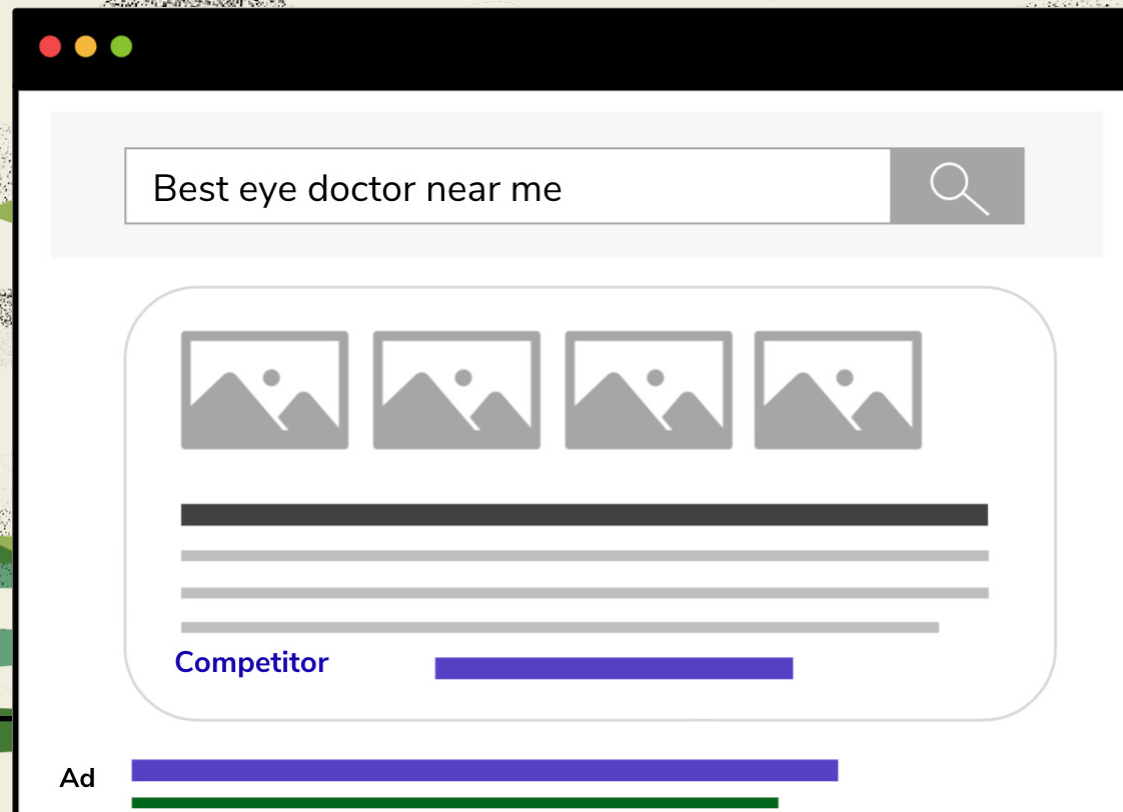


# SEO 101

## A Step-by-Step Guide to SEO for Content Marketers

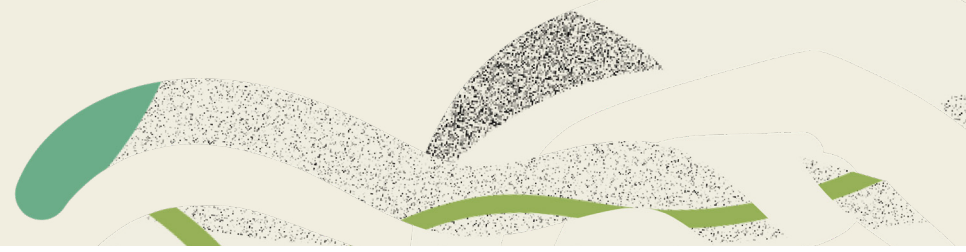


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# Introduction



## What's SEO Got To Do With Content?

**We know what you're thinking:** you're a content marketer and you write great content. You promote your brand. You educate your customers. You answer your readers' questions.

So why should you care about SEO? If you're writing high-quality content, are following a solid distribution plan, that's all you need... right?

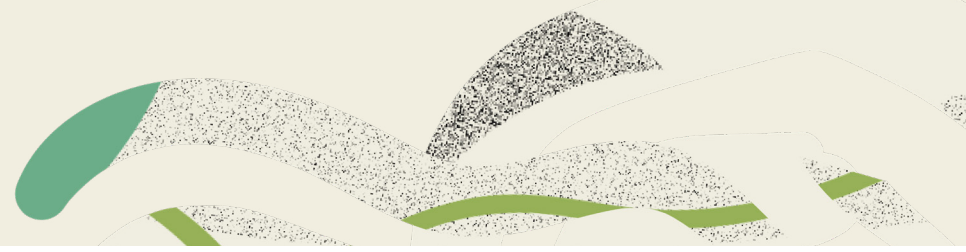
Sure, with Google penalizing websites with spammy, thin content and rewarding those with high-quality E-A-T content, you should be in great shape. But high-quality content only goes so far if your future customers can't find you.

**And that's where SEO comes in.**

Think of SEO as another checkbox on the content distribution checklist. Implementing an SEO strategy that guides content creation can take a single piece of content a long way.

You know that SEO is important. But you don't know where to start. Well, that's why we created this resource — **specifically for content marketers** — to guide you from ideation, writing and optimization to way beyond pressing “publish.”

# Content Ideation



## How Do I Use SEO Before I Start Writing?

You get content ideas from a lot of different places. So how does SEO become a part of the ideation process?

