



# A Beginner's Guide to Technical SEO For Local Businesses

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## Introduction

Technical SEO problems can have a serious effect on your site's performance and rankings on search engines. Think of the technical aspects of your website as an engine. If an engine is not maintained and has all of its parts working properly, the engine will perform poorly or even break down completely.

Today we are going to discuss what technical SEO items need to be addressed for local businesses. I will also be sharing instructions and screenshots on how to complete some of these tasks.

Since 45% of sites ranking on Google are WordPress sites, I'm going use WordPress screenshots. However, all of these principles apply no matter what CMS you are using.

## Keyword Targeting (Local SEO)

There are multiple on-page items that are technical and important for ranking a page for a specific keyword. In general, if you want to target a keyword, you'll want to include your target keyword in the:

- Page Title
- Meta Description
- URL
- H1
- Subheadings
- Internal Link Anchor Text

Let's discuss these areas in more detail.

### Meta Tags

Meta tags provide more information about an HTML document. Meta tags are not visible by users but search engines can see this code and utilize it. Page titles and meta descriptions are popular meta tags.

#### Page Title

The page title is one of the most keyword sensitive areas of a web page and is the #1 most important on-page element to optimize for rankings.

**Whitespark's Local Search Blog; Insights, Research & How To's**

<https://whitespark.ca/blog/> ▼

Whitespark's blog covers a wide range of topics from tools for Local SEO, how-to's, small business marketing insights, industry news and more.

#### How To Optimize Page Titles for Local SEO

If you want to rank locally, then it's **critical** to add the city name along with your target keyword into each of your page titles, especially on your core site pages. Here are some examples of how to structure your page titles on your home page and service pages.

Page Title Examples:

URL Example	Page Title Formula	Page Title Example
domain.com	[Business Name]   [Type of Company] [City, State]	Kool Daddy   HVAC Company Tampa, FL
domain.com/hvac-services/	[General Service] in [City, State]   [Business Name]	HVAC Services in Tampa, FL   Kool Daddy
domain.com/hvac-services/ac-repair/	[Specific Service] in [City, State]   [Business Name]	Air Conditioner Repair in Tampa, FL   Kool Daddy
domain.com/hvac-services/heater-repair/	[Specific Service] in [City, State]   [Business Name]	Heater Repair in Tampa, FL   Kool Daddy
domain.com/hvac-services/air-purification/	[Specific Service] in [City, State]   [Business Name]	Air Purification Systems in Tampa, FL   Kool Daddy

```
<head>  
<title>Kool Daddy | HVAC Company Tampa, FL</title>  
</head>
```

By doing this, if a potential customer is searching for your service while located in your city or if they add the city name to their search query, you now have a chance of showing up in the search results.

***PRO TIP: Out of the box, WordPress does not allow you to easily edit page titles. You will need to use a plugin like Yoast SEO.***

What About Page Title Length?

Right now it's recommended that you keep page titles under 60 characters. But what if you have words that are cut off at the end of a page title? Do the words at the end of the page title help the page to rank even though you can't see the keywords in the SERPs?

Joel Headley performed a very intriguing page title test in which he added random letters (a made-up word) to the very end of some page titles. On average, these page titles were 196 characters long, way over the recommended length!

So what were the results when he searched for the random letters on Google? Did it trigger those pages in the search results? Yes, it did!

So what's the lesson here? As Joel said, "Don't be afraid of the ellipsis..."

## Local SEO Tools Software & Citation Services - Drive More Local ...

<https://whitespark.ca/> ▼

Advance your local search, improve rankings, and get more business with the help of Whitespark's local SEO tools and managed citation services.

If you have important keywords you need to include in your page titles, don't be afraid to add them even if your page title will be a little longer than the recommended length. These keywords can still help the page to rank even if you can't see them in the page title on Google.

### Meta Description

The meta description is not keyword sensitive but can entice users to click on your search result instead of other results.

## Whitespark's Local Search Blog; Insights, Research & How To's

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Whitespark's blog covers a wide range of topics from tools for Local SEO, how-to's, small business marketing insights, industry news and more.

### How To Optimize Meta Descriptions for Local SEO

Even though including your service and city name in the meta description won't help you rank for that keyword phrase, it will let users instantly know what you offer and where you offer it. This will increase the likelihood that they will click on your result.

Meta Description Example:

```
<head>
```

```
<meta name="description" content="Kool Daddy has been providing top-rated HVAC services across Tampa for over 20 years. Contact us today for a quote!">
```

</head>

## URL

As we are going to discuss in-depth in the next section called “URL Structure”, adding your target keyword to your URL may have ranking benefits and users will know exactly what the page is about.

### Whitespark's Local Search Blog; Insights, Research & How To's

<https://whitespark.ca/blog/>

Whitespark's blog covers a wide range of topics from tools for Local SEO, how-to's, small business marketing insights, industry news and more.

## HTML Code

Here are some HTML elements that you'll want to include your target keywords in as well.

### H1s

The main heading (also known as the h1) is another important place to insert your target keywords.

“Google looks at a lot of different things we look at over 200 things PageRank is just one of them whenever we rank things other things we use things in the title things in the URL even you know things **that are like really highlighted like h1 tags** and stuff like that.”

Matt Cutts, Formerly at Google

### How To Optimize H1s for Local SEO

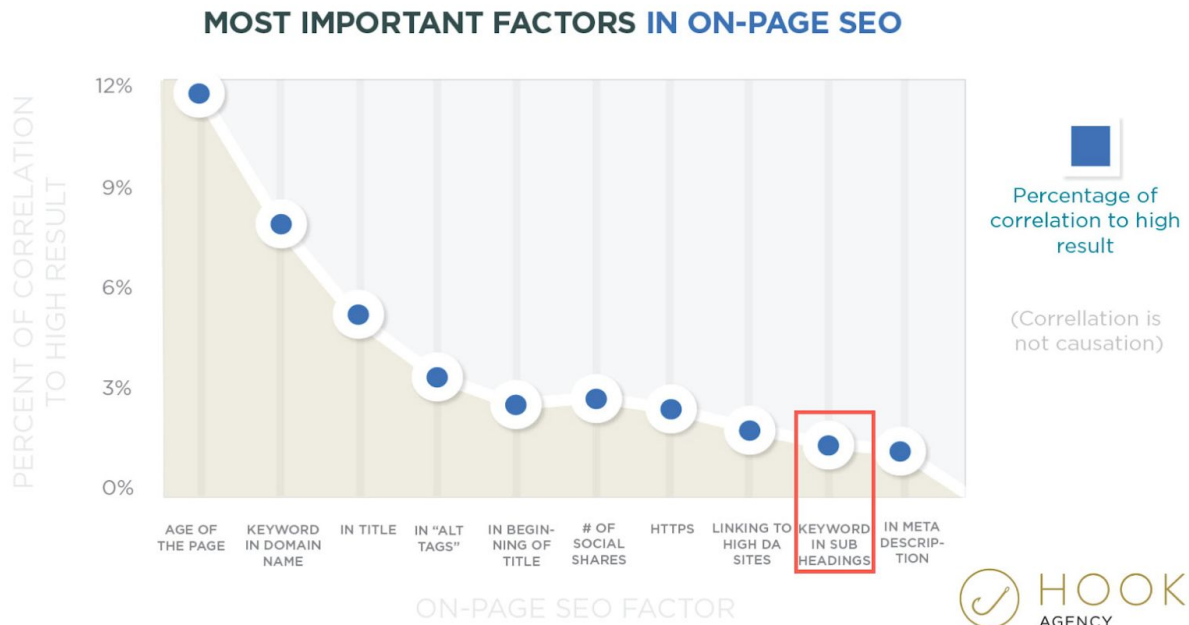
This is another area where you should add your target keyword phrase along with the city you are targeting. Google may pay a little more attention to “highlighted” areas of the page such as the main heading.

H1 Example:

```
<body>
<h1>HVAC Services in Tampa, FL</h1>
</body>
```

## Subheadings

A study by Hook Agency eluded to the fact that keywords in subheadings are also an important ranking factor.



“We do use **H tags** to understand the structure of the text on a page better”

John Mueller, Google

How To Optimize Subheadings (h2s, h3s, etc.) for Local SEO

This is where you’ll want to include some variations of your keywords in your subheadings and maybe even the city / county name you are targeting if it’s appropriate.

Subheading Examples:

```
<body>
```

```
<h1>HVAC Services in Tampa, FL</h1>
```

```
<p>Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua.</p>
```

```
<h2>We Provide the Best AC Services in Hillsborough County</h2>
```

```
<p>Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua.</p>
```

```
<h3>Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning</h3>
```

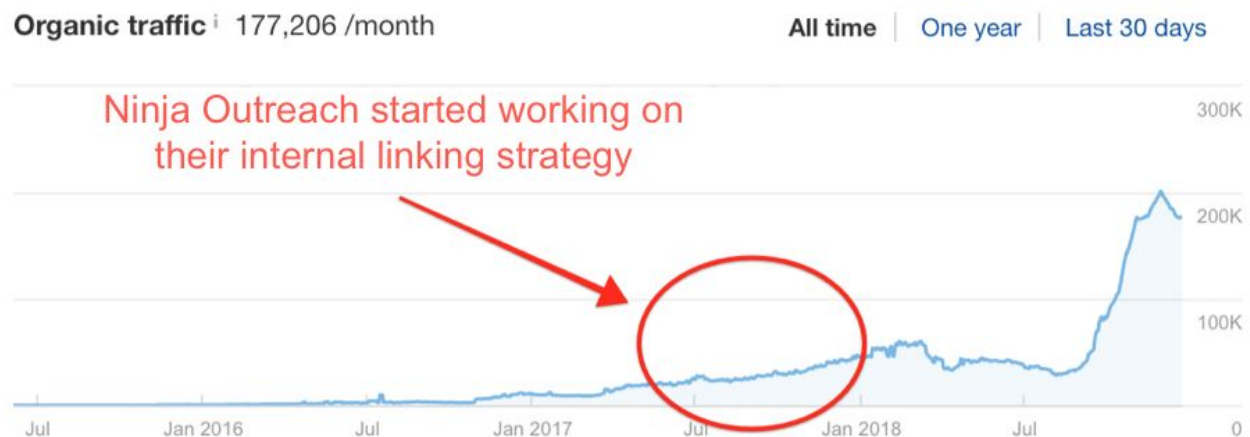


<p>Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua.</p>  
</body>

## Internal Links

It's no secret that adding internal links to your site that include your target keywords are very powerful for rankings.

