



DIGGITY
marketing

Matt Diggity's

EVERGREEN

Onsite SEO Guide



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1.0 VERSION HISTORY

1.0 - July 12, 2014

1.1 - August 10, 2014

1.2 - August 27, 2014

1.3 - November 27, 2014

1.4 - April 3, 2015

1.5 - May 15, 2015

1.6 – December 26, 2015

1.7 – March 16, 2016

1.8 – October 10, 2016

1.9 – December 26, 2016

1.10 – May 23, 2017

- Added some new adjustments to URL and title tag for optimization based on recent test results.
- Added some more ninja tricks to meta descriptions.

1.11 – December 23, 2017

- Tweaked the following sections
 - H1 optimization
 - Word count with respect to hidden content
 - Authority links: Click discouragement
 - Warning on Topical Relevance Pitfalls

1.12 – April 12, 2018

- Added guidelines about keyword cannibalization

1.13 – February 1, 2019

- Updated guidelines on word count and keyword density

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This guide is a compilation of the latest findings on the most effective techniques for onsite SEO to date. As you know, Google changes their algorithm daily, and what works today might not work tomorrow. The goal of this document is to provide an up-to-date, always current resource for result-based onsite SEO tactics that are working now. I encourage you to check the version history and make sure you have the latest and greatest version of this document. To make sure, please don't hesitate to reach out at matt@diggitymarketing.com.

About me:

My name is Matt Diggity. I've been immersed in SEO since 2009 and have made a quite successful living from ranking sites and helping others rank sites. I'm a data-oriented SEO and base all of my techniques off of actual test results performed in-house at [Diggity Marketing](#).

My experience with SEO has been quite diverse. Currently, I am involved heavily in affiliate SEO and lead gen. I operate over 200 money sites and manage a PBN of over 8000 sites.



Currently, I offer the following SEO services:

- [Outreach Link Building from Authority Builders](#)
- [SEO Outsourcing from The Search Initiative](#)
- [SEO Instruction from The Affiliate Lab](#)
- [SEO Consulting](#)

Why you should trust my SEO knowledge:

Owning a fleet of ranking websites, a massive backlink network, and having access to hordes of data, I have the advantage of being able to see what is working effectively in today's SEO environment based on real data, not speculation. I've tried pretty much every tactic known to SEOs and I'm constantly testing new ones. I know what works based on data and experience, not speculation.

What's so important about onsite SEO?

From my experience offering SEO coaching and consultations, **the most common issue that is holding people back from ranking is: onsite SEO**. You can have the best links on the planet pointed to your site, but if you're not up to speed on what should be happening onpage, then you'll be perpetually trapped on page 2 or worse.

Think of it like this. Winning in SEO is like winning a car race. Your onsite SEO is your car and the links are the gas you put in it. If you don't build a good car, it's simply not going to go anywhere despite the gas you put in it.

What you'll find in this guide:

This is not a beginner's guide. You'll be expected to know your way around Wordpress, plug-ins, metas, HTML etc. This is for those that need the latest information that will give them that push to get onto page 1.

What you will find is guidelines, techniques, and tricks for optimizing your site according to today's standards.

3.0 HIGH-PRIORITY KEYWORD HOLDERS

3.1 URL

In this document, I'll use the familiar "dog training" keyword example to illustrate my points.

What is an EMD? An Exact Match Domain uses the exact keyword for the domain name. In our example, it would be www.dogtraining.com, dog-training.com, or some variation thereof.

EMDs in the recent years have been devalued by Google on multiple occasions. It's not like they don't work anymore; they certainly still do have an almost [unfair advantage in ranking](#) simply for having the keywords in the URL (more on this later). However, they have a much higher chance of getting hit with over-optimization problems.

These days I prefer EMDs if I want to get a site ranked quickly. The ranking bonus is just too good. I've pushed the envelope when it comes to optimization and have found that it's still quite hard to get hit with over-optimization penalties when you're [choosing anchor text correctly](#).

Consider making a branded site in parallel, especially if you're a beginner. Making parallel "sister sites" helps you minimize risk and in the best-case scenario, you rank multiple sites on the first page and [dominate the niche entirely](#).

What is a PMD? A Partial Match Domain uses the target keywords, but adds additional words between or around them. For example: mydogtrainingguide.com or trainingyourdog.com or even dogmasterpros.com. Simply having one word of the keyword phrase is enough to put you in the PMD category.

PMDs work very well today, as they were blessed with a little more leniency in June 2014 which has seemed to stick. As of now, EMDs and PMD's are my preferred domain naming strategy for quick ranking. I'll choose an EMD if it's available, and a PMD if not.

That said, branded domains are my preferred choice in most situations...

What is a Branded Domain? Branded domains include none of the target keywords in the domain name.

Most of the major domains that Google loves like WebMD, Forbes, Amazon, Wikipedia, etc. are branded domains. They provide the most leeway against penalization and then enable you to send Branded anchor text from your links, which Google also loves.

Branded domains are great for a long-term strategy. If you're building a site for a real product and are looking to create some recognition, then branded domains are the way to go. They are sell-friendly, so if you're looking to flip your website later, they typically sell better and easier for EMDs and PMDs. Lastly, branded domains are much easier to build outreach links for.

Brand domains are also recommended for beginners, where you might not have a fine grasp on the nuances of optimization.

You can have a branded domain's homepage target your main keyword, even though it doesn't contain the keyword itself, and this is accomplished by taking advantage of the TITLE and H1 tag as you will learn below.

3.2 TITLE META

This is what goes into your <title></title> HTML. Also known as your Title Meta. Most people use the popular Wordpress Plug-In's "All-in-One SEO" or "Yoast" to create individual titles for each page.

Back in the easy days, people used to simply spam this field with their keywords. For example, "Dog training tips | Dog training guide | Learn how to train your dog".

Nowadays, you want it to be readable to the user and you want to use the keywords sparingly (see section 3.5). Make sure to create a unique title for each page.

3.3 DESCRIPTION META

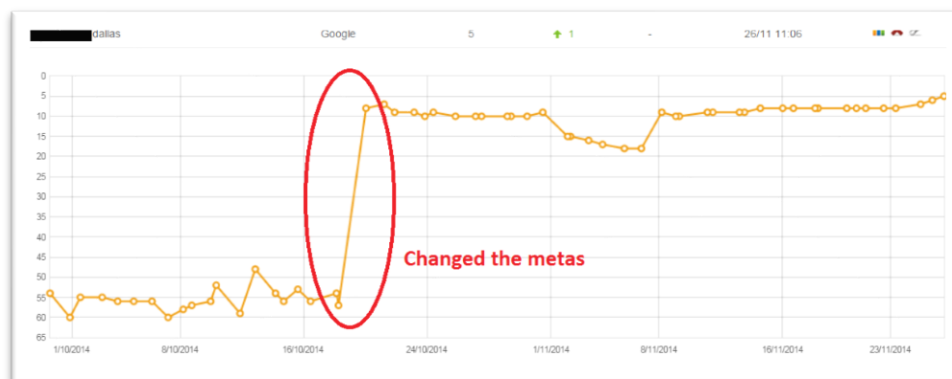
Same as the title meta. It's filled out with the "All-in-One SEO" or "Yoast" plug in. Use a unique description for each page (more on this later).

3.4 KEYWORD META

Also filled-out with the "All-in-One SEO" or "Yoast" plug in however it should be completely ignored. Google doesn't apply it to its ranking algorithm. [See article](#)

3.5 PRO-LEVEL URL AND META OPTIMIZATION

Using the techniques below, I've seen clients get incredible results. I've seen sites jump from page 6 to page 1, simply from making these changes.



