



## Successful Search Engine Listing Tips

This article highlights three simple steps to search engine optimisation. There are many articles that overcomplicate Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) by making references to search engine algorithms, PageRank formulas, keyword density, etc. This article will attempt to keep SEO in simple terms without getting involved in anything too technical.

Firstly be aware of anybody that guarantees to get you into the top listings of any search engine, there are no guarantees. To reach the top of the search engine listings requires work over a long period of time and continual updating. In order to help get high in the search engines follow these simple steps of the SEO equation to remember:

1. Choose to target search terms that are not hotly contested by competitors.
2. Optimize your page content and html for those terms.
3. Actively seek external, one-way, incoming links with the targeted key terms as the anchor text.

### 1 Choose target search terms.

Why choose search terms? Would you rather take your chances against competitors, who throw cash into their professional SEO and advertising campaigns, or would you rather have relevant traffic directed to your site now? Websites targeting the most popular search terms are competing against each other, with many sites involved in the challenge to reach the top of the listings. By targeting less popular terms the chances of reaching higher more specific rankings improve, here's an example, when recently checking to see how well ahb Solutions was doing in the search engine rankings it wasn't even listed in the top 300 sites globally for "web design", but being more specific and using "Ayrshire web design" listed in at number 5. The term "web design" had about 1,230,000,000 sites indexed, whilst "Ayrshire web design" had only 1,420,000 sites indexed. Which will provide the greater chance of higher listings, competing against 1.2 billion sites, or 1.4 million sites?

### 2 Page Optimisation

There are 2 types of optimisation, on page and off page optimisation. On-page optimisation is what can be done on the pages of a website to maximise its performance in the search engines for target keywords related to the on-page content. Off-page optimisation (off-page SEO) is what can be done off the pages of a website to maximise its performance in the search engines for target keywords related to the on-page content and keywords in off-page direct-links. The most logical page to start optimising first is the site homepage

Particularly important is the header and its relationship to the rest of your code. Each page of the website should include three tags in the head. They include

- title,
- meta description,
- and meta keywords.

The title tag is important as it is seen as the name of the page, with search engines paying particular attention to this tag. The 2 meta tags indicated have been in the past of particular importance, but are of much less importance to the major search engines such as Google. The meta description should contain a relevant description of the page, and the meta keywords tag a list of key words or phrases relevant to the content of the page. If the major engines don't pay much attention to these why bother? It's not only the major engines to consider, there are a number of small search engines, and niche search engines that may still look at these, some directories also use these to provide additional text during submission so don't totally ignore these. When creating the content for these tags keep the content natural and relevant, and don't use keyword stuffing, you will be penalised for this.

Now the header tags have been considered, time to look at the remainder of the page. The principle here is to make the page content appear with the keywords prominent within the web page text.

Search engines see a number of tags as emphasising, or making text more prominent within the text. These include tags such as

- the header tags (<h1>, <h2>, ..., <h6>)
- text style (<strong>, <em>, <u>)
- anchor tag <a> and <a href="...">

The web page title should appear in an <h1> tag and:

1. as close to the beginning of the main page content as possible,
2. should contain a number of keyword
3. should be the same or similar to the <title> tag

Whatever text content on the page, the desired keywords should appear frequently and regularly throughout the text, also at in an emphasised form such as bold and italic or underlined (just once will do). Do not repeat the keyword terms throughout your text content too often, this is another form of keyword stuffing. Do not attempt to hide the terms by giving them a font colour the same as the background. Use them naturally throughout the text so that it remains easily read. Remember the text is written first and foremost for the reader, not the search engine, no one likes to read spam.

For pages that have images always include a text alternative. Search engines can't read images, but a good description of the image is important. Use the alt attribute within the img tag to provide text equivalent. Like images, other multimedia elements do not provide search engines with much information in order to provide ranking information, do not include these elements unless it is specifically to enhance the reader experience.

## What not to do

- Do not optimise a page that redirects.
- Do not use robots exclusion to impede search engine access to optimised pages.
- Do not attempt to hide keyword text on the page, for example using same colour text and background.
- Do not spam keywords with immediate repeats.
- Do not force any text to appear at 4px or under.
- Do not use frames, this is more difficult for search engines to parse.
- Do not fill your pages up with internal scripts. Where possible, use links to external scripts.

## 3 Actively seek incoming links with the targeted key terms as the anchor text.

Having other sites linking in does not immediately guarantee linking, but it does give a level of importance to the site, in Google terms this is known as the page rank. High page rank does **not** relate to a high position on the search page. Incoming links provide credibility to the web site and will improve the credibility of the site, also known as the link popularity. There's an important point to realise about Google SERPs, this is known as the "Sandbox" effect. It is believed that Google filters new domain names for a period of time depending on the popularity of the site's targeted key-words. The only thing you can do is work on your external linkage and optimise more pages of your site. The hard work will pay off on steady incoming traffic and high ranks.

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