

ULTIMATE GUIDE TO SEO FOR BEGINNERS



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Generate leads that convert

Search engine optimization is a concept that seems very complicated at first glance. But the truth is, even if you have no experience with SEO, there is still a lot that you can do that will help you improve your search engine ranking. In this ultimate guide to SEO, I'll provide you with all the information you need to properly optimize your website.

WHAT IS SEO AND WHY DO I NEED TO DO IT?

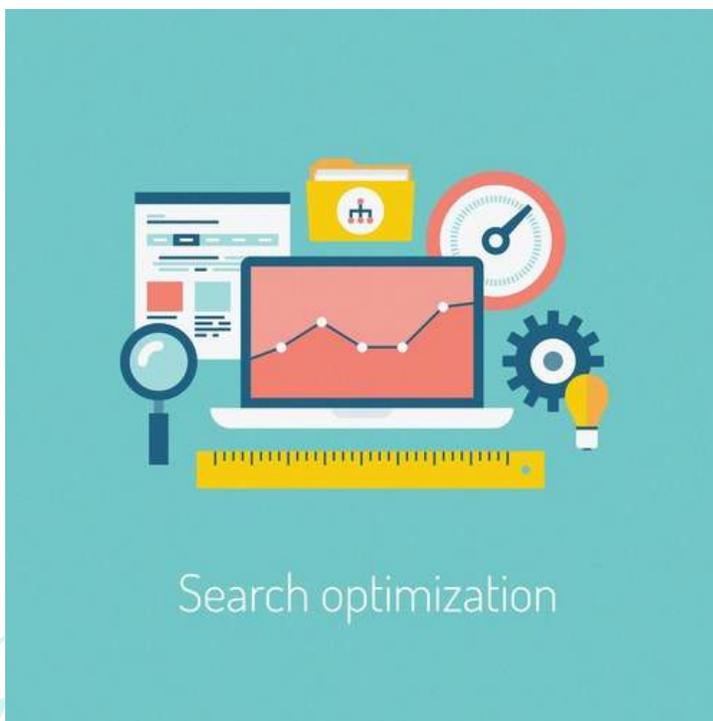
SEO is a marketing technique that helps you improve your visibility and ranking on search engines organically. So, put simply, it's what you need to do if you want to get on the first page of a Google search.

Search engine optimization is necessary for anyone with a website or blog. Getting your website on the first page of a Google search means more traffic, more engagement, [more conversions](#) and more of all the good stuff really. Google (and other search engines, although not at the same level) is how most people find new websites and blogs, no matter what type they are. Not

to mention, the traffic that you get from Google searches is targeted traffic – after all, the people getting to your website got there because it's what they searched for; this means that the better you rank on search engines, the better your chances to make more conversions and sales.

Search engines can't really read and understand web pages the same way a human would (although I'm sure we're close to getting there), so webmasters use SEO to write in a language that search engines will understand so that they can appropriately index and rank your website.

If you're not at the top of search results, chances are your audience won't see or notice your website. After all, how many times do you go further than the first page of a [Google search](#)? Most people find what they need within the first few results, so if your business or website isn't there, you are losing a lot of targeted traffic, which means you're probably also losing lots of potential leads.



SEO often involves making small, but strategic changes to your website, but other times, you need to spend some long hours doing things like looking for link building opportunities.

In my experience, SEO also helps you create a better browsing experience for your visitors, unless of course you are abusing it just so you can get to the top of the list.

DON'T I NEED AN SEO EXPERT?

While SEO can get complicated and especially time consuming, that doesn't mean you can't do quite a bit by yourself. Even adding a few keywords in strategic places and structuring your posts so that they are better optimized can make a big difference to your ranking.

Now let's get into what you need to do in order to properly optimize your website, improve your online visibility and get more traffic.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE

Before you can get started on your website's search optimization, you need to truly understand your target audience and particularly, how they use search engines and how they would search for your business.

Search engines strive to get the most relevant results whenever someone performs a search – it's not like in the old days anymore, when they usually just matched search queries with websites that contained the same keywords.

Think of it this way: what needs is your website meeting? How would you search for a website like yours? Knowing and understanding your audience is very important, because as I mentioned earlier, search engines strive to serve the user and reader and help them get the best results, and not your website.

KEYWORD RESEARCH

Keyword research is arguably one of the most important aspects of search engine marketing. By researching keywords, you find out what types of words and phrases people use to search for websites like yours. When you find the right keywords and rank for them, you massively improve your ranking and your chances of getting those coveted first few spots in search queries.

The key here is to find those keywords used by people who have an actual chance of converting; after all, having a lot of traffic means nothing if that traffic is not targeted. Researching keywords can also help you figure out what your audience is looking for, so that you know what types of changes you need to make to your website and service or product offerings.

