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# The Ecommerce SEO Playbook

Rank your Shopify or WooCommerce store on Google — step by step, in plain English. No developer. No agency. No guesswork.

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- ✓ 7 actionable chapters
  - ✓ Works for Shopify & WooCommerce
  - ✓ Written for complete beginners
  - ✓ 4-week action plan included
  - ✓ No tech experience needed
  - ✓ Start seeing results in 4–8 weeks

# What's Inside

Seven chapters. Real fixes. A step-by-step plan at the end.

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## BEFORE YOU START

SEO is a long game. The stores that win are the ones that make consistent, methodical improvements over weeks and months — not the ones who try every tactic at once. Work through this playbook one chapter at a time. Small changes compound. Most stores start seeing movement in Google within **4–8 weeks** of implementing these fixes.

# Product Titles & Descriptions That Actually Rank

Most store owners copy the manufacturer's title, write three sentences of description, and wonder why they're invisible on Google. This chapter shows you how to fix that — without writing a novel for every product.

## WHY THIS MATTERS

70% of all purchase journeys start with a Google search. Your product title is the #1 signal Google uses to decide when to show your product. Get it wrong and you're simply invisible.

## The Anatomy of a High-Ranking Product Title

Google reads your product title as a direct signal of what your page is about. It needs to contain the exact words your customers type into search — not the words you think sound best in a catalogue.

## THE FORMULA

[Primary Keyword] + [Product Type] + [Key Attribute] + [Brand or Size/Colour if relevant]

## BAD EXAMPLE

"The Coastal Collection Tote" — sounds nice, ranks for nothing.

## GOOD EXAMPLE

"Canvas Beach Tote Bag — Large, Waterproof with Zip Pocket | The Coastal Collection" — targets what people actually search for.

## How to Write Product Descriptions Google Rewards

A product description serves two audiences: your customer (convince them to buy) and Google (convince it to rank you). Most descriptions fail both.

### 1 Lead with the customer benefit, not the feature

Don't open with "Made from 600D polyester." Open with "Keeps your gear dry on the trail, no matter the weather."

### 2 Include your primary keyword in the first sentence

Google weights the beginning of your description more heavily. Get your main keyword in early, naturally.

### 3 Use bullet points for specs and features

Bullets are easier for customers to scan and help Google parse structured information from your page.

### 4 Aim for 150–300 words minimum

Pages with thin content (under 100 words) rarely rank. You don't need an essay — but you need enough words for Google to understand what you're selling.

### 5 Answer the question your customer has before they ask it

What size is it? Will it fit a 13" laptop? Is it machine washable? Answer these in the description and you'll rank for long-tail queries automatically.

#### 📌 QUICK WIN

Pick your 5 best-selling products right now. Check if their titles contain the exact phrase a customer would type into Google. If not, rewrite them using the formula above. This single change is often enough to see a measurable traffic increase within 4–6 weeks.

## Meta Titles — The Other Title You're Ignoring

Every product page has two titles: the one customers see on the page, and the meta title — the one Google shows in search results. In Shopify, go to the bottom of any product page and click "Edit website SEO." In WooCommerce, use a plugin like Rank Math or Yoast.

Element	Ideal Length	Must Include
Meta Title	50–60 characters	Primary keyword + brand name
Meta Description	150–160 characters	Keyword + benefit + soft CTA
Page H1	Natural, readable	Primary keyword
Image Alt Text	Under 125 chars	Descriptive keyword phrase

# Page Speed Fixes That Move the Needle

A one-second delay in page load time reduces conversions by 7%. Google uses page speed as a direct ranking factor. This chapter tells you exactly which fixes are worth your time — and which aren't.

**53%**

of mobile users leave a site that takes longer than 3 seconds to load

## How to Measure Your Speed (Free)

Before fixing anything, get your baseline score. Go to [pagespeed.web.dev](https://pagespeed.web.dev), enter your store URL, and run the test. You'll get scores for both mobile and desktop. Mobile is what matters most for rankings.

