

The Ultimate Shopify SEO Checklist & Guide for Beginners

19 secret tips & tricks to boost your Shopify on-page SEO and get free organic traffic. Learn how to optimize your Shopify store to rank #1 on Google.



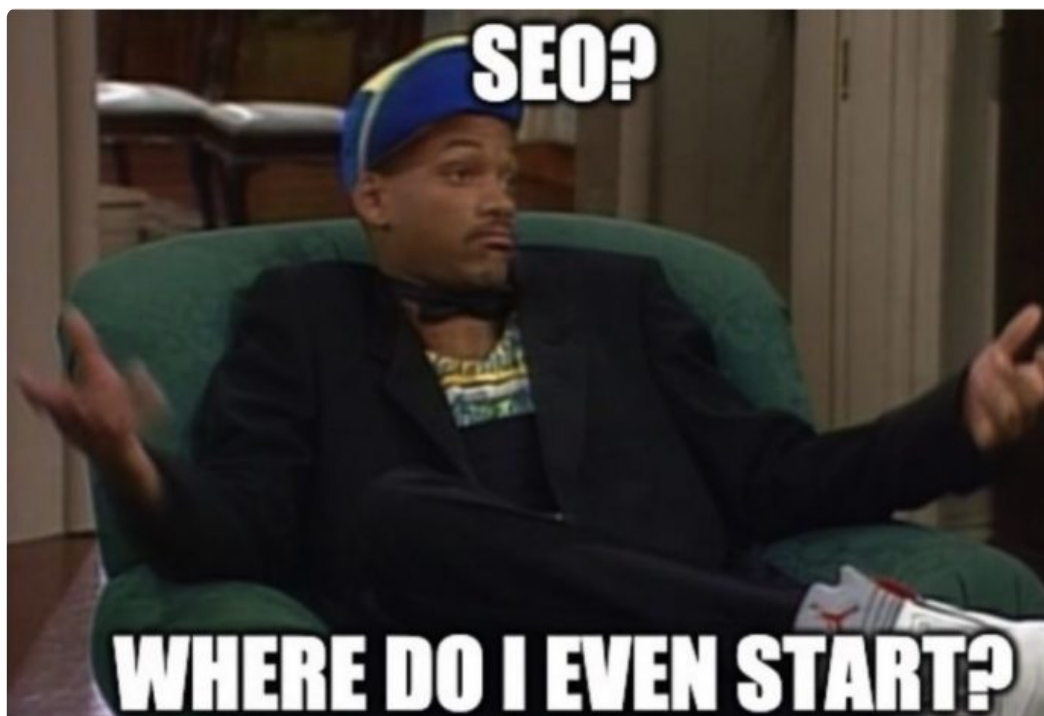
Organic traffic to your Shopify store is one of the most valuable channels due its relevancy and low cost. Essentially the organic traffic is free but some investments may be required in order to produce content or use SEO-related tools. It's important to

understand SEO (and organic traffic) is just one of the traffic channels. The others are paid acquisition (i.e. Facebook, Instagram, or Google ads), email marketing, referral and direct traffic. Your store shouldn't heavily depend on a single traffic source, but should be rather diversified into many. In this article, we have put together the best tips & tricks to validate your SEO and find hidden potential.

If you understand basic SEO and have identified your keywords, you can go directly to the [SEO checklist](#) and skip the intro part.

Intro to Shopify SEO, on-page vs. off-page factors

Before we start with actual tips, let's define some basics. You probably know SEO stands for Search Engine Optimization. By search engine it's mostly meant Google that has [over 90% of market share](#) worldwide, but there are others as well. For example, Yandex (0.5% share) can be relevant if your customers are in Russia, or DuckDuckGo (0.6%) if your customers are concerned about privacy. Luckily, the SEO is mostly shared and can be applied across the search engines.



There are two types of SEO – the **on-page** and **off-page** one. The on-page SEO is related directly to your store and how well is optimized. The off-page SEO is related to other sites on the Internet and how they refer and mention your store. Starting with on-page SEO makes sense as most of the signals are in your control. Once you nail it, you should start focusing on the off-page factors.

Keyword research

Before you start an actual SEO, you need to understand the **keywords** you are targeting. And for that you need to perform a keyword research. In terms of the e-commerce, this basically means understanding how customers are searching for your products. There is a lot of great educational content around that we recommend studying before proceeding to the actual checklist, for example:

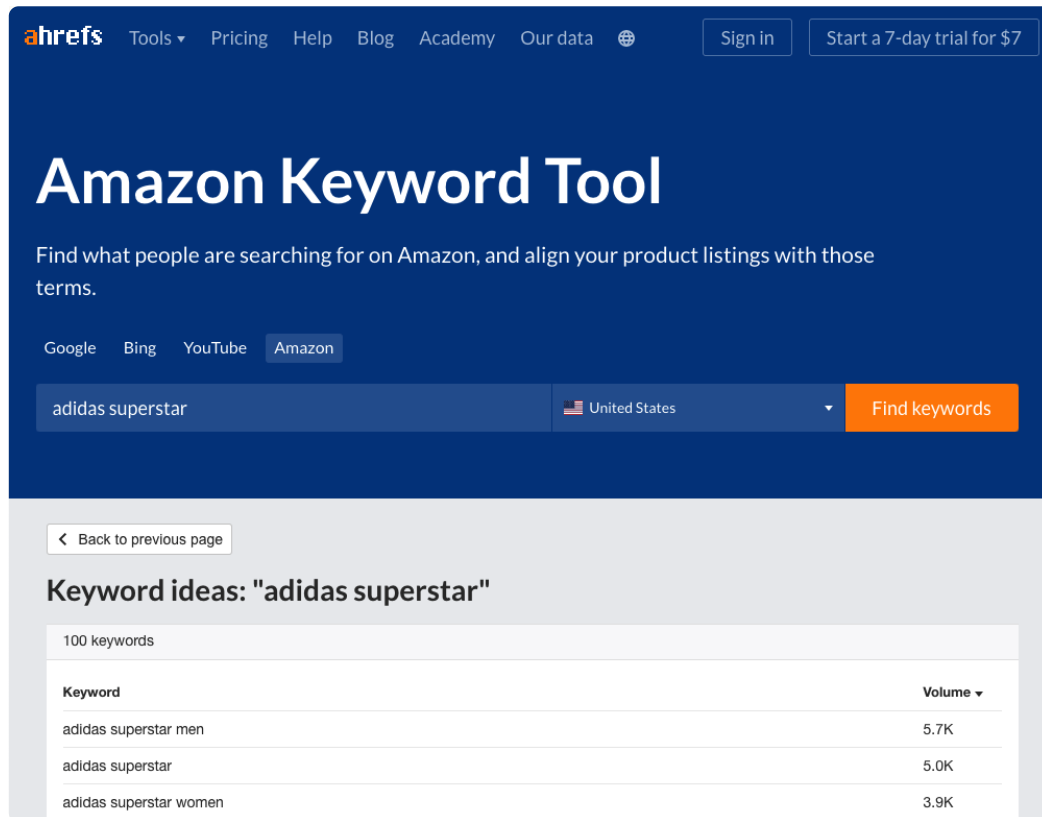
- [Keyword Research Essentials: How to Find the Search Terms Your Customers Use](#)
- [How to Conduct Keyword Research for Ecommerce from the Ground Up](#)