There are several tools that you can use to research keywords and get ideas for other useful keywords, of which the most popular is probably Google's own Keyword Planner that you can access [here](#), but you can also try other tools, such as Moz's Keyword Explorer [here](#).

Keyword Planner

Where would you like to start?

Find new keywords and get search volume data

- ▶ Search for new keywords using a phrase, website or category
- ▶ Get search volume data and trends
- ▶ Multiply keyword lists to get new keywords

Plan your budget and get forecasts

- ▶ Get click and cost performance forecasts

Before you begin

- [How to use Keyword Planner](#)
- [How to see your organic data](#)
- [Building a Display campaign? Try Display Planner](#)

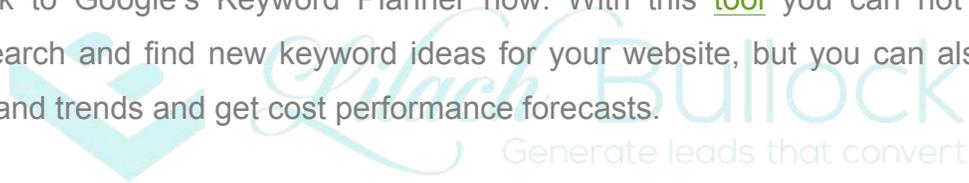
With Google's Keyword Planner, you can research stats for keywords, as well as get forecasts on your keyword ideas, so you can figure out what type of budget you are going to need.

The best way to go about this is to start by making a long list of potential keywords and groups of keywords. Put yourself in your customer's shoes and think of the words they would use to search for your website. It's a good idea to be very specific with your keywords – this way, you

will be getting more targeted traffic. More general keywords on the other hand, are good for when you want to reach as many people as possible.

Before we go any further, it's important to understand what long tail keywords are. Popular, one word keywords might have lots of searches every day, but those aren't the ones that are going to get you [targeted traffic](#) generally. The more general the keyword, the more likely that they're just browsing. Most people who are looking for something specific online use so-called "long tail keywords" – meaning, they are done browsing and already know what they want. If you rank for these less popular, but more targeted long tail keywords, you increase your chances of conversions. For example, let's say you had an e-commerce website selling unique candles. Ranking for 'candles' might mean you could reach more people – but how many of them are actually looking to buy candles? On the other hand, if someone is searching for "candles gift UK" for example, you know that person is looking to buy candles as a gift and therefore there's a better chance they might buy something from your website if they happen upon it.

Let's go back to Google's Keyword Planner now. With this [tool](#) you can not only do your keyword research and find new keyword ideas for your website, but you can also see search volume data and trends and get cost performance forecasts.



Enter one or more of the following:

Your product or service

Your landing page

Your product category

Targeting ?

- All locations
- English
- Google
- Negative keywords**

Date range ?

Customize your search ?

- Keyword filters**
- Keyword options**
 - Show broadly related ideas
 - Hide keywords in my account
 - Hide keywords in my plan
- Keywords to include**

Get ideas

K
ert

As you can see, Google makes it quite easy to browse through possible keyword ideas. Another important thing to note is the negative keywords function. This feature helps you target even further, by making sure that search queries containing the words you choose won't show your website. For example, if you have a website selling only women's clothes, you could use "men" and "children" as negative keywords as they are looking to buy something completely different.

Once you come up with keyword ideas, go to "Get search volume data and trends" to upload or enter your list of keywords, select the date range, locations and negative keywords you want, and you'll find how your keywords are doing.

CHANGES TO YOUR WEBSITE

As I mentioned in the beginning, you also need to make changes to your website so that search engines can properly ‘read’ and index them.

Before making any changes to the wording of your website, make sure to remember your website is first and foremost for your customers/readers, not search engines. Make your website the best it can be for your visitors and then make the changes needed to rank better on [Google](#). As I mentioned earlier, SEO, in an ideal world, works hand in hand with a good website, one that is easy to navigate and has content that is easy to consume. So as long as you don’t abuse search engine marketing, your website should work for both visitors and Google.

Keywords

Remember the keywords you researched? You should also use them on your website in the content you write, including headlines, page titles and more. Make sure not to abuse them however; if the keyword density is too high, you’ll be penalised by search engines.

Headlines and blog posts

If you have a blog on your website, there is a lot that you can do to optimize your articles and headlines and get better results. Choose one keyword or long tail keyword to define your entire blog post. Then use this keyword in the title as well as some of the headlines from your post. It’s worth mentioning again that you shouldn’t exaggerate and just adding keywords left and right. Not only will this make for a bad reading experience for your readers, but search engines won’t like it either.

