

# SEO 101

Everything You **Need to Know** About SEO  
(But Were Afraid to Ask)

By **Stoney deGeyter**, CEO of Pole Position Marketing



**POLE  POSITION**  
**M A R K E T I N G**  
**VELOCITIZE YOUR WEB PRESENCE**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. [Back To Basics](#)
2. [Everything You Need To Know About Title Tags](#)
3. [Everything You Need To Know About Meta Tags](#)
4. [Everything You Need To Know About Heading & Alt Tags](#)
5. [Everything You Need To Know About Domain Names](#)
6. [Everything You Need To Know About Urls](#)
7. [Everything You Need To Know About Site Architecture](#)
8. [Everything You Need To Know About Internet Searches](#)
9. [Everything You Need To Know About Keyword Core Terms](#)
10. [Everything You Need To Know About Keyword Qualifiers](#)
11. [Everything You Need To Know About Seo Content](#)
12. [Everything You Need To Know About Page Content](#)
13. [Everything You Need To Know About Links](#)
14. [Conclusion – Putting It All Together](#)



## CHAPTER 1

# Back to Basics

When you've been writing about SEO as long as I have, you sometimes feel like you've run out of things to say. We forget that there is always someone new who is just learning about SEO and hasn't had the chance to read every article ever written on the topic. Not many people have that kind of time on their hands.

In light of that, I want to spend some time going **back to the basics of SEO**.

# CHAPTER 1

The trick with going back to the basics is deciding what gets included and what doesn't. I'm sure there will be a lot of "basics" left out, while some of the things noted here could be considered more advanced. Either way, the SEO information I'll provide here includes those things which I consider essential. And perhaps that's a better way to look at this: Not as SEO 101, but rather SEO Essentials. Whether you've been around awhile or are just learning about this stuff, I hope you'll learn something new, have previous misconceptions expelled, or have other thoughts confirmed.

**Every site has to start somewhere.** When it comes to people, we've heard it said that beauty is on the inside. The same is often true of websites. The design of the site may be pretty and eye-appealing on the outside, while the behind-the-scenes SEO elements are a bit more creepifying. With a little work, you can turn any SEO-ugly website into a gorgeous web marketing goddess.



But the point is, you have to start somewhere. Short of moving forward with the implementation of a good SEO strategy, your site will be falling short in a number of different ways.

## 4 Basic Benefits of SEO

There are four basic benefits of SEO that are the foundation of online success. In the end, what we are all looking for is more business. But in order to get that, there are a few things that need to be dealt with as part of your optimization strategy.

### 1. Indexed pages

- Before you can get pages to rank for targeted keyword phrases, you need to be sure search engines can find and decipher them. This goes back to making sure that you have strong, search engine-friendly website architecture. I'll touch on that more later.

### 2. Rankings

- Rankings ARE important, but they are not the goal. Too many people look at rankings and think they are losing money by not being ranked #1. That's not necessarily true. Rankings don't make sales. They just provide a way in the door.

### 3. Visitors

- Once you start getting rankings, even for low-volume but important keywords, you'll start to see your visitor count rise. Again, this is good, but it should not be the ultimate goal (unless you get paid on a cost per impression basis).

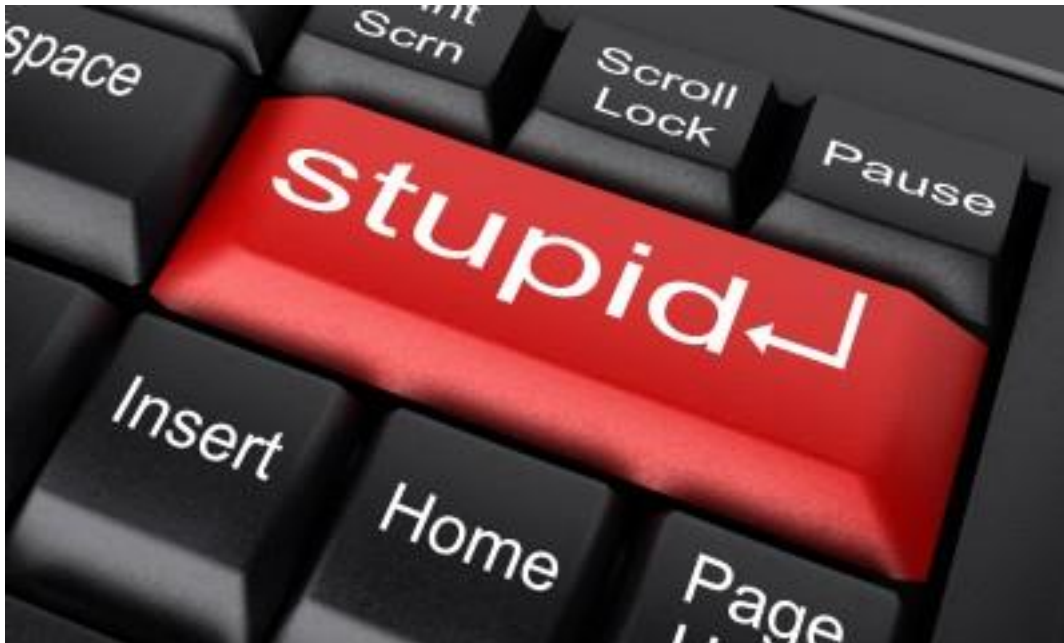
### 4. Conversions

- This is the REAL end-all, be-all benefit. Beyond rankings and traffic, SEO should help you increase conversion counts and percentages. A conversion can be anything you want it to be, from a blog comment to a purchase. It's important to know what your conversions are so you can set SEO goals to achieve them.

## Search Engines Are Stupid

Throughout the process of SEO, it's important to keep in mind that the search engines, as smart and advanced as they are, are still pretty stupid. Although they're getting closer, they still can't completely determine the intent of a search query. If intent is needed in order to determine the relevance of a page's content, the search engines will never be 100% accurate. Part of the SEO process is going out of your way to make sure the content matches the intent of any given search.

Keep in mind that visitors can also be pretty dumb. Business owners are always complaining about calls they get asking for information that's clearly noted on the website. Of course, it's not that your visitors are really stupid, it's that they are impatient for things that aren't easy. The harder your site makes it to navigate, find information or make a purchase, the more likely the visitor is to leave. They'll move on to another site where things are easy.





## CHAPTER 2

Everything You Need to Know About

# Title Tags

The title tag is the **single most important piece of SEO real estate on your site**. A title tag can be as long as you want, but you only have 50-55 characters before the search engines cut it off. Use them wisely.

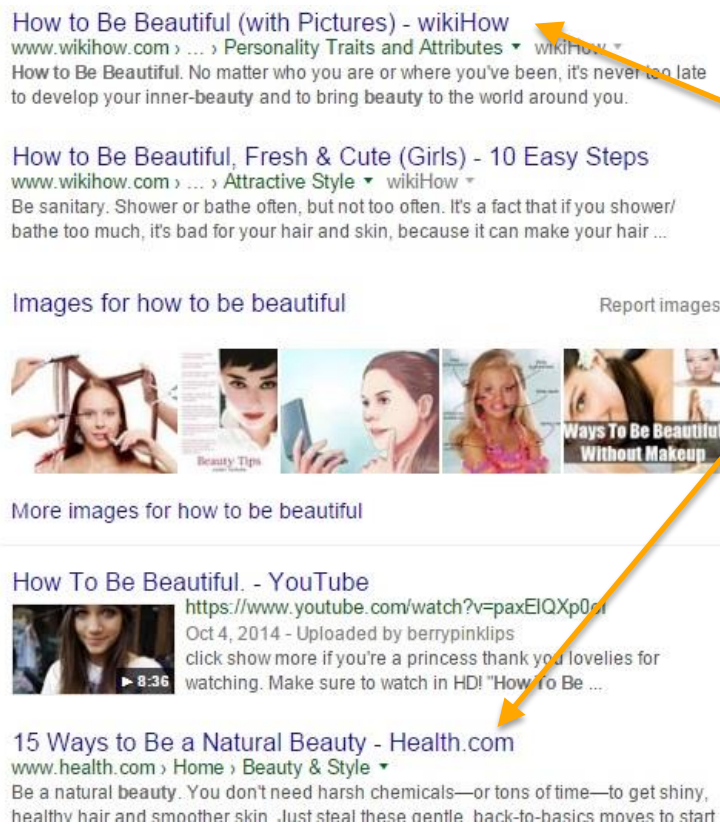
Since the title appears as the clickable link in the SERPs pages, it has to be able to meet a couple of different demands.

## Title Tags Must Be Keyword Rich

Searchers type in specific words into the search engines, and they expect the engines to provide results that match their original query. We know that the **search engines look at over 200 different signals** to determine the relevance of any page against the keyword searched. The title tag is only one of them, but a very important one at that. You don't necessarily need your keyword in the title tag for it to come up in the search results, but it helps a great deal.

But what about the visitor? What does the searcher see? Let's say a searcher types "how to be beautiful" into the search engine and two results are displayed. One reads "How to Look Good and Feel Great" and another reads "How to Look Beautiful Even When You Don't Feel Like It." Which of these two is more likely to be clicked by the visitor?

It's entirely likely both pages address the same concerns, but only one uses the searched keyword. More than likely, the second result will get far more clicks than the first, even if it is in a lower position in the results.



Title Tags

## Title Tags Must Be Compelling

Using keywords in your title tag to entice the click is only part of the battle. Going back to our example above, if we put the first non-keyword headline up against a third keyword-rich headline of “Sexy and Beautiful, Today’s Hottest Stars,” which do you think will gain more clicks?

My guess is the first one that doesn’t use keywords because it is far more compelling and speaks more toward the searcher’s intent. So in this situation, the third headline is likely to rank higher but will receive fewer clicks.

The trick is to make sure that the title tag is both keyword rich *and* compelling. This helps move your site to the top of the rankings and also makes it more likely that visitors will click on it into your site.

### STONEY SAYS :



“The trick is to make sure that the title tag is both keyword rich *and* compelling. This helps move your site to the top of the rankings and also makes it more likely that visitors will click on it into your site.”

# CHAPTER 2

## Common Mistakes

Implementing title tags properly is crucial to making them effective. There are a number of **common mistakes** that you can make if you don't take the time to do it right:

1. **Same on Every Page:** Each page in your site is unique, or at least it should be. This means your title tags should be unique on each page as well. On a lot of sites, you'll see the same title tag across all the pages: "Welcome to My Site," or something similar. That hardly describes the page at all. If that appears in the search results, you're not likely to get any clicks. Go through your site and customize each title, ensuring it uniquely and accurately describes the content of the page.



