# SEO Glossary: 72 SEO Terms [2020]

Like other specialized industries, search engine optimization has its own set of terms, abbreviations, and industry jargon. Phrases like *XML sitemap*, *page title*, *alternative text*, and *301 redirects* are puzzling at first. Here, we decode 72 common SEO terms using everyday language. Our goal is to set aside the complex jargon to make SEO more accessible and actionable.

****301 Redirect:****A signal to the search engines that a web page has moved. A person attempting to reach the original page gets taken to a new page that’s the closest match.

****404 Error:****A type of technical SEO error that signals the web page could not be found (often because it’s been moved or deleted).

****Algorithm:**** A formula that calculates the rank of search engine results. These algorithms evolve with the goal of providing a searcher with the most relevant content based on their specific search.

****Alternative Text:****Tags placed on images which provide the search engines with a written description of an image. Also known as “alt text” or “alt tags.” Including alternative text is, first and foremost, a principle of accessibility, but alt text also helps the search engines derive meaning as well.

****AMP:**** Accelerated mobile pages make a page load lightning-fast on mobile devices. AMP is most often used by publishers (news websites).

****Authority:****A measurement of a website’s strength, which gets built up over time via backlinks. The software company Moz has a measurement tool for "domain authority," which acts as a proxy to calculate your website's authority in the eyes of Google. A website with stronger authority will get its content to rank more quickly and easily.

****Backlinks:**** Links that point from other websites to yours. These links are valuable because of their ability to pass authority (ranking power) from one website to another. In the simplest terms, links act as votes of confidence between websites. The higher the authority of the website giving the link, the more authority that link will pass to the website to which it’s pointing.

****Black Hat SEO:**** Practices that try to increase search engine rank by violating Google's quality guidelines.

****Blog:**** A frequently updated section of a website (or and entire site) which is typically written in a more conversational manner. A place to publish your expert content.

****Bots:****Another name for search engine spiders or web crawlers.

****Bounce Rate:**** The percentage of visitors to a web page or website who leave after viewing just one page on the website. Bounce rate is a measure of interaction with your site. A "good bounce rate" varies from industry to industry and also depends on the traffic source.

****Breadcrumb:****A navigation element that shows your current location in relation to the structure of the website.

****Broken Link:**** A link on the web that points to a moved or non-existent page. Broken links are frowned upon by the search engines because the crawlers are being directed to dead ends, which wastes resources.

****Cache:**** Technology that temporarily stores website content in order to improve the load time of web pages.

****Citations:**** Business listings which include your business’ name, address, and phone number. Think Yellowpages.com or Apple Maps.

****Click-Through Rate:****The ratio of people who click on your link when they see it appear in the  Google search results. Higher click-through rates mean more clicks or visits. The closer your website is to the top of Google, the higher its click-through rate.

****CMS:**** Content Management Systems provide the structure and power to websites. The most common content management systems include WordPress, Wix, and Squarespace. These software platforms help you create and manage digital content.

****Competition:****Other websites that are also trying to rank based on — and drive traffic from — your keywords. Other websites that are trying to reach the same audience as you are.

****Content is King:****An often-used phrase which emphasizes the importance of content to search engine optimization. The search engines value content because it’s proof of your relevance and expertise.

****Conversion:****A visitor who completes a desired action on your website — such as filling out a form or making a purchase.

****Crawling:**** How the search engines explore the web and index (keep track of) web pages.

****CSS:**** Cascading Style Sheets make websites look good (or bad) by controlling fonts, colors, etc. independent of the content itself.

****Deep Link:**** A link on your own website that points to pages deep within your site (not to your homepage, for example). These links act as votes of confidence for individual pieces of content, such as blog posts.

****Domain Name Registrar:**** This is the name of the company that holds your web address (domain) for you. GoDaddy and Network Solutions are examples of popular registrars.

****Featured Snippets:****Answer blocks which appear at the top of a search engine results page, featuring content pulled from another web page and displayed on Google.com.

****Google Ads:**** An advertising platform from Google which powers the paid listing space on www.google.com and so much more. Google Ads are sold on a cost-per-click basis, and can be utilized for businesses of all sizes.

****Google Analytics:****A free, enterprise-level web analytics tool from Google which allows you to monitor your website’s performance.

****Google My Business:****Google's free tool for managing your Google Maps listing.

****Google Search Console:**** A communication channel with Google allowing you to understand which keywords are driving traffic to your website, and how well the search engines are crawling and indexing your content.

****H1 – H6:****Tags within a page’s content which define the header of a page and organize sections of content. Headers provide structure to your pages, and Google rewards structure.  Headers are also important to website visitors, since they break your content into easy-to-read parts.

****Holistic SEO:****Forward-thinking, long-term SEO practices which position your website for success today and years down the road.

****HTML:**** HyperText Markup Language is the programming code used to create web pages.

****Image Compression:****Making image file sizes smaller without losing image quality. Often used to speed up a web page, a little like magic.

****Index:****A database of all of the content the search engine crawlers have collected. Think of it like an old-fashioned Rolodex or a library.

