

# Off-Page SEO Checklist

Checklist · 87 items · 10 sections

A companion to on-page SEO. Covers backlinks (quality, diversity, anchor profile), brand mentions, local citations, digital PR, disavow and toxic link management, E-E-A-T authority building, and competitor backlink analysis. Built from Google Search Central, Ahrefs, Semrush, Moz, Backlinko, and Search Engine Journal.

Open the editable, AI-powered version online:

<https://genechecklist.com/checklist/off-page-seo-checklist>

## BACKLINK FOUNDATIONS

- Prioritize referring domains over total backlinks (50 links from 50 sites beat 500 links from 5 sites)  
**HIGH**
- Target authoritative domains in your vertical (.gov, .edu, established publishers)  
**HIGH**
- Audit dofollow vs nofollow ratio quarterly; aim for 60-80% dofollow (Backlinko)
- Diversify anchor text: branded, naked URL, generic ('click here'), exact-match, partial-match  
**HIGH**
- Keep exact-match commercial anchors below 10% of profile to avoid Penguin signals  
**HIGH**
- Monitor link velocity; sudden spikes in low-quality links trigger algorithmic suspicion  
**HIGH**
- Evaluate prospect quality: Domain Rating (Ahrefs), DA (Moz), Authority Score (Semrush), real organic traffic, topical relevance  
**HIGH**
- Reject links from PBNs, link farms, comment spam, irrelevant directories regardless of metric scores  
**HIGH**
- Verify each prospect has real organic traffic via Ahrefs or Semrush before outreach
- Place links contextually within body content (sidebar and footer links carry less weight)

## BACKLINK ACQUISITION TACTICS

- Build a guest posting pipeline targeting topically relevant blogs and publications  
**HIGH**
- Use Ahrefs Content Explorer or Semrush Topic Research to find sites that accept guest posts

HIGH

- Run broken link building: use Ahrefs Broken Backlinks on competitor domains and pitch as replacement

HIGH

- Execute Skyscraper Technique (Brian Dean): find top-ranking content, build a 10x better version, outreach existing linkers
- Sign up for HARO/Connectively, Help a B2B Writer, Qwoted, SourceBottle, Featured.com; respond daily
- Pitch digital PR via Muck Rack and Prowly; target journalists covering your niche
- Book podcast guest spots (PodMatch, MatchMaker.fm) and direct outreach to niche podcasts
- Find resource pages with operators: 'intitle:resources + [niche]', 'inurl:links + [topic]'
- Pursue niche edits (link insertions) only on contextually relevant, recently updated articles
- Submit to legitimate industry roundups and expert-quote pieces
- Create scholarship/grant pages for .edu backlinks; follow Google's incentivized-links guidance
- Sponsor relevant industry events, conferences, webinars with branded link inclusion
- Reclaim 404 backlinks: Ahrefs Best by Links filtered to 404s; 301-redirect to live pages

HIGH

- Build relationships with niche experts who maintain professional blogs or affiliate content

## BRAND MENTIONS

- Set Google Alerts for brand name, common misspellings, founder/author names

HIGH

- Monitor unlinked mentions with Mention.com, Brand24, BuzzSumo, or Talkwalker Alerts

HIGH

- Convert unlinked mentions into links via friendly outreach; target 20-40% conversion rate

HIGH

- Track competitor brand mentions in Ahrefs Content Explorer; pitch your brand for inclusion
- Set up Reddit and Hacker News alerts via F5Bot for community mentions
- Engage authentically when mentioned on forums; never drop unsolicited links
- Claim and verify brand profiles on Crunchbase, Product Hunt, G2, Capterra, Trustpilot

## LOCAL SEO CITATIONS

- Create and verify a Google Business Profile if you have a physical location; include accurate NAP, hours, category

HIGH

- Build core citations on Bing Places, Apple Business Connect, Yelp, Foursquare, BBB

HIGH

- Submit to industry-specific directories relevant to your vertical
- Maintain NAP (Name, Address, Phone) consistency across all citations: even 'St.' vs 'Street' fragments signals

HIGH

- Audit citations quarterly using Moz Local, BrightLocal, or Whitespark; clean duplicates
- Earn local press coverage in city business journals and beat-specific columns
- Build state and country-specific citations for international markets

## SOCIAL SIGNALS

- Social shares are not direct ranking factors (per John Mueller) but correlate with brand searches and traffic
- Build branded presence on X, LinkedIn, Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, YouTube; consistent handles reinforce entity association
- Create YouTube videos for informational queries; YouTube ranks in Google SERPs and captures video intent

HIGH

- Optimize YouTube titles, descriptions, tags with target keywords; link to relevant pages in descriptions

