

29

# BADASS

SEO Recommendations  
when redesigning your website

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# BADASSS

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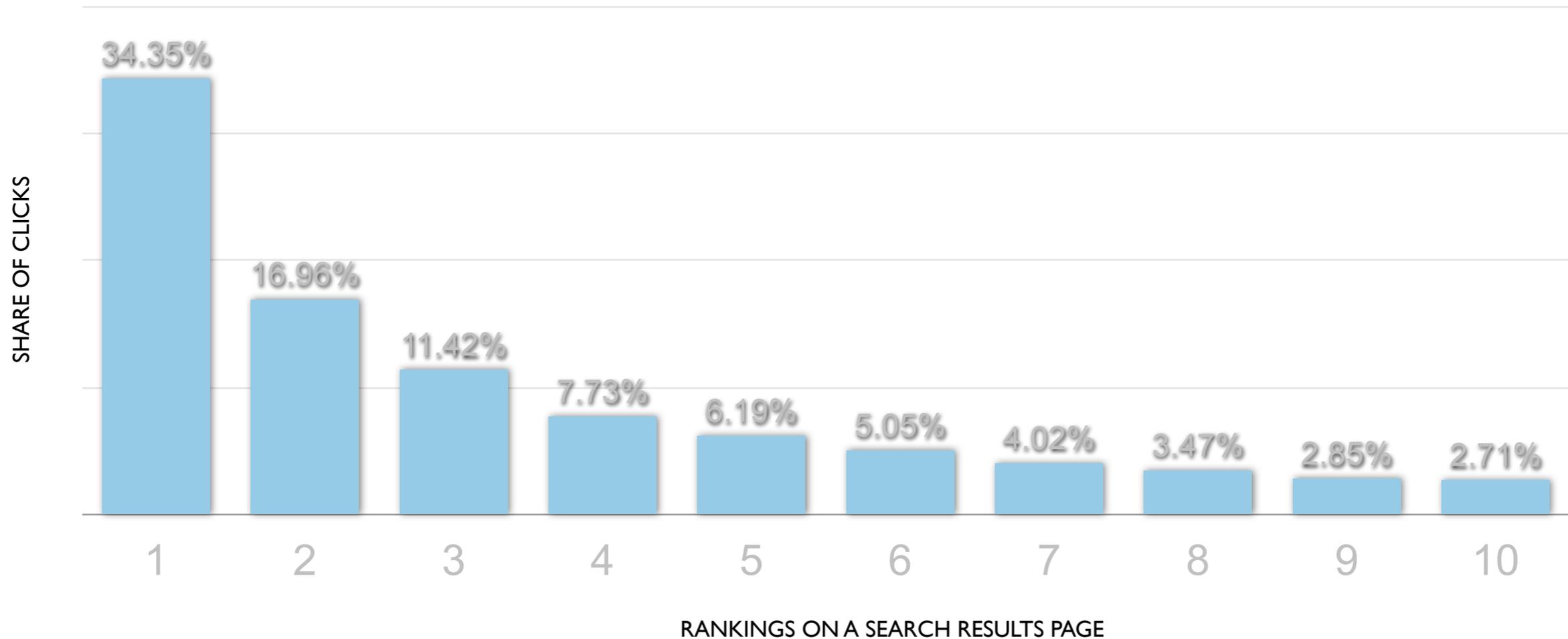


Many Americans begin their purchasing experience by doing online research to compare prices, quality, and the reviews of other shoppers.

Even if they end up making their purchase in a store, they start their fact-finding and decision-making on the Internet.

JIM JANSEN  
SENIOR FELLOW  
PEW RESEARCH CENTER'S INTERNET & AMERICAN LIFE PROJECT  
SEPTEMBER 2010

60% of all organic clicks go to the top 3 organic listings.

