

The Complete Guide on Structuring Your URLs Correctly

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If one thing's for sure, there's a ton of confusing information out there on proper URL structure.

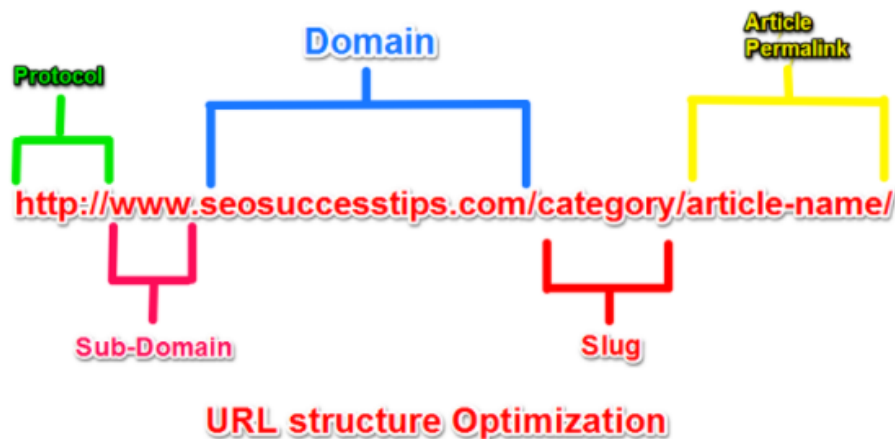
To be fair, it *is* a pretty multi-dimensional concept with a lot of working parts.

And while proper URL structure isn't exactly the holy grail of SEO efforts, it still serves as a noteworthy way of gaining a possible edge over your competition in search engine rankings.

With this in mind, I highly recommend that you avoid the “bento box” approach to optimization.

Don't focus so much on one specific component of SEO, like URL structure, that you forget to consider SEO on a holistic level.

To help you along your SEO journey, I've compiled a sweeping guide to serve as a one-stop-shop resource for all of your [URL structuring](#) needs.



So what exactly does “correctly” mean, anyway?

The descriptor “correctly” refers to [SEO-friendly URL structure](#) that is optimized for search engines to both promote PageRank and enhance the user experience.

As you probably already know, keeping user experience at the forefront of your mind is perhaps the most important of all SEO efforts.

At the end of the day, we can optimize our content and URL structures until we turn blue in the face.

But, without offering a great user experience and useful, unique content that will engage the reader and promote sharing — it will be nearly impossible to organically rank well on search engines.

Step 1: Keep it simple *and* consistent

Think of search engines as those stable, consistent, and responsible individuals in life.

They don't like too much excitement or change, nor do they like surprises.

They are [looking for readability](#), steadiness, and consistency.

Permalink Settings Help ▾

By default WordPress uses web URLs which have question marks and lots of numbers in them; however, WordPress offers you the ability to create a custom URL structure for your permalinks and archives. This can improve the aesthetics, usability, and forward-compatibility of your links. A [number of tags are available](#), and here are some examples to get you started.

Common Settings

<input type="radio"/> Default	<code>http://thinksem.com/?p=123</code>	No.
<input type="radio"/> Day and name	<code>http://thinksem.com/2015/11/30/sample-post/</code>	Meh.
<input type="radio"/> Month and name	<code>http://thinksem.com/2015/11/sample-post/</code>	
<input type="radio"/> Numeric	<code>http://thinksem.com/archives/123</code>	No.
<input type="radio"/> Post name	<code>http://thinksem.com/sample-post/</code>	Better.
<input checked="" type="radio"/> Custom Structure	<code>http://thinksem.com /blog/%postname%/</code>	BEST!

URLs are fundamentally classified into two basic types:

1. Static

2. Dynamic

Dynamic URLs change and include parameters. *Static URLs* stay the same as long as no changes are made within the HTML.

They are consistent — and when it comes to URL structure, consistency is key for ranking purposes.

