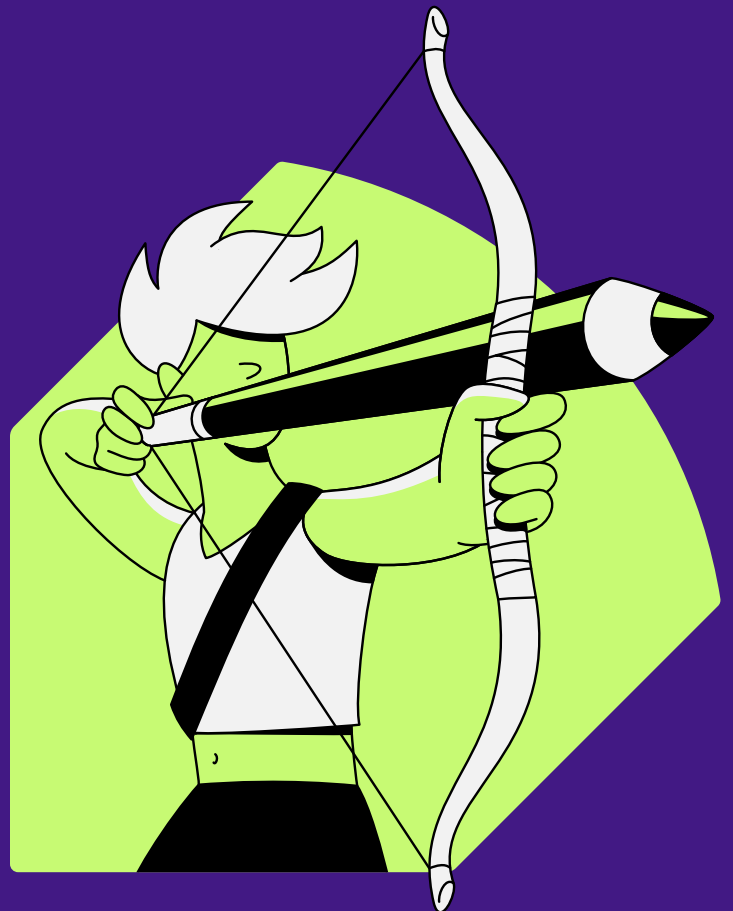# The Semrush Content Writing Workbook

A practical guide to improving
the efficiency of content production

SEMRUSH

About This Workbook

If writing is an art and marketing is a science, then producing high-performance marketing content requires a healthy dose of both.

In content marketing, there's no such thing as a blank page. There's always a set of business objectives, an audience, a brief, and a strategy just below the surface. Professional content marketers know how to use everything at their disposal to write assets that resonate with their target audiences.

In this workbook, we'll take you through what it takes to write standout content that achieves real business goals. You'll work through practical tasks and learn how to develop a content plan, write engagingly, and deliver a ton of value to your audience.

Here's what we are going to cover: ↓
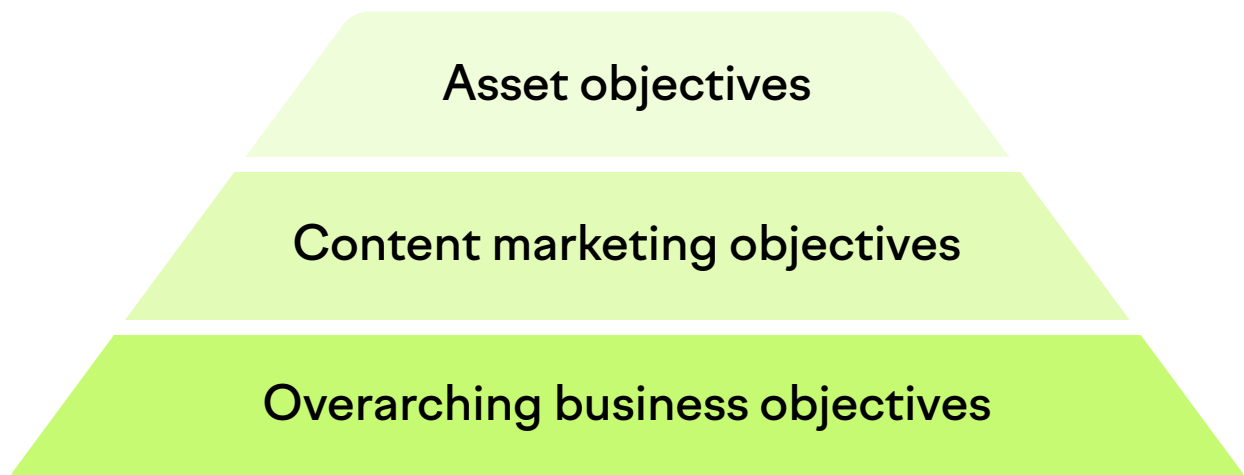
Table of Contents

Getting started with a content writing plan

1   Starting with objectives

There are several layers of objectives you'll need to keep in mind when writing your content marketing plan.

Asset objectives

Content marketing objectives

Overarching business objectives

Overarching business objectives

While these won't help you write content directly, business objectives are foundational—they inform the strategic direction of the company. In most cases, these objectives will have been defined by the executive team.

Content marketing objectives

These objectives should identify exactly what your content campaigns need to achieve within a certain timeframe. They should also stay aligned with your overarching business objectives in order to stay relevant and measurable

Asset objectives

Each individual asset should have an objective and help move the content plan forward. Nothing should be created unless there is some strategic thinking behind it.

2 Writing effective objectives

There's an art to writing effective objectives. Vague aims are impossible to measure, those that overreach demotivate teams, but objectives that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) get results.

Answer the following questions to ensure your content marketing objectives are SMART:

S What does this content campaign need to achieve?

M How will we know it is successful?

A Can we achieve this with current resources?

R How does it align with the overarching business strategy?

T By when must we achieve the results?

Who is your target audience?

You need a firm understanding of your target audience. Without this you are in danger of creating content that is too generalized—and, as prolific American author Mike Nappa says:

> "If you write for everyone, no one will buy. If you write for one, everyone who feels like that one will buy."

Developing an understanding of your audience

Buyer personas allow you to segment your market into recognizable groups for targeting. They profile your target customers, existing clients and potential customers or readers that you may not want to target yet. And once you have a clear picture of each type of client, it becomes easier to know their aims, challenges and objections. This in turn will help you position your messaging and create content that resonates with them. ↓

These personas encompass a range of information that might be relevant for your team to know. For example:

Demographics and background

- Age range
- Gender identity
- Employment
- Salary
- Location
- Marital status

Objectives and challenges

- What do they need to achieve?

- How would your product or service help them?

- What's stopping them?

- What other products or services have they tried?

Customer journey

- What would they like most about your product or service?

- What objections would they have?

- How would you pitch your product or service to them in 30 seconds or less?

