



# All About SEO Ranking Factors You Should Know



BY

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# **SEO: All about SEO Ranking Factors You Should Know**

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## **Chapter 1: What is SEO?**

SEO stands for Search Engine Optimization. It is the process of optimizing your content in the eyes of the search engines like Google or Bing.

While we don't know the exact formula for determining the rank of a website, we have a few clues to decipher the algorithm that Google uses.



To start off, a bit of history behind this science. You may be familiar with “Page rank” or the rank a certain website gets about others. What you may not know is that Page Rank does not get its name from the website, but rather its creator, Larry Page. Back before Google started, Larry Page and his partner Sergey Brin decided they wanted to organize the near infinite database of information on the internet. They envisioned anybody being able to find the websites they were looking for in a split second.

To do this, they needed a ranking algorithm, that would prioritize the sites that were most likely to be relevant to what the user was searching. Now with so much information at their disposal, they try to make use of all of it.



In this book, we will start by getting some background on what SEO is and then we will dive into the subject a little deeper by explaining all the factors and what you should be doing to improve your SEO.

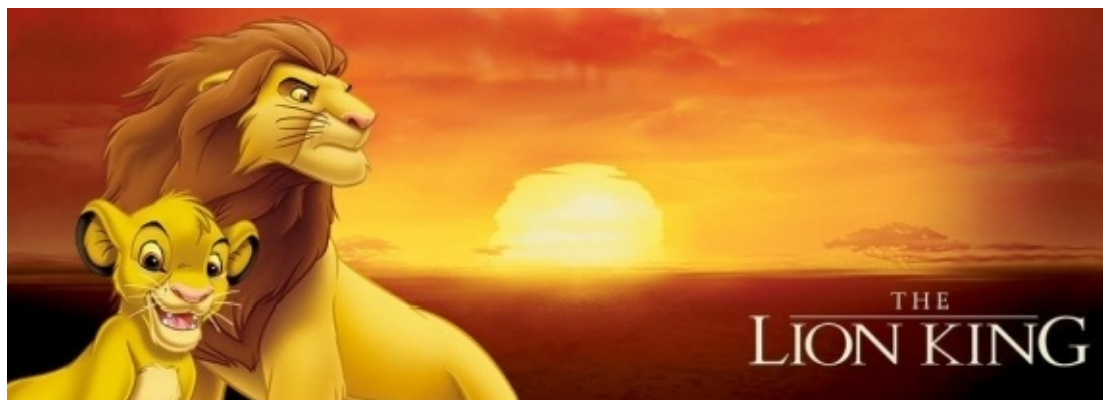
## Chapter 2: Keywords

One of the biggest factors in SEO is keywords. It makes sense because users usually find websites by searching for keywords.

So let’s make an example. Let’s say we have ten possible websites and we want to find the one most relevant to our query. Let’s say we are looking for “The Lion King” and we type it into the search bar. If we rank the websites by how many times those three keywords mentioned, we should find the right one, right?

Wrong. The reason is that this method counts all the keywords as being equal. The answer to this problem is to check for **term frequency**. The way we do this is by giving priority to the words that appear less frequently in the ten documents. Out of the ten documents, let’s say ten mentions the word “The”, four mentions the word “King” and only 2 mention the word “Lion”. What we do now divide the number of time the word appears by the

amount of documents it appears in. So if one document mentioned “the” 100 times, the score would end up being only 10, because the is such a common word. A document about Lions that mentions “Lion” 40 times would rank this page because the document contains a much more scarce keyword.



Note two things here. The first is that “the” “Lion” and “King” are all words that can be understood by a computer. Together, they bring to mind a very popular movie that everyone is familiar. The searching algorithm doesn’t understand “The Lion King” like we do, so it has to be able to figure this out using words it does know.

The second thing to note here is that there are two common strategies with keywords. You could aim to capture a small amount of traffic for a large keyword like “pets” or you could aim to capture a large chunk of traffic from a smaller keyword like “shih tzu”. Experts say that the latter is more effective because it is better to give people information that is relevant to them. No one will click on your shih tzu website if they are looking for canaries, so it is better to focus on your target market.

So we correct for term frequency in the search engine, are we done yet?



