

ON-PAGE SEO Checklist



I probably don't need to tell you that on-page SEO is HUGE.

Sure, backlinks are still the #1 Google ranking signal that Google uses. But to get the most value from the links that you build, your on-page SEO needs to be rock solid.

Here's a checklist that you can use to quickly make sure every page on your site is up to speed with today's on-page SEO best practices.

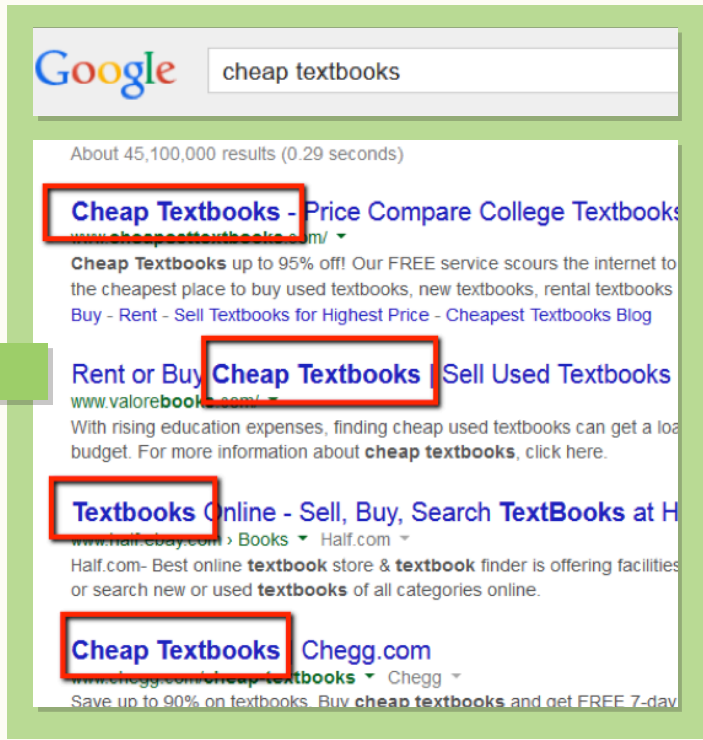
1

FRONT-LOAD YOUR TITLE TAG

Google puts more weight on words found in the beginning of your title tag. You can see this in action by searching for competitive keywords in Google:



AND



As you can see, most pages that rank for competitive keywords strategically place their keywords in beginning of their title tag.

For example, let's say you wanted to rank for the keyword "weight loss tips" and you were deciding between two headlines:

HEADLINE #1

Weight Loss Tips: 10 Strategies for Shedding Pounds

OR

HEADLINE #2

How to Drop 10 Pounds With These Weight Loss Tips

Google would see the first headline as MORE about the topic of "weight loss tips" than the second one.

Why?

Because the keyword is in the beginning of the title tag.

So you'd want to go with **headline #1**.

★ **ACTION STEP:** Include your target keyword in the beginning of your title tag.



2

SEO-FRIENDLY URLS

I see a lot of people creating 50+ character URLs, like this:

http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/Conditions/More/ConsumerHealthCare/A-Guide-to-Understanding-Clinical-Trials_UCM_426055_Article.jsp (That's an actual URL)

Even if your URLs aren't as long as this one, it might be a good time to revisit your URL structure.

Why does your URL matter for SEO?

Just like your title tag and content, Google uses your URL as a clue to help them figure out the topic of your page.

And the easier you make that process for them, the more confident they'll be about ranking your page for your target keyword.

How can you make it easy for them?



Create short and sweet URLs that include your target keyword.

If you have a date or category in your URL structure (like: <http://example.com/category/2014/5/12/title-of-your-post>), consider cutting out the category and date from future posts.

After a lot of testing I've found that super-short, keyword-rich URLs make a small but significant difference in rankings.



KEEP IT SHORT & SWEET

★ **ACTION STEP:** Use short and sweet URLs that include your target keyword.

3

□ USE MULTIMEDIA IN BLOG POSTS

Adding multimedia – like images, screenshots, lists and videos – doesn't have a *direct* effect on your page's rankings.

But I included it here because it boosts user-interaction signals that Google is paying more

and more attention to (more on that later).

