

# Advanced SEO: Techniques for Better Ranking in 2020

Moderator:

Alaina Capasso [aecapasso@my.uri.edu](mailto:aecapasso@my.uri.edu)  
RI Small Business Development Center  
Webinar Coordinator

Presentation by:  
Amanda Basse



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These SEO techniques can help your website not only improve its rankings and traffic numbers but also help drive the return on investment (ROI) you want from SEO. Whether you're looking for sales, store visits, or leads, these SEO tricks can help you get the job done.

# How Search Engines Work

*First, you need to show up*

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# CRAWLING, INDEXING, AND RANKING

## How do search engines work?

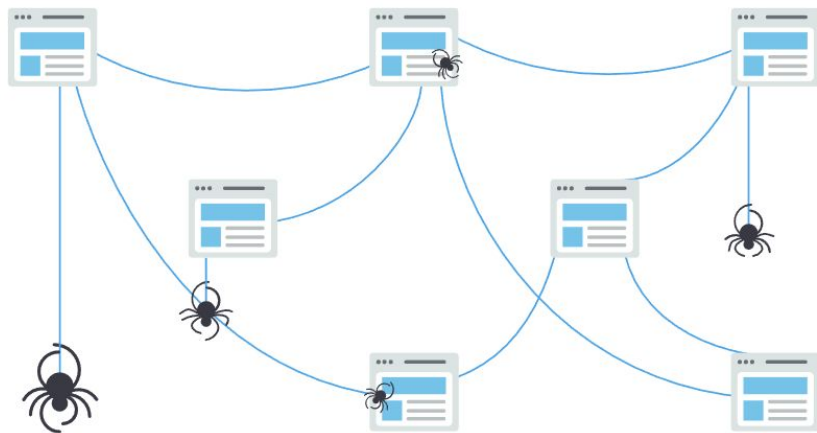
Search engines have three primary functions:

1. **Crawl:** Scour the Internet for content, looking over the code/content for each URL they find.
2. **Index:** Store and organize the content found during the crawling process. Once a page is in the index, it's in the running to be displayed as a result to relevant queries.
3. **Rank:** Provide the pieces of content that will best answer a searcher's query, which means that results are ordered by most relevant to least relevant.

# Crawling

**Crawling** is the discovery process in which search engines send out a team of robots (known as crawlers or spiders) to find new and updated content. Content can vary – it could be a webpage, an image, a video, a PDF, etc. – but regardless of the format, content is discovered by links. If you're not showing up anywhere in the search results, there are a few possible reasons why:

- Your site is brand new and hasn't been crawled yet.
- Your site isn't linked to from any external websites.
- Your site's navigation makes it hard for a robot to crawl it effectively.
- Your site contains some basic code called crawler directives that is blocking search engines.
- Your site has been penalized by Google for spammy tactics.



# Indexing

Indexing is the gathering of contents found during the crawling process. If a search engine **indexed** a page, and it can appear among the search results for the related queries.. Search engines process and store information they find in an index, a huge database of all the content they've discovered and deem good enough to serve up to searchers. Once it has extracted the page content, the crawler will put it on the index of the visited pages and organizes all the information. The information is then used to measure the relevance of the page compared to similar ones.



# Ranking

When someone performs a search, search engines scour their index for highly relevant content and then orders that content in the hopes of solving the searcher's query. This ordering of search results by relevance is known as ranking. In general, you can assume that the higher a website is ranked, the more relevant the search engine believes that site is to the query.

It's possible to block search engine crawlers from part or all of your site, or instruct search engines to avoid storing certain pages in their index. While there can be reasons for doing this, if you want your content found by searchers, you have to first make sure it's accessible to crawlers and is indexable. Otherwise, it's as good as invisible.

# Keyword Research

*Understand what your audience wants to find*

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# Understanding Your Audience

The power of keyword research lies in better understanding your target market and how they are searching for your content, services, or products.

Keyword research provides you with specific search data that can help you answer questions like:

- What are people searching for?
- How many people are searching for it?
- In what format do they want that information?

Before you can grow through search engine optimization, you first have to understand who your clients are, what problem or need does your product or service solves, and how quickly they need your solution.

# Discovering New Keywords

You likely have a few keywords in mind that you would like to rank for. These will be things like your products, services, or other topics your website addresses, and they are great seed keywords for your research, so start there! You can enter those keywords into a keyword research tool to discover average monthly search volume and similar keywords. During the discovery phase, it can help you determine which variations of your keywords are most popular amongst searchers.

Once you enter in your seed keywords into a keyword research tool, you will begin to discover other keywords, common questions, and topics for your content that you might have otherwise missed.

# Search Volume

How often are those terms searched?