Just a few secret tips related to keyword research that aren't mentioned in the guides above.

Use Amazon & eBay product search data

Google may be the most popular search engine in the World, but there are segments where it isn't. One of the examples is **product search** – when customer is searching for a specific product to purchase. In this case, majority of US customers ([54% in fact, grew from 46% in 2015](#)) are going straight to Amazon.com and perform

the search. Those keywords represents exactly the keywords you want to have on your list.



The screenshot shows the Ahrefs Amazon Keyword Tool interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links for Tools, Pricing, Help, Blog, Academy, and Our data, along with a globe icon, a Sign in button, and a Start a 7-day trial for \$7 button. The main heading is "Amazon Keyword Tool" with a subtext: "Find what people are searching for on Amazon, and align your product listings with those terms." Below this, there are tabs for Google, Bing, YouTube, and Amazon (selected). A search bar contains "adidas superstar" and a dropdown menu shows "United States". A "Find keywords" button is to the right. Below the search bar, there's a "Back to previous page" link. The main section is titled "Keyword ideas: 'adidas superstar'" and shows "100 keywords". A table lists the following keywords and their volumes:

Keyword	Volume
adidas superstar men	5.7K
adidas superstar	5.0K
adidas superstar women	3.9K

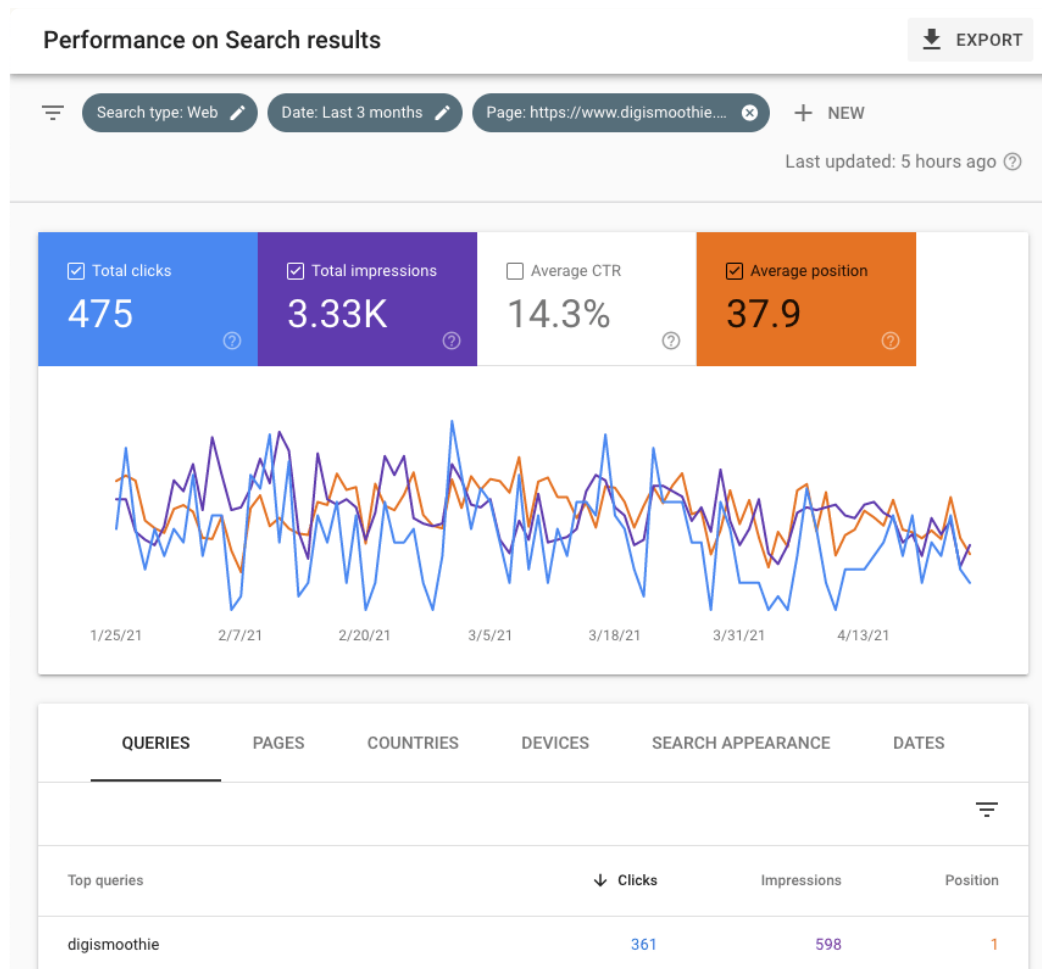
Keyword ideas for "adidas superstar" in Amazon Keyword Tool by ahrefs

To find out what keywords are people searching for at Amazon or eBay you can either use search suggestions on the site. Or some proper tool that also includes search volumes. We recommend [ahfres for Amazon](#) that you can use for free, and [Keyword Tool for eBay](#) (from \$69 per month). Both will give you great ideas and better understanding of how your customers are searching products your store offers.