In a case study done by Ninja Outreach, they show how they used internal links to help increase their organic traffic by 40%.



Traffic growth for *ninjaoutreach.com* during the period in which they actively worked on their internal links via Ahrefs Site Explorer.

## How To Optimize Internal Links for Local SEO

For each page you want to rank, you'll want to add a number of internal links pointing to it from other pages on your site. When you link to the target page, use keywords and phrases that you would like the target page to rank for. If you want to rank locally, again you will want to include the city name you are targeting in some of the anchor text of these internal links.

## Internal Link Examples

*/page-one/* - On this page, link to */target-page/* and in the anchor text use the target keyword and city name or a variation of it.

*/page-two/* - On this page, link to */target-page/* and in the anchor text use the target keyword and city name or a variation of it.

/page-three/- On this page, link to /target-page/ and in the anchor text use the target keyword or a variation of it.

Here's how that would look if you wanted /hvac-services/ to rank for the keyword "HVAC Services Tampa":

/hvac-services/ac-repair/ - On this page, link to /hvac-services/ and in the anchor text use "Tampa HVAC Services"

/hvac-services/heater-repair/- On this page, link to /hvac-services/ and in the anchor text use "HVAC Service in Tampa"

/hvac-services/air-purification/- On this page, link to /hvac-services/ and in the anchor text use "Heating & Air Conditioning Service"

Just make sure that when you add these internal links to your site that they make sense to users and that they look natural. No need to overdo it.

## URL Structure (Local SEO)

The structure of your URLs and is another opportunity to help organize your content better and help search engines understand more about your business. There have been many studies that indicate Google finds keywords in the URL valuable and at times it's been shown to help rankings as long as all your other SEO ducks are in a row.

URLs are another place that I recommend including your target keywords if it's reasonable to do so, although I **do not** recommend stuffing keywords into your URLs.

Good Example - domain.com/locations/tampa-diner/

Bad Example - domain.com/locations/tampa-sandwiches-cheeseburgers-salads-milkshakes/

Here are some page types that all local businesses should have on their site (if applicable) and examples of how to structure the URLs.

## Core Site Pages

Core site pages are generally considered to be the home, about, reviews, contact and service pages.

Example:

domain.com  
domain.com/about/  
domain.com/reviews/  
domain.com/hvac-office/  
domain.com/hvac-services/  
domain.com/hvac-services/ac-repair/  
domain.com/hvac-services/heater-repair/  
domain.com/hvac-services/air-purification/

### **Contact Page**

If you only have one location, your contact page will also serve as your location page.

Example:

domain.com/hvac-office/

### **Location Pages**

If you have multiple business locations, you can create a page for each office.

Example:

domain.com/hvac-office/tampa/  
domain.com/hvac-office/st-pete/  
domain.com/hvac-office/clearwater/

### **Service Area Pages**

If you service some cities in which you don't have an office, you can create a few service area pages for the top cities you want to target.

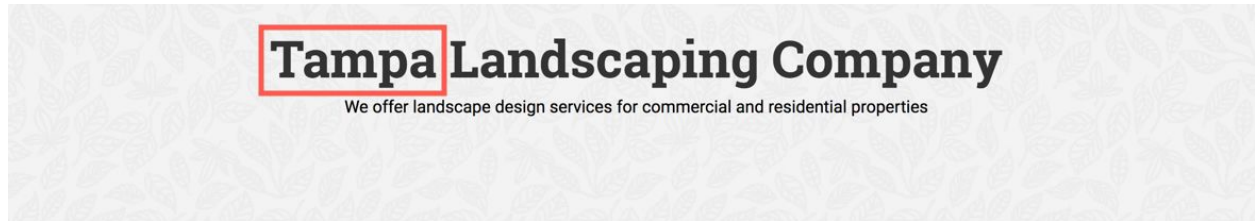
Example:

domain.com/service-areas/largo-hvac-service/  
domain.com/service-areas/pinellas-park-hvac-service/  
domain.com/service-areas/seminole-hvac-service/

### **Duplicate Content (Local SEO)**

A common issue on local business websites is duplicate content. If you need to create multiple location pages or service area pages, it's easy to simply copy each page and replace the city name in the URL, headings and in the body. Unfortunately, this is what many people do when creating location pages and service area pages.

## Lazy Service Area Page Example:



Home • Landscaping Services • Landscape Design

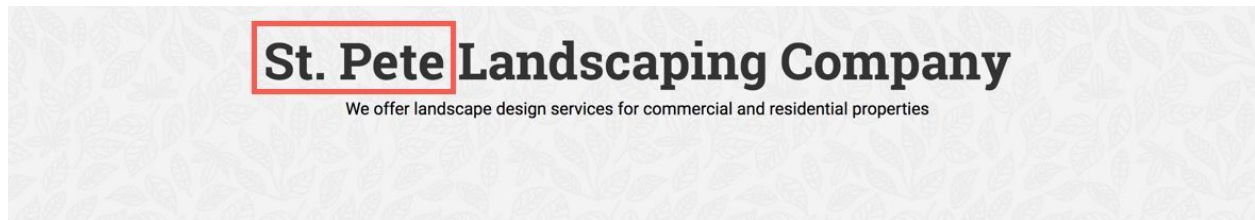
All Landscape Services
<b>Landscape Design</b> >
Landscape Installation
Lawn & Landscape Maintenance
Irrigation Services

### Landscape Services in Tampa, FL

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua. **Tampa**. Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exercitation ullamco laboris nisi ut aliquip **Tampa** ex ea commodo consequat. Duis aute irure dolor in reprehenderit in voluptate velit esse cillum dolore eu fugiat nulla pariatur. **Tampa** Excepteur sint occaecat cupidatat non proident, sunt in culpa qui officia deserunt mollit anim id est laborum.

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua. Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exercitation ullamco laboris nisi ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat. Duis aute irure dolor in reprehenderit in voluptate velit esse cillum dolore eu fugiat nulla pariatur. Excepteur sint occaecat cupidatat non proident, sunt in culpa qui officia deserunt mollit anim id est laborum.

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut



Home • Landscaping Services • Landscape Design

All Landscape Services
<b>Landscape Design</b> >
Landscape Installation
Lawn & Landscape Maintenance
Irrigation Services

### Landscape Services in St. Pete, FL

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua. **St. Pete**. Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exercitation ullamco laboris nisi ut aliquip **St. Pete** ex ea commodo consequat. Duis aute irure dolor in reprehenderit in voluptate velit esse cillum dolore eu fugiat nulla pariatur. **St. Pete** Excepteur sint occaecat cupidatat non proident, sunt in culpa qui officia deserunt mollit anim id est laborum.

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua. Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exercitation ullamco laboris nisi ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat. Duis aute irure dolor in reprehenderit in voluptate velit esse cillum dolore eu fugiat nulla pariatur. Excepteur sint occaecat cupidatat non proident, sunt in culpa qui officia deserunt mollit anim id est laborum.

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut



In reality, each page on the site (no matter what type it is) should be as unique as reasonably possible. So how can you do that on location pages and service area pages? One way is to create localized content for each location page or service area page.

A tool you can use to see if you have internal duplicate content is Siteliner.

**Siteliner** Products Help About Sign up Log in

**MAIN MENU**  
Summary ▶  
Your Pages (32)  
**Duplicate Content (14%)**  
Broken Links  
Skipped Pages (6)  
Related Domains

Your report is ready.

Siteliner scanned 38 pages of 38 found on your site. 06:04:34 pm GMT Aug 08, 2019

Your Top Issues

Your Pages - Click below to see detailed results for your pages:

Download Site Report  
Download Site Report PDF  
Download XML Sitemap

Normal Pages:	32
Skipped, Redirect:	2
Skipped, Noindex:	4

Click a category to see detailed results for your pages.

- MAIN MENU
- Summary
- Your Pages (32)
- Duplicate Content (14%)**
- Broken Links
- Skipped Pages (6)
- Related Domains

To see your duplicate content highlighted on the page, click on a row in the table below:

### Duplicate Content

Search title or URL

URL	Title	Match Words	Match Percentage	Match Pages	Page Power
...	...	304	49%	4	50
...	...	250	26%	4	50
...	...	234	28%	2	50
...	...	220	24%	2	50
...	...	191	33%	2	50
...	...	186	19%	1	65
...	...	174	22%	2	50
...	...	171	30%	2	50
...	...	140	24%	3	50
...	...	124	17%	3	50
...	...	106	17%	4	50
...	...	99	21%	3	50
...	...	94	14%	1	50
...	...	89	29%	3	50
...	...	77	15%	3	50
...	...	71	7%	3	50
...	...	70	11%	2	50

- Download Site Report
- Download Site Report PDF
- Download Current Table
- Download Current Table PDF
- Download XML Sitemap

### Location x Service Pages and Service Area x Service Pages

Some people have used the strategy of creating multiple service pages per location. This could or could not be in addition to the main service pages on the site. It looks like this:

- domain.com/hvac-services/
- domain.com/hvac-services/ac-repair/
- domain.com/hvac-services/heater-repair/
- domain.com/hvac-services/air-purification/
- domain.com/hvac-office/tampa/
- domain.com/hvac-office/tampa/ac-repair/
- domain.com/hvac-office/tampa/heater-repair/
- domain.com/hvac-office/tampa/air-purification/
- domain.com/hvac-office/st-pete/
- domain.com/hvac-office/st-pete/ac-repair/
- domain.com/hvac-office/st-pete/heater-repair/
- domain.com/hvac-office/st-pete/air-purification/
- domain.com/hvac-office/clearwater/
- domain.com/hvac-office/clearwater/ac-repair/

domain.com/hvac-office/clearwater/heater-repair/  
 domain.com/hvac-office/clearwater/air-purification/

The main issue with this is that you may spend a lot of time making all of these pages but much of the content is duplicate or extremely similar. In my experience, these types of pages don't get much traffic, which means that the time spent creating them was wasted when it could have been spent on something else that would have been more effective. That's not to say that they will never perform well, I just haven't seen it myself when there are a lot of service pages on one site.

