

BONUS CHECKLIST!

sell while you sleep
ACADEMY

THE BEGINNER'S STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

SEO for Your WordPress Website





SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is all about how to get your website to rank higher on search results pages. After all, the higher you rank, the more likely you'll be found, right?

There are a variety of ways you can improve your SEO score (or how you rank on a search engine results page). This guide will tackle the easiest things you can do to your website. Don't miss the checklist at the end. I have the checklist pinned to my corkboard next to my desk to use as a reference daily!

WHY SEO MATTERS

You have an amazing website, right? You may have realized that just because you own a website doesn't mean people will automatically flock to it. You have to work to drive people to your amazing website.

There are a variety of free and paid things you can do to drive more people to your website. They should all work together.*

It's a safe assumption that nearly every person who uses the Internet uses a search engine for one reason or another. Your audience may search "healthy eating coach in Cleveland" and discover your health coaching website. Or maybe they know your name but forget the name of your business, so they search "Jane Doe health coach."

For both examples, you want your website to appear at the top of the search results page.

Let's look at a brief overview on how SEO works before we dive into the factors that affect it.

*This guide tackles SEO and the free things you can do to boost your score. For more information about different ways to drive traffic to your website, check out more articles and guides posted on [SWYSAcademy.com](https://www.swysacademy.com).

WHAT MATTERS TO SEARCH ENGINES

When you create a website, it becomes available for search engines to comb through. These search engines have algorithms that carefully weigh several contributing factors.

Keywords

Keywords are crucial.

There are short-tail keywords—like “nutritionists”—which are typically under three words. It’s extremely hard to rank highly on a search results page for short-tail keywords. Established companies with huge advertising budgets usually dominate the first page.

That’s why you need to use long-tail keywords. These keywords—like “low-carb healthy eating coach” or “nutritionists for diabetics in Cleveland”—typically have less competition. Plus, people who are searching for these long-tail keywords are going to be more qualified leads because they’re looking for something specific.

Using either one or a few long-tail keywords across your website (we'll show you exactly how to use them in a minute) will help the search engine better understand what service you offer, and show your website to the right person.

Backlinks

In addition to matching keywords with a user's search query, search engines also look at how many other websites link back to yours. These, appropriately, are called backlinks.

Quality backlinks are from relevant, established, and trustworthy websites. This typically comes from nurturing genuine relationships with influencers (people who already have established followings) in your industry or sphere. Guest blogging is a great example of well-executed backlinking. You can also leverage social media and forums to increase the number of backlinks.

Be careful! A bad tactic is paying other websites to link back to your website even though there is no relationship or reason. Search engines are cracking down on these "black hat" tactics and will push your website further down in the search results page if they determine someone is trying to trick the system.

External Links

The links you place on your own website also matter to your SEO score. Search engines consider both the number of external links, as well as the reputation of these websites.

If you have excessive links to untrustworthy websites, search engines will begin to view your website as untrustworthy. These bad links will adversely affect your SEO score.

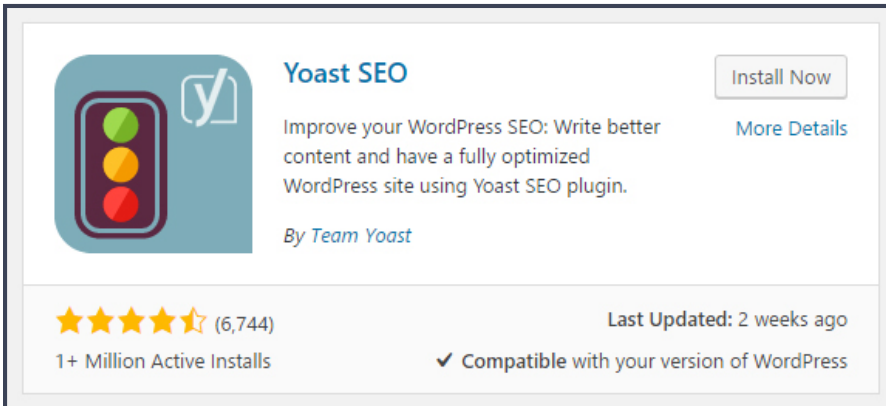
What constitutes an untrustworthy site? Anything spammy, fake, or malicious—a website you wouldn't trust with your credit card information.

Add trustworthy external links when appropriate—there is no magic number. Try to aim for no more than two external links per paragraph. This will vary, though, depending on the page's content and purpose.



