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Free Template

Topic Map Template: Plan Your Shelf of Pages

One main service, about 20 connected pages, and a linking plan, in a template you can fill in one sitting.

A fill-in topic map that turns one main service into a shelf of connected pages, plus a starter map for a local business and a linking plan. Finish it and you know your next 20 pages and how they link.



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SEO since 2018 · I help founders get customers from Google + AI search
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How to use it

1. Read section 1 so you know what Google has and hasn't said about topic authority.
 2. Fill the template in section 2 for your one main service.
 3. Compare with the starter map in section 3, then follow the linking rules in section 4.
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What Google has actually said

In May 2023 Google published 'Understanding news topic authority'. It describes a system that helps find expert sources for news searches in areas like health, politics and finance, using signals such as how well-known a publication is for a topic or place, original reporting that others cite, and source reputation. That post is about news.

Google has not published a general 'topical authority' score for all sites. What it does say, in the SEO Starter Guide, is that links help users and search engines find other parts of your site, and that link text tells them what the linked page is about.

So treat the shelf idea as practical advice: cover one subject fully, link the pages together, and stay on that subject. It's a sensible way to be the most useful site for your customers, not a documented ranking factor for every site.

The topic map template

One main service per map. If you sell three services, make three maps.

Topic map (blank)

MAIN SERVICE (the shelf): [e.g. roof repair]

HUB PAGE: /[service] (the service page everything links back to)

1. COST PAGES (buyers comparing price)

- [service] cost
- [service] cost by [type / size / material]
- [option A] vs [option B] cost

2. PROBLEM PAGES (people about to call someone)

- why is my [thing] [problem]?
- is [problem] an emergency?
- can I fix [problem] myself?
- [problem] causes

3. COMPARISON PAGES (buyers deciding)

- [option A] vs [option B]
- repair or replace [thing]?
- best [material / type] for [situation]

4. HOW-TO AND LEARN PAGES (future buyers)

- how long does [thing] last?
- how to choose a [service provider]
- [process] step by step

5. LOCAL PAGES (only if you serve more than one area)

- [service] in [city 1] (real local details, not a copy)
- [service] in [city 2]

6. TRUST PAGES

- [service] examples / case photos
- [service] FAQ
- pricing / how quotes work

OFF THE SHELF (don't write these): [topics outside your service]

Fill each group with real questions from Search Console, People also ask and your customers.
Aim for about 20 to start.

Tracking sheet columns

Page title | Group | Main keyword | Intent | Links to hub? | Links from hub? | Status (idea / brief / draft / live) | Published date

Paste into a spreadsheet. One row per page.

A starter map for a local roofer

An example to copy the shape of. Swap in your service and your customers' real questions.

Group	Page	Intent
Hub	Roof repair in [city]	Buy / visit
Cost	How much does roof repair cost?	Compare
Cost	Roof replacement cost by material	Compare
Cost	Metal vs shingle roof cost	Compare
Problem	Why is my roof leaking after rain?	Learn, close to buy
Problem	Is a roof leak an emergency?	Learn, close to buy
Problem	Missing shingles: what to do	Learn, close to buy
Problem	Can I fix a roof leak myself?	Learn
Comparison	Repair or replace your roof?	Compare
Comparison	Best roofing material for [climate]	Compare
How-to	How long does a roof last?	Learn
How-to	How to choose a roofer (questions to ask)	Compare
How-to	What happens during a roof inspection	Learn
Local	Roof repair in [nearby city]	Buy / visit

Group	Page	Intent
Trust	Roof repair photos: before and after	Compare
Trust	Roof repair FAQ	Learn
Trust	How our quotes work	Buy

Link the shelf together

☐ Every page on the map links to the hub page.

The hub is the page you want customers to land on. Google's guide says links help users and search engines find pages.

☐ The hub links to every page in the map, grouped by heading.

So no page is an orphan that only a sitemap knows about.

☐ Pages in the same group link to each other where it helps the reader.

A cost page should point to the comparison a buyer reads next.

☐ Link text says what the page is ('roof leak repair cost'), not 'click here'.

Google says link text tells users and Google what the linked page is about.

☐ Nothing on the shelf is off-topic.

Practical advice: a roofer writing about crypto doesn't help roofing buyers, and it dilutes what the site is about.

☐ Publish steadily and update the hub as pages go live.

Honest answer on timing: nobody can promise how long this takes. Expect months, not weeks.

Sources

- Google Search Central blog: Understanding news topic authority (May 2023) — <https://developers.google.com/search/blog/2023/05/understanding-news-topic-authority>
- Google Search Central: SEO Starter Guide (links and link text) — <https://developers.google.com/search/docs/fundamentals/seo-starter-guide>
- theStacc — <https://thestacc.com>

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