

# SEO “Cheat Sheet”

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**SEO** stands for **S**earch **E**ngine **O**ptimization. It is a set of techniques to increase the rank of your website as high as possible on all the major search engines, which include Google, Bing, and Yahoo. The goal is to acquire as much visibility and web traffic as possible. It is as much science as it is art and it should be an important part of your online strategy.

## OVERVIEW

There are many components that go into SEO. Search engines use their own algorithms to determine what your overall rank should be. But in general, the following are the most important factors (in no particular order):

- 1) **Meta Tags:** The code behind a web page that search engines use to help rank and describe that page (explained in detail below).
- 2) **Content:** The words, headlines, images, captions, video, etc and even the URL that make up a page. Rich and frequently updated content increases your rank.
- 3) **Popularity:** Incoming links, number of pages, monthly traffic, and more determine your “footprint” on the web and therefore its importance and rank.
- 4) **Security:** Websites that try to “trick” search engines into giving them a higher rank or those that contain malware or are the origin of spam will automatically get their ranked lowered. Also, sites that use secure https links are generally favored above those that use non-secure http.
- 5) **Relevance:** An often overlooked factor, does your site contain what the user is looking for? Are you in the same geographic region as the user? The more closely the content and focus of your site matches what the user is looking for, the more likely your site will rank high in that person’s search results.
- 6) **Submission:** The search engines need to know that your site exists and need to be reminded to “crawl” your site (see what new content is available) on a regular basis. Submitting your website to the search engines frequently (monthly is recommended) is an important part of achieving a good rank. In addition, providing a site map will ensure that all your pages are discovered.
- 7) **Mobile:** Sites that are responsive (optimized for both desktop and mobile devices) will garner higher rankings, especially for users who are searching from a mobile device.
- 8) **Magic:** There are numerous other factors involved in achieving high search rankings, some of it known and some of it proprietary to the search engines. While it is a complex topic, by doing the basics right, you can achieve and maintain good rankings.

## **TAKING ACTION**

A lot of time – and money – can be spent trying to achieve better search rankings with mixed results. At any point, search algorithms can change and so can your rankings. Our recommendation is to not buy into any “snake oil.” You may be tempted by companies promising specific rankings, but know they can never guarantee such results as those rankings are in complete control of the search engines.

Despite this caveat, it is still important to build and maintain your site with SEO in mind. Just like you wouldn't build a store without putting up signs, you need to drive traffic and visitors to your website and the most common way to do so is via search engines: they are the path to your virtual doorstep and an important way to attract customers.

## **META TAGS**

Meta tags are lines of code in your web page that help search engines make sense of your content. By taking the time to create targeted meta tags, you can improve your rankings.

Note: Meta tags should not include a quote mark (“) within tags since this is used to start and end the actual tag itself. If a quote mark is absolutely necessary, use the HTML entity code equivalent of &quot; but note this will not appear in search engine listings. For more information, see: <http://theseosystem.com/quotes-in-meta-tags-description/>

### **Title**

The title is the only meta tag that you can see from your web browser without viewing the source code. It is the title that appears at the top of your browser window. Not only does it act as a label for the window and for any bookmarks that may be created, it helps search engines understand the content of that page.

For the title meta tag of your home page, start by listing the most important words and / or phrases related to your website. The total title length should not exceed 70 characters, and the most important words should be within the first 55 characters. Avoid redundancy and emphasize what's most unique about your website and the content, services, or products you offer. If location is critically important, add that to your list, but note that most search engines are aware of your geographic location anyway.

Keep in mind you are targeting the search phrases and words people will most likely enter to find your site. Make sure you list the phrases in order of priority, with the most important appearing first. Most likely, you should also include the name of your business or website, usually at the beginning or the end of your list. You can separate the keywords and phrases with commas or spaces.

Title example (from my own website): *PHP expert, PHP developer, custom web applications, eCommerce developer, iPhone iPad iOS development, New Media Design, John Contarino, Philly*

### **Description**

The description is hidden code that search engines display under your weblinks on their search results page, so it's important to summarize what your site offers.

