

# THE ESSENTIAL SEARCH ENGINE CHECKLIST



# INTRODUCTION

If you are a creative professional, whether full-time or part-time, or just someone who wants to make some extra cash with your hobby, a website is essential to sell your product or service, serve as a sales fulfilment platform or showcase your portfolio.

Just as important as it is to create a quality website with valuable content for readers, you need to ensure that your website is search engine-friendly or more importantly, “Google friendly”.

## WHY?

Being “Google friendly” is vital since Google is the world’s most popular search engine. You want to ensure that your website adheres to the **Google Webmaster Guidelines** (See <https://support.google.com/webmasters/answer/35769?hl=en>).

This in-turn ensures your website is indexed and can be found by potential customers & clients. You also want your website to be re-indexed by Google’s “web crawlers” or “Google Bots” whenever you update your website.

## HOW?

This eGuide offers a checklist of essential things you need to do to ensure that your website is Google friendly.

Some tips may seem quite technical if you are new to Google, website and search engine optimization (SEO). However, I have kept the information as simple as possible and offered resources for further learning.

If you have not set up your website but are hiring a web designer or developer to build your website, make sure that the items in this checklist are done. You can specify these items to be part of the job scope when creating the website.

Let’s get started!

## VERIFY YOUR WEBSITE OWNERSHIP WITH GOOGLE

One important thing to do, especially for new websites, is to verify your website ownership with Google using their “Search Console” (Originally called Google Webmaster Tools). While your website does not need to be verified in order to be indexed by Google, it is better to have it verified so that you can use the tools in the “Search Console”.

### Step 1

First, go to the following link: <https://www.google.com/webmasters>.

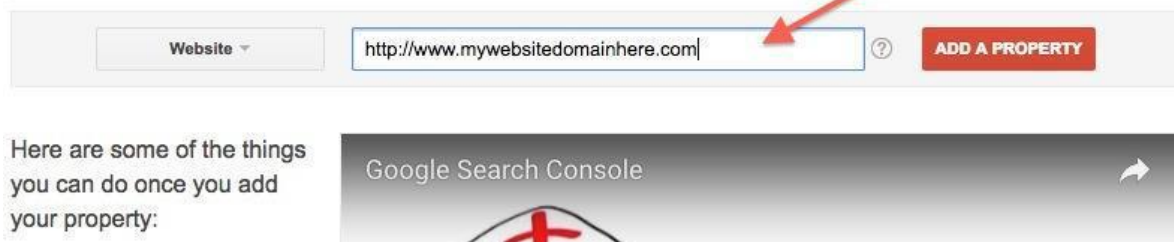
You will need a Google account and follow the steps to verify your website. This may seem a bit technical and overwhelming but the support documentation is good.

Enter your website domain and hit the “Add a Property” button.

### Welcome to Search Console

Get the data, tools, and diagnostics needed to create and maintain Google-friendly websites and mobile apps.

To get started, just add your site or app now.



### Step 2

Once you add your domain, you will be asked to verify your domain name. This is important because Google needs to know that you are the owner of the domain name and the website.

There are several different methods to do this but one of the most straight forward ways is to download a **HTML verification file** and then upload that file to your web host.

Uploading the download HTML verification file will require you to use a process technically known as FTP.

FTP stands for “File Transfer Protocol”. It is basically a way for a file to be uploaded or downloaded from a local computer to a remote computer (your website hosting company’s server) that is hosted in a data center.

## Search Console

Verify your ownership of <http://www.mywebsitedomainhere.com/>. [Learn more.](#)

Recommended method

Alternate methods

### Recommended: HTML file upload

Upload an HTML file to your site.

Download the file and upload to your web host

1. **Download** this [HTML verification file](#). [google548a2a880c886a5f.html]
  2. **Upload** the file to <http://www.mywebsitedomainhere.com/>
  3. **Confirm** successful upload by visiting <http://www.mywebsitedomainhere.com/google548a2a880c886a5f.html> in your browser.
  4. **Click** Verify below.
- To stay verified, don't remove the HTML file, even after verification succeeds.

You can use free FTP programs like Filezilla (<https://filezilla-project.org/>) to upload the file. If you are not sure how to use it, do a Google search for tutorials.

There are alternate methods to verify your ownership, but these methods are much more technical. Downloading and uploading the HTML verification file is the easiest way to do this once you figure out how to use the FTP program.

Verify your ownership of <http://www.mywebsitedomainhere.com/>. [Learn more.](#)

Recommended method

Alternate methods

- ☐ **HTML tag**  
Add a meta tag to your site's home page.
- ☐ **Domain name provider**  
Sign in to your domain name provider.
- ☐ **Google Analytics**  
Use your Google Analytics account.
- ☐ **Google Tag Manager**  
Use your Google Tag Manager account.

