

# Introduction to Search Engine Optimization

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## Who are You

**Name**

**Title and Role**

**Organization**

**Number of Employees**

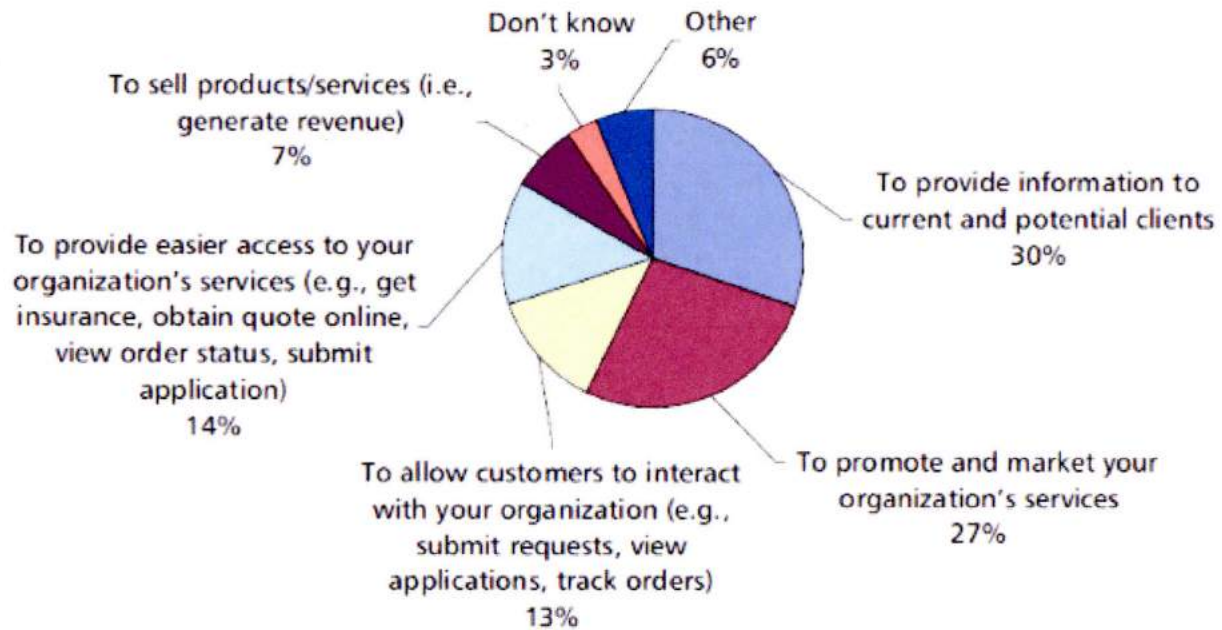
**Your background and training**

**Platform of website CMS vs. HTML etc.**

**Do you have an IT staff or a technical webmaster**

**What is the theme/purpose of your website**

## What is the theme/purpose of your website



Graph 9 — Which one of the following goals best describes what your organization considers the main purpose of its Web site?

Source: [www.Martinbauer.com](http://www.Martinbauer.com)

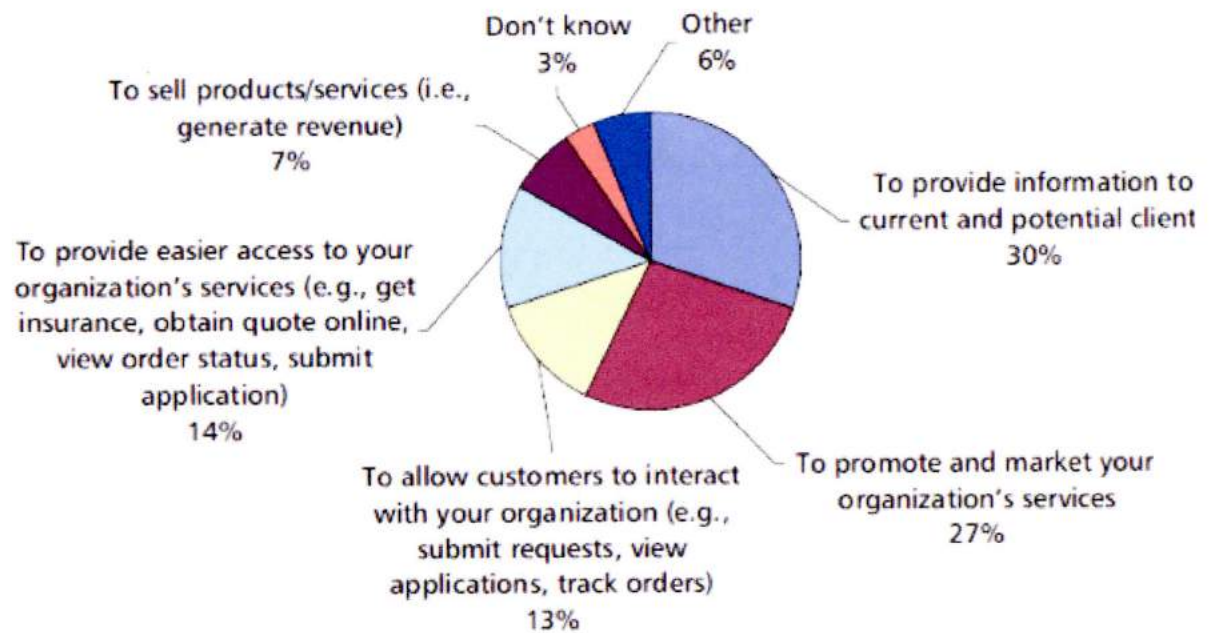
## Introduction to Search Engine Optimization

**What is it? – SEO is – the process of increasing the number of visitors to a website by achieving high rank in the results of a search of (Google, Yahoo or Bing).**

**The higher the rank, the greater the chance that a user will visit your site.**

Who are you? – Name and Organization. Your role in the organization and number of employees.

- Search Engine used – Google, Bing or Yahoo.
- 
- Do you currently have a website? – CMS vs. Programmed site.
- 
- Task Number, 1 of SEO - What is a websites Theme – Purpose?



Graph 9 — Which one of the following goals best describes what your organization considers the main purpose of its Web site?

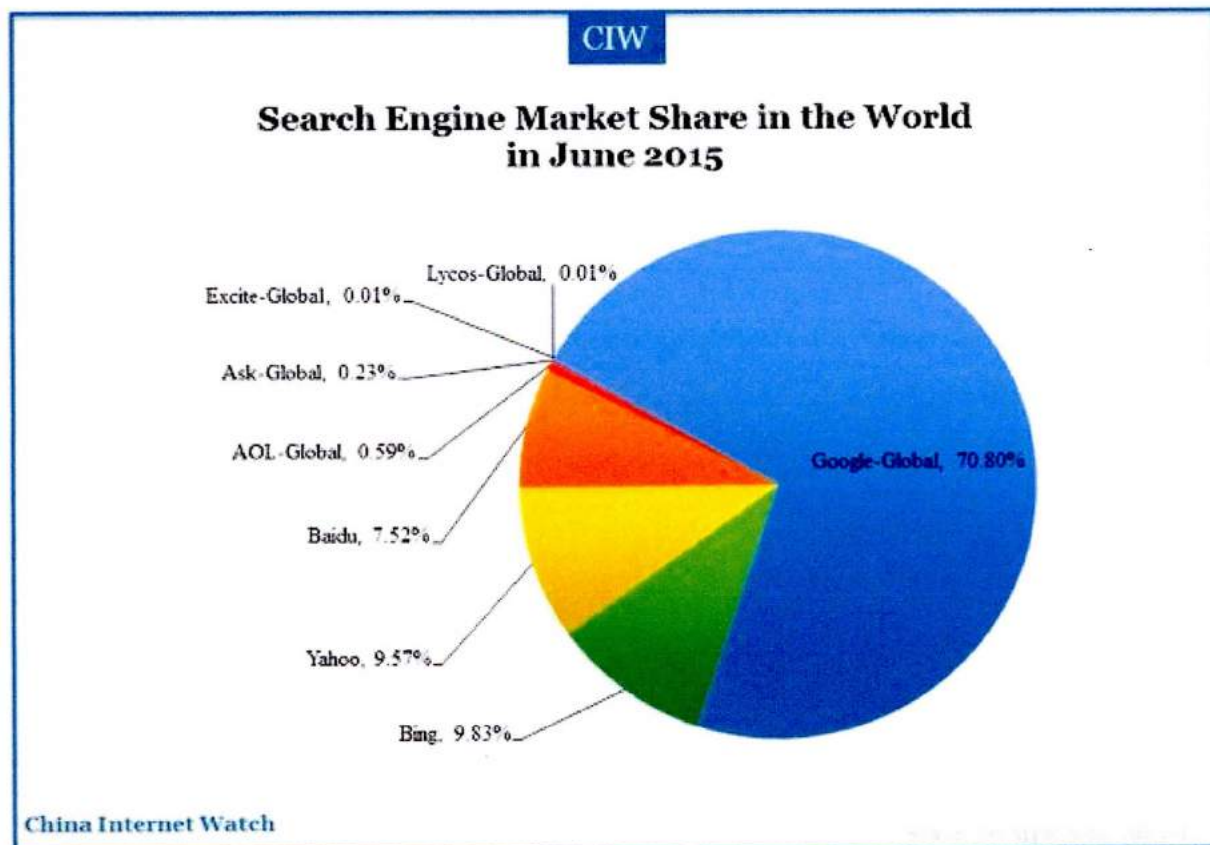
Source: [www.Martinbauer.com](http://www.Martinbauer.com)

