



# A GUIDE TO SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMISATION

HOW TO OPTIMISE YOUR WEBSITE FOR HIGHER  
SEARCH ENGINE RANKINGS.

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## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Master the art and science of SEO. Learn what it takes to rank your website in Google search.

You will learn the fundamentals of on page SEO, off page SEO and technical SEO before exploring the basics of keyword research.

By the end of this guide, you should be able to:

- Optimise your web pages for search
- Build quality links to your pages and posts
- Structure and set up your website for usability and speed
- Undertake keyword research to serve user intent



## **ELEVATE CREATIVE CO.**

### WHO ARE WE?

For more than a decade, the team at Elevate Creative Co. have been helping businesses with their marketing. We have written, planned, implemented and reviewed thousands of projects for clients across all industries.

We recognise that not every business has thousands of pounds to spend every month on outsourcing their marketing. This guide is designed to give you the knowledge and tools you need to create and implement a strong marketing strategy.



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**C H A P T E R**

# 1

## **INTRODUCTION**

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# INTRODUCTION

When you have a question, query or problem, where's the first place you go? If you're like most people, you will head to Google. Your prospects and customers are no different. Most searches begin with a search engine. If SEO is not one of your go to marketing tactics, it should be. It has infinite potential.

Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) is the practice of improving the ranking of your website in the search engine results pages (SERPs). The higher your website ranks, the more likely people are to find it.

SEO is not easy. It takes a lot of time and effort to see results, but it is well worth it. A well optimised website can bring in a lot of organic traffic which can lead to more conversions.

There are many factors that contribute to a good SEO strategy. It involves a combination of factors such as keyword research, user intent, link building and content creation.

Google, the leading search engine has more than 200 factors it will use to determine how to rank a website. Some of the most important ranking factors include:

- Content
- Keywords
- Links
- User Experience

Search engines have one primary purpose – to serve users with the most valuable and relevant content that relates to their search query. Each time you make a search, complex algorithms decide what to serve you in the results pages.

The pages that search engines present are those the algorithm believe to be the most authoritative and relevant to the question or query typed in.



# INTRODUCTION

## SEO Strategy

A tailored SEO strategy will focus on ranking your website as high in the search engine results page as possible.

There are three main elements to a good SEO strategy:

**On-page SEO** – Everything you can do on your web pages to improve ranking. This will include elements such as keyword research, user intent, title tags and meta descriptions.

**Off-page SEO** – All of the things that you undertake outside of your website to improve ranking. Off-page SEO will include activities such as building links and using social media to promote your content.

**Technical SEO** – Not as scary as it may sound. It's all the behind the scenes stuff that helps Google (or any other search engine) find and index your website. It will involve setting up site maps and robots.txt files as well as submitting URLs to Google for indexing.

To create a successful SEO strategy, you should ideally focus on all three of these areas.

Content is one of the main ways to attract attention with SEO. Therefore, mediocre content, optimised with the right keywords won't get the results you expect.





**C H A P T E R**

# 2

**ON-PAGE SEO**

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# OPTIMISING WEBSITE PAGES

When a prospect or customer performs a search on Google, they are essentially looking for content. Google will scan the web in a matter of seconds and deliver the most authoritative and relevant content – a blog post, a video or infographic or product page if the user is looking to buy.

Search engines will use the content on a web page to determine whether it should be ranked. On page elements are essential to this process. As Google spiders are computers, they need to be given information that will help them categorise and understand what the page is about. Google algorithms are complex and are constantly evolving. They are much more sophisticated than they once were. In the early days, they would scan a piece of content to identify keywords to classify content. As the technology has evolved, search engines are able to understand more of the content on a page.

if a web user Googles a search query, they will quickly scan through the list of results. If your website is listed and the user feels that you answer their question they will click through.

