



Beat The Penguin!

Super Simple SEO Basics

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Firstly: A Disclaimer

This report has been written to assist you in making the right decisions for your website by simplifying Search Engine Optimization (SEO) techniques and giving you a basic understanding of the types of things that the search engines, particularly Google, are looking for in a website. It is not an exhaustive look at the very complex world of Search Engine Optimization and I make no guarantees that the information contained within will make you any money nor will I guarantee that you will be able to reach the top of the search engine results. As I explain in the document there are many factors that influence search engine results and I have no control over what you actually do with the information or the quality or number of backlinks that you get for your site. Rankings can fluctuate daily and it is very important to see them as a long term strategy rather than a short term solution.

That said, I have done many hours of testing and research to find not only what works for me but is also reported to work very well for other website owners, particularly since the Panda and Penguin updates. I hope you find the information useful and that it gives you a good grounding to what SEO is and how knowledge of it can help you build better websites or blogs.

For the purpose of simplicity I will only refer to Google throughout the document as it is the most dominant search engine, however the principles are pretty much the same for Bing, Yahoo! or any one of the other search engines.

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www.magicaffiliatesales.com

Part 1: What's it all about?

What is SEO and what does it have to do with penguins?

Very simply SEO stands for Search Engine Optimization. What it really means is that search engines look at every web page that they can find and check them out to see whether or not they have certain good or bad characteristics. They then use those characteristics to determine how well the web page should rank when somebody does a search. Pages that are seen to fit really well with what the searcher is looking for will rank highly while unrelated web pages won't appear at all.

How those individual characteristics are graded exactly and how they fit in together is a closely guarded secret known only by the programmers at Google, Bing and Yahoo! etc. But although we don't know exactly, there are still many characteristics that have been tried and tested and are known to work very well and some of that knowledge has even been released by Google in an effort to encourage web builders to create good quality, relevant sites.

So creating a web page that is designed to have as many of these good characteristics as possible using the knowledge we have is called Search Engine Optimisation. In a nutshell that's all that SEO is: Giving Google what it wants.

To give an example, if someone goes on to Google and does a search for "horse grooming brush" then Google will look for web pages that are most relevant to those words and try to present all of those pages back in order of what they feel will give the searcher the best experience, with No. 1 being the most relevant to Horse Grooming Brushes, then No.2 and so on.

The No.1 ranked website will have the best mix of the good characteristics that Google is looking for.

Keywords

The words "horse grooming brush" are called keywords and a Google search today for those particular keywords resulted in over 73 million results! That might seem pretty daunting if you are trying to rank No.1 out of 73 million but the reality is that most of those results aren't really that relevant and it's not as hard as it may seem to get firstly in the top 100 then make your way up towards the coveted No.1 spot.

There is an important note to make here though.

Let's say that you own a site that is very relevant to the keywords "horse grooming brush" because you sell a great range of horse grooming brushes and you have a great site that is perfectly tailored towards everything to do with horse grooming brushes. Your SEO is perfect and you rank No.1 in the Google results. That's awesome but if someone does a search instead for "horse cleaning products" you might find yourself nowhere near the top spot and maybe not even in the top 50!

That's because your site will only rank well for certain keywords, you can never cover every keyword within your niche; it's just not possible.

This simply means that when you build your site or blog you should firstly decide what keywords you want to rank well for and build your site around them, don't do it the other way around.

The two main factors that all of the search engines look at when ranking your pages are your On Page SEO and the quality of your Backlinks. Let's have a quick look at those:

On Page SEO

This refers to how well your page is constructed to make it relevant to your particular keywords. This includes the content of your site and the structure of your site. Google looks at many factors including, but not limited to, how many times your keywords appear on your site, where those keywords are placed and how they appear to the reader, whether you have relevant images, how many pages you have in your site and how they are all linked together.

Backlinks

These are links from other websites that link directly back to your site. Backlinks come in a wide range of quality from good to bad and will either benefit your rankings or may even hurt your rankings if they are of poor quality and you have too many of them. Using our keywords above as an example, a backlink from a top school for grooming horses would be very good while a link from a Xmas dinner recipe website is completely unrelated to your niche and would be seen as poor quality.

