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# Introduction

[From Wikipedia...](#)

**Search engine optimization (SEO)** is the process of improving the visibility of a [website](#) or a [web page](#) in [search engines](#) via the "natural" or un-paid ("organic" or "algorithmic") [search results](#). Other forms of [search engine marketing](#) (SEM) target paid listings. In general, the earlier (or higher on the page), and more frequently a site appears in the search results list, the more visitors it will receive from the search engine's users. SEO may target different kinds of search, including [image search](#), [local search](#), [video search](#), [academic search](#)<sup>[1]</sup>, news search and industry-specific [vertical search](#) engines. This gives a website [web presence](#).

You may of been tempted in the past to hire a person or company to enhance your position in search engine rankings. A page one listing almost guarantees that your site will be visited.

However, with the advent of blogs and free online tools, SEO is now in the hands of the ordinary person. You don't have to pay anyone. Besides, no one can guarantee a page one listing, no matter what they promise in emails.

# Improve your SEO with incoming links

Search engines look for links, they use them to measure how popular a site is. If your site has a lot of links coming in from other sites but fewer links going out then your site would be considered as being important. It's only part of how a search engine works out ranking but still important. And remember, the better the rank, the higher your listing in the search engine results.

So what is the easiest way of getting links from other sites aimed at your site?

## Find a relevant site and leave a comment

Blog posts (most of the time) allow comments to be left. Gives readers a chance to leave their views, agree or disagree on what's been said or add something to what's already been written. Along with your comment you get to add your name and a link, normally to your website (see the bottom of this post for an example).

What is very important is that you find a site that is relevant. There is no point leaving a comment on a site about cheese if you then link to your site which is about plumbing. Search engines can work out relevancy, is the site being linked to related in content? If it is then brownie points and your page rank gets a bit better.

## Banners and mentions

Getting a link can be as easy as asking a site owner to mention your site. This can be as simple as your site name with a link, a graphical banner or even a blog post. Most would be happy with a swap, you mention them and they will mention you. That will do but even better if it was one way, them to you.

## Article Directories

Spend some time and write an article about your business or even something about one of your products. BUT don't make it a sales pitch. There are many sites that have thousands of articles in many different categories. They will accept a small biographical piece at the bottom with your name, your business name and a link.

Ensure that what you submit is unique and does not already appear anywhere else. Dealing with duplicate content can be difficult so avoid it and makes sure it's fresh and relevant.

Check out sites like [ezinearticles.com](http://ezinearticles.com), [hubpages.com](http://hubpages.com), [goarticles.com](http://goarticles.com). Make sure you read what they require in terms of content, style and length. A big list of the top 50 with their own page ranks can be found on '[Top 50 Article Directories By Traffic, Pagerank](#)'

## **Time...it's going to take time**

This is an important part of search engine optimisation but it's not going to make a drastic improvement overnight. It is something you must work hard at and to keep working at even when your ranking does improve.

# Optimising your website

Search engines examine your website code to try and work out importance and relevancy. The HTML code we are going to look at are meta tags, title tags, header tags and paragraph/body tags. They are a small part of the overall formula that search engines take notice of.

## Keywords and Descriptions

There are two important tags that appear at the top of your page and should be in a block similar to this...

```
<head>
<meta name="description" content="description about the page" />
<meta name="keywords" content="keywords for your page">
</head>
```

The text and both tags should relate to each other. For instance, if you are a plumber in the Charente...

```
<meta name="description" content="Charente plumbing, qualified plumber for all your needs in the Charente area" />
<meta name="keywords" content="Charente, plumbing, plumber" />
```

The word "Charente" comes first, Google in particular loves local sites. Besides, as a plumber you want locals to find you. They would most likely type in search terms such as "Plumber in the Charente". The keywords back up and reinforce the description.

Don't go mad on the length of descriptions. A single short paragraph is enough and a maximum of about 10 keywords. One thing I must mention, search engine really don't bother much with meta tag keywords. However, things change so include it anyway, it doesn't cost much in time or page size.

