



SEO Your Website

A brief guide to search engine optimization (SEO) for your blog or website.

How To Optimize Your Website: Keyword Research — Get Paid to Write Online

Search engine optimization (SEO) costs money. There are lots of people out there who will charge you lots of money to make sure that Google, Yahoo and MSN will find your website. But when I wanted to increase my search engine ranking a few months ago, I didn't have the budget to pay anyone to do it for me. What I needed was a do-it-yourself approach to website promotion. I did some reading, tried a few things and realised that it was easy to promote my site myself if I could devote a couple of hours a week to doing it properly. This is how I started:

What is SEO?

Search engine optimization (SEO) is a way of making it easy for Google, Yahoo, MSN and other search engines to find and index your pages. The easier it is for search engines to find your pages, the more likely it is that someone will come to your website and offer you work or buy a product you've offered for sale. SEO increases traffic to your site or blog and, in the case of WritingUp, makes it more likely that someone will click on your ads and rack up those AdSense earnings.

How do I optimize my website?

If you're launching a site from scratch, you start with keyword research. If you're updating an old site, start with keyword research. If you want to bring traffic to your blog (and can write about anything), start with ... (you get the idea). You need to think about what keywords best describe your website, business or blog and what similar keywords people are looking for on Google, Yahoo, MSN and others.

What will keyword research cost me?

Zilch. Zip. Nada. Bupkes. You can pay if you want to, but there are a few free tools you can use that will work well if you're on a tight budget. They are:

These tools are simple to use. You type the keywords you want into the form, enter and you get back a list of related keywords or the number of times those keywords have been searched in

the past month. Once you've identified the keywords that are best for you, you need to put them into your page content.

How To Optimize Your Website: Keyword Placement — Get Paid to Write Online

Optimizing your website content so it is found easily by Google, Yahoo and MSN doesn't have to cost you anything. In [Part 1](#), I listed some free tools to do keyword research. Now I'm going to show you how to make those keywords work for you. Search engines search text and rely on metatags to come up with the titles and descriptions they list in their search results. Metatags can be seen when you select 'View, Source' in your browser menu. They are found in the head section of the page.

What are the most important metatags?

The main ones are:

title This comes up at the top of your browser and is the first line of your entry on a Google search. This should be short, or the most important aspects should be at the start

description: This comes up as the second part of your Google, Yahoo or MSN listing. Your description should be relevant to the site content

keywords: this is where you put the keywords that you found in [Part 1](#). It is usually best to put a few, relevant keywords, rather than cram in as many as you can type. Search engines usually downgrade you if they perceive that your keywords are not relevant. When I researched my own site, I found that people searching for freelance writers also search for "write articles"; those searching for ghostwriters also searched for "write your life story", so I've included those in my metatags.

Where else can I put keywords?

You can also put keywords into

author: put your name and company name here; people will use these to search for you.

alt tags: these are used to give additional information about images. When you hover your mouse over an image the text you sometimes see is contained in the alt tags. You can put keywords in these as well. They are also indexed by search engines.

Example: hover your mouse over the picture on any WritingUp blog. The text you see is in an alt tag.

How do I put keywords into my website content?

So far, so good. Now you need to make those same keywords part of your content (again, avoiding putting too many in an obvious way). Make a list of the keywords you want to use, then start to write your page content, using the most important keywords a couple of times each.

Tip: One of the ways you can make search engines take more notice of these keywords is by using emphasis. Heading tags (h1, h2, h3), strong or b (to make text bold) highlight the parts of the page you think are worth paying attention to and Google, Yahoo and MSN will take notice of them too.

Now you know how to find relevant keywords for SEO and what to do with them once you've got them. Next, I'll look at another technique for on-page search engine optimisation.

SEO: What's Under The Hood? — Get Paid to Write Online

In [Keyword Placement](#), I talked about using keywords in metatags and content to optimize your website. Now we're going to extend the strategy a bit further. Remember that you can highlight keywords within the text on your page. To make your site more search-engine friendly some of these keywords into links going further into your site. This will tell Google, Yahoo and MSN and other search engines which have found your home page that there's something else to look at.

Why do I need links to optimize my website?

Google, Yahoo and MSN and other search engines like pages with lots of links. Inbound links are best (those are links from other sites to your page) – and will improve your PageRank quickly, but cross-linking of pages within your site is also good. Cross-linking shows that different pages of your website are relevant to each other – and relevance is a big factor in improving PageRank. If you know what you want to do with your site, this will be an easy step to take.

Why do I need a sitemap?

A sitemap is one of the best ways of letting the search engines find the rest of your site. You should have a link to it off your home page and it should contain links to all the pages you want the search engines to find. A sitemap makes it easy for search engines and users to find everything on your site.

If you have a big site, this can take a while, but luckily there are lots of free tools that will do it for you.

[Freefind](#) provides a sitemap and free (ad-sponsored) search box for your site. Their free service will create a sitemap page, which you can customise to suit your web template. They will also search your site at specified intervals and update the sitemap. If you use the search box, they will also provide statistics about what visitors to your website searched for. The ads are quite unobtrusive, but if you don't want them you can upgrade to the paid service.

