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## **Why you should know your keywords**

Do you know your website's keywords? Infact, what are keywords and how should you use them? These are good questions and the answers are important for you to know as a webmaster and website marketer.

Keywords are words or phrases that people search for on google or their favorite search engine. For example, if you typed 'search engine optimization' into google, any page that contained the words 'search', 'engine' or 'optimization' would appear in the search results, all 5 million of them, but you will see the first page. There are more available but most people only look at the first page.

And the first page of results are sites that 'rank' highly for those keywords and deserve (according to google's ranking algorithm) to be on the first page of results. Of course, the ranking algorithm google uses is kept secret.

But if you don't know the keywords you want each page of your website to be ranked for, you don't stand much chance of getting onto the first page, or any results page for that matter, and missing all that free traffic.

The keyword topic is part of Search Engine Optimization or SEO, a big subject in its own right, but it all starts with knowing your keywords.

For each page on your site choose a primary keyword and maybe 2 or 3 secondary keywords. For example, if your primary keyword is Italian cooking, your secondary keywords might be Italian cuisine and Italian pasta. So your page should be about Italian cooking and your keywords must be on the page.

You can help improve your ranking by including your primary keyword in the title tag (the bar at the top of your browser window), in the main heading (between <h1> tags) and in the first few paragraphs. And don't forget to add it to the 'alt' text of your images too.

But how do you choose the right keywords? Do you let the content you write select them for you and then hope that people are searching for those keywords? Or, do you find out what people are searching for; what's popular, and then write about those topics?

Well, you can do both. Choose and write your content, then using a keyword tool, find out what people are searching for on that topic, and edit your content to include those keywords. So you can get the best of both worlds.

And how do you find the keywords people are searching for? Keyword tools are the answer and there are many to choose from. The wordtracker free [keyword suggestion tool](#) is excellent. Or you can try [NicheBOT](#), which is a paid, web-based keyword service combining several tools into one.

## 5 ways to rank well in google

There is always an air of mystery that surrounds how google ranks pages and exactly why sites appear on the first search page. Or at least, that's how it seems. The techies at google labs keep their ranking algorithms a closely guarded secret. It all helps to fuel the mystery.

So we don't know the algorithm they use, but we do know what is important to google and other search engines. And we can use this to make sure our web pages stand a fighting chance of being ranked well for each of our keywords.

- **Keyword position** - google gives more weight to words and phrases appearing in the page title (i.e., the title tag, <title>), headings and sub-headings (<h1>, <h2>, <h3>) and within the first paragraph.
- **Link popularity** - each link inbound to your web page is a vote for your site. The more links into your page, the higher your page rank. A popular site like [youtube](#) has a very high ranking and 85,000 inbound links.

- **Link quality** - it's better to get one link from a trusted site, highly ranked, then 10 links from low ranking sites. Google will also give the link more weight if the site linking to yours is on the same topic
- **Link text** - if your web page is about horse racing, and the link to your site contains the text 'horse racing', google will give your webpage a higher ranking
- **Relevant URL** - and if your site is all about ipods, and in your domain name is the word 'ipod', this will also help your site to rank well.

In a nutshell, google likes to see your URL, titles, headings and text to be on the same topic and it likes to see plenty of trusted, 'authority' sites, on the same topic as your site, linking to your site.

It gives you a lot more credibility and satisfies google searchers with website content that is not just relevant, but exactly what they were looking for.

## Why google might penalize your website

When you're optimizing your website for the search engine spiders, are you using white hat or black hat techniques? What..? Do you know the difference? You should, because if you don't, google may penalize your site.

Not so long ago there were software programs that created doorway pages, generated content pages based on links or even created entire websites with little or no effort. This is not content that google likes.

Think about it. If you searched on google for 'how a hamstring muscle works' would you want to be re-directed to a page that wasn't relevant, was full of links to other sites or just tried to sell you 'deep heat cream'? You wouldn't.

Google is only protecting its good name as a search engine that delivers results as close to what you are searching for as possible. So, if you want your website to survive long-term, don't practice black hat SEO. Don't,

- Stuff long lists of keywords, either invisible (white text on white background), or visible, very small and right at the bottom of your pages
- Generate 'doorway' pages to attract the search engines and redirect users to another page that doesn't rank so well.
- Use software tools that automate the generation of pages, links or content, based on some-one else's content

Google and the other search engines want unique content that is relevant to the searched-for words or keywords. If you want to rank well in the search index, and stay there, use white hat SEO techniques, such as,

- Add your keywords to the page title, heading and the first paragraph
- Find 'authority' sites that will link to your site using relevant text and keywords
- Write, or pay a freelancer to write, relevant content for your site

If you black hat SEO, google **will** find you, eventually, and penalize your site. Your website could be banned - forever.

## How to choose the right domain name

You may not have given much thought to the domain name you chose for your website, but if you have, you'll realize it's an important decision. Choose wisely and both your visitors and the search engines will find you easily.

