

Guidelines for improving search engine placement

Several things work together when it comes to optimizing web pages for search engines. Your pages are among a sea of content, so it is important that you do what you can to make them searchable. Listed below are web page elements and suggestions on how to make them search engine friendly.

Title

The title tag is quite important to search engines. Most search engines use the title as the linked text in search results. You can revise this text by editing the "Title" field of your pages in the content management system (CMS). The CMS limits the number of characters as search engines only accept varying, limited numbers of characters. The title tag should have one to two keywords / phrases and should be related to the page on which it appears.

Description meta tag

When you edit a web page in the CMS, one of the fields you see is labeled "Content description." In this field, provide a description of the page's content that includes keywords. Include three to four of the most important keyword phrases, including keywords that appear in your title tag and page text. The description should be written in human readable form (sentences and phrases).

Try to have your most important keywords appear at the beginning of your description. This often brings better results and will help avoid having search engines cut off your keywords if they limit the length of your description.

Heading tags (H1, H2, etc.)

Your first heading should have an H1 tag and your second heading(s) should have an H2 tag. If you have a third tier of headings, make them H3. You can do this by selecting the heading and clicking the appropriate button in the editor tool bar (H1, H2, or H3). Search engines tend to give extra weight to content in these heading tags. Try to write headings that include keywords.

Text/copy

The copy or text on the pages should contain keyword phrases. The keywords you use in the title and description should appear here, too. If a page actually has content related to the search terms, it is more likely to be placed higher in search results.

Image alt text

Images on your pages can include keyword phrases that relate to the image. If you select an image, you'll see a field where you can enter a description (alt text) of the image. It can be one or two sentences in length. In addition to being useful for search optimization, image alt text also shows up on browsers that have images turned off.

Links

Link relevant words instead of "click here."

Avoid spamming

Avoid spamming or trying to trick search engines as you could be blacklisted. Be wary of simply repeating keyword or phrases, as search engines may interpret this as spam. Pages must have all of the elements described in this document working together along with quality text / copy.

Links on other sites

It also helps if your site is linked on related sites. In some cases, if you request a link on an appropriate site, the webmaster will add it. For example, a related professional organization may choose to link to your site for free if the content is related and useful.