











Search engine optimisation factors



1. On-page optimisation ranking factors

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| On-page optimisation Factor 1 | Title HTML tag <code><title></title></code> | Applies to: HTML Header | Importance:  5/5 SEOmoz rating: 4.9/5 |
| <i>What is it?</i> | <p>The title of each web page appears at the top of the browser window and is indicated in the HTML code by the <code><title></title></code> keyword.</p> <p>It is also very important since typically forms the text underlined within the search results page as a call-to-action hyperlink through to the destination website. If it is an effective call-to-action that demonstrates relevance you will receive more clicks which equals more visits.</p> <p>Example: <code><title>E-consultancy.com: Internet Marketing Strategy Training Online Marketing Research</title></code></p> | | |
| <i>Best practice:</i> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use target keyphrase(s) and keywords to left of tag, brand / site name on right. Example <code><title> Internet and online marketing and e-commerce best practice: E-consultancy.com</title></code> 2. Make unique on each page to avoid rating as duplicate content. 3. Minimise keyword density – typically less than 10 to 15 keywords. 4. Avoid keyword stuffing. | | |
| On-page optimisation Factor 2 | Meta description meta tag | Applies to: Each page on site | Importance:  3/5 SEOmoz rating: 2/5 |
| <i>What is it?</i> | <p>A meta tag is an attribute of the page within the HTML <code><head></code> section which can be set by the content owner. The “description” meta tag denotes the information which will sometimes be displayed in the SERPs when a web page is found if relevant ‘snippets’ cannot be used from within the body copy.</p> <p>Example: <code>META NAME="DESCRIPTION" CONTENT="Learn how to improve your internet marketing and e-commerce strategy. E-consultancy.com has expert advice, research and guides to help you develop successful internet marketing strategies and effective online marketing campaigns."></code></p> | | |
| <i>Best practice:</i> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create a unique meta description for every page where practical, otherwise Google may display a snippet in the SERPS that at best you have little control over and at worst is gobbledygook. For product catalogues and larger sites, the meta description can be automatically generated to include the product keyword name plus a summary of the value proposition of the site. 2. For your homepage and pages targeting strategic keyphrases, create a powerful meta description that combines a call-to-action and summarises your differential proposition and encourages clickthrough on SERPs as in the example from Capital One above (although this is a little long). Purists may disagree with this and suggest | | |

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| | <p>that just a straight description of page content is more in keeping with the spirit of the W3C standard and accessibility guidelines. However, this is a guide on search engine <i>marketing</i> best practice.</p> <p>3. Remember that just 15-20 words (150 characters) of the meta description are visible within the SERPS of Google – make sure your key message isn't truncated. Often less is more – a succinct description may be more powerful.</p> <p>4. Limit to 2-4 keyphrases per page.</p> <p>5. Do not use too many keywords or use too many irrelevant filler words within this meta tag since this will reduce keyword density.</p> <p>6. Avoid undue repetition – 2 to 3 times maximum, otherwise may be assessed as spamming.</p> <p>7. Incorporate phrase variants and synonyms within copy.</p> <p>8. Vary on all pages within site.</p> <p>9. Make different from <title> tag since this may be a sign of keyword stuffing. It also helps if it is complementary to the title to appear more relevant to the searcher.</p> | | |
| On-page optimisation Factor 3 | Meta keywords meta tag | Applies to: Each page on site | Importance:  1/5 SEOMoz rating: 1.2/5 |
| <i>What is it?</i> | The “keywords” meta tag is an attribute of the page within the HTML which can be set by the content owner, typically via a CMS. It contains keyphrases which refer to the content of the page. | | |
| <i>Best practice:</i> | <p>1. Select keywords that reflect the theme or context of the page.</p> <p>2. Separate by commas (or spaces).</p> <p>3. Use 5 to 8 keyphrases maximum otherwise there will be a dilution effect which will decrease keyword density. There are too many in example above</p> <p>4. Use keyphrases with high relevance, high volume on homepage. Some of those above are too generic, e.g. Mastercard or too low volume, e.g. e-banking. Use lower volume keyphrases on other pages.</p> <p>5. Use different phrase variants including plurals, misspellings and synonyms.</p> <p>6. Don't spend too much time refining meta keywords since they are relatively unimportant as a ranking factor.</p> | | |
| On-page optimisation Factor 4 | Keyword frequency and density in body copy | Applies to: Each page in site (particularly important on homepage) | Importance:  4/5 SEOMoz rating: 3.7/5 |
| <i>What is it?</i> | Keyword or keyphrase density refers to how frequently a word appears in a document as a proportion of its length. | | |
| <i>Best practice:</i> | 1. Often recommended to be limited to 200 to 400 words by search engine optimizers to make it easier to achieve density. | | |

