

SEO

Search Engine Optimization

When users search for a given term on a search engine like Google, the results that are shown for the search do not end up there by accident.

Search engines run small programs called 'web crawlers' or 'search bots' that scan all of the pages they can on the internet. They then rank each of those pages based on a number of different factors. Pages are then displayed in descending order, with pages with a higher "page rank" at the top of the list.

Search engine optimization (SEO) is the process of designing your page so that your page is highly ranked for specific keywords that relate to your content.

- Two types of SEO:
 - On-Page
 - Off-Site

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On-Page SEO - Keywords

Probably the most significant component of on-page SEO is keywords. There are two types of keywords to consider:

- Obvious Keywords
- Less Obvious Keywords

Obvious keywords are the ones most content editors use naturally when creating content. However, less obvious keywords (synonyms, acronyms, alternate word order) can provide good SEO without impacting the meaning of the content.

While obvious keywords are the most competitive search terms, the less obvious keywords provide greater opportunities for websites that are just starting out.

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On-Page SEO - Keyword Placement

In addition to placing keywords in your content, keywords should also be used in URLs where possible. Consider the following URLs:

- <http://www.example.com/products/item1.html>
- <http://www.example.com/products/shoes/>

The first URL, while functional, doesn't provide us with much information about what's going to be on the page. The second URL, on the other hand, has the word 'shoes' in it, giving us a clue that there are shoes on the webpage. Search engines will make note of this and will rank the page at the second URL higher than the page at the first, even if they have the same content.

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On-Page SEO - Keyword Placement

In addition to the URL and the page content, placing keywords in the title element of a page can help improve its search ranking.

HTML - keyword.html

```
<head>  
  <title>Keyword - Company Name</title>  
</head>
```

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On-Page SEO - Meta Description

The meta tag allows us to provide a description about our page.

HTML

```
<head>  
  <title>Page Title</title>  
  <meta name="description" content="Description of my page" />  
</head>
```

Historically, this was used as a description of the page and significantly impacted SEO. However, anecdotal reports indicate that this is no longer used by search engines to determine page rank. That said, it does appear to be used to describe your page in search results and to describe your site on social networking sites like Facebook. For best results, it is recommended that you only provide 25 words or less if you choose to use a meta tag.

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On-Page SEO - Keyword Placement

Placing content inside of page headings can also have an impact on page rank. By placing a keyword in your URL, your page title, and your page headings, the association of that word with your page increases significantly.

HTML - widgets.html

```
<head>  
  <title>Widgets - Company Name</title>  
</head>  
<body>  
  <h1>Our Widgets</h1>  
</body>
```

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On-Page SEO - Keyword Placement

When writing content, it is important to use keywords. That said, using the same keyword over and over can make your content less interesting and, in some cases, unnatural. When writing content, use synonyms, plural/singular variants, and alternate word ordering to provide a variety of keywords. For example:

We sell the best flowers for moms on Mother's Day. If you're looking for the perfect floral arrangement, we can help you get the right bouquet at the right price.

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On-Page SEO - Quality Content

In addition to keyword associations, having quality content can significantly impact your search rankings. "Quality" content is:

- Regularly updated
- Not duplicated
- Well-designed (i.e., more important content first)
- Shallow Paths

The concept of "shallow paths" relates to the number of clicks it takes the user to get to a certain page on your website. If a page requires five clicks to get to, search engines will assume that it is not as important as a page that is linked to directly off of the homepage.

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On-Page SEO - Page Construction

Lastly, page construction can impact search engine rankings. Fortunately, we've already covered this topic in our earlier lectures:

- Valid HTML
- Accessible HTML
- Proper use and ordering of headings
- Good use of emphasis tags with keywords

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Off-Page SEO - Authority and Relevancy

Off-Page SEO is related to how many other websites link to your pages. Think of this as a search engine's reference check. "What do other websites think of this website?"

Google's search engine was designed based on the "friend of a friend" principle. The idea is this: if you have a friend whom you trust and they make a recommendation to you, you're more likely to trust that recommendation over the same from someone you don't know and trust. Similarly, if a website that is well-established links to another website, that link is going to be more trusted by a search engine than a link that is found on a random website that may or may not be linking to less-than-trustworthy content.

The key to good off-page SEO is getting links from quality sites. Additionally, links to your page from similar websites will rank higher than links from unrelated sites. Lastly, links that use your keywords in the anchor text will help improve your page ranking more than a simple 'click here' link.

Unfortunately, we don't have a lot of control over how other sites link to our content. Some options for promoting your pages on other websites:

- Comments Section
- Online Directories
- Outreach
- Give-Aways / Promotions
- Guest Blogging
- Badges
- Social Media
- Quality Content

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Bad SEO

Don't try to trick the search engines!

Search engines are pretty smart. They've seen lots of people trying to beat the system and have adjusted accordingly. Even if you are able to trick the search engines into giving your page a higher rank, the result is usually only temporary. If you don't trick the search engines, some of them will actually apply a negative page rank to penalize your questionable practices. Additionally, you're likely impacting your users' experience negatively by trying to format your pages for search engines rather than for them.

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Google's Recommendation

"Focus on the user and all else will follow"

~ [Google Philosophy](#)