These days, it's all about being precise and avoiding spammy practices. The following techniques don't risk over-optimization and uses Google's highly intelligent semantic synonym association to get Google to recognize your page's relevance towards a certain topic.

1. Get your keyword in the URL (once and only once), and be as brief as possible while making sure your keywords are represented.

At the inner page level, recent tests have shown that shorter is better. Keep your URL slugs as short as possible, while including as many keywords as possible.

In the past I would recommend inserting extra filler words to mix up your keyword phrases, but the current advantage that you get for being brief, overrides the aforementioned benefit.

So in general, try to keep your both your homepage and inner-page URL slugs as short as possible.

Example: Branded domain is going for target keyword "dog training"

GOOD: <http://www.ilovemyk9.com/dog-training>

BAD: <http://www.ilovemyk9.com/dog-training-guide-for-new-owners-of-puppies>

Example: Partial match domain is going for target keyword "puppy training"

GOOD: <http://www.dogguides.com/puppy-training> (bonus because "dog" is related to the word puppy)

BAD: <http://www.dogguides.com/guide-for-training-your-puppy-dog> (too long and "dog" is used twice)

2. Get your keyword in the Title (once), keep the string together for the most part, and keep it at the front of the title tag.

Recent tests have shown that shorter title tags are out-performing longer versions. Avoid adding "click bait" words until you're ranked #1-#5 when it really starts to matter.

GOOD: Dog Training Guide for Beginners | Obedience Tips

BAD: Dog Training - How to train your dog - Dog Training Tips

GOOD: Dog Training Guide for Beginners | Obedience Tips

BAD: Dog Training Guide for Beginners (It's short, but wasting valuable optimization real estate)

3. Use the description to increase click through rate (CTR) as your primary goal.

Just like the meta keywords, the description is also not considered in Google's ranking algorithm ([read article](#)). However, meta descriptions can affect CTR, which is indeed a key factor in ranking.

Here's a trick: Write your descriptions in a way to encourage people to click on your link.

How to encourage clicks from the SERP result using a meta description:

- a) Be descriptive about your page
- b) Be persuasive
- c) Make people curious
- d) Highlight trigger words with capital letters
- e) Cut the length down to 156 characters

Example: These sneaky Dog Training Tips will work on ANY dog. You'll DEFINITELY want to check out our FREE ...

Protip: Specifically insert a "..." to encourage people to click and find out exactly **what is free**.

4.0 CONTENT

Content (otherwise known as the context) is what goes into the body of the page: the bulk of the text that makes up the body page itself. In the section, you'll find guidelines on what's working best in the content of your web pages.

4.1 HEADER TAGS

Your <h1>, <h2> and <h3> tags are used to inform Google about the main and sub-topics of your page.

Also, in the past, these fields were spammed and abused as an easy way to tell Google what you want to rank for.

What they're actually intended for is dividing up sections of your topic. Your H1 is your page's main topic, your H2's are the sub-topics of that main topic, and so forth.

Include your target keyword only once in one <h1> tag. And make it part of a larger phrase. Not just the exact keyword.

Also, do not simply repeat your entry for the <title> tag meta (3.2). The H1 and the <title> should be unique from each other.

Example:

Dog Training Tips for Newbies

Sidenote: each page should only have one <h1> tag. Most themes have it setup to automatically create a <h1> tag from your page title, so be sure that you don't create two. Each <h1> tag can have other <h2> tags underneath it, and the <h3> tags go underneath those <h2> tags.

Example:

Dog Training Tips for Newbies

House Breaking (Potty Obedience)

Young Puppies

Older Pets

Tricks

Sit

Shake

Roll-over

4.2 OPTIMIZING A PAGE FOR MULTIPLE KEYWORDS

When it comes to onsite optimization, certain places are more valuable to have your keywords in than others. Based on my tests, in order of impact, from most valuable keyword real-estate to least valuable:

1. URL
2. SEO Title Tag (i.e.: <TITLE></TITLE>)
3. H1 (i.e.: Page title)
4. H2, H3, H4...
5. Content

We can use this knowledge to our advantage, if we have multiple keywords that we want to target on a single page, which should be the case anyways.

Let's say we have the following keywords we want to target on the homepage in order of importance:

1. dog training
2. dog obedience
3. puppy school
4. potty training for dogs
5. dog walking training

We'll start with our URL, making a branded domain, with an inner page targeting however many keywords we can fit in the URL without looking spammy. The following URL covers our two most important keywords.

URL: <http://petpros.com/dog-training-and-obedience>

Now for the SEO title tag. Again, let's try to get as many keywords as possible in there, remembering the rules we read above.

SEO Title Tag: Dog Training and Obedience School | Pet Pros

Next comes our Page Title. Definitely get our top keywords in there, and let's also try to get some of the words that we haven't included so far. Additionally, we'll use a synonym "Canines" to get some semantic advantage.

Page Title: Dog Training School for both Puppies and Adult Canines

Whatever we can't fit, whether it be to length issues or it just not making sense for our sales copy, we can fit on H2's and H3's.

H2: Potty Training

H2: Walking your Dog

Lastly, in the event that we have a long list of keywords, make sure to put them in the content somewhere.

Protip: Let's say you're trying to rank for the keywords "____ review" and "____ reviews". You'll need to include both 'review' and 'reviews' somewhere on your page. If these are important keywords, then definitely drop them in the URL, SEO Title Tag, or Page Title.

4.3 WORD COUNT

People debate over how many words per page is optimal. No one has the exact number, because this matters on a per-niche and per-keyword basis. For example, pages in the health niche, typically require more words to rank than others.

However, based on my testing experience and recent studies, the minimum amount of words you want on a page is:

- **Regular page: 500+ words**
- **Web 2.0 page: 1000+**

In general, the recommended way to determine an optimal word count is to look at the pages ranking on page 1 and hitting the average (or perhaps a little bit higher). There are many tools available to give you a quick snapshot of the word counts for each position, such as [Surfer SEO](#).

On the same line of thought, there is indeed a limit on how many words you want on a page and it depends on the niche. In searches that are highly sales oriented, such as local service providers, Google is expecting to see content that is concise and to the point. Trying to rank your lead-generation plumbing site with 3000 words is overkill, especially compared to your competition that is ranking with 500 words.

FAQ: Does content that is hidden behind “accordions” and “drop downs” count towards word count. Until the mobile-first index releases, the answer is unclear. Hidden content is indeed indexed, but whether or not it counts towards word count shows that it is *partially* counted. Once mobile-first rolls out, the understanding is that 100% of hidden text will be considered as if it were unhidden.

4.4 KEYWORD DENSITY

Keyword density refers to the amount of times you write your keywords in an article of a given length.

A common fallacy is to focus on keyword phrases

Here is a critical tip that is making huge returns for my clients:

Pro Tip: Individual words of a keyword phrase matter

Many people come to me and ask if they're over-optimized. They only have "dog training" on their page 4 times, but "dog" is used 90 times and "training" is used 60 times. This has Panda-penalty written all over it.

Now that this is established, let's talk about actual recommended keyword density recommendations.

Pro Tip: The Optimal Keyword Density is Niche-Dependent

You should be looking at the frequencies of keywords (and non-keywords) of the other URLs already ranking on page 1.

As of now, the most highly used method for determining this is through **TF*IDF analysis**.

I go over TF*IDF methodology and recommended tools in detail in [this article](#).



4.5 SYNONYMS

Synonyms are the most under-utilized tool in the on-page arsenal. Use synonyms to establish semantic relevance for a page without risking over-optimization.