No. The reason is that there are still certain irrelevant documents that will outrank relevant ones. The reason for this is document size. A 400-page book about anything is bound to outrank a 1-page article about The Lion King. What we need to do is determine the relative frequency of the term, that is, how many times it appears per line of text. Once the algorithm checks for that, it will return the document that most frequently mentions the keywords.

So let’s say we are down to two documents competing for the top spot. One is about Disney’s The Lion King, and the other is about famous monarchs that keep Lions as pets. Both will mention the search terms “Lion” and “King” in equal frequency, but one is clearly more relevant. The way the algorithm finds this is by checking for a few different variables. One important variable that gets checked is how closely the terms mentioned to one another. Another important variable is the order in which they mentioned. The sentence “The Lion King was a very popular movie” clearly outranks “The king of Persia used to keep a Lion as his pet” because the first sentence has both the correct order and all the terms are together.

So to review, we have sometimes keywords are mentioned in the document, giving

priority to the document that has more rare keywords as well as documents that mention them very frequently. We also give priority to the documents that mention these keywords close together and in the correct order. Seems simple enough, right?

The last variable we will include is where the words appear in the document. Picture the raw score we found from before and now imagine that is to multiply if the keywords are in the title. So if the document is called “The Lion King” it would easily outrank a document called “Popular Disney Movies”. It leads us into our next chapter about content.

### Chapter 3: Content

Not all content is created equal. Google takes this into consideration when determining page rank to make sure everything included. We mentioned before how having keywords in the title can give a massive boost to the visibility of a website. Now let’s take a deeper look at the different types of content.

To fully understand the different types of content, you have to know a bit about programming.

The Google algorithm uses a robot called a crawler that comes through the code of websites to determine their rank. Because a human does not do this, there are certain things the crawler does and does not understand. Here is a quick guide to the different types of content.

**Images:** Yes Google does check images used on a website. Although the technology is not quite available for picture recognition, Google uses **Alt text** to determine what a picture. Alt text is placed onto an image file so that a computer can discern what the picture represents. The catch is that there are character limits so a programmer has to determine what terms the website should rank.

**Headings:** Headings are much more visible on your site. When people look at an article, that is the first thing they see. Just like with titles, headings also get priority over plain text.



**Plain text:** These are things such as product descriptions. Body paragraphs and page intros. For the most part, these are giving similar priority that is lower than that of headings and titles.

An important thing to remember before you jam your website with as many keywords as possible, Google also needs to see other content on your site. If every other word is your keyword, the text

will be too repetitive, and Google will assume that you have duplicate content. Duplicate content will not count towards your page rank because Google determines it to be irrelevant. Try to aim for about 2-4% of your document being keywords.

Another thing that we will mention later on is “black hat” SEO. These are behaviors that seek to attain search engine ranking in a way that is inorganic. Black hat SEO attempts to beat the system and in many cases doesn’t end up working at all. For instance, people use to inject keywords into their code but for those of you who know a bit about programming, it is very easy to see the difference between text and command code. Text code seen by the users of the site whereas command code is only “read” by the computer. Obviously, the command code is given little priority if any at all.

A quick tip to master website content: When you are creating your website, make it as interactive as possible. When there is a forum or a blog, this serves as an endless source of content creation. With a successful forum or blog, your users will do all the work for you! Generating hundreds of keywords per day and they are all weighted towards things that are relevant and useful to your userbase.





## Chapter 4: Ranking “Points.”

Because we don’t know the exact algorithm for search ranking, we also don’t know what particular measurements called. For now, let’s just call these “points”.

Let’s pretend that every website gets 100 points to start out. It can transfer points to another site by including a link to the website, and it can receive points by having another website post a link to it.



If we have a website, and we have links to 4 other websites, each of those websites gets 25 of our “points”. It gets factored into their ranking among many other factors. Let’s say we take down two of these links, now each of the two sites is getting 50 points. It is telling Google that not only does our site think these other two sites are good, but it says they are so good that we don’t feel the need to reference any other sites. If we had an online forum, we might have 100 links people publish to

their site. It means that each of these links only give 1 point to the website. Google does not think these links are as important because they are not as special.

