

# SEO Fundamentals for WordPress

The simple, straightforward guide to getting started with SEO on WordPress, even if you are still uncertain exactly what SEO means.

Featuring



WordPress SEO by Yoast  
W3 Total Cache  
Jetpack  
Redirection

301 Redirects  
Google PageSpeed  
Webmaster Tools  
Writing  
Alt Text  
Sitemaps

## Is This Book Right For You?

This book is intended for owners & operators of self-hosted WordPress websites who don't have a lot of familiarity with SEO.

### What if I'm on WordPress.com or another platform?

The topics covered are applicable to almost any website, however I will mention some tools in this guide that are specific to WordPress.

If you use WordPress.com I recommend you [click here to read All About SEO on WordPress.com](#). I also recommend you [click here to read about digital sharecropping](#).

### What if I know nothing about SEO?

That's fine. This book will cover everything from basic definitions (like defining SEO) to practical ways to implement the fundamentals.

### What won't be covered?

This book covers things that you should do, I'm not going to devote time to talking about things you should not do.

This book primarily focuses on WordPress and SEO activities to do on your website. While some website promotion activities are mentioned, I won't be covering them in great depth.

Look at it this way: if you are building a piece of furniture it doesn't matter how well you market that piece of furniture if none of the drawers open. This guide covers building your site correctly so when you do market it you can get a great response.

# Table of Contents

<b>Basic Definitions</b>	<b>5</b>
General Acronym Tip	5
Copy	5
What is SEO?	6
What is white hat vs black hat vs grey hat?	6
What are SERPs?	7
What are ORM & SERM & CRM?	7
What is SEM?	7
What is SMM?	8
What is SMO?	8
What is CTR?	8
When Will the Acronyms Stop?	8
Key Takeaway	9
<b>Search Engine Basics</b>	<b>10</b>
Google vs Bing	10
Search Engine Submission	11
Knowing You're Listed	11
<b>Your Domain, URLs &amp; Sitemap</b>	<b>12</b>
Selecting a Domain	12
Country Specific Domains	14
404 Pages	14
301 Redirects	14
URLs & Slugs	15
Sitemaps	16
<b>Keywords</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Basic Page Elements</b>	<b>18</b>
Page Title	18
Meta Description	19
Rich Snippets	19
Headings	21
Links	21

Images	23
Main Content	23
Bold & Italics	25
Contact Info	25
Privacy Policy / Terms of Use	26
<b>Writing, Editing, Grammar &amp; Copyrights</b>	<b>27</b>
Editing	27
Writing Style	28
Grammar	29
Copyrights	30
<b>Website Speed</b>	<b>30</b>
Google PageSpeed Insights, YSlow & GTmetrix	31
Unruly Plugins	32
<b>Website Security</b>	<b>32</b>
Keeping Your Site Safe	33
<b>Your Hosting Provider</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>34</b>
Where do you go from here?	34
<b>Next Steps</b>	<b>35</b>
Did you enjoy this eBook?	35
Need help implementing these topics & more?	35
Want news & updates about WordPress, websites, SEO & more?	35
Did you get this eBook from a friend?	35

## Basic Definitions

It's easy when talking about SEO (and really most topics) to get excited and start using a lot of acronyms. Unfortunately, you just have to learn them.

### General Acronym Tip

If the acronym starts with "SE", then it's about Search Engines and how your website is perceived by them.

If the acronym starts with "SM", then it's about Social Media and promoting your website.

Additionally, "RM" in the acronym stands for "Relationship Management". Typically talking about a service which helps you manage your business's relationship with someone. That someone could be a search engine, social media, clients, customers, etc.

### Copy

You're going to see this word come up a lot when talking about SEO, so I want to make it clear.

For the most part in this eBook and in the world of SEO, **copy** means the written text of an article, web page, book, etc.

**Hard copy** refers to printed materials.

**Copywriter** is someone who writes copy for websites, blogs, etc. Frequently a copywriter refers to a person who is being paid to do said writing.

**Copyeditor** is someone who takes content that is already written and improves it for grammar, readability, SEO, etc.

**Copyright** refers to ownership of materials (not limited to text).

**Content** refers to both written text and graphics of a website, flyer, book, etc.

## What is SEO?

SEO is an acronym for Search Engine Optimization. In the old days (around 2000) it involved submitting your website to search engines (Google didn't dominate back then) and doing keywords right.