IMPROVING YOUR SEO RIGHT NOW

The rest of this guide is broken into two sections: things you can do right now and things you should do over time. Once you get everything set up, maintaining your SEO should be a breeze!



Yoast SEO [Install Now](#)

Improve your WordPress SEO: Write better content and have a fully optimized WordPress site using Yoast SEO plugin. [More Details](#)

By Team Yoast

★★★★★ (6,744) Last Updated: 2 weeks ago

1+ Million Active Installs ✓ Compatible with your version of WordPress

I. Download the Yoast SEO Plugin

By far the most comprehensive and useful WordPress plugin I've found is [Yoast's free SEO Plugin](#). It's easy to use and guides both beginners and advanced users through the process of improving your SEO score.

Yoast also has [comprehensive documentation](#) on SEO and their plugin if you need advanced help.

2. WordPress Link Names

Make sure your website's link names include the page's title:

Good: <http://mywebsite.com/seo-tips-beginners>

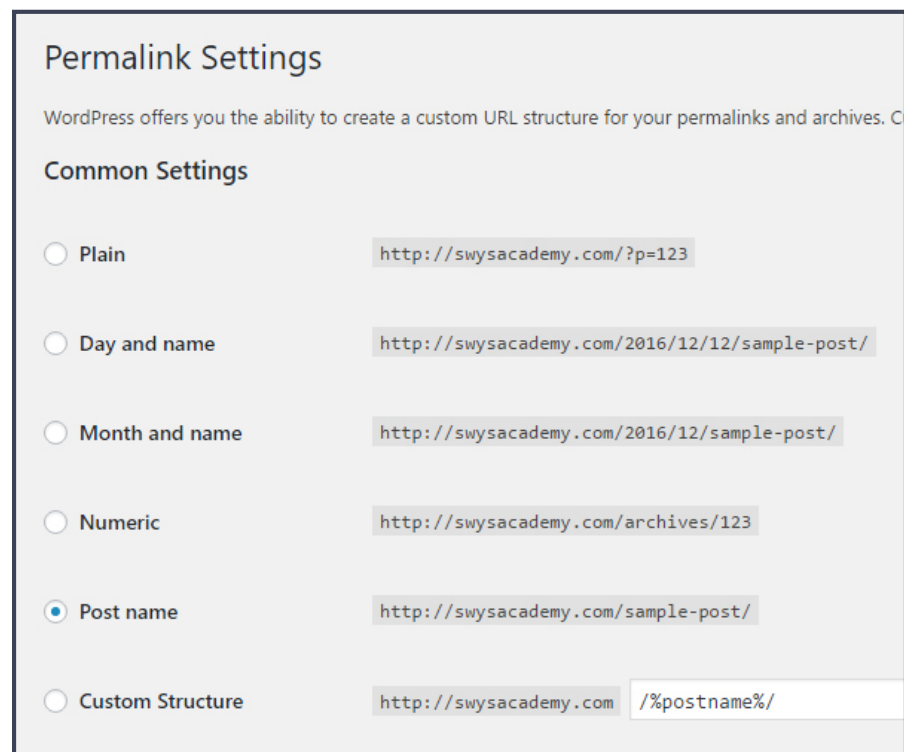
Bad: <http://mywebsite.com/?p=123>

These permanent links, called Permalinks, can be updated from your WordPress dashboard > Settings > Permalinks.

Search engines look at the words used in your URLs. It's also easier for your user to know what to expect when they can understand the URL address. It's not only good form for SEO, it will help you appear more trustworthy to your audience.

If you have an established website, changing all your links may be a bit of a challenge. WordPress should be smart enough to update your menus and help with redirecting people from the old link to the new link.

Always make sure every link on your website connects properly. Also adjust your ads or social media links with the new Permalinks.



3. Keyword Research

As discussed earlier, your keyword makes the world go 'round. Well, at least with improving your SEO score.

While you may have a pretty good idea of what people are looking for when they find you, I encourage you to do some keyword research. You may be surprised at what your actual audience is like: what they search for, their interests, and what problem they're trying to solve when they find your website.

Here are a handful of free keyword research tools you can play with:

[Google Analytics](#) & [Google Keywords Planner](#) & [Google Trends Keyword Tool](#)
[BuzzSumo](#)



Good Examples:

- DIY desk organizer ideas
- Makeup tutorial acne scars
- Modern American-made ergonomic chairs

Bad Examples:

- Office desks
- Makeup tutorial
- Modern chairs USA

Search engines are pretty smart these days. Let's say you make "DIY desk organizer ideas" the keyword for a blog article. If someone searches for "Desk organizer DIY idea," your website will still match highly. The order of the words doesn't matter to search engines. Search engines will also be able to identify synonyms in a search query and show your website if appropriate.

