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SEO Basics Guide PDF

SEO is the practice of helping search engines find, understand and show your pages to people who need them. The basics are to match search intent, write helpful content, use clear titles and headings, make the site fast and easy to crawl, earn trust and links naturally, and measure progress in Search Console.

Key takeaways

- Search engines crawl, index and rank pages.
- Search intent decides what kind of page should rank.
- Helpful, original content made for people comes first.
- Clear titles, headings, internal links and fast mobile pages support visibility.
- Nobody can promise a ranking position; focus on quality and measure results.

What is search engine optimisation basics?

Search engine optimisation is the process of improving a website's content, structure and reputation so that search engines can crawl and index it and show it for relevant searches.

How does search work?

A search engine discovers pages by following links and reading sitemaps (**crawling**), stores and analyses their content (**indexing**) and, when someone searches, selects and orders pages (**ranking**) using many signals. Your job is to make each step easy: allow crawling, offer clear content and show that the page serves the searcher well.

What is search intent?

Intent is what the searcher really wants. Common types are informational (learn), navigational (find a site), commercial (compare) and transactional (buy). A query like "how to choose running shoes" wants a guide; "buy running shoes size 9" wants a product page. Look at current results to see what kinds of pages appear, then match that type.

How do I do basic keyword research?

Start with topics your audience cares about, list questions and phrases, use research tools or search suggestions to find variations, group them by intent and assign one main topic per page. Prefer specific phrases that match your real expertise over very broad ones that you cannot serve well.

What makes content helpful?

Content should answer the question clearly, show first-hand experience or expertise where relevant, be accurate and up to date, and be easy to read. Use headings, short paragraphs, lists and examples. Do not write only to please search engines; write for the person and let clear structure help both.

Which on-page basics matter?

Element	Guidance
Title	Clear, specific and unique for each page
Headings	Logical structure with the main topic in the first heading
Description	A useful summary; it may be shown in results
URL	Short and readable
Images	Descriptive file names and alternative text
Internal links	Link related pages with meaningful text

What technical basics should I check?

Make sure pages load quickly on mobile, use secure connections, avoid blocking important pages from crawling, provide a sitemap and fix broken links. Use consistent canonical addresses so duplicates do not confuse search engines. Check the official documentation for current guidance.

How do links and reputation fit in?

Links from other trustworthy sites act as recommendations. Earn them by creating useful resources, sharing research or building real relationships, not by buying links, which can break search policies. Mentions, reviews and a clear about page also build trust.

How do I measure SEO?

Use Search Console to see queries, impressions, clicks and indexing problems, and an analytics tool to see visits and conversions from organic search. Compare periods, track by page group and annotate changes. Results take time, and many factors including competition and updates affect them.

What should I avoid?

Avoid keyword stuffing, copied content, hidden text, link schemes, thin pages made in bulk and promises of fixed rankings. Quality and honesty protect long-term performance.

What is a simple weekly routine?

Review Search Console, fix one technical issue, improve one existing page, publish or plan one helpful piece and record the change. Small regular steps compound.

What is a simple page review you can do today?

Choose one page and check five things: does it answer the main question quickly, is the title specific, are the headings clear, do images have useful descriptions and does the page link to two related pages. Then open it on a phone and check speed and readability. Write down three fixes, make them and note the date. After a few weeks, look at Search Console to see whether impressions or clicks changed for that page.

How should I think about updates to search systems?

Search engines change their systems from time to time. Rather than chase each change, follow the official guidance, keep content helpful and accurate, and maintain a technically healthy site. If traffic drops after an update, compare affected pages with those that held steady, look for common weaknesses and improve them honestly. Panic edits and shortcuts usually make things worse in the long run.

What is a short checklist for a new page?

Does it match one clear intent? Is the title unique? Are headings logical? Is the content original and useful? Are images optimised? Does it link to related pages and receive links from them? Is it in the sitemap? Can it be crawled? Is the mobile view good?

What should I read next?

Continue with the on-page, off-page and technical SEO page, then practise by auditing one small website you are allowed to review.

How do I stay honest with clients or managers?

Share what you did, what you measured and what remains uncertain, and avoid any promise of a specific ranking.

Frequently asked questions

What is SEO?

SEO is the practice of improving a website so search engines can crawl, understand and show it for relevant searches.

What is search intent?

Search intent is the goal behind a query, such as learning, comparing or buying, and your page should match that goal.

How long does SEO take?

It often takes months to see steady results, and the time depends on competition, site quality and consistency of work.

Can anyone promise a first page ranking?

No. Rankings depend on many factors outside your control, so be careful with promises and focus on quality and measurement.

Which tool shows my search performance?

Google Search Console shows queries, impressions, clicks and indexing issues for your own site, and an analytics tool shows visits and conversions.

Sources and further reading

- Google Search Central SEO starter guide
- Google Search Central documentation
- Google Search Console Help

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