For the description meta tag, write 1-2 sentences that explain what your site is about and / or what your business offers. It should be clear and concise and help differentiate your site from your competitors. Limit the length to 160 characters.

Description example: *New Media Design develops custom web applications, eCommerce systems, games and presentations using PHP, MySQL, iOS, Xcode, Cocoa and the latest technology.*

### **Keywords**

Keywords are also hidden code that search engines do not put much emphasis on anymore, therefore they are optional.

Similar to your Title, this is a list of searchable phrases, separated by commas. The difference is that this list can be a lot longer (between 20 and 100 words) than your title and it's OK to have some redundancy. For example, you would include both "web developer" and "website developer" whereas the title tag would use just one of these phrases to be concise. You may want to create this list first and then edit it down to create the Title list.

Keywords example: *PHP expert, PHP developer, PHP guru, custom web developer, iOS developer, PHP programmer, custom ecommerce developer, ecommerce websites, custom shopping carts, ecommerce developer, lingo programmer, interactive developer, interactive producer, new jersey, philadelphia, philly, john contarino, MySQL, iOS, Xcode, Cocoa, director programmer, shockwave game producer*

### **More Information**

When creating your meta tags, check out your competitors' websites (as well as other sites in general) and see what they are using, especially those that rank higher than you on search engines like Google. The easiest way to view meta tags for any website is to right-click on a web page and choose the View Source (or View Page Source) option. Then look towards the top of the page for this code:

#### Title

```
<title>How To Use HTML Meta Tags - Search Engine Watch (#SEW)</title>
```

#### Description

```
<meta name="description" content="Meta tags aren't a magical solution, but they will help ensure your website appears on search engine results pages. This tutorial explains
```

what HTML meta tags are, which meta tags matter, and how to avoid mistakes when implementing meta tags." />

### Robots

One meta tag you don't want to see on your important pages is this:

```
<meta name="robots" content="noindex, nofollow">
```

This tells search engines NOT to crawl your site. Some websites, including those built with WordPress, have the option to “discourage” search engines from crawling a site. This is usually done when a site is in development, but when a site is live, search engines should be allowed to crawl your site.

To learn more, here's a good basic overview of meta tags:

<http://searchenginewatch.com/article/2067564/How-To-Use-HTML-Meta-Tags>

## **CONTACT US**

If you would like an expert to guide you through the world of SEO, please contact us for a free initial phone consultation. We can help you create optimized meta tags, improve the structure and content of your website, and submit your site to the search engines on a regular basis. Please be sure to mention this document when you contact us for a discount.

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## **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

Here are some additional links you may find useful:

### **Why Is Metadata Important?**

<http://www.practicalecommerce.com/articles/91427-SEO-Why-Is-Metadata-Important>

### **7 Advanced SEO Concepts**

[https://moz.com/blog/7-advanced-seo-concepts?](https://moz.com/blog/7-advanced-seo-concepts?utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=social&utm_content=7_advanced_seo_concepts&utm_campaign=blog_post)

[utm\\_source=twitter&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_content=7\\_advanced\\_seo\\_concepts&utm\\_campaign=blog\\_post](https://moz.com/blog/7-advanced-seo-concepts?utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=social&utm_content=7_advanced_seo_concepts&utm_campaign=blog_post)

### **Ingenious Ways To Increase Web Traffic**

<http://www.quora.com/What-are-some-of-the-most-ingenious-ways-to-increase-traffic-to-a-website>

### **Google's Mobile Friendly Update**

<http://www.practicalecommerce.com/articles/84702-SEO-How-Google's-Mobile-friendly-Update-Affects-Performance>

**SEO: Content Optimization Checklist**

<http://www.practicalecommerce.com/articles/97596-SEO-Content-Optimization-Checklist>

**26 Free SEO Tools for Merchants**

<http://www.practicalecommerce.com/articles/97619-26-Free-SEO-Tools-for-Merchants>

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