2. **Leading with Business Name:** There are good reasons to have your business name present in your title tag, but that shouldn't be the default. If you use your business name, think through the reasoning and make sure it's sound. I'll discuss this more in a bit.
3. **List of Keywords:** Wanting to get your keywords in the title tag makes it tempting to throw as many in there as you possibly can. "Beauty | Makeup | Makeovers | Diet | Healthy Skin." Sure that gets all your keywords in there, but it does nothing to make someone want to click on the result. This means that (gasp!) you have to use keywords sparingly so you can also make the title something worth clicking on.
4. **Lack of Description:** Aside from getting your primary keywords in the title and making it compelling, the title tag must also provide enough of a description of the content to ensure it gets a targeted click.

# CHAPTER 2

## Branded Titles

So let's address using your business name in your title tags. As I said earlier, sometimes that's wise, but it shouldn't be the default. In general, you can place your business name either at the front or the rear of the title tag. My rule of thumb is that you don't want to put your business name at the front of your title tag unless you have a highly recognizable brand name that the visitor will know and will likely be a click-generator from the search results. If that's not the case, you simply don't want to give up that real estate.

Branding at the rear of the title tag is a far better solution for most businesses. This helps moderately known or even unknown companies build brand name recognition. The downside is you are still using up valuable real estate that might otherwise be used making a keyword rich and compelling headline. Also note that if the title goes too long, your business name will be cut off in the search results.

**Most of the time, you don't need your business name in your title tags at all.** However, I would suggest leaving it off almost 90% of the time on product pages. It's so crucial to get important product data into the title tag that there simply may not be enough room for your business name. Again, I might make an exception for well-known business names, but default to showing product info first and foremost.

### Front Branded: Recognizable Brands

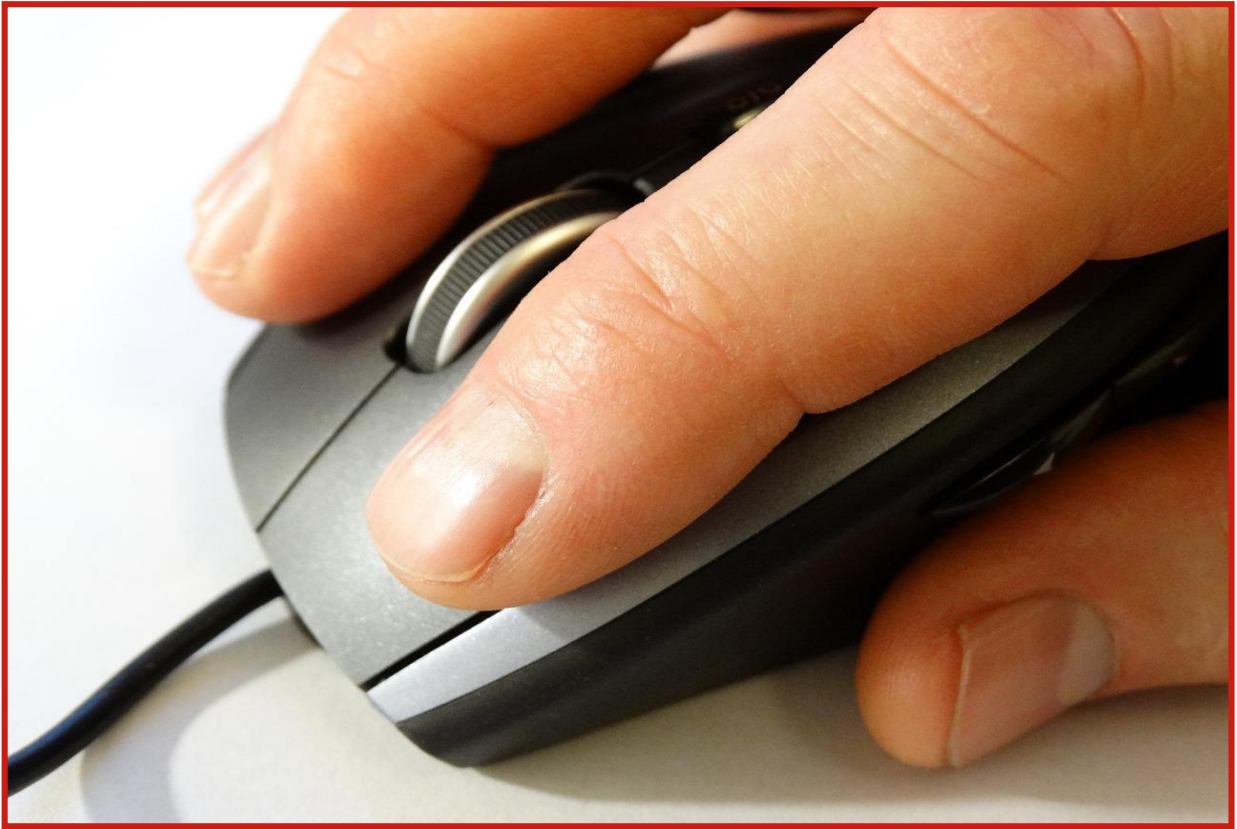
**Business Name** | Korres Natural Shower Gel with Basil Lemon

### Rear Branded: Build Recognition

Korres Natural Shower Gel with Basil Lemon | **Business Name**

### Non-Branded: No Brand Concern

Korres Natural Shower Gel with Basil Lemon for Dry Skin



## CHAPTER 3

Everything You Need to Know About

# Meta Tags

If you were ever going to tell a “back in the day” story about SEO, it would have to include a discussion of meta tags. Long before links were built, content was king and social was sharable, meta tags were optimized. Meta tag optimization is the *original* SEO.

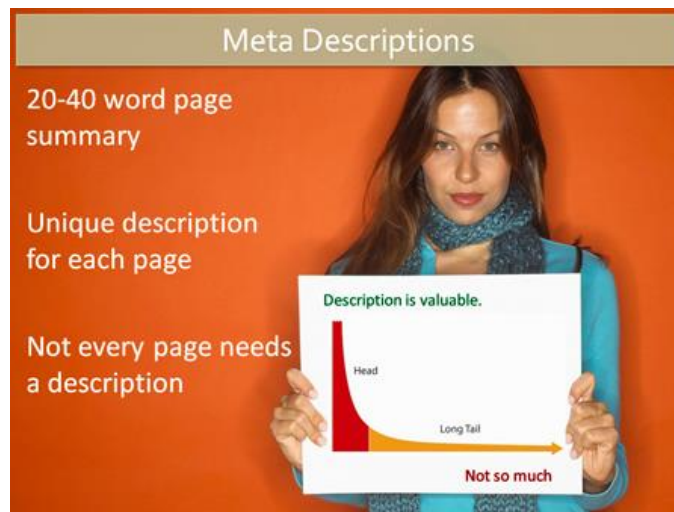
But gone are the days when throwing long lists of keywords into a meta tag could earn your site a #1 search engine ranking. Today’s SEO isn’t the SEO of, well, your slightly older sibling. While there’s still some value to optimizing meta tags, it isn’t what it used to be.

# CHAPTER 3

## What are Meta Tags?

There are lots of meta tags that serve a variety of purposes, but for SEO, there are really only two that matter. Strike that. There is really only one tag that matters, but we'll cover two tags just so you can slap the idiot that tries to tell you the keyword meta tag is still relevant. But we'll get to that later (keywords, not the slapping).

## Meta Description Tag



One of the big misconceptions about SEO is that everything we do is designed to increase search engine rankings. This isn't (or shouldn't be) true, and there is no simpler example of that than the meta description tag. Even though this tag doesn't have any weight in the search engine ranking algorithms, it is still a very powerful part of an effective optimization campaign.

Like the title tag, the meta description tag will often show up in the search results. Generally what you see in the SERPs is the clickable title link and then the description tag or page snippet just below it. If the description is pulled in to the results, **it becomes a very important part of helping entice visitors to click on the link into your site.**



# CHAPTER 3

If your description tag fails to adequately tell your visitors what's on the page, it's likely they'll click on another result.

The reason why many people don't put much stock into the description tag is because they are stuck on the belief that people click on rankings, not on search results. This isn't true. Sure, more people click on sites that rank higher, but only if those sites also have compelling titles and descriptions, which is often not the case. **Few people blindly click links without first vetting them**, and those that do often find themselves disappointed.

Those who take the time to look through the search results, reading titles and descriptions to find the site that is most likely to give them what they are looking for, are more likely to be a targeted visitor once they land on your site.



## Meta Description Rules of Thumb

1. Each description tag should be unique.
2. The description should be a **20-30 word summary** of what the visitor can expect to find on that page, and that page only.
3. Use **primary and secondary keywords** while making it compelling to searchers.

# CHAPTER 3

## Meta Keywords Tag



The only thing there is to say about the meta keywords tag is that there isn't much to say about it. The search engines don't put much, if any, stock in it, and your visitors don't see it. By all measures, it's invisible.

But that doesn't keep people from asking, Do I use commas or spaces? Do I use phrases or words? How long should the keyword tag be?

The answer is: **It doesn't matter.** If you are going to take the time to add the meta keywords tag to your pages, then I suggest this: Don't waste your valuable time worrying about the "right" way to write it. Throw a few keywords in there and walk away. Don't worry about formatting, spacing, commas, length or anything else. Keep it short, sweet and move on.



## CHAPTER 4

Everything You Need to Know About

# Headings & Alt Tags

Will a killer heading or the right alt attribute shoot you to the top of Google's rankings? Likely no. But taking a little time to optimize these areas can not only help search engines determine your intent, but also help visitors understand your content better.

# CHAPTER 4

## Heading Tags

Heading tags are certainly no magic solution to building keyword relevance. They are merely one more baby step to creating a well-rounded, optimized page. Adding heading tags using your keywords won't have any significant impact in your keyword rankings, but they do help search engines determine your content's hierarchical structure.

If nothing else, they help break up your content for visitors. Think of headings as you would an outline of an important paper. At the top is the title, in this case the H1 tag. Next would be the main points. In an outline, they would be I, II, and III. In HTML you would use the H2 for all of them. Next we have our sub-points A, B and C, or the H3s, and following that sub-sub-points of 1., 2., 3., or the H4s. You get the idea.

An alternate strategy would be to use your H1 for the title as noted above and the H2 for a sub-title. Then you'd start with H3s for your main points I, II and III, and go down from there. You can go all the way down to the H6, but it's rare that you have a page with so much content that this is warranted.

## STONEY SAYS:



“Heading tags are certainly no magic solution to building keyword relevance. They are merely one more baby step to creating a well-rounded, optimized page.”

# CHAPTER 4

## What NOT to Do

One of the problems I often see with heading tags is that they are used by developers for the site's navigation. In a way, it makes sense. You want to segment different areas of the navigation with headers of their own. The only problem is that you end up using valuable heading tags in an invaluable area, diluting the effectiveness those tags.

If your developers are intent on using hx tags in the navigation elements, make sure they stick to the lower level H5 and H6 so you can use the higher level tags in the content where they'll make the most impact. Make sure they don't use the H1 tag for the logo. That's a complete throwaway and prevents you from gaining anything by having that H1 tag.



