



Introduction to SEO and Keywords

How to make sure people find your business when they search
online

Introduction

You need to keep internet search engines happy if you want a consistent flow of visitors to your site who are looking for your products and services. Even if you run an offline business, your online marketing efforts, and this includes your website or blog, need to be found by the search engines. What two important factors help search engines find your content and list it in their search results so that people can find your business when they are searching online? They are:

- 1) Search Engine Optimization (SEO)
- 2) Keywords and Keyword Phrases

In the early days of the internet you could simply repeat a keyword over and over, and your web page or piece of content would rank high in search results for that particular word. As search engines evolved, they realized that this type of "keyword stuffing" resulted in poor content. Search engines changed their algorithms, as they do frequently, and SEO has also changed as a result.



How search engines work

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Search engines are web pages where you enter words when you are searching for products, services, information, and other things on the internet. Search engines like Google and Bing are constantly roaming the vast World Wide Web. They employ search engine "spiders" who "crawl" the web, and their ongoing goal is to find and index every web page and piece of content on the internet.

Google is the largest and most important internet search engine in the world. Since its launch in 1997, Google has dominated the search engine market and today has 90%, followed by Bing with 4% and Yahoo with 3%. Google's search engine may find over 1 million pages or pieces of content concerning "squirrel-proof bird feeders". Among all of those many pages, how does Google decide which content to rank at the top of its search results? Search engines rank content higher when that content has been optimized according to the search engine's current ranking algorithm.

An important part of search engine algorithms is concerned with keywords. When you have the right mix of keywords, search engine optimization, and great content, you will eventually rank higher than your competition. Let's take a closer look at the 2 major functions of search engines:



Crawling and indexing

All of the information linked online can be seen as a spider's web. As mentioned above, search engine spiders are always crawling the web, looking for new and updated content. When they come across a new web page, or a page they have previously seen which has been changed in some way, they add that content to their search engine library, or index.

Incidentally, search engine spiders read code and text. They don't read text exactly the same way a human being does, but they are getting better all the time. Search engine providers like Google are constantly working to make their software as human as possible. This means your content should be easy to read. It also means HTML and other code used to design your site needs to be appealing to the search engines as well. When you do both of those things properly, the search engines send you plenty of relevant traffic.

According to complicated and detailed formulas, search engines index that content as more or less relevant for certain keywords and keyword phrases. A page which ranks #1 on Google for "homemade lemonade recipes" may not even be indexed at all for the keyword phrase "how to raise zebras". That's because different words are used to discuss those very different topics. This is why using the appropriate keywords, and related words and phrases, is extremely important so that search engines can find your content and index it properly.



Providing search results

Once the spiders have done their job, the search engine begins the task you are most familiar with – delivering search results. You search for information online all the time. Though Google, Bing, or some other search engine may show thousands of pages of search results, you probably never venture past the first page of those results. This is because you assume whatever pages are ranked high for your search phrase, they are more relevant to what you are looking for than pages which are ranked lower.

That brings us to the ongoing and difficult job of search engines. They have to scour all of the information on the constantly changing Web, and then list search results in order of most relevant to least relevant for the particular word, term, or phrase you entered. Change just 1 or 2 words in the phrase you are searching for, and you can drastically change the search results. This is why keywords and phrases are so important in helping your content rank high, so you receive more relevant web traffic than if you have lower-ranked pages.



Why are backlinks important

Backlinks are important because they help determine the relevancy and popularity as far as particular keywords and search terms are concerned. Backlinks are incoming hyperlinks from one web page to another. These can be internal links (from one of your website's pages to another page on that same site), or external (a link to your web page from somewhere other than your site).

Have you ever clicked on a link on Facebook? Perhaps a friend of yours mentioned a movie trailer or preview that sparked your interest. They included a link so you could check out the preview to determine if you would like to see the movie. When you clicked on that link, you were taken off of Facebook, and sent to the page where that movie trailer was located.

