

[FIVEJARS]

ON-PAGE SEO CHECKLIST: HOW TO MAXIMIZE SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION FOR DRUPAL SITES

All you need for perfect on-page SEO

Table of Contents

1. What is on-page SEO?	4
2. How to do a successful SEO setup	5
2.1 Create an XML sitemap	5
2.2 Setup robots.txt	5
2.3 Setup 404 pages	6
2.4 Add contact details to your page	6
2.5 Delete duplicate content	7
3. How to do a monthly SEO audit	9
3.1 Check & fix broken links	9
3.2 Run the HTML validator	9
3.3 Run a mobile-friendliness test	10
3.4 Run a page speed test	10
3.5 Check up on Core Web Vitals	10
4. SEO checklist for new content	11
4.1 Optimize content for keywords	11
4.2 Add alt tags for images	12
4.3 Optimize meta tags & descriptions	13
4.4 Optimize linking	14
4.5 Use readable URL	14
5. Conclusion	15
About Five Jars	15

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Did you know that search engine optimization (SEO) is one of the best ways to acquire traffic, [driving 10x more traffic](#) than organic social media?

But if you don't specialize in SEO, you might not have time to learn the intricacies of the Google algorithm.

Don't worry, we have you covered. After reading this guide, you will have everything you need for near-perfect on-page SEO.

It's split into three checklists: a checklist for successful SEO setup, a monthly SEO checklist, and a checklist for adding new content.

Since this is a Drupal guide, we will give links to all kinds of fantastic modules that will make the optimization process much faster and friendlier. But you can also use this guide for your non-Drupal website.



Read more: [Top 17 SEO modules](#)

But first, a quick reminder about what we will be doing.

1. What is on-page SEO?

On-page SEO is all about making the content on your page easier to understand for both search engine robots (crawlers) and people.

It involves:

- Adding meta tags & descriptions.
- Optimizing the keywords, structure, and internal linking of the content pages.
- Adding additional information that helps crawlers index your page.

On-page SEO helps Google understand what your article is about and whether it is relevant for the query.

It differs from off-page SEO by the fact that you are not yet worried about ranking signals from outside your website, such as backlinks. Instead, you optimize things that are entirely in your control.

Now, let's delve into our checklists and start optimizing your website.

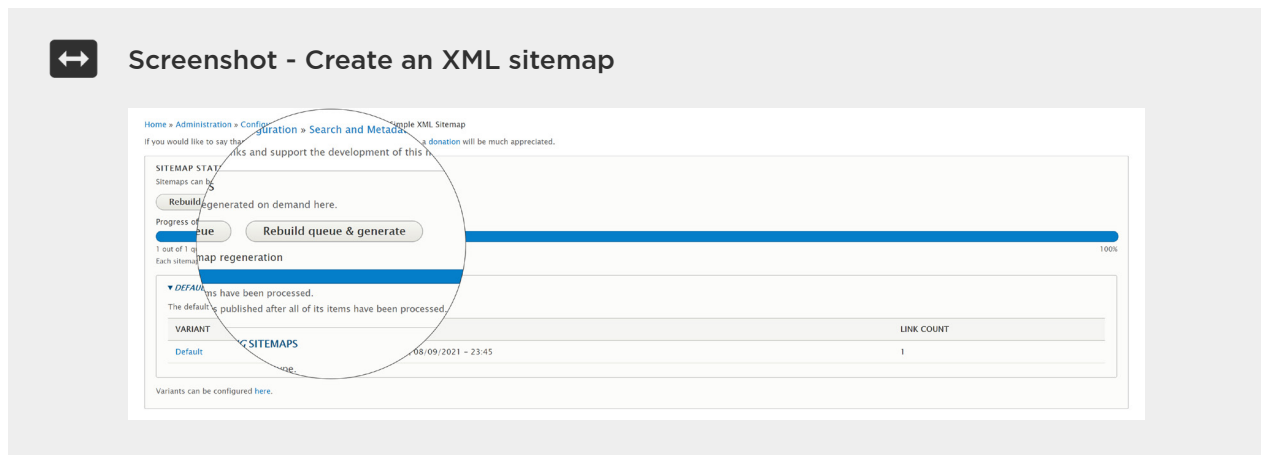
2. How to do a successful SEO setup

These are the SEO tasks that you can, for the most part, “set and forget”. Of course, it pays to come back to them now and again and make sure everything is still ok and relevant.

