

*Do-It-Yourself **SEO** for Long Term Results and Ethical People*

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WORDPRESS
Barista,
What can I get started for you?

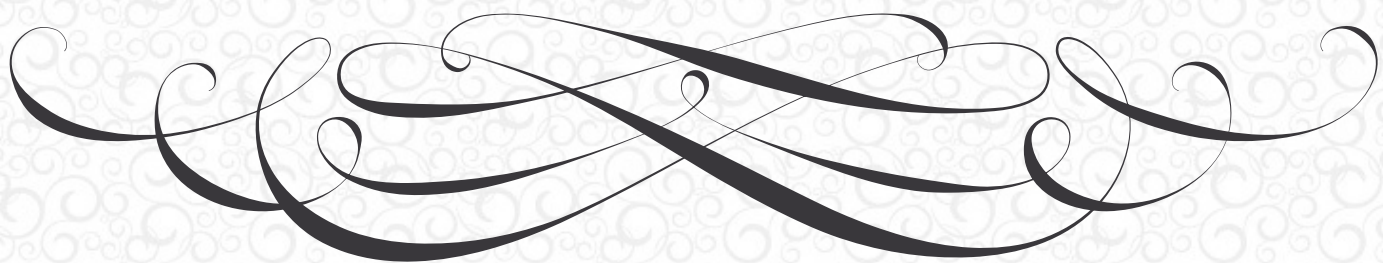


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1

TERMS & KEYWORDS

SEO stands for Search Engine Optimization, and it's the science – or some might call it art – of getting your web pages viewed on the first page of search engines.

First, let's go through a list of terms that you need to know:

Black Hat SEO: the practice of using methods that are short-term, often effective quite quickly but likely to get you de-indexed from Google on their next algorithm upgrade

Index: this is the big daddy of a database that Google keeps up to date so it knows where to point people when they're searching for "Pizza by my house". So to be 'de-indexed' is to be removed from the all important Google database

Keywords: keywords are those words or phrases that best explain your content

Searchers: those who are using a search engine

Search Engines: Google, Bing, Yahoo, etc

SERP: search engine result pages. Obviously the closer to page one you get, the more searchers will see your site

White Hat SEO: using long-term, Google guideline-obeying methods

Okay. Let's move on to what we know about the mysterious Google algorithms, and how we can let searchers know that we have great content for them!

RANKING FOR KEYWORDS

The rest of this book will talk about how to get ranked appropriately for the keywords you're targeting. That is the ultimate definition of search engine optimization. What are keywords? Its probably best explained by an example:

Let'slet's say you own an online shop selling baby clothes. So you do some research and determine that shoppers primarily use the terms, "baby clothes" when searching. With a little more research you determine you can outrank most of your competition using the words, "baby clothes". With those two factors: 1 – people actually search for "baby clothes", and 2 - you can rank in the top three results in Google, we can definitely declare "baby clothes" good keywords for your site.

See the last section (chapter 10) for a handy list of research tools.

When it comes to how to target keywords, there are a lot of theories but some can send your site into a nose dive instead of do you any good. The SEO communities are abuzz with lively discussion on these topics.

Google is notoriously close-mouthed about the algorithms they use to determine rankings, but on the following pages we'll delve into what we do know about this topic, especially as it applies to WordPress users.

2

CUSTOMIZE WORDPRESS SETTINGS

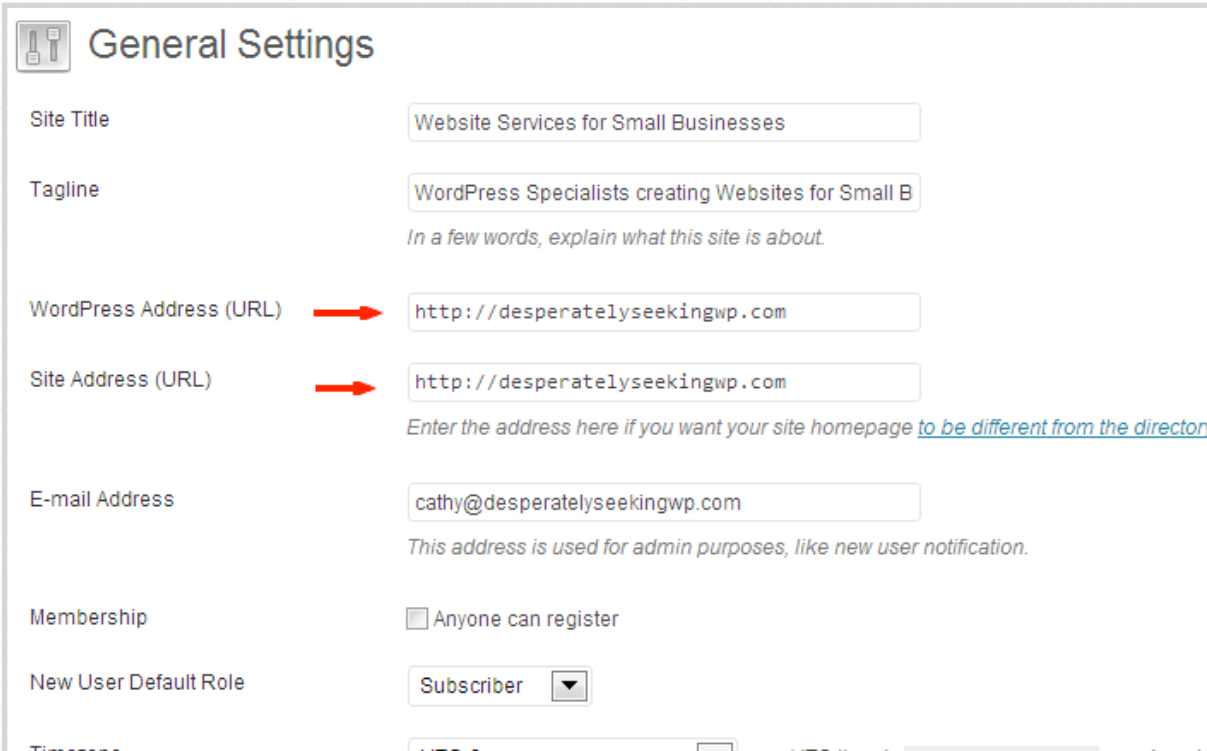
Do you think a keyword-rich, well-optimized blog post is the first step to get the SEO juices flowing through your website? Think again! Search engine optimization for websites is not only about content, but site structure as well. Customizing your WordPress settings is the first step to SEO success.

DECIDE ON A ROOT DOMAIN

Many websites are accessible by both the `http://www.yourdomain.com` and the `http://yourdomain.com`. WordPress sets your root domain to `http://yourdomain.com` by default. There's nothing wrong with this format, but some search engines have trouble processing both names for one domain.

If you prefer "www" at the beginning, it's a good idea to change this setting before posting. When someone tries to access your website with the other domain, the blogging software will activate what's known as a 302 redirect sending people to the `http://yourdomain.com` web address. Deciding on a single root domain upfront helps maintain link integrity and page load times. Our recommendation is to use whatever is most prevalent on incoming links. On a new site, we recommend the naked domain (without the www). The reasons for our recommendations are little outside the scope of this short ebook.

To add or remove "www" to the root domain, log in to your WordPress dashboard, and go to Settings>General. You will see a field for WordPress address (URL) and Site address (URL). Make sure to add or remove "www" to both. This will make sure that your default URL remains consistent.



General Settings

Site Title: Website Services for Small Businesses

Tagline: WordPress Specialists creating Websites for Small B
In a few words, explain what this site is about.

WordPress Address (URL): <http://desperatelyseekingwp.com>

Site Address (URL): <http://desperatelyseekingwp.com>
Enter the address here if you want your site homepage [to be different from the directory](#).

E-mail Address: cathy@desperatelyseekingwp.com
This address is used for admin purposes, like new user notification.

Membership: ☐ Anyone can register

New User Default Role: Subscriber


Timezone: UTC-8

The second place to set your preferred domain is in the Google Webmaster Tools dashboard. We discuss this later in chapter 8.

PRETTY UP PERMALINKS

Ideally, search engines want to see URLs that tell them the meaning of a page. Straight out of the box, WordPress assigns numbers and symbols for post URLs, also known as permalinks. Be sure to customize your website settings to pull the post titles for permalinks. Not only does this style of URLs guide search engines in returning your posts for the appropriate search terms, but it informs readers of the content to expect by clicking the link.

Customize permalinks by navigating to Settings>Permalinks in the WordPress dashboard. If you have a lot of Pages (as opposed to posts) select anything except the %postname% structure. Due to the internal processes involved in creating permalinks, 100's of pages with a %postname% structure will likely slow down your site.

 **Permalink Settings**

By default WordPress uses web URLs which have question marks and lots of numbers in them, however WordPress offers you the ability to choose from different structures to improve the aesthetics, usability, and forward-compatibility of your links. A [number of tags are available](#), and here are some examples to get you started.

Common Settings

<input type="radio"/> Default	<code>http://strawberriesareglutenfree.com/?p=123</code>
<input type="radio"/> Day and name	<code>http://strawberriesareglutenfree.com/2012/12/02/sample-post/</code>
<input checked="" type="radio"/> Month and name	<code>http://strawberriesareglutenfree.com/2012/12/sample-post/</code>
<input type="radio"/> Numeric	<code>http://strawberriesareglutenfree.com/archives/123</code>
<input type="radio"/> Post name	<code>http://strawberriesareglutenfree.com/sample-post/</code>
<input type="radio"/> Custom Structure	<input type="text" value="/%year%/%monthnum%/%postname%/"/>

Optional

If you like, you may enter custom structures for your category and tag URLs here. For example, using `topics` as your category base would leave these blank the defaults will be used.

