

Tip 2 Site Design and Structure.

From **GoogleTop 10 Tips - 10 steps to a Google top 10 ranking.**

(Please note - words or phrases highlighted in **this colour** are to be found in the Glossary in Appendix 1.)

Don't just think of your site as a single entity with the Home page being the only entry point.

Think of it as having a number of entry points, each entry point acting as a doorway into different parts of your site so clients can be taken direct to the relevant part, rather than having to wade through lots of unnecessary pages.

For example, if your site is offering to sell jewellery then one entry point could be a necklaces section, another one could be a section on earrings etc. Each section may be one page or a group of pages. For instance, you may wish to separate necklaces into gold necklaces and silver necklaces.

Think of your site in terms of a hierarchy. We could think of each node in the hierarchy as a page in its own right. You want your prospective clients to be able to enter at almost any level in the hierarchy. Wouldn't it be good if they could be taken direct to the area of your site which they are most interested in?



Site Themes and Keywords.

If we refer to the hierarchy diagram above, when someone searches on the keyword 'necklaces', why not take them direct to the 'necklaces' page on your site? If, however, they type in the search 'silver necklaces' then send them directly to the 'silver necklaces' page. Think of the alternative where they have to go to the Home page every time and then click through a series of menus to get to their target page, by which time they will probably have lost interest and gone to another site! In practice, we need to think of **optimisation not at site level but at individual page level**, each page having its own specific theme and keywords.

Site Naming Standards.

Once you have decided upon your site themes, you will need to think about names for your pages. In practice, page names usually have some bearing on the function which they provide. For instance, about_us.html or contact.html.

It can be beneficial to use the theme names as your page names, especially if the theme names reflect the optimum keywords for the page.

E.g. for the silver necklaces' page, why not name the page

silver_necklaces.html or
silver-necklaces.html.

It is debatable whether the use of the underscore or hyphen is more effective, however, either one are better than none at all i.e.

silvernecklaces.html.

You could even have a folder structure which mirrors the site design. So in the example above we would have a folder named **jewellery** which contains a folder named **products** which in turn contains a folder named **necklaces** which contains the page **silver-necklaces.html**.

The full path would then be:

www.aaajewellery.com/products/necklaces/silver-necklaces.html.

Menu Structure and Site Navigation.

Menus and links need to be set up using properly so that both users and search engines can follow them easily and effectively.

In terms of the search engines, links are most effective when set up using HTML **anchor tags** and suitable **anchor text**,
e.g. `Go to Necklaces page`

This may not however be the most suitable method for humans, for instance, they may prefer to see image buttons.

Whichever method of navigation you use, it is important to ensure that your **site navigation** is set up in such a way that both humans and search engines can easily reach your most important pages.

(Please note that HTML links do NOT have to be text-only links. There's nothing wrong with graphical image navigation that is wrapped in standard `<a href>` tags, as the search engines can follow image links just fine.)

A very useful navigation feature is the **breadcrumb trail**.

This allows a very simple mechanism for navigation especially when your site contains a multi-level hierarchy.

e.g. taken from the **DMOZ** website.

[Top](#): [Computers](#): [Internet](#): [Web Design and Development](#): [Promotion](#):
Search Engine Optimization Firms

You can navigate up or down the hierarchy very easily by selecting any of the individual within the breadcrumb trail.

Javascript Menus.

Javascript is a programming language that some website designers use to supplement basic **HTML**.

Unfortunately, the search engines cannot read JavaScript links and menus. This doesn't necessarily preclude you from using them on your site. If you do use them, however, you do need to provide alternate means of navigating your site for the benefit of the search engines. If you have only a drop-down sequence of menus to provide links to the other pages of your site, then the search engine crawlers will never find those target pages.

Sitemap.

Another useful tip is to set up a **sitemap** page. On this sitemap page will be a list of all the pages on your site including proper HTML links to each one of them.

e.g. `Go to Necklaces`
`Go to Earrings`

You can even display them in a logical hierarchy and also add a description for each page if you wish.

This will ensure that the search engine spiders will visit as many pages as possible.

If the sitemap is larger than 100 or so links, you may want to break the sitemap into separate pages.

It is obviously important to ensure that the sitemap page can itself be found by the search engines by ensuring proper HTML links to it.

An alternative to a sitemap is to put links to your other pages at the bottom of your Home page but this may become unwieldy if you have a lot of pages.

Images

If you use images to display important names, content, or links then be warned that the Google spidering program (Googlebot) doesn't recognize text contained in images.

