

Article Summary: Search engine optimization should not be confusing. SEO maximizes your site for readers as well as search engines. Keywords, titles, and meta descriptions are vital elements that should always be part of the foundation of your SEO efforts. Learn how to use these three keys in a beginner's guide to SEO.

SEO for Beginners: Top Three Elements of Search Engine Optimization

Introduction: What is Search Engine Optimization?

The term Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is based on the fact that there is a series of step-by-step factors involved in maximizing your exposure to both your human visitors and the search engines.

Although the term is called "search engine" optimization, the first rule is to never lose sight of the fact that in reality, you have created your website or blog for real people. First and foremost, you will need to provide your reader with engaging, intelligent, and valuable content that will keep them coming back for more.



The main purpose of SEO is to create your content, titles, meta descriptions, and basic web structure in a "best practice" fashion that makes your site easy for the search engine spiders to find, crawl, and rank. Always keep in mind that true search engine optimization is a

combination of two distinct skills; *writing for people* and *writing for the search engines*. A proper balance, or holistic approach must always be taken in order to achieve maximum benefits, ranking, and traffic. The first three elements of SEO include keyword choice, titles, and meta descriptions.

Targeted Keywords

Before adding the first line of content to your website or blog, it is vital to decide on your targeted keywords.

What are keywords? Your keywords and keyword phrases are the words that you have decided to use repeatedly and naturally throughout the body of your posts in order to gain authority with the search engines for your niche topic. Basically, the more original your niche, the better your chances are for successfully ranking with the search engines.

When choosing your keyword list, you can use tools such as [Google AdWords Keyword Tool](#), or you can simply create your list based on search terms that are relevant to your product or service.

Example-- If you are a website design and marketing firm located in Michigan that specializes in creating sites for small businesses, your best keyword phrases should include:

- Small Business Web Design
- Michigan Web Design
- Small Business Marketing

Those are three examples, but ideally your list should include up to 20 specific keywords and keyword phrases. Use these phrases where appropriate throughout your articles, but don't overdo it. "Keyword stuffing" just for the sake of getting the phrases in your articles is frowned upon by Google. Three or four of your keywords, used a couple of times in your article is enough.

Page Titles

Your page title is just as important as the content you provide. A title tag will tell the search engines and potential readers what the topic of a particular page is.

Best SEO practices for creating page titles include the following:

- Use your keywords within your title if possible.
- Create a compelling and interesting title that also summarizes the article or page's content.
- Be brief. If a title is too long, only a portion of it will show up in a search result.
- Create a unique title tag for each page. This helps search engines determine how each page on your site differs from the others. As a whole, all titles should relate to your niche, yet be distinct enough to stand alone.

The Description Meta tag

Think of your meta tag description as a guide that will help readers and search engines determine what your article or page is about. Your meta description may appear in search results as a snippet or summary directly following the page title, although Google may choose to take a short passage from your page content instead.

Best SEO practices for creating your description include:

- Accurately summarizing the content of the page or article. Do not use sentences such as, "This is a page about search engine optimization." Instead, provide a short but

compelling description of the problem addressed or subject covered. For example, "The importance of small business SEO and how you can quickly learn to implement these practices in your own internet marketing efforts." Direct, to the point, and the answer to a problem. Descriptions that address a direct problem will receive much more traffic.

- Avoid stuffing keywords unnaturally into your description.
- The name or location of your business can be included in your description if you are also building your local search rankings.

Keyword choices, titles, and meta descriptions. Those are the first three pieces to the SEO puzzle. As you learn more about search engine optimization, be sure to build upon this original foundation. Along the way you will continue to discover more ways to optimize your site. As you do, build upon or add to what you already know. These first three elements will always be part of your SEO foundation.