Multimedia also increases the perceived value of your content. Higher perceived value=more links=higher rankings.



ACTION STEP: Include at least 1 multimedia type (video, audio, images and lists) in every blog post that you publish.

4

□ USE OUTBOUND LINKS

Google wants to see you as an active member of the web.

If you rarely link out to other resources – or nofollow all of your outbound links—it looks like you're hoarding PageRank for yourself.



ACTION STEP: Include at least 2 outbound links to authority sites (popular blogs, news sites and .edu and .gov resources) in every piece of content that you publish.

5

□ INCLUDE YOUR KEYWORD IN THE BEGINNING OF YOUR POST

Keyword prominence is the new keyword density.

In other words, Google pays close attention to WHERE a keyword appears on your page. The earlier it appears, Google's thinking goes, the more important it must be.

Think about it like this:

Let's say you were writing an article about office furniture.

Wouldn't it be weird if the first time the words "office furniture" appeared was in the last sentence of the article?

Well it's the same idea. It looks weird NOT to mention your keyword early in your article.



ACTION STEP: Include your target keyword in the first 100 words of your article.

6

WRAP YOUR TARGET KEYWORD IN AN H1 TAG

Your H1 tag is like your page's subheadline.

Most blog platforms (like Wordpress) automatically wrap your blog post title in an H1 tag.

However, certain themes override this setting and cause your page to have no H1 tag at all.

You can easily check this on your site by looking at your page's source code and searching for your article's title. If it's in an H1 like this, you're set:

```
'columns-3 nomargin nopad">
class="c1">
id="post-1126" class="post_box top">
<div class="headline_area small">
  <h1 class="headline">On-Page SEO: Anatomy of a Perfectly Optimized Page</h1>
  <aside class="byline">
update">by Brian Dean&nbsp;&#124;&nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;Last updated <time datetime="2014-05-29">May. 29,
</div>
```

★ **ACTION STEP:** Make sure your blog post's title is in an H1 tag.

7

NAIL LOADING SPEED

This is HUGE.

Page Speed is one of the few ranking signals that Google has publicly confirmed. It's that important.

You can easily evaluate and improve your site's loading speed using Google's own [PageSpeed Insights](#) tool.



★ **ACTION STEP:** Use the Google PageSpeed Insights tool to figure out your site's loading speed. Wordpress plugins [W3 Total Cache](#) and [WP Smush It](#) (both free) can help speed things up.

8

ADD MODIFIERS TO YOUR TITLE TAG

This is a great trick to wrangle in those super long tail searchers.

These 5-9 word searches may not show up in the Google Keyword Planner, but people DO search for them.

For example, here are some keywords people have used to find blog posts at Backlinko (this is data from Google Analytics before Google replaced this information with “Not Provided”):

<input type="checkbox"/>	56.	does a backlink from an authority website from an unrelated industry help my page rank
<input type="checkbox"/>	91.	impossible to get youtube video on google first page
<input type="checkbox"/>	113.	sites which provides guest blogging for land for sale



While it doesn't make sense to optimize around these keywords (after all, they're unpredictable), you can rank for them by including modifiers in your title.



ACTION STEP: Add modifiers like “2014”, “best”, “guide”, and “review” to help you rank for long tail versions of your target keyword.

9

USE PROMINENT SOCIAL SHARING BUTTONS

The easier you make it for people to share your article, the more likely they are to share it.

Make sure your social sharing buttons are prominently displayed on blog posts and articles. I use a Wordpress plugin called Sharebar so that people see the buttons constantly as they scroll down the page:



You can do the same thing for your site..
500 marketing budget or connections with infl