Image Alt Tags

Image ALT tags are those HTML tags that tell you and the search engines what an image is all about. As we know that search engines can't read the text written in the images so it's good to use ALT tags to help the search engines to understand what the image is all about.

Image ALT tags not only help the search engines to understand your images but they also help the user who is viewing your site to get more information about the images themselves.

The following is an example of an image ALT tag:

```

```

In this example, the text '**silver charm bracelet from aaajewellery**', will be displayed when the cursor is placed over the image.

Remember the following points in relation to image ALT tags:

- Always make sure that you use well written and descriptive ALT tags for your images.
- Keep the description in the ALT tags concise – no more than 10 words.
- You can use your main keywords in the ALT tags but make sure that you don't overdo it and run the risk of spamming.

Search Engine Spidering.

The more pages which can be spidered, the more chance you will have of obtaining a higher ranking.

It is a complete waste of time optimising pages that cannot be reached by the search engines.

One thing to bear in mind, however, when optimising a site is that you may not actually want all of your web pages to be spidered by the search engines.

When would I not wish my pages to be spidered?

Well think about secure pages, where you may be holding secure information such as credit card details or password information. You don't want anyone picking up those pages on a search do you! This problem can be avoided by telling the search engines **not to spider** those pages.

This is where the **Robots.txt** file comes in.

Robots.txt.

Robots.txt is just a normal text file, written in notepad, which contains instructions which the search engines can interpret.

Sample robots.txt file (# indicates a comment).

```
# Sample robots.txt file (make sure the filename is ALL LOWERCASE
on Linux/Unix systems)
# This file should go in your web site's ROOT directory
# The root directory is where your site's main /index.html file would be
found
# The following line says to apply these settings to ALL search engine
spiders/crawlers
User-agent: *
# These settings will keep spiders from indexing your unwanted pages
# The following line prohibits spidering of the directory named 'admin'.
Disallow: /admin
# The following line prohibits spidering of the page named 'login.php'.
Disallow: /login.php
# The following line prohibits spidering of the page named
'password_forgotten.php'.
Disallow: /password_forgotten.php
```

Frames

Many sites use frames for navigation, but most Search Engines have difficulty indexing framed websites. Using frames often prevents search engine spiders from finding all the pages within a website.

Remember that a Frame is also a page but it is usually only a subset of the whole page which a user would see. If this subset page was optimised, it could cause problems when it was displayed in the search engine results.

The problem is that the link from the results would be to the subset page only and the page may not contain any menu or links to any other pages so the user is effectively stuck on that page and cannot navigate to any other pages within the website.

What does Google have to say about Frames?

Your page uses frames. Google supports frames to the extent that it can. Frames tend to cause problems with search engines, bookmarks, emailing links and so on, because frames don't fit the conceptual model of the web (every page corresponds to a single URL). If a user's query matches the site as a whole, Google returns the frame set. If a user's query matches an individual page on the site, Google returns that page. That individual page is not displayed in a frame -- because there may be no frame set corresponding to that page.

How can I make frames more attractive to search engines?

The homepage or index page of a framed site is the document which contains the frameset and as you can see from the HTML above there is very little in the way of **content** for the search engines to read and index. What is needed is for more information to be added to the NOFRAMES element.

The best way of achieving this is to add a complete web page within the NOFRAMES tag including appropriate keyword rich headings and text. A navigation menu should also be included to provide links to all internal areas of your website. This will allow the search engines to index all areas of your website and improve accessibility for those using a browser or alternate device which does not support frames or which has frames support disabled.

Frames and Internal Site Navigation.

As mentioned earlier, a common problem that occurs when you use frames is that the search engines will often display one of the internal pages in your site in response to a query. If this internal page does not contain a link to the home page of your site or its own navigation menu, the user will be unable to navigate away from this page.

The solution to this problem can be solved by placing a link on each internal page to your homepage including the attribute TARGET = "_top" this will prevent your framed site becoming nested within your own frames.

E.g.

```
<a href="index.html" TARGET = "_top">Go to our home page</a>.
```

Thank you!

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Appendix 1 Glossary of Terms.

AdWords

See **Sponsored Links**.

Algorithm

A complex mathematical formula used by search engines to assess the relevance and importance of websites and rank them accordingly in their search results. These algorithms are kept tightly under wraps as they are the key to the objectivity of search engines (i.e. the algorithm ensures relevant results, and relevant results bring more users, which in turn brings more advertising revenue).

