Topic	What is it?	Specific Google Ranking Factor?	Explained
301 Redirects	A 301 redirect is a server-side redirection for a permanently changed URL.		While 301 redirects are essential for signalling canonical and passing ranking signals, there is no confirmation that 301 redirects are a ranking factor.
404 & Soft 404 pages	404 errors occur when a user or search crawler tries to access a page that does not appear to exist on a domain.		Google has said that 404s don't affect your site's rankings. "404 page not found" and 301 redirects are preferred by Google to soft 404 errors.
AdSense Usage	AdSense is a Google ad product that allows publishers to monetise their content by displaying targeted advertisements on their website.		Google has confirmed that AdSense is not a ranking factor. The way AdSense ads are used on a page could lead to lower rankings, but that's true of all ads.
Alt Text	Alt text is an HTML image attribute. It allows you to create an alternative text version of your image in the event the image is unable to load or there is an accessibility issue.		Not a ranking factor but good practise for user experience.
AMP	AMP is an HTML framework that helps desktop-optimised sites deliver ultra-fast mobile versions of webpages.		Google has confirmed multiple times that AMP is not a Google ranking factor.
Anchor Text	Anchor text refers to words or phrases that a user clicks on to visit a URL that's linked within a piece of copy.	☑	Using descriptive anchor text when inserting links on a page is a best practice listed in Google's SEO Starter Guide.
Authorship	The person who writes the content.	☑	Users care about the reputation and relevance of a piece's author and it's becoming more and more important to Google.
BBB Rating	The Better Business Bureau (BBB) is a nonprofit, non-government organisation that examines the trustworthiness of a business.		While the importance of trustworthiness for Google rankings is clear, there is no evidence that the algorithms consider BBB ratings a ranking factor.
Bounce Rate	How long users sit on a webpage.		Bounce rate is not a reliable measurement of the relevance of web pages – and Google has confirmed it does not use it for rankings.
Breadcrumb Navigation	Navigation that indicates the page's position in the site hierarchy.	☑	Yes, Google documentation supports that breadcrumbs are used to evaluate web pages.
Canonicalisation	Rel="canonical" is an HTML tag that can be used to tell Google which version of a page to show in search results when multiple versions of the page exist.		Canonicalisation is confirmed to have a connection with search rankings, but that doesn't mean it's a ranking factor.
Chrome Bookmarks	Does Google use data around how many times a site is bookmarked in Chrome as a ranking factor.		Google does not use Chrome bookmarks data as a search ranking signal.
Click Depth	Click depth is the number of clicks it takes to go from a homepage to another page on a website.	☑	Click depth likely is a ranking factor but not a crucial one.
Click-Through Rate	The proportion of visitors to a web page who follow a link and click through to the site.		There is no compelling evidence to support the idea that Google uses CTR as a direct search ranking signal.
Co-Citation	Citations are a type of link. Co-citation helps give a link context. It helps Google understand who's who and whether the link makes sense in the bigger picture.	☑	The complexity of Google's index and ranking algorithms means that co-citation probably carries a lot less weight than it does in academic document scoring, but it is still a ranking factor.
Code To Text Ratio	The volume of code versus the amount of text on that page.		Whilst ratio is not a ranking factor, the quality of your coding, page load speed, and code to text ratio play an indirect role in SEO. More importantly, it affects how users experience your page.
Contact Information	Email, telephone, address information.	☑	Google definitely uses contact information in local listings (citations) as a local ranking factor.
Content	The copy on a website.	☑	Google uses content as a search ranking signal.
Content Length	Word count.		Word count is confirmed to not be a ranking factor.
Core Web Vitals	Core Web Vitals measure page experience signals to ensure an engaging user experience for search users.	☑	Google has confirmed that yes, Core Web Vitals are a ranking factor.
Crawl Errors & Budget	Crawling is the first step on any page's journey to a results page. Search engines have to discover your page before evaluating it and deciding where to place it in the results.		Indexing is required for ranking. But, an increased crawl budget is not responsible for better positions in search results.
