

HOW TO DO BETTER CONTENT MARKETING

# Performing a Content Audit



Your content takes on a life of its own as soon as you hit “publish.” But too often, marketers post content and never think about it again. Then in the blink of an eye, your content is aged and outdated and provides little value to your audience.

Enter: the content audit.

By keeping your content in check on a regular basis, you get a pulse on how your content is performing, can easily maintain your existing content, and find out what you should change.

Here’s what you need to know about performing a content audit.

## What is a content audit?

A content audit is the process of measuring and analyzing the performance of content that lives on your website, such as landing pages, resources, and blog posts, over a given length of time. Rather than being just an inventory of your existing content, a content audit is an in-depth evaluation and analysis of your content based on key performance indicators (KPIs) from multiple data sources.

A content audit is a more involved version of the routine historical content analysis you perform to [understand your target audience](#), [prioritize ideas for new content](#), and [guide your content strategy](#). Perform a content audit to add additional data-backed context to your regular [daily, monthly, and yearly content reporting](#).

Taking the time to regularly perform content audits positively impacts your business as a whole—not just your content team.

## What is the purpose of a content audit?

It's a best practice for businesses large and small across industries to perform a content audit at least once a year—if not more often. But why is it so crucial for success? There are two main purposes of a content audit.

- 1. Search engine optimization (SEO):** For many businesses, organic search is a main driver in increasing web traffic. This means SEO makes a big impact on the business, especially when it comes to brand awareness. A website content audit helps you identify the areas that are hurting your website's SEO. By conducting a content audit for SEO, you're able to determine some actionable steps to take to improve your site's organic search performance.

**2. Content marketing:** Beyond analyzing visit metrics, engagement, or social shares in a silo, a content audit also allows you to see how your audience is responding to each piece of content in the context of multiple data sources. Being able to cross-reference your content's performance with all of its related metadata is a crucial step to learn what's working and what's not, and make changes accordingly.

A content audit shows your business where you need to focus your future SEO and content marketing efforts. It gives you insights into the changes to make on your site to provide a more seamless and compelling digital experience for visitors—your potential customers.

## What are the benefits of a content audit?

There are several benefits of content audits.

The first, as mentioned above, is evaluating your SEO efforts and finding new ways to improve your organic search ranking. Another is determining other weak spots or inconsistencies on your website. For instance, you may find broken links or pages where your [brand voice](#) isn't consistent. By addressing these previously undiscovered issues, you can provide a more compelling digital experience for your audience.

Lastly, a content audit helps you gain data-driven insights into all of the content on your website. Equipped with this data, you're empowered to:

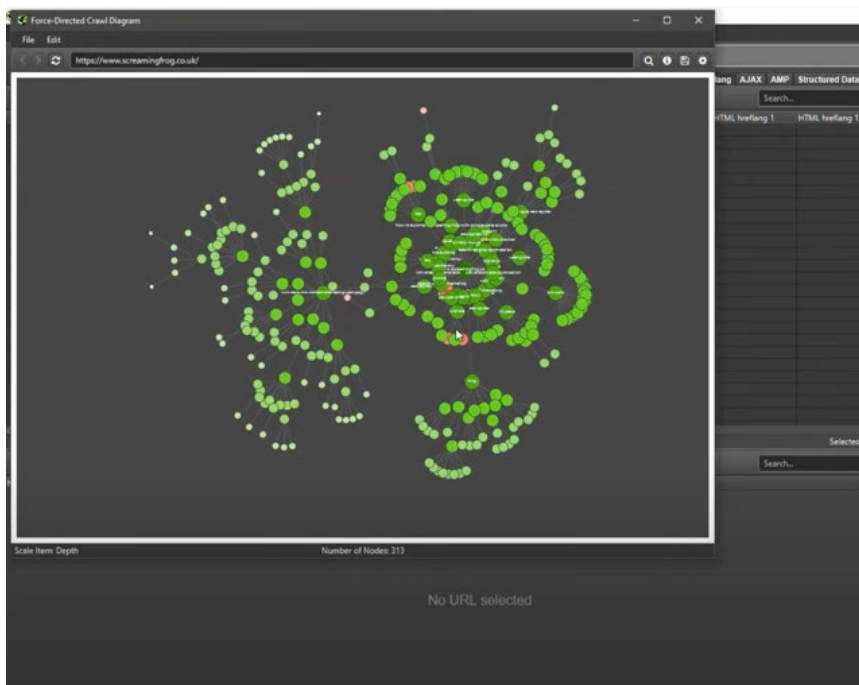
- Learn what topics resonate best with your audience so you can optimize future engagement.
- Identify top performing pieces of content that can be [repurposed](#) into new marketing collateral.
- Identify content that isn't performing well and [old content that needs to be refreshed](#) and [evergreened](#).
- Make data-informed decisions when building your future [content development strategy](#).
- Measure and increase [content ROI](#) to build a case for a bigger budget.

