

Getting Started with Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

Hi Class, let's get started with Search Engine Optimization, SEO for short.

Before starting this assignment decide what kind of product or service you intend to offer for your final project for this class – real or fictitious. You can change this later, but you will need a product or service for these exercises.

The first thing you need to do is read this article in Search Engine Watch, [SEO Basics: 8 Essentials When Optimizing Your Site](https://searchenginewatch.com/sew/how-to/2259693/seo-basics-8-essentials). You should also read the expanded update to this article [SEO basics: 22 essentials you need for optimizing your site](https://searchenginewatch.com/2016/01/21/seo-basics-22-essentials-you-need-for-optimizing-your-site/). It provides new insights based on how search engines like Google rank sites today.

To help you start applying SEO to your site we're going to do 7 exercises. Before you do, copy the exercises into your E-commerce Plan. You will be writing your answers there. After complete them, check your grammar, spelling and punctuation. Then write a summary of what you learned. To turn in the assignment, upload your E-commerce plan to the SEO assignment in Canvas, then post the summary into this week's discussion. Make sure you participate in the discussion by replying to the posts of at least two other students. If you make your initial post by Wednesday, you will receive an extra point.

Exercise 1 is title Your Website is Like a Cake

In the 8 Essentials article, **Essential 1** says your website is like a cake. Links, Search Engine Marketing (SEM), and Social

Networking are the candles and icing that attract attention to your online business. The cake is what keeps visitors on the site and makes them want to return. Content crafted with an understanding of who your customer is and what they really want. In the 22 essentials article, it says you can accomplish this by regularly publishing "helpful, useful articles, videos or other types of media that are popular and well produced" and writing "for actual human beings rather than the search engine itself." In other words: "stop worrying about keywords and focus on the user experience."

Even though keywords aren't the focus of SEO they used to be, most experts agree they are still important. For instance, Niel Patel, considered one of the top web marketing experts in the world, and founder of KISSmetrics, <http://contentmarketinginstitute.com/2015/10/content-strategy-questions-answered/>

says, keywords are still important in helping to make your site more relevant, but you don't need to do anything "voodooish." Instead use the right words in the right places.

<http://searchengineland.com/guide/seo/content-search-engine-ranking> He also says to use "long-tail" keywords, keywords that are 2 or 4 words long and are more specific, instead of "broad" keywords, which are usually one word and less specific. Long-tail Keywords are better than Broad Keywords because they are easier to rank and people who use them are more likely to buy.

<https://www.wordtracker.com/academy/keyword-research/technical-guides/three-good-reasons-to-target-long-tail-keywords>

Here are some examples from Niel Patel.



How do you find out which keywords are best? Since Google is by far the most popular search engine, find out what keywords people are using the most on Google. The best tool to use is the [Google Keyword Planner](#). It's free, if you have a Google AdWords account, but you need to supply credit card information. For that reason, for this exercise we'll use a free tool instead, the Keyword Tool -- <http://keywordtool.io/> One thing to keep in mind about Google AdWords is that they are one of the most powerful paid ways to promote your site, and nowadays you really need to pay-to-play. You should really consider using AdWords.

Here are the steps for this exercise:

1. Visit <http://keywordtool.io/>
2. Select the Google tab
3. Enter a keyword for your business
4. Pick ten results that you like the most and paste them into your E-commerce Plan

Note: You are only allowed to use this tool free twice

Exercise 2: Check the Indexing of your competitors

To be competitive it's important to know as much as possible about your competitors. One thing you need to be aware of is how easy it is for potential customers to find your site compared to your competitors. One indication of this can be the number of pages indexed by a search engine like Google. Why is this important? An indexed page is one that's been coded and stored in a search engine for quick retrieval. Some experts say the more pages a site has keyword indexed, the more likely it can appear as a search result when entering key words. You can find a good explanation for this on <http://webcertain.com/index-glossary.html>

These are the Steps for Exercise 2:

1. Obtain the URLs of at least 2 sites you consider to be your direct competitors
2. Open a new search page in Google
3. In the Google search bar type the competitor's site using this format -- **site:nameofsite.com**

4. At the top of the page it will list the number of results and under that a list of the indexed pages for that site
5. Copy the number of pages indexed and paste it in your E-commerce plan. Be sure to type the name of the site above the number of results.

Answer these questions in your E-commerce Plan:

- Would you consider paying for AdWords to help promote your website? Why or why not?
- Based your results, which keywords would you consider paying for to help promote your site? Why?
- Which site has the highest number of pages indexed? Why?
- What do these indexing results tell you about these sites?
- Does it help make them more popular or profitable? Why or why not?

Exercise 3 is Know Your Business Model

Essential 4 of the 8 essentials, Know Your Business Model, poses a series of questions.

Answer these questions in your E-commerce Plan:

- What are the goals of your business?
- Nielsen defines the E-commerce term conversion as a “user that takes a desired action.” Usually this means someone who buys something on your site. What is a conversion for you? Why?
- Are you selling eyeballs (impressions) or what people click on? Basically, this means will you be making money from advertising (eyeballs) or selling goods or services (clicks). Why?
- What are your assets and liabilities (refer to your SWOT)?

