

The Complete Guide to **ON-PAGE** SEO



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Introduction

On-Page SEO: Everything You Need to Know



Written By
Anna Crowe
Assistant Editor, Search Engine Journal





Succeeding in organic search today requires optimizing for a combination of factors that search engines consider important – technical, on-page and off-page.



Over the years, we've seen increased focus toward off-page techniques – such as link building – and other technical elements.

But the reality is, off-page SEO won't do much good if you don't pay attention to the fundamentals – on-page SEO.



Smart SEO practitioners know that on-page optimization should be constantly prioritized.

And because the search landscape is ever evolving, it's important to make sure your on-page SEO knowledge is up to date.

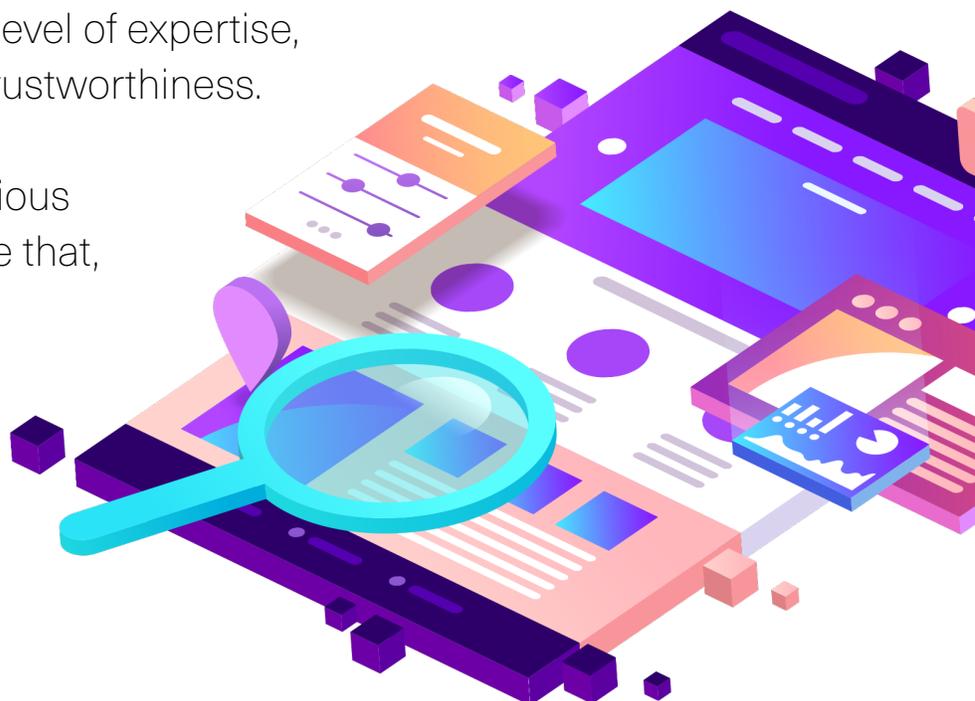
In this post, we will cover what on-page SEO is, why it matters, and 10 of the most important on-page SEO considerations today.

What Is On-Page SEO?

On-page SEO (also known as on-site SEO) refers to the practice of optimizing web pages to improve a website's search engine rankings and earn organic traffic.

In addition to publishing relevant, high-quality content, on-page SEO includes optimizing your headlines, HTML tags (title, meta, and header), and images. It also means making sure your website has a high level of expertise, authoritativeness, and trustworthiness.

It takes into account various aspects of the web page that, when added together, will improve your website's visibility in the search results.



Why On-Page SEO Is Important

On-page SEO is important because it helps search engines understand your website and its content, as well as identify whether it is relevant to a searcher's query.

As search engines become more sophisticated, there is a greater focus toward relevance and semantics in search engine results pages (SERPs).

Google, with its plethora of complex algorithms, is now much better at:

- Understanding what users are actually searching for when they type a query.
- Delivering search results that meet user intent (informational, shopping, navigational).

Adapting to this development is essential, and you can do it by ensuring that your website and its content – both what is visible to users on your webpages (i.e., text, images, video, or audio) and elements that are only visible to search engines (i.e., HTML tags, structured data) – are well-optimized according to the latest best practices.

Additionally, you can't simply ignore on-page SEO because you have more control when optimizing for on-site elements – as opposed to off-page SEO that consists of external signals (i.e., backlinks).



If you put effort into on-page strategies, you'll see a boost in traffic and a rise in your search presence.

This guide will walk you through the most important elements of on-page SEO.

Paying close attention to these 10 areas will help improve your content and authority – and increase your rankings, traffic, and conversions.

1. E-A-T

E-A-T, which stands for Expertise, Authoritativeness, and Trustworthiness, is the framework that Google raters use to assess content creators, webpages, and websites as a whole.

Google has always put a premium on high-quality content. It wants to make sure that sites producing high-quality content are rewarded with better rankings and sites that create low-quality content get less visibility.

There is a clear relationship between what Google considers high-quality content and what appears in the search results.

Call it correlation or causation – whatever it is, E-A-T is somehow playing a role in Google's organic search results. Which means E-A-T must be a consideration in your SEO strategy.

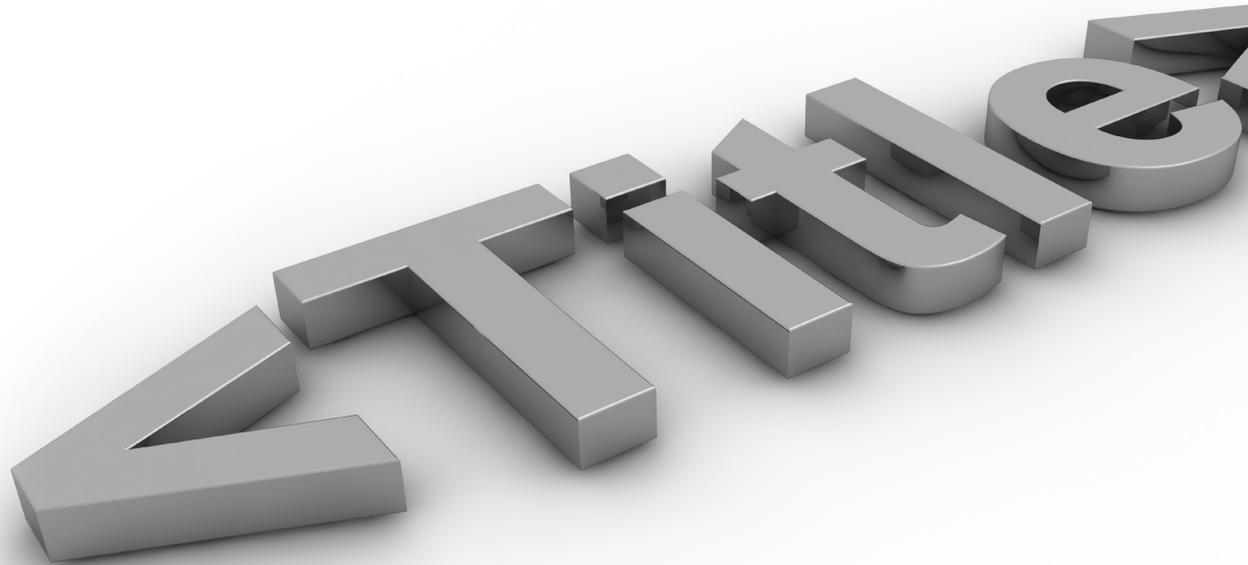
2. Title Tag

The title tag, an HTML tag that exists in the head section of each webpage, provides an initial cue or context as to what the topical subject matter is of the respective page it is on.

It is featured prominently in the search engine results pages (typically used as the clickable link) as well as in the browser window.

The title tag by itself has little impact on organic rankings, this why it's sometimes overlooked.

That said, missing, duplicate, and poorly written title tags can all negatively impact your SEO results, so make sure you're optimizing for this element.



3. Meta Description

Since the early days of SEO, meta descriptions have been an important optimization point.

Meta descriptions, meta tags that provide a description of what the page is about, are often displayed in the SERPs underneath the title of the page.

While Google maintains that meta descriptions don't help with rankings, there is anecdotal evidence that indirect attributes of better descriptions do help.

Optimizing meta description correctly can help improve:

- Click-through rate (CTR).
- Perception of the quality of the result.
- Perception of what your website offers all change.

4. Headlines

Want your website content to perform well on search? Then start writing compelling headlines.

Coming up with a title for a blog post might seem too basic, but a great headline can mean the difference between a click and an impression – that's why it's important to create them strategically.

Your headlines need to spark interest for it to stand out on the SERPs – enticing users to click through and continue reading the rest of the content.

5. Header Tags

Header tags are HTML elements (H1-H6) used to identify headings and subheadings within your content from other types of text (e.g., paragraph text).

Header tags aren't as critically important for your site rankings as they used to be, but these tags still serve an important function – for your users and your SEO.

They can indirectly impact your rankings by:

- Making your content easier and more enjoyable for visitors to read.
- Providing keyword-rich context about your content for the search engines.

6. SEO Writing

SEO writing in 2019 means writing content with both search engines and users in mind.

There is a strategy behind writing solid SEO content – and it is more than just keyword research and fill in the blanks.

Simply producing content for the sake of it won't do. Remember that you're writing content for people – therefore that content must be high-quality, substantial and relevant.

7. Keyword Cannibalization

True or false? The more pages you have targeting a keyword, the better you'll rank for that keyword.

False!

Targeting a specific term across multiple pages will cause “keyword cannibalization” which has some potentially disastrous consequences for your SEO.

When you have multiple pages ranking for the same keyword, you're actually competing with yourself.

It's important to identify whether keyword cannibalization exists on your website and resolve it right away.

8. Content Audit

Most content creators are focused on creating new content that they forget to audit their existing content. And this is a mistake.

Auditing your existing content is crucial because it helps you:

- Evaluate whether your existing content is achieving its goals and gaining ROI.
- Identify whether the information in your content is still accurate or has become stale (or even outdated).
- Determine what types of content are working for you.

Content audits can greatly help your SEO strategy and they should be done on a regular basis.

9. Image Optimization

Adding images is a good way to make your web pages more appealing. But not all images are created equal – some can even slow down your website.

If you're not optimizing images properly, then you're wasting a valuable SEO asset.

Image optimization creates many advantages such as:

- Additional ranking opportunities (show up on Google Image Search!).
- Better user experience.
- Faster page load times.

Images should not be considered as an afterthought. Make sure to incorporate images that support your content and use descriptive titles and alt text.



10. User Engagement

Enhancing your website's on-page SEO elements is only half the battle.

The other half lies in making sure that users will not bounce – but instead, they'll continue viewing your content, interacting with it, and keep coming back for more.

Retaining engaged users is a great challenge in itself, but it's certainly doable. To increase user engagement, focus on aspects such as site speed, user experience, and content optimization, among others.

Get More On-Page SEO Insights & Techniques

We've only just scratched the surface. Ready to go much deeper?

Read on and learn more actionable on-page SEO techniques from our 10 information-packed chapters, written by some of the smartest practitioners in the industry.



Chapter 1

E-A-T & YMYL: How to Boost Your On-Page SEO



Written By
Alex Valencia
Co-Owner, We Do Web Content



Some people believe that E-A-T is one of the most important SEO success factors today.

Others believe the importance of E-A-T is massively overblown.

Is it a direct ranking factor? Is it an indirect ranking factor? Or is E-A-T not a factor at all in Google's ever-evolving algorithms?

The debate over the importance of E-A-T – an acronym for Expertise, Authoritativeness, and Trustworthiness, made famous by its inclusion in [Google’s Search Quality Evaluator Guidelines](#) – will likely rage on for a while to come.

However, many took [this whitepaper](#) as confirmation that E-A-T is an important ranking signal.

Here is what some consider the “smoking gun” from the whitepaper:

“Our ranking system ... is specifically designed to identify sites with high indicia of expertise, authority, and trustworthiness.”

Does that mean E-A-T is a ranking factor? It could be. But not necessarily.

It’s important to not overlook this sentence from the whitepaper:

“Google’s algorithms identify signals about pages that correlate with trustworthiness and authoritativeness.”

This certainly makes it sound like more of an indirect relationship.

But really, this is nothing new. Google has been trying to make its algorithm as “human” as possible.

If you were doing SEO before E-A-T even existed, you probably remember the concept of **Authority, Relevance, and Trust**. Google has been using identity, authority, and trust signals in its ranking system for a long time.

But Google's algorithms have never been perfect. Plus user behavior and technology is always evolving.

That's where search quality evaluators come in.

Google collects E-A-T scores from these search quality evaluators (the human raters Google employs to test the quality of its search results).

But to be clear: the actual E-A-T ratings given by search quality evaluators are NOT ranking factors.

Google said the data it collects from its human raters does not directly impact the ranking of any individual website.

So even if E-A-T isn't a direct ranking factor, it can still help you rank.

Why?

To understand that, it's important to understand exactly what E-A-T is and why it matters for on-page SEO.

This post will explain E-A-T, as well as YMYL, and offer actionable tips for how you can use these concepts to boost your on-page SEO.

What Is Google's E-A-T, Really?

E-A-T stands for Expertise, Authoritativeness, and Trustworthiness. Google raters use this framework to assess content creators, webpages, and websites as a whole.

This all makes perfect sense, right?

Google wants to make sure that sites producing high-quality content are rewarded with better rankings and sites that create low-quality content get less visibility.

Now let's look at each of these factors individually.

Expertise

Are subject matter experts creating your content?

These are people who possess the necessary knowledge and understanding of your field to talk deeply about a specific topic. This can be general knowledge or highly specialized.

Google also is OK with something called "everyday expertise." What is that?

“Some topics require less formal expertise. Many people write extremely detailed, helpful reviews of products or restaurants. Many people share tips and life experiences on forums, blogs, etc. These ordinary people may be considered experts in topics where they have life experience. If it seems as if the person creating the content has the type and amount of life experience to make him or her an ‘expert’ on the topic, we will value this ‘everyday expertise’ and not penalize the person/webpage/website for not having ‘formal’ education or training in the field.”

Basically, Google wants to provide links to websites that have published helpful content that is useful, comprehensive, relevant, and accurate.

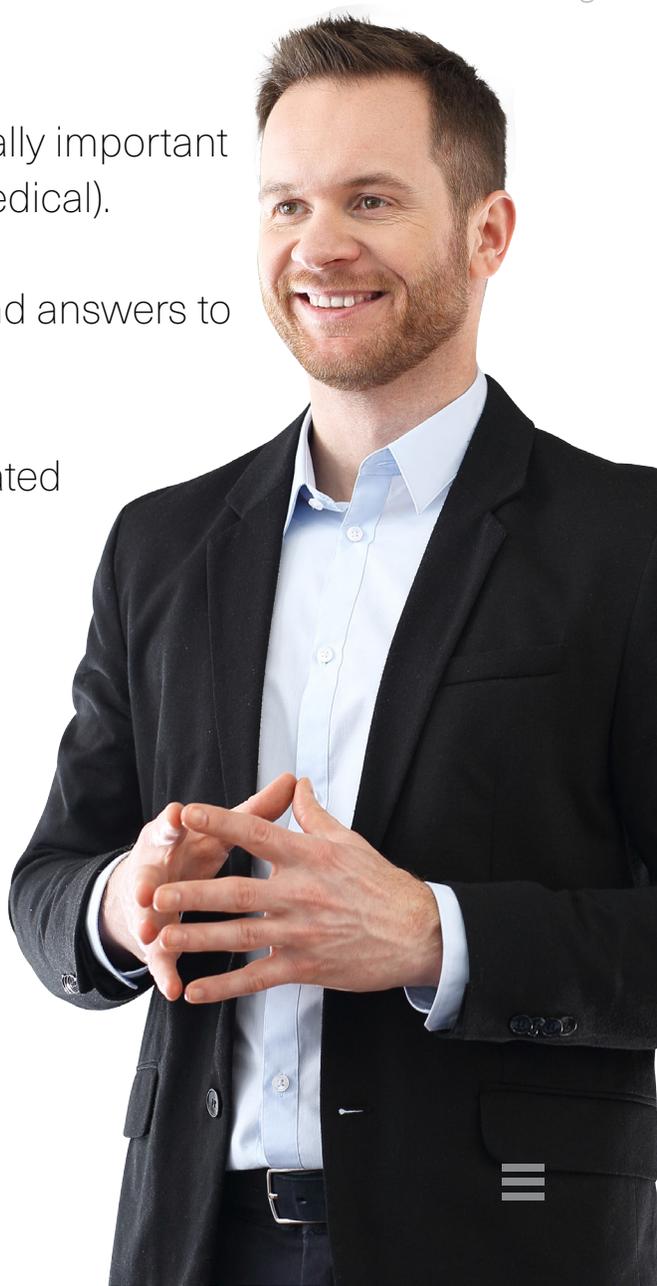
Demonstrating your expertise is especially important in certain niches (e.g., legal, financial, medical).

People are coming to your website to find answers to important questions.

Providing inaccurate, unhelpful, or outdated content is a recipe for SEO disaster.

Google doesn’t want to send its users to incorrect content or websites that deliberately mislead users.

So make sure the people who create your content possess subject matter expertise and do the necessary research and fact checking.



Authoritativeness

As noted in the above-mentioned whitepaper, Google has used PageRank to understand authoritativeness since the very beginning. It's what made Google Google!

That means one signal of authoritativeness has been links.

Links – especially the quality of those links – continue to be a top ranking factor. This is no secret.

For years, we've heard links compared to votes, where the more votes you get, the more authoritative (or popular) you are.

So where expertise is having certain knowledge or skills, authoritativeness is what happens when others (inside and outside of your industry) recognize that expertise.

That recognition can come in the form of links, mentions, shares, reviews, or any other type of citation.

It kind of sounds like authoritativeness is like your online reputation, right?

That's because, in a way, it is.

The best way to build that authoritativeness online is to create that useful content we talked about in the last section.

Trustworthiness

You have to put in a ton of hard work to earn the trust of people and search engines.

You want people to trust in your brand or business and are willing to endorse or buy from you.

One way to increase your trustworthiness is by highlighting the credentials of your content creators and the website.

Think awards, testimonials, endorsements, and other trust factors.

People have to feel they can trust all the information they find on your website.

Likewise, Google wants to rank websites and content that it can trust.

Trust also ties into Google's YMYL concept.



What Is YMYL?

Websites that sell products or provide services or information that can impact the happiness, health, financial stability, or safety of users are categorized by Google as YMYL – which stands for “Your Money or Your Life”.

Google holds these types of sites to the highest standard because the stakes are incredibly high when it comes to this type of content.

Some industries that fall under YMYL include ecommerce, financial services, healthcare, and legal.

Bottom line when it comes to YMYL: make sure that any content on your website will help, not hurt, the people who consume your content.

Make your users feel safe.

Take great care of your users and Google should take great care of you.

Why Is E-A-T Important for Your SEO?

Since as long as I can remember, Google has been telling us to create great content.

So it's no surprise that Google values high-quality content.

There is a clear relationship between what Google considers high-quality content and what appears in the search results.

Call it correlation or causation – whatever it is, E-A-T is somehow playing a role in Google's organic search results. Which means E-A-T must be a consideration in your SEO strategy.

What Is High-Quality Content?

Whatever content you create must have a purpose. Your content must benefit your clients, customers, users, or readers.

According to the Search Quality Evaluator Guidelines, high quality pages are those that have:

- Additional ranking opportunities (show up on Google Image)
- High level of Expertise, Authoritativeness, and Trustworthiness (E-A-T).
- A satisfying amount of high quality main content, including a descriptive or helpful title.

- Satisfying website information and/or information about who is responsible for the website. If the page is primarily for shopping or includes financial transactions, then it should have satisfying customer service information.
- Positive website reputation for a website that is responsible for the main content on the page. Positive reputation of the creator of the main content, if different from that of the website.

The highest quality pages (and YMYL pages) will have a very high level of E-A-T, according to Google's guidelines.

But Google noted that E-A-T applies to all types of sites (e.g., gossip websites, fashion websites, humor websites, and forum and Q&A).

So that means it applies to YOUR site.

Your top priority should be creating content that your target audience wants or needs and offers true value.

In short, creating more high-quality pages for your website should help your website perform better in Google's search results.

And, yes, this is much easier said than done.

What Is Low-Quality Content?

Low-quality content is, as you'd expect, the exact opposite of high-quality content. As Google puts it:

“Websites or pages without some sort of beneficial purpose, including pages that are created with no attempt to help users, or pages that potentially spread hate, cause harm, or misinform or deceive users, should receive the Lowest rating.”

Here are the characteristics of a low-quality page, according to Google's guidelines:

- An inadequate level of Expertise, Authoritativeness, and Trustworthiness (E-A-T).
- The quality of the MC is low.
- There is an unsatisfying amount of MC for the purpose of the page.
- The title of the MC is exaggerated or shocking.
- The Ads or SC distracts from the MC.
- There is an unsatisfying amount of website information or information about the creator of the MC for the purpose of the page (no good reason for anonymity).
- A mildly negative reputation for a website or creator of the MC, based on extensive reputation research.

If high-quality content helps your site rank higher, then logically it makes sense that low-quality pages could hurt your Google rankings.

If your content is inaccurate, has no purpose, or includes elements that hurt the user experience, it's unlikely that Google will feature your website prominently in the SERPs.

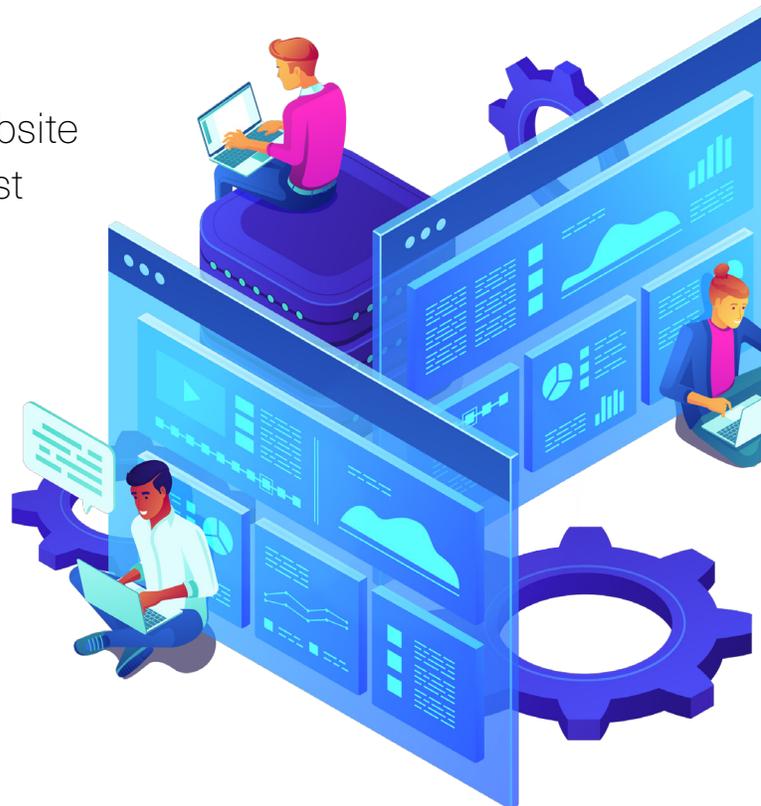
In short, low E-A-T means bad content. Bad content means bad SEO. And bad SEO means you're missing out on valuable traffic and conversions due to low rankings.

How to Improve Your Website's E-A-T

Hopefully you now fully understand the E-A-T concept and why it's important.

So how can you make sure your website content is high quality and also boost your on-page SEO efforts?

Here are some best practices to follow when creating new content heading forward.



1. Identify Your Authors with a Byline & Bio

Have you ever landed on a blog where some content was published by “Admin” or some random guy with no last name?

Did you trust that site? Was the content amazing? No and no.