Use Google Search Console

Another smart tactic is understanding how your actual visitors are searching for your products. Such data used be available directly in Google Analytics, but are no longer available due to privacy reasons. However, you can still retrieve them via another

Google tool called [Search Console](#) (previously also called as Google Webmasters and Google Webmaster Tools).



Performance on search results displayed in Google Search Console

This tool is a must for doing any SEO. It basically gives you an overview of how Google Bot "sees" your site and shows you issues and potential improvements. Besides the site health, it also provides a very valuable data related to Google Search. In the Search report, you can see all queries for which your site appeared in Google SERPs (Search Engine Results Pages). That means it shows you keywords, impressions and positions that bring you traffic already, but also keywords that don't bring any traffic. Those keywords are hidden gem for you. You should basically look for the combination of impressions and position, and find opportunities (keywords) to target/optimize.

The Shopify SEO checklist – 19 secret tips to boost on-page SEO

There are many "SEO checklists" on the Internet, but this one is specifically written for **Shopify merchants**. Many of the recommendations are applicable to any site, but we have also focused on how to implement them in your Shopify store.

1. Set meta title and description for each product & page

Page title is the text you see in your browser tab. It's also (often) displayed in the SERPs together with a page description. By default, Shopify is using product name as page title and product description as page description. It's definitely better than nothing, but you can easily optimize it to attract more visitors from search.

The **meta title** should be up to 60 characters long according to [Moz](#). Besides the product name, you can also include some alternative keywords. For example, the product name maybe "Adidas Originals Superstar" and you could add terms like "shoes", "trainers", or "sneakers". The **meta description** should be up to 155 characters long. It should include the product description, but it should also motivate people to click on the search result. So you can add terms like "in stock", "delivered next day", etc. to differentiate from other sellers.

Both tags should be unique for each product/page. It's also important not to go over the recommended character counts above (not the Shopify ones which are outdated). If it happens, Google may cut the text or even use a different one from the page.

Search engine listing preview

ADIDAS | CLASSIC BACKPACK v1

<https://tom-jarvis.myshopify.com/products/adidas-classic-backpack>

This women's backpack has a glam look, thanks to a faux-leather build with an allover fur print. The front zip pocket keeps small things within reach, while an interior divider reins in potential chaos.

Page title

ADIDAS | CLASSIC BACKPACK v1

28 of 70 characters used

Description

This women's backpack has a glam look, thanks to a faux-leather build with an allover fur print. The front zip pocket keeps small things within reach, while an interior divider reins in potential chaos.

202 of 320 characters used

URL and handle

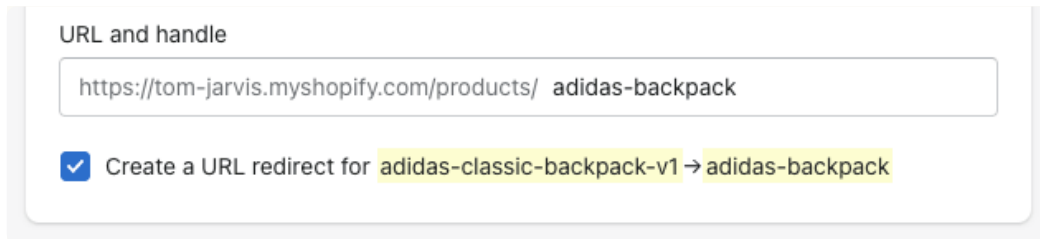
[https://tom-jarvis.myshopify.com/products/ adidas-classic-backpack](https://tom-jarvis.myshopify.com/products/adidas-classic-backpack)

To edit page title and description of your products, go to *Products* > *All Products* > select a specific product, and click on "Edit website SEO". You can also do it via export and import which is more convenient. To edit these tags for your homepage, go to *Online Store* > *Preferences*. Other pages are editable via *Online Store* > *Pages*. Cart page and checkout you can edit only via theme code.

2. Set custom URL handle (slug) for each product & page

URL handle or often called **slug**, is the last part of the URL that identifies a particular product or page on your store. For example, in the URL "<https://www.mystore.com/product/adidas-superstar>" the slug would be "adidas-superstar". By default, Shopify is using product name without blank spaces and special characters. The slug should tell the user what approximately the page is about, include relevant keyword(s), and focus. It should be short and

descriptive, lowercase letters only. Use dash "-" instead of a blank space. You should leave out redundant words like prepositions, questions, etc.



URL and handle

<https://tom-jarvis.myshopify.com/products/ adidas-backpack>

☒ Create a URL redirect for [adidas-classic-backpack-v1](#) → [adidas-backpack](#)

To edit the slug of your products, go to *Products > All Products >* select a specific product, and click on "Edit website SEO" (i.e. same way as editing meta title and description). You can also do it via export and import which is more convenient. If you are changing slug of the existing (indexed) URL, keep in mind to create a redirect from the old URL to the new one. Luckily Shopify can handle this if you check the box "Create a URL redirect" when you are updating the slug.

3. Structure your content and use headings correctly

Make sure your product page are using **only a single H1 element** that is typically the product name. You can validate that by going to your product page and inspecting the element in your browser. If any of your pages is missing the H1 element, you will need to go to theme code and edit it.



```
<div class="grid product-single">
  <div class="grid__item medium-up--one-half">...</div>
  <div class="grid__item medium-up--one-half">
    <div class="product-single__meta small--text-center">
      <h1 class="product-single__title" itemprop="name">ADIDAS | CLASSIC BACKPACK v1</h1> == $0
      <div itemprop="offers" itemscope itemtype="http://schema.org/Offer">...</div>
      <!-- /snippets/social-sharing.liquid -->
      <div class="social-sharing" data-permalink>...</div>
    </div>
  </div>
```


The other headings should be used in hierarchical order – H1 > H2 > H3, etc. but this is becoming less and less important nowadays. Just make sure you are using headings only to emphasize something important or divide content sections. Not use them to make a font bigger or smaller.