Anchor tag <a>

The HTML tag which is used to create an anchor to link from in a web page. The 'href' attribute is used to address the document to link to, and the words between the open and close of the anchor tag will be displayed as a hyperlink.

Anchor text

A word or phrase on a web page which the reader can click to visit another page. When generating links to your own site, they are most effective (in terms of ranking) if they include your keywords.

Blog

A blog is basically a journal that is available on the web. The activity of updating a blog is "blogging" and someone who keeps a blog is a "blogger." Blogs are typically updated daily using software that allows people with little or no technical background to update and maintain the blog.

Breadcrumb trail

On a Web site, a breadcrumb trail is a navigation tool that allows a user to see where the current page is in relation to the Web site's hierarchy. (The term comes from the story of Hansel and Gretel, who left a trail of

breadcrumbs as they walked through the forest so they could trace their way back home).

Content

The content of your web pages. Whether it is Text, images, flash or video.

Copy

See **Content**.

Copywriter

A professional writer who specializes in the writing of advertising copy (compelling, engaging words promoting a particular product or service). See also SEO copywriter and web copywriter.

Crawl

Google finds pages on the World Wide Web and records their details in its index by sending out 'spiders' or 'robots'. These spiders make their way from page to page and site to site by following text links. To a spider, a text link is like a door.

Domain Name

The virtual address of your website (normally in the form www.yourbusinessname.com). This is what people will type when they want to visit your site. It is also what you will use as the address in any text links back to your site.

Ezine

An electronic magazine. Most publishers of ezines are desperate for content and gladly publish well written, helpful articles and give you full credit as author, including a link to your website.

Flash

A technology used to create animated web pages (and page elements).

Google

The search engine with the greatest coverage of the World Wide Web, and which is responsible for most search engine-referred traffic.

Google AdWords

See [Sponsored Links](#).

Google PageRank

How Google scores a website's importance. It gives all sites a mark out of 10. By downloading the Google Toolbar, you can view the PR of any site you visit.

Google Toolbar

A free tool you can download. It becomes part of your browser toolbar. It's most useful features are it's PageRank display (which allows you to view the PR of any site you visit) and it's AutoFill function (when you're filling out an online form, you can click AutoFill, and it enters all the standard information automatically, including Name, Address, Zip code/Postcode, Phone Number, Email Address, Business Name, Credit Card Number (password protected), etc.) Once you've downloaded and installed the toolbar, you may need to set up how you'd like it to look and work by clicking Options (setup is very easy). NOTE: Google does record some information (mostly regarding sites visited).

HTML

See [Hyper Text Mark-up Language](#)

Hyperlink

A word or image on a web page which, when clicked, will direct the reader to another page or another location within the same page. There are normally visual clues to indicate to the reader that the word or image is a link, for instance, the cursor may change to the shape of a hand.

Hyper Text Mark-up Language

HyperText Markup Language (HTML) is the coding language used to create much of the information on the World Wide Web. Web browsers read the HTML code and display the page that code describes.

Internet

An interconnected network of computers around the world.

JavaScript

A programming language used to create dynamic website pages (e.g. interactivity).

Keyword

A word which your potential clients search for and which you use frequently on your site in order to be relevant to those searches. This is known as targeting a keyword. Most websites actually target 'keyword phrases' because single keywords are too generic and it is very difficult to rank highly for them.

Keyword density

A measure of the frequency of your keyword in relation to the total wordcount of the page. So if your page has 200 words, and your keyword phrase appears 10 times, its density is 5%.

Keyword Effectiveness Indicator (KEI).

The very best keywords have high popularity (as in a large number of searches), but are not very competitive, that is they do not appear on a large number of pages. This relationship is represented by the Keyword Effectiveness Indicator, or KEI. KEI is a logarithmic scale that aims to quantify the effectiveness of any search term. The KEI value is 0 to 10. It is similar in principal to the Richter Scale, commonly used to measure earthquakes, and this is a good way to think about the figures.

Key phrase

A number of keywords associated together.

Link

See [Hyperlink](#).

Link path

Using text links to connect a series of page (i.e. page 1 connects to page 2, page 2 connects to page 3, page 3 connects to page 4, and so on). Search engine 'spiders' and 'robots' use text links to jump from page to page as they gather information about it, so it's a good idea to allow them traverse your entire site via text links.

Link partner

A webmaster that is willing to put a link to your website on their website. Quite often link partners engage in reciprocal linking.

