

## Search Engine Optimization Guidelines:

### 200+

The number of criteria weighed by Google to determine your ranking in their search engine results page (SERP). SEO is as much an art as it is a science and it all begins with writing great content.

### Domain name:

**"Old is Gold":** The longer your URL has been in existence, the more weight it holds. Consider multi-year registration.

**Less is more:** The shorter the domain name the better in terms of Search Engines. Keep it clear and concise. That said a human might be able to remember a catchy one better. Do your research and choose the best avenue; Is the main marketing done via word of mouth?

## Keywords and Key Phrases

**Keyword:** A single word being searched for. Usually a lot of competition (results). Do your users really search for only one word?

- Ex: "Cars" "Soup" "Shoes" "Candy"

**Key phrases:** Multiple words or phrases searched for. More specific == less results == more likely to convert because a web searcher is looking specifically for what you have to offer.

- Ex: "2010 Jeep Wrangler Rubicon towing capacity" "Green Nike Shoes" "Homemade Potato Soup recipe" "Candy most likely to break my tooth"

### Step 1:

#### Establish keywords and keyword phrases

- Think like a user. What would you search for to find a company like this? Write down your ideas
- Ask someone else to search for a company or product within your niche. Write down their ideas. What terms did they use to search? Use these as a starting point.
- Use online tools such as google adwords keyword tool or a service such as <http://www.wordstream.com/keywords> to check the viability of your keywords.
- Try to use "LOW" competition keywords with a high monthly search volume. Some of this is trial and error; use good common sense.
- Try a search and look at the bottom of the screen for "searches related to" for alternative words and phrases to try.

## Step 2:

### Use your keywords

- This should happen relatively organically, but can also be intentional. Put keywords into your content and descriptions whenever possible. Work in any words and phrases that you found valuable and that people may search for.
- Do not force the use of keywords. Intentionally use only use where they makes sense. Your site can be penalized for “stuffing” page content with keywords just for the sake of adding them.
- A statistic I read was to stay between 2% – 4% saturation of any single keyword integration, at that point you may be more likely to get flagged and do more harm than good.

### Content is King

- Put Keywords in the <H> heads and in lists and throughout the <p> text. The more important HTML element they are in, the more weight they are given. <H1> is more important than an <h3>, and an <h3> shows more importance than <strong> or <em>, while <strong> and <em> reign over <p> elements.

### Images

- Add keywords to image file names; use-a-hyphen-to-separate-words
- Add keywords to image alternate text; try to keep it five words or less by being clear and concise.
- optimize every image. A slow loading page is bad for SEO.

### URLs (Pages)

- Try to include keywords within page names, and keep page names similar to your navigation structure.
- Use hyphens to help separate page names. It turns out Spiders like to read these better, just like on image names.
- Title every page unique to the page content (8-12 words). Also, begin your title with a keyword
  - A lot more great tips on page titling: <http://www.hobo-web.co.uk/title-tags/>

### Meta Descriptions

- Add a meta description to your site (typically below the <title> in the <head> area. The importance of this seems to have diminished in modern times, but it doesn't hurt to try to have nice descriptions sprinkled with keywords to show up on the SERP (try to limit to 200 characters or less).
- It turns out it's better to have no meta description tags than to have the same one on every page. So have a unique one relative to content on each page.

**<meta name="description" content="Your description goes here" />**

### Meta Keywords

- Like a meta description, because of black-hat SEO practices too many of these can actually hurt your results. Just remember to be purposeful. The meta keywords are the keywords pulled from the page content.
- Keep it to the 10 most important keywords.

**<meta name="keywords" content="keywords, keyword, keyword phrase, etc.">**

### Some other things to look into:

- Create a custom 404 (error) page with links back into your site (check out cPanel options of your host)
- When people link back to you from their site, it adds legitimacy to your site; Try to build real relationships and trade links.
- Social media is an increasingly important factor in rankings. I have no idea how it really works yet beyond realizing more likes and retweets are like votes for your website. The more the better.

### Technically speaking:

- Keep your code clean – only include html and css code you are using. Search Spiders and bots like this.
- Use text not images. Spiders can't crawl an image
- Faster load times == better SEO ranking. Optimize *everything*.
- Get responsive. Mobile technology is outselling desktop computers.

### Other helpful tools

A free fundamental course on SEO to use as reference.

<http://webdesign.tutsplus.com/series/seo-fundamentals-for-web-designers--webdesign-9715>

What's trending on Google. Timely content generation can capitalize on these hot topics.

<http://www.google.com/trends/>

Helpful tricks to enhance your own SEO strategy.

<http://www.quicksprout.com/2013/12/04/11-seo-changes-that-will-give-you-big-results/>

SEO tester. Put your site to the test and see what can be improved. Remember SEO, just like the web is about iteration and continual improvement. There are more of these tools out there, just do some Googling.

<http://seositecheckup.com/>

## **Wait, what should I do again?**

- ☐ research power words and phrases to integrate into your content
- ☐ work them into the powerful content areas of your site (title>H1>H3>Strong>p etc..)
- ☐ meaningfully title pages unique to their content. Start with a keyword (8-12 words)
- ☐ give your .html pages descriptive names (based on content) with dashes
- ☐ give your images descriptive names with dashes
- ☐ give your images meaningful alt text
- ☐ add meta description tag, unique to each page (200 characters max)
- ☐ add meta keyword tags unique to each page (10 words)
- ☐ optimize EVERYTHING to ensure fast load time
- ☐ get rid of redundant or unused code
- ☐ make friends and cross-link like content with a white hat approach
- ☐ update content often (no updates == neglect == frowny face from Search Engines)
- ☐ stay responsive
- ☐ don't duplicate content.
- ☐ use social media
- ☐ integrate favicons

## **And above all else remember:**

You can bend over backwards trying to optimize your site for the search engines and it's really just a gamble. Nobody knows the secret algorithms, and by the time we begin to figure them out, they change. So while it's good to pay attention to, and be intentional of SEO, don't get so carried away with it that it affects your human visitors.

## Analytics

Fancy way of saying “Show me data about the people who use my website”

### Integrate Analytics into your site

1. Go to [google.com/analytics](https://google.com/analytics)
2. Create a new google account now if you don’t already have one, or just login.
3. Go to the **admin** tab
4. Create an account (This is a person; you as the manager or another individual)
5. Create a unique property; (this is specific to a single website)
  - You can have multiple properties within a single account, just make sure not to reuse the code across sites.
6. Copy the provided Tracking ID and put it directly before the closing `</head>` area of **every page** of your website HTML.
7. Re-synchronize your site with your remote server.
8. Send your site to lots of friends (let’s all go to social media right now!!).
9. Try the “real time” tab in google analytics to see if it’s working. It can sometimes take 24 hours for initial results to be recorded.

### Why use analytics?

Get information about visitors. It’s hard to argue with data.

- Data collection can start pretty basic and still give good insight into many things such as:
  - Who comes (how often, from where, how long do they stay, what kind technology do they use)
  - Are they engaging or am I losing them (high or low bounce rate)
  - What pages to they find first, is it impacting their time on the site
  - What keywords are used most
  - After an ad campaign do my usage statistics spike, comparing two campaigns which one worked better
  - As I get more hits does my SERP ranking rise?
  - Am I getting more organic traffic after some SEO and keyword improvements (are the changes paying off or do I need to switch strategies?)

### Annotate

I like to add notes of anything I’ve done to help see what causes a spike in traffic. Larger spikes (or lack of an expected spike) can help give you information into what kinds of headlines are catchy, a time of day to release new content, or simply what kind of information is being viewed (or not).