

# SEO MADE SIMPLE



SEO—the famed Search Engine Optimization. You've probably heard this term a million times, and know it's important for your business. But why? If you had to define what it means, what it entails, and why it's such a big deal...could you do it?

SEO is the process of optimizing a website for better placement in search engine results. Let's say you need information about a place you're visiting on vacation, or are looking for a cookie recipe. You'll probably do a search online. When you type your query into Google, Bing, or any other major search engine, they will serve you the most relevant search results based on a huge number of factors.

# HEADS UP!

When we say SEO takes a “huge number of factors” into account, we specifically mean the hundreds of factors programmed into complex algorithms that each search engine uses to optimize search results according to their idea of how to rank results. And, last we checked, Google dominates the search scene with a whopping 87.35% of daily queries, so here we’re going to focus on SEO factors we know that Google looks at seriously. Optimizing for other search engines will have a lot in common with Google SEO, but the algorithms won’t be exactly the same.

Once you’ve typed your search in, you’ll most likely click on one of the first five results that pop up. This was recently confirmed by a MOZ study; on average, the first 5 results of a search attract more than 67% of all clicks.

And there it is—that’s why SEO is important for any business. SEO brings colossal boosts to website traffic and brand reputation if that website shows up on page one of search results. These days, 40,000 searches are performed on Google every second. What’s more, 93% of all online activities start with a search engine, and 39% of global eCommerce traffic comes from web searches. Check out the stats on SEO Tribunal. If your links are in the right place at the right time, that traffic is yours for the taking.



Statistics aside, with great opportunity comes stiff competition. More and more websites are competing today for better placement in search engine results. To make sure none of the most cunning strategists abuse the system, search engines have developed sophisticated algorithms to rank websites based on hundreds of factors, including on-page and off-page elements. This is done to serve people with the most relevant search results.

Optimizing your pick of these factors for better rankings in search results is exactly what SEO is all about. However, optimizing for that full slate of hundreds of factors is both impractical and, surprisingly, damaging to your site ranking. Applying too many SEO tactics can be seen as abusive by search engines, thereby nullifying your work.



The key to a successful SEO strategy lies in balance. Keeping your SEO strategy simple while focusing on high-quality content and measurable results are the spark that ignites SEO success. In the following list, you will be presented with an overview of what we think are the most important SEO factors.

## 1. On-page SEO

SEO is divided into two major categories: off-page and on-page. Off-page SEO are tactics performed outside the boundaries of your website, like backlinking and social media marketing. On-Page SEO describes tactics performed on the website itself, such as page formatting, mobile usability, and keyword density. Although both categories are essential for SEO, we're going to focus more on on-page SEO because it's the easiest to control.

## 2. Referring domains

The number and "authority" of domains that link to a website are some of the most important ranking factors in Google's algorithm. Google determines the credibility of a website based on the number and quality of links pointing to that website or content. Links from high-authority domains are much more valuable for your ranking, and links from low-quality websites can actually hurt your ranking. This takes us down a rabbit hole of backlinking strategies and other tactics we can use to boost referral authority. Give us a shout at [coinmo.co/contact](https://coinmo.co/contact) to get into greater detail on this one.

## What is "domain authority?"

**Domain authority is a search engine ranking score that predicts how a website will rank on search engine results pages (SERPs) on a scale from 1 to 100. It was developed by MOZ and accounts for a variety of factors when ranking a website, including the number and quality of external links to a site. The higher the ranking of the page pointing to your site, the greater your ability to rank high on SERPs. Domain authority is important because it reflects the credibility of your website in the eyes of search engines.**

## 3. Mobile usability

Google announced in 2015 that it would take into account the mobile usability of a site as a key ranking factor. This means a website is now ranked by how easy it is to use on a touch-screen device like a tablet or phone. The number of mobile searches has exploded—and so it makes sense for Google to give ranking boosts to sites that are mobile-friendly for users performing searches on smaller devices.

Specific factors—like quick load times on mobile devices, optimized user experience (UX) on mobile devices, and displaying the total content of a website on mobile—can significantly improve the mobile usability rating of a website, and ultimately its SERPs.

## 4. Content quality

Content and SEO go hand-in-hand. The most recent evolutions of Google's page authority algorithm value engaging, unique, and valuable content that focuses on people instead of pure SEO—or even your brand.

Your content should focus on differentiating your website from others by expertly answering the questions you know your future clients have. Decide what's unique about your brand and use it to spice up your client-centric content. Avoid dated SEO techniques like keyword stuffing.

## 5. Readability scores

Readability and content quality run together, too. Readability is the measure of how simple it is to read content, and it's an important ranking factor that Google takes into account.

Like it or not, we usually have to take our content voice down a notch or two to get better readability scores. The recommended reading level of a fifth-grader doesn't mean your future clients are in the fifth grade, but it is the reality of the kind of content that engages people online. The digital world is moving fast, so it's the simple, easy-to-read content that will win the attention of website visitors.

## 6. Keyword Strategy

Although keywords aren't as important as they used to be, they still play a fundamental part in SEO. Google uses keywords both to determine the topic of a webpage and to rank the page.