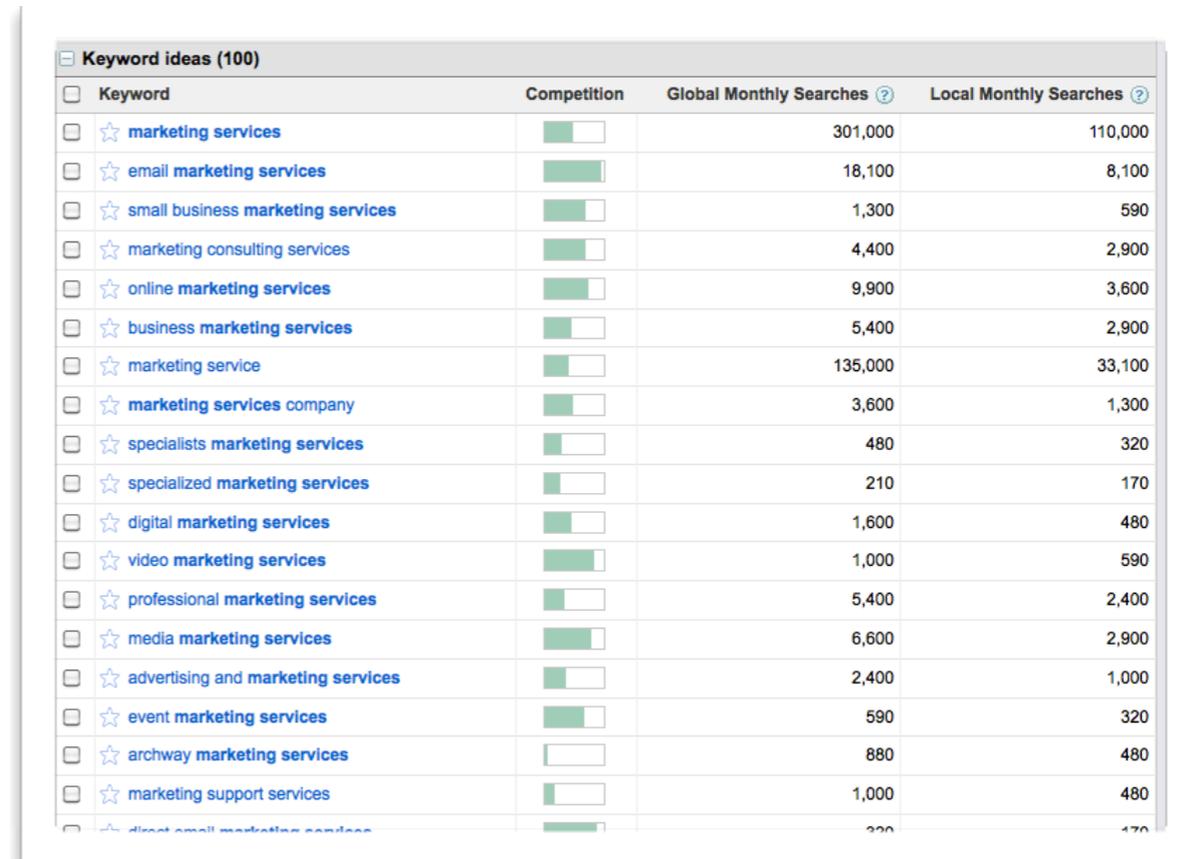


SOURCE: CHITIKA INSIGHTS. BASED ON 8.2 MILLION DATA POINTS.

# Do your keyword research.

Trying to determine what keywords you should target for your website is the cornerstone of everything you will do later on, so it's important you get it right.

Should you target "marketing services", or "affordable marketing services"? Each will have different amounts of people searching for that term, and the higher that number, generally the more competitive it is. Keep in mind that the more competitive the keyword, the more difficult it will be to rank highly for that same keyword. Choose words that are not overly competitive, or choose to target words that you already show up for on page 2 or 3.



Keyword	Competition	Global Monthly Searches	Local Monthly Searches
marketing services	High	301,000	110,000
email marketing services	Medium	18,100	8,100
small business marketing services	Low	1,300	590
marketing consulting services	Medium	4,400	2,900
online marketing services	Medium	9,900	3,600
business marketing services	Medium	5,400	2,900
marketing service	High	135,000	33,100
marketing services company	Medium	3,600	1,300
specialists marketing services	Low	480	320
specialized marketing services	Low	210	170
digital marketing services	Medium	1,600	480
video marketing services	Medium	1,000	590
professional marketing services	Medium	5,400	2,400
media marketing services	Medium	6,600	2,900
advertising and marketing services	Medium	2,400	1,000
event marketing services	Medium	590	320
archway marketing services	Low	880	480
marketing support services	Low	1,000	480
direct small marketing services	Low	220	170

[CHECK OUT THE GOOGLE KEYWORD TOOL HERE >>](#)



**Tip: Check your rankings for a variety of keywords. If your website is not easily found, try choosing words around 1,000 to no more than 2,500 searches per month (US, broad match). If your website is easily found for lots of terms, choose words with higher search volumes.**



# Use target keywords in your navigation.

Now that you have a pretty good idea of the keywords you should target (about 10-20), check to see if you can include any of them in your navigation sections.

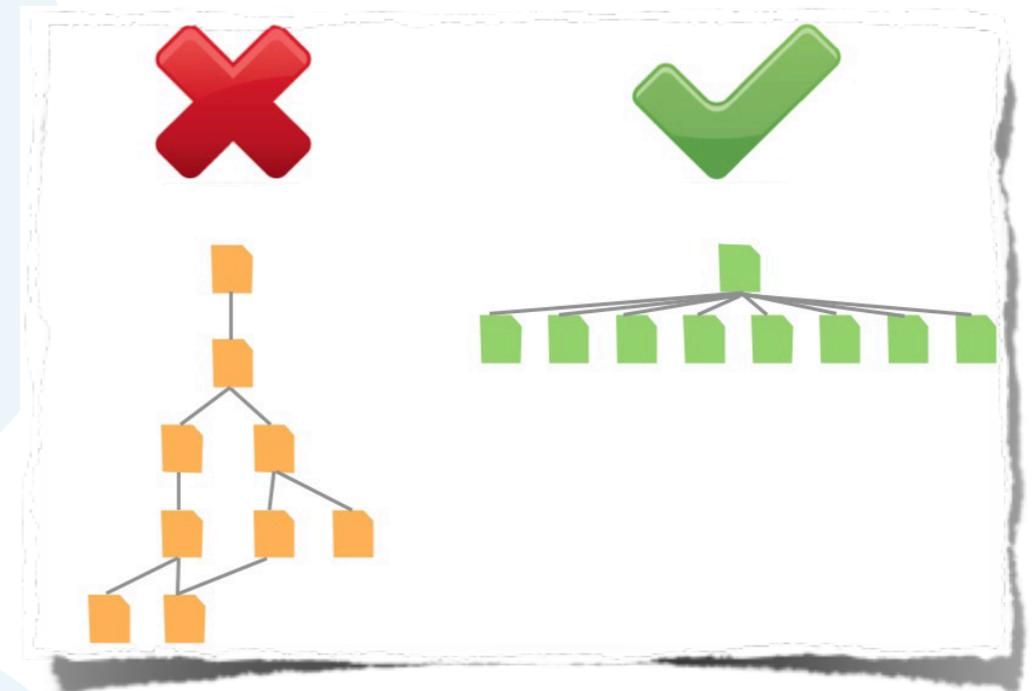
For instance, instead of having a link for "Products" or "Services", try a word that might describe the product(s) or service(s), such as "Internet Marketing Services".



