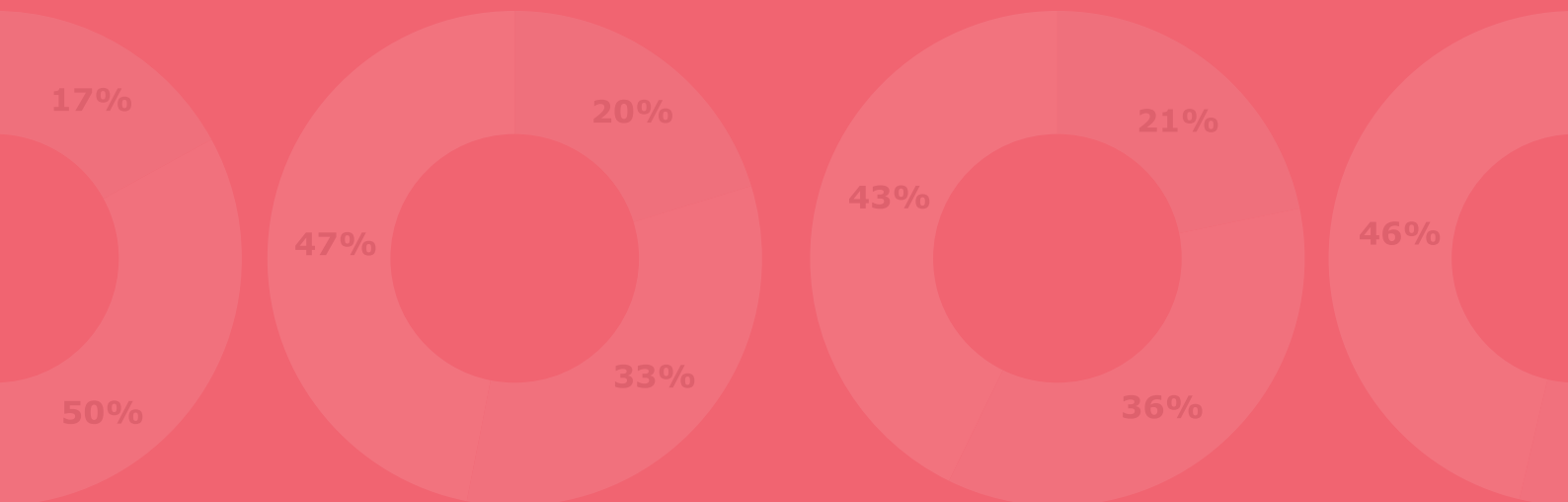




# A SIMPLE GUIDE TO ORGANIC SEARCH (SEO)

WHAT IS ORGANIC SEARCH AND  
WHAT YOU CAN DO TO IMPROVE  
YOUR SITE'S PERFORMANCE





# INTRODUCTION

Everyone knows that offline businesses have been struggling in recent times in a tough economic climate. But, whilst they've been up against it, their online divisions and their online competitors continue to prosper, as consumers become ever more reliant on the web to interact with brands and to purchase goods and services.

So how can you ensure that your brand's website is visible to these online consumers in search engines?

This eBook gives you the basics of today's best practice organic search (SEO) principles that companies of all sizes can use to increase site visibility, the number of visitors coming to your site and, most importantly, improve conversion rates.

To give an indication of modern consumer behaviour, in the summer of 2013 [Google conducted a survey](#) with 'back to school' shoppers. Ahead of the new term, the survey found that 37% of parents comparison shopped online, an increase of 32% from the same time period in 2012. 78% of smartphone users said that they would use their phones to shop online, whilst it was found that 66% of online searchers were looking for the best price and 60% were shopping around for discounts.

This means that potential buyers are going to search online for information before making a purchase. Consider these statistics:

- By 2014, 53% of total retail sales (online and offline) will be influenced in some way by the internet, as consumers continue to rely heavily on the web when researching products before purchasing (Forrester, March 2010). (Source: [Click here](#))
- On average, a consumer checks 10.4 sources of information before making a purchase (Social Trends Report 2012). (Source: [Click here](#))
- Those consumers that research across online, offline and mobile channels spend 18-36% more than those that don't (Social Trends Report 2012). (Source: [Click here](#))
- Almost two thirds of consumers (61%) use search engines to help with product research before deciding to make a purchase (Econsultancy). (Source: [Click here](#))

Therefore, in order to have a chance to make the sale, you have to be found.

This eBook is your guide to the basics of organic search (SEO).



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Summary



# ORGANIC SEARCH (SEO) GLOSSARY

Although you'd normally expect to find a glossary at the end of a publication, we wanted to make this guide as simple as possible. Therefore, the glossary below contains some of the terms and phrases that you will encounter in this eBook.

**301 Redirect** – This is a permanent redirect. They are often used when a page no longer exists and you want to direct the user to a new page. Search engines will follow these redirects.

**302 Redirect** – This is a temporary redirect. You're unlikely to use one of these except when the page being redirected to is temporary. Search engines will not follow these redirects.

**AdWords** – Google's Pay Per Click advertising programme. Advertisers listings appear free on search results pages when particular keywords are searched for, and then pay for each visit to their site when the advert is clicked on.

**Affiliate** – an affiliate site is one that refers visitors to other websites in exchange for commission based on those referrals.

**Algorithm** – a complex program used to interpret data and determine an outcome. Google and other search engines use these to determine the ranking of a web page in their search results.

**Alt Text** – an attribute that is part of the code behind an image in HTML, which describes the image. It isn't shown to the user except when an image is broken and is used for those with accessibility issues. Search engines use this attribute as part of their algorithm so they can understand what the image is.

**Analytics** – a program that compiles and analyses data

about a website's visitors, allowing easy reporting for the user to interpret. Google Analytics is a popular free analytical package used by millions of websites.

**Anchor Text** – the text part of the link visible to the user. This should also be clickable. Search engines use this to help them determine the relevancy of the site it links to.

**Authority** – also known as “link juice” or “trust”, is the amount of trust that a site is given by search engines and is calculated by relevant inbound links from another trusted website.

**Back Link** – a link to one website from another.

**Black Hat** – a search engine optimisation tactic frowned upon by search engines and people within the industry. It is a practice that attempts to trick the search engine algorithms into ranking a site higher, using techniques considered dishonourable. They are often caught quickly and the offending site penalised.

**Blog** – a content section which displays posts in chronological order, and is often used for business, company or personal news.

**Bot** – see “Search Engine Robots”.

**Bounce Rate** – the percentage or number of users that enter and then leave a website without navigating to another page.

**Breadcrumbs** – a navigation bar (usually horizontal) that allows you to jump to any step you have visited on your way to that page in the format of the site structure.

**Canonical Issue** – refers to duplicate content caused by

a page existing under more than one URL. The same page existing under more than one URL can be overcome with 301 redirects or the canonical Meta tag.

**Cloaking** – a technique used to hide content from users but show it to search engines. This is a black hat technique and is frowned upon, and can result in penalisation of your site.

**CMS** – stands for “content management system”. Software such as Wordpress, Joomla and Magento are used by webmasters to manage websites and content without necessarily having knowledge of HTML or other coding skills.