Google’s guidelines advise creating articles with “journalistic professionalism.”

Part of that professionalism means every piece of content you publish should have the writer’s name – their byline – attached to it.

Here’s how Search Engine Journal highlights the bylines of its articles:

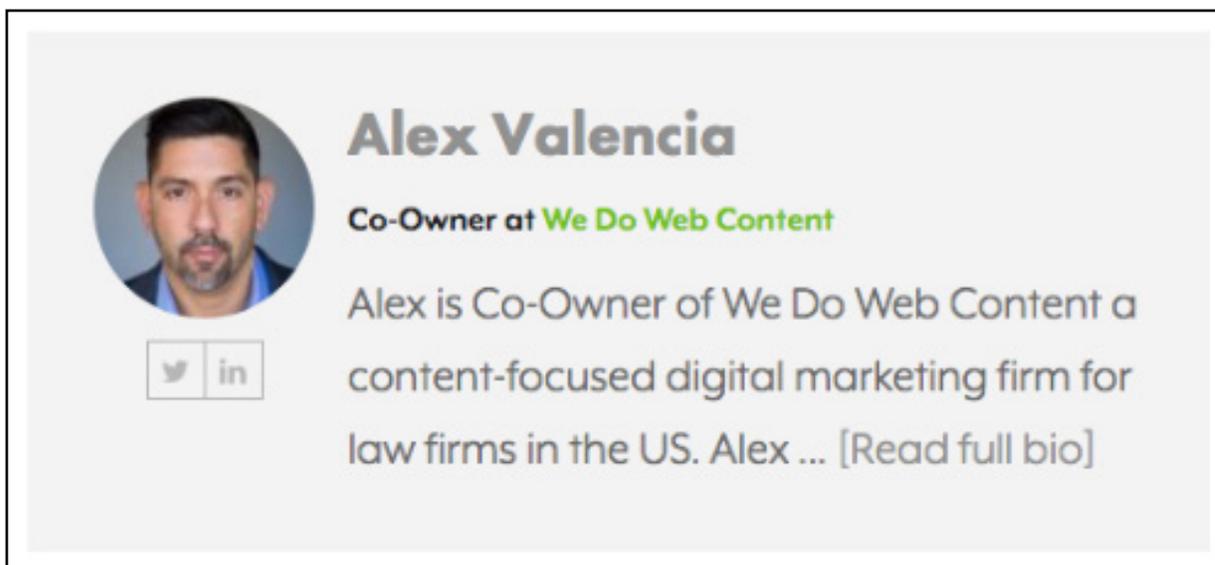


Ideally, you should highlight the biographical details of every person who creates content for you – whether that’s blog posts, articles, or question and answer pages.

Is the author of your content a recognized expert in your field? Then you definitely want to highlight that.

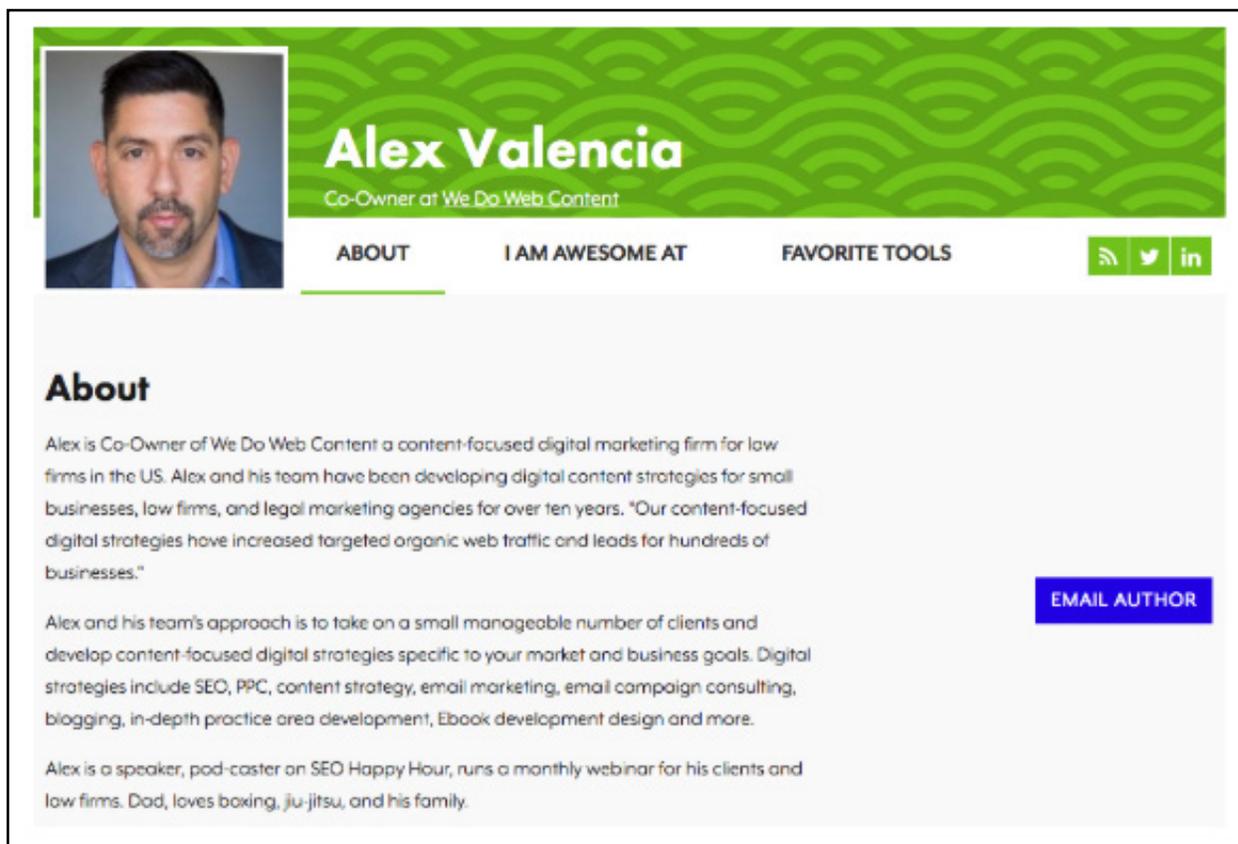
You can do so on a separate bio page that also contains the author’s past content, or even at the bottom of the article.

Search Engine Journal does both. At the bottom of any SEJ article you’ll see an author’s box like this:



The image shows an author bio box for Alex Valencia. On the left is a circular profile picture of a man with a beard and mustache, wearing a blue shirt. Below the picture are two small icons for Twitter and LinkedIn. To the right of the picture, the name "Alex Valencia" is written in a large, bold, dark grey font. Below the name, the text "Co-Owner at We Do Web Content" is displayed, with "We Do Web Content" in a green font. Further down, a paragraph of text reads: "Alex is Co-Owner of We Do Web Content a content-focused digital marketing firm for law firms in the US. Alex ... [Read full bio]".

Clicking on [Read full bio] leads to my full bio page with information that establishes who I am and what I do:



Alex Valencia
Co-Owner at We Do Web Content

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About

Alex is Co-Owner of We Do Web Content a content-focused digital marketing firm for law firms in the US. Alex and his team have been developing digital content strategies for small businesses, law firms, and legal marketing agencies for over ten years. "Our content-focused digital strategies have increased targeted organic web traffic and leads for hundreds of businesses."

Alex and his team's approach is to take on a small manageable number of clients and develop content-focused digital strategies specific to your market and business goals. Digital strategies include SEO, PPC, content strategy, email marketing, email campaign consulting, blogging, in-depth practice area development, Ebook development design and more.

Alex is a speaker, pod-caster on SEO Happy Hour, runs a monthly webinar for his clients and law firms. Dad, loves boxing, jiu-jitsu, and his family.

[EMAIL AUTHOR](#)

Here are some essential elements of a good bio page

- Full name
- Headshot
- Title/position
- A detailed bio
- Contact information (e.g., email form, social media)

Doing all of this makes it easy for users (and Google) to know who created the content and assess their individual E-A-T.

2. Make Your Contact Info Easy to Find

When visitors arrive on your landing pages, is it easy to find your contact information? Or details on how to get customer support?

Remember, E-A-T evaluates your website as a whole.

The easiest solution?

Make sure you link to your [About Us](#) and/or [Contact Us](#) page in either your main or footer navigation.

And if you don't have those pages on your website? Make them now!



3. Remove or Improve Your Low Quality Content

As Search Engine Journal's Executive Editor Danny Goodwin puts it: you have to decide whether you can [improve or remove your old or outdated content](#).

SEJ has been going through this process for over a year now and it has increased their traffic by 2x, according to Goodwin.

If you have content that is no longer useful – or is just so terrible that it's not worth the time investment to update or improve it – then pruning that content is one quick way to improve your E-A-T.

Removing content should always be your last resort. But if it needs to be done, do it without hesitation.

Ideally, you want to identify any content that looks like it has low E-A-T and figure out ways you can reverse that.

Some ways you could increase E-A-T:

- Have a more authoritative person write it.
- Add quotes from experts, data, sources, or citations.
- Make some simple edits to improve the readability, grammar, spelling, and structure.
- Add more information to make it more comprehensive.
- Write a new and better title.

- Add some visual appeal, as photos, charts, screenshots (and make sure to **optimize those images**).
- Add a video for people who prefer that format vs. text only (this has the added benefit of potentially keep visitors on your site longer).

The process of elevating content definitely takes longer, but it too will greatly improve your website's E-A-T and performance. And this process is especially crucial for any YMYL pages.

4. Create a Positive Brand Reputation

A positive brand reputation is key to both growing your business and your E-A-T.

One way you can do this is through thought leadership.

If you can share insights that your target audience truly finds valuable, this can push them down the path to conversion.

High-quality thought leadership content is good for winning, keeping, and growing business.

This will also help you build authority in your niche, and help Google trust you.

Thought leadership is incredibly powerful when done right. So make sure you aren't underwhelming your audience!

For more on how thought leadership delivers real ROI, check out the Edelman-LinkedIn Thought Leadership Impact [study](#).

Summary

Is E-A-T a ranking factor?

This is the wrong question to ask, in my opinion.

Let's forget about ranking factors for a moment and instead think about your audience.

If you're doing everything outlined in Google's E-A-T guidelines, then you're creating informative, useful, high-quality content that your audience wants and helping them accomplish a task (e.g., acquiring knowledge, buying a product).

In other words, you're providing a satisfying user experience.

And anything that is good for users is good for helping you rank in Google – and driving the traffic and conversions you really want.

Chapter 2

Title Tag Optimization: A Complete How-to Guide



Written By
Corey Morris
Vice President of Marketing, Voltage



The `<title>` tag is crucial for any SEO strategy to succeed.

Missing, duplicate, and poorly written title tags can all negatively impact your SEO results.

Don't let this happen to you.

This chapter will help you understand what goes into writing and optimizing a great title tag.

What Is a Title Tag?

The **title tag** is an HTML tag that exists in the head section of each webpage. It provides an initial cue or context as to what the topical subject matter is of the respective page it is on.

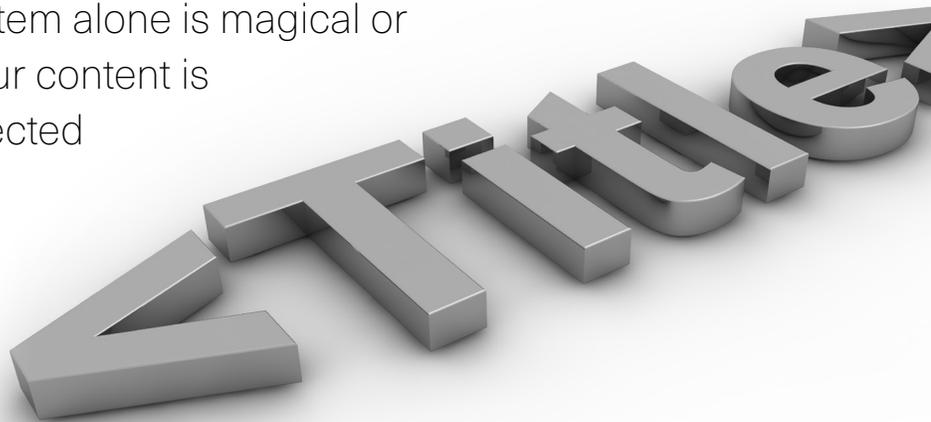
The title tag is featured prominently in the search engine results pages (typically it is used as the clickable link) as well as in the browser window.

Other than those two places, it isn't as visible as other web content on a given page (e.g., body copy, image content, and other aspects) that a user will see immediately when landing on the page.

Title tags aren't a visual element users will see on a webpage, so the title tag can sometimes be overlooked.

At the same time, the title tag by itself has little impact on organic rankings. No one item alone is magical or powerful – especially if your content is low-quality or you've neglected technical SEO.

Here are eight important aspects to consider when optimizing your title tags for search.



1. The Page's Context Within the Site

Before you can write an optimized title tag, you need to know where the page fits into the overall hierarchy of the website.

A home page title tag is going to be much different than a blog post or product page.

For websites that have a lot of pages, it can be challenging to come up with tags that are different from page to page. That's why mapping out your site and knowing where each page fits into the context of your subject matter is important.

Each page deeper you get into the site, the more specific you can and should be.

You can repeat words and phrases but should be more detailed each step down into the site you go.

An ecommerce example of title tags at different levels of the site that have appropriate context:

- **Home Page:** Groomsmen gifts and unique men's gifts by The Man Registry
- **Product Category Page:** BBQ sets and utensil gifts for groomsmen by The Man Registry
- **Product Page:** 5-Piece Customized BBQ utensil set by The Man Registry

2. Topical Relevance Within the Page

The next step of understanding where the page fits in the hierarchy of the website overall is to evaluate the content on the page.

The title tag is most impactful for search engines and users when it introduces the topic of the page and the same important keywords are used in body copy, image alt attribute, the meta description, URL, and other aspects of the page.

It is a wasted exercise to ignore the page content when writing the title tag if it contributes to a higher bounce rate and can't lend more relevance to the topic of the page.

You should use words in the title tag that are also used in other parts of the page to tie the topic together.



3. Unique Tags

Duplicate title tags are not helpful to searchers or search engines.

If you have duplicate tags you'll see them in [Google Search Console](#) or Bing Webmaster Tools reports and you'll often find that the search engines have chosen to ignore your title tag and use other content it found on your page for the blue link text in the SERP.

When multiple pages have the same tag, those tags are useless to the search engine.

You can use the data provided in Google Search Console and Bing Webmaster Tools to find where you have issues as well as run your own tests through any number of on-page auditors and crawling tools.

If you have duplicate tags within your site, add writing custom tags to your SEO action plan.

4. Use Dynamic Options When Possible

If you have a large website, or one that features a large amount of dynamic data – like an ecommerce website – find ways to semantically code your tags.

Most content management systems and website platforms will automatically generate the title tag to start with.

If you want to override or customize the default title tag at scale, work with your developer or within your website platform settings to find ways to add more detail and customize at different levels.

The more you can scale and not have to manually manage hundreds or thousands of tags, the better.

An example of a dynamic structure could include some standard text in all product page tags but with the specific name of the product populated from the database.

For example, it could be “[product_name] groomsmen gifts from The Man Registry.” The bracketed “product_name” would be a variable that would populate that part of the title with the actual product name in the database.

In this case, you wouldn't have to manually write all product title tags and can ensure they are unique. For cases where you have the same products with variations or attributes like different colors – you can also look at ways to add more variables from the database.

5. Searcher Intent Keyword Use

We can all relate to times we really want to find an answer to something specific, yet the top ranking sites are answering a different question. The same goes for great content that gets unnoticed.

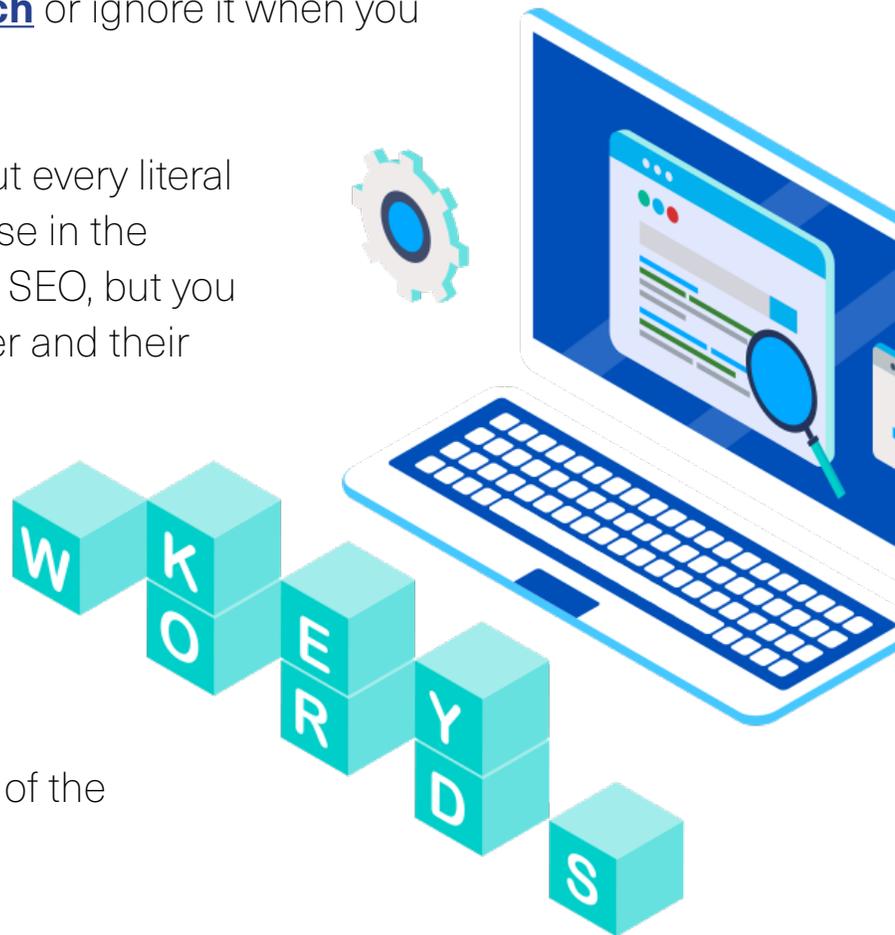
Knowing what your audience is searching for, and how they are searching, is critical for title tag optimization.

If you don't know what words and phrases people are using when they are searching, then you're at risk of guessing wrong.

Don't skip **keyword research** or ignore it when you are optimizing title tags.

You don't have to worry about every literal version of a keyword or phrase in the current context-based era of SEO, but you also can't ignore the searcher and their intent.

Your goal for an optimized title tag is to match the wording that you use with what is being searched for as long as the perceived intent is the focus of the content of the page.



6. Call to Action in SERP

Remember that the title tag will be shown as the text in the blue link in the search results page (SERP).

This is prominent real estate and the message featured here greatly impacts the searcher's decision on whether to click through to your site or move on to the next search result.

Your focus must be on answering the question, need, or desire of the searcher.

Having a clear vision of what your page is about and what the desired outcome is for you and your visitor are critical.

If you're trying to accomplish too many business goals on a single page, it can be hard to focus clearly enough on what the call to action (CTA) should be. If you find this to be the case, consider breaking your content out into more topics and pages.

Much like the art of writing a solid PPC text ad headline, the title tag needs to match the intent of the searcher to earn their click.

When writing your title tag, keep in mind that the tag is **truncated by Google at 70-71 characters**. The user won't see any word past that character count.

Get your important words and phrases in there. Be concise, be direct, and prioritize the important words to appear as early in your title tags as possible.

For example, you might have the average sounding home page title tag of: “Groomsmen gifts and unique men’s gifts by The Man Registry”.

You could test out more actionable language like “Shop the best groomsmen & unique men’s gifts at The Man Registry”.



7. Don't Try Too Hard

Avoid repetitive and spammy looking titles.

Resist the temptation of overdoing it with your title tag.

The search engines are focused on context – not literal keyword use, frequency, and density.

Pick words that are clear to the topic of the page and intent and stick with them in the title tag.

You can use longer form areas of the page to elaborate and build on that context.

An example of a dangerous title tag would be: “Groomsmen gifts, Groomsman Gifts, Gifts for Men, Unique Gifts”.

Overplaying and repeating words is a quick way to find trouble.

8. Keep Perspective of the Title Tag's Impact

Don't overemphasize the importance or impact of the title tag alone.

While you might see a small bump from optimizing all the title tags on your site, you can't expect that the title tag alone is your key to SEO success.

Holistic search optimization is much more important.

In many cases, title tag optimization is just the start or an entry point until you are at the top of the SERPs – making small adjustments and have the luxury of spending time obsessing over minor wording changes to see how they impact rankings one position at a time.



Conclusion

The title tag is just one of many elements that are part of a thorough SEO plan.

In a vacuum, the title tag is not a significant detail, but working in context and conjunction with all other on-page factors within a single page, and in concert with all pages of a website, can factor into the success of gaining more traffic.

Through the direct impact of CTAs in SERPs to signaling what the page is about, the title tag can be helpful.

Title tag issues on a website including tags that are missing, too short, duplicate, stuffed full of too many repetitive words, or are otherwise not helpful can signal bad SEO and a bad user experience overall.

So make sure that title tags always have the proper place in your optimization plan.

Chapter 3

SEO Best Practices: How to Create Awesome Meta Descriptions



Written By
Brian Harnish
SEO Director, Site Objective



Since the early days of SEO, meta descriptions have been an important optimization point.

Google continues to maintain that meta descriptions don't help with rankings whatsoever.

But, as an indirect signal, there is anecdotal evidence that indirect attributes of better descriptions do help.

Things like click-through rate (CTR), perception of the quality of the result, and perception of what your website offers all change when you optimize the meta description correctly.

Our latest deep dive takes a look into how to craft awesome meta descriptions, and how to apply these steps to your site.

What Is a Meta Description?

Quite simply, the meta description is a meta tag that provides a description of what the page is about. This meta description is displayed in the SERPs underneath the title of the page.

Why Are Meta Descriptions Important for SEO?

In the olden days of SEO, meta descriptions were important parts of optimization to get right.

Did they help rankings back then? Google has said and continues to maintain that they do not help ranking, and that they are not a **ranking signal**.

According to a recent in-depth study, performed by Yoast:

- Google automatically creates many of the meta descriptions on their own, regardless of the ones they wrote and regardless of whether or not the page appeared in the segmented groups they created for the study.
- It did not matter that Yoast created long or short meta descriptions, and whether a high or low keyword density was implemented for them.

- In two-thirds of cases that they examined, Google used sentences from the first paragraph. Of course, this particular ascertainment is not a guarantee Google will do the same for your site, but the indication is there that an article introduction should be completed with the meta description as a focus.

Be that as it may, there are other important considerations for meta descriptions beyond their SEO value.

In addition to SEO, meta descriptions can drive clicks, traffic, potential conversions, and revenue by:

- **Increasing a site's CTR in the SERPs:** There is evidence that meta descriptions that have been well-written and properly optimized are directly responsible for increased "website curb appeal".
- **Traffic:** By increasing a site's CTR through proper optimization, increased rankings can result in more traffic to the site.
- **Potential conversions:** Crafting a well-written meta description that is closely related to the topic of the page, is interesting to users, and is highly optimized for [user intent](#) can increase conversions significantly. In addition, when you do this, there is anecdotal evidence to support that the increased traffic and CTRs will cause Google promote your site. It is worth noting, that the head of Google Brain in Canada has recently confirmed dwell time as a ranking factor, per Brian Dean's [Definitive Guide to SEO in 2018](#).

Meta Descriptions vs. SERP Snippets

Some people mistakenly use the terms “meta description” and “search snippet” interchangeably. But meta descriptions and search snippets are two different things.

