Search Engine Optimization

On-page-factors and Off-page-factors

The Periodic Table of SEO Success Factors

Search engine optimization (SEO) seems like alchemy to the uninitiated. But there's a science to it. Below are some important "ranking factors" and best practices that can lead to success with both search engines and searchers.

On-The-Page Factors

These elements are in the direct control of the publisher

Content

Symbol	Name	Description
Cq	QUALITY	Are pages well written & have substantial quality content?
Cr	RESEARCH	Have you researched the keywords people may use to find your content?
Cw	WORDS	Do pages use words & phrases you hope they'll be found for?
Cf	FRESH	Are pages fresh & about "hot" topics?
Cv	VERTICAL	Do you have image, local, news, video or other vertical content?
Ca	ANSWERS	Is your content turned into direct answers within search results?
Vt	THIN	Is content "thin" or "shallow" & lacking substance?

Architecture

Symbol	Name	Description
Ac	CRAWL	Can search engines easily "crawl" pages on site?
Am	MOBILE	Does your site work well for mobile devices?
Ad	DUPLICATE	Does site manage duplicate content issues well?
As	SPEED	Does site load quickly?
Au	URLS	Do URLs contain meaningful keywords to page topics?
Ah	HTTPS	Does site use HTTPS to provide secure connection for visitors?
Vc	CLOAKING	Do you show search engines different pages than humans?

HTML

Symbol	Name	Description
Ht	TITLES	Do HTML title tags contain keywords relevant to page topics?
Hd	DESCRIPTION	Do meta description tags describe what pages are about?
Hs	STRUCTURE	Do pages use structured data to enhance listings?
Hh	HEADERS	Do headlines & subheads use header tags with relevant keywords?
Vs	STUFFING	Do you excessively use words you want pages to be found for?
Vh	HIDDEN	Do colors or design "hide" words you want pages to be found for?

Off-The-Page Factors

Elements influenced by readers, visitors & other publishers

Trust

Symbol	Name	Description
Ta	AUTHORITY	Do links, shares & other factors make pages trusted authorities?
Te	ENGAGE	Do visitors spend time reading or "bounce" away quickly?
Th	HISTORY	Has site or its domain been around a long time, operating in same way?
Vd	PIRACY	Has site been flagged for hosting pirated content?
Va	ADS	Is content ad-heavy? Do you make use of intrusive interstitials?

Links

Symbol	Name	Description
Lq	QUALITY	Are links from trusted, quality or respected web sites?
Lt	TEXT	Do links pointing at pages use words you hope they'll be found for?
Ln	NUMBER	Do many links point at your web pages?
Vp	PAID	Have you purchased links in hopes of better rankings?
Vl	SPAM	Have you created links by spamming blogs, forums or other places?

Personal

Symbol	Name	Description
Pc	COUNTRY	What country is someone located in?
Pl	LOCALITY	What city or local area is someone located in?
Ph	HISTORY	Has someone regularly visited your site?

Social

Symbol	Name	Description
Sr	REPUTATION	Do those respected on social networks share your content?
Ss	SHARES	Do many share your content on social networks?

On-The-Page SEO

Content	Architecture	HTML
Cq +3 Quality	Ac +3 Crawl	Ht +3 Titles
Cr +3 Research	Am +3 Mobile	Hd +2 Description
Cw +2 Words	Ad +2 Duplicate	Hs +2 Structure
Cf +2 Fresh	As +2 Speed	Hh +1 Headers
Cv +2 Vertical	Au +1 URLs	Vs -2 Stuffing
Ca +2 Answers	Ah +1 HTTPS	Vh -1 Hidden
Vt -2 Thin	Vc -3 Cloaking	

Off-The-Page SEO

Trust	Links	Personal	Social
Ta +3 Authority	Lq +3 Quality	Pc +3 Country	Sr +2 Reputation
Te +2 Engage	Lt +2 Text	Pl +3 Locality	Ss +1 Shares
Th +1 History	Ln +1 Numbers	Ph +2 History	
Vd -1 Piracy	Vp -3 Paid		
Va -2 Ads	Vl -3 Spam		

Factors Work Together

All factors on the table are important, but those marked 3 carry more weight than 1 or 2. No single factor guarantees top rankings or success, but having several favorable ones increases the odds. Negative "violation" factors shown in red harm your chances.