If you have more than one location or service area, I recommend creating your main service pages and targeting one to two cities on these pages. Then for the other cities that are not as important, you can create a location or service area page and target one to two service keywords on these pages. Here's what that would look like:

URL Example	Target Keyword(s) Example	Page Title Example
domain.com/hvac-services/	Tampa HVAC Services, St. Pete HVAC Services	HVAC Services in Tampa & St. Pete, FL
domain.com/hvac-services/ac-repair/	Tampa Air Conditioner Repair, St. Pete Air Conditioner Repair	Air Conditioning Repair Service Tampa & St. Pete, FL
domain.com/hvac-services/heater-repair/	Tampa Heater Repair, St. Pete Heater Repair	Heater Repair Service Tampa & St. Pete, FL
domain.com/hvac-services/air-purification/	Tampa Air Purification, St. Pete Air Purification	Air Purification Service Tampa & St. Pete, FL
domain.com/service-areas/largo-hvac-service/	Largo Air Conditioning Service, Largo Heating Service	Air Conditioning & Heating Service Largo, FL
domain.com/service-areas/pinellas-park-hvac-service/	Pinellas Park Air Conditioning Service, Pinellas Park Heating Service	Air Conditioning & Heating Service Pinellas Park, FL
domain.com/service-areas/seminole-hvac-service/	Seminole Air Conditioning Service, Seminole Heating Service	Air Conditioning & Heating Service Seminole, FL

## Schema.org

What is Schema? Excerpt directly [from Google](#): “Google Search works hard to understand the content of a page. However, you can provide explicit clues about the meaning of a page to Google by including structured data on the page.” One type of structured data is Schema.org.

### **LocalBusiness Schema (Local SEO)**

By adding LocalBusiness Schema to your site, you are able to tell Google your exact website address, logo, hours, price range, business description, etc. This can help reduce the odds of Google becoming confused about your real business data. It also sends important local signals about your business to Google such as street address, phone number, city, longitude, latitude, etc.

In addition to this you can choose a more specific Schema itemtype such as Dentist or AccountingService. Check out [Phil Rozek’s great Schema itemtype list](#) to see which one fits your business best.

How do you use this list? Well, in the example below do you see “@type” : “LocalBusiness”? You would simply replace “LocalBusiness” with one of the choices on Phil’s list. Like so:

“@type” : “Dentist”,  
“@type” : “AccountingService”,

Here’s a JSON-LD example for creating LocalBusiness Schema on a web page.

```
<code>  
<script type="application/ld+json">  
{  
  "@context": "http://schema.org",  
  "@type": "LocalBusiness",  
  "@id": "WEBSITE URL",  
  "name": "BUSINESS NAME",  
  "hasMap": "https://maps.google.com/maps?cid=YOURCIDNUMBER",  
  "logo": "LOGO URL",  
  "telephone": "PHONE NUMBER",  
  "email": "EMAIL ADDRESS",  
  "sameAs": [ "URL #1", "URL #2" ],  
  "url": "WEBSITE URL",  
  "image": "IMAGE URL",  
  "priceRange": "$000 - $000",
```

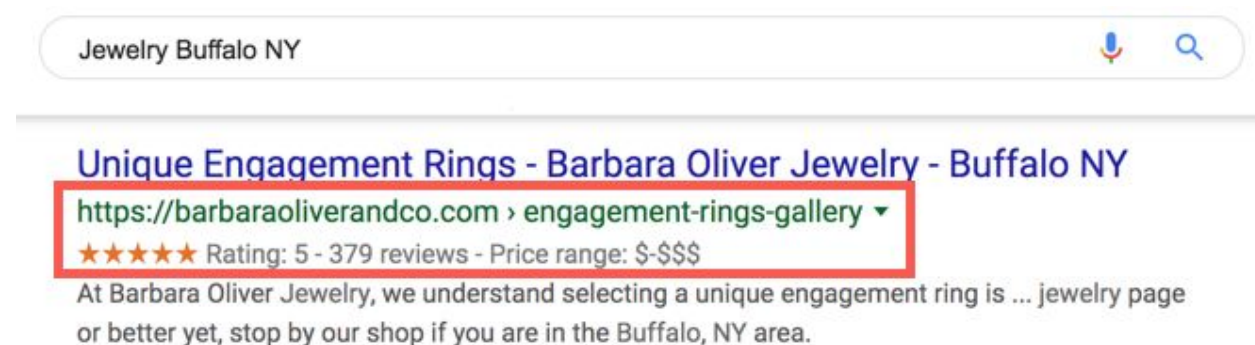


```
"description" : "BUSINESS DESCRIPTION",
"address" : {
  "@type" : "PostalAddress",
  "streetAddress" : "STREET ADDRESS",
  "addressLocality" : "CITY",
  "addressRegion" : "STATE ABBREVIATION",
  "postalCode" : "ZIP CODE"
},
"geo" : {
  "@type" : "GeoCoordinates",
  "latitude" : "LATITUDE COORDINATES",
  "longitude" : "LONGITUDE COORDINATES"
}
}
]
}
</script>
</code>
```

If you are not skilled at WordPress, follow this helpful Schema tutorial on [how insert Schema.org code using a plugin on WordPress websites](#).

### Review Schema (Local SEO)

By implementing Review Schema on a web page, you give that page the opportunity to show review stars in the SERPs like this:



One study showed that by getting review start to show up on your own website results, “it can boost CTR by as much as 35%”.

***PRO TIP: Whitespark's Reputation Builder does this for you! They mark-up your first-party reviews with Schema so that you don't have to mess with any code.***

Here's a JSON-LD example for marking up two first-party reviews on a web page along with the aggregate rating.

```
<code>
<script type="application/ld+json">
{
  "@context": "http://schema.org",
  "@type": "LocalBusiness",
  "name": "BUSINESS NAME",
  "address": {
    "@type": "PostalAddress",
    "streetAddress": "STREET ADDRESS",
    "addressLocality": "CITY",
    "addressRegion": "STATE ABBREVIATION",
    "postalCode": "ZIP CODE"
  },
  "telePhone": "PHONE NUMBER",
  "geo": {
    "@type": "GeoCoordinates",
    "latitude": "LATITUDE",
    "longitude": "LONGITUDE"
  },
  "url": "URL",
  "logo": "LOGO URL",
  "image": "IMAGE URL",
  "priceRange": "$-$$$ ",
  "aggregateRating": {
    "@type": "AggregateRating",
    "ratingValue": "PUT A SINGLE DIGIT, WHAT THE AVERAGE RATING IS OVERALL (1-5)",
    "ratingCount": "PUT A SINGLE DIGIT HERE, HOW MANY REVIEWS TOTAL ARE ON THE PAGE"
  },
  "review": [
    {
      "@type": "Review",
      "author": "REVIEWER ONE NAME",
      "datePublished": "YEAR-MONTH-DAY (xxxx-xx-xxxx)",
      "reviewBody": "THE REVIEW CONTENT THAT REVIEWER ONE LEFT",
      "reviewRating": {
        "@type": "Rating",
        "bestRating": "5",
        "ratingValue": "PUT A SINGLE DIGIT, WHAT THE AVERAGE RATING IS (1-5)",
```

```
"worstRating": "1"
}
},
{
"@type": "Review",
"author": "REVIEWER TWO NAME",
"datePublished": "YEAR-MONTH-DAY (xxxx-xx-xxxx)",
"reviewBody": "THE REVIEW CONTENT THAT REVIEWER TWO LEFT",
"reviewRating": {
"@type": "Rating",
"bestRating": "5",
"ratingValue": "PUT A SINGLE DIGIT, WHAT THE AVERAGE RATING IS (1-5)",
"worstRating": "1"
}
}
]
}
</script>
</code>
```

***PRO TIP: Don't forget to read Whitespark's [step-by-step guide on how to set up Review Schema](#).***

## Mobile-Friendly

I'm not going to go into a lot of detail here because hopefully, by now your site is already mobile-friendly. You can [test your site out here](#) to see if it is.

If your site is not mobile-friendly honestly, I suggest building a new website that is [responsive](#). Simply put, a responsive website will visually respond to the size of the screen the user is using. If they are on a desktop computer, the site will look optimal for them. If they load the same site on a mobile device, it will “respond” and reorganize and resize content to make it look better on a mobile device.

[StudioPress](#) has some great WordPress themes that are responsive.

If you are not willing to rebuild your website, you can always try a WordPress plugin as a temporary fix. Because I have never used any of them, I can't recommend one to you but you can [search for some on WordPress.org](#).

## Site Speed (Local SEO + General SEO)

Another super important thing for local businesses is their sites mobile speed. Many times their customers and potential customers are out and about or sitting on their couch browsing their phone when looking for their services.

In 2016, mobile searches officially surpassed desktop. One study found that 56% of mobile searches done on the go have local intent.

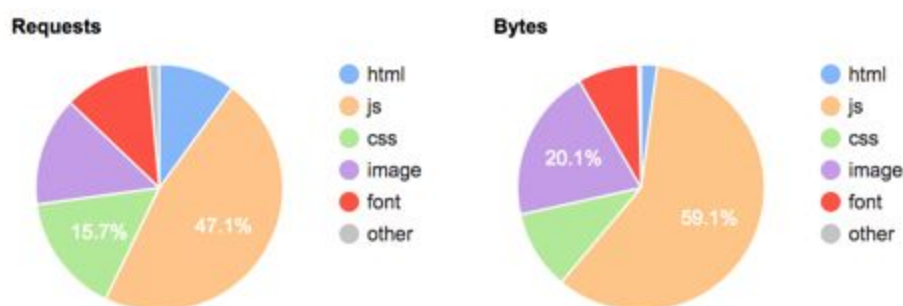
Mobile phones have a much slower download speed compared to desktop devices. Because of that, websites that are already slower will have an even harder time loading quickly on a mobile device.

How does this affect local businesses? “The average bounce rate for pages loading within 2 seconds is 9%. As soon as the page load time surpasses 3 seconds, the bounce rate soars, to 38% by the time it hits 5 seconds!” This will also have a negative effect on conversion rates.

Reference: <https://royal.pingdom.com/page-load-time-really-affect-bounce-rate/>

So what to do? First you’ll want to test your site’s speed. Using Google’s page speed tool is a good idea since we want to make Google happy. I also use GTmetrix and WebPageTest.org to get even more helpful data.

WebPageTest.org shows you a breakdown of your site content, which can help you identify which files are taking up your resources. In the example below, there are a lot of JavaScript files; I’d review all the JS files to see if of them any are unnecessary and can be removed.