Suppose you have decided to build a website about European train journeys because you now sell European tours. What would you choose as a domain name? First you need to look at your content.

What are you planning to put on the home page? How will you think about your site? Will it have a historic focus? Are you selling budget tours? What's the angle? Compile a shortlist of words to describe its essence.

Then, using the wordtracker free [keyword suggestion tool](#), type in the shortlist of words you compiled. Which words have the highest search counts? These are the words you should use in your domain name.

Domain names can be up to 67 characters long, so you can choose a good descriptive name, such as *europetrainjourneys.com*. This could be a good choice for both the search engines and your visitors. It contains the popular, searched-for words and is easy for your visitor to remember.

You will need to choose your extension. For our example, you might choose *europetrainjourneys.eu* as this is a site on European travel. Most people want .com, the most popular choice and the default for web browsers too. But the combination of words you want may be taken already. If so, you could choose .net, .org, .info, .biz. or a country top level domain.

The TLD or Top Level Domains are usually .com or the country domains, like *uk*. But you can now select an SLD or Second Level Domain as well, which widens your choice. If you are building a UK site, [Nominet](#) explains the rules.

Once you have a shortlist of choices, [betterwhois](#) will tell you if the name you want is available and can register the name for you. Try [godaddy](#) if you want inexpensive registration and some help choosing a name.

Like many things, it's a compromise. You want to choose a name that is easy to remember but contains popular keywords or phrases, that isn't already taken. But you can still be lucky.

## **This technique alone will get your site ranked**

Have you ever thought about how search engines see your webpage?

The search engines send out robots or 'bots' to examine your pages. These 'bots' don't see an eye-catching, well designed webpage. What they see are HTML tags and text. That's it! They don't see the wonderful photo collections, stunning graphics or marvelous layout that took hours of painstaking work.

And most importantly, they cannot follow links based on JavaScript. So, the super-cool JavaScript, drop-down menu you installed last week, will not allow the search engine 'bots' to crawl your site and index all your pages.

The correct way to link is really very simple. Always use,

```
<a href = "http://www.destinationsite.com">destination site</a>
```

Then the search engines will always be able to follow your links. This applies to internal as well as external links. So, where should you be linking to?

Your task, as a webmaster and SEO optimizer, is to get as many links as you can, pointing to your website, from popular, on-topic authority sites. The sites on the first search page, for popular keywords, often have hundred's or even thousand's of incoming links.

It takes time to build that many links. But when you have, it tells google you are an authority because everyone links to you, and you have earned your place on the first page of results.

So, you should be systematically adding links to your site, on every website in your niche, particularly authority sites with a high page rank, because some of that page rank will come your way.

But here's a trick that many webmasters miss. Assuming you already know the keywords for your website. You should use these keywords in the links pointing back to your site. So if your domain name is 'footloose.eu', and your keywords are *hill walking, walking, Alps*, then use these words in your links, not your domain name. For example,

```
<a href = "http://www.footloose.eu">hill walking</a>
```

`<a href = "http://www.footloose.eu">Alps walking</a>`

This tells the search engine "here's link to a website and it's about hill walking", or "it's about Alps walking", and it knows before visiting your website. So, when the 'bot' arrives at your site and sees it is indeed about hill walking and Alps walking, it's opinion of you as an authority is reinforced, giving you higher rankings and a better position in the search results.

Linking is a powerful way to improve your rankings, but there is a lot more advice, tips and techniques you will need to employ, and a terrific source, with an excellent reputation is [search engine news](#).

## **Search engine myths you should ignore**

You've probably seen the advertisements - *submit your website to 1000's of search engines for one small fee*. You may have even been tempted to try it; after all, inclusion in *that* many search engines must be a bargain!

Don't be fooled. There are really only 3 major search engines; google, yahoo and MSN. Current research from [comscore](#) shows google has the lion's share of search traffic at 43.7%, yahoo at 28.8% and MSN at 12.8%. All the rest only get 14.7% combined. And google's share is still growing.

So, you would be wasting your time and money. If you are convinced you must submit your website to search engines, only do so to google, yahoo and MSN. But if you want my advice, you wont do that either.

Instead, you should link to your site from at least 2 or 3 popular, authority sites in your niche. Google will 'spider' these sites frequently and see your new link, follow it to your site and include your site in its index.

And this can happen quickly. When I started my blog, I submitted my site to [technorati](#), the blog directory. Within a few days I was in google's search index. It can be that fast. Posting new content frequently helps too.

The search engines like to find you. So, if you've built a brand-new site, get a handful of links to get yourself indexed. Most search engines use google's search database, so you only really need to consider google, and getting indexed in google.

There is only one place I would submit a new website, and that's [dmoz](#). It's an open source project directory and is staffed by real people who check and approve your submission before inclusion. But this directory is very popular and gets a lot of traffic, so it's worth doing.