+3	
+2	
+1	
-1	
-2	
-3	

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Content

On-the-page SEO

On-the-page: content quality

- Are pages well written and have substantial quality content?
- The main reason search engines want to rank websites highly: *good content*
- E.g.: a search for "whale facts" → National Geographic website

On-the-page: content research

- Have you researched the keywords people may use to find your content?
- Understand the target audience – whatever words they use, even if technically incorrect, must be understood

On-the-page: content words

- Do pages use words and phrases you hope they'll be found for?
- Helps: liberal use of keywords in titles, headings a paragraphs
- E.g. "…Kostin is a web developer who has been designing websites…"

On-the-page: content freshness

- Are pages fresh, and are they about hot topics?
- Content that changes from time to time suggests it is more relevant
- News websites, bulletin boards, blogs rank better than static sites
- Query Deserved Freshness (QDF) is also a factor

On-the-page: content vertical

"**Vertical** content, as distinct from a general content, focuses on a specific segment. They are also called specialty or topical search engines. The **vertical content** area may be based on topicality, media type, or genre of **content**."
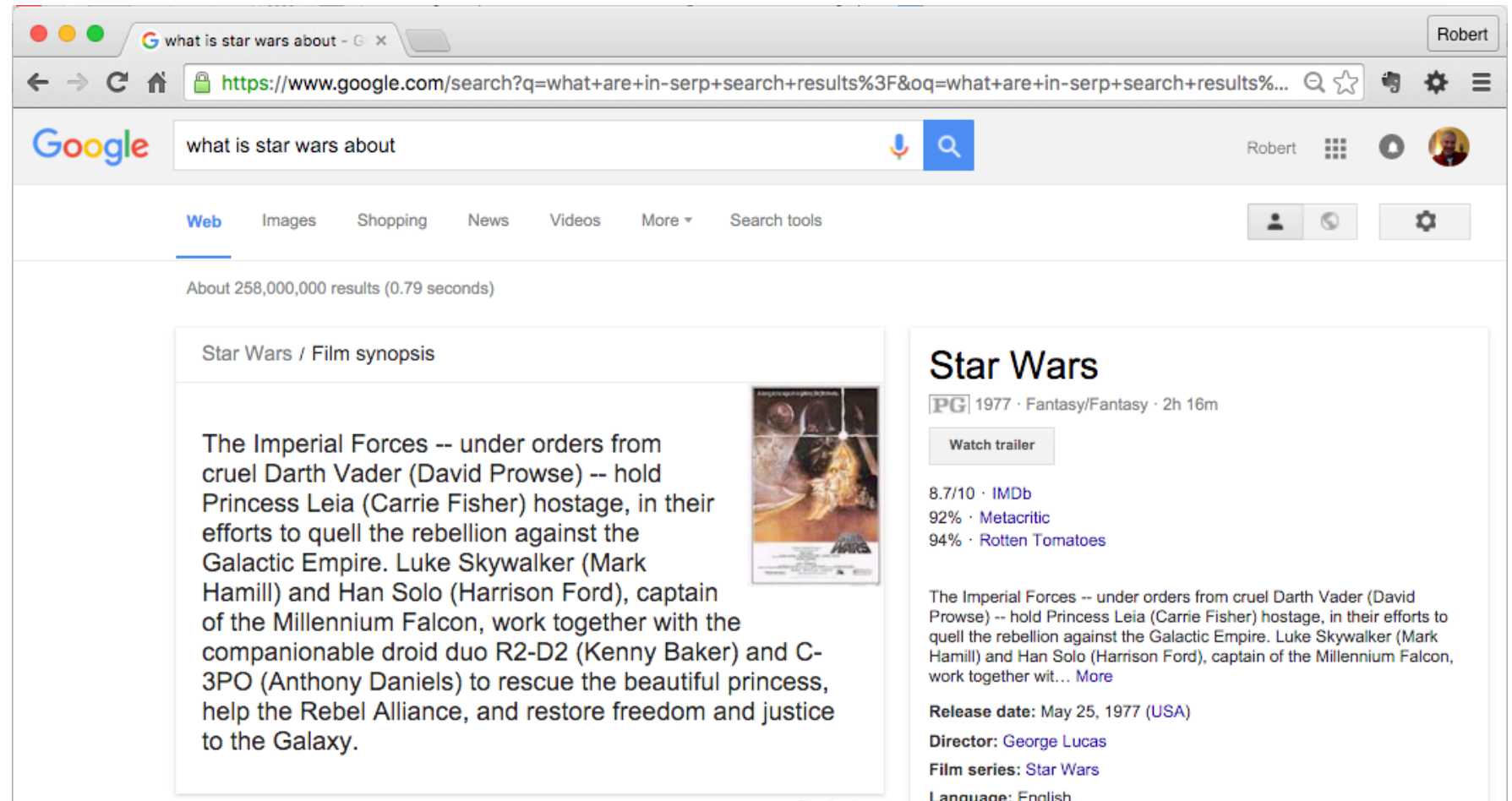
• Do you have image, local, news video or other "vertical" content?

On-the-page: direct answers

- Is your content turned into direct answers within search results?

Architecture

On-the-page SEO

On-the-page: architecture, crawling

- Can search engines easily find and crawl pages on the site?
- XML Sitemaps
- www.xml-sitemaps.com

On-the-page: architecture, mobile

- Does your site work well for mobile visitors, on smartphones and tablets?