****Internal Links:**** Links on your website which point to other pages within your website.

****Keyword Research:****The process of identifying the words and phrases your audience uses to search for your products, services, or expertise.

****Keyword Stuffing:****An old-school tactic of placing too many keywords on one page. It makes for a poor reading experience, so avoid this.

****Keywords:****The words and phrases which users enter into the search bar. Keywords are also known as “search queries." The search results for these words and phrases will direct people to your brand, products, and services.

****KPI:**** A Key Performance Indicator is a measurement of how well your marketing initiative met the overall campaign goal.

****Landing Page:**** Any page on your website that serves as the first page a person will view. Some landing pages have specific purposes, like supporting pay-per-click advertising.

****Local Pack:**** A group of (typically) three Google Maps listings representing local businesses and appearing on the search engine results page.

****Local Search:****Anything you do online to promote a business with a physical presence, such as a salon or an electrician. Local search begins with Google Maps.

****Long-Tail Keywords:**** Multiple-word phrases that are entered into the search bar for a specific reason. These phrases make up 70% of the total online searches! For example, long-tail keywords such as “what are the best headphones for kids” or “wireless headphones for swimming laps” imply that the user wants to buy something. These keywords are often less competitive than shorter phrases, and tend to have higher conversion rates.

****Meta Descriptions:****A tag in the header code of each web page. The search engines often use these to display these in the description portion of the listings you see on a search engine results page. Meta descriptions directly contribute to the likelihood of a person clicking (or not clicking) on your listing in the search results.

****Meta Directive:****Code snippets which live in the header code of each web page. These directives aren't visible to website visitors, but they provide search engine bots with page-by-page instruction on how to index a page’s content.

****Mobile-First Indexing:****In 2018, Google started crawling and indexing your pages based on the mobile version of your website instead of the desktop version.

****Organic Search:****The free listings displayed on Google, Yahoo, and Bing.

****Page Speed:****The amount of time it takes for a web page to load. There are many additional measurements within page speed — like First Contentful Paint (FCP),which measures perceived load time.

****Page Titles:**** Also known as title tags. Page Titles are tags in the header code of each web page. The search engines use these to craft the linked titles of the results you see on a search engines results page. Page titles influence the likelihood of a person clicking on your listing (the click-through rate).

****Pay-Per-Click:****Also known as PPC. A model of marketing where a marketer pays for website traffic on a cost-per-click or cost-per-visit basis.

****People Also Ask:**** A block displayed on some search engine results pages, featuring questions and answers relating to the search query.

****Personalization:****The ability of the search engines to customize the results you see based on factors such as your location or your past search history.

****Query:**** A word or series of words entered into the search bar.

****RankBrain:****A machine learning aspect of Google's algorithm which rewards the most relevant search results.

****Ranking:**** The order of the search engine results, with #1 being the best and located at the top of the page.

****Rel=Canonical:****A tag in the code of a web page that tells the search engines which version of the page is the original, and which are duplicates or copies.

****Relevancy:**** The relevance of the content on your website to search queries. The more relevant your content, the more likely your web page will perform well (appear higher) in the search results.

****Responsive Design:**** A method of building website layouts with content blocks that seamlessly reassemble depending on the size and orientation of the visitor’s screen.

****Robots.txt:**** A file on your website that tells the search engines where they’re not supposed to go.

****Schema:****Code that tags elements of your website with structured information that the search engines can then extract and display on the search engine results pages. For example, schema powers the recipes that show up directly in the search results.

****Search Volume:****The estimated average number of monthly searches completed using  a search engine like Google. Search volume is measured separately for each keyword.

****SEO:**** Search engine optimization is the art and science of getting your website found using the free (organic) keyword space.

****SERP:**** A Search Engine Results Page is what you see after you enter something in the search bar on Google, Yahoo, or Bing.

****Short-Tail Keywords:**** Approximately 30% of the searches performed online use short phrases — keywords like “headphones” or “headphones for sale.” This is called "the short tail of search" and the keywords used are called "short-tail keywords." These keywords tend to be high in both volume and competition, so these phrases are often out of reach.

****Site Speed:**** A measurement of how quickly a sample group of your web pages loads.

****Site Structure:****How your website content is organized. For example, the homepage is the top (most important) page, followed by those located in your main navigation. Often described by the number of clicks away from the homepage a particular page is located.

****SSL Certificate:****Secure Sockets Layer encrypts the data that gets passed between a server and a web browser. It makes your website appear as HTTPS, which is more secure.

****Structured Data:****Snippets of code that give search engines precise information about a web page’s content. Structured data allows search engines to easily organize web pages in the search results. Did you ever wonder how Google quickly displays recipes, movie times or concert information? Structured data (Schema Markup) gets the credit.

****Traffic:**** Visits to your website.

****URL:**** The web address of an individual web page.

****White Hat SEO:**** SEO practices that are in line with Google's quality requirements.

****XML Sitemap:****A file on your website that tells the search engines what to explore. Similar to your website’s resume.