



Reason8 Search engine guides

**Guide 2 of 3:
Search Engine Optimisation**

Search Engine Optimisation

“Basically, our goal is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful.”

“The ultimate search engine would basically understand everything in the world, and it would always give you the right thing. And we're a long, long ways from that”

Larry Page

(Co-founder of Google)

Search Engine Optimisation: Definition: The use of techniques that enable your site to appear higher in a list of search engine results.

1.1 Purpose of this guide

This guide is the second guide in a series of three produced by Reason.com. The first guide explains what search engines are and how they work. This guide explains what you need to do to get good search engine position and the third guide explains how to use the Reason8.com system to optimise your website to get great search engine position.

There are 3 objectives to this guide

1. To introduce and explain key-words and key-phrases. How you should decide on your own key phrases and how the search engines check to see what key words and phrases you use
2. To show you what to change to gain a better search engine ranking.



3. To explain the concept of inbound-hyperlinks and why it is vital for search engine position.

1.1.1 Background

Before reading this guide you should be familiar with the concept of search engines, the role they play in facilitating the use of the Internet and how they can help you get more traffic to your website. Our [sister guide](#) covers all these points and we recommend that you read this guide prior to reading this one.

All the major search engines have one thing in common: They are all machines and run to a set of predefined rules. If you understand and obey these rules you can get a higher ranking against certain key phrases.

However, the search engine rules have evolved over many years and the one thing they are always looking out for are websites that try and gain an unfair advantage by using tricks or over-optimising their websites. It is therefore important that care is taken when modifying your website so that it does not become blacklisted from the search engines.

This text is certainly not comprehensive. Search engine algorithms are Top Secret and they mutate and change constantly. As the algorithms change so too do the theories on how best to optimise your website. However this is a good general guide that will help you get the basics right.



1.1.2 Websites or webpages ?

Before we dive into the theory it is worth making one point clear. Search engines do not find websites. They find webpages. They regard each page on your website as individual documents. Of course they know and understand that they are all related and linked but the content on each of your pages is individually catalogued.

When a user enters a search term, the search engine returns a list of all the **webpages** NOT websites that it regards as suitable. It is on this set of webpages that it applies a prioritisation according to its algorithm (or rules).



1.1.3 Never loose site of who your audience is?

One of the many questions we are often asked is when do I optimize my website ? should I create the keywords before I create any content and should I create the content and optimize at the same time.

We recommend that you never loose site of who your audience is. Write your content how you think your customers will want to read it, not search engines. You are creating your website for your visitors, not for search engines. Too poorly structured websites appear at the top of search engines only to plummet like a stone when the search engine algorithms change.

Once your content has been written it is much easier to change the content and optimize your site.

Search Engine Optimisation:

We recommend that you never loose site of who your audience is. Write your content how you think your customers will want to read it, not search engines. You are creating your website for your visitors, not for search engines.

2 Search terms, keywords and key-phrases?

“We've heard that a million monkeys at a million keyboards could produce the complete works of Shakespeare; now, thanks to the Internet, we know that is not true”

Robert Wilensky

(speech at a 1996 conference)

First let's start with some definitions:

Search Term

A search term is the name given to whatever a user types in to a search engine expecting to find your website

Keywords

Keywords are individual words that you feel are key to describing the content of a webpage. You expect search terms to contain these keywords and key-phrases are made up of keywords

Key phrases



A key phrase is one of a number of short phrases that suitably describe the content of a webpage. You should select a small number (ideally 1 or 2) of key phrases for each webpage.

2.1.1 Example:

Take Joe Bloggs Builders they are a general builder based in Basildon, Essex. They undertake most building jobs in Essex; plumbing, carpentry, plastering and conservatories. They have 15 pages on their website describing themselves and each of their specialisations. They understand their customers, they have done the research and have spoken to a number of their clients who use the internet to find tradesmen. They learn that the **Search Terms** used are *I want to find Builders in Basildon, Reliable Basildon Plumber, Cheap Carpenter Essex and Quality Basildon Conservatories.*

They decide to optimise individual pages around each of the following **key phrases** *Builders Basildon, Basildon Plumber, Carpenter Essex and Basildon Conservatories.*

As you can see the **key words** that must appear throughout their site are *Basildon, Builder, Plumber, Essex, Conservatories.*

2.2 Understanding Keywords

Think "specific keyword phrases" not "keywords". Why? Due to the extreme amount of competition for general terms in the search engines, if your keyword phrases are too general it is very unlikely you will rank well in the search engines. You stand a far better chance to rank well for specific phrases where there is less competition. The resulting traffic, since it is more highly targeted, should also be much higher quality too!