Here is where it gets interesting. We don’t care as much about how many points we are giving to other sites; we care more about how many points are coming to our site. By manipulating this number, we can improve our search rank quite significantly.

So we want to get a link to our website published on as many websites as possible, right? Not exactly. Like most other things, the 80/20 principle carries here. Most of our success will come from a small number of other sites. There are forums that have millions of links and for that reason, links on these websites are not as valuable in Google’s eyes.

There are two factors in determining the best site to get a link on. The first is the page rank of that site itself. Google gives authority to sites that get a lot of traffic. The second is the amount of other links that are already on the website. In an oversimplified formula, the amount of points you get can be found by  $(\text{total websites} - \text{website rank}) / \text{amount of links on the website}$ . So if your link posted on the number one site in the world out of 1 million sites, you would get 999,999 points divided by the amount of other links on the website.

I can assure you that the real algorithm is much more complicated than the one mentioned above, but the purpose of this is so that you can get an understanding of how the system works.

Now, if we want to find which websites will give us the biggest impact on SEO, you have to determine the nature of the websites. One of the reasons why social media websites are so popular is because they are SEO machines. There is so much content flowing through them that they tend to outrank almost every other site. These sites have the highest amount of points to give, but they also have the highest competition. Luckily there are almost no barriers to entry, so this is the place most people start. Later on in the book, we will get into the best ways to do this.



Ideally, you want to get links that have lots of traffic and little competition. It is very hard to do, but it is important to do the best you can with this. Blogs can generate a lot of content about other websites, and they tend to have loyal followings. It is a good place to start promoting your product or service along with a link to your website. With a few bloggers on your side, you should be generating some good traffic as well as rank better on Google.

There the way to do this from a marketing perspective is to generate an email list. Find out what type of product or service you are offering and then come up with a list of blogs that directed to people that would need that product or service. When you reach out to the blogs, make sure you offer them something, a free sample or a very generous discount. Bloggers are always looking for content, and some blogs consistently review products. By getting them to mention your website, not only will you be getting a significant amount of targeted traffic, you could be greatly improving your SEO.

## Chapter 5: Backlinks and Social Media

Backlinks are a popular commodity in the SEO universe. They are very simply defined as an incoming link from another website or page. These links are classified as do-follow if



they pass on SEO benefits to the page they link to and no-follow if they do not.

As we mentioned earlier, a link from one website to another is important in Google's eyes. It says that one website thinks another one is important. By gathering many do-follow backlinks, one can greatly improve the SEO of their website. The goal here is to get the backlinks from different sources because they only compound if they are from different sources.



A way around this is by using social media. Because social media sites are constantly producing highly interactive content, they tend to be among the highest authority sites in the world. What makes them different from another website is that every user has their “page”. Because each user’s page is different, they can establish their opinion of what the search

engines should be looking. That means every time someone posts a link on their Facebook page; it counts as a backlink from Facebook.

That’s right. Every time you get your website mentioned by someone on social media, you are getting another back link. Let’s use Pinterest as an example. It is a website that often overlooked regarding social media marketing, and yet it is possibly one of the most powerful SEO tools out there.

If you pin something from your website, a backlink appears on your Pinterest page. When somebody else repins that same pin or shares it, you also get that backlink added to their page as well. If they share that pin, they also add a backlink to their page. You can also use services like viral would incentivize other Pinterest users to repin your content. It is a very easy and free way to increase your backlinks and get the ball rolling regarding SEO.

## Chapter 6: Google Algorithms, Panda, Penguin, and Hummingbird

Google is constantly updating their algorithms, and these algorithms often named after animals. Here is the quick guide to the main three, so you don’t get puzzled next time someone mentions the new panda update.

**Google Panda** is an algorithm used to ensure that content is original, elaborate and useful. The content pieces on websites should be kept long and full of relevant and original content.

**Ranking elements:**



**Content Planning** strategy is an outline of your key business

and customer needs and a detailed plan for how you will

use content to address them.

**Technical SEO** audits checklist and corrects a website contents and keeps error free

**Google Hummingbird** allocates rank based elements including both the form and meaning



of words in context and provides several UI/UX improvements in search results pages.

