

# Learn the Fundamentals of SEO to Help Businesses Grow



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# INTRODUCTION

This eBook is written to help business owners, students, bloggers, aspiring business owners and anyone that wants to learn the fundamentals of Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) to improve website traffic and boost sales organically.

SEO is the concept of optimising a website to rank in the first page of google and other search engines. Statistics has it that about 75% of people never scroll past the first page of search engine to find the information they need. Therefore, it is essential for business owners, bloggers and anyone using online services to gain basic knowledge to help their website and content reach their targeted audience without spending money.

## **75% OF PEOPLE NEVER SCROLL PAST THE FIRST PAGE OF SEARCH ENGINE**

In this eBook, you will learn how a website works, the evolution of SEO, the various types of SEO (On-Page SEO, Off-Page SEO and Technical SEO) and the necessary SEO tools required to help you succeed. The content in this eBook is applicable for small and large websites.

It is my hope that this book will help you grow your online presence, increase traffic and sales.

# CHAPTER 1

01

## **Understanding How Websites Work for SEO**

Search engine optimisation is the act of optimising a website to rank at the top of search engines. However, before attempting to optimise and rank a website at the top of search engines, it is essential to understand how a website work.

One of the most important aspect of a website is rendering. This is the process where a browser decodes a website and turns it to a viewable page for users to read.

It takes several steps for a browser to decode a website. These steps affects load time and page speed, which is essential for keeping users on a website. Secondly, Google renders certain resources, like JavaScript on a second pass. In other words, Google looks at a page without JavaScript first and after a few days or weeks, it will render the JavaScript. Hence the delay for some SEO content to get indexed on time (Britney Muller and the moz staff, <https://moz.com/beginners-guide-to-seo/technical-seo>).

## How a Website Can Be Accessed

Before a website can be accessed, two things has to be done. These are registering a domain and hosting the domain.

**1.Domain Name Registration:** it is essential to register the name of the domain. This can be achieved with web hosting registrars like GoDaddy, Bluehost, iPage, HostGator, etc.

**2.Domain Hosting:** After the registration of the domain, the next is to host and be active online. In this process, a website address is given. This address is known as the IP (internet protocol) address.

## How Website Gets From Server to Browser

According to Britney and the moz staff, a website gets from server to browser following these steps:

- User requests domain: A user request for a website by typing the name of the domain into the browser or by clicking a link to a website
- Browser makes requests: the request made by the user sends a web page to prompt the browser to make a DNS lookup, converting the name of the website to the IP address. The server then send a code the page is constructed with.
- Server sends resources by sending website files to be assembled in the searcher's browser
- Browser gathers the web page: after receiving the resources from the server, the browser will have to put together all the resources necessary and render the page for the user to see what was requested
- Final request made: the browser shows pages after all the necessary code is downloaded, parsed and executed. If the browser requires more codes, it will send an additional request from your server.
- Website appears in browser

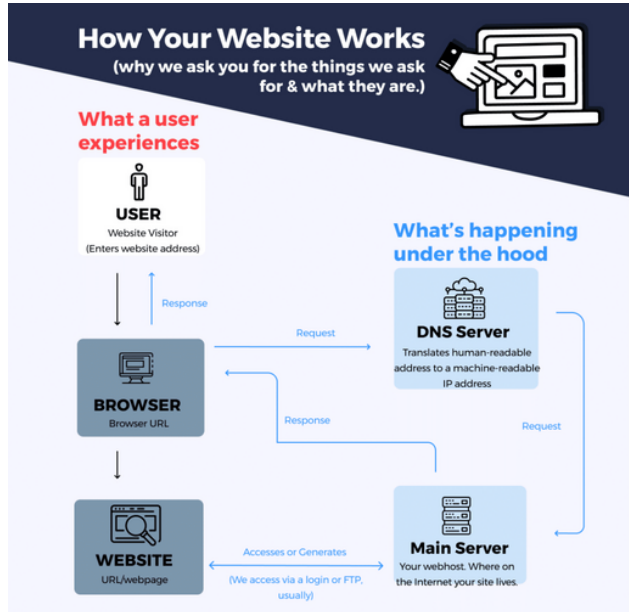


Image Source: Duke, Kimball|web development,  
<https://www.superwebpros.com/blog/how-does-a-website-work/>

## Components Of A Website

- HTML – what a website says (title, body content, etc)
- CSS – the look of the website (fonts, colours, etc.)
- JavaScript – How the website reacts (interactive, static., dynamic, etc.)

