

13 THIRTEEN STEPS TO ON PAGE SEO














T H E B E G I N N E R ' S C H E C K L I S T



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WTC
WEBSITE • TRAFFIC • CONVERSION

1.  Identify your page's title tag.
2.  Check your page's meta description.
3.  Organize your on-page content with header tags.
4.  Maximize your content.
5.  Make sure your URL structures are intuitive.
6.  Add "image alt-text" to optimize graphics.
7.  Direct potential searchers with links.
8.  Get the right pages indexed with a robots.txt file.
9.  Tidy up your site structure with an XML sitemap.
10.  Test your page load speed.
11.  Ensure your website is optimized for mobile.
12.  Check your local "NAP citations."
13.  Get familiar with Google Analytics and Webmaster Tools.



INTRO

Your website talks about you behind your back. Do you know what yours is saying?

Millions of people use search engines every day to scour the internet's offerings. For your website to be found, it needs to relay the right information to the search engine's algorithmic software (also known as "crawlers" or "spiders") so they can tell searchers what your business or service is really about.

Search engine optimization (SEO) is a lengthy and complicated process, but it always starts in the same place: the internal makeup of your website. Most on-page elements need to be assessed and implemented on each individual page of your website. The coding of your website is talking, but is it spreading the right message?

On-page SEO is the language you can use to manage what your website says.

Optimizing these internal descriptions ensures your audience can find your website with ease. Let's take a look at the basics of on-page SEO, why each element is so important, and how to identify potential problems on your website.



IDENTIFY YOUR PAGE'S TITLE TAG

At its most basic, the title tag is the *name* of a certain page. To check your page's title tag, go into your site's source code by right-clicking anywhere on the screen (works for most PCs and some Macs), selecting "View page source," and searching for "<title>". It will be located in the "Head" section at the top of your HTML code. The coding will look like this:

EXAMPLE: <title>Your Page's Title Tag</title>

Your title tag tells search engines that this is the *most essential information* about your page, so you want to make sure it's accurate and descriptive.

- Search engines consider the first words in a title tag to be the most important.
- Title tags should start with a definitive keyword or two (as that's what people will likely be searching for).
- If your services are geo-specific, include your location.
- To avoid being truncated in the search results, the title tag should be no longer than 512 pixels. This generally means it should be around 60 characters or less.
- Check [how your potential title tag will look](#) with a tool that mimics Google searches.

Examples of this are on the following page. -->

Google Penguin Resource Guide - Linkarati

linkarati.com/resource_guides/google-penguin-algorithm/ ▼

Welcome to **Linkarati's Penguin Resource Guide**. We have worked to compile what we feel is the best, most informative content around the web regarding ...

This is how your title tag will be displayed in search results. ^^^

```
<meta http-equiv="X-UA-Compatible" content="IE=edge" />
<meta http-equiv="Content-Type" content="text/html; charset=UTF
<title>Google Penguin Resource Guide - Linkarati </title>
<link rel="shortcut icon" href="/favicon.png" />
<link rel="pingback" href="http://linkarati.com/xmlrpc.php" />
```

This is what your title tag looks like in the HTML code. ^^^



Your title tag is also displayed in your browser tab. ^^^



CHECK YOUR PAGE'S META DESCRIPTION

A meta description is the informative snippet that shows up directly below your title tag in the search results.

To show up in the search results, the meta description must also go in the “Head” section of your code. [Check your current description](#) with a “meta data” checker tool or look at your page source and search for the piece of coding that looks like this:

EXAMPLE:

```
<meta name=“description” content=“Your Meta  
Description Here”/>
```

The purpose of a meta description is to describe what your business or service does in a persuasive manner. This is where you establish who you are and what you do.

- Ideally, the meta description should convince people to click on *your* website instead of the one above or below it.
- Keep meta descriptions less than 160 characters to ensure your snippet doesn't get cut off in the search results.
- Google doesn't factor in meta descriptions when ranking your site in search results, but it is your opportunity to make a first impression on potential customers.
- Words contained in your meta description that are *also* contained in a searcher's query will show up as **bolded text**, enticing them to click on your result.

An example of a meta description is on the following page. -->

[Web](#)[Maps](#)[Shopping](#)[Images](#)[News](#)[More ▾](#)[Search tools](#)

About 4,810 results (0.17 seconds)

Linkarati

linkarati.com/ ▾

Linkarati is an SEO and link building community, home for all things link building.