By doing so you create what is called a backlink. You "linked" from Facebook to the movie trailer you wanted to watch. When ranking nearly identical content, the page with more relevant backlinks will almost always outrank similar pages with fewer relevant backlinks.

Think of this as a popularity contest. Imagine an instance in which search engine spiders are crawling the web for content, and they come across 2 similar pages discussing the benefits of organic foods. They check out the code, text, images, videos, meta-tags, and everything else that makes up both of those pages. If they can't find some way to rank one of those pages higher or lower than the other, they begin to study the backlinks for those pages. One page may have 100 backlinks from social media sites and other websites talking about organic food. If the second page only has 20 back links from relevant pages, it is going to be ranked lower in search results than the page with more backlinks.



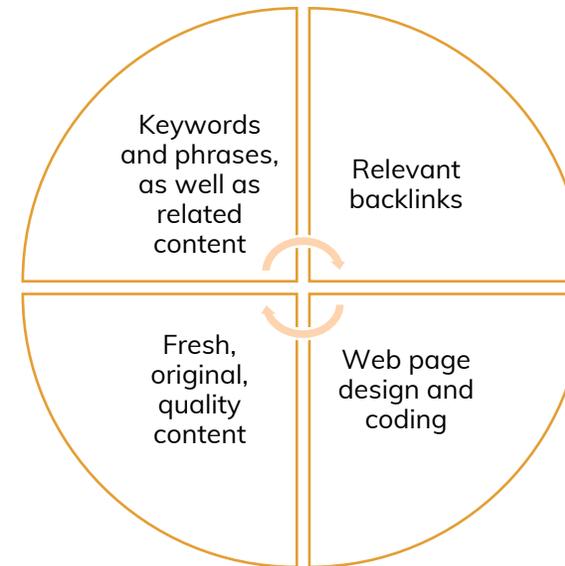
How Ranking is Determined

Search engine algorithms change all the time. Google tells us that thousands of their engineers and scientists are hard at work refining algorithms and building useful new ways to search.

Because of this, it can be difficult to keep a handle on exactly how rankings are determined.

Although ranking algorithms can change over time, certain metrics are viewed as important year after year as far as search results are concerned.

The following elements are important to consider when optimizing your web content for search engines:



Why SEO is Necessary

Knowing how search engines work arms you with some very powerful information. For instance, if Google is looking for 10 different search engine ranking factors, and you provide them with nine while your competitor only delivers five, your ranking for relevant keywords is probably going to be higher.

This is why search engine optimization is so important. When you design your site and write your content according to search engine requirements, you effectively communicate exactly what your web page, website, and any other online content is about. This leaves no confusion in the eyes of the search engines. Instead of sending you just any web traffic, they can get your content in front of the people who are looking for exactly what you have to offer.

Done correctly, SEO can reward you very handsomely. Put quite simply, the higher you rank for a particular keyword or phrase, the more free, relevant traffic you get. Consider this:

70% of all organic search traffic goes to the top 5 listings in search engine results.

The further down search result rankings you appear, the less traffic you will receive. Your aim should be to appear on the first page of Google search results for several keywords and phrases relevant to your niche. That way, you have multiple opportunities for your target market to find you, depending on what they're searching for.

Important SEO Factors

Search engines are very good at reading HTML text. HTML, or Hypertext Markup Language, is "a standardized system for tagging text files to achieve font, color, graphic, and hyperlink effects on World Wide Web pages". This is how almost all web content is designed. You may see words, pictures, and videos on a web page, but what you are seeing is actually created by HTML code.

Even when you are adding a video clip, digital photo, or audio file to your site, you need to name those files in a specific way to tell the search engines what that content is about. Without optimizing your content for search engines, your web pages don't get indexed, no one finds you online, and all of your internet marketing efforts are wasted.

Getting a lot of traffic to your online content should not be your goal. You should focus on attracting relevant, targeted traffic. If you receive 100,000 visitors to your website every month, that may look on the surface like a good thing. However, if those visitors are searching for content irrelevant to your website, they leave quickly.

