

Gone are the days of keyword and key phrase stuffing. SEO (Search Engine Optimization) is now, FINALLY, coming around to align with how users engage with content and how it's presented to them. That **should** make it easier, but as those of us in marketing know, it's not that simple. So here's a quick primer.

1. Keywords/Phrases Research

Start here. Too often keyword research is done AFTER the content is developed. Don't do that. Don't force the keywords into existing content. It never works right.

You have a list of keywords and phrases that YOU want to rank for. These are essentially how you want your product/service to be perceived, found. Those are part of your brand. But they're yours. You live and breathe this industry, so you speak your language. Do your customers? Not sure, well, do a trend search. You can use any number of tools or platforms to see what's ranking, trending in your industry, and what words your competitors are using.

This is where you will begin to identify and parse the trends, interests, and what you offer, and how you will present it on different pages throughout your website.

2. Keyword/Phrases Selection

SEO is organic search, so it is, by definition, how your customers find your content. So you want to choose words and phrases that draw your customers in. (HINT: Remember, marketing is about WIIFM, What's In It For Me, so select the combination of words and phrases that align your customer interests and your offerings.

Old school SEO involved repetition and stuffing. Don't do that. It was a bad idea then and finally the search engines realized it. Select different keywords and phrases for different pages on your site. There will always be consistent keywords you want to rank for, and those can be included on your keyword focus, but don't have repeated ones as the primary focus phrase. Use specific ones that are mostly unique to the content on that page (you can tailor the phrase to be unique!).

3. Content Development

Now write your content based on that combination. Tell that story using these keywords and phrases and write it in a way that is effective in grabbing the audience's attention.

4. Content Writing / Presentation

There are several parts to the content that will improve the readability, which is a factor in the SEO ranking and optimizations. Remember the focus is ease of readability and how it aligns with your keywords.

Standard writing applies: intro, easy, short, digestible paragraphs, bullets, conclusions

- **Length:** this varies based on the type of page and content you're creating. A standard article is 600-1100 words recommended, but many instances are less functional with longer content (for example, landing pages, sign in pages. Rule of thumb, keep the consumer in mind. No keyword or content stuffing, because it will take away from the experience, and it will reduce your optimization scores.

- **Title:** include your main focus keyword/phrase in the title (Many SEO ranking tools want engaging "power" words in the titles. If it works, use it, if not, don't stress it.)
- **Subtitle:** whether it shows or doesn't, if you have the option of including one, include one.
- **Opening Paragraph:** include your main keyword as early in the paragraph as possible. Keep it short and simple, tell your readers what they'll find here.
- **Table of Contents:** if applicable, for longer content pages, include a linked TOC at the top
- **Headers:** use them. Use H2 and H3 tags where possible, and include your keyword/phrase in them
- **Paragraphs and Bullets:** make your content scannable, chunk it into small, digestible bits that get the message across quickly
- **Links:** Include Internal Links and External Links
- **Images:** include them, they break up the content. Be sure to include alt tags that include your keyword.

NOTE: a word about ALT tags. They are NOT merely an opportunity to stuff keywords into your page. ALT tags serve a variety of purposes beyond on page SEO. They serve as descriptions used by page readers for those with disabilities, so be sure to make the ALT tags descriptive of what is in the image/what the purpose of the image is to convey within the context of the page. That is the main purpose. Also, they serve as search terms on image searches, so make sure the description you use is viable to stand alone in a search results page.)

- **Summary / Conclusion:** include one.

5. Keyword Density

Using the keyword, phrase throughout your content is important as it reinforces the message, focus. But it must be natural. If including it more than 2-3 times seems forced, then you should reevaluate overall, because it likely means the word isn't aligned with the content of the page. Most instances tweaks to the ordering or wording makes it better. A rough rule of thumb is about once every 100 words.

6. Meta Description

The meta description is the summary of the page that appears in the search results listings in search engines. This can be customized, or it will be automatically pulled from the first words on your webpage. If you're awesome at SEO, this shouldn't be a problem, but for the rest of us, make sure you customize your meta description to say exactly what you want people who are searching for your content to see as the summary. They aren't on the page, they don't have context beyond THEIR OWN SEARCH for what your website offers, so the combination of your page title and summary should match.

REMINDER: as you update your site pages be sure to update your meta descriptions. Oftentimes the focus of a page may change, and it can mix up your keyword focus and appearance, so this should be part of your regular optimization, maintenance practices.

7. Specific Keywords and Phrases

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8. Presentation

It matters. Spacing, fonts, blocking content, etc. It matters to your users, so now it matters to your optimization score. And it matters across platforms -- check how it displays on desktop and mobile, too.

Summary

There are courses and years of expertise that will give in-depth teachings, techniques, tracking of SEO, and that's great, but you need to start somewhere, and you need to understand the basics, regardless of your involvement in marketing, writing, and website development.

SEO is about getting your users to your site so they can consume your awesome content and do something. SEO is about being found and being pertinent. And now not only will you be rewarded by getting found, search engines will give you a better optimization ranking, which helps get you higher on the listings (oh, and it will also help you with better page scores for paid search, so it can reduce the cost!).

SEO trends and algorithms are ALWAYS updating, so you will want to refresh your content and learnings regularly.

Additional Resources:

- [Neil Patel and Website Analyzer](#)
- [SEO Basics: Complete Beginner's Guide to Search Engine Optimization](#)
- [So, You're a CRO Specialist ... that's cute](#)