The higher the search volume for a given keyword or keyword phrase, the more work is typically required to achieve higher rankings. This is often referred to as keyword difficulty and occasionally incorporates SERP features; for example, if many SERP features (like featured snippets, knowledge graph, carousels, etc) are clogging up a keyword's result page, difficulty will increase. Big brands often take up the top 10 results for high-volume keywords, so if you're just starting out on the web and going after the same keywords, the uphill battle for ranking can take years of effort.

Typically, the higher the search volume, the greater the competition and effort required to achieve organic ranking success. Go too low, though, and you risk not drawing any searchers to your site. In many cases, it may be most advantageous to target highly specific, lower competition search terms. In SEO, we call those long-tail keywords.

# Short Tail vs Long Tail Keywords

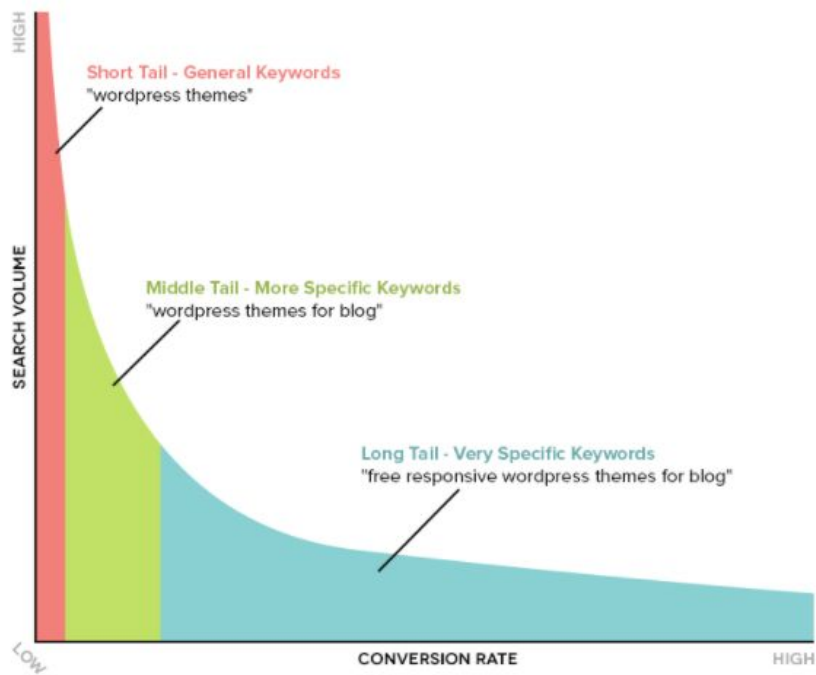
**Short-tail keywords** are much more general search queries consisting of one or two words, while **long-tail keywords** consist of three to five or even more words.

**A short tail keyword** is a phrase that contains 3 words or less. Examples include: “*athletic apparel*,” “*DVD player*,” or “*engagement ring*.” Short tail keywords are also known as “**head terms**”. They may be the first thing you think of when you are deciding where to go to eat (“Chinese food,” “pizza delivery”), what to do (“dance clubs,” “roller coaster park”), or where to worship (“synagogue,” “Catholic church”).

**A long-tail keyword**, however, is a little different compared to short tail keywords. Long tail words are phrases containing more than 3 words. They are definitely a lot more targeted and not as broad. You may not bring in as much search traffic from long tail keywords but the traffic you do bring in is the kind you are looking for.






Examples of long-tail keywords include: “summer women’s athletic apparel,” “super Blu Ray HD DVD combo player,” or “white diamond engagement ring.” Long tail keywords are obviously a lot more specific than short tail keywords; this actually can work very much in your favor. But there are pros and cons to both types of keywords.

# Search Volume of Short vs Long Tail Keywords



*As keywords get longer, search volume becomes lower. However, all other metrics such as conversion rates go in favor of long tail keywords.*

# Intent of Short vs Long Tail Keywords

<b>SHORT TAIL</b>	<b>VS</b>	<b>LONG TAIL</b>
 High	<b>Volume</b>	Low
High	<b>Competition</b>	Low 
Low	<b>Focus</b>	High 
High	<b>Cost</b>	Low 
Low	<b>Conversion Rate</b>	High 



# Where to Find Search Volume

Google Keyword Planner is **100% free** to use. You need not spend a penny on AdWords ads to gain access. You just need a Google account.

If you don't have a gmail account, get one! You will need it to access keyword planner.

[This article](#) will show you how to set up Keyword Planner without running a Google Ads Campaign.

Follow the steps EXACTLY.


Google Keyword Planner gives you two options to get started, which are:

**Find keywords:** Get keyword ideas that can help you reach people interested in your product or service;

**Get search volume and forecasts:** See search volume and other historical metrics for your keywords, as well as forecasts for how they might perform in the future.

