



Search Engine Optimization:

Keyword Introduction and On-page Factors

Following Search Engine Guidelines will Increase Your Rankings

Webmasters and search engine optimizers often search for ways to get their site better indexed and improve their rankings. You can scour Search Engine Optimization (SEO) forums, read books and talk to other webmasters. But often, one of the most valuable ranking resources is forgotten: the search engines themselves. All three major crawlers, Google, MSN (Windows Live) and Yahoo! offer comprehensive, webmaster-friendly help sections on optimizing your site. Before setting off to optimize your site, make sure you got the basics down by following the rules of the game. The following white paper is a summation of "keyword best practices," as outlined by the major search engines, to maximize your placement on Search Engines.

"Natural" Search Engine Optimization

The process of trying to get your site ranked better in search engine results has become known as "natural" or "organic" search engine optimization (SEO). Since search engines are extremely popular with users and bring in pre-qualified traffic, many sites want to know how they can improve their rankings in non-paid search results. Anyone can launch a pay-per-click campaign on Google, but only a few sites rise to the top of search results. Why is it important to be ranked high organically? Only 20% of browsers ever click on pay-per-click links. The other 80% click on the organic results.

Before you can understand how each search engine scores web sites, you need to understand the various factors they consider. These factors can be divided into two categories, **on-page** and **offsite**.

On-page factors are concerned with keywords and their placement in the HTML:

- Keyword frequency, weight, prominence and proximity
- Format, placement and content of the title tag
- Use of the meta tags
- Use of header tags
- Use of ALT tags

Visit our Website at: www.digitalhill.com

Website Design • e-Commerce • e-Marketing • Spam Blocker • Custom Programming

Off-site factors are not related to the content of your HTML, but rather to the overall quality of your site, search engines perceive it. The major off-site factor is Link popularity and everything related to it, such as the following:

- Number of incoming links
- Anchor text
- Quality of the linking sites
- Directory links, etc

Achieve results

You can improve most of the above factors to achieve higher rankings. We recommend that you work on both on-page and off-site factors at the same time. This is especially important for sites targeting general and highly competitive terms. The search engine marketing landscape is simply too competitive right now to ignore either page-related factors or link popularity.

Choosing your Keywords

Most techniques to improve your search engine rankings have one thing in common -- **keywords**. Choosing appropriate keywords is extremely important. Think about it: Keywords are what lead search engine users to your site.

How to choose your keywords

Choosing the right keywords is the first step to better search engine positioning. Analyze your business carefully and think of all the words that relate to your company or product. Let's say you sell *sheet metal*. What words would you search for when looking for the same product? Ask your colleagues and friends to think about the same question. This is perhaps the most important stage in your war for a spot in search engines' top 20. As you think about keywords, consider the following:

• Who needs your products?

Think about who will use your products, then target them with keywords. For example, if you know that people in the fabrication industry need sheet metal, add words like "sheet metal fabrication" and "custom sheet metal" to your list.

• Include variations of your keywords

People will search for your site using all sorts of keywords. Because of this you should consider including misspelled, capitalized and plural keywords. Always include the longer forms of keywords too.

• Avoid wrong keywords

Do not use "stop words" -- particles like "and" and "the" and common words like "industry." Remember, the more specific your keywords are, the better the chance that people who find your site through search engines will actually benefit from its content.

Visit our Website at: www.digitalhill.com

Website Design • e-Commerce • e-Marketing • Spam Blocker • Custom Programming

- **Look at your competition**

If you have any competitors that are doing well online, look at what terms they're advertising and ranking for. You can get ideas for your own terms by doing competitive research.

- **Use suggestion tools**

Numerous suggestion tools are available to help you pick keywords and research keyword alternatives. Here are a few:

<http://www.yooter.com/keyword/>

<https://adwords.google.com/select/KeywordToolExternal>

Keyword Optimization - The Basics

Keyword Density is the number of occurrences of a key term in relation to the total content. Keyword page density is calculated by taking the number of key word occurrences, and dividing by the total number of words on a page. *Page density* of targeted key terms should be between 3% and 7%. Keyword density is often calculated per tag, per section, and/or per page. As an example, the density of key terms in relation to all other text in the page title tag is extremely important. Important tags, such as the title tag and link anchor text should have a greater keyword density, even as much as 100% (without repetition). The page density, while still worthy of consideration, is less important, as long as there is adequate representation of the targeted terms.