How do you ensure that you are speaking the language of internet search engines effectively, so they deliver relevant traffic that is looking for exactly what you are offering? You do this by keeping the following important search engine ranking factors in mind when designing your website and creating online content.



1 **Make Your URL SEO-friendly**

Search engines use your URL to find a clue on what your site is about. Remove dates, categories, and any other unnecessary information or symbols from your URL, add relevant keywords, and keep it as short as possible.

2 **Add Your Target Keyword or Phrase Early On in Your Post, Preferably Early in the First Sentence**

If you are writing about "how to train a parakeet", it wouldn't make sense for that phrase to first appear in the last paragraph of your blog post. The things you begin talking about early on in your content give search engines a quick idea about what your content is covering.

3 **Related Keywords and Phrases**

LSI (latent semantic indexing) is a fancy way of saying search engines like to see words and phrases related to your target keyword. If you are targeting "paleo diet recipes", you should include phrases like "weight loss recipes," "low-carb diets," and other related phrases.

4 **Go Long With Your Content**

Across all niches, as an average, when your content is at least 1,800 words or more, you have a better chance of being ranked in the top 10 for particular keywords and phrases.

5 **H1, H2, and H3 Your Keyword**

Your H1, H2, and H3 tags (header tags) function as your page's sub-headlines. Make sure your header tags include the keyword you are trying to rank for.



- 6 Place Your Target Keywords in the Very Beginning of Your Title Tag**
Your title tag should begin with the keyword that your web page is focusing on. If you are trying to rank for the keyword phrase "blood type diet", your title tag should be "Blood Type Diet Recipes" as opposed to "Delicious Recipes for the Blood Type Diet".
- 7 Add Multimedia Like Screen Shots, Images, and Videos**
This does not directly affect your page ranking according to most search engine algorithms. However, multimedia does keep people on your page longer, and also drives user interaction, two important search engine ranking factors.
- 8 Outbound Links**
Search engines, especially Google, like to see you participating on the web. This means when you link from your site to popular authority sites relative to your niche, your ranking improves. These tags are also the 'styles' in a WordPress post, so use them for headings and sub-headings when you format a post or page.
- 9 Internal Linking**
Link from your content to other content on the same site. Internal links are just as important as external links in the ranking process.
- 10 Get Social**
Add social sharing buttons before and after your blog posts and articles. This makes it easier for people to share your content, which builds backlinks, drives traffic, and gets you noticed by the search engines



11

Page Loading Speed

Google have continually and repeatedly pointed out that the faster your page loads, the better as far as your search engine rankings concerned. If you have a slow site, consider hiring a developer to figure out how to speed it up for you.

12

Mobile-Friendly Design

When your site is designed to work on both mobile and desktop, it makes the search engines' job easier, which also makes it easier for people to find you. That doesn't necessarily mean you need a whole separate 'mobile' site. Instead, you can make sure that your design is 'responsive'.

13

User-Friendly Design

Set up your site to be easy to navigate. This not only helps your users find different things of interest, it also helps the search engines crawl your site. That means they can find more pages to rank!

14

Security

With security a bigger and bigger issue on the internet, search engines give a secure website a better ranking. Secure means that you'll see 'https' in front of a url, rather than 'http'. You'll need to get an 'SSL' certificate from your website host in order to have a secure site. If you're unsure how that works, ask your tech support person or your hosting service what to do.

15

Incoming Backlinks

This is a crucial piece of any search engine ranking algorithm. When you have a lot of inbound links pointing to your site, and they come from related pieces of content, you will rank higher for specific keywords and phrases.



Designing your content with
search engines in mind

You just learned the importance of including your target keyword or phrase in your header tags and title tags. Those are just a few of the important search engine considerations you should be making when creating content online, apart from keyword placement. While including keywords and related phrases is definitely needed to tell search engines what your content is about, the same is true for other factors.