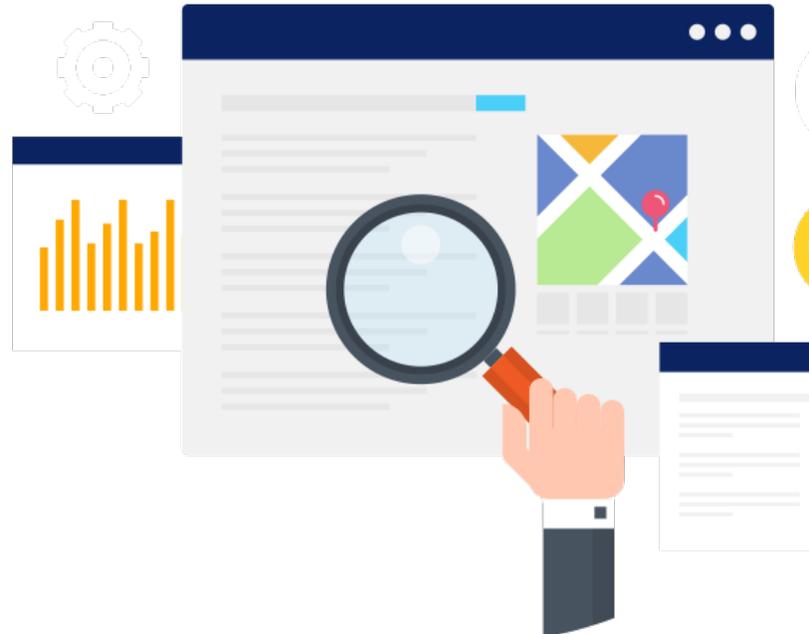
The meta description is an HTML tag that you control. You can create and optimize your own meta descriptions.

Search snippets are the descriptions Google shows for your webpages. It could either be the meta description you have created, or it could be something completely different. Google controls this.

Why wouldn't Google use your meta description? Depending on the search query, Google may generate a description for your webpage that is entirely different from the meta description you created.

This is nothing new. Google automated this process many years ago.

The distinction between meta descriptions and search snippets is an important one, especially when Google makes announcements – such as when Google **expanded the length of search snippets** (only to **shorten snippets** about six months later).



What Is the Recommended/ Ideal Meta Description Length?

It has been considered a standard SEO best practice for years to keep meta descriptions at around 160-165 characters maximum (or 156-160 characters, depending on who you talk to).

The reasoning behind this is that this optimization helps to avoid the truncation of the meta description in the SERPs and as a result, helps to avoid high bounce rates.

Late last year, Google announced a change to the SERP snippets, taking them up to 300 characters, more than double the usual 150-165 character limits that are recommended.

Moz performed an in-depth [study](#) that determined that writing 300 character long meta descriptions should be observed as a new limit. Then, Google quickly changed back to the standard word count character limit.

What does this mean for SEO?

Continue to experiment and assess results, and make changes based on those findings.

Listen to what Google and their spokespersons have to say about what should and should not be implemented, but also do your own testing. Test what they say and test what they don't say.

Find out exactly what works for your site.

Research the SERPs

Regardless of your industry, you should be performing research first and foremost. This research consists mostly of SERP research.

Figure out what your competitors are doing. Monitor their SERPs over the next several days, weeks, and months.

You will be able to assess exactly what meta descriptions they are sticking with and which ones they are not.

To do SERP research effectively consists of the following steps:

Step 1: Research the SERPs for Your Targeted Keyword

Easier said than done, I know. It can be time-consuming to manually go through every search result and identify what, exactly, is your competition's kryptonite.

The reason why we were looking at the competition is because usually, the competition implements techniques that are currently working.

Step 2: Research the SERPs for Your Competition & What They Are Doing

Here, you take a look at your competition and figure out exactly what they are doing for their brands.

Step 3: Put Them Together in a Spreadsheet, and Track Them

Using the [SEO Quake Google Chrome extension](#), it is possible to export Google SERPs to an Excel Spreadsheet quite quickly and efficiently. This will let you keep a running tally of your competition and track them easily and efficiently on a monthly basis, without ginormous monthly costs.

Research Your Clients

Identify your target audience's optimal buying journey, and what happens at each stage of the marketing funnel.

The marketing funnel can be different depending on your target market, so sharing an exact funnel to follow here would be fruitless.

Target and tailor your meta descriptions according to your findings.



Set a Tone of Voice That's Consistent With Your Brand

Every brand has a unique tone of voice that is consistent with their brand identity. The brand identity is how that brand appears online to users.

Each meta description should be uniquely crafted and tailored according to how that tone of voice amplifies itself across the brand's ecosystem.

You wouldn't use a tone of voice for a website that sells shoes that's more consistent with a tone of voice on a website that sells hardware, would you?

So why would you use a tone of voice that's exactly the same from page to page?

The main benefit of tone of voice is that it reaches different **personas** who may be targeting certain keywords.

By targeting personas with user intent and combining keywords with this research, it is possible to reach your target audience with a level of sophistication and optimization that they have not seen before.

The key is to make sure that this optimization doesn't stick out like a sore thumb, and that it actually resonates with your site's target audience.

Keywords Your Audience Is Searching for Should Appear in the Meta Description

Google continues to maintain that they don't use keywords in the meta description for ranking purposes. But, when you perform SERP research, what is it that you see? Highlighted keywords in the meta description.

This is not conclusive evidence that Google uses it, but it is something that can draw your reader into the most relevant result that will satisfy their query.

Why?

Because the reader is looking for search results that nail their query. If their query is personal injury lawyers, they may go to that result over others.

BUT – it depends on whether that result satisfies their intent and what they really are searching for.

If your meta description satisfies their intent better than any other result that appears, then you have just won the battle to attaining their attention enough to click on that result.

Part of that battle includes adding keywords that Google is most likely to highlight when displaying your results for that search query.

Take Advantage of Trending Social Headlines to Craft Your Description

As a connoisseur of social media, you're most likely on the up and up in your industry when it comes to identifying exactly what's trending, and what isn't passing muster for your audience.

Following influencer accounts and industry firms should already be a part of your strategy.

Taking it a step further, assessing what's currently trending in terms of topics, and basing your meta description's phrasing on that can help nail down what may be best for your brand.

Don't fall into a rut.

When you write meta descriptions for a living, it can be easy to fall into a rut. You know the kind – the kind of rut that causes you to write the same meta descriptions day in and day out.

The best way to cure this kind of rut is to practice your ABCs on a daily, weekly, or monthly (for some industries) basis:

Always Be Crafting.

Also, the ABRs:

Always Be Researching.

Research new industry trends, research what's working and what's not, and above all – practice, practice, practice.

Make Your Meta Description Specific

Generalized meta descriptions and hollow phrases such as “best widgets” and other sales speak is usually something that can turn off prospecting customers.

It is important to inspire confidence, the confidence that your result is something that will satisfy their user intent for the query.

You want to speak about what your readers are really after, not attempting to persuade them into your own sales funnel.

Refreshing Your Meta Descriptions on Older Content

When you have stale content on a website, it can be a boon for the site if you refresh your meta descriptions. This can be a great way to get new traction on older pages.

Also, by refreshing your meta descriptions, it is possible to get more traction from social media as a result. You can re-share and grab more visibility from older posts if you perform a systematic refresh of all of your meta descriptions.

Examples of Great Meta Descriptions

So what does a great meta description look like?

Here are a few examples:

- “Did you know that pain and suffering are very real to the victim in a personal injury case? Learn more from our personal injury attorneys in this latest blog post.”
- “By thinking clearly about your needs, it is possible to find a computer that will help you do all the things you currently love, and more. Our technicians explain.”
- “When you are looking for the right widget, we can help. Our widget technicians can help you with anything. These are the things you should look out for in widgets.”

Not every meta description type will work well for each industry. This is where testing, assessing your results, and making changes based on those results come in.

Tailor your meta description to the website, and down to the page that is designed for your users. And always keep in mind user intent while integrating the above-discussed optimizations.

Optimizing Meta Descriptions Requires Striking a Balance

All of this has to be done while also observing character limits, including power calls to action in the meta description, observing proper branding and tone of voice, and also including targeted optimizations for specific pages.

It is a delicate balance that must be maintained while also interweaving common SEO elements.

Go forth, our young padawan, and make us proud with your meta descriptions.



Chapter 4

11 Headline Writing Tips to Drive Traffic & Clicks

SEJ
EBOOK

Written By
Kristi Kellogg
Founder, Dazzling Digital



Wondering how to write a headline that drives traffic and clicks?

The best headlines are:

- Extremely relevant to the content
- Contain a keyword
- Generate interests

There's plenty of room to be creative and demonstrate value, right off the bat.

Read on to discover 11 useful tips to help you write good headlines.

1. Let Keywords Drive You

If you're writing a piece of evergreen content, always do keyword research to find out what people are actually searching for.

A slight difference in wording can make a huge impact on traffic.

Let's take this content, for example.

As with all content, I did keyword research beforehand to pinpoint what people are actually searching for.

I narrowed it down to these keyword phrases, based on their monthly search volume:

- Headline writing tips: 360
- How to write a headline: 360
- Good headlines: 390
- How to write a good headline: 170

By choosing a relevant keyword phrase with the most search volume, I can boost the ROI of the content.

Accordingly, I chose "headline writing tips" as my main keyword (and, of course, I can use the others as supporting keywords).

As you can see, the headline on this content is "12 Headline Writing Tips to Drive Traffic and Clicks."

It's keyword-rich, relevant and (hopefully) demonstrates value.

2. Come up with Multiple Headlines

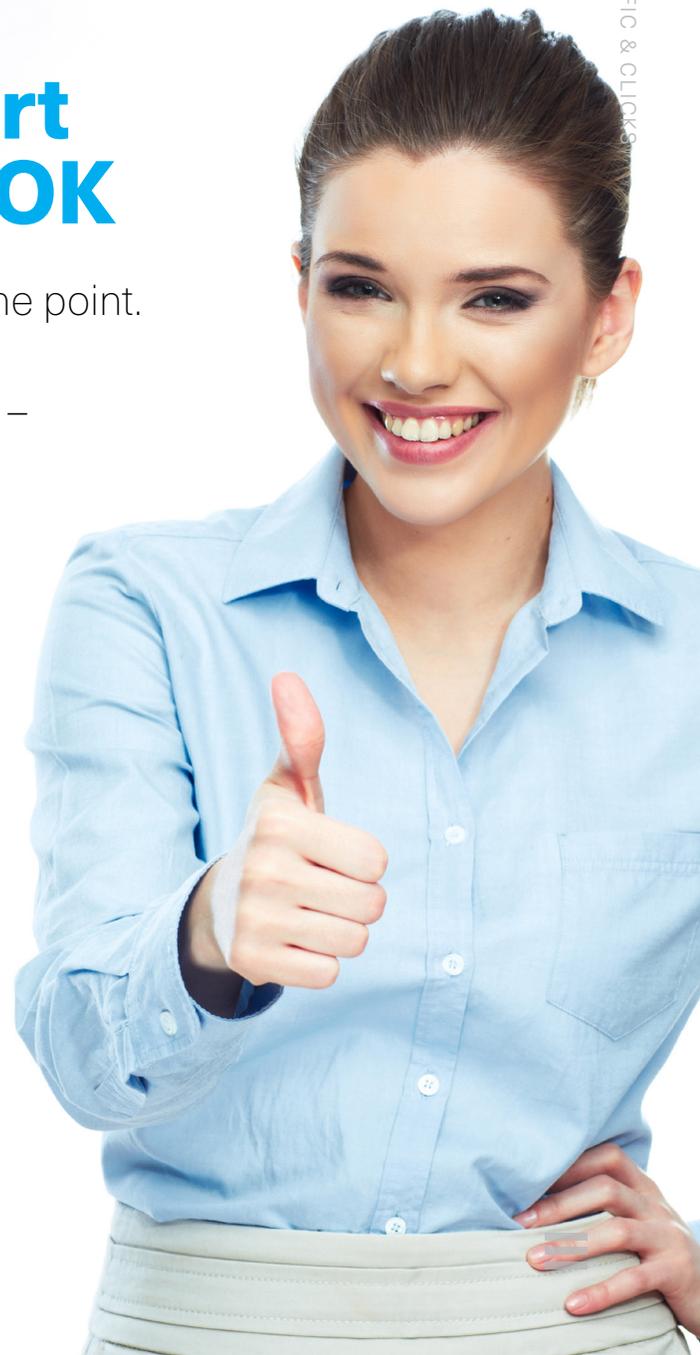
If you find yourself with a bout of writer's block and can't come up with a headline that really strikes your fancy, try writing a bunch!

The act of brainstorming multiple headlines will really get your creative juices flowing, and you'll land on something great eventually.

3. Know that Sometimes Short and Sweet is A-OK

Sometimes we need to get straight to the point.

Not every headline needs to be lengthy – sometimes being punchy and straightforward is a better approach, so don't automatically discount a potential headline just because it's short.



4. Pull a Quote from the Article

Another option for coming up with a good headline is pulling a quote from the content.

A quote, especially from a celebrity or influencer, can be excellent fodder for a headline.

The quote, of course, should be on-topic with the article as a whole.

Here's one technical issue to keep in mind: unlike body copy, quotes in headlines should always appear in single quotations, according to Associated Press Style.

5. Leverage a Compelling Statistic

Considering popping a powerful statistic right into the headline.

That's what Matt Southern did in this article for SEJ: "**91% of Brands are Moving Toward In-House Digital Marketing.**"



6. Look at Competitors' Headlines

If you're stuck and can't come up with a good headline, look to your competitor's content for inspiration.

You can never copy them, of course.

But you can look at what your successful competitors to get some ideas and then you can create your own variations on that theme.

7. Put a Word in All Caps

Very occasionally, you can put a word in all caps.

This will immediately give your headline a sense of immediacy and urgency.

I like to use this occasionally to punch a headline up.

Use this sparingly, however – it's not for every article, every time.

8. Use a Question

What questions does your article answer?

The question itself can sometimes make for a good headline.

If you're writing a guide on the Facebook algorithm, a headline like "What is the Facebook Algorithm? 10 Things You Need to Know" would be perfect.

Potential readers will know, upfront, exactly what question your content is going to answer, which is valuable.

9. Don't Forget a Call to Action

Whenever you can, add a call to action in the headline.

Use terms like discover, learn, find out, understand, etc. to make your reader feel like they're making an empowered choice when they click through to your content.



10. Use a Number

Studies have shown including a number in your headline drives clicks.

Note: the Associated Press states that headlines beginning with a number should spell out the number.

You're also supposed to spell out numbers one through nine, including nine.

Online, however, where attention spans are short and space is precious, numerals rather than spelled out numbers tend to perform better.

It's still good to know the rule, though, even if you're going to break it.

11. Test Out the Headline – Would You Click It?

Unsure of whether or not the headline is good?

Use this simple test: would you click it?

Put yourself in the readers' shoes and consider whether or not you'd be intrigued by your headline.

If you are, great – you've found a winner.

If not, keep brainstorming – get back to this list of headline writing tips and consult it whenever you're feeling stuck!

Chapter 5

How to Use Header Tags: SEO Best Practices



Written By
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Owner, AWCopywriting



Like many SEO meat-and-potatoes tactics, there's no denying that header tags aren't as critically important for your site rankings as they used to be.

However, there's no denying that these **tags still serve an important function** – for your users and your SEO.

They can indirectly influence your rankings by making your content easier and more enjoyable for visitors to read, and by providing keyword-rich context about your content for the search engines.

If you want to call yourself an SEO with a straight face, you can't afford not to optimize your header tags. Here are seven header tag best practices for SEO.

1. Use Headers to Provide Structure

Your header tags provide structure and context for your article. Each header should give the reader an idea of the information they can glean from the paragraph text that follows below.

A helpful way to think of header tags is by comparing them to a table of contents for a non-fiction book:

- Your H1 introduces the topic your page is all about, just as a title tells a reader what a book is all about.
- The H2s are akin to book chapters, describing the main topics you'll cover in sections of the article.
- Subsequent headers, H3s to H6s, serve as additional sub-headings within each section, just as a book chapter may be split up by multiple sub-topics.

2. Use Headers to Break Up Text

A scannable article is a readable article, and a readable article is one that's more likely to perform well in the search engines.

Scannability is so important to the success of an article, that publications like [Forbes](#) have gone so far to call it “the most overlooked factor of content marketing.”

The data backs up these claims. Only **16 percent** of internet users read an article word-for-word. The rest are scanning.

People simply like scannable content. According to the same research, an article that's scannable is 58 percent more likely to perform better with readers.

When an article is scannable, users might actually stick around to read it, instead of **bouncing back to Google**. Plus, they'll also be more likely to share it with their friends.

While **social signals aren't a direct ranking factor**, the more an article is shared, the more likely it is to naturally earn backlinks, which are a ranking factor.



3. Include Keywords in Your Header Tags

While headers are not going to have as large an impact on your SEO as a backlink from an authoritative site, Google still looks at them to gather context for your page.

As with anything Google pays attention to, that means it's worth including keywords in your header tags.

This does not mean you should shoehorn keywords in at all costs. Be judicious, not spammy.

You'll note that many of the header tags in this article contain keywords, but not all of them do.

Your page should be readable first and foremost, and naturally include keywords.

Design for users, then make tweaks to optimize for Google – without sacrificing the user experience.

Increasingly, SEO professionals are finding that **good UX translates to good SEO.**



4. Optimize for Featured Snippets

One place where header tags do seem to make a positive impact on SEO is with featured snippets – in two particular ways:

- The first is optimizing your header tag for a long-tail voice search keyword, and then answering the query directly below using text within <p> paragraph tags.
- The second is using subsequent, smaller headings to outline different list items. Google uses these headers to create its own bulleted and numbered lists featured snippet results.

For example, Pear Analytics scored this featured snippet for “what is a h1 tag?” when Google pulled the paragraph of text beneath their keyword-optimized H1.

🔍 🔊

All
Shopping
Images
News
Videos
More
Settings
Tools

About 24,600,000 results (0.53 seconds)

The **header tag**, or the **<h1> tag** in HTML, will usually be the title of a post, or other emphasized text on the page. It will usually be the largest text that stands out. There are other header **tags** in HTML too, like an h2, h3, h4, etc. Aug 18, 2014



[How To Write a Header Tag \(h1\) for SEO - Pear Analytics](https://pearanalytics.com/blog/2014/how-to-write-a-header-tag-h1-for-seo/)
<https://pearanalytics.com/blog/2014/how-to-write-a-header-tag-h1-for-seo/>



Ryan Kelly
Founder/CEO

♥
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How To Write a Header Tag (h1) for SEO

Updated August 18, 2014 with additional information on multiple H1's and a video from Matt Cutts.

The **header tag**, or the **<h1> tag** in HTML, will usually be the title of a post, or other emphasized text on the page. It will usually be the largest text that stands out. There are other header tags in HTML too, like an h2, h3, h4, etc. Each can have a lesser degree of importance on the page, but it really depends on how your HTML/CSS guy did the layout. Sometimes, they make your logo the h1 – because it's in the "header", but it would be best to make the h1 the title of the page or post instead.

And here's an example for the list scenario.

Search for "best essential oil for first aid," and Google creates a list of answers using the H3s from the Natural Living Ideas blog.



[All](#) [Images](#) [News](#) [Shopping](#) [Videos](#) [More](#) [Settings](#) [Tools](#)

About 136,000,000 results (0.41 seconds)

6 Must-Have Essential Oils For Your First Aid Kit

- Lavender. After your chosen carrier, lavender is absolutely the most important oil to include in your essential oil first aid kit. ...
- Tea Tree. ...
- Chamomile (German or Roman varieties only) ...
- Rosemary. ...
- Peppermint. ...
- Eucalyptus.



[Essential Oil First Aid Kit: 6 Must-Have Oils & 17 Ways To Use Them](http://www.naturallivingideas.com/essential-oil-first-aid-kit/)
www.naturallivingideas.com/essential-oil-first-aid-kit/

6 Must-Have Essential Oils For Your First Aid Kit

Of the hundreds of different essential oils in the world, there are quite a few which are known to be useful for healing and first aid. However, a select few of these oils are especially helpful and will cover the majority of injuries minor enough to treat at home.

The 6 essential oils listed below will provide an excellent, basic kit that will easy handle the majority of your first aid needs.

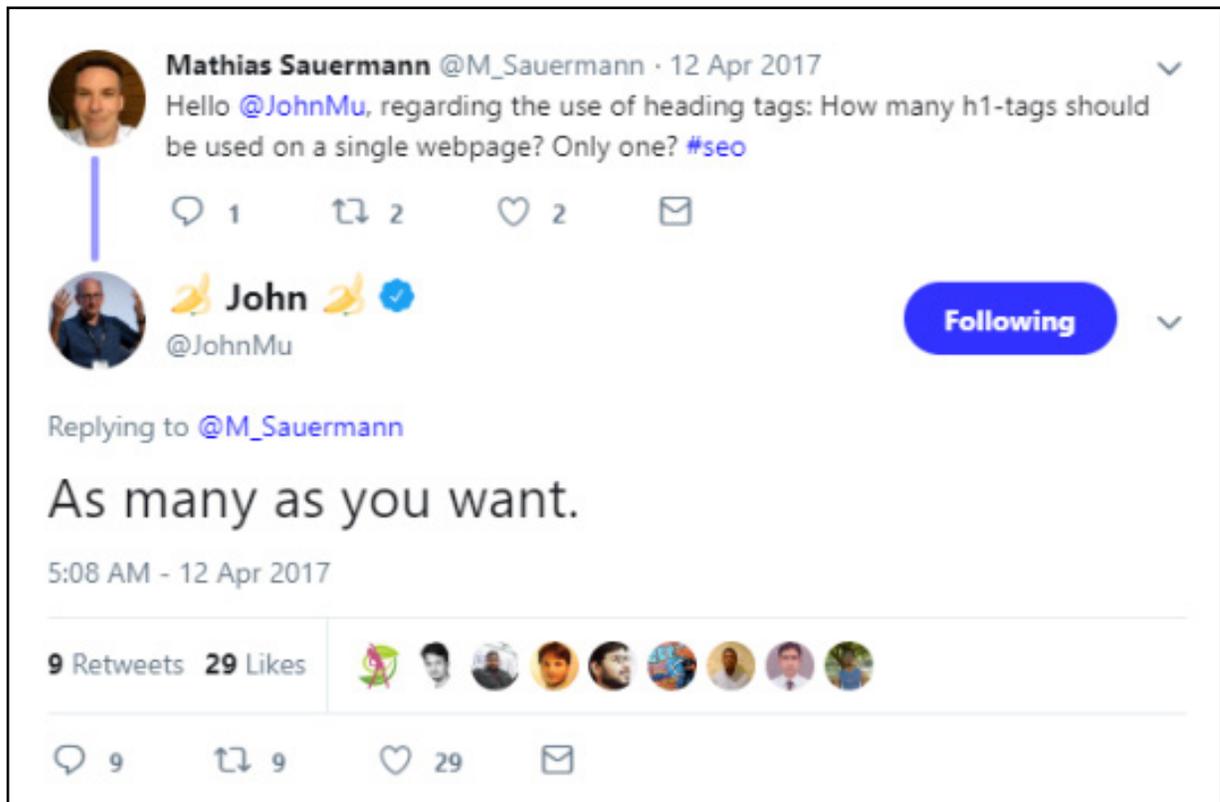
1. Lavender

After your chosen carrier, **lavender** is absolutely the most important oil to include in your essential oil first aid kit. In fact, if you could have only one essential oil in your kit, this would be the one to choose. Lavender has a **very wide range of applications**.

5. Only Use One H1

Let's dispel a common [SEO myth](#).

Google has said there is [no problem](#) with using multiple H1s.



However, that doesn't mean it's an SEO best practice to use multiple H1s on a page.

Why not?