**Comment Spam** – posting a comment for the sole purpose of gaining a link to a website. This alone is the main reason sites moderate comments or do not allow links altogether.

**Content** – the text and images on a website which are intended to have value for the visitor.

**Content Marketing** – the process of producing informative and engaging content of value to an audience on a regular basis to drive engagement + sales or leads.

**Contextual Advertising** – an advertisement that is related to content on the page.

**Conversion** – also known as a “goal”, it is the achievement of passing a set of rules. A conversion could be someone submitting a contact form, downloading a white paper or completing a purchase for example.

**Conversion Rate** – the percentage or number of people achieving a conversion compared to the number of visitors to the site.

**CPC** – stands for “cost per click”. This is the rate paid to the advertiser for each click made on an advertisement in a paid search campaign.

**Crawler** – see “Search Engine Robots”.

**Directory** – a website that categorically lists other websites for easy searching.

**Duplicate Content** – used to describe similar or an exact copy of content that exists on another website or page. A site may see a drop in rankings if they duplicate content from another website. Search engines do not always know where the original content comes from however.

**E Commerce Site** – a website devoted to selling products.

**Feed** – commonly refers to an RSS Feed, which is a specialised file that can be interpreted by news reader software. They are often used to compile content from lots of sites into one place for easy reading.

**Frames** – a page that is set up to display one or more separate pages in a split screen setup.

**Hit** – describes the action of loading a web page, document, image, etc. One page view can generate many hits.

**HTML** – stands for “hyper text mark-up language” and is the code that makes up a website.

**Impression** – this is when a page is returned to a user in search engine results page (SERPs).

**Indexed Pages** – pages on a website that have been added to the list of pages a search engine has seen and stored.

**Keyword** – a word (or phrase) that a user wants to search for (when searching) or wants to associate a page or piece of content onto a web page.

**Keyword Density** – the percentage or number of times a keyword has been mentioned on a page.

**Keyword Stuffing** – also known as keyword spam, is the act of using a keyword a huge number of times on a web page in hope that the search engines notice and associate the content on the page with that keyword. Keyword stuffing can get a page or site penalised.

**Landing Page** – a page that the user will load when they click on a link in the search engine results.

**Link Bait** – a page that has been designed with the sole



purpose of attracting back links. These pages are often highly useful or fun pages. They often go viral through social media sharing.

**Link Building** – the act of gaining links to a web site or web page.

**Link Exchange** – a scheme designed so that webmasters link to each other (reciprocal linking). These types of links are often considered of low value by search engines.

**Long Tail** – a more specific search query. These are generally targeted less often than shorter search queries. For example you might search for “hat” which is very broad, but “blue hat with a ribbon” is more specific and is a long tail search query.

**Meta Tags** – lines of code within the header of a website which tells crawlers information about the page. These include the title, description and the (unused by most crawlers) keywords. It's important to have this information so the search engines can use it to help them determine what the page is about.

**Nofollow** – a command that prevents search engines from following a link or an entire page, depending on how it has been used.

**Noindex** – a command that prevents search engines from indexing a page.

**Non Reciprocal Link** – a link that links to one site but that site does not link back. This is a non reciprocal link and tends to have more value to search engines than a reciprocal link.

**Organic Search Results** – search engine results which are not paid for advertisements. Paid advertisements generally appear in a (sometimes only slightly) different coloured box at the top, bottom or right hand side of the search results.

**Page Rank** – also known as “link juice,” page rank is determined by the number of backlinks to a site, their relevance and other factors.

**Page View** – the act of loading a web page will trigger a single page view. Refreshing the page will trigger another

page view.

**Pay Per Click (PPC)** – an advertisement scheme where a cost is incurred by a company whenever someone clicks on one of its ads.

**Reciprocal Link** – an exchange of links where two sites link to each other. These types of links are not generally seen as high value by search engines.

**Redirect** – a method of sending a user from one page to another. These are often used when a page is moved or deleted.

**Robots.txt** – a file in the root of a website that tells search engines what they can and cannot crawl and index.

**ROI** – stands for “return on investment” which shows the increase or decrease in revenue based on an investment.

**Search Engine Robots** – a piece of software that collects information from websites, including their links, then follows links to other websites and repeats the process. This software is how search engines are able to show you results when you make a search.

**SEM** – stands for “search engine marketing” and is the combination of search engine optimisation, paid listings/ advertising and other related activities used to increase your exposure to search engines and boost traffic to your site.

**SEO** – stands for “search engine optimisation” which is the process of optimising web pages and link building to them to increase page ranking and overall traffic in and from search engines.

**SERP** – stands for “search engine results page”, which is the page you see after you have searched for your query.

**Sitemap** – a page on a website which links to each top level (and sometimes all) pages on a website. These help to improve site access for search engine crawlers and help users who have got lost in the site structure.



**SMM** – stands for “social media marketing”, which is the process of promoting a website through social media.

**Social Bookmark** – a bookmark to a website or page that has been found to be useful and has been posted on social media websites.

**Social Media** – sharing information, opinions and news on blogs, forums, social sites such as Facebook and Twitter, and rating sites such as Reddit.

**Spammer** – someone who posts lots of useless information to unrelated places in the hope of reaching their goal or to simply annoy other web users.

**Spider** – see “Search Engine Robots”.

**Time on Page** – the amount of time a user spends on a page before moving to another.

**Toolbar Page Rank** – a value between 0 and 10 that has been assigned by Google to primarily describe page importance/trust. This is calculated based on varying factors including link relevancy. The higher this number, the more trust the page is said to have and is normally updated every few months.

**URL** – stands for “uniform resource locator”. It is simply the web address used to view a website.

**UGC** – stands for “user generated content”. Forums, blog comments, reviews and wiki’s are all examples of user generated content where anybody on the web can make a contribution.

# THE EVOLUTION OF SEO

In the late 1990s and at the turn of the millennium, the internet was starting to become an increasingly important commodity for businesses and organisations. And with Google being the world's go-to search engine, webmasters believed that being ranked as high as possible in search engine results pages (SERPs) was imperative.

In order to achieve this, webmasters would perform a range of different SEO tactics:

- Paid links
- Stuffing pages with keywords
- Link farming
- Hidden text
- Cloaking
- Duplicate content
- Blog comment spam

These methods were done with only the search engine robots in mind. For example, a piece of content that had been overly optimised with keywords would be near enough unreadable for a human. However, as these search engine robots weren't as sophisticated as they are today, these tactics succeeded in boosting rankings; as far as webmasters saw it, if it boosted rankings, who cared about the end user?

However, the SEO industry has changed. Google's robots have become more sophisticated. These kinds of tactics no longer work and, if you were to try them, your site would end up being penalised, something which could hamper future chances of good organic search performance.

Today, SEO is all about the human; your end user. Webmasters should optimise their website and its content in a way that will help its visitors and potential customers.