Content marketing preferences

- Their favorite content formats (e.g., podcasts and blog posts)

- The key topics and themes they are into

- Their preferred communication channels (e.g., social media or email)

- The brand and influencers they tend to follow

How do you create buyer personas?

Get input from your team to decide exactly what information you need for your buyer personas. A well-researched set will help your content team understand who they are writing for and why.

Just be aware that these personas should be evidence-based, and not invented because assumptions about clients can lead your content writing team astray. You can use a range of data sources to help you inform your buyer personas, including:

- ✔ Google Analytics
- ✔ User surveys or interviews
- ✔ In-house sales or customer service data

- ✔ Other reliable team knowledge (e.g. from account managers)
- ✔ Social media analytics

[Read more about Buyer Personas↗](#)

What is your message and how will it engage your audience on an emotional level?

When creating a message for your buyer personas, you have to remember that each person is at a different stage of the customer journey. This journey can be mapped onto a content marketing funnel. As you can see from the diagram below, we generally consider clients to be in one of three stages; the Awareness stage, the Consideration stage, or the Conversion stage.

Awareness
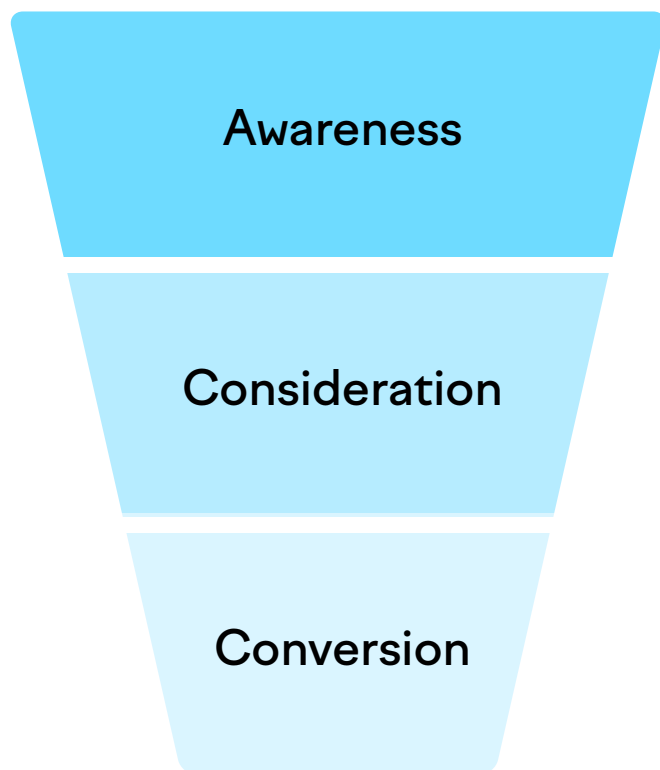
The customer is aware they need to solve a problem, but unaware of the solutions available to them.

Consideration

The customer is aware of a number of solutions and is researching the best fit for them.

Conversion

The customer is almost ready to purchase a solution, but needs guidance and onboarding help.

Messaging for each stage of the funnel

You can encounter leads at any stage of the customer journey. That means you should have a range of content to meet your buyer personas' needs at each point in the funnel:

Awareness

At this point in the customer journey, your website visitor needs guidance, not a salesperson. The content you create should therefore answer their questions and point them in the right direction. Avoid hard-sell copywriting and give the content consumer time to explore their options.

If a visitor clicks through to a sales page or product landing page, they might be more serious about purchasing.

Consideration

At this point in the customer journey, your website visitor wants more product information. Refer back to your buyer personas—what were their biggest frustrations? What do they need to achieve? Ensure the content you produce helps them find the answers to their most frequently asked questions. Your potential buyers should be able to understand the benefits of the product or service.

Conversion

When someone is ready to buy from you, it's smart to make sure the purchasing process is as simple as possible. Conversion content gives the clients the nudge they need to make a final decision and makes buying from you easy.
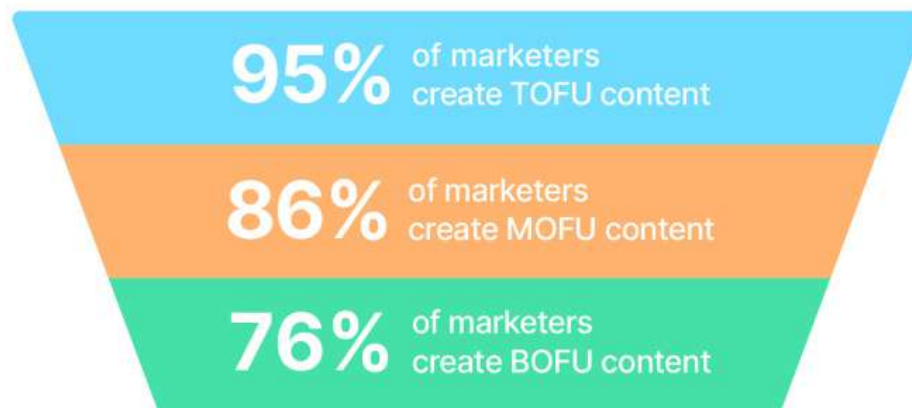
Source: [the Semrush Study↗](#)

Primer # The continuing importance of text

Text will always have certain advantages over video, even beyond the obvious benefit of being more easily interpreted by machines and search algorithms.

Text is:

- quicker to consume than video (you can read faster than you can watch);

- easier to scan than video (skip down if you already knew this part);

- easier to share than video (try to pull a quote out of a video and send it to a friend);

- lends itself well to short-form information (no one records quick answer videos);

- is better in quiet or social environments (I read the paper while eating breakfast with my wife).

Is anyone seriously predicting the end of text? Try to imagine it. What do you do with your email inbox? How would social media comments work? How would you search for things?

Video is an amazing format. It conveys emotion and trust. It explains complex concepts. It's passive to consume so viewers often sit back and binge for hours. But video is no threat to text.

— *__Andy Crestodina__,*
Chief Marketing Officer and Co-Founder,
__Orbit Media Studios__, Inc.

Workbook Task One

Preparing your content plan objectives

Answer the following questions, considering the first three months of your content marketing output.

S What does our content campaign need to achieve?
e.g., We need to increase the number of our Marketing Qualified Leads (MQLs).

M How will we know it is successful? (What Key performance indicators will you use?)
e.g., We need to increase those leads by at least 15%.

A Can we achieve this with current resources? (If not, what resources will we need to find?)
e.g., We will need to use a content marketing and SEO platform to help.

R How does it align with the overarching business strategy?
e.g., New leads will increase our bottom line.

T By when must we achieve the results?
e.g., By the end of the first quarter.

Summarize your answers above in a single paragraph, which will form the basis of your content marketing plan objectives.

