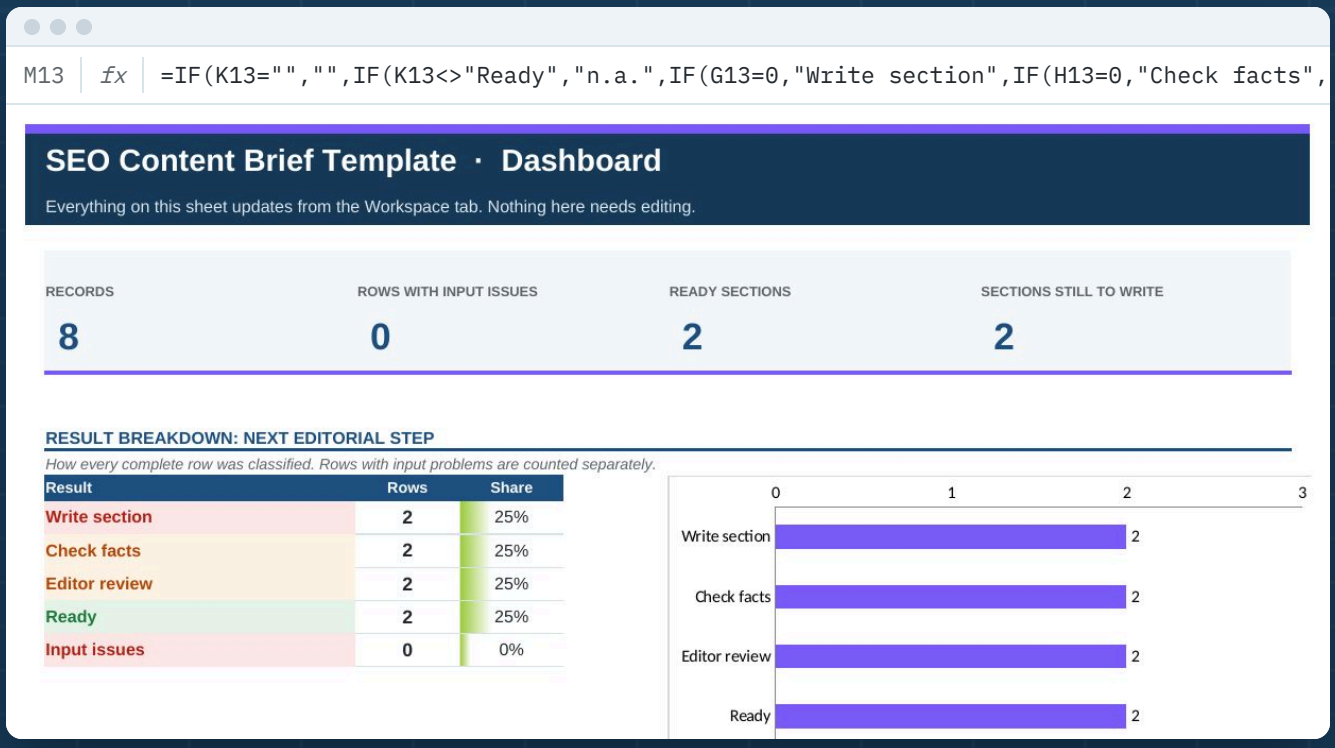
OptimizationTheory.com

Content SEO Toolkit, resource 19

SEO Content Brief Template

A content brief built for Google and AI answers: real questions, original evidence, sources and a three-step approval workflow.

Built for the DataForSEO API: Labs: Keyword Overview



Field guide, v3.0, November 2026

Jourdan Rombough, optimizationtheory.com

What this template decides

Which sections of a page are ready to publish, and what each unfinished section needs next: writing, fact-checking or editor approval.

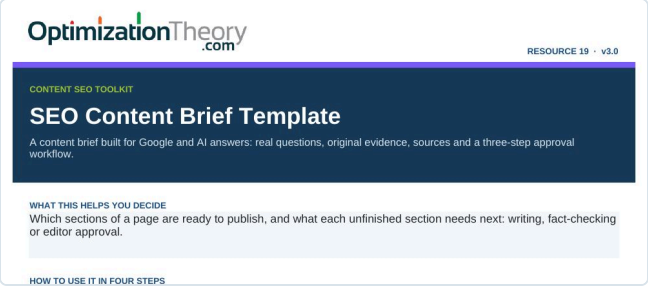
Most SEO content briefs are a keyword, a word count and a list of competitor headings. That produces content that looks like everything else on page one, which is exactly what neither Google nor AI answer engines want to cite.