All of the tags can be used repeatedly on the page, depending on where they fall in the total hierarchy, except for the H1 tag (or H2 if you are using it as a sub-headline). Be sure to use the H1 only once on the page.

# CHAPTER 4

## Alt Attributes

Alt attributes, commonly referred to as “**alt tags**,” allow you to add descriptive text to your images. The visitors generally won’t see the alt text unless they mouse over the image or have images turned off. It’s meant to replace the image should the image not show. There are a number of reasons visitors may not see your images:

1. **Text-only browsers** – Yes, some people still surf with images off, usually to speed up a slow connection.
2. **Accessible browsers** – These help the visually impaired by reading the image alt text, so not having an alt attribute can be detrimental.
3. **Mobile browsers** – Again, with a slow internet connection.

Make sure your alt text reads properly and adds something for the reader who doesn’t see the image. The text itself should describe the content or visuals of the image for the visitor. **This text also provides much needed information to the search engines**, especially if the image contains text. That text should be included in the alt tag.

Using alt attributes in your image tags can help provide a greater context for the text on the page, which can be factored into your search engine rankings. It also helps visuals come up in image searches, driving additional traffic and conversions to your site.

The most important area to use alt tags is in your navigation. Whether it be your header, footer, side-bar navigation or any other place, supplement images with alt text. Failure to do so could make your site unnavigable to any visitor that isn’t seeing images.



## CHAPTER 5

Everything You Need to Know About

# Domain Names

It's easy to think all the good domain names are taken. Sure, the easy and obvious ones were snatched up years ago, but that doesn't mean there aren't any great .com domain names left.

The starting point is realizing you *do* need your own domain name. Most businesses have figured this out, but many bloggers haven't. After all, it takes some work and small fees. First you have to purchase the domain, then host it, pay the monthly hosting fees, install the blog, etc., etc. Not quite as easy as signing up for a blog service and pounding out your first blog post all in 10 minutes.

## Get the Best Domain Name

Whether you're a business, a blogger or something in between, selecting your domain name can be a trying process. Those of you who have searched for the "perfect" domain name know what I mean. You go through dozens, if not hundreds, of different options looking for just the right one.

When looking for domain names for your business or blog, here are a few guidelines:

### Keep it short

- 2-3 words max
- Longer = harder to remember

### Make it memorable

- Easily remembered
- Skip "clever" spellings that are hard to remember

### Use keywords

- Try to incorporate some primary keywords
- No keyword stuffing. Remember: short and memorable!

# CHAPTER 5

## Alternate Domains

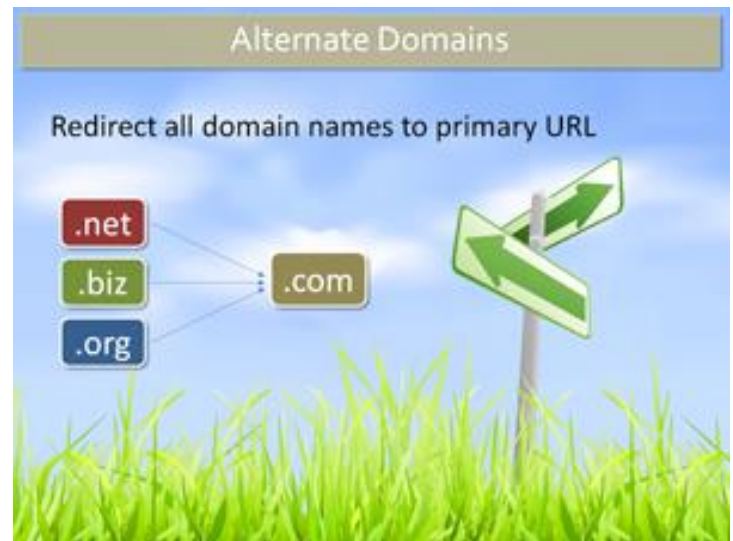
Once you've found the perfect domain, buy up many of the alternative domains that go along with it. These can be the .net, .org or .biz versions. It can also include misspellings, common typos and even yoursitesucks.com, just in case. It's also valuable to purchase domain names named after your products or other brand names.

All of these combinations can add up to a dozen or more alternate domains. What do you do with all of them?

## 301 Redirects

Well, there are two things you *don't* do with them: 1) Let them sit with a "not found" error, and 2) Park them on your main domain. You can get some benefit from these domain names, but only if you leverage them properly.

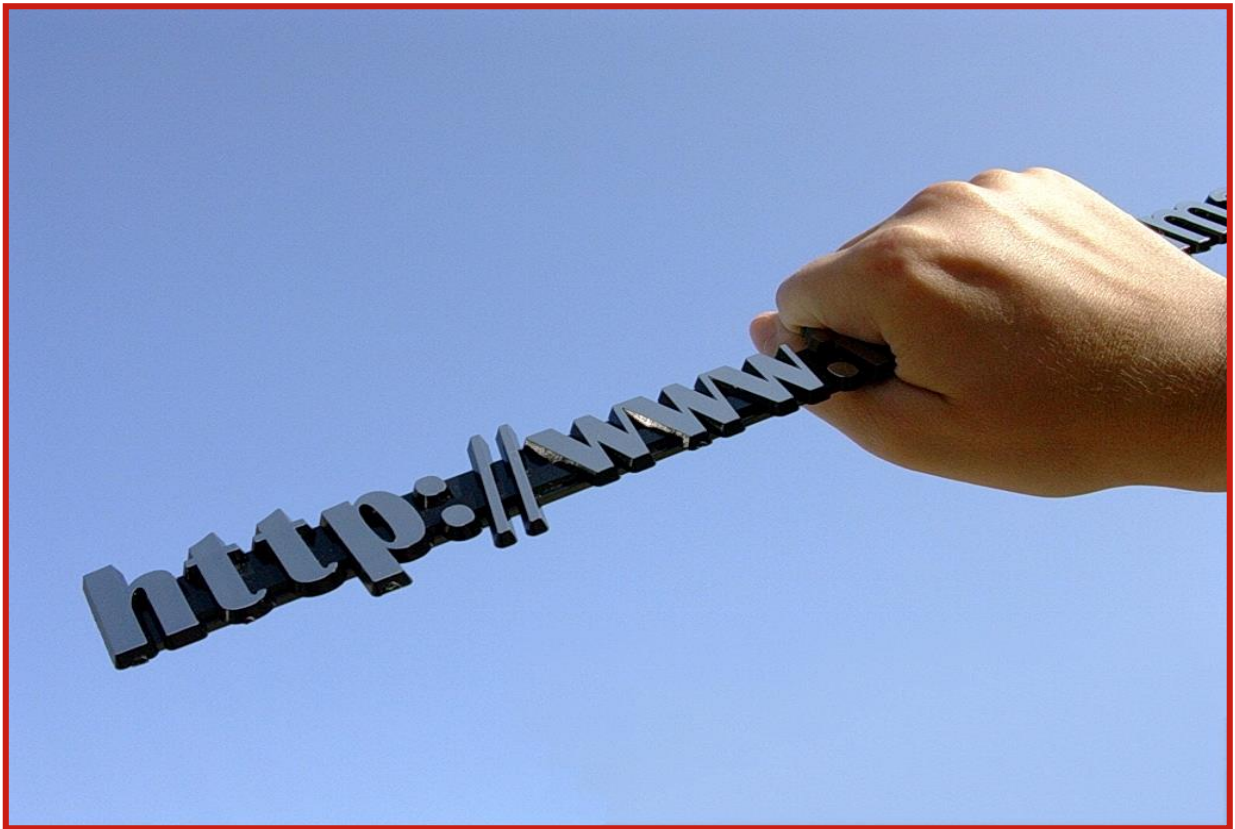
You also might be tempted to build mini-sites on each of these domain names. DON'T! The solution is much simpler than that. Simply redirect these domains to your main domain.



Take note that **there is only one proper redirect to put in place: The 301 Permanent Redirect**. Don't settle for anything less, because anything else can potentially reduce the impact your site will have in the search engines.

You'll want to talk to your web host about how to implement the 301 redirect. They may have an easy solution. Short of that, here's quick tutorial:

1. Purchase a separate (cheap) web hosting account for *one* of your alternate domains.
2. Set up a 301 redirect from the alternate domain to your main domain.
3. Park *the rest* of your alternative domains on the hosted/redirected alternate domain.



# CHAPTER 6

## Everything You Need to Know About

# URLS

When developing a website, you can save yourself a lot of problems by planning before moving full speed into the site development process. One of the first site architectural issues to consider is how your URLs will read. This is especially important for ecommerce websites that quite often have long, complicated URLs. But having good URL structure is still no less important for static websites.

## Two Steps for Optimized URLs

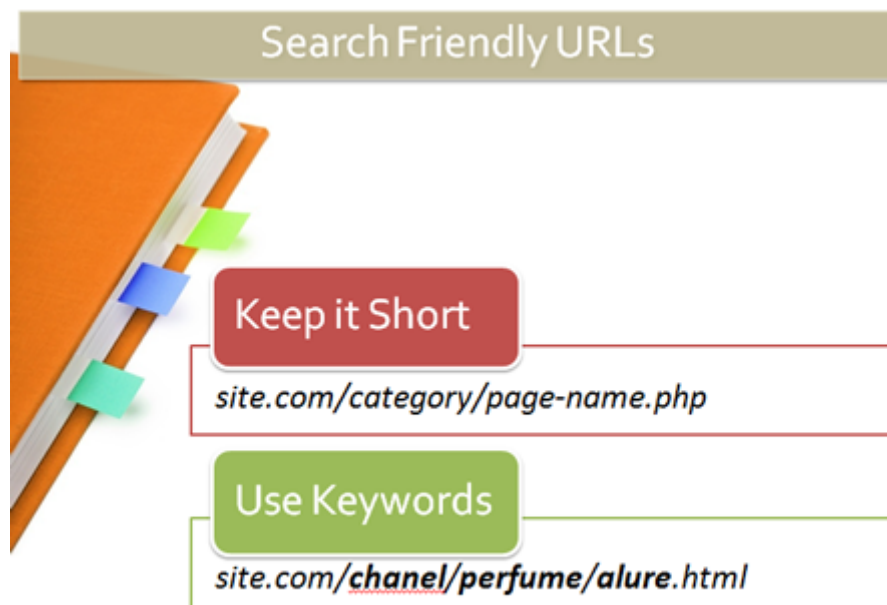
### 1. Keep It Short

Just like your domain name, you want your URLs to be short. We're not talking three letters short, or even three words short, but short enough that it can easily be typed into the browser's address bar.

A lot of ecommerce systems create long-complicated URLs that couldn't be retyped in the address bar without error if they were being dictated to you one letter, symbol and number at a time. Use words, directories and sub-directories strategically.