E.g. By the end of the first quarter, we will have chosen a SEO content marketing tool to help us generate 15% more new, qualified leads and increase our bottom line.

Primer # How does your content and brand story impact your audience?

So far we've been focusing on your objectives and your customers. Your brand image forms a much bigger part of the equation: It's the public's perception of your company. It exists in the minds of your consumers and followers—and comprises their thoughts (both positive and negative) about your company.

Every piece of content, input and interaction from and with your brand contributes to this image. While you cannot control how your content and branding is perceived by the marketplace, you can strive to ensure all the content, copy and ads you produce form a consistent and coherent image of your brand.

Ultimately, it's about having a shared vision and understanding of your brand story, style, voice and tone. By telling authentic stories that reflect positively on your company, your content will contribute to a brand image that people know and love.

Consider the following brand questions with your team.

What does our company deliver that no other does?

When do we perform better than our competitors?

When have we failed to do our best?

What would our customers miss most about us, if we went away tomorrow?

What is our Brand Purpose—the ultimate value we deliver to our customers?

Workbook Task Two

Create a Content Marketing Mission Statement

In the following task, work with your team to complete a content marketing mission statement. It will ensure everyone is working towards the same goal and will help make your content more consistent.

Fill out the following content marketing mission statement from Andy Crestodina and Orbit Media. This will help you consider how your content will help your audience understand why you are different.

Our content is where

[audience x]   gets

[information y]   that offers

[benefit z]

How to write engaging content and copy

Learning how to write engaging copy takes time, but there are some tips and techniques that can help speed up the process. Let's go into some key writing tactics and frameworks that all marketers need to know.

The AIDA framework

AIDA stands for Attention, Interest, Desire, Action. This natural progression is important to keep in mind, especially when trying to write conversion or product-led content.

The framework is most often applied to a single product-focused landing or sales page at the bottom of the funnel, but it can also be useful when thinking about other types of content too. For example, learning how to get your audience's attention and generating interest is important at all stages of content creation.

Here's how the framework works and what you should consider: ↓

Attention—writing great headlines

The first step in the framework encourages you to think about your headlines and openings. How are you going to get your buyer persona to click on your content? What will make them look twice?

Things to think about:

- Use contrast, humor, controversy, conflict or emotion in your headlines. Including one or more of these factors will make your copy irresistible.

- Ensure your H1 is unique—this will avoid your website visitors getting confused.

- Make sure your H1 describes the content. Google may have a harder time understanding what your content is about if your H1 doesn't describe it well enough.

- Use question words 'how', 'why', 'what', and 'where'—these help people understand what they will find in your content.

- Consider using numbers in your headlines: list headlines tend to get 80% more traffic than other types of articles. These also get 2x more social shares than other headline types, according to our research.

Other attention-grabbing factors

- Select eye-catching featured images. Your featured images should pop. If they are not visually arresting, they won't stand out on social media and your content could easily fade into the background.

- Speak to your audience directly. Use all of the data you have on your buyer personas to your advantage. The more personal a piece of content feels, the more likely it is to be successful.

Interest—delivering on expectations

Once someone has clicked on your article, video, or landing page, you have to keep them interested. **Here's how:**

- Deliver on expectations. Your content must meet your audience's expectations—clickbait headlines aim to deceive in order to generate traffic. At the same time, they get high bounce rates because people leave when the content isn't what it appeared to be.

- Provide value. No matter what type of content you're writing, you need to be sure your audience can find the solution they are searching for and take away something practical. Remember your audience's challenges, questions and goals—and be sure that your content guides and informs them.

Desire—showing benefits over features

Once you have someone's attention and interest, it's time to consider how your content affects their desire. How will you get your audience over the line and ready to take an action?

- If you are writing conversion-level content, remember to speak to your product or services benefits. Think about HOW your customers will use the product and the problems it will solve. This is far more interesting and engaging for your reader or viewer than a list of product features.

- Reviews, customer experiences and social proof are also key drivers of desire. At the very least, they show that other people who are similar to the audience have also enjoyed the benefits of your product. It adds layers of legitimacy and trust to your conversion-level content.

Action—tapping into emotions

There are numerous ways to encourage people to take action and make a purchase.

- The fear of missing out (FOMO) is powerful. People don't like to think that their peers, competitors—or even friends—are enjoying something out of their reach. Tapping into this unconscious bias can drive people to take action.

- Stories in particular work by engaging your customer's emotions— and in doing so, they create positive associations with your brand or product. Emotions like love, joy, surprise and empathy make people feel good about your product. Emotions such as fear, anger, sadness or jealousy can also push people into taking action. However, always make sure that your approach is ethical and fair, and reflects the values of your brand.

- Think about your calls to action. People sometimes need an extra push to make a purchase. By including a deadline, people know they only have a short time to act. Referral fees and discount codes can also encourage people to make a purchase or recommendation they wouldn't otherwise make.

7 Elements of an Engaging Blog Post

Margarita Loktionova (Our Content Marketing Lead at Semrush) interviewed Henneke Duistermaat. Henneke teaches writers how to captivate, educate, and inspire their readers. She is the author of two 5-star rated books and several acclaimed courses about copywriting and blogging. Find more tips from Henneke at [Enchanting Marketing](#).

Have you ever written a blog that's fallen as flat as a pancake? It had great content, lots of ideas, and it took you a long time...but you just got nothing back. No comments, no shares, no engagement at all.

We've all been there—and it's a real tear jerker.

If your blogs aren't doing as well as you'd hoped, it's time to think about making them more engaging, more conversational—and more effective. Here are seven elements that you really cannot do without when writing blogs online. ↓

1 Identify the blog's purpose

An aimless blog is a readerless blog—that almost goes without saying. So, before you start writing anything, it's important to define your mission. Whether that's to [get more people to cook and eat delicious Malaysian food](#), to stamp out gobbledygook (in Henneke's case), or even to make work better with a SaaS product—your willingness to help and improve people's lives should come across in your content. That's what's going to get people to sit up and take notice.

Think about how your business can help others and—even in a small way—make the world a better place through your writing. It should be something you're passionate about—that's what's going to shine through.

Once you focus on your mission instead of sales, customers will start lining up at the door. Because a mission attracts, energizes, and motivates people.

2 Tell the story

"Once upon a time" is for fairytales, but storytelling itself is an important blogging technique. In fact, stories are often what make your articles memorable.

Unfortunately, people are often confused about how to use storytelling in blog posts. One way to think about this is the zoom-in-zoom-out technique. You tell a specific story and then relate it to the big picture/data. ↓

It looks something like this:

- Captivate readers by zooming into the story of one person in one specific situation

- Zoom out to the bigger picture and describe the trends, the lessons, the statistics

- Avoid the bit in-between

Using a personal example helps the reader relate to the narrative on a deeper level—and the broader context shows them why it's important.