Backlinks are just as important as on page SEO, in fact they work hand in hand with each other. Google looks at both the content on your site and your backlinks when deciding where you should be ranked. Ignore either or both of these at your peril!

The Panda & Penguin Updates

In 2011 Google did an update called Panda which was designed to lower the ranking of sites that were of low quality or had a high percentage of advertising content and raise the ranking of sites they deemed to be of better quality and relevance. It basically updated the characteristics that it was looking for and decided that some of the ones previously considered good would now be considered bad and sites rankings were affected accordingly.

It wasn't perfect and has been updated several times since then. Google did another major update in 2012, this time called Penguin which again was designed to give their users a better experience. Penguin targeted different characteristics than Panda, particularly keyword stuffing; cloaking (an attempt to trick Google and send users immediately to a different webpage) and the deliberate use

of duplicate content. It is also reported to look at websites more as a “whole” rather than looking at pages individually. Panda and Penguin continue to be updated periodically by Google.

These updates overall reportedly affected over 15% of English language websites, however Google has come out with a list of 23 bullet points about characteristics that they are looking for and are designed to assist us all in developing better websites. That list has been included at the end of the report for you to have a look at and makes a good checklist when thinking about your site.

Just remember that Google is looking for quality, quality and more quality when ranking websites. Make sure you never use underhanded or “black hat” techniques to get more ranking because Google doesn’t miss a trick anymore and you will be penalised for it.

If you create something you can be proud of, that doesn’t lie, cheat or steal you should have nothing to worry about from the Panda or Penguin updates.

Part 2: The Nitty Gritty

Although it may seem a little daunting at first, the characteristics that Google looks for are quite simple for the most part. Whether you are building a website from scratch or creating a blog with Wordpress the principles remain the same. It doesn’t matter what niche you are in or what you are selling or promoting, there is no complex programming to do or secret software to install, you just need a good dash of common sense mixed in with the ability to follow a few simple “rules” and your sites will be Search Engine Optimized in no time.

On Page SEO

1) Keyword density

You should aim to have a keyword density of between 1 to 1.8%. This means that your keyword or keywords should appear on your pages 10-18 times per thousand words. Much more than that and you are in danger of overdoing it. The rule of thumb used to be more like 3-5% but that is not such a good idea anymore and could be seen as keyword stuffing.

Never ever try to boost your keyword count by entering them somewhere on your page and then changing the font to the same as the background so they can’t be seen. Google checks for text hidden amongst the background colour and has done so for years.

2) Document length

There is no hard and fast rule but you should always have at least 1000 words of good quality content on your main page. Other pages can be less but should be relevant to what you are doing on that page. For instance a Contact page will be simple and short with just your contact details while a Disclaimer page may be longer.

3) Copy score

This is how your content “reads” – do you have poor spelling, are your sentences too long, or have you used too many technical words? It’s all about keeping your content easy to read and easy to understand. Believe it or not Google has sophisticated programming that looks at your sentence and paragraph structure too! Make sure your keywords are distributed naturally throughout your content: if it doesn’t fit somewhere, use it somewhere else!

Make one or two of your keywords **bold**, one or two in *italics*, and one or two underlined.

4) Duplicate content

Don’t be tempted to just copy and paste your homepage content onto 2 or 3 other pages in your site and then just change the keywords. Duplicate content within a site is a big no-no with Google and you will be penalised for it

5) Page title

Make sure your keywords or at least your main keyword appears in your page title. Keep it short and to the point. Using our Horse example you might want to call your main page “Best Value Horse Grooming Brush Sales”. Other pages within your site should also have a title relevant to your keyword or niche but not exactly the same as your home page.

6) Meta description

This is the description that is shown in the search results below the web page URL and is usually the first thing that searchers read. If you are using Wordpress it is easy to install a plugin like Platinum SEO Pack which will give you the option of creating a Meta description for each of your posts or pages. Keep your descriptions to less than 160 characters (including spaces) to make sure they are displayed properly in the search results, for instance:

Looking for a horse grooming brush? We have a great range of horse grooming products, please feel free to browse our site and check them out for yourself.