There are two ways of looking at this:

1. **When you have a topic in mind:** How do you increase search demand around topics that you want to write about or that were brought to you by other departments?
2. **When you need to find a topic:** How do you figure out what your customers are actively searching for and the questions they are asking? How do you create a taxonomy and keyword strategy so you can fill in the gaps?

### What about Google's algorithm?

Google changes its algorithm often and SEO pros spend their careers updating strategies and recommendations based on ranking fluctuations.

The good news? Although we don't fully understand how the algorithm changes (it changes daily!), we do know in which direction it's moving. **No matter how many changes Google makes, they are moving toward one single goal: to provide the best possible user experience.**

This is why aligning content with the language your customers use when searching is the best way to ensure your content is optimized for search engines.

# How to Find the Right Keywords

**Finding the right target keywords could be the difference between reaching five readers or 5,000 readers.** At Conductor, we experienced customers driving major traffic and significantly increasing conversions by simply changing the keywords within their content.

Using a keyword research tool such as [Google's Keyword Planner](#) or Conductor's [Explorer](#) feature. You can discover the monthly search volume (MSV) of individual keywords – which represents, on average, how many times users search for that term on Google each month.

## What is MSV?

MSV is the average number of Google searches per month for a given keyword.



### TIP

**Identify trends and topics your customers are searching for so you can create content that is in demand.** Draft an initial list of topics with your team and then use a keyword research tool to decide which topics will resonate with your audience.

When analyzing the content topics and keywords, consider the following:

- **Search volume** – How many people search using this keyword each month?
- **Search intent** – Are these users looking to research or buy? What type of content are they seeking?
- **Competition** – Who else is ranking for this keyword? What content do they provide?

**How about a real-life example?** The popular backpack brand, [JanSport](#), sells bags specifically designed for laptops.

Before keyword research, JanSport targeted the term “digital bags” to describe their product. After researching target keywords, they saw that people weren’t searching for “**digital bags**.” Instead, they were using the term “**laptop backpacks**.”

When JanSport changed its target keyword strategy to include “laptop backpacks,” which had 18,000 more monthly searches, this helped their content and products appear in Google search engine results pages (SERPs) for thousands of new potential customers.



Choosing the right keywords isn’t always easy. And it is especially challenging if the topic was suggested by another department rather than based on initial keyword research. **Consider initiating keyword research early on in your content planning and share the data across your organization.**

**So what are a few things to think about when choosing keywords?**

## What is the SERP?

The search engine results page (SERP) is the page displayed after a searcher submits a question to Google or another search engine.

# Size Doesn't Always Matter

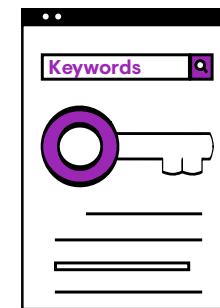
While it's great to target a high-volume keyword such as "laptop backpacks," **choosing keywords with the highest volume is not always the best strategy.**

Consider your competition and how your content and site ranking compares. Identify which competitors are ranking for specific high-volume keywords and phrases. Does your content have a shot at ranking? (Some highly competitive keywords will be out of reach for your content.)

If you have a set of keywords in mind and they don't have high MSV or the words are extremely competitive, think outside of the box:

- **Can you find a better set of keywords with less volume and less competition?**
- **Are there other keywords for which your competition isn't ranking?**

In the end, your content will have the best chance of ranking if you are strategic and deliberate about your keyword choices and implementation.



# How Many Keywords Should You Target?

## What's the ideal number of keywords to target?

SEO best practices suggest targeting **five keywords** per piece of content. Of course, this doesn't mean your content will only rank for those five chosen keywords. You can rank well for other topics and phrases associated with those words.

But by limiting your focus to five keywords, you can ensure you're writing great content that will rank and users will find. While you may choose to focus on one highly relevant keyword, you'll want to implement secondary and tertiary keywords, which are keywords related to the primary keyword. Including more than one keyword within your content and placing it strategically on-page will help set your page up for SEO success.

## But what about personas?



# Use Your Personas and Stages of the Buyer's Journey for Keyword Ideas

Analyzing the words and phrases a customer uses to search for your product or service can indicate where they are within [the buyer's journey](#).

This is sometimes called **search intent**, which refers to what a user is trying to accomplish by searching for a certain keyword or phrase.

For example, keyword phrases that begin with “**what is**,” indicate an early-stage search intent, where a user is looking for general information about a product or topic. Keywords that begin with a term such as “**best**,” show that the user is in the consideration phase of making a purchase and is trying to determine the best solution to the problem. Keywords with words like “**buy**” or “**where to find**” often indicate a purchase-ready search intent. →

When writing content, or choosing a set of keywords for existing content, consider which stage of the buyer's journey you are speaking to and the customer's mindset at that stage. If you're writing an early-stage piece, you'll want to select early-stage keywords to target. Use data, personas and content consumption within the buyer's journey to inform which keywords to target and when.

## Example:

**You're marketing a dishwasher.**

### Early-Stage Search

How to wash dishes



### Mid-Stage Search

Best dishwasher with a delayed start on control panel



### Late-Stage Search

Buy [brand name] dishwasher



# Content Optimization



## Research SERP, Relevance and Competition

If you did keyword research after you selected your topic or wrote content

Google the target keyword. What content appears when in the search results? Are they listicle-style articles? Videos? An interview with a leader in your field? Product pages?

**Investigating the SERP results** will help you understand the content Google (and people searching for the identified keyword) finds most valuable. If there is a significant difference between your content and the content that appears within the search, you can revise your content to better align.

But if your content is drastically different from the content that appears in the SERP, you may want to reconsider the keyword you are targeting. That's because Google's algorithm serves the content that **best aligns with the user's keywords and search intent**. If your content seems like it doesn't fit, then it may not be what users want when Googling that specific keyword.

