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# HOW TO USE SEO: A GETTING STARTED GUIDE FOR BLOGGERS

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## Blogging and SEO

As a blogger you write contents and you want your target audience to read them. Your job does not finish at writing and posting your content though; you must make the content accessible to your readers. To do so, you must teach the search engines what your page is about and must show search engines that your blog posts are relevant to the audience's search inquiry.

## What is SEO?

Search engine optimization (SEO) is a process of increasing the visibility of your blog post for search engines. SEO makes it easy for search engines to find and categorize the blog post. It helps a post to appear higher on users' search result when they search a relevant term to the content of your blog post.

SEO boosts your blog's user experience and increases your organic blog traffic noticeably.



SEO is a part of the technical side of a blog but for its ability to attract more audience to your blog, it must be an integral part of your digital marketing strategy.

## How do search engines work?

When your audience searches Google, Yahoo and Bing for a term, which is relevant to the content of your blog post, SEO directs them to your blog and subsequently bring free and organic traffic to your blog.

Search engines decide what pages or post to show to your audience when they search keywords or strain of keywords.

To make a list of top relevant search results, the search engines use a series of automated software and internet bots that crawls the web to discover new URLs. Technical teams call them Crawlers. Search engines call them spiders who crawl the internet to find and index new links across the web. Crawlers or spiders have two jobs:

- They follow URLs by reading sitemaps or by finding your URL is other websites.
- They crawl the web to read and follow new or updated content of your blog regularly.

Search engines, with the help of crawlers, follow a few steps to index your blog post. The steps include:

- 1- Finding all the web pages on internet
- 2- Storing them in their algorithms
- 3- Saving a summary of the content
- 4- Saving the URL of the blog post

This process is known as the indexing process.

Search Engine Results Pages (SERPs) like to show the best result at the top of their search result pages. They match their database, which includes all the indexed URLs on the web, and match the keywords with the content of the indexed URLs.

Table 1 A guide to technical terms: Cho, J. Garcia-Molina, H. (1999)

<b>Crawl</b>	The process of finding and memorizing new or updated URLs on the web.
<b>Crawler</b>	Automated software and bots that crawl the web to discover new URLs.
<b>Index</b>	Finding, storing, and saving content and URLs of the content on the web.
<b>SEO</b>	Search engine optimization: the process of improving a site for search engines to find.
<b>SERP</b>	Search Engine Results Page: the pages listed by search engines in response to a user's search query.

## Why use SEO?

Now that you know how search engines work, you can train them too. You must use SEO to increase your blog's crawlability and indexability.

If you use correct SEO, you can make the job of the crawlers easier and lead them to your content. Use the SEO to guide the crawlers to your contents so that they:

- 1- Read your blog
- 2- Follow the links on the contents of your post
- 3- Index your blog posts based on the topic and relevance to that topic.

Once the crawlers finish their job, search engines use the indexes to form their search result pages. If you pick the best SEO, your blog posts appear among the top search results too.

## Optimize SEO

If you want to optimize the SEO on your blog, you must optimize both your content and your blog's structure.

### On-page SEO

On-page SEO is the process of optimizing search elements on the blog as opposed to use of external tools to gain more relevant traffic from search engines.

You use on-page SEO to optimize your blog posts and to rank high in search engines. It helps the crawlers to read and understand your content and to help search the engines to lead your audience to your blog. A few of the basic tips include:

- **Write quality content:** You must focus on a subject when writing a post and when you plan your blog. Stay focused. Search engines do not rank websites that have content about everything high.
- **Title tags:** When you search a keyword, on the top of the link of a web page in the result page, you see a short text. It is the title tag. Include the main keyword in your title tag.

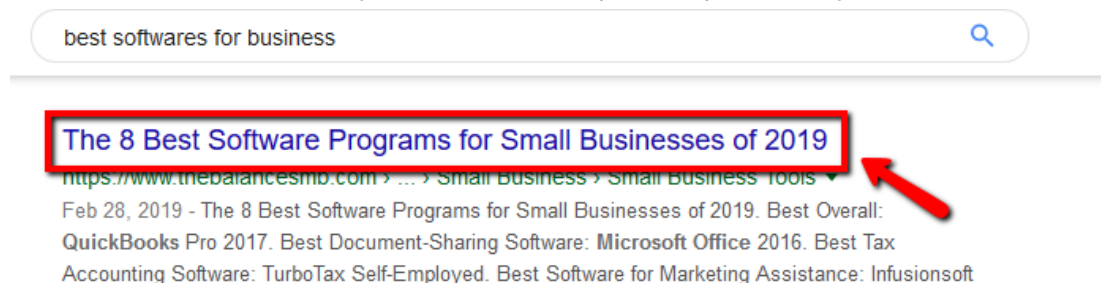


Figure 0.1 Title Tag: Harris, Zac and Condron, Sidra. SEO: Examples of Best Practices "Spyfu"<sup>1</sup>

- **Meta descriptions:** When you search a keyword, in the result page, the description below the link is the meta description. It flows in a sentence and is easy to read. Include your main keyword in meta description of your blog post.

