

SEO Specialist interview questions

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What to expect

Interviews for SEO Specialist roles usually test three things: whether you can actually run a technical audit and read the data, whether you can explain search concepts to people who aren't in marketing, and how you've handled a ranking or traffic problem under time pressure. Expect a mix of tool-specific and judgement-based questions rather than pure theory.

- **Technical:** Questions about auditing site structure, crawlability, page speed and indexation issues using tools like Screaming Frog and Google Search Console.
- **Analytical:** Questions about interpreting traffic and ranking data in Google Analytics or SEMrush, and reporting it to non-technical stakeholders.
- **Behavioural:** Questions about past projects, collaboration with content teams, and handling competing priorities.
- **Scenario:** Hypothetical situations such as a sudden ranking drop or an algorithm update, testing diagnostic thinking under pressure.
- **Client-facing:** Questions about explaining SEO value and timelines to stakeholders who may be sceptical of long-term, unpredictable results.

Most SEO interviews open with a walkthrough of your recent work and tools you use daily, move into a scenario or technical problem (sometimes a live audit of a sample site or screenshot), then close with behavioural questions about working with content or development teams and how you communicate results upward.

1. Walk me through how you'd run a technical SEO audit on a new website.

Why they ask

This checks whether you have a repeatable, logical process rather than a scattered checklist, and whether you know which tools to use for which issue.

How to structure your answer

Process walkthrough: state the tools you'd use at each stage (crawl, index check, on-page review, performance check), in the order you'd actually do them, and what you'd prioritise fixing first.

Example answer

"I'd start with a full crawl in Screaming Frog to map the site's structure and flag broken links, duplicate titles and missing meta descriptions. Then I'd check Google Search Console for indexation issues and manual actions, and review Core Web Vitals for performance problems. Once I have that picture, I'd prioritise fixes by impact: indexation and crawl blockers first, since they affect every other page, then on-page issues on high-traffic pages, then lower-priority items like image alt text."

2. Tell me about a time you diagnosed a drop in organic traffic or rankings.

Why they ask

Ranking drops are common and the interviewer wants to know you can stay methodical rather than guessing.

How to structure your answer

STAR: describe the situation, the specific traffic or ranking change you noticed, the diagnostic steps you took, and the outcome.

Example answer

"I noticed a steady decline in organic traffic to a client's blog over a few weeks, visible in Google Analytics. I checked Google Search Console for manual actions or crawl errors first and found none, then compared the timing against known algorithm update dates and against our own site changes. It turned out a recent template change had accidentally added noindex tags to several category pages during a migration. Once I flagged it to the development team and the tags were removed, rankings and traffic recovered over the following weeks."

3. A stakeholder asks why SEO results are taking three months to show up. How do you respond?

Why they ask

Tests your ability to manage expectations and communicate technical timelines to a non-technical audience without sounding defensive.

How to structure your answer

Judgement under pressure: acknowledge the concern, explain the reasoning in plain terms, and describe how you'd keep them informed in the meantime.

Example answer

"I'd acknowledge that the timeline feels slow compared to paid channels, then explain that search engines need time to recrawl and re-evaluate pages, and that authority signals build gradually rather than instantly. I'd show them leading indicators we can already track, like improved crawl coverage or ranking movement for target keywords, so they can see progress before the traffic numbers catch up. I'd also agree on a realistic check-in point rather than leaving it open-ended."

4. How do you decide which keywords to target for a client with limited content resources?

Why they ask

This tests prioritisation and commercial thinking, not just keyword research mechanics.

How to structure your answer

Process walkthrough: explain the criteria you weigh (search volume, competition, intent, business value) and how you translate that into a content plan.

Example answer

"I look at search volume alongside keyword difficulty in SEMrush or Ahrefs, but I weight commercial intent and relevance to the business more heavily than raw volume. A lower-volume keyword that matches a service the business actually sells is often worth more than a high-volume term with vague intent. I then map those keywords against existing content to find gaps, so writers aren't starting from nothing, and sequence the plan by expected impact and effort."

5. How have you worked with content writers or developers who don't have an SEO background?

Why they ask

SEO rarely works in isolation, so this checks collaboration skills and how you explain technical requirements clearly.

How to structure your answer

STAR: describe the working relationship, a specific point of friction or education needed, and how you resolved it.

Example answer

"On one project the content team was writing strong copy but titles and headers weren't structured for search. Rather than rewriting their work myself, I put together a short, practical brief template covering title length, header hierarchy and internal linking, with examples from pages that were already ranking well. That let them apply it themselves going forward, and it meant fewer rounds of

back-and-forth edits.”

6. What do you think makes you well suited to this role right now?

Why they ask

This probes your awareness of the market you're entering and whether your skills match current demand, rather than just reciting a generic pitch.

How to structure your answer

I bring a strong mix of technical and analytical skills to the SEO field, including [specific skill], [specific skill] and [specific skill].

Example answer

“I think the role needs a fairly unusual combination: comfort with data and tools like Search Console and SEMrush, technical enough understanding to talk to developers, and enough writing sense to guide content. Not many people build all three at once. I've spent time on both the technical audit side and the content collaboration side, so I can move between a crawl report and a stakeholder conversation without needing a specialist to translate for me.”