Build Links Without Content

10 Strategies to Build Links Without
... Content often makes ...

Zlider

Hello everyone! Yesterday we were
so excited to host our first ...

Strategy

Strategy. Strategy. Using Forums to
Build Links, Authority, and ...

Contact Us

Contact Us. Contact Linkarati. We're
pretty easy to find. If you have ...

This is a meta description (highlighted). ^^

```
<!-- This site is optimized with the Yoast WordPress SEO plugin v1.5.3.3 - https://yoast.com/wordpress/plugins/seo/ -->
<meta name="description" content="Linkarati is an SEO and link building community, home for all things link building." />
<link rel="canonical" href="http://linkarati.com/" />
<link rel="next" href="http://linkarati.com/page/2/" />
```

This is what your meta description looks like in the HTML code. ^^



ORGANIZE YOUR ON-PAGE CONTENT WITH HEADER TAGS

The function of header tags (H1, H2, etc.) is to *prioritize* the content on your website for the search engine crawlers. In your source code, header tags will look like this:

EXAMPLE: `<h1>Your Header</h1>`

Header tags send direct signals to search engine crawlers, informing readers and robots alike about the most important information within a specific page's content.

- Header tags are an organizational hierarchy. “H1” tags are the most important.
- There should only be *one* piece of information with H1 status on a page, but *every* page must have an H1. The rest of the “H” tags are weighted accordingly (i.e. Google sees H1 tags as more important than H2 tags, and H2 tags as more important than H3 tags, and so on).
- H1 tags will appear on your site as big, bold text.
- The page's title, or a keyword or two, is ideal for an H1 tag. If you're having trouble deciding between two or more of *the most important* topics on page, consider starting a new page for one of the topics.

Examples of this are on the following page. -->

Google Penguin Resource Guide

Welcome to Linkarati's Penguin Resource Guide. We have worked to compile what we feel is the best, most informative content around the web regarding Google's famous Penguin algorithm.

Google rose to power as a search engine because they consistently produced better results than their competitors in the 90s. These better results came from a unique

This is an H1 tag. ^^

```
id="content" class="clearfix">
```

```
<h1>Google Penguin Resource Guide</h1>
```

```
<p>welcome to Linkarati's Penguin Resource Guide.  
<p>Google rose to power as a search engine because
```

This is what your H1 tag looks like in the HTML code. ^^




MAXIMIZE YOUR CONTENT

Content is the overarching term for “*everything on your site.*” It generally refers to text, but it also includes graphics, videos, and other media.

Technically, title tags and meta descriptions are part of your “on-page content.” Content is the most important aspect of user experience *and* it carries a lot of weight in search ranking factors.

- For both human and SEO purposes, the copy on your website or blog needs to be updated often and provide legitimate value for its users and readers.
- On-page copy should be clean and written in a natural voice. Include relevant keywords in your content, but do it in a contextual and organic way.
- Make sure the language of your content is varied. Use synonyms and comparable phrases to avoid veering into what SEOs call “keyword stuffing.” Google considers this to be a highly spammy practice and will penalize your site.
- Learn more about Google’s penalties for [low-quality content](#) and [duplicate content](#).

IMAGES




VIDEOS

TEXT

Linkabiz Webinar: The State of Link Building sponsored by Page One Power

Q & A Time!



Google Manual Penalties Against Brand Names: A Timeline

Top

2002

2005

2006

2007

2008

2009

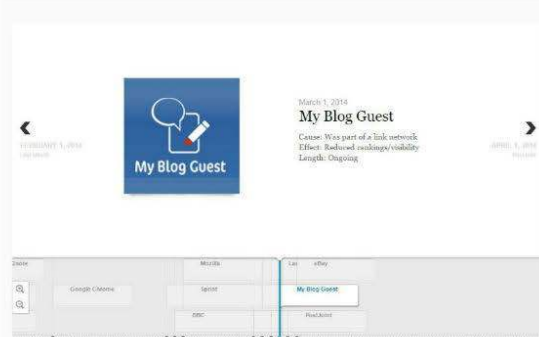
2010

2011

2012

2013

2014



1 FEBRUARY 1, 2014

My Blog Guest

March 1, 2014

My Blog Guest

Causes: Was part of a link network

Effects: Reduced rankings/visibility

Length: Ongoing

INTERACTIVE FEATURES

PODCASTS

SEO & Content Marketing

While it may not always be feasible to have multiple departments or agencies collaborate with one another, it's still a good idea to consider the given complementary marketing when making strategic decisions in your SEO campaign.

