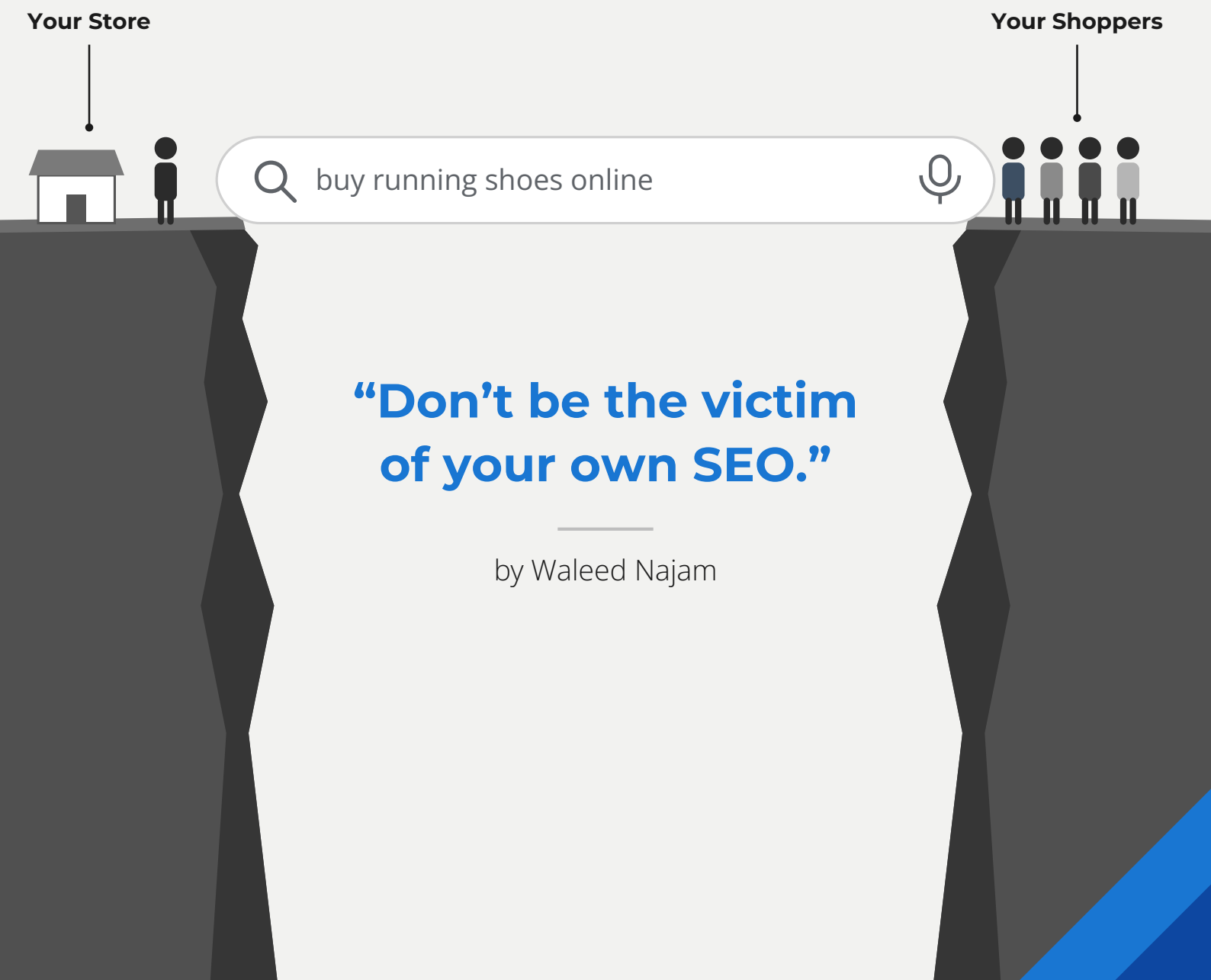
MaxMind SOLUTION

# E-COMMERCE SEO

## SUCCESS BLUEPRINT

Optimizing 250 Ranking Factors




**“Don’t be the victim of your own SEO.”**

by Waleed Najam

01 SECTION 01

# The blueprint at a glance

Where an online store ranks in Google comes down to many small things done right. This blueprint brings together the 250 ranking factors that matter most for online stores, sorts them into 15 areas, and gives each one a clear action.

**250**
ranking factors, each with one clear thing to do

**15**
areas, from setting up the store to avoiding penalties

**81**
HIGH-priority factors to fix first

## THE 15 AREAS

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 01 **Setup and hosting** 16 factors | 02 **Crawling and indexing** 16 factors | 03 **Site structure** 14 factors | 04 **Speed, mobile and security** 12 factors | 05 **Keywords and titles** 13 factors |
| 06 **Content quality** 18 factors | 07 **Product and category pages** 18 factors | 08 **Images and rich results** 8 factors | 09 **Link quality** 36 factors | 10 **Link building** 19 factors |
| 11 **Brand and social** 14 factors | 12 **Trust and reviews** 15 factors | 13 **Searchers and local results** 19 factors | 14 **Stock and seasons** 10 factors | 15 **Spam and penalties** 22 factors |

## HOW TO READ A FACTOR

Every factor has a number, what to do on the store, the tool we check it with and a priority:

HIGH — Fix first. These have the biggest effect on an online store.

