

Is Your Website “Google Ready?”



A Simple Way to Explain SEO

I was just trying to explain SEO (Search Engine Optimization) to someone in a simple way and I came up with something pretty good...

Think about if Google was a person and your website was your house. For a website to rank well, it needs:

- **Good coding** – little to no errors, clean code. It's like going to someone's house and they didn't clean up. You're inviting Google over and if your place is a mess, you leave a bad impression.

- **Fast** – it needs to load quickly. When you go to someone's house, the more you have to ring the doorbell or knock, the more annoying it is, right? You wonder if anyone is even home.
- **Good structure** – things have to be organized. If Google sends someone to your home, it should make sense where things are. The Library shouldn't be partly on the 1st floor, partly on the 3rd floor and the most of it being in the basement. If everything is close together, Google knows that they can send someone over to find what they need and maybe even some related things that they might also be wondering about.
- **Good content** – original content that's factual and helpful. Google's not going to send people your way if there isn't much there. They will instead pick a better result.

Make sense?

Relevance

On top of all of that, your website needs to be relevant.

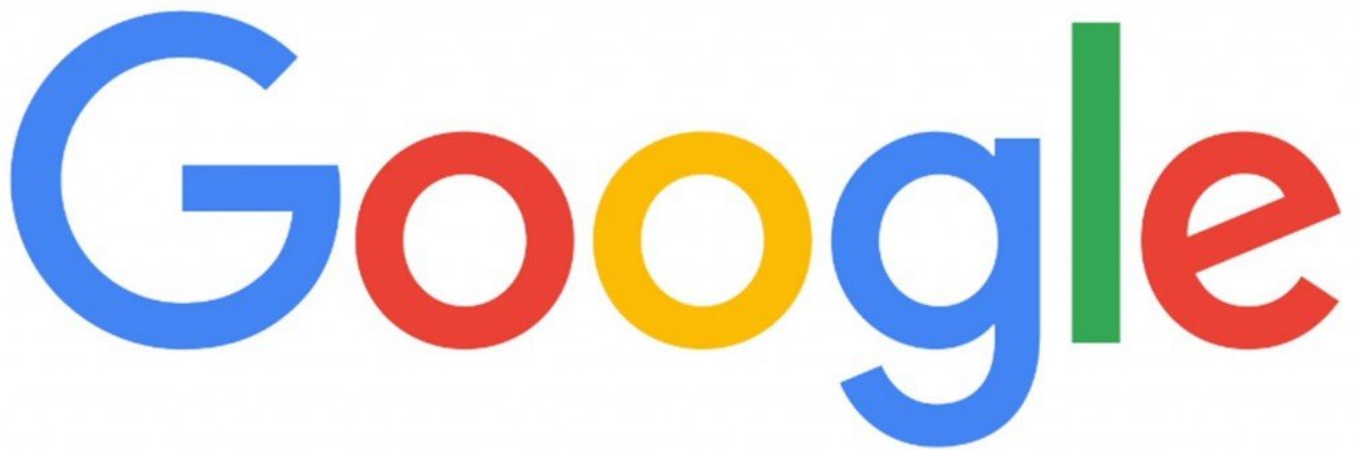
Articles you post need to closely match the relevant keywords for that topic. The easiest way to explain this is to go to the corresponding [Wikipedia](#) page for what your page is discussing. Go there and look for relevant keywords – things that are unique to that topic. Then, go back to your article and make sure those keywords are in there and that you're providing good information about each one.

Two Sides of SEO

There's on-site SEO and off-site SEO. This is covering on-site SEO. You basically need to make sure your website is set up right and then add great content – this is all on-site SEO. Do this part first before you start building links.

Or in other words... clean your house before you start inviting people over!

What Else Does Google Look For?



To make sure you're being a good host, there are a few more things your website should definitely have besides good structure.

A Privacy Policy

This is essential and it's something you don't see on every website. Google wants to see that you have a Privacy Policy page because it explains what you do with content that people submit (send to you) on your website. Websites without this page seem less trustworthy and Google wants to provide the best results possible so if this page is missing, you simply won't rank as high. It's not THE main factor for ranking but it's definitely a part of the equation.