4. Avoid duplicate content and meta tags

As mentioned in the meta title and description recommendation, you should absolutely avoid having any duplicate tags and content in your store. If for some reason you need to create multiple product or landing pages with the same/similar content, use [canonical links](#) to "tell" Google which page is the primary one and should be prioritized in search. Alternatively, you can use [noindex tag](#) to "hide" the duplicate page from search engines and exclude it from being indexed.

SEO Analyzer: digismoothie.com		
← BACK TO REPORT		EXPORT TO CSV
ALL ISSUES CRITICAL ERRORS WARNINGS RECOMMENDATIONS		
SEO ISSUES DISCOVERED	DIFFICULTY	SEO IMPACT
→ 16 pages have a low word count What is this and how do I fix it?	MODERATE	HIGH
→ 8 pages with duplicate meta descriptions What is this and how do I fix it?	MODERATE	HIGH
→ 15 pages with duplicate <title> tags What is this and how do I fix it?	MODERATE	HIGH
→ 1 pages with a long loading time What is this and how do I fix it?	HARD	HIGH

Some of the Shopify SEO apps will help you to identify duplicate content/tags in your store. Or you can use external service like [Siteliner](#) or [SEO Analyzer](#) to scan your store ad-hoc. Both are free to use. The Siteliner is great to scan your content, while the SEO Analyzer will detect duplicate tags and other errors like low word counts, or missing elements.

5. Use internal linking

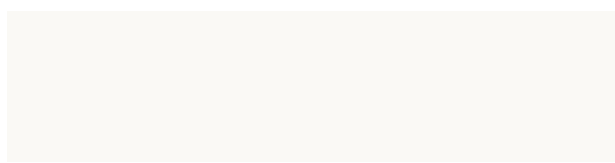
This one is probably the most underrated one, but it can have a great impact on your store SEO. Use internal links. You can use them in your product descriptions, FAQs, about us page, and obviously in blog posts. You can see a great example of internal linking done by Asos below. In the product description they link to "shorts" category/collection and multiple times to the brand category/collection.

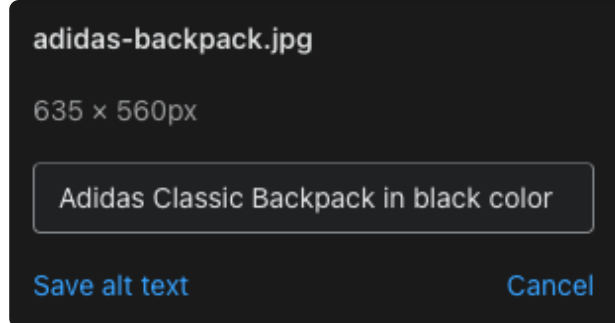
PRODUCT DETAILS	PRODUCT CODE	SIZE & FIT
Shorts by Reclaimed Vintage <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make some legroom• Paper-bag waist• Five pockets• Branded patch to reverse• Regular fit• True to size• Exclusive to ASOS	2001310 BRAND If your aesthetic is part on-trend, part throwback vibes, then you'll love Reclaimed Vintage . With two distinct collections, Reclaimed Vintage Inspired serves up fresh designs with a vintage twist, while Reclaimed Vintage Revived is all about handpicked vintage gems and customised pieces. From bold-printed dresses and utility trousers to embellished jackets and accessories, our Reclaimed Vintage at ASOS edit has it all and more.	Model wears: UK 8/ W26" Model's height: 169cm/5'5.5" LOOK AFTER ME Machine wash according to instructions on care label ABOUT ME Non-stretch denim Pink wash Main: 100% Cotton.

Besides the text links, you can also use images and implement sections like relevant products, or products in the same category on your product pages.

6. Add ALT text to all your images

Alt (alternative) text is an image HTML attribute that describes the content and purpose of the image on the page. By default, Shopify is using a product name in all product images as alt text. Again, it's better than leaving it empty, but you can easily optimize it. Try to be as descriptive as possible and write a unique text for each image variant.





To edit the alt text go to *Product > All Products >* select a specific product > click on a specific image, and click on "Add alt text". If you are using descriptive image file names (see next point), you can also do it via export and import which is more convenient.

7. Use descriptive names for image files

Not just for SEO, but for many practical purposes it helps to use a descriptive names for your image files. File names like "main.jpg" or "1.jpg" don't tell you (and Google) much about the expected result. Use names like "adidas-backpack-front.jpg" to better explain what's on the image. It's also a good opportunity to include your keywords.

8. Compress and optimize image size

Resource size on the product page is one of the key factors affected page load time and therefore a vital part of your SEO strategy. In most cases, the major part of your resources will be media – images in particular. Shopify doesn't have any built-in image optimizer (compressor) and basically uses whatever image is uploaded. Some of the themes have lazy load which is great (i.e. not all product images are loaded at the same time, but only when they are "needed").

For example, the original image below had over 300 KBs. After optimization (compression) it has roughly 60 KBs. That's a huge difference and yet the image still looks good.



Before starting the image compression, make sure it's in a appropriate size. Not too big and not too small. You compress image in some of the desktop tools like Adobe Photoshop, but there are plenty of free ones running in a browser. My favourite one is [Compress JPEG](#) that lets you compress multiple formats from JPEG, PNG, SVG, to GIF. You can also set the output quality. For JPEGs(JPGs) the recommended output quality is around 80.

9. Keep sold-out products active, but push them to the bottom of your collections

This is common mistake of many Shopify store owners. Once a product becomes out-of-stock, the store manager will "deactivate" it by switching it to draft or unpublishing from the Online Store channel. It obviously doesn't make sense to show sold out products to customers. However, by deactivating the product, it will also deactivate its URL and produce a 404 not found error – which Google doesn't like at all.

The best way to handle sold out products is to keep them active, but pushing them to the bottom of the store collection.

Unfortunately, that's not possible natively on Shopify, but you can

use app like [Nada](#) to help you with that. You can also learn how to manage sold out products in our article [8 Tips on Managing Sold & Out-of-Stock Inventory on Shopify](#).