2.1 Create an XML sitemap

An [XML sitemap](#) is a file that lists all the important pages on your website. It basically acts as a map for Google, showing the crawlers what content you have on your page.

It's easy to make one for your Drupal project. If you install the [Simple XML Sitemap](#) Drupal module, it will generate it for you – no need to do anything else.



2.2 Setup robots.txt

[Robots.txt](#) is a file that tells search engines which URLs can be accessed on your site. You can use it to disallow search engine crawlers to index certain parts of your website or prevent crawlers from accessing duplicate content.

The most important thing to do with robots.txt is to close off all your service pages so that Google can't access them.

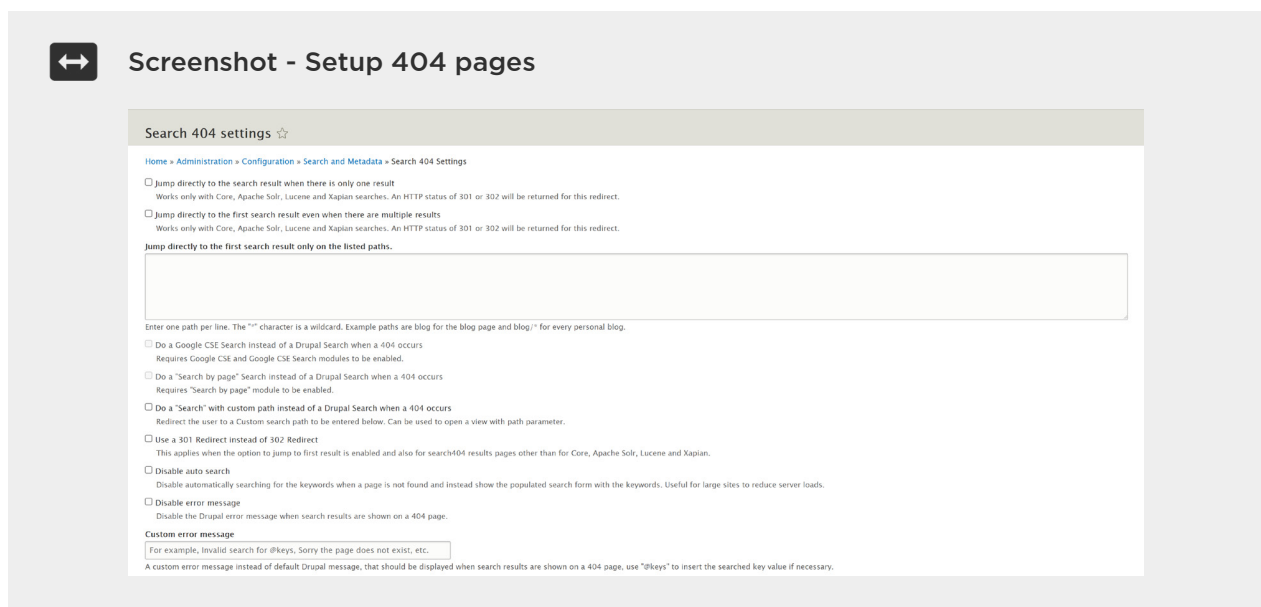
There's not a lot to it, but it helps to read a [guide](#) when working with the file to avoid costly mistakes.

2.3 Setup 404 pages

Default Drupal error pages are rather terse and not user-friendly. To help your users, make sure your 404 page is customized and actually gives the 404 response code. Here's a [good guide](#) for doing that.