Examples of effective SEO tactics include:

- Producing quality content
- Using structural semantic markup
- Carefully crafted and accurate title and meta tags
- Thorough keyword research
- High quality inbound links
- Social Marketing
- Good user experience

Through brand outreach, connecting with your customers and visitors with great content and a solid social media strategy, you can begin to build a strong reputation for your brand and increase the relationship between its 'fans.' For example, a consumer is much more likely to purchase from your ecommerce site if they enjoy reading and sharing your high quality content than a rival site that doesn't do this as well.

The theory that 'SEO is dead' often gets floated around in digital circles. The truth is that it isn't. As the industry has evolved and sites like Google have enhanced their algorithms, so have the practices. In short, SEO has evolved into something else.

The commercial objectives of a business should now be much more aligned with the objectives of Google and the sites that it ranks highly.



# HOW SEARCH ENGINES MAKE MONEY

## (AND WHY IT MATTERS)

There are two kinds of search results.

**Organic results** are “natural” results. Based on a series of complex algorithms, sites like Google will try and ensure that the sites that appear in the SERPs are those best placed to answer your query.

**Paid results** – PPC ads are placed by advertisers (or third-party advertising networks) and displayed according to a formula that includes how much the advertiser is willing to pay, how relevant the ad is to the keyword and the quality of the landing page. When searchers click on these ads, this is how search engines make their money. And, of course, the search engine with the most users will command a higher fee for ads.

The screenshot shows a search engine results page for the keyword 'jackets'. It is divided into two main sections: 'PAID' (top) and 'ORGANIC' (bottom). The 'PAID' section contains several advertisements for jacket retailers, including John Lewis, Marks & Spencer, Adidas, George, Asda, and Jacamo. The 'ORGANIC' section shows natural search results, including links to 'rich coats, leather jackets | ASOS', 'Bomber Jacket - Denim Jacket - Leather jacket - Blazer', 'Jackets & Coats - Clothing - Topshop', 'Mens Jackets, Coats, Designer Jackets - Superdry Jackets', and 'Mens Jackets & Coats at Debenhams.com'.

Search engines are always working to ensure that the sites appearing organically are the most relevant. This is the only way they can make their search engine better than others. Once a user feels that a particular site isn't giving them the information they require, they'll simply switch search engines. This will reduce the search engine's user base, which

means fewer searches to serve ads against...and lower rates for the PPC ads.

All of the major search engines roll out updates to ensure that their organic results are of the highest quality. For example, Google typically makes between 500 and 600 algorithm changes each year. The majority of these updates are fairly minor, just small feature improvements or minor tweaks to how Google ranks a site.

For Google, there are two recent and ongoing updates that, when they first launched, had a significant impact on the SEO industry:

**Panda:** this aims to completely remove or lower the rank of low-quality sites, ad-heavy pages and thin content. You're probably safe from the impact of Panda if you publish high quality, original content that people want to read and share.

**Penguin:** this looks for link spam and devalues it. There is minimum risk to your site from Penguin if you publish high quality, original content that reputable sites want to link to. This means that you should not engage in any 'spammy' linking practises, such as buying links, spamming comment posts with links, paid advertorials, submitting un-newsworthy press releases and so on.

**Hummingbird:** again, the search engines are tightly focused on providing the best experience for the searcher so that they can become (or remain) the engine of choice. Indeed, to mark Google's 15th birthday in October 2013, the organisation announced details of its Hummingbird algorithm, an update which helps users with more conversational/natural language as opposed to a list of keywords. Hummingbird is designed to provide answers to long tail searches in a more



intuitive way than previous Google algorithms.

Users have come to expect more from Google; they want more accurate results for more specific queries. Hummingbird should help with this demand, as well as with the increase in voice activated searches from mobile devices that may incorporate language and phrases that 'chattier.'

By doing this, search engines will help grow their traffic numbers, which eventually will mean that bidding for ads will become more competitive.



# KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

The most important thing you need to do if you want to increase the SEO performance of your website is to make sure that it's brimming with great content.

And the first step in writing great content for the web is learning about your audience. You aren't writing web content simply because you enjoy writing and you (hopefully) aren't writing just to make the search engines happy. That means that you should be writing for humans not robots, making the content something that users will genuinely want to read, engage with and share on their social channels. This will, in turn, make for good SEO and help to pull users through the buying process, helping to increase conversions.

In the early years of the web, overly optimised meta tags and pages of content that were stuffed with certain keywords and phrases were able to rank highly in search engines. Although it was often unreadable, site owners didn't really care as long as it was picked up by search engines. They were writing for the search engines and not humans so, although they may have been getting traffic to their site, their conversion rate would have remained fairly static as the content they were producing would not encourage visitors to make a purchase or trigger them into repeat business.

Now, however, Google penalises sites that produce this type of content. This is why there has been an even more important focus in recent times on content. If you produce content that is informative, entertaining, solves problems and provides readers with something worthwhile, this will generate traffic, will be more shareable on social media sites and will better place your brand as a good source of knowledge about your industry. This is what will get you good results in the search engines.

You should have a specific purpose in mind for the content and a specific type of reader to write for. If you're new to writing for the web or are trying to reach a new audience, it's worth going through a formal process to define your buyer personas. This is a character representation of someone who defines your brand's audience, helping you to better understand their needs and write content specifically for them.

# KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE



To create a persona, start by assessing your best customers. Determine the characteristics they have in common and then create a persona that reflects them. The aspects to define will vary depending on your industry, but for a B2B company, you might wish to determine whether your ideal reader is...

- In a specific industry
- In a specific department
- In a specific size of company
- At a particular level of responsibility
- In a specific geographic location
- Using a particular tool or program

For a B2C company, the characteristics of your ideal reader could include factors like:

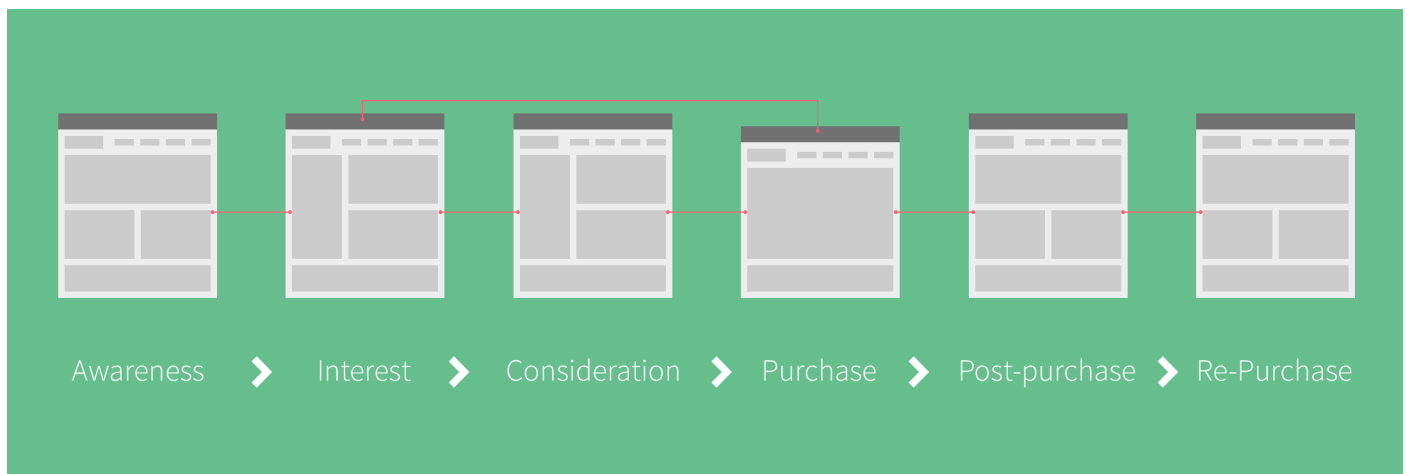
- Gender
- Age
- Owner of a smart phone
- Plays sports
- Travels for work 12+ times annually

If you already have a strong understanding of your target audience, do just a brief, informal persona review in your head before beginning work on content for your new web page or your next blog post.