## Give the page a title

The page title should be meaningful but also have some of your keywords. Make sure it is meaningful to the reader but at the same time interesting for the search engines. Remember, the title is used when the page is bookmarked and by search engines for their search results. Ensure that each page of your site has a unique title and is not duplicated.

The title tag is at the top of the page and should be similar to this...

```
<head>
<title>This is my page title</title>
<meta....
</head>
```

## The body of the page

The main content appears between `<body>` and `</body>`. This is where you use standard HTML to signify keyword importance.

Anything that has a title should use `<H1>`. If you need subtitles then use `<H2>`. Do not use paragraphs/body tags whose behaviours are modified with CSS. Search engines look at the code and pick up the header tags (H1,H2...etc). So using our plumber example...

```
<H1>Plumber in the Charente</H1>
<H2>All your local plumbing services</H2>
```

Which is better than

```
<H1>Plumber in the Charente</H1>
<P class="subtitle">All your local plumbing services</P>
```

As you can see we have keywords in the header tags. The `<H1>` tag contains the main ones, "plumber" and "Charente". This indicates to the search engines that we consider them as important.

All text should be contained between <P> and </P>. Sprinkle your keywords in the text but remember who reads it. It must make perfect sense to the reader, not the search engines. After all, you are selling to real people.

## **Verifying your code - validation**

Getting your site validated means that the HTML code makes sense and follows standards ([check yours here...](#)). However, when you start adding widgets such as Facebook 'like' boxes etc, that can cause validation to fail. Google has stated that [non-validated sites are not penalized](#) for badly written code.

Website developers should be writing valid HTML code anyway. Watch out though as many programs that are used to create sites can include unused or badly formed code.

# Giving search engines directions with site maps

From time to time, search engines can get a bit lost - when it comes to indexing pages. They may have a problem with understanding complex links or ones that are not written out correctly. Whatever the reason, you can lend them a hand. This is also one of the important parts of SEO and you should take the time to do it.

## Creating a site map

[Site Maps](#) are a standard format file for informing search engines about the location of your sites pages. It is not something you handwrite yourself but there are online services that will create them for you. See sites like...

- [XML site maps](#)
- [Web site Map](#)
- [Make a site map](#)

These sites offer a free service but there will be limitations, such as the number of pages indexed etc.

Once the site map has been created and downloaded, you need to transfer it to your site with an FTP program. It is easier to name the file something like 'sitemap.xml' and upload it to the root directory of your site.

## Telling the search engines

If you have not done so already, register an account at [Google Webmaster](#) Tools. Once you have verified your site you can upload a site map. It should only take a short while for it to be checked and accepted.

## Sitemaps

Submit a Sitemap to tell Google about pages on your site we might not otherwise discover.

Submitted URLs  
**152**  
145 URLs in web index

Show submissions: **By me (2)** - All (2)

Sitemap	Status	Type	Downloaded	URLs submitted	URLs in web index
<input type="checkbox"/> /blog/?feed=rss2	✓	RSS	Sep 29, 2011	11	10
<input type="checkbox"/> /sitemap.xml	✓	Sitemap	Sep 22, 2011	141	135

[Download this table](#)  
[Download data for all sites](#)

The Bing search engine can use the same XML file. Create an account at [Webmaster Central](#), follow the steps required to verify your site and register your site map file. I found that Bing took a much longer time to pass the file than Google did.

[Help ?](#)

### Sitemaps

Submit Sitemap feed(s) to tell Bing about your site's structure and make sure we are aware of pages that we may otherwise not discover. Supported formats: [Sitemap](#), [RSS 2.0](#), [Atom 0.3](#), [Atom 1.0](#) and text files.

Name	Status ▾	Type	Last Crawled	Last Submitted	URLs Submitted
sitemap.xml	Success	Sitemap	05/09/2011	02/06/2011	141

[Yahoo has Site Explorer](#). You need to register your site and verify it before you can go on to adding the site map. Again, easy to do but site statistics can take a long time to appear, just like Bing.