Category base

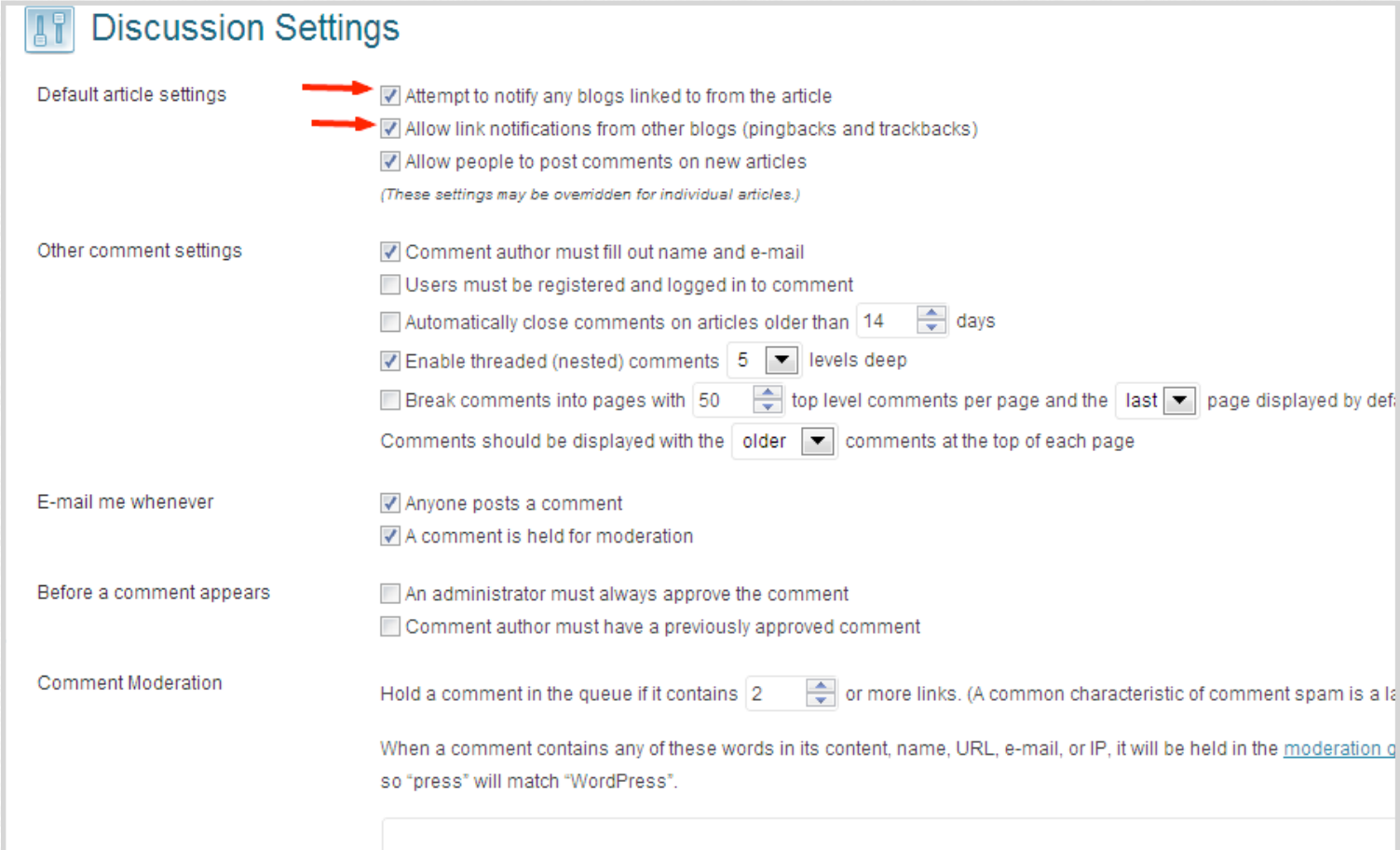
Tag base

Save Changes

ACTIVATE PINGBACKS

To immediately start getting links back to your website, turn on pingbacks. Pingbacks are a system where every time you publish a link to a website, the website is automatically pinged, notifying the owner you've linked to them. Often, the website owners will link to you in return. Pingbacks work really well when you're linking to related websites in your niche.

You will find the option to activate pingbacks under Settings>Discussions. For default article settings, select both "Attempt to notify blogs" and "Allow link notifications".



Discussion Settings

Default article settings

- ☒ Attempt to notify any blogs linked to from the article
- ☒ Allow link notifications from other blogs (pingbacks and trackbacks)
- ☒ Allow people to post comments on new articles

(These settings may be overridden for individual articles.)

Other comment settings

- ☒ Comment author must fill out name and e-mail
- ☐ Users must be registered and logged in to comment
- ☐ Automatically close comments on articles older than 14 days
- ☒ Enable threaded (nested) comments 5 levels deep
- ☐ Break comments into pages with 50 top level comments per page and the last page displayed by default
- Comments should be displayed with the older comments at the top of each page

E-mail me whenever

- ☒ Anyone posts a comment
- ☒ A comment is held for moderation

Before a comment appears

- ☐ An administrator must always approve the comment
- ☐ Comment author must have a previously approved comment

Comment Moderation

Hold a comment in the queue if it contains 2 or more links. (A common characteristic of comment spam is a large number of links.)

When a comment contains any of these words in its content, name, URL, e-mail, or IP, it will be held in the moderation queue. (A common characteristic of comment spam is a large number of links.)

so "press" will match "WordPress".

By no means are these suggestions a comprehensive list of every area to tweak to improve SEO. Keep reading for more dashboard settings, plugins, and exterior tools you can use to increase your website's visibility.

These settings are the most widely used. Tiny niche sites have a different focus than large authority or branding websites. What's important to recognize is that WordPress websites can be crawled by spiders from the search engines and indexed within hours. A well-thought-out website setup process will position your website for SEO success from day one.

3

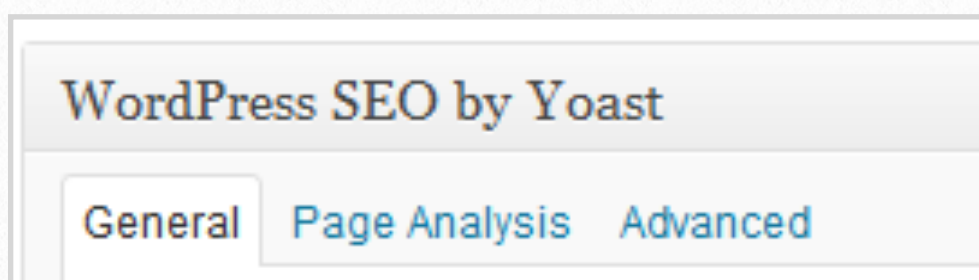
STARTING WITH ON-PAGE OPTIMIZATION

The good news is that any WordPress user can optimize their site through the use of themes or plugins. And many are free to use. Of course, we have a favorite that works above and beyond to make your life easier. This section is devoted to walking you through the set up and use of WP SEO by Yoast. This is SEO for WordPress at its easiest!

HOW TO USE WORDPRESS SEO

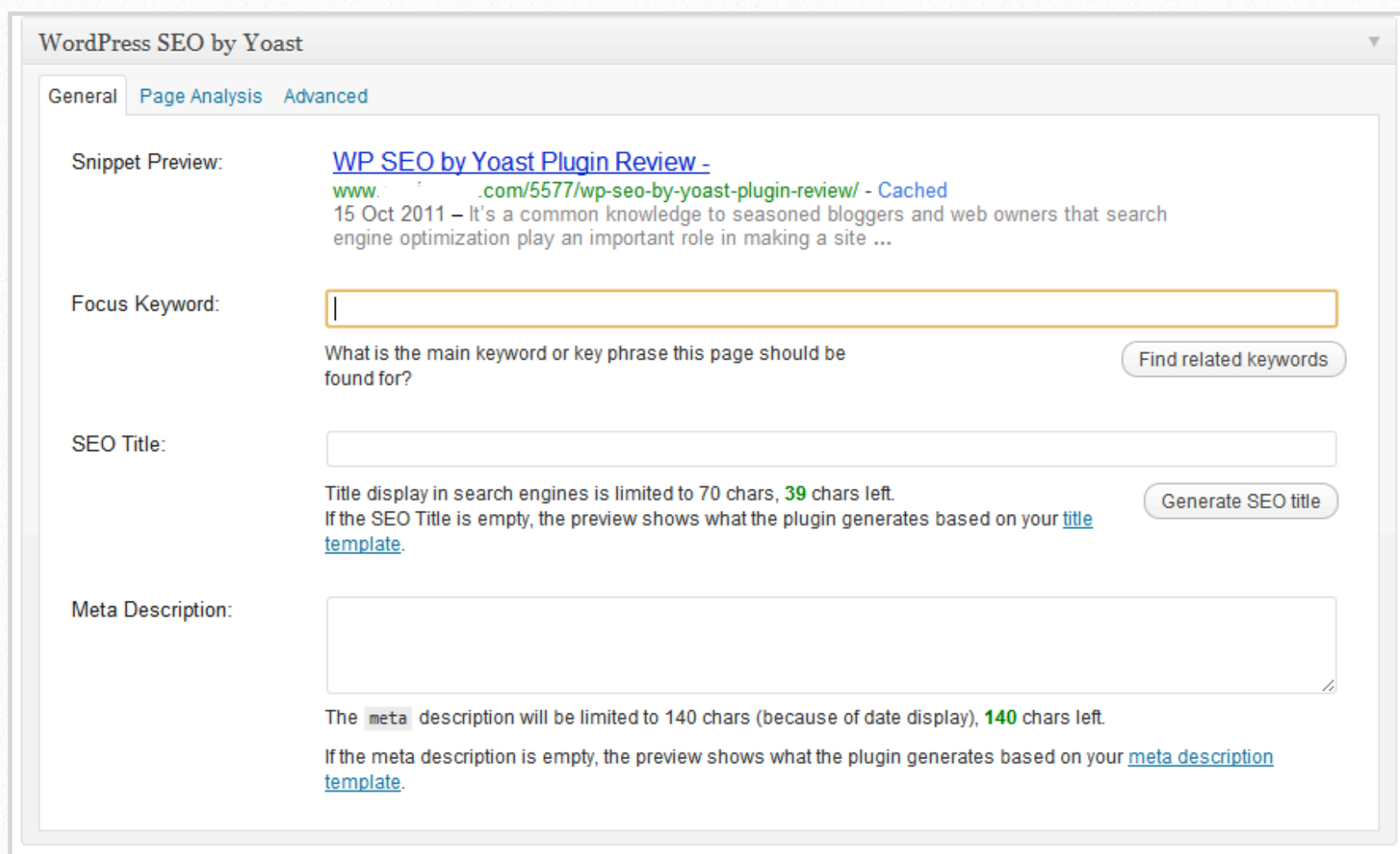
We're going to start this a little backward – on purpose. Go through these instructions first and see the benefits. Then we'll go through all the settings step by step and cover best use scenarios.

After set up, the Wordpress SEO by Yoast plugin adds three tabs in each post/page: the General Tab, Page Analysis and Advanced.



In the General tab, you'll find places for your Snippet Preview, Focus Keyword, SEO Title and Meta Description.

Let's break it down into each field and explain what each does:

A detailed screenshot of the WordPress SEO by Yoast plugin's "General" tab. The interface includes a title bar "WordPress SEO by Yoast" and three tabs: "General", "Page Analysis", and "Advanced". The "General" tab is active. It contains four main sections: 1. "Snippet Preview:" showing a preview of a search result for "WP SEO by Yoast Plugin Review -" with a URL, date, and description. 2. "Focus Keyword:" with a text input field and a "Find related keywords" button. 3. "SEO Title:" with a text input field and a "Generate SEO title" button. 4. "Meta Description:" with a text input field. Each section includes helpful text about character limits and how the plugin generates content if the field is empty.

Snippets are basically the short description that we see whenever we search for something on Google. Here you can preview all your changes to see how the post will look on Google.

Focus Keyword

In this field write the keywords for which you are optimizing. For the beginner, the related keywords are one of the most helpful tools in this plugin. When you type in a keyword in the focus keyword field, the plugin automatically generates related keywords. This means that you can use keywords suggested by the plugin or you can copy the keywords suggestions and research their popularity and competition before posting your article.