When it comes to proper keyword strategy, there are some new considerations to take into account. With the booming competition for website visibility, ranking for shorter, more popular keywords will be rough without millions of dollars devoted to marketing efforts.



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Instead of focusing on high-competition general keywords, focus on related keywords with lower competition and strategic long-tail keywords (i.e., keywords or key phrases that are more specific). Try to understand how people search for your products and services. Use synonyms of the more popular search terms, and consider new optimizations for voice search. By picking variations and semantically-related keywords and phrases instead of more popular keywords, you can win big with hyper-strategic SEO.

## Long-tail keywords

Long-tail keywords are search strings that contain at least three words, for example, “remodelers with EPA certification.”

## Voice Search

To optimize for voice search, ask yourself how people talk to Siri or Alexa. “Siri, where I can get my nails done?”

By optimizing for keywords with less competition, not only do your rankings skyrocket, but your conversion rates will be dead-on; there will be greater visibility around exactly what services or products you offer.

## 7. Page Formatting

Page formatting in relation to SEO describes where certain text or visual elements of a webpage are placed so that the page's content may be more easily broken down—for both search engines and users. Optimizing a page's format generally includes:

- Using Keywords as close as possible to the beginning of the page's title, or keywords that are in the title.
- Wrapping titles and subtitles in <h> tags. The main title should be wrapped in <h1> and </h1> while subheadings should be wrapped in <h2>, <h3>, etc. These titles are called headers.
- Using secondary keywords within the first or second paragraph of an article or page copy.
- Using multimedia, catchy headings, bold, italics, and any other formatting that can increase the time users spend on a webpage by helping them pick out the engaging nuggets of information they came looking for.

## 8. Internal links and internal anchor text

Internal links are a critical factor for SEO

- To begin with, Google's algorithm follows links to discover (or “crawl”) and rank new webpages. If a webpage doesn't have any link pointing to it, Google will never be able to find it.
- Using internal links can help Google understand what your website is all about, and distinguish between the important and less important pages.

The more internal links a page has, the more value it has in the eyes of Google. And the individual pages of your website can have different authority rankings, too, meaning the more links you have to and from your high-ranking pages, the better.

Using anchor texts (the text you highlight and turn into a hyperlink) that are descriptive and carry keywords can also improve the ranking of your website. With smart anchor texts, Google can crawl your website better and quickly understand the content of the entire sitemap.

**WARNING:** Avoid using excessive keyword stuffing or thinking only of search engines with your internal links. The key is to use anchor text linking to internal content that actually helps users navigate your site and find what they want.

## 9. Blog excerpts and page metadata

Believe it or not, blog snippets and metadata don't actually influence the ranking of a web page. However, using good-quality metadata and blog snippets can increase the click-through-rate when your pages do show up in search, which IS a critical factor in SEO. The key is to focus on snippets that accurately display what a page is about. Keep your focus on the user, not the search engines.

## 10. Image optimization (size, frequency of use, and alt data)

A successful SEO strategy always includes relevant and optimized images.

Images are more engaging than text, and having great images will decrease your bounce rate. Users will stay on your page longer, and Google will take note.

Here are some other important factors to take into account when optimizing your website images for SEO:

- Use high-quality images. Just like with high-quality content, search engines prefer high-quality images that are relevant and engaging.
- Reduce the size of images. The loading speed of a page is an important factor of SEO, especially for mobile load times. Use JPEG or PNG formats, and optimize your images via Photoshop or an online optimization tool.
- Use captions and alt text (text which describes an image on-page). Captions can influence SEO and will also make your content more engaging. Incorporating alt text will both make your website accessible to people with disabilities (improving its usability, and with it your page ranking), and will help search engines better understand and catalogue your content.

## Let's recap!

When it comes to search ranking, Google, Bing, and all the other search engines take hundreds of factors into account to determine the "authority" of each page on the internet.

Focusing on optimizing for the full list of SEO factors is counterproductive, and can actually hurt your rankings. The key to a successful SEO strategy is balance.

If you want to succeed and harness the opportunities SEO can offer, the following is a blog posting SEO checklist.

## You made it this far!

We're going to leave you with our one-and-done checklist for blog and website content writing. It leverages key SEO strategies without overdoing it (or having to spend hours on a single blog post).



**“The world of marketing has changed. You can lead the change or be a victim of change.”**

**- Denise Morrison**



# BLOG POSTING SEO CHECKLIST

## First draft:

- Decide what related internal content you'll link to
- Draft good content
- Look up external links to include to support your points  
(and remember, the higher domain ranking of the other website, the better)
- Link everything up using killer anchor text

## Second sweep:

- Tweak your draft with a sweep for on-page SEO
- Check for readability

## Final draft:

- Format it so it looks good
- Optimize your photos
- Include the right meta data  
(photos, snippets and excerpts)

## Promote:

- Publish!
- Share!
- Reach out for cross-linking!
- Measure (analytics)



# Repeat!

Repeat this checklist for each post, and you've got a great SEO strategy.