



THE BLOGGER'S GUIDE TO

SEO Basics

HOW START MAKING
YOUR BLOG AWESOME
FOR SEARCHERS

Katalog

About The eBook

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Katie has successfully lead over 100 clients, from small florist shops to national brands, understand the value of SEO and how it can help their businesses succeed. She now has a passion for breaking down the technical jargon of SEO so that others can see what actually goes into making a site easy to find and valuable for searchers.

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Table of Contents

Chapter 1.....	How Search Engines Function
Chapter 2.....	Optimizing with Keywords
Chapter 3.....	Title Tags
Chapter 4.....	Meta Descriptions
Chapter 5.....	Alt Text
Chapter 6.....	H1 Headers
Chapter 7.....	Why Have a Sitemap?
Chapter 8.....	What is a Robotos.txt file?
Chapter 9.....	A Few Basic Seo Goals
Chapter 10.....	You're All Set!

First and Foremost

Your blog has launched. Congratulations! I mean it. It's brave to start putting yourself out there online. Kind of like applying for a job or going on that first date, right?

Now that your site is live I think that you deserve to be found. That's what I want to help you with today.

To start with, did you know that search engines like Google now process around 40,000 searches every second? That's about 3.5 billion searches a day! Meaning that people are definitely searching. They're searching all day long actually.

Whenever they can't find a coffee shop, they pull out their phones to run a search. When they can't find the answer to something during a conversation, again, they reach into their pockets to look up their answer.

More importantly for you, when they are stuck in line at the pharmacy or are at home looking for a great read, they run a search to find some entertainment. **The human need for instant answers and media is exactly how blogs like yours can earn organic search traffic.**

*In this eBook, I will cover some of the technical things you can do **today** to begin earning that organic search traffic.* I'll cover things like what the heck title tags, meta descriptions, and robots.txt files are. Plus, I'll show you how to start making your blog search friendly once you know the basics concepts of SEO. My hope is that you'll be able to see that these key elements of on-page SEO are easy to do and not at all complicated.

Before I dive into the technical aspects of making your blog search friendly, I want to explain some general ideas about the ever elusive term "SEO."

“You should optimize a page to be the strongest it can be in search only after you've made it the best page for a specific need or topic.”

-REBECCA CHURT

I'm sure you already know that SEO stands for search engine optimization. Going by the name alone, it sounds like SEO is just a set of strategies you can use to trick search engines into listing your site as #1 on search engine result pages (SERPs).

Just typing that out makes me cringe by the way because that is the exact opposite idea I want you to take away from this guide. Instead, if you take away anything from your read today let it be this: **when you think about SEO, try to think about it as a way to ensure each page on your site communicates just how great your content is and how it can help searchers.**

As [Rebecca Churt of HubSpot](#) so eloquently puts it, *"You should optimize a page to be the strongest it can be in search only after you've made it the best page for a specific need or topic....Just ranking isn't enough: **You need to provide what people are looking for** with enough depth and insight that they stay on your site and are compelled to take action (contact you, share your content, etc.)."*

So here's the deal. Before I explain what SEO measures will begin to help your site rank well, **try focusing first on creating amazing content.** Seriously. That should be your absolute number one priority.

That's because, at the end of the day, you don't want meaningless traffic anyway. Trust me. Those numbers might look awesome but they'll only translate as page bounces. (a.k.a people who came, saw, and left), which can hurt your site's rankings. *That's why you need to position your blog as a source of unique and relevant information that people will want to read.*





THE IMPORTANCE OF KEYWORDS

To get searchers who will stick around on your site and share it with others, your content will be key. You can find these searchers by speaking their language, relating to them, and providing content that will make them scream *“YES! This is exactly what I have been looking for.”*

Okay, now that I’ve completed my little speech, let me tell about how you can communicate your site’s value to search engines.

1. How Search Engines Function

Let’s first take a look at how search engines determine which sites are awesome.