Also, it's worth considering the need-based journey of your site's visitors. Think about why they may have searched for something and what they wanted to achieve by doing so; does your content and the calls-to-action (CTAs) on your site's pages help them to achieve their aim? For example, a user searching for "cheap hotels in London" will want to view rooms that are reasonably priced and may be shopping for a late deal. Is the content of your web pages suited for this type of enquiry? Are your CTAs targeted to help this user get what they want?

# KNOW WHAT YOUR READERS WANT

## UNDERSTAND WHY PEOPLE MAY SEARCH FOR YOUR CONTENT



Great, so you've identified your audience. Now you need to make sure that the content you produce connects with them. If it addresses the needs of your persona(s), it will be read more and shared more, helping it to rank better in search engines.

People search for a variety of reasons. Common reasons in the B2B sector include searching to...

- Understand a product category
- Learn about a product or solution
- Solve a specific business problem
- Be informed about new approaches

Common reasons in the B2C sector include searching to...

- Find the best deal
- Find the closest location
- Locate a product or service that's advertised

Here's a basic example of a buyer's journey:

Awareness > Interest > Consideration > Purchase > Post-Purchase > Re-Purchase

You can think about this before beginning a piece of content. Is your persona:

- Looking for a general category of information? (Awareness)
- Looking for a solution to a specific problem? (Interest)
- Looking for an enterprise solution? (Awareness-Interest)
- Identifying and comparing specific products or vendors? (Consideration-Purchase)
- Looking for help with one of your products they already own? (Post-Purchase)
- Looking to replace or upgrade a product, and planning to remain loyal to you? (Re-Purchase)

# OPTIMISING YOUR CONTENT

## KEYWORDS

Although it's important to focus completely on the reader and the quality of your content, a little optimisation is needed to make it search engine friendly.

A keyword is the word (or phrase) you want searchers to find your page for. It should clearly identify what your page is about.

Your page content is (or should be) about one main thing. Choose a keyword that:

- Represents your content well.
- A majority of searchers are likely to use when they want information about that one main thing.

### Keyword tips:

- Your keyword can contain more than one word.
- If your keyword contains several words, the order in which you use the words matters. For example, "plumbers in Manchester" is not the same as "Manchester plumbers" and returns different results.
- Find keywords through research. Ask people, drill down into social media, do a survey, see what's already being used, and/or use keyword research tools such as the [Google Keyword Planner Tool](#), [Google Trends](#), Google Auto Suggest, [Wordtracker](#), [SEMrush](#) and [Ubersuggest](#).

Also, if you do paid search (PPC), the data that you can find in Google AdWords will be vital in finding out what's already converting well.

After you've found out what's already being used, look in your current analytics solution and see which words visitors to your website are currently using to find you. More importantly, you must then analyse how effective these keywords are through bounce rates and conversions. For example, is it really worth targeting one keyword that generates 100 visitors to your site but has a 100% bounce rate and no conversions?

You can find more information in Google Webmaster Tools, which provides more detail about how a website is ranking organically. This can be found under **Search Traffic > Search Queries**

- Think about the kind of language your target/ideal reader is likely to use.
- Target 3-5 keywords per page that are semantically related. These are different words that can relate to and convey the same theme/message.
- **Do not deliberately repeat a keyword several times throughout a piece of content!** If it's natural and not forced, this is ok.
- Constructing a headline around your keyword or phrase can be a good way of immediately optimising your content from the off.

# OPTIMISING YOUR CONTENT

## KEYWORDS

Keyword research tools such as the Google Keyword Planner Tool are a great way to see how searchers in general are looking for information. You'll get better information if you can access the tool through an AdWords account (these are free), but there is anonymous access as well, through which you can get basic information.

Once you access the tool, you can get a rough estimate of how many searches are happening each month on a specific term. You can filter by location, languages, devices people are using to access the search engines and other factors.

You'll also want to find out what kind of words consumers might use to search for the type of content that you produce. You can do this by:

- Asking customers how they would find a specific product or category
- Analysing existing search engine referrals
- Researching external keyword databases
- Listing product names (and their generic equivalents)

However, keep in mind that the quality of your content is key and that you are writing for real people and not the search engines. If you do start overly optimising your content and shoving multiple keywords into each piece, Google will penalise you. Along with the other major search engines, Google constantly looks for websites that violate their terms and conditions. Search engines continually update their algorithms to automatically detect pages and websites

trying to cheat the system. They also have manual web spam teams in place, i.e. humans that look for spam and follow up on spam reports. A penalty could result in a huge drop in rankings and seriously affect your chances of ever ranking again in the future and ultimately generating business results.

### What type of language to use

Before you start writing your content, you'll also need to consider what kind of words your audience uses.

What words do they use when talking about your products, the industry you are in, or whatever they are looking for? Of course, these will vary based upon their demographic, age, gender etc.

Search engines are getting much better at trying to understand searcher intent. They look at the whole query that searchers type in rather than individual words. The Hummingbird update was designed to better understand more 'conversational' types of searches that have become increasingly common with the rise in mobile and voice-activated searches.

But it is still important to remember certain differences in language for audiences in different locations. For example, suppose you manufacture automotive accessories. You want to promote a new anti-slip mat for car boots. You should write about "boot liners" for a UK audience but, for a US audience, searching for "boot liners" will bring up very different results.



# OPTIMISING YOUR CONTENT

## KEYWORDS

### Long tail keywords

“Long tail” are low competition, low volume keywords.

It's estimated that over 70% of Google search terms are long tail. They are used by people looking for something very specific: “digital camera” is short and general (710M results); “canon digital rebel xti 10.1mp digital slr ef-s 18-55mm f/3.5-5.6 lens” is long and specific (54k results).

### Long tail keywords:

- Bring more targeted visitors to your site
- Are less competitive
- Clearly illustrate the searcher's intent
- Keep visitors on your site for longer (if you've met their exact needs)

In general, your shorter and more general keywords are useful for traffic in the early part of the buyer's journey, when people are doing broad research; long tail keywords are more useful for people who skew toward the end of the process, who know exactly what they're looking for, especially since the rollout of Hummingbird.

A good way of thinking about content when you want to target a long-tail keyword is that you're writing for 10 really interested potential customers, rather than 100 ones that are just browsing if you target a more generic keyword.