You can also create a special Google Sitemap ([here's why](#)) and upload it to your server. Two free online services are:

You can also download Google's own [Sitemap Generator](#).

How else can search engines find my site?

Some search engines look for a special file called a robots.txt file. This stays on your server and tells it which search engines can search your site and which can't. The reason to have one is so that you can block any search engine bots that bring spam in their wake. (This is only a basic level of protection, which relies on spam bots respecting the boundaries you have set.) However, you can also specify which folders search engines are allowed to spider just in case you're storing anything confidential on your server.

You can create a robots.txt file [here](#) then upload it to your server. It also provides an example of a robots.txt file.

How can I use this on my blog?

Even if you don't host your own blog, you can use some of these techniques to improve its position in the search engines. You can certainly highlight certain keywords and link them to other posts you have made – and you can do an index post, which links to all your posts (or to all posts in a certain category). Haven has a good example here. If your webhost is providing your blog software, then you can also use a robots.txt file.

On-site links, a sitemap and a robots.txt file are all useful tools in [search engine optimization](#), but there's still more you can do to get your site noticed. Next, I'll look at strategies and tools for search engine submission.

There's Life Beyond Google — Get Paid to Write Online

A little submissiveness goes a long way, especially when you're talking about website promotion. Once you've finished all the on-page optimization of your site, by doing [keyword research](#), [keyword placement](#) and [creating a sitemap](#), it's time to get the word out to Google, Yahoo, MSN and others. Haven has a tip on search engine submission, which has the submission addresses for Google, Yahoo and MSN. As Haven points out, you only need to submit the main – or index – page of your site; if you've got a good sitemap, the search engines will do the rest – eventually.

Beyond Google, Yahoo and MSN

It can take a while for your site to show up on the 'Big 3' (Google is a particularly tough nut to crack), so there are a few strategies you can use to improve your chances. Google, Yahoo and MSN also crawl other search engines, so submitting to some of the lesser known ones (which are likely to list you faster) will help to get you on their list. A resource I found really useful was [WebCEO](#), free software that automates website management and tracking. It includes keyword and page optimisation tools and a very good submission tool. (See Gracepub's review)

What else can I do to promote my website?

Glad you asked. You can also submit your website to relevant directories, and I know of another free resource that will help you to do it. The [SEO friendly directory list](#) catalogues directories by interest and country and includes PageRank information for each directory listed. That means you can decide which directories are worth bothering with. I started with the 9s and 8s and worked my way down to the 3s and submitted my site to so many directories that I've forgotten which ones they are. Be warned, this will take time, as in many cases you'll have to submit your site manually. But if you're listed by external websites, Google, Yahoo and MSN will start to like you.

How can I make the most of this site promotion strategy?

Resubmit your site every six months to keep the listing fresh and practice deep submission – submitting links to individual pages that you think are important. This works for blogs, too. I have submitted the URLs for most of my posts and they show up on Google (if you click on 'show omitted results').

One final tip: you might want to set up a disposable email address just for site submission, because you will get a LOT of email. You'll also find that you've been subscribed to lots of site promotion newsletters, most of which are a waste of time, IMHO. I set up a new one on my domain and once I've confirmed my directory listing, I can then ignore everything else that comes to that address.

How To Market With Articles: Shameless Self-Promotion — Get Paid to Write Online

Now that you've made your site [search engine friendly](#) and submitted it to [search engines and directories](#), it's time to up the ante and use a few more tried and true methods of raising your site's (or blog's) profile. If you're blogging here, you already have a head start, as you can use your posts to promote yourself, your site or your blog.

How To Promote Yourself With Article Marketing

Article directories are websites that have articles on almost every subject. Some are all-purpose, covering everything from family issues to healthcare, while others have a niche, such as computer advice or art. All of them are hungry for content. Here's how you can provide that content and promote your site, blog or business at the same time.

- Step 1: Write an article. This can be about almost anything, as long as it's useful. Your blog posts here are a good starting point. Keep the articles short (250-500 words) and remember to spell-check.
- Step 2: Sign up with an article directory and submit your article. Many article directories will vet your work before approving it. Whatever their guidelines, stick to

them and your article should be approved. Avoid self-promotion or promotional links in the body of your article. Most article directories disallow this.

- Step3: Make the resource box work for you. The resource box is where you can put your bio and a few links to your site, blog or product.

Example:I have three different resource boxes that I use on [EzineArticles](#) – and I have changed the content a few times over the last few months. Click on a couple of my articles to have a look (try this one on [interviews](#) and this one on [funeral planning](#)). In the first, I link to my WritingUp blog; in the second, to a resource I'm promoting.