As a result, you always want to shoot for static URLs over dynamic ones with parameters. So always opt for static, human-readable URLs like this:

`http://www.examplestaticsite.com/forums/the-challenges-of-dynamic-urls.html`

Instead of this:

`http://www.exampledynamicite.com/forums/thread.php?threadid=12345&sort=date`

Another important factor to keep in mind when it comes to keeping things simple is the length of your URL.

Use short URLs (the shorter the better), as they tend to rank higher on Google's first page.

Shorter URLs enhance the user experience, instill trust in the web browser, and are optimized for sharing.

The recommended character length is listed at no longer than 2,083 characters max — and this is a *generous* number.

Ideally, you really don't want them to be anywhere near this number.

Keeping it short and simple keep it memorable.

Step 2: Keep it organized

Keeping your URL structure organized in the most widely accepted format is imperative.

Many times it's a nice thing to stand out from the crowd — except in the case of SEO.

So if you're looking to get attention by shaking things up, just make sure you do it with your content and not your URL structures.



Generally speaking, directories, categories, and subfolders are much better to use than subdomains when it comes to fundamental URL structuring.

This is because subdomains split authority. Search engines tend to classify subdomains as their own independent entities, which is not so great for SEO purposes on a holistic level.

Example:

[www.example.com/blog](#)

vs.

www.blog.example.com

Directories, categories, and subfolders are all useful for aesthetic reasons, which is why it's best to keep a clean and organized structure when it comes to your URL formatting.

So you have your homepage, which would be like this:

Homepage

<https://www.homepage.com>

Then, ideally, you'll have your categories and subcategories organized neatly from there.

Here's an example of the way this should work:

Category (makeup)

<https://www.homepage.com/makeup>

Subcategory (lipstick)

<https://www.homepage.com/makeup/lipstick>

Product (liquid lipstick)

<https://www.homepage.com/makeup/lipstick/liquid>

And so on and so forth. This creates a visually pleasing and simple “breadcrumb trail,” enhancing the user experience.

On the search engine side, it shows topical relevancy by telling Google what each page is about as well as what it relates to.

This shows the search engines that your website has depth and substance, which [establishes credibility and value](#).

 example.com/skinny-jeans.html	✓ use of descriptive keywords, short and sweet
 example.com/skinny_jeans.html	✗ hyphens are generally not preferred and hard to read
 example.com/?p=123	✗ permalinks with non-readable text is not a good idea
 example.com/jeans/skinny	✓ categorization and nesting of pages helps organize the site
 example.com/skinnnny-jeanz	✗ cute misspellings aren't so cute, and are hard to remember
 example.com/clothing/skinny/denim	✓ deep nesting is also ok as long as it makes sense and is natural

While the root page typically has the most PageRank, the number of directories/categories/levels does *not* matter when it comes to search engine optimization. It may help with usability, but it does not affect PageRank.

Another important note on the organization of URL structures has to do with global websites.

If you have a multiregional or multilingual website, you'll want to place relevant language markers in your URL sequence.

This enhances the user experience and tells people that everything they browse in that specific directory will be in the same language.

Here are a few examples:

`https://hotelsite.com/en/hotel-name`

`https://hotelsite.com/fr/hotel-name`

In this example, `/en/` indicates that the website is written English, and `/fr/` indicates that the content is written in French.

Take a look at this recent video I created showing how you can double your traffic through internationalization.

Step 3: Use the right keywords

It should probably come as no surprise that I'm going to talk about keywords for a few minutes.

Proper [keyword research](#) is the first step toward ensuring that your URL is structured in a way that's best optimized for search engines.

Once you have figured out your keyword list, it is important not to go overboard with them in your URL structure.

The recommended number of keywords in a URL is 1-2 *at most*.

At the end of the day, stuffing your URL with a bunch of keywords isn't going to help your search engine rankings.

In fact, [according to Matt Cutts](#), former head of the web spam team at Google, you should keep the keywords you use in your URL relatively close to, or exactly the same as, what you use in the title of the page.

This helps search engines determine relevancy.

Also, adding these keywords in your meta description helps your page stand out visually during search engine inquiries.


For example, if you search for "negotiate a lease agreement," the keywords (and closely related words) that are included in a website's meta description will be bolded and, thus, stand out.