There’s also the beautiful waterfall view that can show you which resources are taking the longest to load.



Unfortunately, working on site speed optimization is not for beginners. It's easy to break things on your site and is basically web development work. But here are some things you may be able to do on your own. Make sure your website is backed up before making any site speed changes.

## **Speed Optimizations**

### Hosting

Something I've noticed that has a big impact on site speed is the quality of your website hosting. If you are using the cheapest hosting you can find, then your site is probably hosted on a cheaper, slower server. I'd recommend upgrading to something around \$30/mo or even VPS hosting. Review Signal is an awesome resource for comparing web hosting companies if you don't know who to choose.

### WordPress Plugins

There are also many things you can do to your website to reduce file sizes and load files more efficiently. Here are some of my favorites.

WP Rocket: This plugin is great for caching, gzip compression, minifying and / or combining HTML, JS and CSS files, deferred JS loading, DNS prefetch and more!

WP Asset Cleanup: When you use plugins on your site, many of their assets (.CSS and .JS files) on every page of your website instead of just the pages that they are needed on. For example, Contact Form 7's assets may load on every page but it may only be needed on your contact page since that's the only page with a Contact Form 7 form.

WP Asset CleanUp allows you to choose whether or not to load individual CSS or JS files on all or only specific pages on your site.

ShortPixel: This plugin can resize all your images in bulk, compress all your images in bulk, keep the original image files, restore original image files, replace all original images on pages with the compressed versions, serve WebP image formats and more! I have tried many image compression plugins and this one is my absolute favorite.

Keep in mind, you should manually resize images before uploading them to your site if possible, then use this plugin to compress your images in bulk.

## Images (Local SEO + General SEO)

In addition to resizing and compressing your images so that they load quickly, you can also optimize them for local search.

Two important aspects are:

### **File Name**

The name of the image file is important because it helps tell search engines what your image is about. Usually, when you upload an image, the file name is something random like IMG080919.jpg.

Can you tell what this image is from reading the file name? Well Google can't either.

Now take a look at skateboarder-fall-down-go-boom.jpg. Can you tell what this image is just from reading the file name? A short but descriptive file name can help users and more importantly search engines.

### File Name Example:

<https://domain.com/wp-content/uploads/ac-repair-tampa.jpg>

## Alt Text

Alt text provides additional details about an image for both users and search engines. Alt text is used in two ways. If for some reason the image cannot be displayed, the alt text will show instead, giving users an idea of what the image is. See the example below.



More importantly, alt text is used by search engines. [Google claims](#) that they cannot read images and that they use alt text to try to understand what images are about.

### Alt Text Example:

```

```

## Crawling & Indexing (General SEO)

When it comes to technical SEO making sure that search engines can crawl and index your site is #1 in importance. If your site can't be crawled, it can't be indexed and then people will **never** find it.

### **What Is Crawling?**

There isn't a central registry of all web pages that exist anywhere (that we know of), so Google must constantly search for new pages and add them to its list of known pages. This process of discovery is called crawling.

Google uses a web crawler called Googlebot to crawl the internet. A web crawler is like a virtual robot or a spider. A web crawler is really just automated program that crawls from one web page to the next.

For example, Googlebot will crawl /about-us/ and if there are any links on the /about-us/ page to other pages, then Googlebot will crawl those next.

Why does Googlebot do this? If Googlebot finds new content, it may suggest that it be indexed by Google.

### **What Is Indexing?**

After a page is discovered by Google, it tries to understand what the page is about and decides to add it to its “index”. Google’s index is just Google’s registry of all websites that they may want to show in their search results.

When you search on Google, you are not seeing all available websites that exist, you are only seeing websites Google has decided to add to their index of websites.

### **See If Google Can Crawl Your Site**

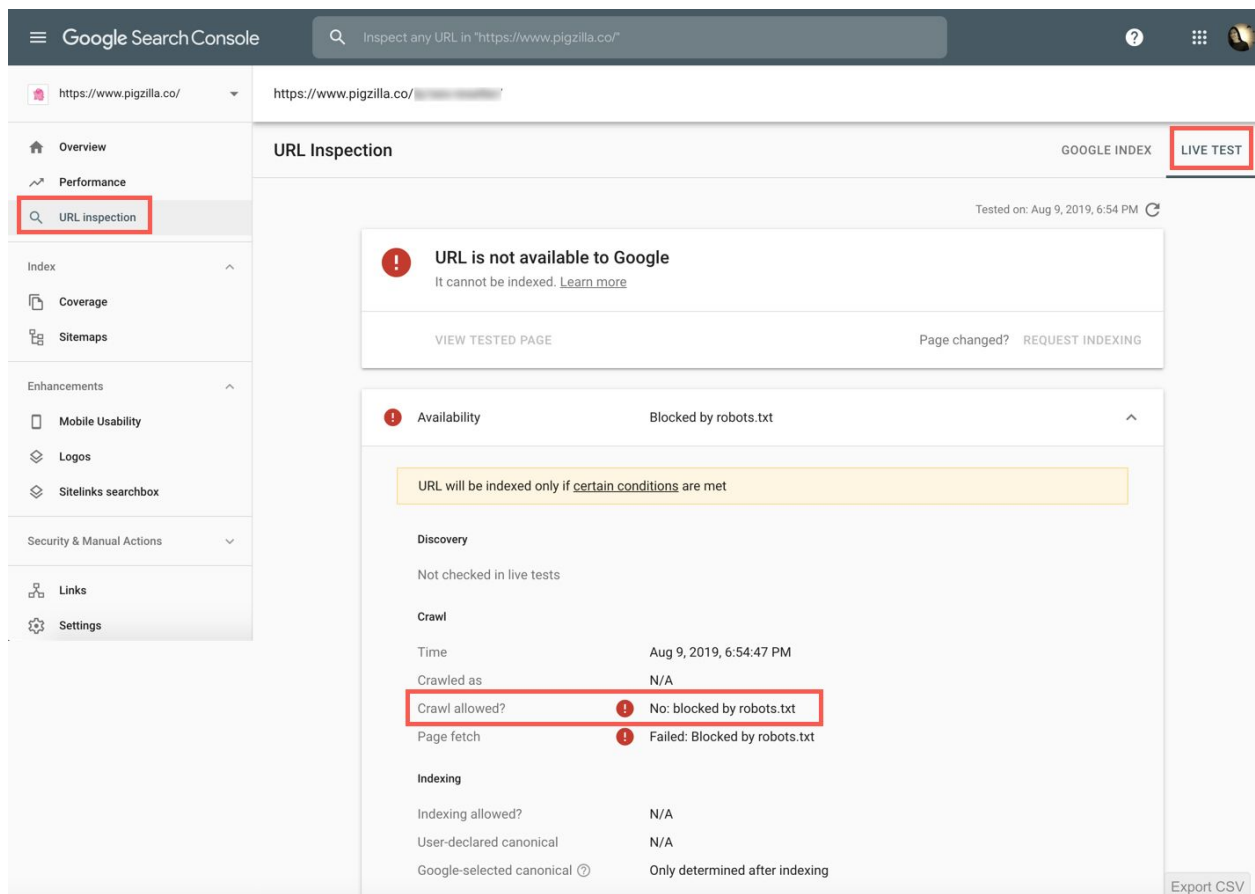
You will need to see if Google is able to crawl your site. You can do this a few different ways.

#### Google Search Console

Sign into Google Search Console and navigate to the “URL Inspection” tab. Enter the URL you want to test and then click on the “Test Live URL” button.

See what it says besides “Crawl allowed?” If it says: “No: blocked by robots.txt” then Google can’t crawl this page.

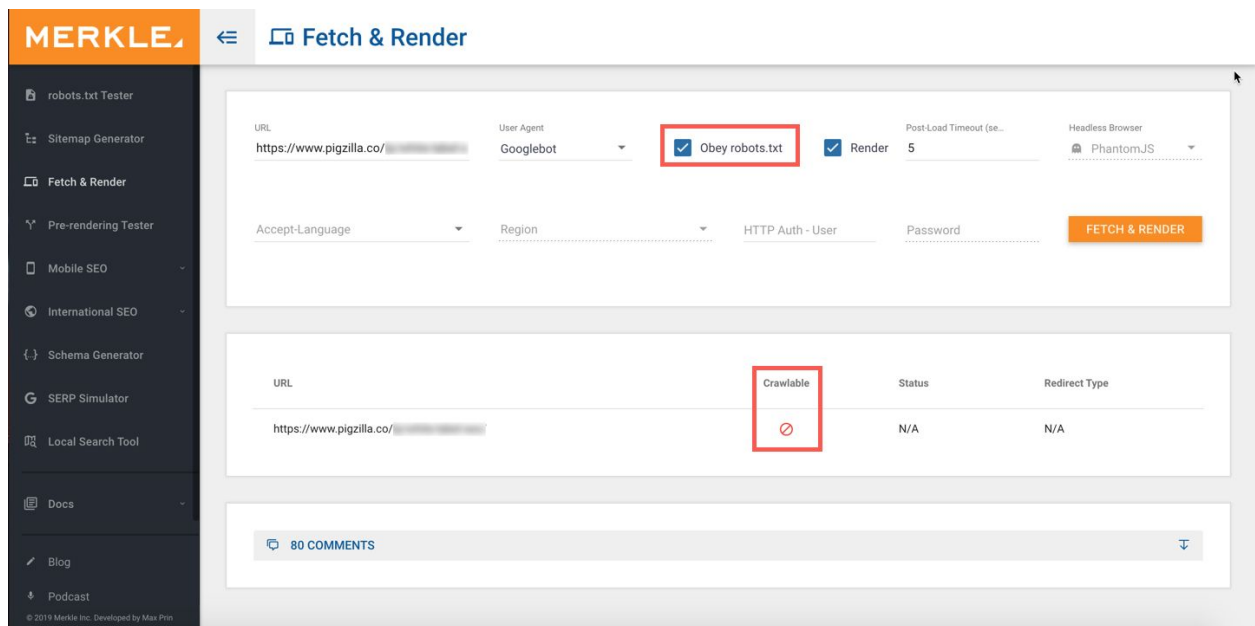




## [TechnicalSEO.com](https://www.technicalseo.com)

If you don't have access to Google Search Console for some reason you can use this free [Fetch & Render tool](#).

Make sure to check the "Obey robots.txt" box and click the "Fetch & Render" button. If the results show a "no symbol" like the screenshot below, then Google is not able to crawl this page.