MED — Fix in the first three months.

LOW — Small, debated or not a direct factor. Fix when it's easy.

## HOW TO USE IT

**1 Check**
Go through all 250 factors on your store.

**2 Fix**
Start with the HIGH factors, area by area, beginning with areas 01 to 04.

**3 Repeat**
Check again every three months and after every big Google update.

02 SECTION 02

# The 250 ranking factors

Work through the areas in order. In each area, fix the HIGH factors first.

## 01 Setup and hosting 16 FACTORS

Every page sits on this setup, so one mistake here holds back the whole store.

| # | FACTOR | WHAT TO DO | CHECK WITH | PRIORITY |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | One preferred version | Pick one version (https://www.) and 301 every other version to it; set it in Search Console. | Screaming Frog | HIGH |
| 2 | Platform SEO settings | Check SEO URLs, canonicals, robots and sitemaps in Magento, WooCommerce, Shopify, OpenCart or PrestaShop. | Platform admin | HIGH |
| 3 | Analytics and Search Console | Not ranking factors (Google), but you can't fix what you can't see. Set up both, with Enhanced Ecommerce. | — | LOW |
| 4 | Previously penalised domain | Check Manual Actions before launch; clean up and file a reconsideration request. | Search Console | HIGH |
| 5 | Domain history | Before buying a used domain, check its past content in the Wayback Machine and its old links in Majestic. | Wayback Machine, Majestic | MED |
| 6 | Uptime | Monitor the store every minute; long or repeated outages can drop pages from Google. | Pingdom, UptimeRobot | MED |
| 7 | Server location | Host near your main market or use a CDN such as Cloudflare. | — | LOW |
| 8 | Keyword in a subdomain | Keep categories in folders (store.com/running-shoes/), not subdomains, so they share one domain's strength. | Screaming Frog | MED |
| 9 | Short, memorable name | Easy to spell and say: it earns more brand searches, typed-in visits and natural links. | — | LOW |
| 10 | Hyphens in the domain | Avoid more than one hyphen; heavily hyphenated domains look spammy to shoppers and linkers. | — | LOW |
| 11 | Keyword in the domain | A slight relevance hint at most. Choose a short, brandable name over a keyword string. | — | LOW |
| 12 | Exact-match domain | The September 2012 EMD update demoted thin exact-match sites. A keyword domain won't save weak pages. | — | LOW |
| 13 | Domain age | Small effect. Google's Matt Cutts (2010): six months vs one year makes little difference. Don't buy old domains to rank. | WHOIS | LOW |
| 14 | Registration length | Debated (based on a Google patent). Renew for several years anyway so the domain can never lapse. | WHOIS | LOW |
| 15 | Public or private WHOIS | Little effect. Public details that match the About page help shoppers trust the store. | WHOIS | LOW |
| 16 | Owner of other spam sites | Keep the store separate from any sites the owner has used for spam; Google can connect them. | — | LOW |

02

## Crawling and indexing

16 FACTORS

Google can only rank pages it can find, and stores easily create thousands of useless copies.

| # | FACTOR | WHAT TO DO | CHECK WITH | PRIORITY |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 17 | robots.txt | Block cart, checkout and internal search; never block CSS or JavaScript (Google, October 2014). | robots.txt Tester | HIGH |
| 18 | XML sitemaps | Separate sitemaps for categories, products and guides; only live, canonical, indexable URLs. | Sitemaps report | HIGH |
| 19 | Crawl budget | Under 20% of Googlebot's visits should go to filter, sort and other duplicate URLs. | Server logs | HIGH |
| 20 | Canonical tag | Every page points to its own clean URL; filter and sort URLs point to the main category. | Screaming Frog | HIGH |
| 21 | Duplicate content in the store | The same text on several URLs splits ranking strength; fix with canonicals and unique copy. | Siteliner | HIGH |
| 22 | Filter pages in Google | Index a filter only with 100+ searches a month and 6+ products in stock; canonical the rest. | Screaming Frog, Index Status | HIGH |
| 23 | Sort, view and limit options | Canonical to the default page; mark as "Sorts" in the URL Parameters tool. | URL Parameters | HIGH |
| 24 | Pagination | rel="next" and "prev"; each page canonical to itself. Never canonical page 2 to page 1. | Screaming Frog | HIGH |
| 25 | One URL per product | Products reached through several categories keep one address. | Screaming Frog | HIGH |
| 26 | Internal search pages | Block in robots.txt and never link to them from the store. | robots.txt Tester | HIGH |
| 27 | Session and tracking codes | No ?SID= or utm codes in internal links. | Screaming Frog | MED |
| 28 | Crawl errors | Fix 404 and server errors every week. | Crawl Errors | MED |
| 29 | Helpful 404 page | Search box and top categories, returning a real 404 status, not a soft 404. | Crawl Errors | MED |
| 30 | Number of pages | More pages help only if they are useful; thousands of thin filter pages hurt. | Index Status | MED |
| 31 | HTML sitemap | One page linking to every category helps shoppers and Google on large catalogs. | — | LOW |
| 32 | HTML errors | Not a ranking factor (Google), but broken HTML can stop Google rendering the page; fix serious errors. | W3C Validator | LOW |

# 03 Site structure

14 FACTORS

Clear links between pages tell Google which categories and products matter most.