3 Simple writing is clear writing

Jargon and complex sentences only serve to make things harder to understand. That's why you should simplify and write with clarity, so you can be clear about your message to your reader. While you should never patronize your readers, you should certainly avoid overwhelming them.

Keep your writing concise and remember—when you try to say too many things in one content piece, it gets too much.

4 Understand the reader's psychology

Understanding the reader's psychology and the purpose of each section of the article will help you write more engagingly. For example, we often simply summarize what the blog will be about in the opening paragraph. By starting off with obvious things, we make the whole thing look boring. ↓

But really, the only purpose of the opening paragraph is to get people to read your blog post. So, use your opening to explain to readers that you understand a specific problem they're facing and promise them, your post will help solve that problem.

Also, blog posts often peter out at the end—as if the writer was getting tired. The purpose of the closing paragraph is to inspire people to implement what they've just read, to see what difference it can make to their life. To inspire your reader, consider what's holding them back, and take away that hurdle in your final paragraph.

5 Embrace empathy

To truly write engaging content, it can help to put our content strategy, business objectives aside when writing. If we focus too much on our business goals, we might lose sight of our readers.

So, imagine you are writing for one person. What are their aims and challenges? How can your blog posts help improve their lives?

This is the starting point for empathy, and empathy for your readers makes your writing more engaging.

When you outline a blog post, think not just from the perspective of SEO, but also from the perspective of that ideal reader. What are the questions that he has about this topic?

Step into the shoes of your reader and edit the draft trying to look it through their eyes, as if you are having a conversation with them.

When you write as if you're having a conversation with one reader, your writing becomes more human. It's almost as if you were writing a letter.

6 Be more conversational

Readers don't want to feel like they're attending a lecture. So, make your blog like a conversation with a friend.

One trick is to use more questions. When you're having a chat with a friend, you also ask questions, right?

Questions make your writing feel like a dialogue, especially if you use the word YOU, too.

7 Making your writing more personal

Finally, let's talk about you.

What's different about you? Which experiences and opinions can you share?

Sharing your own experience, voicing your opinion and using short personal stories can really boost engagement.

When readers get to know the person behind the keyboard, they begin to feel like you're a friend. And they want to join in a conversation with you.

Start sharing anecdotes, use your real experience to illustrate your tips—and your engagement will skyrocket.

Combining these seven elements will give your writing an edge over your competition, will start to build a community around your brand, and—if you are consistent and focused—will start to grow your business and brand. Good luck!

Tone of Voice

Tone of voice reflects your brand personality, helps you connect with your audience, and makes you different from the rest. It relates to how your brand communicates with the audience and thus influences how people perceive your messaging.

Moreover, it builds a connection with your audience: **65% of customers** say that they are emotionally connected to a brand in a way that makes them feel like the company cares about them. Customers who feel comfortable with you are more likely to want to interact.

While your tone may vary depending on the different audience personas you communicate with, the medium you are speaking through, and your objective, it should otherwise remain consistent. This creates a memorable image of your brand.

A tone of voice audit should address two elements:

- What you sound like.

- What you want to sound like.

Norman Nielsen Group created a list of **37 tone-of-voice words** that you can use to help you decide where you fall. For example, are you more formal or casual? Serious or funny?

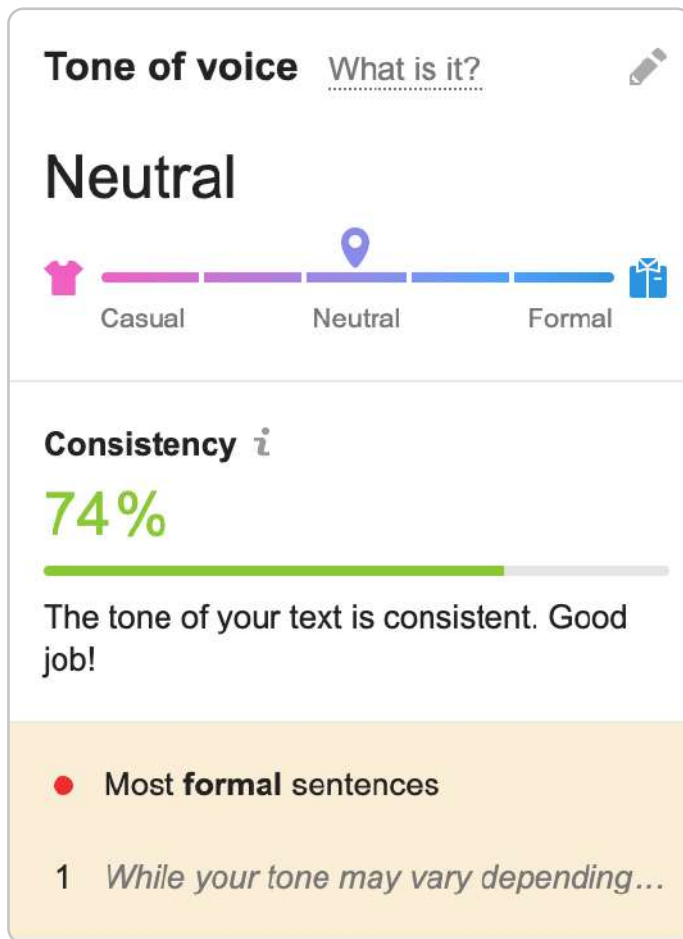## Read more in our in depth article on tone of voice↗

Readability

Readability simply refers to how easy a text is to understand. Different target audiences will prefer reading texts of different complexities. This means there is no "universal" readability score to aim for, rather you should try to write to your audience's level.

Readability is determined by sentence length and complexity, vocabulary choice, and text length. The closer your text is to your target readability, the more effective it will be.

Using the Semrush SEO Writing Assistant to check tone of voice and readability

The SEO writing assistant is an intuitive tool that can be used as a Google Docs add-on, within the Semrush app, and on Wordpress. If used in Google docs or Wordpress, it will automatically check the document/page you are working on. If used within the app, it will check the text you paste or type in.

After inputting your target keywords, the tool will review the text and give you a score. ⬇

Tone of voice _What is it?_ ✏

Neutral

👕 Casual — Neutral — Formal 👔

Consistency _i_

74%

The tone of your text is consistent. Good job!

● Most **formal** sentences

1 _While your tone may vary depending..._

- First, the assistant gives you an idea of the tone your copy is striking. In this case it's neutral—that's great if that is how you are going to position your brand voice.

- If you want a more informal tone, you may want to search for shorter sentences and more colloquial terms.

