



Introduction to Search Engine Optimization (SEO) Guide

Getting Started

SEO stands for search engine optimization and it's the art of improving a website (in terms of its design, structure, navigation and content) so it's more easily found within search engines like Google, Yahoo! and Bing. SEO is free or "organic" and is the opposite of paid or "sponsored links" that appear in search engine results.

Why is SEO important? A website that is well-optimized appears in the first few pages of search engine results. This is crucial since studies show 92% of searchers only go as far as the first three page of results, or 30 listings on average ([Source: Jupiter Media + iProspect: "Search Engine Behaviors"](#)) for their keyword query. If you're not on one of the first few pages of listings, you're practically invisible. Also, where you show up equates to how relevant and authoritative your site is perceived to be by searchers.

Getting to the top of search engine results with SEO requires you to pay special attention to these aspects of a website:

- **Content and keywords**

Create a list of keywords that your audience, not you as a marketer, might use as search terms when they want to learn more about your particular issue or cause. Think about your audience persona. Study Google Analytics data about your referring URLs, the amount of time visitors spent on your website and your exit rate for particular keywords. Track and refine keywords regularly.

When creating content, it's important to pay the most attention to the top 25-50% of the text on every page of your website. Sometimes this is all search engine spiders (and humans) crawl to get the "gist."

- **Keyword frequency and meta data**

Include your keywords on your pages within prominent places like in headings and tabs, body copy and within hyperlinks. Your homepage should have around four or five target keywords and your jump pages should have around two or three. Keywords should make up around six to eight percent of your body copy.

Give the same keywords you identify for your pages to your web developer, if you have one, to add to the back end of your website as part of your meta data. This meta data helps search engine spiders get a snapshot of what each of your pages is about. Meta data also includes a meta title and a meta description. A meta title should effectively describe what your organization's website is all about. It should succinctly explain who you are and what you do. A meta description can be a little longer, maybe a sentence or two, but don't go over 20 words max. The key to writing a great meta description is to take your meta title as a base and add a little more description about your organization, who your target audience is, what you do and what the benefit of what you do is.

- **Headings & tabs**

Websites contain either text-based or image-based headings and tabs. The way to find out which yours has is to run your mouse over them and try to select the copy. If you can, they're text-based. If you can't, they're image-based. While image based headings and tabs are usually more visually appealing, search engine spiders can't read images, which initially created an SEO setback. If your headings and tabs are images, you'll have to determine whether you want them to look good as opposed to them being more functional for SEO. If you do opt for image-based headings and tabs, give each one a keyword and provide those keywords to your web developer. These keywords for images on the back end of a website are known as "ALT tags." If your headings and tabs are text-based, spiders *can* read them. Just make sure the words in those headings and tabs are keyword-optimized.

- **Link building**

Another data point that many search engines use to rank a website is by the link company it keeps. Links include inbound links (links from other blogs or websites that link to your blog), outbound links (links from your website or blog out to other websites or blogs) and internal links (links from one page on your website to another).

Inbound links are the most important for SEO. And when it comes to inbound links, focus on gaining quality over quantity. A website with many inbound links is considered relevant and credible. It therefore carries more weight when search engine spiders analyze your website's links and page rank than the combined weight multiple web pages each with a small number of inbound links.

Here are just a few link building tips you may consider adding to your arsenal:

Create a list on your website of the top 10 bloggers in your issue/cause's space you recommend

Create pages within your website of tips related to your organization's area of focus that link to helpful resources

Link to credible, well-trafficked, reference websites about your cause or issue, like a related Wikipedia online encyclopedia article

- **Cross promote your website with blogs and social media**

If you participate in social media communities make sure to link them to your website and vice versa.

- **Tools for SEO research:**

To conduct keyword research: Use [Google AdWords Keyword Search Tool](#)

To get an overall SEO assessment of a website: Use [Hubspot's Website Grader](#)

To find out the # of incoming links a website has: Use [Backlink Watch](#)



More Resources

[Resource Media:](#) We offer website SEO consultations for current websites and website design consultations for either current or upcoming websites

[SEOMoz:](#) A blog we love which contains all the latest news and tips about SEO

[Search Engine Optimization for Dummies:](#) An “oldie” but goodie. Ten SEO books in one, written by Bruce Clay.

For the Long Run

Building and maintaining a website that is search engine optimized takes time. And just when you think you’ve covered all your bases and you are pleased with your page ranking results, search engines like Google, will change things up. It’s wise to think of SEO as a long-term discipline that gets stronger over time with maintenance and consistency.