In the dog training example, we can use the following words instead of "dog" and "training":

- canine
- k9
- puppy
- pooch
- obedience
- learning
- instruction

Since our page is going after "dog training", we can use "canine" and "instruction" with no abandon. We don't care if we're over-optimized for these keywords because hardly anyone is searching for "canine instruction." But by using these words we're establishing a high degree of relevance for the page.

To see a video on how I choose the exact synonyms that Google believes are the same word, check out my video in the subscriber resources page, when you [signed up for this guide](#).

4.6 STRUCTURED MARKUP AND FEATURED SNIPPETS

Structured markup is essentially HTML code that is added to a site which can enable search engines to further classify text into various categories of text.

What constitutes structured markup? In a very simple sense, H1's, H2's etc. (which you learned about before) are used to markup where different topics begin and end in the content. But these aren't the most effective markup elements that will help you land you the featured snippet.

4.6.1 HOW TO GET THE FEATURED SNIPPET RESULT

The featured snippet (see below) is a highly coveted place in a SERP result. Essentially you can take over the #1 spot without being the #1 organic result.

Example of featured snippet:

Google how to make ice cream


All Videos Images News Books More Search tools

About 18,900,000 results (0.67 seconds)

1. Stir sugar, cream, and milk into a saucepan over low heat until sugar has dissolved. ...
2. Transfer cream mixture to a pourable container such as a large measuring cup. ...
3. Pour cold ice cream mix into an ice cream maker, turn on the machine, and churn according to manufacturer's directions, 20 to 25 minutes.

More items...

[How to Make Vanilla Ice Cream Recipe - Allrecipes.com](#)
allrecipes.com/recipe/233928/how-to-make-vanilla-ice-cream/



About this result • Feedback

As of now, consistently landing the featured snippet placement lacks any consistent methodology. However, I have seen that certain markup aspects considerably help.

4.6.1.1 ORDERED AND UNORDERED LISTS

Especially for “How to” type queries, Google links to see steps outlined in list format. This also applies to “ingredient” queries where the data is often placed in a list.

4.6.1.2 TABLES

List of English Premier League Winners Since 1992

YEAR	WINNERS	RUNNERS-UP
1994-95	Blackburn Rovers	Manchester Utd
1995-96	Manchester United	Newcastle Utd
1996-97	Manchester United	Newcastle Utd
1997-98	Arsenal	Manchester Utd

20 more rows, 2 more columns

[List of Premier League Winners Since 1992 & Overall](#)
www.totalsportek.com/list/english-premier-league-winners-since-1992/

About this result • Feedback

When your search requires a comparison of data from a variety of different metrics, organize your data in a table and embed that table on your page.

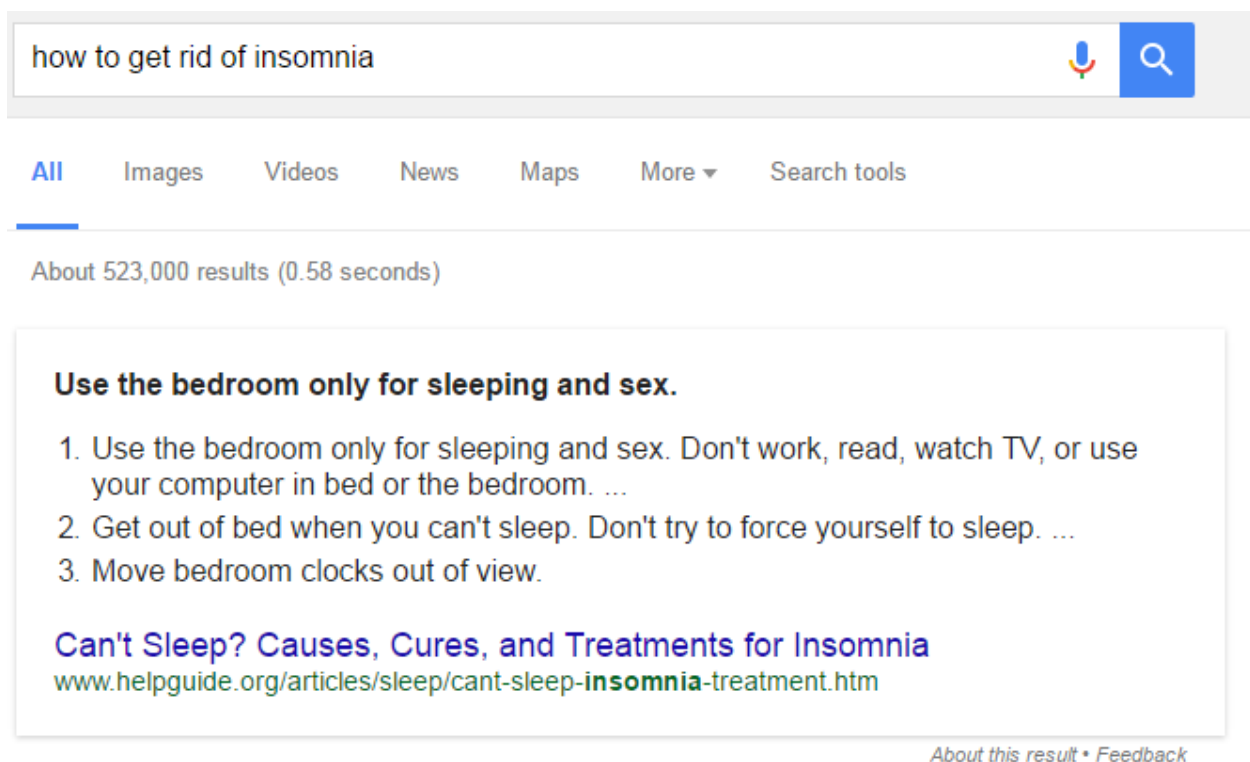
Implementation of a table is quite simple using the [Table Press plugin for Wordpress](#).

4.6.1.3 REVERSE ENGINEERING

Despite the above two markup suggestions, the best way to take over the featured snippet is to simply look and see what the current snippet is displaying and mimic it better.

More often than not, a featured snippet's result will discuss a certain aspect of the question being asked.

For example:



For the query “how to get rid of insomnia”, Google seems to like the discussion of only using the bedroom for sleeping or getting busy. So, when you’re optimizing your own content, focus on your own section about this argument.

Then apply the above markup suggestions and do it better. In this particular example, I would:

- 1) Integrate synonyms and related words around your ordered list.
- 2) Use scientific names to come off as more educated.
- 3) Put the target keywords in the H2 right above the list.

[Click here](#) for my full-detailed guide on stealing the snippet.

4.7 AUTHORITY LINKS

An essential way to establish relevance for a page is to link out to an authority page in your niche. What's an authority page? Think WebMD.com, CNN.com, etc. Something with Domain Authority 90 or higher.

The ranking benefit of linking to authority sites has been tested and quantified in [this study](#).

For our example, linking to a LifeHacker article for "dog training" would be perfect.

Protip: Don't use Wikipedia for your authority links. This is what every other SEO on the planet is doing. Remember, Google doesn't like SEOs, so don't look like one.

For every page that you're trying to rank, throw up an authority link somewhere past the fold. Putting it anywhere above the fold increases the chance that the reader will actually click on it and bounce from your page.

There's considerable debate about whether or not to make the link dofollow or nofollow. The nofollow team wants to keep all their link juice on their site and refrain from leaking it off the page.

Since it hasn't been empirically proven which one works better, I opt to keep it dofollow since the disadvantage of having no authority link on the page wouldn't be worth it. If you're worried about ranking another page, simply link to an authority page (DA 80+) that doesn't rank higher than you already or isn't on the first page.