Now, SEO involves two major activities: a to do list of activities to perform ON your website; and a list of activities to do OFF your website to promote it.

## What is white hat vs black hat vs grey hat?

They are respectively the good, the bad, and the ugly. Search engines consider white hat SEO techniques to be good things. Black hat techniques are bad things, and grey hat techniques are some messy ugly mix of the two.

I'll be honest, white hat techniques take time, hard work, patience and ongoing effort.

Black hat tend to be very quick and work for a short while. However, once the search engines find out about your black hat techniques they will punish you severely (they remove your site from their listings completely and make you go through a very long and painful process to get re-listed).

Grey hat techniques generally involve some mix of white hat and black hat. Usually your results aren't quite as quick as black hat, and \*some\* of your techniques are white hat. However, if the search

engines catch you (and it's just a matter of time until they do) they will punish you just as severely.

## **What are SERPs?**

SERPs is an acronym for Search Engine Results Pages. You will hear SERPs talked about a lot since the entire point of SEO is to get your webpage to show up in search results.

## **What are ORM & SERM & CRM?**

These are your main relationship acronyms.

ORM is a generic online relationship management. It frequently encompasses social media, search engines & what clients/customers are saying about you online.

SERM is Search Engine Relationship Management. It specifically covers how your website is viewed in the eyes of a search engine. When you hear people talk about authority and Page Rank, this is frequently what they mean.

CRM is Customer/Client Relationship Management. This is typically some sort of software/database that stores information about your clients and your interactions with them. It can be anything from a newsletter mailing list to a highly sophisticated system.

## **What is SEM?**

SEM is an acronym for Search Engine Marketing. As a broad term SEM means internet marketing to increase a site's placement in SERPs. This is done through two methods: paid advertising which places a page at the top of the search listings; and SEO techniques (generally offsite) to increase the popularity of a website.

Paid advertising is generally Google's AdWords or Bing's Ads.

### **What is SMM?**

SMM stands for Social Media Marketing. This is typically done on social media websites like Twitter and Facebook. This includes both paid advertisements and connecting with other users to get them to promote your products/services to their followers.

### **What is SMO?**

SMO is Social Media Optimization. This typically encompasses careful creation and editing of social media accounts; acquiring new followers on social media; and marketing products/services on social media.

Social media, marketing, relationship management and the like are beyond the scope of this particular book. But, I mention them because you will see them thrown around a lot in SEO discussions.

### **What is CTR?**

CTR is Click Through Rate. This how often someone clicks on a particular link. CTR generally refers to clicks on SERPs or ad campaigns.

### **When Will the Acronyms Stop?**

Probably never. People love to make up acronyms, it makes them feel important. It also means fewer letters to type, which means less work, and people like less work. Also, Twitter caps tweets at 140 characters, and acronyms really reduce your character count. And people who do SMM and SMO typically love Twitter.

## Key Takeaway

Copy = text of your website

SE = Search Engine

SM = Social Media

RM = Relationship Management

If it looks like someone just randomly hit letters on the keyboard,  
Google it.

## Search Engine Basics

Search Engines want to deliver answers to questions. Better yet, they want to deliver the **best answers to questions**. If they give you better answers you are more likely to come back when you have your next question. In fact, Bing's entire marketing is based on the tag line "decision engine".

So when you work on SEO what you are really doing is trying to help search engines understand what questions your page or site answers. It's a little like Jeopardy (US game show), where your site provides an answer and the search engine has to guess the question.

But explaining to search engines what questions you answer isn't enough, after all **search engines want to help people get answers**. So if the search engine delivers your website as result #1 and people click your site and then leave after 5 seconds, your website didn't answer the question and you won't be #1 any longer.

**Your website needs to answer questions and be useful to people, but also be understood by search engines.**

### Google vs Bing

As of February 2014, Google has about 67% of search engine traffic, Bing & Yahoo have about 28% and the remaining 5% go to little engines like Ask & AOL.

I lump Bing and Yahoo together because Yahoo searches are actually powered by Bing. The plus side to this arrangement is that you really only have to worry about how Google & Bing look at your

website. The downside is that Google has a significant majority and really is the one that determines your fate on the internet.

## Search Engine Submission

Long ago and far away you filled out a form and then a search engine visited your site and then included you in their index.

Those days are long gone. Google and Bing still have simple forms that you can fill out to encourage them to visit your site. However, unless they think you are very special they won't index you just on that.