## What tools do you need to perform a content audit?

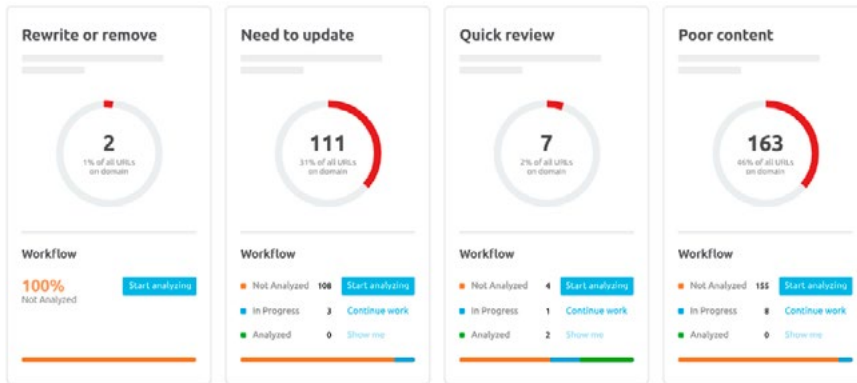
A good content audit requires time and resources. You can manually source data for your website content audit over a period of time, but using [analytics tools](#) to automate parts of the data-collection and research process will make your life much easier.

Here are some of our favorite tools to aid your content audit process.

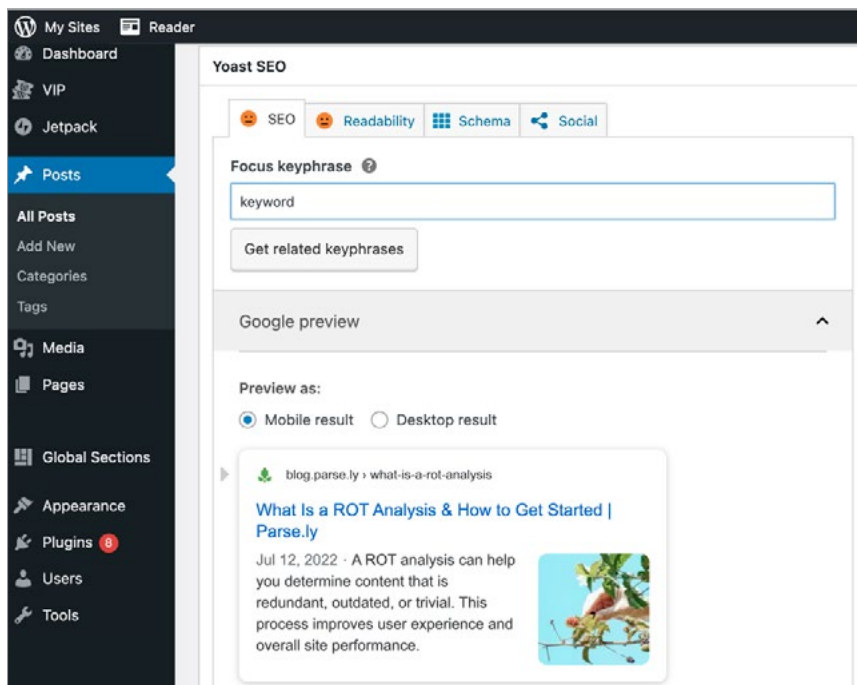
1. [Screaming Frog](#) provides a fast and advanced SEO site audit tool called SEO Spider, which can be used to crawl websites of all sizes. The tool collects URLs from your sitemap and creates an SEO content audit, allowing you to find broken links, analyze page titles and meta data, discover duplicate content, and much more. The goal is to help you quickly identify site issues and make informed SEO decisions.