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| | <p>2. However, particularly for research topics or scholarly documents there is likely to be value attributed to longer documents with many clear sub-sections that may be judged to be of more value to readers.</p> <p>3. For longer documents / articles, consider including different versions of documents, e.g. (a) 5 page interlinked documents (b) full document (for printing, possibly without main navigation). ClickZ (www.clickz.com/experts) uses this approach and the print version of documents often rank higher, they do not seem to attract a duplicate content penalty since Google will select the page with the highest link equity.</p> | | |
| On-page optimisation Factor 5 | Semantic analysis including use of synonyms of keyword / phrase | Applies to: <title> tag Body copy | Importance:  4/5 SEOMoz rating: 3.7/5 |
| <i>What is it?</i> | <p>Phrases or words that are commonly used as alternatives for the main target keyphrase.</p> <p>Also remember that singular and plural forms of words are treated differently. The target phrase can also be reversed and additional words interspersed between the different keywords of the phrase.</p> | | |
| <i>Best practice:</i> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Include a range of synonyms within page copy, meta descriptions and within title tags if possible. 2. Use synonyms when developing copy for product related content in catalogues, or use an attribute table for each catalogue product which describes different features / benefits of a product. 3. An automated approach may be possible where each product has different attributes and these are combined in a table or in sentences with different qualifiers. 4. Publishing search results for a site may help with this since users may enter synonyms naturally. | | |
| On-page optimisation Factor 6 | Target keyphrases included more frequently towards top of document. | Applies to: Page template for whole site. | Importance:  2/5 SEOMoz rating: Not rated |
| <i>Best practice:</i> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Include target keyphrases near the top of the body copy of the document. 2. Structure the code of documents forming the page templates of sites so that the body copy appears in the document before the main navigation (if practical). 3. Repeat the phrase regularly throughout document and include at end of document, particularly in hyperlinks to sections to find out more. | | |
| On-page optimisation Factor 7 | Target keyphrase in headings (Aspect of semantic markup) | Applies to: Each page. | Importance:  2/5 SEOMoz rating: <h1>3.1/5 <h2>,<h3>,<h(x)> 2.8/5 |
| <i>What is</i> | Using heading styles <h1>, <h2>, etc containing target keyphrases has some | | |

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| <i>it?</i> | positive effects, but the default sizes are not acceptable for visual design, so the font style is used to produce a smaller, more aesthetic font, often using Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) to apply across the whole site. | | |
| <i>Best practice:</i> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduce more use of subheadings within document, if this is not the house/copywriting style. 2. Include different keyphrases in different subheadings within document. 3. <h1> is most effective, so important to use, can use CSS to reduce font weight. 4. Consider making H1 distinct from <title> to target slightly different phrase variants. | | |
| On-page optimisation Factor 8 | Keyword formatting (bold or italic) | Applies to: Body copy on each page | Importance:  1/5 SEOMoz rating: 2.3/5 |
| <i>What is it?</i> | This is formatting using bold , <i>italic</i> , <u>underline</u> or size style. Bold is most important. | | |
| <i>Best practice:</i> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use sparingly (1-5 times per page according to length) to emphasise unique context of page for primary target and secondary keyphrases. 2. Also use to assist scannability of page by visitors to help them assess content of page and unique benefits of products where relevant. | | |
| On-page optimisation Factor 9 | Keyphrase in hyperlink anchor text | Applies to: Each and every text (and image) hyperlink on the web | Importance:  3/5 SEOMoz rating: 3.5/5 (For external links) |
| <i>What is it?</i> | The hypertext used to form the text of an internal or external link, in the HTML. Example: Anchor text which forms link when viewed in browser | | |
| <i>Best practice:</i> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Relevant anchor text should be used both in navigation and inline body copy. 2. Anchor text should include a target keyphrase for the destination page rather than something neutral or un-related such as 'click here' or 'more'. <body> Read the E-consultancy Search Engine Marketing best practice guide. </body> 3. The hyperlink also needs to form a logical call-to-action or next-step for site visitors. | | |
| On-page optimisation Factor 10 | Alternative text attributes for images ('Alt' text or tags) | Applies to: Each image on each page | Importance:  1/5 SEOMoz rating: 2.6/5 |
| <i>What is it?</i> | Graphical images that form each page can have 'hidden text' associated with them that is not seen by the user, but will be indexed by the search engine. This is required for accessibility compliance (screen-readers used by the blind and visually | | |

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| | <p>impaired, read-out the 'alt' tags), but is also used by the search engines to determine relevance where the image is associated with a hyperlink.</p> <p>Due to search engine spamming this factor is assigned lesser relevance than previously, but is more important if the images are set up as hyperlinks.</p> | | |
| <i>Best practice:</i> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use alt attributes that summarise the content of main images that are relevant on the page for accessibility reasons. 2. Use target keyphrases relevant for the page in linked images. 3. Create links for images that link through to a target keyphrase page with 'alt' tags consistent with this keyphrase. 4. Don't overuse 'alt tags', e.g. adding to 'spacer' images used for layout which may be penalised. | | |
| On-page optimisation Factor 11 | Keyword(s) within domain name | Applies to: Top-level and sub-domains for a site. | Importance:  2/5 SEOMoz rating: 3.0/5 |
| <i>What is it?</i> | <p>If the domain name contains target keywords, then the search engine may place more emphasis on the pages for the domain.</p> <p>This is a combined effect of extra emphasis because of appearance of the keywords in the domain name, but more important, anchor text in links into the site containing its name will contain these words.</p> | | |
| <i>Best practice:</i> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. If possible, for start-ups or new domains, register domain names which comprise high volume, high relevance keywords. 2. For simplicity, best to use concatenated words as domain. Search engines will normally distinguish separate concatenated keywords, e.g. www.marketingonline.co.uk or sites can contain words separated by hyphens, e.g. www.marketing-online.co.uk which denote separate words (underscores not permitted for domain names). | | |
| On-page optimisation Factor 12 | Keyword(s) within document filename (and within folders structure) | Applies to: Each page | Importance:  2/5 SEOMoz rating: 2.8/5 |
| <i>What is it?</i> | <p>If the page name or the subdirectories (s) contain keywords within the filename, then the search engine may place more relevance on this.</p> <p>The words will also appear in the URL on the search results page and so may indicate relevance and increase clickthrough.</p> <p>If the URL is pasted into other sites or postings, then the words in the document folder and filename will appear in the anchor text.</p> | | |
| <i>Best practice:</i> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Incorporate one to five keywords most relevant for the page into the document filename using a natural word order for the phrase in normal grammatical construction. 2. Folder names should also contain keywords in full 3. Separate keyphrases by hyphens which denote separate words (not underscores which are less aesthetic). | | |