# On-Site Optimization

*Use your research to craft your message*

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# Content Creation

There is no “secret sauce” to ranking in search results. Google ranks pages highly because it has determined they are the best answers to the searcher’s questions. In today’s search engine, it’s not enough that your page isn’t spamming, or broken. Your page has to provide value to searchers and be better than any other page Google is currently serving as the answer to a particular query. Here’s a simple formula for content creation:

- Search the keyword(s) you want your page to rank for
- Identify which pages are ranking highly for those keywords
- Determine what qualities those pages possess
- Create content that’s better than that

If you create a page on a keyword that is 10x better than the pages being shown in search results (for that keyword), Google will reward you for it, and better yet, you’ll naturally get people linking to it!

# Title Tags

A page's title tag is a descriptive, HTML element that specifies the title of a particular web page. They are nested within the head tag of each page.

Each page on your website should have a unique, descriptive title tag. What you input into your title tag field will show up here in search results, although in some cases Google may adjust how your title tag appears in search results.

## Kitchen Appliances - IKEA

[www.ikea.com](http://www.ikea.com) > [IKEA](#) > [IKEA Kitchens](#) ▼

Shop **appliances** at IKEA. Find refrigerators, ovens, cooktops, ranges, dishwashers, microwave ovens and range hoods for your home **kitchen**.

In this case, the page title tag is “Kitchen Appliances – IKEA.”

This is what both people and search engines will see as the title of your page. Often, this is the first thing they'll see, and that's a big reason why it's so crucial to put time and effort into your title tags.

# Meta Descriptions

Like title tags, [meta descriptions](#) are HTML elements that describe the contents of the page that they're on. They are also nested in the head tag.

What you input into the description field will show up here in search results:

[www.searchenginejournal.com](#) › [category](#) › [webinar](#) ▼

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# Header Tags

Header tags are an HTML element used to designate headings on your page. The main header tag, called an H1, is typically reserved for the title of the page.

Many website builders do not require any coding. You just highlight your H1, and select Header 1.

There are also sub-headings that go from H2 to H6 tags, although using all of these on a page is not required. The hierarchy of header tags goes from H1 to H6 in descending order of importance.

Each page should have a unique H1 that describes the main topic of the page, this is often automatically created from the title of a page. As the main descriptive title of the page, the H1 should contain that page's primary keyword or phrase. You should avoid using header tags to mark up non-heading elements, such as navigational buttons and phone numbers. Use header tags to introduce what the following content will discuss.

# Local Optimization

If you're a business that makes in-person contact with your customers, be sure to include your business name, address, and phone number (NAP) prominently, accurately, and consistently throughout your site's content. This information is often displayed in the footer or header of a local business website, as well as on any "contact us" pages. You'll also want to mark up this information using local business schema. Schema and structured data are discussed more at length later in the presentation

If you are a multi-location business, it's best to build unique, optimized pages for each location. For example, a business that has locations in Seattle, Tacoma, and Bellevue should consider having a page for each:

Each page should be uniquely optimized for that location, so the Seattle page would have unique content discussing the Seattle location, list the Seattle NAP, and even testimonials specifically from Seattle customers. If there are dozens, hundreds, or even thousands of locations, a store locator widget could be employed to help you scale.

# Internal Links

Part of a website's crawlability lies in its internal linking structure. When you link to other pages on your website, you ensure that search engine crawlers can find all your site's pages, you pass link equity (ranking power) to other pages on your site, and you help visitors navigate your site.

The importance of internal linking is well established, but there can be confusion over how this looks in practice.



# Anchor Text

Anchor Text is the visible, clickable text in a hyperlink. In modern browsers, it is often blue and underlined, such as [this link to the RISBDC recorded webinars](#).

The anchor text sends signals to search engines regarding the content of the destination page. For example, if I link to a page on my site using the anchor text “learn SEO,” that’s a good indicator to search engines that the targeted page is one at which people can learn about SEO. Be careful not to overdo it, though. Too many internal links using the same, keyword-stuffed anchor text can appear to search engines that you’re trying to manipulate a page’s ranking. It’s best to make anchor text natural rather than formulaic.

Anchor text can provide both search engines and users relevant contextual information about the content of the link's destination.

```
<a href="http://www.tinydancinghorse.com">Tiny dancing horse</a>
```

*Target Link*

*Anchor Text*

# Image Optimization

Images are the biggest culprits of slow web pages! The best way to solve for this is to compress your images. While there is no one-size-fits-all when it comes to image compression, testing various options like "save for web," image sizing, and compression tools like [Optimizilla](#) or [ImageOptim](#) for Mac (or [Windows alternatives](#)), as well as evaluating what works best is the way to go.

Another way to help optimize your images (and improve your page speed) is by choosing the right image format.

How to choose which image format to use:

- If your image requires animation, use a GIF.
- If you don't need to preserve high image resolution, use JPEG (and test out different compression settings).
- If you do need to preserve high image resolution, use PNG.
  - If your image has a lot of colors, use PNG-24.
  - If your image doesn't have a lot of colors, use PNG-8.

