

# SEO Copywriting Best Practices

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## What Is SEO:

### What does SEO Mean?

SEO is an acronym for **Search Engine Optimization**. Simply put, it's the practice of constructing your website in a manner that Search Engines prefer to see and feel should be the standard across the internet. Websites that adhere to these best practices tend to rank better than those that do not in the Organic Search Results.

### The Rule Book

If everyone knew how to play the game by the rules, then how do we determine a winner? Good question, and for that reason the rule book isn't always that clear. Search Engines do publish their best practices. However there is a very complex algorithm (think of a complex math problem) used to calculate what website should rank on top of another. The exact algorithm is not published and is highly secretive.

Members of the SEO industry have learned through trial and error what works and what doesn't over the years and have figured out much of the "game". However the Search Engines continue to enhance their algorithm and thus the rules keep changing.

Algorithm changes are typically for two reasons:

- To enhance search results
- To prevent spamming of SEO and stop low quality websites from ranking better than they should

### The Basics of SEO

In basic terms, what the Search Engines look for from your website is that you are providing quality content to the internet, you are an active website/business, and you offer a quality experience to the visitors of your website.

While there are over 500 factors that go into the algorithms that calculate how your website will rank, they are ultimately looking to see if you are a good business.

- Is it clearly stated through out the website what your site is about and what I can get from it?
- Can a visitor easily navigate your website?
- Are you an active business that contributes to your niche community on the internet?
  - o Quality articles/content
  - o Interact with people that are looking for help/information in Social Media, forums, communication through your website, etc.

For a brick and mortar store to survive they would need to have a clean appearance in their store, interact with their customers, help them with their needs, and offer a quality product/service. A website should do the exact same thing through digital means. If a Search Engine can detect that the website is doing just that, then quality rankings should come naturally.

# SEO Terminology 101:

## What is what in SEO?

	What is it?	Where does it show up?	Is it a factor by the Search Engines for how my website ranks?	Does it influence users of a Search Engine to click through to my website?
Title Tag	70 characters that describe what the content of your page is.	Tab/page heading, Search Engine Results	Yes (#1)	Yes
Meta Description	165 characters that entice a search engine user to click through to your website	Search Engine Results, Facebook sharing/liking	No	YES!!!
<H1> Tag	The title of the page	On the page, typically boldest/largest text	Yes (#2)	No
<H2> through <H6> Tags	Secondary important information about your page	Varies page to page if implemented.	Potentially	No
Body Copy (SEO Copy)	Text on the page for a visitor and search engine to read. Examples: Descriptive text about a product, the body of an article, text on banners/images, description of what products are in a category, etc.	Varies page to page if implemented.	Yes (#3)	No
Alt text	Text that describes an image if it were to not display.	If an image does not display, the alt text will display. Also in the code for Search Engines to read.	Yes	No
Title text	Text that describes or supports an image. Can also be applied to a link or almost any object on the page.	When a mouse is hovered over an image for a few seconds the Title text will display in a box next to the mouse.	Yes	No

### Glossary:

- Organic Traffic (Also known as *Natural Traffic* or *Free Traffic*)
  - o Traffic to your website that happened naturally. It was driven to your website without payment, influence, or extra effort on your part. This refers to search engine traffic only.
- Duplicate Content
  - o If a search engine detects the exact same (or very similar) content in multiple locations across the internet, they recognize a duplicate content instance. It is in the best interest of the Search Engine to

provide easily understandable results to its visitors. For this reason, only one website (or web page) can be given credit for this content. The other website/webpage will not gain SEO credit for this content.

- SEO Penalty
  - o A Search Engine feels a website has violated their policies and have thus manually applied a penalty to that website. Website owners have the opportunity to correct these violations and request a reconsideration request. If the Search Engine feels the violation has been corrected, the website will be added back into the Search Engines Index.
- SEO Devaluation
  - o A Search Engine may find content or links to your site to not be valuable. For that reason they may devalue that content from a particular website's SEO value.
- Index
  - o A Search Engines collection of links and information about websites across the internet. Search Engines actively attempt to find content across the Internet to add to their index. Webmasters can also submit content to Search Engines for consideration to be added to their index. Each Search Engine creates it's own index.
- Indexation
  - o The ability for a Search Engine to crawl a website and add it's pages into it's Index
- Page Rank
  - o A Google only ranting of the value of a particular webpage. Page Rank is updated quarterly and is on a 1-10 scale – 10 being the highest.
- SERP
  - o Search Engine Results Page. The page of results that is returned to a user of a Search Engine. Traditionally this includes 10 links/pages. Some Search Engines display different results however with images, maps, videos, etc.
- Paid Advertising
  - o These links to websites are paid for by the company that the link directs them to. Paid Advertising typically shows with a yellow background or a tag that says "Sponsored Ad" on it.
- Authorship
  - o A Search Engine may associate an author to a particular webpage. The collection of pages/articles that this author has written builds up that author's Authorship Profile. A photo of the author may appear next to articles that include Authorship.

