

A photograph showing a person's hands typing on a laptop keyboard. The person is wearing a blue denim shirt and a black watch. On the desk to the left of the laptop, there is a ping pong paddle and a ping pong ball. A red laser line is visible in the background. In the top right corner, there is a circular logo with the letters 'MP' inside.

MP

ULTIMATE CHECKLIST FOR BUILDING SUCCESSFUL BLOG

MAYUR PATHAK

www.mayurpathak.com

A successful blog is right blend of user focussed design, kick-ass content, perfect technical and content SEO and simplified social sharing. Plus all these factors packaged ideally for every screen size.

This might sound tiny at broader level, but at micro level there are exhaustive number of things that needs to be checked and improved to build a successful blog.

This is a quick checklist of 30 elements for ensuring that your blog is built to be successful.

DESIGN CHECKS

- Responsive Design
- Navigation
- Content Promotion Bars

TECHNICAL SEO CHECKS

- Google Webmasters Tools
- Indexing Rate
- Robots.txt
- Sitemaps
- URL Structure
- Canonicals and Redirects
- Find and Remove Broken Links

CONTENT SEO CHECKS

- Title Tag
- Meta Description
- ALT Tag
- Heading Tags
- Content Length
- Internal Links
- Rich Snippets

CONTENT READABILITY CHECKS

- Font Size
- Shorter Sentences
- Content Optimised for Mobile Reading

SPEED CHECKS

- Google Speed Test
- Optimise Images
- Use CDN
- Leverage browser caching
- Minify CSS, JavaScript, and HTML
- Remove Render-Blocking JavaScript
- Reduce redirects

SOCIAL SHAREABILITY CHECKS

- Simplify Sharing
- Claim URLs on social networks
- Social Media Meta Data

Here is the expanded list of 30 important checks, classified under 6 categories for easy comprehension. These 30 checks will help you in building and successfully marketing a website or blog.

6 Categories:

- Design and UX Checks
- Technical SEO Checks
- Content SEO Checks
- Content Readability Checks
- Speed Checks
- Social Shareability Checks

Design Checks

Design is the very important aspect of any digital platform. A good design not only looks cool but also encourages people to read more of your content and share it on their social channels.

Hence optimise the design to gain more readers and engagement.

Good design encourages people to read and share content. Optimise design for engagement #UXDesign Click To Tweet

Check #1: Responsive Design

More people are accessing web on mobile devices than desktop, and are using different screen sizes to consume content and information on internet.

A superior user experience and content discoverability on any screen size becomes a vital metric for success.

A responsive web design ensures that, whatever device a user is using, he gets the best and consistent experience of a website on any device that he is using – be that the a phone, a tablet or a desktop.

Check #2: Navigation

Effective and prioritised navigation lead visitors to other content that they are likely to be interested in.

While designing the navigation, the internal links in the body of content must also be considered, apart from top and side bars.

Typically a social media visitor will look at other pages using links in the body of content. Use this strategy to increase the visitors to older posts.

Check #3: Content Promotion Bars

Once you have got a visitor on the blog, he must be directed to other interesting pages on your blog.

Sidebars provide an optimal solution to promote other contents to visitors. This also provides ample space for distraction free reading on left and promotional content on right side.

Ensure that the space available to the post is enough, so that your readers aren't distracted with other elements.

Technical SEO Checks

The part of SEO that deals with search engines, crawling and indexing can be categorised under technical SEO. This generally includes every SEO task done apart from the content.

Check #4: Google Webmasters Tools

Start by adding your blog to [Google Webmasters](#). This will help in keeping a tab on search queries, indexation status, crawl errors, security issues and more.

This [guide](#) will help in understanding more on Google Webmasters Tool.

Check #5: Indexing Rate

Check your [Google Search Console](#) to see how many pages are indexed.

The rate of indexation is important to know, since lower rate indicates issues ranging from lack internal linking, low domain authority, render blocking code on your pages and others.

Check #6: Robots.txt

The [Robots file](#) is used to inform search engines about the pages which should be crawled and indexed and which shouldn't be. It is a simple text file in your blog's root folder.

When you are facing indexing problems and you realised that some pages from your blog are not showing up in Google's results, check robots.txt file.

Check #7: Sitemaps

Submit your sitemaps to Google and Bing using Google Search Console and Bing Webmaster Tools.

Check #8: URL Structure

Relevantly titled and properly structured URLs, with keywords tell Google and users what the page is about. URLs are used for determining relevancy and computing rankings.

A URL should be clear, simple, short and descriptive. It should follow a clean structure like this one – <http://www.somesite.com/category/product>

Properly structured URLs also increase the clickthrough rate of links since on a search engine results page (SERP), it reassures users that the link contains information they are searching for.

Check #9: Canonicals and Redirects

Same page can accessed from multiple URLs.

Canonicalization will tell Google clearly that there are no duplicate pages. Google puts penalty for duplicate content and pages.

Specify canonical version of site in your Google Webmaster Tools. Use Rel canonical link tag properly across the site.

Check #10: Find and Remove Broken Links

Use free tools like [Xenu's Link Sleuth](#), to find and remove broken links.

Content SEO Checks

This includes the optimisation work done on content with the goal of attracting search engine traffic. Content SEO is largely based on keyword research and using important keywords in right mix and format for content.

Check #11: Title Tag

Title tags indicate the relevance of the post and it should be optimized and unique. Ensure that title tag is limited to 60-65 characters and begins with a relevant keyword.

Check #12: Meta Description

A meta description is actually a short description of your page's content and search engines use these as the snippet of page content in the results.

Use meta description tag to enhance click-through rate for your page by writing compelling description of your page, using important keywords.