Effective search engine optimization means including clues in your coding and website design to keep the search engines happy as well. The 12 search engine ranking factors discussed in your last module will help boost your rank for target keywords and phrases. The following considerations will also help.

Write for human beings first

You should always create content by first considering the human factor. Catering to technical SEO factors is definitely important to improve the success of your online efforts. However, you should, in every case, write for human beings first and search engines second.

Now that you know the importance of keywords for search engine ranking and traffic, that last statement may confuse you. You may be thinking, "Shouldn't I be sure to include keywords and related words and phrases in my content?" You definitely should, but the best way to do that to make both people and search engines happy is to just go ahead and get your message down.

Write your blog posts, articles, press releases, or other content with no concern for the search engines. Create content that solves a big problem in your marketplace. What are the things that keep your target audience up at night? What problems, concerns, and questions does your perfect prospect have? Make content that answers those questions and provides value to your readers.

Google, Bing, and the other major search engines constantly talk about quality content being the most important component of their search engine algorithms. Take the time to make a great piece of content, thinking about the human emotions involved regarding your target keyword or phrase. After you have done that, you can edit your content to ensure you have other important ranking factors covered.



Use HTML

Odds are your website or blog has been coded in HTML. This is the preferred code for search engines. If you choose one of the popular blogging or website platforms like WordPress as the basis for your web property, everything you create will be defaulted to HTML.

In some rare cases some code other than HTML may be used. This could happen if you hire someone else to build your website. Communicate with your web designer, letting them know that your site needs to be created in HTML. That is what the search engines prefer, so it just makes sense to use this particular code.



Link structure

The World Wide Web is not named the World Wide Filing Cabinet for a reason. The way all of the information on the internet is connected resembles a spider's web more than a traditional linear filing system. On a spider's web a single strand of silk takes you to an intersection of 2, 3, or more strands. Each one of those strands offers multiple options as well.

On the internet, the strands that connect web pages are called links. The importance of internal and external backlinks was mentioned earlier. Just as important as relevancy is to your links, having the proper structure will also help your SEO efforts.

The proper internal link structure for your website begins with your homepage. That important page should link to relevant pages on your site. Each one of those pages should then link to other pages on your site that deal with the same topic or information, or a related keyword or phrase. It should be easy for search engines to trace every page on your website back to your homepage.

This makes it much easier for indexing. Consider that you have 1 homepage and 4 other pages on your website, pages A, B, C, and D. Your homepage links to pages A and B. Pages C and D are not linked to your homepage, or to pages A and B. This can lead to those pages being "orphaned" by the search engines, which means they are absolutely invisible and not accessible to web surfers.

Make sure that every page of your website or blog is linked to another page on that site, and that they are eventually linked back to your homepage. This is extremely important for quality assessment and better keyword ranking.