Keyword Proximity refers to the distance in space, as measured in words, between two words or two key phrases. The proximity of a word or phrase in relation to each other and other key phrases is extremely important when determining how to use word combinations in page titles and page content.

Keyword Prominence refers to the importance of a key word or key term, as measured by:

- The position of the key term in relation to the rest of the text in any given position.
- The density of the key word or term on a page and across an entire web site.

Visit our Website at: www.digitalhill.com

Website Design • e-Commerce • e-Marketing • Spam Blocker • Custom Programming

Confidential

Words and/or phrases that appear first in a title, heading, and paragraph are given a greater level of importance in ranking considerations. Managing the prominence of key words, terms and phrases is important for:

- The entire web site architecture
- Each page
- Each title, heading, and all link anchors
- The design of paragraph content

I. Optimizing your Page Title

What is an HTML Page Title and why should I use it?

An HTML Title describes the contents of your web page in one sentence. It's likely to appear in search engines' results and in bookmarks. It's also the first thing a search engine's spider sees on your page. Since your title will be seen by both readers and search engines, it's particularly important.

Your HTML title looks like this:

```
<title>Your title here</title>
```

Your title is the most important part of your page as far as search engines are concerned. Google, Yahoo and MSN also support the title tag and place a lot of importance on keywords that appear inside it. Here are a few tips on how to make you title tag more appealing to both search engines and people.

Using keywords in your HTML title

Don't just make your title the name of your company. It's far more important for a title to contain plenty of targeted keywords. Although you may include your company's name, including keywords should be your top priority. So, instead of "Smith Brothers Incorporated," try "Accounting services from certified CPAs - Smith Brothers Inc." Though it's important to include keywords, you shouldn't just make a list of all the keywords you came up with. Rather, try to include them in a sentence that markets your services. Avoid using common words that search engines are likely to ignore, such as "Internet," "web," "best," etc. Additionally, geography can be very important. Users tend to search with the name of the nearest metropolitan center in the search query. If you only do business in Fort Wayne it should be included in your title. For example: "Accounting services from certified CPAs in Fort Wayne – Smith Brothers Inc."

Your title's length

Although all engines allow up to 150 characters, they will only display 80 characters or so in their results listings. To make sure that browsers and search engines display the titles of your pages correctly, limit your title to about 80 characters.

Visit our Website at: www.digitalhill.com

Website Design • e-Commerce • e-Marketing • Spam Blocker • Custom Programming

The Importance of Key Word Proximity

Keyword Proximity refers to the distance between two related key terms. Generally speaking, the shorter the distance between two targeted words, the better that page will rank for that "key phrase" in the major search engines, all other variables being equal. As an example, consider the heading or title "We sell engines that are remanufactured for all makes and models of trucks made by Ford Motor Company."

- 18 Words
- 4 Key Words - 22% keyword Density
- 2 Key Terms – Fragmented

The keyword combinations to consider here are "remanufactured engines" and "ford trucks." Notice the distance, or proximity, between the keywords "Ford" and "trucks", the distance between "engines" and "remanufactured", and the distance between the two key phrases in relation to each other. These factors are very important to consider, especially the distance between Ford and engines.

To optimize a phrase for keyword proximity: "We sell remanufactured engines for Ford Motor Company Trucks, including all makes and models." At this point, two concepts need to be addressed: **key word prominence** and **keyword dilution**.

Key word prominence refers to the position, sequentially, of a key word or phrase in relation to the rest of the text in any given area. Generally speaking, words at the beginning of a tag/section/paragraph/heading or area are assigned a greater value than those occurring at the middle or end. Key word dilution refers to the effect of text in the given area that is not directly related to the key terms being targeted, or the effect that targeting multiple key terms or phrases has on each other.

