

— 8 Ways to —

# ROCK SEO

By Shea Hanson | Lynda.com



# Introduction

Search engine optimization (SEO) improves the content and organization of a website to boost search result rankings. Effective SEO increases views and drives more traffic. Why is this important? Research shows that that top Google search results get about twice as many clicks as those that rank second.

Google rankings rely on proprietary algorithms that place the most relevant content at the top. There's no easy or sneaky way to get there. Web content needs to be clear, relevant, and optimized for search. Use this guide to analyze your website, optimize its content, and improve your search engine rankings.

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## Build an easy-to-index site



**NO. 1**

## Build an easy-to-index site

### ► **INCORPORATE LOTS OF TEXT**

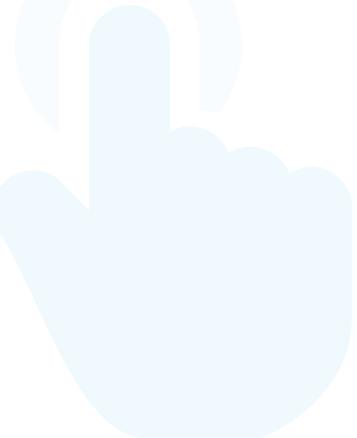
Site indexers read text. Image- and flash-based text isn't read by search engines, and it won't be indexed. Links should be text-based and include natural, descriptive language.

[🔗](#) For a deeper dive, watch our Lynda.com video [Understanding Why Indexing is Important](#).

### ► **ORGANIZE YOUR SITE THOUGHTFULLY**

Your navigation tells search engines how important each page and its content is to your site. The more pages to click through, the less important and the lower to your site will rank.

[🔗](#) For a deeper dive, watch our Lynda.com video [Reviewing Page Content](#).



### ► CREATE RELEVANT TAGS

Title, header, and alt tags should be polished and relevant. Keyword stuffing doesn't work here, so only include language that is meaningful. Leave out the fluff.

[For a deeper dive, watch our Lynda.com video \*Building Title Tags\*.](#)

### ► SUBMIT A DETAILED SITEMAP

Include a sitemap in both HTML and XML formats and a well-defined robots.txt file. This helps site crawlers find their way around your site more easily and rewards you with better rankings. For an example of an HTML sitemap, [view our Lynda.com sitemap](#).

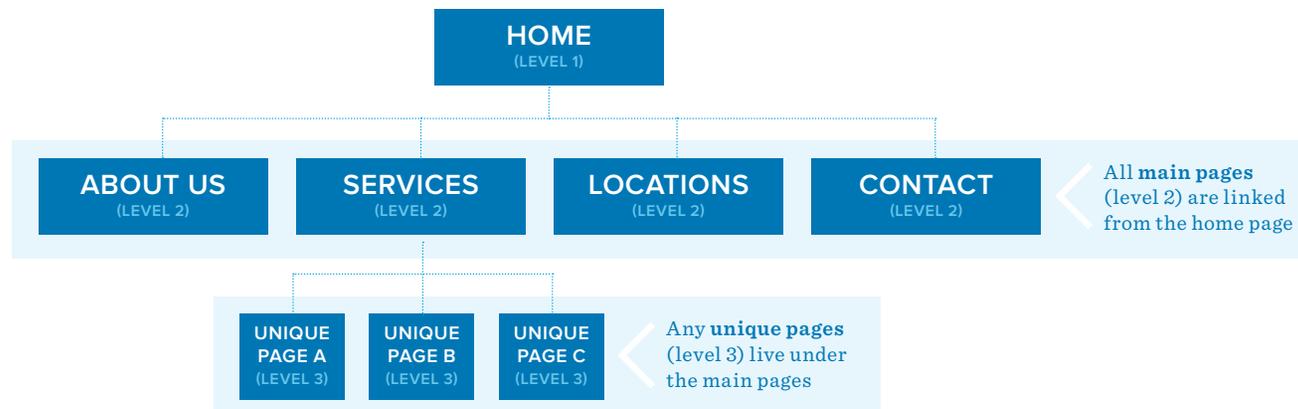
[For a deeper dive, watch our Lynda.com video \*Building and Submitting HTML and XML Sitemaps\*.](#)





## Start with a sitemap diagram

If you're not quite sure where to begin with creating an HTML and XML sitemap, a sitemap diagram is a great place to start. A sitemap diagram is an internal tool for planning website content in a logical and organized manner. They're also used to help conceptualize what keywords and tags could be used on each unique page. Below is a basic example.