However, if your page fails to fulfil the search intent – they don't find what they are looking for, the user will 'bounce' back to the search engine to look for something more relevant. This can affect rankings. Therefore, you can't just try to rank a bunch of keywords looking for click throughs. This tactic not only causes frustration for web users, it also affects your ranking if lots of people are bouncing from your website. When analysing Google analytics, always look at bounce rate. A low bounce rate means your content matches the search query. A high bounce rate means the on page content needs more work or your keywords need reviewing.

Some of the most important on-page elements include:

- Keyword use and placement
- H1 and H2 title tags
- External links
- URL's
- Meta title
- Meta description
- Unique content
- Valuable content
- Search intent
- Question title tags
- Schema
- Emotion
- User experience
- Original images
- Internal linking

## Content Writing

SEO is powered by content. But you can't just publish anything and hope it will rank. Create content based on proven frameworks and make sure it is actionable. To create actionable content:

Start by defining the purpose of the article or guide

Break the topic into manageable segments with lots of sub-heads. Unless a piece of content is interesting, people rarely read the whole thing. They will scan, skim and scroll to find the most important sections.

With each section, give the reader something practical they can take away. It could be a tip, technique or strategy that will help them solve a small problem.

At the end of the content piece, summarise what has been covered and include a call to action. You can also set the reader a challenge or activity which makes the content more interactive. Even better, ask them to join and share their results in a group you run or on social platforms and tag you in their post.

## ON-PAGE OPTIMISATION

<b>Keyword Use &amp; Placement</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Main keyword in first 100 words</li></ul>	<b>H1 &amp;H2 Titles</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Main keyword in H1 title tag</li><li>• Subheadings should go in H2 tags</li></ul>	<b>External Links</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Use outbound links to authoritative sources</li></ul>
<b>URL's</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Optimise your URL for SEO (include keyword)</li></ul>	<b>Meta Title</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reflect content of your page (include keyword)</li><li>• Use modifiers (best, guide, review, checklist etc)</li></ul>	<b>Meta Description</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Make it unique, interesting and include keyword</li></ul>
<b>Unique Content</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Create content that brings a new outlook. Strategy, tip, process etc.</li></ul>	<b>Valuable Content</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Make it actionable, apply effective copy, include a new strategy, be an expert.</li></ul>	<b>Search Intent</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What do people want to find on your page?</li></ul>
<b>Question Title Tags</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Use questions to optimise for click throughs</li></ul>	<b>Schema</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Create reviews and images for Google</li></ul>	<b>Emotion</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Add a small amount of emotion to title tag</li></ul>
<b>User Experience</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Structure for readers who skim, scan and scroll</li><li>• Make content user friendly</li></ul>	<b>Original Images</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Create your own original image – avoid stock photo's</li></ul>	<b>Internal Linking</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Include lots of internal links to your other website pages</li></ul>

This table can be used as an on-page checklist whenever you create a new piece of content. Focus on creating content that serves user intent. Think like your customers and prospects. What search strings are they using? To find out what people search for, enter a seed keyword into Google and look at the results in:

- Google Suggest (the search bar as you type in a word or phrase – what terms are listed underneath)
- People Also Ask
- Related Searches

The data will give you a tonne of research material to start with. Pay close attention to the results in these sections as they show you what people are actually searching for. You can also use a tool called Answer The Public which will generate a list of questions people are asking in search engines.

# CONTENT FRAMEWORKS

As you start to think about content types and platforms, you will notice as you complete your research, lots of the content on authority websites fits a certain formula or framework. These frameworks are used over and over because they are proven to work. Some of the most common include:

## List posts

It's no secret. People love lists. They are easy to consume and they can fit a lot of information into a list post. Longer lists have been shown to work particularly well such as 101 ways to...

## Definitive Guide

This type of guide will provide a detailed insight into a topic. It will cover everything there is to know. By the end of the guide, the reader will have a full understanding of the topic in detail. Readers like these guides because it saves them time searching for different pieces of information on a topic.

## How To

A how to guide is a tried and tested framework that will teach the reader something useful. People search how to content on search engines such as Google and YouTube all the time. These posts perform really well if you can bring a new technique or tactic, something you know works but hasn't been shared hundreds of times before.