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by Brian P

Feb 22, 2013 - Ever since I saw April's article on [alternative footwear](#) for the bride, I was inspired to write a similar ... [Wedding](#) inspiration and advice from [Invitations by Dawn](#) ... But us men can pull off cowboy boots just as well as the ladies.

[Wedding Accessories | Advice and Ideas | Invitations By Dawn ... - 1](#)

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Jul 15, 2013 - Wedding inspiration and advice from [Invitations by Dawn](#) .... Get some inspiration from these popular styles of [men's wedding bands](#): Patterned: If your .... [Footwear alternatives for the groom](#) · [Wedding footwear alternatives](#) ...

NOTE: As of July 2014 Google announced that these images may be going away. However at the time of writing I have notices that it is not 100% rolled out – images are still showing.

- Algorithm
  - o Essentially it's a complex math equation. Search Engines use an algorithm to calculate what website should rank above another for a particular keyword search. The Search Engines continually modify the algorithm in an effort to improve their search results.
- White Hat / Grey Hat / Black Hat SEO

- These terms refer to how well you follow the rules. White Hat means you follow the Search Engine guidelines to the T and play by the book. Grey Hat SEO's walk the line of good and evil... Black Hat SEO's try to find loop holes in the guidelines to find opportunities to rank better in the SERPs. While a Black Hat may get some quick wins, typically the Search Engines make improvements to their algorithm that will later penalize the Black Hat SEOs.

A screenshot of a Google search for "flourish feature wedding invitation". The search results show several listings. Annotations include:

- TITLE TAG**: Points to the title of the first search result: "flourish feature featherpress wedding invitation, ecru, cheap ...".
- META DESCRIPTION**: Points to the description of the first search result: "Enjoy the look of letterpress for less at Invitations by Dawn. Shop the Featherpress Collection featuring elegant designs including flourish wedding invitations."
- PAID ADVERTISING**: Points to a sponsored result: "Shop for flourish feature wedding invitation on Google".
- NOT SEO**: A large red circle with a slash through it, placed over the sponsored result, indicating that such advertising is not considered SEO.

A screenshot of the website "invitationsbydawn.com" with various on-page SEO elements annotated:

- TITLE TAG**: Points to the page title "View All Wedding Invitations > Wedding..." in the browser's address bar.
- <H1> TAG**: Points to the main heading "View All Wedding Invitations" on the page.
- IMAGE TITLE TEXT**: Points to the alt text of an image: "The invitation you've been dreaming of at a price that can't be beat."
- BODY COPY (SEO COPY)**: Points to the main body text: "Let's delve a little further into the themes and styles of wedding invitations offered at Invitations by Dawn, shall we? Read more..."

# Keyword Research:

## Google Keyword Planner Tool

The keyword planner tool will indicate the number of monthly searches that occur within the Google Search Engine for a particular keyword. It is a great tool for determining if one word is more valuable than another. This tool also offers suggestions that relate to the terms you search, so it's a great tool for exploring other terms that would be great for SEO.

<http://adwords.google.com/>

*NOTE:* A free Google Adwords account is required.

Once logged in, go to :

- **Tools and Analysis -> Keyword Planner**
  - Choose **Search for new keyword and ad group ideas**
  - Type in one or more keywords or keyword phrases (each on a new line)
  - Click **Get Ideas**
  - Click on the **Keyword Ideas** tab
  - The **Avg. monthly searches** column shows you how many searches are performed in Google.
  - The **Search Terms** box shows the results you searched for
  - The **Keywords (by relevance)** box shows suggestions of other keywords that are correlated to your search
- 
- Use this tool with some logic however. Example being that the word "Orange" returns over 13 million local monthly searches. So saying we want to rank for "Orange" may sound like a great idea. However how many of those 13 million searches are relevant to the products we offer? So lets look at this term with some more granularity.

