

The ultimate SEO guide

v1.0.1 - 10/5/2024

In a nutshell, SEO is improving your website in order to *increase it's visibility* on organic results of search engines like Google, Bing, Yahoo, etc...

The goal of this document is to support you on your SEO journey. In the next 26 pages, you will learn how to optimise your website, how to pick the **best keywords** and write **enticing content**.

With SEO you can **increase the quantity and quality of the audience (traffic)** coming to your site, ultimately growing the conversions for your business.

Let's take a look at what search engine optimisation (SEO) entails.

What's covered in this guide?

3 SEO basics

From SEO audits through to implementation, this guide helps you create an SEO strategy that is built to last and will help increase visitors to your site.

4 Technical SEO

How to get your website ready for Google's crawler bots with the SEO audit and checklist.

9 Keyword research

Learn how to create a keyword list that is true to your brand and relevant to your prospective customers.

15 On-page SEO

Your brand is your visual voice for your business. Learn how to optimise your on-page SEO with the checklist

18 How to write content

Learn how to write unique, compelling content for your web pages and blog posts that helps you engage with your audience and demonstrate your expertise in your field.

22 Content organiser

Download your free content organiser. Customise and save yourself a tonne of time! You'll soon see the results.

SEO basics

How does Google determine which pages to show to their users?

Regardless of what search engines you use, the **search results are constantly evolving to anticipate the customer's needs.**

Google's algorithm (as you would expect) is extremely complex. However, Google does state that it is looking for:

"Pages containing '**high quality**' content that is the most relevant to their user's search."

Your site **relevance** is determined by bots/spiders "crawling" your website to evaluate what the purpose of your site is and how relevant it is to their search enquiry.

Quality is determined by a number of means

- Relevant keywords
- Links
- Loading Speed
- Mobile Friendliness
- Unique content

Technical SEO

Technical website management may not be your ‘thing’ but some basic knowledge about technical SEO can make the difference between a high-ranking site and one that doesn’t rank at all.

Optimising the technical aspects of your website will make your website *faster* and *easier* for search engines to crawl. Overall this improves the search engine’s understanding of your site and how you can help users.

When tackling technical SEO, the best place to start is with an **SEO audit**. Try it with your site today - follow the link below.

An SEO audit will highlight areas of your website that need help. We have broken down some of the most common aspects that might appear in your audit.

Try our SEO audit >

<https://lvw.re/audit>

Technical SEO tools

Google Search Console, Google Analytics, Google Ads, Google Mobile Friendly Test, Google Business Profile, Also Ask, Answer the Public, Page Speed Insights

***Remember to join
Google Search Console
and Google Analytics***

Crawl errors

There are many things that could prevent a search engine's bots from accessing or crawling your website. With access, the search engine can see your site and what your content is about. Without access, your site will not be ranked.

The most common errors are:

- › **DNS error** - the search engine couldn't communicate with your server. This is an indication that your server might have an issue.
- › **Server errors** - the bot wasn't able to access your website. This could be due to an error in the loading code.

SSL (Secure Sockets Layer)

This is an additional layer of security which creates an encrypted link between a web server and a browser. This means Third Parties have to verify the code on your site before approving it for their users. Google will label sites without SSL certificates as unsafe and may prevent users from entering the site from their search engine.

Mobile-friendliness

Over half of internet searches are from phones. Google has announced that its ranking system now includes a ranking of how user-friendly your website is for mobile users. Google will not rank websites that have a low mobile-friendly rating.

XML sitemap

An XML sitemap is a file that helps search engines to understand your website whilst they crawl it. It is a map of code containing information about each page on your site. Typically a sitemap will include useful information like when a page was last modified, what your priorities on your site are and how frequently your site is updated.

Check duplicates

Defined as content that appears in more than one location or URL. Duplications have a negative effect on search engines and users. Duplicates should be limited where possible.

When faced with multiples of the same content, search engines can't determine which URL should be shown in their results. As a result, your content might not appear even if your content is the original and a better fit for the search.

Duplicate content will also affect your site's UX (User Experience). No one is interested in reading repeated material. Your website is your virtual store and just like a physical store, it is all about providing your customers with the best experience.

Site speed

A 2019 study from Portent found that 0-4 seconds loading time is the best for conversion rates. Google recommends 0-2 seconds. However, not even they can achieve that. If your website is slow to load there are several ways to improve it:

- Minimise HTTPS requests – keep the use of plugins to a minimum.
- Use one CSS stylesheet (the code used to tell your browser how to display your website), instead of multiple CSS stylesheets or inline CSS.
- Ensure your image file sizes are as small as possible
- Minimise your site's code – remove any unnecessary spaces, line breaks or indentations in your HTML, CSS and JavaScript

Links

There are two types of links; inbound links and backlinks (external). There are two points to note with links in regards to search engines. The first is that links are used by search engines to crawl from one site to another. The second is that links represent a vote of confidence. Of course, the source of the link matters. The more quality (non-spammy) links you have, the more votes of confidence you have. However, too many links and the search engine will see your page as spammy. Try to stick to no more than 2 – 4 links per page.