Use your exact keywords once plus other related keywords if you can but keep it flowing and natural.

7) Keywords in headings

Use your keywords in H1, H2 and H3 headings at least once but don't put keywords in every single heading or sub heading. As a rule of thumb you would have 1 x H1 heading, 2 x H2 headings and 3 x H3 headings per main page then as many as you like of H4 and H5 headings if it suits. Make it look and read naturally and not forced.

8) Keyword in first paragraph and last sentence

It's always good practice to have your keywords in the first paragraph, not just for Google but to let your readers know exactly what you are providing. Then finish off your page with your keywords in a natural sounding, normal length, final sentence.

For example: *We hope you have found this information helpful and you are now confident in choosing the right horse grooming brush to suit your needs, please contact us for more information.*

9) Keyword in URL (Exact Match Domain)

This isn't as important as it once was but using your keyword in your domain name is always good practice. If you are ranking for several keywords make your domain name one that is relevant to all of them if it is possible.

E.g. www.horsegrooming.com instead of www.superduperhorsegroomingbrush.com

Regardless of the SEO benefits, having your keywords in your domain name makes your site more attractive to the searcher. Would you rather click on www.horsegrooming.com or www.xyztoday.com/newproducts/horses/brush.html ?

10) Keywords in Categories

If you are building a blog you should organise your blog posts into Categories, then name each of your categories with a keyword or keywords that relate back to your home page keywords. Don't use the exact home page keywords though to avoid being penalised for keyword stuffing.

E.g. You could have categories titled Horse Grooming Techniques, Horse Cleaning Products, Our Latest Grooming Brushes etc

11) Images (Title and Alt tags)

Use your keywords wisely in the Title and Alt tags of your images. Have at least 3 images but only use your keywords in 2 of them. This shows Google that you are not trying to stuff your keywords in every possible place in your site. Very important since the Penguin update.

12) Pages within your site

As Google looks at your site as a whole it's always a good idea to have at least a Contact page and a Disclaimer page (especially if you are selling something) as well as your main page or pages. You should have easy to find links to these pages spread throughout your site. Ideally you would have 6-10 pages in your site with the title and the content of each page based around keywords closely related to your home page keywords. Don't have any "orphan" pages, which are pages that don't have any links from or to your home or other pages.

All pages should link back to your home page and you should be using your original home page keywords as your link anchor text. Anchor text is simply the words you use in a link to another page.

E.g. In this example our anchor text would be: [horse grooming brush](#)

One of your other pages might be on a particular brand of horse grooming brush called XYZ Horse Brushes. Your title and main keywords for the new page would be XYZ Horse Brushes and you would again have a link on that page back to your home page using the original keywords Horse Grooming Brush as the anchor text in your link.

E.g. Check out our home page if you're looking for a [horse grooming brush](#).

13) Outbound links

Apart from any affiliate links it's always good practice to link out to an authority site from within your own site. The best types of sites to link out to are .org or .edu sites, article directories, expert forums, expert blogs or other well known, reputable sites like Ask.com or even Wikipedia.com.

Find a page on the authority site that has good content related to your keywords, then copy the whole URL from the address bar and link to it from within your own page, using closely related keywords in your anchor text.

Always use the "nofollow" attribute when creating links out of your site, it requires a little html knowledge but is very important and worth learning about. You should also use nofollow when linking to pages within your own site that you don't need to rank in Google like the Contact and Disclaimer pages. Using nofollow tells Google that you are not a spammer and makes your site appear more trustworthy.

Here's an example of a nofollow link:

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<a href="http://www.example.com" rel="nofollow">anchor text</a>
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Backlinks

Backlinking is a subject that could quite easily take up another whole ebook and is technically not Search Engine Optimization even though it does affect your rankings. So I'm not going to go in to too much detail with it, however there are some important things you should keep in mind to go hand in hand with your on page SEO.

