

## Getting Found on Google: The Do's and Don'ts of SEO

Yes, Yahoo and Bing and important too, but let's face it. When two thirds of searches take place on Google, there is no question that Google is the dominant engine and the most crucial to conquer. If you get found on Google, you'll likely achieve similar results on the other engines as well.

Ideally, you want to make your way into the natural search results on page one. Research shows that more than 50% of searchers do NOT search beyond the first page of search results. (Some studies suggest that this number is much higher – we'll go with the more conservative number.)

Doing thorough keyword research is vital. Analyzing your keywords' potential will help you uncover the keywords that have the best likelihood of getting your business included on the first page of Google results. (i.e. The best keywords have sufficient search volume, but not too much competition. If you have a page one Google organic search position for a search term that no one uses to search, it won't do you any good. Conversely, if you are targeting a keyword that has huge search volume but your business doesn't show up until many pages into the search results, you simply won't get found!)

What can you do to increase your chances of gaining great organic search positioning? Read on!

### Overall Search Engine Optimization Tips

- Conduct thorough keyword research to identify the best keywords to use (see above)
- Optimize those keywords strategically (specific tips will follow)
- Optimize only ONE keyword per page (you can use more keywords within the text, but focus on just ONE to optimize in all ways mentioned below)
- Do NOT use the same title tag and description universally across every page of your site – the search engines like to see each page optimized individually
- Inbound links are also important in determining which sites / pages achieve higher organic results
- Once you have optimized your site for the on site factors, be sure to develop a linking strategy that will help you achieve greater credibility with the engines. (Note: the more competitive your category or market, the more that inbound links will be factored into search engine rankings)

### Meta Tag Optimization

- *Title tag* – by FAR is the most important. Use primary keyword in title – ideally at the front.  
(Note: the title tag also becomes the link that people click on when you show up in Google.)
- *Description tag* – Use keyword in description too. You can use an additional keyword or two in the description if it reads naturally, but put primarily focus on one keyword. (Note: the meta description is generally used as the descriptive text in Google results. Think of it like a classified ad – what you say can help people decide whether they want to click through to your site.)
- *Keywords tag* – virtually ignored by the engines. Add a few to keep you focused – just know that meta keywords do you no good whatsoever in getting your site ranked for those words.

- *Robots tags* – make sure the page is both indexed and followed.

Tip! Use the “view source” function as you visit any webpage to see what your competitors are using for their title tags, descriptions, and keywords.

### **On Page Optimization**

- Use an H1 header on each page and feature your primary keyword within it. (You can use cascading style sheets to alter the appearance but keep code as H1)
- Use alt tags on all images and feature your primary keyword in the alt tags
- Name your image files with the keyword
- Name your page file using your primary keyword
  - Example: primary keyword is “Reno plumbing services” – the page file should ideally be set to appear in the URL as [www.xyzsite.com/reno-plumbing-services.html](http://www.xyzsite.com/reno-plumbing-services.html)
- Include primary keyword in page content
  - Content on each page should ideally be 250+ words in length to give the engines enough content to determine relevancy
  - Each page must have unique content
  - Mix keywords naturally into the subheadings and content
  - Make sure that your content reads naturally and makes sense to your site visitors
- Use keyword-anchored links within your site (vs. simply saying “click here”)

### **What to Avoid with On Site Optimization**

- NEVER use “tricky” techniques to try to fool the engines
  - Never use keyword “stuffing” (plugging the keyword in everywhere – you’ll get penalized)
  - Never try to “hide” the keyword by placing it on the page in the same color as the background (get caught doing this and the engines will likely BAN your site)
- Use engine friendly techniques to develop your pages
  - Do not use flash excessively (engines can’t read flash)
  - Do not build your pages with frames (engines can’t read frames)

### **Off Site Optimization – Solid Inbound Linking Strategies**

- Work to increase inbound links to your site
- Strive for inbound links that feature keyword rich anchor text (vs. just featuring your URL)

- Links from credible sites count more (websites with high Google Page Rank count more)
- Links from relevant websites (similarly themed to yours) count more than random incoming links
- Links from .org and .gov sites get high points with the search engines (very hard to get, though)
- The number of backlinks is important, but the quality of the links is even more important
- The age of inbound links is also factored in (older is better)
- The pace at which you obtain inbound links is considered (too many too fast and it may be assumed by the engines that you are resorting to link farms or purchasing links – both a “no no”)
- Directory links are important – especially those from DMOZ and Yahoo

### **Poor Inbound Linking Strategies**

- Inbound links from link farms or sites known to sell links for a fee
- Rapid or excessive link building (may be assumed that you are buying links or using link farms)
- Reciprocal linking (i.e. you link to me and I’ll link to you) – this strategy no longer works well
- Cross linking or round table linking (A links to B, B links to C, and C links back to A) – better than reciprocal linking, but not given much credibility by the engines because it’s usually forced (i.e. “unnatural” linking)