**TIP:** Creating a flat hierarchy = better SEO rankings

[🔗](#) For more information on how to create a sitemap, check out our Lynda.com video [Creating a Sitemap](#).



Use the best keywords



**NO. 2**

## Use the best keywords

Use a keyword tool, such as [Google Keyword planner](#), to compare the search volume of the keywords you're using and identify alternatives. You can view statistics for current or possible keywords to evaluate how well they perform and check out your competition's keywords to see what they are bidding on and ranking for. This can help you build competitive advantage.

EXAMPLE: A local carpet cleaning company is researching the best keywords to use in its website copy. When researching search volume, the company finds that "carpet cleaning" has 90,500 average monthly searches, while "steam cleaning" only has 1,600. For local searches, "carpet cleaning Santa Barbara" ranks higher than "carpet cleaners Santa Barbara."

[🔗](#) For more information, watch our Lynda.com video [Checking for Sitemaps on Competitor Websites](#).

**KEEP IN MIND:**

70%

of search traffic comes from long-tail keywords.

source: [goo.gl/P2GDRb](https://goo.gl/P2GDRb)

65-75  
characters

of a title tag are displayed.

source: [goo.gl/KZ2kRA](https://goo.gl/KZ2kRA)

70%

of search results include synonyms.

source: [goo.gl/vOj0nd](https://goo.gl/vOj0nd)



## Create clear content



**NO. 3**

## Create clear content

Search engines are smart enough to understand proper grammar in words and phrases. Attempting to reinforce a keyword unnaturally in website copy doesn't help your SEO. If anything, it might negatively impact your efforts. When you build content, keep in mind there is no magic number of words or term repetitions that will make your site rank higher. Instead, include information that brings the most value to users. If you're going after a particular search term, do so because that term is popular to your user base and using it naturally is in your benefit. If you really need a formula, stick with this: Insert a keyword or related concept in your heading tag.

 For more information, watch our Lynda.com video [\*Creating Engaging Web Copy.\*](#)





Add links



**NO. 4**

## Add links

A large number of quality links pointing to your site will increase your authority and popularity. And if you're consistently promoting good quality content through link outreach opportunities, other websites will link to you. Being able to clearly see what's happening to your link portfolio can tell you how trustworthy and authoritative search engines think your website is. A few really good tools out there help analyze backlink metrics, including Majestic SEO, Ahrefs, and Raven.

**TIP:** Use absolute links. If your content is republished on another page, it still links back to your site. Here is an example of an absolute link: `<a href="http://url.com">Home</a>`.

.....  
 For a deeper dive on SEO link building, explore our Lynda.com video [\*SEO: Link Building in Depth\*](#).



Be local



**NO. 5**

## Be local

### USE GOOGLE

Show up on local searches and Google Maps by setting up a My Business profile.

### BE CONSISTENT

Google will link identical contact information. Make sure all your phone numbers, addresses, links, and more are consistent.

### COLLECT REVIEWS

Customer reviews will show up in search results and help build credibility for your organization. Make sure you're present on customer review sites, including Yelp.

[Explore our Lynda.com videos \*SEO for Local\* and \*Leveraging Local SEO\*.](#)

**20%**  
**OF GOOGLE**  
**SEARCHES**  
are for local  
information.



Go global



**NO. 6**

## Go global

Structure your site to accommodate translated content. Each language your site is translated into should have it's own separate content.

EXAMPLE: [yourdomain.com/es](#). Using multiple domains offers freedom in terms of content, structure, and navigation. However, you risk losing SEO value built by your main domain.