This SEO content brief template is organized around the questions a real audience asks, the original evidence you'll bring to each one, and the source that supports it. Each section moves through drafted, fact-checked and approved, and the template tells you the next editorial step for every section so a brief doubles as a production tracker.

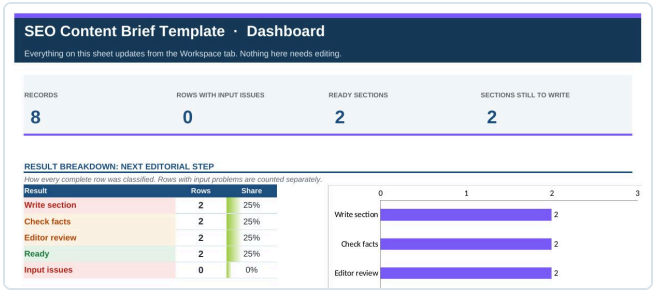
Who it's for

- Content leads briefing writers or freelancers
- SEOs building pages meant to be cited in AI answers
- Editors who need a fact-check trail
- Subject matter experts contributing original evidence

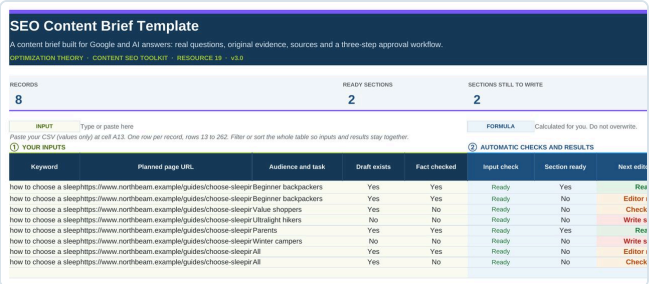
What's in the workbook



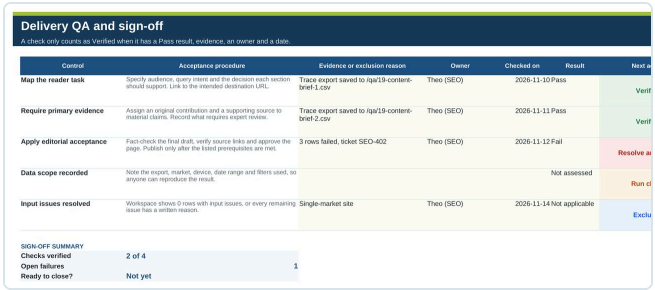
Start Here. Purpose, four-step setup and colour key.



Dashboard. KPIs, charts, Top 10 and an automatic action list.



Workspace. The working table, room for 250 rows.



Delivery QA. Evidence, owner and date for each validation step.

How the calculation works

Section ready = 1 only when drafted, fact-checked and approved are all 1. Next editorial step returns Write section, Check facts, Editor review or Ready in that order, so the first missing step is always the one shown.

The key formula, as written in the workbook

```
=IF(K13="","",IF(K13<>"Ready","n.a.",IF(G13=0,"Write section",IF(H13=0,"Check facts",IF(I13=0,"Edito
r review","Ready")))))
```

Result column	Plain-English formula	What it tells you
Section ready	IF(AND(Draft exists=1,Fact checked=1,Editor approved=1),1,0)	All three editorial steps completed with the required evidence fields.
Next editorial step	IF(Draft exists=0,"Write section",IF(Fact checked=0,"Check facts",IF(Editor approved=0,"Editor review","Ready")))	First incomplete step in the editorial workflow.

The results you'll see

Write section | Check facts | Editor review | Ready

Green means the row meets the checks, red means fix it first, amber needs a human review and blue marks an opportunity. Rows with missing or out-of-range inputs show in the Input check column and are left out of the results until fixed.

How to use it, step by step

1

Start from questions, not headings

List the questions your audience actually asks: sales calls, support tickets, People Also Ask, your AI prompt panel.

2

Name the original evidence

For each question, write what you'll add that others can't: your data, tests, photos, expert quotes.