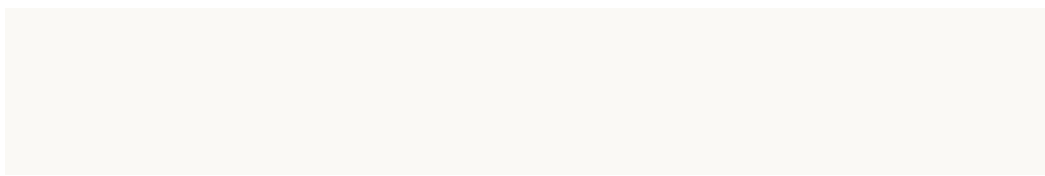
10. Have enough unique content on product pages

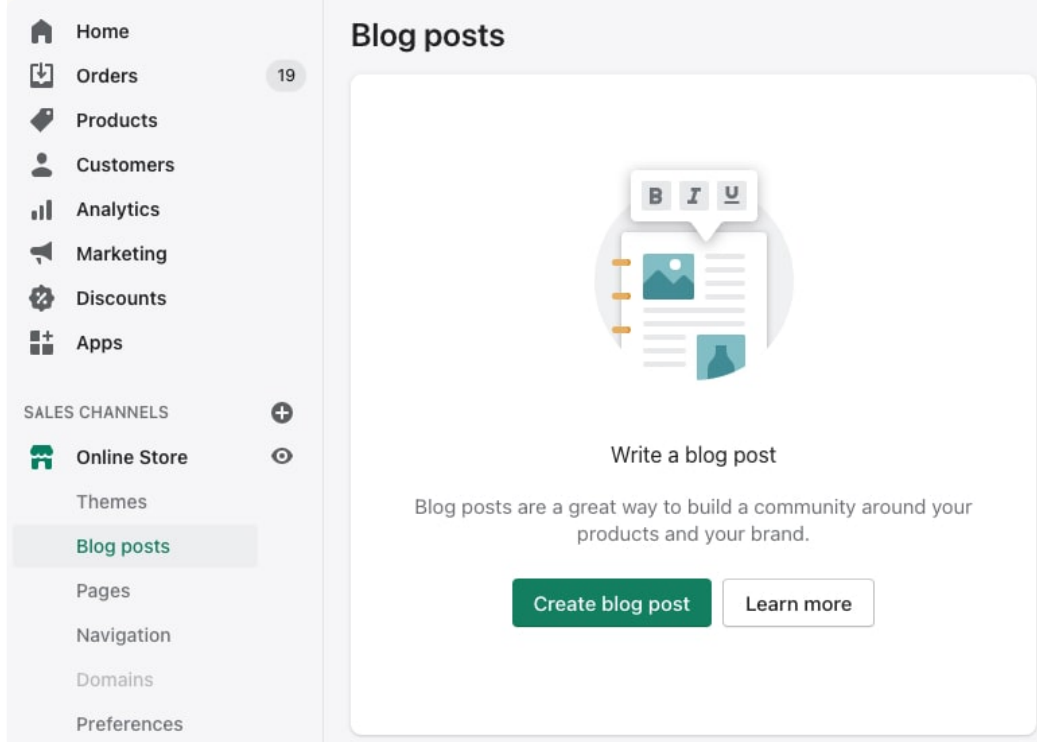
Google (and other search engines as well) love content. Especially unique content. You should aim to have around **300 words of text** on your product pages. Writing a custom product description in such length may be a difficult job, but you can add some elements like customer reviews, FAQs, and technical information that should help to have enough content.

Don't use product descriptions from your supplies as they are likely used by many of your competitors. Write them from scratch in your own words. Consider hiring a professional copywriter for your key product pages.

11. Maintain a blog (content site)

A blog or content site is necessarily not the first thing you need to run a successful e-commerce business. It's rather a longterm strategy that requires lot of resources (i.e. someone producing the content), but if done right it can provide a lot of value and SEO benefits. What many merchants aren't aware is that Shopify has a built-in Blog CMS. Go to your store admin > *Online Store* > *Blog posts* and create your first post. It's actually a pretty basic CMS similar to WordPress, but what's great is that people can leave comments. By default, comments are disabled. To enable them go to *Blog posts* > *Manage blogs* > select blog > select "Comments are allowed, pending moderation" and save.





You can write reviews of your products, upcoming deliveries, contests, customers, etc. Or you can be more broad and write about the category of your products. Don't forget to use the internal linking strategy in your posts. A great example of blog supporting the e-commerce and SEO is Gymshark's blog called [Gymshark Central](#).

12. Create landing pages with relevant content

Besides running a blog, you can also create a set of landing pages that are somehow connect with your products. For example, if you are running a [store selling fashion](#), you can create landing pages explaining the different clothing sizes and their conversion. To create a landing page go to your store admin > *Online Store* > *Pages*. Each page should not just bring you additional organic traffic, but you should also use it for better internal linking. We also recommend using a third-party [landing page builder](#) to build professional landing pages without any coding.

What's the difference between landing page and blog post? You should use blog post to write about timely relevant events, or news. While the landing page is typically time-independent and often updated during its existence.

13. Engage with your visitors

One of the factors Google takes into consideration is whether a visitor does any action on the page. The action on store is typically a purchase which typically not many visitors will actually do. But there are a few things you could do in order to increase visitors' engagement and time on your store.

- Use wish lists to let people engage with products they like
- Run contests, share discounts, and offer [free gifts with purchase](#)
- Add link to contact form "Ask question about this product" to your product pages – customer contacting you is a great example of engagement and Google "sees" it
- Display icons with links to your social media accounts
- Display an engaging content people would like to read
- Ask visitors to create a customer account or signup to your newsletter (don't use pop-ups though)
- Enable comments on your blog posts

On the other hand, try to avoid using things like "wheel of fortune" or intrusive pop-ups. They just provide a terrible UX and don't help your SEO at all.