Focus Keyword:

Wordpress Seo plug

wordpress seo plugin

wordpress seo plugin review

wordpress seo plugin 2011

wordpress seo plugin yoast

wordpress seo plugin best

wordpress seo plugins compared

wordpress seo plugin free

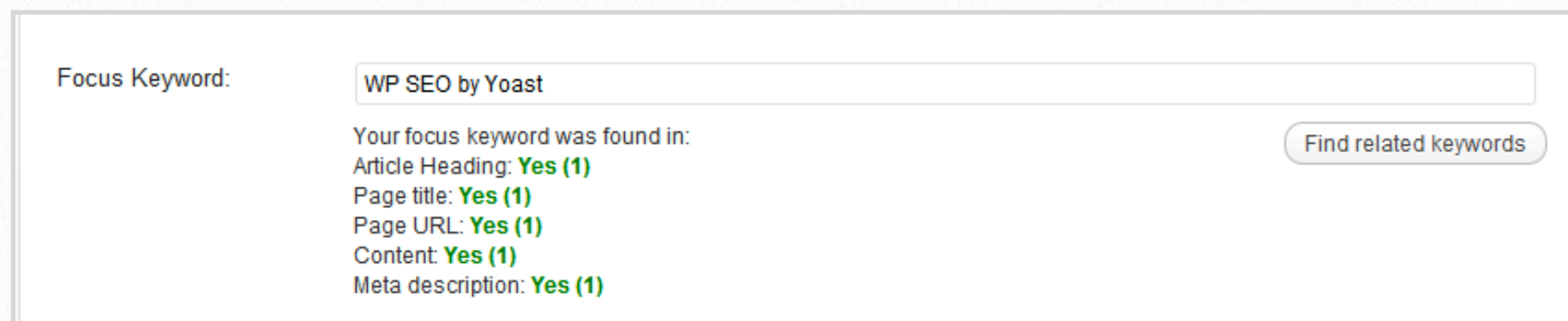
wordpress seo plugin comparison

best wordpress seo plugin 2011

top wordpress seo plugins

If the meta description is empty, the preview shows what the plugin generates based on your [meta description template](#).

Furthermore, this plugin let you see if you are placing your keywords in the correct places (Title, body, url & meta description). It also gives you the ability to see if the keyword(s)/keyphrase(s) are contained in the most important areas of your posts, just by looking at the keyword numbers indicator.



Focus Keyword: WP SEO by Yoast

Your focus keyword was found in:

- Article Heading: **Yes (1)**
- Page title: **Yes (1)**
- Page URL: **Yes (1)**
- Content: **Yes (1)**
- Meta description: **Yes (1)**

Find related keywords

SEO Title

Every page needs a title that is readable by search engines. The SEO title field let's you enter your customized title for that specific post. This is only needed if you are not using a search-engine friendly post title. For example, if you use a title like "Q&A with Cathy" that doesn't mean a lot to a googler. They are likely searching for the questions within the post. So for the googler's sake, use keywords and meaningful words to help them find your content. Instead of "Q&A with Cathy" it could be, "How to create an optimized post in WordPress using an SEO plugin".



SEO Title: WP SEO Plugin by Yoast

Title display in search engines is limited to 70 chars, **48** chars left.
If the SEO Title is empty, the preview shows what the plugin generates based on your [title template](#).

Generate SEO title

In addition, the SEO Title section let's you see how many characters you're using for your title. Search engines usually display 70 characters in the search page results and if your title is more than 70 characters, it will be truncated. The indicator is really useful especially if you want your whole title to show up in the search results.

Meta Description

Most SEO experts agree that meta descriptions do little to improve rankings. However, they are mandatory to compete on the SERPs (search engine results pages) and for drawing targeted visitors who actually take action. Meta descriptions are vital to pre-selling searchers on the value of the information provided by your web pages.

Meta descriptions are grabbed from the first few sentences of the content by default. If you use custom excerpts (a built-in WordPress feature) it will grab that instead, and lastly if you write a meta description here, it will overwrite all other options.

The Preview Snippet area gives you a live preview of how your description or snippet will look in search results page. Just like the SEO Title field, the meta description section has a number of characters indicator.

PAGE ANALYSIS

Use the page analysis tab regularly and follow the suggestions. By doing so your pages have the best chances of being search engine-friendly.

WordPress SEO by Yoast

General

Page Analysis

Advanced

Note: to update this page analysis, save as draft or update and check this tab again.

OK

The keyword density is 0.19%, which is a bit low, the keyword was found 1 times.

OK

The keyword for this page contains one or more [stop words](#), consider removing them. Found 'by'.

OK

No heading tags appear in the copy.

OK

No images appear in this page, consider adding some as appropriate.

OK

No outbound links appear in this page, consider adding some as appropriate.

OK

The meta description is under 120 characters, however up to 140 characters are available. The available space is shorter than the usual 155 characters because Google will also include the publication date in the snippet.

OK

The page title contains 31 characters, which is less than the recommended minimum of 40 characters. Use the space to add keyword variations or create compelling call-to-action copy.

✓

The copy scores 60.8 in the [Flesch Reading Ease](#) test, which is considered OK to read.

✓

The keyword / phrase appears in the URL for this page.

✓

The keyword appears in the first paragraph of the copy.

✓

The meta description contains the primary keyword / phrase.

✓

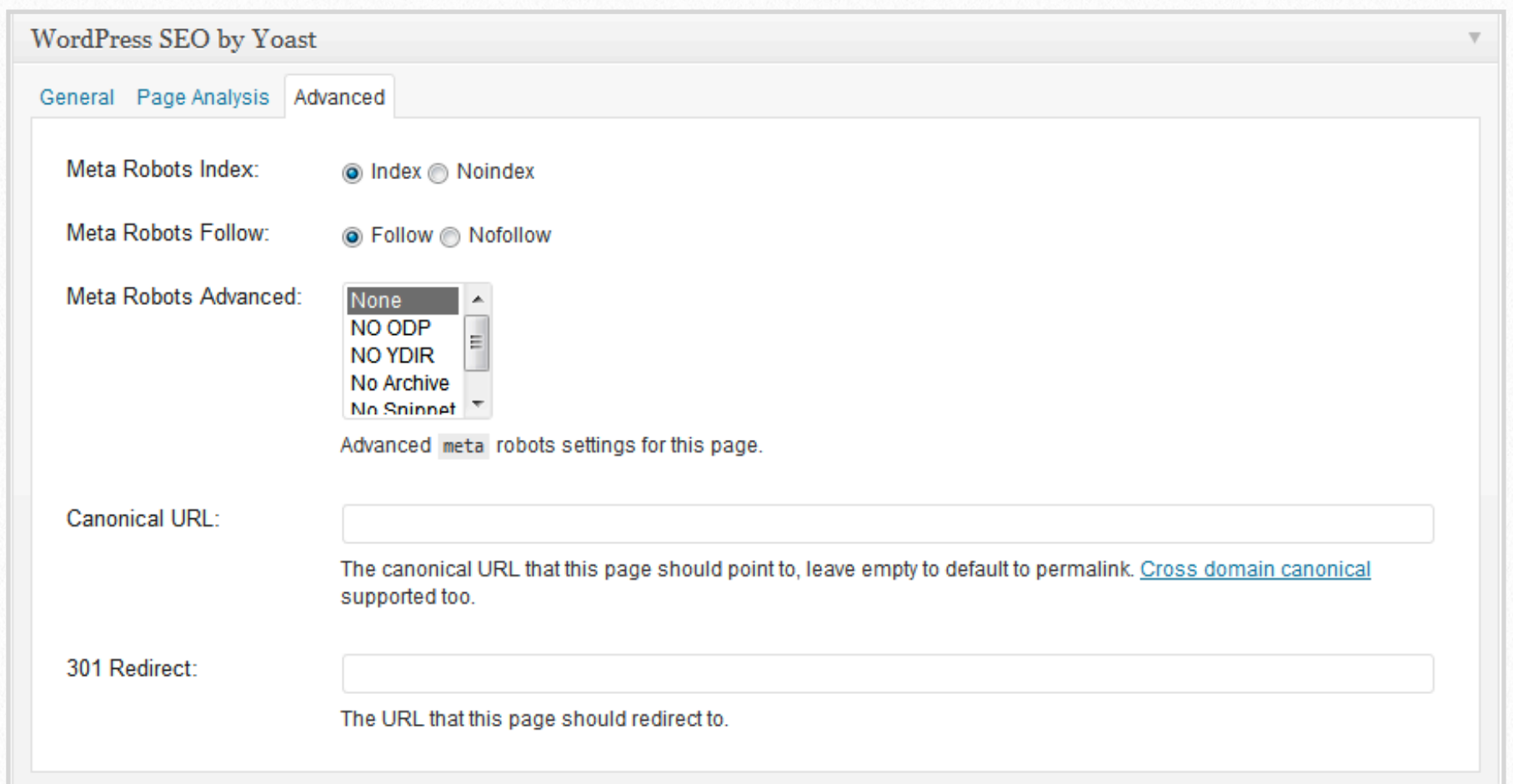
The page title contains keyword / phrase, at the beginning which is considered to improve rankings.

✓

There are 534 words contained in the body copy, this is greater than the 300 word recommended minimum.

ADVANCED TAB

Lastly, the “advanced tab” is where you can set permissions to Meta Robots and where you can set your canonical URL or redirects. This is excellent if you don’t want the search engine to index a specific post or you want to set up a 301 page redirect. If you do this incorrectly you risk restricting robots and people from visiting this page.



The screenshot shows the 'WordPress SEO by Yoast' interface with the 'Advanced' tab selected. It contains the following settings:

- Meta Robots Index:** Radio buttons for ☒ Index and ☐ Noindex.
- Meta Robots Follow:** Radio buttons for ☒ Follow and ☐ Nofollow.
- Meta Robots Advanced:** A dropdown menu with options: None, NO ODP, NO YDIR, No Archive, and No Snippet.
- Advanced meta robots settings for this page.** (Text label)
- Canonical URL:** A text input field with a description: 'The canonical URL that this page should point to, leave empty to default to permalink. [Cross domain canonical](#) supported too.'
- 301 Redirect:** A text input field with a description: 'The URL that this page should redirect to.'