## Goals of a website

- Achieve Conversion
  - Convert a visitor to a customer.
  - Sign up for your email newsletter.
  - Download a white paper or free tool etc.
  -
- White Hat vs. Black Hat
- Users arrive at your website on a *Landing page*. Search engines will rank your site based on the user *Clicking through* that landing page and exploring other pages on the site. If there is no click through you are penalized for having a high *Bounce Rate*.

**Search engines** are remotely accessible programs that allow users to search the Internet (World Wide Web) using keywords or phrases. Searches may cover titles of documents, URLs, headers, or full text. This information is gathered from websites using robots also known as a bot, crawlers or spiders.

## Who are the Search Engines:



## How Search Engines Work

- Visit your site creating an index to understand the site's content and organization.
- Count links for other sites and the number of informative articles (blogs) you have. Using this criterion, they vote on the quality of your content.
- Evaluate your website social media counting tweets, Facebook “likes” and “shares” and other social media events.

## Usage of content management systems for websites

This diagram shows the percentages of websites using various content management systems. See [technologies overview](#) for explanations on the methodologies used in the surveys. Our reports are updated daily.

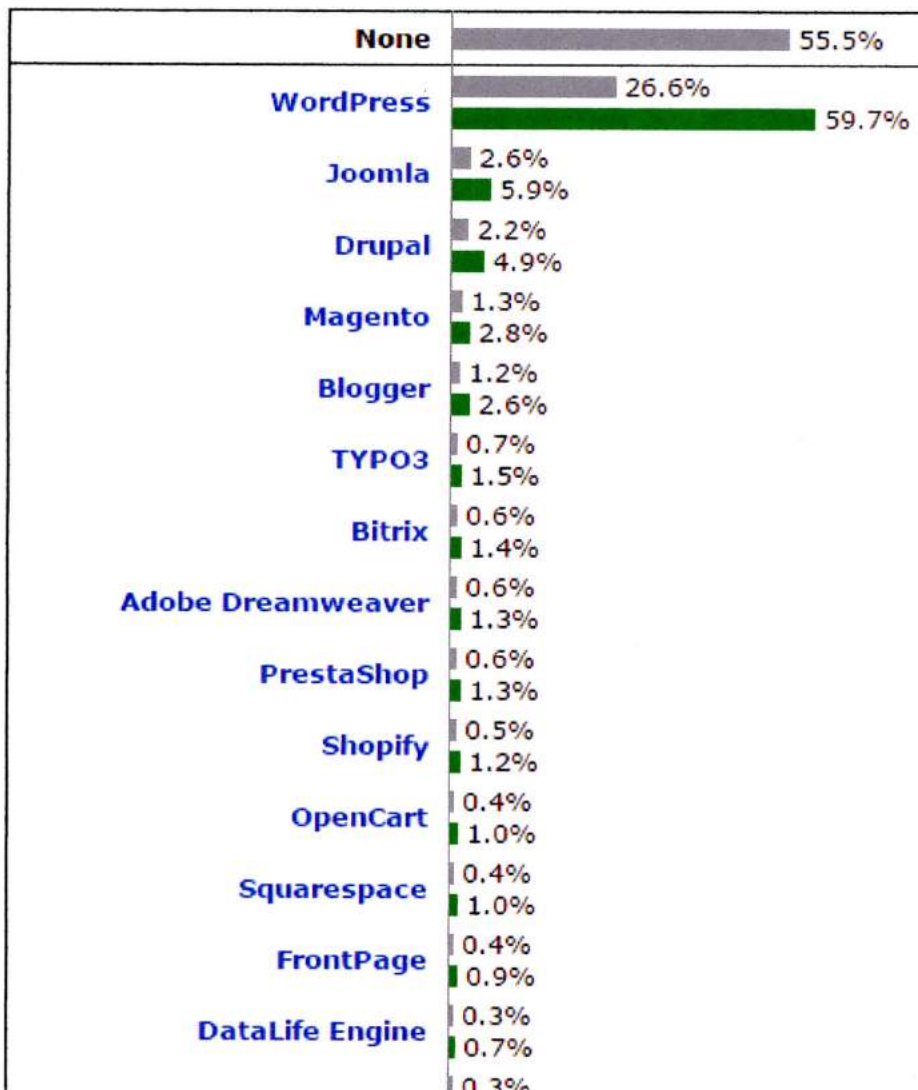
Request an extensive market report of specific content management systems.

[Learn more](#)

How to read the diagram:

55.5% of the websites use none of the content management systems that we monitor.

WordPress is used by 26.6% of all the websites, that is a content management system market share of 59.7%.



Source: [https://w3techs.com/technologies/overview/content\\_management/all](https://w3techs.com/technologies/overview/content_management/all).  
 Accessed July 25, 2016

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# What is SEO

What is it? – SEO is – the process of increasing the number of visitors to a website by achieving high rank in the results of a search of (Google, Yahoo or Bing).

The higher the rank, the greater the chance that a user will visit your site.

Purpose?

## SEO Goals for a Website

1. Getting to Page 1 – Number 1 in a Google Search.
2. Getting Selected from the item on the Search Engine Reference Page.
3. Getting the user to navigate rather than leave the site from the same page upon which he landed.
  - In this process the users arrive on your website on a *Landing page*. Search engines rank your site based on the user *Clicking through* the landing page and exploring other pages on the site. If there is no click through you are penalized for having a high *Bounce Rate*.
4. Achieve Conversion
  - Convert a visitor to a customer.
  - Sign up for your email newsletter.
  - Download a white paper or free tool etc.

## Local Business Search Results

All three major search engines, Google, Bing, and Yahoo, provide free resources to list your business. Getting listed is a simple process, and you will appear in a map search.

**Google My Business:** To start the process, go to <https://www.google.com/business/> and complete the form to enter your business or edit your current listing.

**Yahoo Local:** offers a similar service. To see if you are listed enter <http://local.yahoo.com>. Requirements for listing have been complicated and have changed dramatically for details go to

<http://www.yext.com/pl/yahoo-claims/index.html>

**Bing Places:** Go to <https://www.bingplaces.com>

/

# Keywords - The Heart of SEO

A **Keyword** is a word or phrase that a search engine robot looks for in its index based on the user search query. Keyword must match the words chosen by the user. The same choice words may vary but describe the same thing. E.g. – car – automobile – horseless carriage. Identifying keyword requires understanding your user and a rich use of synonyms.

Start by defining the purpose of your website and develop user profile(S).