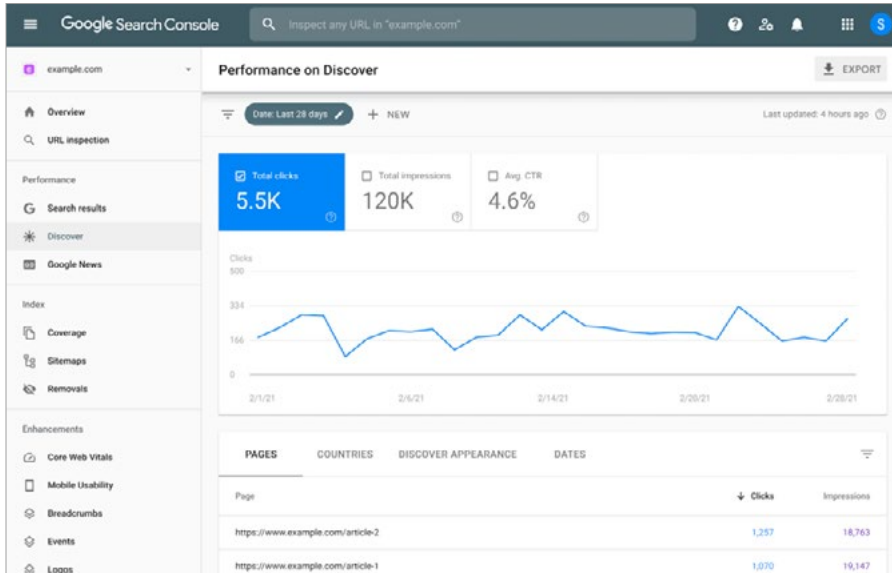
2. [Semrush](#) is another useful content audit tool. You can personalize your content audit based on real-time metrics from Semrush, Google Analytics, and Google Search Console. Input your website domain and you'll get a custom report that shows areas of your site that need improvement.



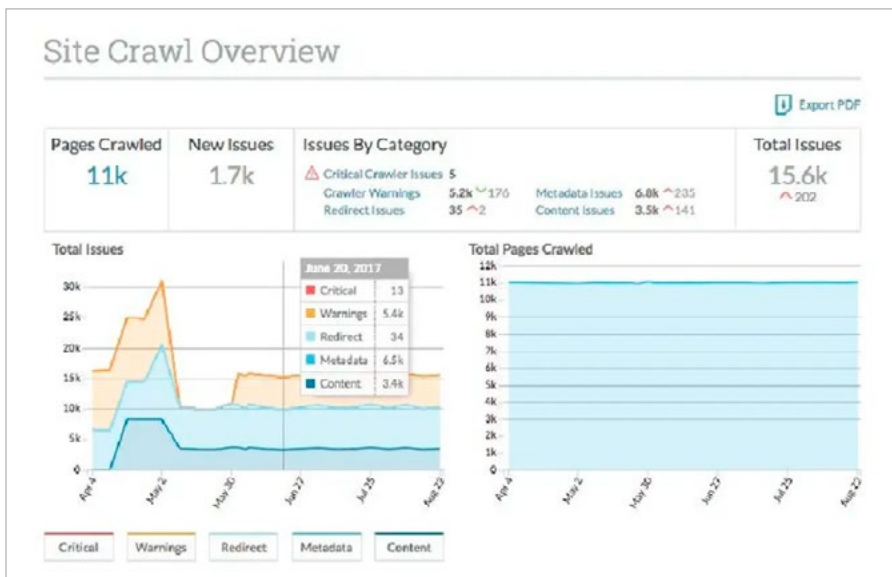
3. [Yoast SEO](#) is the #1 WordPress SEO plugin. It makes sure your site meets the highest technical SEO standards and gives you the tools to perform a content audit and optimize your content for SEO.



