

# MOZ Quick Start Guide to SEO Cheat Sheet



## 1. Gather Your SEO Data

To do SEO you really only need 3 things to get started: a website, your brain, and data. So let's make sure you are collecting the right data from the start.

### Install analytics

Web analytics tools allow you to peek at your site's visitors and their behavior. Google Analytics is commonly installed by default as it's free and widely used in marketing departments, however other tool sets are available.

**Tip!** Google Analytics 4 (GA4) is replacing Universal Analytics. Install GA4 through the setup wizard to future-proof your analytics & reporting.

**Tools:** [Google Analytics](#), [Matomo](#), [Statcounter](#), [Google Search Console](#), [Bing Analytics](#)

### Register with search engines

Gain special insights into keywords your site is ranking for and insights into how your site is crawled, and more!

**Tip!** This doesn't directly gain you more traffic but provides insights to help you create a marketing strategy.

### Run a crawl

See your site like a search engine! Identify high priority issues that may affect your site's visibility, accessibility and user experience.

**Tip!** Not all crawler issues are critical, but a robust site crawl will help your understand the urgency and quantity of issues across your site. Prioritize your issues by issue type and page authority with Moz Pro Site Crawl.

**Tools:** [Moz Pro Site Crawl](#), [Screaming Frog](#)



## 2. See How Your Site Is Indexed

To be eligible to show up in search results, the pages of your site first must be "indexed" by search engines.

### Perform a site search with [Google](#)

A quick and easy way to see roughly how many pages are indexed. This is also a handy method for checking if an individual page on your site is indexed so you can start troubleshooting.

**Learn more!** Now that you're using advanced search operators like a pro, gain more insights with our guide to search operators and parameters. **Resource:** [Learn more about search operators](#)

### Troubleshooting: Why isn't my site indexed?

#### • Is the site brand new?

It takes time for search engines to crawl and index sites, so new sites or pages may not show up right away. **Tool:** [URL inspection tool](#)

#### • Does the site offer unique, valuable content?

Is it uniquely valuable? Spam, non-original, or low-value content may be excluded by search engines by default.

#### • Is the site crawlable and indexable?

You'll be glad you set up Google Search Console! Use URL inspection in GSC to find out if you have any crawler issues.

#### • Does the page return a 200 status code?

[Learn more about status codes](#)

#### • Do robots meta directives allow indexing?

[Learn more about meta directives](#)

#### • Is the page blocked by robots.txt?

[Learn more about robots.txt](#)

#### • Is the page listed in a sitemap file?

[Learn more about sitemaps](#)

#### • Is the page duplicate content?

[Learn more about duplicate content](#)

## 2. See How Your Site Is Indexed Continued

### **Mobile Check: See Your Site Like a Search Engine**

The majority of web users now access most sites through search via their phone. **Tool:** [Mobile-friendly test](#)



## 3. Target Specific Keywords

The magic of SEO is that people can find your content the exact moment they search for an answer using a search engine.

### **Discover what keywords you already rank for**

Knowing what keywords and phrases you already rank for is often a good starting point before you begin optimizing for new keywords.

**Discover!** Enter your domain into Keyword Explorer to see all of your top-ranking keyword by search volume.

**Tools:** [Keyword Explorer](#), [GSC Performance Report](#)

### **Find keywords related to your topic**

Identify relevant keywords have some level search volume, and a level of competition that's manageable for your business. **Resource:** [Keyword Research Master Guide](#)

**Tip!** Don't look at keywords in isolation, group keywords to gain an accurate picture of the level of volume in your niche, category or industry. **Resource:** [Group keywords with Keyword Lists](#)

**Learn more!** Discover what is a 'good' score when it comes to keyword metrics. **Resource:** [What is a good search volume?](#)

### **Target keywords on your page**

Incorporate your target keywords, topics, and related concepts onto your page. Fundamental places to include your important keywords include your title tag, meta description, headline, paragraph headers, and body text.

**Learn more** about on-page optimization with Moz's [On-Page Optimization Guide](#).



## 4. Optimize Your Search Appearance

When you rank in search, Google (and other search engines) takes elements of your page to display in search results.

### **Title tags**

Title tags might be the most impactful part of your search appearance, and they're also a small ranking factor!

Google is known to rewrite a lot of title tags, but there are a number of best practices you can use to help your SEO.

- Write unique, accurate titles for each page.
- Use keywords in your titles, but don't overdo it. **Tool:** [Keyword Explorer](#)
- Aim for between 50-60 characters. **Tool:** [Title Tag Preview Tool](#)

### **Meta descriptions**

Set your expectations! [Meta descriptions](#) don't count as a Google ranking factor and you may see your description tags being replaced by Google's own copy in the search results.