# CHAPTER 2

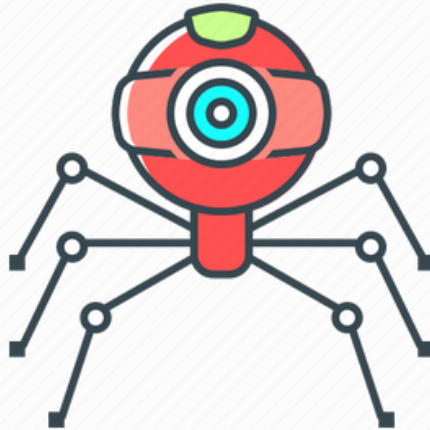
## Search Engine Optimization

### Defined:

This is the process of optimizing a website to increase quality traffic, attract relevant customers and rank higher than other websites (competitors) in search engine through organic strategy.

### How SEO Works

Google and other search engine such as Bing uses a crawler to navigate the web when a user search for a particular query. This crawler bring all the result relevant to that query and list them in order of preference for the user to choose from.



## Benefits of SEO

The following are the benefits of search engine optimization

- Organic search is most often the primary source of website traffic
- builds trust and credibility
- Improves user experience
- Increases engagement, traffic and conversions
- It is relatively cheap compared to other digital marketing strategies
- helps you understand the web environment
- It is a long term strategy
- It is quantifiable
- SEO beats paid traffic

## Evolution of SEO

Algorithm change all the time. Therefore, there are need to update SEO strategies and tactics to combat updates from Google and other search engines. When implementing SEO, it is important to follow the best practice to avoid penalty and future changes.



## **Panda Update - February, 2011**

Google Panda update launched as an effort to eliminate bad SEO tactics and web spam. This update was implemented due to content quality as more websites with irrelevant contents were at the top of search result pages. This update affected low quality sites that had low value add for users, copy content from other websites and sites that are just not useful.



## **Penguin Update - April 2012**

This update targeted web spam and manipulative link building strategies. This helped to understand the type of links websites were earning. Penguin ensured natural, authoritative and relevant links rewarded the websites they pointed to, while manipulative and spammy links were downgraded.



## Hummingbird Update

Prior to the introduction of hummingbird update, search was different. If a user search a single word like games, google brings a list of website that were not relevant to what a user was searching. This use to affect click and bounce rates, as users will click in and out of a website, scroll further until they find what they wanted. This took time and relevant websites were not always present in the first page of google.

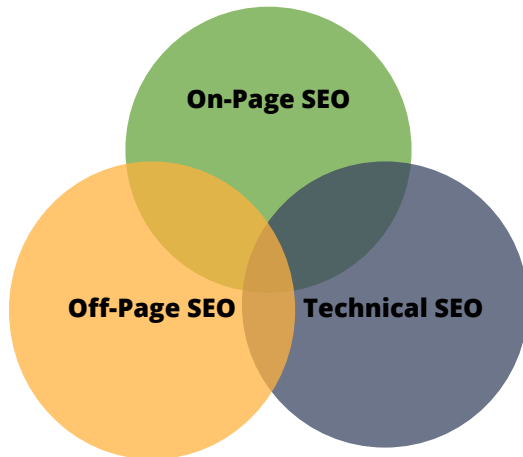
The hummingbird update was introduced to eliminate the pain users were facing and helped users get relevant queries that matches their search query.



## Categories of SEO

SEO can be categorised into 3 parts

- On-Page SEO: Page and content optimisation
- Off-Page SEO: Website promotion
- Technical SEO: Crawling and indexing.