Also, don't forget to bear in mind your landing page strategy when it comes to selecting your long tail keywords and the type of content you write for a page. It needs to be relevant to the product/service and help your visitor to convert.



# EIGHT BEST PRACTICES FOR WRITING CONTENT

Tips to serve both search engines and your visitor

## 1. Carefully select keywords.

Refer to the previous chapter on keywords. Remember, you should write for your audience and not the search engines, but a little optimisation is needed. When it comes to optimising:

- Include a selected keyword in your copy or headline
- Think about selecting one primary keyword and some supporting ones to go along with it
- Target a low number of SEO keywords per page (ideally no more than five)
- Use the exact term
- Don't mention it too many times!

*\* Remember: as long as the content reads naturally then the writer shouldn't worry too much about how many times a keyword has been mentioned.*

## 2. Think about your headlines and titles.

These need to be as 'sticky' as possible because, if it isn't enticing/appealing, the content won't be read. You could shape the heading to suggest that your content is solving a problem, creating a debate or offering guidance, for example. Also, it is worth bearing in mind that the headline will also be used when it is shared on social networks.

## 3. Make sure content delivers on your headline.

Eight out of 10 people will read headline copy, but only two out of 10 people will read the rest. Because many people initially skim over articles, they won't stick around and digest

it properly if they don't think your content is addressing your headline, the thing that got them onto the page in the first place. So make sure your content delivers on your heading.



## 4. Reel in your audience with a killer intro.

Your headline is your initial sell, but the introduction is what will entice the reader to delve further into your content. You could open your content:

- **By posing a question** - this will engage your reader and they will want to read on and find the answer, particularly if it's a question that they can relate to.
- **With a quote** - this may trigger the audience to read further to see how the quote relates to the headline.
- **With an anecdote** - telling a personal or powerful story will give your content a personality, it will back up what you're saying and it should entertain your reader.
- **By quoting an interesting fact** - this will entice the reader if it is related to the topic and will back up what you're saying.



- **By being contextual** - give a brief reason why you're writing this particular piece of content. Data and stats will also be useful here.
- **By painting a picture in your reader's mind** - 'imagine this' or 'do you remember when?' are ways this can be achieved.
- **With an analogy** - this can immediately grab attention.

### 5. Break up your text.

Using sub-headings, short paragraphs, call-out boxes and bullet pointed or numbered lists, for example, will make information easier to digest. It will also help those people skimming and scanning your content. Additionally, sub-headings do also have a minor SEO benefit, too.

### 6. Insert images.

Backing up your content with screenshots, infographics, charts etc. can convey a message more powerfully than words alone. However, it is also important to bear in mind that there are strict copyright laws surrounding the use of images, so you must make sure that any image that you use on your site is there with the permission of its owner. Failing that, think about taking your own images or using free image websites such as iStock or Shutterstock.

\*Note: it is also wise to tag your images and give them captions to help search engines to work out what they are.

### 7. Think about internal links.

Linking your visitors to another piece of related content will ensure that you are keeping them on your site and exposing them to more of your content. There is also a significant SEO benefit in doing this too, as editorial and mid content internal links provide citation, which is any mention of your brand online with or without a link.

### 8. Set goals for every single piece of content that you produce.

You might want a piece of content to specifically generate leads or to be shared on social media. Whatever it is, make sure that you have a goal in mind before writing, as your content should be shaped around achieving this aim.

### Never sacrifice the user experience to force your copy to meet an SEO goal.

- Furthermore, this [fantastic infographic](#) from the Content Marketing Institute highlights some other things to consider when producing valuable content.

# HOW TO OPTIMISE A PAGE

It is a fact that organic search has evolved significantly since its early beginnings. Producing content that meets the needs of your audience and customers is now at the core of effective SEO.

However, there are still a few things that are important that you must remember to consider in order to give the search engine robots just that little bit extra help.

## Title tag

**Men's jackets & coats | Men's trench coats, leather jackets | ASOS**  
[www.asos.com/Men/Jackets-Coats/Cat/pgecategory.aspx?cid=3606](https://www.asos.com/Men/Jackets-Coats/Cat/pgecategory.aspx?cid=3606)  
Discover men's jackets and coats with ASOS. Shop from a range of styles, from leather jackets, macs and college jackets with ASOS.  
[Bomber Jacket](#) - [Denim jacket](#) - [Leather jacket](#) - [Blazer](#)

The title tag is the most important tag on the page. It helps inform both search engines and searchers what the page is about. It's displayed when someone bookmarks your page, is shown in search results and appears at the top of a browser window when someone is looking at the page.

## What makes a good title tag?

### 1. A good title tag is anywhere up to 65 characters (including spaces)

- If it's shorter than eight characters, your audience won't sufficiently understand what your page is all about.
- Search engines will index up to 150 characters (including spaces), but anything over 65 characters (including spaces) will be hidden from searchers and so unable to influence them to click on a search result. They will see only an ellipsis (...).

### 2. It accurately describes the page

- Make sure the keyword you wish to target is in the title i.e. the one that you want people to find your page for. They are far more likely to click on your listing if they see the keyword in the title.
- It is best to use the focus keywords in exactly the same order as you use them in the rest of the page ("diabetes symptoms" is different than "symptoms of diabetes"), but it isn't mandatory. It is still possible to rank well when the words are out of order, but your page won't rank as highly as it would when the order matches the keyword your searchers use to find the page.
- Only mention the keyword once
- Remember to construct the title tag so that it mirrors the reasons why people would visit the page. For example, "the latest in laptop software" may attract a different audience to "cheap laptops."
- The title tag may well be the first interaction your brand has with a potential customer, so make sure it doesn't disappoint them.

### 3. Put the keyword early in the title

- It is best if you can use the focus keyword starting in the first 10 characters of the title, but don't worry about this too much if it means it will then impact on the quality of your title tag content.

### 4. All the title tags for your pages are unique

- Every page on your website should be unique. It solves a specific problem, addresses a specific need, conveys unique information, or answers a question. The title tag should reflect this. If the page is similar enough to

another page that you need (or want) to use the same title tag for, do you really need this additional page?

- If you can't decide what a page is really about and what makes it unique, then neither Google nor your visitors will be able to figure it out, either.

## URL

The URL is an extremely important place to put your keyword. It will help your page ranking because when people link to your page, the link they use will automatically include your keyword. Having the keyword in the URL also helps visitors make the decision to visit your page.

When you use multiple words to form a keyword, separate the words with a hyphen ("diabetes-symptoms"). Removing the spaces and smashing the words together ("diabetessymptoms") makes them hard to read and creates a keyword unlikely to be used by a searcher. An underscore is treated as an actual character instead of a word separator (e.g., "Diabetes\_ symptoms" reads as one single 17-letter word).

### What makes a good URL?

#### 1. A good URL is shorter than 115 characters

- It is advised by many webmasters to try and keep URLs as short as you possibly can.

#### 2. It accurately describes the page

- Ensure the keyword is in the URL
- Keep the URL as short as naturally possible while still being able to communicate what the page is about. Use the keyword just once.