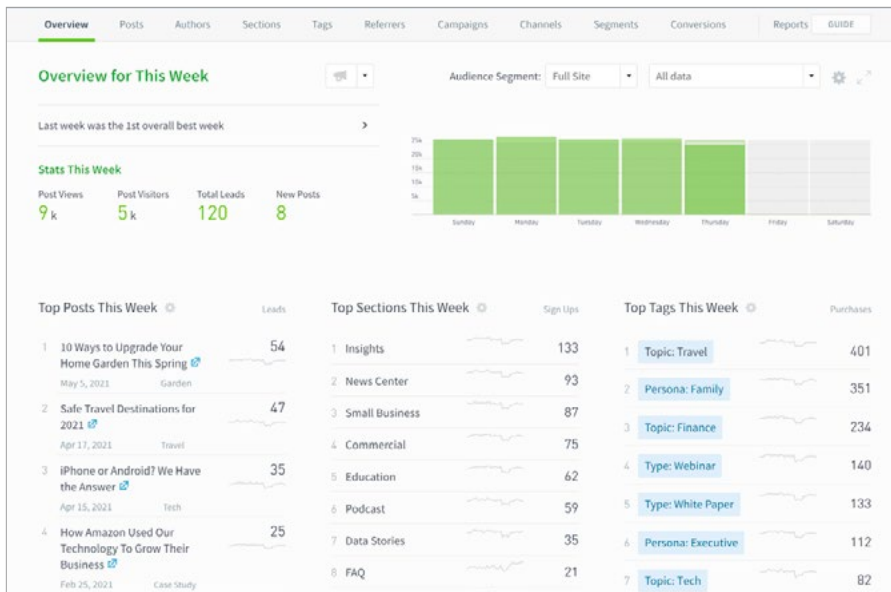
4. [Google Search Console](#) helps you improve your performance on Google Search. With it, you're able to gain content insights via Search Analytics, crawl individual URLs, get immediate alerts on site issues, and more.



5. [Moz](#) is an SEO software tool that helps you crawl your site on demand, discover technical SEO issues instantly, and find specific ways to improve your site, such as adding [title tags](#). You can also build your own custom dashboard.



6. [Parse.ly](#), part of the [WordPress VIP](#) platform, is a content analytics solution that is specifically designed for measuring the performance of content, unlike SEO or general web analytics tools. It helps content teams gather real-time and historical data, either by using [filters](#) to focus on a particular aspect of data or through automated reports. By automating your content analytics, you're able to gain trustworthy, data-backed insights into the performance of every piece of content on your website during your audit.





## How do you perform a content audit?

Now that you understand the value of a content audit and the tools needed to do the job, it's time to start executing. Here's a step-by-step guide on how to perform a content audit.

### **Step 1: Define your scope, goals, and metrics.**

Before collecting and analyzing any data, think about what you want your content audit to accomplish. What do you want to measure? What overall company goals is your content team driving and contributing toward? And what problems do you want to address?

First, set the scope for the content and metrics you'll evaluate in your audit, considering these questions:

- Do you want to audit your entire content archive? Or just content published in a specific timeframe? Perhaps just a specific type of content?
- Do you want to analyze the all-time performance of your content? Or just the performance over a certain period of time?

The answers will depend on the date of your last content audit, the next one scheduled, and the timelines of any long-term content initiatives or projects to account for.