Link popularity

The number of links to your website. Link popularity is the single most important factor in a high search engine ranking. Webmasters use a number of methods to increase their site's link popularity including article PR, link exchange (link partners / reciprocal linking), link buying, and link directories.

Link text

See [Anchor text](#)

Meta tag

A short note within the header of the HTML of your web page which describes some aspect of that page. These meta tags are read by the search engines and used to help assess the relevance of a site to a particular search. They are not visible to a person browsing the web page.

Natural search results

The 'real' search results. The results that most users are looking for and which take up most of the window. For most searches, the search engine displays a long list of links to sites with content which is related

to the word you searched for. These results are ranked according to how relevant and important they are.

Organic search results

See **Natural search results**

PPC (Pay-Per-Click advertising)

See **Sponsored Links**.

PageRank

See **Google PageRank**.

Ranking

Your position in the search results that are displayed when someone searches for a particular keyword or key phrase using a search engine.

Reciprocal link

A mutual agreement between two webmasters to exchange links (i.e. they both add a link to the other's website on their own website). Most search engines (certainly Google) are sophisticated enough to detect reciprocal linking and they don't view it very favourably because it is clearly a manufactured method of generating links. Websites with reciprocal links risk being penalized.

Robot

See **Spider**.

Robots.txt file

A file which is used to inform the search engine spider which pages on a site should not be indexed. This file sits in your site's root directory on the web server. Alternatively, you can get a similar effect by placing tags in the header section of your HTML for search engine robots/spiders to read.

Sandbox

Many SEO experts believe that Google 'sandboxes' new websites. Whenever it detects a new website, it withholds its rightful ranking for a period while it determines whether your site is a genuine, credible, long term site. It does this to discourage the creation of SPAM websites (sites which serve no useful purpose other than to boost the ranking of some other site). Likewise, if Google detects a sudden increase (i.e. many hundreds or thousands) in the number of links back to your site, it may sandbox them for a period (or in fact penalize you by lowering your ranking or blacklisting your site altogether).

Search engine

A search engine is an online tool which allows you to search for websites which contain a particular word or phrase. The most well known search engines are Google, Yahoo, and MSN.

Search engine optimisation

The process of making your website relevant and important to the search engines so that it ranks high in the search results for a particular keyword or key phrase.

SEO

Acronym for **Search engine optimisation**

Sitemap

A single page which contains a list of text links to every page in the site (and every page contains a text link back to the sitemap). Think of your sitemap as being at the centre of a spider-web.

Site Navigation

This is how your pages link from one to another. It is normally done via a menu from which the person browsing can chose which page to visit. It is crucial to get the site navigation structured correctly in order to get the search engines to spider the maximum number of pages.

Spam

Generally refers to unwanted and unrequested email sent en-masse to private email addresses. Also used to refer to websites which appear high in search results without having any useful content. The creators of these sites set them up simply to cash in on their high ranking by selling advertising space, links to other sites, or by linking to other sites of their own and thereby increasing the ranking of those sites. The search engines are becoming increasingly sophisticated, and already have very efficient ways to detect Spam websites and penalize them.

Spider

Google finds pages on the World Wide Web which have been submitted to Google and records their details in its index by sending out 'spider' programs or 'robots'. These spider programs make their way from page to page and site to site by following text links. This task is repeatedly performed on a pre-defined time cycle.

Sponsored Links

Paid advertising which displays next to the natural search results. Customers can click on the ad to visit the advertiser's website. This is how the search engines make their money. Advertisers set their ads up to display whenever someone searches for a word which is related to their product or service. These ads look similar to the natural search results, but are normally labelled "Sponsored Links", and normally take up a smaller portion of the window. These ads work on a Pay-Per-Click (PPC) basis (i.e. the advertiser only pays when someone clicks on their ad).

Submitting a site

You need to submit your website to the search engines so that their 'spiders' or 'robots' will crawl your site. The submission process involves telling the search engines information such as the domain name and also a description of what your site is about.

URL

Uniform Resource Locator. The address of a particular page published on the Internet. Normally in the form

<http://www.yourbusinessname.com/AWebPage.htm>.

Web copy

See **Copy**.

Webmaster

A person responsible for the management of a particular website.

World Wide Web (WWW)

The vast array of documents published on the Internet. It is estimated that the World Wide Web now consists of approximately 11.5 billion pages.

Yahoo

One of the largest Search Engines and one of Google's main competitors.