Protip: Create your authority links to open in a new window. This keeps your bounce rate low; in case the reader decides to click on the authority link. Example: ``

Protip: Choose your affiliate link anchors to discourage people from clicking on them. Obviously, you want the benefit of linking to authority sites, but you don't want your visitors to actually leave. Create links on words that people already know what they are. Like "health", for example.

4.8 IMAGE OPTIMIZATION

Any well-performing webpage has a high amount of visual content in addition to textual content.

4.8.1 HOW MANY IMAGES SHOULD I PUT ON A PAGE?

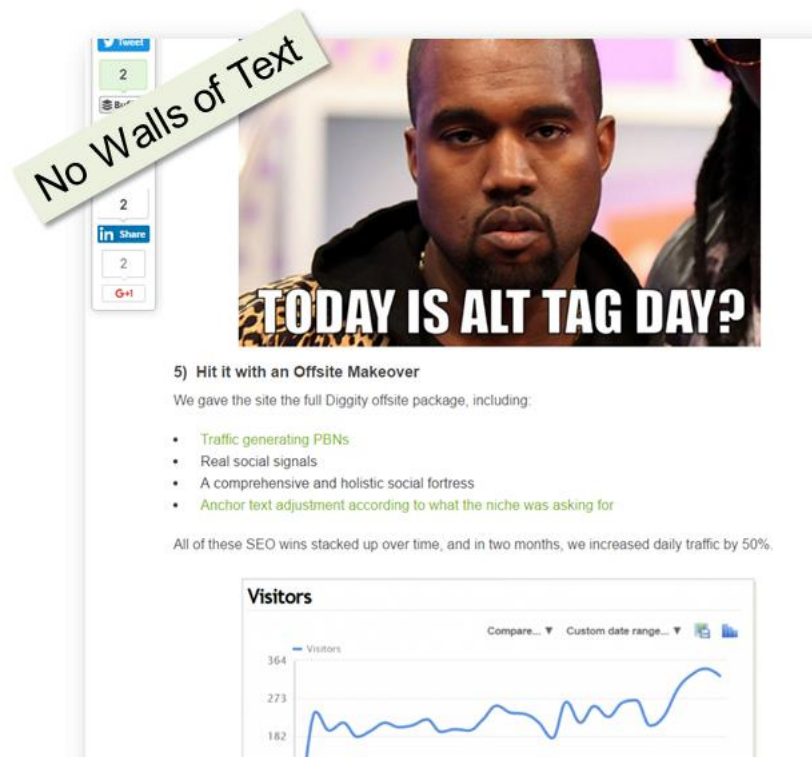
Many argue that there should be a specific ratio of HTML code (namely images) versus raw text, in order to make the search engines happy.

Based on my tests, I have never concluded on a magic number of how many images should be present per a given word count. But I do indeed recommend a simple rule of thumb that I've garnered from extensive conversion rate optimization and split test experiments:

Never have a wall of text on the page.

There should never been a segment of your page where all the reader can see is simply a top-to-bottom block of text, with no graphics or structured markup (e.g.: table or list). Following this rule will keep you within safe bounds regarding both:

- 1) Keeping the search engines happy
- 2) Keeping your visitors interested in your page



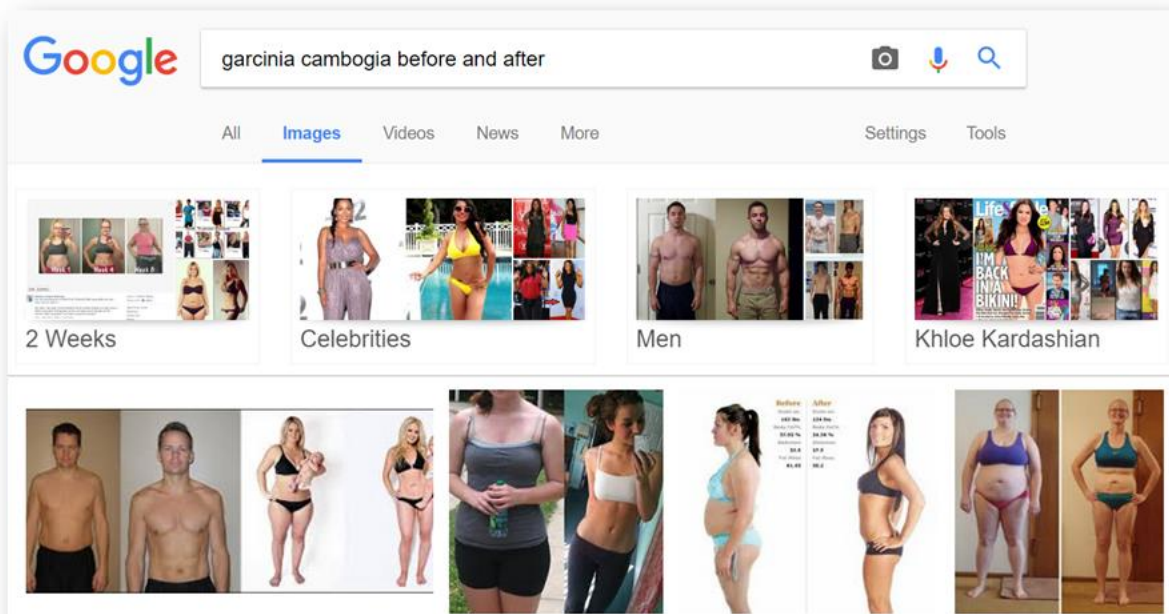
For a full methodology on how to rank your images in Google Image search: [click here](#).

4.8.2 HOW TO OPTIMIZE ALT TAGS AND FILENAMES

Fact #1: Keywords placed in image alt tags and file names do indeed contribute to the overall content of the page.

Knowing the above, placing keywords in your alt tags and file names does indeed add to your overall keyword density of the page. For example, if you had the word “dog” in your content 10 times, and “dog” was in two alt tags as well, then your total count is 12 times.

Fact #2: Having optimized image alt tags and filenames helps you rank in Google image search and does not give you a bonus in ranking for normal organic search than you would have by simply including those keywords in the content.



That said, you can use images alt tags and filenames to increase keyword density (as in the above fact), so in a roundabout way, it can help if increased density is what you need.

Personally, I’ve only found few situations where ranking in Google images brought me decent traffic and resulted in some good conversions. For example: “garcinia cambogia before and after pics”. However, these situations are few and far between. Most of the time, I prefer to completely de-optimize my alt tags and filenames so I don’t have to keep track of keyword density on two fronts.

What are alt tags *actually* for?

Alt tags were designed for screen readers that help visual-impaired folks read webpages. When the screen reader comes to an image, it reads the alt tag to describe what that image is.

Essentially, Google wants us to simply describe the picture. If it’s a picture of a girl smiling, then label the alt tag “picture of girl smiling.”

Using the alt tags *as intended* is another reason I mostly choose not to optimize them.

4.9 YOUTUBE

Like an authority link, embedding a YouTube video on your page further increases relevance for the page. Videos also increase on-page engagement time, an important metric in Google ranking.

Be sure to select YouTube videos that are:

- 1) Relevant to your niche. Simply look for the same keywords in the title of the video if you're unsure.
- 2) Interesting to your visitors. Make sure that the video makes sense where it's embedded, and your visitor will actually get value if they take the time to click play.