HIGH

- Build a LinkedIn company page; encourage founder/employee thought leadership posts
- Track branded search volume in GSC and Google Trends; rising branded searches signal off-page momentum

HIGH

- Cross-promote linkable assets on social to drive initial visibility and natural link discovery
- Engage in Reddit, Quora, LinkedIn groups, Facebook groups with helpful answers (profile links nofollow but drive referral)

## DIGITAL PR

- Publish original research and data studies; journalists link to primary data
- HIGH
- Create linkable assets: interactive tools, calculators, infographics, definitive guides
- HIGH
- Pitch newsworthy angles tied to trending events, awareness months, regulatory decisions
  - Use Connectively, Featured.com, Qwoted to position founders and advisors as expert sources
  - Build a press page with logos of past coverage, media kit, founder bios, journalist contact info

- Distribute press releases for genuinely newsworthy launches (PR Newswire, Business Wire, EIN Presswire); do not spam
- Provide expert commentary on breaking news within 24 hours; speed wins journalist relationships
- Develop ongoing relationships with 10-20 target journalists; follow on X, engage with their work, pitch only when relevant

HIGH

## DISAVOW AND TOXIC LINK MANAGEMENT

- Audit backlink profile monthly using Ahrefs, Semrush Backlink Audit, or Moz Link Explorer
- Flag toxic links: low DR spam, link farms, irrelevant foreign-language sites, hacked sites, over-optimized exact-match anchors
- Attempt removal first by contacting webmasters; document outreach attempts
- Use Google's Disavow Tool only when manual action received or clear negative SEO evidence (Mueller: most sites should not use it)
- Upload disavow files in correct format (one domain per line with 'domain:' prefix); test in GSC
- Re-audit disavow file every 6-12 months; remove disavowed domains that have improved
- Watch for negative SEO patterns: spammy anchor spikes, foreign-language link farms, porn-site references

HIGH

## AUTHORITY BUILDING (E-E-A-T)

- Implement E-E-A-T signals: Experience, Expertise, Authoritativeness, Trustworthiness (Search Quality Rater Guidelines)
- Display detailed author bios with credentials on every YMYL content page
- Link author bios to LinkedIn, PubMed publications, ORCID IDs, professional society memberships
- Cite primary sources (NIH/NCBI, PubMed, peer-reviewed journals); avoid linking only to other blogs
- Add expert reviewer bylines ('Medically reviewed by Dr. X, board-certified, last updated MM/YYYY')

HIGH

- Display trust signals: HIPAA badges, SSL, privacy policy, disclaimer, editorial policy, corrections policy

HIGH

- Earn mentions on Wikipedia when genuinely citable (nofollow but builds entity authority)
- Build a Wikidata entity for the company and key authors to strengthen Knowledge Graph signals
- Get founders and advisors quoted in established publications (NYT, WSJ, Wired) to build personal brand authority

HIGH

## COMPETITOR BACKLINK ANALYSIS

- Identify top 5-10 competitors in your category
- HIGH
- Use Ahrefs Site Explorer Backlinks and Referring Domains to export competitor link profiles
- HIGH
- Run Semrush Backlink Gap to find domains linking to 2+ competitors but not to you (high-probability prospects)
- HIGH
- Use Moz Link Explorer's Link Intersect feature for additional gap analysis
  - Sort competitor backlinks by DR/DA and traffic; prioritize the top 20% of prospects
- HIGH
- Analyze competitor anchor text distribution to benchmark a natural target for your own
  - Reverse engineer competitor digital PR wins; identify highest-link stories and develop better angles
  - Track new competitor backlinks weekly via Ahrefs Alerts or Semrush Position Tracking

## MEASUREMENT AND REPORTING

- Track referring domain growth month-over-month; target consistent positive growth
- HIGH
- Monitor Domain Rating (Ahrefs) and Domain Authority (Moz) quarterly; treat as directional, not absolute
  - Track anchor text distribution; alert on any single non-branded anchor exceeding 5% of total profile
- HIGH
- Measure branded vs non-branded organic split in GSC; rising branded share signals off-page momentum
- HIGH
- Review GSC Links report monthly: top linking sites, top linked pages, top linking text

HIGH

- Track referral traffic in GA4 from linked sites; quantify which backlinks drive visitors and conversions
- Build a monthly off-page dashboard: new referring domains, lost domains, new toxic links, branded search volume, digital PR placements
- Set quarterly off-page OKRs (e.g., '+25 new DR 40+ referring domains', '5 digital PR placements')
- Compare growth against competitors using Ahrefs Batch Analysis and Semrush Domain vs Domain