



SEO Basics: HOW TO OPTIMIZE YOUR WEB SITE FOR SEARCH ENGINES

Unfortunately, there is no magic trick to getting your web site to come up first in a search. Search engines purport to be democratic; therefore, if you are one of 1,000 spas in San Francisco, your competition for search ranking is fierce. There are, however, ways to manipulate your content (and the way your site is coded) in order to ensure your web site the best possible placement.

Note the difference between an **organic search** versus **paid ad space**. Anyone can pay for ad space in order to come up high on the ad listings—whether we’re talking about Google, Facebook, Yelp, or any other search site. The problem is that most users are savvy enough to ignore this area of the page and focus on the organic part—the part they believe to be true and authentic.

The following will help your web site to come up as high as possible in an organic search:

1. **<title> tags:** relevant, unique, location-specific, page-specific, and up to 90 characters long. The content of your title tag often shows up as the first line of your search result.
2. **Use meta tags**, specifically the *description* meta tag and the *keywords* meta tag. The description meta tag is also sometimes shown in the search engine’s results, so it should be written well.
3. **The site should be coded properly.** You can check this with a free spider simulator. Organize your pages and files in a sensible way that web crawlers (as well as real people) can easily sort through them. Avoid using Flash more than necessary, if at all.
4. **In general, your site should be heavy on the actual text**, light on images or other tricks.
5. **Name the files on your site with descriptive names** that match the content of each page.
6. **Offer quality content. As Google says, “Creating compelling and useful content will likely influence your website more than any of the other factors.”**
7. **Use concise, descriptive anchor text.** Words that you link should clearly describe the pages they are linking to. (Hint: don’t say “click here.”)
8. **Relevant content should be appropriately tagged.** In other words, use keywords. Use **Google AdWords** to come up with popular keywords that are relevant to your content and **Google Analytics** to analyze how users are finding your site.
9. **The fresher the content is, the more search engines will pick up on it.**
10. **Submit your info to:** Google Local, DMOZ, Yahoo, Yelp, and any other professional directories relevant to your business.

At Outside Eye, we always keep your site’s search engine savvy in mind when helping you to create and place content. We can work with you to enhance your SEO techniques and give your business the best odds of being found on the internet.

Incidentally, many of these tips were taken directly from Google’s free online document “Search Engine Optimization Starter Guide.” You can Google it to download the 22-page file yourself.