## Check Your Robots.txt File

Many times the reason Google can't crawl your site is because it's being blocked from doing so in the robots.txt file.

To view this file for your site, simply add /robots.txt to the end of your home page URL.

Example: <https://whitespark.ca/robots.txt>

There are a lot of ways this file can be configured but to keep it simple I'll cover the two basic ways.

If your robots.txt file looks like this it's blocking all web crawlers from all content on your site.

User-agent: \*  
Disallow: /

If your robots.txt file looks like this it's allowing all web crawlers access to all content on your site.

User-agent: \*  
Disallow:

To learn more about robots.txt files, [check out this article](#).

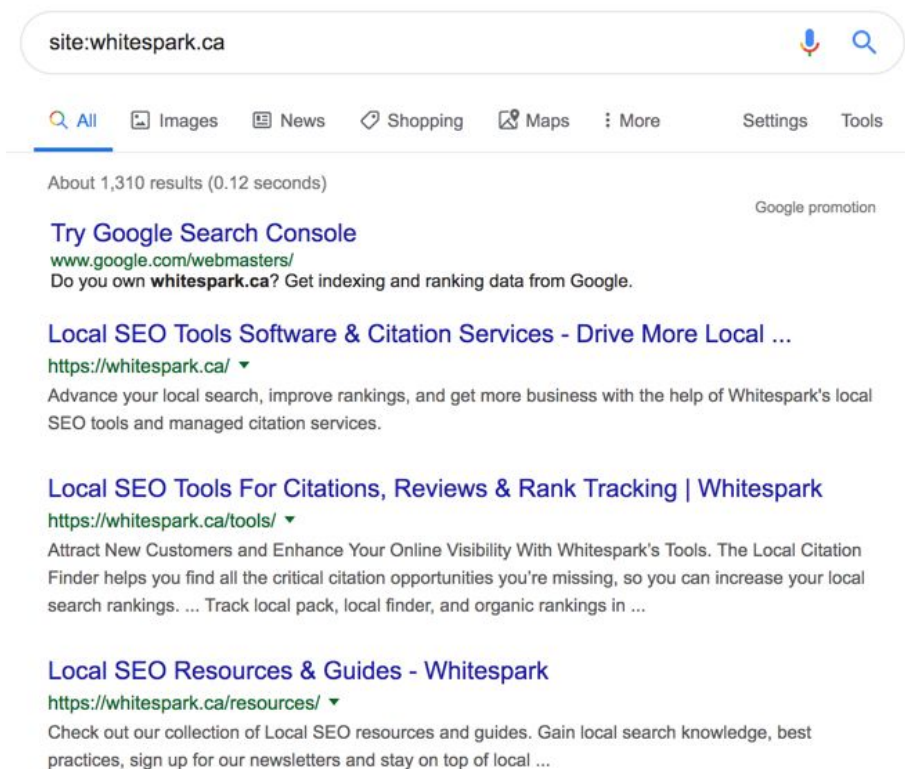
## See If Google Has Indexed Your Site

After you have made sure Google can crawl your site, you'll want to see if Google has indexed it as well. You can do this a few different ways.

### Site Search

The quickest and easiest way to see if Google has indexed any of your site is to go to google.com and type in "site:domain.com" into the search bar. If you see any results then that means Google has indexed some or all of your pages.

Here's what that would look like:



### Check The Meta Robots Tag

You can check the meta robots tag on the page itself to see if it is allowed to be indexed by search engines.

If you are using Chrome, right click on the page and select "Inspect". Then search for name="robots".



If you find no tag, then the page is allowed to be indexed.

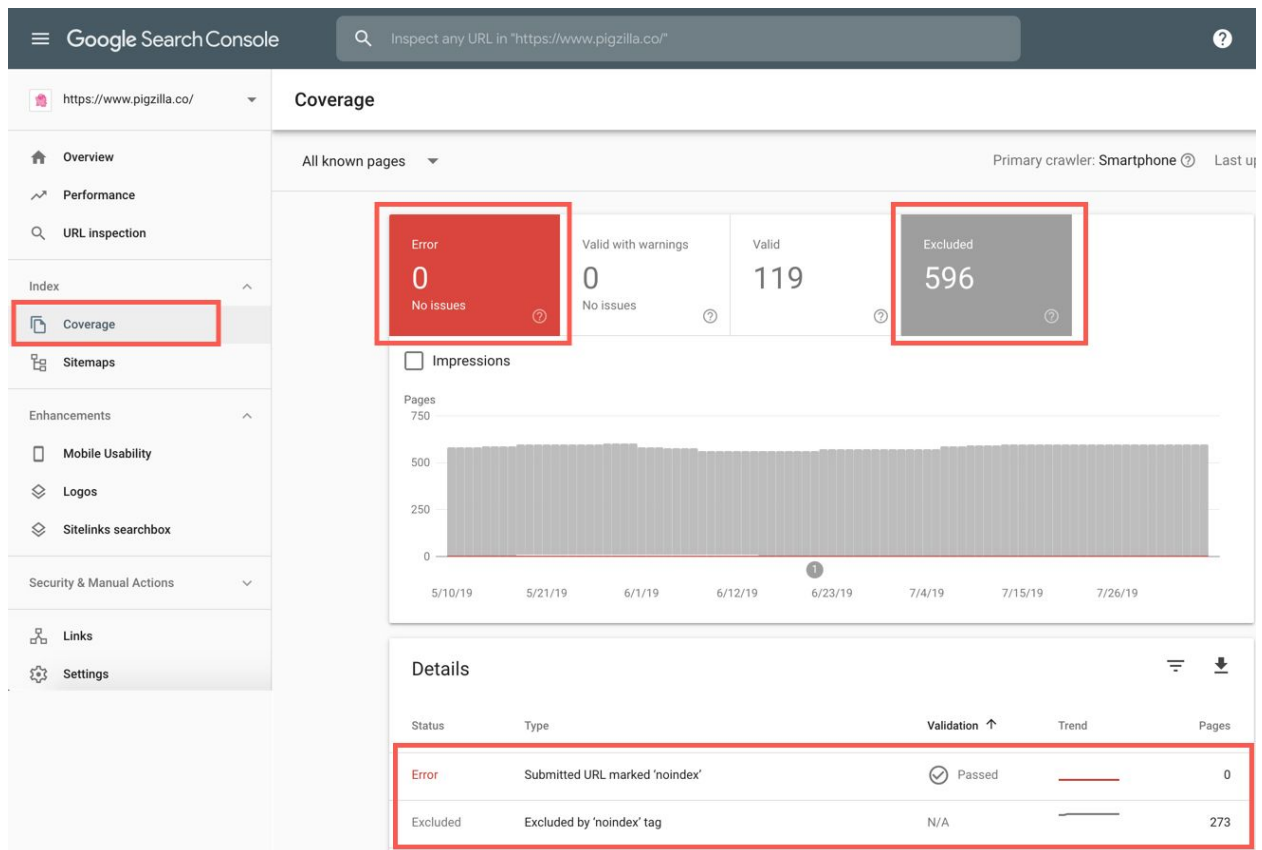
If you find either of these tags, then the page is not allowed to be indexed.

```
<meta name="robots" content="noindex, follow">
```

```
<meta name="robots" content="noindex, nofollow">
```

### Google Search Console

In Google Search Console go to the “Coverage” tab and select both the “Errors” and “Excluded” blocks. When you scroll down, if you see anything that says “noindex” this means Google is being told not to index those pages. Either on purpose or by accident.



### Crawling Software

Another way you can see if pages are telling Google not to index them is by using a crawling software like ScreamingFrog as I mentioned before. You can crawl your site as Googlebot and check the “Directives” tab and look under the “Meta Robots” column. If any pages show the word “noindex” in the “Meta Robots” column then Google is being told not to index those pages.

Meta Keywords		H1	H2	Images	Canonicals	Pagination	Directives	Hrefl...
Filter: Noindex				Export				
	Address	Oc...	Meta Robots 1	X-Robots-Tag 1				
1	https://www.pigzilla.co/...	1	noindex, follow					
2	https://www.pigzilla.co/...	1	noindex, follow					
3	https://www.pigzilla.co/...	1	noindex, follow					
4	https://www.pigzilla.co/...	1	noindex, follow					
5	https://www.pigzilla.co/...	1	noindex, follow					
6	https://www.pigzilla.co/...	1	noindex, follow					
7	https://www.pigzilla.co/...	1	noindex, follow					
8	https://www.pigzilla.co/...	1	noindex, nofollow					
9	https://www.pigzilla.co/...	1	noindex, follow					
10	https://www.pigzilla.co/...	1	noindex, follow					
11	https://www.pigzilla.co/...	1	noindex, follow					
12	https://www.pigzilla.co/...	1	noindex, follow					
13	https://www.pigzilla.co/...	1	noindex, follow					
14	https://www.pigzilla.co/...	1	noindex, follow					

### X-Robots-Tag

This is probably going to happen way less often on a small business website but I'll cover it just incase. Another way you can not allow a page to be indexed is by an X-Robots-Tag. With this you can use robot.txt directives in the header of an HTTP response.

### Checking in Chrome

You can see if a page has an X-Robots-Tag by looking at the HTTP headers of the page. If you are using Chrome, right click and select "Inspect". Then click on the "Network" tab and reload the page. Select the HTTP request of the page and look for a X-Robots-Tag.



A screenshot of the Chrome DevTools Network tab. The "Network" tab is selected and highlighted with a red box. The left pane shows a list of requests, with "whitespark.ca" selected and highlighted with a red box. The right pane shows the details for this request, including the "Response Headers" section, which is also highlighted with a red box. The headers include: cache-control: max-age=600, must-revalidate; content-encoding: gzip; content-type: text/html; charset=UTF-8; date: Fri, 09 Aug 2019 23:19:34 GMT; link: &lt;https://whitespark.ca/wp-json/&gt;; rel="https://api.w.org/"; link: &lt;https://whitespark.ca/&gt;; rel=shortlink; server: nginx; status: 200; vary: Accept-Encoding; vary: Accept-Encoding; vary: Accept-Encoding, Cookie; wpe-backend: apache. The status code is 200.

If you don't see one then there obviously isn't one. In the example above, there is none.

