

SEO Starter Checklist

A new year is a great opportunity to **get the basics in order.**

Not with complex steps, but with a few small checks that make your site easier to find and use.

You can use it

- Today, to let Yoast set up your basics
- Before you publish your next page or post
- Once a month, to keep your important content in good shape

Each step tells you what to do and why it matters, so you are not just ticking boxes; you are making your site easier to find for the people who need you.



Strategy and basics

Step 1: Define your goal(s)

Why it matters:

Defining an objective(s), think of splitting them between business (calls, bookings, ..) and SEO goals (LLM, rankings, ..). Keeps you focused on visitors who are likely to become customers rather than chasing random traffic.

How to do it:

Decide on the primary action you want from your visitors and design your website and calls to action around goals.

[Read more](#)

Step 2: Describe your ideal customer(s)

Why it matters:

Knowing who you serve makes writing copy and choosing keywords easier because your content stays relevant to the users and matches their intent.

How to do it:

Write a short paragraph in your customers' words describing their needs, challenges and situations.

[Read more](#)

Step 3: List your top offers

Why it matters:

Highlighting your core services or products ensures they get the visibility they deserve and prevents confusion.

How to do it:

Create a dedicated page for each key service or product group and avoid cramming everything into one page.

[Read more](#)

Step 4: Simplify your site's navigational structure

Why it matters:

A clear menu helps visitors find information quickly, improving user experience and encouraging contact or purchase.

How to do it:

Keep your navigation simple with items like home, about, services or products, blog and contact, and organize posts into sensible categories or tags if needed.

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Tools and setup

Step 5: Install Yoast SEO

Why it matters:

The free Yoast SEO plugin provides clear red, orange and green feedback, automates your technical SEO, and is full of other SEO features.

How to do it:

Install Yoast SEO for WordPress or Shopify from the plugin store and activate it.

[Read more](#)

Step 6: Run the first-time configuration

Why it matters:

Yoast's first-time configuration sets important basics to build your site's SEO foundation in just a few steps.

How to do it:

Open the Yoast SEO dashboard and follow the configuration steps to set up your site's settings.

[Read more](#)

Step 7: Enable XML sitemaps

Why it matters:

A sitemap helps Google find your pages more easily and is vital for indexing.

How to do it:

In Yoast settings, turn on the XML sitemap feature and Yoast will automatically create it. Don't forget to submit the sitemap URL to Google Search Console.

[Read more](#)

Step 8: Check search appearance settings

Why it matters:

Making your posts and pages visible or invisible, like a "thank you for signing up page" in search, ensures you show the relevant page only.

How to do it:

In Yoast's settings, go to content types and set posts and pages to "show" in search results.



Step 9: Set up redirects

Why it matters:

Fixing 404s and redirecting old URLs prevents visitors from landing on dead pages, preserving your ranking.

How to do it:

Regularly check for broken links and use Yoast SEO Premium to redirect old or changed URLs to the correct page.

[Read more](#)

Measurement basics

Step 10: Connect to Google Search Console

Why it matters:

Search Console shows which queries bring people to your site and alerts you to technical issues.

How to do it:

Add your site to Google Search Console, verify ownership and check the performance and coverage reports each month.

[Read more](#)

Step 11: Activate Google Analytics

Why it matters:

Google Analytics 4 helps you understand which pages attract visitors, which encourage conversions and other user data.

How to do it:

Add Google Analytics and Search Console to your site and review reports regularly. You can connect them to your Yoast SEO Dashboard through Google Site Kit.



Keywords and pages

Step 12: List 10 target keyphrases

Why it matters:

Aligning content with actual keyphrases avoids internal jargon and makes your pages more discoverable.

How to do it:

Brainstorm a list of ten phrases your customers might type, such as “emergency plumber Brooklyn” or “family dentist Mumbai.”

[Read more](#)

Step 13: Assign one page per keyphrase

Why it matters:

Assigning a unique page to each keyphrase prevents your own pages from competing with each other.

How to do it:

For each important phrase, choose the most relevant page and optimize that page around the phrase using the Yoast SEO keyphrase box

[Read more](#)