**Ranking elements:**

**Keyword Research** a recommended part of all SEO services whether they implemented on-page via content or off-page via backlinks. That is the keyword phrases that visitor will use

to search the website on search engines.

**SEO Copywriting** targets keyword phrases in certain frequencies and densities



**Google Penguin** manipulates back-linking to gain SEO strength.

**Ranking elements:**

**Link Acquisition** is a search engine's tool named as crawl discovers website pages and links

using sophisticated link analysis, backlinks, sitemap

etc.

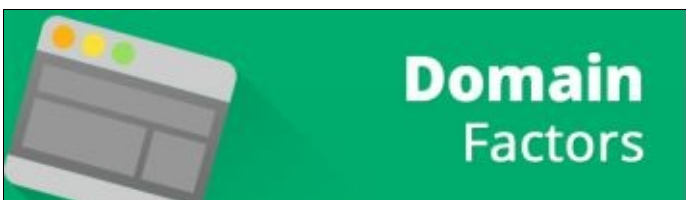
**Link Analysis & Detox** classifies all high, medium, and low link audit priority of the website.

Also finds bad links and good links.

**Blogging & Content Marketing** mean a bunch of activities across all social networks, blogs

and other websites.

## **Part 2: Google SEO Ranking Factors**



### **Domain Age**

Domain name is not that important, but older aged domains tend to do better.

## **Domain Registration Length**

Valuable domains for several years in advance. The date when a domain expires in the future seems a factor in predicting the legitimacy of a domain.

## **Exact Match Domain**

Google often allows exact match domain as a low-quality search result. The keywords, site description and meta information can be the high-quality search tools.

## **Domain History**

A site with volatile ownership (via who.is) or several drops may tell Google to reset the site history, negating links pointing to the domain.

## **Public Vs Private Who.is**

Private Who.is information may be a sign of something to hide. On the other hand, having Who.is privacy turned on isn't automatically bad for Public Who.is

## **Personalized Who.is Owner**

If Google identifies a particular person as a spammer, it makes sense that they would scrutinize other sites owned by that person.

## **Country Code Top Level Domain Extension**

CCTLD like .bd, .us, .au etc. helps the site rank for that particular country, but limits the site's ability to rank globally.

## **Keyword Appears In Top Level Domain**

Doesn't give the boost that it used to, but having your keyword in the domain still acts as a relevancy signal. After all, they still bold keywords that appear in a domain name.

## **Keyword As First Word In Domain**

It is always better to use the main keyword as the first word in the root domain name may boost rank up to 69.3%.

## **Keyword In Subdomain Name**



A keyword appearing in the subdomain boosts rank up to 57.8%.



## **Keyword In Title Tag**

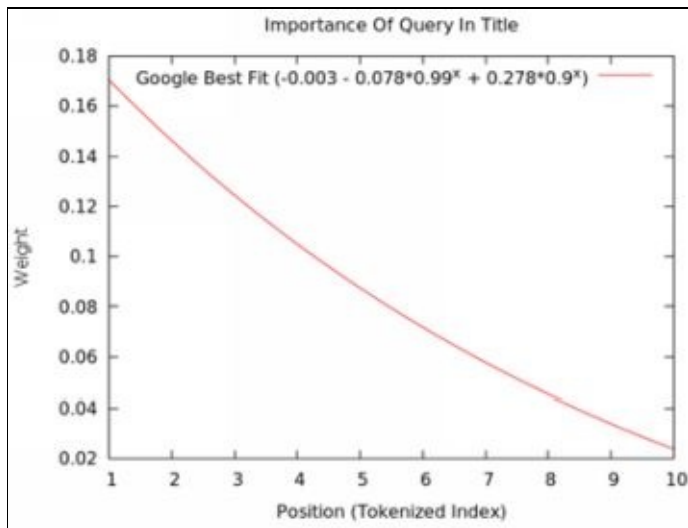
The title tag is a webpage's second most important piece of content and, therefore, sends a strong relevancy signal.

## **Keyword In Description Tag**

Another important relevancy signal.