Now, if you want to be included in search engines you really need to set up your website with Webmaster Tools. Both Google and Bing have their own Webmaster Tools. There you can submit complete site maps to the search engines. This gives you a greater likelihood of being listed by the engines, but is by no means a guarantee. While you are setting up Webmaster tools, you should also setup Analytics.

Search engines like to see some evidence that you have a worthwhile website before they include you. This evidence is websites that are already listed linking to your website.

For example, you can set up social media profiles for your website and link to your site from them. You can then get links to your website shared on social media. You can also get other websites you know to put a link to your site.

## Knowing You're Listed

To find out if Google & Bing have listed you, go to the search engine and enter `site:http://www.yourdomain.com` (replace

yourdomain with your actual domain, so I would enter `site:http://www.anphira.com`) – this will display only results that the search engine has about your site. You will need to perform this search on both [google.com](http://google.com) and [bing.com](http://bing.com). If there are no results, your site isn't indexed.

## Your Domain, URLs & Sitemap

I'm starting off with your domain because generally the first thing someone does when they want to create a website is register a domain.

### Selecting a Domain

It's a simple fact that most people are used to typing in .com for businesses and .org for non profit organizations. These are habits that are well ingrained in most people. Occasionally people can remember a .net, but most people don't.

Additionally, if you are considering a less commonly used domain it is likely because the top levels (.com, .org and .net) are already taken. In this case you will be **competing directly against** the owners of those domains. SEO is hard enough without adding competition before you even started.

You may also have difficulty getting listed if the search engines don't think your content is substantially different from the others.

Remember, search engines are in the business of finding people answers. If they think you are the same answer as existing sites, they will ignore you.

In general hyphens (-) are used in URLs to separate words. This makes URLs easier to read. However, **people are not used to typing**

**in hyphens when they type in domain names.** This means that if someone has [www.mywidgets.com](http://www.mywidgets.com) and you want to have [www.mywidgets.com](http://www.mywidgets.com), you are going to end up sending **a lot of your traffic** to the folks who have [www.mywidgets.com](http://www.mywidgets.com).

You should also be careful about capital I vs lowercase l. They look the same in many fonts, and most people just scan for a name. Domains should always be written out in all lowercase, especially avoiding using an uppercase I. Also watch out for double ll near i's.

For example aililli would be nearly impossible to type in correctly the first time. If you do already have a name with i's and l's, when writing it out use a monospace font (aililli vs aililli) or font which very clearly distinguishes letters. Similar issues can happen with m's and n's.

If your company name has a frequently misspelled word in it, it might be useful to try and get a couple of the most common misspellings. Additionally, the longer the name, the more likely there is to be a typo. For example I came across an organization with the domain [advocatesforadolescentmothers.com](http://advocatesforadolescentmothers.com). It took two tries after looking up how to spell adolescent. Trying to email them would be a significant challenge.

Non-profit organizations will frequently get a .org extension. However, many of them also get the .com extension of their name since so many people are accustomed to typing in .com (and to prevent someone else from getting the .com). The organization may also get their country specific top level domain. For example in Canada people are used to typing the .ca extension.

## Country Specific Domains

A country specific domain (like .ca for Canada) is fine, as long as your primary target audience is in Canada. Canadians are used to seeing .ca addresses. However, if some of your audience is in Puerto Rico then search engines may target that traffic away from .ca domain. For US folks, the .us extension is a new one and most people aren't familiar with it.

## 404 Pages

404 is the error code for page not found. When someone tries to access a page on your site that doesn't exist (like example.com/isnel73h) they will be redirected to a 404 page. Most WordPress themes will come with a basic 404 page.

Your 404 page should have links to general information. For example you might suggest people check out your services page if they end up on your 404 page.

Always have your 404 page be helpful, you don't want people to hit a dead end and leave your site.

## 301 Redirects

Search engines frown on multiple webpages having the same content. So if you own multiple domains the correct way to handle it is to redirect all website traffic going to one page to another. For example, if you are a non-profit you would redirect all traffic going to your .com domain to your .org domain.

Domain redirecting is handled through your domain registrar or hosting provider (they are frequently the same).

This is also the correct approach if you move a webpage. For example if you wrote an article on a topic 2 years ago and then wrote a new article with a lot of updates. You would redirect traffic coming to the old article to go to the new article. This is very useful if your old article is still getting traffic from search engines.