Let's start with SEO and content marketing as these two are closely tied to one another.

Specifically, link building and content marketing are closely related - a smart man once said they are "two different peas in a pod".

It's possible to build links without content, but content marketing can absolutely supercharge link building. Investing in content creation makes build easier, because you can create something people actually want to link to - a linkable asset.


Your SEO and content teams should work together very closely. SEOs can provide unique perspective and insight into the SEO performance of posts, help guide content creation during the ideation phase. Also, once the content is produced SEOs are well suited to promote said content and increase its short and long term.

SEO & Public Relations (PR)

PR is another marketing strategy that effectively complements SEO.

SEO and PR complement each other in a similar way to SEO and content marketing - through link building. In fact, PR likely belongs in the aforementioned.

Download or Stream the Podcast below!



0:00

0:08

[Click here to download the Backlink Show - 1.69mb](#)
[Click here to stream the Backlink Show](#)

CONTENT = ALL THE THINGS... ^^



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MAKE SURE YOUR URL STRUCTURES ARE INTUITIVE

Your URLs need to describe the page in a way that's as obvious as possible.



People searching for information, products, or services are more likely to find your site if your page is telling the search engine crawlers that *this* is exactly what they're looking for.

- Optimal URLs should be short and include a content description or target keyword, *not* gibberish numbers and letters. Consider URL structure when titling blog posts in particular.
- You don't need filler words like "with" or "and."
- Use hyphens instead of underscores for spaces.
- URLs should be front-loaded. The most relevant information needs to be listed first.



This is the URL for a Linkarati Tutorial Tuesday titled "Setting Up Automatic Email Replies in Outlook and Gmail." Notice that only the most essential words are used in the URL. ^^



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ADD “IMAGE ALT-TEXT” TO OPTIMIZE GRAPHICS

Alt-text coding for graphics means search engines are able to “see” your images, too.

Keywords or short descriptions in the alt-text provide visual context for search engine crawlers *and* people with accessibility issues.

- Alt-text helps those with visual or certain cognitive disabilities to interpret the visuals on your page.
- If a specific image includes text, those words should be in the alt-text.
- Image file names should be suitably descriptive *before* you upload them. If the images are of your actual products, this step is absolutely crucial.
- While you’re at it, make sure images are sized correctly for devices of any proportion. Learn more about [optimizing images](#).

WHAT WE SEE



WHAT SEARCH ENGINES SEE

```
src="http://linkarati.com/wp-content/  
uploads/2014/12/outreach2.jpg"  
alt="Male stenographer taking dictation"
```



DIRECT POTENTIAL SEARCHERS WITH LINKS

There are two kinds of links. *Internal* links send people to other pages on your own domain; *External* links send people to other websites.

Links are extremely important for easy navigation of your site and for SEO purposes. (They're a *very* big factor in search rankings.)

- External links are considered a “vote of confidence” from your site to another page, so make sure you’re *only* linking to high-quality, relevant sites. Also make sure your links open in a *new* tab so you’re not directing people away from your site.
- Internal links hold your site together and are a guide for anyone on your page -- they must be user-friendly if you expect people to explore the rest of your site.
- Anchor text, the words that are hyperlinked, should be descriptive without being stuffed with keywords.
- Beware of links that don’t point where they’re supposed to (also known as “broken links”), as they’re detrimental to search rankings.
- There are tools available for [scanning your internal/external](#) links for any errors, broken links, or duplicates.

INDUSTRY SURVEYS

Link builders often use surveys as a form of link bait, since surveys often contain interesting data that various blogs and news outlets will analyze and report. The same is true within our own industry. The following is a list of surveys with interesting and revealing data of which you should be aware.



- [Lady Link Builders: Women in Digital Marketing Discuss Diversity](#)
- [2014 Industry Survey by Moz](#)
- [The New Link Building Survey 2014](#)
- [Link Building Survey 2013](#)

Internal link pointing to another Linkarati post

External link pointing to Moz.com

[^ Back To Top](#)

Internal links and external links look exactly the same to a reader, but lead to different places. ^^



GET THE RIGHT PAGES INDEXED WITH A ROBOTS.TXT FILE

“Robots” is the actual name of a coded text file. Essentially, it details what search engine crawlers *avoid* on your site. To find yours, type your site’s URL followed by “/robots.txt”.