# Research SERP and Other Content

## If you identified a keyword and want to ideate before you start writing:

Search for your keyword and do some research. If the keyword you want to target is “psychological principles,” what shows up on that SERP? Are users seeking a quick definition? Or are they looking for a lengthy explanation of the principles of psychology?

Spend time figuring out which content appears for that search and then figure out how you can integrate those insights into your own content.



### PRO TIP

SEO platforms and technology can help determine which types of results (videos, articles, answer boxes) appear on the SERP. In [Conductor](#), you can use [Explorer](#) to view the types of content that show up for individual keyword searches. Using the right technology saves you time and effort.

## If you want to know what your competition is doing

You can find information on how your competition uses SEO by looking through the SERP. Did a competitor implement a creative strategy that enables them to rank for a specific keyword? If so, what lessons can you learn from their strategy and how can you do it better?

To answer these questions, enter your company's most relevant keywords into Google search and analyze which sites rank the highest within the SERP. If you are actively targeting a keyword for your business, you may find that you have new unnamed competitors ranking ahead of your content.



### TOOL TIP

Content marketers and SEO pros rely on SEO platforms to stay updated on the competition in the SERPS. Conductor offers two features to help examine the competition: [Domain Explorer](#) and [Competitive Tracking](#). Domain Explorer provides high-level insights into where the competition is focusing its keyword strategy. Unlimited Competitive Tracking lets you examine individual keywords to determine where your competitors rank and potential opportunities to target a keyword that no one in your field is using.

Already using Conductor? Check out the [appendix at the end](#) of this ebook for step-by-step instructions on how to use the tool to create great content.

## Which key parts of the SERP should you analyze when researching the SERP?

### The Answer Box

Not surprisingly, answer boxes — **the first result in a SERP that provides information without needing to click** — are a key target for an effective SEO strategy. Content that wins the answer box is placed **front and center**, making it easy for the user to find. For this reason, answer boxes have a significantly higher clickthrough rate than any other content within the SERP. If you see an answer box when you are researching a SERP, make a note of which site holds that spot and the content within the box.

If your content answers the user's question clearly and within the first 100 words, your content could land within the answer box, giving your site prime real estate within the search results.

### People Also Ask

Are you deciding which approach you want to take when writing for a specific topic? The “People Also Ask” box is a great way to get information about what other specific keyword queries your searchers are looking for. You can use the “People Also Ask” questions to spark topic ideas or even build an outline for your next great piece of content.

#### People also ask

- How do you sort laundry? ▾
- How do you wash clothes? ▾
- How do you use the washing machine? ▾
- How do I use bleach in laundry? ▾

## Traditional Results

For each piece of content that appears as a traditional result on the SERP, the result will show the optimized **title of the article, the URL and the meta description**. When researching the SERP, you can learn a lot about the SEO strategy behind the ranking content simply by observing which keywords are in the URL, meta description and title tag.

## Video Results

Video results don't appear on every SERP, so take note when they do appear. If you see a video result in the SERP for a keyword you are targeting, you may want to consider creating video content for that keyword.

## Searches Related To

Treat "Searches Related To" as latent semantic indexing, or LSI terms. These related searches are **secondary related topics that provide more context** to your SEO strategy. LSI keywords are especially important if your target keywords have multiple uses or meanings. It's a good idea to include them where you can in your content to prove to search engines that your content is relevant to the entire topic.

### How to Do Your Own Laundry (basic): 6 Steps

[www.instructables.com/id/How-to-Do-Your-Own-Laundry-basic/](https://www.instructables.com/id/How-to-Do-Your-Own-Laundry-basic/) ▼

Introduction: How to Do Your Own Laundry (basic) Time to complete: Approximately 45 mins. Step 1: Separate Clothes. Separate the clothes into piles. Step 2: Use Dial to Start Washing Machine. Turn the dial to set the washing type. Step 3: Load Machine. Step 4: Add Detergent. Step 5: Close Lid. Step 6: Wait.

### How to Do Laundry in 10 Easy Steps - The Spruce

<https://www.thespruce.com/...>Laundry>LaundryHow-Tos> ▼

Apr 7, 2017 · Learning how to do laundry is not difficult. Check the care labels on your garments and linens. Place all clothes that are labeled "wash separately" or "hand wash" into separate piles. Start by sorting the laundry by color. Sort each pile one more time by type of fabric.

### How to Do Laundry - Real Simple

<https://www.realsimple.com/home-organizing/cleaning/laundry/how-do-laundry> ▼

"Once stains from body oils build up, they are very difficult to remove," says Chris Allebrooks, a textile analyst at the Drycleaning & Laundry Institute, in Laurel, ...

### How to Do Laundry - YouTube



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4QxmleZeu9s> ▼

Apr 7, 2014 · Uploaded by How to Adult

In which we discuss how to do laundry, what preshrunk means, and recruit Where's Waldo and Neil DeGrasse ...

### How to Do Laundry - YouTube



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FmYvRc-zTvo> ▼

Sep 3, 2008 · Uploaded by Howcast

Watch more Stains & Laundry videos: <http://www.howcast.com/videos/176-How-to-Do-Laundry> Sure, it ...