Next, set concrete goals for your content audit. If you're thinking big picture and starting with a yearly content audit, your overall goal could be to increase audience engagement or improve SEO. But try to go further and set more specific goals like:

- Better optimize pages for search engines.
- Discover whether your metadata, such as tags or categories, is being used correctly.
- Identify high-performing content to promote on your homepage or via a newsletter and other public-facing channels.
- Identify high-performing topics and create more engaging content.
- Update or remove outdated, stale, and redundant content.
- Strengthen your brand voice with consistent messaging and tone.
- Organize content for easier discoverability and higher conversion.
- Find what content works best at different stages of the buyer journey.

Setting these types of goals and matching them with the relevant metrics will make it easy for you to identify content that needs improvement as you go through your audit.

If your goals focus on improving SEO, keep an eye on organic traffic, backlinks, and page ranking.

If you're focused on increasing engagement, analyze pageviews, engaged time, and social likes, shares, comments, or mentions.

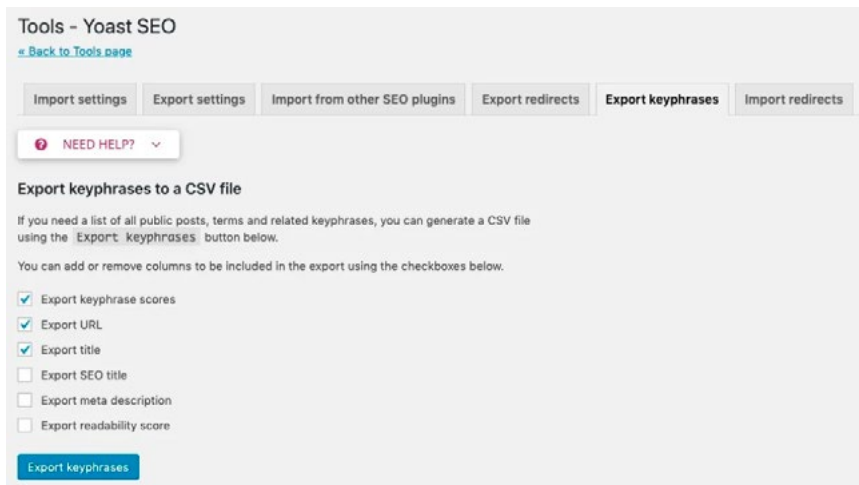
Finally, if your goals are all about generating revenue, focus on conversions, leads, and ROI.

## Step 2: Collect your content.

Next, gather together all the content you're auditing. This is where you do a full inventory of every piece of content on your website that falls within the scope of your audit. Typically, these include landing pages, blog posts, product descriptions, resources, and multimedia.

Collect the URLs of all of those content pieces and add them to a spreadsheet. This is your content audit spreadsheet, and it will eventually house all of the data you need for your content audit.

It's possible to collect all of your content URLs manually, but we recommend using one of the tools mentioned above that will automatically crawl individual URLs for you. WordPress's native export tool allows you to export an XML of post data that can then be converted to CSV. However, if you're using the Yoast SEO plugin with WordPress, you can [export all of the necessary URLs](#) to CSV directly through the WordPress admin.



The screenshot shows the 'Tools - Yoast SEO' interface in a WordPress admin panel. At the top, there are navigation tabs: 'Import settings', 'Export settings', 'Import from other SEO plugins', 'Export redirects', 'Export keyphrases' (which is currently selected), and 'Import redirects'. Below the tabs is a 'NEED HELP?' dropdown menu. The main heading is 'Export keyphrases to a CSV file'. Below this, there is explanatory text: 'If you need a list of all public posts, terms and related keyphrases, you can generate a CSV file using the **Export keyphrases** button below.' and 'You can add or remove columns to be included in the export using the checkboxes below.' There are six checkboxes: 'Export keyphrase scores' (checked), 'Export URL' (checked), 'Export title' (checked), 'Export SEO title' (unchecked), 'Export meta description' (unchecked), and 'Export readability score' (unchecked). At the bottom of the form is a blue 'Export keyphrases' button.

### Step 3: Categorize your content and populate data.

Now, you're ready for the next step: categorization.

On your content audit spreadsheet (currently a list of URLs), add relevant category and metadata fields to catalog your content.