In case you need something more, you can set up the [Search 404](#) module. It will use keywords from the address bar to direct the user to a search with these keywords. For example, if the user goes to <https://myblog.com/drupal/seo/guide> and it doesn't exist, the module will perform a search for "drupal seo guide".

Search 404 is highly configurable according to your needs.



2.4 Add contact details to your page

This one is simple – just add your contact details (phone, post address, email, social links) to your site's footer. If you are working with a local audience, a Google map integration somewhere on the site also helps.

Adding your contact details raises your trustworthiness in the eyes of users and Google and will lead you to higher search rankings.

2.5 Delete duplicate content

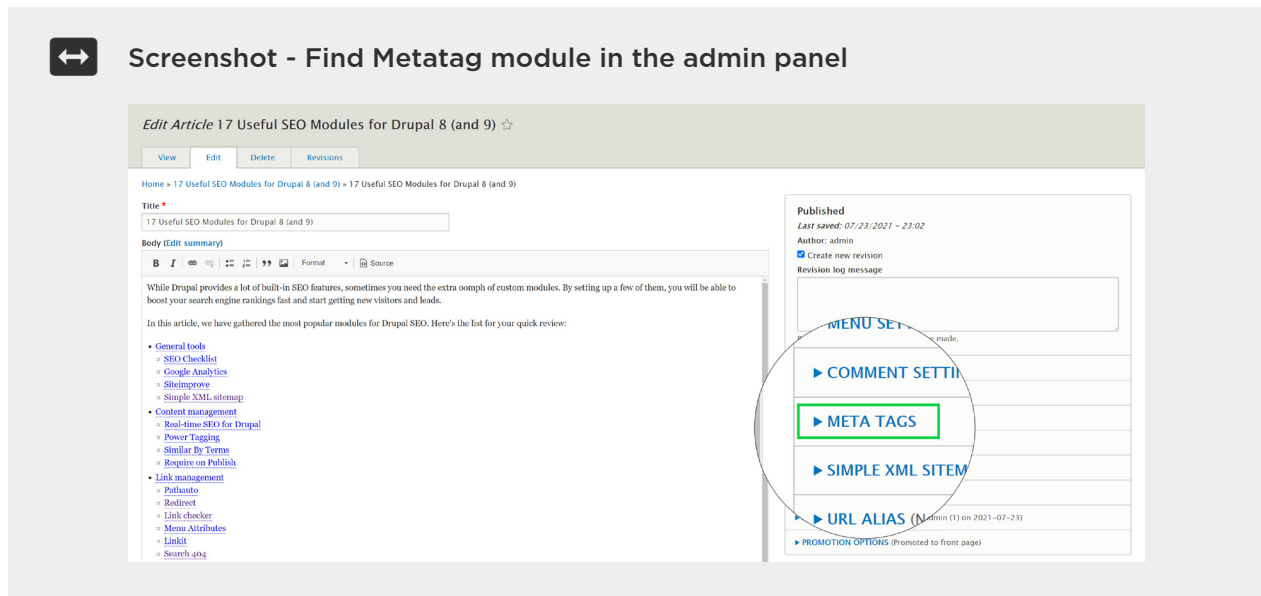
One issue that could be tanking your SEO rating is duplicate content.

The most frequent way to accidentally create a lot of duplicate content is to have trailing slashes. If your website accepts both `websitename.com/` and `websitename.com`, you might be in trouble.

To solve this, you need to pick and display one page as the canonical source. It is done by adding a [canonical URL](#) to the HTML of duplicate pages.

This will show Google that it should take this as the original source of information. It will help prevent multiple pages from competing with each other.

If you want to just set a canonical and keep the pages in place, you can use the canonical link functionality of the [Metatag](#) module.



Screenshot - Use its canonical link functionality

▼ ADVANCED

Meta tags that might not be needed by many sites.

Geographical place name

A location's formal name.

Geographical position

Geo-spatial information in 'latitude; longitude' format, e.g. '50.167958; -97.133185'; [see Wikipedia for details](#).