Google



All Images News Shopping Videos More Settings Tools

About 1,250,000 results (0.62 seconds)


Negotiating a favorable **lease** places your business in the position to succeed. Remember that a real estate **lease agreement** is prepared by the landlord to favor the landlord. Your responsibility as a potential tenant is to read it completely, understand what it says, and then ask for modifications that will favor you.





5 Tips for Negotiating a Commercial Lease | LegalZoom 
<https://www.legalzoom.com/articles/5-tips-for-negotiating-a-commercial-lease>


 About this result  Feedback


People also ask


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<https://www.legalzoom.com/articles/5-tips-for-negotiating-a-commercial-lease>
Negotiating a favorable **lease** places your business in the position to succeed. Remember that a real estate **lease agreement** is prepared by the landlord to favor the landlord. Your responsibility as a potential tenant is to read it completely, understand what it says, and then ask for modifications that will favor you.

How to Negotiate a Lease - Entrepreneur 
<https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/205996>
 Apr 13, 2010 - Co-tenancy **agreements** Say you're **leasing** space in a shopping center because of another tenant, perhaps a supermarket or a Macy's. What if that tenant closes or moves away? You can **negotiate** that if an important tenant leaves, you can pay lower rent or leave yourself.

When it comes to using keywords in your domain name, Cutts says that choosing a domain name with your keyword in it can be beneficial but that it's "...definitely possible to succeed without having keywords in your domain."

Cutts is also quick to point out that keyword domains are nowhere near necessary and that branding can play a greater role than keywords when it comes to success.

Think about sites like TechCrunch, Reddit, and Digg.

They use no keywords whatsoever but are highly brandable, catchy, and memorable.

Also, a word to the wise: In 2012, Google released an update that devalued exact-match domains.

So, if you're relying on a domain with 1 or 2 core keywords in it to help you rank better, you could be in for a rude awakening.

Another factor that doesn't contribute much to PageRank is the position of keywords in URL structure.

Example:

www.sample.com/keyword/London

vs.

www.sample.com/London/keyword

Contrary to what some may think, the placement of your keyword in your URL structure has little influence on your rank.

Cutts detailed that it may help a "little bit," but not to the point where you should "obsess" about it or resort to keyword stuffing.

All in all, it's more important to focus on the quality of the content you have to offer and to avoid keyword stuffing at all costs so that your site doesn't come across as spammy.

This, ironically enough, leads us to the next step.

Step 4: Keep it trustworthy

Everything boils down to trustworthiness.

Google puts its users and the user experience front and center. *Always.*

As such, your website will be ranked on a number of things, including the length of time it's been live since it was first indexed, the type of content you're publishing, and security features you're using.

Some important factors related to security and trustworthiness that you should keep in mind when structuring your URLs are outlined below.


Each will help you build site credibility, which will help you improve your rankings.


HTTP vs. HTTPS

This one is pretty simple and straightforward.

The “s” in HTTPS stands for secure, and it means just that. All communication between your browser and that specific website is encrypted and secure.

This is the standard for all websites where financial information is exchanged, like online banking and ecommerce.



 <u>difference between HTTP and HTTPS</u>		
<u>S.NO</u>	<u>HTTP</u>	<u>HTTPS</u>
1.	It is hypertext transfer protocol.	It is hypertext transfer protocol with secure.
2.	It is not secure & unreliable.	It is secure & reliable.
3.	HTTP URLs begin with http:// .	HTTPS URLs begin with https:// .
4.	It uses port 80 by default .	It was use port 443 by default.
5.	It is subject to man-in-the-middle & eavesdropping attacks.	It is designed to withstand such attacks & is considered secure against such attacks.

In a perfect world, it would be the gold standard for all websites.

I think that HTTPS should be included in your URL because all information that’s sent over a standard HTTP connection is done so in plain text.

This presents a significant problem if someone hacks into a connection, and you are, for example, typing in information that you don’t want a complete stranger having, like your home address, work email address, or birthdate.