For each piece, include:

- Content type (blog, video, ebook, web page)
- Content format
- Website section (resources, blog, case studies, reports)
- Author(s)
- Date of publication or update
- Buyer's journey stage
- Word count
- Other metadata (tags, meta description)

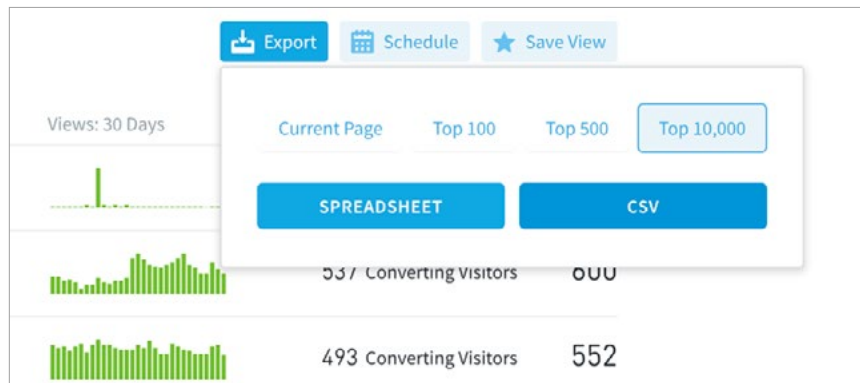
Depending on the scope of your audit, populating these fields manually may be unmanageable (and unnecessary). Instead, export this data for each content piece automatically from your CMS, SEO tool, or content analytics solution and merge it into your working audit spreadsheet.

Next, add the relevant performance metrics (measured over the appropriate time frame) for each piece of content in the scope of your audit.

The metrics you pull should include:

- Pageviews
- [Engaged time](#)
- [Conversions](#)
- Social engagement (likes, shares, and comments)
- Unique visitors
- Referral traffic (social, search, direct, internal)
- Keyword ranking
- Backlinks
- Leads/opportunities

Again, don't waste your time doing this manually. [Export content performance data](#) automatically from your content analytics, CRM, and SEO tools, then merge it with the existing data on your content audit spreadsheet. For Parse.ly analytics users, this takes only a few clicks.



At this point, your spreadsheet should be full of URLs, categories, metadata, and performance metrics for each piece of content in the scope of your audit. Now you're ready for the analysis.

#### **Step 4: Analyze your content data.**

Once you've got your audit spreadsheet brimming with information, start looking critically at the data and metrics as a whole to identify problems and areas for improvement, according to the goals you've set.

Take into account all factors related to each piece of content—authors, keywords, word counts, meta descriptions, optimized images, search referrals, etc.—and compare each factor to its current performance.

**Which content is underperforming?** Identify content that performs poorly in terms of traffic, engagement, conversion, and/or SEO. This is content that doesn't resonate with your audience or needs increased visibility. Often, underperformance for one metric causes a domino effect with others. So try to find the root cause of underperformance by considering all the metrics and metadata you've collected. For example, poor SEO often results in low traffic, and poor engagement usually leads to poor conversion.

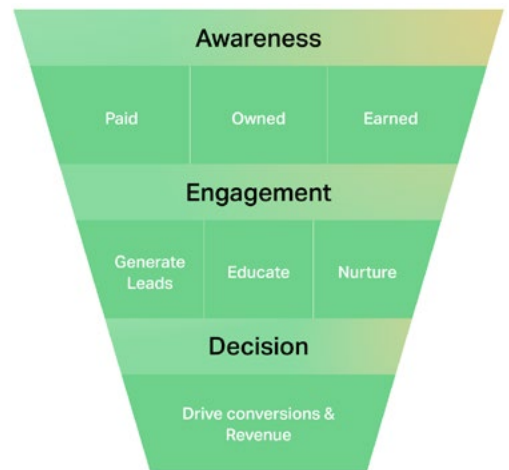
**Why is this content underperforming?** When you find failing content, dig even deeper into why it's underperforming to provide context around the dip. Low engagement indicates lackluster subject matter, while poor conversion suggests your CTA strategy needs improvement. Low traffic points to insufficient promotion, and low page ranking or search traffic reveals ineffective or missing search-related metadata. If an idea you've prioritized has already been executed, unless it was done perfectly, your goal should be to update, repurpose, or repromote it appropriately.