### Searches related to how to do laundry

[how to do laundry for dummies](#)

[how to dry your clothes](#)

[how to do laundry college](#)

[how to do laundry reddit](#)

[how to separate laundry](#)

[how to do laundry chart](#)

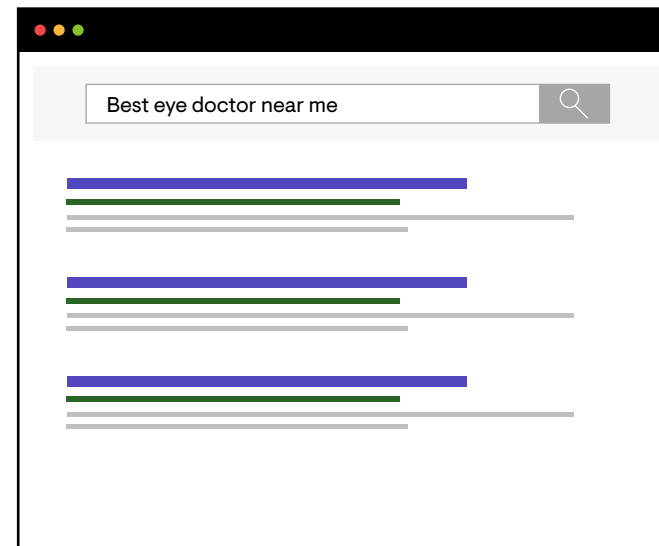
[how to do laundry youtube](#)

[how to do laundry with tide pods](#)

## A few things to look for in the top-ranking content for a relevant keyword or search:

<b>Keyword Analysis</b>	How are keywords used on the page? Are they within the page title or H1 tag?
<b>Content Quality</b>	How much copy is on the page? Is it concise? Does the content address the appropriate concerns and search intents of the persona identified for the keyword?
<b>Visual Elements on Page</b>	Does this page host a video? What kind of visuals does the page employ to keep readers engaged?

## Okay, I've researched the SERP... Now what?



# Integrating a Keyword Into Your Content

Including random keywords or forcing them into your content will only cause trouble – not only with Google but also for your readers.

## So where should keywords go and how should they be integrated into the content?

### 1. Include keywords in H1, H2, or H3 tags.

When Google crawls your content, it is indexing your pages to discover the main focus of the page content. Google does this by reading header tags. Prominently placing keywords within the header tags will tell Google which keywords are associated with your content.

### 2. Make sure you use keywords and LSI terms in your content.

Include keywords and LSI terms only where they make sense. While you may want to include the keywords multiple times on a page, avoid overusing a keyword, which can negatively affect the page rank. Keywords and LSI terms should always feel natural within the copy on the page.

### 3. Update image alt tags and include keywords.

Make sure the targeted keyword is in the alternative text tags of on-page images.

#### 4. Don't forget about the meta description.

The meta description is the short blurb directly underneath the title and URL when the page shows up in Google search results. Including keywords in your meta description helps users better understand if your content meets their needs before they click.

#### 5. Include keywords within the page URL.

When creating pages or posts for new content, include keywords as close to the root of the URL as possible (and as close to your domain). If the keyword is a phrase, avoid using stop words like "of," "a," or "the" within the URL.



#### TIP

Technology such as [Yoast](#) integrates directly into your CMS and will analyze page content to provide suggestions for better optimization. The technology review provides a color-coded overview to indicate what is working and what needs improvement.

- No meta description has been specified. Search engines will display copy from the page instead.
- The focus keyword doesn't appear in the first paragraph of the copy. Make sure the topic is clear immediately.
- No images appear in this page, consider adding some as appropriate.
- The slug for this page contains [stop words](#), consider removing them.
- You have not used the focus keyword in any subheading (such as an H2) in your copy.
- The SEO title contains the focus keyword, but it does not appear at the beginning; try and move it to the beginning.
- This page has 0 nofollowed outbound link(s) and 1 normal outbound link(s).
- This page has 0 nofollowed internal link(s) and 4 normal internal link(s).

# SEO Basics

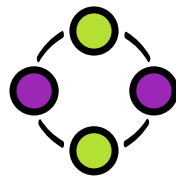
## Keyword Stuffing: Don't Do It

During the SEO dark ages, some SEO pros would attempt to trick Google by publishing low-quality pieces of content packed with specific keywords. While this tactic did work, Google caught on to the low-quality content and changed its algorithm.

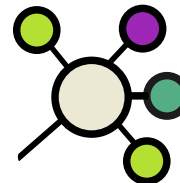
**Now, Google ranks pages based on:**



**High-quality content**



**Relevance**



**Context**

Your site can be red-flagged for overusing a specific word or what SEOs call **keyword stuffing**. Google penalizes sites that appear to be trying to game the algorithm by stuffing keywords into page content.

How do you know if you are keyword stuffing? After you finish creating content, use a “search-and-find” to highlight occurrences of the keyword within the page. If the content lights up like the night sky, you probably overused the keyword and should pare down the mentions.

Keyword stuffing is the strategy of integrating a keyword into your content so often that the keyword feels forced. Using a keyword a few times is good keyword usage. Using a keyword too many times is a bad way to use a keyword. Using your keyword too often is keyword stuffing, keyword overkill, or keyword overuse. Repeating your keyword, keyword stuffing, keyword overuse or trying to force your keyword into your content will make readers and Google dislike your content. Using a keyword sixteen times in five sentences is a bad keyword strategy and sounds super weird, no?

Instead of keyword stuffing, SEO pros use a Latent Semantic Indexing (LSI) Terms strategy.