3

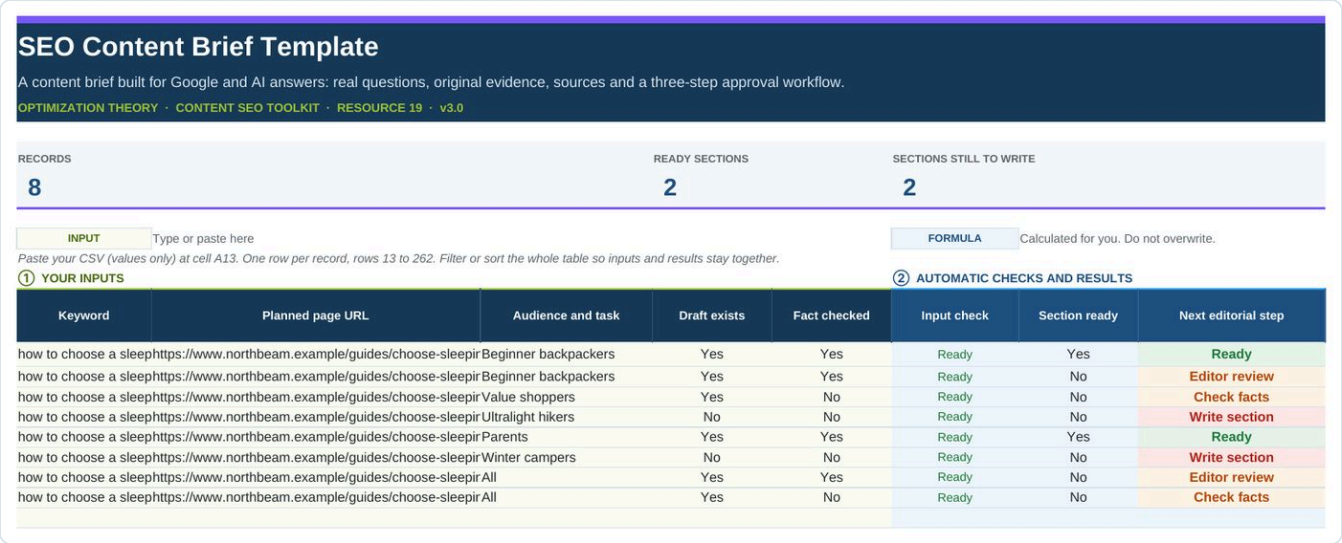
Attach a source

Every factual section needs a source: a URL, a document or an internal report.

4

Move sections through review

Mark drafted, fact-checked and approved as 1 or 0. The Next step column tells the team what's blocking each section.



SEO Content Brief Template

A content brief built for Google and AI answers: real questions, original evidence, sources and a three-step approval workflow.

OPTIMIZATION THEORY · CONTENT SEO TOOLKIT · RESOURCE 19 · v3.0

RECORDS	READY SECTIONS	SECTIONS STILL TO WRITE
8	2	2

INPUT Type or paste here — FORMULA Calculated for you. Do not overwrite.

Paste your CSV (values only) at cell A13. One row per record, rows 13 to 262. Filter or sort the whole table so inputs and results stay together.

① YOUR INPUTS — ② AUTOMATIC CHECKS AND RESULTS

Keyword	Planned page URL	Audience and task	Draft exists	Fact checked	Input check	Section ready	Next editorial step
how to choose a sleep	https://www.northbeam.example/guides/choose-sleepir	Beginner backpackers	Yes	Yes	Ready	Yes	Ready
how to choose a sleep	https://www.northbeam.example/guides/choose-sleepir	Beginner backpackers	Yes	Yes	Ready	No	Editor review
how to choose a sleep	https://www.northbeam.example/guides/choose-sleepir	Value shoppers	Yes	No	Ready	No	Check facts
how to choose a sleep	https://www.northbeam.example/guides/choose-sleepir	Ultralight hikers	No	No	Ready	No	Write section
how to choose a sleep	https://www.northbeam.example/guides/choose-sleepir	Parents	Yes	Yes	Ready	Yes	Ready
how to choose a sleep	https://www.northbeam.example/guides/choose-sleepir	Winter campers	No	No	Ready	No	Write section
how to choose a sleep	https://www.northbeam.example/guides/choose-sleepir	All	Yes	Yes	Ready	No	Editor review
how to choose a sleep	https://www.northbeam.example/guides/choose-sleepir	All	Yes	No	Ready	No	Check facts

The Workspace tab with the worked example. Lime cells are inputs; blue cells are formulas.