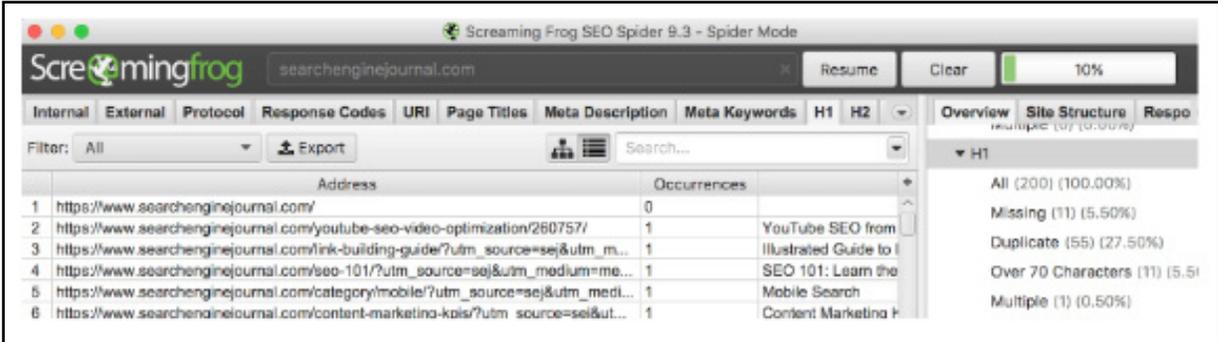
H1s are big, and they look like titles to readers. Use multiple H1s on your page, and it starts to look a little out of control.

Want to make sure you don't have any multiple H1s lingering on your site?

Run your domain through a crawler tool like Screaming Frog.

Toggle over to the H1 tab to see at-a-glance whether you have any pages that are missing H1s entirely or have multiple H1s.

Then click the Filter drop-down menu to export the ones you care about fixing.



The screenshot shows the Screaming Frog SEO Spider 9.3 interface in Spider Mode. The main window displays a list of crawled URLs with columns for Address, Occurrences, and H1. The H1 column is currently filtered to show 'Missing (11) (5.50%)', 'Duplicate (55) (27.50%)', 'Over 70 Characters (11) (5.5%)', and 'Multiple (1) (0.50%)'. The 'All (200) (100.00%)' category is also visible. The interface includes a search bar, a filter dropdown, and an export button.

	Address	Occurrences	H1
1	https://www.searchenginejournal.com/	0	
2	https://www.searchenginejournal.com/youtube-seo-video-optimization/260757/	1	YouTube SEO from
3	https://www.searchenginejournal.com/link-building-guide/?utm_source=sej&utm_m...	1	Illustrated Guide to l
4	https://www.searchenginejournal.com/seo-101/?utm_source=sej&utm_medium=me...	1	SEO 101: Learn the
5	https://www.searchenginejournal.com/category/mobile/?utm_source=sej&utm_medi...	1	Mobile Search
6	https://www.searchenginejournal.com/content-marketing-kpis/?utm_source=sej&utm...	1	Content Marketing H

6. Keep Your Header Tags Consistent

A good rule of thumb for UX is to maintain a consistent experience for users.

When a site achieves that down to the finest detail, it's impressive.

Aim to impress with consistent header tags.

If you choose to use title case format, stick with that across all your pages (and vice versa if you choose sentence case).

Also, keep your headings on the shorter side.

A header tag is not the place to emphasize a block of keyword-rich text for Google.

Treat it like a mini-title for the following section of text.

For a good rule of thumb, keep headers about the same length as your title tags (70 characters or less).

The more you can set up expectations for your site visitors, and then consistently meet them, the happier (and more engaged) they'll be with your site.



7. Make Them Interesting

This rule applies to all your copywriting, not just the headers.

Your initial draft may have bland headers that you use to create your outline, but you should always **review and revise** them before publishing to make them compelling for visitors.

Yes, your header tags make an article scannable. But ideally, they don't scan the whole way through.

Intriguing header tags encourage visitors to take a beat and read for a while.

Place special importance on your **H1 tag** in particular. Users notice H1s.

In large part, your H1 may dictate whether visitors bother to scroll down the page at all.

Do your best to write one awesome H1 tag that answers the user's search intent, and gets them excited about reading your article.

Stay Ahead with Header Tags

Be an SEO all-star. Don't ignore any task, no matter how small the impact. Pay attention to how you use header tags. You won't be wasting your efforts.

Chapter 6

SEO Writing: Top 47 Tips to Master a Combined Art



Written By
Ron Lieback
Founder and CEO, ContentMender



Many agencies continue to believe that SEO writing revolves around one process: inserting keywords into page tags and the body of the text itself.

This belief remains strong, although today the quality and relevance of content have more proverbial weight than a few keywords in the title or heading tags.

According to a recent Searchmetrics General Ranking Factors **study** of Google, overall content relevance was more of a ranking factor than word count, or keywords in the text body, description title, or H1 tag.

Because agencies are naturally focused on the art of SEO itself, they forget about the art of writing.

True success – for search engine rankings, user experience, and the brand overall, whether personal or business – occurs when both the art of SEO and the art of writing are combined.

Neither can survive alone.

This concept is not as simple as many agencies perceive.

Writers are either trained in traditional discipline or the digital discipline. Most agencies have one or the other; find one with both and the proverbial Holy Grail happens.

From experience, I get it.

I've extensively worked and trained in both disciplines, from spending endless evenings chasing stories as a news reporter back when Google was in its infancy, to cranking out 25 blogs in a week that were part of a keyword-themed strategy for a website.

Fast-forward to today, and I've ghostwritten nearly 500 articles for multiple CEOs and helped build their personal and business brands around keywords that were positive to their respective industries.

I've also written over 14,000 articles, stories, and product copy for various online publications.

Let's reiterate – SEO is a must for any online writing, especially from a keyword perspective, and correctly mapping those keywords to pages/posts. I'd say "strategically," but that word needs to go.

Strategy is more than just keyword research and fill in the blanks with some content; strategy also needs to imply the creation of quality content that is relevant to the audience.

Readers can recognize an authoritative voice immediately, and a fake voice even quicker. This does zilch for conversions or brand awareness, something I've learned during nearly two decades of studying both the art of writing and the art of SEO.

With that said, here are the top 47 writing tips for any content writer within any type of company, from billion-dollar software designers to local pizza joints.

The focus weighs more towards the art of writing itself, which will naturally lead to the creation of quality content that search engines demand.



Writing for SEO: The Essentials

1. Think Keywords First

Your writing must be found before you'll have any impact.

No matter how intelligent they become, search engine algorithms can't recognize the best voice in a piece of writing...but if [keywords](#) are there, you'll have the opportunity of being heard.

2. Approach Keyword Research Like an Art

There are thousands of [keyword research](#) articles available; research, discover and test what works best for you.

Make this process cyclical; I build content calendars out in three-month segments, performing fresh keyword research at the beginning of every cycle.

Industries change, and new keywords trend quicker than you'd know.

3. Study the Competition for Keywords

Multiple tools are available to find competitor keywords.

Warning: ONLY steal keywords; don't study the actual writing of your competitors. Once you do that, you sound like them, and struggle to create anything original.

Study keywords – not actual content – of your competitors. Create an original voice and you'll be heard.

4. Target 1 or 2 Keywords for Each Page or Blog (Except Homepage)

Always focus on broader terms for you main “parent” pages and longer term for the “child” pages below.

5. Use Keywords Where They Matter Most

To send search engines strong signals of the content’s intent, it’s vital to use your keyword in the following (prioritized of importance):

- Title tag
- Internal links within content
- Alt attribute of image
- Headline tags (always have an H1!)
- Meta description

6. Use Bold & Bullet Points Wherever Possible

Google pays attention to these, including when awarding [featured snippets](#).

So make sure to use target keywords in bold and bullet points when possible.

7. The Title Tag: Still the Most Powerful Element

Make sure your target keyword is part of the title tag, ideally toward the front.

Also, remember that title tags should be about 60 characters, so put as much time into this as your actual content creation.

For the homepage title tag, target three of the most important keywords that describe the business/website.

Always think about storytelling. Keep it simple. Speak the language of your target audience.

8. Add Related Keywords

Don't simply stuff keywords in after doing the writing.

If you're well prepared with keyword research, have the list of semantically connected keywords in view as you write.

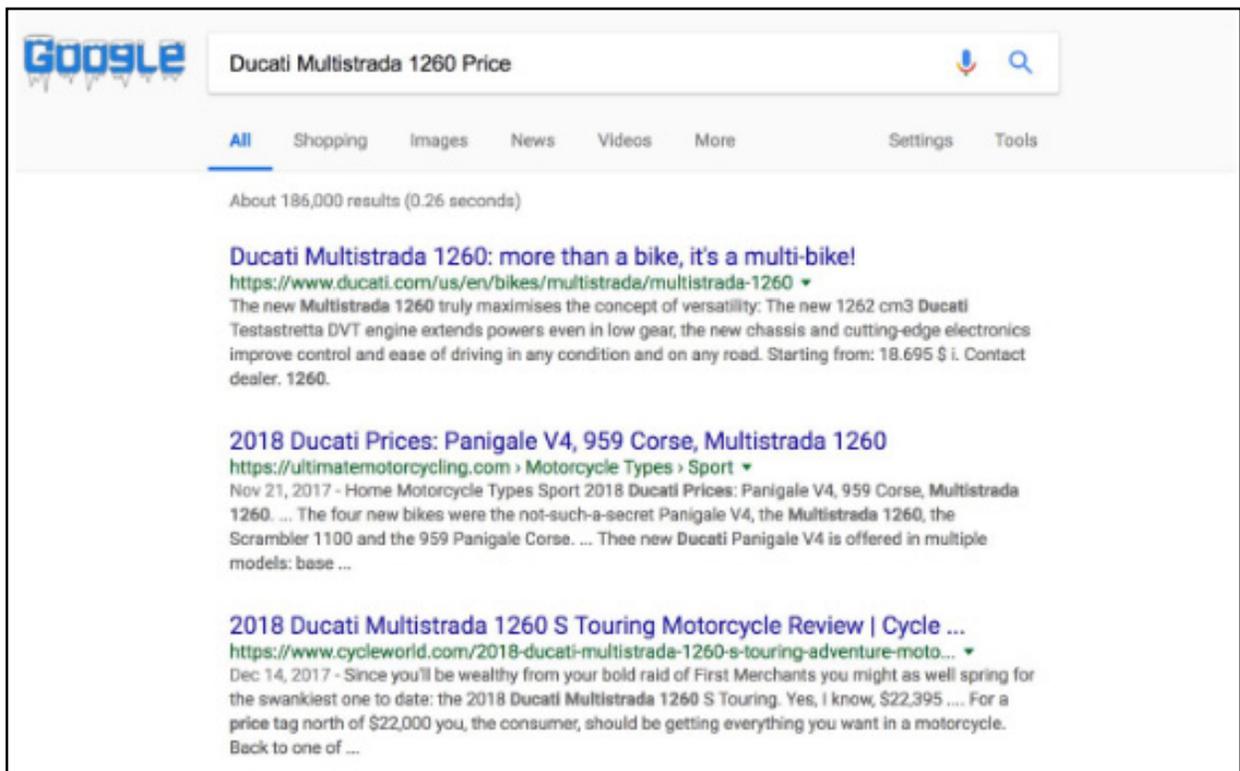
Insert related keywords naturally.



9. Use Your Target Keyword in Your Meta Description.

Google says it doesn't use the meta description as a ranking factor.

However, if someone is searching for that target keyword or phrase, those words will be bold:



Bolding attracts the eyes – and might entice a searcher to click rather than scroll by.

Write your meta description like ad copy.

Writing for SEO: Craft & Routine

10. Write Drunk, Edit Sober

This sentiment is paraphrased from Hemingway.

This doesn't mean you have to drink booze and edit a day (or so) later. But you must create a mood to get words flowing in a natural way that both readers and search engines crave.

Meditation works for some; simply riding around in a car or a motorcycle works for others.

My thing personally – when motorcycles are garaged due to snow – is when wifey and child head to sleep and I relax with music and a glass of red (or three). It's all up to writer preference.

The solution for everyone is simple: worry about writing and get thoughts out before thinking.

Sounds weird? Try it. Then edit when fully focused.

11. Write. Rewrite. Then Rewrite Again. Until It's Right.

It's all about a routine and process.

As William Zinsser says in "Writing to Learn": "Only by repeated applications of the process – writing and rewriting and pruning and shaping – can we hammer out clear and simple product."

12. Outline and Plan

It's much easier for a mind to think, and a search engine to read, in chunks, and actually see those chunks coherently.

Most minds naturally want to write in a stream of consciousness style like Jack Kerouac – but this isn't novel writing; most of us are writing for a business and that business's success.

Organize headlines (for SEO with keywords!) and fill in the gaps.

Sometimes those headlines are more important than the words beneath. Make those headlines scream thoughts, and the words shout to support those screams.

13. Write Sentence by Sentence

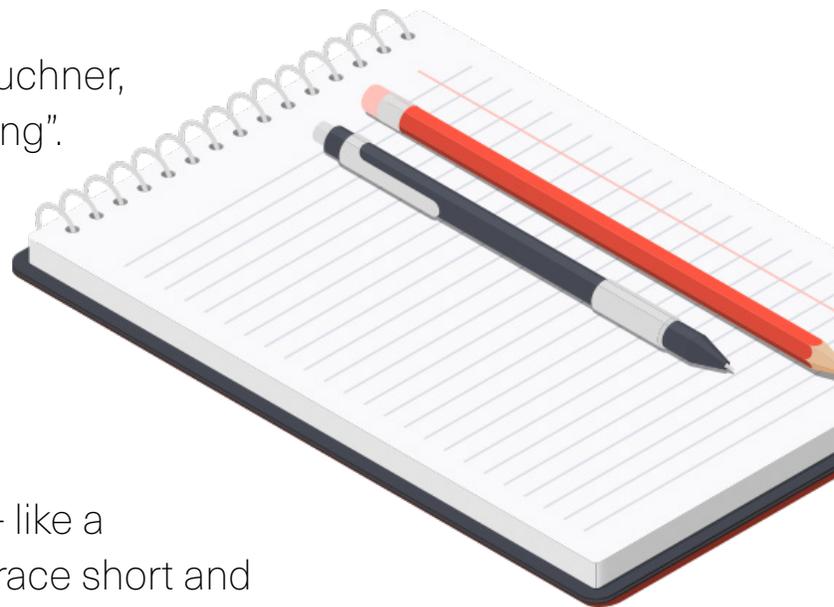
Set up Word or Google Pages in landscape for the first draft, and write sentence by sentence.

Don't write any paragraphs until you do your first rounds of edits.

I learned this tip from Charles Euchner, author of "The Elements of Writing".

Single-line sentences keep the mind fresh. They'll help corral thoughts as you begin editing.

Think short for every sentence – like a 140-character tweet – and embrace short and concise writing.



14. Write Daily

A muscle grows when it has endless input combined with correlating relaxing points.

Your mind works that same way; embrace it.

Again, write daily to work out the writing muscles, followed by some relaxing.

Never stop the growth of writing muscles.

15. Shut Your Wi-Fi Off

This tip comes from Tim Ferriss, author of “The 4-Hour Workweek”.

This simple practice keeps focus in place and the mind from answering anything that's not in the mindset of your focus.

Distractions move a mood. Make those distractions non-existent.

16. Got Questions? Ask Your Digital Assistant

The Wi-Fi may be off, but sometimes you need immediate answers to questions that will nag you. Some can't work without answering questions.

The solution is simple: ask Siri or Alexa.

I keep an Amazon Echo Dot next to my desk and use it for quick research. I have an Echo

Show, but it doesn't belong in the office where it can quickly jack your focus due to the video factor. That one remains downstairs, out of the office.

17. Read All You Can

Especially read the writers who simplify everything.

People may or may not love Hunter S. Thompson due to his politics or mad lifestyle, but his prose is crisp and simple. I read "Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas" in one sitting.

Not once, but maybe 10 times when I needed a push into something I couldn't possibly finish and needed a mind breath.

If you're business minded, Michael Gerber's "The E-Myth" is a one-sitting read also. Simple and informative.

18. Stop Waiting for Inspiration

It's useless.

There's no such thing as inspiration unless you like to talk about writing instead of writing.

True writers write every day and make it a lifestyle that helps develop the "art." Practice makes stuff happen and takes discipline.

Words simply flow better and easier after practice and discipline. Nothing happens without the simplicity of practice.

19. Read the Essentials

For traditional writing, read William Zinsser's "On Writing Well". Don't just read it once. Reread it once a year.

For the digital age of "short" writing that makes an impact, read Roy Peter Clark's "How to Write Short".

20. Try Writing in Longhand

This article is based on notes I took while flying over the Atlantic Ocean en route to Valencia, Spain.

Flying is a great time for thinking and using longhand. Plus, it keeps your mind off the snoring passenger next to you.

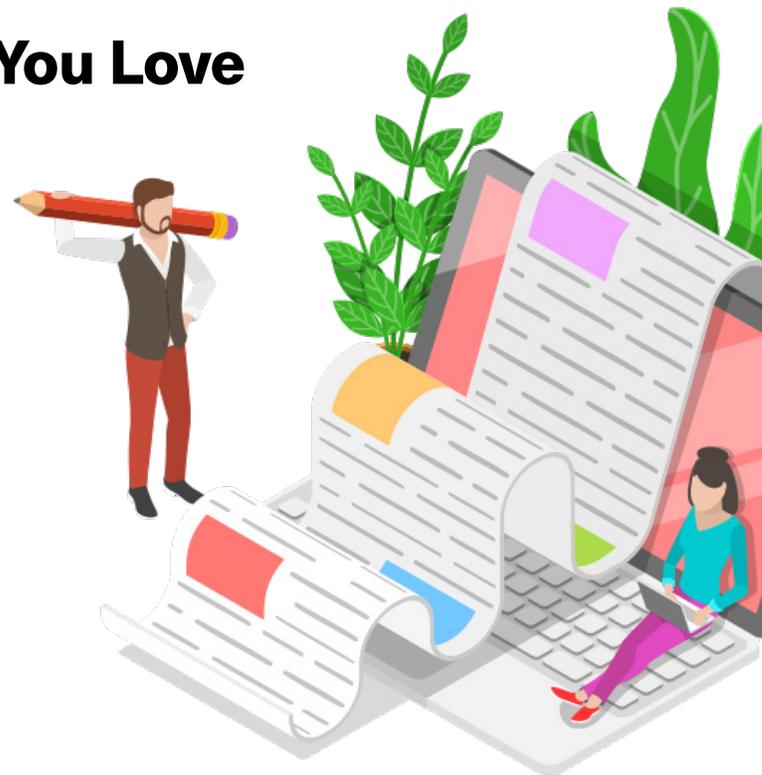
Write in longhand in cabs, buses, middle of meetings, etc. Try it, and revisit those notes before typing anything.

21. Write About What You Love

To truly master the craft of the written word, embrace writing that makes you happy – regardless if it'll make you money. The more you write, the better you'll become.

Take notes daily of things that make you question intent, such as a "For Sale" sign I saw that said "Blue Ball Living Has It All."

Short writing provides inspiration (regardless of how absurd sometimes!).



22. Ask Questions Daily

Friends, family, wife, children, whoever. Continually ask questions.

The more you learn, the more you can provide readers (possible prospects in business), regardless of your industry.

Questions are the highlights of learning. Let people talk.

Think 80/20 – let others talk 80 percent of the time as you listen, and talk the other 20 percent of the time.

Your writing will thank you one day (and so will the clients you write for).

23. Know Your Audience & Write for Them

Remember to keep your voice and style the same.

That's how to set yourself apart from the zillions of other content writers out there.

24. Work Better Under Deadline?

For some people, the pressure of a deadline forces the creativity out of you.

If this is true for you, have project managers bump up your due dates.

I do this with my teams by sometimes as far ahead as four weeks.

25. Think Like a Journalist

Ask the 5Ws – who, what, when, where, why – and, most importantly, how.

Your client's content depends on it.

26. Never Cram all 5Ws and How into One Paragraph

Not only will this present clutter to the reader, but search engines can see this as spammy and keyword stuffed. Write so the flow is natural.

27. Build Your Work Around Questions

Always ask what's the problem and how do I clearly provide a solution to that problem.

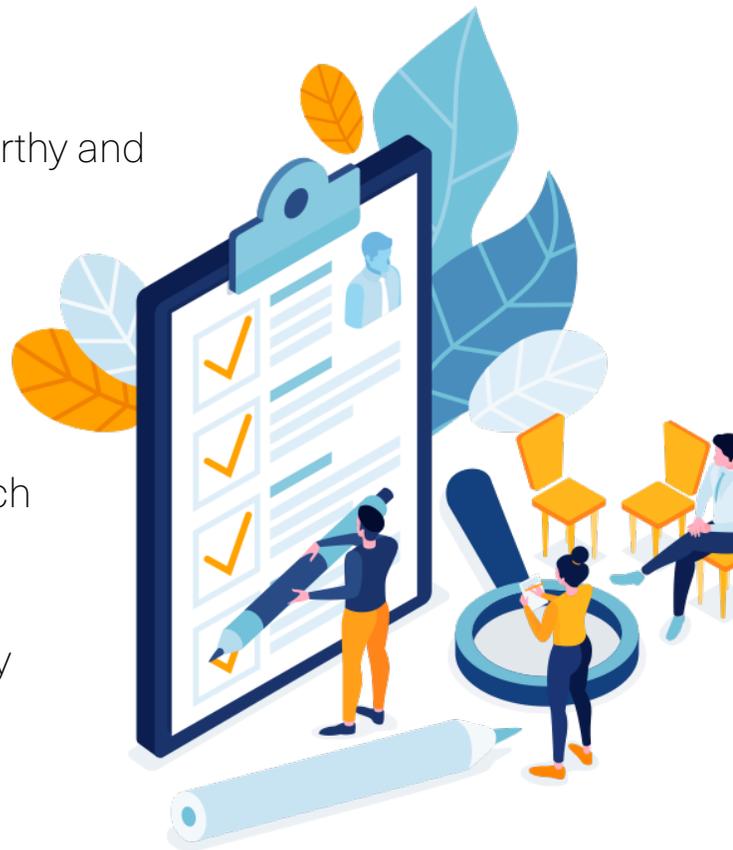
As importantly ask, will readers care?

This will help keep your voice trustworthy and authoritative, keeping search engines and readers happy.

28. Don't Just Appeal to Sight

Also try to appeal to other senses, such as smell, sound, touch, and taste.

Try to appeal to all five senses in every piece of content you create.



29. When Writing, Think Like a Camera

Provide input from aerial views, up close, in the middle of it all, and behind the scenes.

Let your audience experience the moment, and not just read about it.

30. Split Long Projects Into Short Tasks

Write all headlines first (remember to use target keywords in them), and fill in each portion.

This works if you're writing a 2,500-word piece on the craft of writing, or a 750-piece for a client discussing technical aspects of a product.

31. Always Have an Ending in Mind

Knowing where your content is leading will keep your writing focus sharp, and will help you more often achieve the ultimate goal of most online writing – a conversion.

32. Check Your Spelling & Grammar

Misspell a name and the article immediately loses credibility.

Craft your content with sloppy grammar, and the article loses credibility.

After you've checked for spelling and grammar errors, check again.

33. Think of Credibility to Your Brand as a Keyword to SEO

Without credibility, you'll lose any chance of capturing an audience's attention.

Situations get worse if you spread false facts.

Take added time for research and fact-checking.

34. Edit With the 10-Second Rule in Mind

This goes for every single paragraph, especially for the first paragraph and meta description.

You want to immediately grab the reader's attention, and keep that attention.

Also think – is this article worthy of additional conversation? If so, and you have proper CTAs within an article, this can help move readers one step closer to conversion.



Writing for SEO: Form

35. Write Strong Sentences & Paragraphs

The strongest words should begin and end a sentence.