Geographical region

A location's two-letter international country code, with an optional two-letter region, e.g. 'US-NH' for New Hampshire in the USA.

ICBM Geo-spatial information

Geo-spatial information in 'latitude; longitude' format, e.g. '50.167958, -97.133185'; [see Wikipedia for details](#).

Canonical URL

A link to the preferred page of the content of this page, to help search engines eliminate duplicate content.

Content Language

Content language code. May be the two letter language code, e.g. 'en', or the two letter language code with a dash and the two letter ISO country code, e.g. 'en-US' for English in the United States. Still used by Bing.

For stricter measures, you can use the Drupal [Redirect](#) module, which enables you to create URL redirects.

Screenshot - Create URL redirects

▼ URL REDIRECTS

FROM	OPERATIONS
No URL redirects available.	

[Add URL redirect](#)

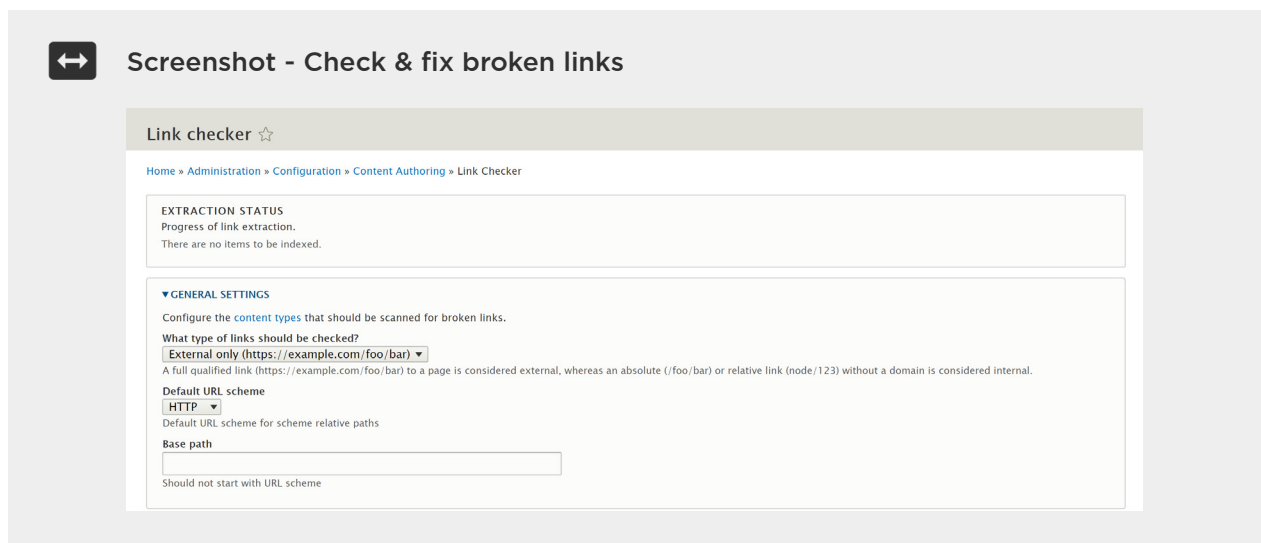
3. How to do a monthly SEO audit

Having good SEO is an ongoing effort. Below is a list of things you should do regularly (every or every other month) so that your website would continue giving healthy signals to Google.

3.1 Check & fix broken links

Google doesn't like it when you have broken links in your content. Thankfully, there are a lot of automatic tools that can crawl your content and point your attention to any 404s.

For example, the [Link Checker](#) module extracts all the links from your content and periodically checks them, returning any links that are broken.



3.2 Run the HTML validator

By running the [w3 HTML validator](#), you can make sure that all the HTML on your website is actually valid code. Even though it might not “look off” right now, invalid HTML can cause bugs down the line and decrease your search engine rankings.

For your convenience, Drupal has a [W3C Validator](#) module that allows you to use it from the admin panel.