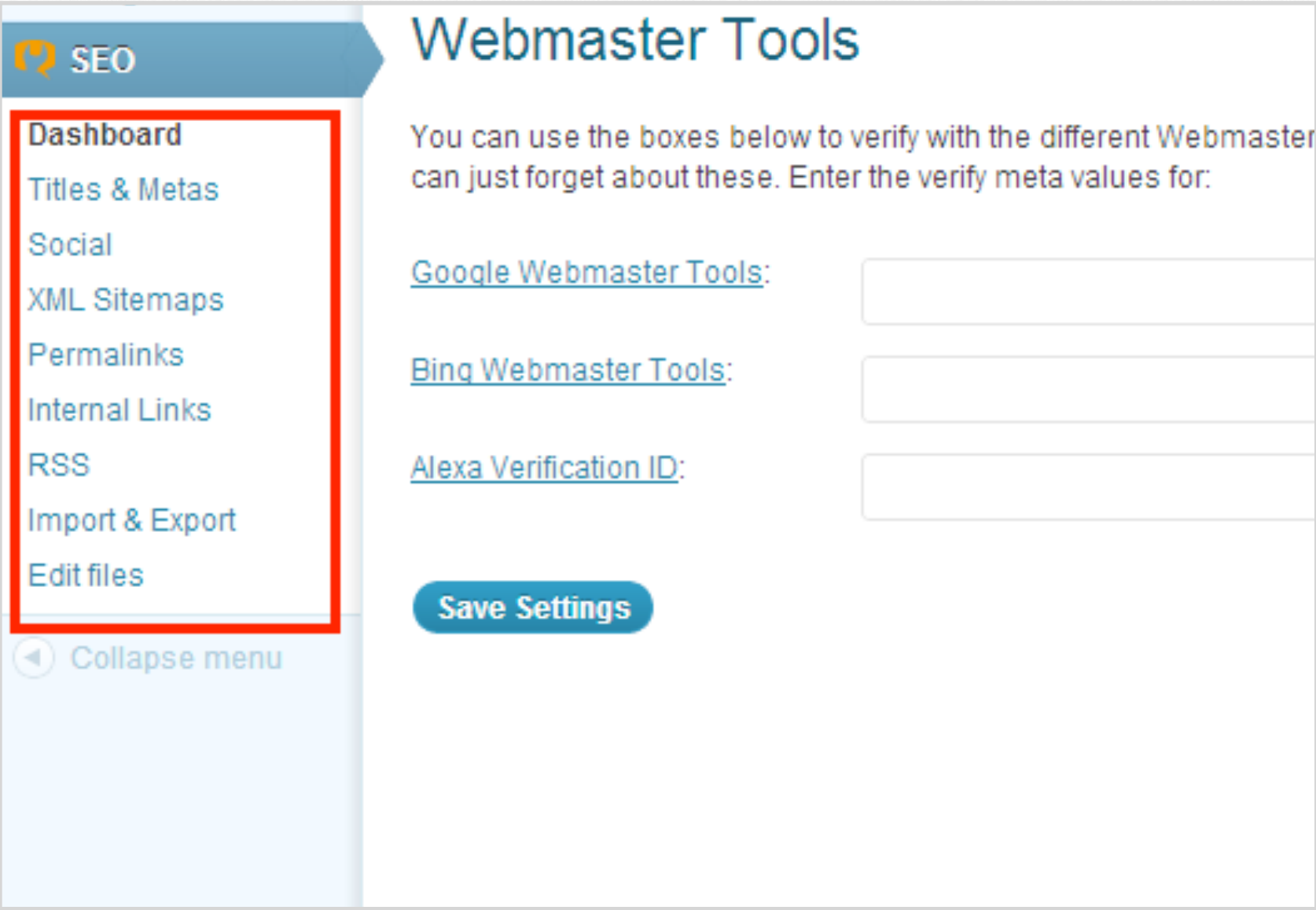
This is the best there is (paid or free) out there for SEO for WordPress. It’s not hard to use and it also improves your knowledge of SEO basics, teaching you how to improve your page’s SEO.

Have we mentioned that the plugin is FREE?!

HOW TO INSTALL WORDPRESS FOR SEO PLUGIN

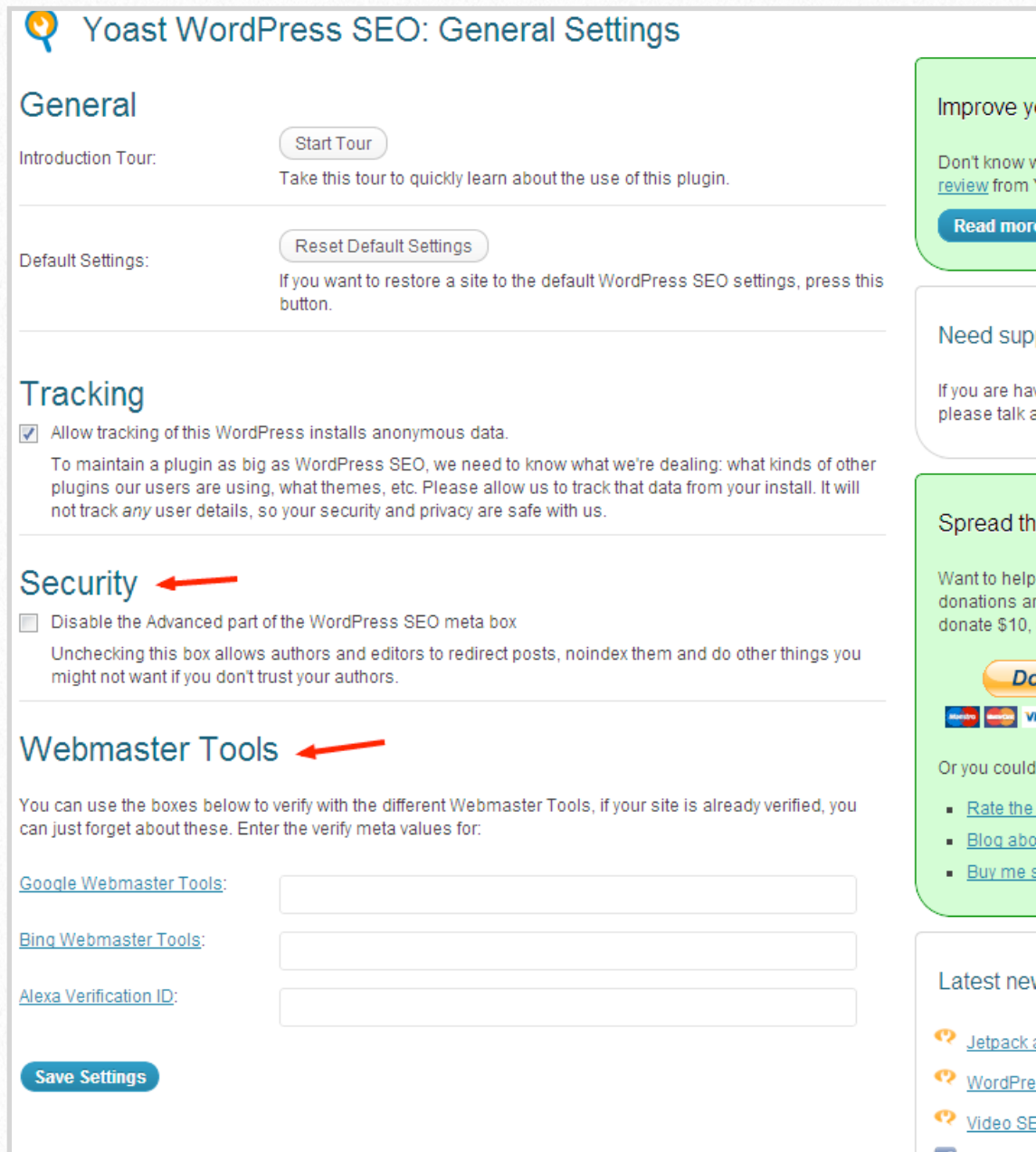
Now that you can see all the benefits, let's go through the easy install. The settings are a bit more intense but we'll go through them step by step. The plugin is only helpful if you set it up correctly!

The plugin configuration is located in the left panel in your WP admin dashboard. The configuration is broken down into 9 tabs (shown below).



DASHBOARD SETTINGS

The first in line is the Dashboard. The dashboard contains a few administrative functions. The only ones we will cover are Security and Webmaster Tools.



Yoast WordPress SEO: General Settings

General

Introduction Tour: [Start Tour](#)
Take this tour to quickly learn about the use of this plugin.

Default Settings: [Reset Default Settings](#)
If you want to restore a site to the default WordPress SEO settings, press this button.

Tracking

☒ Allow tracking of this WordPress installs anonymous data.
To maintain a plugin as big as WordPress SEO, we need to know what we're dealing: what kinds of other plugins our users are using, what themes, etc. Please allow us to track that data from your install. It will not track *any* user details, so your security and privacy are safe with us.

Security ←

☐ Disable the Advanced part of the WordPress SEO meta box
Unchecking this box allows authors and editors to redirect posts, noindex them and do other things you might not want if you don't trust your authors.

Webmaster Tools ←

You can use the boxes below to verify with the different Webmaster Tools, if your site is already verified, you can just forget about these. Enter the verify meta values for:

[Google Webmaster Tools](#):

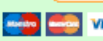
[Bing Webmaster Tools](#):

[Alexa Verification ID](#):

[Save Settings](#)

Improve your site
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Need support
If you are having trouble, please talk at [support](#)

Spread the word
Want to help us? [donations](#) are [donate \\$10, \\$20, \\$50](#)
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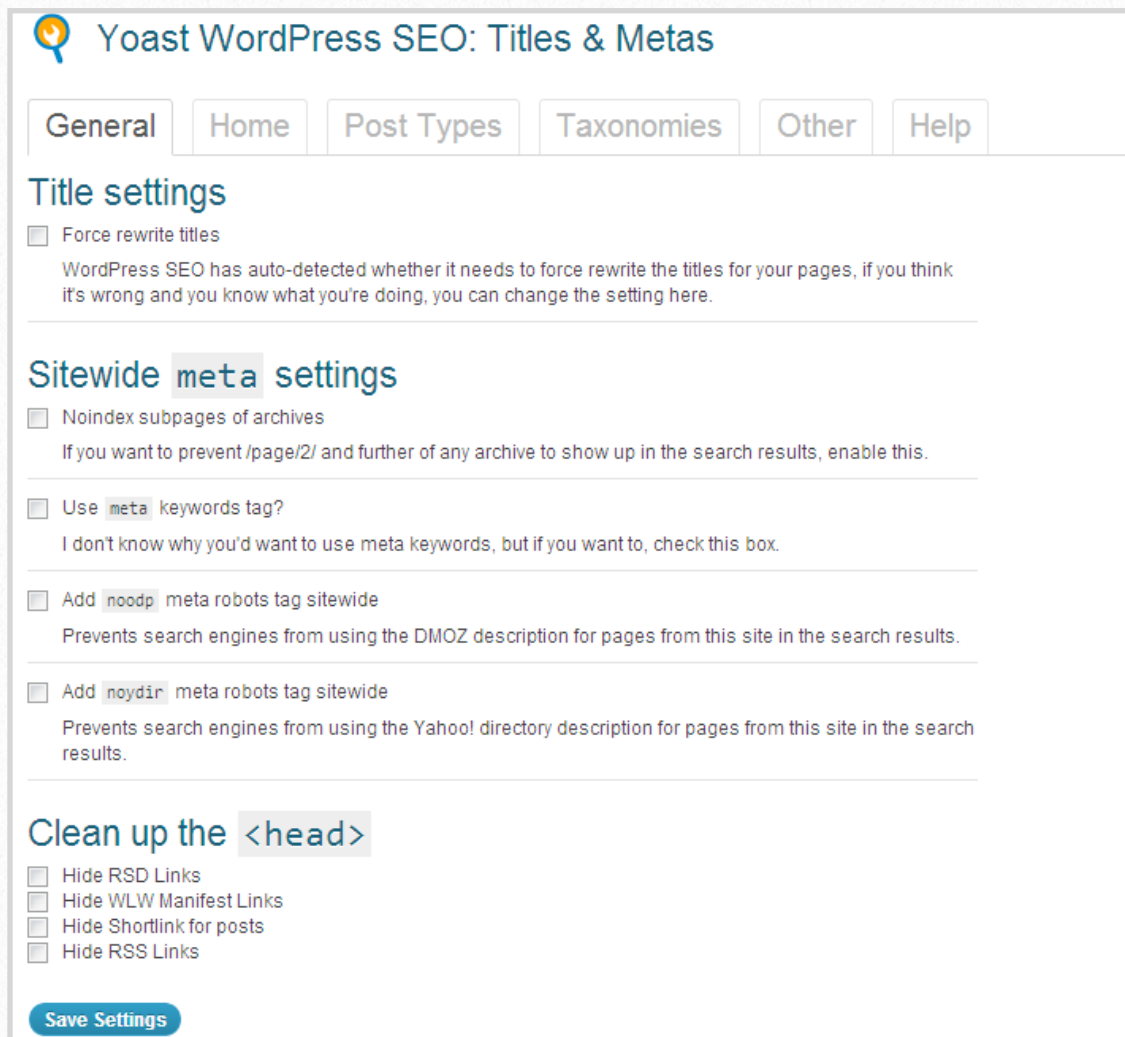
1. Security

Go ahead and check this box. This means that only you (or any other user with admin privileges can access the advanced section on posts and pages).