The strongest sentences should appear at the end and beginning of a paragraph.

This helps keep the slower material in the middle of a sentence, and the most important thoughts before the reader.

36. Become Obsessed About Clarity of Voice

Clean writing reflects a clear mindset – something people (clients!) need.

37. Keep Writing Free of Clutter

Keep it simple.

Get straight to what you're saying.

Strip all useless words.

Get sentences into their simplest form.

38. Beware of Excess Adverbs & Adjectives

If the verb or noun can't perform the explanation, that verb or noun isn't strong enough.

39. Use a variety of long and short sentences

A variety of sentence lengths helps your content to create some rhythm.

Readers enjoy this.

40. Short Paragraphs Allow the Mind to Breathe

Use short paragraphs often.

Space between paragraphs psychologically takes less energy to read, saving that prospect's energy for the sales/lead.

41. Always Use Active Verbs

This sentence was imperative with "Use."

Without active verbs, the mind shifts.

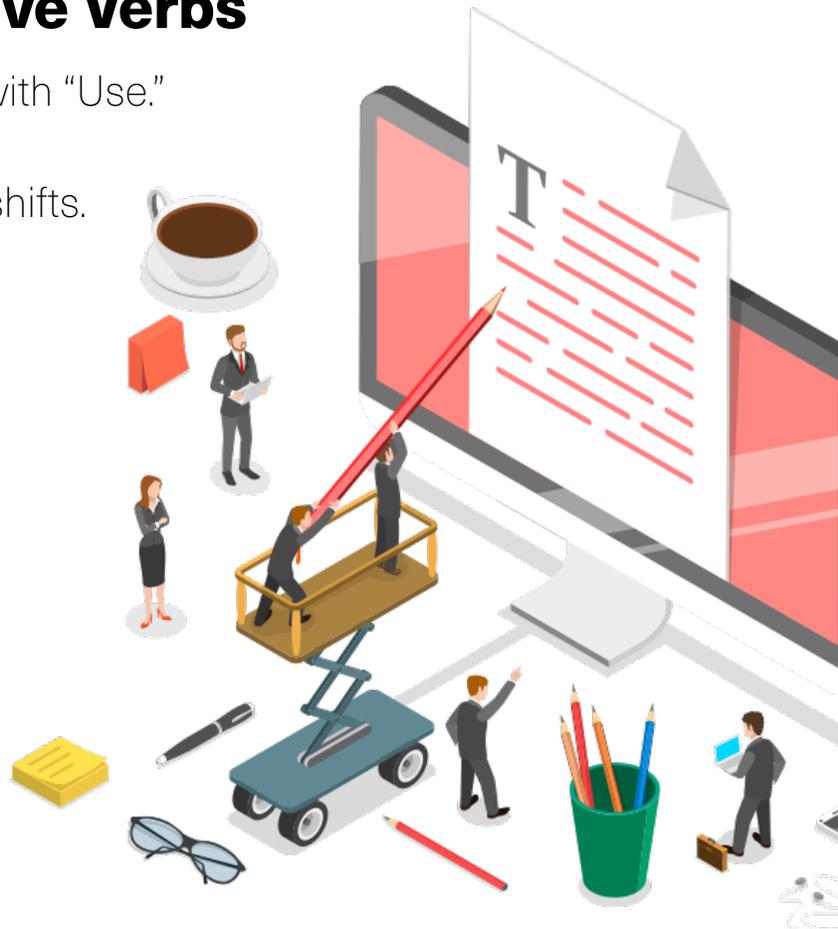
The mind wanders.

You lose an audience...or sale.

42. Avoid Clichés

Um, like the plague.

You feel that one?



Writing for SEO: Favorite Hacks

43. Listen to Your Favorite Music

Why not write to it? Some forms of music will bring drastically different emotions out on the page before you'd realize it, so the more the better.

While writing this, I went from Coltrane to Infected Mushroom to Hendrix to SRV to G n' R to Breaking Benjamin to Chopin.

For editing, Miles Davis was my go-to.

Music can help words flow, so embrace it all.

44. Commit to the Most Serious Writing in the Morning

I'm typically up by 5:30 a.m. That's when my brain is freshest.

I always block a few hours every morning for my most serious writing.

45. Carry a Tablet to Jot Down Ideas

If you think clearer in longhand, carry a small tablet for jotting down ideas over using your phone.

Moleskin tablets are my favorite because they are thin and fit into books, which I always have with me when traveling.

There's only so much marginal space within a book for ideas; a tablet takes care of this and keeps you off the phone.

46. For Clients: Think 80/20 for the Initial Few Engagements

Focus on the 20 percent of your writing that will produce 80 percent results for the client's sales. How?

Simple: always begin a content strategy around the top ROI products. This shows value, and will help contribute to the overall qualified keywords you want them to want to rank for.

47. Remember to Get Away from it All

The writers that have the true minds to create and provide value to clients always need a break.

One of my process weekly tactics is "half-day Wednesday." I detune and either play guitar, hike, ride motorcycles... basically whatever is needed.

This mid-week break keeps the mind fresh and clear, which translates into positive workflow and, ultimately, happy clients.



Conclusion

The perfect solution to create content that leads to conversion involves deep studies not only in the art of SEO, but also in the art of writing. Once both of these arts combine, digital organisms happen.

Embrace both if you're serious about providing the most value to your readers or your client's readers, which you naturally want to turn from prospects to customers.

Also remember if the content appeals, it will only compound online over time.

Think of SEO writing to a business as compounding interest to an investor – have the patience and discipline to do it correctly, and the results should continually speak for themselves.

Chapter 7

How to Identify & Eliminate Keyword Cannibalization to Boost Your SEO



Written By
Aleh Barysevich
Founder and CMO, SEO PowerSuite



There's a common misconception that the more pages you have targeting a keyword, the better you'll rank for that keyword.

After all, the more pages you have trumpeting your niche, the more likely Google is to pick up on your keywords and elevate your SERPs ranking, right?

Actually, no. That isn't true.

What Is Keyword Cannibalization?

Keyword cannibalization is so called because you're "cannibalizing" your own results – you're splitting CTR, links, content, and (often) conversions between two pages that should be one.

When you do this, you aren't showing Google the breadth or depth of your knowledge, and you aren't improving the authority of your site for that query.

Instead, you're asking Google to weigh your pages against each other and choose which ones it thinks suits the matching keywords best.

For example, if your website sells shoes, and "shoes" is the only keyword you target, you're essentially telling Google that every page is about "shoes" regardless of whether they're hiking shoes, tennis shoes, sneakers, etc.



6 Negative Effects Keyword Cannibalization Can Have on Your SEO

Sadly, keyword cannibalization has some potentially disastrous consequences for your SEO. Many people suffering from keyword cannibalization aren't even aware that anything's wrong.

They might even be happy that one page is ranking in the fifth and sixth slot for their targeted keyword, without realizing that one authoritative page would probably rank higher and convert better.

The practical consequences are clear, however: lost site traffic, queries leading to the wrong page, fluctuating SERP rankings, and ultimately lost sales.

Why? Because:

1. You're Diminishing the Authority of Your Page

Instead of having one highly authoritative page, you're splitting your CTR to multiple moderately relevant pages.

Essentially, you've turned your pages into competitors and now you're fighting for pageviews and SERP ranks.

2. You're Diluting Your Links & Anchor Text

Backlinks that could have gone to one consolidated source of information are now being split between two (or more) pages.

Similarly, your anchor text and internal links are leading visitors to multiple different pages instead of one authoritative page on the subject.

3. Google May Devalue the More Relevant Page

Keywords are one of the main ways in which we help Google understand what our pages are about.

If all of your keywords are the same, Google tries to understand which page is the best fit – and if your content is too similar, it might get it wrong.

4. You're Squandering Your Crawl Budget

Your [crawl budget](#) is the number of times a search engine spider crawls your website in a given time period.

Having multiple pages devoted to the same keyword results in the crawling and indexing of pages that aren't needed. (Note: small sites probably won't notice a difference or ever have to worry about their crawl budget, but large ecommerce sites or vendors with multiple products will notice a difference.)

5. It's a Sign of Poor Page Quality

Multiple pages targeting the same keyword tells your users that your content is probably stretched thin, and it also signals Google that your content may not match your keywords on each page.

6. Your Conversion Rate Will Suffer

Inevitably one of your pages will convert better than the rest.

Instead of directing new visitors to that page, and making it the most authoritative page possible, you're instead losing potential leads when they land on less relevant pages.



How to Identify Keyword Cannibalization

Fortunately, once you've identified the problem, fixing keyword cannibalization is easy.

Identifying keyword cannibalization is as easy as creating a keyword matrix.

Simply create a spreadsheet that lists all of your site's important URLs and their associated keywords.

For example, if your site sells shoes, then your spreadsheet might look like this:

URLs	Keywords
www.yoursite.com/shoes	shoes
www.yoursite.com/tennishoes	tennis shoes
www.yoursite.com/womensshoes	women's shoes
www.yoursite.com/menssneakers	men's sneakers
www.yoursite.com/lifestyleshoes	lifestyle shoes
www.yoursite.com/hikingshoes	hiking shoes
www.yoursite.com/basketballshoes	basketball shoes

Alternatively, you can use a keyword mapping tool, which might look like this:

#	Keyword	# of Searches	Competition	KSI	Expected Value	Landing Page	Tags
1	shoes	18M - 18M	High	389,623	2,382,941	https://www.nike.com	
2	sneakers	18M - 18M	High	389,623	2,382,941	https://www.nike.com	
3	women's shoes	18M - 18M	High	389,623	2,382,941	https://www.nike.com	
4	men's shoes	100K - 1M	High	165,550	210,294	https://www.nike.com	
5	basketball shoes	100K - 1M	High	165,550	210,294	https://www.nike.com	
6	hiking shoes	100K - 1M	High	165,550	210,294	https://www.nike.com	
7	sneakers for men	100K - 1M	High	165,550	210,294	https://www.nike.com	
8	slip-ons	100K - 1M	Medium	255,291	210,294	https://www.nike.com	
9	Men's Basketball Shoe	10K - 100K	High	16,335	21,820	https://www.nike.com	Manually added a...
10	hiking shoes	5K - 50K	High	1,854	2,195	https://www.nike.com	Manually added a...
11	men's shoes & sneakers	50 - 100	N/A	No data	21	https://www.nike.com	

When you've listed out your URLs and their keywords, run down the list and look for any duplicate entries.

If you spot any – especially across core pages – you're probably suffering from keyword cannibalization.

Now it's time to fix those pages!

Note that keyword cannibalization can even occur if the meta information in your title tags seems to target the same keyword, so double check those too.

If you're using a rank tracking tool, you may also want to take this opportunity to search for thin content and keywords mistakenly applied to the wrong page.

It's a good time to give your site a little TLC.

How to Fix Keyword Cannibalization

How you solve keyword cannibalization depends on the root of the problem.

More often than not, the issue is simply one of organization, but particularly stubborn cases may require you to break out the 301s or new landing pages.

Here are five possible solutions.

1. Restructure Your Website

The simplest solution is often to take your most authoritative page and turn it into a landing page that links to other unique variations that fall under the umbrella of your targeted keywords.

If we return to our shoe-product example, it might make sense to make “shoes” our canonical source page and link all of the more specific variations back to it.



2. Create New Landing Pages

Alternatively, you might lack a landing page that consolidates all of your product pages in one place.

In this case, you'd benefit from creating a unique landing page to serve as your authoritative source page and link to all of your variations from there.

In our example, we might create a page called "hiking shoes" and another called "sneakers for men."

3. Consolidate Your Content

If your pages aren't unique enough to warrant having multiple pages targeting the same keyword, consider combining them into one page.

This is a chance to take two underperforming pages and turn them into a more authoritative source. It may also solve thin content issues.

4. Find New Keywords

Finally, if you're already blessed with highly diverse, content-rich pages, and the only thing your website is suffering from is a poorly planned keyword strategy, maybe all you need to do is find new keywords.

Just make sure your keywords accurately describe your page's content.

5. Use 301 Redirects

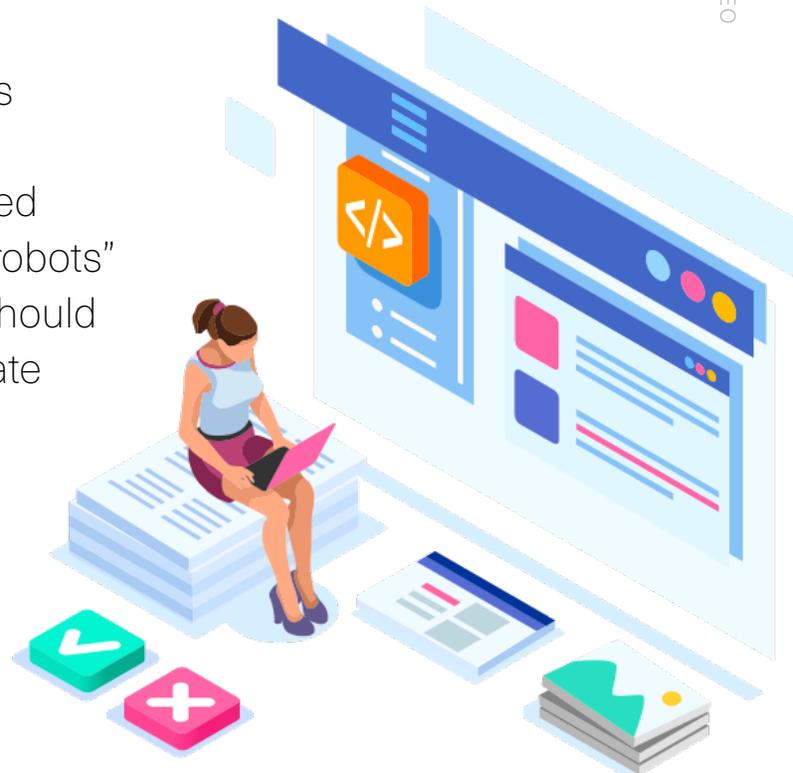
While I generally advise against using too many 301s (see [my list of the 10 Most Harmful Mobile SEO Mistakes](#)), they might be necessary if you already have multiple pages ranking for the same terms.

Using 301s allows you to consolidate your cannibalized content by linking all of the less relevant pages to a single, more authoritative version.

Mind though that this tactic is suitable only for pages with similar content and those matching specific keyword queries.

These five solutions will fix most cases of keyword cannibalization, but if you manage an ecommerce website, you should be particularly careful to note how your CMS separates products with variable sizes and colors. Some CMS programs create separate pages for every product variation.

If your CMS is organizing products like this, you should either restrict duplicate pages from being indexed using robots.txt or `<meta name="robots" content="noindex">` tags, or you should use [canonical URLs](#) to consolidate link signals for the duplicate content.



Conclusion

Keyword cannibalization is more prevalent today than ever before.

Ironically, its victims are usually webmasters who recognize the importance of SEO for their business, but while they intend to optimize their site, they don't fully understand how to 'speak' Google's language.

Fortunately, if your website is cannibalizing its own target keywords, solutions aren't hard to come by, and the damage isn't permanent.

With the right tools and a 'can-do' attitude, you can give your SEO a well-deserved boost.

Chapter 8

How to Do a Content Audit: The Ultimate Checklist



Written By
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Specialist, Madhouse Marketing



When was the last time you ran performed a content audit?

Can't remember?

You aren't alone.

Most content creators are so focused on creating new content that they forget to audit their existing content.

Here are a few reasons why you need to audit your content:

- **Goals:** Is your content achieving its goals? Are you gaining any ROI from the content you've produced? You won't know unless you measure your content's performance and track it through regular audits.
- **Staleness:** Your content can become stale or even outdated over time. Don't beat yourself up, though. Stale content isn't always your fault. What was relevant two years ago may not be as relevant now. On the bright side, you may just need to add a little extra spice to it to adapt to the times.
- **Wrong Information:** As your content ages, facts and data that once were accurate can become inaccurate. Running an audit through your content regularly will ensure your post's accuracy and protect your brand's reputation.
- **Know What's Working:** How will you ever know what type of content or which blog post is your most successful if you never go back to audit all of your content pieces? Perhaps pumping out three blog posts a week is really just tiring, and not actually producing any results. You'll never know if you don't go back and do a content audit to see which pieces perform best, and which were the worst.

Hopefully one, if not all, of those bullets spoke to you and you now understand why it's so important to audit your content regularly.

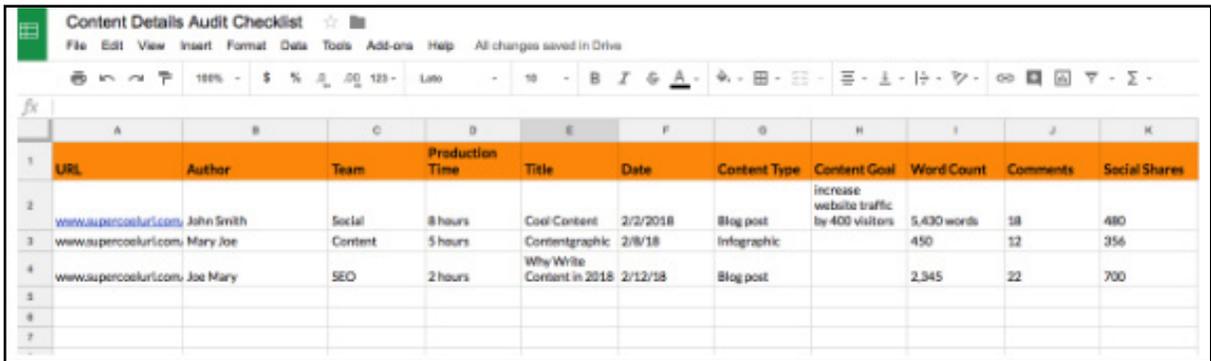
Now, let's get into the audit breakdown.



Content Details Audit

The first part of a content audit is dissecting the basics on the content piece and is a one-time entry on your audit.

Looks at how the content was created, how many people it took to create the content, and the basic publishing information.



	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
1	URL	Author	Team	Production Time	Title	Date	Content Type	Content Goal	Word Count	Comments	Social Shares
2	www.supercoolurl.com	John Smith	Social	8 hours	Cool Content	2/2/2018	Blog post	Increase website traffic by 400 visitors	5,430 words	18	480
3	www.supercoolurl.com	Mary Joe	Content	5 hours	Contentgraphic	2/8/18	Infographic		450	12	356
4	www.supercoolurl.com	Joe Mary	SEO	2 hours	Why Write Content in 2018	2/12/18	Blog post		2,345	22	700
5											
6											
7											

You'll want to track the following for each piece of content in a separate [content details audit spreadsheet](#):

- URL
- Author
- Team Produced (content team, social team, SEO team, etc.)
- Total Time (how long did it take to produce the content in its entirety)
- Title
- Date

- Content Type (is it a blog post, infographic, case study, etc.)
- Content Goal (what was the point of producing the content: backlinks, traffic, conversions, etc.)
- Word count
- Comments
- Shares (break this down by social network and total)

Content Data Audit

Here comes the fun part.

The content data portion of your audit needs to come with its own handy dandy excel doc, just like [this one I created](#) for you guys and gals.

Perform a Past Audit

Before we get into the data, you need to backtrack and audit your past produced content.

Knowing how the content you've already published performed will help you gauge what kind of content you need to create in the future, and what kind to not create.

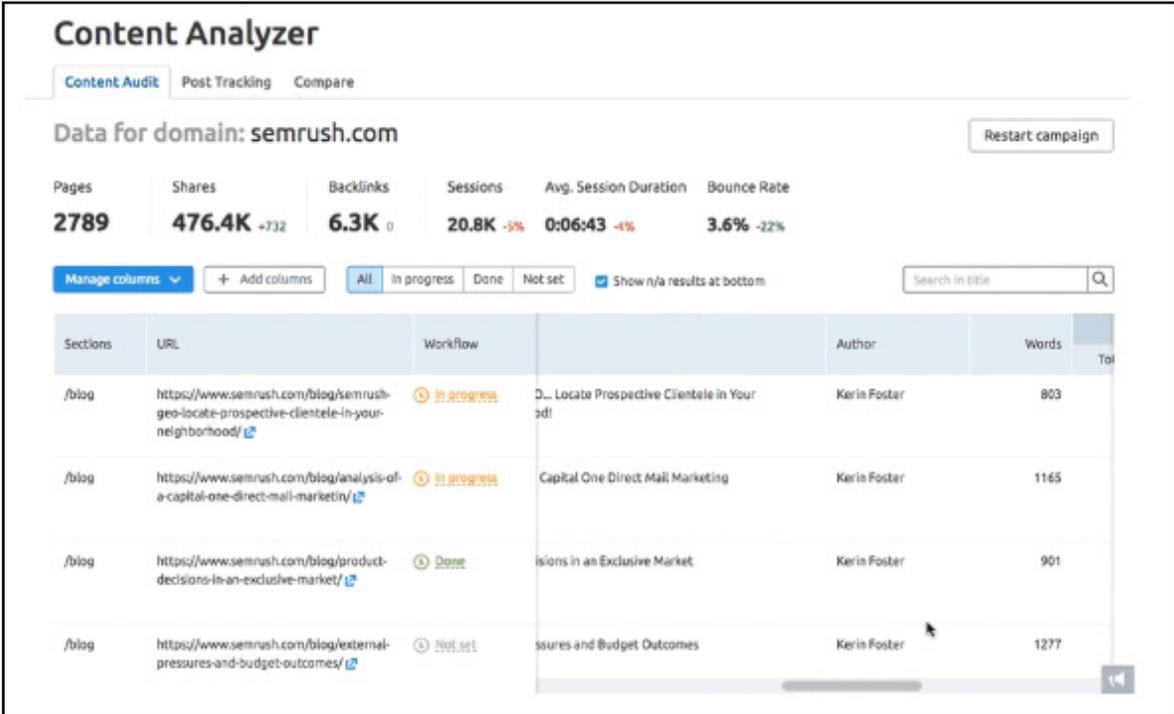
This part of your content audit is going to be very in-depth and time-consuming in the beginning.

You'll need to decide how far back you want to begin your content audit and then gather all of the content URLs for that time period.

I recommend going back at least 1 year and gathering data for how your content performed the year before.

Collecting all of your past content URLs doesn't have to be a manual process, though.

Luckily, there's plenty of website analytics tool like Google Analytics or SEMrush's Content Audit (disclosure: I work for SEMrush) tool that can quickly audit your content based on your sitemap data and provide you with the list of content pages.



Content Analyzer

Content Audit | Post Tracking | Compare

Data for domain: semrush.com Restart campaign

Pages	Shares	Backlinks	Sessions	Avg. Session Duration	Bounce Rate
2789	476.4K -732	6.3K 0	20.8K -9%	0:06:43 -4%	3.6% -22%

Manage columns | + Add columns | All | In progress | Done | Not set | Show n/a results at bottom | Search in title

Sections	URL	Workflow		Author	Words	Total
/blog	https://www.semrush.com/blog/semrush-geo-locate-prospective-clientele-in-your-neighborhood/	In progress	D... Locate Prospective Clientele in Your yd!	Kerin Foster	803	
/blog	https://www.semrush.com/blog/analysis-of-a-capital-one-direct-mail-marketing/	In progress	Capital One Direct Mail Marketing	Kerin Foster	1165	
/blog	https://www.semrush.com/blog/product-decisions-in-an-exclusive-market/	Done	isions in an Exclusive Market	Kerin Foster	901	
/blog	https://www.semrush.com/blog/external-presures-and-budget-outcomes/	Not set	ssures and Budget Outcomes	Kerin Foster	1277	

Prepare Yourself For Ongoing Audits

Once you've caught up and added all of last year's content into your Excel doc, you'll want to repeat this audit activity for new content on a weekly basis.

It will be much easier to keep track of your content and audit it regularly when you're only having to go back one week to input data.