Target scores: **90+** is excellent, **50–89** needs work, **under 50** is hurting your rankings and your sales every single day.

## The High-Impact Fixes (Do These First)

### FIX #1 — COMPRESS YOUR IMAGES

Images are almost always the #1 cause of slow stores. Convert all images to WebP format and compress them before uploading. Use [squoosh.app](https://squoosh.app) (free, browser-based) to compress any image. Aim for under 200KB per image. This alone can cut your load time in half.

### ⚡ **FIX #2 — REMOVE UNUSED APPS AND PLUGINS**

Every app or plugin you install adds code that loads on every page visit — even if you're not using it on that page. Audit your installed apps. Delete anything you haven't used in the last 3 months. On Shopify, just uninstalling isn't enough — you may need to manually remove leftover code from your theme files.

### ▢ **FIX #3 — LIMIT CUSTOM FONTS**

Custom fonts are a hidden performance killer. Each font weight you load (regular, bold, italic) is a separate file download. Limit yourself to 1–2 font families, 2 weights maximum. Or use system fonts (no download required) for body text and save the custom font for headings only.

### ▢ **FIX #4 — ENABLE LAZY LOADING FOR IMAGES**

Lazy loading means images below the fold only download when the user scrolls to them. This dramatically improves your initial load time. Shopify Dawn theme has this built in. For WooCommerce, it's a setting in most caching plugins (WP Rocket, LiteSpeed Cache, W3 Total Cache).

### ▢ **FIX #5 — USE A CACHING PLUGIN (WOOCOMMERCE ONLY)**

Caching saves a copy of your pages so they don't have to rebuild from scratch every time someone visits. For WooCommerce, install **WP Rocket** (paid, worth it) or **LiteSpeed Cache** (free if on compatible hosting). This can cut load times by 60%+ overnight.

## Fixes That Sound Helpful but Rarely Are

Fix	Reality
Minifying CSS/JS manually	Modern hosting and CDNs do this automatically. Low-effort win on paper, near-zero real-world impact.
Switching themes for speed	Theme choice has less impact than images and apps. Fix the content first.

AMP pages

Google removed AMP as a ranking signal. Not worth the implementation effort for most stores.

Preloading every resource

Over-preloading blocks the critical path and can make things slower. Only preload your largest above-the-fold image.

#### ▮ **YOUR ACTION STEPS**

1) Run your store through [pagespeed.web.dev](https://pagespeed.web.dev) and note your score. 2) Download your 10 largest product images, compress them with [squoosh.app](https://squoosh.app), re-upload. 3) Delete any unused apps. 4) Re-run the speed test. Most stores see a 10–25 point improvement from images alone.

# Setting Up Google Search Console in 10 Minutes

Google Search Console is the most important free SEO tool available — and most store owners have never opened it. This chapter gets you set up fast and shows you exactly what to look at first.

## WHAT IT DOES

**Google Search Console shows you exactly how Google sees your store: which pages are indexed, which keywords are driving clicks, what errors are blocking your rankings, and how your pages perform in search results. It's the most direct window into your Google visibility you'll ever have — and it's completely free.**

## Setting It Up (Step by Step)

- 1 Go to [search.google.com/search-console](https://search.google.com/search-console) and sign in with your Google account**  
Use the same Google account you'll use for Google Analytics if possible.
- 2 Click "Add Property" and choose "Domain" (not URL prefix)**  
The Domain option covers all versions of your site (www, non-www, http, https) automatically.
- 3 Verify ownership via your domain registrar**  
Google will give you a DNS TXT record to add to your domain. Log in to wherever you bought your domain (GoDaddy, Namecheap, etc.) and add it. Takes 5 minutes. Changes can take up to 24 hours to verify.
- 4 Submit your sitemap**  
In the left menu, click Sitemaps. Enter `sitemap.xml` in the field. For Shopify, your sitemap is at `yourstore.com/sitemap.xml`. For WooCommerce with Rank Math, it's

yourstore.com/sitemap\_index.xml. Submitting your sitemap tells Google exactly which pages you want indexed.

