

WHAT IS SEO WRITING?

The Complete Guide to Writing for Search

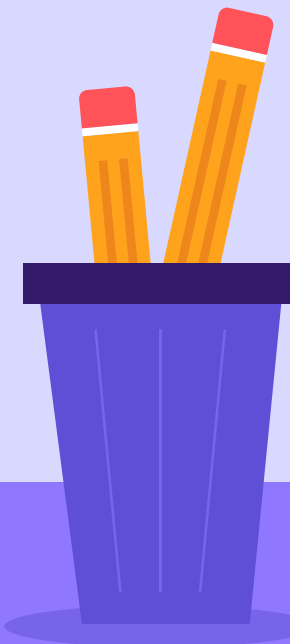
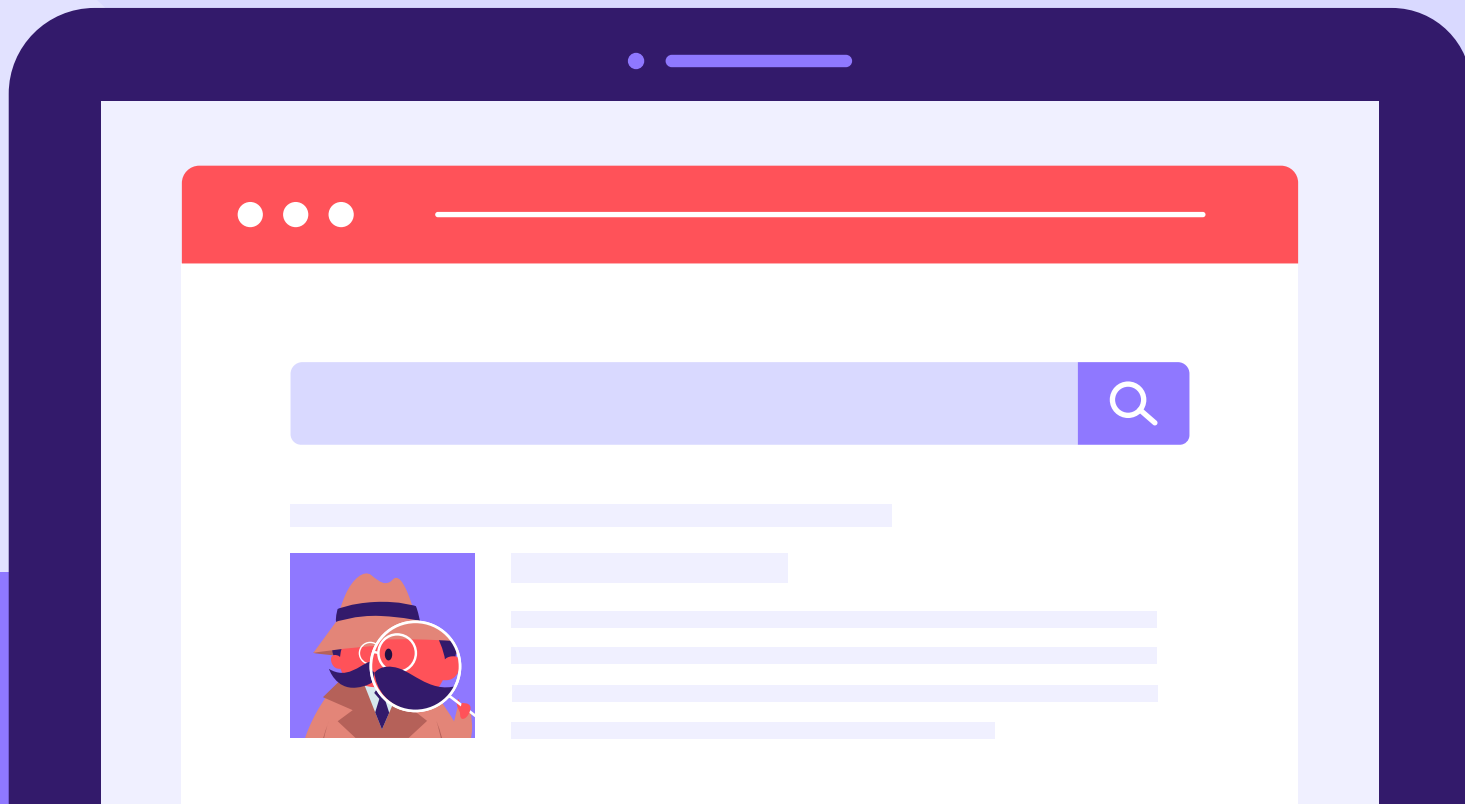


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INTRODUCTION

Search engine optimization is an \$80 billion industry. Are you getting your money's worth?