## Meta description

This is the paragraph that appears under your listing in search engine results pages. It's a great way of providing a searcher with a little bit more information about a page.

The meta description doesn't impact the ranking itself, but a well-written description is in essence advertising your content to searchers, showing them exactly how your page delivers what they're looking for. If you leave the description blank, you are wasting this opportunity.

### What makes a good meta description?

[Men's jackets & coats | Men's trench coats, leather jackets | ASOS](http://www.asos.com/Men/Jackets-Coats/Cat/pgcategory.aspx?cid=3606)  
[www.asos.com/Men/Jackets-Coats/Cat/pgcategory.aspx?cid=3606](http://www.asos.com/Men/Jackets-Coats/Cat/pgcategory.aspx?cid=3606)  
 Discover men's jackets and coats with ASOS. Shop from a range of styles, from leather jackets, macs and college jackets with ASOS.  
[Bomber Jacket](#) - [Denim jacket](#) - [Leather jacket](#) - [Blazer](#)

#### 1. Between 150 and 160 characters (including spaces)

- Search engines will index up to 255 characters (including spaces) of the meta description, but anything over 150 characters (including spaces) will be hidden from searchers.
- The main benefit of the meta description is to entice a searcher onto your page. Therefore, any content that is hidden by the search engines is wasted.

#### 2. It accurately describes the page

- Make sure the description corresponds with the reasons people would visit the page.

\* Note: if you don't include a meta description, or if Google believes it to be incorrect, then the search engine will create its own description based on what it thinks the user should see. This can actually be useful for long tail searches that lead to product pages.

## Breadcrumbs

Like most of the other suggestions in this eBook, breadcrumbs are a useful tactic to help both your site visitors and the search engines crawling your site. Breadcrumbs take their name from the Hansel and Gretel story and are useful for helping your visitors find their way. They differ in a significant way; they are not a literal representation of the path your visitor took to get to the page they are on. Breadcrumbs are instead a representation of where the current page lives in the site hierarchy.

Breadcrumbs typically live in the upper left corner of a page (below the primary navigation) and are an easy way to both set the context of where the content lives in your site and to help your visitors navigate to higher level content. Since these are standard links, search engines will follow them, so breadcrumbs increase the odds that a search engine will discover your content.

Google believes breadcrumbs are important in helping visitors to understand the structure of the site and how the specific page fits into the site hierarchy. It will include breadcrumb navigation in search results when it can.

## Headlines and subheads

Headlines help your audience understand what a page is about and quickly navigate to the sections that interest them. Search engines understand this and look at content with header tags <h1> to help understand what a page is about. It's important to keep this text to headline length; if you have a paragraph of text in an <h1> tag, search engines will think it is spam. Try to limit your <h1> tags to 10 or fewer words (65 or fewer characters, including spaces).

### What makes a good H1 heading?

#### 1. Shorter than 65 characters

- Search engines will index the entire H1 tag, but if it's too long they will discount it as spam.

#### 2. It accurately describes the page

- It is extremely important to use your focus keyword in the H1 heading. They are far more likely to stay on the page if they see the keyword in the heading.
- The H1 heading should be different than the Title tag.

#### 3. Put the focus keyword early in the H1 heading

- It's best to use the focus keyword starting in the first 10 characters of the H1 heading, but don't sacrifice a great

heading to force this.

- Google attributes more value to the first words in a heading than the last ones.

## Alt text

Alternative text is used with images (and other non-text content) to describe what the image shows. The words used within an image's alt attribute should be its text equivalent and convey the same information or serve the same purpose that the image would. This helps the visually impaired understand what an image is about using screen reading software, and it also helps those people that use browsers unable to download images. It's also another chance to tell search engines what the image and your page is about.

When writing the alt text for an image, ask yourself: if you were to replace the image with the text, would most users receive the same basic information?

Every image on a page should have alt text.

### What makes good alt text?

#### 1. Shorter than 65 characters (including spaces)

- The alt text should be a short 'stand-in' in the event that the image itself is not available.

#### 2. The alt text should accurately represent the image

## Google Authorship

When searching for something in Google, have you noticed how some results have the image of the author next to them and others don't?

The links that have author images next to them have been linked to the Google+ profile of the author. This is called Google Authorship. It's a good way of putting a name to a face and will help to build an author's online presence, as well adding visual value to your results in search engines.

Although Google doesn't take Authorship into consideration when ranking a website, that doesn't mean that it won't do so in the future.

It's a good idea for your brand's authors to have Google+ profiles and claim the content they produce. This isn't a substitute for optimisation, but does add value to your pages.

There is also a 'More by...' link on author results. If a reader clicks this, they will see other posts your author claims authorship on, wherever those posts may be.

## How to set up Google+ Authorship for your content

## Set up Google+:

- Visit <https://plus.google.com/authorship> and follow the instructions.
- Make sure that your Google+ email is the same one you use for authorship in your applications.
- On your G+ page, look under Links for the Contributor To section.
- Add website URLs for the websites you contribute to and label them.

**You also must set up the websites that you contribute to:**

- First, on your G+ profile page, copy the URL. It should look something like this: <https://plus.google.com/1101010101010101010>
- Now visit each website you publish on. Navigate to your profile on this site and look for the social media fields. Enter the G+ URL in the Google+ field.

*“...content written by established experts carries more authority, and ranks higher than content with less-credible authorship or no authorship whatsoever. By facilitating the development of internal subject experts and encouraging them to publish on the company blog (and on their own personal blogs), employers can reap tangible rewards that will impact their business’s bottom line.” –*

Steven Shattuck, writing for Search Engine Journal.



# HOW TO OPTIMISE A WEBSITE

## Sitemaps

These are a great way of making all of your content on your site accessible to your visitors.

There are two major types of sitemaps:

- An HTML sitemap is a standard web page that is public-facing and intended to help real people.
- An XML sitemap is a file written in computer code (Extensible Markup Language) that's written only for search engines and is not public-facing. It isn't linked where people can find it and most people couldn't understand the code even if they found the file.

## HTML sitemaps

HTML sitemaps are intended to make things easier for your site's visitors. How one user navigates a website may differ from another, so these provide them with multiple ways to interact with your content.

A sitemap lets people find specific pages without having to go through menus or other navigation. Since HTML sitemaps are treated like any other web page on your site, they're also a good way for search engines to discover more of your pages. In general:

- If your site has fewer than 200 pages, you can include everything in one site map.
- If your site has 200 or more pages, consider a main site map that has the top level pages and links to category-specific site maps.

It's good to include a link to the site map in the footer of every page. It just makes things a little easier once they've finished reading one piece of content and then want to go somewhere else on your site.

Also, search engines will pick up on sitemaps. Google likes to see these as you will be providing as much information as possible for your end user.

## XML sitemaps

Unlike HTML sitemaps, an XML sitemap is a file created specifically for search engines. It doesn't guarantee any indexing of your pages, but it is an easy way for search engines to learn about your pages and give you the best chance to get them indexed.