**Which content is overperforming and why?** Identify what content performs notably well—even years after publication. Again, think about why and reference other performance metrics and metadata to contextualize the spike. But be careful—one high metric doesn't necessarily mean successful content.

Say you find a post with high pageviews. Great! But as you look further at the data, you find that the post also has notably low engaged time. This means that while many people came to this web page, most left shortly after. The upshot? Your content offered only surface-level value to your audience and did not deliver on their expectations.

The problem here could stem from a variety of factors, including bad page design, poor title choice, low [content quality](#), or inaccurate metadata. Dig into the other metrics and metadata you have for this content to identify and address the root cause of the issue.

Also, take into account the [different stages of the buyer's journey](#) as you identify under- and over-performing content. Remember, "awareness" content is meant to attract high traffic, but that traffic won't always convert. By the same token, "consideration" content might draw less traffic, but that traffic should convert more frequently.



**Which content is becoming outdated?** Look for old content with broken links or outdated ideas that need revamping. Maybe a piece from three years ago still brings in significant search traffic. Don't let this organic traffic go to waste. Make sure all of the links are up-to-date, your brand voice and CTA strategy are on point, and any new products, features, or value points are included appropriately.

**Is there content that's missing?** Your audience may be interested in a certain topic you've devoted little coverage to. For example, if your company is social media-focused, maybe you should be writing more about influencer marketing, an industry hot topic.

### **Step 5: Create actionable steps for improvement.**

As you go through this analysis, identifying problems and areas for improvement, assign specific action items to each piece of content on your audit spreadsheet. Some pieces won't need any attention, while others will need updating, editing, or restructuring. Some might need to be deleted altogether.

These action items can be broken into three general categories or statuses—**keep**, **delete**, or **update**. Streamline your plan for improvement by labeling or color-coding each piece of content with one of these statuses, depending on the attention it needs.

**Keep** content that overperforms and stays relevant to your audience. These pieces tend to be FAQs, general company information, or other evergreen content—perfect for [reuse and repurposing](#).

**Update** underperforming or outdated pages you've listed for improvement. Here, revamp your CTA strategy, include new research, update missing or inaccurate metadata, or restructure the page format.

**Delete** content that is no longer relevant or simply can't be improved. This includes duplicate, seasonal, and event content, along with content related to failed or out-of-stock products.

Note: Any content two or more years old should be audited, updated, and then stamped with an updated publish date so it can be re-indexed by site crawlers, helping it perform better on search engines.

	A	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N
1		Category		Metadata			Metrics			Status
2	URL	Type	Format	Title	Description	H1	Backlinks	Shares	Sessions	
3	<a href="https://url/blogg">https://url/blogg</a>	Blog post	Video present	Meta Title	Meta Description	Header	345	456	3456	Keep
4	<a href="https://url/blogg">https://url/blogg</a>	Blog post	Images present	Meta Title	Meta Description	Header	25	136	1707	Keep
5	<a href="https://url/succes">https://url/succes</a>	Success story	Video present	Meta Title	Meta Description	Header	2	9	515	Update
6	<a href="https://url/blogg">https://url/blogg</a>	Blog post	Images present	Meta Title	Meta Description	Header	267	876	2567	Keep
7	<a href="https://url/manu">https://url/manu</a>	Manual	Video present	Meta Title	Meta Description	Header	0	0	153	Delete
8	<a href="https://url/blogg">https://url/blogg</a>	Blog post	Images present	Meta Title	Meta Description	Header	319	914	3009	Keep
9	<a href="https://url/produ">https://url/produ</a>	Product des	With CTA	Meta Title	Meta Description	Header	1	5	324	Update
10	<a href="https://url/manu">https://url/manu</a>	Manual	Images present	Meta Title	Meta Description	Header	7	43	678	Update
11	<a href="https://url/blogg">https://url/blogg</a>	Blog post	With CTA	Meta Title	Meta Description	Header	102	207	1134	Update
12	<a href="https://url/blogg">https://url/blogg</a>	Blog post	Video present	Meta Title	Meta Description	Header	198	754	2887	Keep
13	<a href="https://url/produ">https://url/produ</a>	Product des	With CTA	Meta Title	Meta Description	Header	2	3	97	Delete
14	<a href="https://url/succes">https://url/succes</a>	Use case	Video present	Meta Title	Meta Description	Header	32	149	1442	Keep
15	<a href="https://url/manu">https://url/manu</a>	Manual	Images present	Meta Title	Meta Description	Header	5	27	723	Keep
16	<a href="https://url/blogg">https://url/blogg</a>	Blog post	Images present	Meta Title	Meta Description	Header	53	122	834	Keep