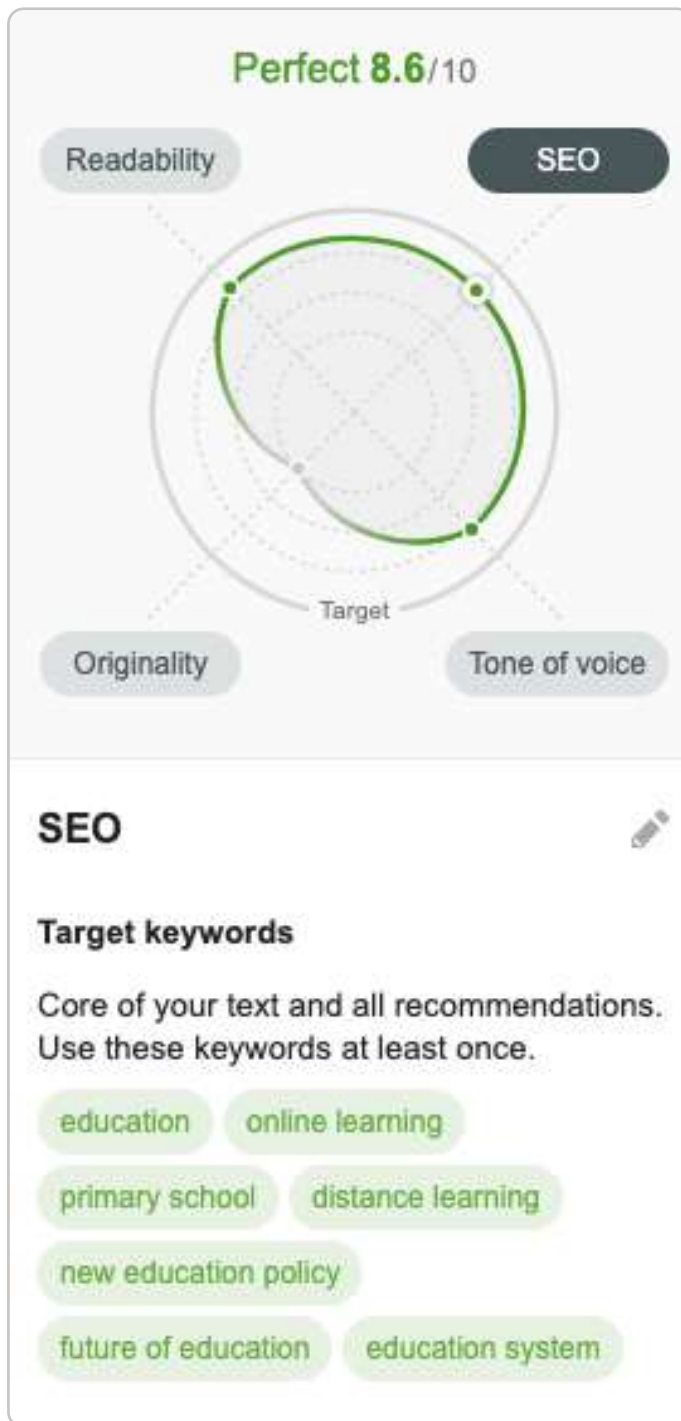- Next, we see how consistent the tone is throughout the document.

In the example, we can see it is fairly consistent (74%). The tool pulls out a number of examples where the language could be edited to be more or less formal.

Click on **What is it?** To better understand the differences between casual, neutral and formal language:

We will check your text for formality level:

Scale	Score	Example sentence
	Very casual	"That's the most stupid suggestion EVER."
	Somewhat casual	"That's not really clever."
	Neutral	"Nobody has asked for this advice."
	Somewhat formal	"Recommendations were not required."
	Very formal	"Given recommendations were unsolicited and undesirable, and will not be accepted."

This will help you create a text that is closer to your brand tone of voice. ↓

Perfect 8.6/10

Readability   SEO

Target

Originality   Tone of voice

SEO

Target keywords

Core of your text and all recommendations.
Use these keywords at least once.

education   online learning

primary school   distance learning

new education policy

future of education   education system

The tool also offers a useful overall optimization score, including how well optimized the copy is and how readable it is, as well as an SEO and originality score.

To get specific recommendations for each area, simply click on the label.

Checking your readability score

The SEO Writing Assistant analyzes your copy and assigns a score based on sentence length and complexity, vocabulary choice, and text length.

It also analyzes your top 10 Google competitors to come up with a target readability score.

Scores range from 0–30, which is considered a College Graduate level, to 90–100, which is a 5th grade reading level (11-year-olds will have no trouble understanding it).

Workbook Task Three

Analyze Your Upcoming Content

Analyze your upcoming or latest blog post using the SEO Writing Assistant (if you don't have a Semrush subscription, you can do this for free using a trial version).

Discuss with your team:

How close is the text to your target tone of voice?

What improvements could you make to make the copy more consistent?

Are you meeting readability targets?

Whether or not you continue to use the SEO Writing Assistant, these questions can help in editing your future work.

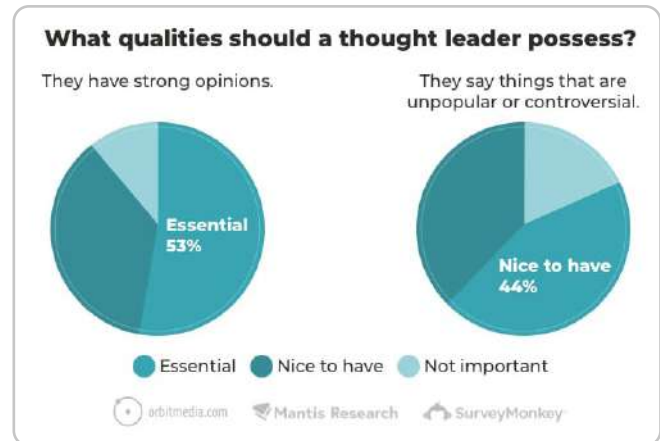**Check out the SEO Writing Assistant here**↗

Primer Becoming a thought leader

A true thought leader takes a stand.

They have strong views.

They are willing to be wrong.

Strong opinion is essential for thought leadership, according to [a survey of 480 marketers](#).

What qualities should a thought leader possess?

This is a difficult path for a lot of content programs. It feels risky. But it's often very effective for the programs that do it, because so few brands are willing to try.

That's why content based on a strong opinion is automatically differentiated. It feels different. It gives the audience something to talk about. It has big advantages in social media and often leads to very loyal followings.

It captures attention and sometimes triggers a response. When that response is in other articles, it leads to links and sometimes press hits.

Strong opinion doesn't have to be on major topics. A lot of people have strong opinions about very mundane things: the Oxford comma, ketchup on hotdogs, is bounce rate important, etc.

— ***Andy Crestodina***,
Chief Marketing Officer and Co-Founder,
[Orbit Media Studios](#), *Inc*.