Feeds - <http://www.tint-network.co.uk>

<http://www.tint-network.co.uk/>    [?](#)

Feed URL (relative to site path)	Status	Last Submitted
<input type="checkbox"/> /blog/?feed=rss2	✓ processed ✓ submitted to Microsoft	05/09/2011 04:06 am UTC
<input type="checkbox"/> /sitemap.xml	✓ processed ✓ submitted to Microsoft	05/09/2011 04:01 am UTC

## RSS feeds as site maps

As you can see in the pictures above for Yahoo site explorer and Google Webmaster, you can include an RSS feed. You still need to add a site map XML file to ensure the search engine knows about **all** the pages. This is especially true if this is the first time registering.

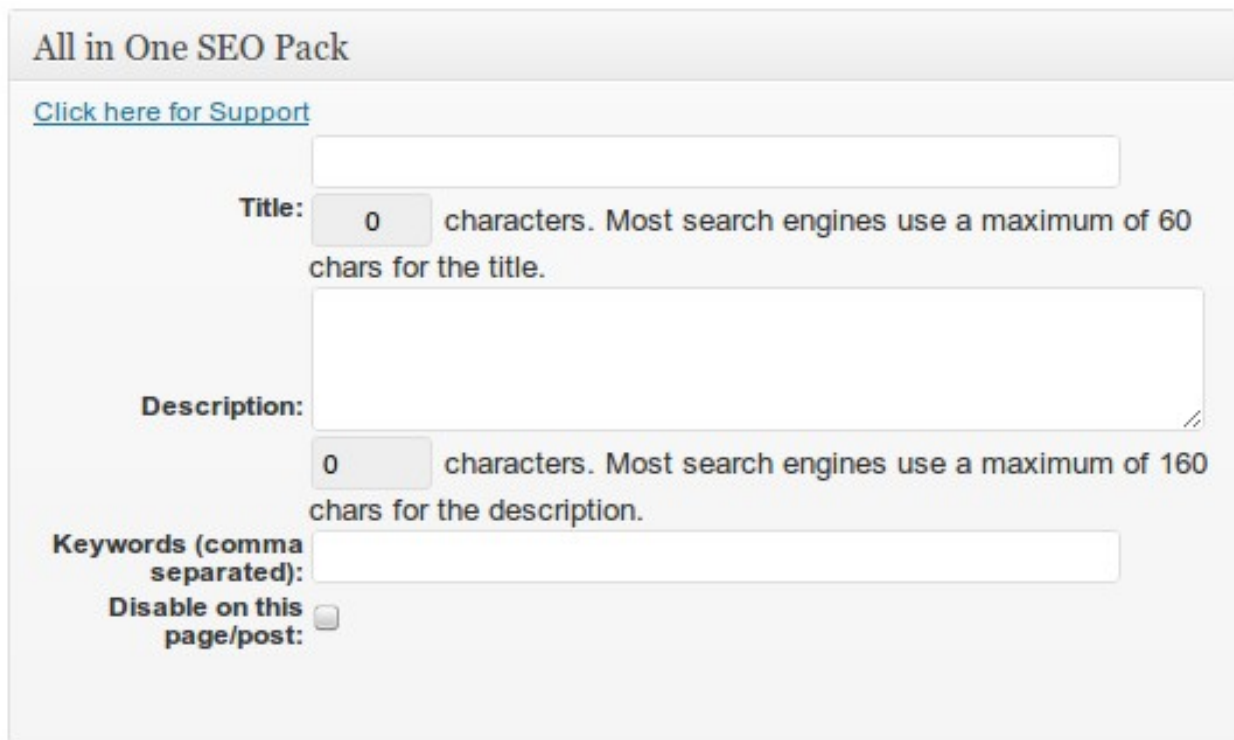
## Stats and more

Google, Bing and Yahoo can also provide statistics on your site. Information on page clicks, keywords, position in search results and more. It is worth spending time registering on these sites so you can access some really useful information.

# SEO for Wordpress

Optimising Wordpress has been made much easier with the some really cool plugins. For this post I shall look at the plugin I use as well as how to slip in keywords and a way to choose them.