2. Webmaster Tools

If you have not already verified with Google, Bing, and Alexa, go ahead and fetch the verification values from each site's dashboard. Then enter them in the fields provided. This will verify your domain with the respective websites and allow you to use their site's tools and analytics.

TITLES & METAS



Yoast WordPress SEO: Titles & Metas

General Home Post Types Taxonomies Other Help

Title settings

☐ Force rewrite titles

WordPress SEO has auto-detected whether it needs to force rewrite the titles for your pages, if you think it's wrong and you know what you're doing, you can change the setting here.

Sitewide meta settings

☐ Noindex subpages of archives

If you want to prevent /page/2/ and further of any archive to show up in the search results, enable this.

☐ Use meta keywords tag?

I don't know why you'd want to use meta keywords, but if you want to, check this box.

☐ Add noodp meta robots tag sitewide

Prevents search engines from using the DMOZ description for pages from this site in the search results.

☐ Add noydir meta robots tag sitewide

Prevents search engines from using the Yahoo! directory description for pages from this site in the search results.

Clean up the <head>

☐ Hide RSD Links

☐ Hide WLW Manifest Links

☐ Hide Shortlink for posts

☐ Hide RSS Links

Save Settings

General

Beginners should leave all these boxes unchecked.

Home

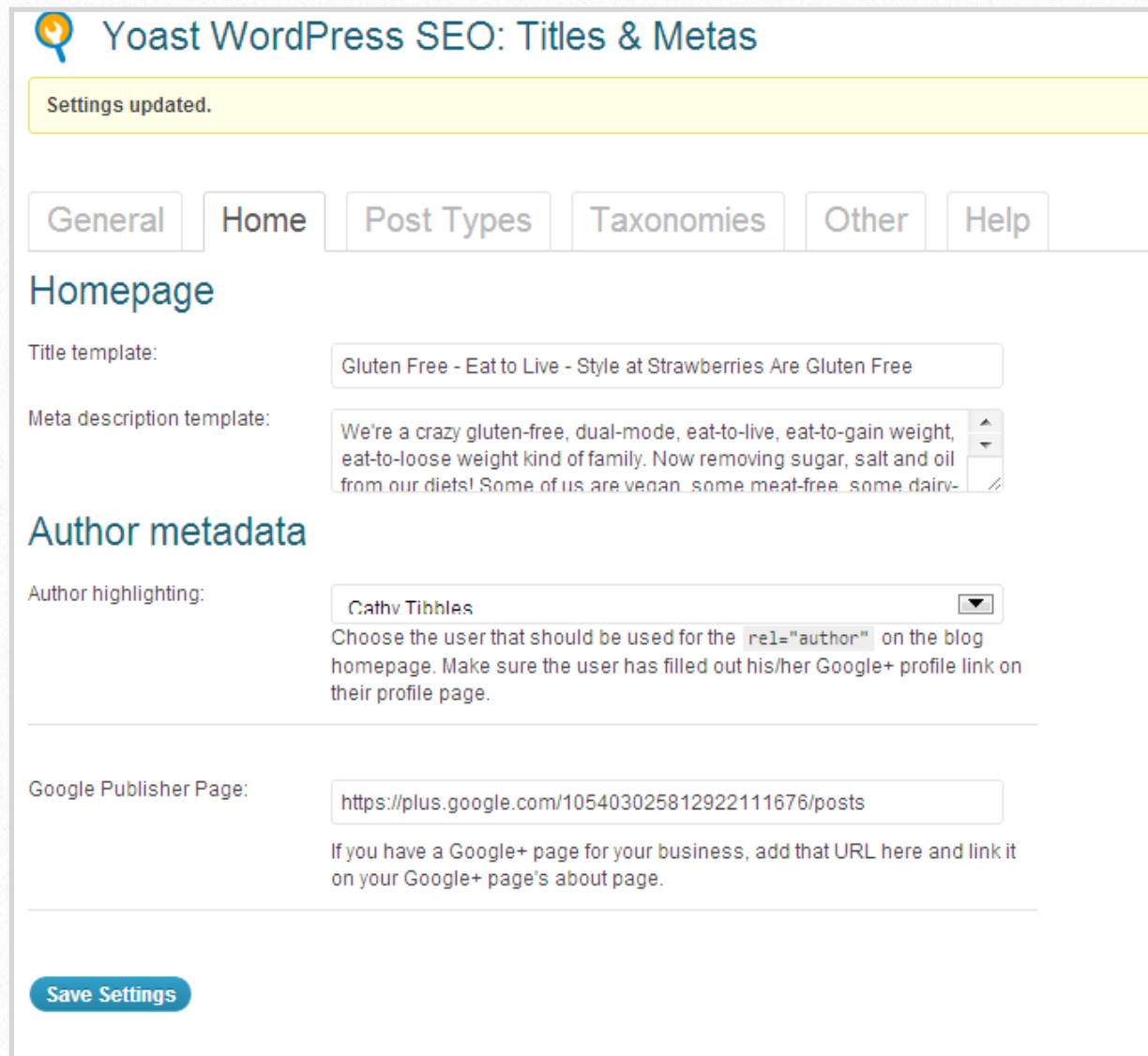
This is where you set the title and description for the entire website. Individual pages will overwrite these settings. And whatever you put in this box will overwrite the Settings → General → title field. It is a good idea to have the title of your site followed by a description. For example:

My Flower Shop – Creating Beautiful Arrangements for your Special Occasions

Complete the meta description as well. And include the geographical location if it fits. For example:

Special Occasions Flower Arrangements in the Tri City area

Home – Author Meta Data



Yoast WordPress SEO: Titles & Metas

Settings updated.

General Home Post Types Taxonomies Other Help

Homepage

Title template: Gluten Free - Eat to Live - Style at Strawberries Are Gluten Free

Meta description template: We're a crazy gluten-free, dual-mode, eat-to-live, eat-to-gain weight, eat-to-loose weight kind of family. Now removing sugar, salt and oil from our diets! Some of us are vegan, some meat-free, some dairy-

Author metadata

Author highlighting: Cathy Tibbles

Choose the user that should be used for the `rel="author"` on the blog homepage. Make sure the user has filled out his/her Google+ profile link on their profile page.

Google Publisher Page: <https://plus.google.com/105403025812922111676/posts>

If you have a Google+ page for your business, add that URL here and link it on your Google+ page's about page.

Save Settings

This is the default author for your posts. Select the user, and enter the Google Plus profile link. This can be overwritten for each author's post, using their User Profile and completing the Google Plus link.

TIP: this will NOT work unless you also complete the Google Plus profile, indicating the site from which the author's work originates.

Post Types

We will cover the title templates for Posts, Pages, and Media. Other post types are usually added by plugins or your theme and you can ask your developer about their importance in the overall sitemap.

Post Title: %%title%% - %%sitename%%
Page Title: %%title%% - %%sitename%%
Media Title: %%title%% - %%sitename%%

Leave the rest of the boxes and field blanks or unchecked.

Taxonomies

Taxonomies are a fancy way of describing any organizing system. The common taxonomies in WordPress are categories and tags. Use the following settings and leave the rest blank:

Categories: %%category%%- %%sitename%%
Tags: %%tag%% - %%sitename%%

Other

In the other tab, we need to disable the duplicate content. And add the title templates for the ones we keep. You need to decide which scenario best fits your website. I will go through two common scenarios as examples. See the section "Dodge Duplicate Content Penalties" below for help in selecting the right structure for your site.

1. Single author, date-based content (blog-style)
2. Multiple author, topic-driven content (magazine style)

1. For Single author, date-based content:

Author archives:	noindex, follow disable author archives
Date archives:	noindex, follow
Category OR Tag archives:	noindex, no-follow

The site will then be indexed by a topic list (either categories or tags). The author archive will likely be considered a duplicate of the home page, as will the date based archives.

2. For Multiple author, topic-driven content:

Date archives:	index follow
----------------	--------------

Author archives:	index follow
------------------	--------------

Category OR Tag archives:	index follow
---------------------------	--------------

In this scenario, the home page, category(or Tag) archives and author archives will all look different, the only one you may want to disable is the date archives so it isn't considered a duplicate of the home page.

SOCIAL



Have you ever tried to 'share' something to your Facebook timeline only to discover that the thumbnail you wanted wasn't available? This solves that problem (partially). OpenGraph are the tags that Facebook uses to grab your images and descriptions for excerpts that are posted in Facebook Activity Streams.

CHECK: add OpenGraph meta data

Frontpage settings: Add the image url and description that you would like to show up by default if someone shares your home page.

Default settings: Add the image url that will show if a post does not have an image associated with it.

Twitter:

CHECK: add Twitter card meta data

And add your twitter username to the field below.

XML SITEMAPS

A screenshot of a WordPress plugin settings box titled "XML Sitemap". Inside the box, there is a single checkbox that is currently unchecked, followed by the text "Check this box to enable XML sitemap functionality." The box has a light gray border and a subtle drop shadow.

XML Sitemap

☐ Check this box to enable XML sitemap functionality.

We recommend leaving you disable your current sitemap plugin (if you have one) and use this instead. XML Sitemaps basically provides search engines an idea of your site's structure, including pages and links. A validated XML sitemap gives the crawler easier access to your site, often times resulting in better indexing.

TIP: once you've enabled the XML Sitemap functionality, you can click on the “XML Sitemap” button to locate the sitemap. Copy the url in your browser. Go to Google Webmaster tools, sign in, and submit your new sitemap. It will take up to several hours to complete the scanning of your new sitemap.

PERMALINKS

This feature allows you to re-structure your links. This can BREAK your page links so be careful. We recommend -leaving everything as is, except for adding a trailing slash - this has the benefit of speeding up (just slightly) load time and preventing duplicate content.

If you are setting up a brand new site, without any incoming links you may also choose to remove the /category/ base word.

INTERNAL LINKS

In the internal links section of this plugin you will see "breadcrumbs settings." Breadcrumbs let's your users navigate your website easier and provide valuable internal links. If you do not already have breadcrumbs and you would like them, you can activate them here. In some cases, you will need help getting them to show up on your templates.

Sample Breadcrumbs



RSS

Content of your RSS Feed

This feature is used to automatically add content to your RSS, more specifically, it's meant to add links back to your blog and your blog posts, so dumb scrapers will automatically add these links too, helping search engines identify you as the original source of the content.

Content to put before each post in the feed:
(HTML allowed)

Content to put after each post:
(HTML allowed)

Explanation

You can use the following variables within the content, they will be replaced by the value on the right.

%%AUTHORLINK%%	A link to the archive for the post author, with the authors name as anchor text.
%%POSTLINK%%	A link to the post, with the title as anchor text.
%%BLOGLINK%%	A link to your site, with your site's name as anchor text.
%%BLOGDESCLINK%%	A link to your site, with your site's name and description as anchor text.

The RSS feature let's you add content for your RSS feed. This is a handy way to add copyright to the feed that is difficult for content scrapers to remove.

For example:

This article originated at %%BlogLink%%. If you are not seeing it there, or in the Blog's feed, this content has been STOLEN. Please report this to the original author immediately! Thank you.

IMPORT & EXPORT

The import & export tab of this plugin gives you the ability to import your SEO data from Headspace, Woo themes or All in One SEO. If you're using a different plugin or Genesis Settings, you can use the SEO Data Transporter plugin.