To start with, search engines truly care about helping searchers find answers to their questions. In other words, they want to give users the best resources to help them answer their search queries. That’s why *search engines now work to promote sites that provide a clear value and a great experience for users.* Meaning, they reward three main things:

- Fast load times.
- Responsive designs.
- Clear explanations about what the content on your blog is about.

How does it work?

Search engines find the sites they want to include at the top of search engine result pages by assuming that the most visited sites have the most

valuable and relevant information. That's *usually* right. Still, they ensure a site is popular and relevant with equations (or algorithms) that help sort out what is truly relevant for searchers.

2. Optimizing With Keywords

Search engines begin to determine what your site is about by looking at how you're using keywords. **Keywords are the search terms we all put into Google.** For example, when you want delivery food, you Google "delivery food in 97215" or "Pizza in SE Portland."

Your goal is to rank for keywords that you want your site to be found for. On top of that, it's best practice to try and rank for *long-tail keywords*.

For example "building an SEO friendly website" is a long-tail keyword that I would probably use to for a blog post about SEO tips. That is, along as it didn't have a crazy amount of competition to rank for and it was high in search volume. (For more on choosing keywords, I definitely recommend [Moz's guide here](#))

On the other hand, "SEO tips" is a short-tail keyword that is probably being used by tons of other sites. It's broad and I would need to beat out a ton of competition to rank for it.

Here's where the magic happens: once Google can crawl through your blog and see that the keywords you've selected are used correctly, then you can begin to rank for them. **More importantly, when you can find keywords that match what your target audience is searching for, then those readers will be more likely to click on your site's link.**

"To start with, search engines truly care about helping searchers find answers to their questions. In other words, they want to give users the best resources to help them answer their search queries."

-KATIE GILBERT

3. Title Tags

A title tag is usually the first place you'll use your chosen keyword. In short, a title tag is what's displayed to searchers when they stumble across your blog on SERPs.

It's displayed as a clickable link that searchers can choose to select if the keyword fits what they're searching for. Title tags are also the headline for any page links that are shared on social media.

That's why your title tags should contain a keyword that accurately describes what each page on your blog is about while still making it interesting and captivating enough for searchers to click on.

You can think of title tags as extremely short stories. They will help encapsulate the meaning of your content in 50-60 characters.

To make it easier to write your title tags, here are a few tips that may help:

- Make your keyword appear first in your title tag if possible.
- Keep your title tag to 50-60 characters.
- Give every page and post on your blog a unique title tag.
- Write with your target customers in mind.
- Include your brand name in title tags for your main pages (e.g. your about page, contact page, and homepage).
- To see how your title tag will appear on SERPs, check out [Moz's Title Tag Preview Tool](#).

4. Meta Descriptions

Below the headline of your page's link is your meta description. You've probably already seen these. **They're the bits of text you read before clicking on a link on Google.**

You can think of these as your closing pitch to searchers. They help people see that your site is the one they want to visit above all others.

A meta description is usually around 160 characters or shorter. Meaning, you can pack about two sentences worth of information for searchers to read in there.

Here's a little anecdote: while working at a marketing agency once, I spent three solid months just writing title tags, meta descriptions, and headers for sites. I'm not going to lie, it was kind of boring. At the same time, the experience completely changed how I approach these key SEO elements now.

For meta descriptions, I learned that **they should be engaging, actionable, accurate, and should include any words that searchers are specifically looking for.**

Back then, I was writing meta descriptions for national car brands. So my meta descriptions usually included words like "4x4 Jeep Wrangler," "Dick's Auto Jeep Dodge Ram", "V6 engine," or "four wheel system."

I absolutely had to include these words while also including the brand's name, address if possible, phone number if it fit, and a call-to-action (CTA) at the end of it all. That way, searchers would be able to find these brand's dealerships while looking for the cars and features they wanted.

Here are a few tips that may help your meta descriptions ring in those clicks!