Its good to keep meta descriptions within 160 characters limit.

Check #13: ALT Tag

An “alt attribute” of image in HTML is a text description of the visual content.

Always write appropriate ALT tags for images. Search engines cannot view the images and hence they need a context to understand the image on your post.

Check #14: Heading Tags

Use H-tags or Heading tags to markup sections and subsections of your content.

Search engines give most weightage to an [H1 tag](#) while determining the intent of your page and rank it accordingly.

You need to ensure that primary keyword phrase is contained in the H1 tag and is as close to the beginning of title as possible.

Check #15: Content Length

Thought quality is always better than quantity, but research shows that longer posts get more shares on social media.

[Neil Patel in this post shared research](#) which shows that posts having more than 1,500 words got more shares.

MY OWN RESEARCH ON QUICK SPROUT CONFIRMS THIS. ALL OF MY POSTS THAT ARE MORE THAN 1,500 WORDS RECEIVE 68% MORE TWEETS AND 22% MORE FACEBOOK LIKES THAN THE ARTICLES WITH FEWER THAN 1,500 WORDS. – NEIL PATEL

Check #16: Internal Links

Internal linking and anchor texts are important part of content SEO. Contextually correct internal links improve search rankings and usability.

One good strategy is to create a list of internal links and use them in the posts wherever you feel it’s contextually right to place them.

Internal links also help in improving engagement on the site and traffic to your other posts.

Check #17: Rich Snippets

Rich snippets help display – product images, pricing, rating and other important information in search results itself

Rich snippets help search engines understand content, and index and present it better. Users get a good deal, too. They get to view search results that make immediate sense.

It pays to add rich snippets to your HTML. Currently, search engines can understand the following types of snippeted content: Product, Recipe, Reviews, Events, Video, News and Software Application.

Content Readability Checks

After all the hard work and research, when you get readers on your blog, it is important to ensure that they read what you are writing. Here are some basic checks which will improve the readability of your posts and will result in more returning visitors.

Check #18: Font Size

We know that [font sizes affects readability](#), larger fonts with sufficient line heights are good for users to read on the screens.

Along with correct font sizes, it is important to use more readable font types such a Arial or Times.

Check #19: Shorter Sentences

It is always easy to read and comprehend short sentences. It is recommended that a sentence should not have more than 20 words and a paragraph should not contain more than one long sentence.

[Yoast plugin for wordpress](#) recommends that 75% sentences Of your post should be less than 20 words.

Check #20: Content Optimised for Mobile Reading

Though responsive design will take care of the most part, it is still important to ensure that elements which are irrelevant for small screen must be removed.

[Google's AMP and Facebook's Instant Articles](#) are paving way for better mobile readability and the practices implemented by them can be used to optimise your content for mobile reading.

Speed Checks

Page speed or page load time is simply the amount of time a page needs to completely load.

While a faster loading page is important for page rankings, it also impacts user experience. Many website owners have found that faster pages convert better.

Check #21: Google Speed Test

Google's [PageSpeed Insights](#) is a wonderful tool to assess page speeds. This is the starting point of improving page speeds.

Good score for both mobile and desktop is around 85/100.

Check #22: Optimise Images

Images can significantly lower the page speeds. Ensure that visuals are compressed for web.

Use compressed PNGs for most visuals to maintain quality while lowering their weight. Use JPEG for logos or infographics.

Check #23: Use CDN

[Content distribution networks or CDNs](#), are networks of servers that are used serve content to end-users with high availability and high performance.

Using a CDN for contents like images, scripts, texts of your blog improves load time and reliability of access.

Check #24: Leverage browser caching

Modern day browsers cache many information like images, stylesheets and JavaScript files. This significantly improves the site speed for returning visitors as the browser doesn't have to reload all the elements.

[Google documentation on caching](#) has more information about leveraging caching.

Check #25: Minify CSS, JavaScript, and HTML

By removing code comments, unnecessary or redundant data and unused codes from stylesheets, JavaScripts and HTML and minifying them by removing spaces can dramatically increase page speed.

Google recommended [YUI Compressor](#) is a good tool for minifying CSS and JavaScript.

Check #26: Remove Render-Blocking JavaScript

Blocking JavaScripts force browsers to fetch before rendering the content of the page. This significantly slows down the page speed.

Move external blocking scripts to below the fold. This will enable browsers to load the page contents first.

Check #27: Reduce redirects

Whenever a page redirects to another page, there is an additional time required for the completion of HTTP request-response cycle. This hurts the page speed.

Minimise redirects to improve speed of your page.

Social Shareability Checks

Social media is a very effective way of getting more traffic to your blog and grow your audience.

Social shares also improve your search ranking. Make sure that you it extremely simple and encouraging for your readers to share your content on social media.

Check #28: Simplify Sharing

Social sharing plugins like [AddThis](#) or [SumoMe](#) make it easier for readers to share your content to any social network, emailing or even saving to Evernote or Pocket.

Placement of share buttons is also important for building social engagements. Some highly effective locations for share buttons are floating sidebars, above and below the posts and headers.

Find out which location works best for your blog.

Check #29: Claim URLs on social networks

Vanity URLs on social media are fast becoming one of the most important branding assets in today's digital age.

You must [claim your vanity URLs](#) on various social channels to improve optimisation, recognition and search rankings.

Check #30: Social Media Meta Data

Optimise the way your shared content appears in social media streams. By using [Twitter Cards](#), Facebook OGL, Pinterest Rich Pins and Google+, you can define exactly how titles, descriptions, images and more appear in social streams.

Using social media meta data improves social media exposure for your shared content. For starters, these social media meta tag templates by Moz will be of great help.