You can also import settings from three of Yoast's other plugins: Breadcrumbs, Robots Meta, and RSS Footer. This will allow you to delete three more plugins and the fewer plugins the better.

The export settings on the other hand allows you to backup your settings any time.

EDIT FILES

Don't touch!!

This part is for the most advanced users. This section allows you to configure or edit your htaccess files without even leaving your Wordpress site. Be forewarned - you can break your site in an instant!

This wraps up our review for the functions and features of Wordpress SEO plugin by Yoast. Now let's go over some other things to know so that you can make the most of your content.

DODGE DUPLICATE CONTENT PENALTIES

By default WordPress is designed to file the same content in multiple areas – date archives, author archives, categories, and tags. The idea was to enhance the usability of a website for readers. This way people could easily access information from various points. Unfortunately this structure appears as useless, duplicate content to the search engines. Even worse, the strength of your internal links are diluted. The WordPress SEO plug-in provides a noindex feature allowing you to choose which areas search engines should crawl. By adding a meta nofollow tag, search engines are blocked from crawling the areas you designate. Pick only one way for the search engines to follow be it categories, tags or archives. The choice is yours but make sure it's going to showcase your work in the best manner as these are the pages that will show up in the search engines.

CONCLUSION

The SEO for WordPress plug-in is a useful tool to lighten some of the heavy lifting of search engine optimization for bloggers. Nevertheless, it's a tool that can only work with input from you. Invest time in customizing your settings when you first setup your website, and you'll reap the benefits in the long run.

4

OPTIMIZE THE HOME PAGE

Search engines love WordPress websites for their dynamic nature. They're a constant source of search engine "food" in the form of fresh content. Yet it's surprising to know this same feature they love could cause your website not to rank as well. Consider building a static homepage as a way to get around this conundrum.

WHY A STATIC HOMEPAGE?

Recent WordPress developments have made the website platform more SEO-friendly than ever. In addition, easy to install WordPress plug-ins automate a variety of SEO processes in the background, without complicated coding.

But this simple software comes with a drawback, especially with regards to your homepage. Here's the scoop: If you want a page to rank for a keyword phrase, there are standard on-page optimization procedures to follow, the most basic of which is to include keywords in the header tags and content.

Search engines crawl these areas to figure out the theme of your page. However, with website posts as your homepage, the content constantly changes. So while your header tags say your page is about "X", the words on the page say something else. As if that weren't bad enough, even the comments readers leave on website posts can dilute on-page optimization.

Sending mixed messages to the search engines is not good. Publishing a static homepage is a savvy way to make your SEO intentions loud and clear. A static page stays put and tells the search engines exactly what your website is about.

How to Create a Static Homepage

Building a static homepage is a fairly simple process. Here are the exact steps:

1. *Go to Pages in the WordPress Dashboard*

Write and design the page you want to appear as your homepage. Remember to apply all the SEO basics for optimizing a page. (Note: If you want this page to override the “Home” tab in your navigation bar, then just save it without a title).

2. *Next, find the Settings module and select the Reading section*

For the “front page displays” field, click on the radio button for “A static page (select below)”

In the front page dropdown box, look for the page you created. (Note: Since there’s no name for the page, it will show up as a blank space holder amidst any other pages published to the website).

That’s all there is to it! Now you have your very own static homepage.

Depending on the specific goals for your website, a static homepage may or may not be the right choice. If SEO plays a major role in marketing your website, this technique is one to test.

5

IMPACT OF CATEGORIES AND TAGS ON SEO

There's a question that seems to run across every new blogger's mind: What's the difference between categories and tags? It's a good question, and one worth paying some attention to. Once you know the answer you'll leap forward in your WordPress SEO skills.

In simplest terms both tags and categories are used to label and arrange content on your website. When a visitor clicks on a tag or category link, they are taken to pages with relevant information.

Without customizations, WordPress assigns this URL structure to a tag:

www.domain.com/tag/post.

Categories in WordPress have another feature: they are hierarchical. This means that you can have ancestor and child categories. So the URL structure looks like this:

www.domain.com/category/sub-category/post

A great analogy to explain the differences is to look at a book's structure. Let's say your website was a book, categories would be the Table of Contents and tags the Index. And just like a book, categories are usually determined first while tags can only be created after the content is written.

Both the Table of Contents and the Index are useful to the reader for finding information, but they serve a completely different purpose. One is used for reading a general larger topic. The other is used for finding specific smaller bits of information.

Likewise, tags highlight specific aspects contained within a single blog post. Your aim is to mark the content with the most prominent descriptions you expect browsers to use when searching for that topic. For example, in a post reviewing a bread maker, you might add tags for the machine model number, “kitchen appliances”, “bread machines,” “bread maker,” and “breadmaker.”

Tags give you the place to include those obscure, related phrases that might be awkward in other areas of your website.

On the other hand, categories house a related “group” of posts. Keeping with the bread maker example, if you have several articles about different bread makers then they could all be listed under a category named “making bread”. In this category, you might also find posts about ingredients and baking techniques.

Another way categories and tags differ is from an SEO perspective. Since the categories are hierarchical, the opportunity is there to house more keywords in the link. But the flip side is that if the link becomes too long, the end words (the post title) gains less weight.

Overall tags and categories serve the same purpose - to organize content. Their major differences are their placement in the structure of your website and their importance when it comes to SEO.

USING TAGS AND CATEGORIES FOR SEO

To avoid being completely overwhelmed with the initial setup of labeling your posts, start off using the “one to many” principle. Simply put, this principle means that you should assign posts to only one category each, while applying as many tags as you like to the individual post.

Tagging blog posts helps you to expand their reach online without putting your website at risk for a duplicate content penalty IF you have disabled the Tag archives.

Categorizing a post in multiple categories increases the chance of duplicate content. Google’s own Matt Cutts even suggests assigning posts to one category. You’ve probably seen top bloggers who file the same content under various sections of their websites. But to keep things simple, especially for new bloggers, just follow Google’s advice.

Another key to preventing the duplicate penalties are to use category descriptions. Each page will then look slightly different with the description at the top of the category archive page. The description can be entered in the Posts → Category page in the dashboard. But not all themes display these descriptions. You may need to check with your theme developer about displaying them on the category archives.

When it comes to categories, aim to use natural-sounding, umbrella keyword terms for which numerous related topics can be filed under. For better SEO, skip the general category names such as “reviews,” “recipes,” and “miscellaneous,” and choose keywords as categories instead, like “bread maker reviews” and “homemade bread recipes.”

Tags and categories are different means to one end. Equipping websites to efficiently manage content for reader usability and search engine accessibility is the ultimate end for both.

6

SEO BASICS FOR GRAPHICS & VIDEO

The SEO basics for optimizing content also apply to website graphics and video. Properly labeling images provides an opportunity to give both search engines and readers the type of content they value.

First, start where many bloggers completely drop the ball. Optimize the filename of the saved image and use a keyword in the name of your picture.

Instead of “dsc0011.jpg”, save the image as “bread-making-step-one.jpg”. The goal is to have the keywords you want to get ranked for in your image title instead of a random description of what it is. Google does read and give SEO credit to well-named image files.

Next, make sure to fill in the title attributes. There are search engines that search specifically for images. When appropriate, include either a descriptive or keyword-rich title. Here's the typical format for an image in html:

``



The screenshot shows the WordPress media library interface for uploading an image. At the top, it displays 'Upload date: March 19, 2012' and 'Dimensions: 264 x 211'. Below this is a grey placeholder for the image and an 'Edit Image' button. The 'Title' and 'Alternate Text' fields are circled in blue, with a red asterisk next to the 'Title' label. Below these are fields for 'Caption' and 'Description'. A hint text 'Alt text for the image, e.g. "The Mona Lisa"' is visible next to the 'Alternate Text' field.

When inserting an image into WordPress, complete the fields marked title and alternate text. The ALT attribute offers another place to use meaningful keywords. There's some debate on whether or not the alt attribute does much for SEO. Regardless, it doesn't hurt your rankings to provide this information and it is best practices for browsers that are not displaying images (voice browsers).

Don't use the same alt attribute on multiple images on the same page, though. Five pictures on the same page, with the same attributes, come across as unnatural to the search engines. You could be penalized for over-optimization or keyword stuffing. Just keep it very natural and use images where appropriate.

By following the previous suggestions, you'll ensure that an ample amount of text is provided for your pictures. The filenames, title and alt attributes, give search engines more content to crawl when determining the meaning of the image.

Finally, add pictures within text. Embedding images in the midst of content improves their relevance to the theme of the page. In turn, the overall quality of the page increases.

Although utilizing these SEO basics for blog images will not catapult you to the top of the search engines, they're still important elements in the increasingly competitive SEO world. Optimized images contribute to a better user experience for readers and help search engines read your website.

REPAIR BROKEN LINKS

As the name implies, search spiders are robot programs that crawl the web from link to link. Broken or missing links stop spiders dead in their tracks. Links are essentially the only way for them to find new or valuable information. Search engines will deem your content worthless if they continue to run into these roadblocks.

Links are broken for a number of very common reasons.

Simply changing the name of a post or moving content around your website can lead to link malfunctions. Once a search engine indexes a piece of content, it expects to find it in the same place it was originally located. Links are like physical addresses. If you move without notifying the post office, you'll no longer receive your mail and eventually people will stop sending it. Websites you have linked to may change a website post title or go out of business leaving your website with an invalid link.

You can tell an error message is the result of a broken link if you receive a 404 Page or Page Not Found message. If you collect enough 404's your rankings will suffer. You can leave a message on your 404 pages directing users to the new location. However, it's still better to remain vigilant about fixing them.

Staying on top of defunct links may seem daunting. But it's an easy task with the number of free resources and tools available. Now there are plug-ins you can download directly to your website to notify you of problems. One such plugin is called 'Broken Link Checker'. You can find it by going to the plugins section of your WordPress website, clicking 'Add New' and then doing a search through the plugin directory. This is a great plugin to keep on top of links as they become broken.

Warning: Use the broken link checker as needed but do not leave it on. It is resource heavy and on shared hosting environments can cause problems.

We love the Broken Link Checker because you can easily fix any broken links using the Broken Link Checker settings page, so you don't need to edit the individual posts or pages. Broken Link Checker even crawls your comments, images, and ads to track down those nasty 404 errors.

One word of caution though: by default, Broken Link Checker puts a strikethrough on any link that's broken. This can make an ugly mess on your posts if you don't stay on top of it, so it might be wise to turn this feature off.

A few broken links might not automatically send your rankings to the basement, but in terms of user experience, it's definitely important to stay on top of the outbound links on your site. Whether you use a plugin or just randomly check from time to time, the point is – don't let users and your search results suffer because of a few 404 errors.

7

GET NOTICED!

There's more to getting your website online than publishing your first post. Technically your site doesn't exist in the search engines' eyes until it's indexed. The process is easy enough, yet it can take up to a week, or even longer, before search engines recognize your website. While you can wait for your site to get indexed, there are some proactive steps you can take to speed up the process.

HOW DO I KNOW IF MY WEBSITE IS INDEXED?

For those of you who've never thought to check if your website is indexed, here's how you do it. Go to www.google.com, www.yahoo.com, www.bing.com and so on. Type in the search string:

Site: www.yourdomain.com

If any listing is returned – even if it's for your “About” page -- then your site is indexed. However, if you get the message “site not found”, then it's time to give the engines a little nudge.