Fix broken links

Broken links damage your user's experience on your website. Who wants to go somewhere where things don't work? It's frustrating. Ultimately broken links are also harmful to your relationship with search engines. Each website is gifted a crawl budget from each search engine (no one knows how big the budget is that you have been 'gifted'). When crawlers find a broken link, they will spend time crawling the link to verify it is

broken. Wasting your crawl budget. A page with broken links will have a lower value than a page with a working link. Ultimately, it affects your page's chances of appearing in a search.

Use HTTPS (Hypertext Transfer Protocol Secure)

HTTPS is a protocol used to exchange data across the web. When accessing a webpage your browser will request information about the webpage from a server. This might include webpage layout, details about images on the page, scripts/code included to make the page work, etc. It allows browsers to verify that your site is secure since any communication between the site and the user's computer will be encrypted.

Redirects

There are multiple ways to redirect a webpage, the main two are the HTTP response codes 301 and 302. It is important to choose the appropriate code for the situation. Each code sends a unique message to the search engines about how they should respond to the redirect.

- The **301 redirect code** tells the search engine that the website/page has been moved permanently and to remove it from their index. This redirection code can be used to redirect from one domain to another. Many businesses own the rights to multiple domains with similar names to their main domain. This business tactic is used to prevent user error and to protect business trade mark.
- The **302 redirect code** tells the search engine that the website/page has been moved temporarily and your SEO shouldn't be affected. This redirection code can be used to redirect users for a short period of time. E.g. whilst you update an area of your website.

Keyword research

The best way to get in front of your users is to be **relevant** to their searches. Keyword research can uncover the best words to target their **volume, ranking** and more.

The goal is to gather data to find common words and phrases that your **target audience** are using. Then align your content with their needs by using those keywords.

The valuable insights provided by Keyword research can improve your **content strategy** and marketing strategy.

Keyword Tools

- › Google Keyword Planner
- › Google Trends
- › Keyword Everywhere
- › SEMrush
- › HubSpot
- › MOZ

Benefits

MARKETING TREND INSIGHTS

Can provide insight into current marketing trends to help you centre your content around these topics.

TRAFFIC GROWTH

Increase site traffic by using in-demand relevant keywords to boost the likelihood of Google showing your site in a search result.

CUSTOMER ACQUISITION

Provide users with a call to action in your content. Give clear directions to your users to guide them through their buyer journey. Improve your chances of a sale by tracking and re-targeting customers at every stage of their journey.

Think of your keyword list as a spider diagram. Take the opportunity to view your business as a customer.

Strategy

Learn how to establish and execute a strong keyword strategy and get your business found online.

MAKE A LIST OF IMPORTANT AND RELEVANT TOPICS

Think about topics you want to rank for. Think in generic terms e.g. a baker would be interested in bread, cake, pastries, etc...

FILL EACH TOPIC WITH KEYWORDS

Next, identify some keywords that fit in with your topics. These words and phrases are important to rank for in the SERPs (Search Engine Results Page) because your target customer is probably conducting searches with these specific terms. E.g. A baker might look at adding best Victoria sponge, types of German bread, and pastry shops in 'location' to their list.

Struggling for inspiration?

If you are struggling to find more keywords, take a look at the related terms in your keywords. Type a keyword into Google search. At the bottom of the search page there is a "Related searches" box. Here Google will show

UNDERSTAND HOW INTENT AFFECTS KEYWORD RESEARCH

User intent is now one of the most pivotal factors in your ability to rank well. A search engine's ultimate goal is to solve their user's query. However, a keyword can be interpreted in many ways. E.g. Someone searching 'best victoria sponge' might be looking for a recipe or a bakery that sells cake near them. An easy way to verify what a user's intent is with a keyword is to place it in a search engine.

How to choose your keywords

SEARCH VOLUME AND TRAFFIC ESTIMATION

Use Google's keyword planner to search the volume and estimated traffic. A top tip is to use Google Trends to fill in any blanks you might have. We would recommend only using keywords with over 100 vol. per month as a minimum.

PICK THE RIGHT RANKING

Think about your crawl budget if you are doing Pay Per Click Google Ads. High search volume keywords will have a lot of competition. Consider a keyword or phrase that is mid to lower range. With less competition, you are more likely to rank. Remember only 5 - 6 sites (4 on mobile) will show above the fold on a results page. Imagine how many sites are trying to get to that spot!

USE THE SERP FEATURES

There are several SERP (search engine results page) features on Google. Make the most of them and get your website to show in a different way.