| # | FACTOR | WHAT TO DO | CHECK WITH | PRIORITY |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 33 | Site architecture | Flat structure: home, department, category, product. Every product within three clicks. | Screaming Frog crawl depth | HIGH |
| 34 | Internal links to the page | Link best sellers from the menu, category text and related products. More internal links signal importance. | Screaming Frog (Inlinks) | HIGH |
| 35 | Category cannibalisation | Two categories chasing the same searches: merge them or give each a clear focus. | Search Analytics | HIGH |
| 36 | Breadcrumbs | Home › Men › Running Shoes on every page, marked up so Google shows the path in results. | Structured Data Testing Tool | MED |
| 37 | URL depth | No more than three folders deep; pages closer to the home page get crawled more. | Screaming Frog | MED |
| 38 | Strength of internal links | Links from the home page and top categories pass more than footer links. | Screaming Frog | MED |
| 39 | Internal anchor text | Descriptive words (“men’s trail shoes”), not “click here” or “shop now”. | Screaming Frog | MED |
| 40 | Keyword in the URL | /mens/running-shoes/: short, lowercase, words separated by hyphens. | Screaming Frog | MED |
| 41 | Brand pages | A real, indexable page for every stocked brand people search for. | Keyword Planner | MED |
| 42 | Menu size | Keep the main menu under about 100 links, pointing to the top categories. | Screaming Frog | MED |
| 43 | Orphan products | Every product linked from at least one category. | Screaming Frog | MED |
| 44 | Broken links on the page | Fix links to 404 pages every week; many broken links signal a neglected page. | Screaming Frog | MED |
| 45 | URL length | Keep URLs under about 75 characters, without long parameter strings. | Screaming Frog | LOW |
| 46 | Sitelinks | Clear menus and structure help Google show sitelinks under brand searches. | Google results | LOW |

## 04 Speed, mobile and security

12 FACTORS

Phones now bring as many shopping visits as computers, and slow or unsafe pages lose both rankings and sales.

| # | FACTOR | WHAT TO DO | CHECK WITH | PRIORITY |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 47 | Page loading speed | Under 3 seconds on a phone. Speed has been a ranking signal since 2010. | PageSpeed Insights, WebPageTest | HIGH |
| 48 | Server response time | Under 200 milliseconds: full-page caching (Varnish), PHP 7 and good hosting. | PageSpeed Insights | HIGH |
| 49 | Mobile-friendly page | Pass the Mobile-Friendly Test on every template (a signal since April 2015, stronger since May 2016). | Mobile-Friendly Test | HIGH |
| 50 | Mobile-first index (testing) | In November 2016 Google began experiments to rank from mobile pages. Mobile must carry all desktop content, markup and links. | Fetch as Google | HIGH |
| 51 | Intrusive pop-ups on mobile | Google announced in August 2016 that mobile pages hidden behind full-screen pop-ups may not rank as highly. Replace them with small banners now. | Real phone check | HIGH |
| 52 | HTTPS | A ranking signal since August 2014. Google said in September 2016 that Chrome will mark non-secure login and payment pages “Not secure”. Move checkout and login first, then the whole store. | Screaming Frog | HIGH |
| 53 | Mixed content | No http images, scripts or fonts on https pages. | Browser console | MED |
| 54 | Image file size | Compress every image (TinyPNG, ImageOptim); aim for under 100 KB per listing image. | PageSpeed Insights | MED |
| 55 | Category page speed | Lazy-load product images below the first screen. | PageSpeed Insights | MED |
| 56 | Responsive site or m-dot | Prefer one responsive site; an m-dot site needs rel=alternate and canonical on every page pair. | Mobile Usability | MED |
| 57 | Ads and banners above the fold | Keep products and text visible on first view; the 2012 page layout update demotes top-heavy pages. | — | MED |
| 58 | AMP in mobile results | In mobile Top Stories since February 2016 and labelled in all mobile results since September 2016. Not a ranking factor and still young for product pages; start with guides. | — | LOW |

## 05 Keywords and titles

13 FACTORS

Titles and headings are the strongest on-page signal of what each page sells.

| # | FACTOR | WHAT TO DO | CHECK WITH | PRIORITY |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 59 | Keyword in the title tag | Main search phrase in every category and product title: “Men’s Running Shoes – Free Delivery \| Store”. | Screaming Frog | HIGH |
| 60 | Keyword at the start of the title | Lead with the search phrase and end with the store name. | Screaming Frog | HIGH |
| 61 | Unique title on every page | No two pages share a title; fix every pair in the HTML Improvements report. | HTML Improvements | HIGH |
| 62 | Keyword in the H1 | One H1 per page, matching the main search; never the logo or “Welcome”. | Screaming Frog | HIGH |

| # | FACTOR | WHAT TO DO | CHECK WITH | PRIORITY |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 63 | Product title formula | Brand + model + key detail + type: "Nike Air Zoom Pegasus 33 Men's Running Shoe". | Screaming Frog | HIGH |
| 64 | Category title and H1 | The main search phrase, unique to this category. | Screaming Frog | HIGH |
| 65 | Title length | About 60 characters, so the title isn't cut off in results. | Screaming Frog | MED |
| 66 | Meta description | Not a ranking factor (Google, 2009), but it sells the click: about 155 characters with price, delivery or returns. | Screaming Frog | MED |
| 67 | Keywords in H2 and H3 | Related phrases as subheadings: "Running shoes for flat feet", "Trail vs road shoes". | Manual check | MED |
| 68 | Keyword in the first 100 words | Mention the main phrase early in the category intro and the product description. | Manual check | MED |
| 69 | Related words and synonyms | Cover the words buyers use: "cushioning", "drop", "pronation" on a running-shoe page. | Google related searches | MED |
| 70 | Keyword frequency | Use the phrase naturally two or three times. There is no ideal density; never stuff. | — | MED |
| 71 | Other searches the page ranks for | A page ranking for many related searches looks relevant; build each page around a group of searches. | Search Analytics | MED |