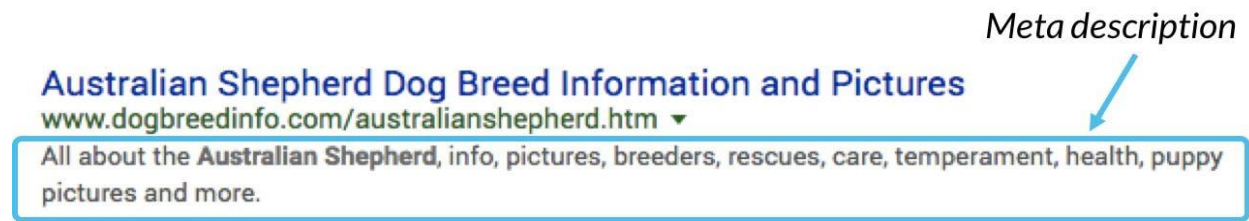


Figure 0.2 Meta Description: Meta Description "Moz"

- **Heading tags:** Use H1, H2 and H3 tags to break the body of your post in different blocks. It makes it easier for both your audience and the SERP crawlers to read. H2 tags are the most efficient ones as they carry more SEO clouds.

## Use the power of links


- **Internal linking:** Linking posts and pages from your blog on other pages and posts on your blog is internal linking. By doing so, the crawlers will learn about your other relevant blog posts in one trip to your blog.
- **External linking:** Linking posts from your blog to other websites
  - Use reputable websites that crawlers indexed to add value to your blog.
  - Crawlers render and follow the external reputable link to update themselves.
  - In the process they find your blog post and memorize its relationship with your blog.
- **Backlinking:** Backlinking also known as off-page SEO is a strategy to use outside pages to optimize your blog.
  - a. SERPs see multiple reputable sites linked to your blog
  - b. They elevate your reputation.
- **Descriptive URLs:** Descriptive link addresses instead of cryptic URLs, makes your URLs friendlier for third party websites to link to your content.
- **Anchor text:** Use the right anchor text that fits your content.
  - a. Use one of your post's keywords
  - b. keep the flow of the sentence relevant to the keywords



**Note:** Used this step as a digital marketing strategy to keep the audience on your blog longer too.

One analogy of backlinking is to see each link to your blog as a vote or testimonial for your blog. They work like the time that you refer a friend to your favorite store because you bought their products and were satisfied with them. The better the backlinking website is, the higher you will rank in Google.

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 **Avoid:** Using generic text like “click here” is a waste of your precious anchor text. Search engines can read anchor text so use a keyword.

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## Structure and design of the page

While you are busy practicing the SEO tips, remember that you want to create a content for your audience not for search engines.

- Pick a reputable domain that search engines already indexed
- Pick a host domain that has a responsive design for mobiles, tablets, and PCs
- Pick a host domain that has fast page-load time
- Avoid adding many pop-ups

## Structure of the content

Think about your target audience. Who are they? What are they looking for?

- **Know you audience:** Learn about your audience’s interest to plan your future posts.
- **Use long-tail keywords:** It is between 2 and 5 words long and is more targeted as opposed to reaching a mass audience.
- **Use Google search console:** Google offer the free tool that helps you monitor and maintain your blog’s presence in Google Search. It offers the following services:
  - **Search analytics tab:** it shows all the pages on your website that are getting your traffic.
  - **Impressions:** it shows
    - How many people are seeing your listing and clicking through your posts’ URLs
    - How many people are seeing your listing and do not click through your posts’ URLs
    - Click through rate (CTR) of your blog
  - **Keyword analysis:** it shows:
    - The keywords you are getting impressions for
    - The keyword you are getting clicks for

## Image Optimization

SERPs cannot see pictures like humans do. SERPs treat images are like any other file formats. Use the following tactics to increase your blog traffic from images:

- **Name the images properly:** A random name, or the default name that your phone or camera gave to the image, lowers the image’s SEO value.

- **Give them an alt-tag:**

- Alt-tag helps SERPS know what the image is about to give more optimization.
- Alt-tag increases your blog post's accessibility for your visually impaired audience.

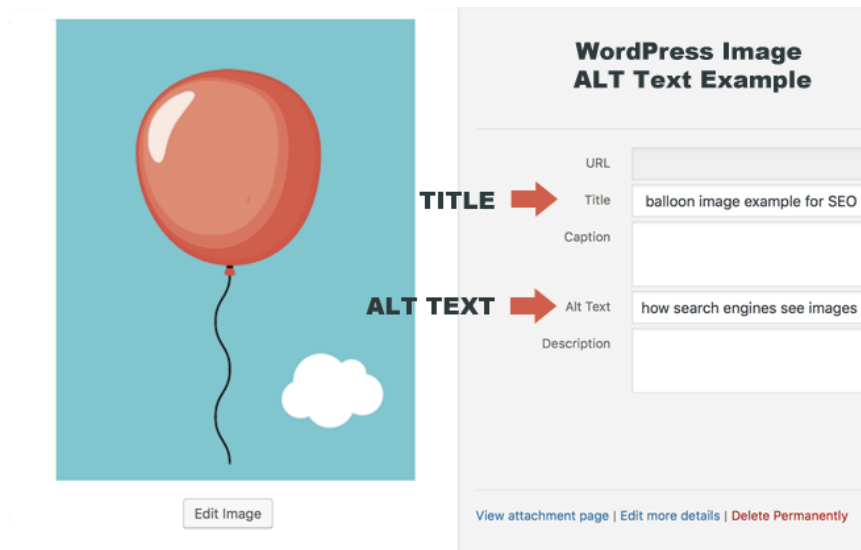


Figure 0.3 Include ALT attributes in a blog: CrimsonDesign

- **Use the content of the image in the body:** If the image has a message in it (like memes) include the content of the image in the post text.

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