

## Optimization Tips for Free (Natural / Organic) Listings

For the business owner & content owner of the Search Engine program...

1. **Know your objectives.** Have a clear understanding of *why* you are implementing a Search Engine program, and your focus and keyword choices will flow from that. And remember, although a Search Engine Marketing program will help you get more visitors, make pages for users, not for search engines! And you will then attract quality leads.
2. **Don't expect quick results.** Getting high rankings takes time. Allow for at least 4-6 weeks for search engines to even start picking up your pages.
3. **Think keyword phrases.** Compile and focus on 2 or 3 keyword phrases (comprised of at least 2-3 words) for each page of your site. General one-word keywords will be difficult to get you ranking in addition will not attract targeted leads. Think like your target audience. Look at competitor sites.
4. **Use keyword phrases in the first paragraph of your page text.** Text that is higher on the page is given a higher importance. 200 - 250 words of keyword rich text is recommended per page (minimum 100 words). Repeat each keyword phrase numerous times within your page copy for best results. The recommended density is 3-7%. This means that your keyword should repeat 3-7 times for every 100 words.
5. **Concentrate optimization efforts on key pages.** The home page and product or service description pages are good places to start.

For the technical person or team on the Search Engine program...

6. **Get familiar with HTML.** Many SEO techniques involve editing HTML code. It's also easier for search engines to crawl clean code (avoid tables if possible).
7. **Use keywords in title tag.** Each page of your site should have its own title tag with its own keywords that related to the page that it appears on. It's also used as the title in search listings so try to make it enticing as well so that users click through! Length: 50 – 80 characters.
8. **Use a keyword rich Meta Description tag.** Use a portion of your 200 -250 keyword-rich paragraph from #4 and your title tag from #7 (this also has a benefit in repeating your keyword phrases exactly). However, remember that the text in this tag often appears under your Title in the search engine results pages, so include text that also describes your site and entices a viewer to click. Length: Under 250 characters.
9. **Using the Meta Keyword tag.** It's not given any consideration whatsoever by Google. However, using this tag does not hurt for the few search engines that support it. Length: under 1024 characters.
10. **Use special keyword spots.** Image alt tags, header tags <H1> to <H5>, keywords in file names (it has been observed that hyphens between keywords will be read as a space by search engines), and keywords in hyperlinks can cumulatively boost search engine rankings.
11. **Have a clear site hierarchy.** <H1> tags come first followed by <H2> <H3> etc, the most important content comes first, and every page is reachable from at least one static text link.
12. **Use text instead of images.** Especially to display important names, content, or links.
13. **Avoid dynamic pages.** If you decide to use dynamic pages (i.e., the URL contains a "?" character), be aware that not every search engine spider crawls dynamic pages as well as static pages. Don't use "&id=" as a parameter in your URLs, as Google will not crawl these.
14. **Worried about Flash and Javascript?** At the very minimum do not use either for your navigation. Use a text browser such as Lynx to examine your site, because most search engine spiders see your site much as Lynx would. If fancy features such as JavaScript, cookies, session IDs, frames, DHTML, or Flash keep you from seeing all of your site in a text browser, then search engine spiders may have trouble crawling your site.
15. **Use the robots.txt file on your Web server.** This file tells crawlers which directories can or cannot be crawled. Visit <http://www.robotstxt.org/wc/faq.html> to learn how to instruct robots when they visit your site.
16. **Submit your site to directories and industry-specific expert sites.** Major directories include Yahoo! and the Open Directory Project. Read Yahoo's How to Suggest Your Site

(<http://docs.yahoo.com/info/suggest/>) and How to add a site to the Open Directory (<http://www.dmoz.org/add.html>) *before* submitting. Note that the Yahoo! Directory is a paid service of \$299 US/year.

17. **Submit your URL to search engines.** Do so manually and on an individual basis. Automatic mass submissions can penalize your site. See here for procedures for major search engines: <http://www.pandia.com/optimization/submit-site.html>.
18. **Have other relevant sites link to yours.** The directory listings are a start. Directories can also be a good source of potential relevant sites to approach for linking to your site. You can also check out sites that have links to your major competitors (type in `link:www.yourdomain.com/` to see what sites link to a site). Do on an individual basis. Sites that promise to link you to a mass of other sites can get you penalized.
19. **Submit a sitemap as part of the Google sitemaps (beta) project** <https://www.google.com/webmasters/sitemaps/login>. Google Sitemaps uses your sitemap to learn about the structure of your site and to increase Google's coverage of your web pages.
20. **Have a site map.** If the site map is larger than 100 or so links, you should break it into separate pages.

### **Optimization Tips for Paid (Google and Yahoo! Search Marketing) Listings**

1. **What will it cost you?** The cost boils down to your own goals and personal or company budget. Keyword CPC's also vary greatly depending on the industry. The best way is to simply try it out and set up an account. With Google it costs \$5 US and takes effect almost immediately. Daily budgets start as low as 1 cent up to whatever limit the advertiser is comfortable spending. To set up a Yahoo! Search Marketing account is free but takes 3-4 days before it's activated (a cost will allow a fast track set up).
2. **Increase your budget and your bidding!** (it's an obvious one, but if you can't do that, there are some other ways)...
3. **Use keyword phrases.** Use keyword generating tools as a brainstorm then refine your list by asking friends and family what they would search for.
4. **Include keywords in your ad text.** Your keyword in your ad text will be bolded and stand out to users. Click through rate has been said to increase up to 50% when doing this.
5. **Consider following the Google and Yahoo recommend daily budget based on your keywords.** These numbers are based on previous data and potential clicks obtainable.
6. **Link to a relevant and informative web page/landing page.**
7. **Be aware of your ad reach.** For broader reach have content network site ads turned on and allow listings to come up under broad match. For more targeted reach turn content network ads off as well as keep listings on exact, phrase, and negative match.
8. **Google: Target your ads geographically.** Choose your target languages, countries or, if applicable, cities and regions.
9. **Write clear ads.** Short, non-repetitive sentences work best. Double-check spelling and grammar.
10. **Identify the unique aspects of your product or service.** Use this in your ad.
11. **Use a strong call-to-action.**
12. **Google: Test multiple ads:** Try different messages, and see what works best. Google tracks the CTR for each of your ads, so you can identify and remove ads that perform poorly
13. **Track your conversions.** Track how many ad clicks convert to purchase, sign-ups, page views and leads – for free.