

10. Search Engine Optimization

We'll help you:

- Understand SEO at a high-level
- Learn about your target audience perspectives
- Illustrate SEO best practices to optimize your content and help users find the information

What is SEO?

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is a practice designed to increase the visibility and ranking of your website in search engine results. When you write content for a website, SEO involves using specific techniques and strategies to make your content more attractive and understandable to search engines like Google.

The primary goal of SEO is to ensure that when people search for information related to your content, your web pages appear prominently in the search results, leading to increased traffic and visibility for your site.

The Role of Content in SEO

For a content author, SEO is crucial because it's not just about creating informative and engaging content, but also about making sure that this content is discoverable by your target audience. This involves strategically using relevant keywords, which are terms and phrases that your audience might use to search for the content you've written.

Additionally, SEO encompasses optimizing your content structure, using descriptive titles and headings, adding meta descriptions, and ensuring your content is accessible and easy to navigate. By integrating SEO practices into your content creation process, you enhance the likelihood of your content reaching and resonating with the right audience.

Important Perspectives

Target Audience

Understanding keyword intent and target audience is crucial for effective SEO efforts. By aligning your content and optimization strategies with user search intent, you can provide relevant information and meet their needs.

Considering your target audience's preferences helps tailor your SEO to resonate with them, driving higher-quality traffic and improving engagement. This ultimately enhances your website's visibility and success in search engine rankings.

Expertise, Experience, Authoritativeness, Trustworthiness (EEAT)

EEAT is crucial for SEO. Demonstrate expertise, relevant experience, and authoritativeness through your content. Build trust through accurate content, reputable sources, and testimonials. Prioritize quality and relevance to improve search visibility and user satisfaction.

Do not write generic content that could be written on any other college site. Write content that is specific for our target audiences and in alignment with our brand.

Keyword Research

Identifying a relevant keyword for your page that aligns with what your users are searching for is pivotal to increasing the number of people visiting the page over time. For example, if users are searching for "register for classes," on the Registration page, it's important to work the phrase "register for classes" into the content.

As a content editor, understanding that the main topic of your page often naturally aligns with your target keyword can simplify the SEO process. In many cases, the primary subject or theme of your content is precisely what your audience will search for.

For instance, if you're creating a page about 'undergraduate admissions,' this phrase itself likely represents your target keyword, as it directly reflects what prospective students might search for. To further refine this, adding your school's name or another qualifier, like a specific program or geo-location (state), can transform it into a more targeted keyword.

This approach requires minimal research and often relies on your intuition and understanding of your audience. Trusting your instincts in these scenarios is not just acceptable; it's an efficient way to ensure your content resonates with and is easily discoverable by your intended users. Remember, sometimes the most effective keyword strategy is to think like the person who will be searching for your content, making common sense and simplicity key assets in your SEO toolkit.

Should there be instances where you want to refine your keyword strategy further, or if you're aiming to expand your content's reach, conducting more thorough keyword research becomes valuable.

This is especially relevant when you're exploring new topics, addressing niche subjects, or targeting specific audience segments where your intuition might need the backing of data. In higher education, this is most commonly needed for program pages. For example, the Monthly Search Volume (MSV) for “2 year nursing degree” is 720, while the MSV for “nursing AAS” is 480. The content on your page should reflect what people are searching for, so you would want to work the phrase “2 year nursing degree” into the content more than “nursing aas.”

In cases where more keyword research is needed, leveraging various keyword research tools can provide insights into the specific terms and phrases your audience is using, helping you tailor your content more effectively to their search behaviors. These tools can help you uncover related keywords, gauge popularity through search volume, thereby enabling you to optimize your content in a way that's more likely to generate increased traffic to your site.

Free Keyword Research Tools

While in-depth keyword research tools are paid, there are free tools out there that you can use to find a keyword for your page.

- [Google Trends](#)
- [Wordstream](#)
- [Ubersuggest](#)

Type in some suggested phrases that your audience may search for and considering their perspective, you will want to balance the highest volume with the keywords that make most sense grammatically from their perspective. SEO and keyword research is part art, part science, and this step of the process is really an exercise in balancing the two.

For example: Ubersuggest

1. **Enter Your Keyword/Page Topic:** In the search bar on the Ubersuggest homepage, type in your keyword, in this case, 'register for classes'. Then, press enter or click the search button.
2. **Review Keyword Overview:** Ubersuggest will present an overview of your keyword, including search volume, SEO difficulty, paid difficulty, and cost per click (CPC). The search volume indicates how many times the keyword is searched per month.
3. **Analyze Keyword Ideas:** Scroll down to the 'Keyword Ideas' section. This area provides a list of related keywords, along with their respective MSVs, trends, and difficulty scores. Look for variations or related terms that might be relevant to your content. For example, 'how to register for college classes' or 'class registration process'.
4. **Evaluate Content Ideas:** Ubersuggest also offers a 'Content Ideas' section, which shows popular web pages related to your keyword. This can provide

insights into what kind of content is successfully attracting traffic for similar keywords, which can inspire your own content creation.