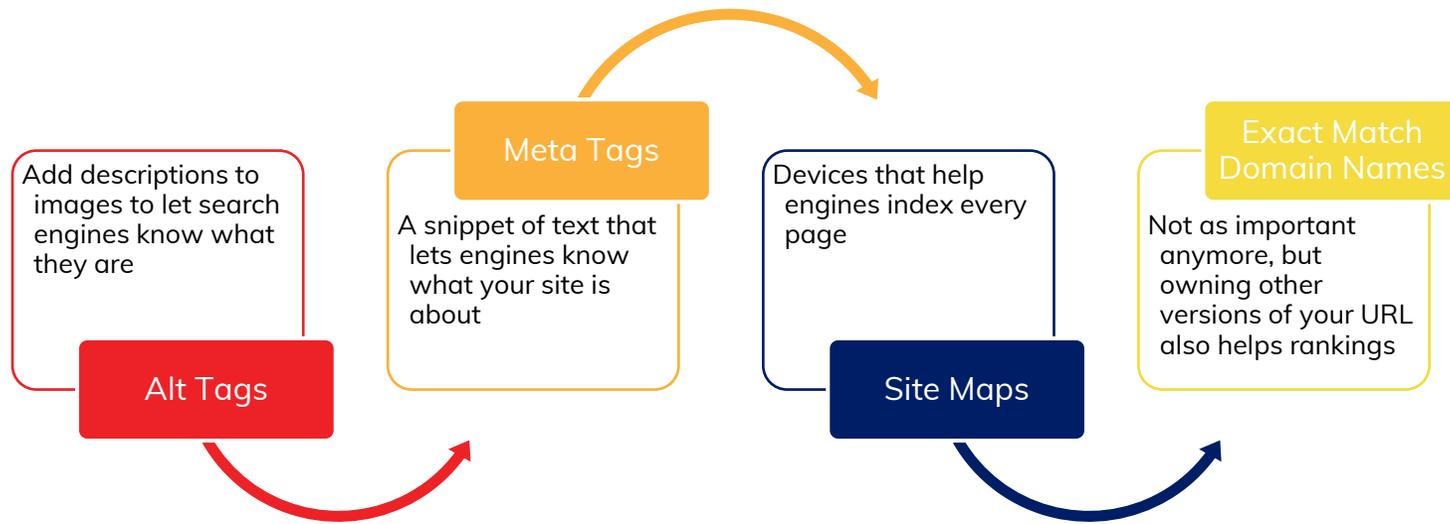
Not all external links are equal

In the Wild West days of the internet, ranking for a particular keyword was easy, as far as backlinking was concerned. If you had more backlinks headed to your site than your competitor, you ranked better. The relevancy of those links did not matter. Your site might have been all about peanut butter and jelly, and you might have established a high number of backlinks from websites about orangutans, seedless oranges, and other irrelevant content.

As long as your incoming links outnumbered your competitor, where those links came from was of no concern to the search engines. That is no longer the case. You can establish just a few inbound and outbound links and outperform a web page targeted for the same keyword, even if that competitor has hundreds of more links than you. This is possible as long as the relevancy of your incoming and outgoing links pertains to your target keyword or phrase better than the competing site.

Develop relationships with authority sites that make sense to your niche or market. Offer to write guest blog posts for them, pointing back to your site. Add links to a few authority sites on your site or blog. When posting to social media, write updates, tweets, and other content that are filled with relevant keywords and phrases, and then link back to your site. Keyword and topic relevancy is extremely important when building your link structure.





Alt Tags

Every image you post to your site includes "alt tag" coding. That alt tag is an attribute of your image coding that gives a text alternative, explaining what the image is about. In case an image cannot be displayed for whatever reason, the alt tag description is shown instead. This used to be an important part of the Google ranking algorithm, but is not as significant anymore.

Meta Tags

These are small “snippets” of text. If you do not manually set your meta tag, a random group of text is taken from your web page. Your meta tag is what appears in search engine results, and you can decide whatever you want a page's meta-tag to be by including it in your HTML code. They help tell search engines what your page is about.



Site Maps

Site maps are devices that help search engines index every page of your site. Most popular blogging and website platforms, like WordPress, have multiple site map plugins that do all of the work for you. Simply add the plugin to your site or blog, follow the directions, and your site map is updated regularly.

Exact Match Domain Names

In the past, owning an exact match domain name (EMD) was an important part of SEO. This means that if you had a website dedicated to silver belt buckles, you wanted your domain name to be SilverBeltBuckle.com, SilverBeltBuckle.org, or SilverBeltBuckle.net. When your domain name was an exact match for the main keyword of your website, it helped your ranking for that word. This is not as important anymore, according to Google. However, it is another simple way to tell the search engines exactly what your site is about, and is user-friendly for web surfers as well.