### What are LSI terms?

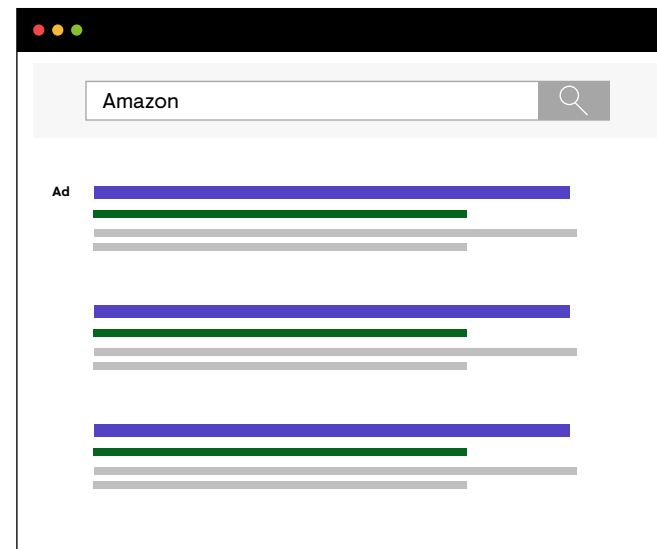
# LSI Terms

## Something to Know: Latent Semantic Indexing (LSI) Terms

When a search engine crawls website content, it compiles a list of the most common phrases to determine what the content is about. **Latent Semantic Indexing (LSI)** is the mathematical method search engines use to look for synonyms or related words it expects to find based on those common phrases.

For example, if you are writing about “Amazon,” the search engine would search your content for related words (think “Kindle,” “sale,” or “Prime”) to determine if your content is about the eCommerce company or the river in South America. Those related words are your LSI terms.

**Including LSI terms will help search engines easily understand your content and surface it for the most relevant searches.**



## How can you identify LSI Terms?

You can use online tools and industry research to determine which LSI terms you should target. For example, if you are a company selling dishware, you may be able to deduce that your porcelain plate product pages are relevant for people searching for “dinnerware.” “Dinnerware” would then be an appropriate LSI term to integrate into those pages.



### TIP

Use keyword research tools such as [Google Keyword Planner](#) or [Conductor](#) to help you. These tools provide an instant snapshot of a keyword’s popularity and offer related LSI terms. They also provide insight into which words map to which stage of the buyer’s journey. Looking for a free tool? [LSI Graph](#) is a great free tool to consider using.

# The Answer Box Strategy

Google wants to give users the best possible experience, which is why it uses the answer box feature. Answer boxes are a quick and easy way for users to find the answer to a question or otherwise meet their search intent.

## Why does this matter?

The answer box is featured above all other results, which means that the chances your link will be clicked is much higher if you appear in an answer box versus anywhere else on page one of the SERP.

For example, [Apmex](#), the number one online seller of gold and silver, used Conductor to identify answer boxes they should target with their price pages. They applied the insights and saw a 700% increase in traffic to those pages in just 90 days.



## How can your content appear in the answer box?

Google's goal is to make the search results as useful as possible to the user who typed the query.

### To be useful – and win the answer box – develop content that:

- Targets a keyword that generates an answer box at the top of the results page. (This is another place where technology such as Content Type Explorer can help identify search terms and intents that feature answer boxes.)
- Has a strong topical focus. Google prioritizes content that is fresh and accurate.
- Answers the question and includes your primary keyword target within the first 100 words. Google often pulls the answer snippet from the top of the page. If you include a “what is” question within your header tags and then an answer beneath it that is relatively close to the top of the page, your content will have a good chance of being featured in the answer box.

### Important points to keep in mind:

1. Not all searches have answer boxes included at the top of a search results page. However, your best approach is to target keywords with, what, where, when, who, etc.
2. You don't necessarily have to rank number one to be awarded the answer box space. For example, a piece of our content could rank second or third for “content map,” but also hold the answer box on the same SERP.

## Use Questions as H1 Tags

Let's say you have a sports fan website and your research shows that a high volume of sports enthusiasts Googled Tom Brady's birthday. To attract these users to your Tom Brady page, use the question, "When is Tom Brady's birthday" as your H1 tag.

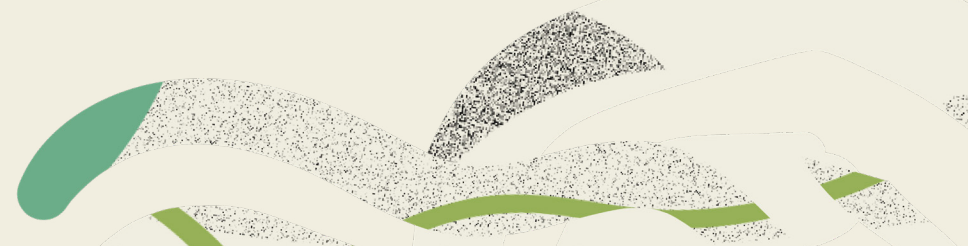


### TIP

#### Shoot for 800 Words

Shoot for content that's at least 800 words long. Experts say that long-form content with 800 words or more has the best chance of getting into an answer box.

# Content Analysis



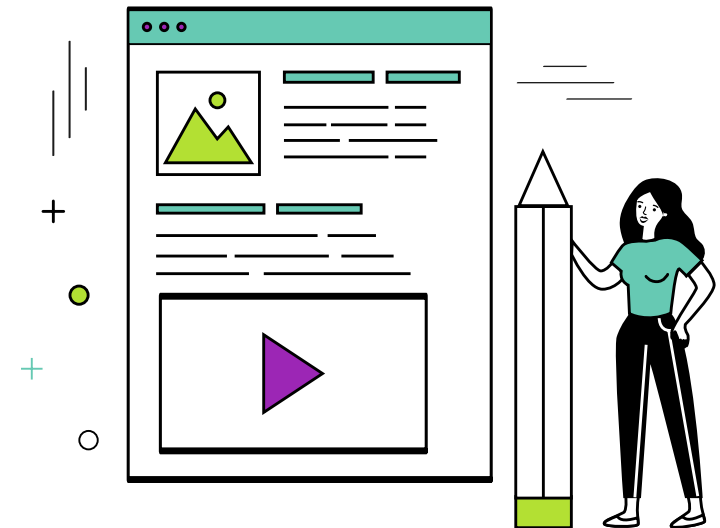
## How Can I Give My Old Content a New Life?

