



# Spoon-Fed SEO for Grown Ups

## 12 SEO Baby Steps for Higher Ranking

by Trendmetrix Software and the SEO Studio Development Team

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# SEO in 12 Steps

## Introduction to Search Engine Optimization

### If you think META tags still rule, you need to read this manual

Some not so honest webmaster that came before you in the 1990s used META tag spamming and other web page manipulation techniques to get higher rankings. The search engines got the message loud and clear, and answered back with a set of algorithm changes that are still evolving today. The Meta tags were slowly phased out as reliable ways to determine the relevancy of a web page by the major search engines by the late 1990s. Currently, the META description tags only real value is for website owners to succinctly describe their sites in the search results. It no longer has any ranking relevance at all.

So now the search engines have the upper hand, and dishonest webmaster have a much harder time manipulating the search results. Of course there are still a lot of people out there who can game the search engines for at least a few weeks or months until their sites are penalized by the engines. At that point, they simply register a new domain and start over with a new link farm, blog spamming, or a new hot off the press "black hat" SEO technique the search engines haven't discovered yet.

### Avoiding the bad apples of SEO

We hope you are here because you want your website to do well on the search engines for a long time and not just for a day or two. The search engines continue to challenge even seasoned SEO professionals, but by no means is search engine optimization an "elite" skill only a handful of people in the world can master. Although a lot of Internet marketers are pushing some new *secret formulas* for gaming the search engines, the fact is there are none if you want to ensure your site's long term success. In every market we can find snake oil sales men who are peddling the next miracle cure to your problems, and the Internet marketing world is no exception.

Just take a look at this typical claim below.



The sales pitch is always the same. They say you are missing a key ingredient in your web promotion campaign and only they know what it is. Or they flaunt in front of you affiliate checks or [Clickbank](#) earnings reports to convince you they know the next big SEO secret that helped them earn a pile of money. Did you ever notice, there is also a sense of urgency in

these offers. If you don't buy their e-book or spam generator gizmo today you are going to miss the boat.

SEO is *not a secret*, but a *discipline* that can be learned by anyone with patience and practice. Yes, that includes even *you*.

#### How can I master SEO?

- **Dedicate sufficient time to learn the fundamentals of SEO and search engine guidelines.** If you don't have the budget to hire a SEO to do the work for you, you will need to have a fair amount of time on your hands to understand the most basic SEO techniques. This manual could take only a few hours to read, but we guarantee it will take a few weeks to really sink in even after a few re-reads.
- **Master keyword research techniques.** Imagine if you were the owner of a retail store on a busy street, and your store didn't have a sign. You would probably get a lot of people who come into your store just out of curiosity, but would they find what they are looking for? Most likely not. It's the same with the search engines and keywords. If you optimize your site for the wrong keywords, you will get a lot of lookers and no buyers.
- **Understand web design and HTML at a very basic level and learn a WYSIWYG HTML editor such as Dreamweaver.** If you can't make changes to your web pages and upload them, there is no chance of improving its relevance through keyword optimization. You don't need to have complete control over the website, as you may work with a template based CMS (Content Management System), but you need to be able to make modifications to the Title tags, META description and the body content. If you have a web designer who makes the changes for you, that's perfectly fine as well.
- **Learn to write and inject keywords into web content and HTML elements.** You don't need to be an expert writer to create well optimized keyword rich content. As long as you understand you potential visitors' needs and wants, writing search engine optimized web copy can be learned by anyone. The important thing to remember is to always write for your *web audience first*, and *then* tweak your copy to incorporate your target keywords.
- **Dedicate enough time to grow their website content by a few pages a week.** Most small business websites stop expanding their web content after 45 pages, which also include some not so relevant pages like privacy policies, contact us page, etc. Websites with more relevant informational pages do better on the search engines. So commit to writing at least one new page per week on a topic that answers some common questions your visitors may have. Begin with "how to tips", "top 10 lists", and "did you know articles" to start your creative juices flowing.
- **Grasp the concepts of links and execute a link building plan.** If you were a hiring manager for a large company, would you hire someone without checking their references? The references provide some tangible way to validate the candidate's skills. Links are the equivalent to references on the web. The search engines use links as validation of another website's value and quality on a specific search topic. The more "citations" the search engines find from reputable websites linking to another site, the higher they rank them. It's important to develop a sharp "eye" for valuable links from the beginning that can push your site past your competitors.
- **Remain patient even in the face of sudden ranking drops and continue to learn more about SEO each day.** *Overreacting* to ranking changes and undoing all the previous work is the single most reason new webmasters fail at SEO. If your site is only a few months old, you need to give yourself and your site at least a year to attain reasonable ranking. As long as you follow the safe optimization and "white hat SEO" link building techniques we describe in the following chapters, any ranking fluctuation will be only temporary and there is no reason to change course. Educate yourself daily by subscribing to SEO blog feeds, read SEO forum posts and expert articles. You can find some of the most popular SEO resources at the bottom of this page.

## What's so secretive about search engines?

"SEO"

"Keywords"

"SERP"

"Page Rank"

"Back Links"

What do all these terms mean? Well, that depends on when you first realized your website needs search engine traffic in order to attract visitors to grow your business. The terms above are common knowledge to most webmasters who have at least visited a few top search engine marketing portals, SEO forums, or read at least one e-book on SEO. If you are unfamiliar with these terms, don't despair. We understand the confusion about the search engine optimization process, and we are here to guide you with an easy to follow road map.

Search engines are still very much misunderstood by most webmasters because ***the search engines don't publish the exact methods they use to rank websites.***

If you are serious about your website's visibility, you owe it to yourself to learn as much as you can about the most effective and safe methods to get top ranking on Google, Yahoo!, and MSN. What you have to realize is search engines actually need your website for their survival and profitability.

The commercial aspect of the Internet has created an entirely different set of problems for the search engines. Search engines existed long before Google came along in libraries, research institutions, and government facilities. In those early days, the document retrieval process consisted of mainly looking at the content of the documents without any external influences and links. The Internet explosion has single-handedly created the race to invent the "smartest" search engine that is able to find the "diamonds in the rough. The diamonds being the truly valuable web content that is relevant to user queries, and the rough being the junky low quality deceptive web pages that try to mislead the search engines. Organizing the billions of web pages and its content into meaningful, relevant well sorted search results is an immense task even for Google.

Think of search engines as the editorial watch dog of all content on the web. As chief editors, it's the search engines job to retrieve the most suitable web pages in response to a user query. The search engines make money by displaying ads next to the natural search results returned. This is why their search relevancy is the key to their survival. The more relevant the search results are, the more people will make them their favorite search tools. Since about 2001, Google has been doing a fantastic job at returning the most relevant results and has been rewarded with hoards of advertisers bidding on keywords making them a pile of money year after year. In order to keep their search results relevant, the search engines have to ensure there is a level playing field among websites. They do this by frequently tweaking their algorithms to find bad apples that don't play by the rules.

This short tutorial will try to take you through the necessary steps to build a site the search engines will love and reward you with high ranking(s). And finally, this tutorial would not be complete if we also didn't warn you about the inherent risks of trying to trick or game the search engines with different spamming techniques to get ahead of the pack.

# The paid keyword advertising alternatives

The natural search results are ranked by the search engine's algorithm while others are simply paid advertisements from companies willing to buy their way to the top using pay-per-click (PPC) advertising. When performing a search for almost any conceivable keyword on Google, Yahoo! or MSN, you'll likely see a set of results labeled as Sponsored Links or Sponsor Results.

Some sponsored results may appear in the same format as the natural search results, while others are listed within colored text boxes along the side of the page. Please see the illustrations below.



[Sing up for Google Adwords](#)





[Sing up for Yahoo! Marketing Solutions](#)



[Sign up for MSN adCenter](#)



An illustration of the "sponsored" and natural results on Google, Yahoo! and MSN

## The pros and cons of PPC

Long gone are the days of ranking well for competitive keyword phrases within weeks of putting a site online. As a matter of fact, new sites can rarely rank well within their first year of existence. This is where the pay-per-click advertising alternatives comes to the rescue. As long as you have a valid credit card handy you can start getting visitors to your site immediately once you sign up with [Google Adwords](#), [Yahoo! Search Marketing](#), or [MSN AdCenter](#) pay-per-click advertising. The greatest benefit of PPC is the immediate traffic you get to your site, but the downside is the on-going cost of bidding on keywords month after month.

### Who uses Pay-Per-Click advertising?

- **Advertisers who are either not ready to commit a budget or time for improving their natural search engine ranking.** Small and mid size business often face a dilemma when it comes to SEO. Hiring a SEO company, or doing in-house SEO both require financial resources and time commitment. In most cases small e-commerce companies choose the easier PPC route at first, but often they quickly realize without proper investment in the advice of a pay-per-click specialist and conversion tracking tools they can loose a lot of money very quickly.
- **High profile companies who's websites can't be optimized using traditional SEO techniques.** Corporate websites are often an untouchable property for SEOs. Key executives rarely give the go ahead to redesign a corporate website to achieve higher search engine ranking. In these cases PPC is the only way to gain visibility on the search engines.
- **PPC advertisers who want to be in the top results for thousands of keywords.** These companies view the cost of PPC as any other off-line promotion method and hey usually heavily invested in visitor analytic tools to accurately report their break even points and profitability for every keyword they bid on.
- **Webmasters who want to test the performance of keywords quickly so they can build an expanded keyword list for organic ranking.** Smart webmasters know that to properly test a keyword's relevance and suitability can be quickly achieved with PPC. It takes only a few minutes to setup a pay-per-click campaign with thousands of keywords and with the use of the free [Google Analytics](#) it can take less than a few days to find the best performing keywords.
- **Advertisers who have a recognizable brand names, but want to have their ads on top of the search results, when other competitors are also allowed to bid on their brand name keywords.** A perfect example of this is the airline industry. Online travel agencies are regularly bidding on airline company brand keywords such as "american arilines", "soutwest" etc.

It's not uncommon to hear of advertisers who spend tens of thousands of dollars on a monthly basis for immediate visibility on Google. Also many advertisers have new websites that are either too young to rank well or may have been penalized for spammy SEO techniques. The point we are trying to make is, PPC is a great alternative to get your site in front of millions of search engine users quickly providing (1) you have allocated a monthly budget, (2) researched your keywords thoroughly, (3) and set up a proper visitor and conversion metrics reporting tool. We can't emphasize enough the need for visitor and conversion measurement tools prior to engaging in any PPC campaign. [Google Analytics](#) is great free choice for webmaster to track their keywords and conversions that can be tied back to their Google Adwords campaign keywords.

PPC can also come very handy to find suitable keywords for your site by testing a large number of keywords at once and measuring the conversion results closely. This process can help you weed out the poor performing keywords and find the true gems. The key is to set up proper visitor tracking prior to starting any large scale PPC campaigns.



## What is the main advantage of search engine optimization?

One of the main advantages of high natural search ranking is your site can get visitors from the search engines 365 days a year without any cost to you other than your own hosting costs. It's like getting a full page add in the Yellow Pages under the category of your choice indefinitely. Do you know any better advertising alternatives that are completely free?

We don't, that's why we think you should follow this guide closely and refer back to it as often as you like during the optimization of your website. Although getting free visitor traffic from the search engines is a very cost effective way to drive targeted traffic to your site, it's not without a steep learning curve. The complexity and difficulty of learning SEO can be directly traced back to the search engines themselves. How is that so, you may wonder? The search engines are in the difficult position of trying to reveal as little as possible about the inner workings of their technology to the public, yet they need webmasters like you and me to provide them with the website's that provide the search result in response to the millions of search queries.

## Why your website doesn't already rank well?

If your site had been online for a few days only, we can assure you, you are asking for the moon. Longevity on the web is gold, and the search engines reward websites that have a few years under their belts. It's not to say your website has no chance of ranking well if it's only a few months old, but older websites have the staying power many younger competitors just can't match, especially on Google.

Beside the age factor, we could list at least a dozen or more search engine ranking factors that your website probably hasn't incorporated into its pages. There are also a number of other external influences (hint: links) that are in your "SEO blind spot" right now. We promise that by following our SEO guide you will be well equipped to uncover the secrets to your own website's ranking.

## Is your website's focus global or local?

There is a huge difference in time and effort needed to climb to the top of the search results, and it all depends on the keyword phrases you want your visitors to find you by. Attaining top ranking on the search engines depends on the competitiveness of the keyword terms you are targeting. Meaning, the fewer web pages competing for the same terms the higher your chances are of succeeding.

Let's say you are the webmaster of a small local real estate firm in Ajax, Ontario Canada with a population of about 80,000. Your job would be fairly simple and straightforward to get a top ranking for "ajax real estate" or "homes in ajax". In this case, the webmaster could probably get a top ranking just by creating unique title tags for the website with the keywords in the title tag and "sprinkle" the same keywords in the body text. The home page title tag for our real estate site in Ajax could look something like this **<TITLE>Ajax Ontario Real Estate Agent : Ajax Home Realtors</TITLE>**

On the other hand if you wanted to rank in New York or Los Angeles for real estate related terms, your chances of succeeding would be severely tested. You may already know the reason why. That's right, a bigger population means more real estate offices with websites that have the same keyword terms somewhere on their web pages. The end results is a bigger optimization and link building effort, and most likely more time needed to get the same results as our friendly Ajax realtors. Since there are many more sites competing for the

New York and Los Angeles real estate terms, naturally the New York or Los Angeles based real estate webmasters would have to go beyond title tag optimization. They would have to do some serious content writing, optimization, and link building to get a number one ranking.

However, this should not discourage you because the search engines rankings are not written in stone, and even the number one website can be unseated with persistent effort and patience.

Website owners who sell products or distribute their content worldwide are in a tougher situation when it comes to SEO. It's easy to see why. Once we remove the local geographical terms and do a search for "real estate" only, we are presented with over 370 million results from Google: *Results 1 10 of about 370,000,000 for real estate*. Unless the keyword phrase is fairly unique, competing globally for popular keywords terms will take more time and careful link building. In some cases, it can take as much as one year of search engine optimization to achieve a top 10 ranking for a very popular term.

## Your website's age and the Google "Sandbox"

You may not know this, but how long your website's has been online is a key factor in how much work it will take to achieve a decent search engine ranking. We are not talking about the domain's original registration date, but the actual time elapsed between the site's going online and now. The longer the site has been online without any significant down time the better. Sites under the one year mark will have a very difficult time, especially on Google due to factors which even Google doesn't disclose publicly. There is overwhelming evidence a new site needs to be online for a minimum of six months to one year before it can reach top 10 results for even moderately competitive keyword terms. This artificially imposed ranking ceiling on new websites is referred to as the Google "Sandbox" in SEO.

The Google "Sandbox" is a phenomenon that was first observed in 2003 and ever since we can see evidence of new sites with commercial focus competing for highly popular keyword phrases are ranked artificially low for a period of between 6-12 month depending on the market segment and specific keywords. The theory behind the Google "Sandbox" is Google's attempt to control newly build spam websites and link farms from rising to the top of the search results in a short amount of time. Unfortunately Google never openly acknowledged the existence of such a filter or algorithm, so we have no official confirmation from Google, but we can assure you it does exist.

The only sites we have seen escaping the Google "Sandbox" are educational or government domains, or subdomains of well established older websites. Another group of sites that may escape the "Sandbox" is sites targeting low competition keyword phrases with local geographical focus. For example a new site that competes for the keyword phrase "*toronto handyman*", or "*toronto carpenter*" may be able to rise to the top of the results in less than 4 months. On the other hand a new site targeting the keyword phrase "*las vegas real estate*" will face the same Google "Sandbox" just like other commercially focused sites in popular niches and may take over a year to achieve reasonable results.

## Achieving high natural search engine ranking is dependent on two main factors

Here is some good news; search engine rankings are dependent on two main factors; **on-page optimization and off-page optimization**.

- **On-page optimization can be described as the tweaking and tuning of web pages and the website** as a whole to achieve a unified keyword theme and an easy to navigate structure. On-page factors can be improved by incorporating keywords into the title tags, body content, and internal navigational links. The actual content of the site falls into the on-page optimization category, and although the on-page factors may contribute less to the overall ranking score, the content will make or break the off-page factors since high quality content will always attract more external links.
- **Off-page ranking factors are commonly known as link popularity which means, how many links are pointing to your site.** While optimizing your web pages is an important step, today's modern search engine algorithms mostly rely on external ranking factors such as inbound links pointing to a website. These external links are counted as votes for your websites popularity and quality. You can improve your websites link popularity by acquiring *relevant* high quality links from many different sources. Some of these source include links from blogs, reciprocal link partners, one-way links, e-zine article links, directory links, government, or trade associations links. Links from press releases or industry news articles are also excellent sources of links.

The search engines recently started to count links in their ranking algorithms community driven sites such as [Technorati](#), [YouTube](#), [Delicious](#), [Stumble Upon](#) and [Bloglines](#). Links from these social websites are given a fair amount of weight because the personal preference of users participating in a particular community is a good indication of a site's value which simply can't be determined by a computer based algorithm. The term often used to describe the propagation of news about a site's value on social websites is called *Viral Marketing*. Viral marketing is the new traffic generation source for webmasters and we'll be covering it in the [Web 2.0 Link Building and Viral Marketing](#) lesson. We'll be revealing all the ins and outs of getting your site in front of thousands of social site users in a very short amount of time.

The search engines are also extremely good at figuring out relatedness between websites. This means **when all other factors are equal the quality of links wins over the quantity of links**.

In the step-by-step lessons following this introduction, we will reveal how your website can achieve high search engine ranking with the right balance of on and off-page optimization techniques and viral marketing.

## What is the secret to getting high ranking?

Every year search engine algorithms evolve and change. In some cases, there is a noticeable change in the ranking order of even well established sites. As SEOs we have to adapt to what the search engines are looking for in site optimization and link popularity metrics. The problem is, the search engines don't publish a new checklist at the beginning of the year to tell us what to watch out for in the upcoming year. It would be very nice, but don't hold your breath.

Short of a precise list of search engine ranking factors, we have to keep on going back to the top 1020 results on Google, Yahoo!, and MSN to gain some insights into how those sites got there. We look for any fluctuations in the search results for target phrases. We also look at the sites' layout, keyword placement, link popularity, and a slew of other factors. In some

cases, there are no changes in the ranking results for months, and then all of a sudden we may see some new websites reaching the top 10 results. When there is a massive number of changes in the top ranking results, it's a clear sign of algorithm changes.

So what are the ranking "secrets"?

- **Old well established domains still dominate the top results.** If you don't already own a domain that has been online for a few years you can always find one. You would be amazed how many people are willing to sell their 4-5 year old domains for next to nothing. But don't go to domain brokers to find good deals on old domains. You need to do your own research the old fashioned way. Page through the search results using your target keywords starting at the 4th or 5th page or maybe even higher. Install the [SEO Firefox](#) extension and enable the website's age information. When you find a site that is at least two years old and the information looks a little dated, look up the contact info and send an email to make an offer.
- **Links from topically relevant high Google PageRank sites can give a huge boost to your sites' ranking.** These are types of links Google don't want you to buy, but in reality without putting some money down you will very rarely get a PR 7 or 8 link without some serious cash changing hands. Let's face it, if your site brand new and commercial in nature, nobody will do you a favor and give you something for nothing. You have to get used to the idea that you either need cash or time and talent to build links to your site.
- **Link exchanges, article and directory submissions are not the silver bullet to building links.** Just like all link building techniques, once they become main stream they lose their effectiveness. If the search engines find 80% to 90% of your inbound links are coming from exchanged links, or article and directory submissions sites, their conclusion about your site is simple: you are manufacturing links in order to rank higher because your site has no value to offer. Your site needs some other sources of inbound links, whether it is editorial links from your peers in your industry or links to a great new tool you have put on your site. The bottom line is one-way inbound links from relevant sites wins the day.
- **Social media is gaining ground, so you better be sociable too.** A link from [Bloglines](#), [Technorati](#), [Delicious](#), [Blogpulse](#), [IceRocket](#) or [Stumble Upon](#) is the web community's way of saying your site is worth checking out. In recent years the search engines started to rely on the collective opinion of social community websites to supplement and aid the relevancy of their machine based search algorithms. This trend will most likely continue and gain even more momentum in the up coming years.

## Do you want to learn more about search engine marketing?

In the world of SEO, changes happen fast. Keeping up-to-date on the latest search marketing developments is essential to your website's success. We have compiled a list of fantastic resources below to help you learn more about the latest news and buzz in the SEO world

Blogs you should regularly visit

<a href="#">Matt Cutts</a>
<a href="#">Seth's Blog</a>
<a href="#">Search Engine Land</a>
<a href="#">AllFacebook</a>
<a href="#">Copyblogger</a>
<a href="#">Social Media Examiner</a>
<a href="#">SEOMoz Blog</a>
<a href="#">ChrisBrogan.com</a>
<a href="#">Social Media Today</a>
<a href="#">HubSpot Internet Marketing Blog</a>
<a href="#">Inside Facebook</a>
<a href="#">SocialTimes</a>
<a href="#">ShoeMoney</a>
<a href="#">Scobleizer</a>
<a href="#">BrianSolis.com</a>
<a href="#">Search Engine Journal</a>
<a href="#">Search Engine Roundtable</a>
<a href="#">Online Marketing Blog</a>
<a href="#">Socialnomics</a>
<a href="#">Convince &amp; Convert</a>

## Conclusion

Search engine marketing can take your website to the next level of success providing you do your homework and spend the necessary time learning as much as you can about safe and effective SEO techniques. Search engine optimization is not hard, but it's very detailed. A great deal of knowledge about achieving top ranking is still based on too many "experts" giving bad advice to novice SEOs. Hopefully, this tutorial will help to clear up any misconception you may have about your website's potential and the work that lies ahead of you.

We know it's no small task getting a website ranking at the top of the search engines for new webmasters, but we are here to help you every step of the way.

**Next:**

- [Step 1 - Keyword Research](#)

## Step 1 - Keyword Research

### Introduction

What is a keyword? It's simple to explain, but hard for new webmasters to grasp and research. Anything people type into a search engine is a keyword. A search query could be made up of one word or several keyword phrases joined together. Every person uses their own method of searching, and that makes it difficult for the webmaster to find those keywords that will connect their websites with the right visitors. Keyword research starts with the understanding that finding lots of related keywords that deliver targeted traffic is the ultimate goal of any keyword research.

It's no use to send thousands of visitors to a site who will not even wait for the home page to load. That is just wasted effort and doesn't do any good for your business, not to mention all the visitors you disappoint. In essence, we want to find the least competitive keywords with the highest number of searches that are the most relevant to our website.

We are asked this question several times, "Is it better to rank for one very popular search term or attain top ranking for more keywords with less searches. Which is the better route?" This depends entirely on your website's theme and how many different search terms visitors can use to find the same information. Some sites can be described in a query in thousands of different ways, while many others may have less than a dozen well targeted terms that would be best suited.

If you are just starting out, it definitely would be to your advantage to target lower competition terms. Having success with low competition terms will lead to increased confidence to target more competitive terms with higher search volumes. In this lessons we'll also introduce you to a new SEO phrase called "long tail keywords" to target less competitive, but very well targeted keywords for your site.

### Thinking like your customers

Thinking like your customers is easier said than done. Part of the problem is actually you, the website owner. You know your business and market too well. The industry jargons and slang are in your every day language. No wonder when you start your keyword research you have a very narrow keyword focus. You become your own worst enemy in exploring other ideas.

Here is an example: when people search for getting their site ranked higher on the search engines, they may look for anything from "web promotion" to "web ranking," or even "web traffic." "SEO software" could be the last thing on their mind, but yet we would bet our business on "SEO software" being the best keyword for our site to target. Here is another example: what is the most popular search term, "cheap flights," "cheap seats," "low fares" or "discount fares"? As you can see it's not that simple to pick the best keywords, is it?

The hardest part of keyword research is to keep an open mind about all possible search methods people might use to look for the same thing. Keyword research is part science, part intuition, and imagination. Since we can't get into the heads of every possible potential visitor to your site who may be interested in your products or services, we have to rely on keyword research tools to tell us what people actually search for and how often. There are a handful of very powerful keyword research tools that are worth using, but the amount of information you can mine from them is mind boggling.

Another great resource for proven keywords is to look at your competitor's website. We are talking about finding the highest ranking competitors on the search engines using your target keywords. Once you find the top 5-10 competitor sites, perform a quick review of their keywords on the web pages. This can be a lengthy and slow process, but luckily the SEO Studio Keyword Analyzer tool can dig up keywords from your competitor's sites in a snap.

We'll cover in detail how the Keyword Analyzer can be used to add hundreds of keywords to your keyword research project.

## Keyword research is like a job interview process

In order to find the right candidate you may need to interview hundreds of applicants to find the perfect fit for the job. Well, the keyword research process is very similar; you have to cast a wide net first to capture all the possible combinations of keywords known to man. Even then, it's almost guaranteed you will discover new keywords you have missed in the original research only a few weeks earlier. What this tells us is the keyword selection and refinement process never ends, or at least it should not end until you are happy with the number of visitors you are receiving to your site.

## Where and how to look for keywords

In order to find the best keywords for our website we need to gather information from a variety of resources. Some of these resources may include:

- **Brainstorming:** Getting your brain to go on a magic carpet ride is one of the best ways to find relevant keywords for your website. Don't just settle for asking the obvious question, what does my website sell? Ask questions such as: "What is this product made up of?" or "Who is using my services?," or "What problems my products solve?"
- **Paid keyword research tools:** These include [Wordtracker](#), [Keyword Discovery](#), [Keywords Analyzer](#), and [Wordze](#). They give you the crucial keyword popularity data that is necessary for any keyword research. . All of these are very powerful keyword research tools, but they can be very expensive unless you do keyword research for a number of websites and you get paid for the work. We would recommend trying the free editions of the [Free Wordtracker](#), and the [Free Keyword Discovery](#) tool before putting some serious money down for their paid editions. If you do decide to sign up for the paid version, you will most likely not need more than a month long membership. Finding the main and secondary keyword phrases should take less than a month for even 2 or 3 websites. This does not mean your keyword research has ended forever, but finding the 4-5 word long secondary key phrases can be done with the free keyword research tools if your budget is tight.
- **Free keyword research tools:** You can gain access to the powerful and free [Google external keyword tool](#) to expand your keyword list. Unfortunately the Google external keyword tool only gives a search volume indicator instead of the actual search numbers. Another very valuable feature in Google external keyword tool is the "Site-Related Keywords" finder. By simply entering the website URL of your competitors, you can find out in seconds which keywords they target on their web pages. Another free keyword research tool available without creating an account is the [Overture keyword inventory](#). As of now, August 2007 this tool only shows the

January 2007 search volumes as it's being phased out, but Yahoo! is promising a replacement. If you have a Yahoo! Search Marketing account you can still gain access to their keyword tool albeit without the search volume numbers.

- **Use pay per click (PPC) advertising:** This will assist you in finding and selecting the best performing keywords based on the click through rate (CTR) and conversion rates. This is one of the fastest and most effective ways to select relevant keywords since your target audience is already casting their votes in the forms of clicks for your site. Testing new keywords with PPC is a very effective and low cost method to validate new keywords before incorporating them into your web page.
- **Ask your friends and colleagues:** Although you may be the expert in your field and perfectly capable of describing your products and services, you may also have a narrow focus when it comes to selecting the best keywords for your website. People who know much less about your business can give you important clues as to how they would look for your products or services.
- **Related search terms suggestion tools:** One of the fastest ways you can find hundreds of related keywords is to use online [lexical](#) or [thesaurus](#) tools. Creating a large initial keyword list that includes a large number of synonyms and acronyms is essential to effective keyword research. Discovering related phrases that are not simply stemming from the original keyword term is a cornerstone of [semantic latent indexing](#). Semantic indexing can be described as the grouping of related documents based on not only direct relationship between words, but the meaning of the words as well. For example a computer shopper typing "apple" into the Google search box expects to see Apple computer in the results, but someone interested in finding information on the fruit apple, expects to find information on different varieties of apples and apple growers. It's the semantic latent indexing that helps connect documents to the correct meaning of the search results and it's believed to be widely used by Google.
- **Some of the search engines provide a related search command list in their search results.** Try [Clusty](#) by entering a search command and take a look at the "clusters" side bar. You can get dozens of ideas from the keyword clusters by playing with different combination of keywords. You can also visit [Technorati](#) a well known blog aggregator and social media tagging site to help unlocked your brain and generate new keywords. Enter a search term and observe the "Related tags" section directly under the search results.
- **Visitor statistic reports:** These can be generated from web server log files or from script based visitor statistic programs. This can help you uncover new keywords for your website by discovering what the visitors are typing into the search engines to find your websites. In some cases, you'll find keywords you didn't expect to come up for in the search results. You should further research those keywords and uncover new keyword niches.
- **Regional keywords and dialects:** This can increase your website relevancy to visitors by using keywords as geographical filters. There can be variations of keywords from country to county even in the English speaking world. For example, in North America, we may use the term "search engine optimization" but in the UK and Australia most web searchers will be using "search engine optimisation"
- **Misspellings, hyphenated and plural:** These keywords can give you a multitude of additional keywords to target. Search engines can suggest the correctly spelled or hyphenated keywords in response to your query request, but they can not change what people actually search for. For this reason, focusing on even a few misspelled keywords or plural keyword variations can bring a few hundred extra visitors to your website every month.
- **Site search engines:** This can be a great source of new keywords and a potential data mining source. As well as further analysis of the average number of keywords, keyword length and other important keyword metrics.
- **Spy on top ranking competitors:** These websites are already well optimized and contain keyword rich web pages. Why not leverage their efforts and harvest the best keywords for your own website? With the help of the [SEO Studio keyword analyzer](#) you can extract hundreds of keywords from their META keywords and



HTML page content in seconds. There are two other very powerful free online tools available to dig up the keywords used by your competitors. The first one is [SEOdigger.com](http://SEOdigger.com). A great tool that lets you enter your competitors' URLs and within seconds you'll have hundreds of keywords in front of you with sortable Wordtracker and Overture keyword popularity data. The other competition spying tool is [Spyfu.com](http://Spyfu.com), which helps to identify PPC competitors and the keyword they use to advertise. SpyFu tells you which keywords each website buys and you can even track it to the individual pages.

## A few examples of good keywords selection practices

Selecting the best keyword takes experience and little know how, but it's always helpful to see how the pros do it, so here are few basic steps for keyword selection.

- **Using your favorite keyword research tool [Wordtracker](#), [Keyword Discovery](#) or the [Keywords Analyzer](#), type in the main keyword phrase.** Start with the broadest possible search terms, this way there is less chance of missing keywords that might otherwise be overlooked.
- **Look for 2-4 word key phrases that have at least a daily search volume of 200 or more.** Since the top 3 sites will receive 60%-80% of all searches, it follows you can expect at least 120 or more unique visitors for those keywords phrases. In some cases, you may want to lower the minimum search volume threshold to as low as 50 if the search term is well targeted for your business.
- **At this point you should have at least 20-30 really good secondary keywords in your basket.**
- **Hopefully most of the keywords you have selected will have little competition.** Some of the keyword tools we have recommended will also tell you the amount of competition for each keyword, but you can also verify these numbers manually by typing the search terms into the search engines with quotes.

It's very important that you use quotes around the keywords to let the engines know you are looking for an exact match. The rule of thumb we use to assess keyword competitiveness is around "100,000" websites. Anything above a hundred thousand results is fairly competitive and requires a fair amount of optimization and link building.



*The Google search results for the exact keyword phrase "second mortgage" over 1 million results reported*

## Grouping keywords

Managing and optimizing a large number of keywords can be a daunting challenge and it requires grouping for logical mapping to specific web pages once our initial keyword research is completed.

Every website has at least 5-10 "main keywords" which can answer this question: "What is this website about?" The rest of the keywords are called secondary keyword and will be some variation of those main keywords whether lexically related or directly stemmed from the main keywords.

## Types of keywords:

- **Main keywords:** These are usually one-two words in length, and all the other keywords either stem from them directly or are lexically related phrases, misspelled, or plural forms. A few examples of main keywords phrases are: *"loan," "real estate," "lawyer," "DVD," "cell phone"* etc. Although trying to get high ranking for these terms would be a futile attempt, nonetheless they are still required to be inserted into a website's title, body text and many other potential HTML tags for effective optimization.
- **Secondary keywords:** These are the keyword we really try to get top ranking for on the search engines; therefore, they require the most amount of research and filtering. The secondary search phrases are either stemming from the main terms or semantically related in singular and plural forms. The secondary phrases are usually 2-3 words in length, but they can be as long as 6 words in some cases. A few good examples of secondary keyword phrases are: *"home equity loans," "low down payment loan mobile home," "best refinance home mortgage loan rate," "prepaid us sim cards," "international sim cards."*

## Every website needs a keyword theme

When we think of a keyword theme, we should think of our target audience. We should clearly define their needs. This will help us come up with a much better keyword theme, rather than if we simply took paper and pencil and started to write down random keyword phrases.

