



## SEO Interview Questions for Freshers

If you're applying for an SEO job at a beginner level, prepare for your job interview ahead of time with these SEO interview questions for recent graduates, or beginners. Many of these are appropriate SEO interview questions for 1-year experience and are geared toward someone with a solid education in SEO or some actual on-the-job experience.

### 1. What makes a website search engine friendly?

Several factors make a website search engine friendly, including keywords, quality content, titles, metadata, etc. A website needs these factors to be ranked by a search engine and therefore found by a user.

### 2. How do you measure SEO success?

You might want to answer this question based on the type of company you're interviewing for, as goals might differ. In addition, there are a variety of ways to measure key performance indicators (KPIs) and, therefore, success. During an SEO interview, possible answers might include increasing traffic to a website or particular landing page, increasing conversions such as newsletter signups or sales, growing the number of inbound links, driving traffic for a particular keyword phrase, or increasing referral traffic. It's critical that an SEO professional measures result to know if the tactics and strategy need to change to succeed.

### 3. How did you learn SEO?

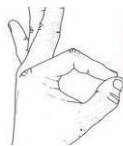
Obviously, this answer will depend on your individual situation, but it matters because a potential employer wants to ensure that you are well-versed in SEO best practices. If you learned SEO by the seat of your pants at your last job because someone had to do it, an employer might doubt the quality of the skillset you offer. And, if that's the case, you can always [get certified](#) before applying for that job to ensure you are well trained!

### 4. Which SEO tools do you regularly use?

You will likely have tools you're familiar with, and you'll want to talk about those. If you don't yet have much of a toolbox because you're new to SEO, check out the multiple [webmaster tools](#) Google offers, as well as the tools offered by [Moz](#).

### 5. How do you approach keyword research?

As with the question above, your answer might vary. You'll want to explain which keyword tools you use for research, as well as how you go about it. For example, if you use Google Keyword Planner to do your keyword research, then that's your answer for the tool used. But you must also explain how you go about it. You must demonstrate you do more than simply guess at a keyword and type that into the tool before checking the results. For example, perhaps you use personas to consider potential problems a prospect faces, and you look for keywords around that. You should also explain that you consider longer keyword phrases,



search volume, and the competitiveness of a keyword. Demonstrate that you know how to find the sweet spot in keyword research, where the keyword is narrow so it's targeted and has good search volume, but is not highly competitive.

## 6. What is link building and why does it matter?

Google exists to serve the searcher. That means Google is constantly trying to determine which results are most relevant to any given searcher and any given time. In addition to relevance, Google considers credibility too. So the search engine looks to see if other websites have linked to yours. If so, that means your content is worth linking to and is, therefore, more credible when compared to a website not linked to externally. In a nutshell, link building is what SEO professionals do to try and get links to their websites in order to improve search results.

## 7. What are backlinks?

A backlink is what we call the links into a website from an external source, as mentioned in link building.

## 8. What is page speed and why does it matter?

Page speed refers to how fast your site loads for a user, something Google takes into account while ranking websites since a faster loading page directly translates to better user experience. If the interviewer asks what you would do to increase page speed, describe how you've achieved this in the past with examples such as reducing image sizes, enabling compression, reducing redirects, removing render-blocking JavaScript, leveraging browser caching, improve server response time, using a content distribution network to compress files, optimizing the code, etc.

## 9. What method do you use to redirect a page?

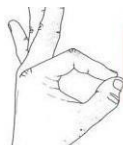
In general, a 301 redirect is the best way to redirect a page so you don't lose any SEO value that has been accumulated.

## 10. How can you do SEO for a video?

Videos are growing increasingly popular on the web, which can improve SEO if the videos produced get attention and therefore shares and backlinks. But to get the video seen can require SEO to get it found, and Google can't watch a video. It needs the same types of information required for text-based pages to rank a video. Including the transcript as a text is an easy way to do SEO for a video because search engines can crawl the text. In addition, the same attention should be paid to keywords, page titles, and descriptions.

