

The Ultimate On-Page SEO Walkthrough

Context: This tutorial walks through every major on-page check and explains exactly how to do each one manually. This is how to get any page on your website search engine optimized. Where RankCheck Pro (RCP) automates a check, I note it.

1. Crawlability & Retrieval

Is the URL allowed in robots.txt?

1. Go to `https://example.com/robots.txt`.
2. Look for any `Disallow:` rules that match your page's path (e.g., `Disallow: /blog/` would block `/blog/post/`).
3. If you see a block, remove or narrow it (requires server or CMS access). Re-upload `robots.txt` and recheck.

What RankCheck Pro handles: RCP checks `robots.txt` access and flags crawler blocks so you don't have to parse file rules line-by-line. You can also go to NoIndexChecker.com and have this done for free.

Are there blocking meta tags (noindex/nofollow)?

1. Open your page, right-click ? *View Source* (or *View Page Source*).
2. Find: `meta name="robots"`. Watch for `noindex` or `nofollow` values.
3. Also check for `data-nosnippet` or `max-image-preview:none` if you need snippets or large previews.
4. Fix in your SEO plugin or theme head template if values aren't intended.

What RankCheck Pro handles: RCP detects `noindex/nofollow` and related indexing traps automatically.

Does the page return 200 (not 3xx/4xx/5xx) and have a correct canonical?

1. Open DevTools (F12) ? *Network* tab ? Reload. Click the document row, confirm **Status = 200**.
2. Check for **redirect chains** (old ? mid ? new). If present, make one clean 301 from old ? new.
3. In source, find `<link rel="canonical" href="...">`. Confirm it points to the page's preferred URL (exact protocol/host/path).

What RankCheck Pro handles: RCP flags non-200 responses, redirect chains, and missing/mismatched canonicals.

LLM retrievability: AI bots allowed and fetchable

1. Test access for AI crawlers by checking your robots rules for User-agent : GPTBot, Google-Extended, PerplexityBot, etc.
2. If your firewall/CDN blocks unusual user agents, add explicit allows where appropriate.
3. A quick technical spot check: use `curl -A "GPTBot"` against the URL to ensure a 200 is returned.

What RankCheck Pro handles: RCP checks basic AI crawler accessibility so you don't have to spoof multiple user-agents by hand.

2. Indexation (Verification)

Is the page indexed in Google?

1. Use Google Search Console (GSC) ? *URL Inspection* ? paste your full URL.
2. If not indexed, click *Request Indexing*. Check for coverage issues under *Pages* in GSC.
3. Manual SERP check: search `site:example.com "unique phrase from your page"`.

What RankCheck Pro handles: RCP runs indexability checks and highlights common blockers before you even open GSC. You still need to check if the page is actually indexed at Google.

Indexed in Bing and discoverable in Brave?

1. Bing: Use Bing Webmaster Tools URL inspection (or `site: search`).
2. Brave: Confirm discoverability via `site: checks` and third-party index testers.

What RankCheck Pro handles: RCP includes multi-engine indexability checks so you don't need to repeat the process across engines. You'll still need to check if the page is indexed in Bing.

3. Content & Experience

Is the page HTML (not a PDF or image of text)?

1. Right-click ? *View Source*. Ensure your main content appears as HTML text, not an embedded PDF or image.
2. If your "content" is a PDF, migrate it into a proper HTML page and keep the PDF as a downloadable asset.

What RankCheck Pro handles: RCP flags non-HTML primary content patterns so you can prioritize fixes.

Is the core content server-rendered and visible in source?

1. *View Source* and search for a snippet from your first paragraph.
2. If it's missing (because content is injected client-side), ensure your framework supports SSR or prerendering.
3. Retest with a “no-JS” extension or curl to confirm content presence without scripts.

What RankCheck Pro handles: RCP surfaces rendering issues so you don't need multiple fetch methods to verify what bots see.

Intent alignment with the live SERP for your primary keyword

1. Google your primary keyword in an incognito window.
2. Document what dominates the top 10: “how-to,” “tools,” “service pages,” “comparisons,” etc.
3. Map your page to that intent: add missing sections (e.g., pricing, steps, FAQs, pros/cons, comparisons).
4. Repeat for your top 2–3 secondary keywords if they have distinct intent.

What RankCheck Pro handles: RCP summarizes SERP intent and highlights content gaps so you're not manually diffing every competitor.