## **Title Tag Starts With Keyword**

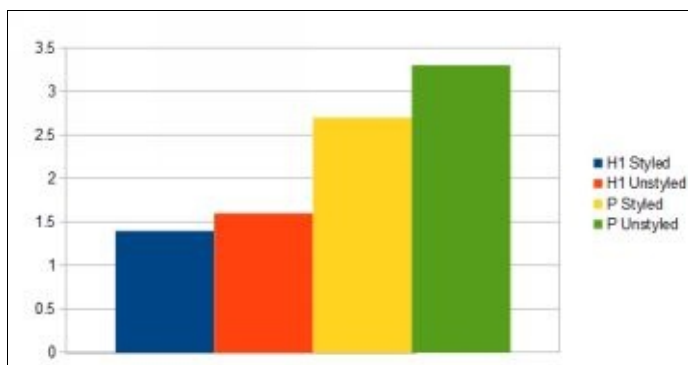
Title tags that start with a keyword tend to perform better than title tags with the keyword towards the end of the tag:



## **Keyword Appears In H1 Tag**

H1 tags are a second title tag that sends another relevancy signal to Google according to results

from this correction study:



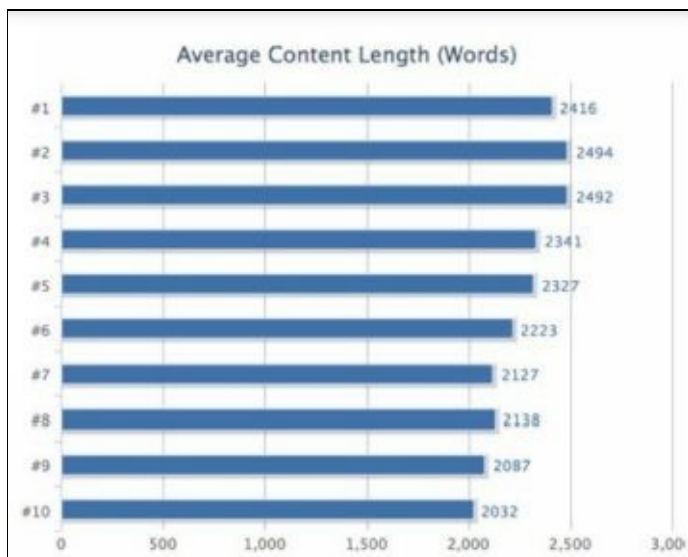
## **Keyword is Most Frequently Used Phrase in Document**

Having a keyword appear more than any other likely acts as a relevancy signal.

## **Content Length**

Content with more words can cover a wider breadth and are likely preferred to shorter superficial articles.





### **Keyword Density**

Although not as important as it once was, keyword density is still something Google uses to

determine the topic of a web page. But going overboard can hurt you.

### **Latent Semantic Indexing Keywords in Content (LSI)**

LSI keywords help search engines extract meaning from words with more than one meaning

(Apple the computer company vs. the fruit). The presence/absence of LSI probably also acts

as a quality content signal.

### **LSI Keywords in Title and Description Tags**

As with web page content, LSI keywords in page meta tags probably help Google discern between synonyms. It may also act as a relevancy signal.

### **Page Loading Speed via HTML**

Both Google and Bing use page loading speed as a ranking factor. Search engine spiders can

estimate your site speed fairly accurately based on a page's code and file size.

### **Duplicate Content**

Identical content on the same site (even slightly modified) can negatively influence a site's

search engine visibility.

### **Rel=Canonical**

When used proper, use of this tag may prevent Google from considering pages duplicate content.

### **Page Loading Speed via Chrome**

Google may also use Chrome user data to get a better handle on a page's loading time as this

takes into account server speed, CDN usage, and other nonHTML-related site speed signals.

### **Image Optimization**

Images on-page send search engines important relevance signals through their file name, alt text, title, description, and caption.

### **Recency of Content Updates**

Google Caffeine update favors recently updated content, especially for time-sensitive searches. Highlighting this factor's importance, Google shows the date of a page's last update for certain pages:



### **Magnitude of Content Updates**

The significance of edits and changes is also a freshness factor. Adding or removing entire sections is a more significant update than switching around the order of a few words.