GIVE GOOGLE A MAP TO FIND YOU

A sitemap lists all the pages available on your website. It's useful for SEO because it helps the search engines know what pages to crawl and also makes it easier for them to find new pages as you add them. It's a very smart idea for you to consider generating a sitemap for your website. The sitemap feature in WordPress SEO plugin does a great job. You just click on the “XML Sitemap” button and you'll be redirected to the sitemap. Copy the link in the browser window. It will look like this:

www.mydomain.com/sitemap_index.xml

Log into Google Webmaster Tools (create a free account if you do not already have one) and enter the Sitemap link in the required field. Within 30 minutes your sitemap will be checked for readability and submitted to google. There's no guarantee that they'll be racing over to check your website, but it's always good to try!

GET LINKS FROM A HIGH-TRAFFIC WEBSITE WITH PAGE RANK

Links from other websites are like votes, testimonials, or recommendations. Google assigns a 'page rank' to most pages online. The highest page rank is 10 and the lowest is 0. The higher the page rank the better. A link to your website from a site with page rank vouches that your website is valuable. Creating link-worthy content is the subject matter for volumes and volumes.

Contrary to popular belief, commenting on other blogs will usually not include a link back to your site. Even if you leave a link in the website field of the commenting form, it will not lead search engines back to your site. WordPress automatically blocks search engines from seeing links in comments by adding a no-follow attribute.

This no-follow attribute is a very good thing for a couple of reasons. First, you don't want all those comments diluting the links on your page that you actually care about. And secondly, the no-follow attribute discourages spam – a little bit.

Nevertheless, commenting and participating in your niche through forums and social media all broaden your scope of influence, and eventually lead to a bigger platform.

CHECK FOR PLUG-IN PROBLEMS

Speaking of plug-ins, they may actually be the culprit as to why the engines are not picking up your website. In an effort to curb duplicate content, it's not uncommon for SEO plugins to be set with the nofollow meta tags option activated. Be sure to follow the recommendations in previous chapters for setting up your SEO plugins. A second culprit, can be the privacy settings in WordPress. Check under Settings/Privacy and make sure "Allow search engines to index this site" is checked.

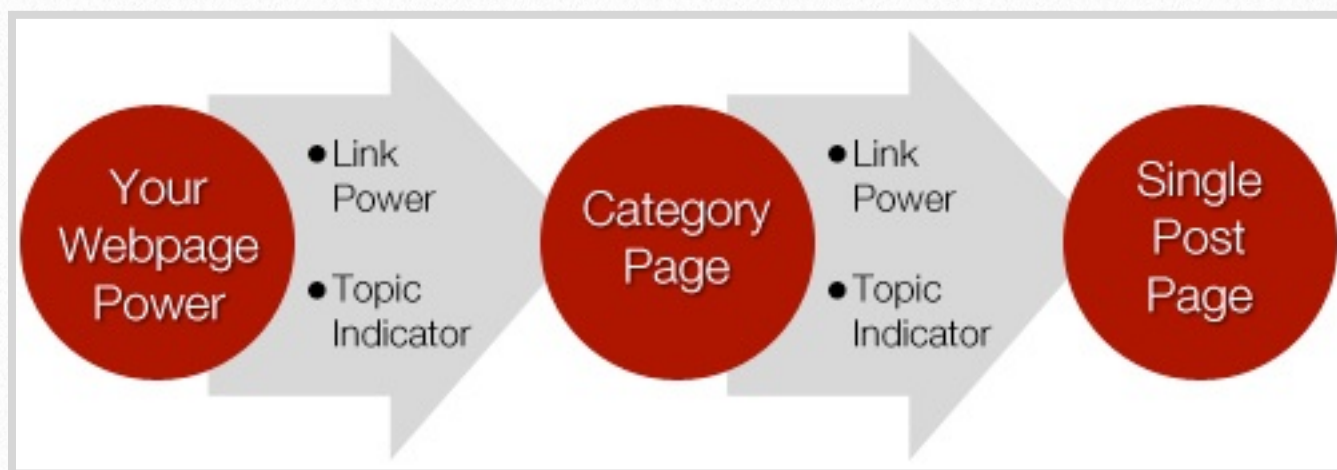
The web is huge. Millions of new pages are published on a daily basis. Google, as well as other search engines, index websites on their own time. Give them a hint that you've created a site worth checking out with these quick tactics.

8

INTERNAL LINKING BEST PRACTICES

Internal linking is an effective method for preserving “link juice” throughout a website. Backlinks into your site – meaning those links from other, external websites -- pass on a certain amount of authority from the referring website. Likewise, strategically placed internal links bolster the rank of designated pages on your website.

The practice of internal linking is vital to the overall structure of a website. Often, the importance of any particular post is determined by the links it receives from within the same site. Also, to some degree, it gives you the power to engineer what keywords pages will rank for.



Unless you take a proactive approach to linking your pages, WordPress will default to its standard linking method. The majority of WordPress linking is formulated through categories, tags, footer links, and navigation pages. Failure to take control of how your content connects is a lost opportunity to capitalize on some hard-earned link juice.

For bloggers, trying to go back and manually sculpt internal links becomes a laborious process and often results in a lot of broken links. To avoid this burden, keep these tips in mind from the beginning:

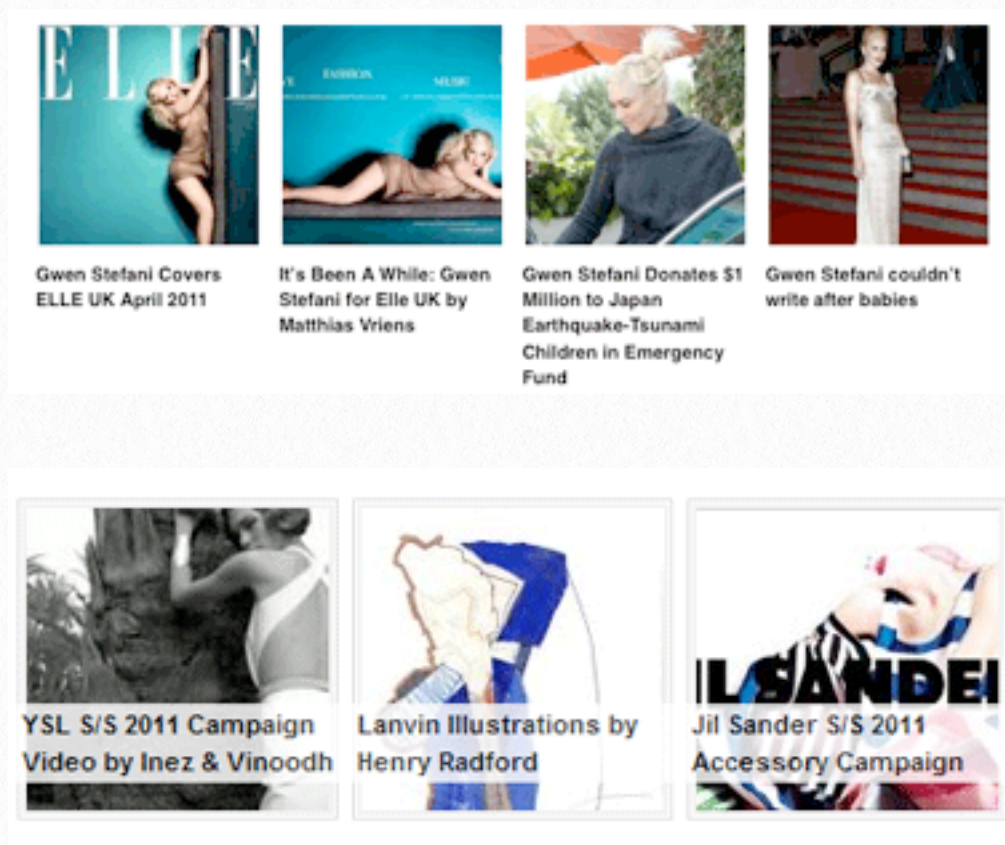
1. Use keywords as anchor text rather than “click here”. For example if your keywords are 'website design' then you would create a link using those words, indicating to the search engine that this is what the page you are linking to is about.
2. Selectively utilize nofollow tags to prevent unimportant pages from being crawled. For example it's not usually important for your contact page and your privacy policy pages to get indexed.
3. When possible, input the same keywords for the anchor text (linking to the page) as the page title (page being linked from).

The idea of internal linking is simple, but it's not the easiest of SEO tactics. We recommend using a related posts plugin to help with the task. It is important to note however, that not all related-posts plugins are created equal. For awhile, a very popular plugin was taking the reader to their site unnoticed, and then returning them to a new page, so there was a loss of link 'juice'. In other plugins, the dynamically generated related posts can be very resource intensive causing problems for some web hosts.

RELATED POSTS RECOMMENDATION: NRELATE

We highly recommend using the plugin nRelate. The two tabs that come with nRelate plugin are full of fun goodies to play with – and none of them require any developer. Some options include:

- 8 different displays for thumbnails and/or titles
- title display with/out excerpts
- vertical or horizontal display
- custom title “You might also like...” “More like this” etc.
- custom styles & colors



The end goal of an internal linking strategy is to evenly distribute link juice throughout key pages, to prime your website for better crawling by the search engines, and/or to pass on authority. All of these elements play a role in SEO. With that said, being purposeful about your internal links is well worth the challenge.

9

FREE SEO ANALYSIS TOOLS

The entire idea of search engine optimization all boils down to keywords. And you'll need an easy way to research which keywords are appropriate for your site, how to track your results in search engines and toss in a little tracking of your competition too.

My site, for example is found by hundreds of people on a daily basis for “mood boards”. Yes, my WordPress Support & Custom Theme site is found for mood boards! There's a story behind that, but the important lesson here is to pick your keywords carefully. Yes, I am getting a lot of google 'juice' and a lot of visitors. But do they want my custom design services and WordPress support? No. Therefore I don't spend a lot of time trying to optimize my pages for mood boards even though my site could fly to the top of google.

