

How to Improve SEO with WordPress

Cheat Sheet & Additional Resources

This 30-minute 'How-To' will walk you through the first steps of optimizing your WordPress site's SEO. We will walk through the following:

- Adding Google Analytics code to your site
- Scanning your existing site for potential problems
- Optimizing content on a per-page basis
- Installing plugins to help you manage your SEO

Things to do before the talk

1. Have a Google Analytics account already established for the site you want to optimize. Make sure to sign in to the associated gmail account before coming to the talk.

See the following link for detailed instructions and links:

<https://support.google.com/analytics/answer/1008015?hl=en>

2. Pick one page of your site that you would like to concentrate on optimizing. This will be your focus throughout the session.

3. Check out this 'Beginners Guide' to SEO. This is the best SEO guide I have ever come across. It is maintained and updated on a regular basis.

<https://moz.com/beginners-guide-to-seo>

The next few pages contain information and links on SEO.

We won't be able to cover everything there is to know in 30-minutes, so make sure to stop by and say hello in the Happiness Bar afterwards. I will be there to help answer questions about what we did, and didn't, cover!

SEO Beginners Guide

Not sure where to start? Or, maybe you are fairly seasoned with SEO and want to make sure you have covered all the bases. This is the best SEO guide I have ever come across. It is maintained and updated on a regular basis. MOZ also has an excellent, though expensive SEO client management tool.

<https://moz.com/beginners-guide-to-seo>

Site Review

I always begin by scanning the most important pages of a site. My favorite free tool for this is *SEOSiteCheckup*.

<http://seositecheckup.com/>

This will scan only one page before you must register for a free account. It is very robust and is a good starting point for your evaluation. I recommend identifying the most important pages in your goal funnel and scanning those.

When making fixes remember, it is not likely that one factor is going to make or break your site. It is an accumulation. I recommend identifying the most critical issues along with the easiest to fix. Start with these, then worry about more complicated or less important fixes.

Handling the basics

Title Tag

The title tag is required in all HTML documents. It defines the title of the page, displaying in the browsers toolbar and in the search engine results (SERPs). A descriptive title tag assists search engines in determining how relevant your webpage is for certain keywords.

Meta-description

The meta description tag should be a short summary of your pages content. As with the title tag, this description can have an affect on your search engine rankings. This description often appears directly in SERP results.

Keywords Density

You should be using the unique keywords determined for your page throughout the body text. Try to use similar words, synonyms, and phrases your readers are likely to search for. Don't overdo it!

H1 and H2

H1 headings are the main HTML tag that emphasizes the main topics and keywords within a page. H2 headings are sub-topical, introducing secondary and related keywords to a page.

Code to Text Ratio

You should not have more HTML and scripts than actual content. The more code the search engine has to wade through, the worse your keyword density becomes. Choosing a lite, SEO friendly theme is important. This will also typically improve site loading times.

Robots.txt

Search engines send spiders/robots to search your site and bring information back to index your site's pages in the search results. If there are files and directories you do not want indexed by search engines, you can use the "robots.txt" file to define where the robots should not go.

There has been a lot of misconceptions around robot.txt files. Check out this great article for in depth information on how to properly use robot.txt.

<https://yoast.com/wordpress-robots-txt-example/>

Sitemaps

Sitemaps allow you to inform search engines about the crawl-able pages of your site. It is simply an XML file which lists all the URLs for a site with additional metadata about each URL. You should be adding them manually using Google and Bing Webmaster tools. Check the feedback you receive and make sure it is accurate.

Directions for Google

<https://support.google.com/sites/answer/100283?hl=en>

Directions for Bing

<http://www.bing.com/webmaster/help/how-to-submit-sitemaps-82a15bd4>

Underscores in Links

The general advise is to use hyphens or dashes (-) rather than underscores (_). Google treats hyphens as separators between words in a URL – unlike underscores.

URL SEO Friendly

URL links should be user friendly – describing what the page is about.

Bad SEO Example: <http://yoursite.com/pages/c/BL00.html>

Good SEO Example: <http://yoursite.com/pages/contact-us.html>

IMG Alt Tags and Names

Alt tags are important for users as well as SERP. Screen readers, used by the visually impaired, reads the alt tag in place of the image. In the instance an image cannot be displayed (broken link, slow connection, etc.), the alt attribute provides a description of that image to the user. The search robots use these descriptions to better understand the content of your page. Use the page keywords and human-readable captions in the alt attributes. For images that are purely decorative, use an empty alt or CSS background image.

Name your images wisely. Rather than “header-image.jpg” or “slider-1.png”, give them a short and descriptive name.

Inline CSS

Avoid inline CSS. An inline CSS property is added using the style attribute for specific tags. CSS is presentational and should be kept separate from content whenever possible. This can increase speed and avoid the use of deprecated tags.

Google Analytics

Google Analytics should be used to gain insight about your site visitors, demographics and other metrics. When working with WordPress, a plugin is typically the best route for adding Google Analytics. See the slideshow from the presentation for step by step details.

Favicon

Favicons are small icons that appear in your browser's URL navigation bar. They are used when bookmarking and can help brand your site, making it easier for users to recognize you.

Resource for Favicon for Wordpress

http://codex.wordpress.org/Creating_a_Favicon

Media Print

Your site should be using the media print CSS property for custom printability. This will provide an optimized version of each page for printing. This is not a site-

breaking issue, so if you do not feel comfortable touching the PHP or CSS code, I don't recommend attempting on your own.

Resource for adding @media to your site

<http://code.tutsplus.com/tutorials/quick-tip-adding-a-simple-print-stylesheet-to-wordpress--wp-176>

Page Objects

Page objects are simply the various objects that make up a web page. Media, video, etc. Too many page objects can cause a slow down, and objects that don't load can cause page errors. Make sure all content is streamlined and available.

HTML Compression/GZIP

Check if your site is correctly using HTML compression. Compression allows your site to load faster. There are several ways to enable GZIP compression on WordPress sites.

JS Minification & CSS Minification

Javascript files used in your page should be minified. Minifying removes excess whitespace, reducing the overall size and load time of your site.

Site Loading Speed

Loading time is one of the more important factors when it comes to SERP. Greater than 5 seconds of loading time for a page is slow and could significantly impact your ranking.

Resources for GZIP, Compression, and speed to your site

<http://softstribe.com/wordpress/enable-gzip-compression-in-wordpress>

<http://www.elegantthemes.com/blog/tips-tricks/how-to-minify-your-websites-css-html-javascript>

Flash

Don't use Flash. Flash content does not work well on mobile devices, and it's not Search Engine friendly. HTML5 should be used in place of Flash.

URL Canonicalization

Canonicalization describes how a site can use slightly different URLs for the same

page. The most common example is www.example.com vs example.com . Setting a preferred page for indexing among pages of similar content is best practice.

Resource for proper canonicalization

http://premium.wpmudev.org/blog/wordpress-canonicalization-guide/?nlpd=b&utm_expid=3606929-34.mZctMukzSv6Wvz3lKaD43w.1&utm_referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F

Microdata Schema

Take advantage of HTML Microdata specifications in order to markup structured data. By using microdata in your web pages, you can help search engines to better understand your content and to create rich snippets in search results.

<https://schema.org/>

Resources for Schema for WordPress

<http://www.wpsuperstars.net/rich-snippets-schema-plugins-for-wordpress/>