## Common SEO Myths

- SEO is dead
- Keyword density and stuffing will improve ranking
- Ranking can be manipulated within weeks
- New websites can rank in a short period of time
- It is a one-time activity
- Buying links will improve your website
- Content doesn't matter
- Social signals are ranking factors
- Ranking is the major goal
- Mobile optimization is not important
- Keywords has to be exact
- Meta description affects ranking
- Backlinks are better than content

# CHAPTER 3

## **On-Page SEO**

This is the act of optimizing the various parts of the website in order to outrank other websites (competitors) on search engine to earn quality traffic and relevant customers. On-page SEO does not only help search engines interpret the content of the website, it does help improve user experience by allowing them to quickly understand what a website is about.

On-page SEO are broken into

- HTML tags
- Content, Keywords,
- Website architecture – website structure, layout, URL, anchor links.

## **HTML TAGS**

HTML tags help to give relevance to your content for search and help crawlers better understand the content on a website. In search, they are some key tags that are necessary. These tags hold strong SEO value and should be used regularly. These HTML tags are:

## Title tag

This tag is one of the most important SEO tags. It appears as a clickable headline in SERP (search engine result pages) and also displayed on social networks and various browsers for searchers to find.

Title tag should provide clear and comprehensive idea on what the page is about. A well written title tag will improve the number of clicks and traffic.

Best practices:

- Give each page on your website a title tag that describes the page and content
- Keep the title within 50-60 characters long
- Put your important keywords in the title and do it naturally
- Use your brand name in the tag

https://cityhire.ie

Party Hire, Marquee Hire, Catering Equipment Hire - CityHire

→ Title Tag

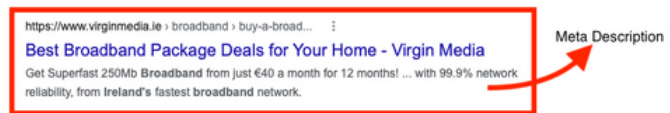
City Hire is a family owned business based in Portlaoise, Co. Laois. We started operation in

## Meta Description

The meta description summarizes the contents of a page in 150 - 160 character (including spaces) and can be used effectively to improve click-throughs with call to action.

Meta descriptions is the content under the title tag in the SERP.

Some professionals are of the opinion that the meta description has no impact on ranking. However, it is necessary for users and people to read a summary of what a page is about before they dig further.



## Heading Tags

Heading tags are HTML tags used to identify headings and subheadings in the contents of a page. The use of heading tag is essential and to be used correctly.

While H3-H6 tags are not too important for search engine, it is essential to use H1 and H2 tags in the best way for search crawlers.

Best practice

- Use H1 tags once on a page
- Use H1 tags in the page title
- Use H2 in subheadings
- Use keywords naturally in the headings when writing titles.



## **Image Alt Attribute**

The alt attributes is added to image to describe the image for search crawlers to know what the image represents. In terms of on-page optimization, image alt attribute is vital because it displays the text to visitors in a situation where the image refuses to display.

## **NoFollow Attributes**

These are links on a site pointing to other sites. Naturally, these links are used as a proven source for content pointing readers to where information can be clearly explained better. These links matter for SEO in the sense that it makes your content reliable as you are pointing to reliable source for information.

When you link on a page pointing to a site, you are casting a vote of confidence to the site you are pointing. By default, this link is followed. When you add a nofollow attribute, you are basically telling crawlers not to follow the link because the source of the information is not suitable or strong enough to help your website to improve authority.

The following links should be set as nofollow:

- Any paid sponsor links
- Links from comments and user generated content
- Links to untrusted contents

## **Robots Meta Tag**

This is a “noindex” tag given pages with thin contents. This instructs search engines not to crawl the page because the content is irrelevant and the page does not require much contents that may impact the ranking of the page.

## **Anchor text**

Anchor text is that link in the content body linking to a different document, internal page or other website. Anchor text can be used to provide search engines information about a source of information or destination of a link.