# Keep your site architecture as flat as possible.

How you design your site architecture for search engines is just as important as how you design the interface for users. You'll want to avoid site structures which require more than 3 clicks to get to any page, and build the navigation as "flat" as possible.

Doing this will also help search engines crawl your site more effectively, and even if you stick to the recommended 100 links per page, within 3 clicks you could reach 1 million pages of content.



# Do the www redirect.

About 12% of the 500,000+ sites we've analyzed do not properly redirect the "www" version or "non-www" version to the preferred URL. You can do a simple check: go to your browser and type in "www.[your domain here].com" and observe what happens to the URL. If it doesn't change, and stays "www", then remove the "www" and observe what happens. If it goes back to the "www", you have a redirect in place. If it does not, and no change occurs, then you essentially have two versions of your website that are competing unnecessarily for rankings.

[GET INSTRUCTIONS ON HOW TO DO THE WWW REDIRECT >>](#)

WWW



# Make sure you 301 old pages to new pages.

If you've had your site for several years, and you've gone through several changes, designs, etc., there is a high chance that you have some old pages lingering in the search engine index, or even linked to on the site. We'll show you 3 easy steps to resolve this problem:

**1. Create a Google Webmaster account and let them crawl your existing site.** If you already have one, go to the Crawl Statistics and check the Errors page. They will let you know what 404 errors they found. [GO TO GOOGLE WEBMASTER TOOLS >>](#)

**2. Do a 301 redirect from the old page to the new page.** If a new page does not exist, redirect it to the home page. [GET INSTRUCTIONS ON HOW TO DO A 301 REDIRECT >>](#)

**3. Google will eventually remove the page from the index now that you've redirected it to another live page.** If you can still access the page, you could also place a "NOINDEX" meta tag on the page, and have it removed from the search results from within Google Webmaster Tools.

# Don't 301 everything to the homepage.

A common mistake when migrating an entire website over is redirecting all of the old pages (maybe on a different domain) to the homepage of the new one. What you should really be doing is mapping out the old site and the new site, and pointing any of the old pages to the most relevant of the new pages.



[SEE WHAT GOOGLE ENGINEER, MATT CUTTS, HAS TO SAY ABOUT 301 REDIRECTS >>](#)

# Don't use more than 2 parameters in the URL.

If you have an e-commerce site, some of your pages may have those pesky, old CGI parameters, like:

[www.yoursite.com/index.php?product=123&sort=price&print=1](http://www.yoursite.com/index.php?product=123&sort=price&print=1) ❌

Not what you want here. Instead, try:

[www.yoursite.com/product/123/print](http://www.yoursite.com/product/123/print) ✅

Having too many parameters in the URL can flag search engines and could cause you long-term problems with searchability.

# Ensure the proper handling of 404 pages.

It is not uncommon for us to see a website handling 404 errors improperly. You can do an easy self-test: type in `www.yourwebsite.com/fjifinsknd` (or some other gibberish which represents a page you know does not exist), and look at the HTTP header (there is a Firefox add on for this). If the header is returning a "200 OK" response, this is wrong. The page does not exist, and could end up in the search engine index. The correct response code should be "404 Not Found". It is perfectly OK to have a custom 404 page, as long as the response code is still a 404.

[READ MORE ON HOW TO HANDLE 404'S FOR SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION >>](#)

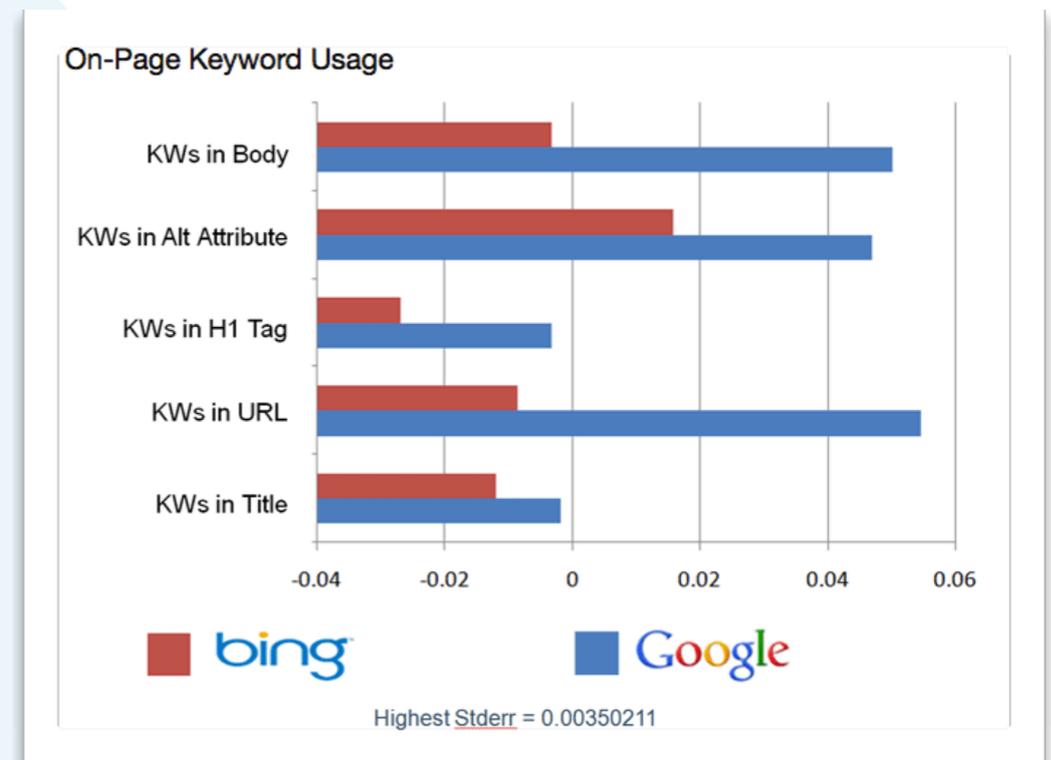


The page you requested was not found.