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### **Wait 3–5 days, then start reading your data**

Google needs time to crawl and report. Come back after a few days and you'll start seeing real data.

## **The 4 Reports to Check Every Week**

### **1. Performance → Search Results**

Shows which queries people type to find your store, how many times your pages appeared (impressions), and how many times they clicked through. Look for queries with high impressions but low clicks — these are pages with ranking potential that need better titles or meta descriptions.

### **2. Indexing → Pages**

Shows how many of your pages Google has indexed. If you have 200 products but only 50 are indexed, something is wrong — likely duplicate content, noindex tags, or crawl errors. Fix these and you'll see a jump in organic visibility.

### **3. Experience → Core Web Vitals**

Shows how Google scores your page speed and layout stability. Any URLs marked as "Poor" are being actively penalised in rankings. Fix these pages first.

### **4. Enhancements → Shopping (if applicable)**

If you have structured data (product schema) set up, Google will report any errors here. Fixing these errors can enable rich snippets — the star ratings and price displays that appear in search results and dramatically increase click-through rates.



#### **COMMON MISTAKE**

Don't set up Search Console and then ignore it for months. Set a recurring reminder to check it once a week. The "Coverage" report will tell you immediately if Google hits a new crawl error — and catching these early can prevent a sudden traffic drop.

# Finding & Fixing Broken Links and Missing Images

Broken links and missing images silently destroy your rankings and customer trust. The frustrating part: you usually have no idea they're there. Here's how to find and fix them fast.

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## Why Broken Links Hurt Your SEO

When Google crawls a link that returns a 404 error, it wastes your "crawl budget" — the time Google spends on your site per visit. Too many broken links and Google starts skipping pages that should be indexed. Worse, any backlinks (links from other websites to yours) pointing at broken URLs pass zero SEO value.

## Free Tools to Find Broken Links

### ▮ TOOL 1 — GOOGLE SEARCH CONSOLE (FREE)

Go to Indexing → Pages → "Not found (404)" to see every broken URL Google has encountered on your site. This is the most reliable source because it's the actual list of errors Google is finding right now.

### ▮ TOOL 2 — SCREAMING FROG SEO SPIDER (FREE UP TO 500 URLS)

Download from [screamingfrog.co.uk](https://www.screamingfrog.co.uk). Run a crawl of your store and filter by "Response Code 404." This catches broken links that Search Console might not show yet, including internal navigation links and footer links.

### 📄 TOOL 3 — AHREFS FREE BROKEN LINK CHECKER

[ahrefs.com/broken-link-checker](https://ahrefs.com/broken-link-checker) — enter your domain and it will show broken backlinks (links from other websites pointing to pages that no longer exist). These are valuable links you're currently wasting.

## How to Fix Broken Links

Situation	Fix
Product or page was deleted, no replacement	Set up a 301 redirect from the old URL to your most relevant category or homepage
Product was deleted, similar product exists	301 redirect to the similar product page
URL structure changed (e.g. after migration)	301 redirect all old URLs to new equivalents — use a bulk redirect plugin
Broken internal link (typo in href)	Find and edit the source page directly
Broken backlink pointing at deleted page	Create the page again, or 301 redirect to most relevant equivalent

## Missing Images — A Hidden Problem

Missing images (images that return a 404) don't just look unprofessional — they slow your page down and signal low-quality content to Google. The most common causes:

- Product images deleted from the media library but still referenced in product listings
- Images renamed or moved after being linked
- Images uploaded with spaces or special characters in the filename (use hyphens instead)
- Images from a migrated platform where the old URLs still exist in product descriptions

#### ▮ **YOUR ACTION STEPS**

- 1) Open Google Search Console → Indexing → Pages → "Not found (404)." Export the list.
- 2) For each broken URL, create a 301 redirect. In Shopify: Online Store → Navigation → URL Redirects. In WooCommerce: use the Redirection plugin (free).
- 3) Run Screaming Frog monthly to catch new broken links before Google does.