Freshness (publish date + last updated + current facts)

1. Ensure a visible publish date and a clearly labeled “Last updated” date near the top.
2. Review facts, screenshots, and prices. Update anything older than ~60–90 days in fast-moving niches.
3. Replace dead tool links; update brand names and UI screenshots.

What RankCheck Pro handles: RCP flags missing update signals and stale elements that commonly drag down CTR and trust.

TL;DR and scannability

1. Add a short TL;DR or key takeaways box above the fold.
2. Limit paragraphs to ~2–4 sentences. Use subheads every ~200–300 words.
3. Use lists and simple tables for comparisons. Add a mini table of contents on longer pages.

What RankCheck Pro handles: RCP evaluates structural/scannability cues and calls out missing quick-read elements. It does not yet check for TL;DR on the top of pages, but it's something every page should have now.

4. Keyword Placement

Items include: keyword in URL, title, meta description, first 100 words; a variation in H1 and first H2; descriptive headings; topical coverage. [oai_citation:1±v3.0 – Free On-Page SEO Checklist (2025 Update) – Template (Make a Copy).pdf](sediment://file_00000000c20071f792ca859e127d5d9e)

How to check manually (thorough pass)

1. **URL slug:** In your WordPress editor, check the Permalink. Keep it short and exact (e.g., /service-area-map-generator/).
2. **Title tag:** If you use an SEO plugin, open its “Title” field. Confirm the primary keyword appears once, near the front.
3. **Meta description:** Write a compelling 140–160-char blurb with the keyword once. Don’t stuff; aim for a natural promise/benefit.
4. **First 100 words:** Put the primary keyword (or very close variant) in the opening paragraph, naturally.
5. **H1 + first H2:** Use a variation of the keyword in H1 and a semantic variant in the first H2.
6. **Descriptive headings:** Replace vague subheads (“More Info”) with specific ones (“Pricing & What’s Included”).
7. **Topical coverage:** Compare your outline to top results. If everyone covers “Pricing,” “Setup Steps,” and “Alternatives,” you probably should, too.

5. Links

Internal links (presence and anchor text)

1. Scan your article for 2–4 internal links to relevant pages (don’t overdo it).
2. Use descriptive anchors (“service area maps”) instead of “click here.”
3. Open each target in a new tab to confirm they load and are relevant.

External links (quality and rel attributes)

1. Verify you’re citing credible, up-to-date sources.
2. For affiliate/sponsored links, add `rel="nofollow sponsored"` (or as required by your policy).
3. Manually click each link to ensure it’s not broken or redirected to something sketchy.

Broken links

1. Run a broken link check (or crawl your site with a spider tool).
2. Fix each one: update the URL, remove the link, or replace with a live equivalent.

What RankCheck Pro handles: RCP includes broken link detection in the report so you’re not flipping between tools.

6. Images

Originality, optimization, filenames, alt text

1. **Originality:** Favor unique images/screenshots over stock when possible.
2. **Filenames:** Rename files to something descriptive before upload (e.g., service-area-map-example.jpg).
3. **Alt text:** In the Media Library, add concise alt text describing the image's purpose (not keyword stuffing).
4. **Size & compression:** Keep hero images < ~200KB if possible; compress with an image optimizer plugin or offline tool.
5. **Layout stability:** Set explicit width/height or aspect ratio to reduce CLS (cumulative layout shift).

7. E-E-A-T (Experience, Expertise, Authority, Trust)

Practical pass

1. **Disclaimers:** Add any legal/medical/financial disclaimers appropriate for your niche.
2. **Sources:** Cite and link to the original sources you used (stats, definitions, quotes).
3. **Author box:** Ensure each blog post has a visible author box with role/credentials.
4. **Author page:** Link to a dedicated author page with bio, credentials, and other articles.

8. Goal Completions

Clear primary CTA

1. Place a clear CTA above the fold ("Get a Quote," "Generate a Map," "Try the Demo").
2. Repeat a softer CTA near the end for skimmers.
3. Ensure the button looks like a button, with adequate contrast and size.