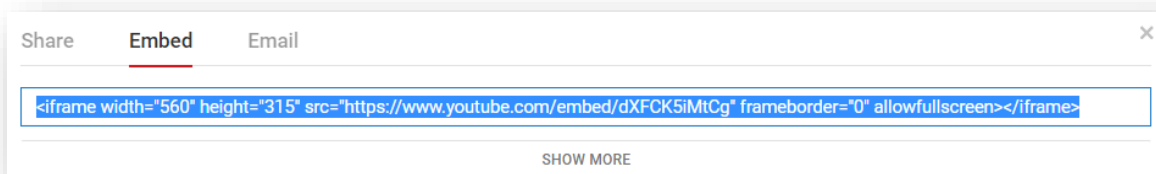
Losing visitors due to bounce is much more impactful than the SEO benefit of having a video on the page. Choose your videos selectively.

Embedding a YouTube video into a WordPress page or post is extremely simple.

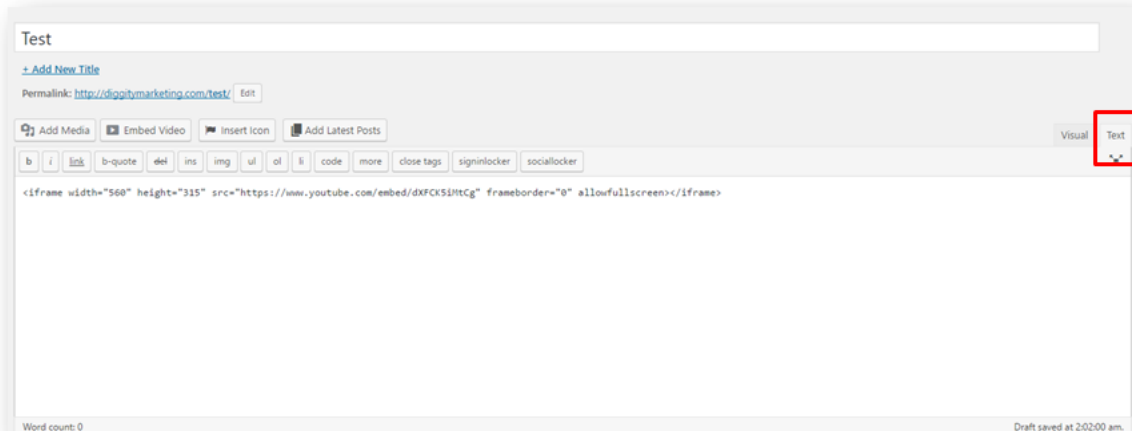
First, bring up the video you want to embed in YouTube and click on "Share."



Click "Embed" to get the embed code and copy it.



In Wordpress, simply paste in the code when you're in "Text" mode input for your Page or Post.

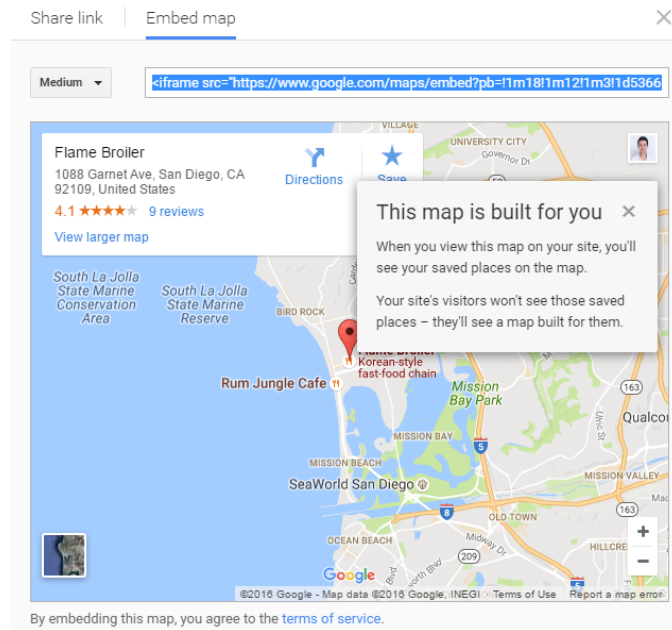


4.10 MAP EMBEDS

If your site is local and you're trying to rank for local terms, embed a map on your site. To apply the benefit of having a map to all pages, you can add it to your footer.

To do so:

- 1) Go to maps.google.com
- 2) Search for your location (requires Google My Business registration)
- 3) Share > Embed



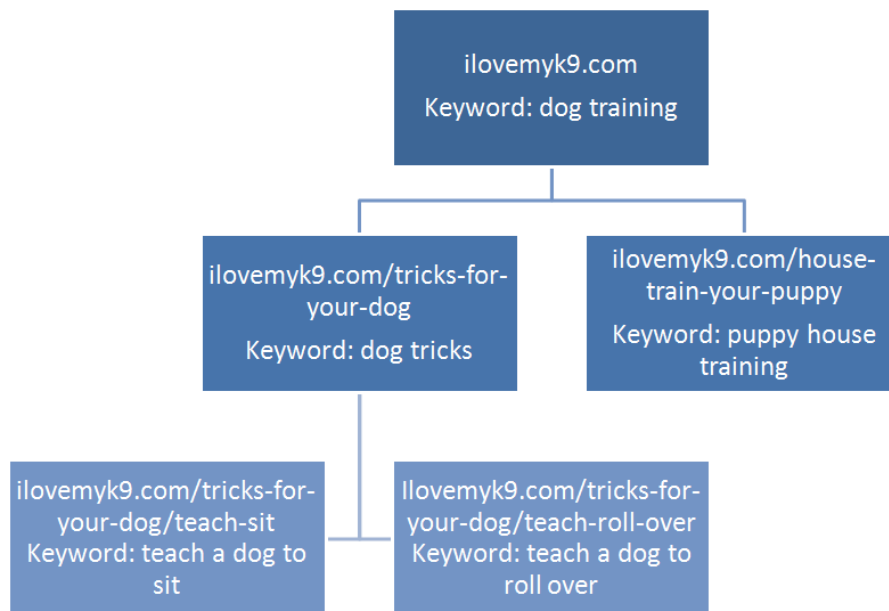
The highlighted code in the image above can be pasted onto your website for a quick map embed.

5.0 SILOING

5.1 WHAT IS SILOING?

Siloing is an essential on-site tactic that allows you to get the most out of the backlinks coming into your page. Instead of ranking for just one page that you send backlinks too, you'll rank any number of pages that you want.

Siloing is an inner page interlinking technique that can be best illustrated by example. In our 'dog training' example, let target the homepage on the keyword "dog training". We've done some keyword research and have found that "dog tricks" and "puppy house training" are profitable keywords and we'd like to create pages targeting these keywords as well. Lastly, we've dug down into "dog tricks" and found many people are searching for "teach a dog to sit" and "teach a dog to roll over", so we'll be making subpages for those. Here's what our page hierarchy would look like.