Fill it with DataForSEO

This template is built to run on **DataForSEO Labs: Keyword Overview**: search volume, monthly history, difficulty and intent for a list of keywords.

This is a sign-off workflow. DataForSEO responses are the evidence you attach; the human checks stay manual by design.

1. Request the data

```
POST https://api.dataforseo.com/v3/dataforseo_labs/google/keyword_overview/live
[
  {
    "keywords": [
      "your keyword 1",
      "your keyword 2"
    ],
    "location_code": 2840,
    "language_code": "en"
  }
]
```

2. Save the full JSON response

Save the complete response, not just the task ID, next to the template folder.

3. Convert it to the input CSV

The script in the Automation folder runs offline: no API call, no credentials.

```
python3 Automation/dataforseo_import.py import --template 19 --csv --input my-filled.csv --output my
-inputs.csv
```

Fills automatically	You add
Keyword	Planned page URL, Audience and task, Section question, Original evidence plan, Supporting source, Draft exists, Fact checked, Editor approved

Source reference fills automatically with the task ID, endpoint, location, language, device and snapshot time, so every row is traceable. Paste the finished CSV at Workspace cell A13. Estimate the cost first with the DataForSEO Cost Calculator (template 38).

Input dictionary

Keep the CSV columns in this order and paste values at Workspace cell A13. A missing observation stays blank; use 0 only for a measured zero or a verified No.

CSV field	Column	Meaning and rule	Typical source
`keyword`	Keyword	Exact query in the selected country and language.	DataForSEO: keyword
`page_url`	Planned page URL	Approved new or existing destination.	Your records or manual review
`audience`	Audience and task	Who needs the page and what decision they need to make.	Your records or manual review
`question`	Section question	One actual reader question to answer in this section.	Your records or manual review
`original_evidence`	Original evidence plan	Named dataset, expert input, demonstration or first-hand example.	Your records or manual review
`source_url`	Supporting source	Primary source to verify this section. Use an accessible URL.	Your records or manual review
`drafted`	Draft exists	1 after the section is written. 1 = Yes, 0 = No.	Your records or manual review
`fact_checked`	Fact checked	1 after claims and calculations are checked. 1 = Yes, 0 = No.	Your records or manual review
`approved`	Editor approved	1 after the editor accepts the section. 1 = Yes, 0 = No.	Your records or manual review
`source_ref`	Source reference	Task ID, export filename and observation scope. Retain the untouched source response separately. Optional.	DataForSEO: source_ref

The worked example

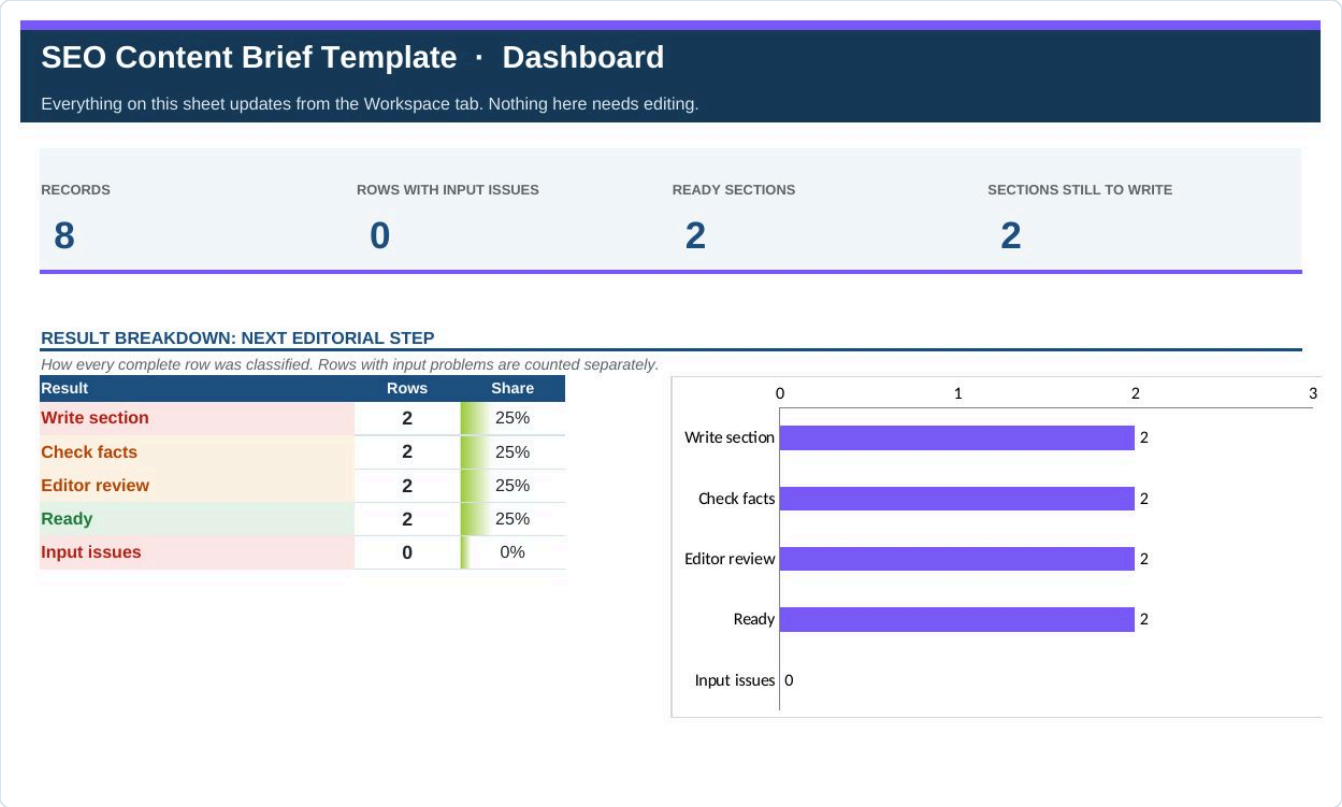
Every workbook ships filled with data from Northbeam Outdoor, a fictional outdoor-gear retailer. This one has 8 example rows.