## 06 Content quality

18 FACTORS

Unique, helpful text is what lifts a store above others selling the same products.

| # | FACTOR | WHAT TO DO | CHECK WITH | PRIORITY |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 72 | Unique content | Never publish the manufacturer's description alone; it is already on hundreds of other stores. | Copyscape | HIGH |
| 73 | Content depth | Answer what a buyer asks before paying: fit, materials, care, delivery and returns. | Manual review | HIGH |
| 74 | Store-wide quality (Panda) | Weak pages pull down strong ones: improve, merge or noindex thin pages. | Index Status | HIGH |
| 75 | Content length | Categories: 150–300 words below products. Products: 150+ unique words. Guides: as long as the answer needs. | Screaming Frog | MED |
| 76 | Content freshness | Keep prices, stock and seasonal text current; the 2011 freshness update favours fresh pages for timely searches. | — | MED |
| 77 | Helpful extras on the page | Size guide, delivery estimator, related products: Google's rater guidelines value helpful supplementary content. | — | MED |
| 78 | Text hidden in tabs | Google has said hidden tab text may count for less on desktop; keep the main description visible. | Fetch as Google | MED |
| 79 | Bullets and numbered lists | Key specs in bullets: easy to scan, and Google often uses lists in featured snippets. | — | MED |
| 80 | Featured snippets | Answer the question in a short, direct paragraph right under a matching heading to win the answer box. | Google results | MED |
| 81 | Regular new content | Add products and guides on a steady schedule. | — | LOW |
| 82 | Size of updates | Real changes (new products, new sections) count more than changing a date. | — | LOW |
| 83 | Update history | Pages that keep gaining reviews and products look maintained. | — | LOW |

| # | FACTOR | WHAT TO DO | CHECK WITH | PRIORITY |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 84 | Page age | Older pages that keep improving hold rankings; update pages instead of deleting and recreating them. | — | LOW |
| 85 | Spelling and grammar | Proofread every product page; errors cost trust and sales more than rankings. | Manual check | LOW |
| 86 | Reading level | Write for shoppers: short sentences and plain words. | — | LOW |
| 87 | Outbound link quality | Link only to trusted sources, such as brand sites and official size charts. | — | LOW |
| 88 | Outbound link relevance | Outbound links on the same topic help Google understand the page. | — | LOW |
| 89 | Number of outbound links | Avoid long lists of external links on product pages; they leak attention and look spammy. | Screaming Frog | LOW |

## 07 Product and category pages 18 FACTORS

These are the pages that rank for buying searches and bring in the sales.

| # | FACTOR | WHAT TO DO | CHECK WITH | PRIORITY |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 90 | Description rewrite order | Rewrite best sellers first: the top 20% of products by revenue, 150+ unique words each. | Universal Analytics | HIGH |
| 91 | Product markup fields | name, image, brand, sku, price, priceCurrency, availability; switch to OutOfStock automatically. | Structured Data Testing Tool | HIGH |
| 92 | Reviews in the page HTML | Reviews must load with the page, not only through JavaScript or an iframe. | Fetch as Google | HIGH |
| 93 | Colour and size variants | One URL per product unless a colour has its own search demand. | Screaming Frog | HIGH |
| 94 | Empty and near-empty categories | No indexable category with fewer than three products; noindex or merge. | Screaming Frog | HIGH |
| 95 | Seasonal category URLs | One permanent URL per season (/black-friday/), live all year. | — | HIGH |
| 96 | Product photos | Five or more photos, with zoom, a plain background and at least 800 pixels wide. | — | MED |
| 97 | Delivery and returns by the button | Delivery cost, delivery time and returns period next to Add to Cart. | — | MED |
| 98 | Specification table | Size, material, weight and care in a table. | — | MED |
| 99 | Product questions and answers | Questions answered by staff add unique long-tail text. | — | MED |
| 100 | Related and accessory products | Four to eight related links spread strength and lift order value. | — | MED |
| 101 | Customer photos | Let buyers add photos to reviews: unique images and proof on product pages. | — | MED |
| 102 | Intro text above products | 50–100 words saying what the range is, without pushing products below the fold. | — | MED |
| 103 | Guide text below products | 150–300 words on how to choose, with links to buying guides. | — | MED |
| 104 | Products per page and View all | 24–48 per page. A fast "View all" page is Google's preferred canonical (2011 guidance). | PageSpeed Insights | MED |

| # | FACTOR | WHAT TO DO | CHECK WITH | PRIORITY |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 105 | Default sort order | Best sellers first, so the strongest products get the most links and clicks. | — | MED |
| 106 | Links to sub-categories and guides | Show the category tree and link related buying guides. | — | MED |
| 107 | Text in banners | Put promotional text in HTML, not inside banner images, so Google can read it. | — | LOW |