SEO writing requires analytics proficiency and high-quality copy skills. It's the convergence of data science and art.

So how do you do it right? How do you please readers, search engines and your boss all in one go?

WHAT IS SEO WRITING?

SEO writing is the **implementation of keywords and keyphrases within web content**. Copywriters and marketers use SEO to increase their site's organic visibility and SERP rankings. The best way to write for SEO is to pair high-quality copy with targeted search terms.

KEY SEO TERMS, DEFINED



Long-tail keywords:

A string of keywords or phrases, often 3-6 words long. Long-tail terms are more specific and are queried less frequently relative to high-level, generic terms. Think “basketball shoes” vs “2019 basketball shoes for sale Colorado.”



SERPs:

Search engine results pages. In other words, the Google page that contains all the results users can click on after a query.



SERP position:

The exact ranking in Google. For instance, Position 12 would refer to Page 2 of Google, since only 10 listings typically appear on Page 1.



Anchor text:

The words or phrases that are hyperlinked, directing traffic to other webpages.



Meta description:

A short summary of a webpage that appears in SERPs – often 160 characters – that can entice searchers to click a result.



Title tag:

The title of a webpage that appears in Google SERPs and as the text on browser tabs.



Search queries:

Words that users type or say into search engines.



Search volume:

The number of times a term is queried per month.



Click-through rate:

Percentage of clicks for a SERP result relative to how many times searchers saw that result.



Conversion rate:

Percentage of people who complete a desired action (a click, a purchase, etc.) divided by the total number of people who visited that page.



Organic traffic:

The number of users who found your site via a search engine under their own free will and not through paid ads or other sites.

**Structured data (schema):**

How SEO elements like metadata, keywords and HTML are formatted on the page. Data that is structured makes it easier for search engines to crawl and index pages.

**Ranking factors:**

The general components that search engine algorithms consider when deciding which pages should rank higher than others.

**Backlink:**

A hyperlink that directs traffic to another page, either internally or externally.

**Page and domain authority:**

A score that measures how “authoritative” a page or site is on a scale of 1-100.

**Pageviews:**

Number of times a page is viewed.

**Pageviews per session:**

Number of pages viewed in 1 session by each user, before leaving the site entirely.

**Organic keyword difficulty:**

A metric of how easy or difficult it will be to rank for a given keyword in organic search, on a scale of 1-100.

**Dwell time:**

The length of time a user spends on a result they’ve clicked on before returning back to the original search engine results page.



START WITH YOUR GOALS

The foundation for any SEO content strategy is to know what you hope to achieve. Set measurable goals before you begin, so that copywriters, marketing managers and other stakeholders are all working toward the same KPIs.

Here are common metrics to measure:

- **Click-through rate.**
- **Conversion rate.**
- **Organic traffic.**
- **Backlinks.**
- **SERP position.**
- **Dwell time.**
- **Page and Domain Authority.**
- **Organic keyword opportunity/difficulty.**
- **Pageviews per Session.**

SEO copywriters should be given the data they need to succeed, so that each new page that's created is tied back to a core business goal.



KNOW YOUR SERP PRESENTATION

There are a growing number of ways search engines present your webpages to the public, known as **featured snippets**. This means not every piece of content is presented to the searchers in the same way.

Even if two companies write an article about the same topic, if one of those pages ranks highly in SERPs, it could earn a featured snippet. So while company A is presented as a generic blue link, company B is presented with additional images, bolded text and more.

How to Explain Content Marketing to Anyone [Fresh Examples]

<https://contentmarketinginstitute.com/.../explain-content-marketing-anyone...>

Sep 4, 2018 - Here's an easy way to explain what **content marketing** is, along with some easy-to-understand real-life **examples** – **Content Marketing Institute**.

COMPANY A ▲



COMPANY B ►

The following are eight examples of content marketing done right.