## Why Keyword Research

Users employ keywords to find information (your website) on the Internet. If a keyword does not appear on your page, it will not be found unless you buy ads. "Keyword research predict shifts in demand, respond to changing market conditions and ensure that you are producing products, services, and content' sought by users. Use a team to generate keywords. Start the process as The Art of SEO suggests:

- Create a list of 1-3 word phrase that describes your product or services.
- Produce a list of synonyms for that list.
- Study sites of industry leaders and observe projects, events people and ideas regarding your organization.
- Identify words and phrase that describe your current site and brands used throughout the industry or group.
- List all of your products and services.
- Ask the team to think like customers and determine what keywords they would use for a search.
- Use outside groups to provide a list of keywords they would use.
- Use analytic tools to determine what keywords are currently used to find you website.
- Determine what your competitor's websites are doing as well as what the media is saying about your competition.

- Brainstorm and build comprehensive list of keywords
- Consult with friends, relatives, associates, employee and customers
- Use a thesaurus.

## Ongoing vs. Seasonal Keywords

E.g. Valentine – chocolate or flowers

Year-end reporting: [www.google.com/press/zeitgeist](http://www.google.com/press/zeitgeist)

Measure how often during a day a keyword is entered in Google:

[www.google.com/trends](http://www.google.com/trends) Use results in a spreadsheet to track keyword performance.

## Determine How Often & What Keyword is Searched:

Paid Searches: Google - <https://adwords.google.com/keywordplanner>

Microsoft – [www.bing.com/toolbox/keywords](http://www.bing.com/toolbox/keywords)

Free tool: [www.bruceclay.com/seo/combining-keywords.htm](http://www.bruceclay.com/seo/combining-keywords.htm)

Clay say;” *It might seem like a good idea to concentrate on the broadest, most general keyword out there, it is actually not. What you want are keywords that give you conversion. (Conversion means becoming a customer, signing up for an email list, etc.) A keyword that brings 60 visitors to your site, 10 of whom make a purchase is much more desirable than a generic keyword that brings in thousand of visitors who only come in, blink, and hit the Back button on their browser. Statisticians attribute this to the fact that people use generic keywords when gathering information and more specific keywords when they are ready to open their wallet.”*

**Users key phrases** rather than single words. **Usually 3 or more.** These phrases produce a higher **pagerank**. The **click-through rate** (a measure of the process of navigation through your site) occurs when more words

match your search query. Your **conversion rate** also increases. A **clear theme increases traffic** and vice versa.

## Picking Keywords

- Group keywords by category and sub-category and Determine
  - Which keywords generate a high amount of traffic
  - Which have a high conversion rate

You want to bring people to your site and keep them there. Quickly leaving your site resulting in high **bounce rate** and poor Google ratings.

### **High bounce rates indicate:**

- A keyword is not relevant to you web page
- Text on the page is not relevant to the keyword
- Content or layout of the web page does not hold their interest
- Page loads too slowly and the user loses interest.

## **Assigning Keywords to Pages**

### **What Search Engines See as Keyword (not in priority order)**

- Web pages that contain the exact phrase.
- Pages that have all the words or the phrase in close proximity.
- Pages that have all words but not in close proximity.
- Stemming: keyword = bicycle Word on page = bicyclist.
- Pages having links that contain matches to keyword in the URL.
- Pages with special formatting e.g. bold, italics, bullets, large fonts, etc.

Introduce keywords in the first paragraph of a page.

Keyword repeated every paragraph = a topic.

Pages connected to a topic = a theme.

Multiple pages of unique information on a theme a rank by search engines for higher relevance,

Include your theme in your homepage.

# Adding Keywords to Existing & New Content

## How & Where to Add Words

- 1 – in Title
- 1-2 times Meta tags (a meta tags display in HTML not your browser & display at the top of a page. E.g. description of pages, rich snippets, listing of keywords important to a page, the 154 character under an item in an item)
- 2 times in first 200 words. 1 in paragraphs 2,3 and 4.
- 1-2 times in the last paragraph
- Avoid the danger of too many keywords. Keep below 5% of total words.
- Make content sound natural.

**Single Page Analyzer:** A free tool to aid in adding keywords and in analyzing effective meta tags.

Get it at: <http://www.seotoolset.com/tools/plans-pricing/> It Measures:

- How effective are your meta tags?
- Counts frequency of keywords used.
- Determine if a title is too long or too short.
- Determine if you are in danger of spamming. (keyword stuffing).

# XML Sitemap

An XML Sitemaps lists for the search engines the URL's on your site. This improves your pagerank. This shows search engines how to navigate your site. Once a sitemap is created, it should be entered into the search engines. You can generate a free sitemap by visiting

<https://xmlsitemapgenerator.org/>

Once the sitemap is created, it should be entered into the search engines as follow

Google Search Console: <https://support.google.com/sites/answer/100283?hl=en>

Bing Webmaster Tools: <http://www.bing.com/toolbox/webmaster>

Yahoo visit: <https://search.yahoo.com/info/submit.html>

# Snippets

Google defines *snippet* as “a description of or an excerpt from the webpage” that follows the title and precedes the URL and Cached link. Simply put, the snippet refers to the description portion of a Google search listing. It doesn't include the title, nor does it include the URL.” Snippets may be up to 174 characters.

**Ordinary snippets** are generated by Google and are extracted from the first 174 character of a webpage.

**Barnes | Barnes - Oxford Genealogy - CompetitiveStrategies.us**

<https://competitivestrategies.us/tag/barnes/>

John "Deaf John" Barnes/Barns (1741-1822) Posted on June 8, 2016 by Dr. Linda S. KimberlingLeave a comment · Revolutionary Artillery Crew Source: 1771

You've visited this page 2 times. Last visit: 6/18/16

**Rich snippets** are created by the web designer and may increase the likelihood that a user will select the item.

**Deaf John Barnes | Barnes - Oxford Genealogy**

<https://competitivestrategies.us/john-deaf-john-barnes/>

Powerful Patriarch-Wilkes County Planter-Pioneer Industrialist-DAR Patriot fought under Washington at Valley Forge-Participated in the War of Regulation

## Types of Rich Snippets:

- People
- Products
- Reviews and ratings
- Business and organizations (including names, addresses, phone numbers, location and logo)
- Recipes
- Events

- Music
- Articles

Bing: Breadcrumb snippets

Google: Video content, TV episodes and software

Rich snippets are created by adding code to your page. Having a basic knowledge of HTML and the Google Structured Data Markup Helper aid in creating the snippet and copying and pasting into your page.

Into your browser enter: <https://www.google.com/webmasters/markup-helper/u/0/>

- Select your data type from the choices displayed.
- Enter the URL for you web page
- Click the start tagging button. \* The screen splits into two columns. With your mouse, markup the items listed in the right column. In the drop down menu identify the item (Brand name, logo, price...)
- If you select price, choose Offer and Price from the drop-down.
- If you need to add data not in the text such as URL, click the “Add Missing Tags” button and add the data.
- When finished create a rich snippet by clicking the “HTML” button in the right column.
- Copy and paste the highlighted text into the HTML of your page. (***If you are uncertain about how to paste into the HTML get help. A period in the wrong place can create errors on your page.***)
- Test your snippet code by clicking on <https://search.google.com/structured-data/testing-tool/u/0/>

Source: Clay, 2015, pp.289-296.

## OPTIMIZE YOUR TITLE AND DESCRIPTION

The first thing a user sees when they search for a keyword is the snippet on the Google Search results page. The snippet includes your the page title, url, and meta description.

The title should be short and concise. It impacts your ranking for keywords. Your meta description should accurately describe the content your page offers. While it doesn't directly impact your search ranking, it will impact your click-through rate!

### Hands-on tips for title optimization

- Keep the title short. Google truncates anything past 70 characters.
- Use keywords you want to rank for in the page title.
- Go back and add page titles to any of pages currently missing one!