If you see something like this below then the page is being blocked from crawlers.

```
HTTP/1.1 200 OK
Date: Tue, 31 May 2019 21:42:43 GMT
(...)
```

### X-Robots-Tag: noindex

(...)

HTTP/1.1 200 OK

Date: Tue, 31 May 2019 21:42:43 GMT

(...)

### X-Robots-Tag: noindex, nofollow

(...)

Checking With a Crawling Software

Another way you can see if pages have an X-Robots-Tag is to use a crawling software like ScreamingFrog. You can crawl your site as Googlebot and check the “Directives” tab and look under the “X-Robots-Tag” column.

	Address	Oc...	Meta Robots 1	X-Robots-Tag 1
1	https://www.pigzilla.co/...	1	noindex, follow	
2	https://www.pigzilla.co/...	1	noindex, follow	
3	https://www.pigzilla.co/...	1	noindex, follow	
4	https://www.pigzilla.co/...	1	noindex, follow	
5	https://www.pigzilla.co/...	1	noindex, follow	
6	https://www.pigzilla.co/...	1	noindex, follow	
7	https://www.pigzilla.co/...	1	noindex, follow	
8	https://www.pigzilla.co/...	1	noindex, nofollow	
9	https://www.pigzilla.co/...	1	noindex, follow	
10	https://www.pigzilla.co/...	1	noindex, follow	
11	https://www.pigzilla.co/...	1	noindex, follow	
12	https://www.pigzilla.co/...	1	noindex, follow	
13	https://www.pigzilla.co/...	1	noindex, follow	
14	https://www.pigzilla.co/...	1	noindex, follow	

### Robots.txt vs Noindex

This is a **very** common mistake that I wanted to point out. Sometimes people think that if they block a page from being crawled in the robots.txt that Google won't index it. That is not true.

Here are a couple of comments from Google that explain it very well.



“Be careful about disallowing search engines from crawling your pages. Using the robots.txt protocol on your site can stop Google from crawling your pages, but it may not always prevent them from being indexed. For example, Google may index your page if we discover it by following a link from someone else's site. To display it in search results, Google will need to display a title of some kind and because we won't have access to any of your page content, we will rely on off-page content such as anchor text from other sites. (To truly block a URL from being indexed, you can use the "noindex" directive.)”

Reference: <https://support.google.com/webmasters/answer/35624?hl=en>

“Important! For the noindex directive to be effective, the page must not be blocked by a robots.txt file. If the page is blocked by a robots.txt file, the crawler will never see the noindex directive, and the page can still appear in search results, for example if other pages link to it.”

Reference: <https://support.google.com/webmasters/answer/93710?hl=en>

### **Noindex Conversion Pages**

If you have “confirmation” pages that users reach only after they have completed an important action, it’s a best practice to noindex these pages. Why?

Let’s say each time someone reaches the /thank-you/ page, you count that as a goal completion in Google Analytics. If a user finds that page in Google’s search results and visits it, this would count as a conversion in Google Analytics. And if you multiply that by many unique searchers, these visits now **all** count as a conversions in Google Analytics and severely skew your conversion data.

For this reason, it’s recommended that you noindex pages like these:

- Confirmation pages
- Thank you pages
- Contact form redirect pages
- Paid landing pages

### **SSL Certificate (General SEO)**

In 2014 Google started to use [HTTPS as a ranking signal](#). HTTPS can also help make your site more secure and is required if you accept payments on your site.

You can purchase an SSL certificate from many places. You can also get a free one from [Let's Encrypt](#). Setting up an SSL certificate manually is not a simple task. For that reason, I recommend you go with a host that offers to set it up for you such as WP Engine or SiteGround. They make the process much easier since it's basically automated and if you encounter any issues you can contact their support team for help.

Once you set up an SSL certificate don't forget to take the following steps:

## Hosting Settings

Your hosting service may have some HTTPS configurations that need to be set up. For example, if you use WP Engine, make sure to check all the boxes in their SSL settings for both versions of the domain; www and non-www. There are a few settings I recommending reviewing in the screenshot below if you are using WP Engine.

**SSL**

**Settings** Save

**WordPress admin pages**  
Select which WordPress administrator pages to secure by forcing their connections to HTTPS. We recommend selecting both options.

- WP-Login — HTTPS only
- WP-Admin — HTTPS only

**Unconfigured pages**  
For pages not covered by your certificate settings below, choose whether to allow both HTTPS and HTTP connections or to force all connections to HTTP only. We recommend choosing *Secure all URLs* for your certificates below, so all those URLs use HTTPS only.

- Allow HTTPS and HTTP
- HTTP only

**SSL certificates** [Show all certificates](#) Add Certificates

Certificate	Expires	Type	Status	Collapse all
	Aug 29, 2019	WP Engine: Let's Encrypt	Enabled	^

**Manage certificate**

- Auto renew
- Secure all URLs
- Secure specific URLs

Choose URLs to secure with [https://](#)

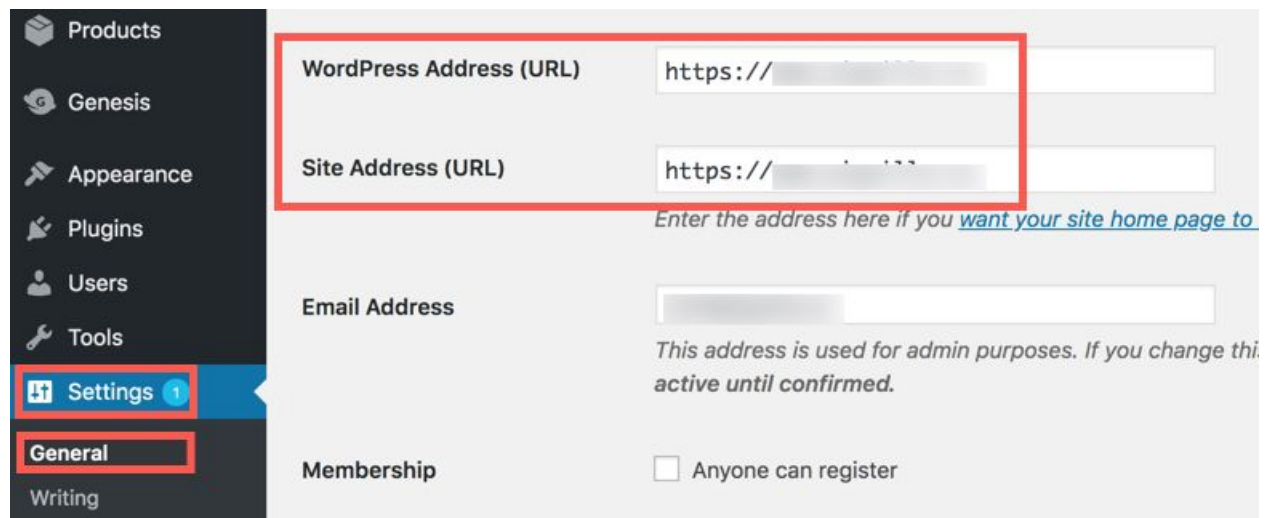
Note: Do not use any type of Force SSL plugins if the site is hosted at WP Engine.

Reference: <https://wpengine.com/support/securing-all-urls-with-ssl/>

## WordPress Settings

You'll also want to make sure that your WordPress settings are correct now that you've installed an SSL certificate on the site.

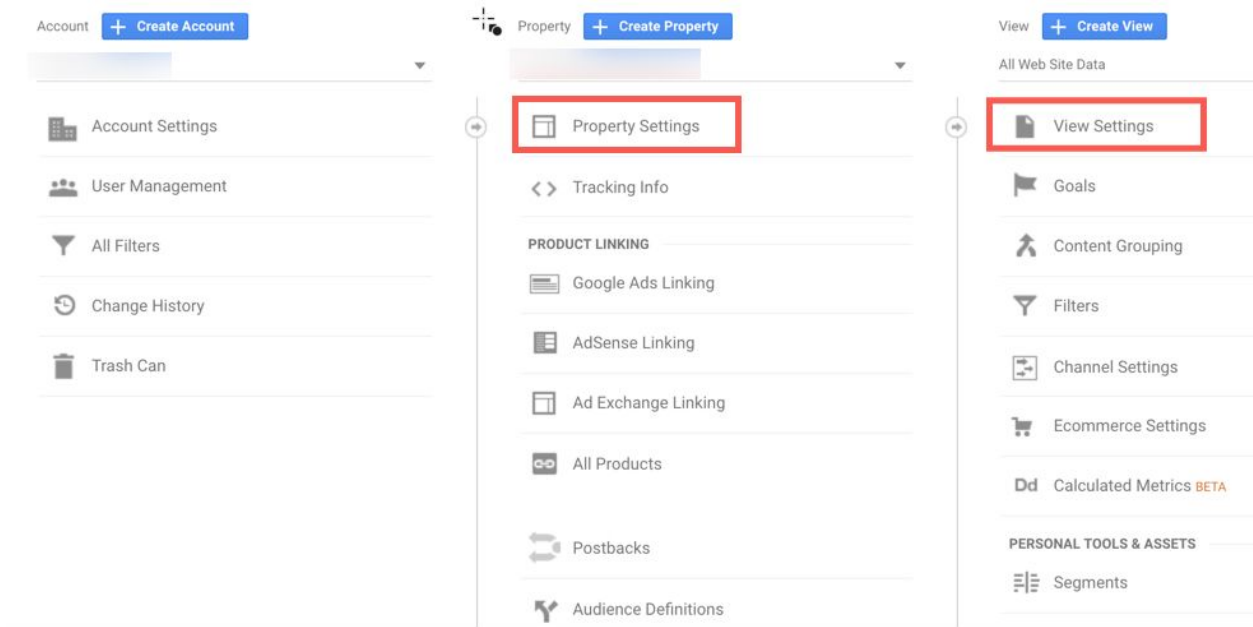
In WordPress, go to the "Settings" tab and then click on "General". Make sure the "WordPress" address and "Site Address" both include the https:// version of the site.