[es.yourdomain.com](#). A different subfolder on main domain maintains the SEO value and authority. However, with this method you might face difficulties with differing site frameworks or variations based on content structures if your content varies between translations. This might also be difficult to accomplish depending on your content management system.

.....  
[Watch International SEO Fundamentals](#) to learn more [International SEO Fundamentals](#).



Find the right tools



**NO. 7**

## Find the right tools

These tools can help you accomplish your SEO goals:

[Google Search Console](#) (formerly Google Webmaster Tools) allows you to review how your site ranks in Google search results.

[Google PageSpeed Insights](#) helps you evaluate the performance of your site based on technical structure and usability.

[Screaming Frog SEO Spider](#) crawls and audits your site so you can evaluate common SEO problems.

[Google Keyword Planner](#) helps you research volume, trends, and forecasts for keywords.

[Google Structured Data Testing Tool](#) allows you to review a competitor's use of structured data.

[SEMrush](#) allows you to analyze massive amounts of SEO data related to your site and your competitors' sites.

[Moz Open Site Explorer](#) helps you analyze links on your site.

[Siteliner](#) finds duplicate content on your site.

[🔗](#) For an in depth look at each of these tools, explore [SEO Tools Fundamentals](#).



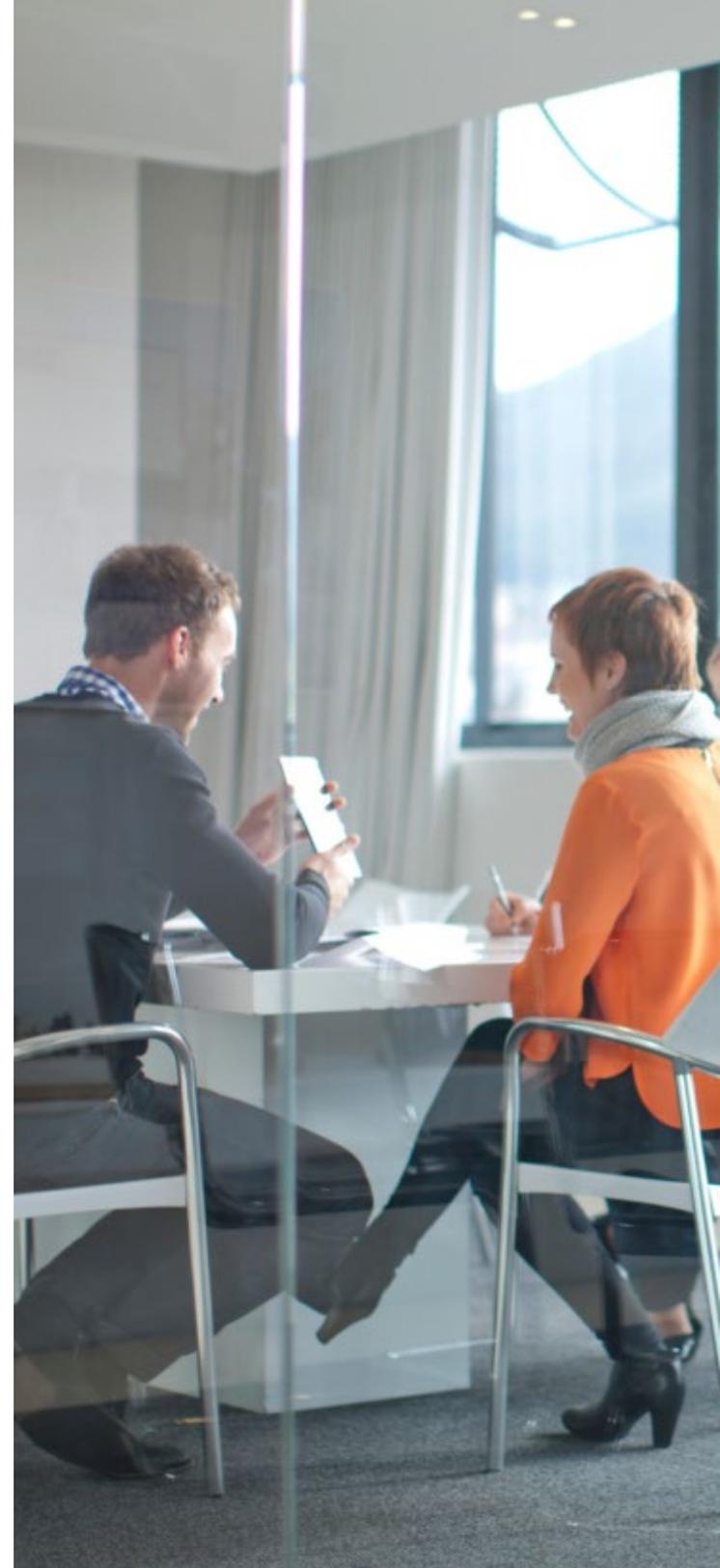
Test your SEO



**NO. 8**

## Test your SEO

Elements of your site should be evaluated and tested regularly. By auditing your site, you'll identify elements that need to be changed or optimized to increase your SEO ranking.





## Elements to Test

### ON-SITE ITEMS

- Keyword focus
- URL structure
- Title tags
- Meta description tags
- Meta keyword tags
- Heading tags
- Content
- Internal linking and anchor text
- Image names and ALT tags
- NoFollow anchor tags

### INDEXING ITEMS

- Page exclusions
- Page inclusions
- URL redirects
- Duplicate content
- Broken links
- Code validation
- Page load speed

### OFF-SITE ITEMS

- Inbound followed links
- Authority and trust
- Competitive link comparisons