## CONTENT

This is an essential part of on-page SEO. The content of the page is what search engine crawls to rank a page. In addition, what a user view on a website is regarded as content. Content has to be relevant and powerful to rank a website at the top of search engines.

Content can be text, images or videos. A good content should have a minimum of about 300 - 350 words for a blog post/page.

### How to Write SEO Content

1. Identify your area of expertise
2. Define your target audience
3. Set your SEO goals
4. Research your topic
5. Determine the search intent
6. Add visual content (video and images)
7. Structure the content for easy flow and readability
8. Research Keywords
9. Create high quality content

When writing your content, it is necessary to use words that are actionable, appealing, and shows empathy as well as offering a solution to a problem. This will help to improve the right keywords to research and implement. It is also important to use HTML tags, most especially H1 and H2 tags. Lastly, endeavour to use keywords in the heading and body of the content.

## KEYWORD RESEARCH

Keywords are the words and phrases people type into search engines in the quest to find what they are searching for. A keyword describe or summarizes the content of an entire website. By finding the right keywords for a website, it is more likely to rank the website higher in search engines.

### Importance of Keyword Research

Keyword research is the only way of understanding what people are searching for on the internet. Keyword research helps you to use what people are likely searching for rather than build a website/create content with words that people are not searching.



KEYWORD RESEARCH

KEYWORD RANKING

COPY OPTIMIZATION

## How to Research Keywords

- Seed keywords – these are keywords associated to your business. They define your niche and help to identify your competitors. For example, a niche keyword for a phone retailer will be phones, Samsung phone, iPhones, etc.
- Competitor's Keyword – What are your competitors ranking for? A quick google search will provide ideas on what your competitors are ranking for when you search your seed keyword. This will give you an idea on how to outrank those in the top pages of search engine result pages.
- Use keywords research tools such as MOZ, Ubersuggest, Google keyword planner, etc.

## How to Analyse Keywords

Having multiple keyword ideas is not the best answer. Having the best keyword is the right answer.

There are 3 major metrics to determine the right keywords to target

- **Search volume:** the average number of people searching for that keyword per month

- **Keyword difficulty:** how difficult is it to rank for that keyword. This is determined by the content length, relevance and freshness, domain rating, number of backlinks, search intent, etc.
- **Relevance:** How relevant is that keyword

## Types of Keywords

Keywords can be divided into short tail keywords and long tail keywords. The table below gives an example of how short and long tail keywords are used for a phone retailer.

Keyword	Short	Long
Phone	iPhone 12 Black iPhone 12 Samsung phones	Buy cheap iPhone 12 near me Fairly Used iPhone 12 available in stores

# CHAPTER 4

## **Off-Page SEO (Link Building)**

Off-page SEO also known as offsite SEO are those actions taken outside of your own website to improve search engine result page rankings.

Optimizing for off-page SEO is necessary as it improves search engine and user's perception of the popularity, relevance, trustworthiness and authority of a website. This is achieved when other websites link to your website or promote your website and effectively vouching for the quality of your content.

### **Why Does It Matter?**

Off-page SEO is an important ranking factor as it gives search engine the notion that your content and product offerings are relevant, and improves the authority of the website.

### **Building Links**

The act of building backlinks to point to your website is an integral part of SEO. Search engines view backlinks as an indication that the link content is of high quality. Therefore, a site with so many high quality backlink will rank higher than a site with fewer links.

According to MOZ, there are 3 types of link building strategies. These are

1. Natural links: these links are editorially given without much action taken on the part of the website owner. A typical example will be a charity blogger writing about a charity event your business was actively involved.
2. Manually Built Links: these are acquired through deliberate link building activities by requesting your customers or business partners to link to your website or asking influencers to share the contents on your website on their own platforms, e.g. an electrical manufacturer listing your website as a trusted reseller.
3. Self-created links: these are links acquired by you putting the work and effort. These links are created by filling out online directory, forum, blog comment, signature with optimized anchor text.

Irrespective of how you obtain a link, those that offer great contributions to SEO are generally those that pass the most equity.