The 3-Steps to Using “The Sky” Get Quality Links and T

There are 3 basic steps to The Skyscraper Tech

Step 1: Find link-worthy content

Step 2: Make something even better

Step 3: Reach out to the right people

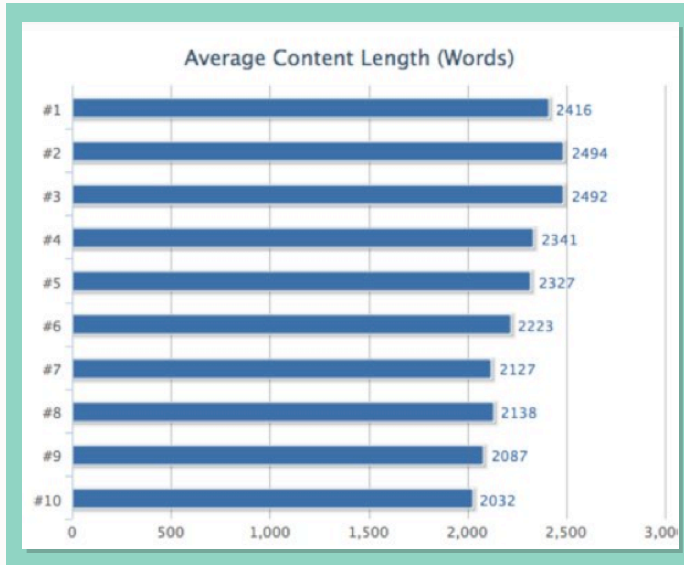


ACTION STEP: Make sure your social sharing buttons are front and center on blog posts and articles.

10

PUBLISH LONG CONTENT

Several industry studies (like [this one](#) by SERPIQ) have shown that longer content (1500+ words) ranks significantly higher in Google:



As you can see, the top 10 results have an average of 2000 words.



ACTION STEP: Write at least 1500 words for content that you're trying to rank for competitive keywords.

11

SLASH BOUNCE RATE

Bounce rate is an SEO and conversion killer. That's why it's a metric that I pay VERY close attention to.

If Google sees people bouncing from your page in the search results, it's a clear sign that you're not a quality result for their users. And they'll quickly drop you from the first page.

Adding internal links to the beginning of your content is one of the fastest ways to decrease your bounce rate.

When people first land a page they're more "click happy" than when they're deeper in an article. That's why internal links at the beginning of your articles tend to get clicked more often... slashing bounce rate significantly



ACTION STEP: Include internal links at the top of your article.

12

USE LSI KEYWORDS

LSI (Latent Semantic Indexing) keywords are words that are commonly found alongside your target keyword.

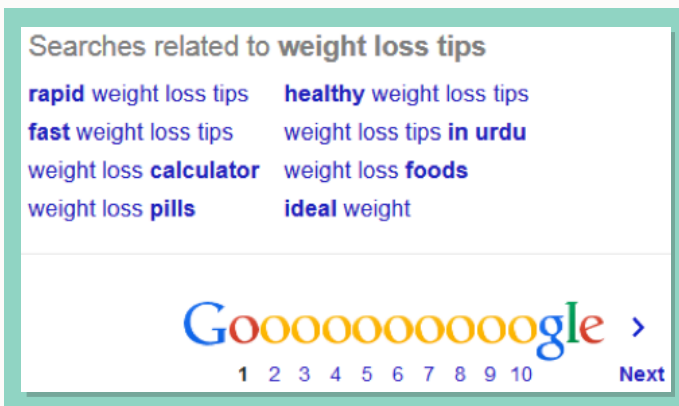
For example, if you were writing about “weight loss tips”, then you’d probably mention words like “nutrition”, “dieting”, “fat loss” etc.

“Nutrition”, “dieting”, and “fat loss” are LSI keywords.

When Google sees those words around your target keyword, it gives them confidence that you’re writing quality stuff.

Fortunately, it’s easy to find LSI keywords for any keyword.

Just search for that keyword in Google and scroll to the bottom of the page where it says “searches related to...”



Those are all LSI keywords that you want to include in your article.



ACTION STEP: Include 1-2 LSI keywords in every article.

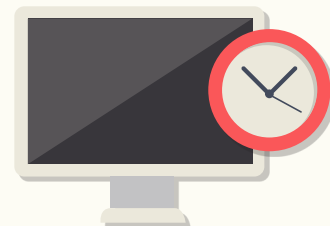
13

DWELL TIME

Like with bounce rate, Google pays very close attention to “short clicks” vs. “long clicks”, also known as dwelling time. Dwell time simply measures how long a searcher stays on your page before hitting the back button.

If they hit their back button immediately after landing on your page, it’s a sign of a low quality page. You can increase your average dwell time by writing long, engaging content that keeps people reading.

