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The first Yoast SEO settings to get right

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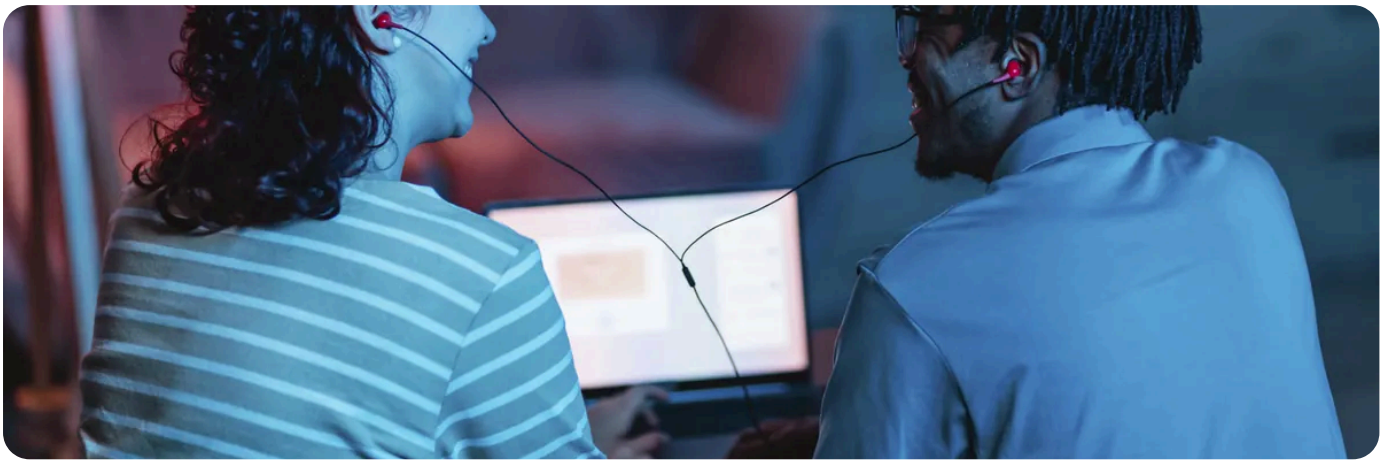
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The first Yoast SEO settings to get right

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Yoast runs perfectly well badly configured, and that is what fools people: it looks done. These are the settings worth doing on day one, in order, and the ones you can leave alone.

First, check the site is not closed to search engines.
Under WordPress **Settings** and **Reading** there is a box asking search engines not to index the site. Plenty of sites are born with it ticked, to stay hidden while under construction, and nobody remembers to untick it. With it on, nothing else in this article does anything.

Install it and run the wizard

1. Under **Plugins** and **Add New**, search for **Yoast SEO**, install and activate.
2. Open **Yoast SEO** and **General**, and run the **first-time configuration** to the end. It is only a few screens.
3. **Does the site represent an organisation or a person?** For a business, choose organisation and fill in the name and logo. That is what feeds the structured data.
4. **Social profiles.** Put in the addresses of the official accounts. It links the site to them, and nothing more.
5. **Skip whatever it tries to sell you.** At the end the wizard offers paid products and an e-mail subscription. You can decline all of it with no consequences.

The four screens that matter

Where	What to do
Settings, Content types	For each type (pages, posts, products) decide whether it shows in results and what the title template is
Settings, Categories and tags	Tags almost always produce thin, repeated pages. Keeping them out of the index is the usual choice
Settings, Media	Attachment pages should not be in the index. Yoast redirects them by default, but confirm it
Settings, Archives	If the site has a single author, the author archive is a copy of the home page. Switch it off

The title template

It is the setting that pays most and almost nobody touches. The template says how each page title is assembled: usually the page title, a separator and the site name. Write the site name exactly as you want it to appear in Google, and check it on a real page before calling it done.

Write the description by hand on the pages that matter.
Let Yoast generate the rest. A description written for the home page, the contact page and your three best sellers is worth more than filling in two hundred of them.

Handing the sitemap to Google

1. Under **Yoast SEO** and **Settings**, in the **API features** section, confirm the XML sitemaps are on and open the address to see the list.
2. Copy that address and submit it in Search Console. The full route is in **being found on Google**.
3. Go back a week later. The data takes time, and checking the next day only gives the impression it did not work.

Take a backup before touching permalinks.
Changing the address structure after the site is indexed breaks everything already shared. If you really must, set up redirects and know how to go back: **restoring a backup yourself**.

What to leave alone

Advanced structured data, breadcrumbs and integrations with outside tools can stay on their defaults. They are useful, but they are not where you start, and changed without reason they cost more in diagnosis than they give back.

NEED A HAND?

Google cannot find the site and you have tried everything?

Open a support ticket →

SEE ALSO

- **Being found on Google: Business Profile, Search Console and the basics**
- **The best SEO plugins for WordPress and how to choose one**
- **A test site before touching what is live**
- **What Yoast SEO is, and what it actually does**
- **Frequently asked questions about Yoast SEO**
- **Getting your site indexed in Google Search Console, step by step**

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