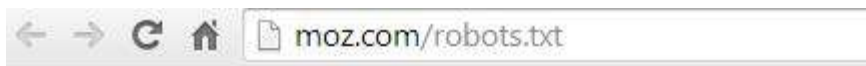
A robots.txt file lets the search engines know what they should ignore using a “disallow function.” Unlike title tags, header tags, etc., the information in your robots.txt file will affect all of the pages across your site.

- Robots.txt ensures that pages with out-of-date content or private information aren’t being read and indexed by search crawlers.
- Be careful. When the wrong information is “disallowed,” it can rapidly tank your rankings in the search results.
- Before you build one, learn more about what should and should not be [included in a robots.txt file](#).

Examples of this are on the following page. -->



```
User-agent: *  
Disallow: /wp-admin/
```



```
User-agent: *  
Allow: /researchtools/ose/$  
Disallow: /researchtools/ose/  
Disallow: /api/user?*
```



```
Sitemap: http://moz.com/blog-sitemap.xml  
Sitemap: http://moz.com/ugc-sitemap.xml  
Sitemap: http://moz.com/profiles-sitemap.xml  
Sitemap: http://d2eeipcrd1e6.cloudfront.net/past-videos.xml  
Sitemap: http://app.wistia.com/sitemaps/36357.xml
```

This is what your robots.txt file might look like. ^^



9

TIDY UP YOUR SITE STRUCTURE WITH AN XML SITEMAP

A sitemap outlines the way your URLs are indexed by search engines.

EXAMPLE: <http://www.yourdomain.com/sitemap.xml>

Sitemap	Last Modified
http://linkarati.com/post-sitemap.xml	2015-01-14 17:02
http://linkarati.com/page-sitemap.xml	2015-01-13 18:02
http://linkarati.com/resource_guides-sitemap.xml	2014-11-19 21:47
http://linkarati.com/master_guides-sitemap.xml	2014-11-18 19:29
http://linkarati.com/category-sitemap.xml	2014-11-18 19:29
http://linkarati.com/post_tag-sitemap.xml	2014-11-18 19:29
http://linkarati.com/guide_topics-sitemap.xml	2014-11-18 19:29
http://linkarati.com/author-sitemap.xml	2014-12-31 16:40

This is one of the only on-page elements that is *exclusively* for search engine crawlers and it's not necessarily a requirement for every website. Often, it's included in your robots.txt file and likewise pertains to all of the pages on your website.

- There *are* certain instances where it's highly recommended to have a detailed sitemap: extremely large sites with tons of URLs, newer websites with very few external links, and sites where it's difficult for your URLs to “talk” to each other.
- Extensible Markup Language (XML) is the preferred form for sitemaps.
- [Learn more about sitemaps](#) and whether you need one, or [submit your completed sitemap](#) through Google Webmaster Tools.



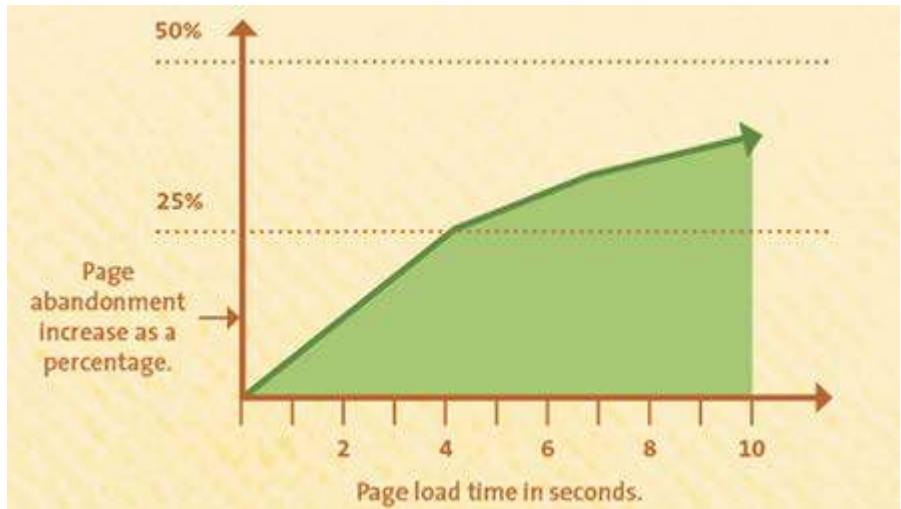
10

TEST YOUR PAGE LOAD SPEED

A quick page load speed is essential for positive user experience, but it's also used as a ranking factor in Google's search algorithms.