Deep Link Ratio	Deep links are any inbound links that point to pages on your website that aren't your homepage.		While links are a confirmed ranking factor, an exact deep link ratio is highly unlikely to be a direct Google ranking factor.
Direct Traffic	Direct traffic is where a person (or not – we'll get to that later) navigates directly to your website's URL versus through another channel, such as a search engine or social media platform.		Google does not use direct traffic as a search ranking signal. It's noisy, easy to manipulate, and difficult to collect and verify.
Disavow Tool	The disavow tool, now located in your Google Search Console, enables you to tell Google not to count spammy links as part of your link profile.		Is using the disavow tool a ranking factor? No. You will not experience any lift in search rankings for using the tool.
Domain Age	Does Google favour older, established domains in its search results?		Google has said domain age is not a ranking factor – and we have no reason to doubt them on this one.
Domain Authority	Authority metrics calculated by third-party tools that have no actual effect on search engine rankings.		Google has noted that they don't call anything they do internally "domain authority."
Domain History	Unless you're lucky enough to register a domain name no one has thought of before, chances are a domain registered today will have a history attached to it.	☑	Domain history is pretty much confirmed to be a ranking factor. That's why Google advises you to do your due diligence and research how a domain was previously used before acquiring it.
Domain Name	URL domain		Your choice of domain name can be an important aspect of your UX and public image. But is not a ranking factor.
Dwell Time	The length of time between clicking the link to view the webpage, and clicking the back button to return to search results, is referred to as dwell time.		Dwell time is a metric. It's more of a check – just one way Google can measure whether its algorithms are providing the best possible search results.
E-A-T (Expertise, Authority, Trust)	Expertise, authoritativeness, and trustworthiness (E-A-T) are important to Google.	☑	Google is committed to ridding its index of harmful misinformation, meaning E-A-T will only continue to grow in importance. Ignore it at your peril.
.edu Links	Governments and educational institutions		A link is a link. And links are a confirmed Google ranking factor. But .edu links are not more powerful.
First Link Priority	If you have two internal links on a single page both linking to another page on your website, does Google value one more than the other?		Your priority in internal linking should always be to facilitate a seamless, intuitive user experience first. Internal links are for helping people move around and navigate your site.
Fresh Content	Keeping content up to date by Google's standards.	☑	When the query demands it, fresh content is a Google ranking factor.
Google Ads	Google's online advertising system used for PPC marketing.		Google is a massive organisation more than capable of keeping these two divisions separate.
Google Analytics	Google Analytics (GA) is a powerful tool that lets website owners learn how users interact with their webpages.		However, the GA code on your site does not send up an SEO bat signal.
Google Search Console	Search Console is a free Google tool that helps you monitor and fix problems with your site's performance in Google search results.		No, Google Search Console is not a ranking factor.
Google Search Quality Rating Guidelines	The Search Quality Evaluator Guidelines are a document used by third-party Quality Raters to inform what changes to Google's Algorithm may improve user experience in search.		Implementing some of the teachings from these guidelines as best practice might help your SEO strategy, by virtue of the improved searcher experience you will provide.
.gov Links	Government website links		Not a ranking factor.
H1	Main title tag	☑	They inform the algorithm's understanding of what the page is about, who it's for, and why it is/is not the best answer for any given query.

Term	Description	Status	Notes
H2-H6	Other title tags	☑	HTML heading tags are an important: • Structural element: that helps readers and search engines navigate the content on each webpage. • Accessibility aid: heading tags help browsers, plug-ins, and assistive technologies navigate the page. • Navigational tool: they can help improve user experience and highlight important information.
HTML Lists	Using the element with child elements creates an unordered list that is typically displayed as a bullet list. The element and children display a numbered list.		Google may use HTML lists as a search ranking signal. If so, it's not nearly as strong a signal as it may have been when HTML, words on the page, and links were nearly all the algorithm had to go on.
HTTPS	HTTPS makes websites safer for users to visit, and that added layer of security is highly valued by Google.	☑	HTTPS is a confirmed Google ranking factor.