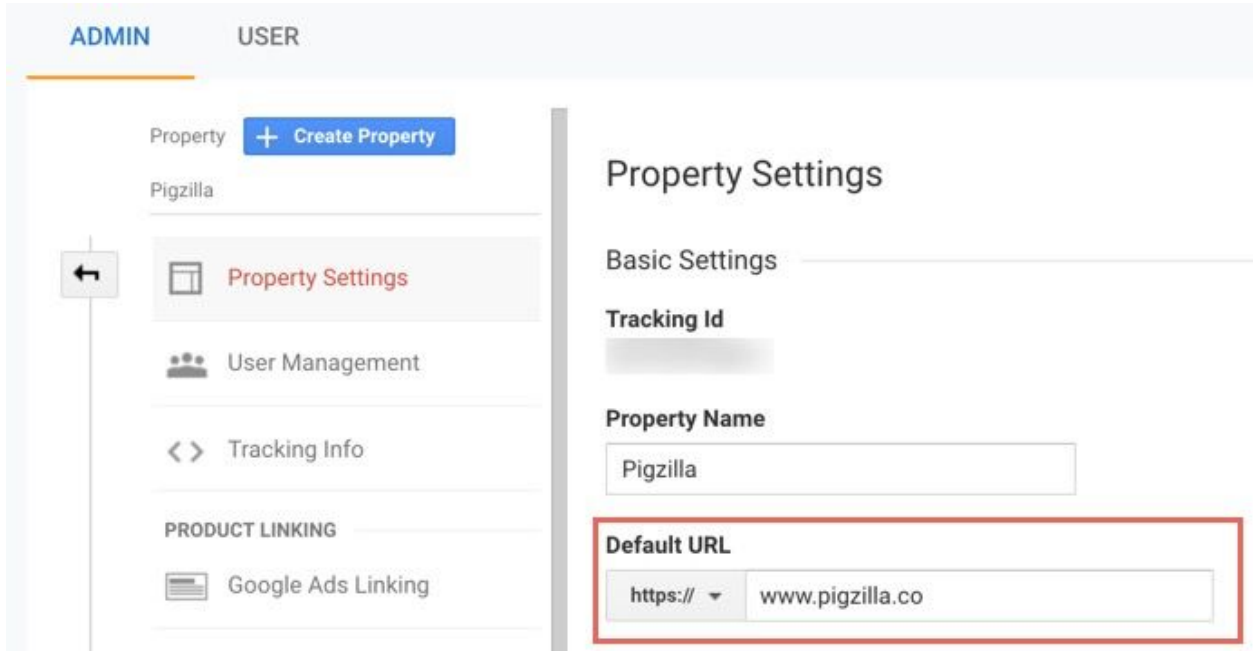
Some hosts will lock this area and it will appear "grayed-out" and not let you edit it. I believe you can contact the host for help or update the wp-config.php file to fix this.

## Google Analytics

In Google Analytics, you will want to review the "Default URL" in the Property Settings and in the View Settings. If there are multiple "Views" in the View Settings, you will want to review all of them.



Inside the Property Settings and View Settings in Google Analytics you can see which version of the URL is being tracked. Make sure it's set to the new https:// version.



If you make any changes here, I highly recommend viewing live traffic data in Google's "Realtime" report to make sure Google Analytics is still tracking properly.

## Google Search Console

This one is also very important. If you have set up Google Search Console by verifying individual properties (aka URL Prefix), then you will need to make sure to verify the two new versions of the domain; both `https://` and `https://www`.

If you have set up Google Search Console by verifying the entire domain, then this section does not apply to you.

### Select property type

**Domain** new

- All URLs across all subdomains (m., www. ...)
- All URLs across https or http
- Requires DNS verification

example.com  
Enter domain or subdomain

CONTINUE

or

**URL prefix**

- Only URLs under entered address
- Only URLs under specified protocol
- Allows multiple verification methods

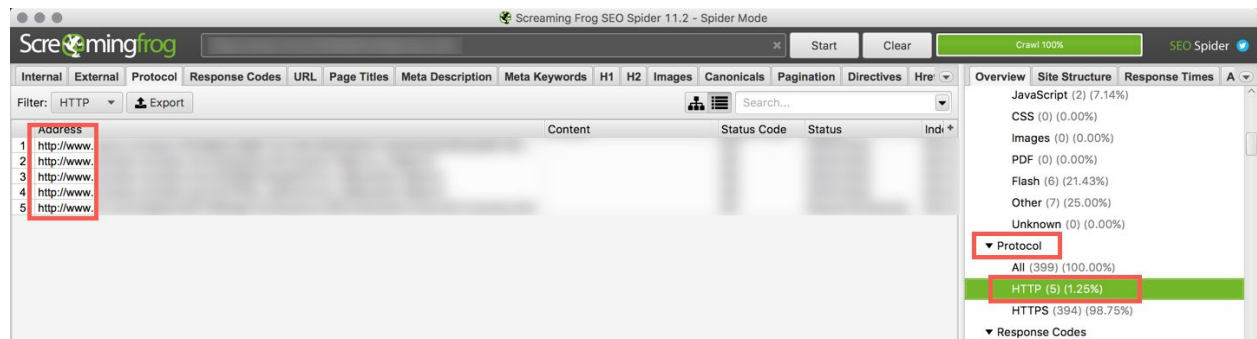
https://www.example.com  
Enter URL

CONTINUE

## Do a Site Crawl

Crawl the site with the software of your choice. I use Screaming Frog to make sure all internal links on the site are now HTTPS.

In Screaming Frog, under the “Protocol” section, click on the “HTTP” tab to see any internal links on the site that are still HTTP.



You can use a [Search and Replace plugin](#) to update HTTP links in bulk. But be very careful. It’s super easy to mess things up using a search and replace plugin.

## XML Sitemap (General SEO)

It’s crucial that Google can find all the pages on your site that you want indexed. Just because a page exists does not mean Google can find it. If it’s not linked to on your site from a page Google knows about, Google may not be able to find it. That’s why an XML sitemap is used. It contains a list of all pages on your site that you want Google to crawl and index.

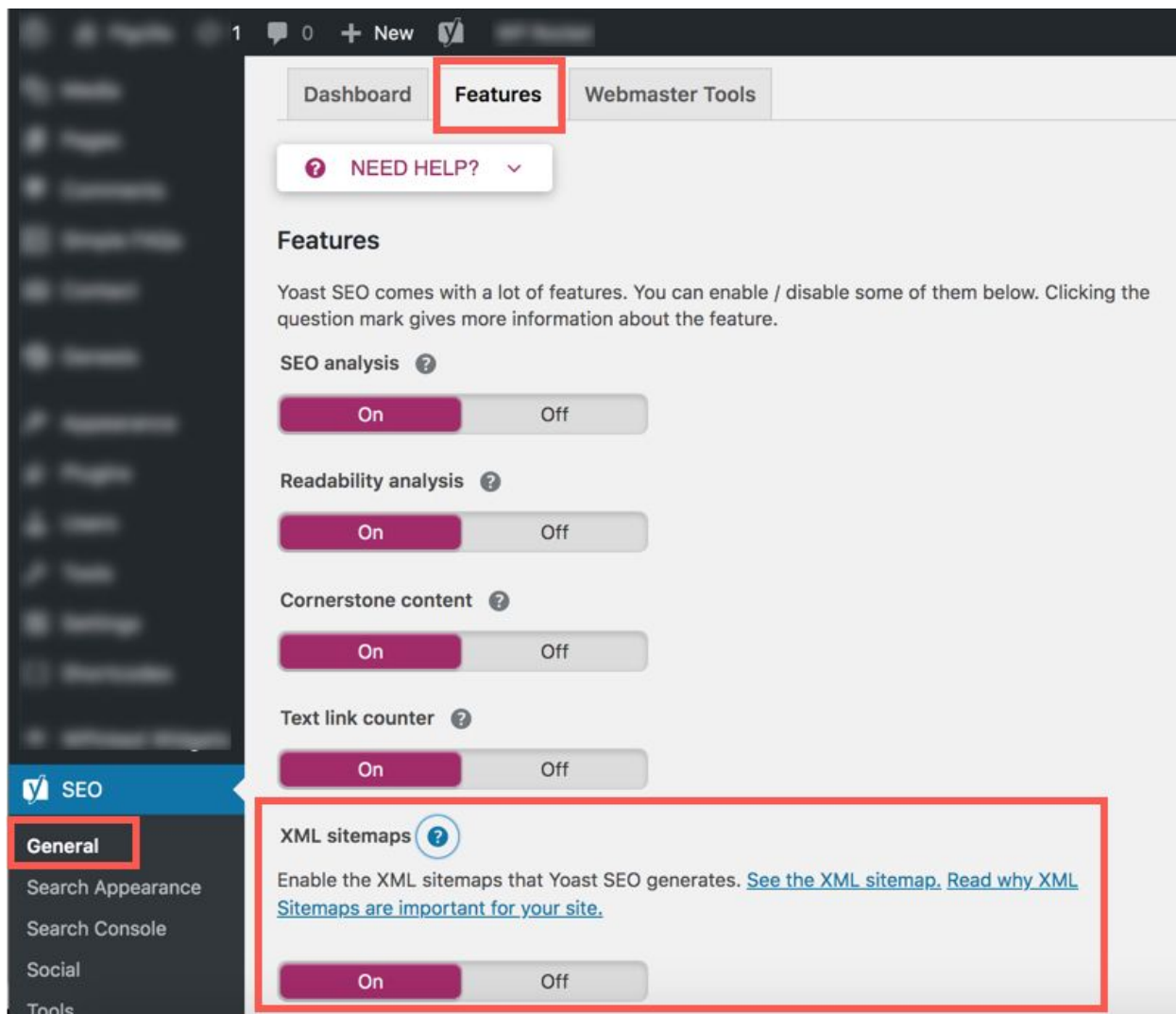
### Create an XML Sitemap

There are many tools you can use to create an XML sitemap. I love using [Yoast’s free SEO plugin](#) for this.

Once you have installed the plugin and configured it, you can confirm the XML sitemap feature is on by going to the “General” tab and then the “Features” tab. You can also view the XML sitemap [here](#).