How to perform keyword
research to find the 'right'
keywords for your content

The link between smart keyword usage and high search engine rankings has been mentioned throughout this course. However, you need to use the 'right' keywords and phrases to get the most out of your SEO efforts. How do you discover what keywords you should be using? This information is made available to you through keyword research. Keyword research helps you spend time making content which focuses on those words and phrases that deliver your most targeted prospects.

These are the people who are looking for exactly what you have to offer, and smart keyword research helps you find them. A small amount of relevant web traffic will always outperform larger amounts of web visitors that are not interested in what you have to say.

What is a Longtail Keyword?

Longtail keywords usually deliver a lower amount of traffic than basic keywords. However, they are highly relevant to a particular topic. For instance, "body weight training programs for seniors" is going to deliver less web visitors than "body weight training". On the other hand, that longer keyword phrase is further along in the buying cycle. The person typing that longer search term is much more likely to buy a relevant product than someone who types in the shorter, more general search phrase.

People who search for "body weight training programs for seniors" are looking for a very specific piece of information. By including that longtail keyword on your website, that web page will still be ranked for the shorter-term, "body weight training", but will also draw the more specific traffic. Be sure to include longtail keywords and phrases, as well as shorter, relevant search terms, in all of your web content.



How to perform keyword research

Performing simple keyword research is relatively easy. Pull up a Google search engine box, and type in a keyword or phrase that you want to rank for. Make sure you enclose your search term in quotation marks, such as "your search term". After you hit enter, you will see a phrase at the top of the search results which says how many results your search has revealed.

Searching for "custom military dog tags" may yield 40,000 results. What does that number actually mean? It shows the number of different web pages that contain that exact same search term, with the words in your search phrase listed in exactly that order. Generally speaking, if there are fewer than 50,000 pages targeting a specific keyword or phrase, this is considered a medium to low level of competition.

(There are plenty of excellent free and paid keyword researching websites and pieces of software, which are listed at the end of this module.)



Targeting the 'Right' Keyword

If you perform the exercise listed above and find a low competition keyword, does that necessarily mean it will be easy for you to get a lot of traffic by targeting that word or phrase? Unfortunately, low competition is not the only guarantee of consistent traffic. Enough people have to be searching for that particular word or phrase for your marketing efforts to pay off.

People may only search for the phrase "custom military dog tags" 500 times per month. Even if you could obtain one of the top 3 or 5 search engine listings for that term, you would only be guaranteed a portion of that traffic. So in addition to medium or low competition, you want to see significant monthly searches for a particular word or phrase.

If you don't already have one, open a [Google Adwords](#) account. It is free to do so. This gives you access to the Google Keyword Planner tool. This free tool lists how many times each month people search for particular keywords and phrases, as well as the level of competition you are up against.

Start researching keywords and phrases relevant to the products and services you offer. In most cases you want a minimum of 100 to 500 searches a day on average, or 3,000 to 15,000 searches per month, for any particular word or phrase. When those parameters overlap with little to no competition, you have found an excellent target for your SEO and keyword marketing attention.



Judging Keyword Value

A longtail keyword is an example of a search phrase that usually has a small amount of traffic. However, because the keyword is so specific, it delivers targeted traffic that you can tailor your content to. These people are much more likely to become customers in the future than if someone is searching for a shorter, much more general term.

That is why longtail keywords are often more valuable than keywords with much more traffic. Another way to judge keyword value is by identifying "buyer keywords". If a search phrase includes words like "buy," "price," "availability," or other similar terms, that keyword phrase is showing buyer intent. You can end up with more sales from low traffic with these types of search terms, since they show that someone is ready to make a purchase.



Popular Keyword Research Tools

Keyword research is a viable way to uncover exactly where you should focus your SEO efforts, and has been for some time. Because of this, many keyword research tools have been developed. The following applications, pieces of software, and websites make keyword research easy.

