



# A Quick, Easy and Straight-to-the-Point Search Engine Optimization Guide

## Define Which Keywords You Want to Target

To figure out which keywords work best for you, you'll have to do some research. The following tools can help you learn more about search volume and competition.

**Google AdWords Keyword Planner:** This is a very common tool for starting SEO research. It suggests keywords based off existing content and provides estimated search volume. To find the search volume for a particular keyword, make sure to select the Match Type to "Exact" and look under Local Monthly Searches. Note that these numbers represent total searches for the query. Your ranking and click-through rate will not reflect this number and a much lower amount of visitors to your site will result.

**Google Trends:** Another Google tool that can give you visibility into what and how people are searching based on time and location.

**Please note: It's important that your homepage and all landing pages should be optimized for keywords that are relevant to the content that the potential visitor will find on your site to improve your rankings and to compete for placement on result pages.**

**Additionally, you will also have to optimize keywords on a per-article basis based on the content within each article.**

**For all pages, articles, etc. that you publish to your site, follow the suggested best practices below to make each page optimized for search engines.**

## Use Keywords in Page/Article Titles

Higher rankings are directly linked to the use of targeted keywords in page titles. When search engines rank pages for a keyword, they consider the page title to be the most important place for some form of your targeted keyword to appear.



### **Recommendations:**

- Add targeted keywords – preferably an exact match – as the first (or one of the first) words in page titles.
- Edit your page titles to 70 characters or less.
- It's important to avoid keyword stuffing in page titles. If you use the same keywords more than once or twice in a title tag, search engines can potentially tag your page as spam and your rankings will suffer.

## **Use Keywords in Meta Descriptions**

Search engines will likely pull and show your meta descriptions as the snippet that describes your page. Your targeted keywords will appear bolded in the description on result pages. This increases visibility and prominence.

### **Recommendations:**

- Correctly and accurately describe each page and its content in a way that makes it interesting and compelling to potential visitors that find it through a search engine.
- Use a targeted keyword at least once - but no more than three times per meta description.
- Don't use the same keyword excessively in one meta description, as search engines will mark it as spam.
- Edit meta tags to be 156 characters or less – this is how many characters search engines pull for descriptions on result pages.

## **Use Exact Keywords in Document Text/Article at Least Once**

Using exact match of long tail keywords at least once is an important SEO best practice – and important for a user-friendly experience.

### **Recommendation:**

- Use your targeted keywords at least once in relevant content, articles, blog post, etc.

## **Use Keywords in URLs**

Using targeted keywords in URL strings adds relevancy to your page for search engines.



### **Recommendations:**

- Make sure your URL only contains standard characters – letters, numbers, slashes, dashes, etc.
- Use targeted keywords in each URL string and if using a multi-word phrase, separate each word with a hyphen – this allows search engines to read the URL as separate words.
- Write URLs to be as short as possible – preferable shorter than 75 characters.

## **Use Keywords in Image Alt Attributes**

Using keywords in the alt attribute of images helps achieve good rankings – it also helps your page rank higher in image searches.

### **Recommendations:**

- Add the page's targeted keywords to the alt attribute of a relevant image or graphic.
- If there are no images on a page, consider adding one or two.

## **Produce Unique Content**

Search engines look for and reward pages that contain a sufficient amount of machine-readable content that is unique from all the other pages that exist online. Search engines deem pages that contain a minimum of unique content/characters are more valuable to users.

### **Recommendation:**

- Make sure each page has a minimum of 300 characters (not including spaces) of unique content. Note that images without alt text, flash files, Java applets and other non-text content are not machine-readable.

## **Use External Links**

Search engines suggest that linking to external pages provides potential ranking rewards.

A standard SEO best practice is to link to relevant and trusted resources that users can find useful.



### **Recommendations:**

- Add a link to a relevant, trusted resource related to your targeted keyword – hyperlink the exact match keyword as a best practice.
- Avoid using too many external links per page. If a page has too many external links, it can set off spam triggers – especially if links don't follow through to quality sites.

## **Avoid Keyword Stuffing**

If you use a keyword too many times in the document text, search engines may tag your page for keyword stuffing, which can hurt your rankings.

### **Recommendations:**

- Edit page to use your targeted keywords no more than 15 times.
- It's also important to not stuff keywords in URLs - a targeted keyword should only be used once per URL.

## **Use Social Media to Boost Rankings**

Utilizing business Facebook, Google +, Twitter and LinkedIn pages can have a positive impact on your search rankings.

### **Recommendations:**

- Setup business pages on social media platforms mentioned above
- Link to your website from those pages
- Regularly post content from your website on these channels

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