

# The Keyword Research Checklist for 2026

---

## 1. Seeds & expansion

- ☐ Start from your ICP and the problems they search for, before you open a tool
- ☐ Build a seed list from your product, categories, and customer language
- ☐ Expand seeds with a keyword tool and autocomplete/related searches
- ☐ Pull the keywords your competitors rank for that you don't
- ☐ Mine Search Console for queries you already get impressions on
- ☐ Collect the conversational, question-shaped phrasings people use with AI assistants

## 2. Intent & grouping

- ☐ Classify each keyword by intent (informational, commercial, transactional, navigational)
- ☐ Check the live SERP to confirm the real intent
- ☐ Cluster same-intent keywords into one topic to avoid cannibalization
- ☐ Map each cluster to a funnel stage (TOFU, MOFU, BOFU)
- ☐ Record which SERP features each target returns, including AI Overviews
- ☐ Note where the SERP answers the query outright, since the click may never arrive

## 3. Prioritisation

- ☐ Score by business value, not just search volume
- ☐ Weigh keyword difficulty against your site's authority
- ☐ Prioritise winnable, high-intent terms first
- ☐ Estimate traffic potential for the whole cluster rather than the single head term
- ☐ Check seasonality before committing to a term on annual volume alone
- ☐ Split branded from non-branded so brand demand does not flatter the forecast

## 4. Mapping

- ☐ Map each target keyword or cluster to one page
- ☐ Check the target against existing pages so you don't cannibalize
- ☐ Flag content gaps where you have demand but no page
- ☐ Decide the page type each cluster needs: guide, listicle, comparison, or tool
- ☐ Plan the internal links that will point at each new target page

## 5. Ongoing

- ☐ Track ranking movement for target keywords
- ☐ Refresh the research each quarter as the SERP shifts
- ☐ Capture new keyword opportunities from Search Console queries
- ☐ Re-check intent on your top targets, since SERPs change shape faster than rankings
- ☐ Retire targets that have stopped returning clicks even where rankings held

PipeRocket Digital is a B2B SaaS Marketing Agency specializing in SEO, AI SEO, Paid Search, and Paid Social. We focus on the results clients actually care about: MRR, ARR, and Revenue. If you're looking for a SaaS Marketing Agency, ping us at: <https://piperocket.digital/contact-us/>