When producing content, each component of a page can contribute in its own way towards the SEO performance of the page, and therefore it is important to ensure each element is considered carefully to help the content rank more effectively for the targeted keywords.

This document is intended to act as a template to be used when creating new content. It contains two key sections:

* A content template that can be filled out when developing a new piece of content, with SEO considerations for each section.
* A section which provides detailed explanations, best practices and key considerations for each element of the template further down in the document (seen in this font).

# SEO Content Template

### Content Purpose and meta information (for content writers)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Scope [(?)](#h.okim5323btee) | What do we want to achieve from the content? |
| Primary keywords [(?)](#h.etltxujwp0f0) | What are the main keywords we are targeting with this content?     |  |  | | --- | --- | | Keyword | Monthly Search Volume | |  |  | |  |  | |  |  | |
| Keyword | Monthly Search Volume |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
| Secondary keywords [(?)](#h.etltxujwp0f0) | What are the keywords which we are targeting, but may not be the primary focus of the content?     |  |  | | --- | --- | | Keyword | Monthly Search Volume | |  |  | |  |  | |  |  | |
| Keyword | Monthly Search Volume |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
| Meta Title [(?)](#h.io5wxfvr2pno) | What is the title of this content? |
| Meta Description [(?)](#h.io5wxfvr2pno) | General outline/introduction to the content of the page |
| Benchmark content [(?)](#h.ruuka4lir6uz) | URLs of benchmark content  <Example URL>  <Example URL> |
| Word count [(?)](#h.ecsrlmjf8amh) | Target word count range |

### On page structure (for content writers)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| H1 Tag [(?)](#h.laztkd6ihn2e) | The main heading on the page |
| Opening content [(?)](#h.9lpv2s4oakdg) | The first section of content that is on the page below the H1 |
| Above the fold content considerations [(?)](#h.t5i98p2r0rn) | Considerations for content that should appear above the fold |
| H2 Tags [(?)](#h.rxboup2i3y6c) | Section subheadings |
| H3 Tags - where applicable [(?)](#h.rxboup2i3y6c) | Section subheadings |
| H4 Tags - where applicable [(?)](#h.rxboup2i3y6c) | Section subheadings |
| H5 Tags - where applicable [(?)](#h.rxboup2i3y6c) | Section subheadings |
| H6 Tags - where applicable [(?)](#h.rxboup2i3y6c) | Section subheadings |

### SEO Considerations

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| URL [(?)](#h.nawhvqj590d6) | www.domain.com/example-content |
| Breadcrumbs [(?)](#h.tpa67q7tly31) | Site > Topic > Article |
| Parent or Child page [(?)](#h.es5gng2bgbyy) | Where does this content fit within the content hierarchy? |
| Internal linking opportunities [(?)](#h.jpf0doe0a8cm) | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Page to link to | Suggested anchor text | |  |  | |  |  | |
| Page to link to | Suggested anchor text |
|  |  |
|  |  |
| Featured snippet opportunities [(?)](#h.ef496j5q1ah2) | Please show screenshots of any featured snippets we are targeting |

### Other considerations

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Word count | 1000 words |
| Benchmark content | Sample URL/s |
| Additional info | Please see below:  https://domain.com/frequently-asked-questions  https://domain.com/termsandconditions  https://domain.com/blog/salary-sacrifice-employers-protection |

# Content Ideation

### Scope

The scope of the page should be the first consideration when creating new content. We want to make sure that the content fulfils a purpose, and is differentiated from the content existing on the site already.