### **Historical Updates Page Updates**

How often has the page been updated over time? Daily, weekly, every 5-years? The frequency

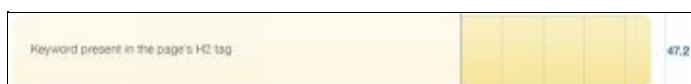
of page updates also plays a role in freshness.

## **Keyword Prominence**

Having a keyword appear in the first 100-words of a page's content appears to be significant relevancy signal.

## **Keyword in H2, H3 Tags**

Having your keyword appear as a subheading in H2 or H3 format may be another weak relevancy signal. Moz's panel agrees:



## **Keyword Word Order**

An exact match of a searcher's keyword in a page's content will normally rank better than the same keyword phrase in a different order. For example: consider a search for: "cat shaving techniques". A page optimized for the phrase "cat shaving techniques." will rank better than a page optimized for "techniques for shaving a cat". It is a good illustration of why keyword research is *really* important.

## **Outbound Link Quality**

Many SEOs think that linking out to authority sites helps send trust signals to Google.

## **Outbound Link Theme**

According to Moz, search engines may use the content of the pages you link to as a relevancy signal. For example, if you have a page about cars that links to movie-related pages, this may tell Google that your page is about the movie Cars, not the automobile.

## **Grammar and Spelling**

Proper grammar and spelling are a quality signal, and it is important.

## **Syndicated Content**

Is the content on the page original? If it's scraped or copied from an indexed page, it won't rank as well as the original, or it may end up in their Supplemental Index.

## **Helpful Supplementary Content**

According to a now-public Google Rater Guidelines Document, helpful supplementary content is an indicator of a page's quality (and therefore, Google ranking). Examples include

currency converters, loan interest calculators, and interactive recipes.

## **Number of Outbound Links**

Too many do follow OBLs may "leak" PageRank, which can hurt that page's rankings.

## **Multimedia**

Images, videos, and other multimedia elements may act as a quality content signal.

## **Number of Internal Links Pointing to Page**

The number of internal links to a page indicates its importance about other pages on the site.

## **Quality of Internal Links Pointing to Page**

Internal links from authoritative pages on domain have a stronger effect than pages with no or low PR.

## **Broken Links**

Having too many broken links on a page may be a sign of a neglected or abandoned site.

The Google Rater Guidelines Document uses broken links as one was to assess a homepage's quality.

## **Reading Level**

There's no doubt that Google estimates the reading level of web pages. In fact, Google used

to give you reading level stats:



But what they do with that information is up for debate. Some say that a basic reading level will

help you rank better because it will appeal to the masses. But others associate a basic reading

level with content mills like Ezine Articles.

## **Affiliate Links**

Affiliate links themselves probably won't hurt your rankings. But if you have too many, Google's

algorithm may pay closer attention to other quality signals to make sure you're not a "thin affiliate site".

## **HTML errors/W3C validation**

Lots of HTML errors or sloppy coding may be a sign of a poor quality site. While controversial,

many people in SEO think that WC3 validation is a weak quality signal.

## **Page Host's Domain Authority**

All things being equal a page on an authoritative domain will higher than a page on a domain with

less authority.

## **Page's PageRank**

In general, higher PR pages tend to rank better than low PR pages.

## **URL Length**

Search Engine Journal notes that excessively long URLs may hurt search visibility.

## **URL Path**

A page closer to the homepage may get a slight authority boost.

## **Human Editors**

Although never confirmed, Google has filed a patent for a system that allows human editors to influence the SERPs.

## **Page Category**

The category the page appears on is a relevancy signal. A page that's part of a closely related category should get a relevancy boost compared to a page that's filed under an unrelated or less related category.

## **WordPress Tags**

Tags are WordPress-specific relevancy signal.

*“The only way it improves your SEO is by relating one piece of content to another, and more specifically a group of posts to each other.”*

## **Keyword in URL**

Another important relevancy signal.

## **URL String**

The categories in the URL string are read by Google and may provide a thematic signal to what a page is about:



## **References and Sources**

Citing references and sources, like research papers do, may be a sign of quality. The Google

Quality Guidelines states that reviewers should keep an eye out for sources when looking at

certain pages: “This is a topic where expertise and authoritative sources are important...”.