## Expert Roundup

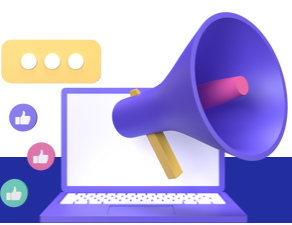
When researching, people often look to experts for advice. Expert roundups can include different experts on a particular area or provide insight into a specific topic. You may decide to do an expert roundup post to summarise the findings of the leading experts in your industry.

## The Skyscraper Technique

This is a technique that has been in existence for a while but it still works. Essentially, it means identifying a topic to write about, using tools online to research the most popular content which has been published already, and then making the content 10x better. You could make it longer, add new techniques or tactics or sharing updates and new insights.

## Be the Source

If you have the time, a be the source piece of content is an article that contains lots of new research and interesting data. This type of content is successful because it encourages links and social shares. Also, bloggers and industry experts in your industry will often cite the research you find or stats you provide in their content.



**C H A P T E R**

# 3

**OFF-PAGE SEO**

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# TACTICS

Off page optimisation is everything you can do outside of your website to improve your ranking.

The most important factor in off page SEO is links. Links are basically votes from other websites. The more votes you have, the higher you will rank.

As well as links pointing to your website, there are also social shares and branded search.

Link building is the process of getting links from other websites. This can be done in many ways such as guest blogging, connections and collaborations, outreach and content promotion.

To get high quality backlinks, you need to focus on link relevance and link authority. Link relevance means that the website that is linking to you is relevant to your niche.

For example, if you have a website about SEO, it would be more beneficial to get a link from a marketing website than from a website about cooking.

Link authority means that the website that is linking to you has a high authority itself. This means that it is a popular and trusted website.

To secure as many quality links as possible to your website from authoritative websites you can use the following tactics:

Be a source - Create content that includes interesting statistics or facts.

Broken link building - Find broken links in your niche and reach out to the website owner with an idea for fresh content - linking back to your website.

In depth guides - Content that is super detailed and provides real value will naturally attract likes, links and social shares



# TACTICS

## EAT Formula

Share your **expertise**, demonstrate your **authority** and show that you are **trustworthy**.

This formula is one of the most effective ways to boost Google ranking signals. It will involve:

- Being mentioned on authority websites
- Securing links from trusted sites
- Attract as many positive reviews as possible about your business
- Become featured in roundup posts – a post where a number of experts provide insight into a particular topic.
- Become an authoritative expert so you are invited to interviews
- Collaborate with brands who have a bigger market share than you do
- Create graphics that can be used by other websites

Use a combination of the above in your off-page strategy for best results.

Link quality is determined by:

- The popularity and/or authority of the website linking to your website
- How well the topic of the website relates to the content on your site they link to
- How new the link is
- Anchor text used to the link
- How trustworthy your website is
- The number of other links listed on your website
- Authority of the domain linking to you

Before you start any off-page SEO strategies, always make sure that the content on your website fits in with all of the on-page SEO elements that we have covered previously.

You must give people a good reason to link to your content and you can do this by positioning your website as an authoritative resource that people will find helpful.



**C H A P T E R**

# 4

**TECHNICAL SEO**

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# TECHNICAL SEO

Technical SEO is the process of optimising your website for the crawling and indexing stage.

This means making sure that your website can be easily found and understood by search engines.

There are many factors that come into play when it comes to technical SEO such as site speed, hosting, sitemaps, SSL certificates, redirects, canonical tags, robots.txt and more.

To improve your technical SEO, you can do things such as:

Optimise your website for speed - This means making sure that your website loads quickly. You can do this by reducing the size of your images, using caching and minifying your code.

Use a good hosting company - This means using a company that can provide you with a fast and reliable service.

Submit a sitemap to Google - This helps Google index your website more easily.

Install an SSL certificate - This helps to secure your website and it also gives you a small ranking boost.

Use redirects properly - This means using redirects to fix broken links and to redirect old pages to new pages.