### 2. Use keywords

Again, just like your domain name, you want to use your keywords in the URL structure. If your site is organized properly, this shouldn't be a problem. Use your categories and sub-categories for your URL directories and sub-directories.



These two tips will go a long way in giving your URLs more context and assisting (however minimally) with the optimization efforts.

# CHAPTER 6

## Canonical URLs

The web is rife with duplicate content. Much of this duplication is deliberate, done by screen scrapers and other nefarious means. When another site steals and duplicates your content, you can submit a [DMCA complaint to Google](#) to try to get them to remove it. There are other legal remedies as well. Consult a lawyer if needed.

But many sites are their own worst enemy. Duplicate content is often created when developers build systems that reproduce content across multiple URLs on the same site. When building your URL structure, it is important to work in solutions to prevent this issue.

The home page is often the biggest culprit. Unchecked, your home page content can be indexed in the search engines with four different URLs, creating a duplicated home page four times over.

1. `www.site.com`
2. `www.site.com/index.html`
3. `site.com`
4. `site.com/index.html`

There are some [simple steps you can take](#) to correct these problems so that all of the above URLs will redirect the visitor to *www.site.com*.

These issues can also rear their ugly heads throughout the rest of site. Consider these duplicate URLs:

- `www.site.com/directory/`
- `www.site.com/directory/index.html`
- `www.site.com/directory2/`
- `www.site.com/directory2/index.html`

Of the four URLs above, only two provide unique content. But the search engines see four pages.

# CHAPTER 6

Products pages also suffer from extreme duplication when they can be found through multiple navigation paths, each creating a different URL for the same product. While the best solution is to ensure each product has no more than one URL to access it, there is a less absolute solution that can be implemented: **The Canonical Tag**.

```
<link rel="canonical" href="http://www.example.com/canonical-page.html"/>
```

Adding the canonical tag into the header of your pages tells the search engine which page is the “proper” one to be indexed. While the search engines use this as a guideline rather than a hard and fast rule, it’s a decent band-aid measure you can easily implement until you get a more permanent fix in place.

There is great value in the permanent fix option. The search engines have to index a page before they can read the canonical tag. All this extra indexing slows down the spidering and can dilute the overall link value of the proper page. Fixing duplicate content issues can greatly improve your site’s overall performance.

## Broken Links

Broken links are more than just a nuisance to visitors. Anytime someone comes across a broken link on or to your site, it’s an opportunity for them to leave. And they often take it.

The easiest way to find and correct broken links is to run monthly broken link checks with a program like [Xenu Link Sleuth](#). Xenu will spider each and every link on your site to make sure it works. The report tells you of any links that don’t work, whether they are internal (within your site) or external (points to other site’s).

Running a Xenu report once per month ensures that, over the course of any changes made to your site, all the links continue to lead where they should, and that links off-site are also still going to valid pages.

# CHAPTER 6

## 404 Redirect

You not only want to be aware of broken links on your site, you want to know about links on other sites that lead to old or non-existent pages on your site. You can do this by keeping an eye on your analytics data and looking for visitors getting “page not found” errors. With this, you can do three things:

1. **Find out what pages are attempted to be accessed the most.** If people are coming to a recently deleted page, you either want to put something back up in its place or implement a 301 redirect from that page to the page that is the closest match.
2. **Find out where the traffic is coming from.** If other sites have links to you that don't work, sometimes you can get that corrected by simply asking them to fix the link. They linked to you for a reason, so it's likely in their audience's best interest to make sure the link works.
3. **Implement a custom 404-redirect page.** You won't be able to fix or redirect every broken link coming to your site, but you can make sure that anybody coming to your site from a bad link gets more than the generic “page not found” screen. By creating a customized 404 page, visitors can be directed to relevant content on your site, helping you keep more visitors and having an opportunity to convert them.





## CHAPTER 7

Everything You Need to Know About

# Site Architecture

It's not the “sexy” part of web marketing, but your website's backend architecture can make or break its performance. Without solid site architecture, your website can end up with a number of performance-killing stumbling blocks that can result in a bad visitor experience and/or prevent search engines from ranking your content where it deserves. Don't let this happen to your site!

## Common Architectural Problems

In order to move your site up in the search engine rankings, you have to get your optimized content to the search engines in the most streamlined way possible. There are some common problems that often stand in the way of that. These problems may not keep the search engines from finding and indexing and even ranking your content; however, they can greatly effect the performance of that content in terms of how well it ranks in the search results.

### 1. Too many URL parameters

The web is littered with long complicated URLs such as this:

*site.com/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/ProductDisplay?storeId=10051&langId=-1&catalogId=10053&productId=100615137&N=10000003+90401+528374*

Aside from changing the actual domain name, the URL above is a real one. Look at it closely, everything after “ProductDisplay?” are the various parameters that tell the browser what content to pull up.

Each “=” in the URL represents a different parameter. Each parameter represents a slight variation of the content. Every variation represents a potentially different page that can be indexed by the search engines.

The search engines want to index valuable content, but URLs such as this can often send engines away. They don’t want to be caught into endless loops of variation. Search engines certainly have no problem indexing dynamic content, but once you have more than three parameters, you risk losing the search engines all together. The engines tend to shy away from sites with duplicate content or endless loops created by many parameter possibilities. Your best bet is to keep the parameters down to a minimum.

# CHAPTER 7

## 2. Inaccessible content

Great content is often inaccessible to the search engines either because it's hidden behind search options or buried deep within the site. Setting up a proper navigation and clickable link search structure is essential for any site, but even more important for large sites with hundreds of pages or products.

Some pages have to be buried; there just isn't any other way to go about it. But they don't have to be so deep that they can't be found without a GPS tracking device. It's all a matter of laying out your site's architecture so all pages have a proper place and that the most beneficial content is the easiest to find.

## 3. Session IDs

Session IDs create duplicate content by the hundreds, if not thousands. Every visitor to a site is given a session ID which is appended to the end of each URL visited. Multiply your visitors by thousands and you now have thousands of new URLs all pointing to the same content.

There are some workarounds when using session IDs for tracking, however there are better solutions altogether that you should look into.



## 4. Code Bloat

Avoid building navigation links using Flash or JavaScript. Depending on how these are implemented, they can often be problematic to the search engines. Pages which are only linked to via these methods can often be outside of the search engines spidering reach and therefore not included in the index.

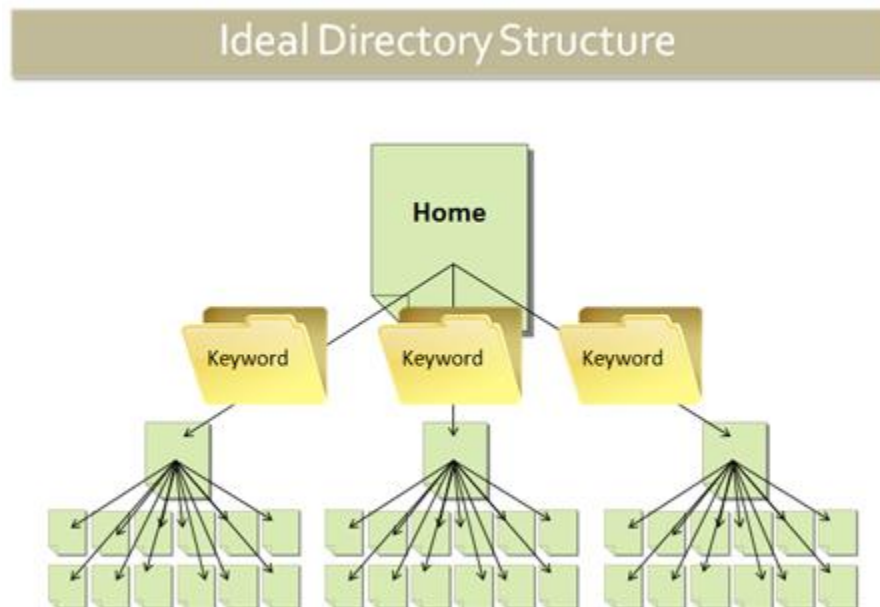
## Directory Structure

There are three basic directory structures you can have: flat, deep or somewhere in between.

A flat directory structure puts all of your site pages on the same directory level. Each page is essentially one click away from the home page, and no page is given any type of prominence.

A deep directory structure is the direct opposite. Only a few pages are accessible from the home page, then a few more are accessible from those, a few more from those and so on. This puts some pages many clicks away from the home page unnecessarily.

**You want to be somewhere in between.** You want a directory structure that makes sense. Pages should be grouped together in broad level categories and only sub-categorized as makes sense from the navigation standpoint. You can go a bit deeper with your URLs, but again, you don't want half a dozen directories when a few will do just fine.



# CHAPTER 7

## Internal Linking

You want to do a good share of internal linking within your site, not just in the navigation but throughout content areas and product pages. Good internal linking helps visitors navigate from page to page and find other areas and products of interest. This improves visitor satisfaction, leads to more sales and helps improve search engine rankings.

Use whatever opportunities you have to help visitors find these other sections of the site. If you talk about a product or service, link to it. If you have a related bit of information or another similar or companion product, link to it. Use keywords sparingly but appropriately in all internal links. This can be a signal to the search engines regarding the content of the linked page, but it can also set off red flags if overdone.



## Site Maps

Site maps provide a great way for both your visitors and search engines to find content with as few clicks as possible. Your site map should always be no more than one click away from any page. This way, if they get lost or have trouble finding what they want, a quick click to the site map gets them a list of every page or piece of content you offer.

Generally, the site map should be fewer than 100 links. Larger sites may need a site map that links to other site maps in order to keep all your products and pages accessible as easily as possible. The site map should be the only page on your site that links to every page, unless your site is under 20 or so pages.



## CHAPTER 8

### Everything You Need to Know About

# Internet Searches

Keyword research tools provide valuable insight into what words people are searching on the major search engines. But research tools don't tell you the *intent* of each search. That information can be deduced with a bit of analysis and keyword organization.

But before we get into that, let's look at how people search so we can better understand how to segment and organize keywords into an effective optimization campaign.

# CHAPTER 8

## How People Search

Searching trends have changed over the years. Once upon a time, the majority of searchers used one-word queries. Then they realized they were getting better, more accurate results when they gave search engines a bit more information.

The more accurate the search phrase, the more accurate the results. Studies have shown that four- and five-word phrases often have a higher ROI than one- and two-word phrases because the searcher is more likely to get results that meet their needs.

A well-rounded optimization campaign focuses on both long- and short-tail phrases. Since the intent of the searcher varies, targeting both will allow you to drive traffic from visitors in all phases of the purchasing decision cycle.