To redirect an old page to a new page, I use either WordPress SEO by Yoast or Redirection. [Click here for a quick tutorial on how to quickly & easily perform your redirect.](#)

## URLs & Slugs

URL stands for uniform resource locator, and no one ever expands the name (I had to look it up myself). URL is also commonly called a web address. On the internet it functions very similarly to a postal address. Without the technical details, you enter a URL and a DNS (Domain Name Server) figures out where to direct you to for the webpage you wanted.

URLs are particularly nice since they are easy for humans to read (computers prefer things like 192.168.1.0). A URL is a complete address to a specific web page. For example [www.anphira.com](http://www.anphira.com) and [www.anphira.com/web-design/website-security-with-wordpress/](http://www.anphira.com/web-design/website-security-with-wordpress/) are both URLs.

Slugs are just the last part of a URL. So [www.anphira.com](http://www.anphira.com) doesn't have a slug and [www.anphira.com/web-design/website-security-with-wordpress/](http://www.anphira.com/web-design/website-security-with-wordpress/) has a slug of website-security-with-wordpress.

**Generally you should keep your slugs to 40 characters or fewer.**

You should also limit the characters you use in your slug to numbers 0-9, lowercase letters a-z, and the hyphen. Underscores and spaces

confuse some servers so it's best to avoid them. Also capital letters can cause problems on some servers.

Between your slug and your domain you should limit the number of directories to 1 or 2. In the above example the website security slug is in the web-design directory. That's only one directory between the domain ([www.anphira.com](http://www.anphira.com)) and the slug (website-security-with-wordpress).

## Sitemaps

A sitemap is a road map for a search engine to navigate your site. You submit a site map to a search engine and it knows all of the webpages of your site that it should visit.

Most sitemaps are in XML, this is a format that is very easy for computers to understand. Generally your sitemap is located at [www.yourdomain.com/sitemap.xml](http://www.yourdomain.com/sitemap.xml) (WordPress SEO by Yoast will automatically generate this for you).

You can also have a human readable sitemap. This is a page of mostly links that people can visit to get a general understanding of the pages on your website.

## Keywords

Keywords and keyword research are huge topics which many books have been written about.

If you are just getting started with SEO, one of the best approaches is to see what keywords Google thinks you should be ranking for.

Basically, you input your webpage into Google's Keyword Planner and then search for keyword and ad group ideas. You will get a list

of related words and phrases that are recommended. When you look at keywords that are returned you want to look for medium-high volume and low competition.

If your site is established, then you can shoot for medium and even some high competition keywords, but if you aren't established then you definitely want to stick to low competition words. Of course a few high competition words will show up in your articles, but your focus shouldn't be those.

If you are looking for in depth coverage of the keyword research topic, check out [CopyBlogger's Guides to Keyword Research for the Real World](#). Quicksprout also has a short tutorial on getting started with keywords at the beginning of their [Double Your Traffic in 30 Days](#) ebook.

But whatever you do, **do not keyword stuff your pages.**

Google likes to see natural amounts of keywords. Sometimes when talking about WordPress the name just comes up a lot. That's ok. But you should not be intentionally trying to stuff a ton of keywords in.

Keywords are generally like a bell curve. Using a word once gets you a little traction, using it 3-4 times gets you a lot of traction. But after a few uses there is little to no gain. Abusing the word actually ends up in a loss of value.

Instead if you have a long article and a topic keeps coming up, think of other ways you can say something. For example instead of using WordPress for an entire article you might just call it WP or your CMS. In fact if you've used it a few times (especially in headings), you might not even have to name the topic at all since your audience already knows it.

When you are writing your article in WordPress, a **great keyword tool to help you out** is [WordPress SEO by Yoast](#). In fact I love Yoast's plugin so much I wrote a whole [Tutorial on using WordPress SEO by Yoast](#).

## Basic Page Elements

### Page Title

Your page title is displayed at the top of your webpage and is the first thing people see. It is also displayed as the link text in SERPs and is frequently the only text in social media shares.

Your page title needs to convey what your page is about and entice people to click on it. It is basically an advertisement for your page, in 40-70 characters.

Your page title frequently includes the name of your site, for example "SEO Fundamentals for WordPress | Anphira". Adding the name of your site helps to brand your content. Placing the brand at the end of the title allows your big keywords to be at the front of your title.

