

Free SEO audit checklist: what to fix before you pay for Ahrefs or Semrush

Run this on your own site with open-source tools first. Only buy a paid suite after the basics are clean.

A. CRAWL BASICS (SEONAUT OR EQUIVALENT)

- ☐ Homepage and top 20 URLs return 200
- ☐ No critical broken internal links
- ☐ Redirect chains / loops listed and owners assigned
- ☐ Missing title tags listed
- ☐ Duplicate title tags listed
- ☐ Missing meta descriptions listed
- ☐ Duplicate meta descriptions listed
- ☐ Heading order issues listed (H1/H2)
- ☐ Pages with noindex that should be indexed (or the opposite) noted
- ☐ Top 10 broken issues scheduled for fix this week

B. FIX ORDER (DO THIS BEFORE ANY PAID TOOL)

- ☐ Fix 404s on money pages and main blog posts first
- ☐ Fix wrong redirects on those same pages
- ☐ Write missing titles for money pages
- ☐ Deduplicate titles that compete with each other
- ☐ Recrawl after fixes and confirm the critical list shrank

FREE SEO AUDIT CHECKLIST · CONTINUED

C. RANK TRACKING STARTER (SERPBEAR OR EQUIVALENT)

- ☐ Pick 10 to 30 keywords you already care about (not 3,000)
- ☐ Add your domain
- ☐ Configure a current SERP provider or proxies (app free is not the same as data free)
- ☐ Record baseline positions once
- ☐ Set a weekly check, not daily panic

D. ONLY IF YOU STILL NEED KEYWORD RESEARCH / BIGGER SUITE (OPENSEO ETC.)

- ☐ You already fixed critical crawl issues
- ☐ You already track a small keyword set
- ☐ You know which questions unpaid Search Console data cannot answer
- ☐ You have a DataForSEO (or similar) budget written down
- ☐ Someone owns the monthly review

E. CONTENT WORKFLOW (SEO MACHINE ETC.) - OPTIONAL

- ☐ Brand voice memo exists
- ☐ Internal links map exists
- ☐ Target keywords list exists
- ☐ Claude Code (or your writing agent) is already in use
- ☐ You will not generate 20 posts before fixing crawl errors

F. BUY DECISION

- ☐ Paid suite solves a gap this checklist did not
- ☐ One person owns the tool
- ☐ Cancel date / review date is on the calendar (30 or 60 days)

Software can be free. Data and weekly follow-through are what usually cost money.

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