# Use the ALT attribute for images on all pages.

Images are usually the most overlooked when it comes to optimizing a page for search. Each image can be optimized with a keyword in the filename, as well as the alt attribute. So instead of using "fileabc123.jpg" as the filename, use "image-ofmarketing-service.jpg".

Also, for optimal image SEO, ensure that the content that surrounds the photo also includes target keywords.



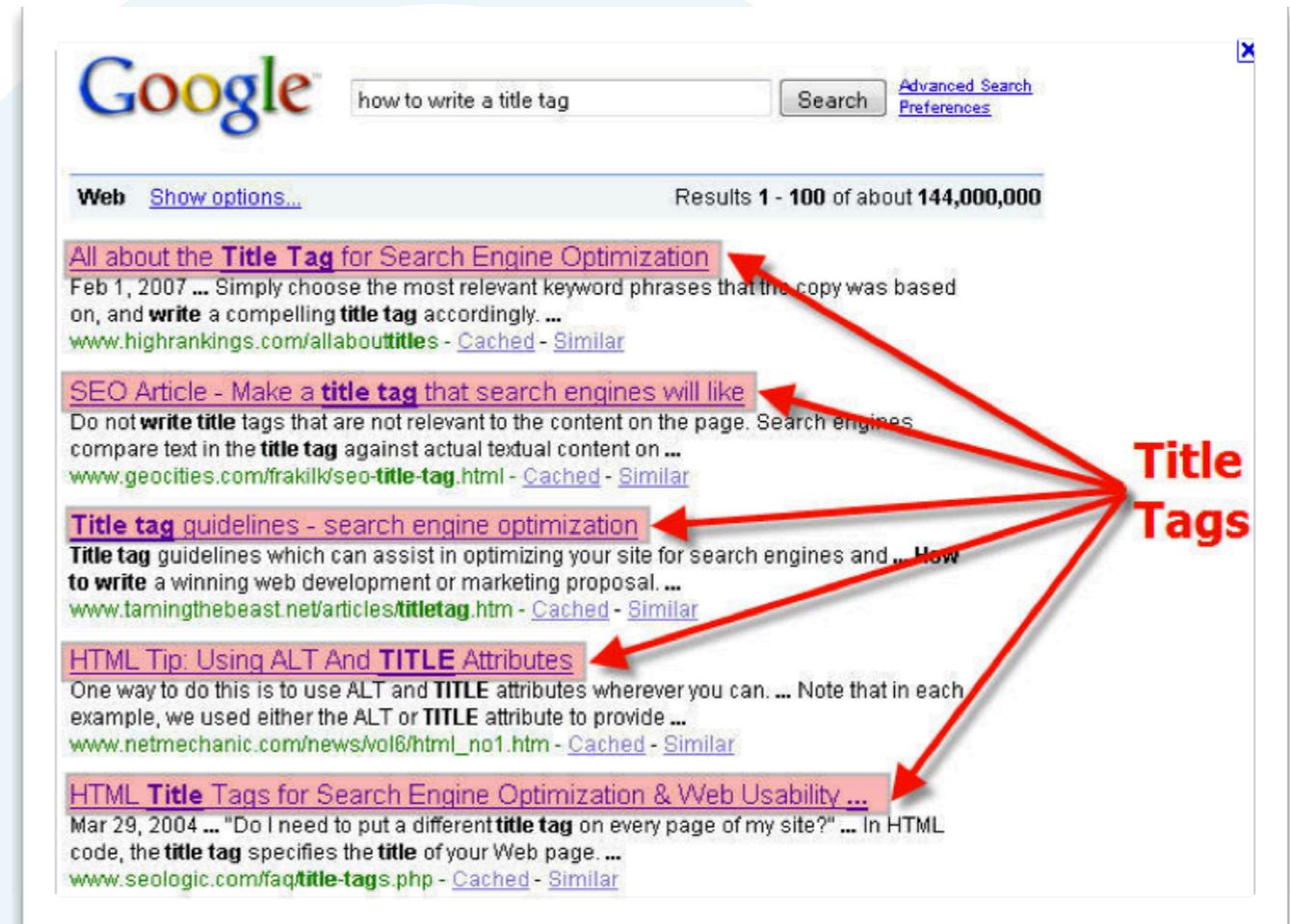
[SOURCE: SEOMOZ.COM - GOOGLEVS. BING - CORRELATION OF RANKING ELEMENTS >>](#)

# Make sure you have title tags on every page.

Each page of your website should have a title tag which describes the page. Not only do you want to include a target keyword, but you want to write the tag in a way where someone would be enticed to click on your listing in the results page.

The title tag should not exceed 70 characters, to avoid being truncated by the search engine.