3.3 Run a mobile-friendliness test

Google has a [diagnostic test](#) for mobile-friendliness you can use. It will help you detect if the site looks and feels good on mobile. It is good to run it once in a while to make sure everything is ok.

3.4 Run a page speed test

It is crucial for search rankings that your website loads fast. There are [many ways](#) to increase page loading speed, but once you get there, it is essential to regularly monitor the page to fix any issues that might arise. You can use [PageSpeed Insights](#) from Google for this, which also provides you with Core Web Vitals metrics.

3.5 Check up on Core Web Vitals

[Core Web Vitals](#) are three metrics that Google wants every website owner to measure.

- **Largest Contentful Paint (LCP)**, which measures the time at which most of the website content is loaded.
- **First Input Delay (FID)**, which measures how long a user has to wait to interact with the page.
- **Cumulative Layout Shift (CLS)**, which measures visual stability. For example, it measures if items don't switch their places while loading.

There is a [wide variety of tools](#) that you can use to measure these metrics regularly.

4. SEO checklist for new content

Every time you post new content (page, blog post, etc.) on your website, it is a good idea to go through this checklist and make sure you have covered everything.

If you already have content on your site before reading this guide, we advise you to apply this checklist to each page of content while doing initial SEO.

4.1 Optimize content for keywords

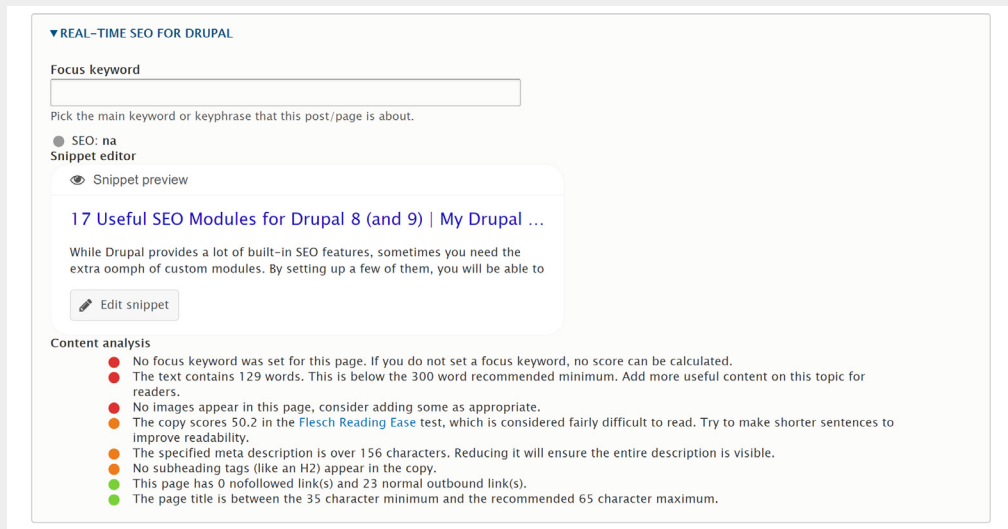
[Keywords](#) are one of the most important things in SEO.

Here are a few things that you should do to optimize content for keywords.

- **Use the keywords.** If you don't use the keywords you want to rank for, Google can't know that your content covers those topics.
- **Start with the keywords.** Text that is near the top of each page, in beginning paragraphs, or in headings should contain the keywords used for that page.
- **But don't overdo it.** Google can detect when you are spamming keywords. After a certain frequency (1-2%), adding more of the keyword can impact your site negatively.

Drupal has a module called [Real-time SEO for Drupal](#) that can help you optimize content for certain keywords.