## SEO All in one pack



The screenshot shows the 'All in One SEO Pack' plugin interface. At the top, there is a header 'All in One SEO Pack' and a link 'Click here for Support'. Below this, there are three main sections: 'Title', 'Description', and 'Keywords (comma separated)'. Each section has a text input field and a character count. The 'Title' section shows '0' characters and a note that most search engines use a maximum of 60 characters. The 'Description' section shows '0' characters and a note that most search engines use a maximum of 160 characters. The 'Keywords' section has a text input field. At the bottom, there is a checkbox labeled 'Disable on this page/post' which is currently unchecked.

[This handy plugin](#) adds three extra spots to fill in at the bottom of the 'new post' page. The first one is Title, here you can override the title of you blog post. You can give a search engine a snazzy eye catching title while giving your readers a title that more fits in with your style.

The second is Description. This is the 'meta tag' description that normally appears on websites. The SEO pack gives the maximum length of characters you should be using (as it does for the title) and gives you a count as you type.

Keywords is again equivalent to the 'meta tag' version, it also has a max length and running count. Most search engines do not use keywords, however, the world of search

engines keeps changing so in my view - fill it in anyway. Not as though it takes much time.

## Researching titles

I do not advocate the use of keywords to the point where your post does not make sense. Just remember who is reading it and who it is for. However you can, where appropriate, slip in keywords and still keep it readable.

A rather easy method to find keywords is to use the [Google Keyword Finder](#) that is part of Adwords.

### Find keywords

Based on one or more of the following:

Word or phrase (one per line)

Website

Only show ideas closely related to my search terms [?](#)

[+ Advanced Options and Filters](#)

Locations: United States [×](#)

Languages: English [×](#)

Devices: Desktops and laptops

Type the characters that appear in the picture below.  
Or [sign in](#) to get more keyword ideas tailored to your account. [?](#)

ionally groups

Letters are not case-sensitive

Search

There are plenty of instructions so I shall leave the details for you to find out. Once you have a few keywords you want to use, sprinkle them in the text of the post. Use them in the title and within the 'All in one SEO' plugin section at the bottom.

## Categories and tags

Ensure you create and use appropriate categories for each of your blog posts. Consider using keywords to name your categories, the way Google is going and considering the popularity of Wordpress - I won't be surprised if their names become more and more important for search engine ranking algorithms.

Tags are a way of cross-linking blog posts and also when users click on a tag they will find related posts. Again, use words that are meaningful or even keywords. Be selective, don't use lots and lots!

## **Site Maps**

You can create site maps for blogs, as discussed in the previous chapter. The extra cool thing about site maps is that you can also submit RSS feeds, becomes self updating.

## **Other options**

There are plugins and services that can automatically update these social networking sites. Already, search engines are finding content first on social networks before they find it by their normal means.

## Doing it yourself

You should now have given you some idea of what you can do yourself. There are professional companies out there that can do it for you but no one can really guarantee getting your site placed on the first page of search engine results. Over the years search engines have evolved and what used to be important (meta tag for keywords for example) are no longer important. There is more emphasis on content and ensuring it is relevant.

So here is what you can do (and it works!)

### Doing the important stuff

**Keywords in Title, description and text:** This is still important but ensure that the text of the page is very relevant to your chosen keywords.

**Incoming links:** Leave comments on other sites, write something unique for an [article directory](#) and make valuable contributions in forums (make sure your profile or signature as your web address in it).

**Optimize your site or blog:** Use keywords and make sure the main text is relevant. Use keywords in titles but they must also be attention grabbing. Remember, visitors read your words - not search engines.

**Provide a map:** get on to the search engines web master sections, upload site maps and check to see if there are any errors that the search engine has found. [Analytic's are a really useful tool](#) so if they are there to be used, use them.

### Good to get going

These are just the basic steps and there is a lot more. However, these are things that you can do for yourself. Combine the above activities with Twitter and Facebook and you can only do good and enhance your websites standing in search results.

Check here for [current articles on DIYSEO](#) on the Tint-network site.

## Thank you!

Thanks for taking the time to read this. If you have liked what you have seen then please consider signing up to the Tint-network RSS feed and email newsletters and bulletins. Find more about that [right here](#).

If you have any comments then please [feel free to get in touch](#).

Thanks also goes to [Caroline Whittle](#) of The Alternative Office (Web/SEO Design) for proof reading and helpful suggestions.

## The legal bit

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