Add the following to your Excel doc and upload the most recent numbers and stats on a weekly basis.

Over time, if you see any drastic changes take note.

Sometimes content, especially evergreen content, can take months before it really takes off.



Metrics to Track

Here are the metrics you'll want to track for your content data audit:

Organic Traffic

Ideally, our content would be receiving a lot of organic traffic.

We wouldn't have to put any extra dollars towards advertising, people would just organically come across our content, love it, and engage.

If you aren't getting a lot of organic traffic to your content that could be a potential red flag.

Perhaps there is something wrong with:

- Your content strategy.
- How you're distributing the content.
- The content type.
- The content itself.

By evaluating the organic traffic metrics regularly in your audit, you'll know when you can pat yourself on the back or when you need to start over.

Bounce Rate

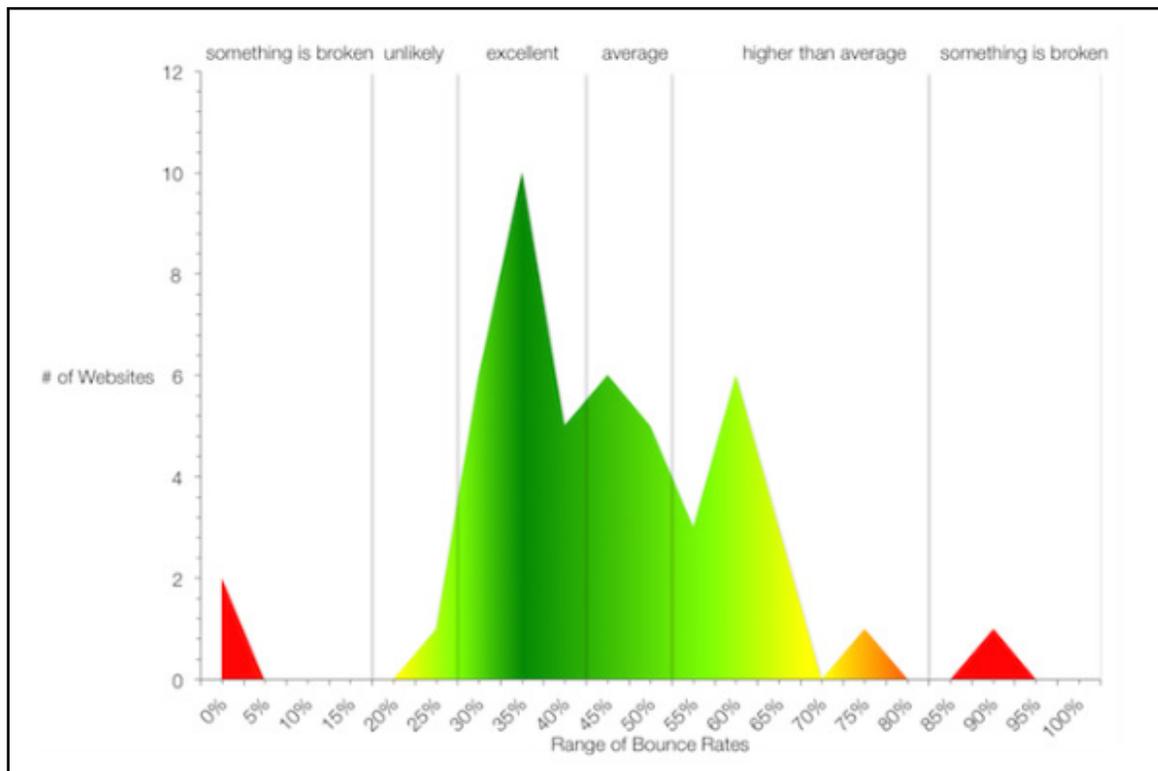
Are users bouncing right off your content page without viewing any other pages on your website?

If so, that's a sign of bad content.

Ideally, your content is just a gateway that leads a user from a search to your website, entertains or informs them, and then guides them to tour the rest of your site for their needs.

Unsure of what a good bounce rate is?

[Rocket Fuel](#) put together this graphic to describe the variety of percentages:



Backlinks

Bring on the backlinks – but only the good backlinks that give us a lot of boost and credibility, please!

Perhaps there is something wrong with: You need to track the backlinks that your content produces on a regular basis for two big reasons:

- **Your backlinks will change over time.** The first day you publish a new piece of content you may gain 2-3 backlinks. Let a week go by and now 10-12 backlinks have appeared. A year down the road and now you have 589 backlinks to one piece of content.
- **Not all backlinks are good.** Sure, 589 backlinks might sound like a good thing, but not if 500 of those backlinks are potentially dangerous to your website and lead to spam. Those 500 **links need to be removed** ASAP or your website and rankings could take a hit. If you don't monitor all of your backlinks by auditing your content regularly, you'll miss out on the opportunity to remove dangerous backlinks before they begin to affect your rankings.

Time on Page

If your content is a long-form blog post of 2,500 words and the average time on page is 18 seconds, something is wrong.

This metric will inform you if your content just isn't right for your audience, or if it is and you need to create more content focusing on topics just like it.

Unique Visitors

We want lots of unique visitors viewing our content and increasing the amount of views the piece of content gets.

The more views, the more chances of ROI from content like conversions, engagement, shares, and backlinks.

Pages Per Session

How many pages is the user looking at after they have viewed your content?

What pages are they going to?

A blog post about the best winter coats to have can encourage a user to then click on links within the blog post and shop around on your website for different coats. Heck, maybe they'll even make a purchase (<-- goal!).

New vs. Returning Users

Are you attracting a new audience with this piece of content?

Returning users are great. Returning customers are even better.

But we also need to aim to attract new users with our content.

Traffic Sources

Learn where your traffic is coming from by defining your main traffic sources.

If a majority of your content's traffic is coming from Facebook, post more of your content on your Facebook page.

If hardly any is coming from your email newsletters, it may be time to restructure your emails.

Conversions

If your goal for a new piece of content is to generate 100 conversions in the first quarter, let's say email opt-ins for your email newsletter, you need to add a column and track the number of conversions coming in from that piece of content.

The first week your conversions could be as little as 2 and you start to doubt the content entirely.

Let two months go by, and continue to audit each week, and notice that now the content has produced 140 total conversions, not only hitting your goal but surpassing it.

Measure Results

Based on what your original content goals are, you need to decide whether your content is working for you.

Each piece of content you audit will have several data metrics attached to it. These metrics will tell you if you're hitting the mark or missing it drastically.

For the content that does well, take note of the content details audit. Analyze what type of content it was, the topic, who produced it, and when it published.

Repeating your successes can help you create similarly high-performing content.

For the content pieces that don't hit your goals, take extra note of their metrics.

Sometimes it's the channels the content was published on. Other times it's a mixture of things such as the author, timeframe of publication, and/or the content type.

Don't be afraid to try new content types as long as you're willing to measure its effectiveness through regular auditing.



Chapter 9

11 Important Image SEO Tips You Need to Know



Written By
Anna Crowe
Assistant Editor, Search Engine Journal



Think about the last time you uploaded an image to your website.

Chances are you downloaded it from a stock photography site, uploaded it to the backend of your site, and then inserted it to the page.

This makes a shining example of image optimization, right? Not quite.

You've added a giant bowling ball weight to your site that's slowing down the page speed. And, search engines can't read your images without alt text.

Let's change that.

Over 20% of all U.S. web searches happen on Google Images, according to 2018 data from Jumpshot.

SEO amateurs and pros alike know that optimizing images for your website is notoriously worth the time spent.

[Dan Morgan at WebSpection](#) got one of his photos to rank #1 in Google Images for "best person in Cardiff" in less than four days by optimizing his image.

And, Robbie Richards generated **[150,732 visits](#)** by adding image alt tags, compressing images, and a few other SEO tricks.

Without proper image optimization, you're wasting a valuable SEO asset.

It's like the search engines are giving away Oreos and milk for free. But, you only take the Oreo. When in reality, the Oreo is way better dunked in milk.

Image optimization creates many advantages such as better user experience, faster page load times, and additional ranking opportunities. And, it's becoming an increasingly more important role.

As Matt Southern pointed out, **[Gary Illyes' statement on image search](#)** in a recent Reddit chat:

“We simply know that media search is way too ignored for what it’s capable doing for publishers so we’re throwing more engineers at it as well as more outreach.”

But which factors are most important to ensure your images are findable and don’t slow down your site?

Here are 11 important image optimization tips you need to know.



1. Choose the Right Format

Decoding all the various image format can feel like your first time ordering at Taco Bell. But, before you can start adding images to your site, you want to make sure you've chosen the best file type.

While there are many image formats to choose from, the PNG and JPEG are the most common for the web.

- **PNG:** Produces better quality images, but comes with a larger file size.
- **JPEG:** You may lose image quality, but you can adjust the quality level to find a good balance.

For me, PNG is the unsung hero of image formatting. Typically, I only use JPEGs for bigger, more visual images taken by a true photographer. But, for my daily use, PNG is the way to go.

2. Compress Your Images

Yep, hell hath no fury like a bloated web page after uploading an image that's not compressed.

Search engines will look at your web page like you might look at a big vat of Crisco: You can't seriously be considering putting that on your website, right?

According to [HTTP Archive](#), images make up on average 21% of a total webpage's weight.

That's why I highly recommend compressing your images before uploading to your site. You can do this in Photoshop or you can use a [tool like TinyPNG](#). TingPNG also has a WordPress plugin you can use too.

However, I prefer [WP Smush as my WordPress plugin](#). It reduces the image file size without removing the quality. Whatever plugin you use, make sure to find one that compresses the images externally on their servers. It reduces the load on your own site.

Increasingly.com improved website speed by [33% / 2 seconds](#) by compressing images.

I mean, there's just something sexy about faster page speed when after you compress your images.

If you're unsure how your images are affecting your page speed, I recommend using [Google's PageSpeed Insights tool](#).

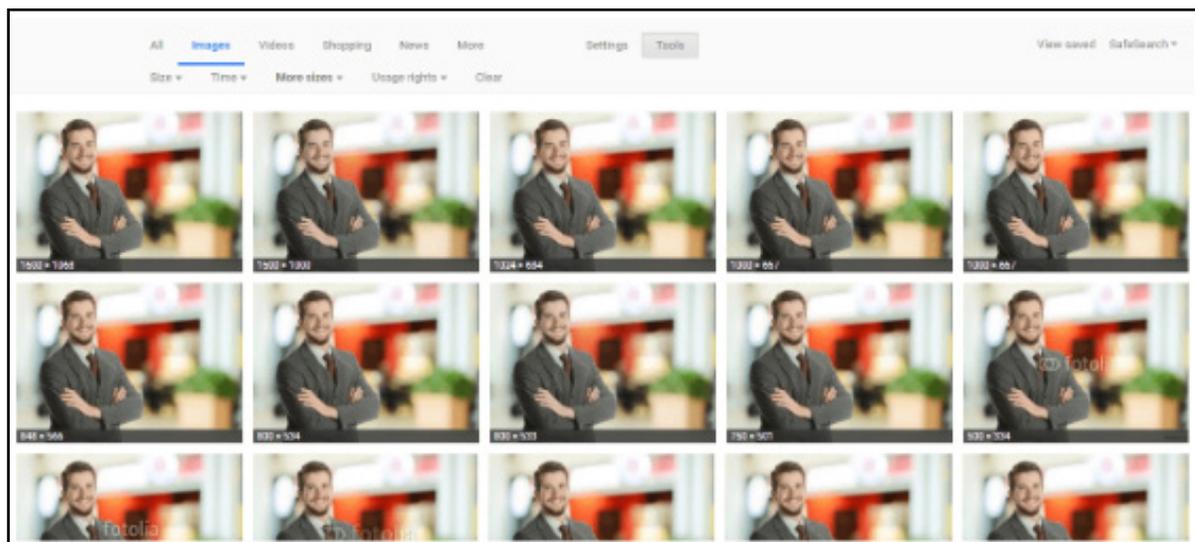
3. Create Unique Images

You want your photos to pop on your site. If you fill your website with stock imagery, you'll look unoriginal – like thousands of other sites that don't stand out.

Too many websites are cluttered with the same generic stock photos.

Think about a corporate website, a consulting firm, a business that prides itself on customer service. All these websites use virtually the same looking stock image of a businessman smiling.

I'm sure you've seen one that looks like this:



While you may have your stock images perfectly optimized, it won't have the same impact or potential SEO benefits as an original, high-quality image.

The more original pictures you have, the better experience for the user and the better your odds are of ranking on relevant searches.

4. Beware of Copyright

Regardless of the image files you choose to use, make sure there's no copyright conflict.

The Postal Service is paying **\$3.5 million** in an image copyright lawsuit. And, Sketchers got sued for **\$2.5 million.**

If Getty, Shutterstock, DepositFiles, or some other stock photo provider owns an image you use, and you don't have a license to use it, then you're risking an expensive lawsuit.

Under the **Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA)**, you could be issued a notice if you have violated any copyright issues. If the owner of a piece of content sees their content on your website, they can issue a DMCA Takedown which you must comply with.

Google Images allows you to filter results based on those available for reuse. And, Mindy Weinstein shares **41 different websites to find free images.**



5. Customize Image File Names

When it comes to SEO, creating descriptive, keyword-rich file names is absolutely crucial.

Not customizing your image file name is like getting a burrito with nothing in it. It just plain sucks.

Image file names alert Google and other search engine crawlers as to the subject matter of the image.

Typically, file names will look like “IMG_722019” or something similar. That’s like ordering from a menu in a different language. It doesn’t help Google.

Change the file name from the default to help the search engines understand your image and improve your SEO value.

This involves a bit of work, depending on how extensive your media library is, but changing the default image name is always a good idea. Let’s take this image of chocolate for example:



I could name it simply “chocolate” but if you sell chocolate on your website, potentially every image can be named “chocolate-1,” “chocolate-2,” and so on.

I named this image “dark-chocolate-coffee” to let users and search engines understand the image.



6. Write SEO-Friendly Alt Text

Alt tags are a text alternative to images when a browser can't properly render them. Similar to the title, the alt attribute is used to describe the contents of an image file.

When the image won't load, you'll get an image box with the alt tag present in the top left corner. Make sure they fit with the image and make the picture relevant.

Paying attention to alt tags is also beneficial to the **overall on-page SEO strategy**. You want to make sure that all other optimization areas are in place, but if the image fails to load for any reason, users will see what the image is supposed to be.

Plus, adding appropriate alt tags to the images on your website can help your website achieve better rankings in the search engines by associating keywords with images. Even **Google has remarked** on the value of alt text in images:

It provides Google with useful information about the subject matter of the image. We use this information to help determine the best image to return for a user's query.

Alt text is required under the **American Disabilities Act** for individuals who are unable to view images themselves. A descriptive alt text can alert users exactly what is in the photo. For example, say you have a picture of chocolate on your website.

The alt text could read:

```

```

However, a better alternative text that describes the image would read:

```

```

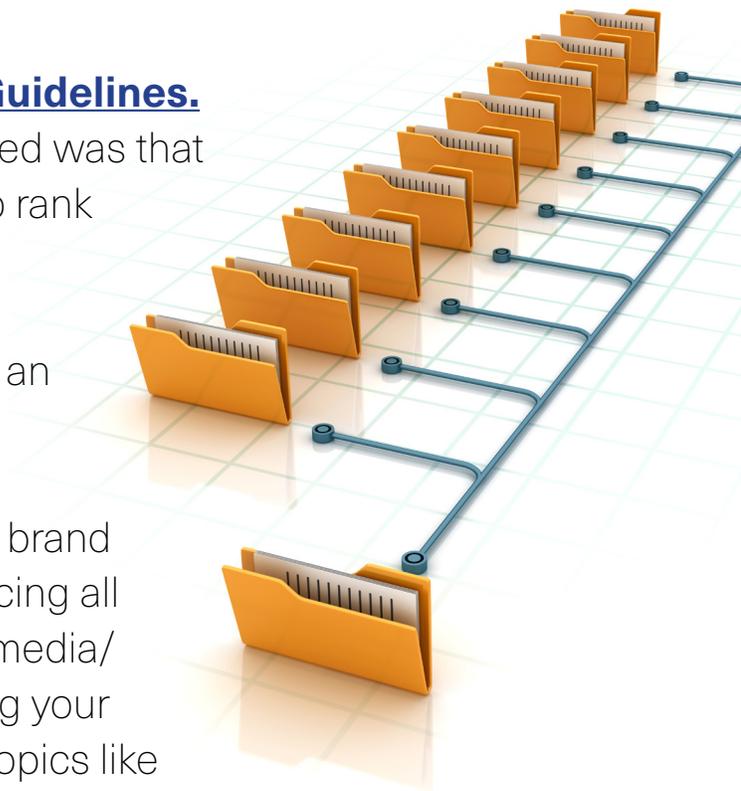
Alt text is viewable in the cached text version of the page, aiding in its benefit to both users and the search engines. For further SEO value, the alt text can act as the anchor text of an internal link when the image links to a different page on the site.

7. Think About the Image File Structure

In 2018, Google updated its [Image Guidelines](#). One of the major updates they revealed was that they use the file path and file name to rank images.

Repeat: The file path and file name is an actual ranking factor.

For example, if you're an ecommerce brand with multiple products, instead of placing all your product images into a generic /media/ folder, I would recommend structuring your subfolders to more category related topics like /shorts/ or /denim/.



8. Make Your Page Title & Description

Google also revealed that it uses your page title and description as part of its image search algorithm.

The Google support page states:

“Google Images automatically generates a title and snippet to best explain each result and how it relates to the user query... We use a number of different sources for this information, including descriptive information in the title, and meta tags.”

All of your basic on-page SEO factors like meta data, header tags, copy on the page, structured data, etc. affects **the way Google ranks your images.**

It's like putting all your toppings on your burrito. It tastes way better with guac. So, make sure to add the guac for improving image rankings.

9. Define Your Dimensions

If you're using AMP or PWA's, you are required to define your image dimensions in the source code.

However, if you're not using either, it's still a best practice to define the width and height. It provides a better user experience.

Plus, it allows the browsers to size the image before the CSS is loaded. This stops the page from jumping when it loads.

10. Make Your Images Mobile-Friendly

Oh, mobile SEO. At its worst, it can give you a high bounce rate and low conversions. But, at its best, it can give you more ranking power and better user engagement.

Problem is, how do you optimize your images for the mobile-first index?

You create responsive images. This means the image will scale with the size of the site whether the user is using desktop or mobile. It adjusts to the size of the device.

11. Add Images to Your Sitemap

Whether you're adding your images to your sitemap or creating a new sitemap for images, you want images somewhere in your sitemaps.

Having your images in a sitemap greatly increases the chances of search engines crawling and indexing your images. Thus, results in more site traffic.

If you're using WordPress, [Yoast offers a sitemap solution](#) in their plugin.

Image Optimization Key Takeaways

So, before you begin uploading your image to your site, make sure to follow the image optimization rituals from above.

The most important thing is to make sure the image and alternative text are relevant to the page. Other key takeaways:

- Choose the right file format. PNGs are my favorite for screenshots.
- Reduce file size for faster page load speed.
- Make sure your on-page SEO elements (meta data, structured data, etc.) pair with your image.
- For crawlability, create an image sitemap or make sure your images are featured in your sitemap.

Optimizing images are no joke. With advancements in voice search technology, media is a growing importance and your entire site will benefit from taking the steps above.

Happy optimizing!

Chapter 10

15 Ways to Optimize Your Site for User Engagement



Written By
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Internet Marketer and
Editor-in-Chief, WebCEO



Placing your site at the top of Google search is only half the battle.

Traffic boosts should come with conversion boosts. You will want to see your engagement rates grow.

But optimizing sites for user engagement is not quite the same as optimizing them for search engines – there are differences between the two, even though they do intersect. And those differences will never go away.

On the one hand, you have Google tirelessly updating its algorithm and trying to match the interests of its users. These interests change faster than Google can keep up.

Then you have websites competing with each other, finding new ways to please their users and outdo one another every day.

The result: a rift between site optimization and engagement optimization that never closes.

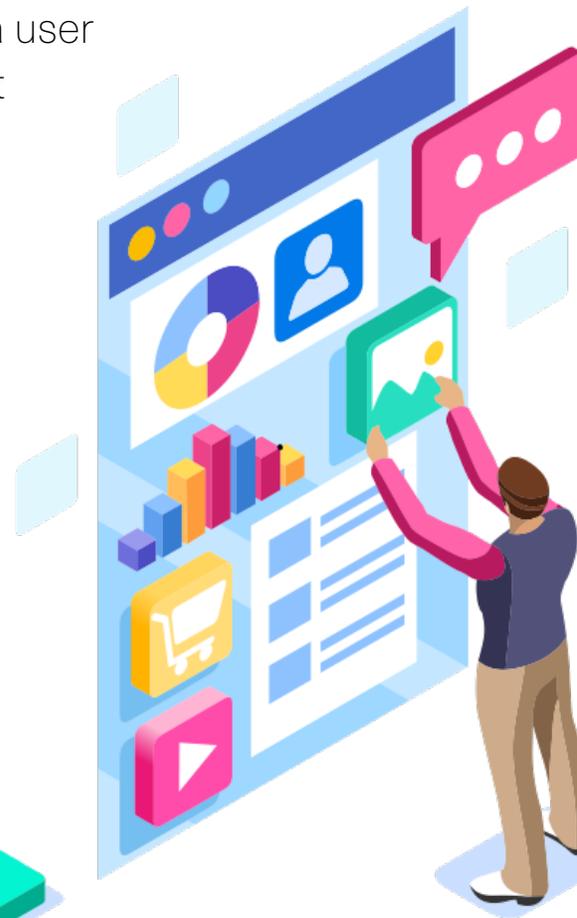
What is the challenge in creating an engaging website?

For one, humans have short attention spans. We easily get distracted and tend to ignore the information around us (which, let's be honest, is a necessary defense mechanism in our digital age).

A user whose attention you haven't caught is a user you've lost. Yet some websites manage to beat the odds and make users not only view their content but also interact with it and even keep coming back for more.

Don't you want to be like them?

It's certainly doable. The "how" is a bit tricky and will take a while to explain. Make yourself comfortable; this read will help you join the cool kids club.



1. Site Speed

When you think about online engagement, you'd expect it to be fast. You'd picture a website that doesn't take its sweet time to load, and you'd be absolutely right.

Rule number one of engagement: slow loading speeds are your enemy!

Work to improve your page load time so your users will actually want to stay and interact with your site. Here's what you can do.

Optimize Your Images

The goal is to find the perfect balance between beauty and kilobytes.

Set your images' height and width to what you actually need instead of leaving them untouched; save images in the format that yields the lowest file size; compress images to further reduce the size.

However, remember that image quality is a vital engagement factor. Be careful not to sacrifice it!

Simplify Your Page Code

For this step, you need sufficient knowledge of HTML, CSS, JavaScript and other types of code that are used to generate site pages.

Optimized code takes less time to execute; therefore, optimized pages load faster.

Host Your Site on a Fast Server

Self-explanatory. Good servers are usually expensive, but if your site is meant to make money, this is something you definitely want to invest in.

Host Your Site on a Content Delivery Network

Hosting your site on one server is great, but hosting it on several at once is even better.

What's more, if one of the servers from the bunch fails, the rest will immediately back it up.

Enable Browser Caching

Make your site tell the users' browsers to cache its elements. That way, when the users visit your site again, it will load much faster – since the elements are already there on their computers.

You can manually set the expiry times in your .htaccess file, or you can use a plugin like WP Rocket if you don't fancy yourself a guru.

Enable Compression

Use compression software for websites such as Gzip to reduce the file sizes of your website's elements.



Minimize Your Redirects

Ideally, you should be able to make your site work without any page redirects. Try to use them only when there's no better alternative.

Use a www Domain for Your Site

Unlike sites without www in their names, www sites don't send cookies to their subdomains by default.