## 08 Images and rich results

8 FACTORS

Stars, prices and photos in Google's results win more clicks than plain blue links.

| # | FACTOR | WHAT TO DO | CHECK WITH | PRIORITY |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 108 | Structured data | Use the schema.org types Google supports: Product, Offer, BreadcrumbList, Organization. | Structured Data Testing Tool | HIGH |
| 109 | Rich snippets | Stars and price in results lift clicks; markup must match what the page shows, or Google drops it. | Structured Data report | HIGH |
| 110 | Image alt text | Describe each product image: "Nike Pegasus 33 men's running shoe, black, side view". | Screaming Frog | MED |
| 111 | Image file names | nike-pegasus-33-black-side.jpg, not IMG_0042.jpg. | Screaming Frog | MED |
| 112 | Images and video | Five or more photos and a product video on top products; video thumbnails can show in results. | — | MED |
| 113 | Image search | Product images rank in Google Images: descriptive file names, alt text and image sitemaps. | Search Analytics | MED |
| 114 | Organization markup | Logo, phone and social profiles in schema.org markup on the home page, for Google's Knowledge Panel. | Structured Data Testing Tool | MED |
| 115 | YouTube channel | Product and how-to videos on YouTube rank in their own right and send buyers. | YouTube | LOW |

## 09 Link quality

36 FACTORS

Links are one of Google's top three ranking signals, but only good links count.

| # | FACTOR | WHAT TO DO | CHECK WITH | PRIORITY |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 116 | Number of linking websites | One of the strongest signals. Grow the number of different sites linking to the store every month. | Majestic, Moz | HIGH |
| 117 | Strength of the linking page | One link from a strong page beats dozens from weak ones. | Moz Page Authority | HIGH |
| 118 | Strength of the linking site | Links from well-known, trusted sites count more. | Moz Domain Authority | HIGH |
| 119 | Relevance of the linking site | Running blogs and sports sites help a shoe store most. | Manual review | HIGH |
| 120 | Link inside the main content | A link in the body of an article counts more than one in a footer or sidebar. | — | HIGH |
| 121 | Anchor text | Mostly brand name and URL, some product phrases, under 5% exact-match keywords. | Majestic | HIGH |

| # | FACTOR | WHAT TO DO | CHECK WITH | PRIORITY |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 122 | Real sites, not networks | Only links from real sites with real visitors count; link networks get removed. | — | HIGH |
| 123 | Natural link profile | Varied sites, anchors and target pages, with no repeating patterns. | Majestic | HIGH |
| 124 | Number of linking pages | Many links from one site count far less than one link each from many sites. | Majestic | MED |
| 125 | Links from different servers | Links from many separate IP ranges look natural; a network on one server doesn't. | Majestic | MED |
| 126 | Relevance of the linking page | The linking page should be about your topic. | — | MED |
| 127 | Words around the link | The text around a link helps Google understand what it points to. | — | MED |
| 128 | Keyword in the linking page title | A link from a page titled "Best running shoes 2016" is a strong relevance signal. | — | MED |
| 129 | Topic of the linking site | Aim for linking sites in your category (Sports, Shopping) in Majestic's Topical Trust Flow. | Majestic | MED |
| 130 | Country of the linking site | Links from sites in the country you sell to help local rankings. | Majestic | MED |
| 131 | Quality of the linking article | Links from well-written, original articles count more. | — | MED |
| 132 | Mix of link types | Natural stores have editorial, directory, social, forum and supplier links. | Majestic | MED |
| 133 | Steady link growth | A steady rise in new linking sites signals growing popularity. | Majestic | MED |
| 134 | Lost links | Track lost links every month and win back the important ones. | Majestic | MED |
| 135 | Reciprocal links | Excessive link swaps are a link scheme under Google's guidelines. | — | MED |
| 136 | Links through 301 redirects | Pass most of their value; keep every redirect to one hop. | Screaming Frog | MED |
| 137 | Position in the content | Links higher up in the article may count more. | — | LOW |
| 138 | Age of the linking site | Links from established sites tend to count more. | — | LOW |
| 139 | Link age | Older links tend to count more; earn links that last. | — | LOW |
| 140 | .edu and .gov links | No special value (Google), but student-discount and council pages are trusted, relevant links. | — | LOW |
| 141 | Image link alt text | Alt text works as anchor text for image links, such as brand logos on stockist pages. | — | LOW |
| 142 | Link title attribute | Little or no weight; don't spend time on it. | — | LOW |
| 143 | Nofollow links | Pass no PageRank but bring visits and make a link profile look natural. | — | LOW |
| 144 | Followed vs nofollow mix | A profile with no nofollow links at all can look manipulated. | Majestic | LOW |
| 145 | User-generated links | Forum and comment links are usually nofollow; Google tells them apart from editorial links. | — | LOW |
| 146 | Site-wide links | Footer and blogroll links on every page of a site count as about one link and can look paid. | — | LOW |

| # | FACTOR | WHAT TO DO | CHECK WITH | PRIORITY |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 147 | Co-citation | Being mentioned beside big brands or topics builds relevance, even without a link. | — | LOW |
| 148 | Outbound links on the linking page | A link among 200 others passes very little. | — | LOW |
| 149 | Length of the linking article | Links from substantial articles count more than links from short posts. | — | LOW |
| 150 | Shares of the linking page | Widely shared pages tend to be stronger link sources. | — | LOW |
| 151 | Sentiment around the link | Google may read whether a mention is positive or negative (patent). Fix the service behind bad press. | — | LOW |