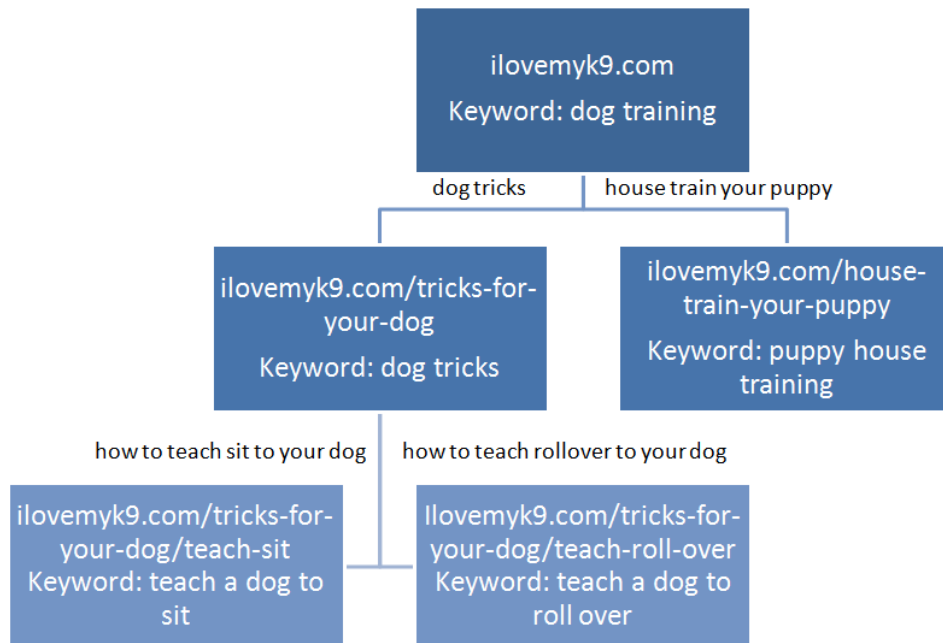
When we interlink these pages, for the anchor we want to use the target keyword(s) the next page is trying to rank for. That way, when an external link lands on the homepage for example, some of the link juice will trickle down to the next pages in the hierarchy and will be focused on the target keyword. So, if you send one link to the homepage, each of the hierarchical pages below will get some ranking boost too.

You want to place these links in the **context** of the page. The sidebar and menu's do not yield the effect we're looking for.

Example of anchor on the homepage:

Training your dog can be an easy task, if you know the right way to do it. Many people would like to teach their [dog tricks](#), which can be a fun and enjoyable exercise. We recommend starting at a young age...

Here's what the diagram would look like with example anchors on the connecting lines:



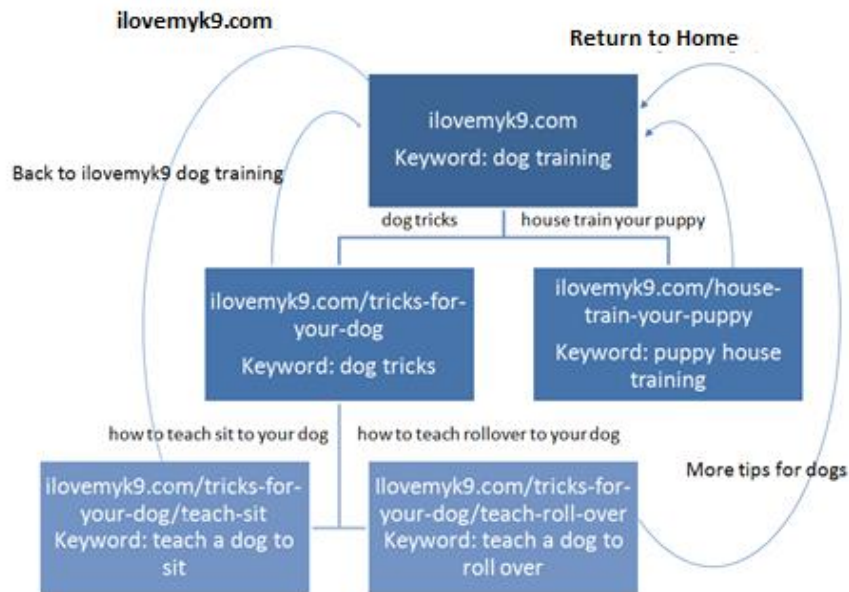
The final and most important step is to link the bottom "leaf pages" back up to the homepage. This recycles the link juice back up to the homepage, which targets your most important keyword. So essentially, no matter what page you send a link to on your site, all pages are going to be getting some love.

When it comes to internal links, there are still rules for anchor text optimization, but the rules are much more relaxed than offsite SEO. Try to vary up the anchor text for the links back to the homepage, as this page will be receiving tons of inner links.

What I typically recommend:

- 50% Target anchors
- 25% Brand or URL anchors
- 25% Miscellaneous anchors

[Click here](#) for a complete guide on both internal and external anchor text.



5.2 RELEVANCE

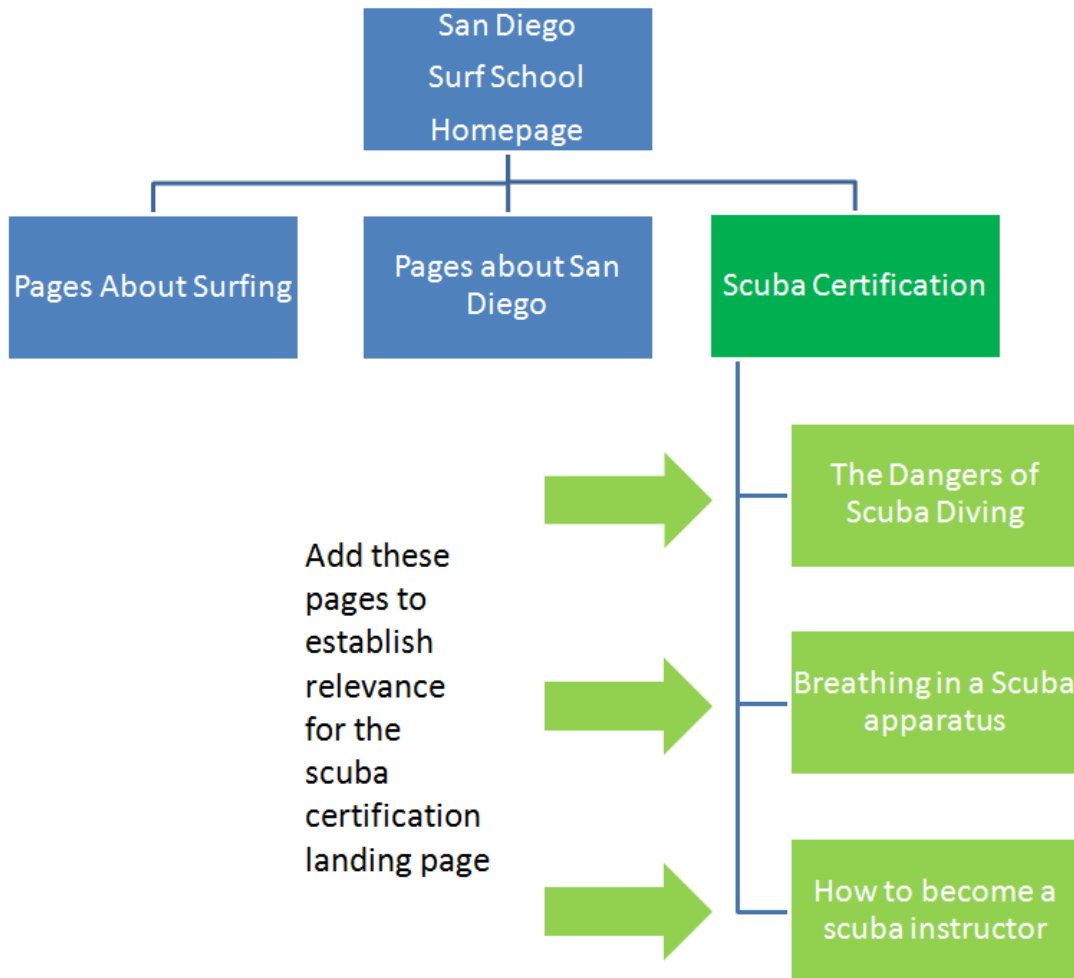
When you try to rank a page on a particular subject, Google expects to see that there are other supporting articles linking to this page. This is called 'establishing topical relevance'.