Exercise 4 is Optimize for Multi-Channels

Essential 5 of the 8 essentials reminds us to not forget to optimize for multi-channels, meaning keyword phrases should be used consistently for all channels.

Answer this question in your E-commerce Plan:

What other channels besides your website are you planning to use? Why? (examples, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, a blog, etc.)

Exercise 5 is Be Consistent with Domain Names

Essential 6 Mentions the importance of including keywords in your site’s title. For instance, if you were promoting a Frisbee Cleaning service you might name your site, frisbeecleaning.com. However, the Search Engine Journal says it’s better to have domain names that are “brandable.”

One of the most successful online retailers of chairs for business is called BizChair – an example of a business that uses obvious keywords in its title.

Let's take the example of Zappos, probably the larger retailer of shoes on the Web. What does Zappos have to do with shoes? On the other hand, it's a pretty catchy name. This is an example of picking a name because it was considered more brandable, than something like Shoes R Us.

These are the steps for Exercise 5:

1. Read [How Your Domain Name Will Impact SEO & Social Media Marketing](#) from the SearchEngine Journal
2. Using the three formulas at the end of the article to pick a domain name.
3. Visit [WHOIS](#) to see if this name is still available. If not, pick another. smarthats
4. What available domain name did you pick?
5. How does it match up to the 7 factors the article says you should consider when choosing a brand-able domain name?

For this exercise make sure you submit a name that is not yet taken. Sometimes it's hard to find one that ends in dot com.

Let's take a quick look at WHOIS. This is the original, and still largest, dispenser of domain names. It's been around since the early 1980s. Let's see what happens when you look for an available domain name. My fictitious business provides mortarboards, it's called smarthats. Let's see if this name is available. We can smarthats.com is already taken. This shows who registered the name. But if I want to use a different extension, such as .biz it's still available. Let's see what happens when I look for mortarboards.com. Again, it's taken, but available if I'm willing to accept .biz. Dot com is still considered the best extension for a business, but the pickings of what's available are slim. Using a great name with an extension other than .com could be your best bet – depending on the extension, of course.

After completing the exercise answer these questions:

1. What available domain name did you pick?
2. How does it match up to the 7 factors the article says you should consider when choosing a brand-able domain name?

Exercise 6 is Focus on Your Meta Data

Essential 8 of the 8 essentials says you should “think of your title as a 4-8 word ad” to encourage your readers to keep clicking and reading.

SEO expert, Ken Lily, at [fdglobal](#) says, the best resource to learn SEO is [MOZ](#). They have a section of their site dedicated to [learning SEO and search marketing](#). Here is a summary of their guidelines for writing title tags.

1. Watch your title length

For Google, this length is usually between 50-60 characters.

2. Don't overdo SEO keywords

Avoid titles that are just a list of keywords or repeat variations of the same keyword over and over. These titles are bad for search users and could get you into trouble with search engines.

3. Give every page a unique title

Unique titles help search engines understand that your content is unique and valuable, and also drive higher click-through rates.

4. Put Important Keywords first

Keywords closer to the beginning of your title tag may have more impact on search rankings.

5. Take advantage of your brand

If you have a strong, well-known brand, then adding it to your titles may help boost click-through rates.

6. Write for your customers

While Title tags are very important to SEO, remember that your first job is to attract clicks from well-targeted visitors who are likely to find your content valuable. The title tag is a new visitor's first interaction with your brand when they find it in a search result—it should convey the most positive and accurate message possible.

From: <https://moz.com/learn/seo/title-tag>

Here are the Steps for this exercise:

1. Visit the MOZ [Title Tag](#) page and read their recommendations
2. After reading, use their [Title Emulator Tool](#) to help you write title tags for these 3 pages on your website:
 - a. Home page
 - b. Product page
 - c. About us page
3. When satisfied paste your Title Tags in your E-commerce Plan
4. Explain how these title tags meet the [MOZ guidelines](#)

Here's an example. Basically, what the Moz Title Emulator Tool does is show you what your title tag would look like on a search results page so you can check its effectiveness and length. The format Moz recommends is the **Primary Keyword - Secondary Keyword | Brand Name**

Based on this recommendation I'm going to create some title tags for my fictitious site that sells mortar boards, call Smart Hats.

After double checking my list of keywords here's what I came up with for my home page

Mortar Boards – Hats for Graduation | Smart Hats

I came up with this because I put the keyword for my product first, then noticed that hats and graduation were terms that appeared high on my list of keywords. I ended the tag with the brand name.

For my product page I added MiraCosta since I noticed that looking for specific schools is also very high on the keyword list.

Mortar Boards – Hats for Graduation | MiraCosta | Smart Hats

For my about about us page I added Why Smart Hats, since the page would explain why customers should choose Smart Hats as their mortar board supplier.

Mortar Boards – Hats for Graduation | Why Smart Hats | Smart Hats

Now let's see what you come up with.

For your final exercise, Exercise 7 you will Write a Summary of what you learned

Here are the steps for your last exercise:

1. Briefly summarize what you learned from this exercise
2. Paste your summary in a post in this week's discussion on Canvas
3. Comment on posts from 2 other students
4. Attach your E-commerce plan to the SEO assignment link on Canvas and submit