### Hands-on tips for optimizing the description:

- Limit your description to 175 characters. Otherwise Google will cut off the rest!
- Try and integrate a call-to-action in your description that encourages users to click on your sitepage.
- What added value does the user get from visiting your website? Make it clear in the description.
- Use important keywords.

## USE ALT ATTRIBUTES TO OPTIMIZE IMAGES

Search engines aren't able to fully interpret the content of images without textual support. That's why using Alt text to describe your images is so important: it allows search engines to understand the image content. And, if for some reason an image can't be loaded, the Alt attribute (alternative description) displays the specified alternative text.

Alt text also allows visually impaired users who use text-to-speech software to access web content. You have to optimize for all audience members, after all!

The Alt attribute is integrated within the image link in the HTML source code:



```
[  ]
```

### Hands-on tips for the use of Alt attributes:

- Go through your website and check if you added all ALT attributes to images already live.
- Add an ALT attribute for every image on your website.
- Use important keywords for the ALT texts.
- Use the ALT text to describe what the corresponding images illustrates.

## Optimizing Images (Continued)

Large graphic images or photo cause the web page to load slowly. Slow loading pages often result in the user abandoning the page before loading is complete.

Images can be reduced in size and dimension (pixel density). Keep image file size to under 500 KB and ideally, 100KB. Keep dimensions between 100X100 or 300X300. To determine these value in Windows, open File Explorer and hover the mouse over the file. Both values are displayed.

Images may be optimized with Photoshop or even the free Paint program that comes with Windows. Save the file in the JPG (JPEG) format if possible.

If pages still load slowly, consider compressing the file size using other programs such as io, CompressJPG or TinyPNG.

Another technique to reduce loading speed calls for not loading until the user scrolls by the image. A Lazy Load plugin is available for WordPress that does this without programming.

## IDENTIFY AND RECTIFY BROKEN LINKS

**W**hen a user visits a URL that can't be found on a server, their browser shows them error code 404 (file not found). When this happens, it not only creates a negative user experience, but it also interrupts search engine crawling. If search engines find too many 404 errors on your website, they take it as a sign that your website is not properly maintained. But more often than not 404 errors occur because of broken links.

In other words, you've inserted a link somewhere on your site that goes to a landing page no longer exists. This often occurs when the destination URLs have been changed or written incorrectly. Make sure to periodically check for any broken links on your website (especially after a relaunch or small URL changes).

### Hands-on tips: Fix 404 errors

- Check if your website displays any 404 errors.
- Redirect the faulty URLs to the correct URLs using 301 redirects.
- Request other webmasters fix any incorrect links that point to your website.
- Check links in the navigation menu.



## **REVIEW YOUR REDIRECTS**

**S**erver relocation can make it necessary to temporarily redirect certain URLs. These redirects (status code 302) ensure that Google retains the old URLs in the index, enabling users to access the older URLs even after server relocation. You should only use a 302 redirect for a limited time period. For permanently redirecting a URL, use the status code 301, which permanently redirects the old URL to the new URL. Part of the link juice is also passed on in the process.

### **Hands-on tips:**

- Check all the redirects used on your website.
- Check if existing 302 redirects are really necessary or if you should replace them with 301 redirects.



Source: Shutterstock

# Xenu's Link Sleuth

is available for download at: [http://download.cnet.com/Xenu-s-Link-Sleuth/3000-10248\\_4-10020826.html](http://download.cnet.com/Xenu-s-Link-Sleuth/3000-10248_4-10020826.html)

## Broken link report

Created with Xenu Link Sleuth 1.3.8 on October 24, 2013 at 21:35:38

Root URL: <http://www.homeschoolingadventures.com/>

### Table of contents

- [Broken links, ordered by link](#)
- [Broken links, ordered by page](#)
- [List of redirected URLs](#)
- [List of valid URLs you can submit to a search engine](#)
- [Site Map of HTML pages with a Title](#)
- [Broken page-local links](#)
- [Orphan files](#)
- [Statistics for managers](#)

[Xenu's Link Sleuth](#) is PC based spider software that checks websites for broken links.

## STANDARDIZE YOUR URL STRUCTURES

The URLs on your website are like signposts to the content your users want to access. The more uniform the website structure is, the faster users can get to their destination. Creating a positive user experience helps reduce bounce rates and increases dwell time.

A uniform URL structure also helps search engines crawl your website faster. The faster bots are able to access all URLs, the more pages it can go through and index on its limited budget for crawling each website.

A uniform directory structure also means using descriptive URLs. These help users orient themselves within your website. Descriptive URLs are also suited for marketing actions or sharing content on social networks since the URLs already provide clues on the contents of the landing page.

### Example of a descriptive URL:

[www.mywebsite.com/directory/productname.html](http://www.mywebsite.com/directory/productname.html)

### Hands-on tips:

- Check if you are using descriptive URLs.
- Check the click paths and reduce the URL structure to a maximum of 4 directory levels.
- Make sure that a directory logically points to all its parent folders e.g., [www.mywebsite.com/main-folder/subfolder/product.html](http://www.mywebsite.com/main-folder/subfolder/product.html)
- Use 301 redirects to redirect old URLs to the new URLs whenever you make changes.

## **SHORTEN YOUR URLS**

**G**oogle has no problem processing URLs that are up to 2,000 characters long.

This means your URL length does not have a direct impact on your sitepage's ranking. However, URL length does have an impact on user experience (which ultimately still affects your SEO). Shorter URLs are much easier to remember, easier to share on social media, and easier for advertising purposes.

Another positive effect: A short URL with no more than 74 characters can also be displayed completely in the Google SERP snippets.

### **What is HubSpot?**

[www.hubspot.com/what-is-hubspot](http://www.hubspot.com/what-is-hubspot) • HubSpot, Inc. -

HubSpot is an inbound marketing software platform that helps companies attract visitors, convert leads, and close customers.



**DISPLAYED URL**

### **Hands-on tips:**

- Avoid redundant stop words (the, a, an, etc.) or conjunctions (and, or) in the URL.
- Keep your URLs as close as possible to the root domain.

## LINK YOUR PAGES INTERNALLY

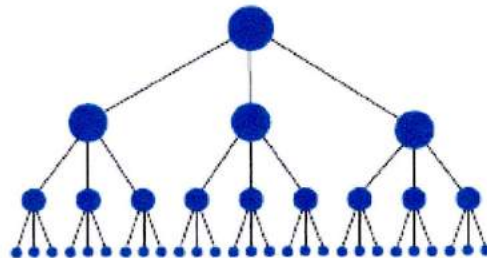
Your homepage is the most important and likely your strongest webpage. The link power (AKA link juice) is distributed from the homepage to all other subpages. Ideally, you should distribute the link juice evenly to all other subpages through internal links and easy navigation menus.

The uniform internal linking also enables you to control the search engine bot. A logical link structure makes it possible for the bot to systematically crawl and index your website. Controlling link power also tells the bot which pages are most important.

Some of the pages on your website might not be linked to any other page. These are referred to as "orphaned pages," and if a bot finds such a page, it is forced to abort the crawl since bots can only move from link to link.

### Hands-on tips:

- Remove links that point to faulty pages (status code 404) or pages that are no longer accessible (status code 500).
- Identify orphaned pages and link them to other thematically relevant subpages.



Source: Moz

## **USE ANCHOR TEXTS TO INCREASE RELEVANCE**

**A**nchor texts describe a link in detail and inform the user about what to expect from the link. Rather than having to click on an ugly URL, anchor texts allow people to click on keywords people actually understand and are redirected by the URL hidden behind the anchor text.

Ideally, the corresponding keyword of the landing page should always be used in the anchor text of internal links. The more webpages use the same keyword to point to a subpage, the more signals the search engine will receive indicating that this landing page must be very relevant for this keyword. This in turn means that the page will be ranked better for this and other similar keywords. Avoid using non-descriptive anchor texts (e.g., "here", "more", etc.) in your internal links and focus more on keywords.



### **Hands-on tips:**

- Try to use the same anchor text when you link to a landing page.
- Make sure the anchor text matches the content of the landing page.