Images (Number of)	Adding images to written content can help add context for readers and keep them engaged for longer periods.		There's no evidence to suggest that the number of images on a webpage, whether too many or too few, is inherently a factor for search rankings.
IP Address	A unique string of characters that identifies each computer using the Internet Protocol to communicate over a network.		Maybe in the past, Google experimented with IP-level actions against spammy websites. But it must have found this ineffective because we are not seeing any confirmation from Google representatives that IP addresses, shared hosting, and bad neighborhoods are a part of the algorithm.
Keyword Density	Some SEO tool companies help add to this belief that there's an ideal ratio of keywords to copy that will maximise the chances of earning high rankings.		Keyword density may have worked at one point but is no longer a factor.
Keyword Prominence	Keyword prominence is an SEO best practice that involves using a page's target keyword early in order to send a strong signal to Google about what the page should rank for.	☑	Keyword prominence is a confirmed ranking factor. Google has reinforced time and again that using a keyword toward the beginning of a piece of copy is better, from an SEO standpoint, than if it first appeared further down a page.
Keyword Stemming	Google's ability to recognise different variations of the same word.		While Google is able to recognise keyword "stems," and use them to return more relevant results, it's inaccurate to call keyword stemming a ranking factor.
Keyword Stuffing	Overusing keywords within a piece of content.	✗	Keyword stuffing is a confirmed negative ranking factor.
Language	Does offering different languages on your website affect organic search rankings?	☑	You need to have a common language with the user to answer their query successfully, and Google takes language preferences into account when serving search results. On the other hand, Google states that they don't use your tags, domains, or subdirectories to determine the language or audience.
Link Stability	The stability of a website's links, or the length of time links remain live on a page without being edited, is to generate signals that are used by Google's algorithms.		There's no conclusive evidence that Google measures the rate at which websites modify their outbound links.
Link Velocity	Link velocity refers to a theory that the speed at which a website gains links has the potential to impact rankings, either positively or negatively.		There is no evidence to suggest that Google uses a signal known as link velocity that can negatively impact rankings.
Links (Contextual)	A "contextual link" refers to an inbound link pointing to a URL that's relevant to the content in which the link appears.	☑	Contextual links are probably a Google ranking factor. A link is weighted higher when it's used in context than if it's randomly placed within unrelated content.
Links (Inbound)	Inbound links, or backlinks	☑	To recap, here are the verdicts on all claims based on the evidence we've presented: • Yes - Inbound links are a ranking factor. • No - Quantity of inbound links is not a ranking factor. To be clear, this means just increasing your raw number of backlinks won't help you, especially if the links are low-quality. However, there is one way that quantity can matter: having a large number of great links is always better than having a small number of great links. • Yes - Relevance and quality of the referring domain is a ranking factor.
Links (Internal)	Links from one webpage to another within the same website.	☑	Google's documentation about how search works and its starter guide on how site owners can help Google understand their content explain internal links' importance.
Links (Nofollowed)	Nofollow links are links with a rel="nofollow" HTML tag applied to them. The nofollow tag tells search engines to ignore that link.		Nofollow links are not a Google ranking factor. Their function is to tell search engines not to add additional weight or ranking. That's not to say you should avoid Nofollow links; they are a natural part of a robust digital marketing strategy.
Links (Outbound)	These are the links in your content (the source) that point to a different website (the target).		Here's what we know: • The presence of outbound links, or lack thereof, on its own is not a ranking factor. • The words in outbound link anchor text are used to help Google understand the source page's content – just like every other word on the page. They are no more or less valuable. • Linking to high authority sites is not an indicator of the source page's authority because it's just too easy to game. Your best strategy is to use outbound links in the way Google intends them to be used – to cite sources, to improve user experience, and as endorsements of high-quality content.
Links (Paid)	Bought links for a website.	✗	Google uses links as a ranking signal. However, they explicitly do not want paid links to count. Yes, you can try to hide it from them. But you do so at your own risk – and the fallout can be devastating.
