

Basic SEO Practices

In continuation of our discussion about Search Engine Optimization, in this module we will explore some simple SEO practices that can be applied to websites as prescribed by Google's SEO Starter Guide.

Objectives:

08_Obj01: Identify the parts of a website that can be optimized

08_Obj02: Identify the steps in adding basic SEO to HTML Files

08_Obj03: Identify important terms related to SEO

For this lesson, we will use *Hypertext Markup Language* or HTML to create simple files that can be opened by a web browser. These will be offline files. Note that this module will not teach you to create a functional commercial website.

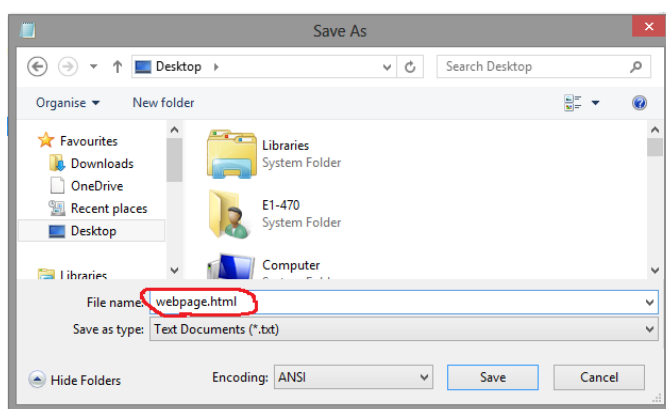
To illustrate important points, we will use one example throughout the lesson. Let's say that we own and operate a website about mountain climbing. Let's call our fictional website *mountaineering.ph*.

To start, let's create a simple HTML file. Follow these steps.

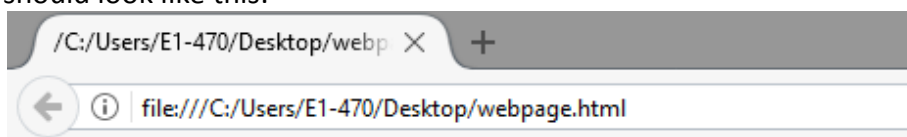
1. Open Notepad or Textpad in your computer.
2. Enter the following text:

```
<html>
<head>
</head>
<body>
<h1>Mountaineering.ph</h1>
<p>Welcome to our website</p>
</body>
</html>
```

3. Save your file. You can use any file name. Just make sure that you add ".html" at the end of it. Doing so will save your text as an HTML file



4. Double click your file to open it in your default web browser. It should look like this:



Mountaineering.ph

Welcome to our website

We now have a basic HTML file. It may not look like much but it is the correct format that can be added to a real website.

Page Title

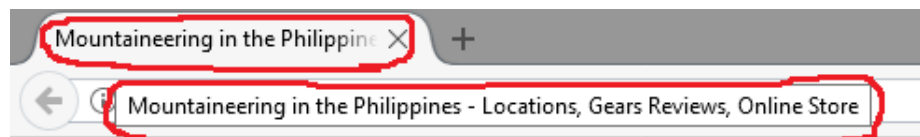
For obvious reasons, Google gives a lot of attention to web page titles so one of the first things that we should do is to create an effective title for your web page. This is done by adding a *title tag* in your HTML file. A title tag lets users and search engines read the topic of your web page. If the web page appears in Google search results, the

contents of the title tag will serve as the clickable link to your website.

To add a title tag, paste the following text between the <head> tags in your file like so:

```
<html>
<head>
<title>Mountaineering in the Philippines -
Locations, Gears Reviews, Online Store</title>
</head>
<body>
<h1>Mountaineering.ph</h1>
<p>Welcome to our website</p>
</body>
</html>
```

Next, save the file and open it in a browser. The title text should appear in the browser tab and when you hover your mouse pointer over the tab.



Mountaineering.ph

Welcome to our website

Now for the SEO part. According to Google:

“The title for your homepage can list the name of your website/ business and could include other bits of important information like the physical location of the business or maybe a few of its main focuses or offerings”

X.X

In our website's title we added the name of the website *Mountaineering in the Philippines* and its 3 main functions *Locations, Gears Reviews, Online Store*.

Google recommends these best practices when adding a title to your web pages:

- Accurately describe the page's content
- Create unique title tags for each page
- Use brief, but descriptive titles

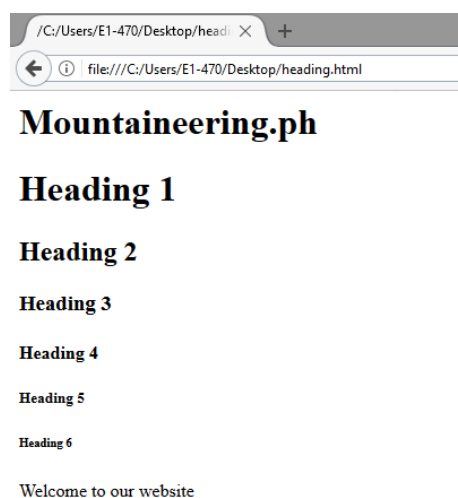
Heading Tags

The contents of heading tags are larger than the normal text in the web page. There are 6 sizes of heading tags from <h1> to <h6>. Heading tags are used to display titles, subtitles, and other important texts in the web page. They can also be used in SEO because search engine algorithms tend to pay more attention to texts in heading tags than normal text.