There are several methods we can use to create content ideas and understand its scope:

* Keyword gap analysis - our keyword gap analysis highlights relevant keywords that we do not rank for that our competitors rank within the top 20 searches for. This shows where there are opportunities to target these keywords on our site with new content.
* Keyword universe analysis - our keyword universe[[a]](#cmnt1) utilises extensive keyword research, incorporating the keyword gap analysis, to produce a vast list of relevant keywords that could be used as content ideas. We may want to look for keywords that have high volume but are more competitive, or more niche, long tail keywords with fewer monthly searches, but are less competitive and more likely to convert to a click.
* Competitor analysis - monitoring our competitors to see if there are any pieces of content that are performing well for them, or if there are content areas that we are missing on our site that we could do better. This differs from keyword gap analysis, which focuses on specific keywords, whereas holistic competitor analysis can identify entire content themes or sections of a site that aren’t present on our site.
* Monitoring industry news/events - this is effective for identifying a recent hot topic or trend in the industry that we feel we could comment on and create content around.
* Internal campaigns and business developments - any new developments from the business that we want to shout about should be a source of content that no other competitors have.

### Primary and Secondary Keywords

Identifying the primary and secondary keywords that we want to target with our content is a crucial step, and should be carried out alongside identifying the scope and purpose of the content. This can be done through utilising keyword research, such as our keyword universe and keyword gap analysis.

Primary keywords should be the core focus of the content, whereas the secondary keywords should be relevant to the primary keywords, but support the content rather than being the primary focus.

We want to make sure that we won’t be competing with our own pages which are already targeting certain keywords. This is what is known as keyword cannibalisation. To check for this, search in Google for: ‘site:sungardas.com “KEYWORD HERE”, which will bring up a list of all the pages on the site which currently rank for the specified keyword.

### E-A-T considerations

E-A-T stands for expertise, authority and trustworthiness, and they are a set of parameters which have been important for SEO since the August 2018 “medic update” from Google. They act as measures of a page’s quality, which can have an impact on how well a page ranks. E-A-T is even more important for certain topics, especially when there are significant consequences for the information being shared. As a lot of the content on our site relates to business security and recovery, e-a-t is something that we should take seriously as we will likely be judged on these factors more than many other industries.

Here are some guidelines to consider for each elements of E-A-T when creating new content, as well as more generally across the site:

* Expertise
* We need to understand what it is that the user is searching for. Identify what is currently ranking in the top 3 positions for our keywords, and understand the content/information that is being provided.
* Once we understand the user intent, we can think about how we can tailor our content to meet the users intent, and convey our understanding of the topic.
* We also want to make sure that our copy is concise yet comprehensive, we don’t want to give generic answers which won’t distinguish our content, and nor do we want to write content that is too in depth and won’t engage readers. There is a delicate balance to convey expertise in a concise way.
* We can also try and understand the next query that a searcher is likely to make after the initial query. This will allow us to add the responses to those questions to our page as well. Again, anticipating and understanding user intent is key in demonstrating expertise.
* Authority
* Search engines evaluate how authoritative content is based on several factors, including the author, the content itself, and the site that the page sits on.
* If the new content is closely related to all the other content on your site, and the author has been proven to have authority in the field, then it is more likely to be seen as more authoritative by search engines.
* Generating backlinks from others in the industry is another way to demonstrate the authority of your site.
* Working on brand recognition through social media shares, article mentions and branded search performance will help indicate to search engines that we are an authority in our own right.
* Trustworthiness
* This point is all about consistency and customer experience. Trust is generated through consistently providing users with a great experience, resulting in positive reviews and recognition.
* Displaying user reviews/feedback on the site can help improve trustworthiness.
* It is also important to be open, honest and accessible when trying to improve trustworthiness. Having contact information clearly displayed on the page for the author, or website owners is a good example of this.
* Using HTTPS rather than HTTP domains aids trustworthiness.
* Having privacy policies and T&C’s clearly linked to on the footer of the site is also important.

# Meta Information

Meta title

The title tag of a page is an important factor for the ranking of a page. The title is what appears as the blue text on the search engine results page (SERP) so should be easily readable, and clearly outline the scope/purpose of the content of your page. An example of a SERP can be seen [here](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.google.com/search?q%3Dsungard%2Bavailability%2Bservices%26oq%3Dsungard%2Ba%26aqs%3Dchrome.0.0j69i57j0l2j46i175i199j69i61l2j69i60.2829j0j7%26sourceid%3Dchrome%26ie%3DUTF-8&sa=D&source=editors&ust=1692706675965981&usg=AOvVaw0pXFO9vwkxGmjSH1J-UY3D).