Popular ways to structure your title include:

- List posts (10 ways to do X)
- How to posts (How to solve X)
- Question posts (What will X be like in 5 years?)
- Sales headline (Free X)

Before I even open up WordPress to start writing an article, I jot down a title on a notepad. Then I go do some keyword research to

determine which words I actually want to use and rewrite my title a couple of times.

For a more detailed discussion of page titles, read CopyBlogger's [How to Write Headlines That Work](#) or Bidsketch's [10 Classic Headline Formulas](#).

## Meta Description

Your meta description is used by search engines to display a snippet of information. Search engines truncate this snippet at 160 characters, so your description needs to be focused copy highlighting exactly what your page is about.

The meta description is frequently displayed by search engines right under the page title. **The meta description needs to tell people why they should click on your link.**

For a more in depth discussion about meta descriptions, [see this great article from Moz](#).

**Meta Keywords** used to be very important to search engines (back around 2000). However, they were horribly abused and as such have become ignored by search engines. Now, if you want to draw special attention to particular words, you should use bold & italics (see below).

## Rich Snippets

In Google's own words, "[Rich snippets are designed to summarize the content of a page in a way that makes it even easier for users to understand what the page is about in our search results](#)".

Rich snippets are little pieces of data that can help tell search engines more about your site. For example if you've searched for lasagna recipes you've probably seen something like this:

## World's Best Lasagna Recipe - Allrecipes.com



[allrecipes.com/recipe/worlds-best-lasagna/](http://allrecipes.com/recipe/worlds-best-lasagna/) ▾ Allrecipes.com ▾

★★★★★ Rating: 4.8 - 8,141 reviews - 3 hrs 15 mins - 448 cal

Filling and satisfying lasagna with sausage, ground beef and three types of cheese.

[413 Photos](#) - [Johnchandler](#) - [World's Best Pasta Sauce](#) - [American Lasagna](#)

This example is loaded with rich snippets. The photo of lasagna is a snippet, the rating of the recipe, how long it takes to make, the number of calories, all of these are pieces of data that allrecipes has tagged specifically so that Google can find them.

The most appealing aspect of this is the photo. Click maps have confirmed that photos get clicked on, a LOT. In fact some #2 and #3 results in search engines get more clicks than #1 because they have photos.

To get a photo into your results is actually quite easy. If you don't have a Google+ account, you'll need to set one up and make sure you have a photo in it.

Now all you need to do is place a link on your website (usually in the footer) to your Google+ account with a `rel="author"` in the link.

```
<a href="[your g+ url]" rel="author">[logo for google+]</a>
```

You can also include this information on your author bio for blog posts you write.

If you are looking for a very detailed discussion of Rich Snippets / Micro Data, [SEO Gadget has a great guide](#).

## Headings

There are three types of headings that you should be using on your pages, h1, h2, and h3. While there are also h4, h5, and h6 those do not carry the SEO weight of the first three.

Headings should generally be between 15 and 65 characters. That's a guideline, not a hard & fast rule.

Every webpage you create on your site should have exactly one h1 tag in it. The h1 is used for the title of the page. If you are using WordPress most themes will automatically place your Page Title into an h1 tag.

The rest of the headings on your page should be h2 and h3. The h2 heading should be used for the major headings within your main body text. Try to keep your h2 headings to less than 1 per 100 words of text, there is definitely such a thing as too much. The h3 tag should be used for subheadings in your main body text, sidebar headings, and footer headings.

If you have a minor heading before a paragraph, use bold for emphasis.

## Links

All of your web pages should include links to other pages on your site. Your site header and footer should have basic links and your main page text should include links. These should be links to your own pages as well as some links to outside pages.

One of the most important things to remember about links is that they need to be relevant.

A relevant link would be linking to a blog post on WordPress themes from a resource page talking about WordPress. Linking to car insurance from a resource page on WordPress would not be relevant.

One way to help you interlink your pages & posts (especially if you have a LOT of posts) is to use the [SEO Smart Links Plugin for WordPress](#). It will help to automatically add a reasonable number of links to your pages & posts when you use certain key phrases.

Another suggestion for interlinking your content is a recommended post plugin. Both Yoast and Zemanta have good ones which I discuss in [Keeping Visitors Onsite with Related Posts](#).

The next most important thing to remember is make your links natural. If you have 5 links in one sentence each to only word of text, that's unnatural. For example I would like "blog post on WordPress themes", not "themes". Themes is too optimized and also makes a rather small click target on smart phones.