As content marketers, you may feel pressure to create new content all the time. But despite how daunting a content audit might sound, it's just as necessary as creating new content.

The bulk of site traffic leads to older pages. Therefore, you want to improve the user experience. So consider refreshing existing content that may have changed since it was published.

**And if older pages are not still getting traffic, then figure out why and work to fix it.**

This section addresses both scenarios.



# How to Conduct a Content Audit

A lot of the content you wrote two years ago is still great and relevant. But maybe no one is reading it and those pages are not attracting visitors.

## So what do you do? Audit.

The first step in a content audit is to identify older site pages that aren't receiving organic traffic. To evaluate, visit your analytics platform (Google Analytics, Adobe Analytics, WordPress Plug-ins, etc.) and export a list of the lowest-performing content by traffic on your site.

Next is the analysis.



### TIP

#### How to Prioritize Pages

Prioritize critical pages to audit with if/then statements. Filter pages that rank three or higher, but have less than 100 visits – those pages have the greatest potential for a turnaround.

# How to Fix Underperforming Pages

## REFRESH AND REPUBLISH CONTENT

Your website may have great content but if it wasn't recently updated, search engines (and users) will view the content as old and outdated. Take some time to refresh existing content and republish those pages.

## ADD NEW CONTENT, OR UPDATE YOUR PAGE

It's a good idea to review content on a regular basis and update as needed. For instance, your industry may have adopted new business terms or standards. Refreshing your page to incorporate the new terms will boost your ranking. Also, the way users think and their journey has likely changed. New and old keywords could have new meanings, and a review and refresh of your content will address these changes.

## QUICK FIXES

If you truly have nothing new to add, consider turning headers into questions that align with users' search intents (e.g. "What is Tom Brady's birthday?"). Remember to answer those questions within content that closely matches the question.



**Note:** Once you've updated or fixed a page, you want to track how the changes influence site traffic and rankings. The easiest way to do this is to use an SEO platform or other technology that can monitor site pages and note changes to the page alongside its performance.

In Conductor, the [Content Activity Reporting](#) feature tracks changes made to the major elements of the page — attributes like alt tags, header tags and so on — and plots when that change was first detected beneath a graph of your organic traffic. With minimal effort, you can identify how your efforts affected page traffic and align data points with republishing and refreshing efforts. Your best bet is to invest in intelligent technology that can help track your efforts. After all, what's the point of tweaking content if you can't measure its performance?

## Global Content Marketing & SEO

If you're writing for a global audience, there are some SEO factors you should know. After all, each market, region, or country is a different audience with different needs and you should be conscious of that when you're writing to them.

**1. Search Engines:** While focusing on Google is a smart play for many countries, others countries have popular search engines such as China's Baidu search engine or Russia's Yandex. If you are creating content for those markets, you must understand how those search engines work. Specifically, you'll want to know how they work differently from Google and your should optimize your content to meet their requirements. Some country-specific search engines also require a website in the native language.

**2. Localized Keyword Research:** Dig into region-specific keyword research. Don't assume that the literal translation of content into another language is enough or that you can generalize what you know about one region and apply it to a different market. Look into your regional competition's keyword strategies to uncover insight into how search behavior in that region may be unique.

Remember, you can create content for different audiences or repurpose old content by redrafting it around a targeted regional keyword strategy. Then localize the site URLs, title tags, meta descriptions and other important ranking factors.

**3. Regional Backlinks:** If you are tackling global content marketing, you need a backlink strategy specific to the region you are targeting. Linkbuilding campaigns should differ from region to region. For example, certain high-authority sites in the U.S. may not have a lot of authority in China and vice versa.

**4. Available Technology:** Explore which tools and platforms can be used for international keyword research, competitor research, collaboration and content management. These tools are essential to crafting an informed and effective global content strategy.

**5. Country-Specific Regulations:** Keep in mind, from initial keyword research through ideation to content creation and promotion, the stipulations around regional and industry-related regulations. Some countries (and search engines) have different standards for content and you must be aware of the nuances to ensure compliance. Researching these in advance can save time and effort and help avoid any potential penalties.

# Technical SEO Tips



## Duplicate Content

Duplicate content is definitely a challenge for content managers. For instance, a company may offer a project-management solution for small, mid-sized and enterprise clients and will leverage the same introductory text and feature description for all three pages. This can be problematic.



### TIP

#### **Consolidate Your Content.**

Consolidate thematically related pages wherever possible to avoid duplicate content. Avoid duplicating content to make a page appear more substantial or “meaty.”



### TIP

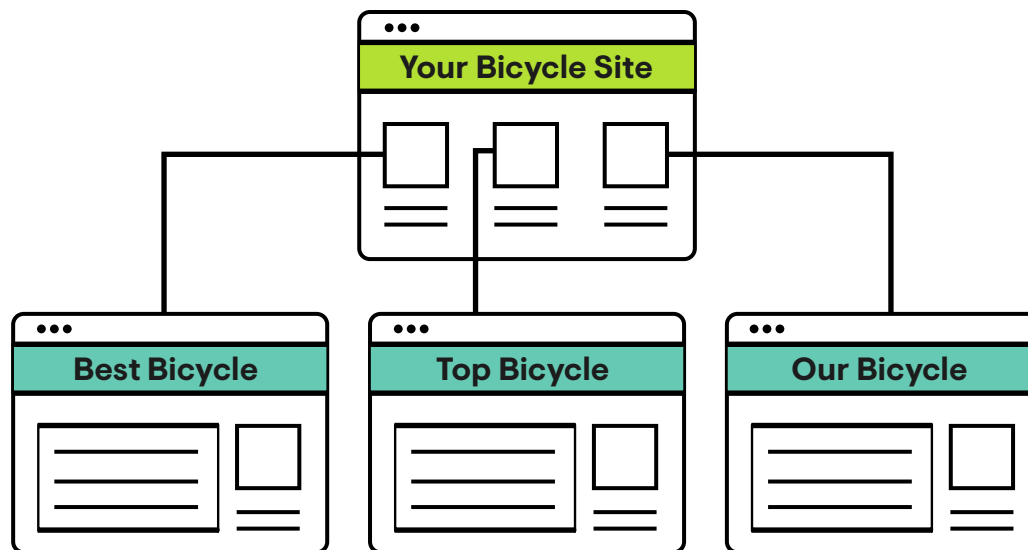
DeepCrawl is the preferred technology for accessing both SEO and UX reports, checking redirects and discovering thin or duplicate content. (Conductor users can access DeepCrawl technology through the [DeepCrawl integration](#) — ah, the best of both worlds.)

