



Forensic SEO & AI Visibility Audit Checklist

Forensic SEO & AI Visibility Audit Checklist

190 signals grouped by primary optimization facet across 77 task sets in eight core groups that comprise the true SEO landscape.

The last time I created an SEO audit checklist and uploaded it (10 years ago), it quickly became a popular download. Unfortunately, over time, that list became outdated, but mostly for lack of true depth in comparison to the actual work I do.

Over the years, all my work became even more important.

What This Checklist Delivers

The checklist below presents the comprehensive, real-world process I use for forensic, sustainable, & AI-ready SEO audits.

Each item represents a critical checkpoint, technical, content, user experience, accessibility, authority, and answer engine readiness, that directly impacts your site's visibility and trust in both classic search and the emerging world of AI-driven answer engines.

You'll notice there is some intentional overlap between categories. That's by design: the strongest SEO, AI, and user experience signals often reinforce each other and span multiple areas of your website.

SEO in 2025 isn't about checking a single box for each item, it's about ensuring that every important signal is strong, consistent, & reinforced across your site's code, content, and architecture. Overlap here means added strength.

Note: This is not auditing for local SEO. While my audits cover on-site local optimization, I don't focus on other local SEO signals. Such work deserves to be handled by professional who are

themselves world-class experts in off-site local SEO.

How to Use This Checklist:

Use this as a reference for the audit process, as a benchmark for ongoing SEO and AI-readiness, or as a transparent "what's included" guide for your team or stakeholders. Every item is evidence of what separates forensic, sustainable audits from generic checklists, helping you see, measure, and improve what really matters for 2025 and beyond.

Technical & Structural Evaluation

- [] Site crawl-ability and indexation health
- [] Review of XML sitemap(s) (accuracy, freshness, coverage)
- [] Robots.txt and meta robots directives (no accidental blocking of key content/resources)
- [] Faceted navigation
- [] Canonical tag integrity and consistency
- [] Hreflang implementation (if multilingual/multinational site)
- [] Server log file analysis (when possible, edge-case diagnosis)
- [] Internal linking structure health (topical vector reinforcement, clear, hierarchical navigation paths, no orphaned pages)
- [] Site architecture and hierarchy (clarity, efficiency, crawl depth, bottlenecks)
- [] URL structure and hygiene (readable, logical, no excessive parameters or broken URLs)
- [] Redirects, 404s, and error code handling (minimal friction, clear resolution paths)
- [] HTTPS and security header validation
- [] Server performance, uptime, and reliability (hosting fit for scale and visibility)
- [] Core Web Vitals scores and site speed optimization
- [] Minimal reliance on client-side JavaScript for primary content/navigation
- [] Clean W3C code validation (no critical errors impacting render or bot parsing)
- [] Management of crawl budget (prioritization of high-value content, elimination of waste)
- [] Mobile usability and responsiveness across templates
- [] Global crawl optimization for large/multinational sites
- [] Content delivery network (CDN) and caching reviewed (as needed)

Structured Data, Entity & Schema Evaluation

- [] Schema markup for ProfessionalService, Organization, FAQ, Review, Breadcrumbs, etc.
- [] No conflicting, duplicate, outdated, or spammy schema markup
- [] expert & topical entity signals present & accurate
- [] Structured data tested & validated (Google Rich Results, Schema.org validator)
- [] Entity relationships clear & properly mapped (for AI/LLM extraction)
- [] Structured data coverage across major content types & service pages
- [] Special schema as applicable (Product, Event, etc. if relevant)

Content, Topical Coverage & Answer Depth

- [] Volume, quality, & depth of primary service/content pages

- [] Overall coverage of the most important questions & topics for your audience
- [] Content intent matches audience needs at all major journey stages
- [] Relevance to business priorities & industry signals
- [] Proper heading structure, semantic HTML, & on-page clarity
- [] Readability, scan ease, & accessibility for both users & AI
- [] On-page entity usage (people, brands, products, topics)
- [] Avoidance of keyword stuffing, duplicate/thin/near-duplicate content
- [] "People Also Ask"/SERP-feature opportunity coverage (when appropriate)
- [] Optional: Topical Depth Audit (analysis of fixed topics/subtopics, question/answer gaps, tiered coverage as contracted)
- [] Content organization & chunking for AI and answer engine extraction
- [] Content freshness (only when appropriate) & update cadence

User Experience (UX) & Conversion

- [] Assess intuitiveness of design, layout, navigation & content presentation
- [] Ease of access to refined sub-topic needs based on visitor intent
- [] Identify friction points to any aspect of usability across visitor types
- [] Evaluate usability from different human circumstances
- [] Evaluate how well site presents to search engine & LLM user needs
- [] Assess overall believability & trust signals
- [] Identify unnatural patterns that interfere with human & AI consumption

Web Accessibility & Inclusion

- [] Alt text for all meaningful images and media
- [] Proper semantic HTML, ARIA roles, and heading hierarchy
- [] Forms, buttons, and links accessible by keyboard and labeled clearly
- [] Site evaluated for WCAG 2.1 AA compliance (with notes on AAA opportunities and limitations)
- [] Accessibility blockers flagged and prioritized
- [] Audio/video content captioned or transcribed where feasible
- [] Accessibility review with focus on friction points for LLM and AI processing
- [] Referral or partnership with A11y specialists as needed

AI/LLM & Answer Engine Readiness

- [] Structured data for FAQ, reviews, and authoritative references is present and accessible

- [] Key content is easily extractable and parsable by bots and LLMs
- [] Multimodal assets (images, video) are properly described and marked up for AI
- [] Minimal technical friction for major answer engines (Google AI Overviews, Bing Copilot, ChatGPT, Perplexity, etc.)
- [] Entity relationships, topical chunking for AI extraction
- [] Deeper dive into topical vectoring at the page, section & site levels
- [] Monitoring and adaptation for emerging AI/LLM search standards
- [] Answer engine visibility and citation opportunities assessed
- [] Site tested for "bot experience" (not just user experience)

Off-Site Signals & Authority

- [] Off-site signals, including citations, mentions, and presence in trusted, relevant sources
- [] Earned media coverage and industry recognition (verticals, associations, media, or conferences as applicable)
- [] Authority and relevance of third-party references to your brand or site
- [] Brand mentions, entity references, and "earned media" signals
- [] Digital footprint across web, industry, and social (presence, activity, signal reinforcement)
- [] Identification and disavowal (if needed) of harmful or irrelevant off-site references
- [] Off-site content syndication, guest contributions, and digital PR (as appropriate)
- [] Review and citation management (accuracy, authority, diversity)

Reporting, Action Plan & Support

- [] Custom intake/discovery and Q&A to clarify business goals and priorities
- [] Prioritized Task-Specific Action Plan
- [] Live walkthrough session to review findings and strategy
- [] Q&A and clarification support during implementation phase
- [] Transparent, jargon-free reporting, no "report drop and vanish"
- [] (If applicable) Ongoing or retainer support and/or implementation services by arrangement

If you are going to make copies, please respect my Intellectual Property - the banner at the top & link to my site at the bottom must remain in place. Thank you!

<https://alanbleiweiss.com>