To see the different sizes of heading tags, paste the following text below the first <h1> tag in your file:

```
<html>
<body>
<h1>Mountaineering.ph</h1>
<h1>Heading 1</h1>
<h2>Heading 2</h2>
<h3>Heading 3</h3>
<h4>Heading 4</h4>
<h5>Heading 5</h5>
<h6>Heading 6</h6>
<p>Welcome to our website</p>
</body>
</html>
```

Your web page should look like this:



Here are best practices recommended by Google:

- Imagine you're writing an outline
- Use headings sparingly across the page

Description Meta Tag

You can also add a description meta tag to each of your web pages. A description meta tag gives search engines a summary of what the page is about. It can be a sentence or a short paragraph. When your web page is included in Google search results, the contents of the description meta tag may appear as a *snippet* which can be seen below the title.

To add a description meta tag, add this text below the title tag:

```
<html>
<head>
<title>Mountaineering in the Philippines - Locations, Gears Reviews, Online
Store</title>
<meta name="description" content="Everything you need to know about mountain
climbing in the Philippines. Mountaineering.ph keeps you updated on events, news,
the latest gear and most popular locations.">
</head>
<body>
<h1>Mountaineering.ph</h1>
<p>Welcome to our website</p>
</body>
</html>
```

Because it is a meta tag, it is not visible on the web page itself but it is visible to search engines. Here are the best practices when adding a description meta tag according to Google:

- Accurately summarize the page's content
- Use unique descriptions for each page

When adding a description meta tag, you should add words that are most likely to be used by users as search keywords. According to Google:

“Words in the snippet are bolded when they appear in the user's query. This gives the user clues about whether the content on the page matches with what he or she is looking for.”

Website URL

The *Uniform Resource Locator* or URL serves as the address of a web page. Each web page in a website has a unique URL. The URL typically displays the names of the folders and documents that make up the web page.

For example, if the articles in your websites are named *article1*, *article2*, *article3*, and so on and if they are located in a folder named *folder1*, your URL's may look like this:

<http://www.mountaineering.ph/folder1/article1.html>

This URL does not give readers and search engines a very good idea about the contents of the page. Instead of *folder1* and *article1*, you can use more descriptive names for your folders and files. This will make your URL's easier to read for both users and search engines. Here's an example:

<http://www.mountaineering.ph/product-reviews/best-hiking-shoes-2017>

Just by reading the URL, users will already know what the page is about. Furthermore, it could also lead to better crawling of your documents by search engines.

Site Navigation

A website is basically a collection of documents that is shared through the Internet. Just like the documents in your computer, the pages in your website have to be organized in a manner that is easy to understand and navigate; not just for you but also for users and search engines. Your web pages should be organized in a hierarchy where the most important pages are the easiest to find.

Breadcrumb Lists

You can also make your website easier to navigate by adding a *breadcrumb list* at the top or bottom of your page. Google defines a breadcrumb list as “a row of internal links at the top or bottom of the page that allows visitors to quickly navigate back to a previous section or the root (home) page”

A breadcrumb link looks like this:

[Homepage](#) >> [Product Reviews](#) >> [Best Hiking Shoes 2017](#) >> [CAT Hiking Boots](#)

Content

In 1996, Bill Gates wrote an essay that was published on the Microsoft website. It was entitled *Content is King* and the first paragraph reads:

“Content is where I expect much of the real money will be made on the Internet, just as it was in broadcasting.”

“Content is king” has become a mantra in the field of SEO and online marketing. There are many tricks that you can do to make your website more attractive to users and search engines but at the end of the day, the most powerful tools that you have are the contents that you publish.

You may be able to boost your website’s popularity with effective SEO practices but without quality content, your website will not be popular for long. Your website should constantly give people data and services that are informative, useful, and/or entertaining.

Glossary of Terms

TITLE TAG - It lets users and search engines read the topic of your web page.

HEADING TAG - This is used to display titles, subtitles, and other important texts in the web page.

DESCRIPTION META TAG – It gives search engines a summary of what the page is about.

UNIFORM RESOURCE LOCATOR – It serves as the address of a web page

BREADCRUMB LIST - a row of internal links at the top or bottom of the page that allows visitors to quickly navigate back to a previous section or the root (home) page

Sources:

Silkstream.net. (2014, July 11). “Content is King” – Bill Gates, 1996. Retrieved October 09, 2017, from <https://www.silkstream.net/blog/2014/07/content-is-king-bill-gates-1996.html>

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Kelly, R. (2016, October 19). How To Write a Header Tag (h1) for SEO. Retrieved October 09, 2017, from <https://pearanalytics.com/blog/2014/how-to-write-a-header-tag-h1-for-seo/>