## Keyword Buying Cycle

Every user has different needs and ultimately different goals they wish to achieve when they begin a search process. Many searches are quick with a sole purpose of learning something such as, “How many days does it take the Starship Enterprise to travel from Earth to Vulcan at warp 7?” A few searches may give a satisfactory answer, allowing the sci-fi geek Trekker to go back to watching the ST:TNG marathon.



Other searches have another simple goal: To buy a product that best suits their wants and needs. While that goal maybe simple, the process to reach it isn't. Most searchers—no matter what the goal—will ultimately use at least parts of the following research cycle:

# CHAPTER 8



Every search starts with an **interest**. The interest generally uses broad keywords with one or two words. As the visitor moves through the other stages—**gather, research, exclude and purchase**, they make their queries more and more specific. Every change in query brings the searcher closer and closer to their goal, each giving them more information along the way.

Most searchers go through this process unintentionally, but as they start in the lower stages, they learn more about what they want and how to search more accurately. How does a searcher know they want a 1080p Blu-ray player until they understand that 1080i isn't quite as good?

Most businesses only care to be ranked for the interest-level searches because that's where the most traffic is. This can often be a mistake because searchers will often use those sites as a springboard to get to the other sites that meet their more specific queries. There are still valid reasons to be ranked on these broader searches, as they can help brand your site and bring people back as they know more of what they want, but the conversions come from the more specific terms.

## What You Learn

Once you understand how the searcher progresses through the buying cycle, you can then learn something from the keywords that were used to search. The information you glean can be crucial in determining how to develop the content and direction of your website.





## CHAPTER 9

Everything You Need to Know About

# Keyword Core Terms

The process of researching keywords isn't something that should be rushed. Each phase needs to be performed deliberately, ensuring that you take the time to find all relevant terms and discard the irrelevant. But that process isn't always linear. You may be working on several phases at a time. There is a lot of overlap and moving backward and forward, but care needs to be taken not to leave any of the phases out. Rushing or skipping phases can lead you down the wrong paths at best, and at worst cause you to have to rethink your entire keyword targeting strategy.

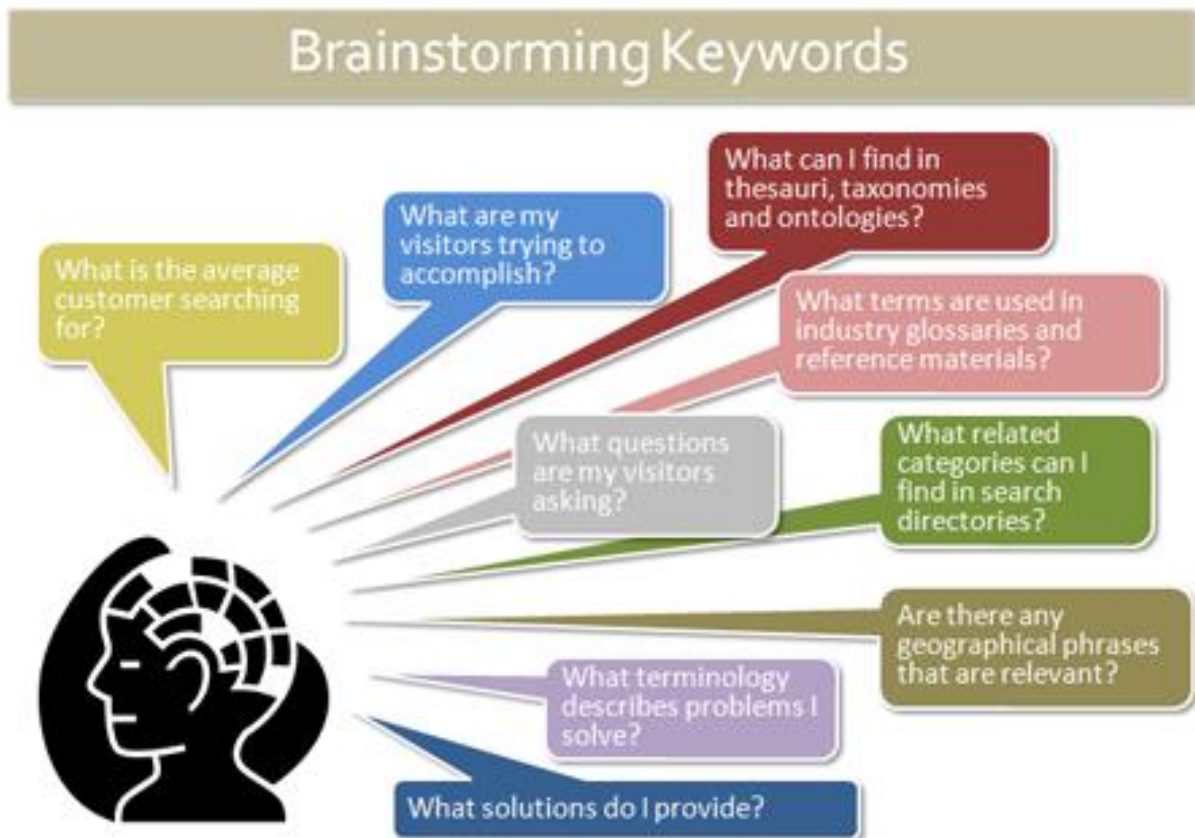
# CHAPTER 9

## Brainstorming Keywords

You can start the keyword research process anywhere, but I like to start with a clean slate and a brainstorming session. Brainstorming allows you to get a list of keywords from an unbiased perspective. The brainstorming process doesn't mean just sitting around and thinking up phrases, though that can be a part of it. Good brainstorming starts with asking questions that can lead to answers that may also be your keywords.

First, think of what questions are relevant to your audience. Don't try to answer them; you'll have time for that later. Start by simply compiling your list of questions.

Once you have a good list, you can do whatever research is needed to find the answers. Those answers give you a base of keywords you can then take to the online research tools to look for related phrases. These related phrases produce a wide-range of variations in how your topic is searched. Some relevant, others not so much.



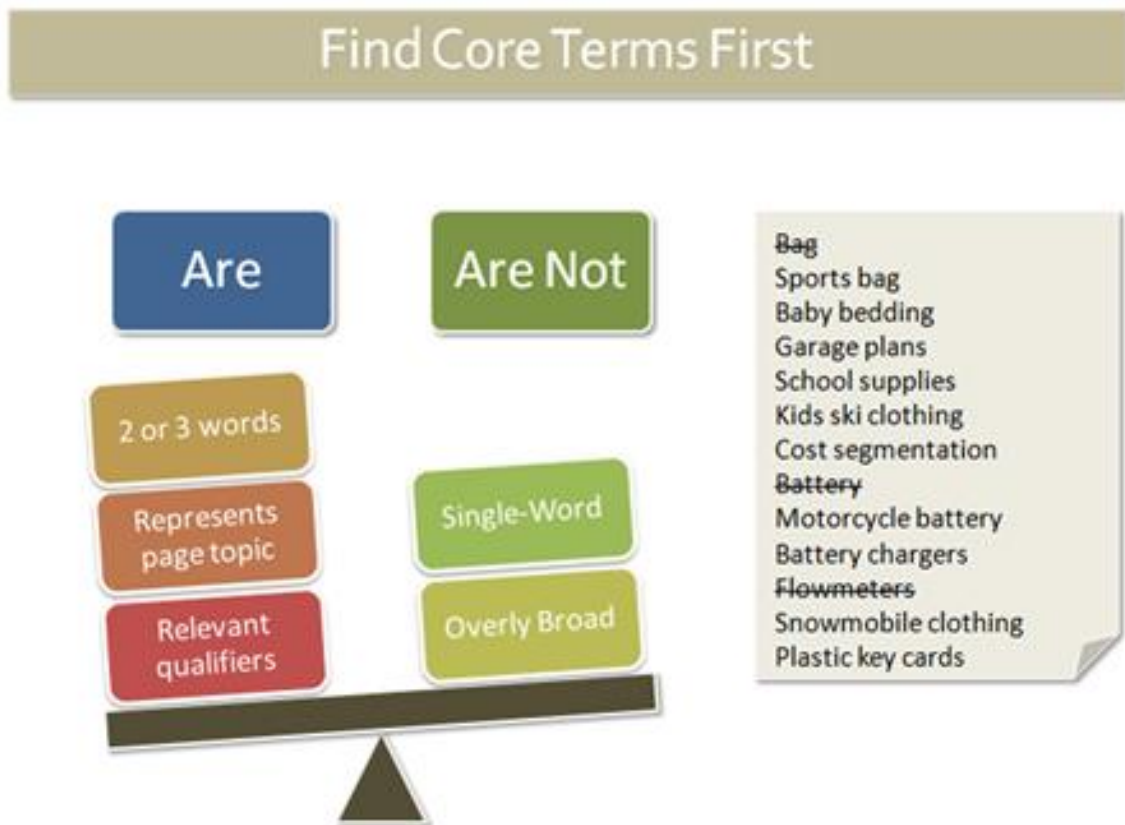
# CHAPTER 9

## Find Core Terms First

Undoubtedly in the brainstorming and research process, you'll amass a list of hundreds of phrases. You want to keep the process as simple as possible, so we'll start by eliminating everything that is not a core term.

A core term is a keyword phrase boiled down to the essentials. It's specific enough to produce a relevant result, but broad enough to cover a wide range of many other targeted phrases. Generally, a good core term is two or three words. On rare occasions, it can be a single word, but only when there is no room for alternate interpretations.

Only use qualifiers on a core term when it is necessary to ensure that the searcher will be led to a relevant page. For example the word "bag" could mean anything from a garbage bag to a sleeping bag to a travel bag. This is a core term that needs a qualifier in order to be relevant to the searcher. If it's not relevant, it's not a core term.



# CHAPTER 9

**Each page of your website should have a single core term associated with it.** You may find several pages that are a good fit for a single term. That's fine during this research process, but later you'll want to make sure you select only the most appropriate page for any single core term. The others will have to find their own core terms.

Don't stop your core term research until you are certain there are no more variations that produce measurable traffic. Using the suggestion tools available in most keyword research programs, find all relevant variations on each of your core terms. For example, a "travel bag" can also be a "back pack," "luggage" (a rare case of a one-word core term) and a "duffel bag." Each can be searched to find even more possible variants.

In almost every industry I have worked with, I have been able to find different ways searchers think of the same product that the site owner hadn't. Sometimes these variations don't get searched much, while other times they are more popular than the terms that the site owner said were the most important. Knowing these options in advance can make a dramatic difference in the direction you go with your optimization campaign.