- **Image Packs** - A row of images at the top of an organic search. Try producing image-heavy content to win a placement here.
- **Paragraph Snippets** - a small snippet of text that appears at the top of a search for quick answers to common search queries. Try writing concise answers to help you win a placement here.
- **List Snippets** - similar to the above but in an instruction format. Try writing direct and clear instructions from start to finish to win a placement here.

Keep an eye on the competition

It is always a good idea to know what your competitors are doing and how well it is working for them. Knowing what keywords your competitors are trying to rank for is an easy way to give your own list a boost.

Also, think of relevant words that aren't on their list. These are gaps you can fill.

****But remember, just because your competition did something doesn't mean you have to****

GET A MIX OF HEAD TERMS AND LONG TAIL TERM KEYWORDS

Head terms are keywords that are shorter and more generic. Typically only 1-3 words. E.g. Victoria Sponge.

Long tail terms are longer keywords, typically 3+ words. E.g. Best Victoria sponge recipe.

Balance your keyword strategy by having a mix of both types of terms. Head terms will normally have a higher search rate but are generally vague with a higher competitive rate. Long tail terms have a lower search volume but the searcher has a specific idea of what they are looking for with an end goal. This is what you can tap into. Searchers of long-tail terms are more likely to be in a position to purchase.

Remember the goal is to have a list that provides some quick wins and progresses you towards your bigger SEO goals.

On-page SEO

What makes your website unique? It should be a reflection of your brand's personality. Search engines will look at your page's content, tags and internal links to improve its understanding of your site. Optimise your visible content and HTML source code to help search engines better understand the purpose of your website.

Ranking factors

UNIQUENESS

- › Provide authentic value (beyond self-promotion).
- › Create content that stands out from the crowd.
- › Provide a 'useful' site for your users, with a purpose to return.

MULTI-DEVICE READY

- › Your website should render for every popular browser type.
- › Optimise the render legibility to every screen. (Most searches are done on mobile devices)
- › Use the same URL when requested/loaded on every device

PROVIDE VALUE

- › Your content and navigation elements should be easily understood by users
- › Your site's design must be aesthetically polished and aligned to your brand's theme
- › The page layout must be optimised for important elements and content should be scannable
- › A minimum number of browser requests are required to fully render

AUTHORSHIP

- › Add keywords in the meta title and description (usually in the page settings)
- › Your meta description should entice a click through from search pages or social media
- › When appropriate use country/language hreflang*
** hreflang is an HTML attribute to help Google understand what language and geographical location your webpage is targeted towards. Use if you have multiple versions of the same page for different languages or locations so Google can recognise which page to show to your users.*

CRAWL/BOT ACCESSIBILITY

- › Content is unique to the URL
- › Content loads in the page's HTML (not via post-load JS/AJAX/iFrame)

- No more than four clicks are required from any Pages on the site to reach the URL
- Redirect temporarily unavailable pages
- Make sure the host server doesn't restrict search crawler IPs

BUILT TO SHARE

- Your URL is descriptive and makes the page's topic obvious
- The page includes sharing options for social networks for the page's audience
- URL includes XML sitemap

Remember, on-page SEO is all about user experience. What can you do to give your user's the best experience. Give them something beneficial to them.

How to write content

Every line counts. The first line must hook your reader's attention and highlight the value of your content. Lay the foundations of your content before you start writing. Keep in mind your audience and how they interact with content online.

Web content can often be overlooked but is the guide your visitors follow to navigate your website.

It is the best weapon in your arsenal to connect with customers. Well thought-out content considers your buyer's journey and walks them through the process, answering their queries along the way.

Blog content is one of the best ways to connect with customers and appear relevant to search engines. Create blog posts around relevant events and keywords your customers are using to appear in their searches.

Follow our ***tips and guides*** to lay the foundations for a more engaging website.

Four types of content

- Entertain
- Educate
- Inspire
- Convince/convert

Preparation

WHAT IS YOUR PURPOSE?

- What are you selling?
(E.g. Product/service)
- What is your focus? (E.g. Sell product/gain followers?)
- Do you want to build a community?

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

- What type of person is coming to your site?
- What problems are you solving?
- What searches would you conduct to find your product/ service?

KNOW YOUR COMPETITION

- What's their offering? How are you different?
- What content are they producing?
- Who is their target audience? Is it the same as yours?

Tips

GET THEM HOOKED

- Add attention-grabbing data.
- Paint a picture with a one line sentence.
- Be thought provoking with a question.

MAKE IT SCANNABLE

- Add headers and subheadings to break up paragraphs.
- Bullet points and numbered lists.
- Add plenty of white space.