A guide to writing different types of copy

1 Blog posts

Blog articles are very versatile. They can be suitable for top of the funnel (ToFu) content—answering user questions and providing solutions—or they can be more middle of the funnel (MoFu), sharing topics like "best lawnmowers for large areas". Blogs can even be at the bottom of the funnel (BoFu), sharing content like "How to use your robo-oven for batch cooking."

Whether you want to write a thought leader piece or a product announcement. It's important to focus on the following:

Information

- Remember your audience—what do they need to know first? Give the reader the most important information right away.

- Focus on the comprehensiveness of your blog posts. [According to our research](#), long reads of over 3000 words get three times more traffic, four times more shares, and more backlinks than average length articles of 901–1200 words. However, this is not about aiming for a universal text length, as there is no such thing and it will vary depending on the industry and ↓

keywords. However, it showcases the importance of covering the topic in-depth. Use the [SEO Content Template](#) to come up with a target text length for your blog posts, based on the top 10 organic rivals.

- Add calls to action where appropriate, but don't overload the content with these.

Structure

- Break up the article with subheadings (H2, H3 and H4 tags)—these should be clear, consistent. Our study shows that more than half of the posts with a complex structure (H2+H3+H4) are high-performing in terms of engagement and traffic.

- Keep each section brief—the more concise the better because your message will remain clear.

Supporting materials

- Use images to illustrate what you're saying and to maintain attention throughout the text. Make sure to use ALT attributes for accessibility and SEO reasons.

- Include appropriate internal links, using keywords to give your SEO a boost.

Keywords and links

- Distribute keywords, using them in the title, opening paragraphs, subheadings and evenly throughout the content in order to optimize it for search engines. Use the SEO Writing Assistant to help you do so.

- Link out to other authoritative sources of information, avoiding linking to pages that are competing for the same keywords.

2 Emails

Emails are some of the most personal forms of writing you can do. Every time you write and send an email—even if it's to a large list of subscribers—it's arriving in someone's private inbox. You therefore need to remember you're speaking to an individual.

- Use people's names

- Respect the reader's time, so keep your emails short: **between 50 and 125 words get the best response rates**, on average (based on research by Boomerang which analyzed the aggregate data of 5.3 million emails).

- And don't overload emails with images, because these can be heavy for your reader's email client. Emails over **102kb get clipped by Gmail**, for example, and this can result in your content being ignored.

On top of this, you should remember that each email needs an objective. What do you want the reader to do? Keep your calls to action clear, simple, and don't overload the content with buttons or links to click on.

Finally, one of the most important aspects of an email is the subject line. Without a strong subject line, it's unlikely your reader will even open the email. For this reason, you should A/B test (or split test) your subject lines and see what is getting the most traction.

Over time you'll learn what your audience likes and what your audience doesn't. And you can then optimize and increase your open rates throughout your email campaigns.

3 Landing pages

Landing pages generally aim to give visitors enough information so they can take action. Following the AIDA framework, as we have already discussed, helps you to structure the page.

Consider the following:

- What is your unique value proposition? Why should the reader care about your solution? Address this in the first section of the landing page.

- What benefits are you providing them? Be clear how your product or service will help the website visitor with their particular problem or challenge.

- Consider what questions the website visitor has. Lead them through all the answers in a logical way.

- Have a strong call to action: Don't be afraid to sell on a landing page. Your users need to know how to take the action you want them to.

4 Product Descriptions

Product descriptions have a primary purpose, and that is to answer potential clients' questions. For example, if you're selling an item of clothing, potential customers first want to know: ↓

- Available size (perhaps include a size comparison chart)

- What material it's made from (synthetic, natural, waterproof, etc).

- The colors it's available in

- Price

- Delivery costs

- Time to deliver

Once you've answered the primary questions, your customers may also have more doubts. For example:

- Is it fair trade?

- Is the material breathable?

- Is the material easily washable, non-iron? etc.

Think about what your customer wants to know. If you're selling something online, especially if it's a tangible product, it's not like stepping into a regular bricks-and-mortar store and picking something off the rack. You have to answer all the questions and overcome their objectionsand you only have a few words to do it.

> Be very concise and think about word economy when you're producing a description, designed to sell a product or service.

Workbook Task Four

Explore the SEO Content Template Recommendations for Your Next Content Piece

You're going to create an SEO-friendly content brief using our SEO Content Template.

- Head to the SEO Content Template to get recommendations based on your target keywords.

- Enter the keywords that you want to target with your content.

- The tool then analyzes content from Google's top 10-ranking pages and gives you recommendations on how to create SEO-friendly content, including:

  - Recommended readability score and content length

  - SEO recommendations based on Google top 10 rivals for your target keywords

  - Suggested semantically-related keywords to include

  - List of websites to get backlinks from

  - And more!

Explore the SEO Content Template here ↗

How to edit & publish your testimonials

By Eddie Shleyner,

Founder of VeryGoodCopy.com

A few years back, I began asking my clients, colleagues, collaborators, and subscribers for testimonials because they're such an efficient and compelling form of proof.

Over the years, I've collected hundreds of testimonials, which I display on VeryGoodCopy.

They vary in length: Some are short, only a few words; others are long, very long, a hundred words or more. So given the variability, I created a system of standardization to provide a good user experience for folks browsing my website:

I pull out the most valuable sentence from the testimonial and display it as either a headline or standalone statement. For example, the "Headline" format looks like this: ↓

"Your work is inspiring."

"Your work is inspiring. I appreciate your simple advice, which I can immediately put into practice."

Laura Ritz
Founder @ Writing With Eloquence

"The only newsletter I read consistently."

"I subscribe to several marketing, copywriting, and content marketing blogs/newsletters. Unfortunately, most are disappointing.

VeryGoodCopy is the only newsletter I read consistently.

Eddie's content addresses all aspects of written persuasion and the advice is always valuable and actionable. I have forwarded articles to nearly every colleague. I highly recommend VeryGoodCopy."

Brian Hayes
President @ Orion Marketing Consultants

The "Stand-alone" format looks like this:

"Eddie is a fantastic copywriter."

ANN HANDLEY
Chief Content Officer @ MarketingProfs

"Eddie's a damn good marketer. I recommend him."

DRAYTON BIRD
Global Creative Director @ Ogilvy & Mather

"I love everything Eddie writes and teaches! Definitely a huge fan..."

KIM KRAUSE SCHWALM
A-List Copywriter & Copy Mentor

"Eddie is one helluva interviewer, an absolute pleasure to talk to."

BEN SETTLE
Email Marketing Guru

"There's a fella who knows something about copy."

DAVE GERHARDT
CMO @ Privy

"There's no better copywriting blog than VeryGoodCopy."

— — —
Brad Williamson, *Freelance Copywriter*

"I love that you share this information so generously."

— — —
Di Clements, *Founder @ On-Time Copy*

"Eddie never runs out of good ideas."