Let's try this with a practical example. We are trying to establish a keyword theme for a website selling furniture with a location in New Jersey. Since this company sells a large variety of different furniture from living room sets to dining room furniture we need to come up with an overall theme and specific keyword segments as well.

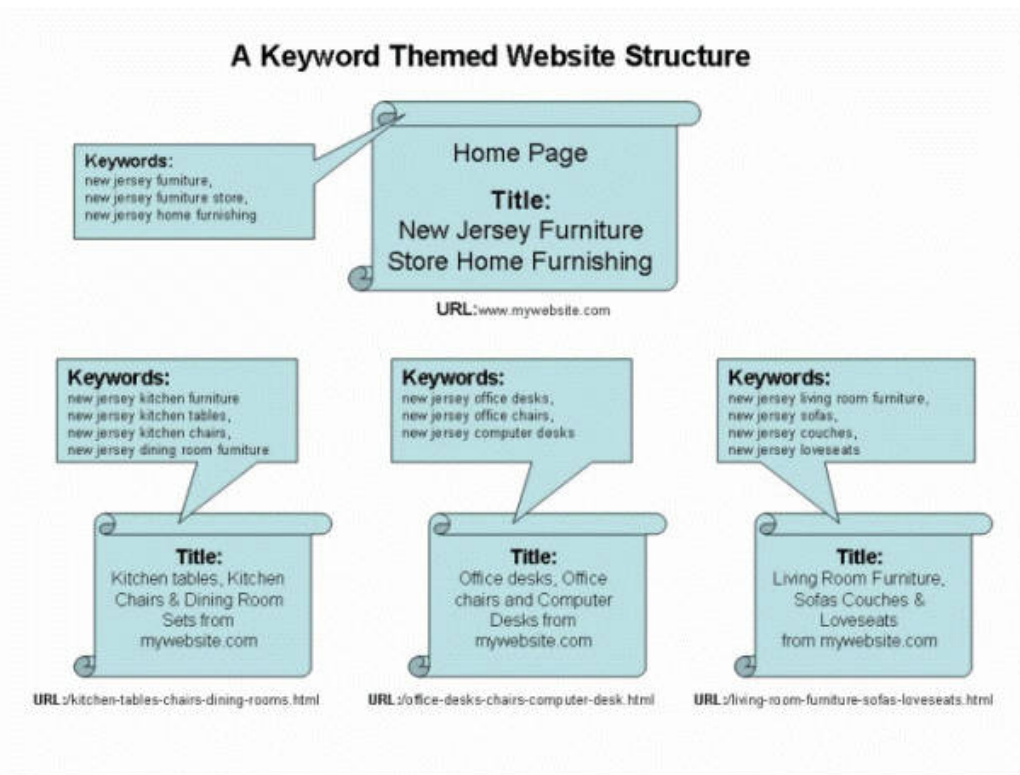
Who is the target audience?	What products or services do we offer to satisfy their needs?	What are the most relevant target keyword phrases?
kitchen furniture buyers	kitchen table, kitchen chairs, kitchen accessories, dining room sets	new jersey kitchen furniture, new jersey kitchen tables, new jersey kitchen chairs, new jersey dining room furniture
office furniture buyers	office desks, office chairs, computer desks	new jersey office desks, new jersey office chairs, new jersey computer desks
living room furniture buyers	sofas, couches, recliners, loveseats	new jersey living room furniture, new jersey sofas, new jersey couches, new jersey loveseats

## Creating a keyword themed website with keyword mapping

One of the greatest misconceptions about keywords is their relation to the pages where they will be inserted. The most common question from new web masters is: **"Do I optimize my home page for 20-30 keywords?"** The answer is no. Too many keywords on the same page would dilute the focus and effectiveness of all keywords on the target page. The search engines will give a higher ranking to those sites and pages that are the closest related to the user's query. In addition, you will learn in the lesson Page Optimization, the Title tag is limited in size and it's physically impossible to fit 20 keywords into the 60 to 70 character limit.

Unless you have a one page website, which we don't recommend, you need to target 3-4 keywords per individual page. The home page should target the most popular key phrases, while the sub pages should target the less competitive secondary keywords. Let's use our fictional New Jersey furniture company again to demonstrate. The home page will be optimized for the keyword term "New Jersey Furniture" and a few other closely related main phrases. The rest of the pages will be broken down into categories of different furniture types, like office furniture, kitchen furniture, and living room furniture.

For those of you who would like to see how this website would be visually laid out after the optimization of specific pages, please take a look at the illustration below. The important principle to remember in organizing a site topically is to start with an in-depth look at your target audience and create your keyword list based on their needs and your product offerings emphasizing its benefits.



*Keyword optimization based on website theme "furniture"*

## Long tail keywords

If you had your choice of visitor traffic originating from the search engines, which scenario would you choose?

- **One thousand visitors from one keyword?**
- or
- **One thousands visitors from one thousand keywords?**

If you can't easily decide, you are not alone. The SEO community seems to be split on this issues as well. It's hard to decide, given the fact that targeting a few very popular keywords could bring to your site thousands of visitors a day, but at the same time you would be facing some very stiff competition. The more popular a keyword phrase is, the more optimization and link building effort is needed to achieve top ranking. So there is a trade off between choosing less competitive phrases with lower traffic vs. more popular keywords with higher difficulty levels to attain top ranking.

Some SEOs prefer to target a few very popular keywords to get the greatest bulk of their traffic while others prefer to focus on many low competition keywords for an almost guaranteed top ranking. Also most SEOs recommend webmasters new to search engine optimization to target Long Tail keywords because it's easier to rank well in a short period of time.

So lets examine first what the Long Tail keyword phrases are all about and how they can drive targeted visitors to your site. Webmasters with a single focus on a dozen popular keywords may miss a very big chunk of traffic from obscure low competition phrases. The Long Tail keywords may be only searched a few times a month, but given a few hundred of these keywords, they can deliver a decent amount of highly targeted traffic. The main advantage of Long Tail keywords is that it's very easy to attain high ranking for them. When you are just starting out it can be a great confidence booster to see the first few visitors trickle in from the search engines using Long Tail keywords.

The Long Tail phrases have a very tight focus, which makes them more targeted than highly popular broad keyword phrases and usually convert better. For example the keyword "golf shoes" might bring in thousands of visitors a day to a website specializing in golf shoes, but if someone searching for a specific brand and model like "men's air accel classic golf shoes" there is a higher chance of sale resulting from the search.

## How do you discover Long Tail keyword phrases for your own site?

Most of the mainstream keyword research tools such as the free [Google external keyword tool](#), [Wordtracker](#), [Keyword Discovery](#), [Keywords Analyzer](#), and [Wordze](#) are a good place to start, but you also have to find some other not so obvious ways to search for Long Tail keywords. The [SEODigger.com](#) keyword spying tool is

definitely a must have tool. You can also try [Google suggest](#). This free Google tool tries to guess what your searching for and gives you suggestions in the form of an auto-complete search box.

Another great way to discover Long Tail keywords is to collect site search query data directly from your visitors. A site search tool consists of a web form and a small database of all the site URLs and their content. When the user types a query into the search box the program saves the query in the database. This is a true gold mine of Long Tail keyword phrases coming directly from your website visitors. We have been using the [Zoom Site Indexer](#), a very inexpensive MS Windows based site indexing and search tool on our own site and several SEO client sites, it works really well.

## Conclusion

Selecting the best search terms is the first and most important step in optimizing your website. The keyword selection process could be defined as the art of expanding and the science of narrowing your keyword list down to the most relevant keyword terms that bring targeted visitors to your site. If you want to grow the number of visitors to your site month after month, you need to continue searching for new keywords within your website's topic relentlessly. Once you have exhausted the conventional keyword research tools and ideas online, start looking at magazines, newspapers, trade publications, consumer advocacy publications and even your junk mail folder.

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- [Step 2 - Competition Research](#)

## Step 2 - Competition Research

### Introduction

The top competitors on the search results leave a trail of evidence behind them that tells the well trained SEO eyes what got them to the top of the results. The hard part for novice SEOs is to truly understand what goes on behind the scenes that drives the search engines rankings. The confusion is understandable. We would all like to know how the search engines work out their ranking scores to place one website ahead of the other, but we can guarantee you, they will never reveal top secret information to us. Instead, we have to rely on experience, good analytical skills and tools to figure what really makes a site rise to the top.

This practical hands on guide will show you step-by-step how to reverse engineer your top competitors' websites. Also, we'll lay the foundation of an optimization and link building road map for you to follow that will guarantee your websites success.

### How can we define our competition?

There are some handy search commands provided by Google which allow you to assess your competition fairly accurately.

The format of these commands is very simple:

*command: keyword phrase*

- **Finding the Anchor link text used by competitors.** In the Keyword Research lesson we discussed how we can use a simple query with our keyword phrase in quotation marks to assess the number of other pages competing for that exact keyword term(s). Now we will take this concept a step further and use Google's built in search commands, the "allinanchor", and "allintitle" commands.

The Google "allinanchor" command will find all the websites using the specified keyword phrase in internal or external link text (anchor text). The anchor text is the visible part of a link.

For example a link to our own site [www.trendmx.com](http://www.trendmx.com) would look like this:

[SEO Software](#)

The HTML code would be formatted this way.

```
<a href="http://www.trendmx.com">SEO Software</a>
```

The keyword "SEO Software" is the anchor text in this case linking to our site highlighted in blue.

You can include the keyword phrase in the "allinanchor" command with or without quotation marks. The internal and external link text is an important ranking factor on all the major search engines and the "allinanchor" command helps us find all those sites that have a solid internal and external linking strategy. Ranking high with the "allinanchor" command usually means a high natural search engine ranking as well.

- **Finding the Title tag used by competitors:** The "allintitle" command works similarly to the "allinanchor" command, but instead it searches the title tag of web pages for the keyword phrase entered. The title tag is used to describe a web page's content in 60-90 characters and it's one of the most important on-page optimization element for you to master. Most of the top ranking competitors have well optimized title tags and the "allintitle" command helps you find those top ranking competitors who have the most relevant title tags.

Let's do a search for "[allinanchor:second mortgage](#)" with the "allinanchor" special Google query operator. Google reports over 90 thousand web pages using the keyword term "second mortgage" in their internal and external link text. Although the number of results returned may not mean much to you just yet, but the "allinanchor" and "allintitle" Google commands are the most important to measure your competitors' strength.



*The Google search results returned for the "allinanchor" keyword phrase "second mortgage", over 90 thousand results reported.*

## How much competition is too much?

You may be surprised by this answer, but it depends on where your website currently ranks for related keyword phrases. Let us illustrate this point with a real life example. In the world of competitive cycling it's unimaginable for someone untrained to even finish the Tour De France 2,000 mile track in 3 weeks, let alone win it.

The same rule applies to achieving high search engine ranking. A website that has been online for only a week has little chance of competing with websites who are in top positions for very competitive keyword terms year after year.

Let's use our previous example again, targeting the phrase "second mortgage. A brand new website would be better off targeting more specific keywords phrases based on the previously discussed Overture results. Some of these keywords would be "second mortgage loan, "second mortgage home loan, "second mortgage rate" or "second mortgage lender. We can also create a location for keyword selection based on a specific geographical area, such as "second mortgage Dallas, "second mortgage Florida" or "second mortgage Toronto" if you sell products or services locally.

## Assessing the competition on Google

You can use this simple table below to find out how competitive your keywords are. Based on our experience with keyword optimization for different levels of competitiveness, we have created a list of very competitive, moderately competitive, and less competitive keyword terms. The number of search results returned by Google indicates how tough the competition is for different keyword phrases.

*Please use this information only as a guide. In the world of search engine optimization there are always exceptions to the rules. Keep in mind that when we collected this data it was a point of time in Google's index, and the number of results returned can change from month to month.*

Competition	Search Method	Number of Search Results
Very Competitive	<b>Exact Search:</b> <a href="#">"dvd burner"</a> <a href="#">"second mortgage"</a> <a href="#">"life insurance quote"</a>	Over 200,000 Results
	<b>Google Allinanchor:</b> <a href="#">allinanchor: "dvd burner"</a> <a href="#">allinanchor: "second mortgage"</a> <a href="#">allinanchor: "life insurance quote"</a>	Over 20,000 Results
	<b>Google Allintitle:</b> <a href="#">allintitle: "dvd burner"</a> <a href="#">allintitle: "second mortgage"</a> <a href="#">allintitle: "life insurance quote"</a>	Over 20,000 Results
Moderately Competitive	<b>Exact Search:</b> <a href="#">"free conference call"</a> <a href="#">"debt management uk"</a> <a href="#">"multiple domain web hosting"</a>	Between 100,000 to 200,000
	<b>Google Allinanchor:</b> <a href="#">allinanchor: "free conference call"</a> <a href="#">allinanchor: "debt management uk"</a> <a href="#">allinanchor: "multiple domain web hosting"</a>	Between 1,000 to 20,000
	<b>Google Allintitle:</b> <a href="#">allintitle: "free conference"</a> <a href="#">allintitle: "debt management uk"</a> <a href="#">allintitle: "multiple domain web hosting"</a>	Between 1,000 to 20,000
Less Competitive	<b>Exact Search:</b> <a href="#">"buy paintballs"</a> <a href="#">"swimming pool chemicals"</a> <a href="#">"glow in the dark paint"</a>	Between 1,000 to 100,000
	<b>Google Allinanchor:</b> <a href="#">allinanchor: "buy paintballs"</a> <a href="#">allinanchor: "swimming pool chemicals"</a> <a href="#">allinanchor: "glow in the dark paint"</a>	Between 1 to 1,000
	<b>Google Allintitle:</b> <a href="#">allintitle: "buy paintballs"</a> <a href="#">allintitle: "swimming pool chemicals"</a> <a href="#">allintitle: "glow in the dark paint"</a>	Between 1 to 1,000

### Keyword effectiveness index (KEI)

For years now, [Wordtracker](#) has been displaying the KEI next to the keyword phrases as a measure of a keyword's competitiveness. According to Wordtracker, "the KEI compares the Count result (number of times a keyword has appeared in our data) with the number of competing web pages to pinpoint exactly which keywords are most effective for your campaign."

The Wordtracker KEI algorithm is simple and works like this:

"Let P denote the popularity of the keyword and C the competitiveness. The formula that we have chosen is  $KEI = (P^2/C)$ , i.e. KEI is the square of the popularity of



the keyword and divided by its competitiveness."

Source [Wordtracker KEI help](#)

We can simplify this by saying, dividing the demand (popularity) by the number of exact search results (competitiveness) we arrive at the keyword's effectiveness. A KEI value of 40 or higher considered very good and indicates a less competitive keyword phrase.

## A word of caution about KEI

Although the KEI may be considered a good guide for a keyword's competitiveness by many SEO professionals, we tend not to use this statistic as it comes with many inherent flaws. For one, it does not take into consideration, link popularity, PageRank, and a number of other "off-page" factors which contribute to high search engine ranking. Relying strictly on the KEI alone could greatly under or overestimate the competitiveness of a keyword. A much better and more accurate competition assessment tool is the Google "allinanchor, and "allintitle" commands.

## Other methods to find your online competitors

Our competition research would not be complete without using some very powerful competition spying tools.

Here is the list of competitor spying tools we have been using regularly:

- **Find related sites using Google's related command.** The search engines know better than anyone what the most closely related websites are in a specific keyword genre. Type the "related" command into Google like this:  
*related:www.yoursite.com*. This command will return a list of pages that Google thinks are related to your site. Now try the command with a competitor's site, as you can see there are endless possibilities to find as many related sites as possible.
- **Use Google's "define" search command.** If you want Google to tell you which sites are considered an "authority" on specific keyword phrases, simply enter this command: *define:keyword*. Google will show you all the websites that are considered valuable resources on those subject matters. Try to enter some of your own keywords to see which sites come up in the search results. You may notice by clicking through some of the results that most of the pages are glossary of term type of pages. This is something to keep in mind for later when building content for your website. Adding a glossary page containing your industry specific keyword terms and their definitions is a great idea.
- [Spyfu is a free research tool for discovering the keywords and ads your competitors are using on Google.](#) You can enter a keyword phrase or a competitor's domain to gain access to their target keywords, current organic ranking, related keyword phrases, and other Adwords advertisers bidding on the same keywords. You have to keep in mind the Spyfu tool is very experimental; nonetheless, a great way to get some estimate of the total number of clicks your competitors are receiving and their average ad position.
- [Google Alerts will send you email alerts based on your keywords.](#) Every time there is some new development related to your specified keyword phrases on Google search, blog, news, or groups, it will send you an email alert. The keywords you specify can include your own website URL or your competitors web address. This is a great way to find out what's being said about you and your competitors.

## On-page and off-page competition analysis

In our introduction, we briefly discussed how the search ranking factors are broken into "on" and "off" page factors. Now we'll apply this information in our competition research when we put their websites under our microscope. In essence we can create a check list of what they are doing right or wrong as we dissect each on-page ranking factor.

In Step 6 we'll complete our off-page analysis of our competitors and uncover some of the most important link popularity factors as well.

On page ranking factor checklist

	<b>On-Page Factors (20%-30% Ranking Score)</b>	<b>How to find out?</b>
1.	Are there optimized, unique Title tags on every page with no more than 90 characters in the Title?	Use the Keyword Analyzer tool and retrieve the internal links. Check individual pages for Title tag optimization by running the Keyword Analyzer.
2.	Does the Body text contain at least 250 words per page?	Check individual pages for Body tag optimization by running the Keyword Analyzer.
3.	Are headings used H1/H2/H3 effectively?	Check individual pages for Heading tag optimization by running the Keyword Analyzer.
4.	Are the internal links text based or Flash or Image based and do they contain the target keywords?  <i>Note: Image based links are the worst type of internal links you can use since the search engines can't read the text inside them.</i>	Check individual pages for Image tag optimization by running the Keyword Analyzer and also check the source code for Image and Flash based navigation.
5.	Are the keywords inserted in the file names, folder or the domain name?	Use the Keyword Analyzer tool to retrieve the internal links. Check individual pages for Filename/URL optimization by running the Keyword Analyzer.
6.	Are related keywords found in the Body text to increase the lexical correlation between keywords?	Check individual pages for Body tag optimization by running the Keyword Analyzer and pay careful attention to the 1, 2 and 3 word phrase list.
7.	Are the keyword repetition, proximity, and prominence appropriate in the Title and Body text?	Check individual pages for Body and Title tag optimization by running the Keyword Analyzer. The closer to the beginning the keywords appear the better optimized the page is.
8.	Are there ALT tag attributes in images and links?	Check individual pages for the ALT image tag optimization by running the Keyword Analyzer.

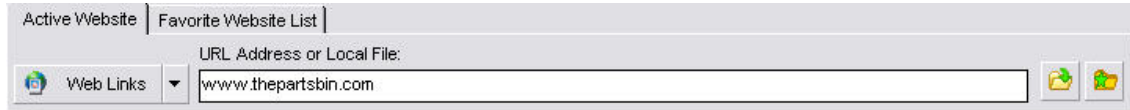
9.	Is the page size and code to text ratio appropriate?	Use the Keyword Analyzer tool to retrieve the internal links and compare the HTML page size to the number of words found in the body. Large page size and low word count indicates too many HTML tags without the use of CSS which can help to reduce HTML code clutter and size.
10.	Are the website pages search engine friendly with no frames in the body or session IDs in the URLs?	Check individual pages for Frames and the URL by running the Keyword Analyzer.
11.	Did the search engines index all the pages?	Run the Links Plus+ tool, and use the Check Indexed pages function to compare the number of retrieved pages.
12.	Do the website main pages show recent updates?	Use the Keyword Analyzer tool to retrieve the internal links that show the last modified date. The more recent the modified dates are the fresher the website appears to the engines.
13.	How many outgoing links can be found, and how closely related are they to the site?	Navigate to the site's resource or link page in your browser and check the outgoing links. Too many links on a single page may be considered a link farm by the engines.
14.	Is there a site map on the site?	Check the site manually for the presence of a site map. Cataloging a website's most important pages is a great way to help the search engines to crawl your website.
15.	What is the top level domain of the site (.edu/.org/.com/.ca/.co.uk.etc)?	Check the URL, .edu domains have an advantage over .com and other TLDs. Country level domains can compete better for geographically related keyword terms.

## "On-page" analysis example

Now we are ready to put into practice our "on-page factors checklist" For a better illustration of the on "page" analysis steps, we are going to use an on-line car parts website <http://www.thepartsbin.com> as an example.

### 1. Open the Keyword Analyzer

Enter the website address into the URL text box as shown on the screen shot below.



The *Keyword Analyzer Configuration Screen in SEO Studio*

Click on the Get Links button to retrieve the internal links from the main page and pay careful attention to the website Title and URLs in the links display windows. You can see this site does a fantastic job at inserting keyword into both the page URLs and the Title tags, which are both very important elements from an on-page optimization perspective. Also note, every page has a unique Title tag. Don't make the mistake of putting the same Title tag on every page.

Website URL	Title	Descripti
<input type="checkbox"/> <a href="http://www.thepartsbin.com/guides/dodge.html">www.thepartsbin.com/guides/dodge.html</a>	Compare: Dodge Replacement Parts at The Parts Bin	
<input type="checkbox"/> <a href="http://www.thepartsbin.com/guides/eagle.html">www.thepartsbin.com/guides/eagle.html</a>	Compare: Eagle Replacement Parts at The Parts Bin	
<input type="checkbox"/> <a href="http://www.thepartsbin.com/guides/ford.html">www.thepartsbin.com/guides/ford.html</a>	Compare: Ford Replacement Parts at The Parts Bin	
<input type="checkbox"/> <a href="http://www.thepartsbin.com/guides/geo.html">www.thepartsbin.com/guides/geo.html</a>	Compare: GEO Replacement Parts at The Parts Bin	
<input type="checkbox"/> <a href="http://www.thepartsbin.com/guides/gmc.html">www.thepartsbin.com/guides/gmc.html</a>	Compare: GMC Replacement Parts at The Parts Bin	
<input type="checkbox"/> <a href="http://www.thepartsbin.com/guides/honda.html">www.thepartsbin.com/guides/honda.html</a>	Compare: Honda Replacement Parts at The Parts Bin	
<input type="checkbox"/> <a href="http://www.thepartsbin.com/guides/hummer.html">www.thepartsbin.com/guides/hummer.html</a>	Compare: Hummer Replacement Parts at The Parts Bin	
<input type="checkbox"/> <a href="http://www.thepartsbin.com/guides/hyundai.html">www.thepartsbin.com/guides/hyundai.html</a>	Compare: Hyundai Replacement Parts at The Parts Bin	
<input type="checkbox"/> <a href="http://www.thepartsbin.com/guides/infiniti.html">www.thepartsbin.com/guides/infiniti.html</a>	Compare: Infiniti Replacement Parts at The Parts Bin	
<input type="checkbox"/> <a href="http://www.thepartsbin.com/guides/jeep.html">www.thepartsbin.com/guides/jeep.html</a>	Compare: Jeep Replacement Parts at The Parts Bin	

The *Keyword Analyzer displaying the links and their page titles from the Thepartsbin.com site.*

### 2. Analyzing the competition's individual pages

After running the Keyword Analyzer using <http://www.thepartsbin.com> you will see the following result for the keyword "import car parts". The keyword highlighting tool really helps to put the spot light on keyword placement and repetition within each HTML element. Although the Title tag on thepartsbin.com site is too long, Google cuts the Title tag at approximately 60 characters and Yahoo! at 90, they have managed to place the most important keywords at the beginning of the Title.

Analyzer Report: [www.thepartsbin.com](http://www.thepartsbin.com)

**Keyword Summary for Keyword: import auto parts**

Title(1), Body Text(6)

**Title:**

Title is the text placed between title tags in the HEAD section and it is used to identify contents of the web page.  
Example: <TITLE>**title goes here**</TITLE>

Occurrence: 1	Density: %10	Prominence: %90	Words: 29	Characters: 196
---------------	--------------	-----------------	-----------	-----------------

Discount Car Parts - **Import Auto Parts** - Replacement Auto Parts - BMW Parts, Jaguar Parts, Toyota Parts, Nissan Parts, Honda Parts, Mercedes Parts, Porsche Parts, Saab Parts, Volvo Parts, VW Parts

**Body Text:**

Body text is the text visible in the browser. Includes link text and headings.

Occurrence: 6	Density: %3	Prominence: %66	Words: 624	Characters: 4339
---------------	-------------	-----------------	------------	------------------

Part # Search Retrieve Quote View Cart Quality Auto Parts... Low Prices ... Free Shipping! Shop For Parts and Accessories - Select Your Vehicle Select Year Select Make Select Model Buy import car parts, domestic parts, import performance parts and discount truck accessories parts online at discount prices. Our wide selection of new, genuine, OEM, rebuilt, and quality aftermarket discount car parts, **import auto parts**, replacement auto parts, Audi parts, BMW

The Keyword Analyzer analysis results of HTML page elements from the home page of Thepartsbin.com.

### 3. Analyzing your competitors' pages to build your keyword list

If you are looking for proven keywords, look no further. Your top ranking competitors pages are loaded with keywords you probably never even thought of. SEO Studio can extract the most frequently used keywords from any web page easily and accurately. It goes beyond just extracting META keywords. It can harvest keywords from any HTML tag that can be found in the HTML source code of the web page.

You can see in the illustration below thepartsbin.com website's keywords in plain view for any SEO Studio user to copy and paste or to extract to a file. You can do the same with your own competitors' pages and watch how fast you can make your own keyword list grow.

1 Word	Count	Dens...	Promi	2 Word Phrases	Count	Dens...	Prom	3 Word Phrases	Count	Dens...	P
parts	109	22%	59%	auto parts	18	6%	57%	import auto parts	7	4%	5
auto	22	4%	54%	truck accessories	12	2%	17%	import car parts	6	1%	2
import	16	2%	52%	car parts	8	3%	53%	cold air intake	6	1%	9
discount	14	4%	10%	import auto	7	2%	57%	000 000 000 000	4	1%	1

Total: 810, Unique: 185      Total: 419, Unique: 152      Total: 176, Unique: 75

Report Description:  Save Report Export

The Keyword Analyzer extracted all the 1, 2, and 3 word phrases from the Thepartsbin.com site.

## Conclusion

Your competitors have spent a considerable amount of time and effort coming up with their keyword selection and the optimization of their sites. You can take advantage of their efforts to expand or refine your own keyword list and learn about their on-page optimization techniques. The search engines and other online tools give us a great deal of insight into our competitor's online campaigns. Before jumping head first into the optimization of our sites, we should thoroughly understand what our competitors are doing online. At the same time, you should not overestimate your competitors ability to find the best suited keywords. You should practice due diligence and verify your competitors' keyword selection with the methods we have outlined in the Keyword Research lesson.

### Previous:

- [Step 1 - Keyword Research](#)

### Next:

- [Step 3 - Site Preparation](#)

## Step 3 - Site Preparation

### Introduction

Before starting your search engine optimization project there are several key factors you must consider prior to even selecting the first keywords. You need to confirm your website's readiness in terms of overall structure and navigation. Your search engine optimization efforts have to begin with an easily navigable and logically laid out website structure.

If your home page has any graphics or flash animations you may have to reorganize your web pages to make them search engine friendly. This is done by (1) creating static HTML web pages in place of those hard to index pages or (2) by using other optimization methods. As a rule of thumb, you should not have more than 10% of text in images or flash based objects, and it's absolutely important that your internal site navigation is based on static text links. We will discuss this further in Chapter 4, Page Optimization and why it is so important.

Search engine optimization works best with statically linked websites. Although the Search Engine spiders have improved a great deal since the days of their initial appearance, some spiders still cannot reliably index dynamically linked pages such as ASP, PHP and Java script with "?" or session IDs embedded in them.

### Creating a better site for the search engines and your visitors

The purpose of any site preparation is to get your website ready for the search engines and your visitors. Although it may seem these two goals entail different tasks, what's good for the search engines is also good for your visitors. [Usability case studies prove](#) paying careful attention to your users' experience on your site [pays big dividends down the road](#).

Let's examine the reasons why we want to create a structurally sound website with great user usability.

- Pay attention to your users' experience, get your friends or colleagues to test drive the site and ask for their feedback. A great user experience will ensure the hard work you put into your site to attain a top ranking will pay off in higher page views and better conversion. Your efforts won't go to waste by turning visitors away with a bad website design.
- The major search engines, Google, Yahoo! and MSN are "crawler based" This means they regularly visit your site and "import" your newly created pages and any updates into their index. It's your job to ensure that nothing restricts the search engines from discovering every page on your site that you want your visitors to find on the engines. Since the search engines follow links from your home page to every other page on your site, you need to create an optimal linking structure.

## What should you watch for?

Each of these key elements below can have a substantial effect on your overall search optimization goals and search engine ranking so please pay careful attention.

- **Internal link navigation** based on static text links works best as internal linking with keywords embedded in anchor text create a powerful combination of page relevancy.
- **Frames** should be avoided wherever possible otherwise it will stop search engines in tracks and your web pages will be left out of their search engine index. As of today many engines are able to follow links within framesets, but it's best not to take any chances.
- **Flash** should be limited to important concept illustrations or special affects, but don't build a flash only website if you want to achieve high search engine ranking. The biggest problem with a Flash based websites is the formatting used in regular content can't be replicated. For example we can't bold, italicize keywords or add bullets and headings to add emphasis to help the search engines understand our pages better.
- **Images** should be only used for illustrations and not for navigation or embedded text. Search engines can't read text embedded in image objects. Unfortunately a lot of menu systems use a combination of JavaScript and rollover images. If you suspect your site uses this type of menu system, change it right away to either completely static link system or DHTML without the use of JavaScript.
- **Dynamic content and e-commerce website** should ensure their product and category page URLs are not simply a number or some cryptic code, but a well formed URL re-written code. There is a built in URL re-writing engine in Linux based servers and there are many third party tools available for URL re-writing on IIS servers. The URLs can be reformatted so they contain the target keywords pertaining to the page.
- **Dynamic navigation using JavaScript** is a big no-no, but DHTML based menu systems are ok. Check carefully the documentation of the menu system you consider buying for search engine friendliness. Unless you are using JavaScript to open pop-up type of windows for the user to open and close the use of JavaScript for navigation is strongly discouraged.
- **Page size and loading speed** is not as much of a concern as it used to be in the early days of the Internet, but overloading your pages with heavy graphics or flash is still not a good idea. Think of your users and their time. If you notice your site's bounce rate is very high it may be due to visitors getting impatient and leave before the pages load.
- **HTML code errors are most often not seen by your visitors and the search engines are very forgiving** when it comes to sloppy source code, but you should aim for nearly perfectly validated HTML pages. You can use many freely available online and desktop tools to help you validate your HTML pages. Here is the most popular HTML code validator [Validator.w3.org](http://Validator.w3.org).
- **The use of CSS (Cascading Style Sheet)** is strongly recommended to substantially reduce the size of your HTML pages. Wherever possible use CSS classes to make your HTML source code more readable and to reduce the ratio between text and HTML codes.
- **Broken links to pages and images are not only embarrassing**, but also can send a signal to the search engines about the quality of your website. Use a freely available link checker called [Xenu](#) to check your links regularly.
- **Image maps are not search engine friendly.** Search engines generally can't follow links associated with parts of an image. An image map designates different sections of an image as clickable links and allows one image to serve as a hyperlink to target multiple URLs. Keep in mind the search engines are blind when it comes to image maps.



- **Add a site map** to your site once your main pages are uploaded. This should be one of the last steps in the page optimization process, but we decided to mention it here as it uniquely relates to usability and search engine friendly web design. A site map is a catalog of important links on a designated page. The link to each page ideally will have descriptive text. The number of links on a site map should not exceed 50 on a single page. If your site has more than 50 pages, you need to create additional site map pages within a new category.
- **Add a site search tool to your website.** Installing a site search tool on your website is a great way to increase your site's usability and at the same time you can get into the minds of your visitors by seeing what they are searching for. The search keywords used in a site search could also be a warning sign that certain information on your site is not easily accessible. By regularly reviewing your website's search log, you can uncover potential usability problems. Our favorite website search tool is the [Zoom Site Indexer](#). This tool is MS Windows based and can easily index hundreds of web pages in minutes.
- **Reliable hosting is a key** essential for a well indexed website. If your site is down for even one day, you can expect the search engine to remove some of your page and in some cases the complete website. We can recommend two hosting companies we have used for years now. For Windows hosting please check out [Alentus.com](#) and for Linux based hosting we recommend [Dreamhost.com](#).

## Conclusion

Site preparation and search engine friendly website design can not become an after thought in your website promotion campaign. Seemingly minor obstacles for search engine spiders to access your website's web pages can turn into major headaches later if they are not addressed properly. Search engines can only rank web pages that make it into their index. It's your job, as a webmaster to ensure every web page that is important to your site gets crawled by the search engines. This may mean website re-design for established websites with low search engine traffic. Look for the obvious signs of search engine spider obstacles such as frames, JavaScript navigation, or long URLs with session IDs. Once you have cleared the way for the search engine crawlers to reach every page on your site, focus your efforts on improving your site's usability.