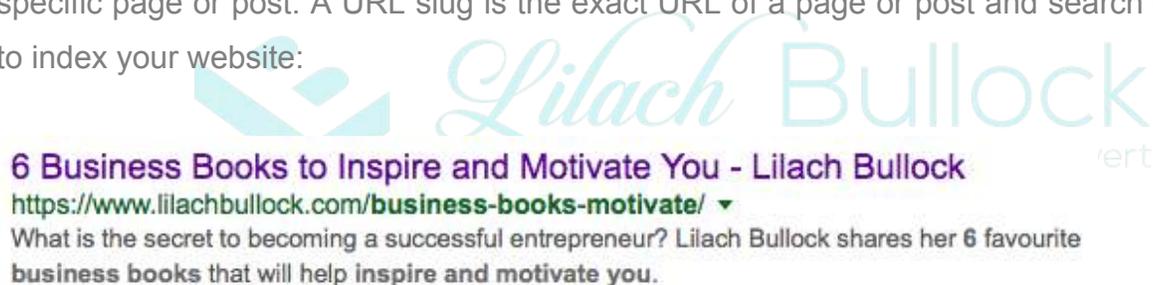


Search engines also appreciate a [well-structured article](#). For example, try to use sub-headlines in your posts wherever possible. Another good idea is to add some visual content to break up the text. These changes not only help with Google, Yahoo! and the likes, but they also make your articles much easier to read, which your readers are sure to appreciate.

It also helps writing longer articles; a 300-word post, for example, won't do much in terms of ranking, while a longer, 1200+ word article can help you rank better. This might seem strange since most people spend seconds reading a website, but, it happens – it might be because long form articles [get more backlinks](#) or maybe it's because longer articles also tend [to get more shares](#) on social media. Whatever the reason might be, one thing is for sure: long articles that are at least 1,200 words tend to rank better than shorter posts. In fact, in my experience I've found that articles of over 2000 words are performing even better.

It's also useful to post new, high quality articles often. Search engines love this and they are also indexing your website more often, meaning you stand a chance to rank better simply by writing content more often. Basically, every time you make a change to your website, search engines index your website anew. Not to mention, as you write more content you're also adding more keywords to your website – another useful aspect.

You also need to make sure your URL slug is not too long and contains the keywords for that specific page or post. A URL slug is the exact URL of a page or post and search engines use it to index your website:



As you can see from above, your URL slug appears in searches and Google uses it for indexing in order to find the right results for you. Make sure you don't make your slug too long and that you use the relevant keywords that will tell Google exactly what the post is about. Changing your URL slug to a short, concise one, can make a big difference in your ranking, so make sure you always optimize them before publishing. You'll also notice under the URL that there is a description under the URL. This meta description also helps [Google](#) index your website, but it also makes it clearer to the person performing the search what your article is about.

The best way to make sure you are doing all you can to make your posts perfect for both your readers and search engines is to get a tool like [Yoast SEO](#). This way, the tool analyses your content in real time so you can see exactly what kind of changes you need to make to your posts in order to optimize them. It also allows you to easily customize your URL slug, as well as

your meta description and set up a focus keyword for your post. This way, it only takes you minutes to make sure each and every one of your articles is properly optimized.

Visual content and SEO

As smart as search engines are, they can't really tell what the images and videos on your website are about unless you give them a helping hand. In order to make sure Google sees your visual content and knows what it is, you need to add alt tags and title tags to each and every one.

The 'alt text' basically tells search engines what they image is of and what it's doing on your website. The best thing you can do is make sure to add your focus keyword to at least one of your images.



LINK BUILDING AND SEO

Over the years, many have claimed that link building is dead or at the very least, soon to be dead. That said, it's still here and still a huge part of SEO.

Search engines use these links to determine how pages are connected between them, as well as to determine the authority of a page. Basically, the more backlinks you have, the more 'important' you are in a search engine's eyes.



There are different types of [backlinks](#), based on how you acquire them. Some of them are 'natural', organic links, where someone links to your content without you having to ask or try to get in any way. Then, there is also the option of reaching out to other webmasters so that they will include your links in their content, or submitting your website to directories, etc. The lowest form of backlinks, that don't really account for much in a search engine's eye are the types of links you would get as you comment on a blog post, for example.

The key to getting lots of 'natural' backlinks is to write awesome content that other websites will *want* to link to. Not to worry though, there's a lot you can do in the meantime, such as building relationships with influencers and similar websites and bloggers, or even asking your partners and customers to link back to you where relevant.

You can also examine your competitors' backlinks so that you can figure out new linking opportunities.

The best part about link building is that it doesn't just help with SEO, but also with getting more traffic, improving brand awareness and even increasing your influence if the right websites are linking back to you.

Link building is a long and arduous process and you need to keep working at it constantly to get the results you need and remember that the better your content is, the better the chances that you will get more natural backlinks.

For more information on link building, check out my [ultimate guide to link building for SEO](#).

USEFUL SEO TOOLS

Yoast SEO

Yoast SEO helps you easily optimize your WordPress website with a single plugin. I've been using it myself for years now and absolutely love it. Yoast SEO tells you what changes you need to make and best of all, it helps you write better optimized content.