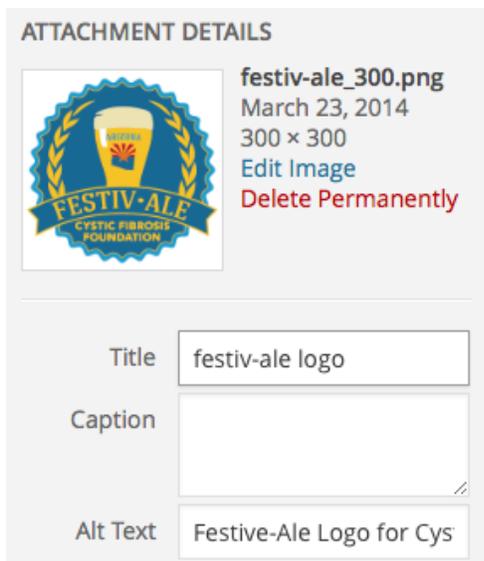
The text is linked (for example "blog post on WordPress themes") is called the anchor text and is used by search engines to determine what the link is about. Since your site is doing the linking, it should include keywords that your page is targeting.

But remember, don't over optimize your anchor text!

Google has now written an official warning in their [Webmaster Guidelines about over optimizing](#).

## Images

Images may not always be worth 1,000 words, but they do appeal to people. Twitter [tweets with images](#) receive more clicks, favorites and retweets than those without images.



However, while images appeal to people, you also have to explain to search engines what your images are. This is done with alt text. In WordPress the alt text is found right where you add images to your posts and pages.

When inserting media into a page there are attachment details which include Alt Text. This alt text allows you to briefly state what this image is. The alt text is also used to help your image show up image searches. After all, image searches are another way in which people can find your website!

If you need help finding compelling images for your next blog post, check out [Getting Free Images for Your Blog](#).

## Main Content

Your page title is designed to get people to read your first sentence. Your first sentence is designed to get people to read your first paragraph. Your first paragraph is designed to get people to share and/or read your whole article.

Therefore it is important to get to your point quickly. People have a very short attention span so you need to tell them up front if this

article is relevant to them. Another reason to tell people up front is that some people who share your article will not read it completely. They will read the first paragraph and scan the rest.

**Sharing buttons for your article should be easy to find** - I frequently recommend both the top and bottom of your article. Remember that some sidebars or top/bottom bars perform very poorly when on a mobile device. [Click here for more information on social sharing.](#)

### **Google also likes fresh content.**

Google has officially stated that they like websites which regularly update content or post new content. They particularly like long form content. Instead of just 300-500 words, they do show some preference for 800+ word posts. Longer posts also give you a chance to include more information and keyword variations.

If you want to keep a schedule for regular new content, the [Editorial Calendar Plugin](#) is a great one, especially if you have multiple people maintaining your site and contributing fresh content. Many of the most successful blogs are using this great plugin.

### **Be kind to your reader, break up text.**

Have you ever attempted to read a paragraph that stretches for 15 lines? It's very hard to keep your place. So instead limit your paragraphs to 4-5 lines each. Occasionally you may end up on a 6th line, but it should not be a habit.

Also remember to break up paragraphs with headings. Most people will skim your article before they decide if they want to read it (if they ever fully read it). This means that your headings and bolded text will

stand out the most and be the most likely to be read. Make sure that your point is conveyed without reading the full text.

## **Bold & Italics**

On the internet when you want to emphasize something you should use either bold (strong) or italics (em). Search engines will give more weight to text that has been emphasized via bold or italics.

**In online text underline should only be used for links.**

While they do give some additional weight to emphasized text, there is a limit. Keep your emphasis to just your main points, otherwise you look spammy to both search engines and readers.

Generally you should choose between primarily using bold **or** using italics for your emphasis. Mixing up the two become visually cluttered and harder to read.

I always recommend waiting until after you've written your article and worrying about emphasis when you are going back for editing.

## **Contact Info**

Google's quality documentation says that websites should have contact pages (and the page should be findable by both humans and Google).

Shady websites hide their contact details. If you want people and search engines to take you seriously and be able to contact you, you should include both a contact page (and if you want people to call or visit you also make sure to include your basic contact info in the footer).