If Google detects similar or duplicate content within your site, it may flag those pages as “low-quality” and consequently filter those pages from SERPs. Remember that duplicate content doesn’t just refer to body copy. Duplicate titles, H1 tags and meta descriptions can all appear low-quality as well.

# Keyword Cannibalization

Multiple pages that target the same keyword will hinder the chances of achieving high-ranking pages. A search engine's goal is to determine the most relevant page from a site and serve it to the user who performed a query using the designated keyword. If your site has multiple pages targeting the same keyword, the search engine has no way of assessing which is the most relevant.

This issue frequently affects eCommerce sites, especially within the navigation. It's important to create a proper taxonomy of topics and subtopics, so that site pages do not compete with each other.



# Social Media and SEO

Content marketers generally work as a part of a marketing department that is active on social media.

**So what should you know about social media and SEO?**

While Google is very clear that social media does not influence SERP ranking, there are plenty of ways to leverage social media to inform an effective SEO strategy.

Because social media platforms have their own search functions, you should use an approach similar to how you approach Google. When using platforms such as Twitter, Instagram and Facebook, treat hashtags like keywords. While they are not necessarily interchangeable, hashtags do help users find social media posts on a particular topic in a similar way that keywords help users find your website pages.

In addition, you can use all social media platforms to gain insight into what your customers are talking about through social listening.



# Optimizing Video Content

YouTube is a video social media platform owned by Google. The connection means that for the most part, the rules of SEO and social media marketing apply to YouTube videos. YouTube also has its own search engine with its own rules and best practices.

## Videos on Google and on YouTube

**Google:** Google indexes and ranks YouTube content on organic SERPs, which means you need to follow the best practices previously discussed in this guide.

To help users find YouTube videos through a Google search, include a robust description of the video content. If possible, a full transcript is even better. Use your primary keyword target in the title of the video and treat a video description like it is a meta description.



## Optimize for YouTube

**YouTube:** Since YouTube is its own massive search engine, the same best practices applied for Google will help your videos rank on YouTube. However, just because a search has a high MSV in Google, that doesn't mean it's a popular keyword or phrase on YouTube. Use tools to research terms and discover YouTube-specific keywords. In addition, tag YouTube videos based on the content topics. When users type keywords related to the assigned tags, your videos will appear within the YouTube search results.

### **Important ranking factors for YouTube videos:**

- Video title, description and tags
- Video quality
- User experience metrics
- Watch time
- Views
- Thumbnail images
- Closed captions

# Backlinking

Backlinks, which occur when another website references your webpage via a hyperlink, are an important metric that factors into Google's algorithm.

Backlinks are essentially popularity signals for the search engine, which means you should strive to get as many backlinks from as many quality sources or related bloggers in your industry as possible.

But beware: irrelevant backlinking can cause a negative result. If a blog post about sneaker trends links to your article on the best credit card for new cardholders, that link won't help you (and could even hurt your site if it happens a lot). **It's also important to win links to your content using ethical, white-hat strategies. Google doesn't take kindly to marketers who purchase backlinks.**

When it comes to backlinking, social sharing can help. While Google doesn't consider social media for SERP, the more people who share your content results in more visibility. If another content marketer sees your article on Twitter and writes an article about a similar topic, they may link back to your article.

How can you improve your backlinks organically? Make it easy for users to share your webpages on social media. Including click-to-tweet callouts or buttons that encourage sharing your website content through social media.

# Top Google Ranking Factors

Google's ranking algorithm incorporates about 200 SEO ranking factors, which are updated daily. There are a few that are absolutely essential to achieving and maintaining a high ranking on a SERP.

## Top Factors That Help Your Ranking

- Mobile-Friendliness
- Content
- High-Quality Backlinks
- Domain Authority
- On-Page SEO

## Top Factors That Hurt Your Ranking

- Keyword Stuffing
- Duplicate Title Tags
- Low-Quality Backlinks
- Irrelevant Anchor Text
- Slow Page Loading Speed
- Lack of Internal Linking

**What's the deal for each ranking factor? Keep reading for details on the ranking factors and why they help or hurt.**

# Factors That Help Google Ranking

## CONTENT

One of Google's core philosophies is to provide users with the highest quality and most relevant content that relates to their search. Website visitors want to read fresh, practical and relevant content -- and Google wants the same.

## MOBILE-FRIENDLINESS

Since searches on mobile devices surpassed searches on desktop computers, Google's algorithm favors mobile-friendly sites. Mobile-friendly sites offer a responsive design or an entirely mobile-focused site optimized for mobile browsing experiences.

## HIGH-QUALITY BACKLINKS

A backlink from another site is essentially a vote of confidence and credibility in the eyes of Google. You want backlinks from sites that are relevant to your site's content, your business and your industry.

## DOMAIN AUTHORITY

Domain authority is a calculated score from 0-100 developed by Moz that indicates how likely a website is to rank on search engine results pages. Factors that influence your authority include your number of total links, the age of the domain, its popularity and its size.