That way — even if they bounce back to the search results — you at least have a “long click.” That long click shows Google that you gave them something of value while they were there.



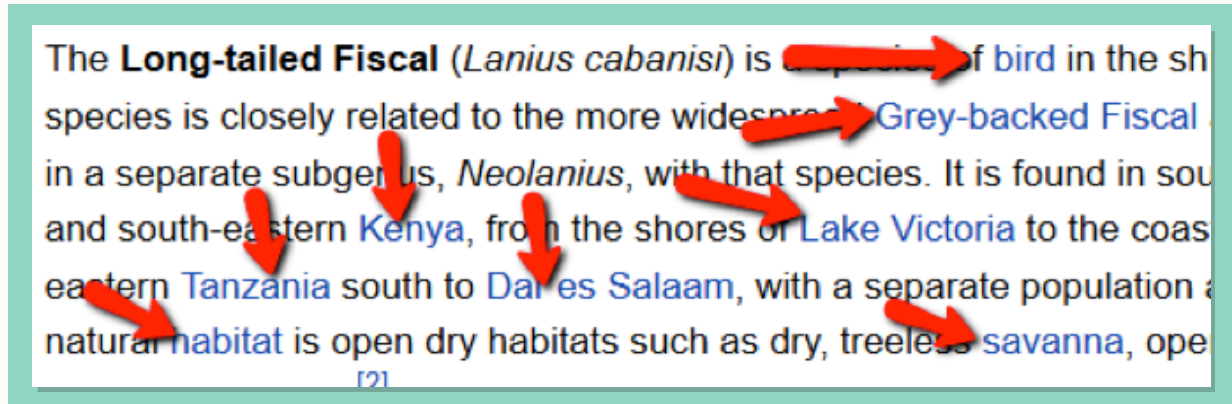
ACTION STEP: Write long, engaging content that keeps people reading. Put a lot of effort on making your first paragraph interesting and compelling.

14

INTERNAL LINKING

Internal linking is SO money. If you want to see a great example of how to internal link on your site, check out [Wikipedia](#).

They add keyword-rich internal links to every entry:



★ **ACTION STEP:** Add 2-3 internal links to older articles when you publish a new one.

15

H2 AND H3 TAGS

I don't think H2 and H3 tags are a big deal. But you should include your target keyword at least once in an H2 or H3 subheading. This also has the added bonus of making your content easier to read.

★ **ACTION STEP:** Include your keyword once in an H2 or H3 subheading.

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IMAGE OPTIMIZATION

This isn't absolutely necessary, but optimizing your images for popular keywords can land you traffic from Google Image Search.



★ **ACTION STEP:** Tag your images with keyword-rich alt text.

**BONUS
STRATEGY
#1**

OPTIMIZE CLICKS TO CONTENT

For 90% of the sites on the web, your homepage is the more authoritative page on your site...

...which means it has the most PageRank to pass around to other pages.

In other words:



The closer a page is to your homepage, the higher it will rank in Google.

So you want to reduce the number of “clicks” from your homepage to pages that you’re trying to rank.

If it takes more than 3 clicks to get from your homepage to your target page (ie. Homepage-->blog-->older posts-->fitness category-->blog post), then that page is missing out on a lot of critical PageRank.

At Backlinko, I include links to important pages in my homepage sidebar:



POPULAR ARTICLES

[17 Untapped Backlink Sources](#)

[Google's 200 Ranking Factors: The Complete List](#)

[How I Increased My Search Traffic by 110% in 14 Days](#)

[SEO Strategy Case Study: #1 Ranking With Guestographics](#)

[On-Page SEO: Anatomy of a Perfectly Optimized Page](#)

[How to Get Backlinks With Guestographics](#)

[How I Ranked My Site #5 For The Keyword "Backlinks"](#)

[Keyword Research: The Definitive Guide](#)

That way, when I get a link to my homepage, some of that PageRank flows directly to those important pages.



ACTION STEP: Make sure high-priority pages are no more than 3 clicks away from your homepage.

**BONUS
STRATEGY
#2**

MAXIMIZE CTR

If people rarely click on your page in Google’s search results, it sends a VERY strong signal to Google that you’re not a good fit for that keyword.