— — —
Vinicius Aguiari, *Founder @ VidaHacker*

"I've become a better copywriter thanks to the VeryGoodCopy blog."

— — —
John Ford, *Freelance Copywriter*

"I love how you convey so much in so few words."

— — —
Rohan Bhardwaj, *Executive Assistant @ IIT Bombay*

"The essential website for storytellers."

— — —
Yoni Solomon, *Director of Product Marketing @ G2.com*

"My #1 go-to resource for inspiration."

— — —
Carmen Ward, *Email Marketer @ Homes.com*

"The only newsletter I actually open and read."

— — —
Naomi Faye, *Freelance Copywriter*

"Like no other copywriting advice on the internet."

— — —
Raashi Singhi, *Entrepreneur*

"It's good enough that I feel bad reading it for free."

— — —
Jordan Judor, *Freelance Copywriter*

"Absolutely transformed the way I approach copywriting."

— — —
Nina Vasic, *Marketing Coordinator @ Monogram Creative*

"Eddie's a master of his craft..."

— — —
Jim Williams, *VP of Marketing @ BlueCat Networks*

"I search it out if I missed it!"

— — —
Jeffrey Thomas, *Founder @ Persuasion Reading List*

"Some of the most actionable advice out there."

— — —
Alex Boyd, *Founder/CEO @ RevenueZen*

"Expertly crafted mix of literary genius meets Adman."

— — —
Dezaray Caraballo, *Freelance Copywriter*

Either way, by focusing the reader's attention on a single sentence, you're doing a few good things:

Good thing #1: You're controlling the narrative.

Every testimonial is different. Different word count, different degree of clarity and specificity and accuracy. This variation can confuse and overwhelm the reader.

Isolating a single sentence helps you highlight the best part of each testimonial while improving the readability.

Good thing #2: You're helping The Reader digest.

You might love reading every word of your testimonials, but most people are (at best) skimming through them.

One sentence is really all you need to make your point.

Good thing #3: You're manufacturing the LISH effect.

LISH is short for the Length Implies Strength Heuristic, which is basically a signal that tells your brain: more words = more credibility.

A wall of one-sentence testimonials is the epitome of LISH—and, therefore, incredibly influential.

There's good news & bad news:

The bad news: Every testimonial you get needs attention and thought, work. One of the worst things you can do is slap an unedited testimonial on your homepage.

The good news: A little work will go a long way. Well-presented testimonials are among the most powerful forms of persuasion at your disposal.

Optimizing your content for search engines

There are a number of ways and tools you can use to optimize your content for search engines. By doing so, you make your content more visible to your target audience, you'll likely generate more website traffic, and have more chances of achieving your content marketing goals.

[Download this SEO Writing Checklist for 2021↗](#)

1 Start with Keyword Research

Pick one primary keyword to be the focus of the entire article. Use the [Semrush Keyword Magic Tool](#) to find the volume and related keywords. The ideal keyword has a high search volume but low difficulty ranking—as this means lots of people search for it and there is a good chance you can rank for the term in the search results. To measure the level of competition for paid campaigns, use the Competitive Density metric to analyze each keyword. ↓

Other keywords you choose should relate to and support your primary keyword in order to keep the article focused on the topic.

The Topic Research Tool

The Topic Research Tool helps you analyze rival websites and gives you ideas to write high performing content. At the same time, it can help you find your audience's interests. It gives you a wide range of related topics, article titles, and keyword-related questions. For example:
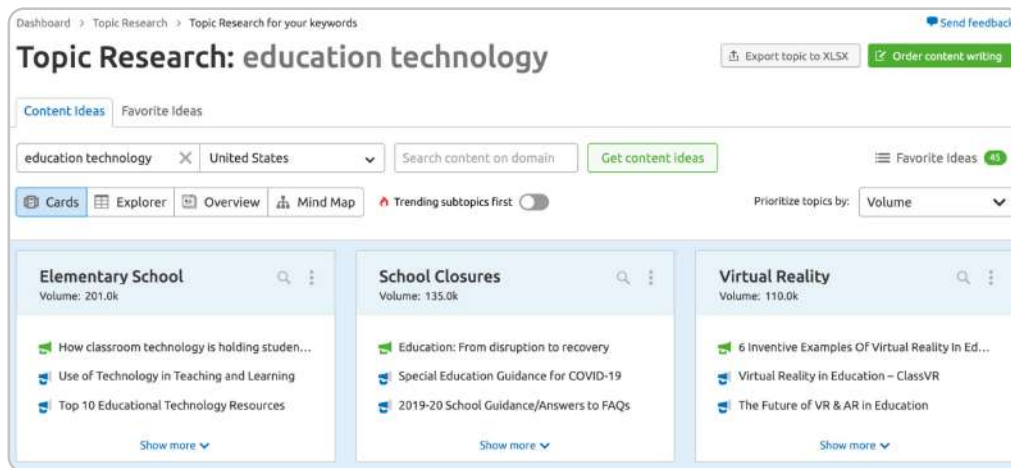
Simply click on show more, for extended information, including the most popular headlines, questions people ask, and related searches:
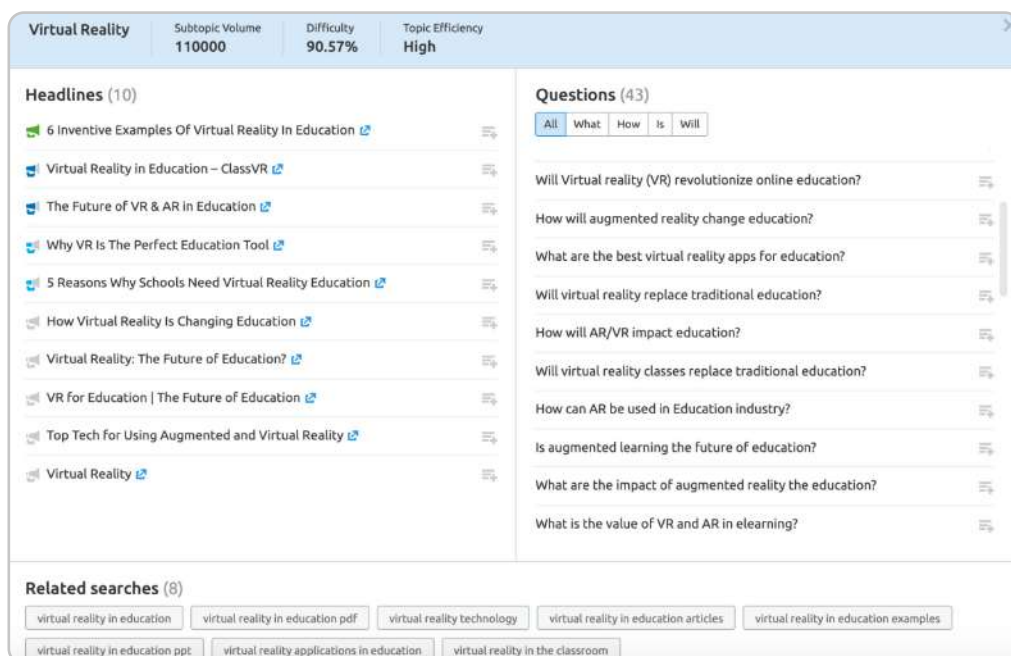
2 Determine Search Intent

It's important to understand what a user is searching for, and which content format will best serve their needs. Google breaks down this search intent into the following categories:

- **Informational searches:** They are looking for specific information on a topic.