* The title of the page should be 50-60 characters long, in order to avoid being truncated (cut off and replaced by an ellipses).
* The title of a page should contain your primary keyword, and potentially a secondary keyword. We want to avoid [keyword stuffing](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://developers.google.com/search/docs/advanced/guidelines/irrelevant-keywords&sa=D&source=editors&ust=1692706675966882&usg=AOvVaw10p8rtDmWJKCuPNlNlmPxZ) in the title, and want to make sure that the title reads well, so only include keywords where they would naturally appear.
* The title tag should be different from any other title used on your site. To check this quickly, ‘site:sungardas.com “YOUR MAIN KEYWORD HERE” ‘ in Google to see what other content exists around your article subject.

Meta description

Although not a direct ranking factor, the meta description should still be optimised as it can have a significant impact on the click through rate of the page from the SERP. The description should be used to provide a brief description of the page, and should go hand in hand with the meta title to give the user a clear understanding of the purpose of the page and what they will find if they click on the link.

Here are some key considerations when writing the meta description:

* Maximum of 160 characters to avoid being truncated - you can use a tool [like this](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.seomofo.com/snippet-optimizer.html&sa=D&source=editors&ust=1692706675968179&usg=AOvVaw2HEp9w6YaZf-7aIfqlvVgH) to test the appearance of your description and title in the SERP.
* Make sure that your primary keyword is included in the description. Any other targeted keywords included in the description should occur naturally.
* Avoid keyword stuffing, keywords in the description have[no impact on page ranking](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://developers.google.com/search/blog/2009/09/google-does-not-use-keywords-meta-tag&sa=D&source=editors&ust=1692706675968847&usg=AOvVaw1Adi6o9DNF61zIzlYI75Xl) for keywords.
* Including a call to action in the description is often an effective way of improving the click through rate of a page (eg. look, read, offers, more info, discover more).

### URL

Although not a direct ranking factor, the URL or a page should still be optimised as it can affect the click through rate of the page from the SERP.

* Having a short URL that is reflective of the content on the page is important.
* Generally, the URL should be reflective of the meta title.
* You can remove connecting words such as “and” from the URL to keep it more concise.
* Can help the user understand the topic of the page

### Breadcrumbs

Breadcrumbs are a small text path which indicates where in the site the user currently is. There should be a logical trail of where the content sits on your site, and how a user might navigate there from your home page.

Where possible, breadcrumbs should be used to help both users and search engines to navigate and understand the structure of the site. This can bolster the page’s visibility as search engines can better understand the page and how it relates to the rest of your site.

Additionally, search engines can display breadcrumbs on the SERP, which can give users an idea of your site structure and content before clicking onto your site, which can help to improve the click through rate.

# Content Structure

### H1 Heading

This title should match the meta title of the page, minus any branding, to ensure consistency. Generally, only one H1 should be used on one page.

### Opening content

The first paragraph of copy on the page is very important in SEO terms. As the first segment of copy that the user and search engines will see on the page, this segment should act as a succinct, information rich summary of what’s on the page.

The primary keyword of the page should feature within this paragraph, ideally within the first 10 words if possible. The other primary and secondary keywords should also feature in this first content block where they naturally fit, but don’t stuff the keywords in there if it makes the content unreadable.

### Above the fold content

Content that appears above the fold (everything that is visible to the user without scrolling down) should be targeted towards engaging the user, and should be a good reflection of the content that is on the page. A large proportion of this above the fold content will likely be taken up with your site navigation, but the H1 title, first paragraph and potentially an image, should all be optimised using the guidelines above to make them as engaging as possible and keep the user on the page.

A user should be able to look at the above the fold content and be able to understand the purpose of the page, and be engaged/intrigued enough to want to scroll further down the page. Content below the fold should provide further detail and context for the summary above the fold.