[SEE HOW TO WRITE AN EFFECTIVE TITLE TAG >>](#)



The image shows a screenshot of a Google search results page for the query "how to write a title tag". The search bar at the top contains the text "how to write a title tag" and a "Search" button. Below the search bar, the results are listed. Five red arrows point from a central point labeled "Title Tags" to the following search results:

- All about the Title Tag for Search Engine Optimization**  
Feb 1, 2007 ... Simply choose the most relevant keyword phrases that the copy was based on, and **write** a compelling **title tag** accordingly. ...  
[www.highrankings.com/allabouttitles](http://www.highrankings.com/allabouttitles) - Cached - Similar
- SEO Article - Make a title tag that search engines will like**  
Do not **write** **title** tags that are not relevant to the content on the page. Search engines compare text in the **title tag** against actual textual content on ...  
[www.geocities.com/frakill/seo-title-tag.html](http://www.geocities.com/frakill/seo-title-tag.html) - Cached - Similar
- Title tag guidelines - search engine optimization**  
**Title tag** guidelines which can assist in optimizing your site for search engines and ... **How to write** a winning web development or marketing proposal. ...  
[www.tamingthebeast.net/articles/titletag.htm](http://www.tamingthebeast.net/articles/titletag.htm) - Cached - Similar
- HTML Tip: Using ALT And TITLE Attributes**  
One way to do this is to use ALT and **TITLE** attributes wherever you can. ... Note that in each example, we used either the ALT or **TITLE** attribute to provide ...  
[www.netmechanic.com/news/vol6/html\\_no1.htm](http://www.netmechanic.com/news/vol6/html_no1.htm) - Cached - Similar
- HTML Title Tags for Search Engine Optimization & Web Usability ...**  
Mar 29, 2004 ... "Do I need to put a different **title tag** on every page of my site?" ... In HTML code, the **title tag** specifies the **title** of your Web page. ...  
[www.seologic.com/faq/title-tags.php](http://www.seologic.com/faq/title-tags.php) - Cached - Similar

# Make sure you don't have duplicate title tags.

This is easy to falter on when your CMS will default every page to a standard title, and you haven't gotten around yet to customizing them. Customize each tag and include a keyword that the page is talking about. You never know, you might bump your rankings considerably by doing this.

[SEE HOW TO WRITE AN EFFECTIVE TITLE TAG >>](#)



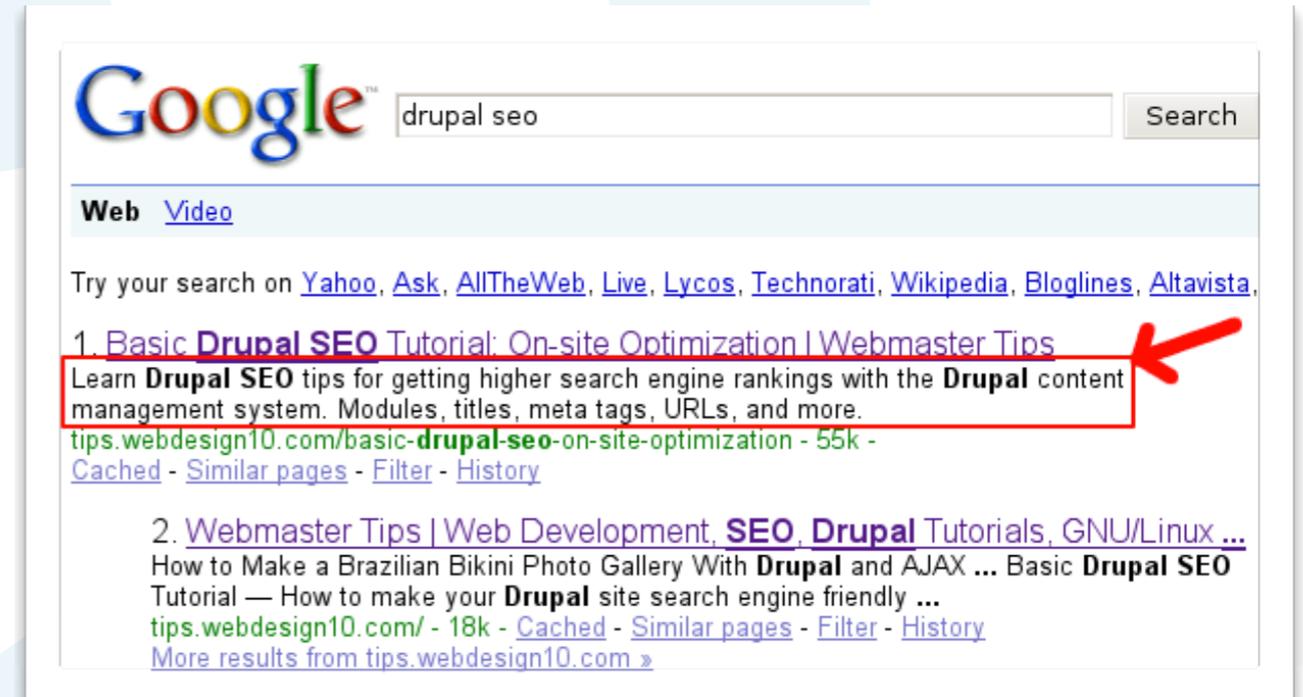
**Tip: Run a full website analysis by going to [www.pearanalytics.com](http://www.pearanalytics.com).**

**Run the first page, then choose the option that allows you to set up a free account and run another 100 pages of your site for free!**

# Write good meta descriptions for each page.

Too often, meta descriptions are written more for search engines than they are for humans. Don't forget that this is what searchers are reading to determine if they will click on your listing or not, so make it compelling, and just include one or two of the main keywords of the page without making it overly obvious that you've optimized the page.