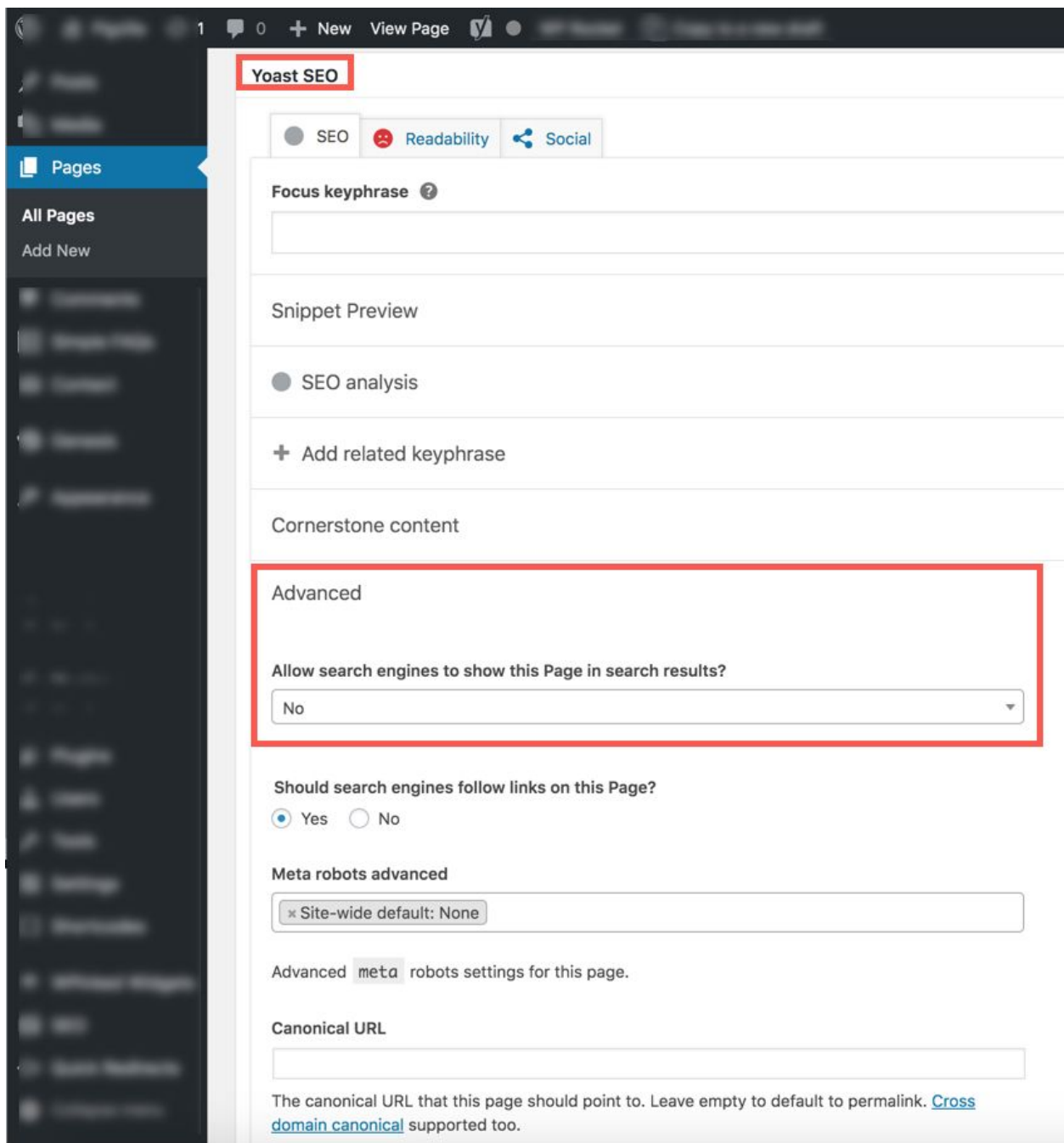
It can also be found by adding /sitemap\_index.xml to the end of your home page URL.

Example: [https://whitespark.ca/sitemap\\_index.xml](https://whitespark.ca/sitemap_index.xml)



## Removing Pages from The XML Sitemap

On individual pages, you can control whether or not Google will index a page. When editing a page, scroll down to the “Yoast SEO” section. Under the “Advanced” section you can choose either “Yes” or “No” to “Allow search engines to show this Page in search results?”



If you choose “No”, Yoast will add the noindex meta tag to the page like so:

```
<meta name=”robots” content=”noindex, follow”>
```

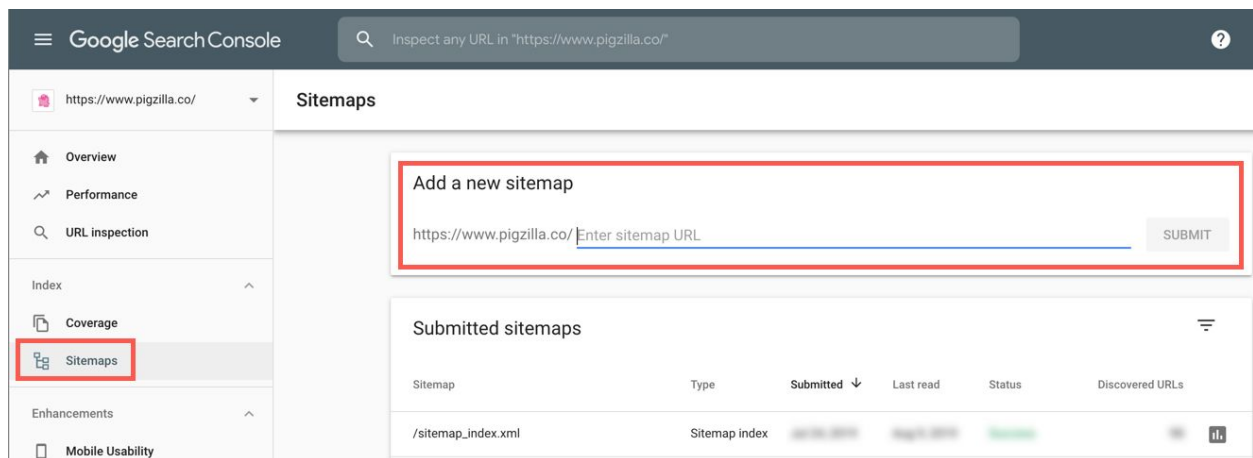
If you use the Yoast SEO plugin to noindex a page, it will automatically be removed from the XML Sitemap.



## Submit The XML Sitemap to Google

After you have created your XML sitemap you'll need to submit it to Google in Google Search Console.

In Google Search Console, click on the "Sitemaps" tab. In the "Add a new sitemap" area, add the XML Sitemap path. Most likely this will be `sitemap_index.xml` or `sitemap.xml`.



## Broken Links (General SEO)

For a good user experience and for crawling efficiency, you'll want to make sure to fix any broken links on your website.

### Finding Broken Links

In Screaming Frog, click on the "Response Codes" tab. In the "Overview" tab on the right, click on "Client Error (4XX)". This will pull up a list of all pages that have 4XX errors. You can see the "Status Code" column to see which ones are 404s (broken links).

1) Click on a link in the main box. 2) Then click on the "Inlinks" tab at the bottom (you may have to drag up in order to see this section). 3) This will show you all the pages on the site that contain that specific 404 link. These are the pages you will need to go to in order to fix this broken link.

1

All broken links found on the site are listed in this box.

2

3

To see where a broken link is located, (1) click on a link in the box above. (2) Then click on the "inlinks" tab. (3) This will show you all pages on the site that contain that broken link.

You can use a [Search and Replace plugin](#) to update broken links in bulk. But be very careful. It's super easy to mess things up using a search and replace plugin.

## Redirects (General SEO)

If there are too many internal redirects on your site it can take a toll on the server. It can also slow down page load speed. This can become an even bigger issue if there are many redirects and many users on the site at the same time.

### Finding Internal Redirects

You can find all the internal redirects that are happening on your site by using a crawling software.

In Screaming Frog, click on the "Response Codes" tab. In the "Overview" tab on the right, click on "Redirection (3XX)". This will pull up a list of all pages that have 3XX redirects. You can see the "Status Code" column to see which ones are 301s and 302s (redirects).

1) Click on a link in the main box. 2) Then click on the "Inlinks" tab at the bottom (you may have to drag up in order to see this section). 3) This will show you all the pages on the site that contain a link that redirects. These are the pages you will need to go to in order to update the internal links so that they no longer redirect.

You will only need to be concerned with internal links that are redirecting.

The screenshot shows the Screaming Frog SEO Spider 11.3 interface. The main window displays a list of URLs with columns for Address, Status Code, and Redirect URL. A red box highlights the 'Status Code' column, with a red '1' above it. A red text box says 'All redirects found on the site are listed in this box.' Below this, the 'Inlinks' tab is selected, showing a table of links with columns for Type, From, and To. A red box highlights the 'From' column, with a red '3' above it. A red text box says 'To see where an internal redirect is located, (1) click on a link in the box above. (2) Then click on the "inlinks" tab. (3) This will show you all pages on the site that contain a link to the page that is redirecting.' A red '2' is above the 'Inlinks' tab. On the right, the 'Response Codes' panel shows a donut chart and a list of response codes, with 'Redirection (3xx) (254) (36.92%)' highlighted. The 'URL' panel shows a list of URLs, with 'Non ASCII Characters (3) (0.95%)' highlighted. The bottom status bar shows 'Spider: Idle', 'Average: 6.72 URL/s. Current: 9.80 URL/s.', and 'Completed 716 of 716 (100%) 0 remain'.

## Updating the Redirecting Internal Links

Now that you have located the internal link that is redirecting, you can update it to the correct / final destination link.

In the example above you will see the link /seo/white-label/ is redirecting. Let's see why this may be:

- 1) It could be that the new contact page link is now /seo/white-label-seo/. If that is the case, update the link from /seo/white-label/ to /seo/white-label-seo/.
- 2) It could be that the link is pointing to the http:// version of the page, but the site is using HTTPS. If that is the case, update the link from http:// to https://.

The main goal is to update the link so that it no longer redirects. Even once you update the link, you'll still want to keep the 301 redirect in place just in case there are any backlinks to the old link anywhere on the internet.

You can use a [Search and Replace plugin](#) to update internal redirects in bulk. But be very careful. It's super easy to mess things up using a search and replace plugin.

## Conclusion

Whew! That's a lot of information. But it's all very important for local SEO. On their own, each issue may not be a big deal but when you add them all up, they have a large impact.

So to recap:

- Make sure search engines can crawl and index your site
- Fix all broken links and make sure there aren't a billion internal redirects
- Target keywords properly with basic on-page optimizations
- Create an XML sitemap and submit it to Google
- Get an SSL certificate set up
- Organize your URLs in a logical order
- Improve your site's speed
- Don't create a bunch of duplicate or extremely similar pages
- Set up LocalBusiness and Review Schema
- Optimize your images
- Make sure your site is mobile-friendly (this goes without saying these days)