### H2, H3, H4, H5, H6 Headings

The subsections of your content should be easily identifiable using subheading. This is crucial for SEO, as this not only helps users and search engines understand the structure of the page more easily, but well optimised subheadings can also lead to being displayed as featured snippets for some searches.

You don’t need to use each heading number in every piece of content that you create. Typically you would just use H2 headings as subheadings of the H1 on the page. H3’s are then used as sub-headings of the H2’s on your page, and so on. Unless the new content is incredibly in depth, it’s unlikely that you will need to use H6 headings, but they are available if need be.

An example structure of a page might be:

H1 - Page Title

* H2 subheading
* H3 subheading
* H3 subheading
* H2 Subheading
* H2 subheading
* H3 subheading

General guidelines for optimising subheadings:

* Use keywords where possible, but as always, the headings should be readable and not keyword stuffed
* Under each subheading, the first few sentences should summarise the subsection
* A FAQ section on the page works very well for targeting featured snippets and appearing as an answer to the “frequently asked” section of Google. The questions should be posed using a heading tag, and the answer should be written in full within the subsequent sentences.

### Internal linking opportunities

While writing the copy for the new content, we should be mindful of the existing content on our site that we can link to from the new page. Where it makes sense to, we should be linking to these other pages from our new content, and vice versa where possible. It is best to link to other content on the site that is related to the content you are linking from, as this helps search engines and users understand the context of the content and its relevance to other content on the site. For example, if we had a new case study that we wanted on the site, and it covered DRaaS, we would want to link through to the [DRaaS page](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.sungardas.com/en-us/services/connected-recovery/disaster-recovery-as-a-service-draas/&sa=D&source=editors&ust=1692706675975596&usg=AOvVaw3IvOUJ3JQ8CxnrDRN6l7Bk), any relevant [blog posts](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.sungardas.com/en-us/blog/what-is-disaster-recovery-as-a-service-draas/&sa=D&source=editors&ust=1692706675976197&usg=AOvVaw32B5DctZJAKhJvuHJ0mmh2), and potentially the [partner pages](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.sungardas.com/en-us/partners/technology-partners/dell-technologies/&sa=D&source=editors&ust=1692706675976581&usg=AOvVaw3wogZmKwZ7H_u9Jc51EQ8N) who helped to provide the solution.[[b]](#cmnt2)

Internal linking helps search engines understand and crawl your site better, and can understand that pages on your site with the most internal links are likely to be the most important pages to crawl and index.

To get a better understanding of the content that we may want to link to, or have a link to the new page, we can use the site:brand “keyword” search on Google to find related content on our site to link. Alternatively, you could use the site search function that is on the site already.

There are also further considerations for internal linking:

### Anchor text

* Anchor text is the visible, clickable text of a link on a page. It is usually differentiated from the rest of the copy on the page by being a different colour, and is sometimes underlined.
* The anchor text that is used as part of internal linking is important for providing context about the nature of the link and the page being linked to. Anchor text such as “click here” or “discover more” is poorly optimised anchor text as they provide no indication to users or search engines as to what the subject of the linked page is. Anchor text should ideally reflect the content of the linked page, ideally targeting the primary keyword of that page. For internal linking, we should try to utilise exact match, or partially matched anchor text, with exact match using the same keyword as the target page, and partial match using a variation of the keyword of the target page.
* Care should be taken to ensure that anchor text isn’t spammed however. The anchor text should be fairly concise, and not stuff keywords.

### Parent or child pages

* A parent page will likely target a “head” keyword, which is a broad keyword, which often has high monthly search volume, and is more competitive. An example might be “disaster recovery”.
* A child page should support a parent page, and may target secondary keywords, or more long tail keywords. These are often more specific, lower volume and less competitive keywords. An example might be “managed disaster recovery services”.
* This has implications on the internal linking of the page. Best practice for internal linking for parent and child pages is that parent pages will tend to have more internal links from across the rest of the site than a child page. This helps to indicate the hierarchy of our content, with the parent page as the more important page on our site, and the child pages supporting the parent page. Between parent and child pages, internal linking should reflect the full hierarchy of the content, with each child page linking to all parent pages above it in the hierarchy, as well as any sibling pages. A parent page should link through to its child pages, and any parent pages above it.
* Not only does this help users navigate your content on the topic, it also helps to signal to search engines that this is a cluster of content that is closely related, and which is the most important parent content.