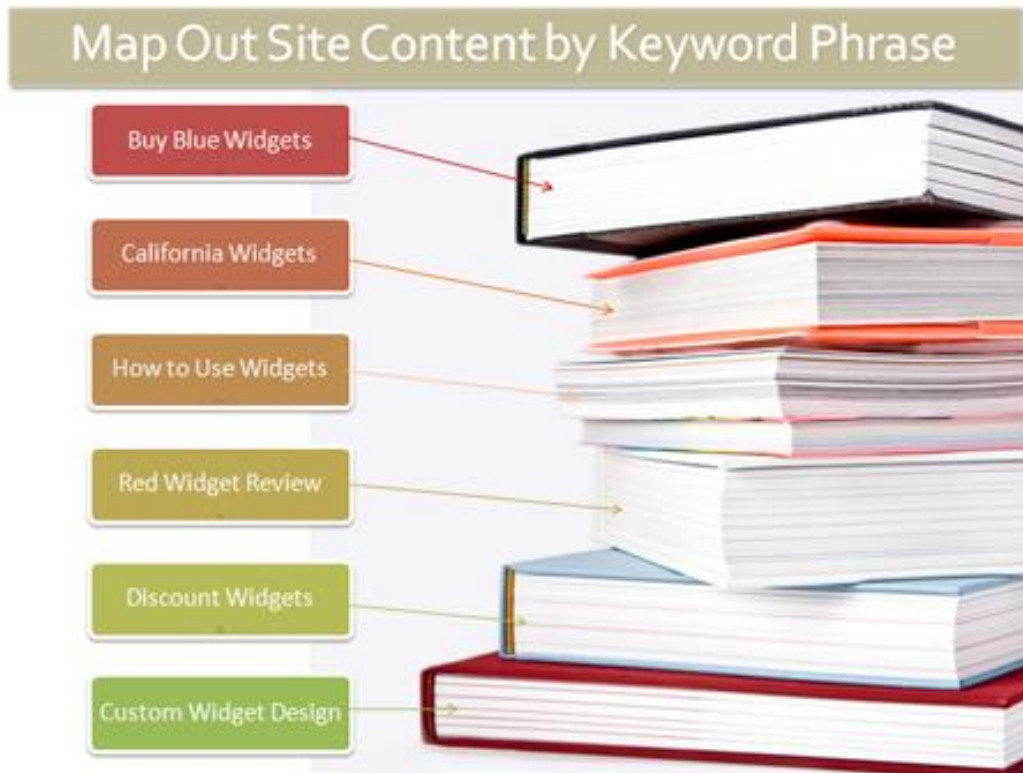
## Core Term Site Mapping

After you have put together an exhaustive list of core terms, and before you start performing deeper research into finding specific phrases, map out where your core terms will be integrated into your site. For some industries, it's as easy as looking at the content and assigning core terms to pages. For others, where there are a lot of core term variations that mean the exact same thing, it can be more difficult.

Assigning core terms to pages must be done very carefully. You need to ensure that the content of each page is either a 100% natural fit or the content can easily be adapted to fit that core term while maintaining its topical integrity. A good example is "cost segregation" versus "cost segmentation." Both essentially mean the same thing, but both are frequently searched (though one more than the other.) The content of a page about "cost segregation" can easily be adapted for "cost segmentation" without altering the meaning or focus of the page.

If you can't make a keyword fit without significantly altering the message of a page, then you need to find another core term or another page for the core term.

# CHAPTER 9



I recommend prioritizing your core terms before assigning pages to them. Which terms get more search volume? Which are the most relevant or bring in the most targeted audience? Which produce the best sales? These are all important factors in determining which core terms are more important than others.

By prioritizing your core terms, research and optimize those that are most important before moving on to lower priority terms. The optimization of your high priority terms can take some time, so leaving the secondary terms for later is good optimization strategy.

Before you move into the next phase of keyword research, you have enough information to start optimizing your website. With the core terms and the map of where they will be implemented, you can begin to perform a very broad and quick optimization of the website. Going a page at a time, optimize title tags, meta description tags, headings and even a bit of content. I wouldn't spend a lot of time on each page, though. You can do more in-depth optimization once you have more keywords to work with.



## CHAPTER 10

Everything You Need to Know About

# Keyword Qualifiers

Optimizing your website for core terms is only part of the optimization process. The vast majority of searches are performed using longer, more specific phrases. When it comes to keyword research, these phrases are really nothing more than your core terms with key qualifiers added to them.

# CHAPTER 10

Using your keyword research tools, you can find dozens or even hundreds of qualifiers for just about every core term. Each of these new phrases must be carefully analyzed for appropriateness for your site, whether it targets what you offer and fits with the page's content for which that core term has been applied. Those that don't can either be discarded or set aside for optimization of other pages.

Some qualifiers are merely the same core term in different form such as plurals, past tense, active tense, etc. (run, ran, running, etc.) Other qualifiers provide additional context for the core term but don't do anything to affect the meaning of the phrase. Other qualifiers will change the meaning of the phrase and may not be appropriate for optimization with the primary core term or page.

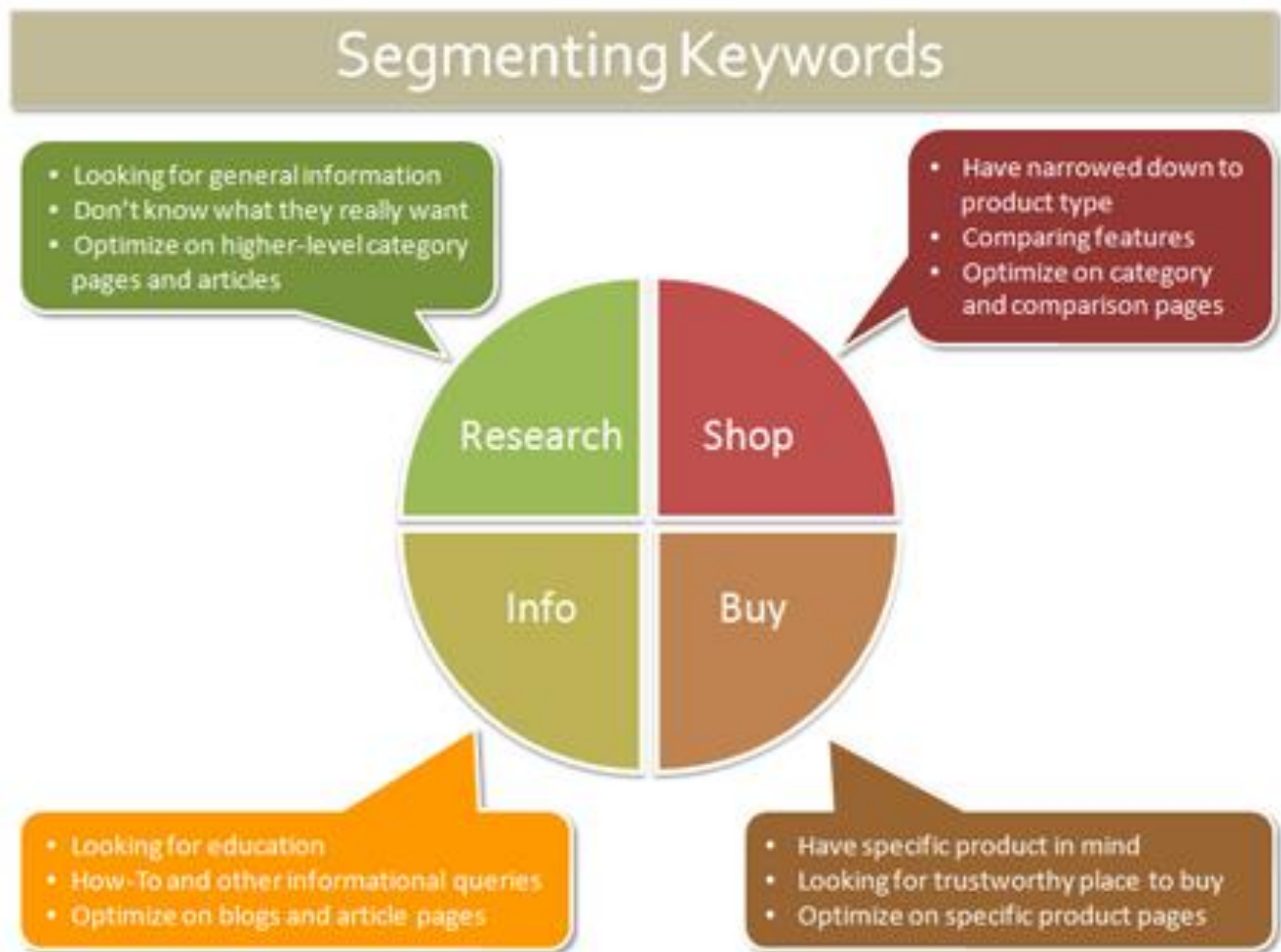


If adding the word “discount” doesn’t apply to you, that’s a qualifier you don’t want. If most of what you offer is not on discount, but you do have a section where you list certain discounted items, then that is a phrase that is better optimized on a different page from the actual core term. Every qualifier added to the core term must be carefully considered to determine whether or not it belongs with that core term.

Some qualifiers will also come in direct contradiction with each other. When speaking of jewelry, you don’t want to use “cheap” and “vintage” on the same page. There are many considerations like this that must be accounted for before just throwing a bunch of related core term qualifiers on the page.