Links (Sitewide)	A sitewide link refers to a static outbound link that appears on every page of a website. They're usually placed either in the header, footer, or navigation menu.	☑	Sitewide links are clearly a possible ranking factor because, in the end, a link is a link. We know Google uses links as a ranking signal. Sitewide links do not have a negative impact on search rankings in and of themselves. There's no reason to disavow sitewide links or ask for them to be removed, except under one condition. If you're working on a website that has a sitewide link pointing to it, and it's search rankings are struggling, it may not be the link itself causing the problem. It could be the anchor text.
Local Citations (NAP)	In local SEO, a citation is a mention of key business information – your name, address, and phone number (NAP) – anywhere else on the web.	☑	Bottom line: It is all but confirmed officially by Google that Google uses local citations as a ranking signal in Local Pack/Finder and localised organic search results.
LSI (Latent Semantic Indexing)	Latent semantic indexing (LSI) is an indexing and information retrieval method used to identify patterns in the relationships between terms and concepts. With LSI, a mathematical technique is used to find semantically related terms within a collection of text (an index) where those relationships might otherwise be hidden (or latent).		While the underlying principles of eliminating noise by determining semantic relevance have surely informed developments in search ranking since LSA/LSI was patented, LSI itself has no useful application in SEO today.
Manual Action	Manual actions get lumped into the ranking factors category because the action refers to adjusting a website's visibility in search results. To be more specific, the action involves demoting or removing a site or specific pages from Google Search.		Although a manual action results in pages or sites being ranked lower or omitted from search results, it is not technically a ranking factor.

Meta Descriptions	The overarching description that is displayed on the SERPs page to entice users to click onto the site.		Google does not use the meta description as a search ranking signal and hasn't since sometime between 1999 and 2003-04. That doesn't mean they aren't an important element of your SEO strategy. The direct benefits of meta descriptions can include: • Improving click-through rates from search results. • Helping to differentiate your content from competitors in the SERPs. • Intriguing and engaging searchers, compelling them to check you out. • Brand exposure.
Meta Keywords	Meta keywords allow you to tell search engines what topics are covered on the page.		Bottom line: Meta keywords are a relic of a bygone SEO era.
Mobile Friendliness	How well the site can be used on a mobile device.	☑	Mobile-friendliness is a confirmed Google ranking factor. If a webpage displays less information on mobile than on desktop, for example, then Google won't have as much context to use for rankings.
MUM	Multitask Unified Model - that it will use internally to help its ranking systems better understand language.	☑	While Google doesn't use MUM as a search ranking signal yet, it most likely could in the future.
Page Speed	Page loading time	☑	Page speed is a confirmed ranking factor for Google's search results. The speed that needs to be met to benefit from this ranking signal is constantly changing. Currently, it can be met by achieving Google's minimum thresholds for Core Web Vitals.
Physical Proximity To Searcher	The idea here is that the distance between a physical location of the business and a searcher is a key ranking factor in local search.	☑	Yes, Google uses proximity/distance as a search ranking signal.
RankBrain	RankBrain's functionality has evolved since its initial introduction. It now allows Google's algorithms to do something that humans do instinctively: relate words to real-world concepts.	☑	Google has confirmed that RankBrain is used to rank search results and is involved in all queries.
Reading Level	How readable the content is and accessible for different reading ages.		While not a confirmed ranking factor, the reading level is critical to content strategy. Every audience has different preferences regarding the complexity and reading level of content.
Reconsideration Requests	Site owners must submit a reconsideration request in order to recover from a manual action.		Reconsideration requests are loosely connected to rankings but it's inaccurate to call them a ranking factor. In fact, there's no guarantee that a site will regain the same rankings it once had after recovering from a penalty.
Relevance, Distance, Prominence	Relevance determines how closely the search user's query matches information about a local business. Distance determines how close the search user is to local businesses based on the user's browser information. Prominence determines how popular a local business is offline. For example, famous museums, landmark hotels, or well-known store brands are also likely to be prominent in local search results.	☑	Prominence, distance, and relevance were confirmed by Google via the Google Business Profile Help Center. In addition to entering your complete business details into Google Business Profile, Google also suggests the following to increase your visibility in local search results. • Verify each of your business locations to increase the likelihood that your business is close to applicable search users. • Keep your business hours up to date and accurate. • Manage and respond to all reviews, both positive and negative. • Add photos that showcase your business, products, and services.
