

Everything you need to know about SEO

A professional's guide to
achieving top search engine ranking

A Little Introduction

The purpose of this SEO Checklist is to allow most beginner to advanced webmasters to optimize their web pages for better search engine ranking. This checklist is made ideally to help you 'do-it yourself' - you shouldn't need any experts to follow the instructions given in this book. Checking your websites for SEO improvements every once in a while is good practice to help yourself earn better ranking by Google, MSN, Yahoo and other large search engines.

This is the first edition of the Webstarts SEO Checklist. When a new edition of this checklist is launched, you can receive it for free providing you have paid for a minimum of one edition of this checklist. You may use this SEO Checklist for as many websites of yours as you like. If you have any problems, questions or concerns regarding this checklist, feel free to contact us or discuss the matter at either of following:

Support: support@webstarts.com

Phone: 877-546-3202

How to use this Book

To use this book, you can either follow the checklist directly from your computer or print the checklist to paper, further information is shown below. While you read through the checklist, ensure you complete or try to complete the things mentioned. If for any reason you do not understand the section or description given, we advise you to contact and ask us for help using the contact page shown above.

- **Printing the Book**
You may print the book onto paper and complete the checklist from there. Each time you complete an item, you simply ticket the circle next to it.
- **Using the book directly from your Computer**
If you do not have sufficient time to complete the entire checklist, you can note down the position number which is located on the right of each item. When you return to the checklist, just go directly to your last position and continue from there.

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Frequently Asked Questions

For frequently asked questions, continue below. If you have any questions you would like answered, please contact us at support@webstarts.com.

- **Where has the information on this book come from?**

The information has been gathered by a number of SEO Experts at Webstarts. Some information has been collected from search engine data such as Google Search Patent and some from popular discussion on bulletin boards. We try our best to cover every area in Search Engines Optimization.

- **Is Search Engine Optimization (SEO) considered as evil?**

The answer is no, but only if SEO is done correctly and in a rightful way. Changes such as making a site more easy for search engines to crawl, tuning the words on a page based on what users search for or what you see in your traffic logs, and gathering links by creating services that make people link to you naturally is considered as good SEO. According to Google and other search engines, bad search engine optimization is the act of deceiving and misleading people or search bots. Things like hidden text, hidden links, doorway pages filled with nonsense words that do a sneaky JavaScript redirect etc are considered as spam (bad SEO).

- **If I follow this checklist, am I guaranteed good top ranking?**

Following this checklist cannot guarantee you good ranking however it can guarantee you have a better chance of receiving good ranking. This checklist doesn't teach you tricks and cheats to get good ranking, instead this checklist supplies you with a list of things to look out for and improve that most search engines look for when crawling your website.

SEO Checklist

1. Your Keywords

Select your keywords

1.1

- Select a range of keywords that match your website theme.
- Try to target keyword phrases rather than individual words, these are much easier to target and you will receive better targeted visitors.
- Look for keywords that have a high popularity (searched often).
- Avoid common words such as "for" or "with" as these are ignored by search engines and they can dilute the impact on your primary keywords.
- Narrow your keywords to approximately 1 to 3 primary keywords which should be targeted most often.

Good Keyword Phrase: [free webmaster tools, seo tools, webmaster services](#)

Bad Keyword Phrase: [free tools and seo services for webmasters](#)

Prioritize your keywords

1.2

- Wherever you insert your keywords, either on your pages or on internal links, always place your keywords in order of relevance.
- Place your most important keyword on position one, second important on position two and so on.

An example of a page title: [Free Webmaster Tools & SEO Services](#)

"free webmaster tools" is the most important keyword phrase

2. Domain name / Filename

Domain Registration

2.1

- Registering your domain for a long duration such as 5 years will tell search engines you are serious about your website and do not have intentions of a spam page.
- Do not hide your domain registration details using Private Registration Services. Some search engines consider websites with hidden details as spam.
- Domains that have existed for a while (2 or more years) appear to have better ranking on search engines.

Keyword in domain name

2.2

- Include your most relevant keyword into your domain name as the domain has a big impact on search engines.
- Keep your keywords to a minimum of 1 to 2 words. A total of 4 or more keywords can be considered as spam.
- Use hyphens (-) to separate your keywords/phrases.