Here's an example for a site selling shoes:

Much Too General	Much Better!
shoes	imported italian shoes
men's shoes	men's leather penny loafers
women's shoes	women's aerobic sneakers

Try to think like your target audience. What would they search for when looking for the page you are optimizing? It is very easy to fall in the trap of coming up with a short list of what YOU would search for, but what about everyone else? They will not necessarily use the same keywords as you. You should try to come up with as many keyword phrases as you can think of that relate to the page you are optimizing. Try asking a few friends and family what they would search for when searching for a site like yours.



Check out your competition for ideas. Do a search using keywords that you already know you want to target and click through on the top sites that come up. Once on the site view the source HTML code and view the keywords they have in their meta tags - this should give you many more ideas! Make sure to only use keywords that relate to YOUR site or page. To view the HTML code simply click the 'View' at the top of your web browser then select 'Source', or 'Page Source'.

You should develop a list of keyword phrases, following the tips on this page, for **each page** that you optimize for the search engines.

2.3 Writing good copy

Remember that just like a visitor to your site would read the copy on your page to figure out what you have to offer, the search engines do too?

And what do you think the search engines are looking for when they 'read' your page copy? Keywords and key-phrases, of course!

Page text tips:

For best results we recommend that each page you submit has **at least 200 words of copy on it**. There is some cases where this much text can be difficult to put on a page, but the search engines really like it so you should do your best to increase the amount of copy where you can but still add value to your customers.

This text should include your most important keyword phrases, but should remain logical & readable.

Be sure to use those phrases that you have used in your other meta tags (see later)

Add additional copy filled pages to your site. For example, how-to articles, tips or tutorials. These types of content pages not only help you in the search engines, but many other sites will link to them too.

Don't ignore this tip! Seriously, optimizing your page copy is one of the most important things you could possibly do to improve your listings in the search engines. So, make sure you have plenty of it even if you need to redesign your site to work it in!

3 Optimizing your website

“There are three kinds of death in this world. There's heart death, there's brain death, and there's excluded from the search engines”

Guy Almes

There are three things that you can do to optimize your website

1. Present your content in a way that is appealing
2. Describe your content (using meta tags)
3. Ensure the correct links to and from your website

Each of these three factors are discussed below:

3.1 Present your content in a way that is appealing

3.1.1 Key word density

Ensure that you include your keywords as many times as you can while still keeping your site readable and adding value to your visitors.

Be sure to use those phrases that you have used in your other meta tags (see later)

3.1.2 Fill your pages

For best results we recommend that each page you submit has **at least 200 words of copy on it**. There is some cases where this much text can be difficult to put on a page, but the search engines really like it so you should do your best to increase the amount of copy where you can but still add value to your customers.

3.1.3 Add many pages to your site

Add additional copy filled pages to your site. For example, how-to articles, tips or tutorials. These types of content pages not only help you in the search engines, but many other sites will link to them too.

3.1.4 Headings

Make sure that you include your key phrases in headings. All headings should use the HTML tags <H1> <H2> <H3>. Reason8 makes it easy with its dynamic editor.





3.1.5 **Bold and Italics**

Try to make your key phrases and key words bold and italicized. Search engines give more weight to words that have been made bold and italics.

3.1.6 **Hyperlinks anchor text**

If you have created hyper-links on your website, try and make the anchor text (the text the link is attached to) contain your key phrase.

3.1.7 **Alt text and images**

If you have added images to your site make sure that **ALL** your images have descriptive text (also know an alt text) added to them. The alt text should contain your key phrases.

3.2 **Describe your content using meta tags**

3.2.1 **Using reason8**

Note the following description of meta tags is valuable and we recommend you understand the value of the three tags

- Title
- Description and
- Keywords

However the Reson8 system simplifies the process of creating and editing meta tags, enabling you to optimize individual webpages independently for search engines.

3.2.2 **Background**

Meta data is contained at the top of every page. The function of the meta-data is to tell the search engines what information the page contains. Think of the meta data as index the search engines.

Meta tags were originally created to help search engines find out important information about your page that they might have had difficulty determining otherwise. For example, related keywords or a description of the page itself.

Many people incorrectly believe that good meta tags are all that is needed to achieve good listings in the search engines, which is entirely incorrect. While meta tags are usually always part of a well optimized page they are not the be all and end all of optimizing your pages. In the early days of the web people were able to get great listings from optimizing just their meta tags, but the increasing competition for good search engine listings eventually



led to many people spamming the search engines with keyword stuffed meta tags. The result is that the engines have changed what they look at when they rank a web page.

The Reason8 systems make it easy to change the meta data for each page. This is covered in the final guide in this series. Instructions on how to do this with our automated tools is contained in the final guide in this series.

The meta tags are written in HTML language (language that web browsers understand) it is not visible to your visitors but is the first thing read by the search engines.