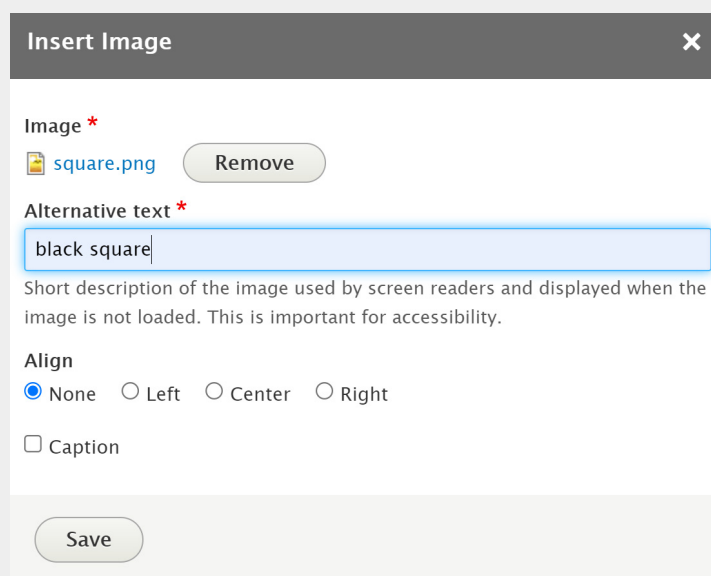
Screenshot - Optimize content for keywords



4.2 Add alt tags for images

Alt tags are important for search engines because they describe images, which the crawlers don't see. Adding alt tags enables the crawlers to understand your images and also makes it much more likely that your image will rank in the image search section of search engines.

Screenshot - Add alt tags for images



In Drupal, you can always change the alt tag by right-clicking on the image while editing content.

4.3 Optimize meta tags & descriptions

Make sure your content has optimized meta tags and meta descriptions. These are the titles and descriptions that will show up on Google and social media.

Here are a few tips you should take in mind when optimizing metas:

- Meta tags & descriptions should definitely contain the keywords you want to rank for.
- You should aim to have a unique main heading (H1), title, and description for every page.
- The title should not be longer than 70 characters, and the description shouldn't be longer than 250 characters.
- The title should be different from the H1.

The [Metatag](#) Drupal module allows you to set up meta tags and descriptions automatically. You can also provide your own meta tags and descriptions in the content editor.



Screenshot - Optimize meta tags & descriptions

▼ META TAGS

Configure the meta tags below.

Use tokens to avoid redundant meta data and search engine penalization. For example, a 'keyword' value of "example" will be shown on all content using this configuration, whereas using the `[node:field_keywords]` automatically inserts the "keywords" values from the current entity (node, term, etc).

[Browse available tokens.](#)

▼ BASIC TAGS

Simple meta tags.

Page title

The text to display in the title bar of a visitor's web browser when they view this page. This meta tag may also be used as the title of the page when a visitor bookmarks or favorites this page, or as the page title in a search engine result. It is common to append '[site:name]' to the end of this, so the site's name is automatically added. It is recommended that the title is no greater than 55 – 65 characters long, including spaces.

Description

A brief and concise summary of the page's content that is a maximum of 160 characters in length. The description meta tag may be used by search engines to display a snippet about the page in search results.

4.4 Optimize linking

Whenever you add new content, you should focus on adding links to and from other pages. This will help both your users and ranking.

Don't create orphan pages

If you want your pages to rank, they should be linked from at least one more page on your website. This is because the crawlers work by opening all the links of the pages they land on. If you do not link to a page, it does not get on Google.

Add internal links

Internal links can make your page rank higher on the search engine. Of course, there is a limit, but it's helpful to link any new page of content from several other pages.

4.5 Use readable URL

Make sure your URLs are user-readable. The simpler they are, the better. There should be no capital letters and as few numbers and special symbols as possible.

5. Conclusion

With this checklist, you should be able to keep your on-page SEO in order so that you can focus on things that matter. If you want to check out our complete list of useful Drupal SEO modules, you can find it [on our blog](#).



About Five Jars

Five Jars is an international Drupal, Web Development, Web Design, and Strategy company led by leaders with 10+ years of experience in web development. In the last 4 years, we've delivered 75+ projects for clients in fitness, education, commercial and NGO markets, including 10+ mid to enterprise clients such as Mount Vernon Museum, Council for Exceptional Children, and numerous large YMCAs across the US.

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