

Etsy SEO Cheat Sheet & 15-Point Audit Checklist

Stage 1 of the course: find out exactly why your listings aren't showing up before you touch a single tag.

Most sellers try to fix SEO by guessing: add more tags, change a word in the title, wait, hope. This guide replaces the guessing with a fixed order of checks, and the checklist that follows turns it into something you can literally tick off, listing by listing.

Part 1 — The Cheat Sheet

How Etsy actually ranks a listing

Etsy's search ranks listings mainly on four things: relevance (does your title/tags/category match the exact words the buyer typed), listing quality score (click-through rate and conversion rate for that listing specifically), recency (newly listed or recently renewed items get a temporary visibility boost), and customer experience (shop-wide reviews, shipping time, response rate). SEO work mostly targets the first two - the other two are earned over time by running the shop well.

The title formula

[Primary keyword phrase] , [secondary descriptor] , [use case / who it's for]

Lead with the exact phrase a buyer would type, not your brand name or a clever pun. "Boho Wall Art Printable, Botanical Line Drawing, Living Room Decor" outperforms "Sarah's Studio - Beautiful Leaf Print" every time, because the first one matches search intent and the second one matches nothing anyone actually searches for.

The tags formula

- Use all 13 tag slots - every empty slot is a missed match.
- Mix broad tags ("wall art") with long-tail tags ("boho leaf line art print") - broad tags bring volume, long-tail tags bring buyers who are ready to purchase.
- Never repeat a word already used in the title inside a tag - Etsy already indexes title words, so a repeated tag is a wasted slot.
- Validate every tag against Etsy's own search bar autocomplete before using it - if autocomplete doesn't suggest it, real buyers probably aren't typing it.

Category and attributes

Pick the most specific category available, not the closest parent category. Fill in every attribute field Etsy offers for that category (color, size, occasion, room, style) - each filled attribute is another way a buyer's filter search can find the listing, and it directly feeds the relevance score.

The description front-load rule

The first two lines of the description should answer "what is this and who is it for" in plain language, using the primary keyword naturally. Etsy's algorithm and impatient buyers both stop reading fast - back-loading the useful information into paragraph three helps neither.

Three mistakes that quietly kill rankings

- Keyword-stuffing the title until it reads like nonsense - Etsy's relevance algorithm favors natural phrasing over a wall of disconnected keywords.
- Letting a listing sit untouched for a year or more - stale listings lose the recency boost and tend to drift down search results even with good tags.
- Copy-pasting the same tag set across unrelated products - tags need to match that specific listing, not just the general shop niche.

Part 2 — The 15-Point Audit Checklist

Run this against your weakest-performing listings first. Check off what's already true - whatever's left unchecked is your priority list for Stage 2.

- 1** Title starts with the primary keyword phrase
Not the shop name, not a pun - the exact words a buyer would type first.

- 2** Title uses the available character space meaningfully
Not padded with repeated or unrelated words just to fill space.

- 3** All 13 tag slots are filled
Every empty slot is a missed match opportunity.

- 4** No word is duplicated between the title and the tags
Etsy already indexes title words - repeating them wastes a tag slot.

- 5** Tags mix broad and long-tail phrases
Broad tags bring volume, long-tail tags bring buyers ready to purchase.

- 6** Every tag has been checked against Etsy's search autocomplete
If autocomplete doesn't suggest it, buyers likely aren't searching it.

- 7** The most specific category available is selected
Not the closest parent category - go as deep as the category tree allows.

- 8** All relevant attribute fields are filled in
Color, size, occasion, room, style - each one is a filter buyers can search by.

- 9** The first photo passes the thumbnail test
Zoom out until it's postage-stamp sized - is it still clear what it is?

- 10** The description opens by stating what it is and who it's for
In plain language, within the first two lines.

- 11** The primary keyword appears naturally in the first two lines of the description
Not stuffed - just present, the way a person would actually write it.

- 12** Price is competitive against the top 10 results for the main keyword
Check the actual current search results, not last month's numbers.

- 13** The listing has been updated or renewed within the last 6 months
Stale listings lose Etsy's recency boost.

- 14** The listing is placed in a logical shop section
Helps both browsing buyers and Etsy's own categorization.

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The description has no broken links or outdated information
Especially processing times, sizing, or seasonal availability.

Scoring your listing

12-15 checked	Solid foundation. Small refinements only - move on to Stage 2 for the tag rewrite.
7-11 checked	The title and tags block are the likely culprits - prioritize items 1-6 first.
0-6 checked	Start this listing over from the title formula on page 1 rather than patching pieces.

Part of "The Shop That Sells Itself" - Stage 1 of 4. Next: rewrite your flagged listings with the Stage 2 SEO prompt pack.