Consider "Remanufactured engines for Ford Trucks." Remanufactured engines has a greater keyword prominence than Ford Trucks. Considering that there are 4 non-stop words ("of" is a stop word that will be ignored except in cases of exact searches), and two key phrases, the density of each phrase is 50%; the keywords are diluted by 1/2. "Remanufactured Ford Truck Engines": Engines is reduced in importance, Ford gains in importance, and remanufactured still has the greatest prominence. Our end optimized title, by applying both prominence and proximity:

- Remanufactured Ford Truck Engines - all makes and all models. To increase key term density, thus reducing the dilution, the "all makes and models" can be removed; this is logic filtering (removing irrelevant text to reduce dilution and increase key term density).

Variations for **key term breadth**:

Visit our Website at: www.digitalhill.com

Website Design • e-Commerce • e-Marketing • Spam Blocker • Custom Programming

Confidential

- Ford Truck Engines - Remanufactured
- Engines, Ford Trucks: Remanufactured
- Remanufactured Engines - Ford Trucks

The keyword density in this title would be 25% for each word, which is excellent, as each word is part of a targeted term. The density of the key phrases is 50%, i.e. "remanufactured engines" and "Ford Trucks." The three variations above could be used to improve the key term density in the body of the page without repeating the key terms in the exact same manner. If the site theme were remanufactured engines, then the page title: "Remanufactured Engines - Ford Trucks" or any logical variation would be ideal. If the site theme were Ford Trucks, then an ideal page title would be: "Ford Trucks -Remanufactured Engines" If the site theme were engines, then an ideal page title would be: "Engines, Remanufactured - Ford Trucks" Proper web copy writing and technical writing addresses all of these issues as a logical step in the writing process.

Your title's appearance

Don't use all CAPS in your title. Search engines hate it and it's difficult for users to read.

Good old marketing

Aside from containing keywords, your HTML title needs to interest your reader in the material on your site. If you're a webmaster with no previous marketing experience, you might want to get some help in this area from a copywriter or someone in marketing. Keeping length in mind, review your keywords and try to come up with a title that entices the reader to learn more about your site. Don't overuse marketing language such as "We're the best." It will only clutter your HTML title with stop words without adding much relevance.

Golden rule

As always follow the golden rule of organic search engine optimization: Create pages for your users, not search engines. This means writing a descriptive and convincing HTML title appealing to your audience. You can then make your page title search-engine-friendly by ensuring that your keywords appear in it.

Titles and directories

Since directories are composed by human editors rather than robots, directories such as Yahoo! and DMOZ don't care about your HTML title. They do, however, care about the title you specify in their submission forms. Each directory should let you know how long your title should be on its form. Prepare a shorter, alternative title for directories that allow a maximum of 40 characters.

II. Using Meta Tags to Optimize Your Web Site

Visit our Website at: www.digitalhill.com

Website Design • e-Commerce • e-Marketing • Spam Blocker • Custom Programming

Confidential

Why bother with Meta Tags?

Have you heard that search engines no longer use meta tags and that there's no need to optimize them? Many years ago, when webmasters were just starting to learn how to optimize their sites, meta tags were the most important element on a page. Because of excessive spam, search engines eventually phased out the meta keywords and description tags as the top ranking factors. And though meta tags aren't as important as they used to be, they are still used by Yahoo and MSN and should still be optimized.

III. Rank High with Optimized Header Tags

Search engines and Headings

Search engines make the logical assumption that the text inside a site's header tags has special importance. Because web designers use headings to sum up previous ideas or introduce new ones, text within these tags often contains the most significant information on the page. All three major search engines - Google, Yahoo and MSN - give extra weight to key terms placed in header tags.

What are header tags?