# Keyword Research for Your Specific Niche

Most store owners either skip keyword research entirely or spend weeks on it using expensive tools they don't need. This chapter shows you the free, 30-minute method that gets you 90% of the value.

## □ THE CORE IDEA

**Keywords aren't about gaming Google. They're about understanding exactly how your customers describe what they're looking for — then using those exact words on your pages. When your language matches their language, you rank.**

## The 3 Types of Keywords You Need

### 1. Product Keywords (highest buying intent)

These are the exact searches someone makes when they're ready to buy. Examples: "buy waterproof dog collar," "mens leather wallet bifold," "organic baby onesie 3-6 months." These should appear in your product titles, descriptions, and meta titles.

### 2. Category Keywords (medium intent)

Searches for a type of product rather than a specific one. Examples: "sustainable homeware," "handmade jewellery UK," "WooCommerce pet supplies." Target these on your collection/category pages.

### 3. Informational Keywords (builds trust, long-term traffic)

Questions people ask before buying. Examples: "how to clean leather shoes," "what size kayak do I need," "best fabric for sensitive skin baby clothes." Target these in blog posts. Ranking for informational queries builds trust and drives traffic from people who will eventually buy.

## Free Keyword Research Method (30 Minutes)

### 1 Start with Google Autocomplete

Type your main product into Google and don't press Enter. Look at every autocomplete suggestion — these are real searches people are making. Note every relevant variation.

### 2 Scroll to "People Also Ask" and "Related Searches"

These sections are Google showing you exactly what else people search for around your topic. Every "People Also Ask" question is a potential blog post topic. Every "Related Search" is a keyword variant for your product pages.

### 3 Check your Search Console "Queries" report

If you've had any traffic at all, Search Console will show you queries people already use to find you. These are your highest-priority keywords — Google already thinks you're relevant for them.

### 4 Look at what your competitors rank for

Go to a competitor's product or category page. Right-click → View Page Source. Search for "meta name=description" and "title" to see how they're targeting keywords. You can also use the free version of Ubersuggest to see their top keywords.

### 5 Prioritise long-tail keywords

"Shoes" is impossible to rank for. "Handmade leather boots womens size 8 UK" is very achievable. The more specific the keyword, the easier it is to rank, and the higher the purchase intent. Start with specific, then work your way up.



#### **DON'T KEYWORD STUFF**

Repeating the same keyword 15 times in a description doesn't help — it hurts. Google is sophisticated enough to understand context. Use your primary keyword 2–3 times naturally, then use related terms and synonyms. Write for humans first. If it reads unnaturally, rewrite it.

# The Biggest SEO Mistakes Ecommerce Stores Make

After auditing hundreds of ecommerce stores, the same mistakes appear over and over again. Here are the ones that cause the most damage — and how to fix them fast.

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## Mistake #1 — Duplicate Product Pages

When you have the same product in multiple colours or sizes, many stores create a separate URL for each variant: /product/red, /product/blue, /product/green. If these pages have identical content, Google sees thin duplicate content and penalises all of them.

### FIX

Use a single product page with variant selectors (dropdown or swatches). If you must have separate variant URLs, add a canonical tag pointing to the main product page. In Shopify, this is handled automatically for variants. In WooCommerce, Rank Math handles canonical tags.

## Mistake #2 — Ignoring Category Pages

Most store owners obsess over product pages and ignore their collection/category pages. But category pages typically rank for higher-volume, higher-value keywords. A well-optimised "Women's Running Shoes" category page is often more valuable than 20 individual product pages.