- Coke's "Share A Coke" Campaign. ...
- Buffer's Open Blog. ...
- Hootsuite And A Game of Social Thrones. ...
- Microsoft And Stories. ...
- HubSpot's Inbound **Marketing**. ...
- McDonald's Question Time. ...
- GoPro And Visual **Content**. ...
- Share As Image.

Nov 5, 2015

Content Marketing Done Right: 8 Examples You Can Learn From ...

<https://marketingland.com/content-marketing-done-right-8-examples-can-lea...>

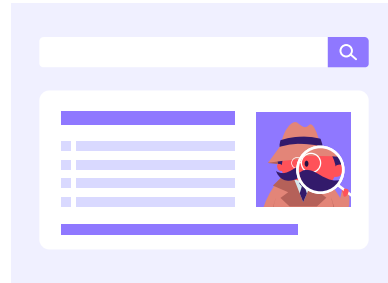


To stand out from competitors, understand how your content is going to appear in Google SERPs – then optimize for that specific format.

Here are the featured snippets you're most likely to encounter:



Paragraph



List



Table

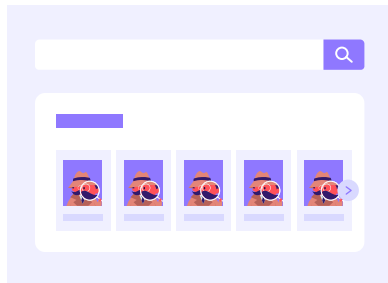
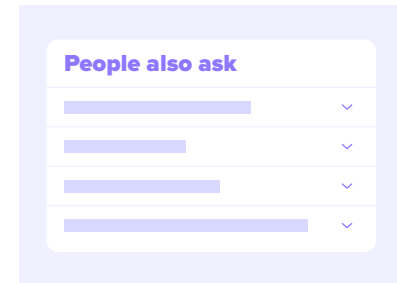


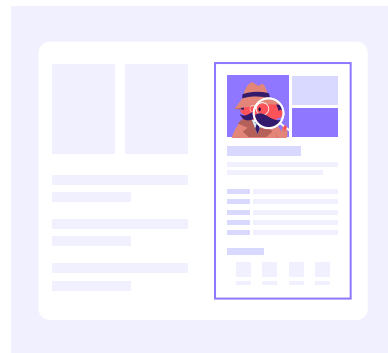
Image Carousel



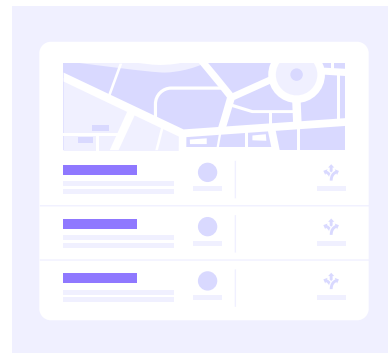
Sitelinks



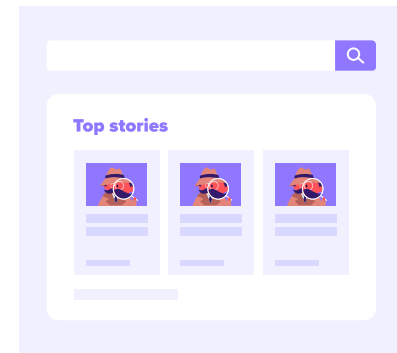
People Also Ask



Knowledge Graph



Local 3-Pack



Top Stories

THINK IN TERMS OF RANKING FACTORS

In line with your company's own commercial objectives, there are also Google's preferences to keep in mind. The search engine's primary algorithm, RankBrain, helps process webpages and determine where they should rank in SERPs.

So content writing isn't just pleasing your readers; it's about pleasing Google too. That's why it's important to know the specific ranking factors Google looks at. There are more than 200, but 10 of the most prominent are:

- 1. Content quality:** Is your writing accurate, relevant and user-friendly?
- 2. Backlinks:** Do other sites link to your content?
- 3. HTTPS:** Is your site secure?
- 4. User experience:** Is your content visually and informationally valuable + easy to engage with?