Our advice still stands! Including unique, well-written meta descriptions can have a positive impact on the number of clicks you ultimately receive.

- Write unique, compelling descriptions for each page.
- Use keywords in your meta descriptions.

**Tip!** If you want to drive organic traffic write good, accurate meta descriptions, but don't be disappointed if they aren't used all of the time.

### **Structured data for Rich results**

Rich results are special features in search results that go beyond title and meta descriptions and include things like review stars, images, FAQs, and more.

Rich results are most often triggered by structured data. Most modern content management systems include support for some type of structured data by default.

- Create structured data for each page.
- Validate your structured data with a [Rich Results Test](#).

**Learn more** about [structured data](#).

#### 4. Optimize Your Search Appearance Continued

##### Breadcrumbs

Typically, having a compelling, keyword-rich breadcrumb structure can have a significant impact on your overall traffic.

- Use [breadcrumb structured data](#).
- Use a clear, keyword-focused URL structure.

##### Favicon

While small, using an attractive, eye-catching favicon can help make your listing stand out.

- Define your favicon according to [Google's favicon specs](#).

**Tip!** A single favicon is defined across your entire site. Keep it simple, recognizable and relevant to your whole site or brand.

#### 5. Create Content Like a Boss Continued

- Don't use images for important text.
- Use alt text. **Resource:** [About alt text](#)
- Optimize your images. **Resource:** [Images best practices](#)

##### Keep your content relevant and fresh

Content freshness, in different forms, is [an actual Google ranking factor](#).

##### Optimize for user satisfaction

Your primary goal in creating content that attracts SEO traffic is to satisfy the user.

**Tip!** There's evidence that satisfying the user by "being the last click" can boost your rankings.

**Resource:** [Understand possible engagement signals](#)



## 5. Create Content Like a Boss

SEO is about more than putting keywords on your page. It's also about how your content is structure, its relevance, and how well it satisfies user intent.

##### Start with user intent

A good place to start is by seeing what already ranks highly for your target keywords.

**Tip!** Remember: the goal isn't to copy your competitors but to use the results as a clue towards what Google might be looking for.

**Resource:** [Understanding search intent](#)

##### Use headers and subheaders

Remember that Google can't "see" images like a human. Here are some best practices to help them get the picture:

**Tip!** This doesn't directly gain you more traffic but provides insights to help you create a marketing strategy.

##### Use images wisely

Remember that Google can't "see" images like a human. Here are some best practices to help them get the picture:



## 6. Internal Links & Site Architecture

Internal links not only help search engines crawl and rank your web pages, but they can also help signal the importance of a page.

##### Use a clear and helpful navigation

Use the following to help users and search engines understand how to navigate your site:

- A clear navigation that links to your most important pages.
- Breadcrumbs.
- Related links.

##### Make sure all important pages are linked

Visitors should be able to navigate from your homepage to any other page on your site within a handful of clicks.

**Tip!** For very large sites, pages should still be linked, but the "handful" of clicks may be a difficult rule to strictly follow. In these cases, [XML sitemaps](#) are your friend.

##### Use descriptive and unique anchor text

**Tip!** Be careful not to overdo it, as over-optimizing your anchor text can lead to negative consequences.

**Learn about** [anchor text](#)

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## 6. Internal Links & Site Architecture Continued

- Employ a logical URL structure**  
In general, it's best practice for your URL to match your site structure, much like your navigation.  
**Resource:** [URL Best Practices](#)

## 7. Gaining Popularity via Link Building Continued

- Promote your site and your best content**  
There are many link building strategies you can employ, but most of them simply involve letting potential linkers know about your content.  
**Resource:** [Beginner's Guide to Link Building](#)



## 7. Gaining Popularity via Link Building

Here's a truth about SEO: popular sites typically rank higher and popularity is, in part, determined by who links to you.

- See who's already linking to you with [Link Explorer](#)**  
Identifying who already links to you can help inform decisions and give you an idea of relative strength.
- Find out who links to your competitors with [domain analysis](#)**  
Knowing who links to your competitors can help you identify opportunities for link building.  
**Tip!** This step requires you to know who your actual online competitors are. These may be different than your real-world competitors!
- Avoid shady link practices**  
While Google rewards links, it discourages manipulative link building and frowns upon:
  - Paid links.
  - Self-placed links (e.g. spammy comment links).
  - Affiliate or advertising links placed without disclosure.**Resource:** [Link schemes to avoid](#)

Thanks for reading!