[SEE HOW TO WRITE A GOOD META DESCRIPTION >>](#)



# Avoid thin content pages.

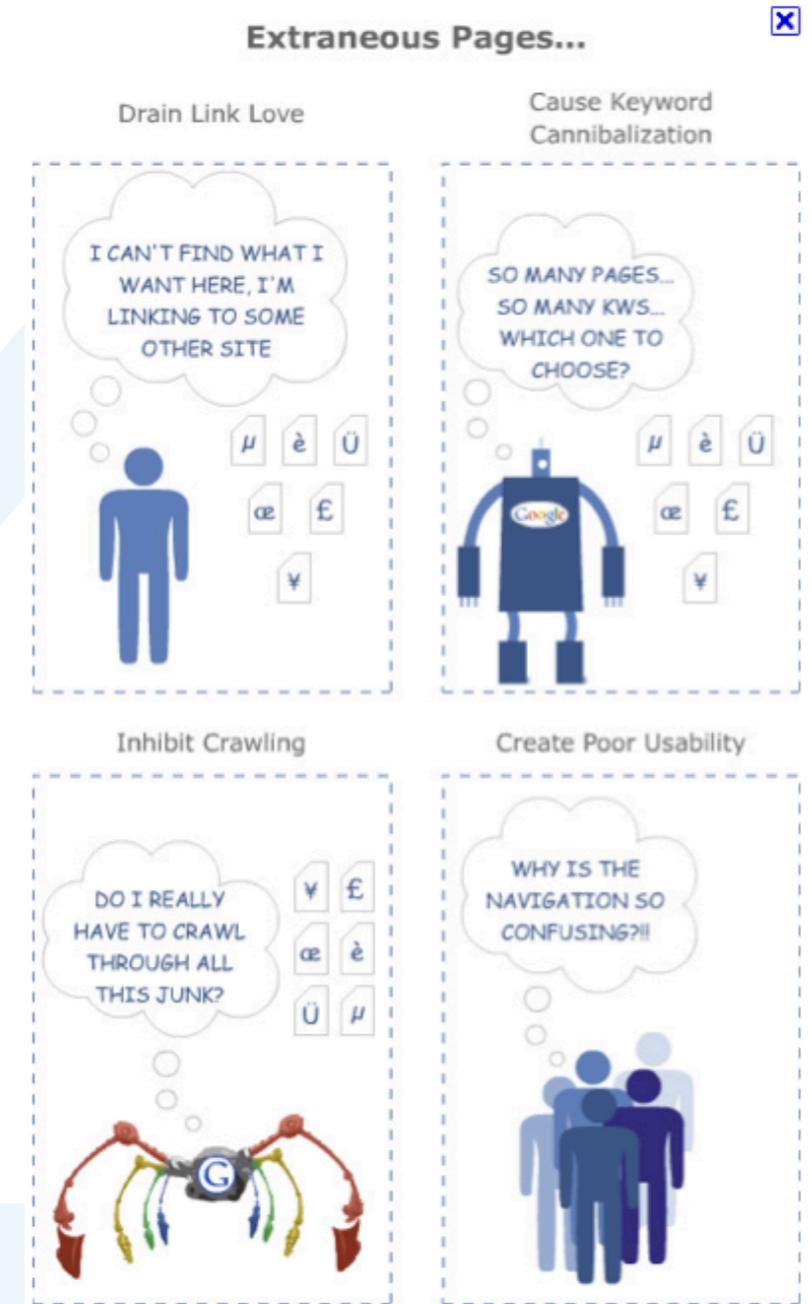
We see this quite a bit for larger product sites. You'll have a page that describes a product (or a product detail page), which has very little content. If this describes you, or this is an e-commerce site, there are a few things you can do to avoid "thin content pages":

1. Add more content to the page about the product itself, perhaps manufacturing specs or descriptions.
2. Install the ability for other users to rate or review the product. User generated content, or "UGC", can help boost the relevancy of a product page.
3. Include external links to highly relevant and authoritative sites or blogs. There is a myth where people think you have to NOFOLLOW every external link in your site, but this is not the case. Linking out to other authoritative sites, particularly ones more authoritative than you, can help raise the trust and authority of your site.

# Avoid “page bloat disease”.

A term coined by Rand Fishkin in one of his SEOmoz videos, "page bloat disease" involves a site which has created hundreds, or even thousands of extraneous pages that have little or no value. The misunderstood theory is that by having thousands of pages in the search engine index, they have a better chance of being found for a larger variety of keywords. This is not the case with many of the cases we've seen, where the pages had no value, and therefore, Google chose not to include many of them in the index at all. Instead, create pages that have content value and potential to be linked to. Avoid creating pages "meant for search engines" and instead create pages that humans will get a lot of value from.

[READ MORE ABOUT WHY YOU SHOULD ELIMINATE EXTRANEIOUS PAGES >>](#)



SOURCE: SEOMOZ.ORG

# Use the “rel=canonical” attribute.

The rel=canonical is similar to a 301 redirect, except it doesn't require your IT staff to do it. For example, if you have 2 URL which resolve to the exact page content, like `www.yoursite.com/page-A` and `www.yoursite.com/pageA`, you would have a duplicate content situation, until you told the search engine which version you prefer to keep in the index by using the rel=canonical link attribute on the preferred page.

You could also have a situation where the site is generating dynamic pages on the fly based on session ID's and it becomes impractical to 301 every version - again, the rel=canonical comes in handy.



[WATCH THIS QUICK VIDEO ON CANONICALIZATION >>](#)

# Install your blog in a subfolder, not a subdomain.

There is a growing debate in channels discussing search engine optimization, and whether it is better to have your blog on a subdomain, or a folder off of the root domain. You may have heard one side of this argument already.

