

SEO PRACTITIONER

Search Intent Play- book

Match Every Keyword to the Right Content

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Classify any keyword in under a minute

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Section 1: Intent Classification Framework

THE CORE PRINCIPLE

Every search query has an intent behind it. When your content matches what the searcher actually wants, Google rewards you with higher rankings. When there is a mismatch, no amount of optimization will help.

The 4 Intent Types

INTENT TYPE	WHAT THEY WANT	SIGNAL WORDS	EXAMPLE
Informational	Learn or understand	what, how, why, guide, tips	"how to improve page speed"
Commercial	Research before buying	best, review, vs, comparison, top	"best SEO tools 2025"
Transactional	Buy or take action	buy, price, discount, coupon, sign up	"Ahrefs pricing plans"
Navigational	Find a specific site	brand name, login, official	"Google Search Console login"

Quick Classification Method

Use this 3-step process to classify any keyword in under 60 seconds:

1**Check the SERP**

Google the keyword in incognito. What dominates the results? Blog posts = informational. Product pages = transactional. Comparison lists = commercial.

2**Read the top 3 results**

What format are they using? If all 3 are how-to guides, the intent is informational. If all 3 are pricing pages, it is transactional. Google has already figured out the intent — follow its lead.

3**Check the SERP features**

AI Overview + PAA = informational. Shopping ads + product carousels = transactional. Review stars + comparison tables = commercial. Knowledge panel = navigational.

THE SERP NEVER LIES

Do not guess the intent. Always check the actual SERP. Google has billions of data points telling it what users want — trust the results page over your assumptions.

Mixed Intent Keywords

Some keywords have mixed intent. "SEO tools" could be informational (what are SEO tools?) or commercial (which should I buy?). For these:

- Check the SERP — the dominant result type reveals the primary intent
- If results are split, target the primary intent on your main page
- Create separate pages for secondary intents and interlink them
- Example: "SEO tools" 'main page is a comparison (commercial), with a linked guide explaining what they do (informational)

Section 2: Content Templates by Intent

STRUCTURE FOLLOWS INTENT

Each intent type has a content structure users expect. Match the structure, and users stay longer, engage more, and convert better — all signals Google uses for ranking.

Informational Content Template

TEMPLATE

The How-To / Explainer

- H1: Clear, keyword-rich title matching the question
- Intro: Direct answer in the first paragraph (snippet-ready)
- Body: Step-by-step sections with H2/H3 headings
- Visuals: Diagrams, screenshots, or examples for each section
- FAQ Section: 3-5 related questions with concise answers
- CTA: "Learn more" link (not a hard sell)

WRONG STRUCTURE

A sales-heavy page for an informational keyword like "what is SEO" — users want to learn, not buy.

RIGHT STRUCTURE

A comprehensive guide with clear definitions, examples, and actionable steps — matching the learning intent.

Commercial Content Template

TEMPLATE

The Comparison / Review

- H1: "Best [Category] in [Year]" or "[Product A] vs [Product B]"
- Intro: Quick summary of top picks (for skimmers)
- Comparison table: Features, pricing, pros/cons at a glance
- Individual reviews: Detailed breakdown of each option
- Use case recommendations: "Best for beginners", "Best for enterprise"
- CTA: Affiliate links or trial sign-up buttons

Transactional Content Template

TEMPLATE

The Product / Service Page

- H1: Product name + primary benefit
- Hero section: Value proposition + primary CTA above the fold
- Features: Benefit-driven descriptions (not just feature lists)
- Social proof: Reviews, testimonials, case studies
- Pricing: Clear, easy-to-compare pricing information
- CTA: Prominent "Buy Now" or "Start Free Trial" buttons

Navigational Content Template

TEMPLATE

The Brand / Login Page

- H1: Brand name + what you do
- Immediate access: Login form, dashboard link, or main action
- Navigation: Clear paths to key sections of your site
- Schema markup: Organization or WebSite schema for sitelinks

Section 3: Persona-to-Content Mapping

THE MISSING LINK

Most SEO strategies focus on keywords. Great SEO strategies connect keywords to the people searching them. When you know who is searching, you write content that truly resonates.