## KEEP CLICK PATHS SHORT

**W**eb site users want to get to their desired page as fast as possible. That means you should keep your click paths as short as possible.

The click path is the route a user takes to reach their desired page. Think of an online shopping experience. The user might start on the homepage and end at the shopping cart. Their click path is the ease and number of pages the users has to go through to reach their desired product and buy it. The length of the click path plays a key role for the navigation on your website.

Search engines also benefit from short click paths when crawling. If the Google bot goes through your website and manages to access all sub-pages within just a few clicks, it can use its limited crawl budget to scan and index more pages. Optimizing the click path pays off for both usability and search engine crawling!

As rule of thumb, every sub-page should be accessible with no more than 3 clicks.

### Hands-on tips:

- Add a breadcrumb navigation to enable your users to orient themselves within the click path.
- Limit the length of the click path to a maximum of 4 clicks.
- Use a smart filter and search function on your website to avoid long click paths.

## **IMPROVE YOUR SITE'S ACCESSIBILITY**

**T**roubleshooting technical errors and ensuring that your website is always accessible is one of the biggest hurdles to manage when thinking about good SEO practices over time.

You can use a sitemap.xml file to inform search engines about all URLs on your website. This sitemap can be read by search engines and contains a list of all important URLs and meta data on the website. The Google bot uses this list as a basis to go through the website and review the corresponding URLs. The sitemap.xml file always has the same structure:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="UTF-8"?>
<urlset xmlns="http://www.sitemaps.org/schemas/sitemap/0.9">
  <url>
    <loc>http://www.mywebsite.com/firstpage.html</loc>
    <priority>1.0</priority>
    <changefreq>weekly</changefreq>
    <lastmod>2016-12-24</lastmod>
  </url>
</urlset>
```

Both the XML version and coding are specified in the file. The URLs can be supplemented with additional meta data [e.g. the frequency with which the URL is changed (<changefreq>) or the last modification (<lastmod>).]

The sitemap.xml can be created using different content management systems. There are also special sitemap generators available for the creation of the file.

After creating the file, you should upload it to the Google Search Console. Google then checks the sitemap-XML for accuracy. However, there is no guarantee that all webpages given in the sitemap will be crawled and indexed. This is up to the search engine.

### Hands-on tips:

- Regularly update your sitemap.xml.
- Always adjust your sitemap.xml whenever you change URLs or edit content.
- Check the status codes of the webpages using the sitemap and fix any accessibility errors.



Source: MediaCurrent

## TELL SEARCH ENGINES WHAT TO CRAWL

The robots.txt is a text file that tells search engine crawlers which directories to crawl (allow) and which not to crawl (disallow). Every bot must first access the robots.txt file before crawling the website.

Using the robots.txt file helps you ensure that search engines identify all the important content on your website. If important website or JavaScript elements are excluded from the crawling, search engines will not be able to correctly index your website.

Below is the simplest form of robots.txt:

```
User-agent: *
```

In this case, the instructions apply to all bots (\*). There are no crawling restrictions. After creating the robots.txt file, you should save it in the root directory of your website.

If you do not want a specific area of the website to be crawled, you should specify this using a "disallow" in the file.

```
User-agent: *  
Disallow: /thisdirectory
```

### Hands-on tips:

- Use a robots.txt file to give instructions to search engines.
- Make sure that important areas of your website are not excluded from crawling.
- Regularly check the robots.txt file and its accessibility.

### Orientation & performance of the website

Your website should be thematically oriented to specific keywords for optimal rankings. The website should fulfill the needs of your users. At the same time, it is also important for your web content to load quickly in order to guarantee user satisfaction.



## ***DO YOUR KEYWORD RESEARCH***

**K**eyword research helps you identify keywords that appeal to a target audience and expand the reach of your content.

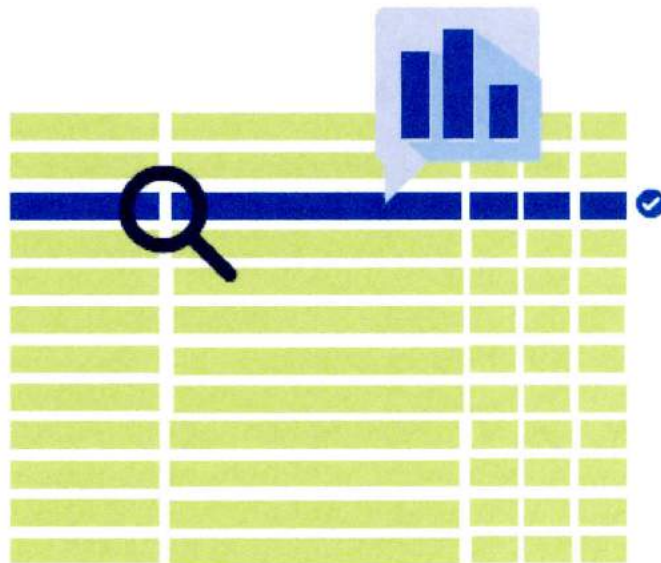
When you use keyword research tools, it helps you identify what kinds of content users are looking for on any given topic. Always make sure to prioritize time for keyword research.

When selecting keywords, you should also keep the purpose of your website in mind. Opt for transactional keywords if the main intention is sales, or informational keywords if your website aims to provide readers with important information.

Below are some of the recommended tools to help you research appropriate keywords:

- **Google Keyword Planner:** The Keyword Planner is part of the AdWords advertising program. You need a valid AdWords account to use this free tool. You can start searching for keywords and suitable ideas as soon as you register. You can also enter websites and view suitable keywords based on their content. The tool also shows you information about the monthly search volume. To the Keyword Planner.
- **Google Trends:** This free tool shows you how often frequent search terms are used. The tool also shows you a preview of possible peak demands. Google Trends is well-suited for seasonal and event-related keywords.

- **Google Search:** When you go to google anything, Google provides suggestions as you type based on the most heavily search keywords that you're current search is matching. This includes long-tailed keyword suggestions based on your short-tailed entry. On a tight time or money budget, take advantage of this easy solution!
- **Übersuggest:** Übersuggest is a classic keyword research tool. It goes through all the recommendations of Google Suggest and shows you the most appropriate search term.



Source: Google Adwords

## ENSURE NEAT WEBSITE NAVIGATION

**A** navigation menu helps users to easily navigate and find what they're looking for on a website. A well-structured navigation menu is key for the user experience. The navigation structure is also important for search engines since it enables them to determine how important a URL is. The navigation on your website should be structured logically to ensure users don't have problems on your website. Long dwell times from your users can help improve your search rankings, so user experience is an important SEO consideration!

### Hands-on tips:

- Use anchor texts in navigation elements. These help search engines understand the subject of the landing page better.
- Identify pages that have a high bounce rate and take measures to prevent this.
- Use a breadcrumb navigation for a better overview.



## IMPROVE YOUR SITE'S LOADING SPEED

**A** webpage's loading speed is very important for its ranking. Users don't want to spend time waiting for a page to load; they want to see your content immediately. Webpages with high loading times have high bounce rates, and high bounce rates often result in poor rankings.

The website's loading speed is even more important for mobile users since the lower bandwidths can further delay the loading of a website.

There are many technical ways to optimize the loading time. You can use Google PageSpeed to check how fast your website loads.



LOADING ...

### Hands-on tips:

- Check the page speed of your website.
- Identify (very) slow pages and find out the cause.
- Avoid using giant image files and optimize the images for their minimum sizes.
- Optimize CSS and JavaScript files. You can save these in external files on the server for performance reasons.

## **OPTIMIZE YOUR WEBSITE FOR MOBILE**

**M**obile friendliness is an important ranking factor for search rankings. More and more users are using their mobile devices to surf the internet. In some areas, over 70% of users visit websites on mobile. What does this mean for you? Every sitepage should be optimized for mobile. Every. Single. One.

Before you start with mobile optimization, you can use Google's free test for mobile friendliness to check the mobile performance of your website.

Here, the requirements for mobile website versions are different from those of desktop versions. For instance, the content should be legible on small-sized screens and the touch operation should be taken into account.

It is also advisable to make the mobile version of your website responsive. This means that the content of your pages should automatically adapt itself to the size and functionality of the respective device.

Want an easy way to optimize your website for mobile?  
[HubSpot's got you covered.](#)

### **Hands-on tips:**

- Check mobile issues on the website.
- The entire website should be accessible on mobile devices and the content should automatically adapt itself to the size and functionality of the respective device.
- Check if a viewport tag has been used.

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

# Google Mobile-Friendly Test Tool

The tool is accessed at

<https://www.google.com/webmasters/tools/mobile-friendly/>The tool should be used to analyze each page of your website for mobile-friendliness. More information about the tool is available by clicking on the link at the above URL.

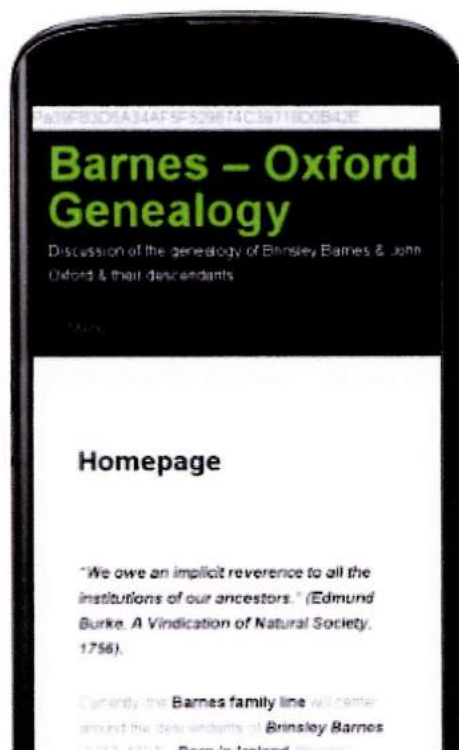
**Awesome! This page is mobile-friendly.**

## How Googlebot sees this page

This page uses one resource which is blocked by robots.txt. The results and screenshot may be incorrect.

Does this screenshot look incorrect? [Learn how to let Googlebot view the page correctly.](#)

► Show resources



## IDENTIFY DUPLICATE CONTENT

**D**uplicate content can appear on a website for different reasons. Sometimes the same content is accessible and indexed under different URLs. This makes it difficult for search engines to determine the best search result among the different URLs. The result is “cannibalization” in the rankings. The website cannot appear in top rankings since Google is unable to choose the best version.

You should therefore identify sources of duplicate content on your website and rectify the errors as fast as possible.

### Hands-on tips:

- Check if your website is accessible with or without www., http, or https. If multiple versions are accessible, use 301 redirects to redirect them to the desired version.
- Check if the same content is indexed in different formats e.g., in print version or as PDF.
- Test if your website automatically creates lists or documents that generate duplicate content.
- Check if your website displays similar content with and without a “/” at the end of the URL.



Source: RANKABOVE

## **ELIMINATE DUPLICATE CONTENT**

**O**nline shops in particular often face the risk of generating duplicate content. For example, a product might be listed in several categories. If the URL is structured hierarchically, a product can be accessible under multiple URLs. One reliable way to solve this problem is by using a canonical tag. This shows Google which URL is the "original" one and which one is a copy. The Google bot then ignores the copies when crawling your website and only indexes the original URLs.

### **Hands-on tips:**

- Go to each page on your website and add a canonical tag.
- In case of duplicate content, the canonical tag should point to the original webpage. Also add a canonical tag on the original webpage that points to itself.
- When adding canonical tags, make sure you write the URLs correctly.
- Do not use relative URLs for canonical tags.

### **Example:**

Original URL: [www.mywebsite.com/maincategory/page1](http://www.mywebsite.com/maincategory/page1).

Copy: [www.mywebsite.com/othercategory/page1](http://www.mywebsite.com/othercategory/page1).

You should add the following canonical tag on the copy:

```
<link rel="canonical" href="http://www.mywebsite.com/maincategory/page1"/>
```

## USE TF\*IDF TO ANALYZE CONTENT QUALITY

Whether or not a website gets to top ranking positions depends on how unique its content is and how much added value it provides users.

Want a surefire way to check your content quality? [OnPage.org](#) recommends using TF\*IDF.

TF\*IDF allows you to check if text optimization on your website is necessary. It determines the frequency of terms associated with the specified main keyword based on the top 10 search results in the SERPs.

You can then use this term frequency to see whether your text already contains the important keywords.

# TF\*IDF

### Hands-on tips:

- Try to meaningfully integrate the most important terms from the analysis in your text.
- Compile thematically relevant content for your users.
- Regularly analyze your text using the TF\*IDF tool in order to keep up with changes in the SERPs and the changing interest of users.

## CREATE UNIQUE HEADLINES

Headlines on your website usually have two functions. One is to give the content an organized structure, and the other is to encourage user to read on. Headlines are marked with h-tags in the HTML source code.

### Hands-on tips:

- Only use one h1 headline per page.
- Use the main keyword of the respective page in the h1 headline.
- Arrange sub-headings in chronological order (h1, h2, h3, etc.).
- Do not use h-tags to format the font size. Instead, use CSS.
- When possible, use thematically complementary keywords in sub-headings (h2, h3, etc.).
- Keep headlines as short as possible and delete all unnecessary words.
- Use elements like numbers, bullets, and images to attract your users attention and make your content easily skimmable.



## CURATE YOUR CONTENT

Content curation is a common way to collect, restructure, and republish existing content. The collection of material often provides new perspectives for users on content ideas you've already covered. For content curation to be successful, you first look for appropriate sources and then use your own blog to purposefully publish the content. Personal social media channels also help spread content easily. Popular topics often provide a lot of traffic.



Source: FanNewscast

### Hands-on tips:

- Publish illustrative infographics that make a complex subject much easier to understand.
- Publish surveys and statistics to topics that could interest your target group.
- Write e-books in which you comprehensively cover a subject in a way that is easy to understand.
- Organize case studies in which you share your own experiences. This gives your users practical insights into your work and expertise.
- Publish guest posts on your blog. External experts can provide detailed insights on a specific subjects that interests your users.



## **RECYCLE YOUR CONTENT**

**C**ontent republishing offers webmasters and SEOs an opportunity to restructure and update content that already performs well for their audience. At HubSpot, we call this process [historical optimization](#).

When you republish content, you can't just publish the same thing and make it look new. You need to update the content with fresh statistics, examples, up-to-date facts, or even fresh formats to make it more relevant for your audience.

Why is this so great for you? The content is already there, so it's much less effort for you than creating brand new content.

Search engines often reward you for updating old content. But remember, you only get a reward for actually making the content more relevant!

### **Hands-on tips:**

- Regularly check your website's KPIs e.g., dwell time, traffic, and scroll behavior.
- Look for your most high-ranking content and check to see if it's up-to-date.
- Make sure you also modify your meta elements e.g., title and description, when modifying your content.

### **Examples of ways you can republish your content:**

- Creating video tutorials from existing content.
- Updating old blog posts or turn the into gated offers.
- Creating listicles based on information on a blog post.
- Rephrasing a press release on a blog post.

## KEEP YOUR CONTENT CODE RATIO HIGH

**T**hin content tells a search engine that your sitepage doesn't have much to offer. As a result, those sitepages are ranked poorly in the search results. Sparse content is mostly characterized by a poor content (text) to code ratio. The common rule of thumb dictates that the amount of text on a website should not be less than 25 percent.

<HTML/CSS CODE>

### Hands-on tips:

- Use sufficient text on your website.
- Reduce the source code by eradicating unnecessary comments and formatting.
- Structure your text so that the content is clearly legible.
- When possible, use CSS instead of HTML for formatting.



## **DIVERSIFY NEW CONTENT**

**T**here are many different ways of creating new content. In addition to text, web content also includes images, videos, graphics, and audio files. Play around with different content styles in a variety of formats -- blog posts, site pages, webinars, videos, etc. Make the most of the diversity of options out there! Users appreciate variety.

### **Hands-on tips:**

- Use infographics to illustrate complex subjects.
- Present facts in brief and clear explanation videos.
- Publish case studies about your own experiences and new methods. Shed light on the various aspects of your work from a totally new angle.
- Conduct interviews with experts, CEOs, and employees on subjects that are relevant to your target group.
- Publish listicles that have never existed before.



## INTERNATIONALIZE YOUR WEBSITE

Is your website available in different languages or country version? Awesome! Don't forget to notify search engines of this. The search engines will then display the content of your website in the respective country and language versions for users. This improves usability since users are immediately redirected to the desired version in the SERPs.

You should use the hreflang-tag to mark the different language and country versions of multilingual websites. Implement this tag in the website's <head> section and make sure you add a new tag for every language version.

### Structure:

```
<link rel="alternate" hreflang="countrylabel" href="alternative URL" />
```

### Hands-on tips:

- Add a hreflang-tag on every page if it has a copy in a different language.
- Link each page on your website to all available language versions.
- Add the hreflang in your XML sitemap.
- Add a hreflang-tag in the <head> section of HTML documents to also reference to other PDFs in other languages.

## **OPTIMIZE YOUR WEBSITE FOR LOCAL SEARCH**

**A** Google study showed that more than 80% of users search stores and local service providers online before visiting them. This fact makes it important to optimize your website for the local search. The online visit is a basis for more customers and more sales.

### **Hands-on tips:**

- Make sure you optimize your website for mobile since users often search for local stores, restaurants, or service providers using smartphones.
- Always use the same business name, address, and telephone number (NAP) on your website. Use the same information for entries in business directories.
- Register your website on Google MyBusiness. Make sure you also add images of both you and your business besides the NAP data.
- Make sure your content relates to your locality. Use the city or region in H1 headlines, titles, and meta descriptions.
- Use your service or business field as a main keyword and sensibly combine it with your region or city.
- Set the keyword focus (ALT attributes or URL names) to the combination of city/region + your offer/service.
- Use markups to mark the NAP data in the source code.
- Add your business in business directories like Yelp.
- Encourage your users to review you online.

## LEVERAGE SOCIAL NETWORKS

**S**ocial networks are an important source of traffic. Good content significantly raises the probability of the posts being frequently shared organically on social networks which helps you expand your reach. At the same time, you can also generate additional traffic through social channels. Social interactions are also registered by Google and can help the search engine review the relevance and quality of your content.

### Hands-on tips:

- Use social networks to promote your content. Make sure you appropriately address the correct target group.
- Only post content that also interests your target group.
- Speak the language of your target audience in your posts.
- Post regularly and do not be afraid to experiment on posts that are most frequently shared.
- Use paid ads on extremely interesting posts in order to further expand your reach.
- Use a preview to check how your posts are displayed.
- Use images and videos to make your posts more attractive and compelling.



## **FORCE USER INTERACTION**

**U**ser-generated content can increase the relevance and freshness of a website. Users can interact with your website in many different forms. The most common ways include blog comments, question and answer boxes on products, and reviews!

### **Hands-on tips:**

- Encourage your blog readers to comment on posts. You can simply add a CTA request at the end of the text or pose open questions.
- Write posts about controversial topics to generate comments.
- Share your blog posts on social networks and encourage users to comment.
- Let users review and rate your products through open text fields.
- Let your users answer questions from other users about your products.
- Post frequently asked questions on your website and answer the questions there.

### **Monitoring**

SEO is not about one-time actions. It is a continuous optimization process. One crucial basis for optimization is valid data about user behavior. Regular monitoring is one of the key tasks of search engine optimization that makes it possible to quickly react to traffic decline or other occurrences.

## SIGN UP FOR GOOGLE SEARCH CONSOLE

The Google Search Console is an important basis for website monitoring. Not only is the sitemap.xml uploaded to the Search Console, you also obtain important data about the most common keywords used to find the website on Google. In addition, the Search Console also informs you about hacked websites and warnings to unnatural links.

You can also access data from the Search Console on other applications through linking other Google products e.g., Google Analytics and Google AdWords. The API allows you to also integrate CTR and traffic statistics as well as links in other web analytics tools.



### Hands-on tips:

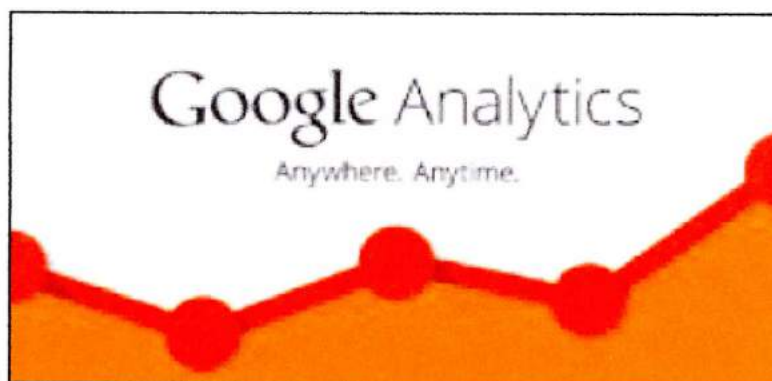
- Register a valid Google account and add your website in the Search Console.
- Regularly check HTML improvements in the Search Console and optimize your meta data.
- Check your markups using the Search Console.
- Analyze the clicks to your landing pages and use this data as a basis to optimize your content and meta data.
- Check the statistics about crawling errors.
- Directly send optimized websites to the Google index using the "Fetch as Google" function.

## SIGN UP FOR GOOGLE ANALYTICS

Google Analytics allows you to specifically analyze the user behavior on your website. The analysis options range from very simple to very complex functions. Using tools like Google Analytics is essential to evaluating the success of your SEO measures. Google Analytics tracks the users on your website. In order to activate the tracking, you must add the respective Google Analytics code snippet on every page.

### Hands-on tips:

- Check the most important performance indicators (such as page visits, bounce rate, and dwell time) on a daily basis.
- Activate email notifications in case of major changes in these KPIs.
- Regularly compare the data with previous periods.
- Revise your privacy policy if you are using Google Analytics.



Source: Google Plus

# Google Analytics

Analytic programs gather and analyze data about website usage. A feature-rich tool Google Analytics is free to the user and is available at

(<http://www.google.com/analytics>)

To be useful, the program must be added to each page of a website. The program reports *bounce rate*, the percentage of users who visit only one page of your website, *time on site* and *average number viewed by a visitor*. The program will provide a *breakout of the visitor by the search engine, traffic by keyword, branded – i.e., searches related to your company name xxx non-branded searches, for example, a long-tail search.*

## Google Trends

Available at <http://www.google.com/trends> allows the user to compare two or more keywords or phrases to compare popularity at a given time or season. Keywords are separated by commas and entered into to the search bar. Results are reported by date and region.

## Obtaining Links

Search engines assign a high PageRank if your website receives links from external sites. This is done because your site and you are perceived to be experts in a given subject. This is common in .edu and .gov sites. It is rare among commercial sites and receiving such links is achieved at a considerable investment of time and financial resources. Unless you are a recognized expert in a given field, we recommend that you forget trying to obtain external links.