As you install it on your website, it indexes it, inserts metatags and creates XML sitemaps and then notifies Google and Bing.

As you write content, it will let you know if your blog post structure is optimized with enough headlines and images and help you create a better meta descriptions and titles.

Buzzstream

Buzzstream is a blogger outreach tool that has some really good link building tools. You can use it to find potential blogs for manual link building and easily reach out to them. You also get detailed stats for each website so you know if it's worth reaching out to them.

Link Building Query Generator

Enter information about your brand, your competitors and your market and this tool will generate link building queries that are likely to uncover good link opportunities.

Product Category (e.g. SEO Software)	Your Brand
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Target Market (e.g. Internet Marketers)	Your Website
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Keyword	Competitor Website
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Keyword	Competitor Website
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="button" value="Create Link Building Queries"/>	

You can also use it to extract page titles, descriptions and keywords from URLs, extract links from HTML and automatically create link building queries. Check out their full list of free and paid link building tools [here](#).

SEO Site Checkup

Welcome to your Toolbox Dashboard

You are tracking 2 websites. [Add another one](#)

example1.com example2.com

Stats for <http://example1.com> from Mar 7, 2016 until Mar 21, 2016 Apply dates

SEO Score
65 out of 100

Loading time decreased
by 0.2s

Uptime percent
100%

Last updated: Mar 21, 2016 Run Report Now

SEO Score Progress

View Report

Date	Score
Mar 06	60
Mar 09	65
Mar 12	65
Mar 15	70
Mar 18	68
Mar 21	65

Most important issues

View Report

- 1 We have found 24 URLs that are not SEO friendly!
- 1 Your HTML size is 47.53 Kb and is over the average web page HTML size of 33 Kb. This can lead to slower than average load times, **lost visitors, and decreased revenue**. Good steps to reduce HTML size include: using of [HTML compression](#), [CSS layouts](#), [external style sheets](#), and [moving javascript to external files](#).

Category	07 MAR	21 MAR
PASSED CHECKS	30	34
FAILED CHECKS	13	11
WARNINGS	4	2

SEO Site Checkup offers analysis and monitoring tools. You can use it to monitor your website or your competitors', check your backlinks and their quality and get professional SEO reports with your branding.

Moz Pro

Moz Pro offer a complete SEO toolset so that you can easily handle all of your search optimization needs from one place.

The tool will help you save time by analysing your website in order to find any errors or opportunities and then let's you know how you can improve your site.

You can also use it explore your links and their quality and track your ranking with the Keyword Ranking tool.

SEM Rush

SEM Rush have a set of useful SEO tools that can help you improve your visibility and rankings.

For example, you can track your competitors and find out what their best keywords are, discover organic competitors and be up to date with any changes in domain positions. You can also use it to content deep link analysis, check backlink types and find out the geolocation for your links. Moreover, SEM Rush has a good keyword research tool to help you find the right keywords and long tail keywords to improve your ranking.

Their [list of tools](#) is pretty extensive, but some of the highlights include the SEO audit tool that lets you know what changes you need to make, position tracking to track any domain or keyword and the SEO ideas tool that finds out which ranking factors are affecting your website's performance and gives you the recommendations you need to create a better optimized site.

CONCLUSION

Search engine optimization doesn't have to be difficult if you follow this guide and get some tools to help you improve your results. What are your best tips for a better search engine marketing campaign?

About Lilach Bullock

Highly regarded on the world speaker circuit, [Lilach Bullock](#) has graced Forbes and Number 10 Downing Street with her presence! In a nutshell, she's a hugely connected and highly influential serial entrepreneur – the embodiment of Digital Intelligence.



Listed in Forbes as one of the top 20 women social media power influencers and likewise as one of the top social media power influencers, she is one of the most dynamic personalities in the social media market and was crowned the Social Influencer of Europe by Oracle. A recipient for a Global Women Champions Award (by the Global Connections for Women Foundation, GC4W) for her outstanding contribution and leadership in business.

After launching her first business within three years of becoming a mother, her financial success was recognised by being a finalist at the Best MumPreneur of the Year Awards, presented at 10 Downing Street. Following a resultant offer and wishing to spend more time with her daughter, she sold her first business to focus on social media, developing a multi-site blog and online marketing portfolio that generated in excess of 600,000 + visitors per month.

Lilach is consulted by journalists and regularly quoted in newspapers, business publications and marketing magazines (including Forbes, The Telegraph, Wired, Prima Magazine, The Sunday Times, The Guardian, Social Media Today and BBC Radio). What's more, her books have achieved No 1 on Amazon for Sales and Marketing and Small Business and Entrepreneurship.

When Lilach isn't working she enjoys spending time with her family and is an avid fan of Zumba.