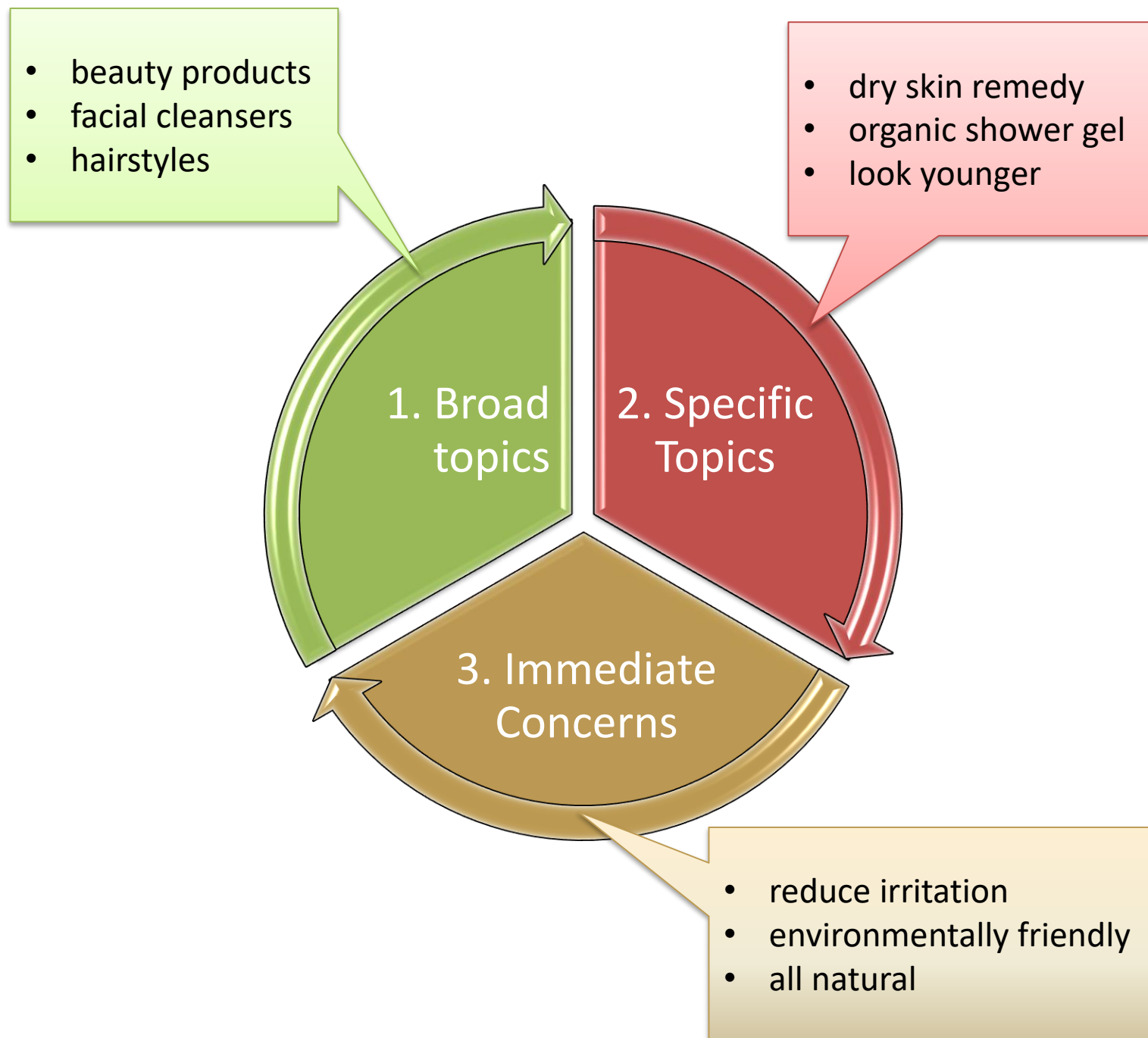
## Segmenting Keywords

There are **four distinct keyword segments**, each representing a different phase of the searcher's buying cycle. After going through the process above, you should be left with one or more groups of keywords that can be optimized into a page or several pages. The next step is to take each group and segment them even further based on those keyword segments.



# CHAPTER 10

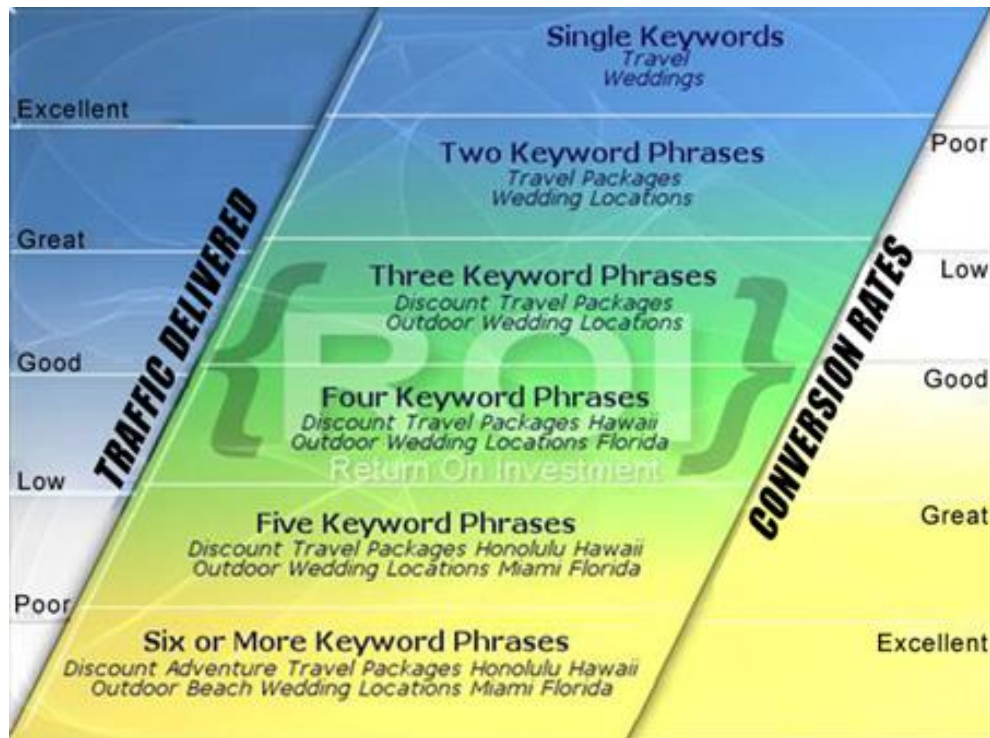
Keyword segmenting for information-only sites and blogs is a bit different than sites selling products or services. In informational sites, all keywords can be used to develop content, so it's a matter of determining what kind of keyword content you can produce and what keywords can be targeted together. Using the same process of elimination as above, you can segment all the keywords into **three distinct groups**:



# CHAPTER 10

## Keyword ROI

When deciding which keywords ultimately get optimized into your site, you want to keep ROI foremost in your mind. This chart shows a very general rule when it comes to determining which keywords produce the best ROI.



One- or two-word phrases can produce a lot of traffic, but conversions from those keywords is often low. The massive traffic the keyword brings may make up for that, but more traffic also means more resources needed to answer calls, emails, etc.

On the lower end of the spectrum are five- and six-word phrases. The convertibility of these phrases is very good, but there isn't a lot of traffic, so total conversions are still low. These are keywords you want to optimize for, but not spend a lot of time on or you will lose any value from the sales they bring.

The happy ROI zone is with the three- and four-word phrases. These bring in good traffic and have good conversion rates. Focus the bulk of your efforts there for maximum value.

Keep in mind, though, keyword length isn't the only factor that matters in keyword selection. You want to make sure you select terms that are targeted for your audience to produce the most profitable sales.



## CHAPTER 11

Everything You Need to Know About

# SEO Content

No SEO is complete without good content. A website without good copywriting is like a sports car with an engine that doesn't run. It doesn't matter how pretty it is, the content is what is needed to provide your visitors the information they need to buy (or convert, or whatever else you want your visitors to do.)

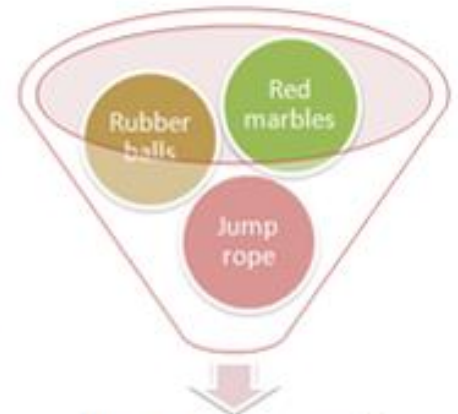
# CHAPTER 11

## Understanding Content

To the search engines, the content on the page is just a bunch of words. Without making this too complex, the engines analyze the words to determine what each page is about. If the web page covers too many different topics, it's difficult for the engines to determine which topic is prominent and deserves ranking. It creates a dilution of focus.

Search engines think every word is a keyword

jump rope text red marbles text text text  
rubber balls text red marbles text text  
text rubber balls text text text text text  
text text text red marbles text text text  
text jump rope text rubber balls text text  
text text text text text text jump rope text



Too many keywords!

The search engines have analyzed millions of web pages and from that have been able to gather significant knowledge of human language. They have an idea of how words and topics work together. It's not really about the number of times a keyword is used, but the focus of the content. If you use a word or phrase too much, it'll be seen as manipulation. But you obviously need to use it in order for your content to be relevant for the topic. Ultimately, **you want to write as much or as little text as is needed in order to make the point you need for your visitors.**

## STONEY SAYS:



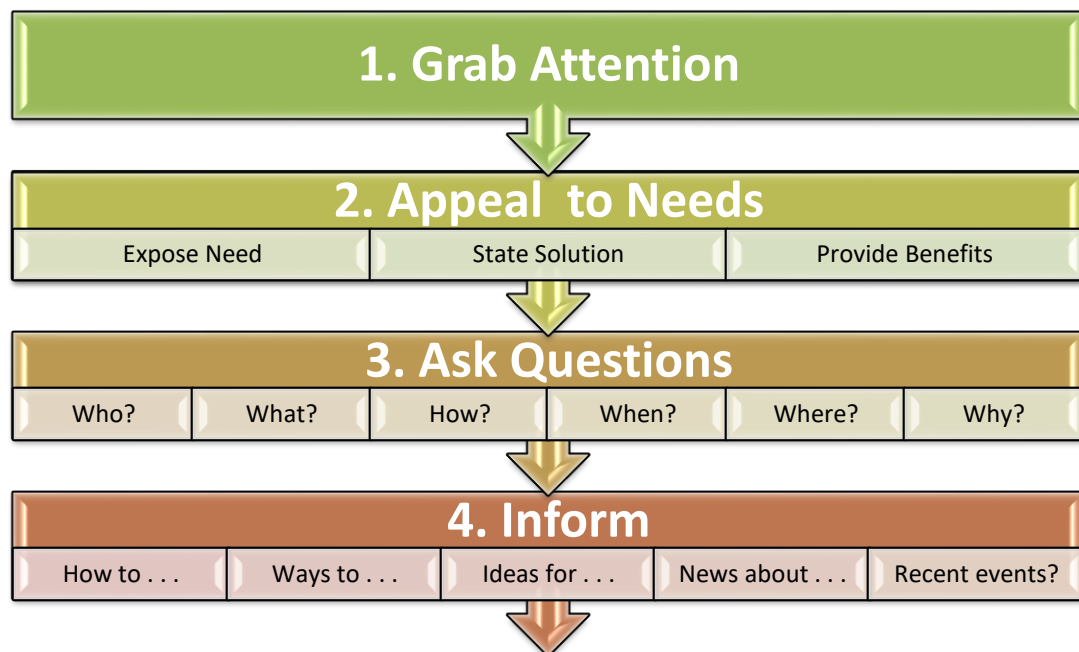
"It's not really about the number of times a keyword is used, but the focus of the content."

# CHAPTER 11

## Draw Them In

There are **four basic things** that the content of each web page must do, regardless of whether it's the home page, a category page, a product page, an article or a blog post:

1. **Grab attention:** If the reader hits the page and the content is unable to get and keep their attention, then all is lost. They move on to another page or another site, and you lost the possibility of a conversion.
2. **Appeal to their needs:** You have to write content that shows them you understand their needs. What motivated them to search for what you offer? By clearly re-iterating the need, you put yourself in a position to show that you have the right solution
3. **Ask questions:** Questions make your readers consider what they are reading and then seek an answer to a question that they didn't even know they had. What kind of questions should you ask? Go back to the basics: Who? What? When? Why? Where? How?
4. **Inform:** The visitor has to walk away having learned something valuable. They need to know that you have exactly what they need, and you must provide enough information to help them justify making a purchase from you, both intellectually and emotionally. Show them how your product or service can make their lives better, or give them more time, money or freedom. You can also give them ideas on how to use your product or service which gives them additional incentives to purchase.