## ON-PAGE SEO

Key factors that improve on-page SEO include:

**Title tags** are what users see on SERPs directly above the page's URL or on the page's tab in a browser.

**Header tags** are how content sections are structured within the HTML source code. H1 tags are the most important for SEO and they lessen in value through the H6 tags.

**URLs** that are clearly structured and incorporate high-value keywords add SEO strength to site pages.

**Alt image tags** should include your keyword. Placing keywords in the alt text tag for each image will improve on-page SEO.



# Factors That Hurt Google Ranking

## KEYWORD STUFFING

In the past, SEO pros could take advantage of Google's algorithm by stuffing content with targeted keywords. Today, that practice can result in a Google penalty, which can drop the ranking of every page of a site for a specific keyword.

## DUPLICATE TITLE TAGS

Many websites still have their company name as the title for every page. Because title tags are important for SEO (and UX), it is essential to use descriptive title tags that feature the targeted keywords.

## ANCHOR TEXT

Internal links, or links to other pages within the same website, are important for indexing your site. The anchor text — the hyperlinked text that the link is attached to — is also key. Make sure the anchor text aligns with what is being linked, rather than offering generic calls to action such as "click here."

## LOW-QUALITY BACKLINKS

The volume of backlinks to a site was previously prioritized above all else. But now, Google's algorithm also factors in the quality of the links. Therefore, backlinking from so-called link farms (low-quality sites that just link out to many pages) can actually harm the site's SEO.

## **SLOW PAGE LOADING SPEED**

Google prioritizes the experience of the user and slow page loading times detract from that experience. Page load speed is a critical component of ranking, so make sure your pages load quickly on both desktop and mobile devices.

## **LACK OF INTERNAL LINKING**

Internal links are how Google's spiders find high-quality content within the site. The most important internal links are in your page navigation, but your content should also include relevant internal links throughout. Integrate internal links into blog posts to provide context for your articles and elevate the ranking potential for all the site pages.

# NEXT STEPS

## **So much information. What do I do now?**

When starting anything, it can be daunting to jump in headfirst.

## **Our advice? Take the first tiny step.**

Review your content team's goals for the upcoming quarter or year and decide whether it makes the most sense to focus your SEO efforts on a content audit or to publish new SEO-optimized content.

The answer will differ for everyone. While it can be tempting to push forward with new content (fixing old content problems is much less sexy), you shouldn't move forward without a plan for addressing both old and new content approaches.

If this is your first big push into SEO, there are probably a lot of quick SEO wins hiding within your existing content.

## **If you didn't know, now you know.**



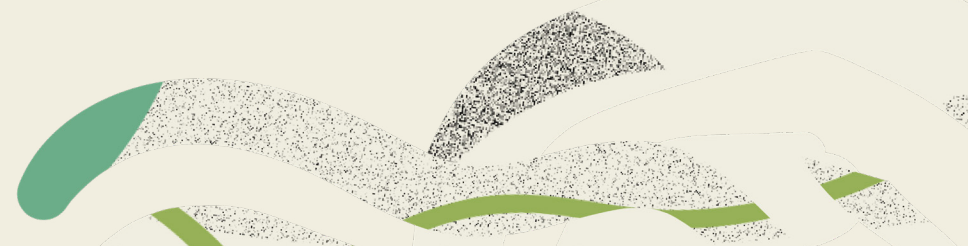


Conductor helps content marketers **create powerful content and drive real results** by providing deep insights into how your customers are searching online.

## **Ready to revolutionize your content?**

Learn more about Conductor and customer-first marketing at

[www.conductor.com](http://www.conductor.com)



## How to Find Content Opportunities in Conductor

For you Conductor pros, we've set up a great workflow to help you discover opportunities for your next great piece of content. We've broken it down into a three-step workflow to help you discover new content opportunities.

### Step 1

Create new content for terms where your existing content ranks low

### Step 2

Find related trends and topics your customer is looking for

### Step 3

Research your competitor's ideas

### Step 1

## Create new content for terms where your existing content ranks low.

Review your tracked terms – keywords you have identified as important in Conductor – to find low-ranking terms. Since low-ranking pieces of content have less than a .01% click through rate, there's a lot of opportunity for you to write even better content for these search terms.

1. Go to Keyword Performance Under the Measure Visibility menu.
2. Click on Saved Filters at the bottom and select "Moved into Striking Distance" to identify keywords where your content is on page 2 (ranking 11-20).
3. Look for a trend – is there anything many of these terms have in common? Consider creating new content to fill the gap.
4. Click on terms you may want to write content about. You're now in Keyword Details.
5. Here you'll see page one results for this term. See what kind of content performs well so you can use that to your advantage when you're creating content. What type of content is it? (Video, article, image, etc.) What stage of the buyer's journey is it written for? (educational, transactional, etc.).
6. If you see a competitor ranking well, make note of the URL so you can use it in Step #3.

### Step 2

### **Find related trends and topics your customers are searching for.**

1. Under the Research tab, go to Content Guidance.
2. Input the terms you've discovered you rank on page 5 or lower for.
3. Review the themes and most important groups of terms to target. These can enhance your content or provide additional idea for the future.
3. You can also dive deep with Explorer, also under the Research tab, to see monthly MSV, related keywords, social volume and more.

### Step 3

### Research your competitors' ideas.

Uncover additional topics by seeing which keywords your competitors rank well for.

1. While still in Explorer, update your search with the link to a competitor's page (such as the ones you discovered in Step 1).
2. Sort from high to low (rank 1 being the lowest) with the Page's Standard Rank filter. This will show high-traffic terms your competitor is ranking well for.
3. Add any topics you want to target to your editorial calendar.