Slow page load is directly tied to a high bounce rate (as in, people leaving your site immediately).

- If [your website is taking forever to load](#), the person has likely already left to find their information elsewhere.
- There are free tools available for [testing your site's load time](#).



Via Kissmetrics ^^^

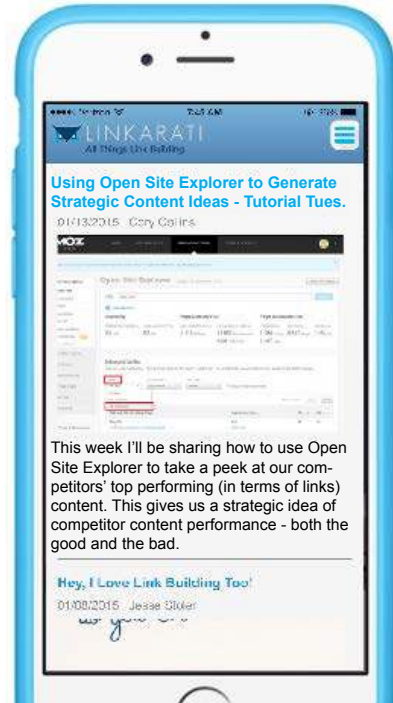


ENSURE YOUR WEBSITE IS OPTIMIZED FOR MOBILE

Your website *must* be accessible on-the-go, for every type of mobile device.

Page load speed for mobile devices is extremely important, as is streamlining your code so it works on *all* smartphones and tablets.

- If most of your business is done through mobile devices, avoid pop-ups and use HTML5 instead of Flash for your fancy special effects.
- Google provides a free tool to [check if your site is mobile-friendly](#).



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CHECK YOUR LOCAL “NAP CITATIONS”

An NAP citation is any reference to your company's name, address, and phone number.

If your business has a brick-and-mortar location (as opposed to purely e-commerce), consistent NAP citations are essential for directing local search traffic.

- NAP citations are a huge factor for ranking in local search queries and ensuring your potential customer base knows how to find you.
- There are tools that [check a variety of local business directories](#) to make sure your website's NAP citations are present and identical.





13



GET FAMILIAR WITH GOOGLE ANALYTICS & WEBMASTER TOOLS

If you have a website, you'll want to make sure Google Analytics and Webmaster Tools are installed.

- Both services can be used to help you understand what your users are doing on your website.
- They provide a way to track user data, website traffic, search queries, security issues, and more.
- For a quick immersion, check out [the beginner's guide to Google Analytics](#) and another for [Webmaster Tools](#).



CONCLUSION

**YOU ARE NOW
POISED FOR
SUCCESS!**

You've worked hard to put good content on your website. Your on-page SEO will help people find it.

Now that you know what on-page elements matter and why, it's time to get optimizing. Remember to keep your audience in mind as you tackle each piece of the puzzle.

Your website says a lot to robots and humans alike. Going through this checklist is a good way to get the coding and nitty-gritty out of the way so you can focus on reaching people.



RESOURCES

Test your title tags:

<http://moz.com/blog/new-title-tag-guidelines-preview-tool>

Check your meta descriptions:

http://seositecheckup.com/tool/all_meta_tag

Learn about low-quality content:

<https://support.google.com/webmasters/answer/2604719?hl=en>

Learn about duplicate content:

<https://support.google.com/webmasters/answer/66359?hl=en>

Check for link errors:

<http://www.brokenlinkcheck.com/>

Learn about robots.txt:

<http://www.robotstxt.org/robotstxt.html>

Learn more about sitemaps:

<https://support.google.com/webmasters/answer/156184?hl=en>

Submit your sitemap:

<https://support.google.com/webmasters/answer/156184?hl=en>

Test your site's load speed:

<http://tools.pingdom.com/fpt/>

Check if your site is mobile-friendly:

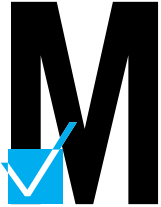
<https://www.google.com/webmasters/tools/mobile-friendly/>

Check your NAP citations:

<https://moz.com/local>

Learn more about Google Analytics:

<http://wtceducation.com/ultimate-beginners-guide-google-analytics/>



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