5. Mobile first: Is your site optimized for mobile screens?

6. Page speed: Does your page load in 2 seconds or less?

7. Direct traffic: Do users come directly to your site, or do they have to Google you first?

8. Content depth: Is your content more comprehensive than similar pages on the web?

9. Behavioral signals: Do people share, comment and mention your content?

10. Schema: Is your content easily understood by search engines?



STRATEGIC, NOT STUFFY: HOW TO USE KEYWORDS

SEO has always been an evolving discipline. In the earliest iterations of the internet, content was ranked and served to users based on repeating the same keywords as many times as possible. This was referred to as keyword density.

However, in the last five years, Google's algorithms have gotten smarter, and they know that keyword stuffing is spammy and not useful to readers. So, copywriters have had to shift their approach: **Write for the end user, not a magic number of keywords.**

What this means in practice is that each page should be built around a single keyword. Writers should cover every angle and aspect of that topic and its associated subtopics. Think ahead: What followup questions might a reader have after reading your piece? Include the answers to those questions in your writing right from the start.

The intent is to be the single best resource for a topic, providing maximum value to readers. Don't worry about using keywords every other sentence. If you're doing your job correctly, the keywords will naturally flow in the article.



TOP SEO COPY TIPS



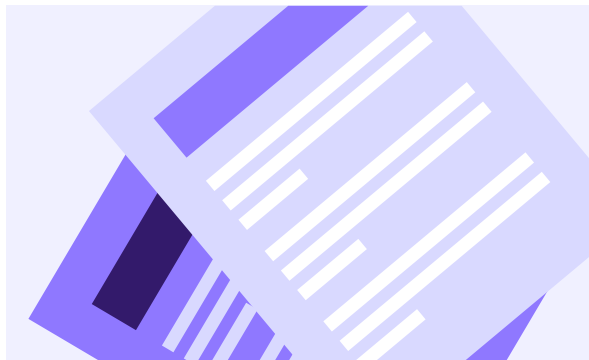
You are not your reader. Do not write for yourself, write for your target audience.



Include keywords where they will have the most impact: metadata, header tags, page title and anchor text.



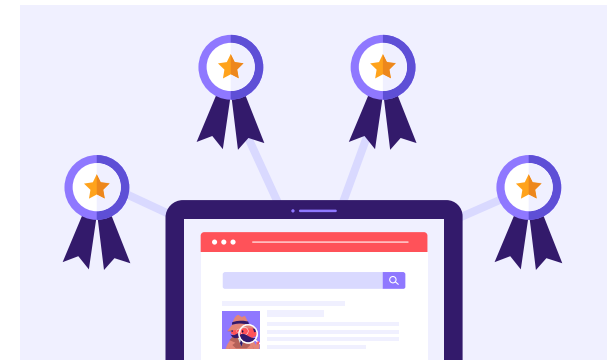
Mimic the language and voice of your audience, whether that's third-person formal or second-person conversational.



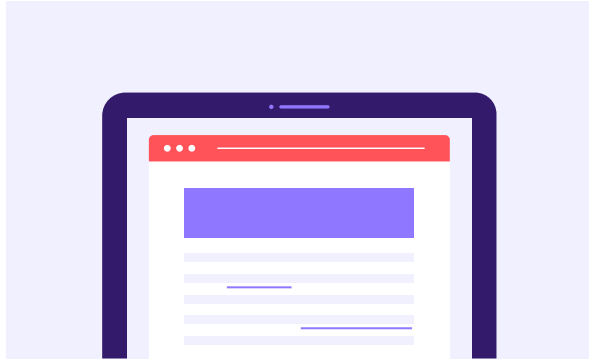
Use short paragraphs of only a few sentences.



Strategically leave white space so readers can scan content at a glance.



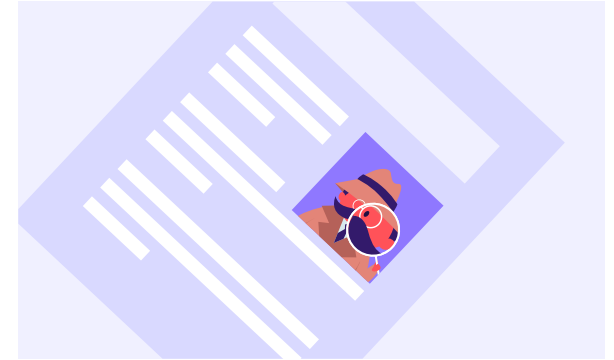
Externally link only to reputable, authoritative sites with high Domain Authority scores.