# Alt Text

Alt text (alternative text) within images is a principle of web accessibility, and is used to describe images to the visually impaired via screen readers. It's important to have alt text descriptions so that any visually impaired person can understand what the pictures on your website depict.

Search engine bots also crawl alt text to better understand your images, which gives you the added benefit of providing better image context to search engines. Just ensure that your alt descriptions reads naturally for people, and avoid stuffing keywords for search engines.

# Alt Text Example



Okay:

```

```

This alt text is only "okay" because it's not very descriptive. Yes, this is an image of a stack of pancakes. But, there's more to be said about this image.

Good:

```

```

This alt text is a better alternative because it is far more descriptive of what's in the image. This isn't just a stack of "pancakes" (as the first alt text example demonstrated); it's a stack of blueberry pancakes with a dusting of powdered sugar!

# Redirection

Removing and renaming pages is a common practice, but in the event that you do move a page, make sure to update the links to that old URL! At the very least, you should make sure to redirect the URL to its new location, but if possible, update all internal links to that URL at the source so that users and crawlers don't have to pass through redirects to arrive at the destination page. If you choose to redirect only, be careful to avoid redirect chains that are too long.

Long story short: If you change your URLs, be sure to change ALL internal and external links. You want to make it easy for Google to send traffic to your page.

# Measuring Your SEO Performance

Set yourself up for success.

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# Engagement Metrics

## Conversion rate

The number of conversions divided by the number of unique visits. A conversion rate can be applied to anything, from an email signup to a purchase to account creation. Knowing your conversion rate can help you gauge the return on investment (ROI) your website traffic might deliver.

## Time on page

How long did people spend on your page? If you have a 2,000-word blog post that visitors are only spending an average of 10 seconds on, the chances are slim that this content is being consumed (unless they're a mega-speed reader). However, if a URL has a low time on page, that's not necessarily bad either. Consider the intent of the page. For example, it's normal for "Contact Us" pages to have a low average time on page.

## Pages per visit

Was the goal of your page to keep readers engaged and take them to a next step? If so, then pages per visit can be a valuable engagement metric. If the goal of your page is independent of other pages on your site (ex: visitor came, got what they needed, then left), then low pages per visit are okay.

# Additional Metrics

## **Bounce rate**

"Bounced" sessions indicate that a searcher visited the page and left without browsing your site any further. Many people try to lower this metric because they believe it's tied to website quality, but it actually tells us very little about a user's experience. We've seen cases of bounce rate spiking for redesigned restaurant websites that are doing better than ever. Further investigation discovered that people were simply coming to find business hours, menus, or an address, then bouncing with the intention of visiting the restaurant in person. A better metric to gauge page/site quality is scroll depth.

## **Scroll depth**

This measures how far visitors scroll down individual webpages. Are visitors reaching your important content? If not, test different ways of providing the most important content higher up on your page, such as multimedia, contact forms, and so on. Also consider the quality of your content. Are you omitting needless words? Is it enticing for the visitor to continue down the page? Scroll depth tracking can be set up in your Google Analytics.



# The Easy Button

There are [plug-ins](#) to make SEO possible without knowing how to code.

## **Squarespace:**

Squarespace has templates that include SEO. You can find the list [here](#).

## **Wordpress:**

WordPress SEO by Yoast is the most popular SEO plugin on WordPress. When it comes to page analysis, you need to know exactly what you're doing. SEO by Yoast makes sure that you're always on the right track.

For example, Yoast SEO can quickly scan any page for images, ensuring that each one has an alt tag that matches the primary keyword for the post. Along with this, it checks your content for length and confirms whether or not your meta description is up to par. And, that's just the start.

## **Shopify:**

Shopify has built in SEO built in to help you optimize your content. You can edit the title tags, meta descriptions, and URLs for blog posts, webpages, products, and collections. You can edit the alt text for image.

# Recap

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SEO is not only about search engines. You should create all pieces of content and website design with the end goal of a positive user experience and usability of a web site.

People rarely go beyond the first page when searching for things online. In order to get to the top of the first, you have to tell Google every detail about your content so they can determine how relevant it is to what the user is looking for.

SEO is also an ongoing process. Continually optimize and add value for your user.

# Resources

[Moz Alt Text](#)

[Local Business Structured Data](#)

[Anchor Text](#)

[Short Tail vs Long Tail Keywords](#)

[Crawling, Indexing, Ranking](#)

[Essential Guide to SEO](#)

[SEO Guide](#)

[SEO Starter Guide](#)

[Sitemaps](#)

[SEO Audit Tool](#)

[Mobile Ready Test](#)

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# Questions?

Type your question to the chat box

Contact Us:

401-874-7232

<https://bit.ly/regRISBDC>

susandavis@uri.edu

