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What Yoast SEO is, and what it actually does

On-Page SEO & Yoast

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On-Page SEO & Yoast Created on **September 27, 2026** 3 min read



Yoast SEO is a WordPress plugin that gathers, into a single panel, the technical settings that help search engines understand a site: titles, descriptions, sitemap, structured data and indexing rules. It has a free version, which is the one nearly everybody uses, and it installs like any other plugin.

> **Installing Yoast is not doing SEO.**
> It tidies the house: it does not pick the words people search for, it does not write the content, it does not earn links from other sites and it does not make the server faster. No green score inside WordPress replaces any of that.

What it handles for you

Feature	What it does
Title and description	Sets the text shown in the search result, instead of whatever the theme invents, with automatic templates per page type
XML sitemap	Generates and keeps up to date the list of addresses handed to search engines
Structured data	Markup saying whether this is an article, a product, a local business or an FAQ
Indexing and canonical	Which pages enter the index, and which version of repeated content is the official one
Social sharing	The image and text that appear when someone pastes the address into Facebook or WhatsApp
robots file and .htaccess	Lets you edit them from inside WordPress, without opening the file manager
Internal links	Counts how many links a page receives from within the site itself

The traffic lights, and what they really measure

Yoast puts two coloured dots under every page: one for the **SEO analysis** and one for **readability**. They are checklists, not the opinion of Google.

Signal	What it means
SEO analysis	Compares the text with the key phrase you typed: whether it is in the title, the address, the first paragraph, the images
Readability	Looks at sentence length, passive voice, subheadings and long paragraphs. It is writing advice, not search advice
Green	You met the checklist. It does not mean the page will do well
Orange or red	An item is missing. Sometimes ignoring it is the right call

Green is not a position.
No plugin knows the Google algorithm and none can guarantee you a place. Stuffing repetitions into the text to light up the green dot makes the text worse for the person reading it, and that is the person who decides whether to buy.

The free version and the paid one

The free version covers the essentials above and is enough for the overwhelming majority of sites. There is a paid version, called **Premium**, and artificial-intelligence extras sold separately. They are products **of Yoast**, the company that makes the plugin, and they are bought directly from them. We neither sell nor resell them.

The rule that avoids most of the trouble

Never two SEO plugins at once. Both try to control titles, sitemap and canonical, and WordPress ends up taking contradictory orders. If you are still deciding which to install, see **the best SEO plugins for WordPress and how to choose one**.

What is not the plugin's job, but ours

Speed, uptime and a valid certificate all count for search engines, and no plugin fixes them. If the site is slow, see **what actually makes a difference**. If the padlock is missing, see **the causes, in order**.

NEED A HAND?

Site is slow and you suspect the plugin is not the problem?

Ask us to look →

SEE ALSO

- The best SEO plugins for WordPress and how to choose one
- Being found on Google: Business Profile, Search Console and the basics
- How to install WordPress in a few clicks
- The first Yoast SEO settings to get right
- Frequently asked questions about Yoast SEO
- Yoast SEO Premium and AI+: what they add, and where to buy them

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