This prevents problems with accessing static content on the subdomains as well as caching.

Minimize the Number of Elements on Your Pages

The more elements you have on a page, the more requests the page sends to the server and the longer it takes to process those requests.

You can just use as few elements as possible, or you can also merge certain elements into a single element.

For example, if you have two images displayed one right after another, you can use image editing software to merge them into one image. If you have two CSS files, you can put their content into one file... You get the idea.

Host Large Files on External Platforms

Reduce the strain made on your site by large files.

For example, it's always better to embed YouTube videos on your pages instead of using your own domain to host videos.

2. User Experience

It shouldn't come as a surprise that user experience directly affects the users' willingness to engage with your site.

Give users a good time on your site, and they'll gladly return the favor. How do you ensure users have a positive experience?

Make Your Site Load Quickly

Make Your Site Load Quickly

Give Your Site a Good Design

You won't find two identical opinions on what counts as 'good' design. Still, most will agree that a well-designed site can, at the very least, be described as such:

- Easy to understand and use
- Has readable text
- Has high-quality visuals
- Follows the principle "less is more"

Fix All Technical Errors as Soon as They Appear

Chances are, your users will have much more luck at finding errors on your site than you. And that's not a good thing at all.

Audit your site for errors at least once a week to preserve the quality of your UX.

SEO tools like WebCEO are pretty good at finding technical errors. Fixing them is up to you.

Minimize the Amount of Popups

Some users might be okay with a popup that asks them to subscribe or presents a special offer, but most will simply be displeased that something extraneous just blocked their view.

Advertisements' approval rating is even lower. Bottom line: users don't like popups.

The few exceptions may include popups that verify the visitors' age and inform them about using cookies.



3. Mobile Optimization

Each passing year, the mobile Internet takes more and more online traffic away from its desktop counterpart.

If your site isn't optimized to work well on mobile devices, consider your user engagement goals to have automatically failed.

If you prefer success over failure, then here's your recipe for creating a mobile-friendly website:

Responsive Design

With just a little HTML code, any website can be made to automatically adapt to any screen, no matter its size and resolution. Add this line before your `<body>` tag:

```
<meta name="viewport"
content="width=device-width,
initial-scale=1.0">
```

Large Text

Anything smaller than 16px will force users to zoom in on your content, but they'll be more likely to just leave.

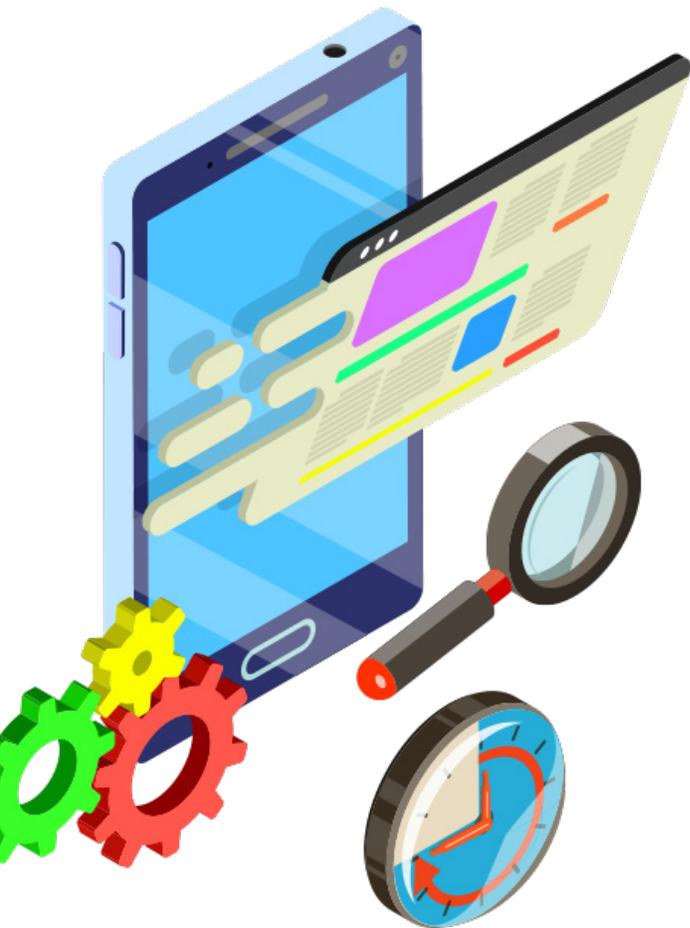


Optimize for a Big Finger

Most people (including myself) don't have thin fingers which would let them press buttons on the screen with precision.

If the interactive elements on your site are placed too close to each other, it becomes way too easy to press something you didn't actually want to touch. This could cause all sorts of problems.

Take pity on us fat-fingered folks. Leave some space between your page elements.



Site Speed

Mobile users don't like to wait for websites to load, even more so than desktop users.

Studies show that, on average, mobile users close tabs after a mere 10 seconds of waiting. This means your site needs to load even faster than that.

Don't Use Software Unsupported on Mobile Devices

Such as Adobe Flash.

4. Content Optimization

No, not for SEO (although it certainly helps).

The goal is to make your content easy to digest and make it so your users have no trouble understanding what you've put on your site.

How exactly it's done depends on the kind of content you use:

- **Text:** It's much easier to digest when you break it into short paragraphs. Spacing between lines and paragraphs prevents text from turning into a cluttered, unreadable mess, too.
- **Images:** Use only high-quality ones. Captions help a lot; in some cases, so does filling out the <alt> attributes.
- **Videos:** Subtitles do wonders, and background music can greatly improve your videos' quality.

Additionally, you need to put some thought into how users are going to behave on your site.

Guide them carefully through your content and present them with call-to-actions where it makes the most sense in context.

Naturally, you'll need to research the best spots to place CTAs, first.

It's also great to make your content available in multiple languages.

If your audience is multilingual, be sure to give them an option to switch to their preferred language.

5. Link Between Relevant Pages

Engagement is when users interact with your site, and clicking on links certainly qualifies.

Sometimes, it's your end goal in and of itself.

For example, you may want your users to create an account or to download something, and that's usually done through clicking on a link.

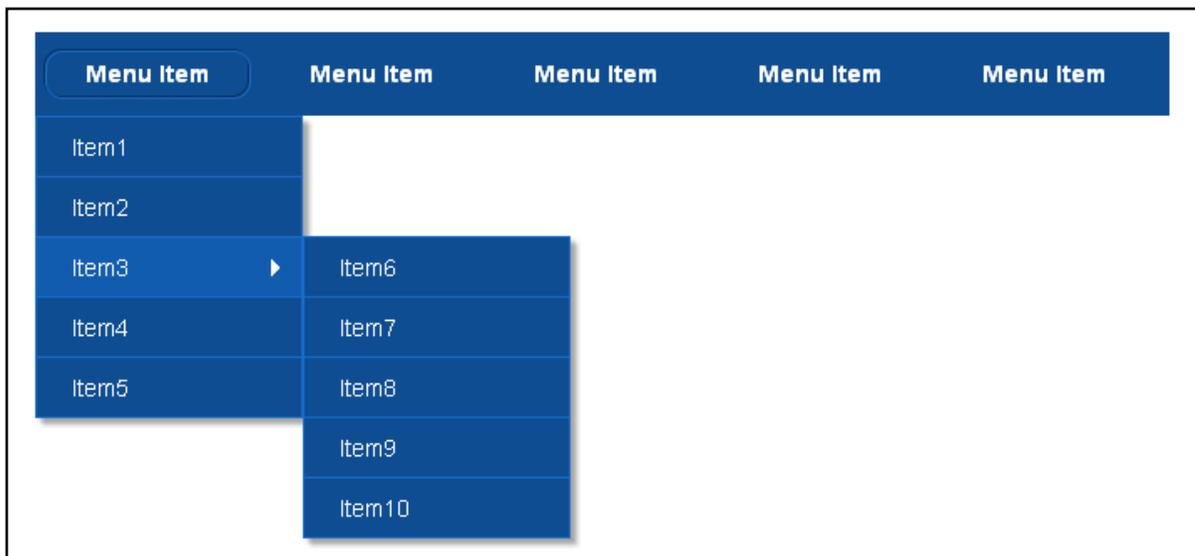
The tricky part is making users click, so how do you go about doing that?

- **Place links on your site** (obviously). Nothing will get done if you skip this part.
- **Link to relevant pages.** You can do it by choosing where to put links in your content, or you can also have your site automatically display relevant content in a sidebar.
- **Design your content to lead users to the links.** Consuming content is a mostly passive activity; clicking, on the other hand, is active. Put some thinking into how you mix the two. The best results are achieved when users see the links coming and are mentally prepared to click on them.
- **Motivate users to click on the links.** Users will be more willing to take action if it benefits them in some way. Make it clear that on the other side of that link lies a solution to their problem.

6. Easy-To-Use Navigation & Search

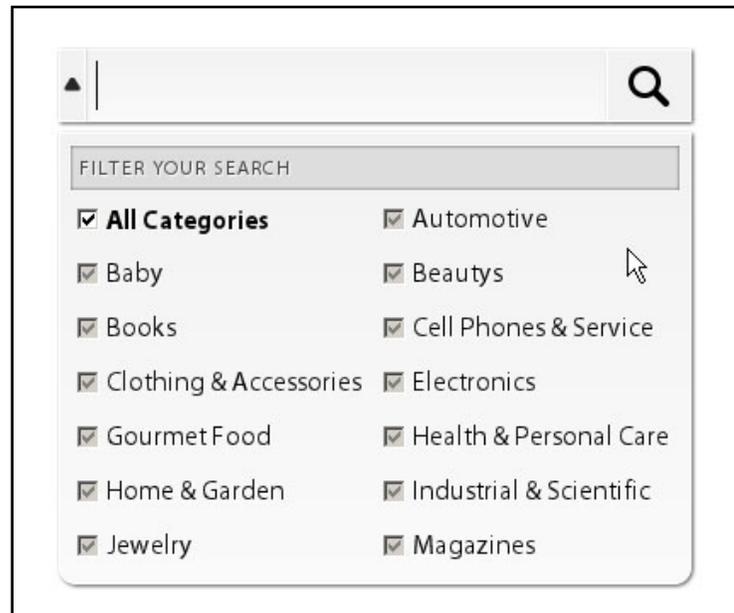
Since engagement is directly tied to user experience, here's another one of the core principles of UX for you: users should never struggle to find the content they need. However, it inevitably becomes more difficult with each new page you add to your site. It's a problem that needs solving, and fortunately, two powerful solutions exist: a navigation bar and a search bar.

A navigation bar can have just links or, if you want to link to many pages from there, collapsible menus with links. The most ideal form of navigation is a horizontal bar at the top of a page. Some websites use a vertical bar on the left side of a page instead, but this form of navigation is very mobile-unfriendly and not recommended (unless you are absolutely confident you can make it work). If your site puts individual pages into categories and subcategories, a navigation bar is a must to help your users get around. An example of such a site is an online store.



A search bar is indispensable when you have no idea where to start looking for the content you want (or just don't have the time).

Even better is when you can implement search filters – they will greatly enhance your site's search feature. Online stores in particular often use filters in their search.



7. Content That Provokes Reaction & Discussion

Here's a fun fact about humans: we enjoy thinking about problems even more than solving them. It's why informative content doesn't encourage much engagement from users.

There's no need to stay on a site once you have a solution to your problem (maybe you already bought a solution from the site owners), and you probably won't come back until you have the same problem again.

On the other hand, users can't get enough of content that sparks emotion. Fun stories, interesting anecdotes, tragic accounts, controversial topics – all of these are among the most powerful engagement generators.

There's a reason clickbait articles earned their name: because they actually do their main job, which isn't necessarily always stating facts.

If it's appropriate for your site, create provocative, even risky content that your users will love (or maybe hate). Be careful not to damage your own reputation in the process, though.



8. Interactive Content

Want to know the second easiest way to make users engage with your site?

Here it is: give users content that requires them to interact with directly.

You know what I'm talking about; you probably love most of these things, too.

- Audio
- Video
- Quizzes
- Games
- Surveys
- Slideshows
- Chats
- Interactive animation

9. Social Media

Promoting your site in social media is a powerful way to grow and engage with your audience.

But there's only so much you can do yourself, even if you create the best content and post it on your pages every day. Get even better results by involving your users.

It's especially easy if you have made your site on a platform like WordPress. There are plugins that will accomplish these tasks in the blink of an eye:

- Add buttons for sharing your content in social media
- Add widgets or links leading to your social media pages
- Enable posting in your comment section using social media accounts
- Automate the posting of your new content in social media when appropriate

10. Ask Users to Engage

This is literally the easiest way to generate engagement: ask users directly and clearly.

- Do you want them to leave a comment?
- Do you want them to like and share your update?
- Do you want them to subscribe to your channel or create an account?

Just ask.

If your content is in text form, you can ask users to engage at the end of it. It's also common to place a call-to-action before the first H2 tag, too.

For videos, you will normally address users in the beginning (within the first minute).

Successful YouTubers will introduce their topic and then say “but first, please take a moment to subscribe to this channel and hit the bell to be notified whenever new great videos come out.”

11. Heat Maps

Have you ever looked at your bounce and conversion rates and wondered, “What is going so damn wrong?”

At times like this, you start seeing flaws with your site literally everywhere and have no idea what you should change.

Well, you aren't the only one. And there is software for people like you who need help with this kind of problem.

Let me introduce to you heat map generators.

This software shows exactly how users interact with your site. Heat maps come in different forms for displaying different types of interactions.

The screenshot displays the WebCEO SEO Dashboard. At the top, it shows the URL 'Grade Your Site' and 'https://www.webceo.com/prun-seo-report.htm' with a creation date of '04-02-19' and statistics: '9 days 18 hours 25 mins' and '1155 visits, 1881 clicks'. The dashboard features several charts and metrics, including a '54%' conversion rate, '3.6K' impressions, '71' clicks, and '84' leads. Below the charts, there is a section titled 'Get Your Actionable Intelligence Dashboard' with buttons for 'Get my report', 'Get my report', and 'SIGN UP FOR A FREE TRIAL'. A list of five actionable items is provided:

- Your site visibility on search engines**: Check your LOCAL and MOBILE rankings. Go to Rank Checker and add locations where your prospects hang out. Select mobile search engines and run the report. Benchmark the results and start optimizing your site.
- See site errors that scare search engines away**: Jump to the Technical Audit tool. Fix all technical errors that scare off visitors and search engines: broken links, anchors and images, 404/page not found, slow response time pages and more issues.
- Get actionable SEO advice on every page**: Go to the SEO Analysis tool - Landing Pages SEO. Fix Mobile SEO issues found in the report in order to comply with the Google Mobile Friendliness guidelines.
- Get rid of toxic backlinks to your site**: Jump to the Backlink Quality tool and inspect your backlinks. Identify your backlink toxic and get rid of toxic links. Be spot in the eyes of Google Penguin and Google Hummingbird.
- Follow link building tips on your DIY SEO Checklist**: Go to the Support menu - Help Center - SEO Roadmap. Get the most out of the Link Building section by following the tips for one-way link building, link bait and link building with the help of social media. Enjoy the results!

At the bottom, there is a section 'Start Improving Your Site SEO:' with buttons for 'Get my report', 'Get my report', and 'SIGN UP FOR A FREE TRIAL'.

For example, they can show individual mouse clicks as dots on the screen, or they can highlight separate elements on the screen depending on how many clicks they get.

They can also show how users scroll through your website and point out the parts they never even reach – and, therefore, don't interact with no matter what you put there.

Heat maps pretty much help you see your website through the eyes of your users.

When your site struggles to unleash its full engagement potential, this is the exact sort of data you need to find out why.

12. A/B Testing

Every now and then, you'll want to create a new page that's really important for your business goals. Or maybe you'll decide to overhaul your entire site's design.

Either way, you'll want the new thing to bring results and convert really well (otherwise, why make the effort at all?).

But there's an obvious problem: it's a gamble. No matter how much thought you put into it, it still might fail.

Is there a way to increase your chances of winning? Yes, there is: A/B testing.

Just like you can simply buy more lottery tickets, you can also create more of the new pages – or rather, different versions of the same page.

Then you can show them to your users, see which one gets the most engagement and stick with that one.



13. Collect User Emails for Re-Engagement

As much as we'd all like to enjoy our users' company forever, that's just not realistic.

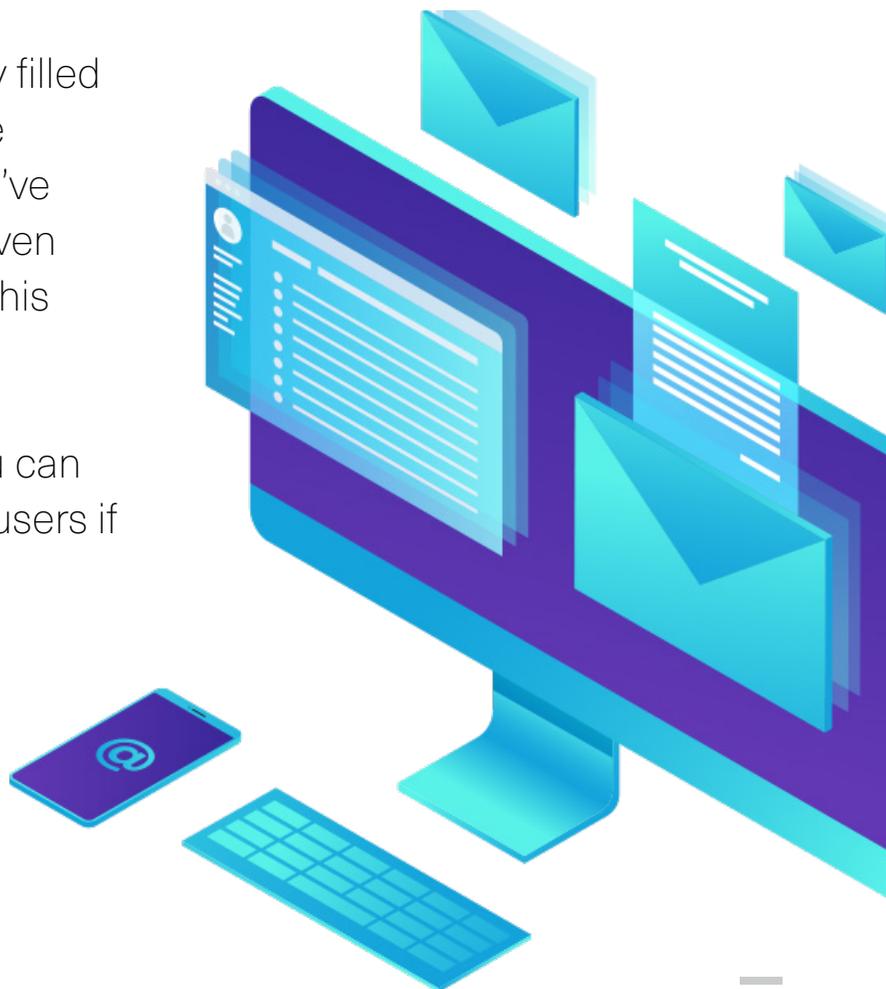
Users have many other important things that demand their attention. It's inevitable that they will eventually stop coming to your site. But that doesn't mean you can't do anything about it.

All you need to do is send them an email.

You see it everywhere all the time. Nearly every site asks for your email address and offers to keep you updated with new content.

Your own mailbox is probably filled with emails from blogs you're subscribed to and stores you've shopped at, and you might even read some of those emails. This strategy works!

So don't miss out on this. You can bring back many of your old users if you have their emails.



14. Google Analytics

You can't imagine optimizing your site for engagement (or for anything, for that matter) without using Google Analytics.

Really, it's nothing short of amazing how such a must-have tool is completely free. It provides tons of data on user behavior that you need to measure the quality of your UX and correct it when necessary.

Connect your site to a Google Analytics account and start receiving this information:

- Page views: both total number and unique views
- Pages per visit: how many pages users go through before leaving your site
- Dwell time: how long users stay on your site before leaving
- Bounce rates: percentage of users leaving your site right away and not engaging
- Conversion rates: percentage of users who engage with your site in the way you want
- Returning visitors: percentage of users who come again

And this is just the tip of the iceberg.

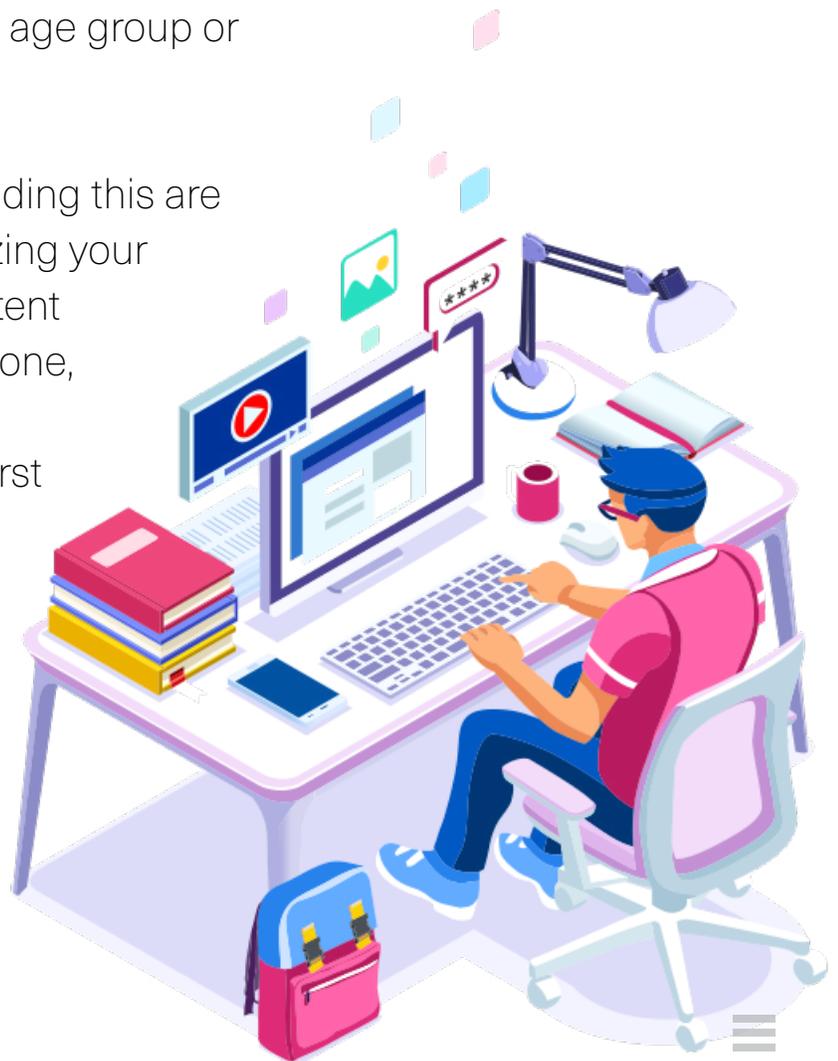
15. Develop a Writing Style That Works Best with Your Audience

Every user is unique, and no two audiences are the same. However, users are able to form audiences because they have things in common.

And if you want to resonate with your audience, you need to know what those things are – or, better yet, have them yourself.

In simpler words: you have users who are interested in what you post, users who want to buy products you sell, users from a specific age group or demographic and so on.

For example, you who are reading this are probably interested in optimizing your site. Therefore, you need content that will help you get things done, which is why you came to SearchEngineJournal in the first place.



Now, what kind of content do your users need? How do you sell it to them?

Aside from preparing content in general (i.e. what to write), you will also need to figure out how to write.

For every audience out there, the most optimal writing style exists that will make your content convert and maximize your engagement rates.

If you haven't found your style yet, try looking at who's the most successful in your niche – they wouldn't be influencers if they didn't do at least something right.