Backlinking is all about quality, not quantity. Google wants to see a natural progression of backlinks to your site developed over time and will expect to see a mix of poor quality and good quality sites linking to you. Obviously you would want more good quality backlinks so it is up to you to control that side of it where you can. Social sites are becoming more and more relevant and it is a very good idea to join and post on a few, particularly Google+, Facebook and other large related sites like LinkedIn and Squidoo and link back to your site where you can.

You should also make helpful comments relevant to your niche and post them on good quality forums, blogs etc. Use a mix of your exact keywords and other closely related keywords and put links to your site in your profile signature rather than in the comment itself.

Article marketing can also be very powerful, a good idea is to write a quality article relevant to your niche and post it on one of the good article sites like ezinearticles, goarticles and articledashboard to name just a few. Again, have a link back to your site in your author signature and remember quality is what counts.

That's it!

So there you have it. You should now have a good idea of what to do when building a new site or fixing up an old one. Don't get hung up on all of the technical jargon out there and all of the so called tips and tricks. Ironically Google's Panda and Penguin have made it easier for regular people with only a basic knowledge of SEO to get better rankings in the search results because they have targeted the underhanded techniques used by the "experts" to try to beat the system.

If you'd like to find out more about building search engine friendly websites that target free affiliate traffic please check out my Magic Affiliate Sales training at

www.magicaffiliatesales.com

Cheers,

Rob

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Appendix A

Taken from the Google Webmaster Central Blog:

<http://googlewebmastercentral.blogspot.com.au/2011/05/more-guidance-on-building-high-quality.html>

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What counts as a high-quality site?

Our site quality algorithms are aimed at helping people find "high-quality" sites by reducing the rankings of low-quality content. The recent "Panda" change tackles the difficult task of algorithmically assessing website quality. Taking a step back, we wanted to explain some of the ideas and research that drive the development of our algorithms.

Below are some questions that one could use to assess the "quality" of a page or an article. These are the kinds of questions we ask ourselves as we write algorithms that attempt to assess site quality. Think of it as our take at encoding what we think our users want.

Of course, we aren't disclosing the actual ranking signals used in our algorithms because we don't want folks to game our search results; but if you want to step into Google's mindset, the questions below provide some guidance on how we've been looking at the issue:

- Would you trust the information presented in this article?
- Is this article written by an expert or enthusiast who knows the topic well, or is it more shallow in nature?
- Does the site have duplicate, overlapping, or redundant articles on the same or similar topics with slightly different keyword variations?
- Would you be comfortable giving your credit card information to this site?
- Does this article have spelling, stylistic, or factual errors?
- Are the topics driven by genuine interests of readers of the site, or does the site generate content by attempting to guess what might rank well in search engines?
- Does the article provide original content or information, original reporting, original research, or original analysis?
- Does the page provide substantial value when compared to other pages in search results?
- How much quality control is done on content?
- Does the article describe both sides of a story?
- Is the site a recognized authority on its topic?
- Is the content mass-produced by or outsourced to a large number of creators, or spread across a large network of sites, so that individual pages or sites don't get as much attention or care?
- Was the article edited well, or does it appear sloppy or hastily produced?
- For a health related query, would you trust information from this site?
- Would you recognize this site as an authoritative source when mentioned by name?
- Does this article provide a complete or comprehensive description of the topic?

- Does this article contain insightful analysis or interesting information that is beyond obvious?
- Is this the sort of page you'd want to bookmark, share with a friend, or recommend?
- Does this article have an excessive amount of ads that distract from or interfere with the main content?
- Would you expect to see this article in a printed magazine, encyclopedia or book?
- Are the articles short, unsubstantial, or otherwise lacking in helpful specifics?
- Are the pages produced with great care and attention to detail vs. less attention to detail?
- Would users complain when they see pages from this site?

Writing an algorithm to assess page or site quality is a much harder task, but we hope the questions above give some insight into how we try to write algorithms that distinguish higher-quality sites from lower-quality sites.