4. Individual Page Focus Keyword & Meta Description

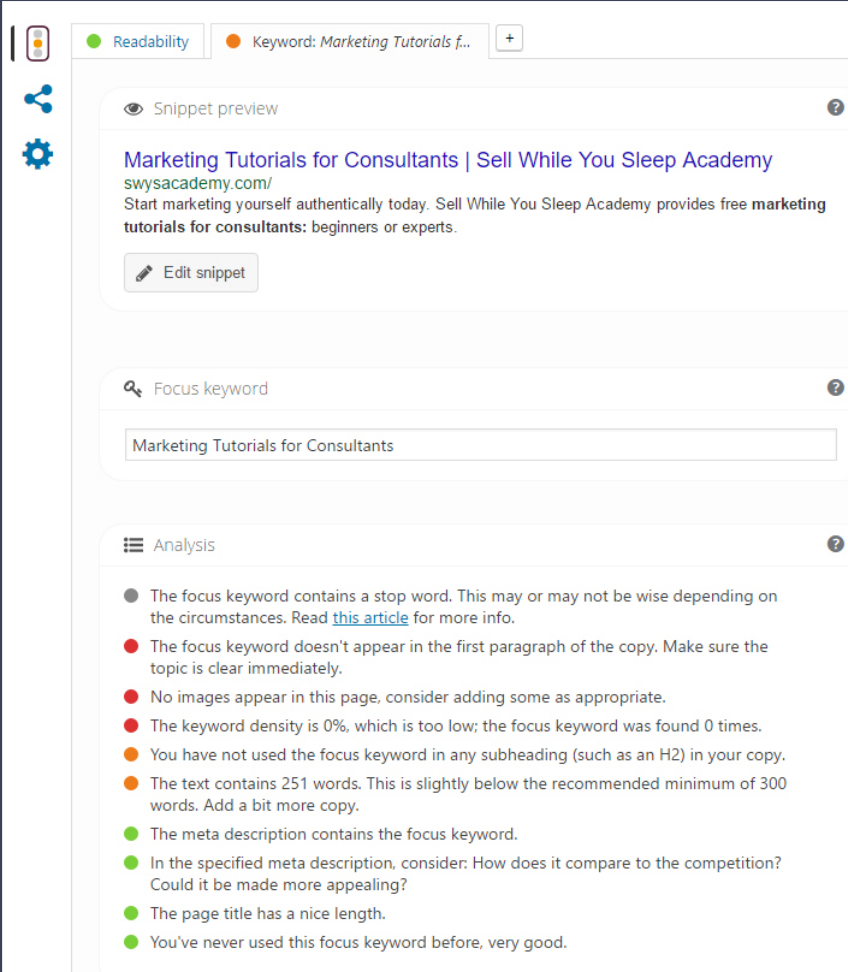
Now that you have the Yoast SEO plugin installed on your WordPress website, you can customize your keywords on every individual page and blog article.

Start with your homepage. Carefully choose a Focus Keyword and make sure the Meta Description makes sense. Consider how someone who knows nothing of you or your services would interpret the Meta Description. Does it let them know what to expect from your business?

Meta Descriptions work well if they clearly define who your ideal customer is, what you sell, and what makes you different from other consultants.

Your keyword for the page should ideally appear in the Page Title, Page Permalink, and Meta Description. You can customize each of these.

Next, we'll look at how headlines affect your SEO score.



The screenshot displays the Yoast SEO plugin interface. At the top, there are two tabs: "Readability" (active) and "Keyword: Marketing Tutorials f...". Below the tabs is a "Snippet preview" section showing the page title "Marketing Tutorials for Consultants | Sell While You Sleep Academy", the URL "swysacademy.com/", and a meta description: "Start marketing yourself authentically today. Sell While You Sleep Academy provides free marketing tutorials for consultants: beginners or experts." An "Edit snippet" button is visible below the preview. The "Focus keyword" section shows the keyword "Marketing Tutorials for Consultants" entered in a text box. The "Analysis" section provides a list of feedback items:

- The focus keyword contains a stop word. This may or may not be wise depending on the circumstances. Read [this article](#) for more info.
- The focus keyword doesn't appear in the first paragraph of the copy. Make sure the topic is clear immediately.
- No images appear in this page, consider adding some as appropriate.
- The keyword density is 0%, which is too low; the focus keyword was found 0 times.
- You have not used the focus keyword in any subheading (such as an H2) in your copy.
- The text contains 251 words. This is slightly below the recommended minimum of 300 words. Add a bit more copy.
- The meta description contains the focus keyword.
- In the specified meta description, consider: How does it compare to the competition? Could it be made more appealing?
- The page title has a nice length.
- You've never used this focus keyword before, very good.