## Conclusion

Ranking high on search engines takes time and energy. It doesn't happen overnight. You might have to rethink parts of your existing site strategies and do some tweaking. You can get started right away—making one change and measuring the results. Over time, and as your skills improve, you can make big changes that drive success. The strategies discussed in this guide are only the beginning. I encourage you to explore the Lynda.com online library to become even more of an SEO rock star.

# Learn more

*SEO Fundamentals* with David Booth

[www.lynda.com/SEO-Fundamentals](http://www.lynda.com/SEO-Fundamentals)

*SEO for Local Visibility* with Brad Batesole

[www.lynda.com/SEO-Local-Visibility](http://www.lynda.com/SEO-Local-Visibility)

*International SEO Fundamentals* with David Booth

[www.lynda.com/International-SEO-Fundamentals](http://www.lynda.com/International-SEO-Fundamentals)

*SEO Tools Fundamentals* with Brad Batesole

[www.lynda.com/SEO-Tools-Fundamentals](http://www.lynda.com/SEO-Tools-Fundamentals)

*SEO Link Building in Depth* with Peter Kent

[www.lynda.com/SEO-Link-Building-Depth](http://www.lynda.com/SEO-Link-Building-Depth)

*Online Marketing Fundamentals* with Brad Batesole

[www.lynda.com/Online-Marketing-Fundamentals](http://www.lynda.com/Online-Marketing-Fundamentals)

*Content Marketing Fundamentals* with Dayna Rothman

[www.lynda.com/Content-Marketing-Fundamentals](http://www.lynda.com/Content-Marketing-Fundamentals)

*Google AdWords Essential Training* with Brad Batesole

[www.lynda.com/Google-AdWords-Essential-Training](http://www.lynda.com/Google-AdWords-Essential-Training)

# Authors

## AUTHOR



Shea Hanson,  
Marketing Content Manager  
Lynda.com

Shea Hanson is the content manager for marketing courses at Lynda.com, where she works with expert authors to create engaging, effective training courses. With a background in instructional design, Shea's goal is to help professionals improve their skills and transform their lives through simple and helpful content.

## CONTRIBUTORS



Brad Batesole,  
Staff Author  
Lynda.com



Lindsay Thomson,  
Email & Marketing Specialist  
Lynda.com



Dave Booth,  
Author  
Lynda.com

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**International:** +1 (805) 477-3900

**EMEA:** +44 (0) 1252 416554

**APAC:** +61 2 9779 1582

email: [enterprisesolutions@lynda.com](mailto:enterprisesolutions@lynda.com)

web: [www.lynda.com/industries](http://www.lynda.com/industries)