On-the-page: architecture, speed

- Does the site load quickly?
- What is the "weight" of all the HTML, CSS, JavaScript and images? …and web fonts, and more?

On-the-page: architecture, duplicate management

- Does site manage duplicate content issues well?

- Reduce how often blocks of content are replicated across multiple pages in one website

- Mostly an issue for very large, content management system (CMS) driven websites

On-the-page: architecture, URLs

- Are URLs short and do they contain meaningful keywords to page topics?

On-the-page: architecture, HTTPS

- Does the site use HTTPS to provide secure connections for visitors?

HTML

On-the-page SEO

On-the-page: HTML title tags

- Do HTML title tags contain keywords relevant to the page topic?
- E.g. <title>Whales - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia</title>
- Note: specificity goes left-to-right

On-the-page: HTML description tags

- Do meta description tags describe what the page is about?

- Whatever is in the meta description, is added to the SERP

- Better than leaving it to chance (the search engine will pick the first plain text it finds)

```
<meta charset="utf-8">
<title>Robert Kostin Web Developer | Web Designer | Rochester, NY - New York</title>
<meta name="description" content="Robert Kostin is a Master Web Developer in the Upstate New York area.">
```

SERP

Robert Kostin **Web Developer** | **Web Designer** | **Rochester**, ...
www.rkostin.com/ ▾
Robert Kostin is a Master **Web Developer** in the Upstate **New York** area.

On-the-page: HTML structure/outline

- Are pages structured with heading tags to describe the content in a logical manner?

- Well structured documents are indexed better than loose text

- Note: don't use an H2 without an H1 above it; don't use an H3 without an H2 above it; et cetera

- http://gsnedders.html5.org/outliner

On-the-page: HTML heading tags

- Do headlines and subheadings use header tags with relevant keywords?

- Headings: <h1>, <h2>, <h3>

- Words are highly indexed; must be relevant

- "Lead-in" text is not relevant; e.g.:
  ```
  <h1>Whales in the Wild</h1>
  <h2>It's really interesting!</h2>  ← this isn't helping
  <p>The story of whales begins with…
  ```

Trust

Off-the-page SEO

Off-the-page: trust authority

- Do links, shares and other factors make site a trusted authority?

Off-the-page: trust engagement

- Do visitors spend time reading or "bounce" away quickly? (high bounce rate = bad)

Off-the-page: trust history

- Has site or its domain been around a long time, operating in the same way?

Off-the-page: trust identify

- Does site use means to verify its identify and that of authors?

Links

Off-the-page SEO

Off-the-page: link quality

- Are links from trusted, quality or respected web sites?

Off-the-page: link text

- Do links point at your webpages use words you hope they'll be found for?
- Beware: Google Bombs!

Off-the-page: link number

- Do many links point at your web pages?
- NOTE: Google!

Personal

Off-the-page SEO

Off-the-page: personal country

- What country is someone located in?

Off-the-page: personal locality

- What city or local area is someone located in?

Off-the-page: personal history

- Has someone regularly visited your site or socially favored it?

Social

Off-the-page SEO

Off-the-page: social reputation

- Do those respected on social networks share your content?

Off-the-page: social shares

- Do many share your content on social networks?

Violations

On-the-page: content thinness/shallowness

- Is content thin or shallow – lacking substance?
- Websites are penalized if they have very little content
- Noted: Are sites with strong imagery but few words penalized?

On-the-page: architecture, cloaking

- Do you show search engines different pages than humans?

On-the-page: Keyword stuffing

- Do you excessively use words you want pages to be found for?
- Gratuitous use of keywords in HTML is penalized
- I.e. using keywords in a way that doesn't enhance the content

On-the-page: HTML hiding

- Do colors or design styles hide words you want pages to be found for?

- Tricks to stuff HTML with keywords are penalized

- E.g.
  `<div style="background-color: #333333; color: #333333;">`
      `keyword, keyword, keyword, keyword, keyword, keyword`
  `</div>`

Off-the-page: trust, pirated

- Has site been flagged for hosting pirated content?

Off-the-page: trust, ads

- Is your content ad-heavy, especially above-the-fold?

Off-the-page: paid links

- Have you purchased links in hopes of better rankings?

Off-the-page: link spam

- Have you created many links by spamming blogs, forums or other places?

Create a Google Analytics Account

Instructions…

- Create a Google Analytics account: http://www.google.com/analytics
- Add an Account to Google Analytics: https://support.google.com/analytics/answer/1009694?hl=en
  - Use any website you own (and can edit code)

Sign-in to Google Webmasters Tools

- https://www.google.com/webmasters
- Click the "ADD A SITE" button

Generate an XML Sitemap

- www.xml-sitemaps.com