However, if you are on a Wordpress website, there are SEO plugins which make the verification process easy. This is even easier than using the FTP program.

Do an online search to figure out which verification method suits your website, host and platform.

Once you have verified your website, you are set.

The “Search Console” (formerly known as Google Webmaster Tool) is a very comprehensive software that allows you to tweak your website to Google’s guidelines.

For example, for new websites, you can submit it to Google to be indexed at :

<https://www.google.com/webmasters/tools/submit-url?continue=/addurl>

You can also submit your sitemap to Google for better indexing or to update your pages on Google. A sitemap is basically a page that lists all the pages that you have in your website.

Knowing how to use this tool is quite technical and will require further learning.

Here are two recommended resources:

<https://blog.kissmetrics.com/beginners-guide-to-google-webmaster-tools/>  
<https://searchenginewatch.com/sew/how-to/2273660/how-to-use-google-webmaster-tools-to-maximize-your-seo-campaign>

If this is not something you want to tackle, you can hire a knowledgeable web developer to maximize the effectiveness of Search Console.

You can hire freelance web developers at freelancer platforms such as [www.upwork.com](http://www.upwork.com).

## **ENSURE THAT YOUR WEBSITE IS MOBILE RESPONSIVE**

More and more users are using their mobile smart phones and tablets to surf the Internet and make online transactions.

In response to this trend, Google did an update on April 21, 2015 with a significant new mobile-friendly ranking algorithm that is designed to give a boost to mobile-friendly pages in Google’s mobile search results. (See <http://searchengineland.com/googles-mobile-friendly-algorithm-boost-rolled-249357>)

This basically means that websites that are mobile friendly and responsive will be ranked higher than others that are not.

If your website was designed before 2011 and not updated for mobile responsiveness, there is a good chance it may not be mobile-friendly.

A really quick and simple way to check if your website is mobile responsive is to resize the browser on your desktop PC or laptop. Drag the bottom right corner of the browser

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to the extreme left to see if your website automatically resizes in proportion and layout to fit the smaller size of the browser window.

If it resizes, it is responsive. If not, it is not responsive.

Google has even provided a tool that you can test your website to see if it is mobile friendly: Go to <https://www.google.com/webmasters/tools/mobile-friendly/> and input your domain name to test if your website is mobile friendly.

The screenshot shows the Google Search > Webmasters > Mobile Friendly Websites interface. The title is 'Mobile-Friendly Test'. The URL entered is 'http://backstagebusinessacademy.com/'. A green banner states 'Awesome! This page is mobile-friendly.' Below this, there are two sections: 'How Googlebot sees this page' and 'Learn more about mobile-friendly pages'. The first section notes that the page uses 3 resources blocked by robots.txt and provides a link to learn how to let Googlebot view the page correctly. The second section provides links to the Webmaster's Mobile Guide and the Principles of Site Design on Web Fundamentals.

If your website is not mobile-friendly, check with a web designer to see if it can be converted to one. If not, now may be a good time to get a new website!

## ENSURE THAT YOUR WEBSITE LOADS FAST

Google's Pagerank algorithm puts significant emphasis on user experience. One of the measurements of user experience is the loading speed of a website. (See: <https://webmasters.googleblog.com/2010/04/using-site-speed-in-web-search-ranking.html>)

As such, it is very important that your website loads fast. The consensus among SEO experts is that websites should load within 3 – 5 seconds. (See <https://blog.kissmetrics.com/speed-is-a-killer/>)

You can test your webpage's loading speed using this tool provided by Google: <https://developers.google.com/speed/pagespeed/insights/>

When you run the test, you should strive to achieve at least a 70/100 score in both 6



mobile and desktop results.

PageSpeed Tools > Insights

GUIDES REFERENCE SAMPLES SUPPORT

<http://backstagebusinessacademy.com/>

Mobile Desktop

**69 / 100** Suggestions Summary

**! Should Fix:**

- Leverage browser caching
  - ▶ Show how to fix
- Reduce server response time
  - ▶ Show how to fix

**! Consider Fixing:**

*BackstageBusinessAcademy.com requires a bit of work to improve its speed*

If your website is loading slowly or scoring less than 70, you should check if the images in your website are compressed and optimized. Larger than needed images are usually one of the common reasons that your website loads slowly.

You can compress your images at <http://tinypng.com> before uploading them to your website.



In general, all regular images should be less than 50kb in size. If it is a large background image, it should be less than 100kb in size.

After compressing all your images, run your website through the speed test again. If it is still scoring below 70/100, you should contact a website developer to help optimize your website further based on the recommendations given by Google.