Let's say that there's a surfing school in San Diego, CA that is ranking quite nicely for "san diego surf lessons". Over the years they've published a ton of content related to surfing on their site as well as various events they're having in San Diego. There is no question in Google's mind that this website is about surfing in San Diego.

They decide to expand their business and include scuba certification. So, their SEO provider throws up a page on scuba and starts firing backlinks at it. After 6 months, it's still stuck on page 3.

The problem is that there are no onsite pages citing the scuba page as a reference. Google doesn't think that this site is really about scuba.

To resolve this, the website owner simply needs to create at least 3+ pages (the more the better) and link them to the page he wants to rank.



This comes into play a lot in local SEO. I had a surgeon client in San Francisco, CA that was ranking fine in San Francisco. He came to me because he was having trouble ranking in the neighboring city of Oakland. All I did was throw up 4 articles that talked about Oakland and linked them to his landing page.

- Oakland Nightlife Review
- Best Restaurants in Oakland
- Budget hotels in Oakland
- Famous People from Oakland

These pages don't even need to be accessible from the navigation bar. As long as they're in the XML sitemap and indexed, they've played their part.

Warning: Inter-linking pages that aren't relevant *enough* can actually harm rankings. For example, linking from a page reviewing chairs to a page reviewing mattresses is going to confuse Google on the topic for the receiving page.

The line is thin as well. I had ranking issues when I was linking a “beard shampoo” page to a “beard oil” page. Once resolved, the “beard oil” page jumped to page 1.

Ultimately, you need to test the effect in *your* niche.

The concept of relevance is often misunderstood or even ignored when it comes to onsite SEO. If you can get this down, you're going to get much better results than your competition.

6.0 SCHEMA MARKUP

Schema is used to “mark-up” and highlight certain aspects of your data such that Google can easily understand what your page is about. In addition, they’re able to upgrade the user experience by building knowledge graphs and displaying review stars in the SERP results.

Schema considerably impactful when it comes to local SEO and getting ranked in the “map pack”. Whether or not Schema has a significant ranking benefit for affiliate SEO is up for debate. I haven’t seen a quantifiable impact in my tests.

Regardless, it’s definitely a ranking factor and has been said by Google themselves to influence a site’s quality score. So why not implement it? Especially if you’re in local SEO, where Schema has a strong impact on establishing locality.

People often get intimidated by the complexity of Schema, when in fact, it is extremely easy to implement on your site. Here’s what you can do for a simple local SEO markup:

- 1) Go here: <http://makeschema.com/>
- 2) Fill out the form
- 3) Take the code that they give you and [paste it into your Wordpress footer.php](#) file
- 4) Save

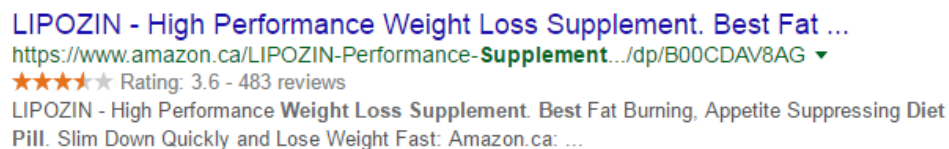
That’s it.

The MakeSchema.com schema generator will give you the basics of what you need to get the code up and running on your site. If you want to go above and beyond, check out [Lab](#) coach [Mark Luckenbaugh’s detailed guide to Schema](#).

6.0.1 HOW TO GET REVIEW STARS IN THE SERPS

A type of rich snippet is the review star. Having review stars on an affiliate product review page, for example, can be a significant factor in stealing clicks from the SERPs.

Example of review stars:



LIPOZIN - High Performance Weight Loss Supplement. Best Fat ...
<https://www.amazon.ca/LIPOZIN-Performance-Supplement.../dp/B00CDAV8AG> ▼
★★★★★ Rating: 3.6 - 483 reviews
LIPOZIN - High Performance Weight Loss Supplement. Best Fat Burning, Appetite Suppressing Diet Pill. Slim Down Quickly and Lose Weight Fast: Amazon.ca: ...

Getting review stars is extremely easy. I simply use the [WP Structured Data Schema for Wordpress](#). As of the time of this writing, review stars are only available for inner pages.

Warning: Google has been passing out [manual penalties based on spammy structured data](#). As of now, most of the reports I’ve seen have been about manipulating location using schema, but I’m sure using fake ratings is a hot spot too.

7.0 FRESH CONTENT

So, you've just completed your website. You've optimized it to the fullest and it's time to forget about your site and focus completely on your offsite SEO. Not quite.

You may have heard about Google's [Freshness Algorithm](#). The Big G wants its search results to serve up the most informative and up-to-date content regarding your particular search. It makes sense that they would reward pages and websites that are constantly delivering new content.

This doesn't mean that you need to commit to blogging on the daily. There's a bare minimum that I've found through testing that not only will minimize your time spent on fresh content, but it will also take advantage of the freshness algorithm and allow you to rank faster than the lazier competition.

7.1.1 ONE OR MORE FRESH BLOGS POST PER MONTH

Once per month, create at least one new blog post. This tells Google that your site is active, you're churning out new content, and that content is getting read by your social following.

Do:

- Link it back to your homepage and/or other relevant silo pages on your site. This will further establish relevance for each of these pages as time goes on.
- Syndicate these blog posts to your social profiles. You should have a Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, etc. setup already for your website. Every time you release a new blog post, make sure the article gets posted on your feeds. This can be easily automated with [IFTTT.com](#).

Don't:

- Write about a topic that you've already covered. Even if your new article is 100% Copyscape unique, if you've already covered a topic, then don't rewrite a new article on the same topic. Think of something else or you're going to get a dupe content flag.

7.1.2 CONTENT REFRESH ON AN EXISTING PAGE

Also, once per month, take an existing page that you're trying to rank (your homepage or a silo page) and update the content on it. It doesn't take much. Add a short paragraph and an image and that's considered enough. What this does is tell Google that the specific page that they're already ranking has just got even more current and deserves its place in the SERPs.

I usually alternate like this:

1. Homepage
 2. Inner page A
 3. Homepage
 4. Inner page B
- :

Possible pitfall: Be careful when adding new content such that you don't over-optimize the keyword density.

8.0 KEYWORD CANNIBALIZATION

At the moment, keyword cannibalization is a major obstacle in Google rankings and it originates from onsite SEO.

What is keyword cannibalization?

In a nutshell, it's when Google thinks you're trying to rank two pages for a certain keyword, and instead of ranking both pages, they don't rank either of them.

Google doesn't want you taking up the entire first page with multiple pages from a single domain, so the built in a mechanism to prevent you from doing so.

Keyword cannibalization doesn't always hurt. I'm sure you've seen keyword SERP results where the top 2 or even the top 3 are all from the same domain.

But this is more likely a case of lack of significant competition, and it's a rarity compared to how common the penalizing effect occurs.

8.1 PREVENTING KEYWORD CANNIBALIZATION WITH ONSITE SEO

8.1.1 METAS

The topic of a page is highly influenced by:

- 1) SEO title tag
- 2) Page title (H1)
- 3) URL

Make sure to optimize your similar pages as differently as possible and has as little keyword overlap as possible in the above three places.

Instead, rearrange so the main keywords are pushed towards the front of the title, and use synonyms to avoid using keywords from the other page.

This is best illustrated with an example.

Let's say you have a page you want to rank for "dog washing tips" and another for "how to wash a dog with long hair".

They're separate topics for sure (one is a subtopic of the other), but it doesn't care what we think. If Google thinks you're cannibalized, they win.