EASY TO NAVIGATE

- Is your information easy to understand?
- Create a clear buyer journey for your user to follow.
- Add relevant backlinks

TALK ONE TO ONE

- Write in an active tone of voice.
- Talk directly to your customer. Be a friend to your customer.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE?

- CTA: Call Us, Sign up, Learn more, Buy or Subscribe

AVOID ERRORS

- Check spelling.
- Check that all links work.
- Check grammar and punctuation.

PROVE YOUR WORTH

- Add success stories from customers.
- Include original data.
- Partner with other reputable companies.

DON'T OVERCOMPLICATE

- Content should be jargon-free.
- Write in short sentences for easy scanning.
- Have a clear focus.

ADD VISUALS

- Infographics
- Images
- Videos

Double check

OPTIMISE SEO

- Add keywords to headers and sub-headers
- Add keywords to meta descriptions
- Is your URL readable and relevant to the page
- Include help links
- Optimise visuals

CONTENT AUDITS

- Check current CTAs and links are working
- Replace outdated CTAs
- Update stats, trends and product details (if relevant)
- Re-purpose content

REMEMBER...

Your goal is to solve your user's problem as quickly and effectively as possible.

Keep in mind the purpose of your content, there are four common types of content: entertain, educate, inspire and convince/ convert. Mix it up for better engagement, but remember to stay loyal to your brand's aesthetic and tone of voice.

Content organiser

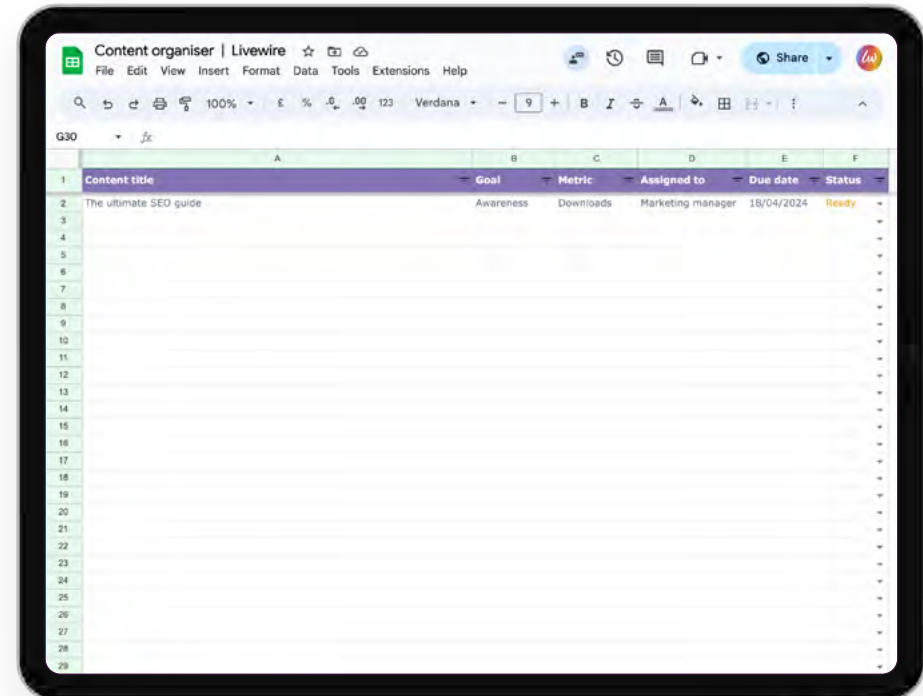
Track your new SEO review content

This content organiser template has been designed to help you track and highlight the vital information to keep you consistently posting relevant and engaging posts.

Download this fully customisable sheet and save yourself a tonne of time!

[Download the content organiser >](#)

<https://lvw.re/content-organiser>



Who are we?

We're a *digital agency*, based in Hampshire on the South Coast, specialising in *web design* and *SEO* including paid ads, email marketing, social media and *content marketing*.

Our mission is to provide *bespoke services* to really help our customers stand out in their industry. We pride ourselves on *building close relationships* first, to fully understand your requirements so that we can *maximise your brand's online presence*.

We deliver a personal, passionate and tailored service to each and every one of our clients. We strongly believe there is *no 'one-size-fits-all' approach* when it comes to your digital marketing. That's why our approach is based on thorough research, analysis and innovative ideas to deliver services that *really help your business thrive*.

Working with Livewire over the past few months has been a joy. The team did not disappoint. Their attention to detail and in particular their problem solving attributes are second to none.

DARYL PEARCE, EV HIRE

We work with a wide range of clients from different industries.

Our capabilities combined with our experience and knowledge mean we are well placed to meet the needs of our clients.

The proof is in the pudding.

savills

British Gas



HUAWEI

BRAUN



PROSTATE
CANCER UK



epay



We'd love to hear from you.
Get in touch.

01794 725 454
hello@livewire.agency