Header tags are HTML design elements that emphasize text by making it bigger and bolder. These tags can signify a new topic or an important point. They come in six sizes, numbered 1-6, with 1 being the largest:

`<h1>Heading 1</h1>` `<h4>Heading 4</h4>`

Heading 1 **Heading 4**

`<h2>Heading 2</h2>` `<h5>Heading 5</h5>`

Heading 2 *Heading 5*

`<h3>Heading 3</h3>` `<h6>Heading 6</h6>`

Heading 3 Heading 6

How do I use the header tags to rank higher? To make your header tags more effective, follow these guidelines:

1. Use the most important keywords

2. **Make room at the top:** If your design permits, place the text inside the header tags as close to the top of the page as possible. This text doesn't have to be huge; you can use smaller headings such as `<h5>`. There's no proof that heading size effects ranking.

3. Keywords first

Visit our Website at: www.digitalhill.com

Website Design • e-Commerce • e-Marketing • Spam Blocker • Custom Programming

Place your keywords at the beginning of the sentence enclosed in the header tags.

4. Be logical

The text you put inside your heading tags should be arranged in a sentence. Remember, users will see this text when they look at your page. Also, search engines may use header text to describe your site in their results.

5. Use headers when possible

Whenever possible, use header tags to emphasize your text instead of using a larger font or the bold tag.

Avoid spam

Don't repeat the same keyword many times in a row in your heading tags. Search engines consider this practice spam and can ban your site from appearing on their search results for this behavior. Remember to always write your pages - and your header tags - to appeal to users first.

IV. Using ALT tags Effectively

What are ALT tags and why should I use them?

ALT tags are tags attached to images on web pages to describe them to site visitors with text browsers or visual impairments. When optimizing a site, webmasters try to include relevant keywords in ALT tags. Simply stuffing your ALT tags with multiple keywords is considered spam and is not recommended. We do, however, recommend writing descriptive text in your ALT tags that includes keywords. First, however, make sure that you adequately describe the images to those using text readers or text browsers.

How do I use ALT tags?

Use an ALT tag to describe every single image on your site. If you use text in an image, you can use the same text in the tag. Try to include important keywords in your ALT text. That way, when a search engine spiders your site, it may give you a higher ranking for those keywords. At the very least, use ALT tags for the top images on your page, since the top of the page is particularly significant to search engines. Here's an example of an ALT tag:

```

```

ALT tag text should be in the form of a sentence rather than a list. There are all sorts of situations in which users see them -- and not just the ones who use text-only browser settings. Readers see ALT text when they mouse over images and while images are loading.

Visit our Website at: www.digitalhill.com

Website Design • e-Commerce • e-Marketing • Spam Blocker • Custom Programming

Confidential

The limits of ALT tags

ALT tags are an excellent way to deal with images, but they're not the solution. Search engines still prefer text to ALT tags and images. That's why we recommend creating an alternative textual navigation for your web site. If you have a site that uses graphics heavily, **consider creating an all-text version**. Also, if you have a graphic with a link, always provide a description of the link below. You will gain a broader audience and make your site easier for search engines' spiders to index.

Avoiding spam

Search engines are very well aware of webmasters who place repetitive, irrelevant keywords in their ALT text. ALT text should be optimized, but like text on your site, it should be created for users first, with search engine considerations being secondary.

V. Search engines and themes

What are "themes"?

A theme is defined by search engines as a common topic throughout the site. In an effort to provide their users with more relevant information, search engines developed sophisticated technology that "extracts" site's themes. This technology allows results to be more focused on the topic searched for.

Hint: Think of themes as your most important keywords used consistently throughout the site.

Importance of "themes"

Themes technology is quite complex. It's used by some of the major search engines when indexing and ranking sites. Currently, Altavista, Lycos and Google use themes as part of their formulas. Inktomi powered search engines, such as AOL, Hotbot, and MSN also use themes.

Avoid the use of spam

When trying to convince search engines of a theme on your site, avoid repeating keywords more than 3-7 times in the title or meta tags. In the text, 3-7% of all words should be keywords.

Visit our Website at: www.digitalhill.com

Website Design • e-Commerce • e-Marketing • Spam Blocker • Custom Programming

Confidential