GUIDE: How To Correctly Configure Yoast SEO Plugin for Wordpress Sites

(This guide was created by Jerry West from SEORevolution.com – an incredibly experienced SEO who we highly respect & recommend).

Note that some edits and additions have been made by Alex Miller

My team and I have tested just about every plugin on the market, the worst being SEO Pressor. Yoast's plugin can fix a lot of problems mentioned above and has the best functionality in our opinion.

*When you work on a site using Thesis, turn off everything that has to do with SEO in the site options. That means robots meta tags, canonical URLs, etc. **Let the plugin do the SEO work and don't rely on the theme for it.** Also, watch out for the Title Tag Settings; the default (-) can create a problem. I make sure to uncheck the "Append Site name to page titles" box, and put a space there instead. The last thing I want is the SEO data transporter plugin to mess up titles. If it does mess up, it takes a while to fix.

Here are settings *I normally use*, keep in mind that this is not one size fits all.

DASHBOARD
[unchecked] Disable the Advanced part of the WordPress SEO meta box.

TITLES & METAS
General

[unchecked] Force rewrite titles

[CHECKED] Noindex subpages of archives

[unchecked] Use meta keywords tag

This one really doesn't matter, sometimes we leave it on.
[unchecked] Add noodp meta robots tag sitewide

[unchecked] Add noydir meta robots tag sitewide

[CHECKED] Hide RSD Links

[CHECKED] Hide WLW Manifest Links

[CHECKED] Hide Shortlink for posts

[CHECKED] Hide RSS Links*

*Your call on these. If you never use them, then check. If you have RSS subscribers, don't hide it. Why make Google crawl these links when it is "not for the user"? This is all about keeping your site minimal.
Home

Post Types

Nothing special in here. Media will be redirecting as an attachment later.

Taxonomies

Categories:

Title template: %%category%% %%page%%

The page numbers are crucial to avoiding duplicate content.

Meta description template: %%category_description%%

[checked] noindex, follow

<u>**Important:**</u>

For categories, before no-indexing them, <u>CHECK</u> your analytics to see if you are getting traffic to those pages from SEO. If it's miniscule, noindex your categories…they are likely just thin, low-quality duplicate pages. The only times we index them is if you have traffic coming to those pages or there's unique content on those category pages – but that requires customization.

[unchecked] Hide

Tags:

Title template:

Meta description template:

[checked] noindex, follow

****After I've done this, I now delete all tags. Google wastes time crawling these useless pages. It only dilutes your link juice. Don't allow Google to index garbage pages. It isn't good for you.

Format:

I rarely have custom post types or indexed media, so I leave it alone. Tweak this to your needs.

Other

Author Archives:

[CHECKED] Disable the author archives

I don't have multi-author sites so this is useless for Google to index.

Date Archives:

[CHECKED] Disable the date-based archives.

If the site is using the permalink structure of /year/mo/da/postname/ – I would immediately change this. This is the guide and tool I used to mass 301 URL structures: http://yoast.com/change-wordpress-permalink-structure/.

SOCIAL – nothing important in here

XML SITEMAPS

Sitemaps is a whole separate area and for best results, should be done manually as the rewards are well worth the effort. Crawls are deeper than we have ever seen before.

We recommend that you do NOT use Yoast SEO Plugin for sitemaps, it's just not flexible enough. **Switch this feature off inside Yoast** *and use* Google XML Sitemaps *instead.*

Here are some brief guidelines:

- *Assign a priority of 0.6 > 0.9 to ONLY your most important pages (main category files, main article pages etc). Home page can be 0.9 or 1.0*

- *The other pages on your site should be assigned a low priority of between 0.1 > 0.4 (0.1 for contact, about, privacy etc – 0.4 for less updated/important categories, articles and so forth)*

By doing this, you'll achieve much deeper crawls because instead of giving every page a 0.5, you're prioritizing fewer pages with a higher priority and the rest with a lower priority. Google basically responds MUCH better than this than a flat-rate across the board or overinflated priorities to pages that are not important and/or don't get updated frequently. Be honest when you do this! This will result in much deeper crawls, which is what you want.

Permalinks
[UNCHECKED] Strip the category base (usually /category/) from the category URL.

[CHECKED] Enforce a trailing slash on all category and tag URLs

I want to be consistent.
[CHECKED] Redirect attachment URLs to parent post URL.

This gets rid of all the thin content pages from images on all the blog posts. I can't believe this is not a default feature of WordPress.
[unchecked] Redirect ugly URLs to clean permalinks. (Not recommended in many cases!)

Note – we don't change anything else in Yoast or touch it…those settings have never been relevant for us.