A good place for a Privacy Policy page is to link to it on the footer section of all pages of your website. It should be easy to find and on the majority of websites out there, there's a link to that page in the footer – right at the bottom of every page.

If you're not a lawyer or if you're not sure how to create a Privacy Policy page, then there are some ways to do it easy and cheap.

First, there are Privacy Policy generators out there. Here are a few:

- FreePrivacyPolicy.com
- TermsFeed.com
- PrivacyPolicies.com
- JenSense.com (for sites using Google AdSense)

Second, just copy one from another website and modify it. You can even borrow mine if you want. Just make sure to go through every line, change text to suit your website and make sure it applies to your website.

Site Maps

Your website needs 2 kinds of site maps. One is the HTML site map, which is a page on your website that has links to every page you have on your website. It's not a fancy page. It just contains links. If you use WordPress, there are some good site map generator plugins you can use.

The other kind is the XML sitemap. This page is hidden and it's written in another language called XML (extensible markup language). It's like HTML but different. This is what Google and other search engines need. [Here is what my XML site map looks like](#). A good WordPress plugin to use for that is the [Google XML Sitemaps Generator](#).

The HTML site map also creates more links to pages on your website and that's good for SEO.

Breadcrumb Navigation

One more thing that helps search engines (and website visitors, of course) get around your website is breadcrumb navigation. This term comes from [Hansel & Gretel](#) who left a trail of breadcrumbs so they could find their way back home.

The breadcrumb nav looks like this:

 [Home](#) ▶ [Web Design](#) ▶ [Is Your Website "Google Ready?"](#)

There are a few reasons why it's good to have this on your website. First, as I mentioned, more links between pages is good for SEO. Second, people might not enter your website through the home page. In fact, most of your traffic is coming from other pages than your home page – check your statistics/analytics. It's kind of like opening a book in the middle and reading a page – there's normally something at the top or bottom of the page that tells you which chapter you're in and what page number you're on, right? That is what breadcrumb navigation does.

Having it allows your website visitor to go up a level and look around some more. If the level above a page does not relate to the page below it, then that is when you know you have bad website structure. Does that make sense?

So when you're setting up a website, don't just throw pages here and there but think about the structure and plan it out.

Conclusion

Just to wrap things up with a bow, remember that website usability is key. You want to provide the best experience possible for your website visitors. Not every website is set up the same – but think about it, if they were, it would be a lot easier to navigate every website out there, right? Again, that's not the world we live in but don't go with some crazy design that you think is innovative. All you're going to do there is confuse people. Stick to the norm of how websites are set up to ensure the best user experience possible.

Then, technically, you want to make sure your website welcomes search engine spiders. Make sure they can find everything easily. Have the right pages on your website. Make sure you have good website hosting, too. A website that's down a lot isn't going to be very trustworthy and thus will not be shown as a result because it cannot be trusted.

I ran across this great article today and I got me thinking about a few things:

7 Ways You Might Be Losing Out on Search Rankings (searchenginewatch.com)

He lists a few of the things that must be technically correct for your website to get good rankings. It's true, you could have a really nice website but if a few, technical things are wrong, Google might think your website is terrible.

I've seen this happen. I can usually tell with just a glance at the HTML code from the home page. Sometimes it takes digging in a little further and using some special website analysis tools but usually within an hour or so, we can tell if a website has major problems or not. There have been a few that look good and they wonder why their website gets not traffic. We look and there are technical errors galore.

When you see that, you wonder what drugs the website designer was on and why they did it that way. It just makes no sense.

This is one of those things that gives the website design industry a bad name. Well, stuff like this and those SEO companies that produce terrible results and charge \$800 a month for nothing (I hate that).

When you hire a website designer, how do you know if you're hiring a good one? How do you know if you're hiring a firm that knows what they're doing? You almost can't. It's tough. It's like getting a good car mechanic, right?

Did I miss anything? Leave some comments below and please rate this article.

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