### Previous:

- [Step 2 - Competition Research](#)

### Next:

- [Step 4 - Page Optimization](#)

## Step 4 - Page Optimization

### Introduction

In recent years the search engine optimizers have started to use the buzzword "SEO copywriting" to describe the process of incorporating keywords into web page elements in order to attain higher search engine ranking. This has resulted in a cult like mysticism about what search engine copywriting really is.

It's true, writing for the engines is a little bit different from writing for a human reader without any consideration for keywords or the search engines, but there are no hard rules carved in stones. Earlier we have talked about keyword grouping and keyword mapping to pages. When you are writing your web pages keep a strong mental note etched in your mind about the "keyword focus" of the page and how the main keywords tie into the content you are writing. It's easy to go off track and start focusing on keyword repetition alone, but you are only going to hurt your conversion rate and turn away your website visitors with a web copy that "smells" too artificial and repetitive. Write your web copy with emotion and enthusiasm. It's guaranteed to grab your visitors attention, and we all know the first 5 seconds are crucial to engage your visitors attention.

### How to please your visitors and the search engines with your web copy?

Writing optimized web content for the search engines is relatively easy providing you already know a fair bit about the subject matter at hand. At the very beginning of this lesson we would like to list a few golden rules.

- **Writing for the search engines doesn't mean you have to change your writing style substantially** by forcing keyword repetitions and forgetting about the fact a human reader came to your website looking for information about your products and services. Don't turn them away with web copy that appears unnatural and spammy.
- **Readability and persuasive content comes before any keyword count or keyword density scores.** If your web copy reads like a machine wrote it, it will make no difference even if the number of unique visitors to your site doubled or tripled.
- **Emphasize benefits instead of features.** Tell your website visitors how your solution will be a god send to their problems detailing the specific benefits your products or services offer.
- **Write in blocks of 10-12 sentences with H1-H3 heading tags separating main logical sections.** This will make your visitors attention more focused and guaranteed to increase the length of time each visitor spends on your site.
- **Strike a conversational tone but refrain from slang words or jargon like verbiage.** . You are writing foremost for your human visitors and not the search engine crawlers.
- **Write at a level an 8th grader could easily read and understand.** There are a number of readability scoring systems for you to test your writing style with. The most known are the [Flesch/FleschKincaid readability test](#) to find out how complex your web pages are to read. We suggest you test your web pages readability scores at [Readability.info](#) by uploading your Microsoft Word document or putting your web pages online.
- **Read expert articles and tips about copywriting for the web.** You can never learn enough about writing content for the web. Beside the obvious tips we can give you to spell check and proof read your page before putting them online, there are a

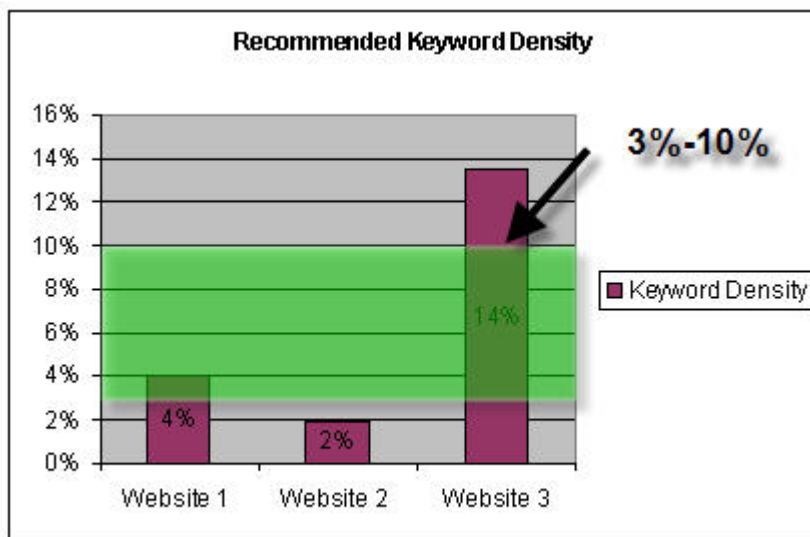
number of experts who share their writing secrets for free with anyone interested. One of our favorite sites to get invaluable copywriting advice is [Copyblogger.com](http://Copyblogger.com)

The best written web pages are those that satisfy the website visitors need for clearly written, informative and persuasive content. At the same you must achieve a level of keyword saturation by using lexically related phrases often enough to let the search engines know what your content is about. This is why proper keyword optimization and the art of writing persuasive content are critically important for all pages of your website.

Repeating keywords too many times or using them unnaturally will make your web pages unreadable and will ultimately turn your website visitors away. This type of aggressive optimization may even have a negative affect on your search engine ranking due to an over-optimization penalty given to web pages suspected of keyword spamming. On the other hand, if you don't use the keywords often enough your web pages will lack a keyword focus and the search engines may assign a lower "on-page" ranking score to your web pages.

## What is the secret of writing winning content for the engines and your site visitors?

Consider the chart below illustrating three different website's keyword density scores. Which one do you think would be ranked higher based on "on-page" ranking factors alone? The answer is not as simple as you may think. A page with the lowest keyword density could still outrank the other two pages if the page Title tag and other HTML elements are better optimized. This ultimately proves you can't rely on keyword repetition alone to beat your competitors' pages on the search engines.



*The optimum keyword density range varies by search engines, but as a guide aim for a 3%-10% range in the body text as illustrated by the green highlighted area.*

Since each search engines use a different "on-page" ranking score it is hard to tell which website would rank higher based on keyword repetition alone. Although there are some common factors to consider, optimizing web pages naturally increases the number of times a keyword is repeated on a web page. Measuring how often a keyword is repeated is known as keyword count sometimes referred to as keyword occurrence. Closely tied to the keyword count is the keyword density, which is a ratio between the total number of indexable words versus the number of times the keywords are repeated on a web page.

For example, one keyword found in a 10 word HTML section is equal to  $(1/10) * 100 = 10\%$  however, if the same keyword appeared once in a 15 word HTML section, its density would be calculated as  $(1/15) * 100 = 6.6\%$ . As you can see, the higher number of words found on the page, the lower our keyword density will be due to the diluting effects of the other text surrounding our keywords.

## What is the ideal keyword density?

Here is the short answer, **there is no such thing**. The optimum density varies greatly from engine to engine. However, in our experience, creating web pages with an **average of 3%-10% keyword density** in the body text ensures the search engines "understand" what the web pages are about.

What you need to keep in mind is, repeating keywords on a web page beyond what seems natural and easily readable is counterproductive and can result in hurting your search engine ranking and your visitor retention. You should start aiming for a 3% keyword density range first and later tweak your web page content to increase keyword concentration if necessary without sounding too repetitious to the web searchers.

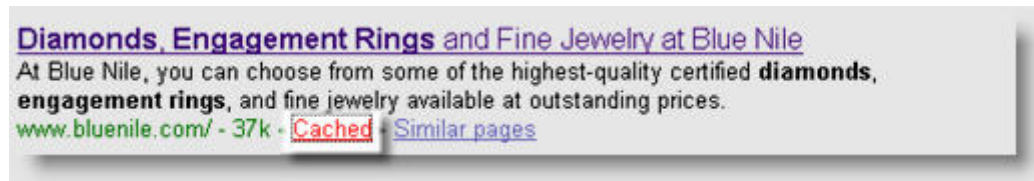
Follow these simple on-page optimization rules for keyword placement and you'll be creating web pages the search engines can truly fall in love with.

- **Use plural forms of the same words wherever possible.** You could sometimes use the plural forms of your keywords only in the body text and still rank well for the singular version as well. The same is usually not true in reverse, so use plural forms when it makes sense without hurting readability.
- **Use lexical tools to incorporate related key phrases and synonyms to improve the latent semantic indexing score.** One of best tools to use for this research is the [Google Keyword Tool](#). The Google Keyword Tool gives you an option to search for synonyms and best of all it can also show you a relative search volume for each keyword phrase. Another excellent keyword research tool is [Clusty](#). Here is an example of a query executed on Clusty with the keyword "seo," on the left hand side of the screen you'll see many related key phrases such as "submission," "tools," "search engine position," etc.
- **Use keyword modifiers such as: "help," "tip," "guide," "buy," "shop," "discount," "affordable" etc.** These words form the "glue" between your words. It's important that you research your top ranking competitors' pages and look for the "hidden glue" between their words and use the some of those words in your own content.

## How do search engines see keywords?

Can the search engines "see" and index everything the human eye can see? Let's use a well known online diamond retailer as an example to prove they can't. Bluenile.com is the number one ranking website for the keyword phrase "[diamond engagement rings](#)" on Google. Now let's examine the Google version of their home page indexed a few days ago. Google has a neat feature to highlight keywords in cached copy of a web page that was used in a search query.

Refer to the screenshot below, and open the cached copy of Bluenile.com's home page in Google.



The Bluenile.com search engine listing on Google

Below we have added a screenshot of the Bluenile.com's page title and Google's cached copy of their home page to better illustrate their "on-page" keyword optimization. Google has highlighted the individual keywords we have used in our search query "diamond engagement rings" As you can see the keywords appear in the title, web page body and internal links.



The search keyword phrase "diamond engagement rings" is highlighted in the Google cached page of Bluenile.com

## Proving the search engines can't index all text visible to the human eye

What the human eye can see and what the search engines can "see" are two different things. We are so used to seeing text near images that we sometimes forget the search engines can't extract text from images. Let's try to prove this with our example of the Bluenile.com website.

To get a glimpse into what visible text the search engines can see, follow these steps:

- **Open the [Bluenile.com](http://Bluenile.com) website in your default browser.** Go to your default browser's Edit menu and click on the Select All menu option (Keyboard Shortcut CTRL+A)
- **Go back to the Edit menu and this time click on Copy (Keyboard Shortcut CTRL+C)**
- **Open Notepad or any other plain text editor** ( MS Word or other Rich text editors will not work since they may also import images and other formatting)
- **Click on the Edit menu in your plain text editor and click on Paste (Keyboard Shortcut CTRL+V)**

The text you have just captured on your clipboard with the copy command is the visible text which the search engines can index.

Did you notice how all the text that was embedded on the images was not copied to the text editor from the Bluenile.com home page? You should take note of this, and never place important keywords in your image files or flash content.



*The visible text captured from Bluenile.com home page*

Beyond the visible HTML page elements, search engines also can recognize keywords inserted in META tags Image or Link attributes such as ALT tags and HREF Title tags, which are not visible on the web pages. We will fully explore these keyword optimization options in later lessons.

## "On-page" optimization matters... but that's not everything

The above example is a very basic illustration of how keyword optimization works. There are no hard rules for "on-page" keyword optimization that can be applied to one website which would guarantee the same ranking results on another. Some webmasters mistakenly believe that by closely matching the keyword count and keyword density ratios of top ranking websites, their own web pages would automatically start to move to the top of the search result list. Nothing could be farther from the truth. As you will later learn, there are many other external factors that contribute to high search engine ranking that are simply not visible on a web page. We are talking about link popularity and other "off-page" factors.

## Keyword placement techniques... starting at the top of the page

Before we get into the specific HTML elements where keywords can be inserted, it's important to first understand what the search engines consider the most important web page elements in their ranking algorithm.

Just like website visitors, the search engines also consider the visible text on a web page to be the most important. Naturally the most prominent HTML web page element is the page title. The page title is a head web page element that is formatted by using the Title tag code as the Bluenile home page example shows below:

```
<HEAD>
....
<TITLE>Diamonds, Engagement Rings and Fine Jewelry at Blue Nile</TITLE>
...
</HEAD>
```

The web page title is visible in the top part of your default browser window and the HTML source page. See the screenshot below. Consider the title as the heading of an article or news story.



*The well optimized Bluenile.com web page title as displayed in Internet Explorer.*

Do you know that the title of every web page becomes the visible link in the search engine search results pages? That's right, when people search Google, Yahoo! or MSN they would find the clickable link in the search results is the same as the title of the page. Just take a look below, do you see any difference? There is none, but if the title tag is too long the search engines use about 60 characters of the title tag and cut the rest off.

## Diamonds, Engagement Rings and Fine Jewelry at Blue Nile

At Blue Nile, choose from certified diamonds of the highest quality, engagement rings, and **fine jewelry** available at outstanding prices.

[www.bluenile.com/](http://www.bluenile.com/) - 39k - [Cached](#) - [Similar pages](#)

*The Google search results show the Bluenile website home page title in the search results.*

Creating a unique web pages title for each web page on your website is crucial to achieving high search engine ranking. It may be hard to believe, but there are still about 15 million web pages returned by Google which contains the word "[Untitled](#)". Don't make the same mistake as those sites, place keywords in your web page titles that match the most often occurring keywords on that web page.

**A simple change to the page title can often result in a dramatic increase in search engine rankings without any other supplementary changes.**

Second in line of importance is the body text. Without indexable website content even the best written title tags will have no affect on search engine ranking. The key to creating well optimized web pages is the art of repeating the keywords often enough for the search engines to "understand" your website content without sounding too spammy or repetitious to your visitors. In our experience a 300 to 400 word web page copy works best when 2-3 keyword phrases per web page are optimized.

Can you guess what other visible HTML elements are also important to optimize?

If you guessed internal text links, you're right. Incorporating your most important keywords into internal text links and creating inline text links within the body of your web pages is a very effective optimization technique to get higher search engine ranking. As a matter of fact you should have a bottom navigation on every page with the main keywords in the links pointing back to the site's most important pages.

For example, instead of linking to your home page like this:

```
<a href="index.html">Home</a> Home
```

A much better and more effective link would look like this:

```
<a href="index.html">Home of Great Golf Shoes</a> Home of Great Golf Shoes
```

## Optimizing visible HTML elements

We have listed the most important visible HTML elements in order of importance in the table below. Don't forget the search engines focus on words and phrases that are emphasized with different text decoration techniques such as heading text (H1, H2, H3) , bold (<strong>) or italicized text (<em>), so add emphasis to your key phrases but don't over do it.

Did you know the search engines differentiate between the <strong> and <b> tags even



though they produce identical visual display results? We recommend the use of the <strong> tag to bold keywords over the <b> tag and for italicizing we prefer using the <em> tag over the <i> tag.

Visible HTML Elements		
Visible HTML Element	Important Notes	Description and Usage Example
<b>Website Title</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The words in the title tag of your page also need to exist in the body text and various headings in the actual content of your HTML page.</li> <li>▪ Each page of your website should have a unique title tag targeting various keyword combinations and phrases</li> <li>▪ Place two to three keywords in the title that are the most often repeated on the web page including the plural forms.</li> <li>▪ Don't put keywords in the title that are not contained on the web page</li> <li>▪ Don't use stopwords or "dead" word such as "with, the, and, of or welcome..."</li> <li>▪ Keep the total number of characters under 60, or 4 to 6 Words</li> <li>▪ The keyword density range should be between 10%-100%</li> <li>▪ You should use the website or business name in the home page title.</li> </ul>	<p>Title is the text placed between title tags in the HEAD section and it is used to identify contents of the web page.</p> <p>The Title tag also becomes the clickable link in the search results once your pages become indexed. Creating a catchy persuasive Title tag will increase the click through rate of your links in the search results.</p> <p>Example: &lt;TITLE&gt;title goes here&lt;/TITLE&gt;</p>
<b>Body Text</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Body text between 250-400 words work best, but write freely and don't try to force on yourself word count rules.</li> <li>▪ Create 2-3 sentence long paragraphs and break them apart with line or paragraph breaks</li> <li>▪ Sprinkle your keywords into body text while maintaining good readability. Use plural forms, lexically related term and modifiers.</li> <li>▪ Incorporate your keywords into the body text in the top, middle and bottom of your web pages</li> <li>▪ Use keywords in heading tags to break apart sections</li> <li>▪ Use keywords in bulleted or numbered lists where it makes sense</li> </ul>	<p>Body text is the text visible in the browser.</p> <p>Example: &lt;BODY&gt;this is where your body text goes&lt;/BODY&gt;</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Link to other web pages where a link to a related subject makes sense using the keywords</li> <li>▪ Use strong, bold or italicized text for emphasizing keywords</li> <li>▪ The keyword density range should be between 3%-10% in the body text</li> </ul>	
<b>Link Text (Anchor Text)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Place two to three keywords in the link text. As a rule you should use the first keyword in the link text that appears in the title of the linked page</li> <li>▪ Refer to the Title tag section for optimization notes</li> <li>▪ Don't use stop words.</li> <li>▪ The keyword density range should be between 50%-100%</li> </ul>	<p>Link text is the clickable text which connects one web page to another.</p> <p>Example: <code>&lt;A HREF="page.html"&gt;link text goes here&lt;/A&gt;</code></p>
<b>Headings H1-H6</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Insert your keywords into the heading text while keeping the total word count under 5-6</li> <li>▪ Use H1-H3 heading mainly and keep the logical order of the heading tags numerical sequence</li> <li>▪ Don't repeat the same heading more than once on the same web page</li> <li>▪ The keyword density range should be between 50%-100%</li> </ul>	<p>Headings are used as the topics of the website's sections.</p> <p>Heading Tags <code>&lt;h1&gt;</code> and <code>&lt;h2&gt;</code> tags used to emphasize keywords. Heading tags are a great way to boost the importance of your keywords; they are also given more weight by search engines compared to regularly formatted text or text between bold or strong font tags. Heading tags range from <code>&lt;H1&gt;</code> (bigger text, signifying more importance) to <code>&lt;H2&gt;</code>, <code>&lt;h3&gt;</code>, <code>&lt;h4&gt;</code>, <code>&lt;H2&gt;</code> and <code>&lt;h6&gt;</code> (smaller text, signifying least importance).</p> <p>Example: <code>&lt;H1&gt;heading 1 goes here&lt;/H1&gt;</code></p>
<b>Strong Text</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Use it to add emphasis to keywords</li> <li>▪ Don't apply this style to every keyword occurrence on the web page</li> </ul>	<p>Strong text is used for stronger emphasis and is usually displayed in bold font.</p> <p>Example: <code>&lt;STRONG&gt;strong text goes here&lt;/STRONG&gt;</code></p>
<b>Bold Text</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ See Strong text notes</li> </ul>	<p>Bold text is used as a font styling element to signify important words or sections in the web page.</p> <p>Example: <code>&lt;B&gt;bold text goes here&lt;/B&gt;</code></p>
<b>Italic Text</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ See Strong text notes</li> </ul>	<p>Italic text is used as a font styling element to point out new terms,</p>

		<p>book or article titles etc.</p> <p>Example: &lt;I&gt;italic text goes here&lt;/I&gt;</p>
<b>EM Text</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>See Strong text notes</li> </ul>	<p>Em text is used for emphasis and is usually displayed in italic font.</p> <p>Example: &lt;EM&gt;em text goes here&lt;/EM&gt;</p>
<b>Cite Text</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>See Strong text notes</li> </ul>	<p>Cite text is used for citations or reference to other sources.</p> <p>Example: &lt;CITE&gt;cite text goes here&lt;/CITE&gt;</p>
<b>Abbr Text</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>See Strong text notes</li> </ul>	<p>Abbr text is used for abbreviations which are shortened forms of words like HTML, FBI or WWW.</p> <p>Example: &lt;ABBR&gt;abbr text goes here&lt;/ABBR&gt;</p>
<b>Acronym Text</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>See Strong text notes</li> </ul>	<p>Acronym Text:</p> <p>Acronym text is used for pronounceable abbreviations like NATO. It is also used for shortened forms of word like Inc. for Incorporated or Lab. for laboratory.</p> <p>Example: &lt;ACRONYM&gt;acronym text goes here&lt;/ACRONYM&gt;</p>
<b>Table Caption</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use keywords in describing a table's content</li> <li>The keyword density range should be between 50%-100%</li> </ul>	<p>Table caption is used as a short description of the table's purpose usually displayed below the table.</p> <p>Example: &lt;TABLE&gt;&lt;CAPTION&gt;caption goes here&lt;/CAPTION&gt;&lt;/TABLE&gt;</p>
<b>Domain, File and Folder Names</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Place keywords into folder and file names and separate them with hyphens</li> <li>The keyword density range should be between 50%-100%</li> </ul>	<p>Most search engines look for keywords in domain, folder and web page names.</p> <p>Example: http://www.keyword.com/keyword1/keyword2-keyword3.html</p>

## Optimizing invisible HTML elements

One of the most important invisible web page elements is the META description. This tag is especially important to include and optimize in the header section, as most of the major search engines use the META description as a partial or full description of the website in their search results. We can see an example of the META description directly taken from the Bluenile.com home page by Google and inserted in the search results. Gaining control over how your website is "described" in the search results can increase the clickthroughs of your search listings.



*An example of the META description directly taken from the page source and placed under the website title in the Google search results.*

We can incorporate keywords into other HTML page elements that are not visible on the web page, but still can be "seen" and indexed by the search engines. Include keywords in the HTML sections below. Although optimizing these less important HTML tags will most likely not result in a great ranking increase, they are nonetheless a suggested optimization task for websites targeting very competitive keyword phrases.

Invisible HTML Elements		
Invisible HTML Element	Important Notes	Description and Usage Example
<b>META Description</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Write one or two sentences that describes the web page, don't simply list keywords</li> <li>Place two to three keywords in the META Description section that are most often repeated on the web page</li> <li>Don't put keywords in the META Description section that are not contained on the web page</li> <li>Keep the total number of characters under 300, or 20 to 40 words</li> <li>Ensure every page of your site contains a unique META Description</li> <li>The keyword density range should be between 5%-10%</li> </ul>	<p>Description is the text placed in the META tag in the HEAD section and is used as a short description of the web page's content.</p> <p>The META Descriptions are often included in the search listings as a brief description of your site, sometime word for word, so it's very important to include them on your pages.</p> <p>Example: &lt;META NAME="description" CONTENT="description goes here"&gt;</p>
<b>META Keywords</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>List the first 20-30 most often occurring keywords separated by commas</li> <li>Don't put keywords in the META Keywords section that are not</li> </ul>	<p>Keywords are the terms placed in the META tag in the HEAD section and are used specifically for search engines which look for search terms</p>

	<p>contained on the web page</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Don't repeat the same keyword phrase more than once</li> <li>▪ Keep the total number of characters under 255, or 20 to 40 keywords</li> <li>▪ Ensure every page of your site contains a unique META Keywords</li> </ul>	<p>that apply to the web page. Keywords should be separated by commas.</p> <p>It's not necessary to include the META keywords as they don't have any positive ranking affect and it will not show up in the search results listings unlike the META Description</p> <p>Example: <code>&lt;META NAME="keywords" CONTENT="keywords go here"&gt;</code></p>
<b>Link Title</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Place two to three keywords in the link title. As a rule you should use the first keyword in the link title that appears in the title of the linked page</li> <li>▪ Refer to the Title tag section for optimization notes</li> <li>▪ The keyword density range should be between 50%-100%</li> </ul>	<p>Link title is the attribute of the link and adds information about the link; it is rendered as a tool tip in the browser.</p> <p>Example: <code>&lt;A HREF="page.html" TITLE="link title goes here"&gt;text&lt;/A&gt;</code></p>
<b>Image Alt Tags</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Place two to three keywords in the image Alt tag that best describes what the image is about</li> <li>▪ Refer to the Title tag section for optimization notes</li> <li>▪ The keyword density range should be between 50%-100%</li> </ul>	<p>Alt tag is an alternative text that is displayed as a tool tip in the browser. It is also used as image description in browsers that do not support images, browsers that have image support turned off, speech synthesizers and visually impaired users.</p> <p>Example: <code>&lt;IMG SRC="image.gif" ALT="alt text goes here"&gt;</code></p>
<b>Image File Names</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Place keywords into image file names and separate them with hyphens</li> <li>▪ The keyword density range should be between 50%-100%</li> </ul>	<p>Image names are the names of the image files.</p> <p>Example: <code>&lt;IMG SRC="image-name-goes-here.gif"&gt;</code></p>
<b>Table Summary</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Write one sentence that best describes the table's content. Don't simply list keywords</li> <li>▪ The keyword density range should be between 50%-100%</li> </ul>	<p>Table summary is used for describing the table's contents and purpose to non-visual media.</p> <p>Example: <code>&lt;TABLE SUMMARY="summary description goes here"&gt;</code></p>

## Conclusion

- **Examine your website code and make sure you get your keywords as close to the beginning of your page as possible**, preferably the in the first 100 words. Your goal is to put keywords towards the very beginning of your web page since search engines give those a much higher relevance. The rest of the page should have keywords near the middle and bottom as well.
- **If you have JavaScript at the top of your web pages make sure you move them toward the end of your web pages**, or better yet, create an externally linkable JavaScript file and place your code there.
- **Make sure your website has a site map**. A site map is a listing of all sections of a website with individual links to every page. The site map enables visitors to click on the site map links and move directly to a specific section on the website, which improves the site usability. Your site map should be linked from the home page as the site map assists crawlers in finding and indexing all of your pages and the home page is usually the first entry page to your site.
- **Add a glossary of terms page for the most frequent industry keywords and their definitions**. We have discussed in the competition research lesson how to find competing sites for your keyword phrases with the Google *"define"* command. Now it's time to gain some advantage for your own site by adding a glossary of terms page of your own.
- **After you've optimized your pages, check and re-check each page with the SEO Studio Keyword Analyzer to ensure you have achieved the desired concentrations of keyword density** and prominence of keywords in each page compared to your competitors top ranking pages. Keep on repeating the optimization and tweaking process until you are satisfied with the Keyword Analyzer report.
- **Inbound links to a website most often will have a far greater importance than perfectly optimized web pages**. Don't fuss too much over the perfectly optimized web page, in our experience there is no such thing, as the engines are constantly changing their methods for scoring page content. Instead, focus your efforts on building content that other websites will naturally want to link to.

Previous:

- [Step 3 - Site Preparation](#)

Next:

- [Step 5 - Getting Indexed](#)

## Step 5 - Getting Indexed

### Introduction

Please don't fall for any offers advertising website submission services, no matter how good they sound!

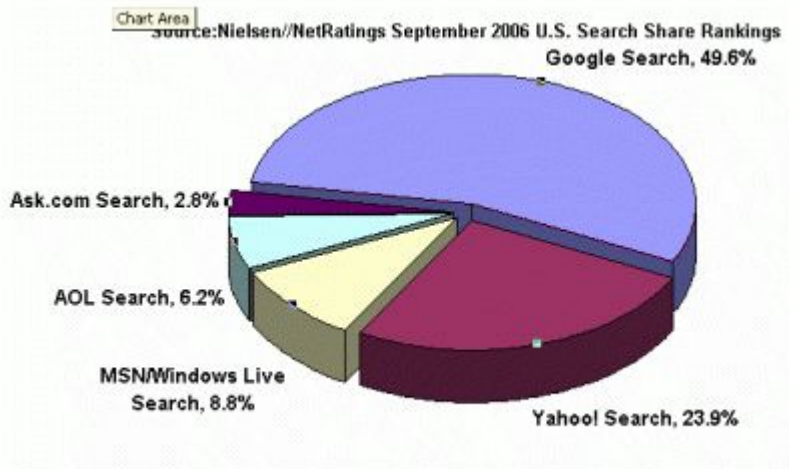
#### Free Website Traffic?

Submit to 500,000 High Traffic Sites  
Now. 100% Guaranteed!

*A search engine submission company offering to submit your website to 500,000 search engines. Very impressive!*

In truth, there aren't even 500,000 search engines, but if you really want to check for yourself you can visit [search engine colossus](#), They have a very extensive list of search engines from around the world. The point we are making is Google, Yahoo!, and MSN are the major players; spending any effort in trying to rank on the other engines is simply not worth your time, unless your site has a local focus in a specific country. In this case, it may be worth discovering other popular local search engines and submit your site to them.

In the [latest survey of the most popular search engines](#) conducted by [Comscore](#), Google, Yahoo!, MSN and ASK control over 90% of the search referrals in the United States and close to that figure around the world. Google's dominance is even more impressive in European countries such as the UK and Germany where Google's search market share is nearly 75%.



*Recent survey results of the most popular search engines by Nielsen NetRatings.*

Armed with these statistics, you should ask yourself, why on earth you would want to submit your websites to the other 499,997 search engines? In the last 5 years since [Trendmx.com](#) had been online, we have yet to see a single visitor from one of those obscure search engines these over hyped submission companies rave about.

### How do websites get indexed?

If you have never submitted your website to any of the search engines and found yourself stumbling upon your site on Google, Yahoo!, or MSN, don't be overly surprised by your discovery, there is a good reason for it.

The top three search engines have automated the retrieval of web content by following hyperlinks from site to site. They are called "crawlers", or sometimes referred to as "spiders", "bots" or "agents". Their job is to index fresh updated content and links. Your website likely got included in their database because the spiders have discovered a link pointing to your new domain somewhere on the web. In short, someone had placed a link pointing to your website on one of their web pages, blogs or may be your site was bookmarked on popular bookmarking sites such as [Delicious.com](http://Delicious.com) or [Stumbleupon.com](http://Stumbleupon.com).

Most likely nobody asked you for your permission to link to your site, but alas, this is the nature of the web. Every website has the ability to connect to another via hyperlinks.

## **Do I have to re-submit a new or changed web page to get re-indexed?**

The crawler based search engines automatically re-index websites daily, weekly or monthly depending on the website's popularity. The depth of the indexing varies each time the search engines visit your website. Sometimes they perform a deep crawl of every page and other times they may just skim your website looking for changed or new web pages. The frequency of the deep crawls can't be accurately predicted, but search engines perform deep crawls about every 1-2 months and shallow crawls are performed as often as daily, depending on how popular the website is and its Google PageRank value. Higher Google PageRank triggers more frequent updates by Google. We'll tell you more about the Google PageRank and its effects on your search engine ranking in the [next lesson](#).

## **Submitting to international versions of Google, MSN and Yahoo! myth... busted**

Sometimes you may come across search engine submission companies making wild claims about the advantages of their submission services. One of those claims is the advantage of submitting to international versions of Google, Yahoo!, and MSN. The offer goes something like this: "get listed in Google UK, Germany, France, Brazil, etc." Sorry to be so blunt here, but this is a load of "BS."

When you submit your website to [Google](#), [Yahoo!](#), or [MSN](#), your website is automatically included in all the international versions of their search engines. The claim that you need to submit your site to international versions of Google, Yahoo and MSN falls into the same category as submitting your site to five hundred thousand search engines. In the end, it will only make your wallet thinner and doesn't result in any advantage for your site.

## **The traditional search engine submission process**

Although the traditional method of submitting your website to a search engine in order to get listed is still viable, there are much faster methods to get your site indexed. The traditional registration method is known as search engine submission and it's the process of directly notifying the search engines about your new website by visiting them and submitting your URL through their web forms.



In order to submit your website, you are required to enter your home page URL only, and sometimes a brief description of your website. One very important thing to note is **you never have to submit individual pages of your site to crawler based search engines.**

## Manual or automatic submission?

There are two ways you can submit your site to the search engines using the manual method outlined above or using some type of automated software tool or online service. Our own SEO software tool, SEO Studio comes with a free automatic [submission tool](#).

The most obvious benefit to using an automatic submission tool is that it will save time. If you only want to submit one website to the Google, Yahoo! and MSN you may be able to accomplish the task in less than an a few minutes. But if you want to submit multiple websites to dozens of international search engines the time required would be greatly increased. The SEO Studio submission tool can submit your website details automatically to multiple search engines simultaneously with the click of a button. Optionally, the SEO Studio submission tool can create a submission report for future record keeping.

## How can we speed up the indexing process?

The average waiting period for a new website to get indexed by the major search engines can vary from a few days to a month or more. If you get impatient and decide to resubmit your site over and over again, the search engines may in fact make you wait longer, so don't do it. The most effective solution to getting your website indexed faster is to gain a few links from sites that have already been indexed by Google, Yahoo! or MSN.

You may be able to reduce the waiting period for indexation from a few weeks to as little as 48 hours by following these simple steps outlined below:

- **Get your web site listed in a local trade organization's** online directory or chamber of commerce website.
- **Submit your web site to [international and local search engines](#) and directories.**
- **Exchange links with other related websites**, look for high Google PageRank link partners.
- **Get listed in DMOZ, Yahoo!** and other smaller, but high [quality directories](#).
- **Create a useful blog** on topics related to your website, and ask other websites to link to your blog.
- **Submit your blog's RSS feed to the top search engines.** Google, Yahoo! and MSN use blog feeds to power their blog search engines and when you submit your blog's RSS feed URL, your site also gets indexed right away.
- **Participate in popular forums or community discussions** and post your website URL as part of your signature.
- **Create a press release** and submit it to an online press release distribution service such as [prweb.com](#)
- **Submit your site using [Delicious.com](#) or [Stumbleupon.com](#).** Both of these social bookmarking and discovery sites are an excellent way to get links pointing to your site.
- **Submit your site using the [Google Site Map](#)** will ensure a quick indexing process by Google of all your important web pages.