- **Navigational:** They are looking for a particular web page or site.

- **Commercial:** They are investigating products to purchase.

- **Transactional:** They intend to buy something right now.

Manually searching for your target keywords can help you identify the types of content the search engines are delivering—and indicate the format your content should be in too. What's ranking now? Listicles, guides, landing pages, how tos?

Moreover, tools like the **SEO Content Template** list your top 10 competing articles on Google—which you can include in your writers' briefs.

3 Create a Well-Optimized Meta Title

Write a unique title for each page, include the primary keyword and don't exceed 60 characters or it will be truncated in the search results. The title should explain how the content will benefit the reader and—ultimately—entice them to click.

4 Optimize URLs

Include your primary keyword in the URL and remove unimportant stop words (if, the, and, or, etc.). This will make the URL more search-engine friendly and will keep things tidy and more readable too.

5   Add visuals

Images break up the page, make content more visually appealing, and improve the user experience—something that Google values. Be sure to include descriptive ALT text—this is good for people who use screen readers and is an opportunity to add keywords also.

6   Interlink

Improve the structure of your site (in terms of SEO) by linking to relevant internal content that will add value to your audience. Never use bare URLs, instead use descriptive hyperlinked text that include relevant keywords.

7   Cover the topic in-depth

The more comprehensive your content, the better it is likely to do in the search results. Answer as many of your reader's questions as possible and go into detail. This will show the search engines that your content is relevant, valuable and worth displaying. It may also encourage natural backlinks, which can be a big boost for your SEO. To find those related questions and subtopics, use the [Semrush Topic Research tool](#).

8 Use the Semrush SEO Writing Assistant

The Semrush SEO Writing Assistant not only analyzes the content for keyword distribution, but also suggests semantically related words and phrases that you should include in the content and helps you optimize links and alt tags.

Recommended keywords ✏

Enrich your text with these keywords to get better SEO results.

quality content product descriptions

digital marketing search results

search engines marketing strategy

freelance writers seo content

high quali...

Difficulty: 81% (very hard)
Volume: High

target au...

content c...

meta tag search engine optimization

content marketing

search engine optimization seo

social media

9 Audit your content

A content audit is the process of regularly analyzing and assessing all the content on your website. Your aim is to find out what's working and what's not in your content strategy. It allows you to have an agile content plan that meets your marketing objectives.

Content audits help you discover which content needs to be improved or repurposed into other formats.

Explore the **Content Audit tool** on Semrush and **learn more in this guide**.

Primer Assembling and structuring content

Long before there was SEO, the best copywriters were still very concerned with engagement. Copywriting legend, Eugene Schwartz said it best:

> "You do not write copy, you assemble it. You are working with a series of building blocks, you are putting the building blocks together, and then you are putting them in certain structures, you are building a little city of desire for your person to come and live in."

The only difference is that today, these are not just cities of desire. They are cities of discovery.

Visuals and formatting can improve engagement. Most marketers know that. If your page looks like a wall of text, visitors aren't going to stick around.

But few marketers fully grasp the importance of visuals and formatting for SEO. But highly visual and scannable content can support all three of the main search ranking factors.

Here's how:

1. User Interaction Signals

↓

RANK

2. Relevance   **3. Authority**
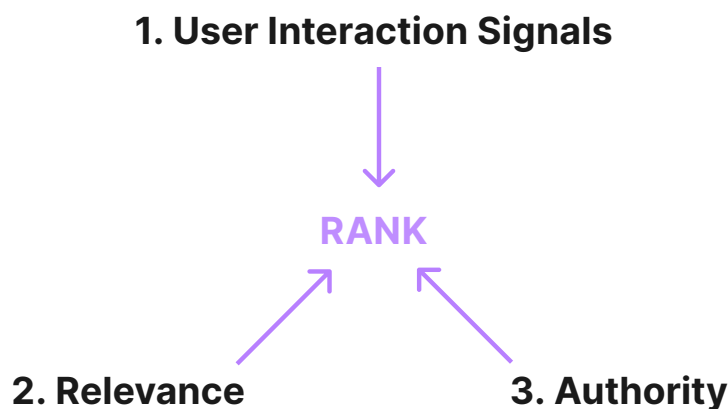
Primer **Assembling and structuring content**

User Interaction Signals

Content that is easy to scan will hold visitors' attention longer, increasing "dwell time" (time on page from organic search) which is a search ranking factor.

The idea is to keep the scan reader flowing through the content by avoiding long blocky paragraphs and adding strong visuals at every scroll depth.

Highly structured, visual content keeps visitors engaged for longer.

Relevance

More formatting means more opportunities for the inclusion of the target keyphrase and related phrases.

These are all places where you can indicate relevance: subheads, bolding, bullet lists, alt text and short summary statements. These types of formatting can also help you win the featured snippet.

Authority

Internal links are another opportunity to use keyword-focused anchor text and to pass authority between pages.

And great visuals (especially charts and diagrams) are opportunities to do "image source link building." Whenever you have the opportunity to contribute to content to another site, add an image and and image source link.

It's easier to build links to articles with great visuals.

— *__Andy Crestodina__,*
Chief Marketing Officer and Co-Founder,
__Orbit Media Studios__, Inc.

Wrapping up

By following the steps in this guide and taking on the advice of experts like Henneke Duistermaat, Andy Crestodina and Eddie Shleyner, you are well on your way to producing incredible, user-centered content.

Your next challenge is to create a content marketing plan and execute it consistently.

It's time to see your business grow through valuable content.

Semrush Content Marketing Platform

Our content marketing platform includes 7 powerful tools to help you execute a data-informed content strategy based on your audience's needs:

- **Topic research**—to quickly generate dozens of content ideas for your content hubs

- **Marketing Calendar**—to collaborate with your team members on the content campaigns

- **SEO Content Template**—to easily generate SEO-friendly briefs

- **SEO Writing Assistant**—to optimize your copy for users and SEO on the go

- **Brand Monitoring**—to find partnership and backlink opportunities

- **Post Tracking**—to analyze the performance of your external publications

- **Content Audit**—to run regular content audits on your website

Sign up for an unbeatable combination of creativity and user insights.

Get your free 7-day trial today↗