❑ difference between HTTP and HTTPS

<u>S.NO</u>	<u>HTTP</u>	<u>HTTPS</u>
6.	HTTP message is not encrypted & is not safe to send.	HTTPS message is encrypted, including the headers & the request/response load.
7.	It is used for many purposes such as a website article that is open & available to everyone, this lack of security is of on important.	If a website is one that needs to collect private information such as credit card number then it is a more secure protocol.
8.	Operates at application layer.	Operates at transport layer.
9.	No certificates required.	Certificates required.

I discussed this in a [previous article](#) where I used Cloudtec as an example.

They saw almost double the number of top 10 search engine rankings after switching to HTTPS.

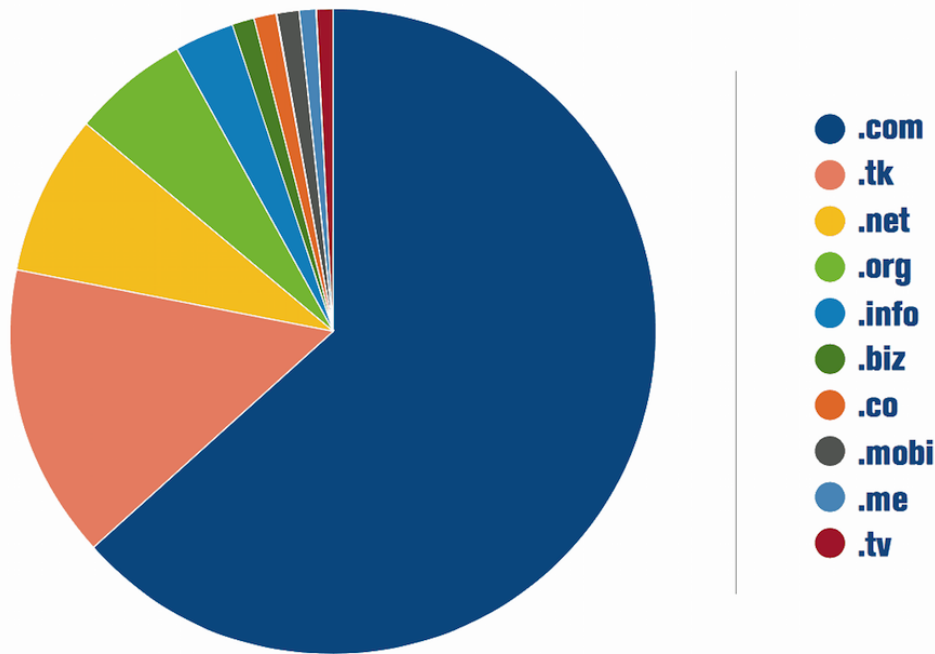
TLDs

TLD stands for “top-level domain” and is the part of the domain that sits to the right of the dot.

When it comes to TLDs, “.com” is the [most trustworthy option](#) to use.

Largest gTLDs and ccTLDs Marketed as gTLDs by Zone Size

Source: Zooknic, Q4 2014; Verisign, Q4 2014; Centralized Zone Data Service, Q4 2014



Another type of TLD is the gTLD, which stands for “generic top-level domain.”

These types of TLDs can be geo-targeted in the Google Search Console and include suffixes such as:

.edu
.net
.org
.gov
.mobi
.pro
.info
.jobs
.biz

Next, rTLDs (regional top-level domains) are comparable to top-level domains like “.com” or “.org,” but are region specific.

Examples include:

.eu

.asia

And last, but certainly not least, are generic country code top-level domains (gccTLDs). The list of gccTLDs changes frequently but, at the time this article was written, included suffixes such as:

.co

.me

.sr

.nu

.tv

.tk

.la

.sc

.ws

Choosing the right TLDs establishes authority and trust from an end user's perspective, making it more probable that your website will see traffic and shares.

While your TLD doesn't directly influence your ranking per se, it does indirectly influence it by influencing traffic — a factor that can have a direct and significant impact on your ranking.

Canonical URLs

Before I dive into canonical URLs, I first want to define what they actually are.

A canonical URL is a preferred URL that acts as the main address for a web page.

They are important because they help facilitate better credibility and trust by preventing [duplicate content](#).

As a result, they are effective at [increasing value with search engines](#).