## Finding cached copies of web pages

A cached copy of the web page is the search engine's view of a page at a specific point in time in the past. Each cached web pages is time stamped and stored for retrieval, but only the text portion of the page is being saved by the search engines. All the images and other embedded object are stripped out prior to archiving.

When the user clicks on a "Cached" web page link, the search engines combine the archived HTML source code with the server side images and object that are still present on the web server.



SEO Software | Search Engine Optimization | SEO Company | Web ...  
Search engine positioning, ranking, and submission software tool. Creates comprehensive keyword analysis reports, and gives optimization advice.  
[www.trendmx.com/](http://www.trendmx.com/) - 42k - **Cached** - [Similar pages](#)

*Clicking on the "Cached" link will retrieve the archived copy of the web page as it was "seen" by Google the last time.*

Yahoo! and MSN also provides this very useful function to its users, but Google is the only one that actually provides a command that you can enter in the search window to look up a cached copy of a web page like this: `cache:your-domain.com`.

## What are the page size limits for search engine crawlers?

An often neglected topic pertaining to search engine indexing is how much content search engine spiders actually index. The search engine crawlers have preset limits on the volume of text they are able to index per page. This is important, because going over the page size limit could mean your pages may only be partially searchable.

Each search engine has its own specific page size limits. Familiarizing yourself with these limits can minimize future indexing and ranking problems. If a web page is too large, the search engines may not index the entire page. Although the search engines don't publish exact limits of their spiders' technical configuration, in many instances we can draw definite conclusions about page size limitations. Various postings by [Googleguy](#), on [Webmasterwold.com](#) and our own observations point to a 101 Kilobytes (KB) text limit size by the Googlebot crawler. At the beginning of 2005 it appeared that Google indexed more than 101 Kilobytes of individual HTML pages. We continue to see evidence of web pages larger than 101KB in the search results pages of Google.

Here is an example of a large HTML page found on Google with a search for the keyword "recipe" Try typing this command into the Google search box: [filetype:html recipe. The screenshot below shows a web page, indexed with over 200 Kilobytes of text.](#)



- Cook'n Deluxe **Recipe** Software  
Cook'n Deluxe provides over 6500 recipies from 70 cookbooks right on your computer. Just type in the ingredients you have on hand, and Cook'n will provide a ...  
[www.dvo.com/cookndeluxe\\_recipes.html](http://www.dvo.com/cookndeluxe_recipes.html) - 211k - **Cached** - [Similar pages](#)

*The evidence of larger than 101KB HTML documents being indexed by Google in July 2005*

Other popular document types found on Google are Adobe's Portable Document File (PDF) types. The PDF file size indexed by Google is well over the 101 Kilobytes allowed for HTML document types; we estimate the file size limit for PDF files to be around 2 Megabytes.

The other major search engines, Yahoo! and MSN have similar or even higher HTML, and PDF file size limits. For example the Yahoo! and MSN spider's page size limit seems to be around 500 Kilobytes. Beyond the well known PDF file format, all major search engines can index flash, Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and RTF rich text file formats.

## Checking your website's indexed pages manually

In the previous section we have discussed how new websites get indexed and how the submission process works. If we want our websites to rank well, we have to make sure all the web pages contained within our website get crawled as frequently as possible.

Finding out how many web pages the search engines have indexed is important for two reasons:

- **Web pages that are not indexed by the search engines can never achieve any ranking.** In order to determine a web page's relevance in response to a query, the search engines must have a record of that page in their database including the complete page content.
- **The number of web pages indexed can influence a website's overall ranking score.** Larger websites tend to outrank 2-3 page mini websites, providing all other external ranking factors are equal. A word of caution to those who are thinking of using automated tools to produce thousands of useless pages to increase a website's size. This type of "scrapped" content will only ensure your site will be banned by the engines in no time.

There are very simple ways to check if your website has already been indexed. Go to a search engine, and simply enter the domain name of your website or some unique text that can be found on your web page only. This can be your business name or a product name which is unique to your website.

Finding out if your home page is indexed is very important, but what about all the other pages on your site? Google, Yahoo!, and MSN provide search commands for finding all the pages indexed on a specific domain. These search options are accessible on most engines by clicking on the advanced search option link next to the search box.

Here is a list of commands for the major search engine to find the individual web pages indexed:

Search Engine	Display Indexed Pages Command
<a href="#">AltaVista</a>	domain: your-domain.com
<a href="#">AllTheWeb</a>	domain: your-domain.com
<a href="#">AOL Search</a>	site: your-domain.com your-domain.com
<a href="#">DMOZ/Open Directory</a>	your-domain.com
<a href="#">Google</a>	allinurl: your-domain.com +site: your-domain.com
<a href="#">HotBot (ASK Jeeves)</a>	domain: your-domain.com your-domain.com
<a href="#">MSN Search</a>	site: your-domain.com
<a href="#">Teoma</a>	site: your-domain.com your-domain.com
<a href="#">Yahoo!</a>	site: your-domain.com your-domain.com

## Total indexed pages online reporting tools

The above method for checking indexed pages is just one of many ways we can find out how many pages got indexed by the search engine crawlers. There are some excellent free online tools available to check the number of indexed pages on multiple search engines simultaneously. We are especially fond of [Marketleap.com](http://Marketleap.com)'s indexed page checking feature. Their [search engine saturation reporting](#) tool is especially useful since it allows you to enter up to 5 other domain names to check. This a great way to check side-by-side the number of web pages indexed compared to your competitors.

## Detailed indexed pages reporting with SEO Studio

SEO Studio provides an indexed page checking feature as part of the [Links Plus+ tool](#). The Links Plus+ tool can extract additional information about each indexed URL, including the page title, META keywords, META descriptions and Google PageRank. If you enable the keyword analysis option in the advanced options screen, Links Plus+ can also display the keyword density of the title and META tags for each individual page.

One of the most valuable features of this tool is its ability to display the Google PageRank of each indexed page. The Google PageRank is an important ranking factor, and a good indication how well individual pages can compete for top rankings.

In the next lesson, we will cover a topic called "deep linking" and how individual pages on your website can rank higher for specific keyword terms than your home page for example. When you know the PageRank value of individual pages on your website, you can better target your link popularity campaign to channel PageRank to individual pages and to increase the number of pages indexed by the search engines.

## Controlling search engine spiders with the Robots.txt file

The major search engines including Google, Yahoo! and MSN use web crawlers to collect information from your websites. These search engine spiders can be instructed to index specific directories or document types from your website with the use of the robots.txt file. This file is a simple text file and has to be placed in the root folder or top-level directory of your website like this: [www.mydomain.com/robots.txt](http://www.mydomain.com/robots.txt).

The robots.txt file can contain specific instructions to block crawlers from indexing entire folders or document types, such as Microsoft Word or PDF file formats.

**The Robots.txt file has the following format:**

**User-agent:** <User Agent Name or use "\*" for all agents>

**Disallow:** <website folder or file name or use "/" for all files and folders>

In the table below we have provided some instructions on how you can set different crawler blocking methods in the robots.txt file.

To do this:	Add this to the Robots.txt file:
Allow all robots full access and to prevent "file not found: robots.txt" errors	Create an empty robots.txt file
Allow all robots complete access	User-agent: * Disallow:
Allow only the Googlebot spider access	User-agent: googlebot Disallow: User-agent: * Disallow: /
Exclude all robots from the entire server	User-agent: * Disallow: /
Exclude all robots from the cgi-bin and images directory	User-agent: * Disallow: /cgi-bin/ Disallow: /images/
Exclude the Msnbot spider from indexing the myonlinestore.html web page	User-agent: Msnbot Disallow: myonlinestore.html

## Controlling indexing of individual web pages with META tags

One of the simplest ways to control what search engines index on your website is to insert code inside your HTML pages META tags section. You can insert robots META tags that can restrict access to a specific web page or prevent search engine spiders from following text or image links on a web page. The main part of the robot META tag is the *index* and *follow* instructions.

**The robots META tag has the following format:**

**INDEX,FOLLOW:** <Index the page and follow links>

**NOINDEX,NOFOLLOW:** <Don't Index the page and don't follow links>

The example below displays how we can use the robots META tag to prevent spiders from indexing or following links on this web page.

```
<HTML >
<HEAD>
<META NAME="ROBOTS" CONTENT="NOINDEX,NOFOLLOW">
</HEAD>
<BODY>
```

In the table below we have provided some more examples of how the robots META tags can be used to block search engine crawlers from indexing web pages and following links.

To do this:	Add this to HEAD section of your web pages:
Allow the web page to be indexed and allow crawlers to follow links	<META NAME="ROBOTS" CONTENT="INDEX,FOLLOW">
Don't allow the web page to be indexed and allow crawlers to follow links	<META NAME="ROBOTS" CONTENT="NOINDEX,FOLLOW">
Allow the web page to be indexed, but don't allow crawlers to follow links	<META NAME="ROBOTS" CONTENT="INDEX,NOFOLLOW">
Don't allow caching of the web page	<META NAME="ROBOTS" CONTENT="NOARCHIVE">
Don't allow the web page to be indexed and don't allow crawlers to follow links	<META NAME="ROBOTS" CONTENT="NOINDEX,NOFOLLOW">

## Indexed pages reporting tools using web server logs

So far we have discussed the methods you can use to find out which pages on your site had been indexed by the search engines. An alternative and very effective method to report search engine spider activity on your website is to use your web server logs and some type of visitor analysis software that can extract search engine crawler data.

Each time a search engine spider requests and downloads a web page, it creates a record in the web server's log file. Analyzing these large web server logs can not be accomplished effectively without the use of specific software tools. These tools can aggregate and summarize large amounts web server log data and report search engine spider activity by page. Some of the better known visitor statistics analysis tools can provide basic search engine spider reporting, but a specialized software tool called [Robot-Manager Professional Edition](#) can also help you create Robots.txt files.

## When analyzing web server logs we want to know:

- **Have there been any search engine spider visits?** If there are no spider visits, there is no chance of getting ranked. If you don't see any sign of crawler activity in your web server logs it's time to get your site indexed by acquiring some high quality links. Please refer to our guide on Getting Indexed in step 5.
- **When was the last spider visit?** The more recent the last crawler visits are the better. Frequent search engine bot visits ensure your new and updated content gets into the search engine databases and can potentially rank in the search results.
- **Did all the major search engine spiders send their crawlers to index our website?** Google, Yahoo! and MSN all have their own crawler agents and they leave different trails in the web server logs to identify them. Please refer to the list below to identify the Google, Yahoo! and MSN crawlers.  
 Googlebot: *Mozilla/5.0 (compatible; Googlebot/2.1; +http://www.google.com/bot.html)*, Yahoo! Slurp: *Mozilla/5.0 (compatible; Yahoo! Slurp; http://help.yahoo.com/help/us/ysearch/slurp)* and the MSNbot: *msnbot/1.0 (+http://search.msn.com/msnbot.htm)*

- **Did the search engine spiders index all of our web pages?** We can type the URL into the search engine's search box, we can use the site command, and we can also check the spidered pages using a web server log analyzer.
- **Did the search engine spiders yield to our Robots.txt file exclusion instructions?** Finding web pages or images that you don't want the public to see on the search engines can be very upsetting. You should double check your robots.txt file instructions and perform a search for restricted file URLs and images on the search engines.

## Indexed pages reporting tools using server-side scripts

If you don't want to download large amounts of web server log files to analyze, there is another method to report search engine spider visits. A free set of web server scripts called [SpyderTrax](#) was developed in PERL by Darrin Ward to track some of the major search engines spiders, Google, Yahoo!, MSN, AltaVista, AllTheWeb, and Inktomi among others. Complete installation instructions are available on the website. Once you have inserted a few lines of code into your web pages, the program starts tracking spider visits automatically.

The screenshot below illustrates how SpyderTrax reports search engine spider visits.

Total hits for this date (05 Jul 2005): 8  
This represents 0.2% of the total hits (4897)

Robot	Date / Time	User Agent	Crawler Remote Host	IP Address	Page
Inktomi	05 Jul 2005 01:09:19	Mozilla/5.0 (compatible; Yahoo! Slurp; http://help.yahoo.com/help/us/ysearch/slurp)		68.142.251.24	/index.html
Inktomi	05 Jul 2005 01:42:38	Mozilla/5.0 (compatible; Yahoo! Slurp; http://help.yahoo.com/help/us/ysearch/slurp)		68.142.251.35	/
Inktomi	05 Jul 2005 08:18:33	Mozilla/5.0 (compatible; Yahoo! Slurp; http://help.yahoo.com/help/us/ysearch/slurp)		66.196.91.169	/
Inktomi	05 Jul 2005 12:47:44	Mozilla/5.0 (compatible; Yahoo! Slurp; http://help.yahoo.com/help/us/ysearch/slurp)		68.142.249.125	/
Inktomi	05 Jul 2005 13:16:24	Mozilla/5.0 (compatible; Yahoo! Slurp; http://help.yahoo.com/help/us/ysearch/slurp)		68.142.249.125	/
Inktomi	05 Jul 2005 15:28:55	Mozilla/5.0 (compatible; Yahoo! Slurp; http://help.yahoo.com/help/us/ysearch/slurp)		66.196.101.94	/
Inktomi	05 Jul 2005 21:08:39	Mozilla/5.0 (compatible; Yahoo! Slurp; http://help.yahoo.com/help/us/ysearch/slurp)		66.228.164.193	/
Inktomi	05 Jul 2005 23:27:37	Mozilla/5.0 (compatible; Yahoo! Slurp; http://help.yahoo.com/help/us/ysearch/slurp)		66.228.164.194	/

*SpyderTrax's search engine crawler activity reporting interface*

## Conclusion

The crawler based search engines make the webmasters job really easy. Initially, you have to let the search engines know your site is online by giving them a link to follow or submit your home page directly. Without any additional work on your part, your site will be visited over and over again by the search engine robots to find any new pages or updated content. The search engines give us the tools to find out which individual pages are in their databases. We also have a great amount of control what parts of our website we want them to index with the use of the robots file and META tags on individual web pages.

**Previous:**

**Next:**

- [Step 4 - Page Optimization](#)

- [Step 6 - Link Popularity Analysis](#)

## Step 6 - Link Popularity Analysis

### What is link popularity?

Link popularity is a measure of how many websites are pointing hyperlinks at another website. A hyperlink is an HTML tag element that is able to take a user from site-to-site or from page-to-page.

When a hyperlink is displayed in an HTML document, it turns into blue colored text that can be clicked on like this sample link below pointing to *www.anotherdomain.com*:

[This is a link to another domain](#)

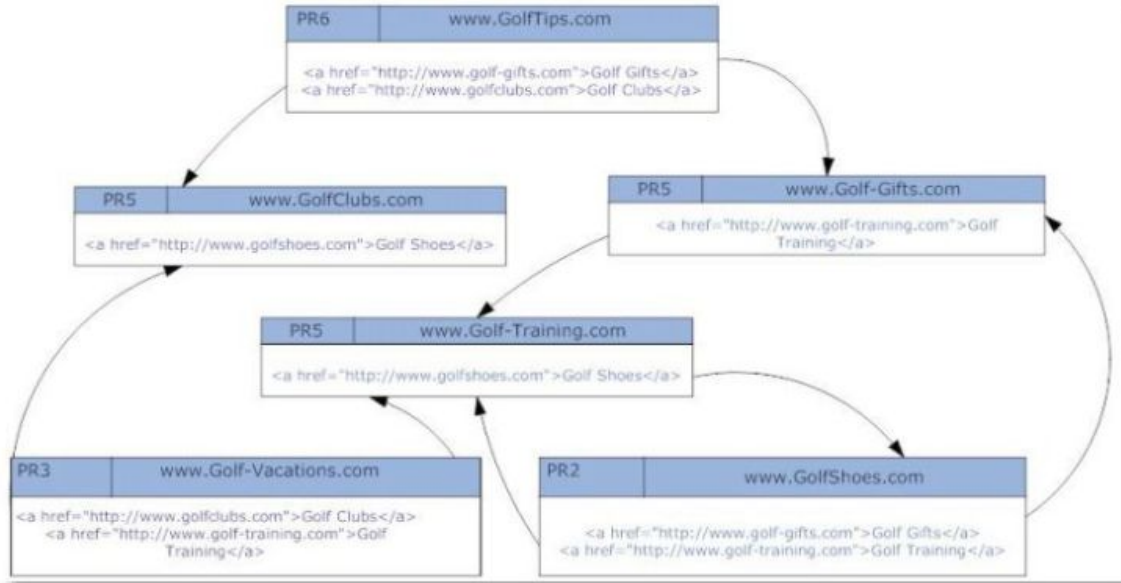
And here is the HTML code below to create this hyperlink:

```
<a href="http://www.anotherdomain.com">This is a link to  
another domain</a>
```

Hyperlinks also serve a very special purpose for the search engines. A hyperlink is made up of two main parts. The target URL and the clickable link text, or anchor text. The target URL above is highlighted in green (`<a href="http://www.anotherdomain.com">`) and the anchor text (`This is a link to another domain`) is highlighted in yellow. The anchor text tells the search engines a great deal about the website where the link is pointing to. For now, just remember the anchor text is a very important part of successful link building.

Here is a brief illustration below of how the search engines may see a few golf related websites linked together.





*The search engines' view of hyper links.*

The Web by its very nature is based on hyperlinks where sites link to other sites. Each site linking to another site is in fact casting a vote in favor of the sites they link to. Since search engines can organize and count these links in their vast databases, they are able to determine which sites get more inbound links related to specific search topics. However, the search engines go way beyond just simply counting links. Just imagine how easy it would be to get top ranking based on link quantity alone. The search engines combine the ranking scores of on-page factors and the link popularity scores to come up with a final ranking order in response to user queries. While it is still possible to achieve high rankings for moderately competitive terms without a great deal of link popularity, it is unlikely your site will ever rank well for very popular terms without it.

Every inbound link is considered a citation for a particular website. In turn, every citation is interpreted as a recommendation for a site's quality by the search engines. The more citations the search engines can find, the more trusted a site becomes through the power of links. Most of the major crawler based search engines: Google, Yahoo!, and MSN employ some type of link analysis as part of their ranking algorithms and can easily discover newly created links on any site pointing somewhere else.

## The benefits of link popularity

Link Popularity is one of the most important and critical aspects of any effective search engine optimization campaign today. Link popularity is the most important off-page factors to consider improving for all websites. The key concept to understand about link building is, you don't need thousands of links to successfully compete, you just need the links that are the most related to your site with the highest quality possible.

In other words, it's not just about getting lots of links from instead, you want links from high quality web pages that are topically relevant to your website with the target keywords inserted into the anchor text of the inbound links. Please refer to this handy checklist below to analyze the backlinks of your competitor's websites and your own.



### Off-Page ranking factor checklist

	Off-Page Factors - Links (70%-80% Ranking Score)	How to find out?
1.	How long the domain has been online?	Use the <a href="http://Archive.org">Archive.org</a> website and type in the domain name or use the Links Plus+ tool to retrieve automatically.
2.	What is the total number of unique inbound links to the site not counting site-wide links?  <i>Note: Site-wide links are links that appear on nearly every page of an external site pointing to a specific domain.</i>	Use the Links Plus+ tool to retrieve the number of sites linking in using the Yahoo! API. Yahoo! provides the most accurate backlink results and the API allows safe and legal link popularity checking
3.	What is the inbound link anchor text focus? Are there a various keywords used in the link text?	Use the Links Plus+ tool to retrieve the anchor text of sites linking in using the Yahoo! API.
4.	How long the linking websites has been online and how long the links have been there?	Use the <a href="http://Archive.org">Archive.org</a> website and type in the domain or use the Links Plus tool to retrieve automatically. There is no reliable way to find out when a particular link was posted first, but the last modified date of the page may help to narrow down the date range.
5.	Do the inbound link pages contain optimized titles and body text with similar keywords to the link text?	Use the Links Plus+ tool to retrieve the Title tag of sites linking using the Yahoo! API. The body text has to be analyzed manually for the presence of related keywords.
6.	What is the Google PageRank of the site and the inbound links sites?	Use the Links Plus+ tool to retrieve the Google PageRank of sites linking in using the Yahoo! API.
7.	Are website and the inbound linking sites listed in the DMOZ and the Yahoo! directory?	Use the Links Plus+ tool to retrieve the Yahoo! and DMOZ listing description of sites linking in using the Yahoo! API.
8.	Are website and the inbound linking sites listed in any important niche directories?	Use the Links Plus+ tool to retrieve the URLs of sites linking in using the Yahoo! API and visually review the niche directories.
9.	Are there any links from authority sites, trade publications, blogs or forums to the website and the inbound links sites?	Use the Links Plus+ tool to retrieve the URLs of sites linking in using the Yahoo! API and visually review the list of URLs.
10.	What is the domain registration length?	Use the <a href="http://Domaintools.com">Domaintools.com</a> site to retrieve the WHOIS domain information or use the Links Plus tool to retrieve domain's registration length in the Link Campaign Manager.

11.	What is the inbound link placement on the link pages, are the links inserted in the body text or they are listed in link directory style?	Visually inspect the URLs in your default web browser after Links Plus+ had retrieved the inbound links.
12.	Are the inbound links reciprocated or they are one-way?	Visually inspect the URLs in your default web browser after Links Plus+ has retrieved the inbound links.
13.	Are the links coming from a large number of unique <a href="#">C Class IP addresses</a> ?  <i>Note: C Class IP addresses are classified as the first three numbers of an IP address. Webmaster can install hundreds of websites on the same web server, which could be used to fool other webmasters into thinking they are getting unique inbound links. The search engines discount links originating from the same C Class IP address</i>	Use the Links Plus+ tool to retrieve the IP address of sites linking in using the Yahoo! API. If you want test for duplicate Class C IP address on multiple sites, use the <a href="#">Ip-Report.com</a> tool.
14.	Are the outgoing links from the site closely related to the website's theme?	Use the <a href="#">MSN</a> "linkfromdomain" operator to find outgoing links like this linkfromdomain: your domain.com.
15	In which country the website is hosted?	Use the <a href="#">Domaintools.com</a> site to retrieve the hosting server's IP address and geographical location.
16.	What does the text say surrounding the inbound link?	Visually inspect the text close to the inbound links.
16.	Are the inbound links site-wide or coming from single unique pages?	Use the Links Plus+ tool to retrieve the URLs of sites linking in using the Yahoo! API and uncheckmark the "Exclude Duplicate Domains" advanced option.

## Understanding the Google PageRank

Fighting spam, and running a trusted search engine used daily by millions of users is not an easy job. Google understood this very well even in their early days. The Google's Page Rank was born in the minds of its founders, [Larry Page and Sergey Brin at Stanford University](#). The Google PageRank simply put is the measure of a website's external and internal links on a logarithmic scale, also known as PR. The Google PageRank is the foundation for Google's link popularity calculations.

The Google PageRank scale starts at zero  0/10 for brand new sites and it can reach a maximum of ten  10/10 for well established sites with thousands of inbound links. Only a handful of sites can ever reach a PageRank of ten, for example, Google and Adobe have a PageRank of ten with a handful of other sites. An average website will normally have a PageRank of between 4 and 6. The more popular websites will have a PageRank of 7 or

higher. As an example MSN and Yahoo! both have a PageRank of 9. Google PageRank is used to assign a value to the importance of every web page on the internet. To arrive at this value Google measures the links pointing to your website found on other web pages. Links from each site linking in counts as a 'vote' for your site. 'Votes' from sites with a higher page rank are weighed more than votes from sites with a lower page rank or no PageRank at all. Also, pages with a lot of links on them will pass a lot lower page rank value to the target page than link pages that have only a handful of external links. So acquiring links to your site from other websites is an important strategy for achieving a high PageRank value and ultimately a higher search engine ranking with Google.

The PageRank correlates to the number of inbound links to a site, but it's not a linear relationship. The pure number of inbound links can't be compared alone. For example two websites reporting identical number of inbound links could have different PageRank values due to the variance of PageRank of individual back links. It suffices to say, the number of backward links are a very important measure of a website's ability to compete in the natural search results. The [Google PageRank](#) and the anchor text in incoming links play a major role in your sites ranking in the search engine results pages ([SERP](#)).

A higher Google PageRank also delivers some other benefits. One of them is the increased spider visits by the search engines, which will guarantee freshness of your web pages in the search results and likely more pages indexed as well.

## Download and install the Google Toolbar

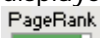
The Google Toolbar is one of the most widely used tools by search engine optimizers and it can provide invaluable information about any website's popularity on the Internet. It also comes with some [very handy web browser utilities](#), including pop-up blocking and automatic web form filling.



### *The Google toolbar as displayed in Internet Explorer*

The Google toolbar is available for [Internet Explorer](#) version 5.5 and higher. A newly released [FireFox compatible](#) Google toolbar is also available.

The most important feature of the Google Toolbar is the Google PageRank gauge. You may have to enable it in the options menu if it's not visible on the toolbar. The PageRank gauge is displayed on every page you visit in the middle of the toolbar as a green bar like this

. When you move your mouse over the toolbar, the PageRank displays a number between 0-10 called the Google PageRank. Simply put, the PageRank helps Google determine the importance of a web page. The Google PageRank constantly fluctuates internally and it's a floating point calculation. This means when you see a value of 4, for example on the toolbar, it can be any value between 3.5 and 4. The Google toolbar PageRank public interface is normally updated only about 3-4 times a year.

## Checking backward links

Another important feature of the Google toolbar is the "Backward Links" search, which is displayed as a menu option directly below the Google PageRank like this:



*The Google Toolbar "Backward Links" search feature*

One important thing to note about the Google Toolbar "Backward Links" checking feature is that it will only display a filtered set of inbound links to a website, and it's not a reliable way to determine the true number of inbound links. According to some SEO professionals, Google only displays inbound links from pages that have a minimum of PageRank 4, but this can't be reliably confirmed. The reason for Google's continued secrecy about the true number of backlinks is to keep webmasters guessing about how top rankings are achieved. So please don't use Google as the sole means of checking inbound links for your own site or your competitors as it's highly unreliable.

Luckily, Yahoo! is a very trustworthy source of inbound link checking and they even have a set of [Site Explorer tools](#) for webmasters to use for free. SEO Studio also has a built in capability to check inbound links using the Yahoo! API to any website. Using the Yahoo! API ensures your IP address will not be banned for running a larger number of link checking queries. The Links Plus+ tool's link popularity checking features goes way beyond the Yahoo! Site Explorer's linking data. We'll cover in detail later how to use the SEO Studio link analysis tools to your maximum benefit.

## A better SEO toolbar for Firefox

[Aaron Wall](#), a well know and respected author of [SEO Book](#) and many industry articles has released a free Firefox based SEO tool called [SEO Firefox](#). The SEO Firefox extension gathers a wealth of information about link popularity and many other off-page factors under the listing of each search result. It's a very convenient ad-hoc tool to complete a quick off-page analysis on top ranking competitors without leaving your web browser.

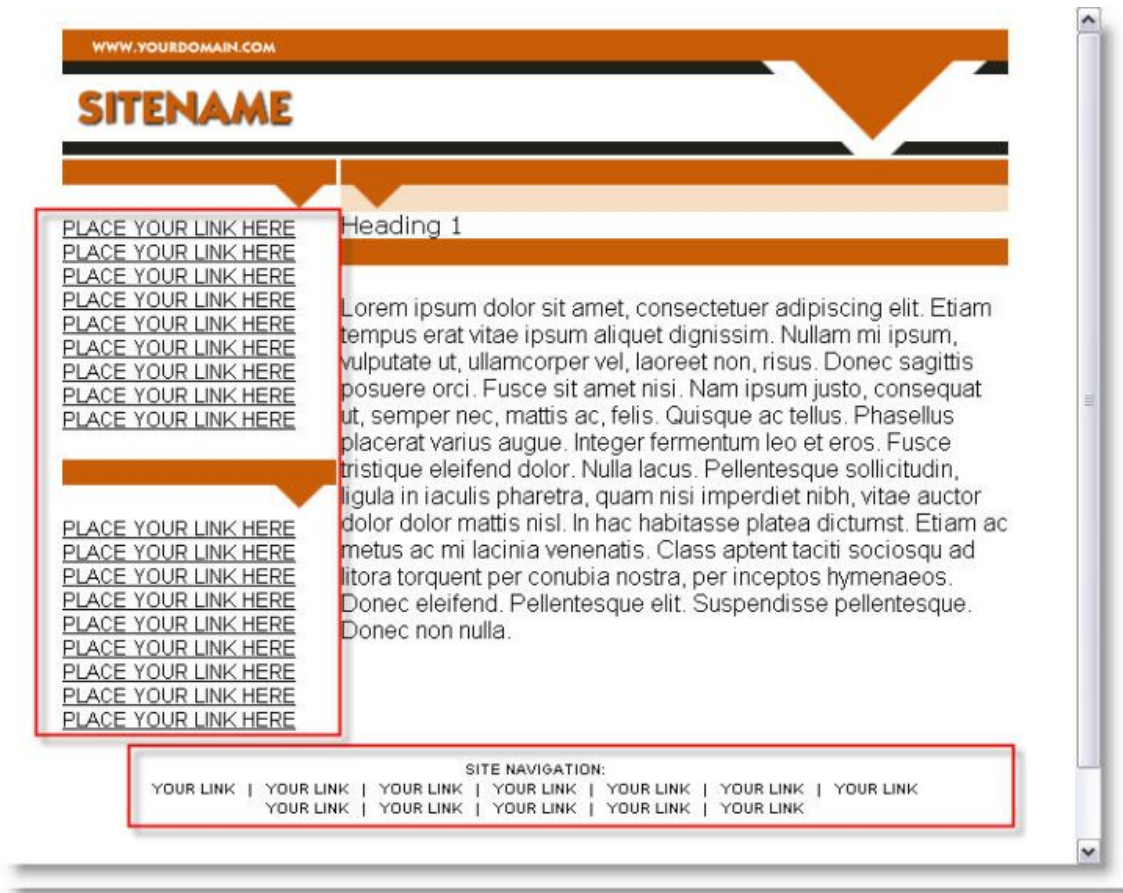
## Proper Google PageRank distribution through internal links

Internal linking techniques and outbound links originating from your site can play a big role in how well your site will rank. Internal and external linking can also affect the Google PageRank value of your home page and internal pages.

The rule of thumb to follow for all sites is to ensure the footer, header or side navigation contains links back to the important pages of the website from every page. This can be accomplished with the use of some type of search engine friendly menu system. To further simplify the maintenance of adding and removing menu items, the use [HTML server side includes](#) or server side scripting languages like ASP, PHP, CGI or .NET is highly recommended. A well interlinked website is not only great for search engine ranking, but it also increases your site's usability.

Let's illustrate a well laid out website that is heavily interlinked:

[Spoon-Fed SEO for Grown Ups](#)



*The menu system in the side bar and the footer of this site ensures that every important page receives the Google PageRank.*

Beyond the basic steps of directing the Google PageRank to your main pages, you may also want to protect your site from "leaking" valuable PageRank to other pages on your site that are not as important to rank well, but still need to be found by your visitors. We are referring to privacy policy, or terms of service pages and many other non search engine relevant pages. In these cases, you may want to use the "nofollow" link attribute as illustrated below in the links. The nofollow link attribute tells the search engines the link does not pass any link reputation or Google PageRank value to the target page whether it's an internal or external page. All major search engines respect the nofollow link attribute.

An example of using the "rel=nofollow" attribute:

```
<a href="http://www.mydomain.com/privacy.htm" rel="nofollow">Privacy Policy</a>
```

The "nofollow" links will function as normal links. There will be no noticeable difference to the website user. The search engines, however, will take note of the attribute and will not pass link reputation or Google PageRank to external or internal pages. The benefit of this approach is being able to control and channel the Google PageRank throughout the site to

our advantage without leaking valuable PageRank to internal or external pages we don't want link reputation to flow to.

Another popular option to preserve the Google PageRank is to link to less important pages on your site using JavaScript based dynamic links. These types of links pass no PageRank value since the search engines can't follow them. It's important to note that JavaScript executes in the browser window of the website visitor. Since the search engine spiders don't open browser windows, dynamic links are not followed by the engines. Here is an example of a dynamic link not followed by the search engines.