## 10 Link building

19 FACTORS

A steady flow of real, earned links is what moves a store past its competitors.

| # | FACTOR | WHAT TO DO | CHECK WITH | PRIORITY |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 152 | Supplier and brand links | Ask every brand you stock to list you on its "Where to buy" page: relevant and trusted. | — | HIGH |
| 153 | Links from news sites | Press coverage from stories, launches or data is among the strongest links a store can get. | — | HIGH |
| 154 | Editorial links | Links given freely by editors are what Google wants. Earn them with guides, data and PR. | — | HIGH |
| 155 | Broken backlinks | External links pointing at deleted pages waste value; 301 each one to the closest live page. | Majestic, Crawl Errors | HIGH |
| 156 | Links after a redesign | Map every linked URL to its new address before a redesign or new platform, or the links are lost. | Majestic | HIGH |
| 157 | Links from pages that already rank | Pages ranking for your target search are the best link sources; contact them first. | Google results | MED |
| 158 | Resource and hub pages | Get listed on "useful links" and "where to buy" pages in your niche. | Google search | MED |
| 159 | Unlinked mentions | Find mentions of the store with no link and ask the writer to add one. | Google Alerts | MED |
| 160 | Links to inner pages | Point stockist, review and PR links at categories and products, not only the home page. | Majestic | MED |
| 161 | Shopping guides and comparisons | Get products into "best X" roundups and niche comparison sites. | — | MED |
| 162 | Local organisations | Sponsor clubs, events and charities for relevant local links. | — | MED |
| 163 | Broken link building | Find dead links on niche resource pages and offer your matching guide. | Check My Links | MED |
| 164 | Guest posts | Fine for reach, but links in posts written for links should be nofollow (Google, January 2014). | — | MED |
| 165 | Press release links | Must be nofollow; Google's July 2013 guidelines treat keyword links in press releases as unnatural. | — | MED |
| 166 | Disavow | Use only for unremovable spam or a manual action, by domain. | Disavow tool | MED |

| # | FACTOR | WHAT TO DO | CHECK WITH | PRIORITY |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 167 | Wikipedia citations | Nofollow, but a citation brings trust and further links. Never add your own. | — | LOW |
| 168 | Directory links | Only edited, niche directories; never paid link directories. | — | LOW |
| 169 | Forums and Q&A sites | Helpful answers on Reddit and Quora bring nofollow links and real buyers. | — | LOW |
| 170 | Video and image sites | YouTube descriptions and Pinterest Rich Pins: nofollow, but they send buyers. | — | LOW |

## 11 Brand and social

14 FACTORS

Google trusts stores that people know and search for by name.

| # | FACTOR | WHAT TO DO | CHECK WITH | PRIORITY |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 171 | Searches for the store's name | A strong signal. Grow it with PR, email, packaging and social. | Search Analytics | HIGH |
| 172 | Brand + product searches | "storename running shoes" tells Google the store is relevant for running shoes. | Search Analytics | MED |
| 173 | Big-brand preference | The 2009 "Vince" change was widely seen as favouring big brands on broad searches; Google says it rewards trust and authority. Build the brand. | — | MED |
| 174 | Brand mentions in the news | Press coverage shows a real, known brand. | Google News | MED |
| 175 | Brand interest over time | Compare brand searches with competitors in Google Trends every quarter. | Google Trends | LOW |
| 176 | Direct visits | Debated. More people typing the store's address usually means a stronger brand. | Universal Analytics | LOW |
| 177 | Returning visitors | Shoppers who come back show a store worth returning to; email and loyalty programmes help. | Universal Analytics | LOW |
| 178 | Bookmarks | Speculative. A memorable store gets bookmarked and revisited. | — | LOW |
| 179 | Marketplace listings | Same product data on Amazon and eBay; they grow brand searches. | — | LOW |
| 180 | Facebook page | A real, active page with real reviews. Not a direct factor, but it builds brand searches. | — | LOW |
| 181 | Twitter profile | Real followers and fast customer service replies. | — | LOW |
| 182 | Instagram and Pinterest | Product photos and Pinterest Rich Pins bring discovery and visits. | — | LOW |
| 183 | LinkedIn company page | Shows a real company with real staff. | — | LOW |
| 184 | Real social followers | Bought followers are easy to spot; grow real audiences. | — | LOW |

## 12 Trust and reviews

15 FACTORS

Shoppers and Google both need proof that the store is safe to buy from.