- Keep your meta descriptions to 120-160 characters.
- Use a call-to-action. Something like, “click here to read more” or “learn how to bring in search traffic.”
- Include any key information or products that you’re offering. This could be the name of an item you’re selling, the topic of your post, the name of a person you’re interviewing, etc.
- Every page on your site should have a unique meta description.
- Use the active voice to make your descriptions engaging.
- Always use proper grammar and punctuation.
- Provide a solution or benefit to searchers. It can really help to tell the searcher exactly what they can expect when they click on your link.

5. H1 Headers

H1 headers help search engines understand what your content is about while also providing some aesthetic value and enhanced readability to your page.

Each header on your site can either be a h1, h2, h3, h4, h5, etc. Typically, front-end developers give each of these types of headers a unique font size so they have a hierarchy in size. H1 headers are usually the largest in font-size. Also, **they happen to be the headers that search engines, like Google, look for when they scan to see what your content is all about.**



ADDITIONAL RANKING FACTORS TO CONSIDER

The number one thing I've noticed among my clients is they tend to disregard h1 headers because they don't like how they look. I completely understand. At the same time, it's worth editing your site's styling to change how your h1 headers appear.

Just scan for "h1" in your site's stylesheet to alter it's size, font weight, or font-family. Then, you can get the look you want while also providing value to both searchers and search engines.

6. Alt Text

The last place you'll use keywords, besides in your content of course, is in your images.

Search engines love alt text because it helps them learn even more about the value and relevance of your content (images count as content too!) *Searchers* also love alt text because it helps them find relevant images when they're running an image search.

These are two valuable reasons why your alt text should contain your chosen keyword and should communicate that the image you're using is relevant to your article *and* to searchers.

Plus, alt text serves an extremely important non-SEO purpose. It helps blind and visually impaired people learn about the value of your images, which they otherwise wouldn't be able to see.

"When you can find keywords that match what your target audience is searching for, then those readers will be more likely to click on your site's link."

-KATIE GILBERT

7. Why Have a Sitemap?

Moving beyond keywords, there are a couple of files that your site should have to help search engines index your pages properly. Namely, your blog should have a sitemap.xml file and a robots.txt file. Let's start by talking about sitemaps.

A sitemap is how you explain to search engines where they can find your content. Basically, It shows them how your site is organized so they can then crawl your site faster and with more accuracy.

A sitemap is also how you share how often you update your site, when you last updated it, and the importance of each page relative to other links on your blog. It's important to note here that search engines give bonus points for sites that are regularly updated with new content.

8. What is Robots.txt file?

A robots.txt file is also good for a few different reasons. For example, if you have a page with very little content on it (like a [Thank You Page](#)), that search engines are going to see as useless, you can tell Google not to crawl it. Basically, robots.txt files let you tell search engines not to judge you for that content.

You can also use a robots.txt file if you don't think a page reflects well on your blog. Just add that page add to your file. That way you won't be penalized for pages that aren't well optimized.

9. A Few Basic SEO Goals

- Write amazing content.
- Make your site easy to crawl.
- Include one consistent keyword in your title tag, meta description, h1 header, alt text, and content.
- Make sure each page, or post, on your blog has a unique keyword.
- Shoot for a high click through rate, low bounce rate, and to increase the time users spend on your blog
- Include optimized images with alt text.
- Have a responsive design so that it looks great and is to easy use on all devices.
- Check to see if any links or pages are broken.

10. You're All Set!

Now that you have everything you need to get started, it's time to put what you've learned into practice! **The best advice I can give you now is to tackle one thing at a time.**

If you have a Wordpress site, you can start by researching which plugins can help you implement these key SEO measures. If you made your site yourself, then I suggest just optimizing one page at a time.

If you have any questions, definitely reach out to me! I will be beyond happy to help out. **You can also always turn back to my blog for regular digital marketing and SEO advice.**

For now, I'll leave you with a few resources to help you continue to grow your blog. Good luck!

Even More Resources!

- [Moz.com](#)
- [Hubspot Marketing Blog](#)
- [Google Webmaster Academy](#)
- [Search Engine Journal](#)
- [The Anatomy of a Large-Scale Hypertextual Web Search Engine](#)
- [How to start building that awesome, searchable content](#)