Chapter 11

7 Common On-Page SEO Mistakes & How to Fix Them



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If you want to rank highly in search engines, you can't ignore on-page SEO.

Optimizing your content and code for search engines is nothing new, but as Google's algorithm has matured, so have on-page SEO best practices.

While it's still important to get the basics right, Google's emphasis on providing an exceptional searcher experience means that SEOs must go deeper.

Today, on-page SEO is all about creating pages that are optimal for both search engines and the searchers themselves.

In your quest for top placement in Google's search results, make sure that you don't fall victim to these common on-page SEO mistakes.



1. Content That Doesn't Match the Searcher's Intent

What can we infer about what the searcher wanted from the words they typed in the search bar? We're talking about searcher intent, and it's often not considered in many pages.

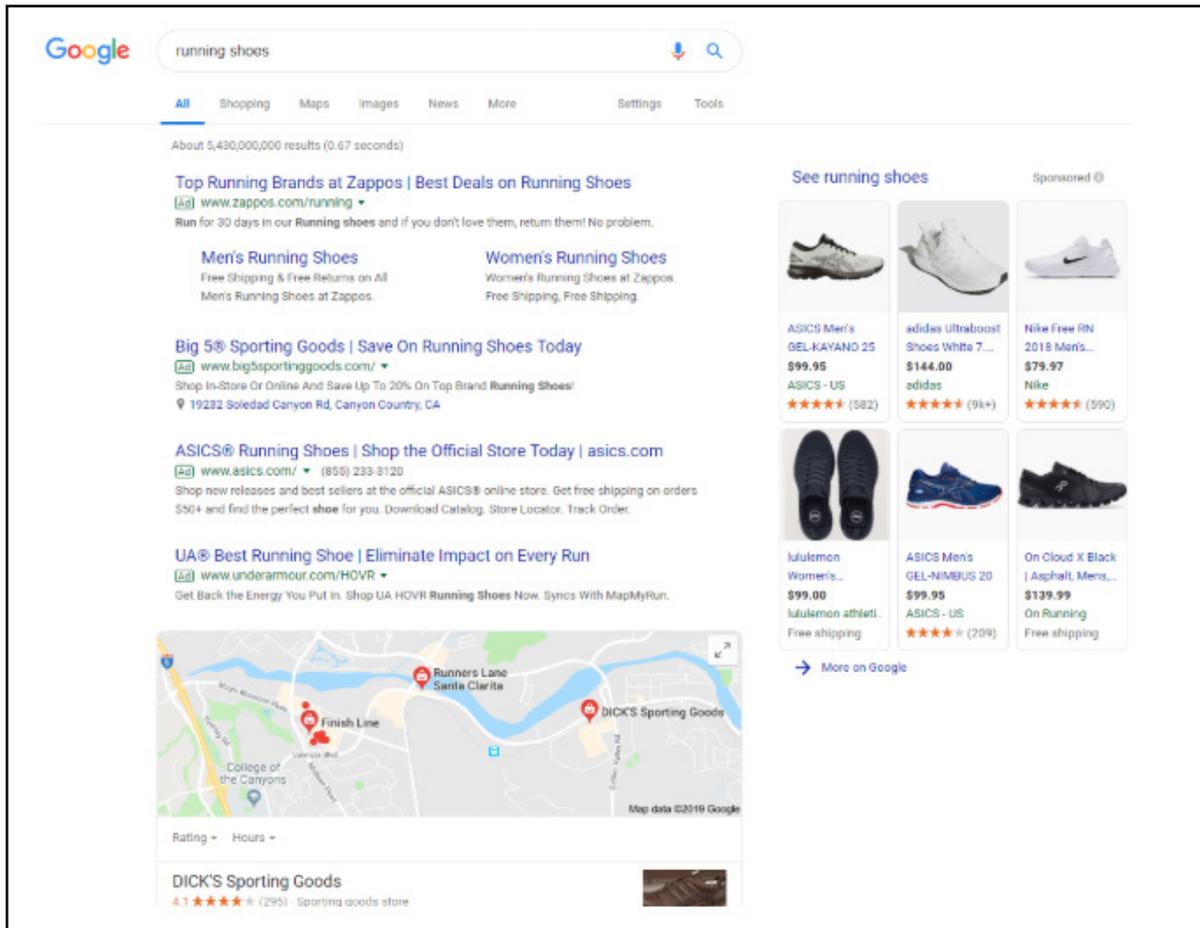
Sometimes it's difficult to infer the searcher's intent from the keyword itself. For example, does the query "pizza" indicate that the searcher wants to order a pizza, make a pizza, or learn about pizza?

To better understand what your audience wants to see on your pages, look to the search engine results page (SERP).

Google extensively tests for searcher satisfaction, so what they place on each SERP is a great indicator of what real searchers want for that query.

Say, for example, you had a page that was optimized for the phrase "running shoes." The page is informational in nature, going into detail about the different types of running shoes, how to pick running shoes, and when to replace your running shoes.

Upon typing "running shoes" into Google, you notice that Google is primarily showing paid ad results and results for local shoe stores.



This is a good sign that Google considers the query intent transactional — someone who searches “running shoes” likely wants to buy running shoes, not learn about them.

Use this method to help you determine when your pages may be missing the mark when it comes to determining what the searcher wanted to see and use that information to create more satisfying pages.

2. Leaning on Keyword Repetition for Ranking

Before Google's algorithm was as mature as it is today, it was easy to achieve page-1 rankings through tactics such as repeating a keyword in the body content at a certain density.

Even though Google's algorithm has matured, many pages have not, and are still using repetition-based keyword rules.

One way to identify keyword stuffing on your pages is via the [MozBar](#), Moz's free Chrome extension.

If you're repeating your target phrase on your page too much, it may indicate that your page is less about satisfying searcher intent and more about keyword repetition.

Use this warning to identify where you can better answer the query, rather than just repeat it.



The screenshot shows a Moz Pro optimization report for the page "How to grow a Bonsai tree, for beginners - Bonsai Empire". The report includes a Page Optimization Score of 87, a Keyword of "bonsai", a URL of "https://www.bonsaiempire.com/basics", and a Page Title of "How to grow a Bonsai tree, for beginners - Bonsai Empire". The report also lists 5 fixes, including "Avoid Keyword Stuffing in Document" and "Keyword Placement in Page Title".

MOZ | PA: 44 | 260 links from 97 Root Domains | DA: 53 | 79,274 links from 5,504 Root Domains | Subdomain: 77,906 links from 5,503 Root Domains | Spam Score: 2%

bonsai [Optimize](#)

Summary **Optimization Factors** On-Page Content Suggestions

87
Page Optimization Score

Keyword: bonsai
URL: https://www.bonsaiempire.com/basics
Page Title: How to grow a Bonsai tree, for beginners - Bonsai Empire

Fixes (5)

⚠️ Avoid Keyword Stuffing in Document
Edit your page to use your targeted keywords no more than 15 times.
[Close](#)

Why?
If you use keywords too many times in the document text, search engines may tag your page for keyword stuffing (a form of search engine spam), which like in the search results to potential visitors. See [A Visual Guide to Keyword Targeting](#).

🗣️ Rand says: "Ack! Why so much keyword repetition? You'll probably annoy users and could even get your page classified as spam. Keep it c

⚠️ Keyword Placement in Page Title

It's important to note that keyword repetition may still work better than it should in some situations, but because Google is constantly working on promoting high-quality pages, it's best to err on the side of providing exceptional content that answers the searcher's question.

3. Forgetting to Optimize Your Title Tags & Meta Descriptions

Title tags and meta descriptions are still important components of on-page SEO.

Title tags can affect the page's ranking for a particular query, and both title tags and meta descriptions have an effect on how many searchers click on your page from search results.

Although title tags and meta descriptions have been known on-page SEO factors for years, they're often neglected in favor of more visible on-page SEO elements like the body content.

Google provides us with some guidelines on how our title tags and meta descriptions should be optimized. For example:

- Make sure you include a title tag and meta description on every page.
- Include descriptive words, but avoid keyword stuffing.
- Avoid using repetitive or generic text.
- Be descriptive, providing the searcher with accurate information about the page's contents.

To check for title tag and meta description issues on your website, you can use the [Moz On-Page Grader](#).

Pop in the URL of the page you want to evaluate, as well as the keyword you're optimizing for, and the tool will give you suggestions for improvement.

Page URL
https://www.petmd.com/dog/care/evr_dg_diy-tips-for-gr...

Keywords Found	Keyword Locations	Page Factors	Page Score ¹
0	Title 0 Body 0 Meta description 0 Uri 0 IMG Alt 0	17 10 ^Helping ✓Hurting	69

Factors associated with this page

Hurting your score	Helping your score	All factors
10	17	27

- Exact Keyword Used in Document at Least Once
- Broad Keyword Use in Page Title
- Exact Keyword is Used in Page Title
- Keyword Placement in Page Title

You can also use [Site Crawl](#) or [On-Demand Crawl](#) to evaluate title tags and meta descriptions across your entire site, as well as view recommendations for how to fix.

Metadata Issues

Latest Crawl May 6
Next Crawl May 13

Recrawl my site 10 of 10 recrawls available until 06/05 Ignore Issue Type Export PDF

All Metadata Issues (19)	Missing Title (0)	Title Too Long (4)	Title Too Short (0)	Multiple Titles (0)
Missing Canonical Tag (0)	Missing Description (15)	Description Too Long (0)	Description Too Short (0)	URL Too Long (0)
Overly Dynamic URL (0)				

Your title tag is longer than 570 pixels. Title tags appear on the SERP as a preview of your page content; they help searchers understand quickly if your page is relevant to their search. [Learn more about title issues.](#)

Why and How to Fix +

Why it's an issue:

If your title is too long, it will not display properly and may limit your ability to attract customers to your site. Google typically displays the first 50-60 characters of a page title depending on the width of the characters. The display actually maxes out at 600 pixels and indicates an ellipsis ("...") if the title is too long to fit in its entirety. We've taken those factors into account and set the maximum pixel threshold that triggers this issue at 570 in order to err on the safe side and help you create titles that are sure to show up the way you intend them to.

How to fix it:

 Brian says: "We recommend limiting your title to between 10 and 60 characters or modifying the characters selected to keep it under 570 pixels. (Example: use less "W"s and more "i"s or "r"s) This should ensure customers see your full title on the SERP, in the browser tab, and in social channels."

You can potentially improve your page's rankings by making your title tag more relevant to that keyword, and you can use both title tags and meta descriptions to entice more searchers to click on your results.

You can get higher rankings and organic traffic from focusing on these elements, so make sure you don't neglect them!

4. Not Including Related Topics & Concepts

Google wants to rank pages that comprehensively address the topic.

One way to do that is by including words and phrases that are semantically and logically related to the main keyword you're targeting.

Without addressing these connected concepts, Google may not view your page as relevant for that query.

Think about it. Wouldn't it be strange to have a page targeting "New York City boroughs" if your page didn't mention Queens, The Bronx, Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Staten Island?

This common on-page SEO mistake is often a result of hyper-focusing on a singular keyword, rather than taking a step back to assess that keyword in context.

To fix this, you can use a keyword research tool like Moz Keyword Explorer to view keyword phrases that are related to your main keyword.



Keyword Overview: travel backpack

11.5k-30.3k Monthly Volume ¹ [Learn more](#)

42 Difficulty ¹ [Learn more](#)

86% Organic CTR ¹ [Learn more](#)

81 Priority ¹ [Learn more](#)

Keyword Suggestions

Keyword	Monthly Volume ¹
travel backpack amazon	201-500
travel backpack reviews	51-100
best travel backpack for europe	501-850
travel backpack for europe	11-50
travel backpack for men	851-1.7k

[See all suggestions](#)

SERP Analysis

Rank	Title & URL	PA ¹	DA ¹
1	The Best Carry-on Travel Backpacks for... https://www.travelandleisure.com/best-travel-backpacks	50	89
2	Best Travel Backpack: How To Pick In 2... https://packhacker.com/guide/best-travel-backpack/	36	38
3	Travel Backpacks REI Co-op https://www.rei.com/c/travel-backpacks	46	85

[See full analysis](#)

Or get related keyword suggestions on the page itself using [MozBar](#).

lost faberge eggs

Summary Optimization Factors **On-Page Content Suggestions**

On-Page Content Suggestions that may help you rank higher

Here are topics that are influencing the SERP for the keyword you queried. Consider incorporating these topics into your content to help your topical authority. Want to [Whiteboard Friday](#) to see how to make On-Page Content Suggestions part of your SEO strategy.

Topic	Relevance	
faberge egg	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>	See top ranking URLs
faberge	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>	See top ranking URLs
scrap metal	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>	See top ranking URLs
golden egg	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>	See top ranking URLs
easter egg hunt	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>	See top ranking URLs
faberge museum	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>	See top ranking URLs
egg hunt	<div style="width: 100%;"></div>	See top ranking URLs

Enter the keyword(s) you're targeting here. Get the words & phrases you should use down here.

5. Including Tags That Prevent Indexing

If you want a page to rank, you need to be sending the right signals to Google!

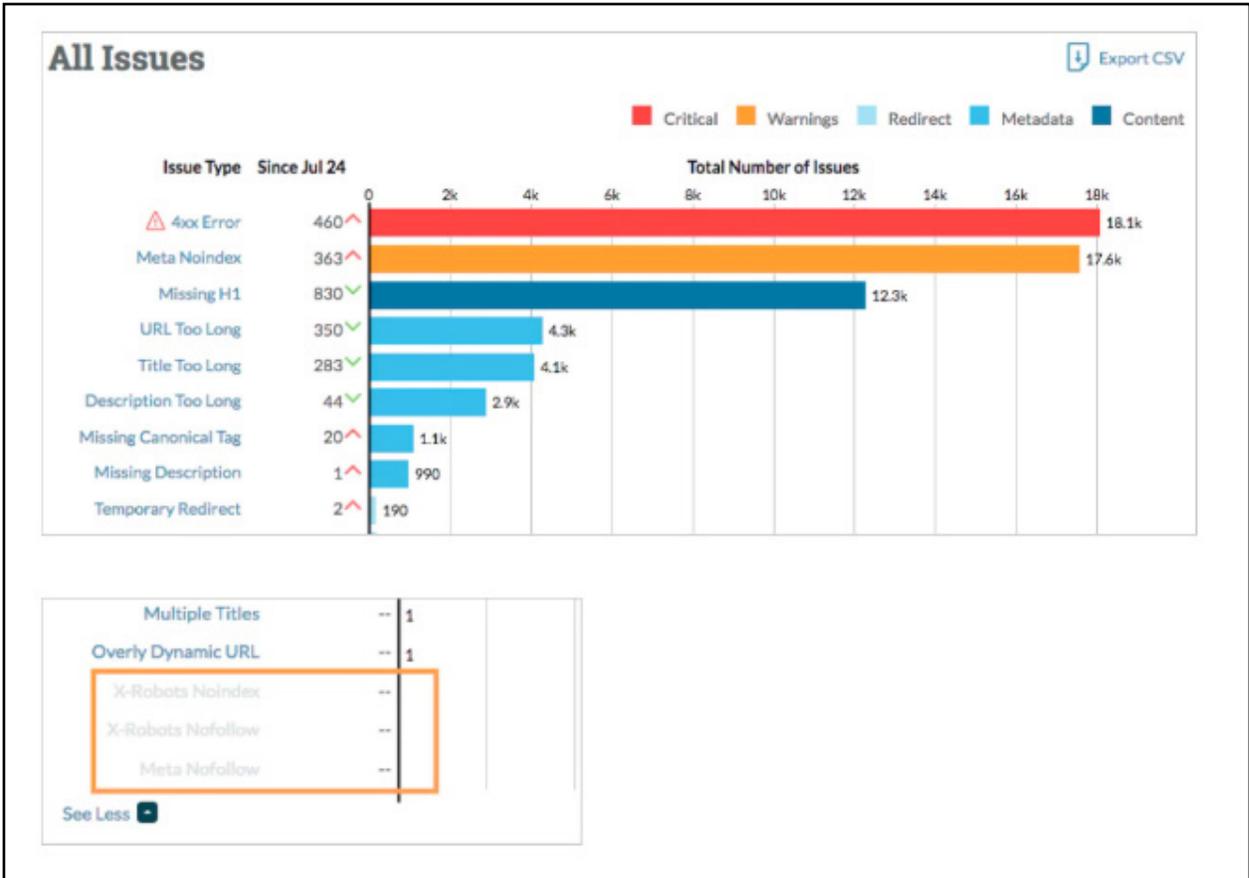
One of the most common on-page SEO mistakes involves adding (or forgetting to remove) tags on your page that tell Google not to index them.

For example, a noindex meta tag could be instructing Google to leave your page out of its index.

Your content won't have a chance to rank if your code is telling Google to ignore it, so make sure you check your site for these tags and remove them if you want Google to crawl and index it.

Moz's [Site Crawl](#) and [On-Demand Crawl](#) are great for this. Scan your site and see all the issues, including things like noindex tags.

If there are no issues of a particular type, it'll be greyed out.



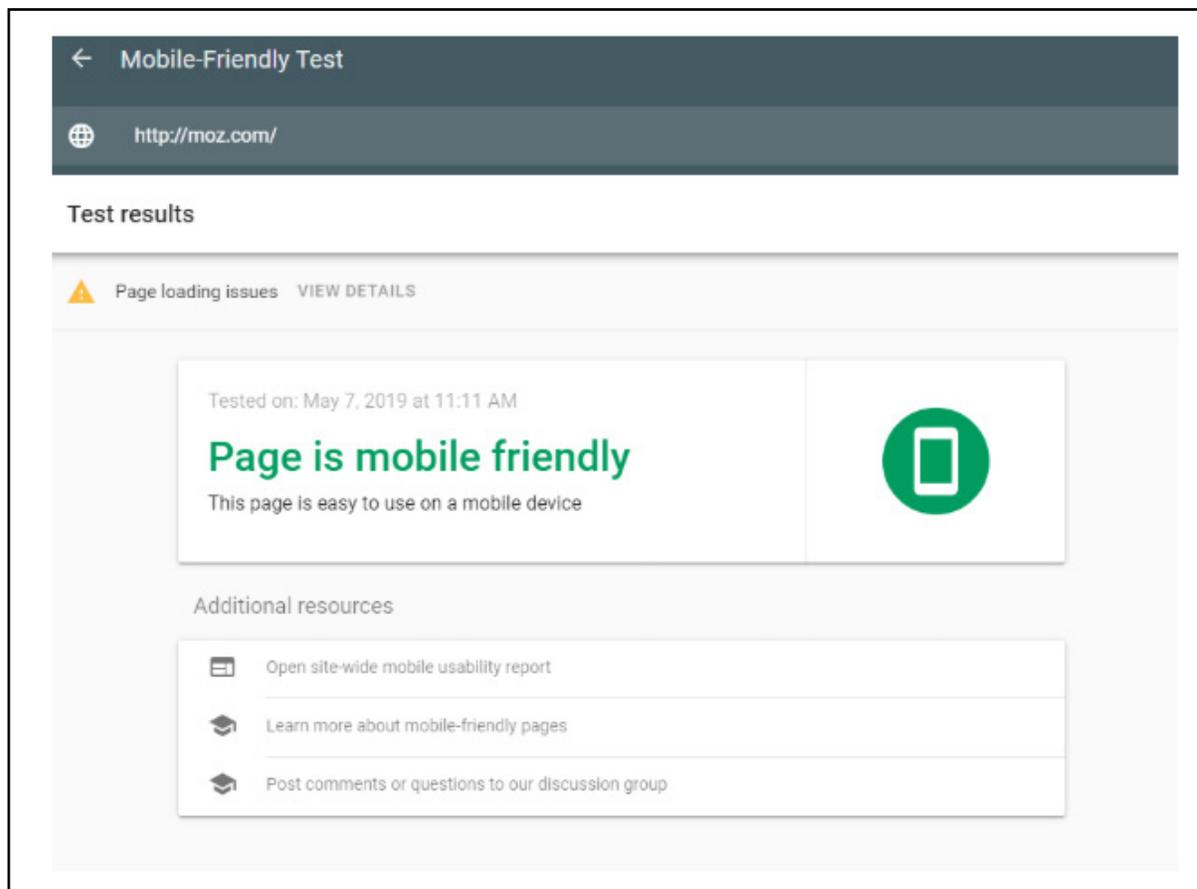
6. Neglecting Your Mobile Experience

Most of us work on our websites from a desktop, so a common on-page SEO mistake is forgetting to check our websites on mobile.

Mobile friendliness is a Google ranking factor on both desktop and mobile, so make sure each of your pages is mobile-friendly.

Google's preferred option for mobile friendliness is **responsive design**, although you can opt for dynamic serving or separate mobile URLs.

To check if your page is mobile-friendly, use **Google's mobile-friendly test**.



Since Google started switching to **mobile-first indexing**, it's also become critical that website owners maintain parity between their desktop and mobile versions.

Google is now using the mobile versions of pages for indexing and ranking, so make sure you're not omitting critical content on the mobile versions of your pages.

Make sure you have a proper mobile version for all your web pages and that it contains your most important content.

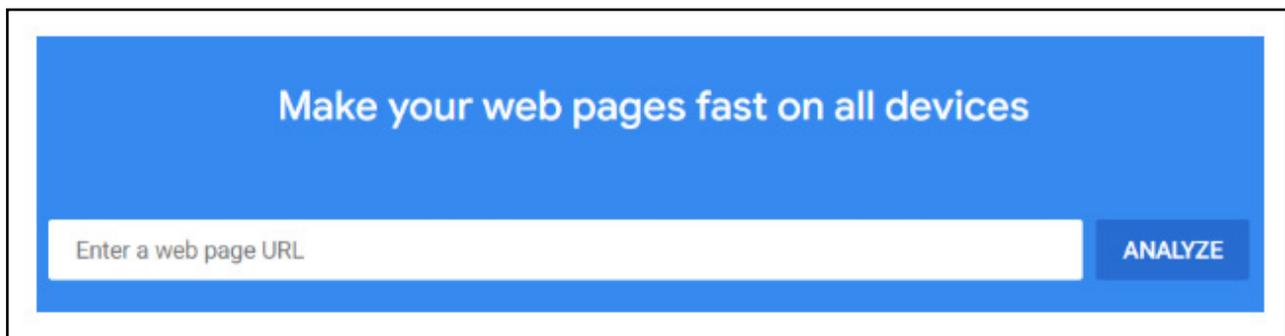


7. Forgetting to Optimize Your Images

Images can make your content more relevant and engaging, but forgetting certain image optimizations can do more harm than good.

For example, images are the single biggest contributor to slow page load times. Images should be properly sized and compressed to avoid bloat.

To check if images are causing slow load times, you can use [Google's PageSpeed Insights](#) or [Chrome Lighthouse Audits](#).

A screenshot of a web page optimization tool interface. The background is blue. At the top, the text "Make your web pages fast on all devices" is displayed in white. Below this, there is a white input field with the placeholder text "Enter a web page URL". To the right of the input field is a blue button with the text "ANALYZE" in white.

If your page includes large images, use a tool like [Squoosh](#), developed by Google Chrome Labs, to compress and reformat your images.

Additionally, make sure your images have:

- **Descriptive file names:** For example, brown-dog.jpg is more descriptive than 73418923.jpg
- **Descriptive, not keyword stuffed, alt text:** For example, alt= “brown dog jumping” is more helpful for understanding what the image depicts than alt= “brown dog, brown dogs, brown puppies”
- **Proper formats:** Use GIF for animations, JPEG if high resolution isn't necessary, and PNG for images requiring high resolution.

The visual nature of images makes it easy to forget the less visible properties like size and file names, but these optimizations are a critical component of on-page SEO.

Summary

On-page SEO can make or break your performance in search engines, so optimize with care!

Make sure you avoid these common mistakes and adhere to other [on-page SEO best practices](#) to increase the likelihood that Google will serve up your pages to searchers.