# CHAPTER 11

## 5 Rules of Copywriting

There are five basic rules to writing good website content that is appealing to both visitors and the search engines.

### 1. Avoid putting important text in graphics

- Can be problematic for search engines
- Can be missed by those with slow connections

### 2. Users before search engines

- Visitors, not search engines, buy your products/services, write comments and share content
- Search engines want what people want

### 3. Write enough content

- Make the points you need to make and no more
- Only you know how much is enough
- Meet ALL visitors' needs

### 4. Target phrases, not words

- People rarely search for words
- Knowing the phrases they use helps you write in their language

### 5. Don't force it

- If phrases aren't a fit for a page, move them to another page
- Don't be afraid to break content into other sections to meet different users' needs if it doesn't fit naturally

# CHAPTER 11

## Seek Opportunity

When it comes to working keywords into your content, there are plenty of opportunities to do so without mucking it up. Look for these opportunities, but don't throw in keywords just because you can. Good writing means using keywords conservatively.

## Internal Hyperlinks

Too often people are afraid to “clutter up” their content with hyperlinks. They have a point, but only to a point. Sure, you can go overboard, but you want to give your visitors the avenue to explore the site outside of the navigation. If you mention something that is explained elsewhere, link to it. If you mention something that you should provide more information in a full context, write a new page of content and link to it.

Links let people explore and find other things of interest. Things that help them gain confidence in you, give them more information and learn new things. Without links, these important areas remain largely hidden, even if they are in the site's navigation.





## CHAPTER 12

Everything You Need to Know About

# Page Content

OK, so now you know why content is important and the basic components of good content. Now it's time to get down to the nitty gritty of actually putting a page of content together. While there are some elements of good writing, such as good grammar and clarity that span across all forms, there are some special considerations when it comes to written content on the internet. This section will help you write content that will meet website visitors' unique needs.

# CHAPTER 12

## Headings



The logical place to begin writing content is with the page's heading. In the last chapter, we saw the importance of grabbing visitors' attention. That's the heading's primary job.

The heading is different from the page title tag. While the title tag is displayed in the search results, the heading is viewed on the page itself. Sometimes you want the heading and title tag to be the same. Other times you don't. The title **MUST** use keywords. The heading **SHOULD**, but it's not imperative. It all depends on the hook you want to use to grab attention and entice your visitor to keep reading.

Be sure your title and heading aren't too far removed from each other. The last thing you want after getting the visitor to click into a page is for the heading to not match their expectations. A good heading tells people what they can expect from the content. What information will they learn? What benefits will be presented? What solutions will you provide? The heading needs to give enough information so that the visitor wants to keep reading without providing so much that they don't feel they need to.

A good example of this is "Good headings help you increase search engine rankings." This seemingly tells me just about all I need to know. On the other hand, "How to write headings that increase search engine rankings," gives me a reason to keep reading. I know I'm going to learn something that wasn't given away in the headline.

## Make Your Content Compelling

The headline draws people into the content, gets them interested and makes them want to dive into what you have to say. Therefore your content must not disappoint.

Don't skimp. Allow your content to go wherever it needs to give the reader everything that they want. The only time you can have too much content is when it gets in the way of the sales process instead of promoting it. Remember, when readers have enough information to make a decision, they'll stop reading and do what they came to do. But if you don't have enough content to convince them, they won't take the action you want them to.

Site visitors come in a variety of personality types and personas. In order to speak your audience's language, you must hit a lot of different key points. Some people want to know about you, some about your products or services, and others care about your qualifications. Others don't care about that at all and want to know how the product or service benefits them specifically. Still others may want to know your history and are looking for signals of trust. And some may need a combination of this information.

If you leave any of these out, you'll lose some potential conversions. Be careful, however, that you don't spread yourself too thin. You can't please everyone, but you can do a reasonably good job of knowing your primary audience and hitting the key points that are important to them. Write what you need to convince the majority of your audience. No more and no less.

**Speak the language**

**Make it scannable**

**Use bullet points**

**Highlight points with bold & italic**

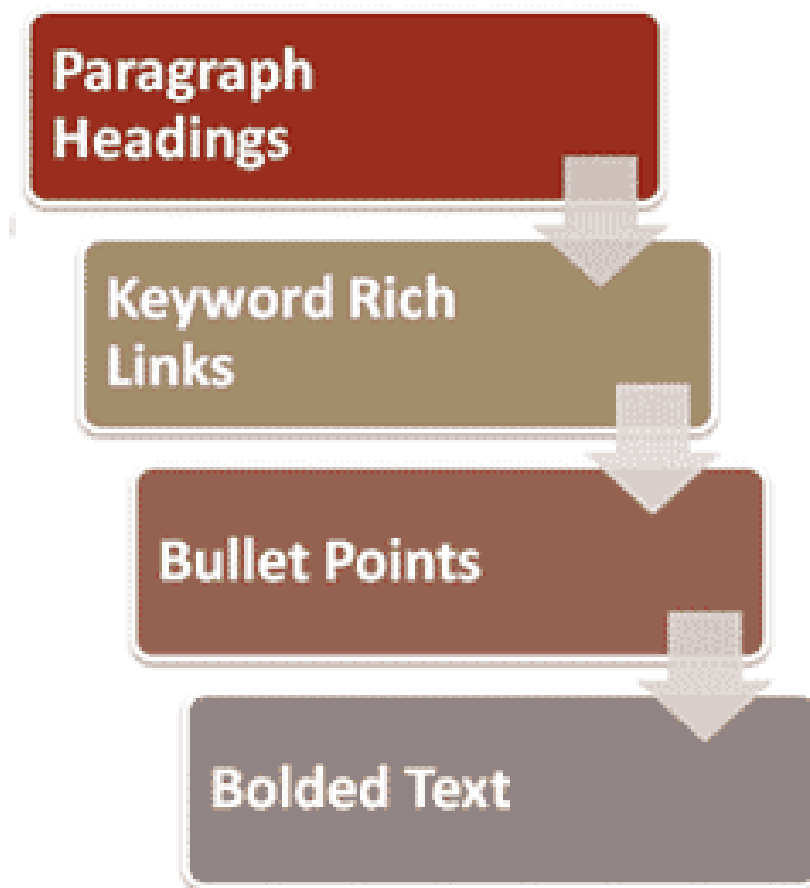
# CHAPTER 12

## Make It Pretty

Long paragraphs of content may get all the right points across, but they are booooring to look at. And visually boring easily translates into just plain dreary to read. Make sure your text looks good. It's not the job of the copywriter to add images, but that doesn't mean the copywriter can't make it easier to read.

Good use of headlines, sub-headlines, paragraph headings and section headings can go a long way to making your content easier on the eyes. You can also use bullet points, content bolding, italics, hyperlinks and numbered lists to make the content look better, easier to read and more digestible.

The content of a website is one of the most important factors in achieving top search engine rankings. But it is an even greater factor in ensuring the website performs with visitors. **Without good content, a site will fail both with engines and visitors.**





# CHAPTER 13

## Everything You Need to Know About

# Links

Links are the highway of the web. Though they have been proclaimed “dead” countless times, they will continue to be an important part of SEO until the internet fundamentally changes. After all, without links, nobody would be able to navigate from page to page or from one site to the next.

# CHAPTER 13

## What Makes Links Work

In the simplest term, a link is a vote for the web page it leads to. It's a lot more complicated than that, but for now, that definition will suffice. If you like something, you link to it. If someone likes you, hopefully they'll link to you.

Links can come in many forms. You socialize your product or blog post, and if someone likes it, they re-socialize it. Reach enough people and you may find that some of them posted a link to you on their own site or blog. The more visitors you get, the greater your opportunity for getting natural links to your site.

Links spread like word of mouth. If you have something worth sharing, more people will spread the word via their sites, blogs and social media channels. The easiest way to get links is to have something worth linking to.

### STONEY SAYS :



“The easiest way to get links is to have something worth linking to.”

# CHAPTER 13

## Giving Context to the Web

Aside from providing a means to navigate through the web, links provide a way for the visitor (and search engines) to know what any page is about before they even click into it. Or at least they should.

Far too often, we use links that say “click here.” That tells the visitors what to do but doesn’t provide a clue as to *why* they should click. The reader is forced to read around the link to understand it. That’s not a problem for those who read every word of a page, but unfortunately, those types are few and far between. Most people skim, looking for what interests them or where to find it. While we may want the reader to hang on every word we say, most don’t. Adding context to links—making your link text briefly describe the page being linked to—adds value for both visitors and the search engines.

Search engines use this as a signal toward analyzing the topic of a page. If people link to a page using words such as “pre-owned vehicles,” “used Lexus,” “buy Mazda Miata,” and “low mileage cars,” the search engine gets a good idea about what this page is about: used cars, possibly with a focus on Lexus and Mazda. The more inbound links a page has, the more the search engine can glean about what the page is about.

The search engine can match the links up with the content for additional relevancy and ranking analysis factors. Not to mention the visitor looking to buy a Mazda Miata knows that clicking that link likely gets them to the information they need.





## Conclusion

# Putting It All Together

SEO isn't especially difficult, but it does take time and enough knowledge to get started down the path to learn as you go. Many small businesses will try to save money by doing SEO on their own, and they can be successful to a point, so long as they have the time needed to not only gain the knowledge but to implement it as well.

This series covered only the most basic aspects of SEO but should be enough to give you a good shove in the right direction.

# Don't want to do it on your own?

With a wide variety of web marketing and consulting services, we can help. Tell us what you need on our Contact Us page!

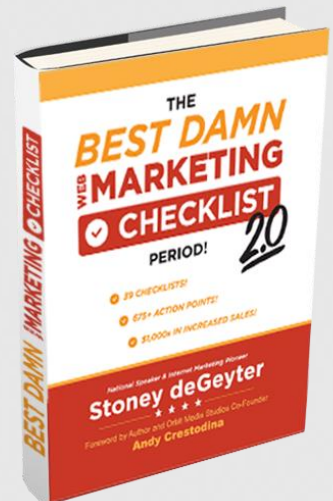
**CONTACT US**



# 39 Checklists. 600+ Action Points. Thousands in Increased Sales

Did you find this ebook helpful? If so, you'll want to get Stoney's book, *The Best Damn Web Marketing Checklist, Period! 2.0*

In addition to SEO, this book covers all aspects of web marketing to help you build a powerful web presence. The book's action points will help your company be found by visitors and search engines alike and convert those visitors once you get them.



[Learn More](#)

**BUY NOW!**

Available on  
**amazon.com**