[SEMrush](#)

[LongTail Pro](#)

[Google Keyword Planner Tool](#)

[Google Trends](#)

[BuzzSumo](#)

[Microsoft Bing Ads Intelligence](#)

[MarketSamurai](#)

[Wordtracker's Free Basic Keyword Demand](#)



Keyword Density

How often you use your keywords used to be very important to achieve high search engine rankings. Keyword density is the term which expresses how many times in every 100 words your target keyword or phrase is mentioned. A keyword density of 10% means that your keyword can be found 10 times in every 100 words.

These days search engines will penalize you, or refuse to index your content at all, if you mention a particular word too often. This is called keyword stuffing, and you definitely want to steer clear of this behavior. There is no secret keyword density which guarantees high search engine rankings for a particular term.

Generally speaking, using a keyword, related word, or synonym once or twice every 100 to 150 words is plenty to get your message across. Write for quality and readability, not to hit some particular keyword density.



Common SEO mistakes

Mentioning your target keyword over and over again is one of the most common search engine optimization mistakes. Another equally common problem is creating "fluff" instead of quality content. Never waste your time making a piece of content that doesn't deliver quality information.

Other deadly SEO errors include not taking the time to develop relevant backlinks, not creating a site map, and not adding fresh, new information on a consistent basis. Always add internal links connecting your site's pages to one another. Your next course module will help you avoid one of the most prevalent SEO mistakes.



Measuring and tracking your efforts

Search engines like Google change their search algorithms frequently. Because of these changes, constantly measuring and tracking your SEO efforts is essential. If you don't track before and after results, how do you know if your SEO is paying off? Besides, what works this year may not work as well next year. By monitoring your SEO work you discover what is working, as well as what is not, and can direct your attention appropriately.

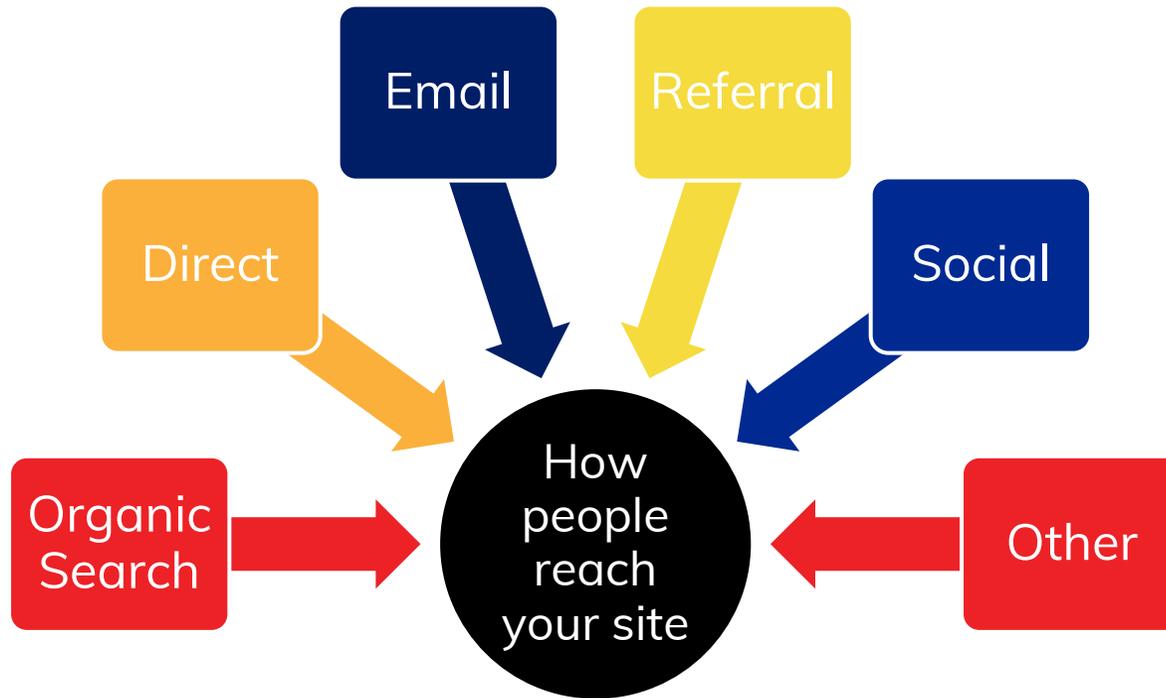
What to track

Keyword research and on-site optimization will keep the search engines happy, sending you a constant stream of free traffic. The simplest way to do this is to keep an SEO log. What should you be tracking? Measuring the following metrics will ensure your SEO hard work pays off, delivering the results you are looking for.