○ Orange	13,600,000
○ orange wedding invitations	2,900
○ orange wedding invites	480
○ orange invitations	4,400

Notice that when we add invitation terms the number of local monthly searches changes drastically. Though "orange invitations" is the highest of the relevant terms, I'd suggest using "orange wedding invitations" (provided the product is geared towards wedding) as you will cover searches for both "orange invitations" and "orange wedding invitations".

## Title Tag:

### Purpose of the Title Tag:

- This shows up in the top of the tab or browser window for the visitor.
- Used when bookmarking a page.
- A primary ranking factor for search engines. So the keywords in the title tag indicate what searches you want this page to be displayed in.

### Title Tag - Product Detail Page:

- Should contain keywords
- Should describe the product
- Should be up to 70 characters (including spaces). Make it as close as possible.
  - o Fewer characters is lost opportunity for ranking
  - o Characters after 70 will be ignored by search engines and thus not be beneficial in our ranking power
- Should NOT contain the brand name (that gets added automatically)
- Dividing characters are acceptable. Pipe ( | ), Dash ( - ), Comma ( , )
  - o Using underscores without a space is not advised – Google will think it's one large word.

### Title Tag – Category / Site Section / Landing Pages:

- Should contain keywords
- Should describe the category
- Should be up to 70 characters (including spaces). Make it as close as possible.
  - o Fewer characters is lost opportunity for ranking
  - o Characters after 70 will be ignored by search engines and thus not be beneficial in our ranking power
- Should contain the brand name at the end
  - o “at [brand name]”, “| [brand name]”
- Dividing characters are acceptable. Pipe ( | ), Dash ( - ), Comma ( , )
  - o Using underscores without a space is not advised – Google will think it's one large word.

## Meta Description:

### Purpose of the Meta Description:

- Appears in the search results in search engines.
- Gives a description to the searcher and a reason for them to click on the result.
- Should speak to them and what they were searching, thus giving them a no brainer reason to click through.

### Meta Description - Product Detail Page:

- Should be unique from other products and unique from the title tag
- Should describe the product and how it fits the need of the searcher
- Can include keywords. Meta Descriptions are not used by search engines to determine ranking position. However, a searcher would typically expect to see the keywords they searched in this description. For that reason it is often wise to include keywords in the meta description.
- Should be as close to, but no more than 160 characters
- Should include a call to action. Soft selling is fine here. The searcher wants to know that we meet their needs, not be sold with used car salesman tactics. Often times bragging up a product or category correctly is a call to action in itself; it's so good I don't have a choice but to click on this!
- Can include the brand name
- Use product names sparingly. That is typically displayed in the title tag.
- Double quotes are cut off by Google. If quotes are needed, use single quotes.
- Dividing characters are acceptable. Pipe ( | ), Dash ( - ), Comma ( , )

### Meta Description – Category / Site Section / Landing Pages:

- Should be unique from other categories and unique from the title tag
- Should describe the category and what items are held within it
- Can include keywords. Meta Descriptions are not used by search engines to determine ranking position. However, a searcher would typically expect to see the keywords they searched in this description. For that reason it is often wise to include keywords in the meta description.
- Should be as close to, but no more than 160 characters
- Should include a call to action. Soft selling is fine here. The searcher wants to know that we meet their needs, not be sold with used car salesman tactics. Often times bragging up a product or category correctly is a call to action in itself; it's so good I don't have a choice but to click on this!
- Can include the brand name
- Double quotes are cut off by Google. If quotes are needed, use single quotes.
- Dividing characters are acceptable. Pipe ( | ), Dash ( - ), Comma ( , )



# Copywriting Best Practices:

## Copywriting - Category Pages

### Rules – Category Pages:

1. 45 – 60 words long.
2. Intro with personable copy
3. Add key terms as appropriate
4. Can link to other related categories, but not necessary.

## Copywriting – Site Section Pages

### Rules – Category Pages:

1. 100 - 150 words long.
2. Intro with personable copy
3. Add key terms as appropriate.
4. Can link to category pages within the site section.