Example: bens-webmaster-tools.com

Keyword in filename

2.3

- Include your most relevant keyword into your filename as the filename has a big impact on search engines.
- Keep your keywords to a minimum of 1 to 2 words. A total of 4 or more keywords can be considered as spam.
- Use hyphens (-) to separate your keywords/phrases.

Example: your-domain.com/webmaster-tools.html

Length of Website Address

2.4

- Keep your website address to a minimum.
- Long filenames can be considered as spam.
- Avoid Session IDs and ID variables which are generated by most web applications.

Good Example: your-domain.com/webmaster-tools/

Bad Example: your-domain.com/free-webmaster-tools-to-check-your-website/

3. Keyword Placement

Keyword in title tag <title></title>

3.1

- Keep your title short, roughly 10 to 60 characters.
- Including irrelevant words to your title will weaken the impact on your targeted keywords.
- Place your most target keyword phrases at the beginning of the title.

Good Example: [Free Webmaster Tools & SEO Services](#).

Bad Example: [Easy to use online webmaster tools for SEO experts!](#)

Keyword in Description Meta-tag

3.2

- Write a few sentences about your website.
- Most search engines do not consider this tag deeply.
- May be seen on some search engines so write it to attractive human eyes.

Keyword in Keyword Meta-tag

3.3

- Keep the tag to a maximum of 10 keywords and separated by comma (,).
- Every keyword listed here should appear at least once in your content (body). If not, the keyword will be considered as irrelevant spam.
- All keywords should be listed only ONCE.
- Most search engines do not consider this tag deeply.

Keyword in Content

3.4

- Your keyword(s) should appear at a ratio of once every 20 words.
- If you do not have much text in your website, ensure you have it displayed at least once.

H1, H2 and H3 (Heading)

3.5

- Place your most relevant keyword(s) in a H1 tag.
- Place your secondary keyword(s) in H2 and H3 tags.
- All heading tags should remain its original style and not altered by Style tags or you may be penalized by most search engines.

Keyword Font Styles

3.6

- Your keyword(s) should be placed in tags which will emphasize the keyword such as Strong, Bold, Italic or Underline styles.

Keyword placement in Body

3.7

- Most relevant keyword(s) should be near the beginning of the content (BODY) and also in large fonts.

ALT Tags

3.8

- Images should be described using ALT Tags.
- You should describe only the image and not use Alt tags to promote your keywords.

4.1 Internal Links

Keyword in links to internal site pages

4.1.1

- Links should be displayed with appropriate keyword(s) in the title rather than titles such as "click here".

Good Example: For more information, visit our [webmaster forum](#).

Bad Example: For more information, visit our webmaster forum by [clicking here](#).

Valid internal links

4.1.2

- Ensure all internal links are active and working.
- Search engines dislike broken links and may devalue you if broken links are found.
- Check all broken links once in a while to ensure every page is online.

Efficient linking

4.1.3

- Spread your links out evenly for the search engine to easily locate them.
- Do not have your pages linked deeply where it becomes difficult to locate the page.

4.2 External / Outgoing Links

Quality Links 4.2.1

- Link to quality websites.
- Linking to link farms/spam websites will devalue your website.

Inspecting your Links 4.2.2

- Review your external links regularly.
- If an external link becomes a link farm or a spam website, you may be penalized for it if you remain linking to the website.
- Ensure all your external links are online and working properly.

Title and Description 4.2.3

- Links to external websites should have an appropriate title and description.

Limit number of links on a page. 4.2.4

- Keep number of links on page to a minimum.
- Google states that number of links should stay below 100 per page.

4.3 Incoming Links (backlinks)

Quality of Referrer 4.3.1

- A referrer page with high backlinks will share more ranking to you.
- Get websites linking to you that have high PageRank or have high backlinks
- Backlinks will be valued more if the referrer has a similar theme to your website.
- A computer games website linking to console games website will have excellent link value.

Trend of link popularity 4.3.2

- Try to get websites linking to you in a steady pace.
- Steadily increasing backlinks will show a good sign to search engines therefore improve your ranking.
- A sudden high increase of backlinks will flag your website for possible spam (i.e. blog spam attack).