Track your traffic sources

Where did your traffic come from? As a percentage of overall traffic, Google Analytics breaks down how people reach your site or how you 'acquire' visitors according to:



The traffic you receive from internet search engines is obviously important as it relates to your SEO work.

Record how many search engine visitors you receive each month, in relation to separate keywords and phrases. Over time you will see the number of your visitors increase, decrease, or stay the same, as you make changes to your SEO plan.



Separate Your Traffic by Search Engine

Different SEO strategies are rewarded in different ways by internet search engines. You may find that a keyword that ranks very well for you with Google doesn't rank as well with Bing, and vice versa. Approximately 90% of your web visitors will come from Google and Bing, and you need to know how much traffic you receive from each of those and any other search engines.



Define Search for keywords

Your keyword research has revealed words and phrases you are going to be targeting in your search engine optimization efforts. Each one of those phrases will deliver different amounts of search engine traffic. Software that analyzes your traffic will list search results, and separate that information by different keyword phrases.



Conversion rates

How much of your traffic leads to sales? How many web visitors sign up for your email list? It is important to know what percentage of traffic does what you want them to do. By tracking and measuring conversion rates according to different keyword phrases, you can direct your content creation toward the keywords that deliver the highest converting traffic.



Links

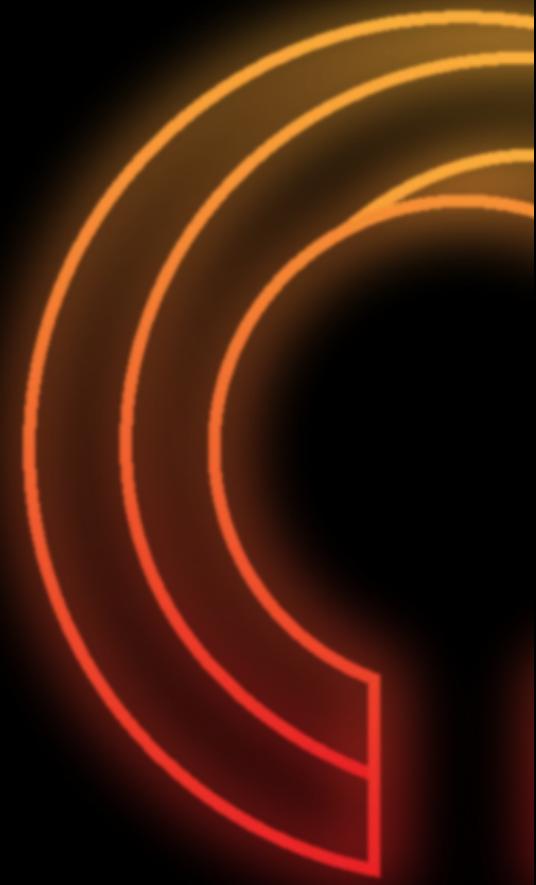
Backlinks are one of the most important search engine metrics you should track. This is because they continue, year after year, to be highly regarded by the search engines. You should always track the backlinks pointing to your web properties. In addition to quantity, you should measure the quality of these important backlinks. This is revealed by URL ratings that SEO tracking software provides. One great tool is called [ahrefs](#).



Time on-site

How long does the average visitor stay on your site? If your bounce rate is high, meaning most of your visitors leave immediately after reaching your site, search engines believe this is because your content is of low quality, and not relevant to a particular search term or phrase.





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