An example of using a dynamic JavaScript based link:

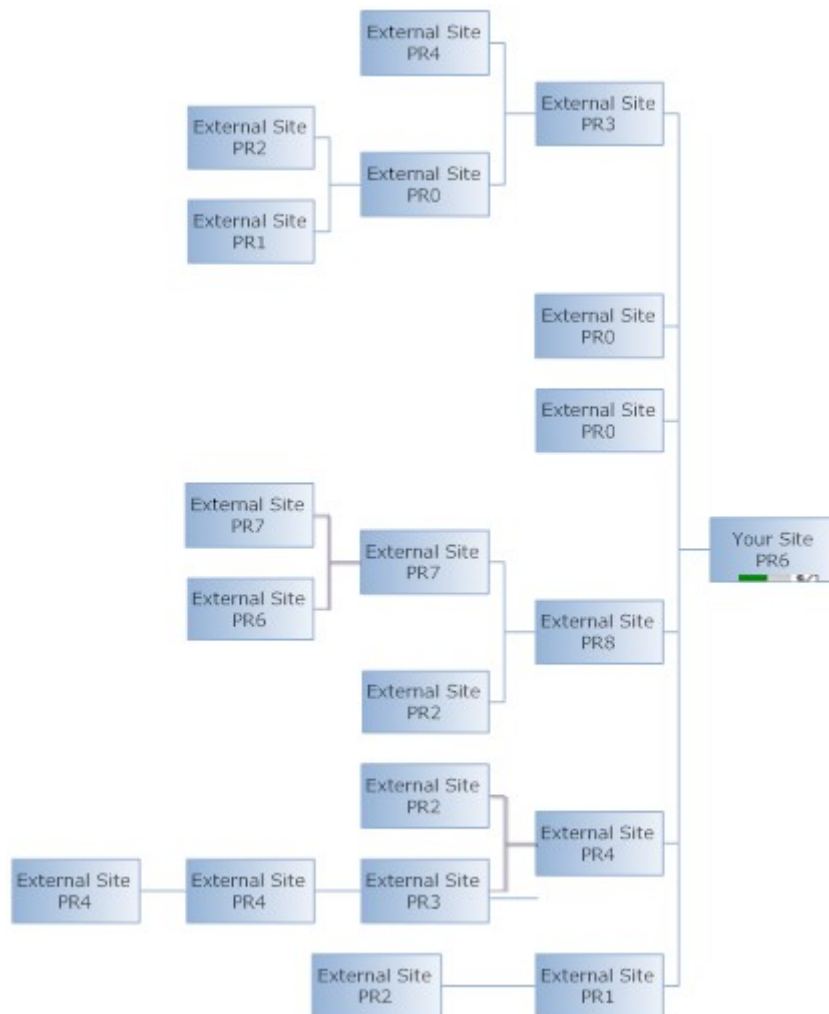
```
<a href="JavaScript:window.open('somepage.html', 'MyNewWindow')"
```

## How can external links lift your sites ranking?

Grasping the concept of link popularity for novice web masters can be fairly complex. Link popularity can be expressed in rather simple terms of links equal votes. Just like in a democratic election, votes are cast for the favorite candidates. As a webmaster, you want to make sure your website becomes a favorite site to link to by others site within your topic because it has some value to offer. Your ongoing job as a webmaster will be to make a quality site and seek inbound links from as many related sites as you can.

Let's illustrate the linking of sites on the web, and the ranking factors behind each incoming link. As you look at this diagram, you will notice how the Google PageRank from high PR sites pushes the Google PageRank value of our own imaginary site to PR6. Each incoming links to our site will pass a certain amount of its PageRank to our home page increasing its own PageRank. For the purposes of this illustration, we'll assume the inbound links are coming from sites which don't use the "nofollow" link attribute or dynamic linking and therefore pass the full PageRank value to us.

Sites linking to us with high a PageRank value are contributing a higher PageRank than sites that have a lower PageRank of only 1 or 2. The sites linking to us with a PageRank of zero still could be valuable provided they are indexed by Google and are closely related to our topic.



*An illustration of Passing the Google PageRank.*

Beyond the PageRank value being passed to us, we are also receiving direct votes for our site from those external pages, increasing our site's overall link popularity.

Although each link can be a valuable vote for us, the real question is:

- **Do the websites linking in have a similar keyword theme to our site?**
- **Do the link pages contain relevant title tags, body text and internal links to our site?**
- **How many other links are present on those link pages linking to us?**
- **What is the Google PageRank of the site and link page linking to us?**
- **Are the linking in sites considered an authority on the subject matter?**

The search engines definitively notice these seemingly subtle differences, and therefore you should also ensure you only request links from relevant sites with the same keywords in their titles, web pages and internal links. In the upcoming lessons we'll be discussing the most effective techniques to acquire links, and the various ways of requesting links from other webmaster. You'll also learn about specific inbound link formatting options that can make or break your link building campaign.



## Link manipulation and the rise of link spam

The reason search engines develop and continually tweak their link popularity algorithm is to minimize the effect of unscrupulous web masters who might use [spamming](#) techniques to help their sites rank higher. The manipulation of inbound links by webmasters to gain commercial advantage continues to be the biggest challenge for the search engine to tame and control. Link analysis gives search engines a new way of determining which pages are more relevant for particular topics or query phrases. Google even defines and warns webmasters against using [link schemes](#) in their webmaster guidelines. There is a very good description of what links spam is and how the search engines deal with link popularity manipulation in a university research paper titled [SpamRank Fully Automatic Link Spam Detection \(PDF Document Link\)](#).

Here are the most popular link spamming techniques:

- **Guest book spam.** Guest books used to be very popular a few years ago. Guest books allowed visitors to leave comments and feedback, but soon dishonest marketers started using guest book forms to submit unrelated and unwanted links. Although the number of guest books is on the decline due to other user generated content options emerging, guest books are still exploited today by link spammers for gaining link popularity and Google PageRank.
- **Blog comment and Trackback spam.** This link schemes involves some type of automated tool or script that inject promotional links into other people's blogs who are unaware of the available comment protection methods such as [captchas](#) which presents a small image for human verification. The spammers always look for the path to least resistance and search out vulnerable blogs running older versions of [Wordpress](#) and other blogging scripts that automatically approve blog comments. The search engines recommended webmaster to use the "no-follow" link attribute tag in all blog comments posted by users to avoid passing link reputation and the Google PageRank to sites that had not been reviewed by the blog owner.
- **Forum post and forum profile spam.** Not much different from blog comment spam, forum posts are generated by automated scripts as well and look for loopholes in popular forum softwares such as [PHPbb](#) and other open sources forum packages. The automated scripts can create a fake user IDs on forums and start making forum posts laden with spammy links within minutes. Because forums don't use the "no-follow" link attribute, the spammers prefer to post to forums or create profiles with self serving promotional links.
- **Cross linking.** Cross linking involves creating a network of unique domains for the purpose of manipulating link popularity and the Google PageRank. The spammers heavily interlink the sites to distribute link popularity and PageRank among all the participating domains. Most often than not, all the websites are hosted on the same server, which makes the detection of this type of linking scheme very easy to identify by the search engines.

## Who do you trust?

Let us introduce you to a new term called "TrustRank." TrustRank is Google's refinement of the purely PageRank driven algorithm which doesn't take into consideration a website's quality and authority. The Google PageRank is strictly driven by the number of inbound links, and the PageRank distribution of the links flowing between the pages from external and internal sources. The PageRank doesn't care about topical relevance or whether or not the site contains any useful information. While the Google PageRank could help evaluate web pages' importance globally, it was ill equipped to deal with spam and PageRank manipulation in specific market segments. For example, the insurance and financial sectors are notorious for attracting the most spammers, but we could list a number of other niches, such as cell phone ring tones, mp3 download site and many others.

In order to combat web spam, Google introduced a new algorithm called TrustRank in a research paper titled "[Combating Web Spam with TrustRank.](#)" Essentially TrustRank gives higher ranking scores to sites that get links from high quality "seed" websites that are considered an authority on a specific subject matter.

Here is how the Stanford research paper defines the inner workings of TrustRank:

*"The algorithm first selects a small seed set of pages whose "spam status" needs to be determined. A human expert then examines the seed pages, and tells the algorithm if they are spam (bad pages) or not (good pages). Finally, the algorithm identifies other pages that are likely to be good based on their connectivity with the good seed pages."*

What does this mean for your site? Getting links directly from topically relevant sites considered "seed" sites or links from sites who have links from "seed" sites is the key to higher ranking. The "seed" sites are also referred to as authority sites or hubs. You can find hubs by searching for sites that provide links to many top ranking sites. For example if you wanted to find the best authority sites, you would do a search for the top 10 sites and then looking at their backlinks, you would find which backlinks they have in common. The top sites most likely have links from the [DMOZ](#) and [Yahoo! directories](#) and a few other industry specific organizations, blogs or forums.

You can speed up the manual link analysis process a great deal with the help of a fantastic online tool called the [HubFinder](#) created by [SEOBook.com](#). Just enter your keyword phrase and select the number of top ranking sites to check and the minimum number of matches for sites linking in. Start with a lower number of minimum matches to make sure you don't miss any important sites to consider getting links from.

## The magic of the link anchor text

Every one of the above off-page factors are very important, but probably none of these factors have as much influence on your search engine ranking as **the inbound link anchor text**. Since the search engines can only understand links in terms of the clickable link text it crucial to ask your link partners for very specific link text formatting with your keywords in the inbound links.

Here are the most affective tips for inbound link anchor text selection and formatting using a website selling golf shoes as an example.

- **Request your keywords to be inserted into the linking text, but vary the anchor text of the keywords.** Pay special attention to how many times you request the same keywords to be used in the inbound link text by your link

partners. If every one of your inbound links will look like the one below, the search engines will suspect there is some unnatural link building happening to the site. They may discount the value of other links with the same anchor text, or they may penalize your site for other related terms as well.

Below is a sample link pointing to the home page targeting the main keyword phrase "golf shoes":

```
<a href="www.greatgolfshoes.com/">Home of Great Golf Shoes</a>
```

- 
- The resulting link will look like this [Home of Great Golf Shoes](#)
- **Request some of the inbound links to point to sub pages of your site with anchor text that matches the title tag of the target page.** Ask for some of your links to be pointed to internal pages like the illustration below targeting a different keyword phrase. This type of linking is also referred to as "deep linking. Ensure, you point at least 30%40% of all links to the sub pages of your site with the appropriate target keywords that match some of the keywords in the target page title.

A "deep link" pointing to a sub page of the greatgolfshoes.com domain targeting the secondary phrase "nike golf shoes":

```
<a href="www.greatgolfshoes.com/nike-golf-shoes.html">Nike Golf Shoes</a>
```

The resulting link will look like this [Nike Golf Shoes](#)

Changing the anchor text in the inbound links and pointing links to sub pages accomplishes two things:

- **A large number of links to sub pages suggests to the search engines your site has a wealth of information to offer** its visitors and should be considered a serious resource. A shallow inbound linking structure and nearly identical anchor text in the majority of inbound links to the home page is a clear sign of link manipulation by the search engines. The most likely penalty will be an almost non-existent ranking for the target keywords most often found in the inbound anchor text.
- **Secondly, getting high ranking for secondary keyword phrases can't be accomplished easily without inbound links to sub pages** targeting secondary key phrases no matter how well you optimize those pages. If the inner pages are not receiving any direct inbound links, they will most likely not rank well for highly competitive keyword terms. Although they may rank for some obscure low search volume keywords.

## "Off-page" analysis example

Before we start up the SEO Studio Links Plus+ tool, we wanted to ensure you fully understand how link analysis works by directly checking the search engines for backlinks.

Here is a brief list of the major search engines and their "backlink" checking search commands to find inbound links to a particular domain. Try the commands out on each search engine and observe the results and more importantly the differences. Have you noticed the number of links from Google is grossly under reported? We have warned you about this, so please use Yahoo! for link analysis instead.

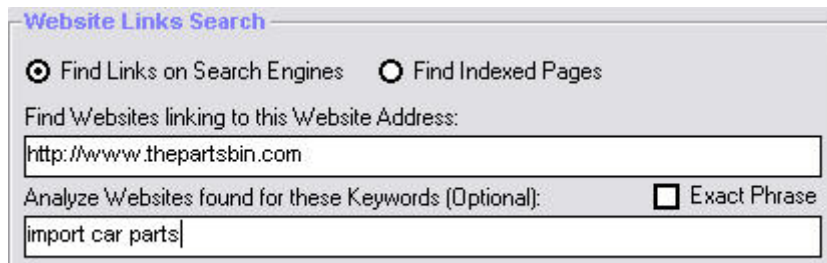
Search Engine	Display Indexed Pages Command
<a href="#">AltaVista</a>	link: your-domain.com
<a href="#">AllTheWeb</a>	link: your-domain.com
<a href="#">Google</a>	link: your-domain.com
<a href="#">Yahoo!</a>	linkdomain: your-domain.com -site: your-domain.com
<a href="#">Yahoo! Site Explorer!</a>	enter the website address and click on "Inlinks"

*Entering the domain name with the "www" prefix or without it could have big difference in the number of backlinks reported.*

*In the next lesson we'll discuss the ways you can ensure that all your links are pointing consistently to the "www" prefixed version of your domain to insure your site is not "splitting" the Google PageRank and its link popularity strength.*

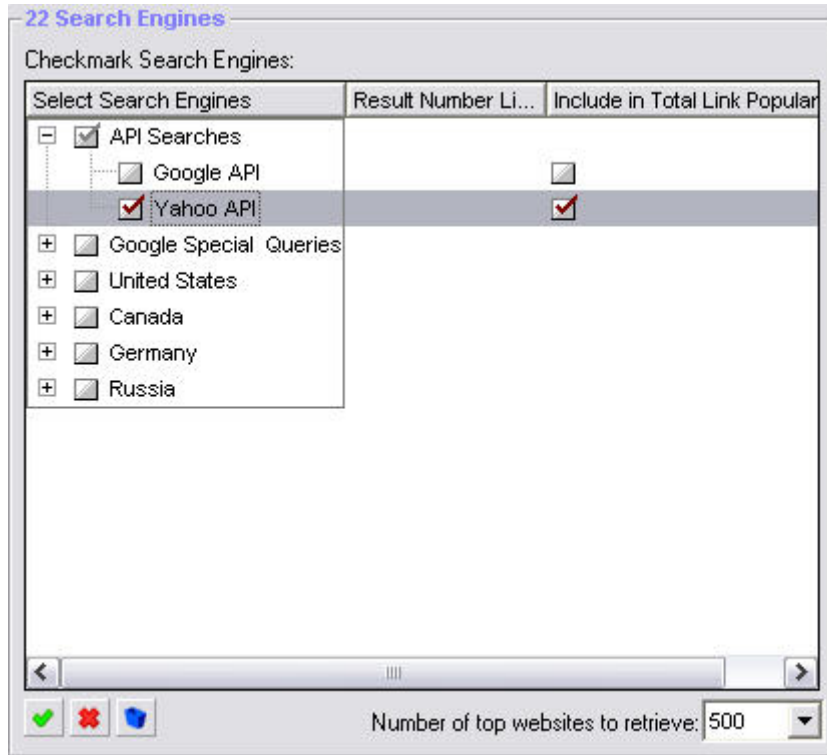
### 1. Open the Links Plus+ tool

Enter the website address you want to find the inbound links to and enter a keyword phase you want to use in the keyword analysis of the link pages. The second option comes very handy if you want to retrieve the page titles and META tags of inbound links and perform a deep analysis on them.



*The SEO Studio Links Plus+ tool configuration screen for retrieving inbound links to Thepartsbin.com*

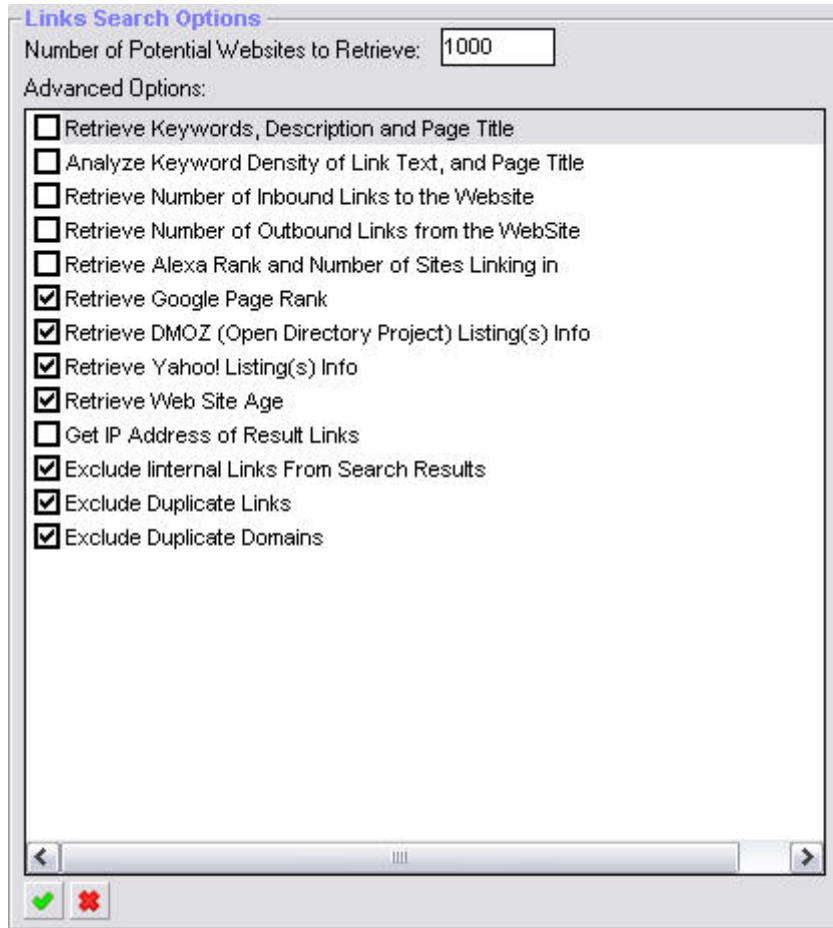
Select the Yahoo! search API to perform the inbound links search. *Please note you will need to [request your own Yahoo! developer API key](#) from Yahoo! to use this feature.* In addition to the Yahoo! API inbound link checking, you can also use other engines such as Google, or Hotbot, but we recommend the Yahoo! API due to safe and legal link checking that doesn't jeopardize your PC's IP address being blocked.



*Selecting the search engines for the "backlink" check in Links Plus.*

Select the inbound link analysis data shown below in the Advanced options window. These options will give us a good idea about the thepartsbins.com's linking strategy. Please note, we have decided to exclude duplicate links and internal links to clean up the search results prior to reviewing the links. This will help us to comb through the links much faster.

When you have selected the options below, hit the Start button to start the inbound link retrieval process to thepartsbin.com website.



*Selecting advanced options in Links Plus.*

In the links search results screen below, you will see a handful of links retrieved from Yahoo!. The Links Plus+ tool can retrieve hundreds of links and analyze them quickly. We can clearly see this site is targeting "import car parts" as one of their main keywords in addition to their own website name and a few other keyword terms.







Please take note of the different anchor texts used in the linking text to this site. As we have discussed in the previous section, varying the anchor texts in the inbound links will steer you clear of any potential link spamming penalty.

Also note the linking page titles, as you can see they are a very close matched to automotive related key phrases. This is one of the reasons thepartsbin.com site is at top of the search results for car parts related terms.

58 Websites Retrieved

	Se...	URL	Link Anchor Text	Page Title	Google Page Rank
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Yahoo!	www.americanstreetrod.c...	The Auto Parts Bin Description	American Stree...	3/10
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Yahoo!	www.autosouk.com/autoli...	Import Car Parts	Used cars new...	2/10
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Yahoo!	www.autobooksonline.co...	Import Auto Parts	Automotive Rec...	2/10
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Yahoo!	www.hotrodsworldwide...	Import Auto Parts - The Parts Bin	Hot Rods World...	2/10
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Yahoo!	www.advancedracing.co...	http://www.thepartsbin.com	AUTO RACING ...	2/10
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Yahoo!	www.classiccartransport...	Import Auto Parts - The Parts Bin	Classic Car enc...	2/10
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Yahoo!	www.voltion.com/autopar...	The Parts Bin	Voltion&#174; ...	4/10
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Yahoo!	www.corrado-club.ca		Corrado Club of ...	2/10
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Yahoo!	www.exoticcarrental.com...	The Parts Bin	Links to auto rel...	3/10
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Yahoo!	www.smogsite.com/links...	http://www.thepartsbin.com	Links	4/10
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Yahoo!	www.1800mitl.com/links/...	The Parts Bin	Wholesalers of ...	3/10
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Yahoo!	www.webertransports.co...	Import Auto Parts - The Parts Bin	Links - Weber T...	2/10
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Yahoo!	www.paragonperformanc...	MERCEDES PARTS AND VOLVO P...	Paragon Perfor...	2/10
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Yahoo!	www.dodgeram.info/links/...	The Auto Parts Bin	Fritz's Automoti...	1/10
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Yahoo!	www.omegamachine.com...	The Auto Parts Bin...	Automotive Tra...	2/10
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Yahoo!	www.donsautopages.co...	The Auto Parts Bin	Parts -- Q-Z link...	1/10
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Yahoo!	www.tperformance.com/s...	The Auto Parts Bin	Links and ww...	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Yahoo!	www.autobodyonline.com...	Mercedes Parts	Linking to Autob...	2/10
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Yahoo!	jaguar.professional.org/re...	ThePartsBin.com	Sean's Jaguar ...	2/10
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Yahoo!	www.hondabeat.com/link...	The Parts Bin	Honda and Acu...	2/10
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Yahoo!	home.earthlink.net/~hainesi...	http://www.thepartsbin.com/	BMW Vendor List	

Do not update Links Search Results automatically (Faster)

     Auto fit  Add Checkmarked

*The results of checking inbound links to the Thepartsbin.com site in Links Plus.*

## In conclusion

Link popularity is the driving force behind top engines rankings. Over the last few years Google has gotten especially good at separating the low quality links from the really valuable ones, and it's proven by the relevancy of their results and overall worldwide market share. The good news is we can all learn a lot about how our competitors get top ranking by studying carefully their inbound links and examine closely what those links say about their site, i.e. anchor text. It's your job as a webmaster to study, and test the affects of the off-page ranking factors. You can turn this knowledge to your advantage by building even stronger link popularity for your site.

**Previous:**

- [Step 5 - Getting Indexed](#)

**Next:**

- [Step 7 - Acquiring Links](#)

## Step 7 - Acquiring Links

### Introduction

One of the most misunderstood subjects about link building by new website owners is the concept of acquiring links. The usual questions new web masters ask is, "Why would my competitors link to me?" or "Why would any site would need to link to my site?" If you have carefully read our chapter on link analysis, you began to understand that inbound links from others sites form a consensus about your site's quality and topic. The search engines need to rely on the inbound links a great deal in their ranking algorithms since the commercial aspects of search marketing created a huge amount of spam on the web.

Think of the inbound links as a word of mouth recommendation in favor of your site the search engines can actually quantify and use in their ranking algorithms. The question then becomes, "How do new websites get links?" You may have heard the expression, "There isn't something for nothing" and this perfectly applies to link building. In other words, you have to give something to gain recognition in the form of inbound links.

### Earned links

An earned link is given and never requested by the website owner. It's given because there is something of value the linking website sees in publishing a link to another resource on a similar topic.

Let's take a look at how your website could earn unsolicited inbound links from other sites.

- **Your site has some information or resource that's valuable to your market segment and can't be found anywhere else.** We are talking about a how to manual, a white paper or even as a simple thing as listing of links to others sites within your genre.
- **Create a special tool, calculator or e-book and give it away for free.** Sooner or later other sites will start recognizing the value of your work and will link to your site so they can serve their own website visitors better.
- **Create a top 10 or top 100 lists of tips for a subject you know well.** People love these lists, and they are being linked to by other sites.
- **Create a blog and post regularly about your industry.** People love to read blog posts that are opinionated, honest, and sometimes even controversial or humorous.
- **Write unbiased product reviews or submit testimonials about products you like to use.** Your site will most likely get lots of links to product reviews as long as it appears honest and unbiased. When you submit testimonials to companies you like doing business with, they may reward you with an unsolicited link to your site.

### Solicited links

Solicited inbound links are asked for by the website owner or inserted in other websites in exchange for contributing content or giving reciprocal links. Let's take a look at the ways you can "manufacture" links pointing to your site.

- **Exchange links with other web masters who have related websites to yours.** Requesting a link from the potential link partner site should be relevant to your website's theme. Keep in mind the number of links acquired through link exchanges should be no more than 10%-20% of all your inbound links. In recent years the search engines have reduced the weight given to links that are reciprocated.



- **Write an article and publish it on well known e-zine sites such as EzineArticles, GoArticles and iSnare.** Article submission not only will result in increased link popularity, but also could result in some additional click through traffic to your site.
- **Writing exclusive articles for a particular website.** . In addition to article syndication on major e-zine sites, you can also submit exclusive content to specific target sites in your niche with a link back to your site. In the SEO industry, these types of content pages are also referred to as "presell pages" or "hosted marketing pages."
- **Ask your colleagues, business partners, suppliers or friends to link to your site** provided the sites are topically similar to yours. What could be easier than requesting a link from someone you already know? Links from industry related suppliers and business associates can have great link popularity boosting benefits.
- **Do some free charity work or give away products to charities and educational institutions for free.** In return for your generosity ask the charity or school for a link to your site.
- **Join a forum that matches your website's topic and post regularly with your website address in your signature bi-line.** Whether you have something to contribute or just ask questions of other forum members, it doesn't matter as long as you make a few posts in the forums. Your website links will be found by the search engines in the forums posts.
- **Signing up and adding your links to social book marking sites and user generated content sites.** Add your site to [Del.icio.us.com](http://Del.icio.us.com) and [Stumbleupon.com](http://Stumbleupon.com) and hopefully other users will find it valuable enough to create their own bookmark to your site. Create a simple "lens" about your website on [Squidoo.com](http://Squidoo.com) and point links to your site.
- **Join [Yahoo! Answers](http://Yahoo! Answers) and contribute your expertise to provide answers to user questions.** A back link to your site can be worth a great deal from Yahoo! Answers.

## Other types of paid and unpaid links

- **Asking for links from related resources without reciprocating.** If you think you have a really good website with lots of valuable information, tools, and resources but due to its age it has not been discovered yet by other websites, you should ask other webmasters and bloggers to link to it. Build a quality link exchange campaign using the SEO Studio Links Plus+ tool, by seeking out high ranking websites relating to the main theme of your website.
- **Directory submissions are an excellent way to gain link popularity and to give your new site needed credibility.** Sites listed in well respected "old" directories are trusted by the major search engines because of the strict editorial review process they have to go through. No doubt, you have heard about the Yahoo! directory, which is one of the most important directories to get listed in. In addition to the Yahoo! directory submissions, we'll cover the complete directory submission process in upcoming lessons.
- **Paid text links from related sites.** The paid text links business had been booming for some years now and since Google had not found an effective fool proof way to detect purchased text links, the buying of text links for the purpose of link popularity building goes unabated. The top text link company is [Text-Link-Ads](http://Text-Link-Ads), which has the largest inventory of links, closely followed by [Text Link Brokers](http://Text Link Brokers).
- **Press releases are an excellent way to get your name out and increase your site's link popularity.** It's not the cheapest form of link building, but it can be effective to get your name out and get a few high quality links. The top press release site to consider in this category is [PrWeb.com](http://PrWeb.com).

## What are the best types of links?

A website's link popularity score, Google's PageRank and "anchor text" in the incoming text links all plays a major role in how well it will rank in the search engine result pages. However there are a few other rules that you should keep in mind to maximize your link popularity building efforts.

- **The best links are one-way, earned and never solicited.** These types of links suggest a strong editorial consensus your site has some value to offer it visitors. The links are usually embedded in a body of text of a related article or resource page.
- **Inbound links from domains with relevant topics** should be your first and foremost aim. This requires the development of great content and a desire to contribute something useful to the World Wide Web. If you have something useful to offer, other websites will link to you naturally.
- **Inbound links from search engine friendly "crawlable" web pages.** This rule is very simple, if the search engines can't reach the web pages where your links are located, your website will not gain any link popularity. It's not always possible to dictate how and where your links are placed, but in most cases you can request a link from a static, indexable web page.
- **Inbound links from older domains** with high search engine ranking are classified as authority websites by the search engines. Obtaining links from these website is a great way to increase your website's link popularity. You can find out how old a website is by using the [Archive.org](#) tool.
- **Inbound links form unique domains with their own class C IP address** have a greater weight than multiple links from the same domain. Acquiring inbound links from different C class IP address blocks tells the search engines the domains are hosted on the different web servers.
- **Inbound links should be permanent, static with lots of links to sub-pages.** The search engines can detect when inbound links first appear. A web site that removes and adds links at a frequent rate sends signals of low quality to the search engines. The SEO term is "link churning." The search engines love static hyperlinks, but they have trouble following links redirected through client side scripts such as JavaScript. Also keep in mind, the use of rel="nofollow" links in the code will not pass the link popularity benefits to the target website. Some of the inbound links should also point to the sub-pages of the target site with different anchor texts in the links; this is called "deep linking."
- **Inbound links nestled in the content of a web page** are more effective especially when surrounded by text related to your website's topic. When links naturally occur in a body of text, the search engines assign a higher link popularity score to those links compared to links on pages with hundreds of other outbound links per page.
- **Inbound links from .edu and .gov domains are trusted by the search engines over .com and .net or other top level domains.** The argument in favor of search engines giving a higher weight to .edu and .gov domain links is that the inbound links are much harder to attain. There is supporting evidence in patent documents filed by Google pointing to a document scoring system that takes TLD information into consideration.
- **Inbound links from authority sites directories like dmoz.org and dir.yahoo.com** have long been regarded as important building blocks of link popularity for any website. Since both of these directories employ human editors to review individual websites, the search engines place a greater trust factor on websites listed in these directories. Some of the other well established human edited directories include botw.org, goguides.org and joant.com.
- **The linking page should have less than 50 links on the page**, but preferably even less than that. The absolute maximum limit is around one hundred links per page according to [Google's Webmaster Guidelines](#). The more links the linking page has, the less valuable your link will become.
- **The link partner should link to websites with a similar keyword theme.** Use the [MSN](#) "linkfromdomain" operator to find outbound links from the link partner

- site. Visit a sample of the links and look at the page titles and page content for similarities. If most of the outgoing links are pointing to sites the link partner has nothing in common with, a link will have very little value for your site. The MSN outbound links command is formatted like this: *linkfromdomain:your domain.com*.
- **Inbound links with a wide variety of anchor text.** Most new website owners make the mistake of requesting links to their website using the same anchor text, which is very unnatural and sends a clear signal to the search engines about someone trying to manipulate link popularity and ultimately the site's search engine ranking. Make your website "link worthy" and people will naturally link to your website using varying link text.
  - **Inbound links from local websites can help better target keywords specific to a city, region, state or country.** Obtaining links from local businesses, chamber of commerce site or local charities will help your ranking for regionally targeted keyword phrases.

## Avoid "splitting" your inbound links and Google PageRank

Making certain that your inbound links are consistently formatted either (1) with or (2) without the "www" prefix will ensure your Google PageRank and link popularity will not be split. It may not seem like a big deal, but the search engines treat these two domain names as separate entities: *www.mydomain.com* vs. *mydomain.com*. What this means to you is, the search engines will store two different link popularity counts for your website, one for the "www" domain and the other one for the one without the "www" prefix. This can hurt your chances of ranking well since neither version of your domain has enough link popularity to beat the competition.

Our suggestion is to choose one format or the other and stick with it for all your links, whether they are internal or external. If you want to have some control over how the search engines index every inbound link coming to your site, you should use a "Re-write" rule on an Apache based server. There is most likely a file called ".htaccess" in the root directory of your Apache web server already. If the file doesn't exist, simply create a text file and name it ".htaccess." and copy and paste the information below.

Open the file, and insert the code below to **remove the "www" prefix** from any inbound links pointing to your site.

```
RewriteEngine on

RewriteCond %{HTTP_HOST} !^mydomain\.com

RewriteRule (.*) http://mydomain.com/$1
[R=permanent,L]
```

Or, if you want to do the opposite, and want to **add the "www" prefix** in front of every inbound link, use the code below.

```
RewriteEngine on

RewriteCond %{HTTP_HOST} ^mydomain\.com

RewriteRule (.*) http://www.mydomain.com/$1
```

[R=permanent,L]

## Conclusion

Understanding the search engines' valuation of links and link relevance is a key concept to master. It's not an easy job for new websites to gain link popularity unless their website's launch is well publicized by other online or even off line media. As a webmaster, you have choices about how you will attain links. You can artificially manufacture links or develop great content, tools, and gadgets and let other websites decide if your site is "ink worthy." One thing you have to keep in mind is you can't successfully manufacture all your links without the search engines catching on. Your site needs a great amount of editorial links that are earned without any solicitation in order to attain high ranking.

### Previous:

- [Step 6 - Link Popularity Analysis](#)

### Next:

- [Step 8 - Article & Directory Submissions](#)

## Step 9 - Link Exchanges and Link Buying

### Introduction

Link exchanges are the favorite methods of new website owners to increase their site's link popularity. If your website had been around for a while, no doubt you have received at least one or two emails with the subject line "Your link has been uploaded." Ok great, now what? Should you be impressed? Should you link back to the site requesting the link exchange?

There are a lot of factors you must consider before linking out to sites sending you unsolicited link requests. We'll cover all them to help you to make intelligent decisions whether or not you should accept the request.