Because these are intended for search engines instead of human visitors, there is a specific format for the file that you must follow. The sitemap must:

- Begin with an opening <urlset> tag and end with a closing </urlset> tag
- Specify the namespace (protocol standard) within the <urlset> tag
- Include a <url> entry for each URL, as a parent XML tag
- Include a <loc> child entry for each <url> parent tag
- All other tags are optional

All URLs in a sitemap must be from a single domain, such as "www.example.com" or "store.example.com". You can see more examples and all the options at: <http://www.sitemaps.org/protocol.html>

Once you have your XML sitemap ready, upload it to Google Webmaster Tools by going to **Optimisation > Sitemaps and choosing Add/Test Sitemap.**

### Image search

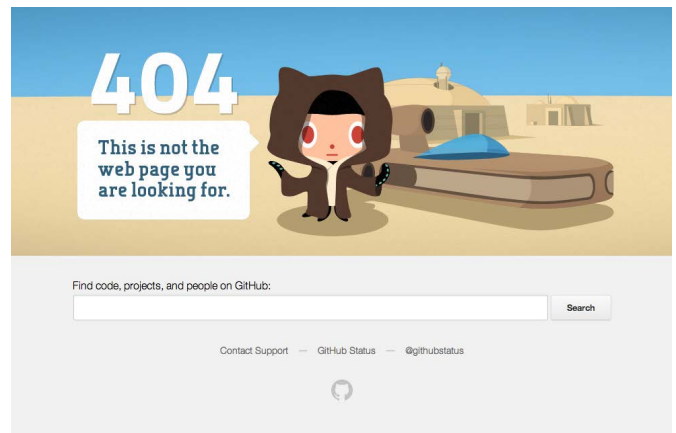
Once you have a standard XML sitemap, you can expand it to include your images. This will help search engines such as Google discover the images you have on your site, so those images can be included in image search. Like the standard XML sitemap, there is a specific format to follow for image search and the details can be found at: <https://support.google.com/webmasters/answer/178636?hl=en>.

### Custom 404

No matter how careful you are, people will occasionally get to a page on your website that doesn't work. Perhaps you moved a page and forgot to set up a redirect, or maybe you mistyped an internal link when you were building a page.

Sometimes it is completely out of your control; perhaps the visitor mistyped a URL, or another website linked to a page on your site that doesn't exist. By default, every web server will return an error message with some version of "404 Page Not Found" when this happens. By now, most people know that this means something went wrong and they'll just move on, but there is a better way than an unsympathetic generic page.

All web servers give you the ability to configure a custom 404 page. This is a standard web page you design to appear whenever someone tries to access a page that doesn't exist. You want to ensure that it offers the visitor options to find what they're looking for, with links to useful places. This is good for both visitors and search engines. Visitors are more likely to have a positive experience with your brand; search engines still have links on your site that they can follow and discover new content to index.



When you create a custom 404 page there are a few things to keep in mind:

- The page is there to help people understand where they are if they get lost.
- Something went wrong and your visitor ended up on this page instead of the page they were expecting. Make sure they have a positive experience and use this as an opportunity to reinforce your brand.
- Provide links back to the main domain, ensuring users and search engines can access other pages on your site.
- Link to key content
- Important/popular pages
- Articles/videos
- Contact information
- Sign up for a demo
- Link to the site map

There are a number of great examples of custom 404 pages from the basic glorified site map to the humorous; just for fun, search for "custom 404 page examples". If you want to see what a specific website is doing for their 404 page, go to





the website and try and access a page you know won't exist. For example, if you want to see Apple.com's 404 page, you could paste this string into your browser: <http://www.apple.com/asdf>.

## Canonical URL

This is one of the most important things you can do to improve your SEO and is the only thing in this eBook that doesn't provide a direct benefit to the visitor.

One of the key factors in how a page ranks in the search engines is how many high quality links are pointing to that specific page. If your website functions with both [www.your-domain.com](http://www.your-domain.com) and [your-domain.com](http://your-domain.com) (no www), both versions will get links. Since the search engines treat www and non-www as separate sites, they will not combine the link scores from two versions of the same page. This means your pages are essentially cannibalising each other, with this result: the version of the page you care about most will not rank as well as it could.

These four URLs will each be ranked separately, and any links will be shared among them indiscriminately:

- [www.company.com](http://www.company.com)
- [company.com/](http://company.com/)
- [www.company.com/index.html](http://www.company.com/index.html)
- [company.com/home.asp](http://company.com/home.asp)

To fix this, you need to choose a canonical URL and make it the standard for your brand. Decide if you want your website to show up with or without the www. With the www is more common, but it's a matter of personal preference and doesn't make a technical difference. Pick one and stick with it. Once you have decided which version you want to use, your webmaster will need to configure the canonical URL to be the one you selected.

Another common situation calling for a canonical URL is when several pages list the same set of products. For example, one page might display products sorted in alphabetical order, while other pages display the same

products listed by price or by rating. If Google knows that these pages have the same content, it may choose to index only one version. Through using a rel:canonical you can suggest to Google: "Of all these pages with identical content, this page is the most useful. Please prioritise it in search results."

## 301 redirect

When this is accomplished, all links, clicks, traffic, etc. from the versions you didn't select must be redirected to the version you did. Just make sure your webmaster sets up a 301 redirect instead of a 302 redirect. They should know to do this without prompting, but it doesn't hurt to make sure. A 301 redirect lets the search engines know that the content has permanently moved and they should apply all value from the old page to the new page. A 302 redirect tells the search engine that the move is only temporary and that they shouldn't pass on any value to the new page.

At Click Consult, we selected [www.click.co.uk](http://www.click.co.uk) as our canonical URL. If you go to the address bar in your web browser and enter [Click.co.uk](http://Click.co.uk) or click a link that takes you to [Click.co.uk](http://Click.co.uk) you will notice that the address is automatically changed to [www.click.co.uk](http://www.click.co.uk).

## URL hacking

Web visitors are getting more sophisticated in the ways they go about finding the content that interests them. One of the things some people do is to "hack" URLs. This isn't a malicious attempt to try and access parts of your site or get information that you don't want them to have – it's a way for them to get more of your quality content without having to go through your navigation menus.

Most quality sites have started using standard directory structures within the site. These directories may be different from every other site out there, but they're consistent within the site itself, which means people can use logic and intuition to find what they want. Web visitors are starting to learn that if you edit the URL to remove the part specific to the page the visitor is currently on, they can get information that's one step (or more) closer to the home page.



For example, if someone is on [www.example.com/white-papers/this-is-a-white-paper.html](http://www.example.com/white-papers/this-is-a-white-paper.html) and they delete “/this-is-a-white-paper.html”, they’ll probably find themselves on a page that displays a list of all white papers on the site. This is often faster and easier than going through the menu structure to figure out where the list of whitepapers is.

You’ll need to work with your webmaster to get this structure configured properly in your system and the directory-level pages (e.g. a list of all whitepapers) will need to be created, but it is well worth the effort. It gives your interested visitors more ways to choose their own path through your site to access your content...and you’re providing search engines with an additional source of links.