Article Submission

Article submission services extend the strategy. Although I recommend EzineArticles, I have also found the [Article Marketer](#) service to be effective. Article Marketer is NOT an article directory. Like EzineArticles, you submit your article (with bio) and get it approved. The article is then sent out to hundreds or thousands of publishers and article lists, depending on the service you choose. I'm on a budget, so I'm using the free service, which claims that 3500 people see my articles. You can set release dates, which is great if you want to submit articles while on holiday, and they just KEEP ON SUBMITTING your articles. Another option for article submission is [Isnare](#), but you have to pay for this.

How To Automate Your Article Submissions

Many of the article directories run on the Article Dashboard script, and there's a free article submission tool that targets these sites. It's called Article Distributor. It incorporates signup details and an article formatting screen and will automatically paste your article into the correct boxes on these sites. Don't worry, it doesn't allow spam. You still have to select the category and press enter on each site. (Please note: The Article Distributor developer has stopped downloads while he works on the next version.)

Multiple Article Submissions: Pros and Cons

Pros: Your work is everywhere, with links back to your site. Inbound links are GOOD.

Cons: your work is everywhere; Google hates duplicate content

Some of my free to reprint articles are published in 20 or 30 locations, and as far as I can tell, this hasn't affected my appearance on Google, Yahoo or MSN. Perhaps that's because the articles are all relevant to the locations where they've been reprinted. I don't really know, but so far the strategy is working.

In the next part of this series, I look at other ways you could promote your website or blog.

How To Keep Your Website Traffic — Get Paid to Write Online

By now you should know almost everything I know about website promotion. We've talked about keyword research and placement, the importance of a sitemap, search engine submission and article marketing. But it's not over yet. There are still a few things you can do to increase and retain the traffic you've started to build up. Here are a few suggestions to keep those numbers on the rise.

Speak out

Join a few forums that are relevant to your area and post regularly. Like WritingUp, most forums allow you to customise your signature so that every comment you make has a link back to your site or blog. These posts are also indexed by search engines. I must admit that maintaining three blogs and growing a writing business doesn't leave me much time for forum posting, but the posts I made a few months ago are still appearing in search engine results.

Get a blog

This strategy also works well for blogs. The advantage of blogging is that that you can write more or less what you like and there's nothing to stop you from putting in affiliate links. This is perhaps the quickest way to get your content found as, for the time being at least, Google, Yahoo and MSN can't get enough of blogs and bloggers.

Network like crazy

Sign up with [Ryze](#), a networking site where you can find people with similar interests. Most networks have promotion days where you can advertise your products or services. WritingUp members can go straight to the [Vertical Blog Tunnel](#), which is moderated by Mitch Allen and is a good place to start.

Bookmarks on steroids

Make use of tagging. Posts or sites that are tagged by [Technorati](#) and [del.icio.us](#) (a social bookmarking service) are picked up very quickly by search engines.

Keep it fresh

If you've got your own site, you can keep the traffic coming and rise higher in the results pages by keeping the site content fresh. Add a couple of pages to the site or update something at least once a week. Better yet, add a blog to your site and update it regularly; this will keep the site fresh as far as search engines are concerned. You can then use a service like [Pingoat](#) to alert sites when your blog content has changed; there is also a blog directory where you can list your blog. One option I'm also considering when I finally get around to hosting [sharonhurleyhall.com](#) is to just have a blog with a few static pages. (I think this suggestion came from Ashok.)

Syndicate to accumulate

Finally, add an RSS (really simple syndication) feed for site updates and news (or include updates in your blog, which is likely to have its own RSS feed). Use the ping service to

alert people that your content has changed. See Haven's post on RSS for more information. If you then burn your feed with Feedburner, then you can make this happen automatically.

If you do all this, the traffic will keep increasing.

In the final part of this ebook, I'll offer my quick-fix solution for increasing site traffic and a quick recap of the key points

How To Put Your Site On Steroids: A Quickish Fix — Get Paid to Write Online

I've been sharing with you everything I know about website development and promotion. Here's a recap:

Website Optimization And Promotion

First, I looked at why it's important to do keyword research and where you can find free tools to help you do it. I then looked at how you can place keywords within metatags. Visitors to your site may not see them, but the search engines certainly will! Third, there was the importance of cross-linking, the use of a sitemap to help search engines find all your content, and the use of a robots.txt file to be in control of who is allowed to search your site. Part four considered other tools for site promotion, including directory submission and deep submission of particularly interesting links. Article marketing was the subject of part five and I highlighted a couple of ways to use this strategy to best effect. Part six gave you additional options for promotion, including networking, syndication with RSS, tagging and keeping the content fresh.

Site Promotion Quick Fix

I'll admit that all this promotion is a slow process. It's taken me nearly eight months to get my traffic to its current levels. But if you don't have a lot of time, here's my quick fix solution. These are the strategies that have proved most effective and have brought the most traffic to [my site](#).

- Write articles for [Ezinearticles](#)
- Distribute the same articles through [Article Marketer](#)
- Blog about the issues in your articles and link back to your articles or site
- This will create inbound links and regular fresh content for your site.
- Watch your hits and page views rise and find your site in the search engines.

Best of luck, and thanks for reading.