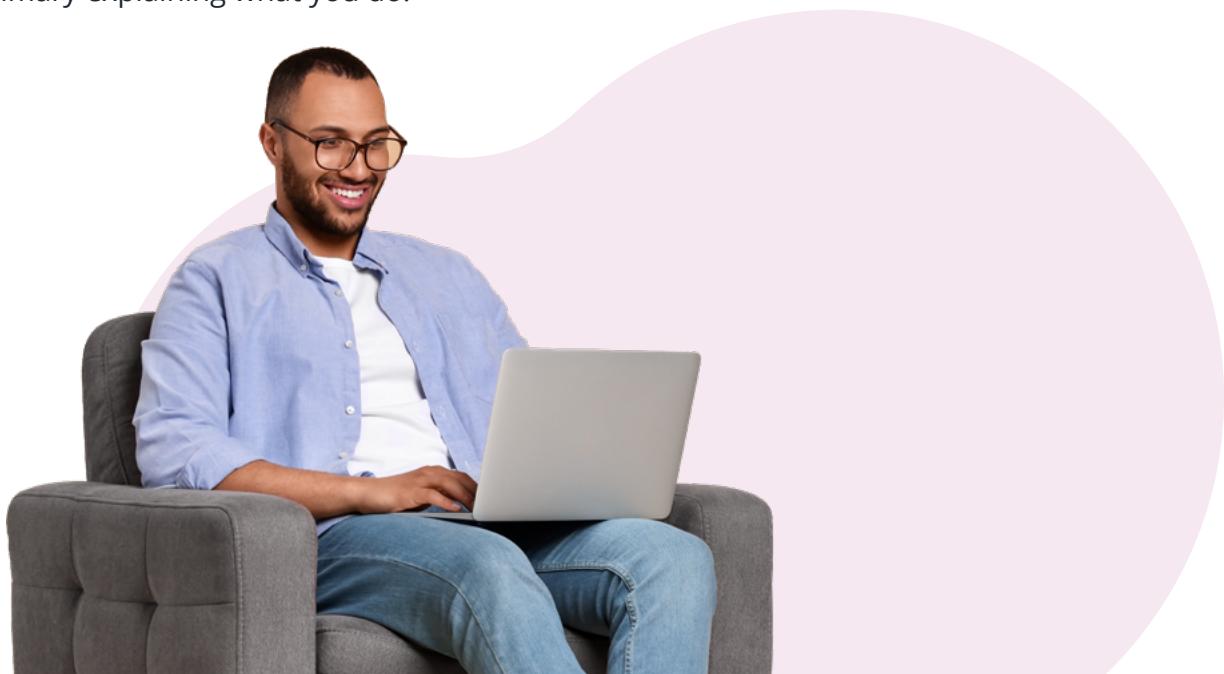
Step 14: Write a clear and concise homepage introduction

Why it matters:

A concise headline helps visitors understand what you offer within seconds.

How to do it:

Use a clear headline such as “accountant for freelancers in Amsterdam” followed by a short summary explaining what you do.



Titles, descriptions and text

Step 15: Craft SEO friendly page titles

Why it matters:

A good title encourages users to click on your result in native search results.

How to do it:

Use Yoast SEO to edit the SEO title; include the service, location and brand name where appropriate.

[Read more](#)

Step 16: Write helpful meta descriptions

Why it matters:

A concise description can persuade users to click through to your site.

How to do it:

Write one or two sentences summarizing who you help, what you offer, and what visitors should do next.

[Read more](#)

Step 17: Use only one H1 and clear subheadings

Why it matters:

Clear heading hierarchy makes pages easier to scan and helps search engines understand the topic.

How to do it:

Assign a single H1 tag matching your main topic, and use H2s to break the page into logical sections such as pricing or how it works.

Step 18: Write readable copy

Why it matters:

Text that is easy to read keeps visitors engaged and increases the chances they will take action.

How to do it:

Keep sentences short, choose simple words and use Yoast's Readability Analysis to identify improvements.

[Read more](#)



Step 19: Answer common questions

Why it matters:

Addressing frequently asked questions reduces uncertainty and builds trust, and structured data can improve your visibility in search.

How to do it:

Add an FAQ section on important pages based on questions you receive from customers.

Images and on-page basics

Step 20: Use photos with descriptive file names and alt text

Why it matters:

Genuine images build trust and accessible alt text helps users and search engines understand your content.

How to do it:

Upload photos, name the files clearly (e.g., "teamworking.jpg"), and write alt text in plain language.
[Read more](#)

Step 21: Make it easy to contact you

Why it matters:

Accessible contact details encourage visitors to get in touch and improve local search visibility.

How to do it:

Include a prominent CTA such as a button, clickable phone number or short contact form on every important page.

Step 22: Link related pages together

Why it matters:

Internal links guide visitors through your site and help search engines understand how your pages relate.

How to do it:

Add links from blog posts to relevant service pages and use Yoast SEO Premium's internal linking suggestions.

[Read more](#)



Local visibility

Step 23: Keep your details consistent

Why it matters:

Consistent name, address and phone number across your site and listings reinforces trust and supports local SEO.

How to do it:

Use the same format for your business name, address and phone on your website, footer and all online directories. If you're on Yoast SEO Premium, you can add additional Organization Schema too!