# HOW TO OPTIMISE A VIDEO

The best search engine optimisation strategy is always to create quality, engaging content which meets some kind of need in the user. However, with Google and YouTube being the two most popular search engines on the planet, there are some additional things that marketers can do to increase the chances of their videos being found organically:

## Write effective titles

While a good title is critical for all content types, it's especially important for video. Be sure to use target keyword phrases in all of your video titles, usually as close to the front of the title as possible.

For the best results, take advantage of “longtail” phrases that are very specific to your content. You can generate ideas by using keyword research tools, Google AdWords and even experimenting with the “auto-fill” feature in the Google and YouTube search fields.

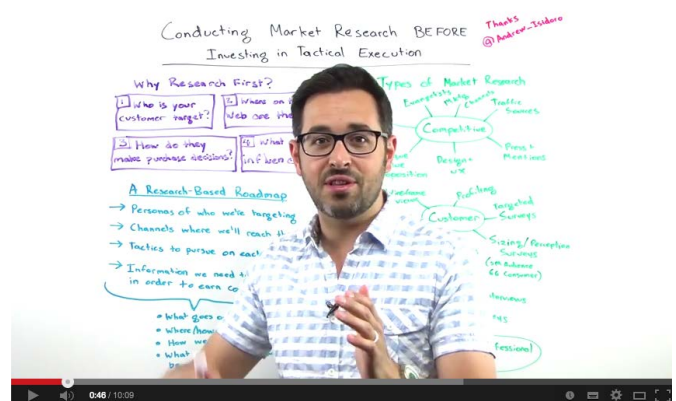
## Use additional text

Since search engines have trouble crawling video content itself, the on-page text around the player is especially important for SEO. Make sure you write engaging, descriptive and keyword-rich summaries for all of your YouTube and embedded videos. Many SEO experts also recommend including audio transcriptions on your video pages in order to give search engines even more information that can improve your rankings, with the additional benefit of improved accessibility to that content.

## Create and submit a video sitemap

Since video is indexed differently than text-based content in Google, you can increase the online visibility of your videos by putting together a video sitemap in addition to a standard sitemap. This will essentially help Google identify which

content items on your site are videos, whilst providing the search engine with more information about your content so that it can be indexed properly.



However, keep in mind that developing a video sitemap requires some fields that are a bit more technical in nature than those of a standard sitemap, so content creators should work with their webmaster or web development teams. The video sitemap also allows you to indicate the location of your video thumbnails. These images will show up in both video and standard search results to help your listings stand out from the pack.

Once your video sitemap is completed, you will need to submit it to Google (via Google Webmaster tools), Bing and Yahoo.

## Use video Meta tags

In addition to the video sitemap, content editors and developers can also take advantage of proper meta data and attributes to expose more information about their videos to search engines.

This structured data uses standard guidelines dictated by schema.org or the Open Graph protocol, and can include



details on authors, video types, descriptions, thumbnail locations and more.

There are some basic tags that you want to keep in mind when creating your sitemap.

**<video:title>** - Most important; what is the title of this video

**<video:description>** - Can be up to 2,048 characters and should be keyword optimised

**<video:video>** - Tells Google this is your sitemap

**<video:thumbnail\_loc>** - URL of video image thumbnail, formatted in JPG or PNG

**<video:player\_loc>** - Embedding your video from YouTube? Be sure to give the original location here

### Submitting to Google

Finally, when it's all done, you will want to submit it to Google (Bing only currently accepts video sitemap via email). However, Google knows what it wants to see in order to index your site and bring you to the searching masses. So, before sending your sitemap out for final approval, ensure that your sitemap follows some of its important guidelines.

- Your sitemap can have no more than 50,000 entries – you will have to submit multiple sitemaps at that point.
- You can create one sitemap, with URL's from different video content, instead of submitting one for each. If you use a lot of video on various websites, this is a good idea.
- Be sure your video is in one of the crawlable formats including: .mpeg, .mp4, .wmv.



# SOCIAL MEDIA & ORGANIC SEARCH

Along with optimising your content and your pages, you should have a social media strategy for any organic search campaign.

By increasing your brand's presence on social networks through interacting with customers, industry experts and sharing and commenting on their content, a significant level of trust is built up. As a result, you'll increase your chances of having your content shared when you come to promote it. Consequently, this will impact on your SEO performance. Google loves to see brands interacting with their audiences through alternative mediums, rather than just the website, and social media is a fantastic way of doing this.

Social media can include keywords that drive traffic to your website.

Social signals increasingly impact on how websites rank in the search engine results pages.

According to [Moz](#):

- Social signals are very important in the early stages of ranking. If your article gets shared by many influential people, you get a higher exposure for a limited amount of time.
- Social signals are not enough to keep that article ranking well, but the exposure may encourage people to link to your article, which does help in the long run. Google will pick up those links and add ranking signals to your article.

Make sure you include social channel buttons that link to your various social networks on every page of your site, and also add social share buttons to every blog post, press

release and in all of your outbound communications. This makes your content easier to share and so more likely to be shared, which encourages higher rankings.

It is also important to work out which social networks your audience is most prolific on. Once you've done that:

- Share content that has value.
- Remember not to be too 'salesy'
- Listen well, and engage. Re-post/retweet the content of others and thank people when they do the same with yours. Generosity looks very good socially.

## Google+

As mentioned in a previous chapter, Google+ Authorship is good for adding authority to your pages. But as a social network in general it is definitely something your brand should look into. As of March 2013, Google's share of the search market stood at 67.1, a position that hasn't wavered much in the past. Google has made it very clear that social signals play a role in its algorithm. Since many search results from Twitter and Facebook are restricted by privacy settings, the social network that can affect page ranking the most is Google+.

- Make sure a number of your employees, especially those who blog, tweet, or post, have Google+ profiles that are connected to your website.
- Share your good content on Google+ and make sure you've got a Google+ button wherever you publish social icons.



# SUMMARY

## Thank you for reading our eBook on organic search (SEO).

We wanted to ensure that we produced something that not only covered many of the fundamental principles, but also explained them in an easy-to-understand manner. We hope that this eBook has been helpful and we wish you the best of luck with your organic search efforts.

You can find more content like this on our website:  
[www.click.co.uk](http://www.click.co.uk).

## Contact details:

Click Consult  
Willow House,  
Oaklands Office Park,  
Hooton Road,  
Hooton,  
Cheshire. CH66 7NZ

0845 205 0292

[hello@click.co.uk](mailto:hello@click.co.uk)



Located in North West England, Click Consult is a multi award-winning search marketing agency with a focus on organic and paid search.

Our team of experts work exclusively with a portfolio of brands and SMEs who are looking to increase their online visibility and return on investment through our bespoke search marketing solutions. We've achieved impressive results for clients operating within a diverse range of competitive verticals including eCommerce, hotels & leisure, legal and pharmaceuticals.

Organic (SEO) and Paid Search (PPC) are at the core of our service proposition, but we also offer a range of search marketing services such as Content, Outreach and Social engagement, Discovery, Integrated Search Marketing, Social Media, Google Penalty Removal and Recovery, Conversion Rate Optimisation (CRO), Display Advertising, Social Media Advertising, International and Multilingual Search Marketing, Inbound Marketing and Search Marketing Consultancy.