# Other considerations

### Word count

In order to avoid the page being flagged as thin content, we must ensure the word count exceeds 300 words. Pages seen as thin content are considered to be low quality, and potentially spammy, and so are penalised in terms of rankings.

Ultimately, the aim of our new content should be to answer the searcher’s intent better than any of our competitors, so word count should not be our primary focus. While there are certainly some [benefits of longer content](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://backlinko.com/content-study&sa=D&source=editors&ust=1692706675980453&usg=AOvVaw1UoVjZGhlBg9LEL6QIfKvP), our key goal should be on creating content that fulfils our core purpose, and is above the minimum threshold for thin content.

Having said that, it can be useful to give an indication of word count for the content, to help signal whether this is a longer or shorter article. This can be used as a proxy to show how in depth the content will be, with higher word count content being more in depth.

* A short article will be 300-800 words
* A medium length article will be 800-1600 words
* A longer, more in depth article will exceed 1600 words

### Featured Snippets

Featured snippets can be a good way of reaching a broader audience with a section of your content, without the user having to actually click into your page. This is great for building brand authority, and may encourage the user to click on your link, even if it’s not the first ranked page on the SERP.

Not every search query has a featured snippet, so research should be carried out to see if there are any related to the primary and secondary keywords of the content. This can be done by replicating the searches on Google, or by using a tool such as SEMrush.

Typically, featured snippets appear more frequently for keywords queries containing more words. If there are featured snippets that we would want to target with our content, this should be reflected in the structure of that content.

[70% of featured snippets](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.semrush.com/blog/featured-snippet/?kw%3D%26cmp%3DUK_SRCH_DSA_Blog_Core_BU_EN%26label%3Ddsa_pagefeed%26Network%3Dg%26Device%3Dc%26utm_content%3D515816610887%26kwid%3Ddsa-1057183201835%26cmpid%3D11776881484%26agpid%3D113846055025%26BU%3DCore%26extid%3D167346300280%26adpos%3D%26gclid%3DCj0KCQjwub-HBhCyARIsAPctr7zUt11PQJDiYWCQRGksTerHawzFvUp8Yf0DxIvtKz9ixCXAqpJs2mAaApxJEALw_wcB&sa=D&source=editors&ust=1692706675982558&usg=AOvVaw2yHxFmEzcCKxfCYPzc567z) are paragraphs of text, so the content of your site should aim to answer the queries with featured snippets in a concise and authoritative manner. As stated above, the use of heading tags to form a question and answer format to address the topics you’re targeting for a featured snippet is an effective method. For example, the featured snippet for the query “what is disaster recovery as a service” is seen below:

<image: image1.png>

On the VMware page, we can see that the H2 targets that exact search term, and the following text answers the question directly, and has subsequently been selected as the featured snippet.

<image: image2.png>

The answer we provide in the new content has to be more effective at answering the question than the current featured snippet, e.g. more in depth, more accurate etc.

### Benchmark Content

It is important that we are able to benchmark our content against similar or related content from competitors. We should identify a list of URLs from competitor domains that we can review, to make sure that our content is at least, if not better than, our competitors, and that we haven’t missed any key areas in our new page.

Once the competitor URLs have been identified, and our content has been drafted, our content should be peer reviewed. Having a second or third pair of eyes read through the content and benchmark our new page against this checklist, as well as against the competitor URLs is an effective method of ensuring our content is well optimised before launch.

We can utilise the checklist above to see if the competitors have fully optimised their page, to help identify any gaps that we can ensure our page is optimised for.

bluearray.co.uk | @bluearrayseo | 0800 0119 123

[[a]](#cmnt_ref1)we link to kw universe resource here

[[b]](#cmnt_ref2)Specific to client