5. **Apply Insights to Your Content:** Use the insights gathered from Ubersuggest to refine your content. Consider incorporating related keywords that have high search volumes but lower difficulty scores to increase your chances of ranking higher.

Meta Tag Guide

Meta titles and descriptions play a crucial role in attracting search engine users and driving traffic to your pages. By crafting concise and engaging meta tags, you can improve search engine visibility, enhance click-through rates, and provide users with relevant information about your college's programs and pages.

Meta Titles

- **Keep it concise:** Limit your meta titles to around 50-60 characters to ensure they display properly in search results. Do not exceed 60 characters.
- **Include target keywords:** Incorporate relevant keywords that accurately represent the page content and align with user search intent.
- **Make it compelling:** Craft a compelling and unique meta title that entices users to click on your page in search results.
- **Maintain relevance:** Ensure that the meta title accurately reflects the content of the page, setting clear expectations for users.

Meta Descriptions

- **Be informative:** Write informative meta descriptions that provide a concise summary of the page's content, addressing user needs.
- **Utilize keywords:** Include relevant keywords naturally within the meta description to improve search engine visibility.
- **Focus on benefits:** Highlight the unique value proposition or benefits users will gain from visiting the page.
- **Maintain optimal length:** Keep meta descriptions around 150-160 characters to ensure they are fully displayed in search results.

General Tips

- **Avoid duplicate meta titles and descriptions** across pages to prevent confusion for search engines and users.
- **Incorporate local SEO elements** when applicable, such as location-based keywords or geo-specific information.
- **Regularly review and update meta titles and descriptions** based on performance and changes in search trends.

- Use tools like Yoast SEO or SEMrush to analyze and optimize meta titles and descriptions for better SEO performance.
- Remember, while optimizing meta titles and descriptions is important for SEO, it's equally essential to ensure they accurately represent the content and provide value to users. Balancing optimization with user experience will contribute to better search visibility and higher click-through rates.

Page Structure Guide

1. **Page Title (<title> tag):** Include relevant keywords, accurately describe the page content, and be within the recommended character limit (typically around 50-60 characters).
2. **Meta Description (<meta name="description" content="">):** Write a concise and compelling description that summarizes the page content and entices users to click. Optimize it with relevant keywords and keep it within the recommended length (around 150-160 characters).
3. **Heading Structure (<h1>, <h2>, etc.):** Use a clear and hierarchical heading structure that aligns with the page content. Use the primary keyword or related variations in the main heading if possible (<h1>) and/or in subheadings (<h2>, <h3>, etc.) to organize and break down the content. Ensure headings follow best practices as laid out in the [Accessibility Guidelines](#).
4. **URL Structure:** Create clean, descriptive, and keyword-rich URLs that accurately reflect the page content. Use hyphens to separate words and keep the URL concise.
5. **Introduction and Opening Paragraph:** Begin the page with an engaging introduction that captures the reader's attention and provides a clear overview of the page's purpose and relevance. Incorporate primary keywords naturally within the opening paragraph.
6. **Content Body:** Develop high-quality, informative, and well-structured content that is relevant to the page topic. Incorporate keywords strategically throughout the content, but ensure it reads naturally and provides value to the reader. Use subheadings (<h2>, <h3>, etc.) to organize different sections of the content. Page snippets already have headings included in the styling.
7. **Keyword Placement:** Place primary keywords and related variations strategically throughout the content, including in headings, subheadings, body paragraphs, and image alt tags. However, prioritize user experience and readability, avoiding keyword stuffing.
8. **Internal Linking:** Incorporate relevant internal links within the content to guide users to related pages or resources on your website. This helps with navigation and enhances the overall user experience.
9. **Image Optimization:** Optimize images by adding relevant alt tags and using descriptive file names that provide a brief description of the image using targeted keywords where appropriate.

- 10. Call-to-Action (CTA):** Include clear and compelling CTAs within the content to encourage user engagement, such as signing up for a newsletter, contacting the school, or exploring related resources.
- 11. Image Compression:** Optimize the page's loading speed by minimizing file sizes. Compress images before uploading into the CMS using tools such as <https://imagecompressor.com/>.

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