What happens when the tables are turned, and your new website could use some much needed "link love"? Should you send out similar emails requesting link exchanges? Yes and no. There is a right and wrong way to request links from other webmasters; don't worry, help is on the way. If you feel your site has something to offer, and it's not just a collection of self serving affiliate links with a bunch of useless content around it, then you are well on your way to gaining link popularity fast. We'll be discussing all the lurking pitfalls of link request, and the most effective methods to make sure potential link partners will actually read your link request emails.

### Link exchanges done right

We want to make something clear from the outset regarding link exchanges. A link request should never be based on whether or not a site will give your site a link back in return for yours. If you had found a great resource based on merit alone, it should not matter if they link back to your site or not.

The SEO community itself is very divided on the value of link exchanges and what, if any, ranking increase can be gained from exchanging links. In late 2005, Google had released an [algorithm update called "Jagger."](#) This update was widely thought to discount the value of reciprocal links, and in the update process many sites lost their top rankings. We have subsequently discovered most of the sites that lost their ranking were engaged in link exchanges as the sole means of building their link popularity.

There is a valuable lesson here—don't use link exchange exclusively to build your site's link popularity. We can't give you an exact number of exchanged links that can hurt your site's ranking, but as a rule the search engines should not find more than 20% of all your links reciprocated.

### The basic rules of link request emails

You can greatly increase the chances of your link request emails being read by potential link partners with a few simple to follow tips. There is nothing more annoying than your inbox getting filled with useless sites requesting a link from you. On top of that, a lot of times these sites don't even publish their contact information, which indicates there is no real business behind the site.

Follow these guidelines for email initiated link exchanges:

- **Build a site first that delivers value to its visitors with a prominent "contact us" link on the home page.** The site must be chuck full of good, unique content.

It must be indexed by the search engines before you should send out any link requests, and it should have a Google PageRank. Having any Google PageRank will greatly increase your chances of getting a webmaster to reciprocate your link. You should also create a contact us page and publish your physical address to show evidence you are running a real business, and you are not hiding behind an email address only.

- **Create a categorized link page accessible from your home page.** Don't be one of those annoying web masters who appear to be legitimate link partners only to burry their link page somewhere deep in the site that no one can find. Also insert the link page category keywords separated by hyphens into the URL of the link pages like this: [www.mydomain.com/resources/golf-courses/new-york](http://www.mydomain.com/resources/golf-courses/new-york).
- **Link to your link exchange partners first.** As a courtesy you should link to your potential link partners first since you were the one approaching them first for a link exchange in the first place.
- **Don't place more than 50 links on a single link page.** The search engines don't like to see hundreds of links on a single page. It's a far better option to break the link pages into logical categories and keep the number of links under 50 per page. The Links Plus+ tool has an option to create link pages based on your main and sub categories.
- **Don't place your link partners' link on a third party site that has nothing to do with your website's topic.** Three way link exchanges are easily detected by the search engines and if you over do it, they may even penalize the sites found to be doing this.
- **Don't name your link pages with "links" in the file or folder names.** This is only a suggestion; there is no hard evidence to suggest the search engines value pages with the word "link" in the URL less than other pages, but you should use "resources" or "partners" instead to avoid any "link farm."
- **Don't use the obvious link exchange email subject lines "link exchange" or "reciprocal links."** Most automated link exchange tools come with a set of predefined templates. Sadly new webmasters send the same email requests without any regard to personalization. In the next section we'll help you come up with more persuasive subject lines that can easily triple the opening rates of your link request emails.
- **Provide some evidence you have at least checked the home page of the potential link partner's site.** Generally, people take great pride in their websites, and stroking the owner's ego is a great way to get them on your side. The more, sincere compliments you can give them about their website the higher your chances of getting a favorable response to your link request.
- **♣ Specify in the email your exact link format requirements; if possible provide an HTML code example.** Webmasters are busy and don't have the time to figure out what is the best way to link to your site. Give the link partner everything they need to link to you.
- **Proofread your emails.** Receiving emails full of typos and misspellings are a huge turn off for anyone. If your emails have spelling mistakes we can guarantee your link request emails will be sent to the trash can in no time. So do yourself a favor and spell check your emails before hitting the send button.
- **Set your expectation based on the perceived value your site can deliver to your link partners.** If your website already has a decent Google PageRank, maybe a 4 or 5, you can expect a 10%–15% reply rate to your link request emails. The lower your site's Google PageRank, the lower the number of replies you will receive to your emails. If your site is brand new without any PageRank at all, don't expect a higher than 1%–2% response rate. If you begin to feel discouraged, we suggest you keep on building up your website's content and quality. Submit to some high PageRank directories, or start an article distribution campaign to increase your site's Google PageRank.

## An example of an ideal link request email

Writing a catchy, yet sincere link request is not hard if you feel confident about your site's quality and are proud to show it off to other people. Your confidence will shine through your email.

Please take a look at the sample link request email below.

Subject: Merchant Account Guides links to Merchant AccountX

Hi,

I feel that your site provides excellent complementary content to our site. We have taken the liberty of adding a link to your fantastic article on "How to select the best merchant account" from here <http://www.merchant-account-guides.com>. I am sure our readers will benefit greatly from visiting your site and explore it further.

Our site is Merchant Account Guides and it has a great deal of content about merchant accounts as well. We hope by linking to our site you will give your visitors the chance to benefit from our tips and guides on applying for merchant accounts.

Please link to us using the following:

Title: Merchant Account Guides  
Description: Merchant Account Guides offers unbiased review of all merchant account providers for US and international businesses.  
URL: <http://www.merchant-account-guides.com>

Our HTML linking code

```
<a href="http://www.merchant-account-guides.com">Merchant Account  
Guides</a>><br />Merchant Account Guides offers unbiased review of all  
merchant account providers for US and international businesses.
```

Best regards,

John Doe  
Merchant Account Guides

Let's uncover the reasons why this sample link request would most likely get a favorable reply.

- The subject line tells the potential webmaster up front the website Merchant Account Guides want to link to them, which eliminates any guessing whether the site is related to merchant account providers.
- The link request describes a specific article on the link partner's site, which proves the link requester actually took a close look at the site.
- The link requester describes their own site which is closely matches the target link partner's site.

- The email specifies the link format requested and also provides an alternative HTML code for easy copying and pasting.

## Link partner selection criteria

Once again the selection criteria that apply to directories and article directories largely apply to link partners as well. When it comes to link exchanges, your most important focus should be to seek out link partners that run real businesses and not just a link page directory of unrelated junky sites. The Google PageRank and the website's age are also very important considerations, but above all, you should always aim to exchange links with closely related sites.

This is where the Links Plus+ tool can be very handy to speed up the link partner selection process. Enter a keyword term to search for top ranking sites, or use your direct competitors to find sites linking to them. In both cases, you can harvest a large amount of data to help your link partner evaluation process.

Here are some of the top selection rules for link partners:

- **You should not exchange links with porn, adult, gambling medical, drug, pharmacy sites.** Unless your site falls into one of these categories don't exchange links with these sites, otherwise you are risking your own site being penalized.
- **The theme of the link partner site and the main keywords you are targeting should be similar, but not your direct competitor.** It's unlikely your competitors will link to your site, but there are usually dozens if not hundreds of others sites with similar themes that make perfect link partner candidates for your site.
- **Choose sites that match your site's main language and geographical location.** This should be pretty obvious, the search engines measure relatedness based on language and location as well. Finding link partners in the same country or locality matters a great deal if you are targeting "geo" focused keywords i.e. "Dallas real estate" "San Diego divorce attorney" etc.
- **Don't exchange links with sites that use pop ups, have too many ads, and other intrusive advertising.** Do you want to send your visitors to sites that are nothing more than an advertising billboard on the web?
- **The Google PageRank of the linking page should match your own Google PageRank.** Webmasters are still very much obsessed with the little "green bar" and will most likely demand a link from a page on your site that is equal or better than theirs. Since this practice is not about to stop until Google does away with the Google PageRank, you should ask your links to be placed on resource pages that have a Google PageRank of 1 at least. A zero Google PageRank site could mean one of two things. The site has been penalized by Google, or it's brand new and has no inbound links yet.
- **Your link partner's link page must be search engine friendly with no redirects, cloaking, META tag "NOINDEX" tag, or frames.** This should be your minimum criteria for any link exchanges. If the search engines can't index the link page, you links will never be "seen" by the engines. The link page must already be indexed and cached by Google MSN, and Yahoo!. Check it with the Google Toolbar.
- **Your link must be formatted as a plain text link with no JavaScript or the "rel=nofollow" attribute.** Script based links, or links with the "rel=nofollow" attribute will not give your site any link popularity benefit, and it also won't pass any Google PageRank. This is one of the favorite methods of unscrupulous webmasters to gain one-way links for their own site by fooling new webmasters into thinking they are getting a link back to their site, when in fact, the backlinks is useless.



- **Don't accept links from third party sites called 3-way link exchanges.** The link must be placed on the site you are linking to. The concept of 3-way link exchanges have been around for a while, but the search engines got smarter and now can easily find 3-way linking schemes. In some cases they may even penalize sites who are aggressively building links this way.
- **There should be no more than 50 other total links on the same page.** If your link gets buried among hundreds of other links, your link will most likely pass very little link reputation or Google PageRank back to your site.
- **Check for fake Google PageRank.** The Google PageRank is a real commodity on the web and the value of an entire domains can be raised by thousands of dollars for even 1 PageRank increase. So be very careful exchanging links with relatively new domains having unnaturally high Google PageRank, it could very well be fake.
- **The links must be not only from different domains, but from different C class IP addresses as well.** As you may already know, many shared hosting plans allow webmasters to host multiple domains on the same web server. A dishonest web master could easily have hundreds of sites involved in a link exchange scheme using the same server. Check the IP addresses of the sites returned in the Links Plus+ tool and look to see if the first 3 set of numbers separated by dots i.e. 123.21.44.145 and 123.21.44.78 are from the same C class IP block. The inbound links from these sites will be counted as one regardless of how many different domains the links are from.

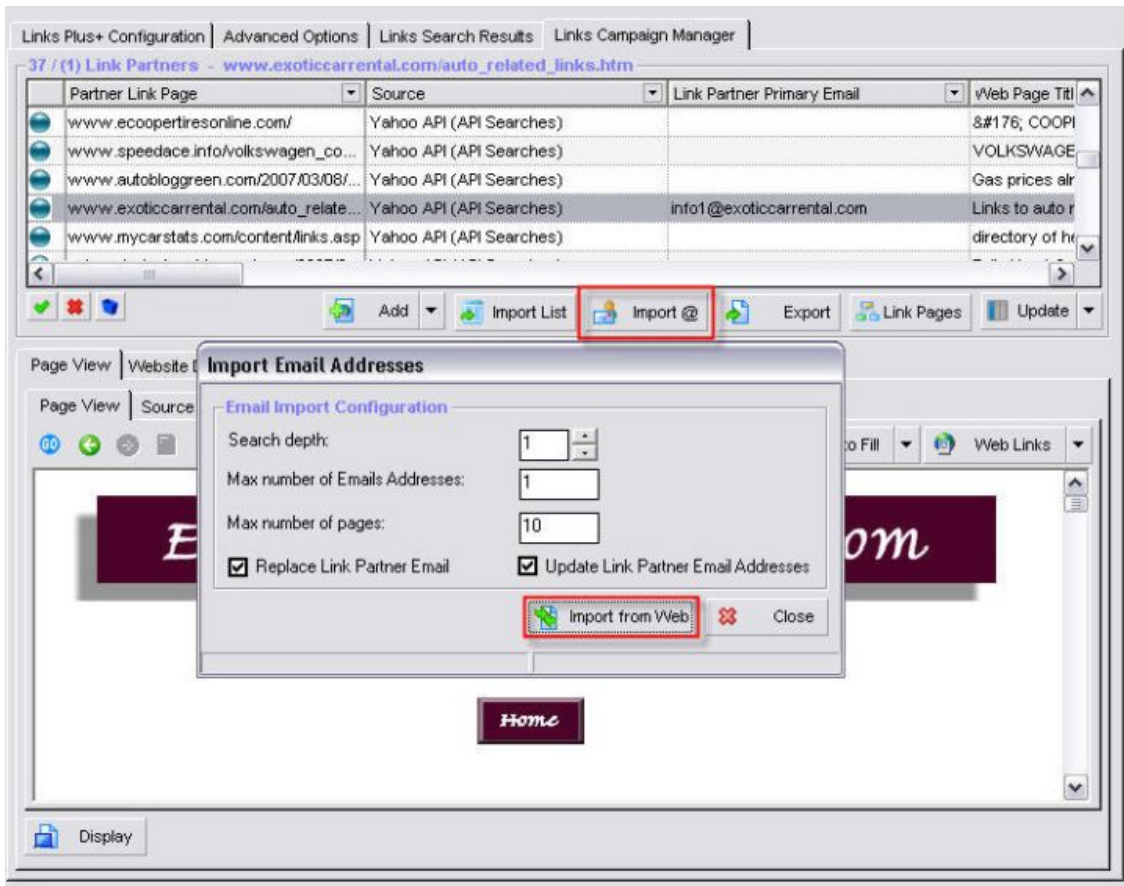
## Automating link exchanges

The SEO Studio Links Plus+ tool offers a very convenient feature to send and manage link partner emails. The greatest benefit of this tool is the ability to manage the entire email correspondence in one place with a highly flexible email template system.

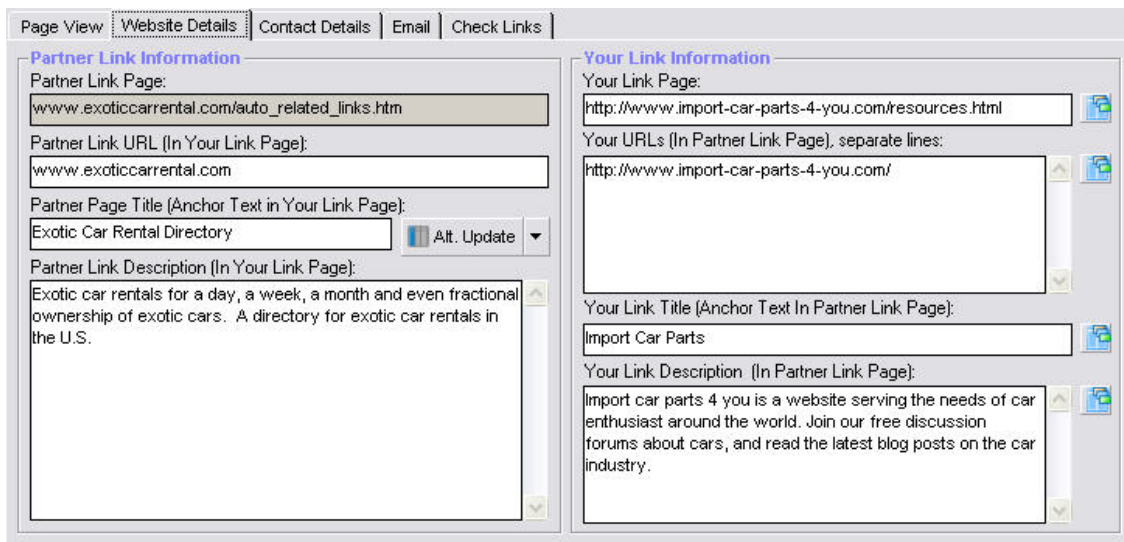
If you have followed our lesson on Link Popularity Analysis, you may recall, we have completed an inbound link review of thepartsbin.com website. We'll pick up where we have left off and transfer a few potential link partners to our Links Campaign manager where we'll walk you through the steps of retrieving contact emails, customizing email templates and managing email correspondence with link partners.

### 1. Open the Links Plus+ tool Links Campaign Manager

Let's assume we have already gathered a few websites linking to thepartsbin.com site, and now we want to retrieve the email addresses so we can contact the website owners with a link request email. Let's open the Links Campaign Manager and select one of the sites called exoticcarrental.com. The next step is to retrieve at least one email address from the website so we can contact the webmaster using the Links Plus+ link request email feature. On the screen below, you see the Links Campaign manager and the red highlighted buttons we have used to retrieve the email address from exoticcarrental.com



In this step we need to input our link details before we open the email editor as seen on this screenshot below.

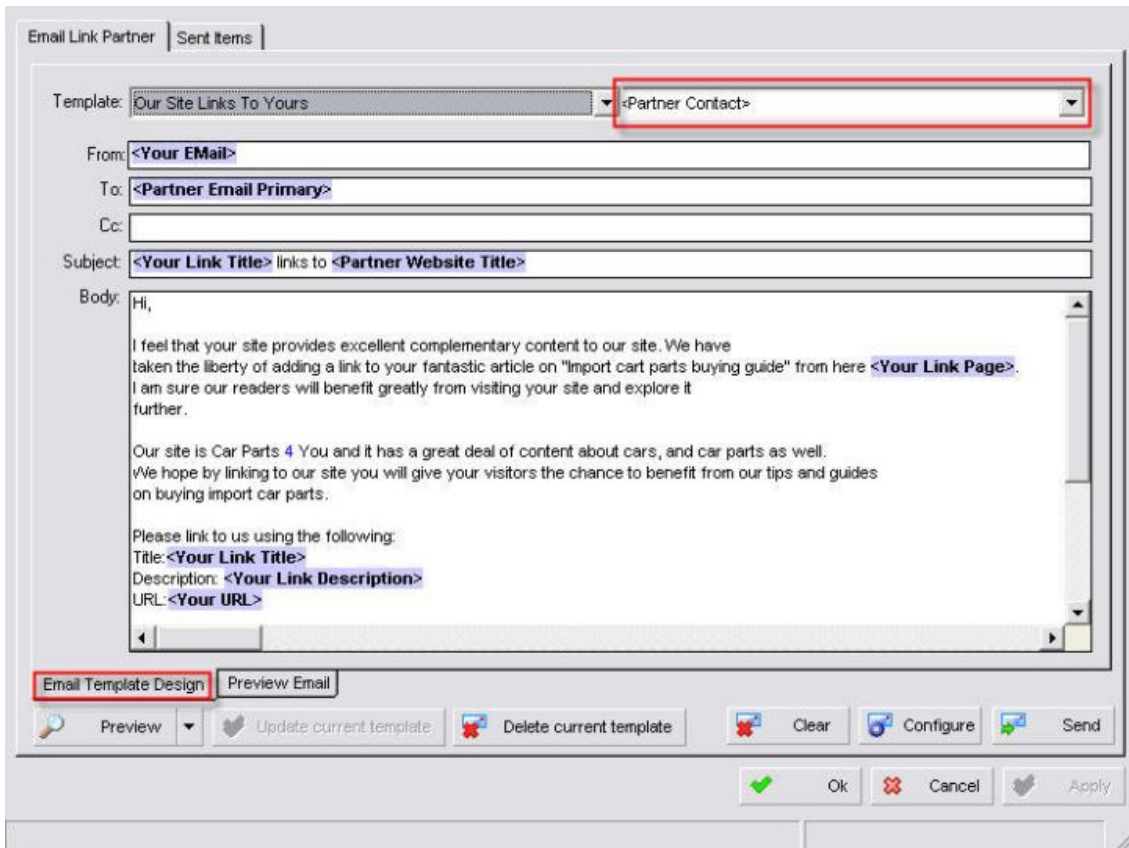


Now we are ready to compose an email using the Links Plus+ email template tool. Navigate to the "Email" tab in the Links Campaign manager and click on the "Email Link Partners" button as illustrated below.



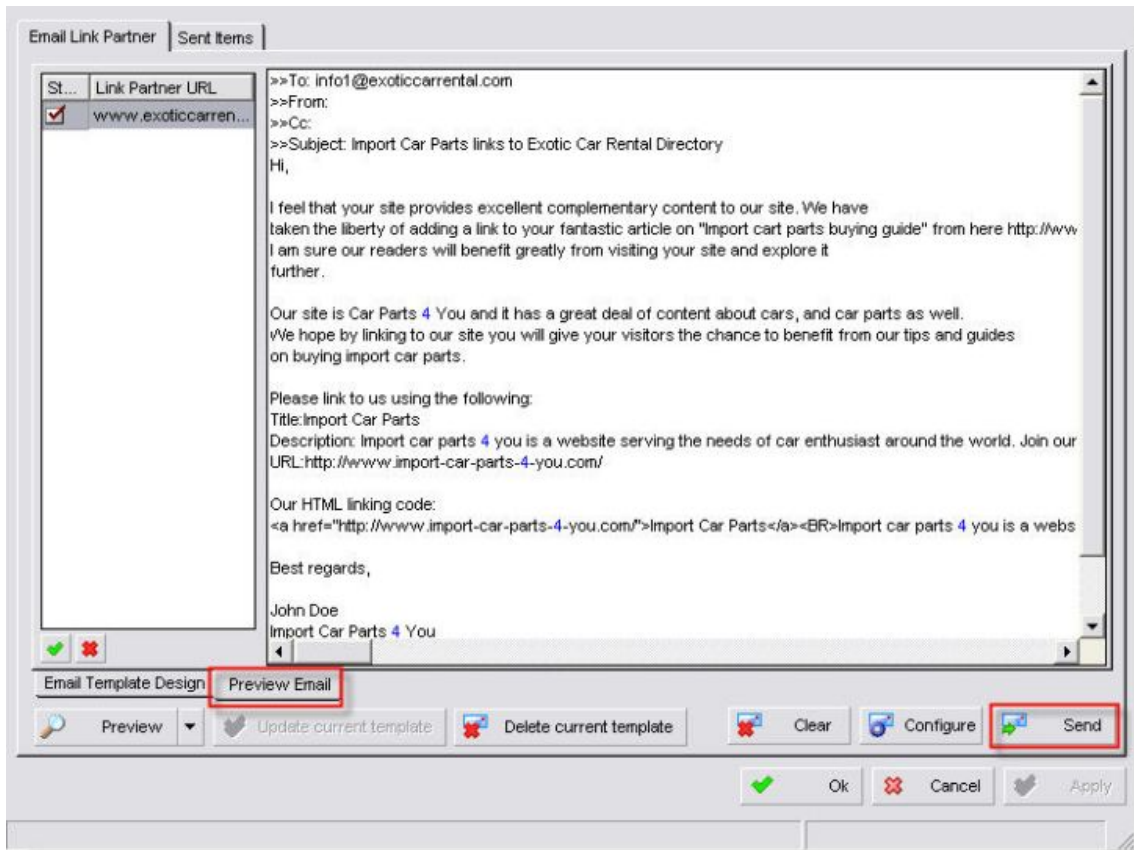
The screen shot below displays the email template editor in design mode. We have prepared a link request email in Microsoft Word and copied and pasted the content of the email into the email editor.

We have also used the email "Variables" drop down box to select and insert placeholders for our link request contact and link details. Please note the gray shaded variable names will be filled in with the proper contact and link information from the Website Details tab.



Let's preview our link request email by clicking on the Preview Email button as seen bellow. As you can see the contact and link details are automatically inserted in the email for us from the Website Details tab. All we have to do now is to hit the send button.

Wasn't this easy? It will take a bit of getting used to this tool, but once you master it, it can save you literally hours of tedious email preparation. The best part is, the Links Plus+ tool can send out multiple emails based on the same template simultaneously. The only limitation to how many emails you can send at the same time is your ISP's emailing policy.



## Verifying your links

In the world of link exchanges there are a lot of people who will try to take advantage of your good will and remove your link after they post it. This gives them an unfair advantage of a one-way link while you are getting nothing back in return. From time to time you must go back to your link partners' resource pages and check on your links. It doesn't have to be every day, but you should schedule a link check at least once a month. Once again you have a choice of doing the link check manually or using the Links Plus+ built in link checker to save you time.

## Paying for links

While link exchanges are still a somewhat effective means of getting your website's link popularity off the ground, a much more effective method albeit costly is the purchase of one-way rented or permanent links to gain link popularity. The reason is search engines give one-way links much more weight in their ranking algorithms than reciprocated links.

However, the search engines [frown upon link buying](#). Paid links hurts their search relevancy and can artificially inflate a site's link popularity without actually "earning" a favorable editorial review. For the link buyers, the trick is to find those publishers whose link pages have not been discovered to be selling links by the search engines, which can be a difficult job for even seasoned SEOs. So, it's quite possible some webmasters are paying for links that don't actually deliver any link reputation benefit due to specific filters put on the site selling links.

We are in favor of paying for links when it makes economical sense for the website owner and other promotional methods are not a practical route to take. Our company has worked on many high profile corporate websites and buying links was the only viable option to build strong link popularity. We think Google simply doesn't have a foolproof algorithm to separate the purchased and non-purchased links, and instead they try to discount all types of paid links. In recent years, they have aggressively pursued paid link detection, and we must admit they are getting better at it each year.

The problem is Google already approves many paid links coming from directories and other authority sites. One of these examples is the Yahoo! directory. It's well known in the SEO community that a link from the Yahoo! directory confers a great amount trust and link reputation. So how can Google say paid links from other authority sites should not be counted? It seems to us there is a double standard somewhere in Google's policy on paid links.

Although you may find hundreds of sites [selling text links](#), there are only two top sites selling links that we can recommend, one of them is [Text-Link-Ads](#), and the other one is [Text Link Brokers](#), you may also want to check out [LinkAdage](#), a well known link auction website.

## Conclusion:

It's a fact. Exchanged links don't have the same link popularity building power as one-way links. The sites you select for link exchanges should be based on merit and relatedness, and not the value of their Google PageRank alone. One of the most important pieces of advice we can give you about link exchanges is to exchange links with sites that have a real business behind them with their contact information clearly displayed on the site. Verifying that the link partner's site is a legitimate business will steer you clear of link farms and low quality link networks that solely exists to distribute links and Google PageRank.

In some cases paying for links is the only alternative to exchanged links due to a site's high profile or partner relationships. All the criteria used in selecting link exchange partners also apply to buying paid links, but beware of one additional factor. The paid link detection algorithms used by the search engines can discount links from known sites selling paid links. You could be paying for links that don't deliver any link reputation to your target site.

### Previous:

- [Step 8 - Article & Directory Submissions](#)

### Next:

- [Step 10 - Web 2.0 Link Building and Viral Marketing](#)

## Step 8 - Article and Directory Submissions

### Introduction

Directory submissions have been around since the [Yahoo! directory](#) went live in the early 1990's. The crawler based search engines, including Google, Yahoo! and MSN recognize links from top Internet directories. Passing the review process by one of the editors of the top directories signals a stamp of approval and vouches for the site's quality. Getting your site listed in the [DMOZ](#) (Open Directory) and the [Yahoo! directory](#) is a sure way to gain trust and link popularity. No wonder, web directories and e-zine directories are popping up all over the web trying to make money off the directory and article submissions hype.

In recent years, directory and article submissions have become the new favorite scheme of many unscrupulous webmasters to gain link popularity. The search engines have answered back with an even tighter scrutiny of links coming from new article and junky directory sites. The hardest part of directory and article submission is to weed out the hundreds of low quality directories from the really valuable ones that actually will make a difference in your ranking. With hundreds of low quality directories competing for your submission dollars, it's a really tough job to decide where to put your money for maximum ROI.

### What to look for when submitting to directories

Here are some of the most important criteria to take into consideration when submitting to directories:

- **How difficult is it to get a listed?** The easier to get listed in the directory the more spammy sites the directory will likely contain. This can affect the "link power" you can gain from getting listed. Getting listed in the DMOZ or Yahoo! directory is tougher for a good reason. The editors are selective about the sites they let into their directory. The higher the barrier to enter a directory, the more valuable your link will become.
- **What types of sites are listed in the directory?** You can get a sense of the sites listed in a directory by visiting [MSN.com](#) and entering the command: "linkfromdomain:directory.com." If you see a lot of sites in the search results you would not want to be associated with, don't submit your listing.
- **What is the age of the directory?** The older the directory the better. Newer directories have a very low trust factor on the search engines, and your link on the directory pages may not be given any substantial link reputation.
- **What is the Google PageRank of the directory?** The higher the better obviously, but don't stop at the home page. Look deep in the category pages if the Google PageRank is distributed to all the internal category pages as well.
- **Are you able to specify your own keywords in the link anchor text?** This is probably one of the most important factors in directory submissions. If you can't specify your own anchor text to use in the directory link you may not gain as much keyword relevance from the link.
- **Are the links in the directory static and passing the Google PageRank and Link Reputation?** There are few directories that don't play by the rules and charge a significant amount of money for links that are simply useless because they contain a "nofollow" tag or are JavaScript based.
- **Do the Title tags of the category pages where your link is placed match closely your websites theme?** Take a look at the Title tag of the page where you are considering submitting your site, does the Title contain at least a few of your main target keywords, if not, look elsewhere or suggest a new category.

- **How many unique inbound links can be found to the directory?** The higher number of unique links pointing to the directory the better and the higher your chance of getting a decent amount link reputation out of your submission.
- **Are you able to add a description to your link?** A great description of your site can substantially increase the click through rate of your link in the directory, so aim for a persuasive description emphasizing a few benefits.
- **Are you able to submit multiple links under one listing?** It's a big plus to get few more links from the same directory with different link anchor text, but it's not an absolute necessity.
- **Are there more than 50 links on a category page?** Too many links on a single page dilutes the effectiveness of your own link, so check carefully and demand another page if the directory tries to put your link on a page with too many links.
- **Are there other directories on the same C Class IP address?** A trick from the early days of SEO when webmasters placed several sites on the same server and aggressively interlinked them. This trick is no longer working, so stay away from directories hosted on the same server cluster.
- **Can you enhance your listing by purchasing category sponsorship?** It's nice to sometimes have some control over where your link is placed. With a feature listing you can jump to the top of your selected category.
- **If you are looking for additional traffic, does the target directory's Alexa rank justify the submission costs?** A somewhat reliable traffic measurement tool is the [Alexa Traffic Rankings](#) for gauging traffic to any website you don't have direct access to, but still would like to know how popular it is. A web master related site with a ranking around 40 thousand could get about 500 unique visitors a day.

## Directory submission preparations

When submitting your link to any directory, you will be asked for some basic information about your site.

As a minimum most directories require the following submission information about your site:

- **URL** — This may be your home page URL, but some directories also allow you to submit your internal pages for deep linking.
- **Title** — This will be the anchor text of the link to your site so choose your keywords carefully and try to minimize the use of stopwords like "in, the, with, etc."
- **Description** — This will be the description below your link. It's important to have some of the keywords from the title of your link present here.
- **Keywords** — This should match closely the META keyword tag content of your home page. Don't use keywords here that are not used on your site.
- **Category** — You will most likely not find an exact category to submit your site to, and the categories vary from directory to directory. In these cases, try to enter a search phrase that matches your website's keyword focus into the directory's search box. In some cases your competitors are already listed in the directory, and you may want to look up the category they are listed in to help you decide on the most appropriate category.

Prepare the content of these submission fields in a text file for easy copy and pasting when it comes time to submit your link to the directories. You should use the same information for the directory submission in as many as 5–6 directories, but after that use different anchor text targeting different URLs for the next 5–6 submissions. Some directories may not allow you to change the URL pointing to your internal pages, but you should try in any case.

It may save you some time to fill out link submission forms automatically with a handy web browser based tool called [RoboForm](#).

## A helpful list of general Internet Directories to consider for submission

We have compiled a detailed list of top quality [Internet directories](#) with their Google Page rank, total number of Google backlinks and finally their Alexa rank to help you gauge the amount of visitor traffic you can expect from these directories.

Our own website is listed in many of these directories, the cost can range from free to a few hundred dollars. Trendmetrix also maintains its own [internet directory](#) called **Root Directory.org**.

We suggest you start from the top of this directory list and decide how much you can afford to spend. If you have a small budget you may want to skip over the Yahoo! directory submission as it is nearly \$300 per year. You are probably better off spending money on 10 smaller directory submissions from our list.

## Niche directories and trade directories

If you have followed our example in the [Link Popularity Analysis](#) lesson and used the Links Plus+ tool to find links to your competitors' sites, you may have come across links that are from trade directories or loosely related categories of link pages. These are excellent submission opportunities to get your own site listed in as long as the theme of the directory matches your site's theme. You can use the search engines to find the most appropriate directories for submission.

Try this on Google: ["import car parts" + "directory."](#) When the query results show up, there will be a lot of directory sites such as business.com and jayde.com. You can try the same search query with your own keywords and simply add directory to the end of the search phrase.

The manual search can work well, but the fastest way to find these niche directories is to use the Links Plus+ tool's keyword search feature in combination with "Link Suggestion Form Search Terms." The reason this approach works well is because the directory submission pages contain search terms like these: "add a site," "suggest a site," "and submit your site" etc.