## 11. Which meta tags matter?

Meta tags have changed since SEO became a common practice, but two remain critical: the page title and the meta description. Stick to these when answering your interview question. The page title (sometimes called SEO title) plays an important role in ranking but it is also important because it is the title that shows on the Search Results Page (SERP). It must use a keyword to rank well with Google but it must also be compelling so a user will want to click on



it. The meta description does not affect ranking, but it also plays a role in the SERP because it also must make the user want to click on the search result. You should also mention that Google recently increased the character length limit of meta descriptions to around 280 to 320 (no one is sure of the actual limit yet).

## **12. What is the difference between a do-follow and nofollow and how are they used?**

Nofollow links exist because we don't want every single webpage or link to be something a search engine crawls and ranks. Therefore, nofollow link attributes tell search engine bots not to follow a certain link. The link is still clickable for a user, but not followed by a bot. On the other hand, all other links could be considered do-follow links, even though they don't have to have special attributes to tell the search engines bots to follow them—the bots will by default.

## **13. Which SEO factors are not in your control?**

The biggest SEO factor not in your control is Google! How exactly Google ranks websites is unknown. The company does not make public the search algorithms it uses, although SEO professionals have determined the best practices we adhere to in order to achieve results. However, Google doesn't like young domains that aren't yet tried-and-true, and you can't control that if you're launching a new site. Nor can you force people to link to your site, share your content, spend more time on your site, or come back to your site for another visit. Google looks favorably on all of these factors and ideally a marketing department is working hard to create content and user experiences that will make these happen, but these factors are beyond the control of the SEO person.

## **14. What is on-page vs off-page SEO?**

This gets back to the question about the factors that are outside of your control. On-page SEO includes the factors you can control, such as keywords, content, page structure, internal linking, load time, etc. Off-page SEO includes those factors you can't control, such as backlinks.

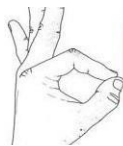
## **15. What are some black hat SEO practices to avoid?**

Ideally, you won't interview with an organization that condones any black hat SEO practices, but it might be a trick question to make sure you wouldn't use them either. Cloaking, keyword stuffing, copying content from another site, exchanging or trading links, buying links, hiding text, and using a link farm are all underhanded techniques frowned upon—and penalized—by Google.

## **16. What is the relationship between SEO and SEM?**

SEO stands for Search Engine Optimization and SEM stands for Search Engine Marketing. The biggest difference between the two is that SEO is free and SEM is paid. SEM includes pay-per-click advertising and display ads that are purchased. Despite the major difference between the two, they work best in unison.

## **17. What qualities are required in order to be effective in an SEO role, in your opinion?**



This is a question requiring a subjective answer, but you might want to think through all of the different skill sets required to be good at this kind of job. An SEO professional must have good research skills, for one thing, as well as strong analytical skills. An ability to spot trends and adapt to change is also important. As you think through the answer to this SEO interview question, consider your own strengths as an SEO professional. Could you weave those into this answer?

The SEO interview questions listed above are aimed towards professionals with about a year's worth of experience. They're likely transitioning into SEO as part of establishing a digital marketing career and perhaps have only a certification and not a reputed track record. For those with more experience, read on for advanced SEO interview questions.

## SEO Interview Questions for Analysts

If you're applying for an SEO analyst or specialist position, you should review the more advanced SEO interview questions below, because you probably won't be asked about the beginner level SEO topics covered above.

### 1. What training do you have as an SEO analyst or specialist?

This is a question only you can answer, but be prepared to answer it in a way that emphasizes your experience and any [advanced SEO training](#) you've done.

### 2. What kind of analytics do you perform and what do you look for?

Because of the job you're applying for, you might be asked several of these types of SEO analyst interview questions. Be ready. Talk about the tools you use for analytics, what you look for, and how you use those metrics to measure results and plan to make changes.

### 3. Which SEO analytics don't get enough attention, in your opinion?

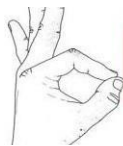
As per the question above, you'll answer this based on your own experience. It might be that there are features of Google Analytics that many people don't know how to use, or that people get caught up in the details and forget to look at the big picture, or perhaps they neglect to align analytics to the SEO strategy. Answer the question as you see fit, but do be prepared to answer it.