5. Update Page Headlines

Starting with your home page, you'll need to go through each page and blog article on your website to examine the text used in headers. Yoast's SEO tool will help with this task.

On your website, the <h1> tag (which stands for Heading 1, typically the largest text on the page) is the most important. Search engines love proper hierarchy: Heading 1 should be the page's overall heading, while Heading 2 is more specific, Heading 3 is even more specific, and the text under each heading is directly related to what's stated in its heading.

Heading 1: Web Design Packages for Entrepreneurs

Heading 2: Websites Designed Within 2 Weeks: Only for Entrepreneurs!

Body text: We design websites for entrepreneurs within a two-week turnaround. Our websites have five content pages and include an hour Skype call for training on using your new website. *[and so on]*

Heading 2: Additional Services

Heading 3: Copywriting

Body: Copywriting is super important to your business. *[and so on]*

Heading 3: Branding + Logo Design

Body: Need a logo? We can take care of that. *[and so on]*

Heading 3: Photo Shoots

Body: For local clients, we can take high resolution photos for your new website. *[and so on]*

Heading 2: What Our Customers Say

Body: "I love my new website!" - Joan

Try to naturally incorporate your keyword in headings and the first sentence of body text. It's important to not get caught up in achieving Green Light status in the Yoast SEO plugin. You don't want your website to be excessively repetitive or worded unnaturally. Your audience will notice.

As you work on a page in WordPress, the Yoast SEO plugin will give you some tips:

The amount of text on a page is important to your SEO score. If you have many pages under 300 words, search engines may question what kind of content is on your website.

You want to break up a big wall of texts into appropriate headings and line breaks. This makes it easier for your audience to read the text, as well as helps search engines determine if the keyword is appropriate.

6. Add Image Alt Text

Each page and blog article should have a few relevant images. Images add to the visual rhythm of the page, making it easier for your audience to read through a page. For SEO purposes, each image is another opportunity to add your keyword to the page.

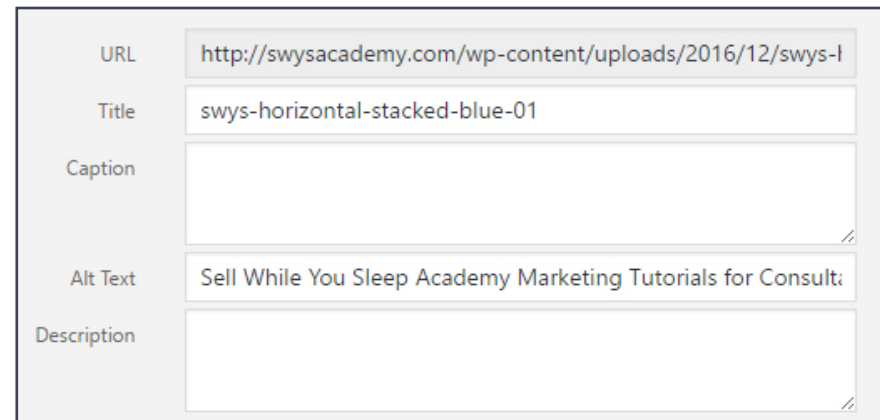
Each image has alternative text (alt text). This is text that shows up if the image fails to load (poor internet connection) or if your user is using a screen reader (software that reads website text aloud for vision-impaired users).

Search engines see an image's alt text even if your audience doesn't. Each image alt text should summarize the photo while using the page's focus keyword.

You don't want to incorrectly describe the photo by flooding it with keywords. Stuffing keywords in an image's alt text (or anywhere, really) is frowned upon by search engines and your website may be pushed lower on the results page for it.

You can add alt text to new photos by following these steps.