| # | FACTOR | WHAT TO DO | CHECK WITH | PRIORITY |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 185 | **"Your Money or Your Life" pages** | Google's rater guidelines hold pages that take payments to the highest standard of trust. | — | HIGH |
| 186 | **Merchant reputation** | Since December 2010 Google demotes merchants with bad customer experiences. Fix complaints at the source. | Review sites | HIGH |
| 187 | **Contact details** | Address, phone and email visible on every page; raters look for them on shopping sites. | — | HIGH |
| 188 | **Delivery, returns, privacy, terms** | Clear policy pages, linked from every footer. | — | HIGH |
| 189 | **Store review programme** | Collect store reviews through Google Trusted Stores or an approved review partner; 150 reviews in 12 months and 3.5+ stars earn AdWords seller ratings. | Merchant Center | HIGH |
| 190 | **Product reviews per page** | Ask every buyer 7–14 days after delivery; aim for 5+ reviews on each top-50 product. | Review platform | HIGH |
| 191 | **Review markup rules** | Mark up only reviews shown on the page, about that product. | Structured Data Testing Tool | HIGH |
| 192 | **Site trust** | Earn links from trusted sites (brands, press, universities); trust flows outward from them. | Majestic Trust Flow | MED |
| 193 | **Registered business details** | Company number and VAT number in the footer and on the About page. | — | MED |
| 194 | **Replying to reviews** | Reply to every negative review within 48 hours, with a fix. | Google My Business | MED |
| 195 | **Reviews and questions on the page** | Customer reviews and questions show engagement and add fresh, unique text. | — | MED |
| 196 | **Customer service visibility** | Phone, chat or email with stated response times on every page. | — | MED |
| 197 | **Guest checkout** | Allow checkout without an account; forced sign-up loses buyers that SEO brought in. | Universal Analytics | MED |
| 198 | **Checkout steps** | Three steps or fewer; track drop-off in Enhanced Ecommerce. | Universal Analytics | MED |
| 199 | **Trust badges** | Card logos, PayPal and a security seal by Add to Cart and in checkout. | — | LOW |

# 13 Searchers and local results

19 FACTORS

What searchers click, how long they stay and where they are all shape the results.

| # | FACTOR | WHAT TO DO | CHECK WITH | PRIORITY |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 200 | RankBrain | Google's machine-learning system (October 2015) learns which results satisfy a search. Fully answer it on the page. | — | HIGH |
| 201 | Click rate from results | Rewrite titles on pages with many impressions but a low click rate. | Search Analytics | HIGH |
| 202 | Local pack | "Shoe shop near me" shows the map pack. Complete a Google My Business listing for every shop. | Google My Business | HIGH |
| 203 | Click rate across the site | A store that's clicked often across many searches may be seen as more useful. Use rich snippets everywhere. | Search Analytics | MED |
| 204 | Pogo-sticking | Shoppers bouncing straight back to Google suggests the page failed. Show products, price and stock at once. | — | MED |
| 205 | Dwell time | Time on page before returning to Google. Good product detail and guides keep people reading. | Universal Analytics | MED |
| 206 | Site usability | Easy search, filters and checkout keep shoppers on the store instead of back on Google. | Universal Analytics | MED |
| 207 | Shopping searches | For "buy" searches, Product Listing Ads sit on top; organic pages must stand out with rich snippets. | Google results | MED |
| 208 | Possum (September 2016) | SEOs' name for the September 2016 local shake-up (not confirmed by Google). Near-duplicate listings are filtered: one clean listing per shop, with the right address. | Google My Business | MED |
| 209 | Local citations | Same name, address and phone on Yelp, Yell and local directories. | BrightLocal, Whitespark | MED |
| 210 | Real shop or office | A physical address with a Google My Business listing shows a real business. | Google My Business | MED |
| 211 | Country-code domain | A .co.uk or .de targets that country automatically. Use one when you sell to a single country. | International Targeting | MED |
| 212 | Generic domain, one country | A .com selling to one country: set the country in Search Console's International Targeting report. | Search Console | MED |
| 213 | Country targeting | Google favours local results by country: ccTLD, International Targeting or hreflang. | Search Console | MED |
| 214 | Query deserves diversity | Google mixes result types (products, guides, video). See which types rank and fill the gaps. | Google results | MED |
| 215 | Bounce rate | Debated as a direct factor. A high bounce rate on a landing page usually means a search-to-page mismatch. | Universal Analytics | LOW |
| 216 | Personalised results | Past visitors may see the store higher. A memorable brand earns repeat clicks. | — | LOW |
| 217 | Domain diversity | Google limits how many results one site gets per search; target related searches with different pages. | — | LOW |
| 218 | SafeSearch | Adult products are filtered when SafeSearch is on; keep adult and general ranges separate. | — | LOW |

## 14 Stock and seasons

10 FACTORS

Products and seasons change, and handling them right keeps the rankings when they do.

| # | FACTOR | WHAT TO DO | CHECK WITH | PRIORITY |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 219 | Temporarily out of stock | Keep the page live with a restock date and alternatives; availability set to OutOfStock. | Structured Data Testing Tool | HIGH |
| 220 | Discontinued, with a replacement | 301 redirect to the newer model. | Screaming Frog | HIGH |
| 221 | Discontinued, no replacement | 301 to the closest category if it has links or visits; otherwise 404 or 410. Never the home page. | Majestic, Screaming Frog | HIGH |
| 222 | Seasonal timing | Seasonal pages updated, linked and crawled 8 weeks before the peak. | Google Trends | HIGH |
| 223 | Revenue-first order of work | Fix pages in order of the extra profit they can add, not their search volume. | Universal Analytics | HIGH |
| 224 | Redirect map and chains | Keep one list of every 301; one hop only, reviewed every quarter. | Screaming Frog | MED |
| 225 | New product launch | Add to the sitemap, link from its category and submit with Fetch as Google on launch day. | Fetch as Google | MED |
| 226 | Product feed matches the site | Same titles, prices and stock in the Merchant Center feed as on the page. | Merchant Center | MED |
| 227 | Back-in-stock alerts | “Email me when it’s back” keeps out-of-stock pages useful and captures demand. | — | MED |
| 228 | Query deserves freshness | For searches like “Black Friday deals”, fresh pages win. Update seasonal pages before the peak. | Google Trends | MED |