14. Submit an XML sitemap

XML sitemap is a list of all your products, collections, images, and blog posts. Google reads the sitemap to understand your site structure and make sure none of the pages is forgotten during the indexing job. Shopify generated sitemap.xml file for each store automatically. It can't be manually updated. To find your store sitemap.xml file simply go to your store URL and add "/sitemap.xml" at the end for example. For example "digismoothie.myshopify.com/sitemap.xml".

```
This XML file does not appear to have any style information associated with it. The document tree is shown below.

<?xml version="1.0" encoding="UTF-8"?>
<sitemapindex xmlns="http://www.sitemaps.org/schemas/sitemap/0.9">
  <!-- This is the parent sitemap linking to additional sitemaps for products, collections and pages as shown below. The sitemap can not be edited manually, but is kept up to date in real time. -->
  <sitemap>
    <loc>https://tom-jarvis.myshopify.com/sitemap_products_1.xml?from=5538388967589&to=668030877125</loc>
  </sitemap>
  <sitemap>
    <loc>https://tom-jarvis.myshopify.com/sitemap_collections_1.xml</loc>
  </sitemap>
  <sitemap>
    <loc>https://tom-jarvis.myshopify.com/sitemap_blogs_1.xml</loc>
  </sitemap>
</sitemapindex>
```

To submit your sitemap to Google you need to register into [Google Search Console](#) service. Once done, select "Sitemaps" in the left menu and submit yours.

15. Create a robots.txt file

So-called **robots.txt file** is a text file located on your store that "tells" search engines which pages should be indexed, and which shouldn't. It can be also used to "disallow" (i.e. prevent from crawling) any particular bot. Shopify created the robots.txt file automatically for every store. It is located on your store domain /robots.txt. For example www.gymshark.com/robots.txt. Unfortunately, the contents of the file is also created automatically and you can't edit it.

16. Add JSON-LD markup

JSON-LD stands for *JavaScript Object Notation for Linked Data*.

While that sounds a bit technical it's actually easy to understand and implement to your Shopify store. JSON-LD is a method of implementation for structured data. In other words, it's a

standardized way of telling Google (and other search engines) more details about the product or page in general. You can read more details in [Google Search Central documentation](#).

The main benefit besides Google understanding your product page better is a creation of so-called rich snippet in the search results. Although it's not guaranteed, it very often works. For example, the rich snippet below (product rating, number of review, product price, and availability) is generated based on the JSON-LD markup.

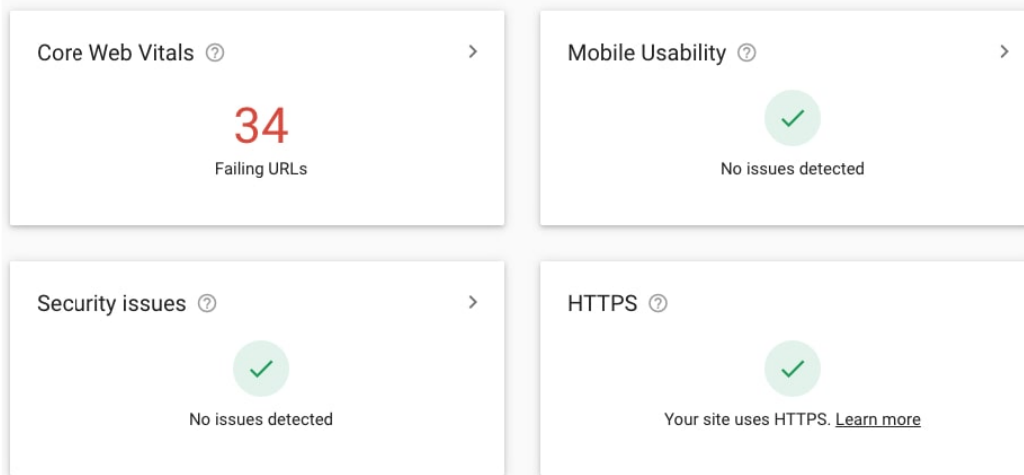


How to add JSON-LD (and rich snippets) to your Shopify store? You can either implement the code manually in your theme files, or use some of the [third-party apps available on the App Store](#). The big advantage of using an app is that it will handle the JSON-LD code automatically and generate it based on your product catalog. Once done, you can also test the result using [Google Structured Data Testing Tool](#).

17. Detect & fix technical errors & recommendations

In order to rank higher, it's no secret your store needs to be in good standing with [Google policies and recommendations](#). The best tool to detect technical errors and failed validations is the [Google Search Console](#), specifically the *Page Experience* report. It will show you the list of URLs that needs to be fixed.

Page experience signals



To achieve so-called "good page experience", you need to pass following four validations:

1. **Core Web Vitals** – A group of additional rules and recommendations that your store needs to pass. This one is the most difficult one, and usually takes lot of effort to fix
2. **Mobile Usability** – Your store can't have any issues related to browsing the store on mobile devices. Most Shopify themes handle this automatically
3. **Security** – Security scan of your store. On Shopify, you shouldn't have any issues with this one
4. **HTTPS** – This one is pretty simple. Your store needs to run on HTTPS using a SSL certificate. All Shopify plans include SSL certificate as part of the monthly subscription price