## How to Find Quality Links

1. The popularity of the site
2. The freshness of the content of the link
3. Relevance of the topic
4. The anchor text used on the linking site
5. The trustworthiness of the linking site
6. The authority of the linking domain and page

# CHAPTER 5

## **Fundamentals of Technical SEO**

Technical SEO is the act of ensuring a website meet the technical expectations of today's search engines. In technical SEO, our discussion will be centred on crawling, indexing, rendering and website architecture.

## **Importance of Technical SEO**

A website can be well designed, have the best content and very expensive to make. However, if the website is not crawled, indexed and rendered for the purpose of ranking, then that website is as good as nothing because no one will find it. At the most basic, Google and other search engine need to be able to find, crawl, index and render the pages on your website for search terms that are relevant to your niche.

## **Components of Technical SEO**

The ability for Google and other search engines to crawl and index your website does not mean that technical SEO is achieved. It is deeper than that. There are several key components needed to improve the technicality of a website for improved ranking. These key components are:

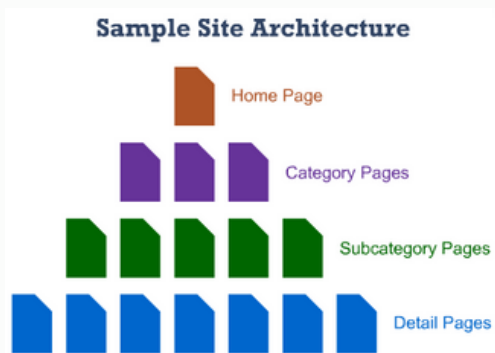
1. Site Architecture
2. XML sitemaps
3. URL structure
4. Thin and duplicate content
5. Canonical tags/url
6. Redirects (404, 301, 302, etc.)
7. Mobile friendliness (website responsiveness)
8. Speed

## **Site Architecture**

The structure and navigation of a website is one of the most important steps for technical SEO. Many crawling and indexing issues occur when a website structure is poorly designed. Therefore, it is essential you get the design and structure of a website right before optimising for search engines.

The structure is how the pages on a website are organised. It is best practice to have a website use a flat structure, whereby all pages are few links away from each other. This makes it for Google and other search engines to crawl and index the pages of your website with ease.

Structure of a website may not be an issue for a small website with few pages and products. However, a large website may become an issue, especially when they have over 250 products.



## XML Sitemaps

An XML sitemap is a file that assist search engines to understands your website whilst crawling it. This helps search engine to understand the exact location of each page. XML sitemap also contains useful information such as the last time a page was updated, what priority it has on your website and how frequently updated is the page/website.

### How to Add XML Sitemaps

The best way to add XML sitemap to your website is the use of SEO tools such as Yoast. Once installed, Yoast generates a sitemap that can be submitted to search engine such as Google and Bing. In a situation where the website is not powered by WordPress, a CSS will have to be designed.