## 15 Spam and penalties

22 FACTORS

One penalty can wipe out years of work, and every one of these is avoidable.

| # | FACTOR | WHAT TO DO | CHECK WITH | PRIORITY |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 229 | Penguin 4.0 | Since September 2016 it runs in real time and ignores spam links page by page. | — | HIGH |
| 230 | Paid links | Buying or selling followed links breaks Google’s guidelines. | — | HIGH |
| 231 | Private blog networks | Networks of sites built for links; Google has been removing them since 2014. | — | HIGH |
| 232 | Followed links for free products | Bloggers must nofollow (Google, March 2016); Google penalised offenders in April 2016. | — | HIGH |
| 233 | Unnatural links manual action | A message in Search Console. Remove what you can, disavow the rest, then file a reconsideration request. | Manual Actions | HIGH |
| 234 | Auto-generated and empty pages | Tag pages, empty categories and internal search results in Google: noindex or remove them. | Screaming Frog | HIGH |
| 235 | Keyword stuffing | Lists of keywords in footers, titles or descriptions risk demotion. | Manual check | HIGH |
| 236 | Copied or scraped content | Content taken from other sites, including competitors’ reviews, risks Panda and manual actions. | Copyscape | HIGH |

| # | FACTOR | WHAT TO DO | CHECK WITH | PRIORITY |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 237 | Hidden text and links | White text or keyword blocks hidden with CSS risk a manual action. | Fetch as Google | HIGH |
| 238 | Cloaking | Never show Googlebot different content from shoppers. | Fetch as Google | HIGH |
| 239 | Sneaky mobile redirects | Mobile visitors sent elsewhere, often by ad scripts (Google warning, October 2015). | Real phone check | HIGH |
| 240 | Doorway pages | Near-identical city or keyword pages built only to rank; targeted by Google's March 2015 update. | — | HIGH |
| 241 | Hacked content and malware | Apply platform security patches (Magento, 2015–16); hacked stores get warnings in results. | Security Issues | HIGH |
| 242 | Over-optimisation | The same exact-match anchor on every internal link and keyword-packed titles look manipulative. | Screaming Frog | MED |
| 243 | Copyright complaints (Pirate) | Many DMCA notices lower rankings (2012). Never copy competitors' photos or text. | Lumen database | MED |
| 244 | Sudden link spikes | Hundreds of new links in days (bought, or negative SEO) look manipulated. Watch for spikes. | Majestic | MED |
| 245 | Links from low-quality sites | Spammy directories, foreign spam and link farms. | Majestic | MED |
| 246 | Links from unrelated sites | Many links from casino, pharma or other off-topic sites. | Majestic | MED |
| 247 | Widget and footer links | Keyword links hidden in widgets, themes or embeds are unnatural (Google, 2013). | — | MED |
| 248 | Spam directories and bookmarks | Paid directories and social bookmarking spam add risk, not value. | — | MED |
| 249 | Comment and forum spam | Automated comments with links. | — | MED |
| 250 | Meta keywords | Ignored by Google since 2009. Remove keyword lists; they only show competitors your targets. | — | LOW |

03 SECTION 03

# Final word

250 factors can look like a lot. In practice, an online store moves up when the basics are fixed first and the rest is done steadily, month after month.

| | |
|---|---|
| AREAS 01–04 | **Get the foundations right.** If Google can't crawl the store, understand its structure and load it quickly on a phone, nothing else in this blueprint can work. Fix these first. |
| AREAS 05–08 | **Make every page earn its place.** Each product and category page should be the best page on the web for its search: a clear title, unique text, good photos and stars in the results. |
| AREAS 09–12 | **Earn trust, don't fake it.** Real links, real reviews and a real brand are what Google rewards, and they are the hardest things for a competitor to copy. |
| AREAS 13–15 | **Protect what you build.** Keep pages alive through stock and season changes, and stay away from every shortcut in area 15. One penalty can wipe out years of work. |

Google changes its results hundreds of times a year, so SEO is never a one-off job. Check the store against all 250 factors every three months and after every big update, and fix whatever has slipped.

ABOUT US

# MaxMind Solution

MaxMind Solution is a software company in Lahore, Pakistan. We focus on high-quality, on-time and cost-effective solutions for clients around the world.

### WHAT WE DO

| | |
|---|---|
| **E-COMMERCE SEO** | Store audits and fixes built on the 250 factors in this blueprint, from setup and crawling to links and trust. |
| **ONLINE STORES** | Building and improving stores on open-source platforms such as Magento, WooCommerce, OpenCart and PrestaShop. |
| **CUSTOM SOFTWARE** | Web applications built around the way each business works. |
| **DATA AND REPORTING** | Analytics set-up and clear reports that show what each change earned. |

Clients choose the engagement model that fits their needs. Our mission is to drive business growth with creative, high-quality solutions that offer value and a competitive edge.

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# E-COMMERCE SEO

## SUCCESS BLUEPRINT

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Optimizing 250 Ranking Factors

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