Your basic information may just an email address, but you should include it. You should also have a dedicated email address with spam filtering that is used for your website. Frequently it is something like info@yourdomain.com. If you are going to be rarely contacted and you don't want the hassle of checking yet another email address, you can set up email forwarding to another email address.

If you want people to call you on the phone, make sure to include a phone number. If you don't want the expense of a separate phone line for your website, you can set up a free Google Voice number which will forward calls to an existing phone.

If you have a physical location that you want people showing up at unannounced (like a store or business office building), you can also list your physical address. You should also get a Google Local listing if you have a physical location to make yourself easy to find from a smartphone.

## **Privacy Policy / Terms of Use**

If your website has a signup for an email list, a contact form, might collect cookies, or may use advertising at some point in the future; then you need to have a privacy policy or terms of use. Typically you just need of these (although if you are a legal firm you may want to consider having both). The link to your policy should be listed in your footer for easy access from any page.

If you aren't sure what to include, there are thousands of sample policies out there to look at.

# Writing, Editing, Grammar & Copyrights

Once you have your page structure down, the next most important aspect of your SEO is your actual writing. After all, your page needs to be useful to people.

As a general guideline you should aim for at least **300 words of unique content per page**. This is of course a guideline and is pretty easy for pages like blog posts and whatnot. But what about photo gallery pages? On pages with a lot of photos you will frequently be below the 300 words, but you can still provide important information using the alt text.

## Editing

Write your articles once, edit them many times.

Writing and editing are two different tasks and should be tackled at different times. One of the goals of most writing is to just get what you want to say on the screen. Don't worry about grammar and word choice and being completely clear.

Just get your words out.

Later is the time for editing. Go back and read you wrote. Or better yet, have someone else read your writing to you. I use the Susan voice from the Text to Speech feature on Macs. I just close my eyes and listen to Susan read my writing. I've found plenty of mistakes this way that I didn't catch, even on multiple prior read throughs.

When you do edit, you want to focus on two main aspects: eliminating passive voice; and checking for grammar. WordPress can

actually help you out on both of these with the grammar checker in JetPack.

## Writing Style

There are a lot of suggestions out there for what writing style you should use. I always say that you should write as who you are; just a polished, edited version of who you are.

If you're from the midwest, go ahead and use pop when talking about soda. When you try to be something you aren't you generally just come across fake (I'm very firmly planted on my soda vs pop stance).

Back to the topic, while being yourself you do need to remember that your content may be viewed by people around the world. Some of them will come from British English, Canadian English, American English, Australian English, and English as a second or third language.

Since many people from many different backgrounds will likely be reading your text, you need to **keep reading ease in mind**. For most text you should aim for a Flesch Reading Ease score of 70 or better. That equates to about 13 year old's reading level in the US. This eBook scores a 70 as checked with read-able.com.

This is why your writing style should reflect some of your personality, but should be polished and proofread. Shortening sentences is a great way to improve reading ease.

One of my favorite proofreading techniques is to use text-to-speech on my computer (especially the Susan voice).

I close my eyes and listen to Susan read. She reads what I wrote and only what I wrote. So if I missed a word or phrased things poorly she doesn't sugar coat it. She just reads it like it is.

I also suggest you read [How to Create a Dynamic Voice and Add Personality to Your Writing](#) from Enchanting Marketing.

## Grammar

Yes, grammar.

Didn't I just mention grammar in the editing section?

Yes.

Grammar deserves to be mentioned twice.

Why is grammar so important? Because well written website copy conveys your point significantly better than poorly written copy. In fact poor grammar is one of the top 10 reasons people will abandon a website never to return. It's definitely after slow loading pages and annoying pop-ups, but poor grammar seriously hurts readability.

### **Readability affects enjoyment, comprehension and social sharing.**

Now unfortunately, grammar is too large a topic to get into in the middle of an SEO book; but, if you really want to create great online content you will need to learn the basic rules of grammar.

### **As they say, you must know the rules to know when to break them.**

If you are concerned about your grammar, you should read [Top Grammar Mistakes and How to Avoid Them](#).

If you'd like some help with your grammar, install the [Jetpack plugin from Automattic](#). Once Jetpack is installed, go to your user profile

and enable the grammar checking options you want. Remember when you are writing posts to click on the grammar/spell check button before pressing publish.