According to google, here is a typical example of a basic sitemap that includes the location of a single URL:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="UTF-8"?>
<urlset
xmlns="http://www.sitemaps.org/schemas/site
map/0.9">
<url>
<loc>http://www.example.com/foo.html</loc>
<lastmod>2018-06-04</lastmod>
</url>
</urlset>
```

## How to Add XML Sitemaps to Google

To add your sitemap on Google, you need to visit the developer's tool on Google and submit XML sitemap in Google Search Console. The sitemap is then checked for errors and any potential issues.

Once it passes, Google will not check the sitemap every time the site is crawled. It will only check when they receive a ping that changes have been made and there is a new update.

## URL Structure

There's need to have the right URL structure for ease for search engine and users of the website. URL structure should be simple irrespective of the kind of website (blog, ecommerce or business website).

One important factor here is to ensure it is consistent and follows a logical structure. This helps users and search engines understand where a particular content is on the website.

Example of Good URL:

[www.yourdomainname.com/page](http://www.yourdomainname.com/page)

Example of Bad URL:

[www.yourdomainname.com/index.php?34=red634572](http://www.yourdomainname.com/index.php?34=red634572)

## Duplicate Content

Duplicate content refers to the use of the same content on several pages of your website. It doesn't stop there, your website can also be affected when content is copied from other websites. This can hamper the ranking of any website.

One shouldn't be worried of duplicate content if they create original and unique content for their pages and website.

### How to Fix Duplicate Content

There are 2 major ways to fix the duplication of contents on website. These are

1. Preventing your content management system (CMS) from publishing multiple versions of a page or post
2. Use canonical link to inform search engines on the main content and what should be indexed and prioritise.



## Canonical URLs

Canonical URLs are used for pages that have similar content with minor differences. To help search engine better understand your content and avoid the thought of duplication, it is essential to use canonicals to inform search engine on the content that is of priority and what should be ranked.

## Redirects

When a page no longer exist, it brings a 404 error (missing page). It is essential to redirect these missing pages to a new page or a page of high priority, mainly the landing page.

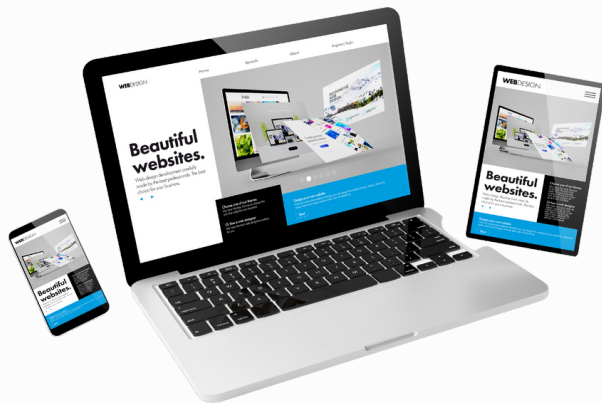
404 error page can be redirected to 301 or 302 redirects. 301 redirects are permanent redirects while 302 redirects are temporary.



## Mobile Friendliness

It is essential to think mobile first as more people access the website through mobile devices. A website should be designed/developed to adjust to the size of the screen. It should look good in desktop as well as tablets and smartphones.

A website not mobile friendly will have content breaking off when accessed on mobile devices. This may increase drop off as users will not be able to access information they want. The increase in bounce rate will impact the chances of ranking high on search engines.



## Page Speed

Search engines tend to rank sites that loads quickly and faster than others. The speed of your page plays a significant factor in ranking on search engines. They are several ways to improve the speed of your website. These are

1. Hosting provider
2. Minimise HTTP request
3. Reduce image size
4. Embed videos
5. Use lazy loading for images
6. Compress web pages (GZIP)
7. Use CDN such as Cloudflare
8. Cache

To examine the speed of a website, all that is required is inputting the url on a search bar in [gtmetrix.com](https://gtmetrix.com) or [PageSpeed insight](https://pagespeedinsight.com).



# CHAPTER 6

## SEO TOOLS

There are several SEO tool with each playing a vital role to the success of your campaign. The following tools can be used individually or can be combined for greater result. These tools are:

### Ahrefs

- Keyword tool
- SEO site crawler
- Backlink finder
- Overview of best performing pages on your website
- Check and fix broken links

### MOZ Pro

- Complete SEO package
- Keyword research
- Backlink finder
- Insight on website performance and how to improve it
- Domain vs Domain

## **GOOGLE SEARCH CONSOLE**

- Monitor and report website presence on search engine result page
- Help with website verification
- Sitemap indexing
- Provide understanding on how google accesses your website
- Submit pages for indexing
- Identify errors on website and offer solution to fix

## **SEMRush**

- Easily access rankings
- Identify change and new ranking opportunities

## **KW Finder**

- Helps to find long-tail keywords that have lower level of competition

## **KEYWORD EVERYWHERE**

- Helps to find best keywords to rank for

## **ANSWER THE PUBLIC**

- Content
- build and easily find topics for blog post

## **SCREAMING FROG**

This tool helps to analyse the technical aspect of a website and performs site's audits. It informs users number of duplicate content, missing headers (H1, H2,etc.), bad redirections, errors to fix, etc.