



## How to Use Search Engine Optimization to Increase Your Rankings

Do you remember a time when no one knew what a Google was?

It's hard to fathom, especially now when searching for information online with Google, Yahoo, Bing, etc is as second nature as picking up the Yellow Pages used to be.

So it makes logical sense that a great way to generate traffic to your website is to rank high for what people are searching for, or in SEO lingo "keywords".

SEO (Search Engine Optimization) is simply following best practices to try and increase your ranking on search engines. Done correctly, there is nothing shady involved, nor are you "tricking" Google. In fact, using risky techniques can lead to bans from Google.

This course isn't meant to be an exhaustive overview of SEO, but rather to emphasize the major points and process in using SEO to take your website to #1.

### Step 1: Research Keywords

By far the most important, and often overlooked, step in the SEO process is keyword research. After all, ranking #1 for a keyword that your prospect is not typing in or using to get to you won't do you any good.

Therefore, it's critical you carefully select which keywords you will

target for both your homepage and sub-pages. An ounce of prevention in this case will truly be worth a pound of cure.

Start by simply brainstorming some words or phrases you think people will use. In most cases it is pretty straightforward. But remember to use synonyms and related terms. Ask friends and family what words they think of if they were to search your area.

Enter these keywords into a spreadsheet. Then start separating them into groups of similar or alike keywords.

Next, sign up for a Google Account so you can use their free Keyword Tool. This is one of the most powerful tools on the market and it's completely free. At the time of writing, the tool can be found at <http://www.google.com/sktool/>.

Google will help you come up with keywords related to your entries. Better yet, you can see how many people are searching for those terms every month. Use this to help figure out what keywords you want to target. Obviously you won't go after keywords with no or low search volumes. On the other hand, you may not want to target keywords that are so general that you have a small chance of ranking high.

Select all the keywords and Export it into a second spreadsheet. Start creating a master spreadsheet of potential keywords. Highlight a shortlist of potential keywords.



For the homepage, you ideally don't want to target more than three keyword phrases with five as an absolute maximum. It's always better to focus on a couple related keywords that are focused than ones which are too broad.

Do the same for your major sub-pages (for example pages under Products or Services). No need for now to optimize generic pages such as Contact Us

### Step 2: Fix Tags

Now that you know which keywords you'll be focusing on, it's time to fix your tags. Every webpage can have code that is invisible to the viewer but impacts the search engine. The most important of these is the Title tag. The Title tag leads to what you see on the very top of the web browser. Research shows this tag alone has a huge impact on search rankings.

Write a short sentence (with or without your company name) that includes the keyword. Copy and paste that into your Title tag. For those who can manage simple edits of their site, the Title tag is found near the top of the HTML code. If you rely on a web designer, ask him to change this and other tags.

The Meta description tag is what people will read on the search engine for your listing, so make sure you write something to the point and relevant. Include the keywords in the Meta description.

Meta keyword tags have lost much of their luster from the days when people would keyword-stuff this tag. Consequently, it's of little impact. Doesn't hurt to include it though.

ALT tags are descriptive tags for images. Google can't see images, but it can see the text ALT tag. If for some reason your image doesn't load for the view, what they see is the ALT tag. Write a brief description of the image and include the keyword(s).

### Step 3: Improve the Page

Google and viewers alike will appreciate a site that is well-design and easy to navigate. Use a critical eye to find areas to improve. Remember, Google can't read images and Flash so if your site is heavily image-based, you will need to find ways to add content and text if you want to improve your rankings.

Make sure Contact Us has easy to read instructions, addresses and phone numbers. It helps if you add seals of approvals such as those from the BBB or SSL security seals.

### Step 4: Create a Sitemap

A sitemap is simply a page with an overview of all the links and sub-links on your page. Generally the link to a sitemap is located way at the bottom in the footer area. Sitemaps help Google crawl your site and give your visitors a one-



page resource to quickly find information.

Create an XML sitemap for free and upload it to the root directory of your website. If nothing of that made sense, ask your web designer to help.

### Step 5: Add Content

Besides keyword research, the other critically important component of SEO is good content. You might have heard that content is king, and nowhere is this more true than with SEO. Poor content over-spams keywords and reads like it. Good content is meaningful, valuable and has target keywords naturally integrated.

The rule of thumb is to target about 200 to 400 words of keyword-rich content on a page. There are ways to arrange content so it's not just one big block of text. You can break it up into columns, boxes or charts. Remember, Google cannot read images. So if your comparison chart is an image, none of that text is readable.

Try to include your target keywords in the first sentence of the text. If you are a poor writer, numerous good copywriters can be found to freelance these types of jobs. Don't cut corners here. Poorly written content with spelling/grammatical errors is a big turnoff to your prospects.

### Step 6: Use Headers

Related to Step 5, break up your content into multiple paragraphs. Start each paragraph with a header using the tags `<h></h>`. Again, if this is new to you, ask your web designer to do it. Include the keyword or variations of the keyword in the header. Google seems to like the text within headers quite a bit.

(You can also underline or bold certain keywords. It may or may not make a difference.)

### Step 7: Get Inbound Links

All of the previous steps involved work on your site. Another important factor is how many other websites are linking to your site. In SEO jargon, these are "inbound links". The more links a website has to it, the more Google figures you are important and thus worthy of a higher rank. After all, a site with 1,500 links to it must be more relevant than one with 5 links.

You can go to Google.com and type in `"link:http://www.YourWebSite.com"` to see how many links Google recognizes you to have. (Don't forget to replace YourWebSite with your URL).

Go find websites that are related to you and see if there are areas you can request or automatically get links placed. Link building isn't hard, but it is very time consuming. There are firms who you can pay



for link building, but make sure they are of a good reputation.

That's a high level overview of SEO. If you can do these seven steps, you will start to notice an improvement within one or two months.

### Don't Forget to Measure

Take a baseline measure before your activities to see what you currently rank for your target keywords. If you use Firefox, you can download an add-in to check ranks quickly:  
<http://tools.seobook.com/firefox/rank-checker/>

Then once a month do another check to see if your rankings are going up.

Also very helpful is to download and install Google Analytics, which will be the subject of another course. This free tool will help you unearth a wealth of knowledge about your website and its visitors.

Download our free spreadsheet called "SEO Checklist" from the Reseller U webpage to see other items of importance.

All of this valuable information is offered FREE courtesy of Value Reseller.

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