



The audit *decision* guide

Throughout, “the response” means the raw HTML your server sends before any JavaScript runs. It’s what a non-rendering reader gets, and where most JavaScript SEO problems hide, or don’t.

AS A GENERAL RULE...

Discovery goes in the response & interaction can wait for the render.

Anything a bot needs before interaction belongs in the response. Anything that only matters after someone interacts can render client-side.

LEANS RESPONSE

Would a non-rendering reader understand the page without it?

- ◆ Title, canonical, meta robots
- ◆ Structured data
- ◆ H1 and core copy
- ◆ Internal links

RENDER’S FINE

Does it only matter once someone clicks, scrolls, or signs in?

- ◆ Cart state
- ◆ Personalized blocks
- ◆ Open/closed UI
- ◆ Post-interaction content

Three ways to check & review

1

Start the crawl

Crawl with JS rendering on, then sort by the delta — where do rendered and response disagree? Anything only in the rendered column is JavaScript-dependent.

Tools: Screaming Frog or Sitebulb, JS rendering mode

2

Eyeball your templates

One page per major template: home, category, PDP, article. Real vs cosmetic — missing copy, nav, or links is real. Unstyled but present is fine.

Tools: NoJS Side-by-Side bookmarklet & Rendering Difference Engine

3

Confirm in GSC

URL Inspection, test live URL, view tested page, HTML. Search it for your H1, body copy, and internal links. That’s what Googlebot actually rendered.

AI crawlers don’t render — the response check is the proxy

Elements to consider

CRAWL & INDEX

- ◆ Title tag
- ◆ Meta description
- ◆ Meta robots
- ◆ Canonical
- ◆ Hreflang

CONTENT

- ◆ H1 and heading order
- ◆ Core body copy
- ◆ Images and alt text
- ◆ Structured data (JSON-LD)

LINKS & ROUTING

- ◆ Internal links
- ◆ Primary navigation
- ◆ Pagination on real URLs
- ◆ Unique URL per view (SPA)

STATUS & RENDER HEALTH

- ◆ Status codes, soft 404s
- ◆ Redirects: server, not JS
- ◆ Valid <head>
- ◆ Lazy-loaded core content