Anchor Text

4.3.3

- Ensure your primary keyword(s) is in the link title that links to you.
- Try to get websites linking to you with a range of different keywords.
- If all your backlinks have the same anchor text, search engines may assume you have purchased links and devalue your backlinks.
- Anchor text should remain the same throughout a backlink.
- When an anchor text of a backlink change frequently, search engines may consider the link as a purchased link.

Age of Link

4.3.4

- A backlink that has age will earn you good ranking.
- Temporary links that last 1 to 3 months do not usually receive good ranking.

Number of Outgoing Links on Referrer Page

4.3.5

- The value of each link is shared between the number of total links on that page.
- If a referrer page has fewer links, each link will be valued more.
- Try to earn yourself backlinks from pages that have few outgoing links.

Position of Link

4.3.6

- Links appearing more early in the HTML code are valued better.
- Links that are located on the header will be valued more than links on the footer.

Trusted Websites

4.3.7

- You will receive better ranking if you have backlinks from well trusted large websites.
- Most domains ending with .edu and .gov are well trusted by search engines.

JavaScript/Flash Links

4.3.8

- Avoid backlinks that are redirected by JavaScript or Flash.
- Most search engines ignore JavaScript and Flash links.

5. On-Page Factors

Home Page

5.1

- Use your home page to target your most relevant and competitive keyword.
- Have a link back to your home page from every single page on your website.
- Use your primary keyword to link back to your home page.

Over optimization penalty (OOP)

5.2

- You may forget penalized for optimizing your website excessively.
- Receive good ranking may take a while. If you cannot reach top ranking, be patient.
- Alternatively you can always use Google Adwords or Overture for front page exposure.

Getting Reported

5.3

- Avoid getting reported to the Google DMCA.
- Do not steal images/content from other websites.
- Do not break any type of Copyright notice.

File Size

5.4

- Do not exceed 100KB page size.
- Large pages tend to get indexed later than small pages.
- Less than 40KB is preferred by most search engines.

Freshness of Pages

5.5

- Google likes fresh content. News, Discussion, Auctions etc.

Frequency of Updates

5.6

- Pages that update frequently will get crawled more often.

Site Age

5.7

- An older site has better rankings. Most spam sites will be dropped within a year, this is why search engines award old sites with better ranking.

Dynamic Pages	5.7
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use short filenames; do not try to fit an entire sentence in the filename.• Avoid Session IDs and ID variables. Example: http://www.Webstarts.com/articles.php?view=261	
Texts inside Images	5.8
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Avoid long informative texts inside images as search Engines cannot crawl graphical pictures.	
Excess JavaScript	5.9
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keep JavaScript to a minimum.• Avoid JavaScript redirects and hidden links.	
Inline Frames and Frames	5.10
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keep frames to a minimum.• Some search engines may not rank pages inside a frame.	
Hidden links / texts	5.11
Avoid hidden links/texts. If the user cannot see the link/texts, it will be considered as spam.	
Cloaking	5.12
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Search engines will penalize your website if cloaking is found. This is when one content is provided to search engines and a different content is provided to web users.	
Duplicate content	5.13
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Avoid duplicate content from other websites.• Search engines will usually place the oldest website that had the duplicate content first.• Search engines like original and unique content.	
Understandable Content	5.14
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure your HTML Code is understandable by most web browsers.• You can always download a range of browsers and ensure your website appears right on all of them.• Majority of search engines cannot read Flash movies.• If you have flash on your website, provide an HTML version.	

6. Off-Page Factors

Traffic Buying / Link Schemes

6.1

- Build your traffic and links up naturally.
- Avoid traffic buying and any type of link scheme.
- If search engines discover that you have affiliate with any of these services, you may be penalized.

A minimum of one backlink

6.2

- You must have at a minimum of one website linking to you (ensuring search engines are aware of this link) to keep yourself in search engines index.

Buying Links

6.3

- Search engines dislike websites that buy unrelated links to boost ranking.
- Avoid earning a sudden boost in backlinks.
- Avoid backlinks from highly respected unrelated websites.

Server IP Address

6.4

- If spam websites have been hosted on the same server as yours, search engines may devalue your website.
- Try to get a dedicated unique IP Address for your website.