[Read more](#)

Step 24: Claim or optimize your Google Business Profile

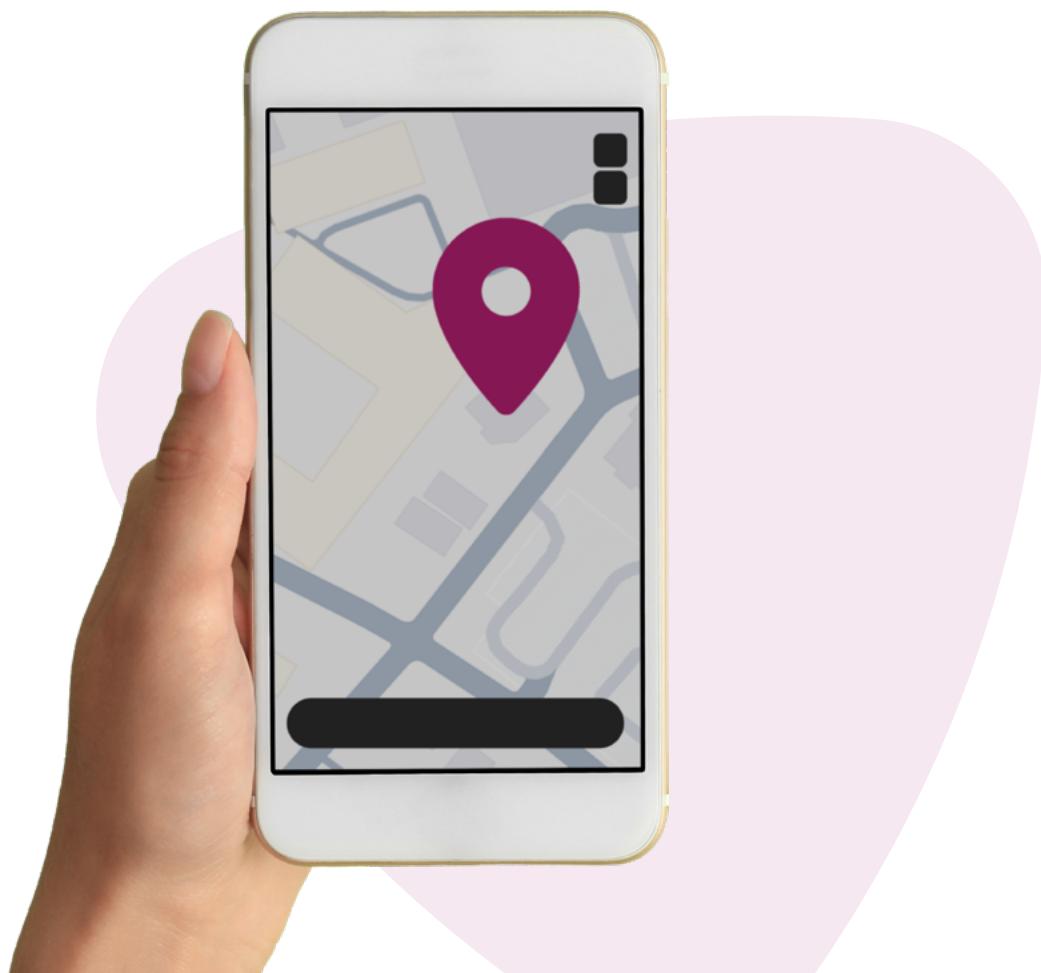
Why it matters:

A Google Business Profile helps you appear in local and "near me" searches with reviews, photos and contact details.

How to do it:

Claim your profile, add your details, upload images and ask happy customers to leave reviews.

[Read more](#)



Content and speed

Step 25: Publish five helpful articles

Why it matters:

Creating genuinely useful content attracts visitors during the research phase and keeps you top of mind.

How to do it:

Pick five topics based on common questions from customers and write detailed articles following Yoast's content SEO guidelines.

Step 26: Merge weak or overlapping pages

Why it matters:

Consolidating similar or thin content into stronger pages improves clarity and authority.

How to do it:

Update outdated posts with better information or combine several short posts into a single in-depth guide, then set up proper redirects.

[Read more](#)

Step 27: Check page speed

Why it matters:

Faster pages create a better user experience and can improve search rankings.

How to do it:

Use a speed testing tool to test your homepage and main service pages; compress images and minimize unnecessary scripts.

[Read more](#)

Step 28: Review your SEO monthly

Why it matters:

Small, regular adjustments keep your site healthy and aligned with your goals.

How to do it:

Once a month, check your top pages in Search Console, update titles and descriptions, and improve internal links based on your analytics. Step 2: Describe your ideal customer(s)



Check all Yoast products!