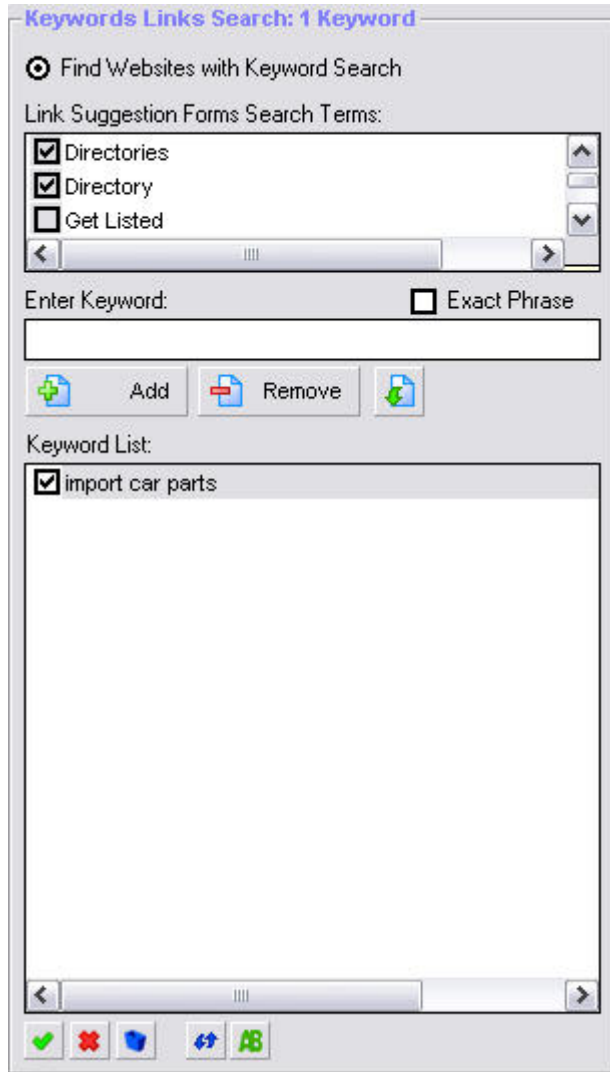
## Finding web directories where your site should be listed

Using the Links Plus+ tool to find niche and general directories can substantially cut the time needed to locate and submit to these directories. Here is a quick step by step method to get started.

### 1. Open the Links Plus+ tool and search for directories

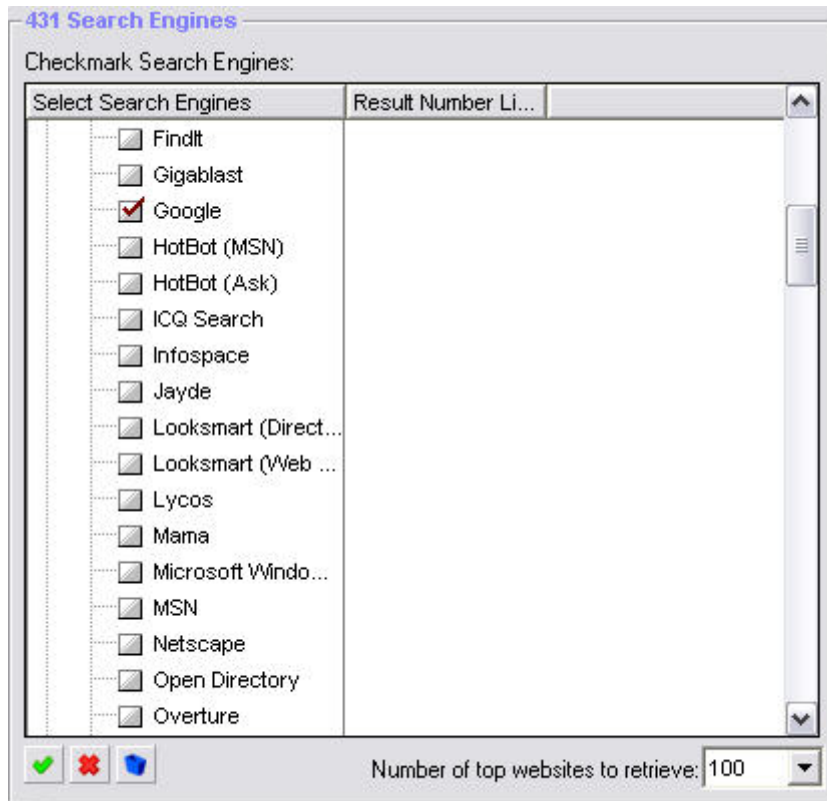
Enter the target keywords for your website and select a few "Link Suggestion Form Search Terms." In this example, we have entered the keyword "import car parts" and checkmarked the search modifiers "add a link" and "add a site."





*Entering search keywords and selecting link, and directory search modifiers in Links Plus.*

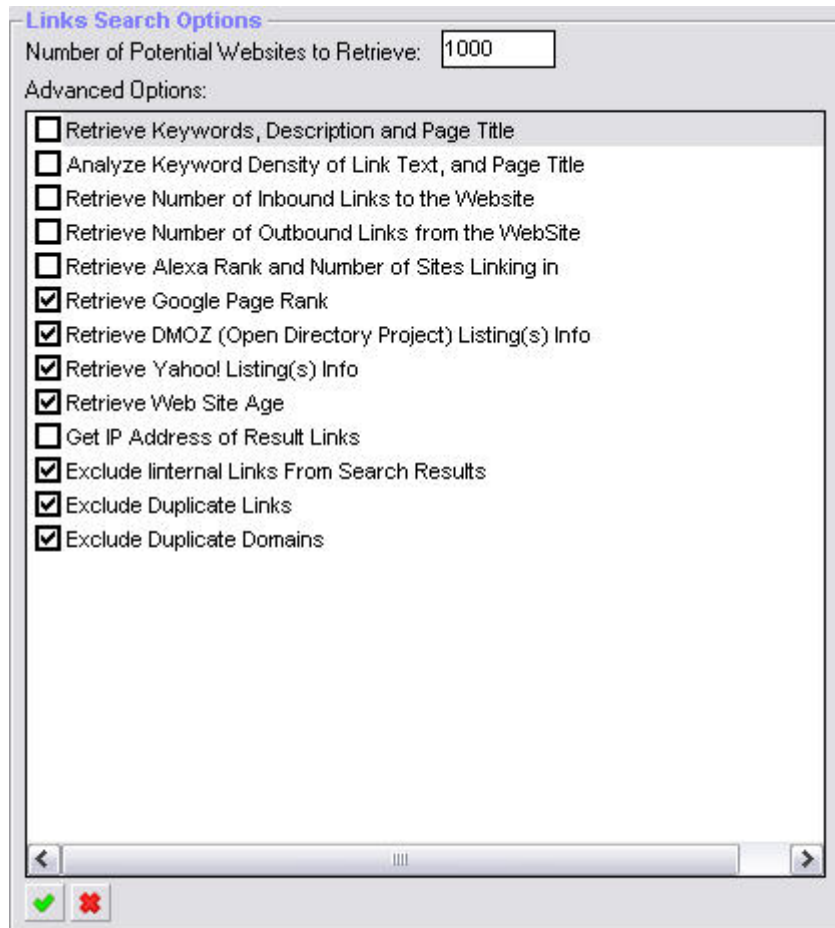
Select Google in the search engine list, but you can also select any of the 431 search engines that accept English language search queries in this example.



*Selecting the search engines for the keyword search in Links Plus.*

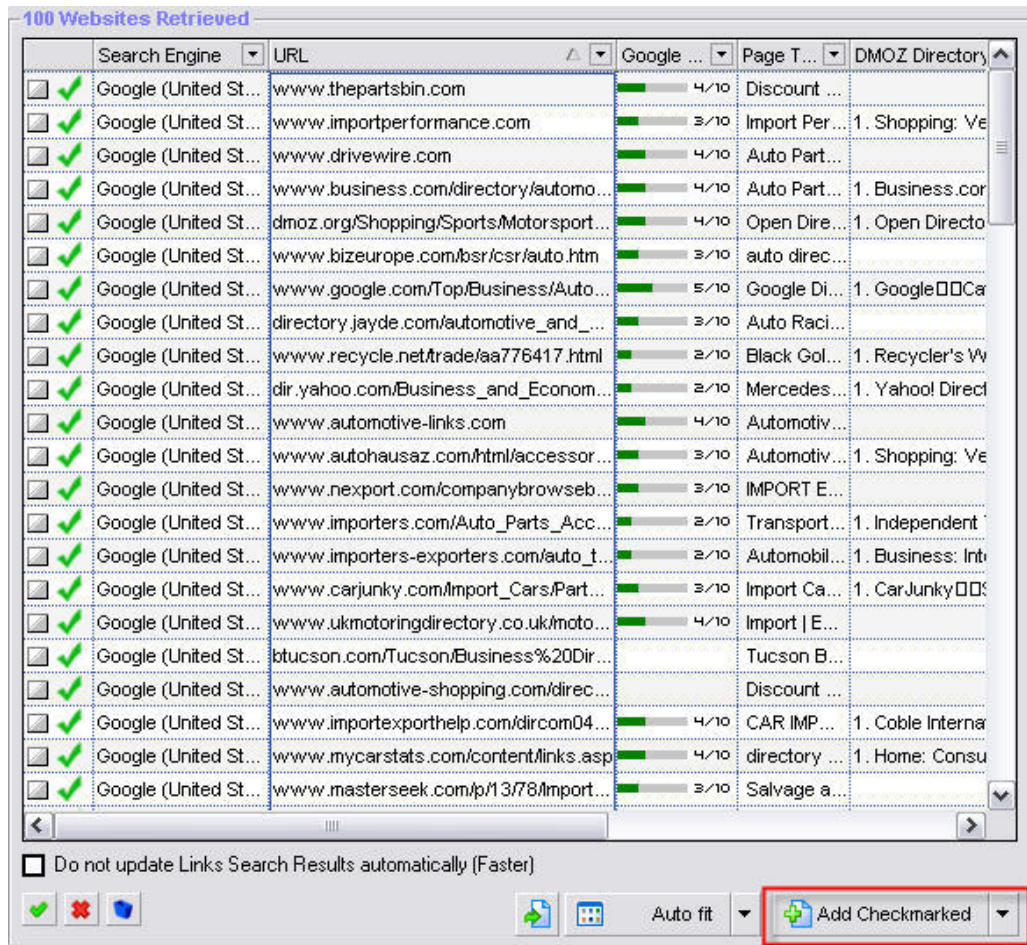
Open the Advanced window tab and select the link analysis data shown below. Please note, once again we have decided to exclude duplicate links and internal links to clean up the search to speed up the review process.

When you have selected the options below, hit the Start button to begin the keyword search on Google looking for potential directories and link partners that match our example website's keyword theme, in this case "import car parts."



*Selecting some advanced options in Links Plus.*

When the Links Plus+ tool starts returning the results, you should see a window similar to the one below. Notice most of the links are listed in the DMOZ directory, which is an added benefit of getting listed on these sites if you have a website that's automotive related. You can use similar search techniques with the Links Plus+ tool to find web directories and links that are the most suited to your market segment.

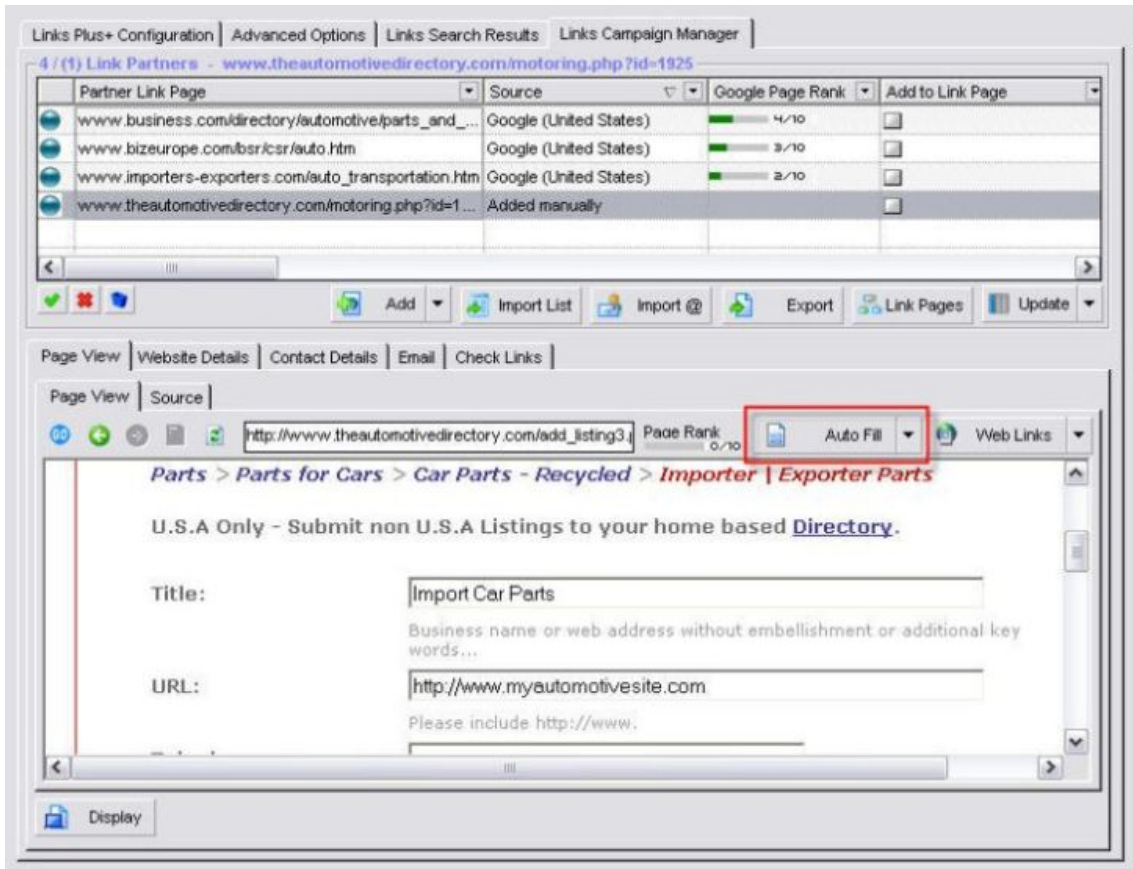


The results returned in Links Plus+ from Google in response to the query ["import car parts" + "directory."](#)

## 2. Submit your link to the selected directories

Now that you have reviewed some of the directories you would like to consider for submission, it's time to transfer them to the Links Campaign Manager by clicking on the "Add Checkmarked" button on the screen above.

Once the transfer of the selected sites is complete, you should see a window similar to the one below in the Links Campaign Manager. We have decided to submit our link to [www.theautomotivedirectory.com](http://www.theautomotivedirectory.com) directory using the Auto Fill will automatically insert our website details into the web form. At this point our directory submission is complete, and all we have to do is hit the Submit button on the form.



Using the automatic submission form filling function in Links Plus to speed up directory and link partner submissions.

## Article submissions

Are you a good writer? Do you know your market segment inside out? If the answer is yes, then nothing should stop you from creating more valuable content for the web, but this time with a twist. Instead of uploading your new web pages to your site, you will submit them as articles to major e-zine sites so they can publish them for you. You may be already wondering why you would want to give away high quality content to "complete strangers" for nothing in return.

Aha, but what if we told you there is something in it for you as well. You get to insert your own "resource box" at the bottom of your articles. What is a "resource box"? It's a mini bio of you and a small description of your business with a link back to your site. In many cases, you have complete control over the "anchor" text and the URL you choose to link back to on your site. This is a great way to increase the "deep link ratio" of your link popularity.

Isn't this a good deal? We think so, providing you follow our simple step by step guide on how to write your articles and how to submit them and most importantly where to submit them.

It's a win-win deal for you and the article publishers as well. The article publishing directories need your content for their members to read so they can monetize your articles with

advertising space surrounding your articles, and you also gain some direct traffic, but most importantly you increase your site's link popularity. In some cases the search engines may even rank the article at the top of the search results or at least in the top 10 if enough people find it useful. They may even point links to your article.

## A well written article is not an infomercial for your website

The writing style for articles is much different from writing website content. The articles that get the most views on e-zine sites are those that help the reader solve problems and provide answers to their questions. Striking the right cord with your readers will make or break your articles. If your article smells like a sales copy, your readers may not even finish the first paragraph.

You have to ensure your article stays on topic without ever talking about your product or services directly. It's not an easy task, but if you want your articles to be approved by the e-zine editors you have to follow their rules. This means no blatant advertising and self promotion allowed.

## The structure of your articles

Article writing is not magic, but there are some rules you have to follow to have great success with them, here are the most important ones:

- **Article Title** should be a maximum 110 characters including all spaces and hyphens, which is about 12 words or less. Make the title catchy, but at the same time think of incorporating your keywords into them. This will become the title of the actual page as well where your article is published. Good title tags are intriguing and memorable. Try using these words in your title: "how to," "top 10 reasons," "the truth about..."
- **Abstract or Summary Description** can be a maximum of about 500 characters. There are no hard rules on how many words the abstract should contain, but about 60–70 words should be more than enough. Make the abstract an enticing intro to your article that hooks the publisher and spurs them to read on.
- **Keywords** should be a collection of words that appears in your articles the most frequently. The formatting of the keywords is very similar to the META keywords on your web pages, which are comma separated.
- **Article Body** should be about 600-800 words long, but it depends a great deal on the publishers' requirements. Some publishers want in depth articles of over 2,000 words. You have to experiment with the most suitable article length for your topics, but don't try to box yourself into a specific rule for article length.
  - **Your article should be written with no HTML formatting** as most article submission sites may not accept HTML formatted articles. If you have written your articles in Microsoft Word, convert them to plain text prior to submission.
  - **Include your main keywords in your articles similar to the way we have discussed in the Page Optimization lesson.**
  - **No advertorials**, or blatant self promotion allowed in the article body.
  - **No links in the article body to your own site or affiliate sites**, but text links that are not formatted as "live" links may be allowed to resource sites in the body.
- **Resource Box** should contain about 30–40 words. This is where you can talk about yourself and your business preferably in the third person. Provide no more than 2 live links to your site, at least one of them should be formatted with your website address as the anchor text, in case the publisher doesn't allow "live links." A live

link is a clickable link and not simply text. Here is an example of a "live link,"s [www.mysite.com](http://www.mysite.com) and this is a non "live link" [www.mysite.com](http://www.mysite.com).

## An example of a good article ready for submission

Here is an example of how to create a framework for a well written article and getting it published. Let's suppose you own a golf training camp for young people, and you want to write a 700 word article that explains the best way to select a golf camp. Your target audience will be most likely the parents of teenagers, so your article must convince them a golf camp is the right choice for their children over a few hours of private lessons.

Your article title will be *"Golf Camps—The Right Choice For Your Teen!."*

- Your article must describe the differences between private golf instructions and golf camps in general.
- Your article also must emphasize the benefits of instructors getting to know their students and identifying their personal weaknesses and strengths.
- The article also has to address every parent's concern about the safety of the children while away from home.
- The article must talk about the organizations that certify golf camps and how the parents should check for references.
- A camp should also provide other fun activities for young people to participate in such as water sports, team sports and other types of recreations.
- And finally you will create a resource box with two links to our website, one of the links will be the actual URL of the website.

As you can see article writing is not magical, but it must have the right focus while staying clear of promotional language. We can offer you another piece of valuable advice. When you write your articles, speak out loud as you write them. We guarantee your articles will sound more natural and be easier to read.

## Submitting your articles

The hardest, and most time consuming part of article distribution is the initial set up of the logins and the actual e-zine directory site selection. Be prepared to spend a minimum of two hours on submitting to about a dozen directories and that's with the use of [RoboForm](#), which helps us automatically fill article submission forms with our article content, resource box, and keywords. Although only about 30–40 article directories out of the close to 500 are worth submitting to, it can be still a challenge to find enough time for article writing and submission.

So, let's start discussing the article directory selection process first. Most of the selection criteria that apply to directories also apply to e-zine sites, so instead of repeating them, please [click here](#) to review them. Having said that, there are some subtle differences in how we rate article directories vs. general directories. In the case of article directories, the estimated traffic we may get directly matters a great deal more since we actually want our articles to be found and read by humans as well, not just the search engines. Therefore, the most important submission factor to us, as content providers is the ability to insert live links back to our sites from the e-zine sites.

## Comprehensive article directory list

In the past few years we have collected over 400 article directory sites, and we have used the Links Plus+ tool to gather all the necessary data to rank them based on their Google PageRank, Yahoo! link popularity, Alexa ranking, and the article directory's age.

Once again we had to rely on the not so accurate Google PageRank and the somewhat skewed Alexa rankings to get some sense of popularity for a particular article directory. The article directory rankings based on these factors will not be 100% accurate, but it's still a very good gauge for us to consider whether or not we should even bother submitting our articles.

Please visit our comprehensive, 8 page [Article Submission and Ezine Directory List](#) on our website. We suggest you take a close look at the top 30–40 article directories on this list. We have had great success submitting articles to these e-zine sites for our own company and our clients.

## Conclusion

Directory and article submission are still very effective means of getting new and well established sites promoted. It should be in every web master's web promotional arsenal. However, directory submissions are very tricky as new directories are popping up almost daily and deciding which ones are worthy of your submission dollars is a real challenge. Links from new directories are scrutinized by the search engines and heavily discounted, so submitting to well established older directories is the way to go. With some careful planning and using our checklist in this lesson you should be able to maximize your submission dollars and time spent on directory submission and article publishing projects. Even if you don't consider yourself a good writer you should research topics well suited for your website's audience and hire a freelance or "ghost" writer to write your articles on your behalf. Here are a few places where you may want to look for hiring article writers: [Getafreelancer.com](#) and [eLance.com](#).

### Previous:

- [Step 7 - Acquiring Links](#)

### Next:

- [Step 9 - Link Exchanges and Paid Links](#)



## Step 10 - Web 2.0 Link Building and Viral Marketing

### Introduction

Finally, we have arrived at the last frontier of improving your website's ranking on the search engines. We are talking about riding the waves of the social revolution of the Internet. The truly democratic nature of the web started to shine through a few years ago when new socially focused applications started to surface. First there was the launch and popularity of the blogosphere world. Your site could gain instant publicity with well written insightful blog posts in days or weeks instead of years using traditional old school press releases and other paper based media. Who wouldn't want to receive some free publicity and a steady stream of visitors for being opinionated and funny? 10 years later, the blogging world is stronger than ever, and we'll show you some quick and easy ways to get started.

In recent years [Blogger](#), [Myspace](#), [Facebook](#), [Wiki](#), [You Tube](#) and many social tagging, and book marking sites such as [Delicious](#) and [Stumble Upon](#) had become very popular. A new breed of web promotion techniques has been developed utilizing these sites as a launching pad for gaining visitors and link popularity on the search engines. We'll cover in detail which methods can give you the biggest return on your investment.

### Blogging with SEO in mind

A few years ago, blogging was considered a hobby of sort by people who had a lot of free time to spare and very little substance to add. Now, businesses without a blog are looked on with a certain level of dismay as some type of outcast of the web world. Their clients and suppliers are probably all wondering if they simply don't have anything to say, or they are just plain lazy and don't care. It's really not a question of, if you need a blog, but when you need it. If you don't have a blog yet, you owe it to yourself to develop one and post regularly right away.

It turns out web blogs are not only a great way to keep in touch with you clients and business partners, but it's also an excellent way to expand the content on your website. Every new blog post becomes a unique URL on your site and gets indexed just like any other web page without any additional effort on your part.

The search engines love content, so it make sense, the more content you have on your site's main topics, the wider variety of keywords are likely used somewhere in the title or body of the web blog. This directly increases the chance for other keyword combinations to rank well and to bring in a few extra visitors every month which ties into the concept of "long tail" keywords. The long tail keywords are those that are usually more than 3 to 4 words in length and only come up in the searches very rarely compared to the mainstream keywords. The most important benefit of the long term keywords is the high conversion rates since these keywords are extremely focused. Although the number of searches may be very low for long tail keywords, but attaining top ranking for a few hundred of long tail keywords can guarantee thousands of well targeted visitors to your site every month.

The other quantifiable benefit of blogging is the potential increase of deep links to your blog posts. When other websites find your blog posts valuable you may earn unsolicited one-way deep links to the inner pages of your site, which are the best kind of links you can get.

**Here are a few tips to get started with blogging:**

- **Pick a blogging service or setup your own blog.** One of the most popular blogging services is [Blogger.com](#). It's owned by Google and it only takes a few

minutes to get started. The biggest drawback is the lack of customization ability and the fact that it's located on a different domain from the one you already own. The free alternative blogging option is installing [WordPress](#) on your website, but you will need to have a fair bit of technical know how to set it up properly. The other paid blogging platform alternatives are [Movable Type](#) and [TypePad](#) which directly compete with WordPress.

- **Successful blogs concentrate on a very specific topic.** It's easy to wonder of topic sometimes and it can be even a good thing to take a break from rehashing what others already covered, but 90% of your posts should deal with your market segment's news topics. You can write about your industry, current changes, and any insider knowledge you may have. It's also ok to be opinionated and funny, but avoid bad mouthing your competitors or posting extreme views you may regret later.
- **Pick catchy headlines that promise some tangible benefit to the readers with your keywords in mind.** You can easily double or triple the clickthroughs of your blog posts with well written keyword rich headlines that are also a magnet for the search engines. The headline of your blog post will become the title tag for the web page it will be posted on, so it's essential to come up with titles that have some of your main or secondary keywords in them.
- **Write from personal experience with a story line.** We are all sick and tired of self serving promotions and marketing fluffs, so give your readers a reason to come back again and again. Write from personal experiences that can relate to your blog's audience. If it could happen to you it can happen to them as well. Tell them how you solve complex problems in your business that can demonstrate your expert knowledge, resourcefulness and professionalism.

## Submitting your blog's RSS feed to important blog aggregators

The next important phase is to get your blog promoted on blog search engines, blog directories, and feed aggregators. Although there are hundreds of blog search engines out there, you should concentrate on handful to get the most publicity for your blog with the least amount of effort. We are going to list a few top blog directory sites that you should consider submitting to. Blog directory submissions are little bit different from submitting your site to other general directories.

The blog search engines are interested in indexing the so called RSS ("Really Simple Syndication") feed of your blog. An RSS feed is a format that publishers use to publish new and updated content that blog aggregators can easily import into their databases. An RSS feed URL looks something like this: *myblogURL/atom.xml* or *myrblogURL/rss.xml*. The XML based file will contain all your posts, their dates and a short summary for each post.

## Selecting blog directories and submitting your blog

If your site is already indexed by Yahoo!, Google, or MSN, there is most likely no need to submit your blog's RSS feed. All the three search engines can index your blog posts in RSS format and the only thing you have to do is to notify them with a "ping" from your blog when you have new content posted.

For example, you can let Google know you have new content posted using this URL <http://blogsearch.google.com/ping/RPC2> or Yahoo! at this URL <http://api.my.yahoo.com/rss/ping>.











Her is a list of blog submission sites you should consider getting your blog listed in.

Blog Submission Sites
<a href="#">Feedburner</a>
<a href="#">Bloglines</a>
<a href="#">Typead</a>
<a href="#">Blogstreet</a>
<a href="#">Blogarama</a>
<a href="#">Syndic8</a>
<a href="#">Boingboing</a>
<a href="#">Search4rss</a>
<a href="#">Icerocket</a>
<a href="#">Feedminer</a>
<a href="#">2rss</a>
<a href="#">Technorati</a>

## Getting your blog readers to spread the word

Your blog readers can be your best assets when it comes to promoting your blog and your website. People want to share valuable information with others, and if your blog posts are interesting, your readers will gladly submit them to social media and bookmarking sites. We have listed a few top social media sites, their icons and submit URLs so you can incorporate them into your blog. The best place to insert these icons is the bottom of each blog post linking to the URL of the post. You may need to do a bit of programming in your blogging software to create the submission hyperlinks on the fly, but its well worth the effort.

The most popular social media and bookmarking sites and their submission pages:

-  - **Stumble Upon** <http://www.stumbleupon.com/url/your-blogpost-url>
-  - **Yahoo! Bookmarks**  
<http://myweb2.search.yahoo.com/myresults/bookmarklet?u=your-blogpost-url&=your+blog+post+title>
-  - **Sphere** <http://www.sphere.com/search?q=sphereit:your-blogpost-url&title=your+blog+post+title>
-  - **Magnolia** <http://ma.gnolia.com/bookmarklet/add?url=your-blogpost-url&title=your+blog+post+title>
-  - **Digg** <http://digg.com/submit?phase=2&url=your-blogpost-url&title=your+blog+post+title>
-  - **Technorati** <http://technorati.com/faves?add=your-blogpost-url>
-  - **Netscape** <http://www.netscape.com/submit/?U=hyour-blogpost-url&T=your+blog+post+title>
-  - **Reddit** <http://reddit.com/submit?url=your-blogpost-url&title=your+blog+post+title>
-  - **Newsvine** <http://www.newsvine.com/tools/seed&save?u=your-blogpost-url&h=your+blog+post+title>
-  - **Fark** [http://cgi.fark.com/cgi/fark/edit.pl?new\\_url=your-blogpost-url&new\\_comment=your+blog+post+title=your-domain&linktype=Misc](http://cgi.fark.com/cgi/fark/edit.pl?new_url=your-blogpost-url&new_comment=your+blog+post+title=your-domain&linktype=Misc)

-  - Spurl <http://www.spurl.net/spurl.php?url=your-blogpost-url&title=your+blog+post+title>
-  - Delicious <http://del.icio.us/post?url=your-blogpost-url&title=your+blog+post+title>
-  - Slashdot <http://slashdot.org/bookmark.pl?title=your+blog+post+title&url=your-blogpost-url>
-  - Furl <http://www.furl.net/storeit.jsp?u=your-blogpost-url&t=your+blog+post+title>

You may want to do some CSS formatting and layout the icons horizontally under your blog posts like this:



Here is the CSS code to accomplish this:

```
<ul style="display: inline;">
<li style="display: inline; list-style-type: none;"> the first icon goes here
</li>
<li style="display: inline; list-style-type: none;"> the next icon goes here
</li>
</ul>
```

## Effective viral marketing with Delicious and Stumble Upon



You are no doubt already familiar with the concept of book marking important pages for easy retrieval using your web browser. It's called "Favorites" in Internet Explorer and "Bookmarks" in Firefox, but the name should not matter. The bottom line is, until now nobody else could have access to your own bookmarks since they are stored on your PC's hard drive. Now, with the web 2.0 revolution we have a way to make our bookmarks public for everyone else to see and discover. It's a very neat concept and the growing popularity of [Delicious](#) and [Stumble Upon](#) proves that it's here to stay. Stumble upon has close to 3 million registered users and Delicious boast about the same. That's a lot of eyeballs that can potentially see your bookmarks and your own website. The avalanche of visitors that can result from a single blog post or the release of a new freebie can be somewhat scary. It's not uncommon to see 3,000 or more visitors arrive on a single web page within a few hours after it has been stumbled or bookmarked by a large number of Delicious or Stumble Upon users.

[Signing up](#) with Stumble Upon is easy and fast. Once you have signed up, download the [Stumble Upon toolbar](#). Now, you are ready to add any page to Stumble Upon instantly. Navigate to your own site and click on the "I like it!" button on the toolbar and you can complete the submission process by specifying a title and appropriate keyword tags.

Delicious also has a toolbar, and after [signing up](#), you can use the "Post to Delicious" feature right away to bookmark your sites in your Internet Explorer or Firefox browser.

Now let's get to the most important benefits of signing up [Delicious](#) and [Stumble Upon](#):

- **Short, but high volume of traffic resulting from stumbles and bookmarks discovered by other users.** When you bookmark or "stumble" your own web sites, you are giving other users a chance to discover your site. Beyond the bookmarking aspects, users can perform searches on other user's bookmarked sites based on the keyword tags used to describe that site. So, it very important to properly categorize your site when submitting it to Delicious and Stumble Upon. The users can also rate websites with thumbs up or thumbs down with the [Stumble Upon toolbar](#). This helps to create a consensus about a site's quality and it's completely driven by user input.
- **Increased link popularity can result from other users linking to your site from their own bookmarks or their own websites.** It's not uncommon for other users to add your site to their own bookmarks or even provide links back to your site if it has something really useful to offer. It's important that you submit your site only after it's completely finished. Stumble Upon and Delicious users are a fickle, sophisticated bunch and are attracted to interesting news, good site design, and unique content and concepts. In order to keep earning links to your site, you have to develop new, unique content on an ongoing basis.
- **Join other groups and check out bookmarks of other users with similar interests.** Getting involved in the community aspect of the social bookmarking sites can guarantee you a higher exposure and more traffic. First bookmark other users' sites you like and respect. In return they will most likely do the same. The key is to get involved as much as you can and provide feedback and reviews of sites. A great number of users on Stumble Upon and Delicious are there because they want to socialize and not necessarily promote their business. The more you can demonstrate your commitment to the community, the better your chances are of getting recognized by others.

Keep in mind the searches on [Delicious](#) and [Stumble Upon](#) are going to be less targeted than searches performed on Google because the searches rely on the user's ability to categorize and tag websites properly. There are bound to be some unrelated sites creeping into the search results when users conduct searches with your target keyword. So you may not always receive the most targeted traffic, but overall, it's an excellent source for a quick burst of visitors to your site.