Shareability (social metadata)

1. View source and confirm Open Graph tags: og:title, og:description, og:image.
 2. Add Twitter Card tags (often handled by your SEO plugin).
 3. Test your URL in social debuggers (Facebook Sharing Debugger, X Card Validator) to confirm preview looks right.
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Quick Copy-Paste Checklist

- ☐ Robots.txt allows crawling for this URL

- ☐ No accidental noindex/nofollow
- ☐ 200 response; no redirect chains; correct canonical
- ☐ AI crawlers allowed (GPTBot/Google-Extended/Perplexity)
- ☐ Indexed in Google/Bing; discoverable in Brave
- ☐ HTML content; server-rendered; content visible in source
- ☐ Intent aligned with live SERP; covers required sections
- ☐ Visible publish and last-updated dates; facts current
- ☐ TL;DR above the fold; scannable sections
- ☐ Keyword in URL, title, meta description, first 100 words; variants in H1/H2
- ☐ Helpful internal links; descriptive anchors
- ☐ Quality outbound links; proper rel on affiliate/sponsored
- ☐ No broken links
- ☐ Image filenames/alt text optimized; file sizes compressed
- ☐ Author box + author page; sources cited; disclaimers present
- ☐ Clear CTA; OG/Twitter tags set for sharing

Why Automate the Boring Parts

Doing all of this by hand means popping open DevTools, viewing source, testing user agents, clicking every link, peeking into your SEO plugin fields, and cross-checking SERPs for intent. That can take 30–60 minutes per URL. RankCheck Pro compresses the tedium into a single report for:

- Crawlability and indexability checks
- Robots.txt, canonical, status code, and redirect chain issues
- AI crawler accessibility basics
- Keyword placement coverage (URL, title, meta, H1, first 100 words, first H2, headings)
- Internal link presence and outbound/affiliate link hygiene
- Broken links
- OG/Twitter social metadata presence
- EEAT essentials (author box/linking patterns, citations presence)

Bottom line: You can absolutely do it manually — this guide shows you how — but most of these checks are repetitive and time-consuming. [RankCheck Pro](#) gets you the answers in one pass so you can spend your time fixing, not hunting.

Glossary of Terms Used on This Page

Robots.txt

A small text file at the root of your site that tells search engine crawlers which parts of your site they're allowed to access.

Noindex / Nofollow

Meta tags that tell search engines not to index a page or not to follow the links on it. Helpful when intentional, damaging when used accidentally.

Canonical Tag

An HTML tag that tells Google which version of a page is the “main” one. Prevents duplicate-content issues.

Status Code (200, 301, 404, 500)

A response your server sends when a page loads. **200** means everything is fine. **301** means it's permanently redirected. **404** means “not found.” **500** means the server broke.

Redirect Chain

When one URL redirects to another, which redirects again. These waste crawl budget and slow things down. Aim for one clean redirect.

AI Crawler

Search-engine-style bots used by AI companies (like GPTBot or Google-Extended) to retrieve and analyze your site's content.

Indexation

The process of a search engine adding your page to its searchable database (its index). A page can exist and still not be indexed.

HTML Content

Regular web page text that Google can crawl easily. PDFs or images of text are harder for search engines to parse.

Server-Rendered Content

Content that appears in the page source when you view it — meaning search engines can see it without needing JavaScript to run.

Search Intent

The real goal behind a search query. It might be “learn something,” “compare options,” or “buy something.” Your page should match what searchers actually want.

Freshness Signal

Clues that your page is up to date — like a recent publish date, updated stats, fresh screenshots, and current prices.

TL;DR

A short summary at the top of the page that gives readers (and search engines) a quick overview of what the content is about.

Keyword Placement

Where your main keyword appears — in the URL, title tag, meta description, first 100 words, H1, etc. These help reinforce topical relevance.

Anchor Text

The clickable words inside a link. Descriptive anchor text helps both users and search engines understand where the link goes.

Rel Attribute

An HTML attribute (like `rel="nofollow"`) that tells search engines how to treat specific links — especially affiliate or sponsored ones.

Broken Link

A link that goes to a page that no longer exists or returns an error. These hurt SEO and user experience.

Alt Text

Hidden text that describes an image for accessibility and search engines. Helps with image SEO and screen readers.

CLS (Cumulative Layout Shift)

A Core Web Vitals metric that measures how much the page “jumps around” while loading. Good pages stay stable.

EEAT

Stands for Experience, Expertise, Authority, and Trust. Google uses this to evaluate content quality and credibility.

Open Graph Tags

Meta tags that control how your page looks when shared on social media — title, description, preview image, etc.

CTA (Call to Action)

The button or link that tells people what to do next — “Get a Quote,” “Download Now,” “Start Free Trial,” etc.

Original article: <https://www.tonyherman.com/the-ultimate-on-page-seo-walkthrough/>

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