Once you have all of your action items and statuses marked on your spreadsheet, create a prioritized action plan based on the goals you set at the beginning of your content audit. The timeline should allow for you to address each issue over a reasonable period of time.

[Source: [SEMRush](#)]



## Final thoughts

Every business can benefit from a content audit. It's an effective way to discover weak spots on your site, understand how your content is performing, and identify ways to improve your overall web experience.

Although performing a content audit is time-consuming, it's beneficial for both your SEO and content marketing efforts. Start by setting your goals, then collect your content and all of the relevant data. Then analyze and create action items to improve your overall digital customer experience.

Performing regular content audits isn't enough to keep your content fresh and impactful. Be proactive, baking in processes to your content creation workflows to avoid rotten, obsolete, or trivial (ROT) content and data wherever possible. Also, include a [ROT analysis](#) in your next content audit to polish your archive further.

Regularly scheduled, full-fledged content audits, and ROT analyses are good practice, but they're just the first step in becoming truly data-driven as a content team. Make hourly, daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, and annual content analysis a regular part of your content workflow.

## Next in our series: Improving existing content

Now that you've audited your content library and created actionable steps for improvement, it's time to get to work upgrading your content. Keep an eye out for Chapter 5 of our *How to Do Better Content Marketing* series, where we'll show you how to improve content you've identified that needs refreshing, restructuring, and repurposing.

# Content audit checklist template

- ❑ **Set your content audit goals.** Align your content audit goals with overall company goals, whether it's to improve search performance or provide high-quality content.
- ❑ **Pull all the URLs of the content you're auditing.** Create a spreadsheet of links, using a tool to aggregate the URLs.
- ❑ **Categorize your content.**
  - ❑ Include general categories (content type, publication date, author, etc.)
  - ❑ Add metadata (keywords, descriptions, image alt text, etc.)
  - ❑ Add metrics (page views, engagement, number of leads, etc.)
- ❑ **Collect and input data.** Populate your spreadsheet by exporting data from your CMS, SEO tools, and content analytics solutions.
- ❑ **Analyze your data to understand the state of your content.** Identify:
  - ❑ Underperforming content
  - ❑ High-performing content
  - ❑ Outdated content
  - ❑ Missing content
- ❑ **Create action items to improve content problems.**
  - ❑ Label or color code each piece of content with a status—keep, update, or delete
  - ❑ Create a timeline to complete each action item



### **About WordPress VIP**

We are WordPress VIP, *the* agile content platform leading a powerful enterprise ecosystem. As we fit seamlessly across your organization, enjoy the ease, flexibility, and freedom you need to scale the digital experiences that drive your growth.

WordPress VIP offers content management, enterprise commerce, and content analytics. Our platform provides best-in-class digital creation, combined with the insights to understand and optimize the impact of those digital experiences.

Our team has been delivering WordPress at scale for more than a decade, and will guide your team with architecture, integrations, plugins, agencies, and more.

Learn more at [wpvip.com](https://wpvip.com).