

SEO Tips & Techniques



SEO Tips: Businesses are growing more aware of the need to understand and implement at least the basics of search engine optimization ([SEO](#)). But if you read a variety of blogs and websites, you'll quickly see that there's a lot of uncertainty over what makes up "the basics." Without access to high-level consulting and without a lot of experience knowing what SEO resources can be trusted, there's also a lot of misinformation about SEO strategies and tactics.

1. Commit yourself to the process. SEO isn't a one-time event. Search engine algorithms change regularly, so the tactics that worked last year may not work this year. SEO requires a long-term outlook and commitment.
2. Be patient. SEO isn't about instant gratification. Results often take months to see, and this is especially true the smaller you are, and the newer you are to doing business online.
3. Ask a lot of questions when hiring an SEO company. It's your job to know what kind of tactics the company uses. Ask for specifics. Ask if there are any risks involved. Then get online yourself and do your own research—about the company, about the tactics they discussed, and so forth.
4. Become a student of SEO. If you're taking the do-it-yourself route, you'll have to become a student of SEO and learn as much as you can. Luckily for you, there are plenty of great web resources (like Search Engine Land) and several terrific books you can read. (Yes, actual printed books!) See our What Is SEO page for a variety of articles, books and resources.
5. Have web analytics in place at the start. You should have clearly defined goals for your SEO efforts, and you'll need web analytics software in place so you can track what's working and what's not.
6. Build a great web site. I'm sure you want to show up on the first page of results. Ask yourself, "Is my site really one of the 10 best sites in the world on this topic?" Be honest. If it's not, make it better.
7. Include a site map page. Spiders can't index pages that can't be crawled. A site map will help spiders find all the important pages on your site, and help the spider understand your site's hierarchy. This is especially helpful if your site has a hard-to-

- crawl navigation menu. If your site is large, make several site map pages. Keep each one to less than 100 links. I tell clients 75 is the max to be safe.
8. Make SEO-friendly URLs. Use keywords in your URLs and file names, such as `asyourdomain.com/red-widgets.html`. Don't overdo it, though. A file with 3+ hyphens tends to look spammy and users may be hesitant to click on it. Related bonus tip: Use hyphens in URLs and file names, not underscores. Hyphens are treated as a "space," while underscores are not.
 9. Do keyword research at the start of the project. If you're on a tight budget, use the free versions of Keyword Discovery or WordTracker, both of which also have more powerful paid versions. Ignore the numbers these tools show; what's important is the relative volume of one keyword to another. Another good free tool is Google's AdWords Keyword Tool, which doesn't show exact numbers.
 10. Open up a PPC account. Whether it's Google's AdWords, Microsoft adCenter or something else, this is a great way to get actual search volume for your keywords. Yes, it costs money, but if you have the budget it's worth the investment. It's also the solution if you didn't like the "Be patient" suggestion above and are looking for instant visibility.
 11. Use a unique and relevant title and meta description on every page. The page title is the single most important on-page SEO factor. It's rare to rank highly for a primary term (2-3 words) without that term being part of the page title. The meta description tag won't help you rank, but it will often appear as the text snippet below your listing, so it should include the relevant keyword(s) and be written so as to encourage searchers to click on your listing. Related bonus tip: You can ignore the Keywords meta tag, as no major search engine today supports it.
 12. Write for users first. Google, Yahoo, etc., have pretty powerful bots crawling the web, but to my knowledge these bots have never bought anything online, signed up for a newsletter, or picked up the phone to call about your services. Humans do those things, so write your page copy with humans in mind. Yes, you need keywords in the text, but don't stuff each page like a Thanksgiving turkey. Keep it readable.
 13. Create great, unique content. This is important for everyone, but it's a particular challenge for online retailers. If you're selling the same widget that 50 other retailers are selling, and everyone is using the boilerplate descriptions from the manufacturer, this is a great opportunity. Write your own product descriptions, using the keyword research you did earlier (see #9 above) to target actual words searchers use, and make product pages that blow the competition away. Plus, retailer or not, great content is a great way to get inbound links.
 14. Use your keywords as anchor text when linking internally. Anchor text helps tells spiders what the linked-to page is about. Links that say "click here" do nothing for your search engine visibility.
 15. Build links intelligently. Begin with foundational links like trusted directories. (Yahoo and DMOZ are often cited as examples, but don't waste time worrying about DMOZ submission. Submit it and forget it.) Seek links from authority sites in your industry. If local search matters to you (more on that coming up), seek links from trusted sites in your geographic area – the Chamber of Commerce, local business directories, etc. Analyze the inbound links to your competitors to find links you can acquire, too. Create great content on a consistent basis and use social media to build awareness

- and links. (A blog is great for this; see below.)
16. Use press releases wisely. Developing a relationship with media covering your industry or your local region can be a great source of exposure, including getting links from trusted media web sites. Distributing releases online can be an effective link building tactic, and opens the door for exposure in news search sites. Related bonus tip: Only issue a release when you have something newsworthy to report. Don't waste journalists' time.
 17. Start a blog and participate with other related blogs. Search engines, Google especially, love blogs for the fresh content and highly-structured data. Beyond that, there's no better way to join the conversations that are already taking place about your industry and/or company. Reading and commenting on other blogs can also increase your exposure and help you acquire new links. Related bonus tip: Put your blog at [yourdomain.com/blog](#) so your main domain gets the benefit of any links to your blog posts. If that's not possible, use [blog.yourdomain.com](#).
 18. Use social media marketing wisely. If your business has a visual element, join the appropriate communities on Flickr and post high-quality photos there. If you're a service-oriented business, use Quora and/or Yahoo Answer to position yourself as an expert in your industry. Any business should also be looking to make use of Twitter and Facebook, as social information and signals from these are being used as part of search engine rankings for Google and Bing. With any social media site you use, the first rule is don't spam! Be an active, contributing member of the site. The idea is to interact with potential customers, not annoy them.
 19. Take advantage of local search opportunities. Online research for offline buying is a growing trend. Optimize your site to catch local traffic by showing your address and local phone number prominently. Write a detailed Directions/Location page using neighborhoods and landmarks in the page text. Submit your site to the free local listings services that the major search engines offer. Make sure your site is listed in local/social directories such as CitySearch, Yelp, Local.com, etc., and encourage customers to leave reviews of your business on these sites, too.
 20. Take advantage of the tools the search engines give you. Sign up for Google Webmaster Central, Bing Webmaster Tools and Yahoo Site Explorer to learn more about how the search engines see your site, including how many inbound links they're aware of.
 21. Diversify your traffic sources. Google may bring you 70% of your traffic today, but what if the next big algorithm update hits you hard? What if your Google visibility goes away tomorrow? Newsletters and other subscriber-based content can help you hold on to traffic/customers no matter what the search engines do. In fact, many of the DOs on this list—creating great content, starting a blog, using social media and local search, etc.—will help you grow an audience of loyal prospects and customers that may help you survive the whims of search engines.

[Share on Facebook](#)

-

[_ Tweet](#)

-
[_ Follow us](#)

-
[_ Share](#)

HermoDesign