And the opposite is also true: if people’s cursors are attracted to your site like a magnet, Google will give you a rankings boost.

How can you maximize your CTR in Google?

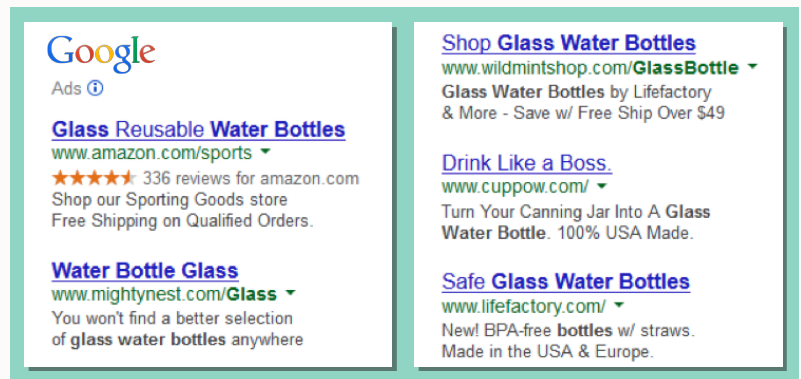
That’s easy: look at that keyword’s Adwords ads.

You see, the Adwords ads that you see for competitive keywords are the result of hundreds (if not thousands) of split tests. Split tests to maximize clicks.

And you can use elements of that ad to turn your title and description tags into click magnets.

For example, let's say you were going to publish a blog post optimized around the keyword "glass water bottles."

First, take a look at the Adwords ads for that keyword:



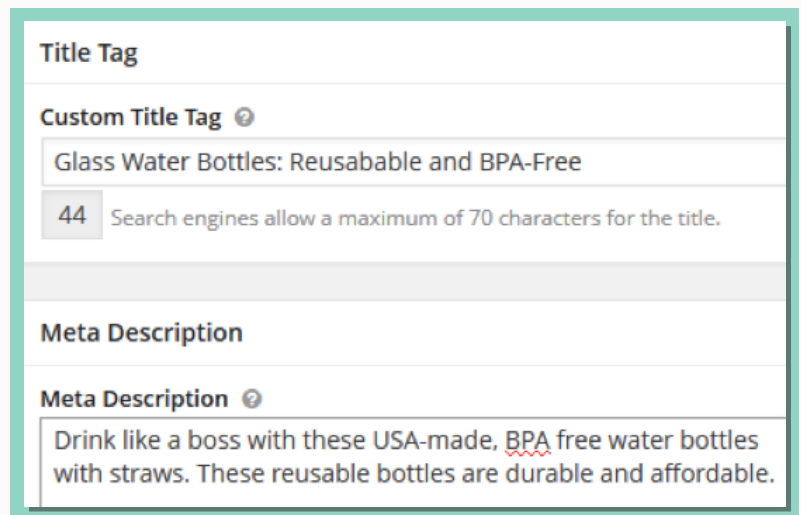
A screenshot of Google Ads for the keyword "glass water bottles". The ads are displayed in two columns. The left column features three ads: a Google Ad with a link to Amazon.com for "Glass Reusable Water Bottles" (www.amazon.com/sports), a 5-star review from Amazon.com, and a link to "Water Bottle Glass" (www.mightynest.com/Glass). The right column features three ads: "Shop Glass Water Bottles" from wildmintshop.com, "Drink Like a Boss" from www.cuppow.com, and "Safe Glass Water Bottles" from www.lifefactory.com.

Keep an eye out for interesting copy from the ads that you can work into your title and description.

In our "glass water bottles" example, we have phrases like:

- BPA-free
- With straws
- Drink like a boss
- USA made
- Reusable

Here's how the title and description tags might look:



A screenshot of a page editor showing the title and meta description tags. The "Title Tag" section shows a "Custom Title Tag" with the text "Glass Water Bottles: Reusable and BPA-Free" and a character count of 44. The "Meta Description" section shows the text "Drink like a boss with these USA-made, BPA free water bottles with straws. These reusable bottles are durable and affordable." A dashed arrow points from the list of phrases to the meta description.



As you can see, these tags include words that are proven to generate clicks.