Read how to detect cannibalization [here](#).

Back to the example...

BAD - Too much overlap

- SEO Title Example
 - a. Dog Washing Tips : A Beginner's Guide for 2018
 - b. 12 Tips for Washing a Dog with Long Hair
- URL Example:
 - a. llovemyk9.com/dog-washing-tips
 - b. llovemyk9.com/long-hair-dog-washing-tips

GOOD – Synonyms used, focus on page's exclusive keywords

- SEO Title Example
 - a. Dog Washing Tips : A Beginner's Guide for 2018
 - b. 12 Tips on How to Wash a Dog with Long Fur
- URL Example:
 - a. llovemyk9.com/dog-washing-tips
 - b. llovemyk9.com/long-hair-cleaning

8.1.2 INTERNAL ANCHORS

Internal anchors (and external for that matter) also shape what Google thinks the page is about.

Don't confuse Google by sending the keywords that should belong to another page.

Example anchors you wouldn't send to the "dog washing tips" page because they contain too much overlap with keywords from the "how to wash a dog with long hair" page:

- How to wash your dog
- Dog washing tips for long hair and short hair dogs

Likewise, you don't want to send anchors like these to your "how to wash a dog with long hair" page because they contain too much overlap with keywords from the "dog washing tips" page:

- Tips for washing your puppy
- washing your dog

[Click here](#) for the complete guide on keyword cannibalization.

9.0 WORDPRESS SETUP

Most SEOs these days are building their sites on WordPress, so I'm assuming you are too. WordPress straight out the box isn't recommended. There's a few plugins that I recommend adding as well as some settings to be adjusted.

9.1.1 RECOMMENDED PLUGINS

1. SEO Optimization Plugins:
 - a. [Yoast](#)
 - b. [All-in-One SEO](#)
2. [Google XML Sitemaps](#) – Automatically creates a sitemap and pings Google whenever page-level adjustments are implemented. Not needed if you're using Yoast.
3. [Contact form 7](#) – Simple and easy contact form plugin that you can add to your contact page (which every website should have).
4. [XML Sitemaps for Videos](#) – Great plugin for [helping to index stubborn pages](#).
5. [Jetpack](#) – For its ability to easily syndicate blog content to social fortress sites (fresh content). Also can be accomplished with IFTTT.

9.1.2 RECOMMENDED WORDPRESS ADJUSTMENTS

1. SEO Optimization Plugin Adjustments
 - a. Remove the addition of “- %BLOG_TITLE%” to the tail of your SEO title tag. More often than not this is going to get you into trouble by repeating keywords to your title tag.
 - b. To optimize crawl budget and make sure the robot isn't spending unnecessary crawl time on non-critical pages, noindex the following pages:
 - i. Media
 - ii. Categories
 - iii. Tags
 - iv. Author
 - v. Date
 - vi. Archives
 - vii. Search results
2. Settings > Permalinks > Post Name Structure – Gives you the most control over URL naming.
3. Removal of theme credits in the footer – Go to Appearance > Editor > Footer.php and remove the link to the theme credit and Wordpress.org. Not recommended if you lack code experience. Easily outsourceable.

10.0 NEED MORE HELP?

If you have any further questions on how to optimize your website as per **today's** standards, I have a few options for you.

10.1 THE AFFILIATE LAB – THE ULTIMATE SEO LEARNING EXPERIENCE



I wanted to create a course that would be able to teach people how to rank and flip affiliate websites based on the test-backed strategies I was using. I wanted to create the *perfect* affiliate SEO course.

Thus, The Affiliate Lab was born.

It's essentially a blueprint for ranking and monetizing affiliate websites, starting from niche selection all the way to conversion rate optimization.

Everything I share with you comes from test results and real-world case studies.

But it's so much more than that.

>> [Learn More About The Affiliate Lab](#) <<

Testimonials

"Closing in on \$1000 per month affiliate sales, about 3x what I had before The Affiliate Lab."



David Attard



Bowen Khong

"500%+ traffic growth since joined The Affiliate Lab. Broke \$3k/Mo last month, looking to hit \$5/Mo and flip for 6-figures"



Barbara Therese Mehr

"Income up 55% for 1 site and new site that's been started since this program is already gaining traction and beginning to get rankings"

10.2 SEO CONSULTING AND COACHING

If you'd like personalized, one-on-one coaching with me, book a consultation session. We'll setup an appointment live on Skype where I'll show you my exact process and give you actionable steps on how to get your site perfect in Google's eyes.

Warning: Consultations are normally booked out 4+ months in advance, so act soon if this is an option you'd like to explore.

>> [Book a Consultation](#) <<

Testimonials



Rob Atkinson

I've done three coaching sessions with Matt since 2015. During the summer of 2015, I was seeing small SEO success (about 3-4K/mo). The problem was my results were sporadic and I knew I was stuck at an income level that wouldn't make me happy.

The coaching session I had in June of 2015 was the **biggest game changer** for my affiliate SEO career. His On-Page advice helped 3-4 of my sites get unstuck. Six months after the call I hit my **first 5-figure month** from affiliate SEO, and it has been going up ever since. I can honestly say I would have been stuck for at least 3-4 more years had I not done the coaching sessions.



Jon Dykstra
FatStacksBlog.com

I hired Matt to consult with him about some on-site SEO questions I had. His knowledge based on his extensive testing was very impressive. He answered all my questions confidently and I could tell he really knew what he was talking about. He was able to prove each answer with data he's garnered from his own massive fleet of websites. It was really great getting some nuanced information that helped me improve my niche sites from someone who wasn't guessing but actually knew what he was talking about.

I also really liked the fact that he's a super nice guy, and professional. Since my consultation was by the hour, he doesn't waste any time and gets down to business quickly.



William W, Australia

I had an hour consultation with Matt regarding one of my client's site that was somehow stuck on the top of page 2 for more than a month. He gave me precise instructions on how to fix it, which I implemented after our discussion. Guess what??

After 10 days, my client's site jumped to no.5!! If you have any questions about SEO, Matt is your go to guy. He is friendly and will give you ton of value!!!

Thanks Matt, you are a legend!!

9.3 SEO OUTSOURCING WITH THE SEARCH INITIATIVE

Want me to do your SEO for you?

Early 2017, I was introduced to an agency that was getting some incredible results for their clients. After sitting down with them and digging into their systems and ranking methods, I realized they were a lot like me.

They were testers.

We sat down for hours, trading various techniques on getting fast, reliable, and safe ranking results. It was a true nerd session. Anyhow, fast-forward a few months... I decided to join their board of advisors and start a new agency called The Search Initiative.

In the short time I've been advising for them, we've had 100% success on new client's results. And we're looking to create more.

Right now, we're taking on a few new clients at discounted rates in exchange for a testimonial down the road.

>> [Reserve a Free Consultation](#) <<

Testimonials



"Great service. Each month our traffic increases and we get tons of new leads. The only issue for us is keeping on top of all the new business!"

Steve Chamberlain, USA
Investment website owner



"The Search Initiative really know they're stuff; took our site from nowhere to first page of Google for lots of really important keywords. We'd happily recommend them."

Jon Nuttal, UK,
Property website owner



"I spent months looking for the right SEO agency, so when I saw Matt had an Agency he would recommend I jumped at the chance. 6 months later and the value and quality of The Search Initiative has been amazing. We are ranking a large site for multiple terms and whilst the foundations are still being laid in the project we can see the value and the future position of our site - this is one agency I would have no hesitation in recommending to anyone who is serious about growing their business!"

James T
Website owner