## 4 essential on-page SEO techniques

What are meta tags and why should you be interested in them?

There are four things about your webpages that influence google when it's 'spidering' your site and deciding where to rank you in its search database,

- Your domain name
- Page meta tags
- Page content
- Link popularity

I've already talked about registering and choosing SEO-friendly domain names. You would be surprised at how much importance google places on relevant, keyword-based domain names.

Meta tags are hidden HTML tags embedded in your webpage between the <head> and </head> tags. And there are three tags you need to edit for every webpage on your site,

- Title
- Description
- Keywords

The title tag is by far the most important and shows up in the bar at the top of your browser. It's inserted between <title> and </title>, should be short and include your primary keyword for the page.

Let's suppose you have a domain 'cureyouracne.com' and your primary keyword is *acne treatment* plus two secondary keywords *adult acne*, *acne cure*. An excellent title would be,

```
<title>acne treatment reviews and comparisons</title>
```

You want to make sure the title contains your keywords and it entices your reader to click through to the website, as google displays it on the search results page. It must be short. Google only displays 60 characters.

Not so important, but you should still include it, is the description tag. In our example choose a good, concise description that, ideally, contains your secondary keywords. For example,

```
<meta name = "description" content = "discover acne treatments that work - reviews for adult acne and acne cures">
```

You may need to play around with this as there are three occurrences of the word 'acne'. But then it does contain all three keywords.

And the least important tag is the keyword tag. It is not really used by search engines anymore, but I recommend you still add it. In our example,

```
<meta name = "keywords" content = "acne treatment,adult acne,acne cure">
```

And make sure you do this on every page of your website. It's a chore, but each of these techniques adds more weight to your optimization. It's a case of 'the whole is greater than the sum of the parts'.

## Optimizing your home page

The search engines consider your home or index page to be the most important page on your website. It's usually the page where the google 'bot' will enter your site, crawl it and index it.

Believe it or not, the best way to optimize your home page content is by making it a sales letter. This is because you will naturally fill the page with the right keywords by writing to sell your product.

But if you don't want to do that, then write an introductory page. Just make sure it's not too short and write it to attract visitors by showing your knowledge and expertise while enticing them inside your website.

Above all, make it relevant. If your domain is 'digitalcamerareview' then write about digital cameras, perhaps the advantages of different models and teasers about what the visitor will find if he reads the reviews.

Once you're happy with the results, take your primary keyword and add it to the first paragraph, then add your secondary keywords to the 2nd and 3rd paragraph. Make sure your main keyword is dotted throughout the page.

Then write a great heading with your primary keyword, preferably as the first words in the heading. Use your secondary keywords for sub-headings, if you can.

And if you have photos, graphics or images on your home page, use the 'alt' tag to feature your primary keywords. For example, on your digital camera review site, if your primary keyword is *digital camera*, you could have,

```

```

When the image doesn't show, or hovering over the photo, the title 'digital camera review' is displayed. It all adds just a little bit more optimization weight to your index page.

Don't make the process too difficult. Write for readers first, then edit it afterwards. This is the easiest way to achieve home page optimization.

## **How to link your site together**

As a webmaster your goal is to connect all pages together, so the search engines can crawl and index every page of your website quickly and easily, and to obtain the highest page rank for your index or home page.

The google 'bot', if it follows a link through to your site - and this is the best way to get your site crawled, will index your home page on its first visit. On the next visit it must be able to reach all of your pages with one hop. This makes it easier for the google spider and so gets your site indexed quicker.

So, how can you achieve a maximum of one hop between every page? The solution is simple. Let's assume you have 5 main topics and each main topic has 3 sub topics. So the site is 3 layers deep; home page, topic pages and sub topic pages.

On the home page create 5 text links (don't use JavaScript menu links, search engines cannot follow them) to each topic page. On the topic pages create 3 text links to each sub topic page. On *every* page link to a site map page. On the site map is a link and short description of every page on your site. The site map also links to the home page. Home page links to the site map.

So, it doesn't matter what page the google 'bot' lands on, it can get to any page with just one hop. And google loves site maps because it helps the search engine crawl a site easily.

Once you have created your links, make sure you use the primary page keyword as your anchor text. What do I mean by this? If your site is about dog breeds and your topic pages are about, spaniels, terriers, hounds, bulldogs and poodles, your text links to these pages should be these keywords.

Before the google 'bot' has even landed on your 'terrier' page, it knows the page is about terriers from the anchor text. These techniques will increase the page rank of the 'terrier' web page. It all helps feed page rank back to the site map and your home page.

This strategy works because it's how search engines work.

If you are inspired and want to learn more I can recommend [Revenge of the mininet](#) by Michael Campbell and [Dynamic linking](#) by Leslie Rohde. Both are free downloadable ebooks.

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