Buyer Journey Mapping Worksheet

Fill out this worksheet for each of your primary personas to map their search journey:

JOURNEY STAGE	WHAT THEY SEARCH	CONTENT YOU NEED	INTENT TYPE
Awareness	"What is [problem]?"	Educational blog post/guide	Informational
Consideration	"Best [solution type]"	Comparison article	Commercial
Decision	"[Your brand] pricing"	Pricing/feature page	Transactional
Retention	"[Your brand] how to"	Help docs/tutorials	Informational

Persona Keyword Template

For each persona, document these 4 categories of keywords:

- Pain point keywords: What problems do they Google? (e.g., "website not showing up on Google")
- Solution keywords: What solutions do they research? (e.g., "best SEO tools for small business")
- Decision keywords: What do they search before buying? (e.g., "Ahrefs vs Semrush pricing")
- Success keywords: What do they search after buying? (e.g., "how to use Ahrefs for keyword research")

Example: Mapping a Freelance Web Designer

STAGE	KEYWORD	CONTENT	FORMAT
Awareness	"how to get more website clients"	Guide to client acquisition	Long-form blog
Consideration	"best SEO for freelancers"	SEO tools comparison	Comparison table
Decision	"SEO course for beginners price"	Course landing page	Sales page
Retention	"SEO monthly checklist"	Downloadable checklist	Lead magnet

START WITH 1 PERSONA

Do not try to map all personas at once. Pick your highest-value persona, map their complete journey, then repeat for the next one.

Section 4: Intent Mismatch Audit

THE HIDDEN PROBLEM

Intent mismatch is the #1 reason good content does not rank. You could have the best guide in the world, but if it targets the wrong intent for that keyword, Google will not rank it. This audit helps you find and fix these mismatches.

Audit Process

- 1 Export your top 20 pages from Google Search Console**
Go to Performance > Pages > Export. These are the pages getting the most impressions.
- 2 For each page, identify the primary keyword**
Check which query sends the most traffic to that page in Search Console.
- 3 Classify the keyword intent**
Use the SERP check method from Section 1. What do the top 3 results look like?
- 4 Compare intent to your page format**
Is your page format matching what the SERP shows? A how-to guide for a commercial keyword = mismatch.
- 5 Flag mismatches and prioritize fixes**
Prioritize pages with high impressions but low CTR — these are likely intent mismatches.

Common Mismatch Patterns

SYMPTOM	LIKELY MISMATCH	FIX
High impressions, low clicks	Title/description does not match intent	Rewrite to match what users expect
High clicks, high bounce rate	Page content does not match intent	Restructure page to match SERP format
Ranking page 2, stuck	Partial intent match	Check top 3 results — match their approach
Ranking dropped suddenly	Google re-evaluated intent	SERP may have changed — re-check and adapt

Mismatch Fix Worksheet

Use this template for each flagged page:

- Page URL: _____
- Primary keyword: _____
- Current page format: (blog / product / comparison / other)
- SERP-indicated intent: (informational / commercial / transactional / navigational)
- Format the top 3 results use: _____
- Action needed: (restructure / rewrite / create new page / redirect)
- Priority: (high / medium / low) based on impression volume

THE 80/20 FIX

Fix the top 5 mismatched pages first. These high-impression pages will show the biggest ranking improvements and teach you the patterns to apply across your entire site.

What's Next?

You Have the Framework — Now Audit and Optimize

This playbook gives you a systematic approach to intent-driven SEO. The practitioners who get results are the ones who audit first, then optimize — not the other way around.

You can classify any keyword's intent in 60 seconds

You have content templates for every intent type

You can map your audience's complete search journey

You can audit and fix intent mismatches on existing pages

Recommended Next Steps

1

Run the Intent Mismatch Audit on Your Top 20 Pages

This single exercise will reveal why some of your best content is not ranking where it should.

2

Deepen Your SEO Expertise

The AI SEO course covers advanced SERP analysis, persona development, and intent mapping with hands-on exercises. Available at udemy.com/course/seo-get-to-number1-in-google-search/

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