### 4. What is keyword stemming and why does it matter?

Keyword stemming is adding on to the stem of a word. For example, if the word interview was your stem, variations could be interviewing, interviewer, interviews. Using keyword stemming helps you to use more relevant keywords on a webpage without keyword stuffing or ending up with content that reads poorly.

### 5. What is the most important thing to look for when doing keyword research?

This is a subjective question! People new to SEO tend to focus on popular keywords without



considering the competitiveness of that keyword, so that's something you could mention. Search volume and relevancy are other factors you might discuss.

## 6. What is a canonical issue?

A canonical issue happens when you seem to have duplicate content. (Google penalizes for duplicate content.) This might happen if you have different versions of a URL pointing to the same webpage, for example, <http://exampleURL.com> and <http://www.exampleURL.com>.

## 7. How have you dealt with link penalties?

We hope you haven't had any link penalties slapped on you by Google due to your SEO efforts, and you might want to make that clear to your interviewer! Then address the steps you've taken to find bad links, and either fix them if you can or to disavow those you can't.

## 8. Which webmaster tools do you use and why?

Google offers so many valuable tools! Demonstrate your knowledge of them and your proficiency with them when answering this question.

## 9. What is Google's preferred method of configuring a mobile site?

Google prefers that mobile websites are configured using responsive web design.

## 10. What are rich snippets?

Rich snippets are the featured text that appears at the top of the organic search results, in a box and sometimes with an image. Webmasters can use structured data to mark up content so that search engines can easily identify the type of content and deliver it as a rich snippet. Rich snippets are not part of SEO, but if used, they can deliver better results on the SERPs.

## 11. Why do you need to know about backlinks to competitors' websites?

Doing an analysis of a competitors' websites is a useful way to execute a competitive analysis to basically see if you should be emulating anything that they are doing.

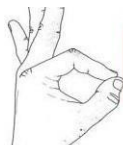
## 12. What is a link audit and why should you do one?

A link audit is basically an audit of the links that point to your website, the backlinks. SEO experts do link audits prior to doing a link building campaign, but also to make sure external links are of the quality you want to help with SEO.

## 13. Which are the major Google updates that have impacted SEO?

Panda and Penguin were the two most significant Google updates, although the search giant is constantly making changes to its search algorithm. Panda was introduced in 2011 and targeted poor quality content. The Penguin update was released in 2012 and targeted





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spammy link building techniques. Both are regularly updated by Google.

#### **14. How has Hummingbird changed the landscape of search?**

Released in 2013, Hummingbird has helped to make search contextual, moving us away from the strict adherence to keywords toward understanding a searcher's intent.

#### **15. What are accelerated mobile pages (AMP)?**

MP is a Google-backed project to push for pages that load quickly on mobile devices.

#### **16. How do you stay up-to-date on the near-constant search algorithm changes?**

You'll want to answer this question based on the sources that you rely on for up-to-date SEO and Google news.

#### **17. How will you measure success as an SEO analyst or specialist at our organization?**

As with the answer above, this will be subjective, but be prepared to answer it by showing you understand SEO's role in the bigger picture. Talk about aligning with business objectives, achieving goals and driving results, not just "winning more searches."

Those are some suggested SEO interview questions for professionals with around 3 years of experience under their belt or an SEO analyst. If management is the direction you're headed in, you will want to keep reading for the SEO interview questions and answers for experienced managers and executives.

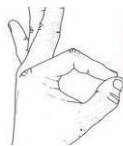
### **SEO Interview Questions for Executives**

If you're interviewing for an SEO executive or manager position, you can expect to field questions about any of the topics addressed above, as well as questions about your management experience. As an SEO executive or manager, you'll be expected to know SEO basics as well as other aspects of digital marketing, such as website optimization, content marketing, search engine marketing, strategy, and analytics. You will probably manage a team of copywriters and web developers in order to implement and achieve SEO goals for your organization.

#### **1. What are some common SEO mistakes you've seen in other organizations?**

If you're an experienced SEO executive or manager, this should be an easy question for you to answer! You can talk about the obvious mistakes such as using the wrong keywords (which is possible in so many ways), not keeping up with changes made by Google, not optimizing for mobile, ignoring analytics, and so on, but mention others that are particular to your experience too.