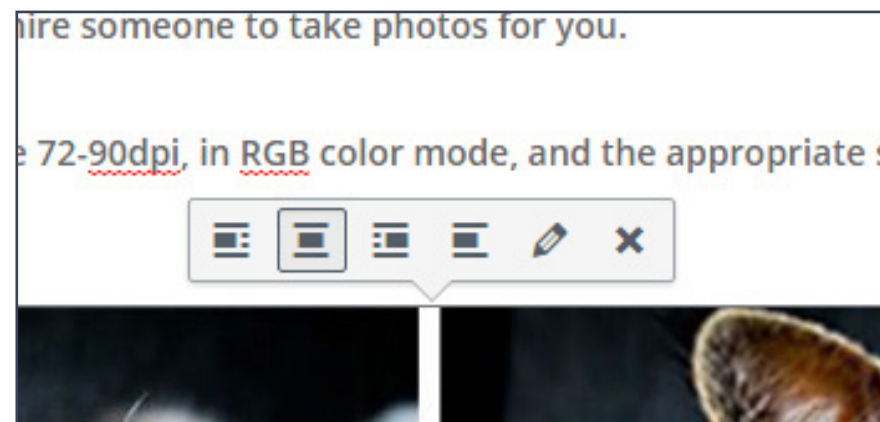
1. From the WordPress dashboard, go to the page or blog article you want to edit.
2. Click where you want to add an image.
3. Click Add Media.
4. Find or upload the image you want to add.
5. Before you click Insert Into Page, you should see a field for Alt Text on the right side of the page. Enter your alt text here!
6. Click Insert into Page and you're done.



A screenshot of the WordPress media editor interface. It shows a form with several fields: URL (http://swysacademy.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/swys-l), Title (swys-horizontal-stacked-blue-01), Caption (empty), Alt Text (Sell While You Sleep Academy Marketing Tutorials for Consult:), and Description (empty). The Alt Text field is highlighted with a red border.

If you want to add alt text to an existing photo:

1. From the WordPress dashboard, go to the page or blog article you want to edit.
2. Click the image that's already on the page.
3. Click the pencil icon that appears just above the photo.
4. Add your description in the Alternative Text field.
5. Click Update and you're done.





ONGOING SEO TASKS: BUILDING BACKLINKS

I've made backlinks it's own section: while you can do a lot right now to build backlinks, it's typically a long-term tactic if you want to do it right (which you do).

Backlinks: What You Can Do Right Now

If you have social media accounts for your business, make sure your About section links back to your website. In addition, for every post that refers to a service or blog article on your website, make sure you include your website URL.

If you don't already have a social media account on at least one website (Facebook, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Twitter, Instagram, etc.), I highly recommend creating one.*

*For more information about social media for consultants, check out SWYSAcademy.com.

If you already have established, genuine relationships with fellow bloggers or consultants, consider trading links. This type of backlinking could be accomplished with any of the following:

- Testimonials on another consultant's or software website
- Press Releases
- Directories
- Resources page on another consultant's website
- Social Media profiles
- Guest blogging for fellow consultants
- Writing articles for media websites
(Entrepreneur, Fast Company, etc.)



SEO CHECKLIST

So you've combed through your website and updated your headers, meta descriptions, and image alt text. That was the hard part, so it should be smooth sailing from here on out.

Moving forward, every time you add a new page or blog article to your website, review the checklist on the next page. Feel free to print it out!

SEO CHECKLIST

For all pages & blog articles:

- At least 300 words of valuable content
- Choose a relevant long-tail keyword
- Check keyword potential success with BuzzSumo.com
- Use keyword in page title
- Use keyword in at least one heading
- Use keyword at beginning of page copy
- Use keyword in URL
- Create custom graphics for page/blog
- Update image alternative text with keyword
- Double check all links
- Add alt text to links
- Rewrite meta description with keyword to better describe page content

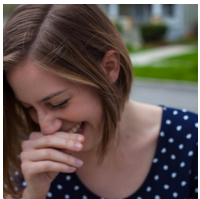
If blog article:

- Schedule to post on social media
 - Facebook
 - Twitter
 - LinkedIn
 - Pinterest
 - Instagram
 - Other: _____
- Send to email list & network
- Readapt for guest blogging opportunity
- Submit to media outlets

THANKS FOR READING

This beginner's guide to SEO is part of Sell While You Sleep (SWYS) Academy. I created SWYS Academy to help consultants and freelancers market themselves better. There are a lot of slimy and manipulative tactics out there, but SWYS Academy approaches marketing in an authentic way. We believe in providing accessible content for any level of tech know-how. For more content, subscribe to the blog on swysacademy.com.

Stacy Harrison is a marketing and design consultant located in Cleveland, Ohio. Want to work together? Stacy offers web design, copywriting, and email marketing packages tailored just for consultants.



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