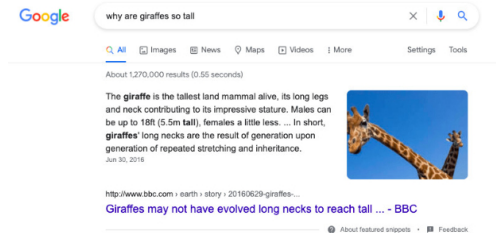


11.2 HTML Meta Tags

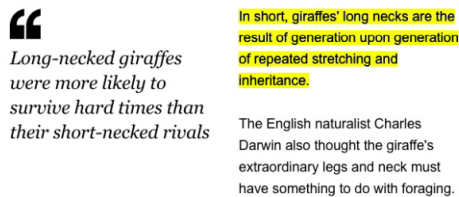
As mentioned in the video, metadata is simply data about data. It typically (with exceptions) does not appear on the browser screen. Instead, it exists only in HTML code to be parsed by machines. One of these machines, of course, is the almighty search engine.

In SEO, comprehensive strategies are important. While backlink building through the use of the `<a>` tag is great for creating website authority, so are HTML meta tags. Meta tags can be used for lots of purposes, from layout building to informing search engines where to look for what on a site.

For example, when you search for something on Google, it now automatically generates an “answer” snippet at the top of your SERP.



If you click on that result, Google will immediately take you to the relevant part of the page, highlighting the answer to your query.

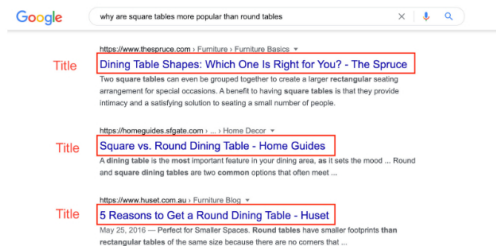


In this section, we'll go over the most crucial meta tags for SEO, their purpose, and tips on how to optimize their use.

**Note: While there are over 90 categories of meta tags, not all of them are part of the SEO ranking metrics.*

Title tag

You know those clickable headlines you see in your SERPs? This is the only meta tag you will really see when looking at a website, for it appears on your browser tab as well. It's created via the `<title>` tag.



**Note: One web page can only have one `<title>` tag.*

SEO Purpose

You shouldn't judge a book by its cover — but users typically judge a page by its title. The `<title>` tag is the primary content by which the user decides whether or not to check out your page.

Code Example

The `<title>` tag is added into the `<head>` element like this:

```
<head>
<title>This is the title of the page.</title>
</head>
```

Best Practices

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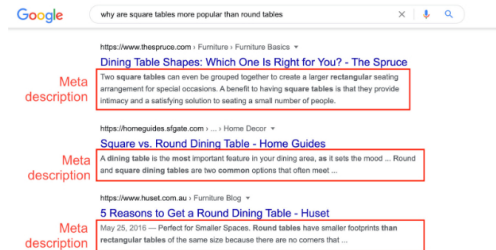
- Have a unique title for every page on your website.
- KISS: keep it short and simple.
- Add keywords and match search terms.
- Avoid vague titles.
- Attract attention but avoid clickbait-y titles.
- No more than 60 characters.

**Note: Sometimes, Google might stray off and use a different title for your web page. This is usually done to increase perceived relevance to the user's search.*

Meta description tag

Within the `<head>` element, you'll find `<meta>` tags, the typical way to add extra information for search engines to understand you.

The meta description is typically used for SERPs next to the title — it's the description right below.



**Note: While descriptions may be used for the SERP snippets, Google has said they do not use the description meta tag in their rankings.*

SFO Purpose

Treat it as a general summary of your web page. Above all else, it's a pitch: its main goal is to convince the user to come to your site in one or two sentences.

Code Example

The meta description tag should look something like this:

```
<head>
<meta name="description" content="Short description of the page">
</head>
```

Best Practices

- Each page on your website should have a unique description.
- Content summaries should be relevant and accurate.
- Include keywords!
- Use sentence case (start the description with a capitalized letter).
- Avoid vague or clickbait-y descriptions.
- The optimal length should be around 140 characters.

Meta robots tag

Do you recall how search engine bots crawl and index pages? Well, developers can also provide these bots with instructional guidelines on how to index information on specific pages. For example, you can instruct the robot to not index whole pages at all!

There are two ways to do so:

1. Through a robots.txt file,
2. Or using a meta robots tag.

**Note: Robots are also commonly known as spiders: they're the bots crawling through your pages!*

Robots.txt vs Meta robots tag

When a robot wants to come onto your site, it firstly checks your robots.txt file or the information specified in the meta robots tag. There are two main differences between them:

1. While **robots.txt** issues directives (or suggestions) regarding how to index content, the meta tag's instructions are more firm. However, with both options, crawlers don't *have* to follow the directives, and the more malicious spiders could easily just skip them.
2. **Meta robots tags** can only tell the crawler not to index a specific web page, whereas robots.txt files have the option of blocking a whole website.

Interested in knowing more? We recommend you read [this article](#) in Ahrefs.

SEO Purpose

If you misuse the meta robots tag, your site could face disastrous consequences in search result pages. There are two main values you need to know:

- **index/noindex:** informs the search engines if it should show your page in its search results;
- **follow/nofollow:** tells search engines how they should act with the links on your pages, i.e. whether they should trust and follow the links you added.

Note: If you want to add **noFollow to an individual link, instead of a meta robots tag, you should add rel="nofollow" to the <a> tag's attributes.*

Code Example

Here's how you can combine the values mentioned above:

```
<meta name="robots" content="noindex, nofollow">

<meta name="robots" content="index, follow">

<meta name="robots" content="noindex, follow">

<meta name="robots" content="index, nofollow">

<meta name="robots" content="none">
```

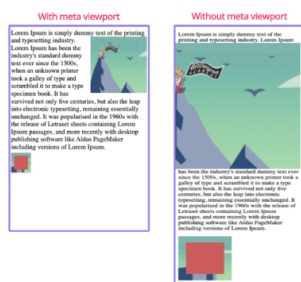
**Note: By default, the meta robots are set to index, follow. Writing content="none" will set it to its default values.*

Best Practices

- Meta robots tags should only be used when you don't want a page indexed/crawled.
- Do not use the meta robots tag in your robots.txt file.
- Remember that malicious crawlers will likely disregard your meta robots directives. If there's sensitive or confidential information involved, use alternative safety mechanisms (e.g. password protection) to secure your website.

Meta viewport

The meta viewport tag is responsible for correctly rendering your page to different sized screens. This is important if you want your website to be accessible not only on desktop but also on a tablet, smartphone, or another device.



SEO Purpose

No one wants to visit a desktop-only website on their phone. After all, in 2019, over half of the Internet traffic came from mobile devices. Google knows this, which is why they penalize websites that don't use meta viewport and responsive design.

**Note: A meta viewport tag is not enough to make a website mobile-friendly. As you learned in the web design section, responsive design bears the brunt of the job.*

Code Example

This is the most common way to add a meta viewport tag into your HTML code:

```
<meta name="viewport" content="width=device-width, initial-scale=1.0">
```

Best Practices

- Add the meta viewport tag to all your web pages.
- Unless you're familiar with the viewport tag, use the most common version (see above).
- Check if your page is mobile-friendly with [this tool](#).

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11.2 HTML Meta Tags

/ by Indre Lukauskaite

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