The total number of links to your website can be checked in your *Google Search Console* dashboard. You just need to go into the *Search Traffic* section and click *Links to your site*, which is the second tab. There you will be provided with the total number of links. Below you can also see: *Who linked the most*.

## Search Console

- Dashboard
- Messages (2)
- Search Appearance
- Search Traffic
  - Search Analytics
  - Links to Your Site**
  - Internal Links
  - Manual Actions
  - International Targeting
  - Mobile Usability
- Google Index
- Crawl
- Security Issues
- Other Resources

Links to Your Site

Total links

Who links the most

More »

When you click on *< more >* you will see the complete list of root domains that link to your website along with the individual links number.

Reciprocal linking (two sites sharing links between each other) results in no pagerank. Pagerank does result from links from social media sites.

# SEO Tools

SEO Tools are a wide-range of products mostly free or available on a trial basis and are distinguished from assessment or diagnostic aids which measure results/progress.

**Google Search Console** formerly known as **Google Webmaster Tools** is a major resource and is discussed separately.

**OnPage.org** available at <https://en.onpage.org/> provides the most extensive set of free and fee-based tools on the net. OnPage provides an extensive library of resources and the tool provides website startup and diagnostics aid. The startup component will carry the user through simple tasks like setting up a Microsoft or Google account.

Although it does not fit the classical definition of an SEO tool, **Convert to Clean HTML** takes a document created from Microsoft Word and similar word processing programs and outputs HTML.

**Copyscape** is available at <http://www.copyscape.com/> is a plagiarism and duplicate content checker.

**MozBar** is a free browser extension that provides metrics and analysis tools. The company Moz.com provides consulting, and both paid and free tools. Details are available at <https://moz.com/blog/announcing-mozbar-v3>.

**Search Engine Watch list** briefly reviews 26 free tools at [https://searchenginewatch.com/2016/08/02/26-expert-recommended-free-seo-tools/?ce\\_b4=\\*|EMAIL\\_B64\\*&utm\\_source=Search+Engine+Watch&utm\\_campaign=c7cf320fab-03\\_08\\_2016\\_NL&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_e118661359-c7cf320fab-17852621](https://searchenginewatch.com/2016/08/02/26-expert-recommended-free-seo-tools/?ce_b4=*|EMAIL_B64*&utm_source=Search+Engine+Watch&utm_campaign=c7cf320fab-03_08_2016_NL&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_e118661359-c7cf320fab-17852621)

# Diagnostic SEO Tools

- **Google's PageSpeed Insights**

<https://competitivestrategies.us/>



Mobile



Desktop

**89 / 100** Speed

## **! Consider Fixing:**

Reduce server response time

▶ [Show how to fix](#)

Leverage browser caching

▶ [Show how to fix](#)

Optimize images

▶ [Show how to fix](#)

## **✓ 7 Passed Rules**

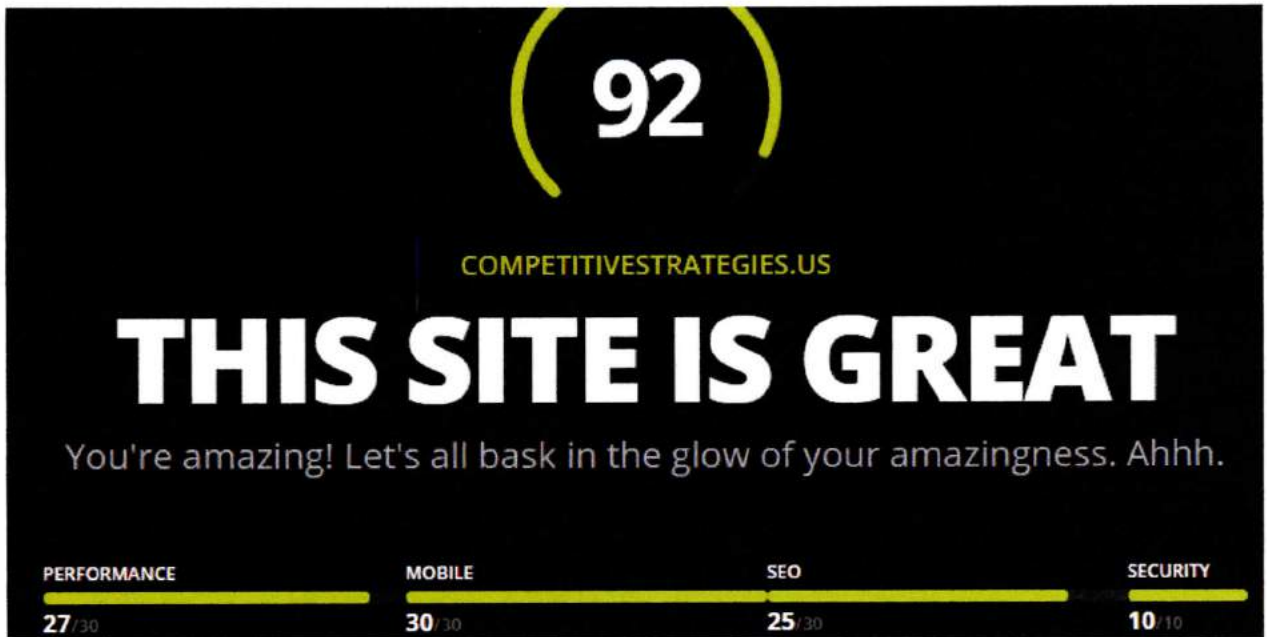
▶ [Show details](#)

Download optimized [image](#), [JavaScript](#), and [CSS resources](#) for

[https://competitivestrategies.us/](#) (page speed insights) | [https://competitivestrategies.us/](#) (page speed insights)

**99 / 100** User Experience

- <https://website.grader.com/results/competitivestrategies.us>



## SEO

Make sure your website is easy for users to discover—and easy for search bots to understand—with better page titles, headings, and meta descriptions.



### PAGE TITLES

**Splendid page titles.**

Page titles should be no longer than 70 characters in length and not repeat keywords.

[READ MORE >](#)



### META DESCRIPTION

**Masterful prose.**

Meta descriptions should be no longer than 155 characters in length and should be relevant to the page.

[READ MORE >](#)



### HEADINGS

**Heads up! There's something missing.**

Heading tags distinguish headings from core page content.

[READ MORE >](#)



### SITEMAP

**Found it!**

Site maps help users navigate your site quickly and easily.

[READ MORE >](#)

**GTmetrics** available at <https://gtmetrix.com/> offers a suite of free features to optimize your website for speed. The company offers a pro service to aid clients.

**SEO Site Checkup** is available at [http://seositecheckup.com/?gclid=Cj0KEQjwvIO\\_BRDt27qG3YX0w4wBEiQAsGu3eZmX9C240F9KJDWO-2M0h2Ln\\_2DJAMMbAAxWxUG4k1kaAhug8P8HAQ](http://seositecheckup.com/?gclid=Cj0KEQjwvIO_BRDt27qG3YX0w4wBEiQAsGu3eZmX9C240F9KJDWO-2M0h2Ln_2DJAMMbAAxWxUG4k1kaAhug8P8HAQ)

They offer a 30-day free trial and a monthly subscription of \$19.95. They provide the most comprehensive analysis of your SEO metrics.

**OnPage.org** available at <https://en.onpage.org/> provides the most extensive set of free and fee-based tools on the net. OnPage provides an extensive library of resources and the tool provides website startup and diagnostics aid. The startup component will carry the user through simple tasks like setting up a Microsoft or Google account.

## **MONITOR YOUR PROGRESS**

**T**here are tons different tools on the market for assessing the success of your website. Make sure you also use the free options to monitor and analyze traffic on your website.

The two free tools, Google Analytics and the Google Search Console, are standard website monitoring tools. Different commercial providers also offer other free tools that can significantly help with your SEO tasks.

## **WHAT A RIDE!**

**O**ver the past 30 days, you have optimized your website step-by-step by applying various SEO tactics to your page. We covered technical, on-page, content, and performance optimization tips. We have laid the foundation for a well optimized website. You are now on your way to becoming an SEO pro!

But remember: SEO is a continuous process and not a one-time “fling”. Keep up the good work and continue maintaining and optimizing your page.

You’ll see – the effort will pay off!

# SEO Training Bibliography

The bibliography lists all source material used in the development of this presentation. Publication in red are recommended for your SEO library.

***Search Engine Optimization All-in-One for Dummies***, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition by Bruce Clay, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2015.

***The Art of SEO: Mastering Search Engine Optimization***, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition by Eric Enge, Stephan Spencer, Jessie Stricchiola and Rand Fishkin, O'Reilly Media, Inc., 2012.

30 Day SEO-Planner by OnPage.org and Hubspot.com was used in its entirety with permission.