Add canonical tags - This helps to prevent duplicate content issues.

Edit your robots.txt file - This helps to control how search engines crawl your website.





**C H A P T E R**

# 5

**KEYWORD RESEARCH**

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# KEYWORD RESEARCH

If your content is to serve user intent, you need to know what people search for.

This is where keyword research plays a huge role in your content creation work.

Keyword research is a targeted process of finding specific search terms that your ideal customer type into Google or other search engines when they are looking for information about your product or service.

There are four types of keyword that you should be aware of:

Informational – People are in the early stage of the buying journey and are simply looking for information.

Navigational – The searcher has an idea of who they are looking for and will enter a website name into search engines.

Commercial – The user will enter keywords to find brand information or services they offer

Transactional – The individual is looking to buy something.

The intent behind the keyword will indicate the likelihood that the searcher will buy soon or whether they are just collecting information in the early stages.

## Keyword Research Step by Step

Now that you know what keyword research is and the different types, it's time to assemble your list of potential keywords for your content.

## Step 1 Brainstorm

At this stage, keep your options open. Take a blank sheet of paper or a screen if you prefer and list out all the words that relate to what you do or sell.

If you are a fitness coach for example, your seed keywords may look like this:

Fitness  
Wellbeing  
Fat loss  
Weight loss  
High protein meals  
Resistance training  
Muscle gain

Think of as many words as you can and add them to your list.

## Step 2 Wikipedia

Head over to Wikipedia and enter a few of the search terms you identified in the first step. If any pages come up, look at their table of contents and add any useful keywords you find to your list. You can also click on hyperlinks within the article that take you to other pages. Repeat the process and add all relevant keywords as you go.

## Step 3 Google

There's no better place to find keyword ideas than Google itself. Enter a search term from Step 1 into Google and then scroll down to the bottom of the page to the 'Searches Related To' section. This gives you an indication of what people are actively searching for. Add any interesting ones to your list. Click on them, scroll to the bottom of the page and repeat the process.

# KEYWORD RESEARCH

## Step 4 Forums

Quora and Reddit are goldmines of information when it comes to keywords. As we have mentioned, keywords are all about user intent. These forums will provide you with lots of keywords to work with.

Enter search terms into each of these forums and then click on the results. Scroll through the questions and answers looking for any keywords/search terms that may be a good fit for your list.

## Step 5 Google and YouTube Suggest

When you type anything into Google or YouTube, it will provide you with relevant suggestions in the list. Type some keywords into the search bars and see what suggestions they provide. Any that are of interest, add them to your list.

## Bonus Step

If you want to expand your list further, you can delve into your competitors websites and find out what keywords they are using through tools such as SpyFu.

By this stage in the process, it's time to start narrowing down your list and selecting keywords to use in your content.

This is where a tool can be useful to help you in your analysis. There are many keyword analysis tools some are paid others free. Some of the most popular include:

- Ahrefs
- SEMRush
- UberSuggest
- Google Keyword Planner

Take one of the keywords you have in your list and enter it into one of the keyword research tools. There are several things to look out for:

**Search Volume** - Tells you how many times the keyword is searched for every month. Avoid super competitive keywords with thousands of searches per month. It is often very difficult to rank for these keywords.

**Keyword difficulty** - On many tools there will be a keyword difficulty score. This tells you how difficult it will be to rank for the keyword. The higher the score, the more competitive the keyword.

**Cost Per Click** - This metric can be a useful one to review as it tells you whether there is any commercial intent behind the keyword.

The best approach is to choose a keyword with low competition and a moderate amount of traffic per month. This will give you a much better chance of ranking if you create relevant and authoritative content.



## GOOD LUCK WITH YOUR SEO JOURNEY

SEO is a complex field and this guide has only provided you with an introduction. There are content frameworks, link building tactics and so much more to consider.

If you want further guidance with SEO and tailored support, contact us about our:

- SEO Strategy
- VIP Days - intensive marketing support
- Bespoke training

**FIND OUT MORE AT**

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