8	0	2	2
Records	Rows with input issues	Ready sections	Sections still to write

In the example sleeping bag guide, two sections are fully ready, two still need writing, two are waiting on fact checks and two are with the editor. That's a realistic picture of a brief halfway through production.

Result breakdown

Result	Rows	Share
Write section	2	25%
Check facts	2	25%
Editor review	2	25%
Ready	2	25%
Input issues	0	0%



The Dashboard updates automatically from the Workspace tab.

Reading the result honestly

The brief is complete when it reduces guessing for the writer and defines an inspectable answer.

Limits. Keyword volume does not prove a section belongs in the brief. No text pattern guarantees an AI citation.

Mistakes to avoid

Copying competitor headings. If your outline is the average of page one, your page will be too. Lead with questions and evidence.

No original evidence. AI answers cite pages that add something verifiable. A brief without a field test, data point or expert input produces a page with nothing to cite.

Skipping fact checks. Unchecked claims are the fastest way to lose trust, and the hardest to fix after publishing.

Tips from the field

Pull questions from the AI prompt research template so the brief targets AI answers too.

Run the answer evidence audit on the published page.

Keep one brief per URL and update it when you refresh the page.

Questions people ask

What should an SEO content brief include?

The target keyword and URL, the audience, the questions to answer, the original evidence for each, supporting sources, and a review workflow. This template adds a section-level readiness tracker.

How is a GEO content brief different?

It puts more weight on answering specific questions clearly, citing sources and adding original, verifiable evidence, which is what AI answer engines tend to quote and cite.

How long should a content brief be?

As long as it needs to give a writer clear direction. One row per question or section usually works well.

Can freelancers use this template?

Yes. Share the XLSX or upload it to Google Sheets; the workflow columns make handoffs clear.

Templates that work well with this one

Answer Evidence Audit Template

Check every claim for a supporting source, original value, clarity and freshness, so AI answers can quote and cite it.

AI Prompt Research Template

Turn real customer tasks and keywords into a weighted prompt panel for ChatGPT, Perplexity, Gemini and AI Overviews.

SEO Content Calendar Template

Track owners, due dates and estimated vs completed hours, and flag overdue work automatically.

Content Audit Template

Score every URL by lost clicks, conversions and links, choose keep, refresh, merge or retire, and catch the risky calls.

SERP Overlap Keyword Clustering Template

Decide whether two keywords belong on one page or two by measuring how much their Google results overlap.

Keyword Mapping Template

Assign every keyword to exactly one URL and catch conflicting assignments before they become cannibalization.

Read the full tutorial online: **optimizationtheory.com/download-view/seo-content-brief-template/**
Get all six templates in the **Content SEO Toolkit**, or all 40 in the **Complete SEO & GEO Toolkit**.