## Facebook powers the new social revolution



You may or may not have heard of [Facebook.com](#), but if you haven't, it's time for an introduction to the next big phase of the World Wide Web and internet marketing. A few years ago social website memberships started to explode, and the marketing community started to take notice. It started with MySpace which Google actually purchased a few years ago. Now we are in the midst of a new web 2.0 application revolution as devoted fans flock to Facebook by the millions every day, about 31 million to be exact. Although Myspace is still growing and valued at close to 10 billion dollars, the Facebook founders have just turned down a 1 billion dollar offer from Yahoo!.

With millions of people online poking around, making new connections, and posting on each other's "walls," there is a huge opportunity for businesses to embrace this new medium and

promote their companies. Facebook may seem like the online hangout for college kids, but Facebook attracts people from all demographics and age groups from around the world. There are certainly a fair number of 30, 40, and 50 year old professionals and non-professionals singing up lately who embrace the social aspect of Facebook, but the real question is, "How can you harness the power of a wildly successful social site like Facebook to your advantage and forge new business connections?"

You must remember the true power of Facebook lies in the personal relationships you forge with new people and groups you find through the hierarchies of friends and groups you discover through search and other member profiles. Facebook gives you the opportunity to explore every other member's profile, their friends, and the groups they belong to unless they explicitly block you or place limitations on what the public can see through their privacy settings in Facebook.

The recipe for successful Facebook business promotion:

- **Create a personal profile.** The first step is of course to sign up. Next you will need to create your own personal profile. It's very important that you do a very thorough job by completing every possible section, especially the personal section. Almost everyone wants to know more about you. They want to know what your hobbies are, what your favorite music is among other things to get a sense of what they have in common with you. Make sure you also complete the Basic, Contact, and Work information with up-to-date information on what you do and how people can get in touch with you. It's important that you complete the Work section with the company and website address you are currently promoting.
- **Build up your network and make friends everywhere.** Next you will need to search for friends, family and colleagues you already know and invite them to become part of your network of friends. You can use the Facebook search feature to find friends or business associates whom you have lost connection with.
- **Start making some interesting new post on your wall about your blog, business or website.** Create a catchy introduction for your website and provide a direct link to it on your wall. Talk a bit about what it's about and what it has to offer. This is your personal page, so you don't need to write an infomercial, but do let others know what you are working on right now.
- **Create a new group and set up a discussion group about the theme of your website or business.** You may want to check out other groups first on the same topic to gauge the level of professionalism and popularity. You can find out a group's popularity by the number of members, the total number of discussions posts and replies. If you like any of the groups, feel free to join them as long as they are not your direct competitors. Now it's time to set up your own group. Write an enticing description detailing specific benefits the group has to offer. Don't forget to fill in your website address, contact information and upload a group picture or logo. Be sure to check you have rights to use the picture for the group. Now it's time to add a welcome message and your first post to the discussion board. Talk about something current in your industry, but nothing too controversial. It can be any topic that invites an honest discussion and lot of questions.
- **Invite people to join from your personal group to join your new group if you feel they would be interested.** You have to start from somewhere and getting some people you already know to join your group is the easiest way to get started. Once your group gains some traction try to make the group more interesting by holding contests, off line meetings and inviting experts in your fields to post articles or give interviews.
- **The power of the "My Notes Section."** Just like in the blogging world, Facebook has its own XML/RSS/ATOM feed that is being fed by your notes directly to your home page. This is very important, because anyone who visits your profile will see your notes and can visit your site or special offer URLs. Post notes regularly about

anything interesting on your site, such as contests, a new section or product or a sales special.

- **Create a Facebook application gadget.** This promotion option can be especially valuable if you are developing websites for a living and have a good grasp on server side scripting languages like .NET, PHP, ASP, CGI, PERL, etc. Even if you are not a developer, you can come up with an idea for a new Facebook application. A Facebook application is an add-on to the existing Facebook interface, and it's an enhancement of the core features of Facebook. Some applications have over a million users, which is very substantial and can result in a flood of traffic for your sites.

You can post your idea for a new Facebook application project on [GetaFreeLancer.com](http://GetaFreeLancer.com) or [RentCoder.com](http://RentCoder.com). One very important advice when you post a project. Keep your project hidden from the public so only the bidders and you can see it. You never know who wants to steal your idea and if you didn't patent it, it's too late if someone comes out with it first.

## Conclusion

Getting social and participating in different web communities is the next big wave of traffic generation on the Internet. Google made the Internet a searchable asset for millions of people around the world by ranking websites according to relevance. The next web traffic revolution will be in the communities that are determining the value and ranking of websites based on the users' opinions and participation instead of relying on machines to create the ranking order.

Anyone who ignores the millions of people who regularly visit blogs, social bookmarking, social media, and community sites is missing a huge untapped market and potential targeted visitors. Don't get us wrong, SEO is here to say as long as there is a need for people to search. With the staggering growth of the number of websites online, there will be even stiffer competition for the top spots on the search engines in every keyword category. Visitors from social media sites can be viewed as an extension of your SEO campaign to reach potential customers who are not actively searching for your products or services, but nonetheless participating in related web communities.

### Previous:

- [Step 9 - Link Exchanges and Paid Links](#)

### Next:

- [Step 11 - Rank Checking](#)

## Step 11 - Rank Checking

### Introduction

One of the rewards of a well optimized website is the increase in search engine ranking. Search engine rankings can fluctuate a great deal almost on a daily basis, and keeping an accurate record of rankings over time is very important. Webmasters want to ensure they get an accurate picture of their own website's position in order to react to any changes in search engine algorithms or competing website strengths.

Websites that rely on visitor traffic from the search engines for leads, sales, and any other types of search engine marketing want to know how well their target keywords are performing. Whether you are in the middle of a campaign targeting new keyword phrases for a well established website, or your site has just passed the first month of being online, you want to get an accurate report of your rankings.

In addition to checking on your own rankings, you may also want to check on your competition from time to time to see if they are gaining or losing positions compared to your own rankings.

### The manual and automatic rank checking options

We don't think we have to state the obvious, manually checking your search engine rankings is time consuming and tedious, not to mention the lack of accuracy and the record keeping aspect. The search engines can make searching for a specific site a little easier by giving users the ability to retrieve a larger search result per page, usually up to one hundred per page. Even with this advanced feature, the ranking check can take a long time to complete if you have hundreds of keywords in your list and a handful of websites. So, if you have a site that you are serious about, you can't pass up the ease and convenience of automated ranking reporting tools.

### The search engines' view of automated rank checking tools

There is one main drawback to checking your search engine rankings with automated tools. The search engines don't like automated tools downloading their search results pages without an actual human visitor seeing them. Why, you may wonder? The answer lay in the search engine's revenue model. Search engine profits are driven by the number of "eyeballs" seeing not only the natural search results, but the dozens of advertisers' ads who are bidding on the same keywords the user typed in. It's no wonder, the search engines have taken steps to limit the automated robots querying their results.

One of the methods used by the search engines to detect automated "robots" is the frequency of the query requests within a certain period of time. If the number of requests exceed a specific threshold per minute or second, the search engines block the users access temporarily based on their PCs IP address. The ban normally stays in effect until the user types in a security keyword in response to an image displayed or a specified amount of time passes without any further suspicious activity.

**Please note your own website can never be penalized for running automated queries on the engines.** It's impossible for the search engines to find out which website URL you are checking. The only information the search engines can derive from automated queries is the IP address of the PC running the queries and the keywords being used.



## How does SEO Studio address safe rank checking?

In order to avoid getting your PC's IP address banned, the SEO Studio Ranking tool offers a number of safe methods of automated rank checking.

- **The SEO Studio Ranking tool has the ability to use the legal, publicly available application interface search methods.** APIs, short for "application programming interfaces," give developers a "back door" access to their search results without "scrapping" the result pages. Not only these APIs provide safe and legal access for the developers to search results, but the developers can create online and off-line tools using these API features and offer them to the public. The SEO Studio Ranking checker can use your existing [Google SOAP API key](#) or you can [sign up for a Yahoo! Developer API key](#).
- **Using proxy servers to avoid detection of automated queries.** Public or private proxy servers hosted on external sites give you the ability to query the search engines without revealing your own IP address. If a ban occurs, the proxy servers' IP address used to query the search engines will be banned and not your own IP address. You can find public proxy servers at [Public Proxy Servers](#) or you can sign up for a paid proxy server service at [Find Not](#). You can also install a desktop based IP address concealing solution. One of our favorites is [Ghostsurf](#), a fairly inexpensive package that does a great job at hiding your PC's identity. With all of the solutions we have listed, you need to give SEO Studio the IP address of the proxy server using the Public Proxy server dialog found in the Tools>Options>Connection Settings menu path.
- **Increasing the time delay between search queries.** The search engines can easily detect the time passed between search queries, and an unnaturally high number of queries executed in a short amount of time suggests there is an automated robot behind the search queries. This is why you should increase the search query time delay to about 1,000 milliseconds as a starting point using the Connection setting options.

## Running a ranking check using SEO Studio

Once again let's illustrate the SEO Studio's Ranking tool's features with an example. Prior to opening the Ranking tool, we have already input our own Yahoo! and Google API keys in the Profile Settings screen. We have also increased the query delay between each search query to 2,000 milliseconds to avoid our PC's getting banned by the engines.

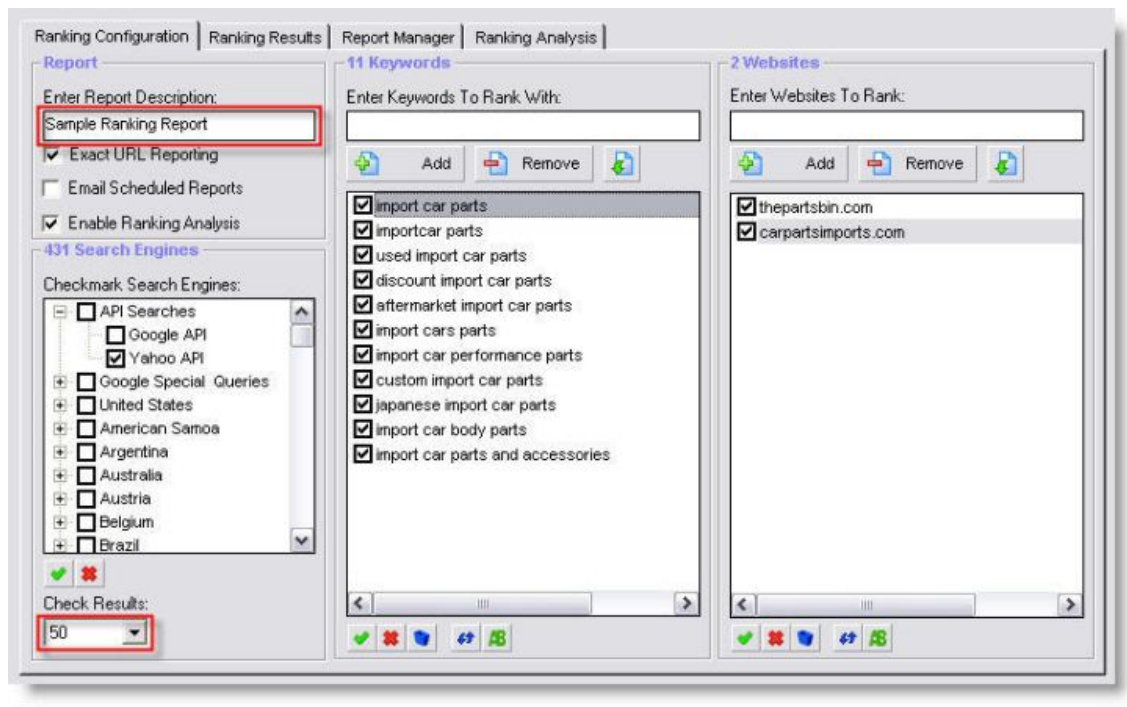
### 1. Open the Ranking Tool

First we'll name our report for easy retrieval later. Our ranking report name will be called "Sample Ranking Report." See the "Report Description" text box below.

We have selected the "Exact URL Reporting" option as well. This will enable us to view the full URL found in response to our search. For example, using the keyword "discount import car parts," the engines may return a URL that is not the home page, but a sub page on a specific domain. We'll want to know which page is ranked for that specific keyword phrase, and that is why we have checkmarked the "Exact URL Reporting" option.

We have also chosen to search up to 50 positions for our keyword phrases using the Google and Yahoo! APIs. This means SEO Studio will retrieve the first 50 search results for each keyword phrase and will check if the thepartsbin.com site and one of its competitor's site carpartsimports.com is found in the returned results.

Now, we are ready to hit the Start button to begin our search.



## Conclusion

Checking your website's ranking becomes necessary once your site achieves a minimum level of popularity and traffic. You need to get a detailed picture of your site's ranking by keyword and search engines so you can better target your optimization of specific sub pages of your website or increase inbound links to pages that needs some more "link juice" to get higher ranking. We recommend using the Yahoo! API to safely check your ranking without the risk of getting penalized.

Google doesn't currently have an API interface for rank checking. Since last year Google switched from the SOAP based API to an AJAX based API and the new AJAX search API is not suitable for rank checking. The reason the Google search AJAX API is not suitable is because it only retrieves the first 9 results. When clicking on the "Next" link to retrieve additional results pages, the API switches to the normal results pages making it impossible to retrieve ranking results. Only existing owners of SOAP API keys can use Google for rank checking since Google refuses to give out any new SOAP API keys.

The fact remains, you need to run ranking reports at least once a month with or without APIs, and there are some recommended solutions you can implement to avoid getting your IP address banned. Some of the alternative Internet connection methods include web or PC based proxy servers which can hide your PC's IP address. You should also increase the time delay between search queries to make your ranking checks search engine friendly in using the Tools>Connections menu.

**Previous:**

**Next:**

- [Step 10 - Web 2.0 Link Building and Viral Marketing](#)
- [Step 12 - Visitor Analysis](#)

## Step 12 - Visitor Analysis

### Introduction

Do you get intimidated by these jargons: "visitor analytics," "referrers," and "conversions." Although these words may seem to come out of a "techno bible," the truth is, the concepts of measuring who is visiting your site are very similar to measuring the results of any direct marketing campaign. When you spend a great deal of time and effort selecting your keywords, optimizing your pages, and building links to your site, you don't want to be left in the dark about how your search engine optimization campaign is progressing. Running ranking reports can alert you to any new algorithm changes and can give you a good idea about your competitors' strengths; however, the ranking reports will not tell you anything about who is visiting your site.

While monitoring your search engine ranking is very important to stay up-to-date on any fluctuations in your site's ranking, it's only one half of the story. The other half of the story is what happens after someone clicks on your URLs in the search results. If you don't know the answer, you owe it to yourself to invest in a server log or tag based visitor statistics tool that can give you powerful insights into your online marketing campaigns' performance.

### The advantages of visitor analysis tools

If you don't use some type of web visitors' analytics tool, you are most likely to have no idea how many visitors come to your site and which search engines referred those visitors. Without these vital statistics, how can you effectively improve your website's ranking and profitability?

Today's modern web analytic tools can provide a wealth of valuable information that can not only report basic user, referrer, and site usage information, but it can also report specific actions users have taken on your site.

Moreover, visitor statistics tools can even tell you if a "conversion" has resulted from a specific search query used to send a visitor to your site from the search engines. You are probably already familiar with the word "conversion," but in the context of visitor statistics, it may mean something completely different from what you think. A "conversion" is any action a user takes on a website. Actions can range from signing up for a newsletter, downloading, or completing a purchase on the site. Conversion improvements are one of the fundamental goals of visitor statistics tools.

We can break down the advantages of visitor statistics tools into these important categories:

- **Basic website statistics, including the number of unique and returning visitors to your site by hours, day, month or year.** This is the minimum requirement for any serious visitor statistics systems. Accurate numbers on visitor traffic volumes is key to your optimization efforts and can set a baseline for targeting new keywords or launching other web promotion campaigns.

- **Gathers referrer data of every visitor, and further breaks down the reports by search engines and keywords used.** This is probably the single most used report by search engine marketers. It's a wonderful feeling to see your optimization efforts paying off by seeing hard evidence, your site is being found on the search engines using your target keywords.
- **Demographic analysis provides answer to the question, "where are my visitors coming from?"** The website visitors can literally leave a trail of evidence behind them about their location and their PC's configuration. A good analytics package should be able to report not only the IP address of the visitors accessing your site, but the actual location, down to the city and state level.
- **Live reporting of visitors on your site.** It's not an absolute requirement, but if you are investing in pay-per-click campaign and testing new keywords, it's essential to get an immediate picture of how well your PPC campaigns are doing. You can analyze in real time how different groups of visitors respond to your campaign landing pages, page layouts, offers and discounts.
- **Reports page views, bounce rates and visitor click paths.** Increasing your website's "stickiness" is achieved through improved usability and publishing great content. The more pages your visitors "see," the higher the page views score will be. The bounce rate is the measure of a single page load. This could be the home page or any other page on your site. A bounce is said to occur when a visitor exits you site from the same page he entered on. Higher bounce rate means, the site has some navigational flaws or doesn't have the right appeal to get visitors to click through to other pages.  
The click paths can pinpoint confusing page layouts and unappealing content pages. Determining which pages on your site help your bottom line and which ones hurt your profitability is very important. By studying the most common exit paths from your site, you can quickly discover which pages are driving people away from your site.
- **Conversion reporting helps to continually improve search engine marketing and increase your bottom line.** Web statistics systems should be able to monitor both organic and PPC referrer results and separate them into drill down reports. A further segmentation of the organic and PPC results is necessary by search engine and keyword to get a complete picture of your search engine marketing ROI breakdown. Getting a glimpse into which campaigns are successful and which aren't, from email and online advertising to affiliate and partner programs, is also an important consideration. You can achieve substantial increase in web site conversion by finding out the conversion rates for each page, path, and conversion scenario.

## Conclusion

There is a wealth of information buried in your web server logs about your visitors and their navigational patterns. Most importantly, you want to identify trends in your website's traffic which can be traced back to your search engine optimization campaigns. This is important because optimizing your site for the right keywords can make all the difference in your website's success. The higher your site ranks for well targeted keyword phrases the higher your website traffic will climb. Remember, traffic alone is nothing without persuading your visitors to take some favorable action on your site with well laid out design and clear compelling content.

For more information on visitor analysis tools, please visit this [list of commercial log analysis products](#). The Google directory category covers most of the popular visitor statistics tools that are available for tracking your visitors. Google also offers its own visitor tracking solution for free called [Google Analytics](#). It's a very well designed package and recent improvements had made it an almost unbeatable option for visitor analysis. The only drawback is the delay in reporting is over 24 hours, which makes real-time analysis impossible. If you need a live visitor statistics program without any reporting delay, you may

want invest in a top-notch visitor statistics program such as [web-stat.com](http://web-stat.com). You can even use both tools side-by-side giving you the ultimate tool in website traffic analysis.

**Previous:**

- [Step 11 - Rank Checking](#)

**Next:**

- [Final Thoughts](#)

## Final Thoughts

What do you think? Can you apply what you have learned on these pages in your own web promotion campaign?

We hope we have made it crystal clear— **there are no secrets in SEO** no matter how many 20 page long sales letters you receive trying to sell you the "ultimate secret" to top ranking. These are just people masquerading as SEO experts, but they are not interested in your success. We can guarantee you that!

The bottom line is search engines need valuable websites like yours to display in their organic search results so they can earn money from paid searches. If you build and optimize your site with your visitors in mind, you can't go wrong. More often than not, what's good for your website visitors is also good for the search engines. But always keep in mind, the search engines are machines without any bias toward visual effects, so it's ok to build a pretty site with lots of pictures and flash, but make sure you let the search engines know what your web pages are about with an equal amount of text.

We can guarantee the most challenging part of SEO will be link building and gaining link popularity for your site. This is especially true if you are starting with a brand new site. There are too many conflicting opinions on which link building techniques work and which ones don't, not to mention the commercial interest of those involved. Just think about it. Would you not recommend directory submissions if you were an owner of a directory? Or, would you not try to discount the risks of link buying if you were selling links and making a decent living from it?

We tried to remain as unbiased as possible and present all points of views in this tutorial, but we won't hide the fact that we are in the business of SEO software development, and we'd naturally would like you to buy our software.

So now it's time for you to set the wheels in motion and have fun at it. SEO can be very rewarding. You will know what we are talking about when you see your site slowly start rising to the top. You will be guaranteed to feel a sense of accomplishment and victory over your competitors, not to mention the wonders it can do for your business and organization.

*Best of luck and have a successful SEO campaign.*

## About this guide

This SEO manual is the work of Joel Katona the CEO and the Trendmetrix Software development team. We have taken great care to present you with factual information based on publicly available sources and our own experience in SEO, but this guide is not a replacement for the search engines' own guidelines and all information subject to changes and updates by the engines. Feel free to distribute this guide to anyone you wish, all we ask is that you don't modify the content in any way.

## About the Author

With over 15 years of information technology and Internet marketing experience Joel leads a core team of search engine optimization experts and developers to deliver innovative search engine optimization software tools and professionally optimized websites.



*Joel Katona CEO  
and founder of  
Trendmetrix  
Software*

TrendMetrix Software Inc.  
1 Yonge St., Suite 1801  
Toronto, Ontario M5E 1W7 Canada  
Tel: 1.877.867.1030  
Email: [support@trendmx.com](mailto:support@trendmx.com)

Please visit [www.trendmx.com](http://www.trendmx.com) for more information and don't forget to [leave a comment or suggestion](#) on how we can improve this SEO tutorial.

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- [Step 12 - Visitor Analysis](#)

# Glossary of Terms

## Algorithm:

A formula or a set of steps for solving a particular problem. To be an algorithm, a set of rules must be unambiguous and have a clear stopping point. Algorithms can be expressed in any language, from languages like English or French to programming languages like FORTRAN. We use algorithms every day. For example, a recipe for baking a cake is an algorithm. Most programs, with the exception of some artificial intelligence applications, consist of algorithms. Inventing elegant algorithms- algorithms that are simple and require the fewest steps possible-is one of the principal challenges in programming

## Abbr Tag

Abbr text is used for abbreviations which are shortened forms of words like HTML, FBI or WWW.

Example: <ABBR>abbr text goes here</ABBR>

## Acronym Tag

Acronym text is used for pronounceable abbreviations like NATO. It is also used for shortened forms of word like Inc. for Incorporated or Lab. for laboratory.

Example: <ACRONYM>acronym text goes here</ACRONYM>

## AdSense

Google provides website owners with a fast and effective way to display related advertising on their web pages and site search pages and earn money through profit sharing with Google. The Google's AdSense system is based on topical relevancy of the ads shown on the publishers' web pages while maximizing earning from each page Google AdSense ads are shown on. Some webmasters can earn six figure monthly income with AdSense published on their forum, or blogs.

## AdWords

Google earns the majority of their revenue from placing advertisements next to natural search results. This type of advertising is called Pay-Per-Click advertising or PPC. Advertisers bid on keywords and create small text or image based ads in using Google Adwords. When a search query is typed into the Google search box, AdWords finds ads that match the target keywords and based on the bid amounts and ad relevance it shows a sorted list of paid ads on the top and right hand side of the screen. You can sign up for [Google Adwords](#).

## API

API is the short form for Application Programming Interface and it's a set of predefined methods and protocols to build remotely hosted client applications that interact with the main host application server. Google, Yahoo and MSN have developed their own proprietary search APIs and made them available to webmasters with basic programming skills. The

query results returned by the search APIs are further parsed and processed by the client application to enhance the API results.

## BODY Text Tag

Body text is the text visible in the browser. Does not include links and tool tips.

Example: <BODY>Body text goes here</BODY>

## Bold Tag

Bold text is used as a font styling element to signify important words or sections in the web page.

Example: <B>bold text goes here</B>

## Cite Tag

Cite text is used for citations or reference to other sources.

Example: <CITE>cite text goes here</CITE>

## Domain

A name that identifies one or more IP addresses. For example, the domain name microsoft.com represents about a dozen IP addresses. Domain names are used in URLs to identify particular Web pages. For example, in the URL

http://www.pcwebopedia.com/index.html, the domain name is pcwebopedia.com. Every domain name has a suffix that indicates which top level domain (TLD) it belongs to. There are only a limited number of such domains. For example:

gov - Government agencies

edu - Educational institutions

org - Organizations (nonprofit)

mil - Military

com - commercial business

net - Network organizations

ca - Canada

th - Thailand

Because the Internet is based on IP addresses, not domain names, every Web server requires a Domain Name System (DNS) server to translate domain names into IP addresses.

## Doorway page

A page made specifically to rank well in Search Engines for particular Keywords, serving as an entry point through which visitors pass to the main content.



## EM Tag

Em text is used for emphasis and is usually displayed in italic font.  
Example: `<EM>em text goes here</EM>`

## Google API

You can use your Google API license key to perform automated queries on Google that complies with Google's term of service agreement. To access the Google Web APIs service, you must have a Google API license key. Your Google Account and license key entitle you to 1,000 automated queries per day.

## Google's Page Rank

PageRank relies on the uniquely democratic nature of the web by using its vast link structure as an indicator of an individual page's value. In essence, Google interprets a link from page A to page B as a vote, by page A, for page B. But, Google looks at more than the sheer volume of votes, or links a page receives; it also analyzes the page that casts the vote. Votes cast by pages that are themselves "important" weigh more heavily and help to make other pages "important."

## Heading Tag

Headings (H1,H2,H3) are used as the topics of the website's sections.  
Example: `<H1>heading 1 goes here</H1>`

## HTML

Short for Hypertext Markup Language, the authoring language used to create documents on the World Wide Web. HTML is similar to SGML, although it is not a strict subset. HTML defines the structure and layout of a Web document by using a variety of tags and attributes. The correct structure for an HTML document starts with (enter here what document is about) and ends with . All the information you'd like to include in your Web page fits in between the and tags.

## HTML Comment Tag

Html comments are not visible in the browser and are mainly used for developers to document html code.

Example: `<!-- comment goes here -->`

## HTTP

HTTP is called a stateless protocol because each command is executed independently, without any knowledge of the commands that came before it. This is the main reason that it is difficult to implement websites that react intelligently to user input. This shortcoming of HTTP is being addressed in a number of new technologies, including ActiveX, Java, JavaScript and cookies. Short for Hypertext Transfer Protocol, the underlying protocol used by the World Wide Web. HTTP defines how messages are formatted and transmitted, and what actions Web servers and browsers should take in response to various commands. For example, when you enter a URL in your browser, this actually sends an HTTP command to the Web server directing it to fetch and transmit the requested Web page.

## Keywords

A word used by a Search Engine in its search for relevant Web pages.

## Keyword Count, Keyword Occurrence

How often a Keyword or Keyword phrase occurs in a particular HTML page section.

## Keyword Density

Most search engines look for keyword density. Some will only look at the first 200-400 characters of your site, and count the number of times the keyword appears. Some index a small amount of text from the top, middle, and bottom parts of your web page, and search them for keywords. Generally keyword density should be in the 6-8% range. Simply repeating the keyword will not work because some search engines consider grammar structure in their calculations. For a very competitive keyword you could aim a little higher perhaps targeting a 10% range, but you have to take into consideration the search engine may consider this spamming.

## Keyword Prominence

Prominence is the ratio of the position of one keyword or keyword phrase to the positions of the other keywords in an HTML section of the page. For example in the text enclosed by the BODY tag is one of sections of the page we measure keyword prominence in.

Your most important keywords must appear in the crucial locations on your web pages because search engines like pages where keywords appear closer to the top of the page. They should preferably appear in the first paragraphs of your page. Also keep in mind if you include keywords closer to the bottom of your page it will have a negative effect on the overall keyword prominence calculations.

## Italic Tag

Italic text is used as a font styling element to point out new terms, book or article titles etc. Example: `<I>italic text goes here</I>`

## Internet

A global network connecting millions of computers. More than 100 countries are linked into exchanges of data, news and opinions.

## Internet Marketing Terms

Ad blocking, banner blindness, buzzword, cookie, email spam, FFA, mouse-trapping, opt-out, page-jacking, spam, Search Engine spam, trick banner.

## Image Alt Tag

HTML tag that provides alternative text when non-textual elements, typically images, cannot be displayed. The image tag is a very important tag. It directs the browser to either a gif or jpeg file. The browser then displays that image file where the command is placed.

## Image Source Names Tag

Image names are the names of the image files.  
Example: `<IMG SRC="image-name-goes-here.gif">`

## Index

In database design, a list of keys (or Keywords), each of which identifies a unique record. Indices make it faster to find specific records and to sort records by the index field -- that is, the field used to identify each record.

## Link Href Tag

Link href is the attribute of the link and specifies the address of another page.  
Example: `<A HREF="link-href-goes-here.html">text</A>`

dered as a tool tip in the browser.  
Example: `<A HREF="page.html" TITLE="link title goes here">text</A>`

## Link Farms

A link farm consists of sites that link to other sites for the sole purpose of increasing their link popularity score. Unlike perfectly valid links to sites with related information, sites that participate in link farming contain links to totally unrelated sites. This practice is also referred to as link stuffing. Google hates link farms and labels the links they generate as spam. In fact, Google gates them so much that some sites get removed from the index if they're affiliated with link farms. Spooked, some web masters are considering removing all outbound links from their sites.

## Link Popularity

A measure of the quantity and quality of sites that link to your site. A growing number of Search Engines use link popularity in their ranking algorithms. Google uses it as it's most important factor in ranking sites. HotBot, AltaVista, MSN, Inktomi, and others also use link popularity in their formulas. Eventually every major engine will use link popularity, so developing and maintaining it are essential to your Search Engine placement.

## Link Text

Link text is the clickable text which connects one web page to another. The link text is also referred to as the Anchor text.  
Example: `<A HREF="page.html">link text goes here</A>`

## Link Title Tag

Link title is the attribute of the link and adds information about the link, it is rendered as a mouse over text when a visitor hovers over the link.

## Manual Submission

Visiting a search engine and adding a URL to the Search Engines individually by hand.

## Meta Tags

A special HTML tag that provides information about a Web page. Unlike normal HTML tags, meta tags do not affect how the page is displayed. Instead, they provide information such as who created the page, how often it is updated, what the page is about, and which Keywords represent the page's content. Many Search Engines use this information when building their indices.

## Page Name

Most search engines look for the keywords in the domain name, folder name and page name. Keywords should be separated by hyphens.

Example: <http://www.keyword1.com/keyword2-keyword3.html>.

## Search Engine Optimization SEO

Short for Search Engine Optimization, the process of increasing the amount of visitors to a website by ranking high in the search results of a Search Engine. The higher a website ranks in the results of a search, the greater the chance that site will be visited by a user. It is common practice for Internet users to not click through pages and pages of search results, so where a site ranks in a search is essential for directing more traffic toward the site.

## Search Engine Positioning

Typically, a Search Engine works by sending out a spider to fetch as many documents as possible. Another program, called an indexer, then reads these documents and creates an index based on the words contained in each document. Each Search Engine uses a proprietary algorithm to create its indices such that, ideally, only meaningful results are returned for each query.

## SERP

The SERP is otherwise known as the Search Engines Results Page. This is the page that users see after typing their search query into an engine. Since conversion starts at the SERP, it is an important job of the search marketer to obtain strong call-to-action listings that entice the click.

## Search Engine Ranking

A program that searches documents for specified Keywords and returns a list of the documents where the Keywords were found. Although Search Engine is really a general class of programs, the term is often used to specifically describe systems like Alta Vista and Excite that enable users to search for documents on the World Wide Web and USENET news groups

## Spamming

Excessive manipulation of on-page and off-page search engine ranking factors to influence search engine rankings. Spam websites are built for the search engines and not for human visitors and they often contain little or no relevant content to search queries.

## StopWords:

Words that are common in a full-text file but have little value in searching. Words in a stopword file will be excluded from the indexes, considerably reducing the size of the indexes and improving search performance. For example these are stopwords a about an are as at be by com for from how.

### **Strong Tag**

Strong text is used for stronger emphasis and is usually displayed in bold font.  
Example: `<STRONG>strong text goes here</STRONG>`

### **Submissions**

The act of supplying a URL to a Search Engine in an attempt to make a Search Engine aware of a site or page.

### **Table Summary Tag**

Table summary is used for describing the table's contents and purpose to non-visual media.  
Example: `<TABLE SUMMARY="summary goes here">`

### **Table Caption Tag**

Table caption is used as a short description of the table's purpose usually displayed below the table.  
Example: `<TABLE><CAPTION>caption goes here<CAPTION></TABLE>`

### **Title Tag**

HTML tag used to define the text in the top line of a Web browser, also used by many Search Engines as the title of search listings.  
Example: `<TITLE>title goes here</TITLE>`

### **Webmaster**

An individual who manages a website. Depending on the size of the site, the Webmaster might be responsible for making sure that the Web server hardware and software is running properly designing the website, creating and updating Web pages, replying to user feedback, creating CGI scripts or monitoring traffic through the site.



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