The 3 most important meta-tags are discussed here:

3.2.3 Title

Without question the title tag of your page is the single most important factor to consider when optimizing your web page for the search engines. This is because most engines & directories place a high level of importance on keywords that are found in your title tag. The title tag is also what the search engines usually use for the title of your listing in the search results.

What it looks like:

The title of the webpage site between two title tags as shown:
<TITLE>Your Title Tag - learn to optimize your title tag</TITLE>

Tag limits:

We recommend that your title tag be between 50-80 characters long - including spaces! The length that the different search engines accept varies, but as long as you keep within this limit you should be ok.

Tag tips:

We recommend that you include 1-2 of your most important key phrases in the title tag, BUT be careful not to just list keywords. If you just list keywords you risk being viewed as a spamming the engines which can ultimately lead to you being blacklisted by the search engines. Your title tag should include your keyword phrases while remaining as close to a readable sentence as possible to avoid any problems.

Make your title enticing! Don't forget that even if you get that #1 listing in the search engines your listing still needs to say something that makes the surfer want to click through and visit your site.



Since the length of your title tag could be a little long for some engines we suggest placing the keywords at the beginning of the tag when possible so that you do not risk having them cut off.

Each page of your site should have it's own title tag with it's own keywords that related to the page that it appears on.

3.2.4 [Description and keywords](#)

What they look like:

Description Meta:

<META NAME="description" content="This would be your description of what is on your page. Your most important keyword phrases should appear in this description.">

Keywords Meta:

<META NAME="keywords" content="keywords phrase 1, keyword phrase 2, keyword phrase 3, etc.">

Where they belong:

The correct placement for both meta tags is between the <HEAD> and </HEAD> tags within the HTML the makes up your page. Their order does not really matter, but most people usually place the description first then the keywords meta.

Tag limits:

We recommend that your Keywords Meta not exceed 1024 characters including spaces.

We recommend that your Description Meta tag not exceed 250 characters including spaces.

Meta description tips:

Make sure you accurately describe the content of your page while trying to entice visitors to click on your listing.

Include 3-4 of your most important keyword phrases. Especially those used in your title tag and page copy.

Try to have your most important keywords appear at the beginning of your description. This often brings better results, and will help avoid having any search engine cut off your keywords if they limit the length of your description.

Meta keywords tips:

Aside from what we mention in the other tips below you should only use those keyword phrases that you also used in the copy of your page, title tag, meta description, and other

tags. Any keywords phrases that you use that do not appear in your other tags or page copy are likely to not have enough prominence to help your listings for that phrase.

Don't forget plurals. For example, a travel site might have both "caribbean vacation" and "caribbean vacations" in their keyword meta tag to make sure they show up in both searches.

If you know of a common misspelling of a popular keyword that could be used to find your site you should enter it in your keywords meta tag. For example, a travel site might use "caribbean" in their keyword meta since it is a common misspelling for "caribbean".

Watch out for repeats! You want to include your most important phrases, but when doing so it can be difficult not to repeat one word many times. For example, "caribbean vacation" and "caribbean vacations" are two different phrases, but the word "caribbean" appears twice. This is okay to do in order to make sure you get the phrases you need in there, but be careful not to repeat any one word excessively. There is no actual limit, but we recommend that no one word be repeated in the keyword meta more than 5 times.

If your site has content of interest to a specific geographic location be sure to include the actual location in your keyword meta.

3.3 Hyperlinks

3.3.1 Background

So far we have considered how changing the content will affect the search engine positioning. While this is true and very important, the one factor above all others that will have the biggest impact on your position in search engines is the number of inbound links to your site.



3.3.2 Inbound hyperlinks

Let's start with a definition:

Inbound hyperlink

A link between an external website and a page on your website.

One of the things that makes search engines special is the way they follow links between pages. As they 'spider' across your site they find each page by simply following the links between pages on your site. In this same way they follow links from your site to any other sites that you have links to and from other sites to you.

Reason 8

Each webpage on the internet collects a ranking which is related to;

1. the number of other pages (internal and external that link to that page
2. the ranking of the pages that link to it

What makes this a very fair system is that high quality, high ranking sites will generally only link to similarly high quality sites or sites with highly relevant content.

Getting links from good quality sites should be a high priority for any website owner and this can lead to a dramatic increase in website ranking and corresponding increase in business.

The best way to achieve this is to try and get a listing in the biggest and fairest directory on the internet DMOZ.

What makes DMOZ so special is that every entry is manually considered by human editors and then the content is syndicated to eight of the biggest search engines and to many hundreds of smaller search engines too.

So by getting one listing on DMOZ you can end up getting dozens of listings on many more directories and search engines.

The secret of successfully submitting your site to DMOZ is to choose the correct page on the directory very, very carefully. If you choose the wrong page on the directory you will simply not get in.

Search Engine Optimisation:

The more sites that are linked to you, the more important your site will appear to the search engine.

