversion Rate

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Organic Conversion Rate} = \\ \text{Organic Conversions} \div \text{Organic Visitors} \times 100 \end{aligned}$$

If 2,000 organic visitors produce 80 enquiries:

$$\text{Conversion Rate} = 80 \div 2,000 \times 100 = 4\%$$

14.4 Monthly Report Structure

1. Reporting period
2. Objectives
3. Executive summary
4. KPI comparison
5. Organic traffic
6. Search Console performance
7. Top landing pages
8. Conversions
9. Completed work
10. Technical issues
11. Content performance
12. Link and local activities
13. Key insights
14. Next-month plan

14.5 Avoid Misleading Reporting

Do not:

- Claim all traffic changes were caused by SEO
- Report only improved metrics
- Hide seasonality
- Treat average position as an exact rank
- Promise future rankings
- Count irrelevant traffic as success
- Present tool estimates as actual revenue

15. Practical SEO Workflow for a New Website

Phase 1: Business and Audience Research

1. Understand products and services.
2. Identify audiences and locations.
3. Define conversions.
4. Record competitors.
5. Create initial topic groups.

Phase 2: Keyword Research

1. Create seed keywords.
2. collect Google suggestions.
3. Use one or more keyword tools.
4. Analyse competitor terms.
5. classify intent.
6. Group keywords.
7. Prioritise opportunities.

Phase 3: Website Architecture

1. Create the sitemap.
2. Assign one primary purpose to each page.
3. Map keyword clusters.
4. Plan navigation.
5. Plan internal links.
6. Avoid unnecessary pages.

Phase 4: Content Creation

1. Analyse search results.
2. Create briefs.
3. Produce useful content.
4. Optimise page elements.
5. Add internal links and CTAs.
6. Review accuracy and originality.

Phase 5: Technical Setup

1. Enable HTTPS.
2. Verify canonical versions.
3. Create robots.txt.
4. Create XML sitemap.
5. Configure Search Console.
6. Check mobile usability.
7. Optimise performance.
8. Implement appropriate structured data.

Phase 6: Authority and Local Presence

1. Create useful resources.
2. Develop legitimate partnerships.

3. Conduct personalised outreach.
4. Optimise Business Profile.
5. Maintain consistent citations.
6. earn genuine reviews.

Phase 7: Measurement and Improvement

1. Monitor Search Console.
2. Monitor organic conversions.
3. Review indexing.
4. update declining content.
5. Improve low-CTR pages.
6. Fix technical issues.
7. Report outcomes.
8. Repeat the cycle.



16. Practical Project 1: Keyword Research

Business Scenario

Conduct keyword research for a local training institute, e-commerce business or professional service.

Required Deliverables

- Business and audience summary
- Minimum 20 seed keywords
- Minimum 100 collected keywords
- Tool names and target country
- Search volume and difficulty where available
- Search-intent classification
- Keyword clusters
- Competitor keyword analysis
- Keyword-to-page map
- Top 20 priority keywords
- Ten recommended content topics

Evaluation Criteria

Area	Weight
Business understanding	10%
Keyword collection	15%
Intent classification	20%
Keyword clustering	20%
SERP validation	15%
Keyword mapping	15%
Presentation	5%

17. Practical Project 2: Website Optimisation

Select five pages from a website.

For each page:

1. Identify the target keyword cluster.
2. Analyse the SERP.
3. record the existing title and description.
4. Propose an improved title and description.
5. review the URL.
6. Review headings.
7. identify missing subtopics.
8. Add internal-link recommendations.
9. Review images and alternative text.
10. Define the CTA.
11. Confirm indexability and canonical.
12. Record all changes in a before-and-after sheet.

Deliverable Table

Element	Existing version	Recommended version	Reason
Title	Existing title	Improved title	Better intent match
H1	Existing H1	Improved H1	Clearer topic
Content	Missing FAQs	Add relevant FAQs	Addresses user questions
Internal links	None	Link from related guide	Improves discovery
CTA	Contact us	Book SEO counselling	More specific

18. Practical Project 3: SEO Audit

Audit a website using:

- Manual checks
- Search Console, if access is available
- PageSpeed Insights
- A website crawler
- An SEO research tool where available

Required Findings

- Domain and HTTPS
- robots.txt
- Sitemap
- Indexability
- Status codes
- Titles and descriptions
- Headings
- Canonicals
- Internal links
- Images
- Mobile experience
- Performance
- Structured data
- Content gaps
- Backlinks
- Local presence
- Prioritised action plan

Students should include screenshots or exported evidence for important findings.

19. Common SEO Mistakes

- Selecting keywords only by search volume
- Ignoring search intent
- Creating a page for every keyword variation
- Repeating keywords unnaturally
- Copying competitor content

- Publishing thin or unhelpful pages
- Using identical titles across pages
- Changing URLs without redirects
- Blocking important pages accidentally
- Including noindex pages in sitemaps
- Pointing canonical tags incorrectly
- Ignoring mobile users
- Installing too many SEO plugins
- Purchasing manipulative backlinks
- Creating fake local listings or reviews
- Reporting rankings without business outcomes
- Expecting immediate results
- Making changes without recording them

20. SEO Tools and Their Practical Uses

Tool	Practical use
Google Search	SERP, intent and competitor analysis
Google Search Console	Performance, indexing, URL inspection and sitemaps
Google Keyword Planner	Keyword ideas and advertising demand indicators
Google Trends	Seasonality and relative interest
PageSpeed Insights	Page-performance diagnosis
Rich Results Test	Structured-data validation
Screaming Frog	Technical and on-page website crawling
Semrush	Keyword, competitor, audit and backlink research
Ahrefs	Keyword, content and backlink research
Spreadsheet	Keyword mapping, audits and reporting
Browser Developer Tools	Mobile, code, network and performance checks

A professional does not depend entirely on one tool. Tools collect data; the SEO professional must interpret it.

21. Key SEO Terms

Term	Meaning
Crawl	Search-engine discovery of pages and resources
Index	Search engine's stored understanding of content
SERP	Search Engine Results Page
Keyword	Search word or phrase
Search intent	Purpose behind a query
Organic result	Unpaid search result
Title tag	HTML title describing a page
Meta description	Summary that may appear in search results
Internal link	Link between pages on the same website
Backlink	Link from another website
Anchor text	Clickable text of a link
robots.txt	File containing crawler instructions
Noindex	Instruction not to index a page
XML sitemap	File listing important website URLs
Canonical	Preferred URL among duplicate versions
Redirect	Instruction sending one URL to another
404	Status indicating a missing resource
Structured data	Machine-readable information about page content
Local SEO	Optimisation for geographic searches
Citation	Online reference to a local business
NAP	Business name, address and phone number
CTR	Clicks divided by impressions
Conversion	Completion of a desired action
Keyword cannibalisation	Unnecessary competition between pages
Core Web Vitals	User-experience performance measurements

Final Learning Outcome

After completing this module, students should be able to take a real website and independently:

1. Understand its business and audience.
2. Perform keyword research using suitable tools.
3. classify search intent.
4. Develop keyword clusters and a page map.
5. Optimise important pages.
6. Conduct a technical crawl.
7. Diagnose indexing problems in Search Console.
8. Create an ethical authority-building plan.
9. Optimise a local business.
10. Prepare an evidence-based SEO audit and report.

Practical SEO is a continuous cycle:

Research → Plan → Create → Optimise → Measure → Improve

The objective is not to manipulate a search engine. The objective is to build accessible, relevant and trustworthy pages that satisfy users and can be correctly understood by search engines.



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