

CONTENT AND SEO TEMPLATE

Keyword Research and Content Brief Pack

The research sheet that decides what to write, and the brief that stops a writer guessing what you meant.

Two documents that fix the two ends of content production. The research sheet picks topics on intent and winnability rather than volume alone. The brief tells a writer what the page has to prove, what it must beat, and what done looks like, so the first draft is close instead of a starting point.

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How to use this pack

Most content underperforms for one of two reasons: it targets a term the site cannot win, or the writer never knew what the page had to prove.

- 1 **Research first, brief second.** A brief for the wrong topic is a well-executed waste.
- 2 **Score winnability, not just volume.** A term with 300 searches you can rank for beats one with 8,000 you cannot.
- 3 **Match the format to the intent before writing a word.** If the results page is all comparison tables, a narrative essay loses regardless of quality.
- 4 **Fill the gap section honestly.** If you cannot name what this page adds beyond what already ranks, it will not rank either.
- 5 **Send the brief with the deadline, not before it.** A brief without a date is a suggestion.

THE QUESTION THAT SAVES THE MOST TIME

Before briefing anything, ask: what does this page have that the current top three results do not? If the honest answer is 'nothing, it will just be ours', stop and pick a different topic.

The research sheet

TERM	VOLUME	DIFFICULTY	INTENT	CURRENT RANK	SCORE

Where to look beyond a keyword tool

- **Search Console queries** where you rank 8 to 20. Existing impressions with poor position are the cheapest wins available.
- **Your own sales calls.** Questions clients ask twice are questions people search.
- **Support tickets and email replies.** The phrasing there is the phrasing people type.
- **Autocomplete and related searches**, for the modifiers you would not have guessed.
- **Competitor pages that rank but read badly.** A weak page holding position 3 is an opening.

DIFFICULTY SCORES ARE DIRECTIONAL, NOT ABSOLUTE

Every tool computes difficulty differently and none of them know your site. Use the number to sort candidates, then check the actual results page before committing. If the top ten are all sites far larger than yours, the score is optimistic.

STEP 2

Scoring and prioritisation

Score each candidate out of 5 on four axes, then multiply nothing and argue about the low ones. Simple beats sophisticated here.

AXIS	5 MEANS	1 MEANS
Business value	Buyers read this before purchasing	Interesting but never converts
Winnability	Sites your size already rank	Only enterprise brands rank
Effort	You can write it from existing knowledge	Needs original research or data
Durability	Still true in three years	Outdated next quarter

TERM	VALUE	WINNABLE	EFFORT	DURABLE	TOTAL	DO IT?

DO THE BORING HIGH SCORERS FIRST

The topics that score well are usually less exciting than the ones you want to write. Publish the high scorers anyway. Interest is not a ranking factor.

STEP 3

Intent and format matching

Open the results page and look at what is actually ranking. The format that wins is not a preference, it is an observation.

WHAT RANKS NOW	INTENT	FORMAT TO WRITE	DO NOT WRITE
Comparison tables	Evaluating	Comparison with a clear pick	A narrative essay
Step-by-step guides	Doing	Numbered process with screenshots	An opinion piece
Definitions and explainers	Learning	Answer first, then depth	A sales page
Product and category pages	Buying	A commercial page, not a blog post	A blog post
Listicles	Shortlisting	A curated list with criteria stated	A single-product review
Tools and calculators	Calculating	An interactive tool	An article about the tool

For this brief

DOMINANT FORMAT IN
RESULTS

INTENT

FORMAT WE WILL WRITE

FIGHTING THE FORMAT LOSES

A deeper, better-written piece in the wrong format still loses to a mediocre piece in the right one. If every result is a tool and you write an article, you are competing in a category the reader did not ask for.

The content brief

WORKING TITLE	PRIMARY TERM	DUE
		Date

FIELD	ANSWER
Reader, specifically	
What they are trying to do	
What the page must prove	
Action we want after reading	
Format and rough length	
Voice notes or examples to match	
Internal links to include	
Sources that must be cited	
Anything explicitly out of scope	

Secondary terms to cover naturally

NOT A KEYWORD QUOTA, A COVERAGE CHECKLIST

Outline

H2 LEVEL ONLY. LET THE WRITER OWN THE H3S

The competitive gap

Fill this in by reading the current top three, not by skimming their headings.

RANK	URL	WHAT IT DOES WELL	WHAT IT MISSES
1			
2			
3			

So this page will

ADD WHAT NONE OF THEM HAVE

Original data, a real example, a tool, a stance, a missing step

INFORMATION GAIN IS THE WHOLE JOB

Search engines and readers both reward the page that adds something. A first-party number, a screenshot of the thing actually working, a step everyone else omits, or a clear recommendation where others hedge. Rewriting the consensus in your own words is not a gap.

Review and acceptance

- ☐ The page answers the primary question within the first two paragraphs
- ☐ The gap named in the brief is genuinely delivered, not just claimed
- ☐ Format matches what actually ranks, not what we preferred to write
- ☐ Every factual claim is checkable, and dated where it will age
- ☐ Internal links from the brief are present and in body text
- ☐ A reader who only skims the headings still gets the answer
- ☐ There is a clear recommendation or next step, not a summary
- ☐ Nothing in it could have been written without knowing this subject

Sign-off

WRITTEN BY

REVIEWED BY

PUBLISHED ON

SET A REVIEW DATE NOW

Add a date to revisit this page. Content decays quietly, and the pages worth updating are almost always the ones already ranking rather than the ones you forgot.

We build the systems behind the paperwork

Gatilab is an independent WordPress and search agency. We build sites, rank them, and stay long enough to prove the work moved something.

2014 Founded	850+ Clients served	2,000+ Projects completed	10,000+ Plugin installs
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What we do

WordPress engineering

Custom themes, blocks, plugins, and migrations built to stay fast and maintainable after handoff.

SEO strategy

Technical fixes, topical coverage, and search visibility work measured against clicks, not scores.

Content marketing

Research-led articles and editorial systems your team can keep publishing without us.

Conversion design

Landing pages, service pages, and forms designed around the decision the reader is actually making.

Need this handled instead of templated?

Send the problem, not a brief. We will tell you whether it is worth building, what it depends on, and what we would deliberately skip. If the honest answer is that you do not need us, you will get that too.

[Start a project](#)

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USE IT FREELY

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