Review Sentiment	Review sentiment reflects the prevailing opinion shared by customers in reviews of a business's products or services.	LOCAL ONLY	Review sentiment is confirmed to not be a ranking factor for organic search rankings, though we do acknowledge it is a factor for local search rankings.
Schema Markup	Schema markup is a type of microdata that creates an enhanced description Google might use in search results as a rich snippet.		Schema improves how sites appear in major search engines.
Social Signals & Shares	Social signals are engagement from social media users with content you have shared from your website.		Google may have used social signals in the past to create better results for users. But social signals seem to be a thing of Google's past.
Spelling & Grammar	The use of proper spelling and grammar within the site content.	☑	Spelling and grammar are not direct Google ranking factors. However: • They are important signals to users of your website about its quality, and you should care about that more than whether the algorithm counts them. • Google is not the only search engine, and they might be ranking factors for other search engines. A perfect editing job may not impact your rankings in Google search, but it can help with other search engines and improve your conversions from search traffic. There's also a correlation between good spelling and grammar and good performance in search.
Subdomains & Subdirectories	Subdomains are sections of your website. Subdirectories, on the other hand, are folders in your domains.		Since you have to verify subdomains separately in Search Console, but not subdirectories, it is safe to assume Google treats subdomains as separate websites.
Syndicated Content	Content Syndication means republishing the same piece of content - an article, a video, an infographic, etc. - on one or more different websites.		If you are using content syndication to reach new audiences on popular networks with high-quality content, you can boost your visibility in search by ranking on other networks. But simply syndicating content will not help the rankings of the original content in search results.
Tabbed Content	In-page tabs and accordions are a type of user interface (UI) control that can improve the user's experience by splitting content into logical sections.		Content is a ranking factor, and you do not devalue that content by enabling users to control what content they see and when. Tabbing the content would basically be the same as not tabbing it. So does it ultimately matter whether that content is tabbed?
Text Formatting	HTML elements to format text	☑	Proper markup will help users and search engines find the most important points of your content.
TF-IDF	Term frequency–inverse document frequency is the more often a word appears in a document collection, the more important it is, and the heavier that term is weighted.		Google has more superior ways to evaluate web pages
Title Tag	Titles used within content on a webpage.	☑	Page titles are a confirmed Google ranking factor, with evidence suggesting the strength ranges from mild to moderate. A title tag is a tool for communicating what a page is about to Google. It helps search algorithms understand what category the page fits into and which queries it may be able to answer.
URLs	Domain link	☑	Google has confirmed that URLs are a minimal search ranking factor.
User Search History	Past history	☑	Based on Google's statements, we conclude user search history is a ranking factor with light impact.
User-Generated Content (UGC)	UGC can be text, images, video, or some other form of content (e.g., blog comments, forum posts, product reviews) that has been created for a brand, business, or publication by someone not associated with that company.	☑	Google doesn't differentiate between content you wrote and content your users wrote. And we already know that content is a ranking factor. Therefore, user-generated content is a confirmed ranking factor. Unfortunately, it can also have a negative impact on your rankings well, in regards to UGC spam.
Website Quality Score	An overarching score of how a site is	☑	While Google has hinted at the possibility of a metric to measure site quality in the future of Search Console, there has not been any confirmation of an organic website quality score to date.
WHOIS	You can choose domain privacy protection if you don't want the names, addresses, phone numbers, etc. of website contacts listed in WhoIs for all the world to see.		There's no evidence that Google ever used domain privacy protection as a ranking factor.

www vs. Non-www	Inclusion or exclusion of the www in a URL		The key to success with www or non-www is to choose one and stay consistent.
XML Sitemaps	An XML sitemap is a list of a website's pages that assists Google with discovering new URLs and recognising when existing ones have changed.		XML sitemaps are known to have an effect on indexing, but not ranking.