## Copyrights

Copyright violations can get you and your website into a lot of trouble. The best way to avoid copyright issues is to pay careful attention to where your images come from and where your copy comes from. If you are paying people for your images or website copy, make sure that they are legally obtaining or creating the content.

If and when you quote someone else's work, put it in quotation marks or use the blockquote HTML tag. I generally recommend using the blockquote tag since that also makes it very clear to search engines that it's a quote. Then of course reference who the quote came from and link to the source if appropriate (one sentence from Einstein really doesn't need a link, a couple lines from Google's SEO Guidelines definitely does).

If you don't have the money for images, you should take a look at legal ways to [Get Free Images for Your Blog](#).

## Website Speed

One of the indicators that search engines use to grade your website is speed. This includes both the actual time that your site takes to load as well as a score of your optimization.

Search engines also use bounce rate (the percent of website visitors who visit only one page on your website) to grade how people

perceive your website. In addition, search engines factor in the amount of time visitors spent on your site.

A typical bounce rate is 40-60%, depending on the type of site you have (blogs run 70-98% while retail runs 20-40%). One thing that directly affects your bounce rate is the speed which your webpage loads. About 40% of people will abandon a website that takes more than 3 seconds to load. So if your website is very slow, it's going to kill your bounce rate.

For more information on bounce rates, [I recommend QuickSprout's infographic.](#)

## **Google PageSpeed Insights, YSlow & GTmetrix**

[PageSpeed Insights](#) is a good way to see how Google views the speed of your website. You are looking for a score of at least 80 on desktop and at least 70 on mobile. Higher is of course better.

[YSlow](#) is a service from Yahoo which provides similar scoring to that of Google PageSpeed. It is also provided as a web browser integration which allows you to quickly & easily test your site.

While both PageSpeed & YSlow are useful, I prefer [GTmetrix](#) which combines the two services and provides you additional timeline and history analysis tools. GTmetrix is a free website performance analyzer which doesn't require any signup (however if you do get a free account you get more features).

For more information on GTmetrix and analyzing your site with it, [read my article on the topic.](#)

## Unruly Plugins

There are some plugins which can help speed up your site and there are plugins which can kill your site speed. Knowing which plugins are which can be challenging, but WPEngine has put together a [list of plugins that it doesn't allow](#) on its managed hosting.

Don't take inclusion on the list as a statement that a plugin is bad (for example [W3 Total Cache](#) is a great plugin). But do take a look at the list and notes with each plugin to decide if it is right for you.

## Website Security

I see a quizzical look on your face, what does security have to do with SEO?

A LOT.

If your website is hacked, then the search engines will detect malware, links to known sites with malware, or other shady things.

Malware is code or computer programs that when run do damage to computers or steal information. One example might be a key stroke logger which would record the key strokes of people (this can steal credit card info, bank logins, etc). Another example would be a file that is automatically downloaded and corrupts the hard drive of a visitors computer.

When the engines detect this, they will either flag your website or just remove your site from their listings. Once this is done, you will have to convince them that you have fixed the problem. Google has a whole [step by step process for if your site is hacked](#).

Sometimes, if you are lucky, you find out that your site has malware **before the search engines do**. If this happens, then you need to take immediate action. For example, a file can be placed on your server which prevents anyone from accessing your site. Better no one can access it than visitors get infected with malware.

If you have your website set up with Webmaster Tools, then you will be able to regularly check for any issues with your site (security or otherwise).

## Keeping Your Site Safe

A proper discussion of website security is beyond the scope of this book, but I have a collection of articles detailing several things **you can and should do to keep your WordPress site safe**.

[Click here to read Website Security with WordPress](#)

## Your Hosting Provider

Your hosting provider affects the speed, uptime, security and success of your website. You need to make sure that your hosting provider is meeting all of your needs. If they aren't you should look into switching.

## Conclusion

Search Engine rankings are an important part of how people find your website and the factors in this ebook play an important part in those rankings.

Hopefully this guide has gotten you started on the fundamentals of SEO with specific tips on WordPress.

### Where do you go from here?

Did you enjoy but this guide but are now looking for some more advanced material? Do you want to focus on link building & content marketing?

I recommend some of Quick Sprout's tutorials. I have no affiliation with Quick Sprout, but I've read a number of their tutorials and find them very useful (but not exactly designed for beginners).

[The Advanced Guide to Link Building](#)

[The Advanced Guide to SEO](#)

[The Advanced Guide to Content Marketing](#)

## **Next Steps**

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