Links from bad websites

6.5

- Links from bad websites cannot necessarily affect your ranking.
- If your website exchanges links with bad websites, you may get devalued.

Server Reliability and Uptime

6.6

- Ensure your website is active as much as possible.
- Search engines may remove your website from their index if they find it unavailable at the time of crawling.

7. User Activity

Search Engine Traffic

7.1

- Increase in visitors show search engines a positive sign therefore improving your ranking.

Click through Rate (CTR)

7.2

- Increase in click rate show search engines a positive sign therefore improving your ranking.

Time spent on page

7.3

- Search engines monitor the time spent by a user on your website using Toolbars.
- Encourage visitors to spend more time on your website.
- Provide content that will keep users on your website such as articles.

Monitoring Bookmarks

7.4

- Search engines monitor addition and deletion of a user bookmarks using Toolbars.
- An increasing rate of bookmarks will improve your ranking.

Leaving the Website

7.5

- Search Toolbars monitor how a user left a website.
- If using the back button, your website may be devalued.
- If through an external link, your website may remain the same or improve in ranking.

8. Gathering Links

Collecting Links

8.1

- Collecting links is a big factor in receiving good ranking.
- Try to get your primary keyword(s) in link titles that link to you.
- Read more regarding Backlinks above at "Incoming Links (backlinks)".

Unique Content

8.2

- Try to create unique content that will attract many users to link to you.
- Webmasters will blog about most unique content they come across.

- Articles 8.3
- Write descriptive articles which webmasters will link to.
 - Submit your articles to related article websites.
 - Have a little section in your article with your details including a link to your website.
- Press Release 8.4
- Issue an attractive Press Release.
 - Have a section in the Press Release about you and your website (include a link).
- Forums / Guest books / Blogs 8.5
- Participate in forums that allow users to add a signature link with their posts.
 - Leave relevant posts on blogs and guestbook's with your link.
 - Do not spam any of the above; search engines may devalue you for spamming.
- Sponsoring 8.6
- You may want to sponsor websites.
 - Sponsoring websites will usually get you a link from that website.
- Directories 8.7
- Submit your website to well-known related directories.
 - Ensure the directories you submit to are search engine friendly.
 - Try to get your website listed in Dmoz or Yahoo! as some search engines trust websites listed on them.
- Link Exchange 8.8
- Look for websites that have a similar category to your website for link exchange.
 - Ensure the website you are exchanging links with is not a spam website or a link farm.
 - You can find websites that link to your competitors and ask them for link exchange.

Glossary

AdWords

- Google's advertising service for displaying Ads of your website as paid inclusion.
- More details can be found at <http://adwords.google.com/>

Alt tag

- A tag that provides alternative text for visually impaired users.
- Search engines may pick this text instead of graphical images.

Anchor text

- Anchor text is the visible text in a hyperlink.
- Search engines may pick this up for ranking.

Backlink

- Any direct link from another web page to your website.
- Backlinks can sometimes be known as Incoming Links.

Blog spam (or comment spam)

- Automatic posting random comments, promoting commercial services, to blogs, guestbooks, or other publicly-accessible online discussion boards.

Cloaking

- Serving a specific page to search engines and a different page to human visitors.

Crawl

- When a search engine visits your website and extracts your content for search results.

External links

- A link that forwards to a website outside the home domain name (third party).

Filename

- A file name, including directory path.
- <http://www.your-domain.com/your-path/your-file.html>

Internal links

- A link that forwards to a website inside the home domain name.

Javascript

- A script language created by Netscape, that can be embedded into the HTML of a web page to add functionality.

Link farm

- A set of web pages that have been built for the sole purpose of increasing the number of incoming links to a web site. This is done in order to increase link popularity and search engine rankings.

Meta-tag

- A special HTML tag that provides information about a Web page.
- Generally used for search engines to describe your website.

PageRank (PR)

- Google's method to determine a page's relevance and importance through the quality of sites linking to it.

Referrer / Referring page

- When a user visits your website by clicking a link from another website, the other website is called a referrer.

SEO

- An abbreviation for Search Engine Optimization.
- To optimize and promote your website in a technique that makes search engines rank your website higher in search results.

Spam

- Excessive manipulation to influence search engine rankings, often for pages which contain little or no relevant content.
- Can result in penalization of a website by search engines.