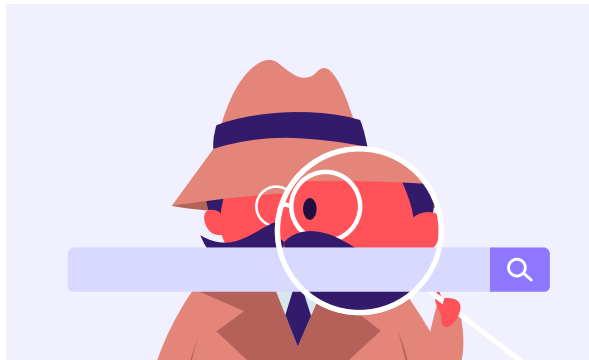
Internally link only where relevant – not to every single related blog post or possible CTA.



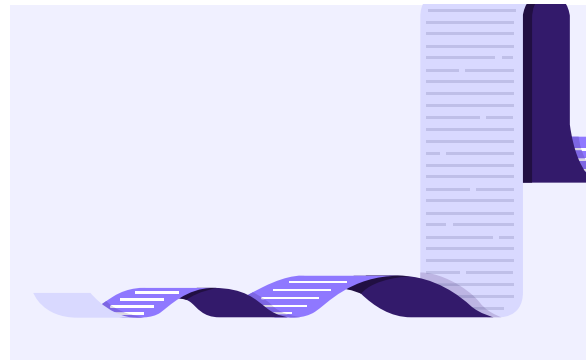
Include as much data as possible to support your claims.



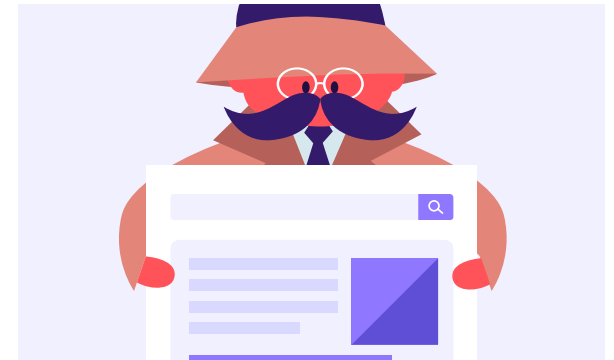
Embed relevant imagery so that visuals can complement your narrative.



Think of search queries as article titles.



Write for as long as it takes to comprehensively cover the topic (aka don't aim for an arbitrary word count).



Write with featured snippets in mind.

OPTIMIZE THE FINE PRINT: TITLE TAGS, META DESCRIPTIONS AND ALT TEXT

SEO writing is part prose, part process. There are defined steps writers should take to ensure they're thinking about each piece of content holistically, both on and off the page. One of the most important elements of SEO copywriting is nailing metadata. Metadata is a cue to search engines: **It helps tell the story of what your content is about and how it should be presented in SERPs.**

Optimizing title tags, meta descriptions and image alt text may take only 75 words in total, but those 75 words are vastly more important than the rest of the copy that appears on the page.

Here is some guidance:

Title tags

- Use only 1 header tag per page and try to include a targeted, primary keyword.
- Keep it to 70 characters or less.
- Each page should have a unique title tag – no duplicates.

Meta descriptions

- Keep it to ~160 characters so that it doesn't get cut off by Google.
- Use clickworthy phrasing and don't regurgitate copy already on the page.