In most cases, **a website will see more SEO value and benefit by having their blog in a root folder (like [www.pearanalytics.com/blog](http://www.pearanalytics.com/blog)) versus a subdomain ( like [blog.pearanalytics.com](http://blog.pearanalytics.com))** because what most web developers are unaware of is that Google will treat the subdomain like a completely different site. It would be no different than putting the blog on a separate domain all together. Little SEO benefit from the root domain is transferred to the subdomain, other than through linking back and forth. By using the subfolder approach, you are getting the full benefit that the root domain has in terms of trust and authority, to help your blog posts rank higher than they otherwise would.

There are a few exceptions to the rule, but they are less SEO-minded options, and more related to security and other IT related issues.

# Use an H1 tag on each page.

The header tag, or "H1" is used to determine importance on the page. From a hierarchical standpoint, the H1 has the 3rd most important place on the page, after the URL path and title tag.

The largest infraction of the H1 is usually on the homepage, where most web designers will place the logo in the top right as the H1, instead of using it as a text headline on the page. Try to avoid this, even if it means you have to re-work your CSS a bit to make it happen. Your pages could bump several positions by having well-optimized headers.



***Tip: Instead of hiding text with CSS by offsetting the pixel display outside the visible page area, try these [image replacement methods](#) instead.***

[SEE HOW TO WRITE A HEADER \(H1\) TAG >>](#)

# Don't launch the site with any “coming soon” pages.

There is a difference between launching a your startup site in alpha or beta using launchRock.com, and launching your new business website with a menu full of unlinked buttons and "coming soon" pages because the client is pushing for a deadline. The theory is that the search engines will not rank pages that are essentially unfinished, thereby creating a poor user experience.

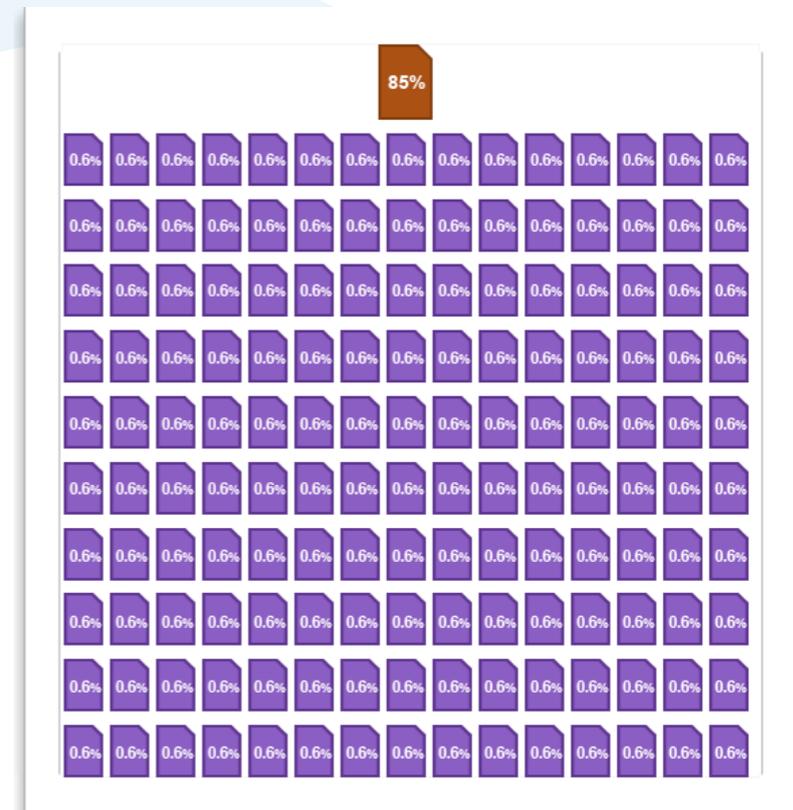
**laun**chrock

[TRY LAUNCHROCK TODAY >>](#)

# Don't have more than 100 links on any page.

The general rule of thumb here is not to have more than 100 links on any given page. This not only dilutes link juice passing through to other pages, but can give the crawler a hard time, or they simply will not crawl all of your pages until you pass the imaginary trust threshold.

However, if your page has a high Google PageRank (7 or higher), you can get away with more than the 100 link limit, and probably put in the range of 200-300 links on the page without any problems.



[READ MORE ON HOW TOO MANY LINKS CAN DILUTE THE PAGERANK BEING PASSED ON >>](#)

# Don't block the search engines inadvertently.

Sometimes we find that a website is mistakenly blocking search engines without their knowledge. For example, every install of WordPress will default the Privacy setting to "I would like to block search engines, but allow normal visitors" until you select the other option to make it visible.

Sites can also have a misconfigured robots.txt file, and block search engines that way by disallowing all, or allowing none.



[CHECK AND MAKE SURE YOU ARE NOT BLOCKING SEARCH ENGINES INSTANTLY >>](#)

# Install an XML sitemap.

The XML Sitemap is the standard protocol in which Google and other search engines would like you to use. It essentially helps their crawlers capture a lot more information, than hanging around and trying to go through all of the links of your site efficiently.

If you do not know how to create an XML sitemap, go to [www.XML-sitemaps.com](http://www.XML-sitemaps.com) and create one (up to 500 pages only). If you are running WordPress, you can accomplish the same thing by installing the Google XML Sitemaps plugin. Once you have created the sitemap, submit it to the search engines using their Webmaster Tool applications.

## XML Sitemap

This is a XML Sitemap which is supposed to be processed by search engines like [Google](#), [MSN Search](#) and [YAHOO](#). It was generated using the Blogging-Software [WordPress](#) and the [Google Sitemap Generator Plugin](#) by [Arne Brachhold](#). You can find more information about XML sitemaps on [sitemaps.org](http://sitemaps.org) and Google's [list of sitemap programs](#).