### FIX

Add 150–300 words of descriptive text to your top category pages. Include the main keyword in the page title and H1. Add a meta description. This alone separates you from 80% of competitors who leave category pages blank.

### **Mistake #3 — No Internal Linking**

Internal links (links from one page on your site to another) spread "link equity" across your store and help Google understand your site structure. Most stores have zero intentional internal linking beyond the navigation menu.

#### **FIX**

On each product page, add 2–3 links to related products or the parent category page. In your blog posts, link to relevant products. In your category description text, link to featured products. More internal links to a page = Google understands it as more important.

### **Mistake #4 — Missing Alt Text on Images**

Alt text is what Google reads to understand what an image shows. It also appears when an image fails to load and is essential for accessibility. Most ecommerce stores have hundreds or thousands of product images with no alt text — they're invisible to Google image search and drag down overall SEO signals.

#### **FIX**

For every product image, write alt text that describes what's in the image and includes your keyword naturally. Example: "Canvas waterproof tote bag in navy blue — open showing internal zip pocket." Not: "img\_product\_247\_v3\_final.jpg"

### **Mistake #5 — Not Building Any Backlinks**

Backlinks (links from other websites to yours) are still one of Google's strongest ranking signals. Most small ecommerce stores have none. You don't need hundreds — even 5–10 quality backlinks can push you from page 3 to page 1 for competitive keywords.

#### □ EASY FIRST BACKLINKS

1) Get listed in your local business directory. 2) Submit to niche product directories in your category. 3) Reach out to bloggers in your niche and offer a free sample in exchange for an honest review. 4) Create a genuinely useful blog post and share it in relevant communities — if it's good, people link to it.

## Mistake #6 — Treating SEO as a One-Time Task

SEO is not something you do once and forget. Google's algorithm updates regularly. Competitors improve their sites. New search trends emerge. The stores that win at SEO treat it as a monthly ongoing practice, not a one-time project.

#### □ MONTHLY SEO ROUTINE (30 MINUTES)

1) Check Search Console for new errors. 2) Review your top 10 queries — are any slipping? 3) Update any product or category page that dropped in rankings. 4) Publish one blog post targeting an informational keyword. 5) Check for new broken links. That's it.

# Your 4-Week Action Plan

Do these things in this order. Don't skip ahead. Consistency beats intensity every time.

## WEEK 1 — FOUNDATION

### Set Up Tracking & Fix Your Biggest Errors

- Set up Google Search Console and verify your domain
- Submit your sitemap ([yourstore.com/sitemap.xml](#))
- Run your store through [pagespeed.web.dev](#) — note your mobile score
- Export your 404 errors from Search Console — create redirects for the top 10
- Compress and re-upload your 10 largest product images

## WEEK 2 — ON-PAGE OPTIMISATION

### Fix Your Product Pages

- Rewrite the titles of your top 10 products using the formula from Chapter 1
- Update meta titles and meta descriptions for each of those 10 products
- Add or improve alt text on all images for those 10 products
- Expand any product description under 150 words
- Add 150–300 words of description text to your top 3 category pages

## WEEK 3 — SITE HEALTH

### Clean Up Technical Issues

- Run a Screaming Frog crawl — fix all internal broken links
- Remove any unused apps or plugins slowing your store

- Check for and fix duplicate content issues (variant pages)
- Add internal links: on each product page, link to 2–3 related products
- Check Core Web Vitals in Search Console — fix any "Poor" URLs

#### WEEK 4 — CONTENT & GROWTH

### Start Building Long-Term Authority

- Do 30-minute keyword research session using the free method from Chapter 5
- Write and publish one blog post targeting an informational keyword
- Get listed in 3 relevant business or product directories (free backlinks)
- Set a recurring monthly calendar reminder for your SEO check-in
- Re-run [pagespeed.web.dev](https://pagespeed.web.dev) — compare to your Week 1 baseline score

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and ready to rank from day one. Fixed price. No calls required.

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