We all need to rank for keywords that our potential customers are looking for. To begin your own keyword research, you need to know:

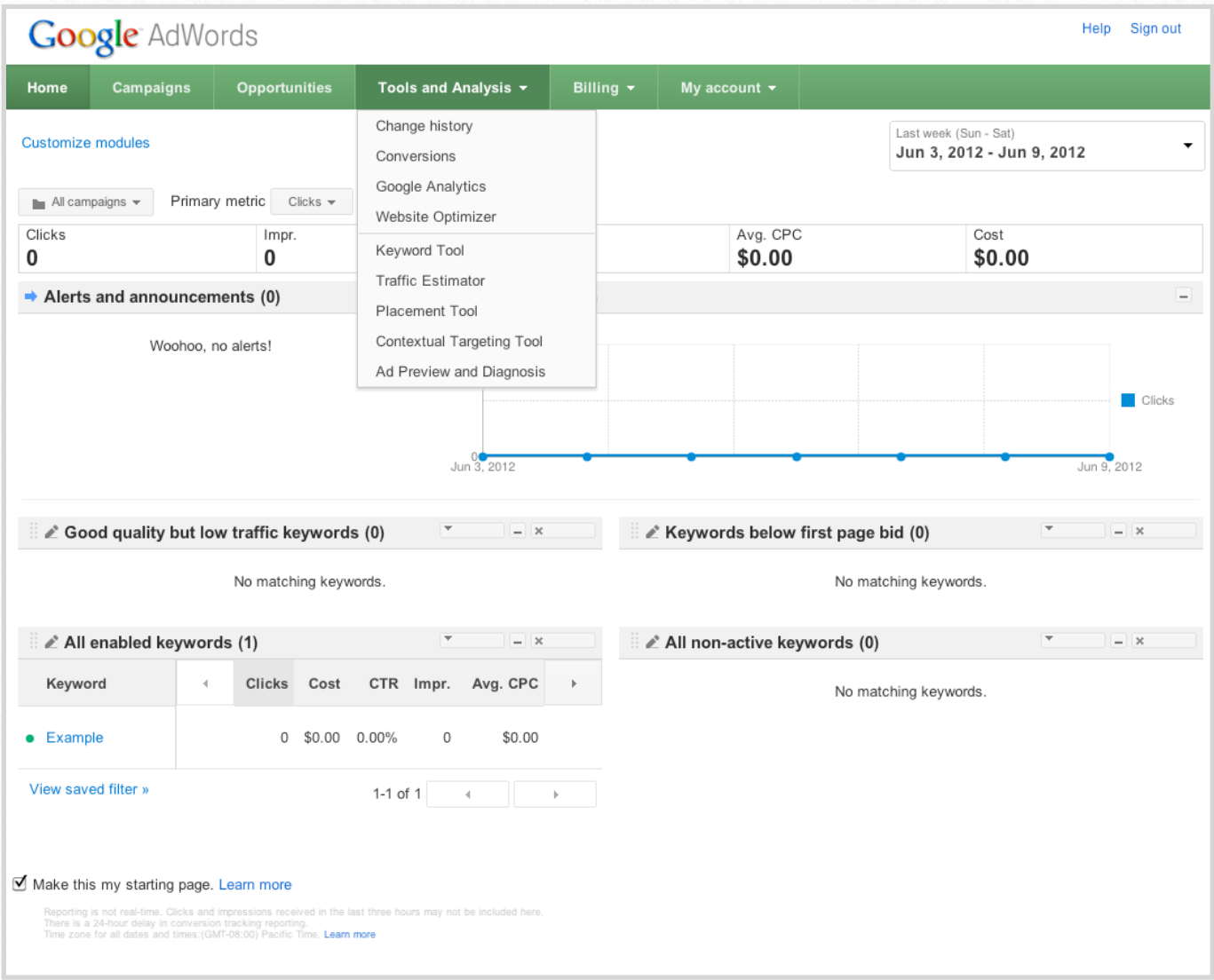
1. your ideal customer and his/her interests.
2. his/her search habits and language.

Fortunately this is quite easy to find. Have a look at Google Webmaster Tools:

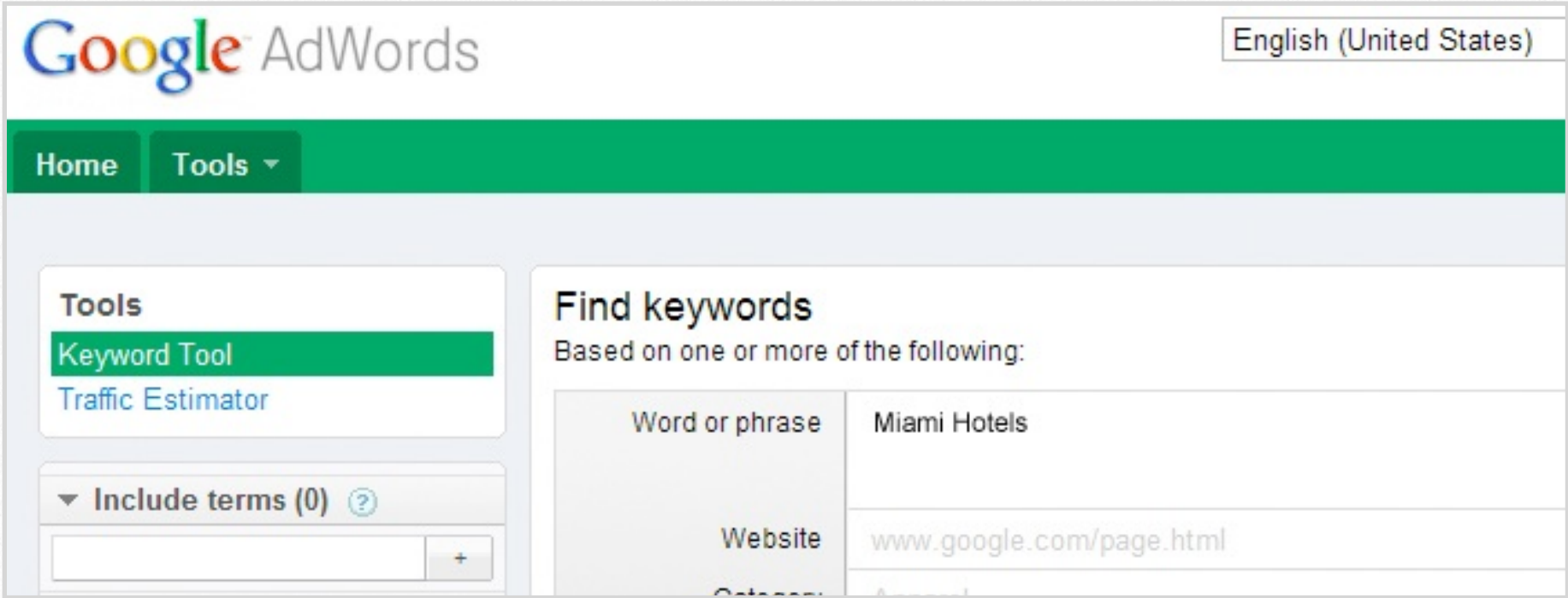
1. Log into Google Webmaster Tools, click on “Search Queries”. Under “Queries” in the table, you'll see the search results that people are using to find your site.
2. CTR means “Click Through Rate” that is how often google users click on the search result from your site. If it is low that means your custom description/meta tag could be better.
3. Average Position = the average position of your site on the search results page for the period the graph is displaying (by default one month).
4. Click on the keyword itself (its a link) and you can see more detail.

Now that you know which words are being used, and what search engines think your site is about, its time to start being more purposeful. We need targeted keywords.

An easy and free tool to begin your research is adwords.google.com. After logging in, click on the Tools & Analysis tab and then Keyword Tool.



Type in a general term that your site or niche is about. Let's take an example: Miami Hotels.



The results will give you an idea of how competitive that keyword is and how popular it is. I might want to rank for Miami Hotels but unless I'm TripAdvisor, Expedia or Hotels.com, I'm not likely to get to the top three. You need a low to medium competitive keyword. Make a note of all the keywords that are not in the “high” competitive category.

Then...

I might be able to get to the top of search engines for Purple Swirl Wallpaper in Hotels in Miami, but who is going to search for that? You need a popular keyword. Out of your list of keywords, which of them have a lot of global and local searches? If you're a small or beginner website start at the low end of searches and if you're a highly competitive website start at the higher end. Write down the keywords that meet all the above criteria.

Now you have a list of viable keywords. Next we need to find out more about them and the probability that you can successfully get to the top 1-3 results in Google, Bing, or Yahoo.

TRACK YOUR RESULTS

Unfortunately we're back to the stone ages on this one – you'll need a good old fashioned spreadsheet.

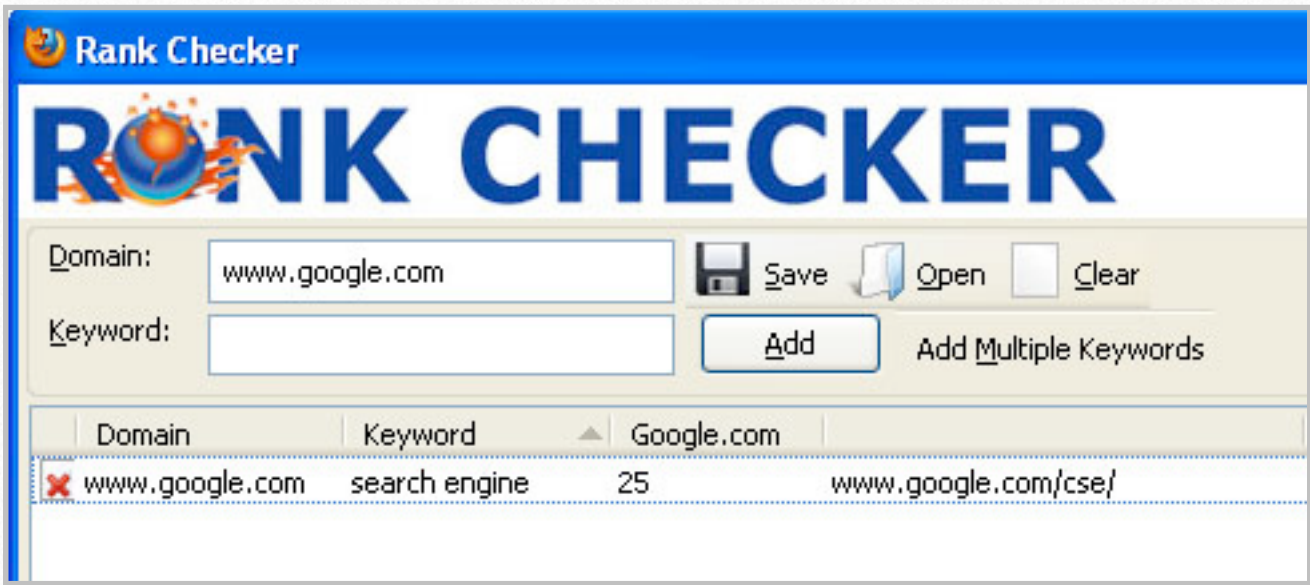
Step One: Enter the keywords you have chosen, up to 10 of them. Then, while still in the Adwords tool, enter today's competition analysis(high, medium, low), and popularity numbers both Globally and Locally. You'll want to keep an up to date record of these each month to be sure your efforts are producing the desired return.

Step Two: Google Them. Google your chosen keywords. Go to each site in the top 10 results and check on the following:

- PR rank
- incoming links
- age of site

The easiest way to do this is to use Firefox browser, and download the SEObook Rank Checker plugin. (<http://tools.seobook.com/firefox/rank-checker/>)

To use the Rank Checker, open Firefox, then click on the Rank Checker icon in the toolbar. Enter your domain name and the list of 10 keywords you chose earlier. Save this list and you can come back and run this check every week or month. Click on Start. If the site doesn't rank in the top 200 results, the field will display a dash (-).



Also, if you'd like to dig a little deeper, check up on your competition by entering their domains and the same keywords. This will let you know how close you are in the race to be seen in search engines.

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CONCLUSION

As we said at the beginning, SEO is a little bit science, a little bit art, and it is most definitely a lot of testing and tweaking.

Consistently applying the techniques covered in this ebook will undoubtedly help you rank better, but remember – nothing is written in stone. If you find that you’re putting more effort into tagging your posts than the search results you see merit, then no one will fault you for giving up the tags in favor of more profitable work.

“...search engine optimization should never outweigh reader experience.”

Above all else, though, remember that **search engine optimization should never outweigh reader experience**. Don’t sacrifice readability for keyword usage and don’t stuff a list of keywords into your title tag. Use keywords and their synonyms naturally throughout your site, and not only will the search engines love you, but so will your human visitors.