Alt text

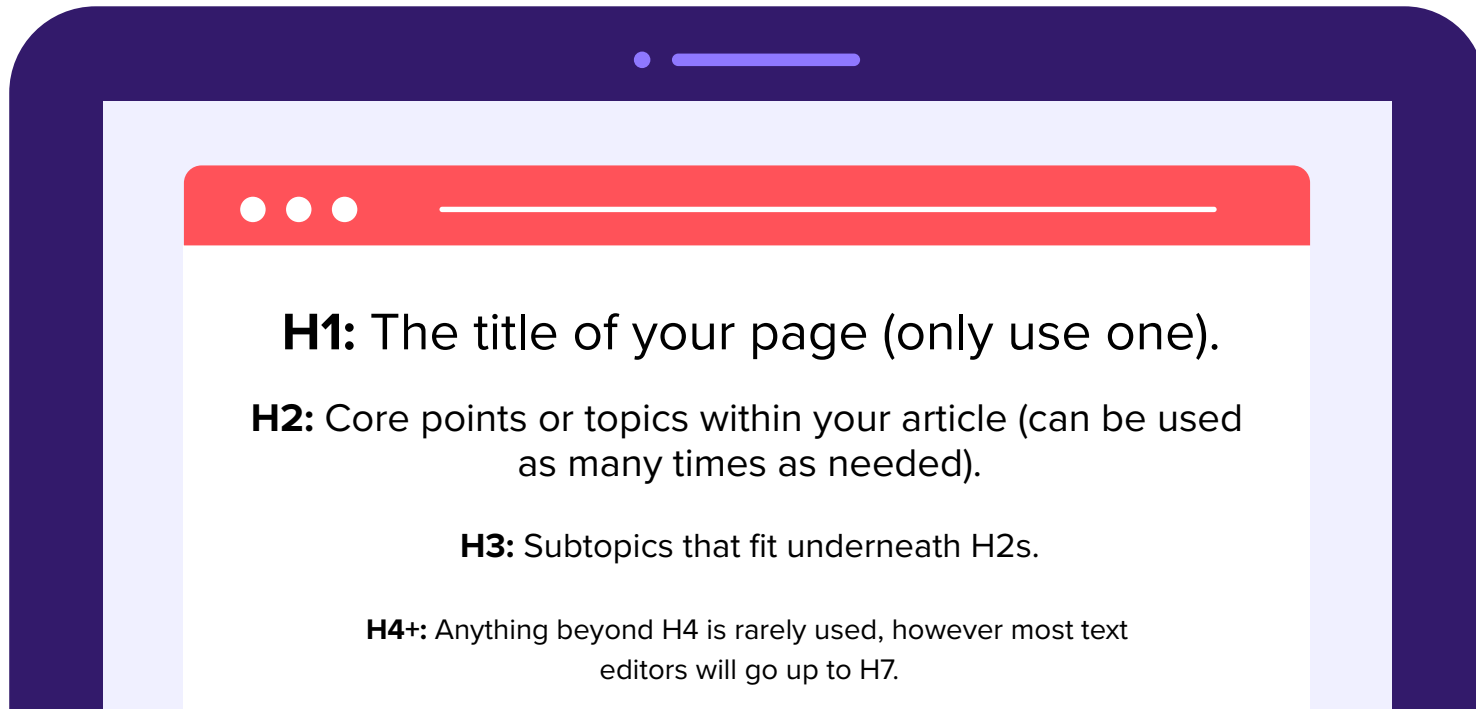
- Use descriptive language that closely matches the image.
- Include keywords where relevant.
- Keep it to 125 characters or less, with tags separated by commas.



STRUCTURE MATTERS: HEADERS, SUBHEADERS AND SUB-SUBHEADERS

Think of header (HTML) tags as the skeleton of your content. Structurally, headers keep your copy organized and provide readers with a general outline of what your topic entails (without them having to read every single word). In the eyes of search engines, though, headers are also key elements of code that signal what the article is about. Proper header tags allow search crawlers to quickly analyze your page and correctly index it in SERPs.

Headers are simple because they follow a descending order:



Including keywords in your headers is a key SEO tactic as well, so frame your article structure around which keywords and topics are most relevant and useful to the reader.



HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO WORK?

Based on various industry studies and several of our own experiments, it takes about **100 days** at minimum for content to mature. “Mature” in this instance refers to how long it will take Google to definitively rank your page in SERPs. Prior to those 100 days, your ranking will fluctuate a lot, sometimes appearing on Page 1, other days dropping to Page 2.

Behind the scenes, Google is testing if your content has staying power – if it’s valuable enough to keep on Page 1. If after 100 days or so your content ranks highly, it will likely stay there (until a competitor writes a better piece of content and outranks yours).

Don’t base all of your judgements or KPIs on immediate SEO performance. Positive metrics accrue over time, so ensure your commitment to SEO and content marketing is a long-term one.



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