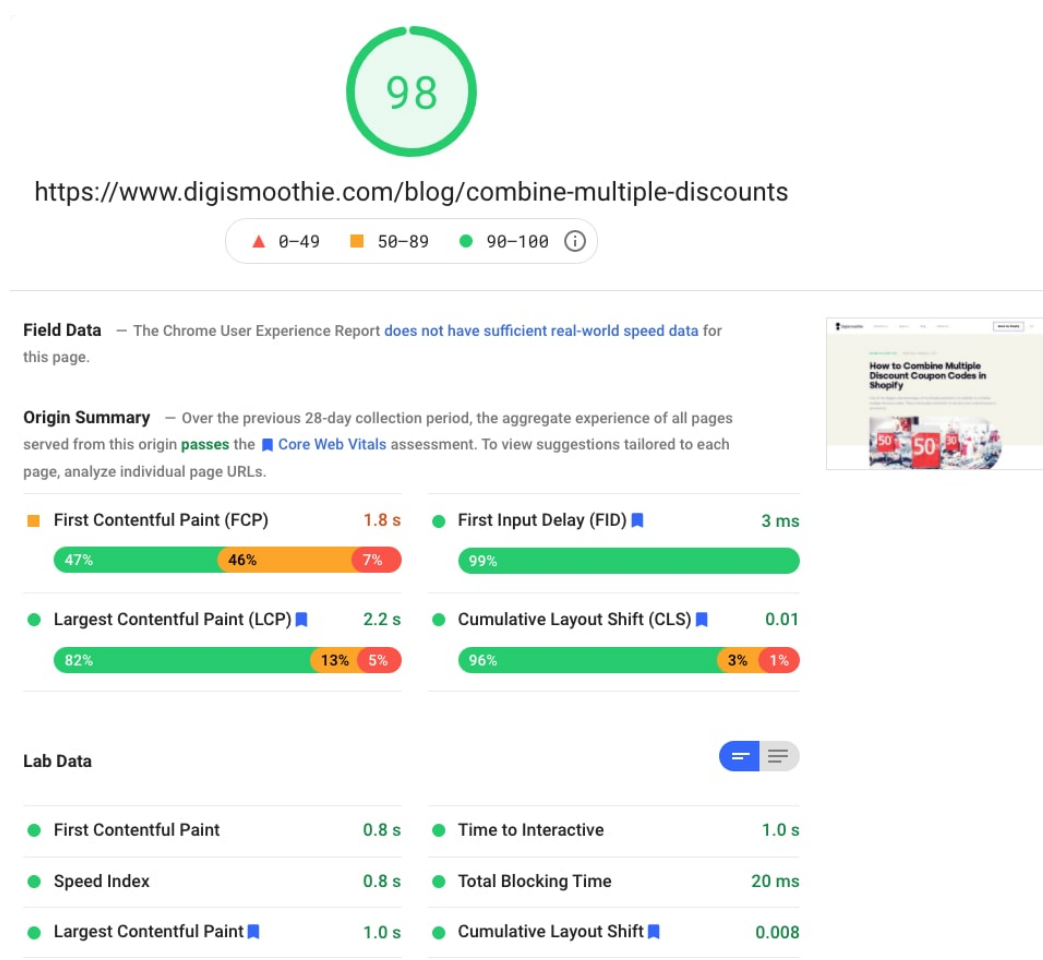
Your aim should be to provide a good page experience at least on your homepage, collection pages, and products pages.

18. Page performance (speed) is the new king

Few years ago there was a saying "content is a king" in order to rank high. Nowadays, it's more a page load time which is the new "king", especially on the mobile devices. If you are in an e-

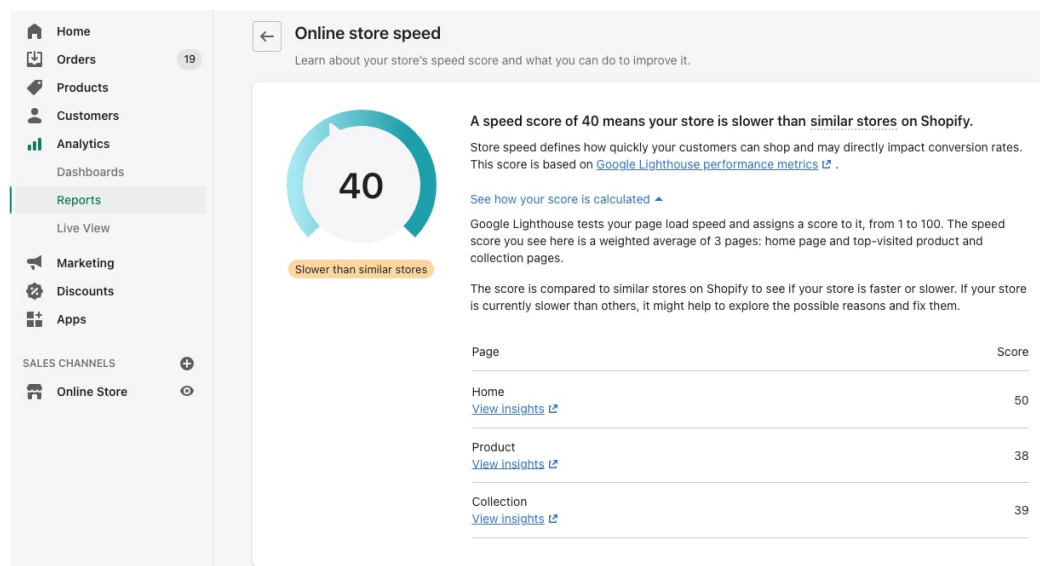
commerce business, you should aim to achieve a **0 - 4 seconds to load the page**.

The best tool to measure page performance, but also display recommendations is again from Google. It's called [Google Lighthouse](#) and it basically combines the "old" [Google PageSpeed Insights](#) with performance, accessibility, best practices, and SEO tests. You can run it directly in Google Chrome browser by going to *Developer Tools > Lighthouse*. Make sure to always run the test in the incognito mode of your browser. Otherwise the results could be affected by other tabs, cache, or installed add-ons.



Shopify is totally aware of the performance importance and the fact that speed is an issues for many Shopify store owners. The reason is often leftover script in the theme from third-party application that has been uninstalled. We have seen stores with dozens of such scripts dramatically affecting the store performance. To help with performance Shopify also recently

created a dedicated report called Online store speed. To access it go to your store admin > *Online Store* > *Themes* > *Online store speed* and click on the "View report". You'll basically see a performance score for your store as a whole, but also separate score for your homepage, collection pages, and product pages. The score is based on the Google Lighthouse report.