#### **2. What is RankBrain and why does it matter?**



As with so many things Google, no one can say exactly what it is. RankBrain is part of Google's search algorithm. It's an [Artificial Intelligence \(AI\)](#) system used to process billions of web pages to help determine which results are the most relevant, in particular, queries that are new and not necessarily related to specific keywords (to really dumb down the explanation). There isn't a way to optimize websites for RankBrain other than to continue to focus on quality content because RankBrain is less about keywords.

### 3. What is PageRank and why does it matter?

PageRank is about credibility and it is used to help rank your pages. Credibility is determined in part by the age of the page, the amount and quality of the content, and the number of inbound links.

### 4. How do you use content marketing for SEO?

[Content marketing](#) is crucial to effective SEO because Google wants quality content, it gives you content to optimize for SEO, and it creates content other websites will link to (when done right). Content marketing is often done via a blog, but content can be created in many other forms as well, such as video, podcasts, infographics, ebooks and so on.

### 5. How do you use social media marketing for SEO?

The degree to which social media influences search rankings is not known, but social media still matters. For example, it can help you get backlinks when you share website content via social media platforms, and it builds your brand, which makes your website more likely to get the clicks on the search results page.

### 6. How do you see SEO and PPC working together to improve results?

This is another SEO interview question you'll answer based on your experience, but some specifics you might mention include how PPC can be used to drive traffic while waiting for pages optimized for SEO to start ranking. Also, we no longer have keyword research tools just for SEO, so we have to use PPC tools. PPC can be used to try out a keyword before committing to using it for SEO.

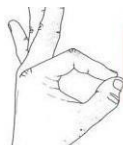
### 7. What is your approach to developing an SEO strategy?

Again, you'll answer this question based on your own experiences and knowledge. Factors you might mention include knowing the short- and long-term goals, knowing the competitive landscape, understanding the audience, etc. But how you as an SEO expert go about developing the strategy will probably be unique to your experience.

### 8. How do you evaluate web analytics to measure SEO performance?

As part of your answer, you will want to talk about how you use Google's web analytics to look at direct navigation, referral traffic, numbers of visits, conversions, time on page, etc. and how you interpret all of that data to measure the effectiveness of your SEO strategy.

### 9. What's your greatest digital marketing success story?



Obviously, this is an advanced SEO interview question we can't help you with, but you have to anticipate and be ready to answer the question, preferably with some hard data to add credibility to your story.

#### 10. What is your experience with managing a marketing or SEO team?

Again, this is an advanced SEO interview question we can't help you with, but you are interviewing for an SEO executive or manager job, so you will need to talk about your experience as a manager

#### 11. Explain Google's projected plan for indexes in 2018.

Google is going to have two indexes, starting at some point in 2018: one for desktop searches and one for mobile searches.

#### 12. What is Hummingbird?

Hummingbird was an overhaul of Google's search algorithm, released in 2013. It strives to move beyond just keywords and understand a searcher's intent.

#### 13. Why do internal links matter?

Internal links are links within your website linking to another page within your website. Internal links help all of the content on your website to get crawled and ranked.

#### 14. What is Domain Authority?

Domain Authority is a search engine ranking score developed by [Moz](https://moz.com). It predicts how well a website will rank in search results.

#### 15. How do you stay current with Google's changes as well as industry changes?

To answer this question, you'll want to talk about those blogs or newsletters you follow, probably including the well-known SEO websites such as Moz and SearchEngineLand, but also including any others, you find beneficial.

#### 16. How do you see SEO changing in the near future?

This answer is more subjective and no one will fault you if it turns out your predictions were wrong, but giving a well thought out answer shows you pay attention to the industry. You can talk about the two indexes Google will start using in 2018 and how that will affect mobile SEO, and the continued importance of providing a good user experience (and what that might look like). Local search is still a hot topic, as is voice search. Take a look at what the pundits are saying prior to your answering your SEO interview questions and you'll come across as someone in the know.





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