URL	Priority	Change Frequency	LastChange (GMT)
<a href="http://webhostinghelpguy.inmotionhosting.com/">http://webhostinghelpguy.inmotionhosting.com/</a>	90%	Weekly	2010-11-08 20:08
<a href="http://webhostinghelpguy.inmotionhosting.com/web-hosting/hosts-file-how-to-modify-your-hosts-file-in-windows/">http://webhostinghelpguy.inmotionhosting.com/web-hosting/hosts-file-how-to-modify-your-hosts-file-in-windows/</a>	100%	Weekly	2010-10-27 21:25
<a href="http://webhostinghelpguy.inmotionhosting.com/web-hosting/dns-%e2%80%93-how-to-customize-your-own-records/">http://webhostinghelpguy.inmotionhosting.com/web-hosting/dns-%e2%80%93-how-to-customize-your-own-records/</a>	100%	Weekly	2010-10-21 20:46

[MAKE AN XML SITEMAP \(WORDPRESS\)](#)

[MAKE AN XML SITEMAP \(NON-WORDPRESS\)](#)

# Use dashes, not underscores in your URL's.

You may have seen websites which use the underscore (like `www.yoursite.com/some_page_here`) method in the URL, and it turns out that the search engines still have a bit of trouble with those. While they don't algorithmically penalize you for underscores versus dashes, let's say you have `word1_word2` in your URL. The only way your page will return in the listings is if someone searches for "word1\_word2". But if you have "word1-word2" in the URL, the page can be returned for various searches of word 1, word2, or even "word1 word2".



[SEE HOW GOOGLE ENGINEER, MATT CUTTS, DESCRIBES THE USE OF UNDERSCORES >>](#)

# Use trailing slashes.

It turns out that `website.com/section` and `website.com/section/` can return different content, and can all together be different pages. Even though Google says they can canonicalize trailing slashes (and recommend them), that doesn't mean they always do. If your web server isn't configured to automatically append the `"/`, you'll have to do the 301 work yourself.



[SEE WHAT ANN SMARTY HAS TO SAY ABOUT TRAILING SLASHES on SEJ >>](#)

# Update the content often.

Search engines will reward sites which update often with new content, but the content must be useful to visitors, and be unique to your site (remember the Panda update?). You even can write your blog posts in advance and schedule them to publish once per day, so your new content is going out to the search engines like clockwork every day.



[READ WHAT GOOGLE IS LOOKING FOR POST-PANDA UPDATE >>](#)

# Use social media to create influence.

Google and Bing use certain social media factors to measure social influence for your domain, and use that information when ranking a website. Essentially, what this means is that if you are not using social media, you should. Use it to have conversations, create thought leadership, customer support and more. These types of interactions is what Google uses to understand the social graph and how we influence others when deciding to buy something.

The Google logo is displayed in its characteristic multi-colored font (blue, red, yellow, blue, green, red) with a slight 3D effect and shadow.The Bing logo is shown in a blue, lowercase, sans-serif font with a slight 3D effect and shadow.

[READ HOW GOOGLE AND BING USE SOCIAL MEDIA FACTORS TO INFLUENCE RANKINGS >>](#)

The KLOUT logo features a red speech bubble icon containing a white 'K' on the left, followed by the word 'KLOUT' in a bold, dark grey, uppercase sans-serif font.

[CHECK YOUR SOCIAL INFLUENCE >>](#)

The pearanalytics logo consists of a stylized pear icon on the left and the text 'pearanalytics' in a lowercase sans-serif font on the right. Below the main text, the words 'analytics insights intelligence' are written in a smaller, lighter font.

# Make sure you have analytics installed.

Having analytics installed will help you determine what visitors are actually doing on your site. If you had Google Analytics already installed, great! Be sure to upgrade to the new asynchronous JavaScript, as the new code will not only run smoother and faster, but we've seen instances where traffic numbers have changed as a result of the script being in the header as opposed to the footer.



[CHECK TO SEE IF YOU HAVE GOOGLE ANALYTICS INSTALLED PROPERLY >>](#)

# Include your address and phone number in the footer for local search.

This is an easy one to do if you're looking for better results for local search. Place your address in the footer of the site, including business name, street, city, zip and phone number. Essentially, write exactly what you would in a directory. You could even include the city and state in the title tag for further indication where your business is located. If you have multiple addresses in multiple locations, it is perfectly fine to place all of them in the footer.

 **Get your business found on Google**



[CLAIM YOUR LISTING ON GOOGLE PLACES FREE >>](#)

# Check your page load times.

Load times are getting increasingly more important for SEO, even as we see Google Analytics recently launching a new page load time feature. The goal is to get your page to load in less than 2 seconds, which requires a good host, and proper configuration of your website, scripts and more.

[READ HOW POOR LOAD TIMES CAN AFFECT VISITORS AND EVEN YOUR RANKINGS >>](#)



[HOST YOUR WORDPRESS SITE ON ZIPPYKID FOR 3X FASTER PAGE LOAD TIMES >>](#)



USE PROMO CODE "PEAR" AND GET A DISCOUNT



# Make sure your site is mobile friendly.

With more than 20% of all searches happening on a mobile device, don't deter visitors by having a crappy site that just doesn't work on your standard iPhone, Android device, or even iPad. We still see sites embedding videos in Flash instead of just putting them on YouTube and embedding the object code.

You can also check your Google Analytics and find out how many visitors are hitting your site from a mobile device, and even *which* mobile device by going to Visitors > Mobile > Mobile Devices.



[CHECK OUT GOOGLE'S PAGE SPEED SUGGESTIONS FOR MOBILE >>](#)

# Still need more?

Check out our Web Shop Partner Program. It's awesome.

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