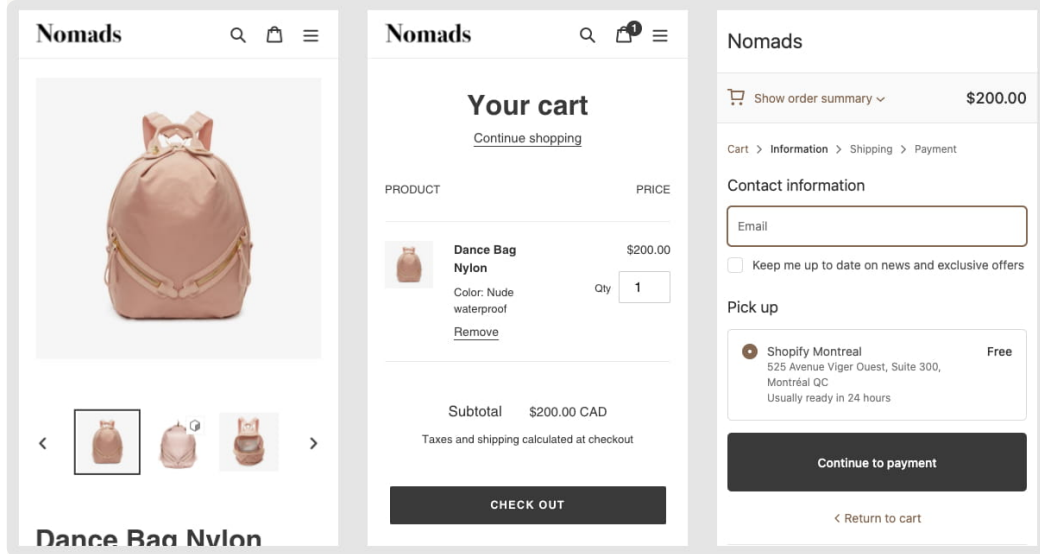


In reality, it's almost impossible to achieve full 100 score in each category, you should aim to be in the green zone of 90+. Besides the SEO, page speed has also direct impact on your conversion rates. [According to Portent](#) marketing agency, each additional second of page load decreases store conversion rate by 4.42%.

19. Use mobile first Shopify theme

Mobile commerce is nowadays predominant, and more customers are using mobile devices to purchase than the desktop devices. In the last Black Friday 2020, [67% of sales were made on mobile devices](#), and only 33% on desktop. That's why having a mobile first store is vital for your SEO, but also for your conversion performance.

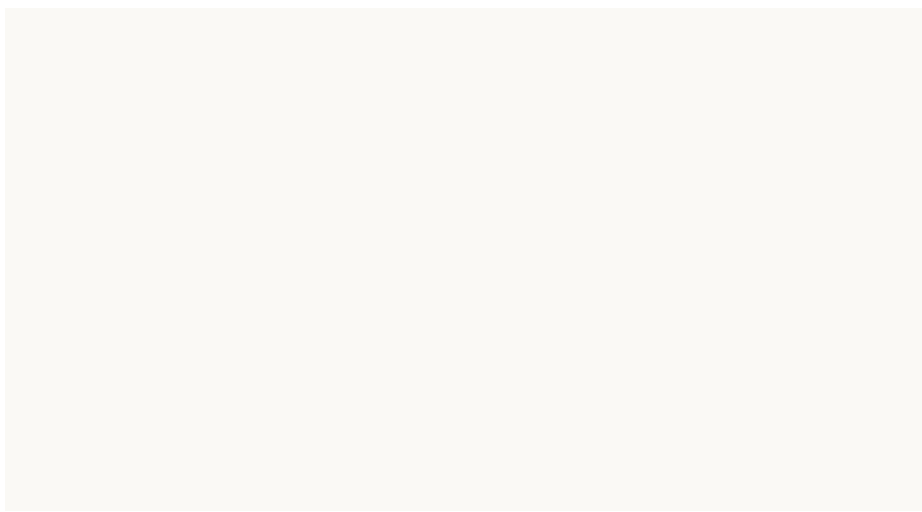
Luckily, all the Shopify free themes are now optimized to provide a good mobile experience. To provide a mobile-first experience, you should invest into a premium template.



To validate your Shopify theme is working well on mobile devices use [Google Lighthouse](#) report combined with the [Google Search Console](#). You need to pass both Core Web Vitals test and Mobile Usability test.

Conclusion

Doing SEO is an **ongoing** and **never ending process**. It requires lot of resources and the effects are not immediate. But if done right, it can be a massive contributor to success of your online store. We hope these tips helped you to better understand what's on-page SEO is about, and find at least a few areas you were missing. We plan to keep this guide updated for the future. We also plan to write up similar guide focusing on the off-page SEO factors.





The golden rule – be the best result

If you think about SEO from a different perspective, it's actually very simple. From the search engine point of view (i.e. from Google's POV), its main goal is to put the best results in front of searchers. And your goal should be to provide the **best result for the particular query**. Your goal shouldn't be checking all the boxes in the guide, but rather providing the best possible output from the whole Internet. Look up the first results and understand what they have and you don't. Provide it even in a better and more robust form.

How "good" is your SEO?

There is unfortunately no solid tool to measure your SEO. One way of measuring how "good" is your SEO are the SERPs (search engine result pages) for particular queries. If you have identified your keywords and key queries then your position on those queries is basically showing how good/bad is your SEO. You should **monitor your key queries** and positions, and watch how they evolve over time to understand how your store is doing.

There are also some tools to help you with that, for example [ahrefs Rank Tracker](#) or [Ubersuggest Rank Tracking](#) (both paid).

Besides monitoring your rankings, you can also run an adhoc "SEO analysis" of your key pages. There are plenty of good and free tools to do that:

- [Ubersuggest SEO Analyzer](#) (free)
- [SEOptimer](#) (free)
- [SEO Site Checkup](#) (free)
- [SEO Checker](#) (free)
- [Google Lighthouse SEO Test](#) (free)

Additional Resources

- [Official Shopify SEO Checklist](#) (2021; online) – An official SEO checklist by Shopify is a good start. It goes beyond the on-page optimization and includes also some off-page areas like backlinks and reputation building.
- [Official Shopify SEO Checklist](#) (2018; PDF version) – An older version of the checklist above. Slightly outdated but presented in a handy PDF document that you can download.
- [List of best Shopify SEO apps](#) – Hand-compiled list of the best apps, tools, and plugins for Shopify that will help you to implement many of the recommendations above
- [On-page SEO Checklist by Moz](#) – More general yet very comprehensive on-page SEO checklist written by Moz



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