However, Google has denied that they use external links as a ranking signal.

### **Bullets and Numbered Lists**

Bullets and numbered lists help break up your content for readers, making them more user friendly. Google likely agrees and may prefer content with bullets and numbers.

### **Priority of Page in Sitemap**

The priority a page is given via the sitemap.xml file may influence ranking.

### **Too Many Outbound Links**

Straight from the quality above rater document:

*“Some pages have way, way too many links, obscuring the page and distracting from the Main Content”*

### **Quantity of Other Keywords Page Ranks For**

If the page ranks for several other keywords, it may give Google an internal sign of quality.

### **Page Age**

Although Google prefers fresh content, an older page that regularly updates may outperform a newer page.

### **User-Friendly Layout**

Citing the Google Quality Guidelines Document yet again:

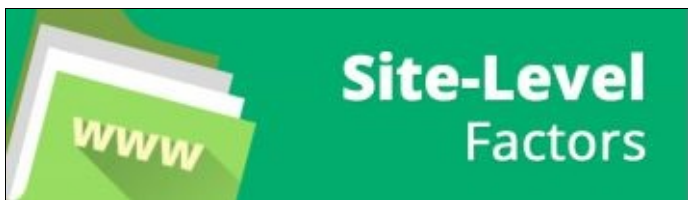
*“The page layout on highest quality pages makes the Main Content immediately visible.”*

### **Parked Domains**

Google decreases search visibility of parked domains.

### **Useful Content**

As pointed out that Google may distinguish between “quality” and “useful” content.



### **Content Provides Value and Unique Insights**

Google has stated that they’re on the hunt for sites that don’t bring anything new or useful to the table, especially thin affiliate sites.

### **Contact Us Page**

The Google above Quality Document states that they prefer sites with an “appropriate amount of contact information”. Supposed bonus if your contact information matches your who.is info.

## **Domain Trust/TrustRank**

Site trust: measured by how many links away your site is from highly-trusted seed sites. It is a massively important ranking factor.

## **Site Architecture**

A well put-together site architecture (especially a silo structure) helps Google thematically organize your content.

## **Site Updates**

How often site updates and especially when new content added to the site called site-wide freshness factor.

## **Number of Pages**

The number of pages a site has is a weak sign of authority. At the very least a large site helps distinguish it from thin affiliate sites.

## **Presence of Sitemap**

A sitemap helps search engines index your pages easier and more thoroughly, improving visibility.

## **Site Uptime**

Lots of downtime from site maintenance or server issues may hurt your ranking (and can even result in de-indexing if not corrected).

## **Server Location**

Server location may influence where your site ranks in different geographical regions. This factor is especially important for geo-specific searches.

## **SSL Certificate**

Google has confirmed that they index SSL certificates and that they use HTTPS as a

ranking signal.

### **Terms of Service and Privacy Pages**

These two pages help tell Google that a site is a trustworthy member of the internet.

### **Duplicate Meta Information On-Site**

Duplicate meta information across your site may bring down all of your page's visibility.

### **Breadcrumb Navigation**

It is a style of user-friendly website construction that helps users (and search engines) know where they are on a site:



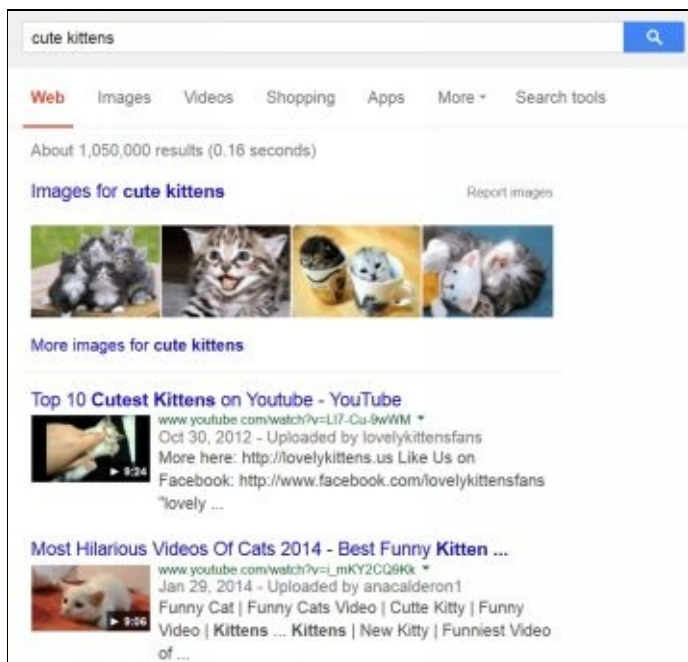
### **Mobile Optimized**

Google's official stance on mobile is to create a responsive site. It's likely that responsive sites get an edge in searches from a mobile device. In fact, they now add "Mobile friendly"

tags to sites that display well on mobile devices. Google also started penalizing sites in mobile search that aren't mobile friendly.

### **YouTube**

There's no doubt that YouTube videos are preferential treatment in the SERPs (probably because Google owns youtube ):



In fact, Search Engine Land found that YouTube.com traffic increased significantly after Google Panda.

### **Site Usability**

A site that's difficult to use or to navigate can hurt ranking. It is measured by the time spent on site, pages viewed and bounce rate. This may be an independent algorithmic factor obtain from massive amounts of user data.

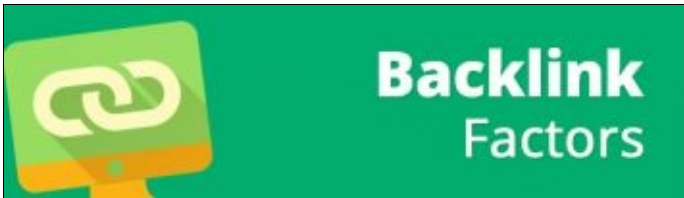
### **Use of Google Analytics and Google Webmaster Tools**

Some think that having these two programs installed on your site can improve your page's indexing. They may also directly influence rank by giving Google more data to work with (i.e., more accurate bounce rate, whether or not you get referral traffic from your backlinks etc.).

### **User reviews/Site reputation**

A site's on review sites like Yelp.com and RipOffReport.com likely play an important role in the algorithm. Google even posted a rarely candid outline of their approach to user reviews

after an eyeglass site was caught ripping off customers to get backlinks.

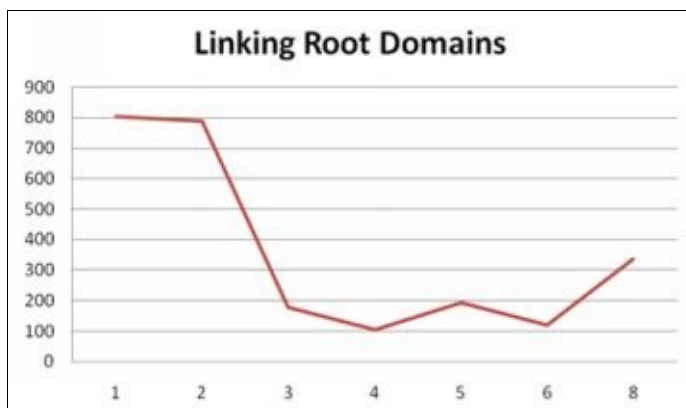


### **Linking Domain Age**

Backlinks from aged domains may be more powerful than new domains.

### **# of Linking Root Domains**

The number of referring domains is one of the most important ranking factors in Google's The algorithm, as you can see from this chart (bottom axis is SERP position):



### **# of Links from Separate C-Class IPs**

Links from separate class-c IP addresses suggest a wider breadth of sites linking to you.

### **# of Linking Pages**

The total number of linking pages — even if some are on the same domain — is a ranking factor.

### **Alt Tag (for Image Links)**



Alt text is an image's version of anchor text.

### **Links from .edu or .gov Domains**

TLD doesn't factor into a site's importance. However, that doesn't stop SEOs from thinking

that there's a special place in the also for .gov and .edu TLDs.

### **Authority of Linking Page**

The authority (PageRank) of the referring page is an extremely important ranking factor.

### **Authority of Linking Domain**

The referring domain's authority may play an independent role in a link's importance (i.e., a PR2 page link from a site with a homepage PR3 may be worth less than a PR2 page

link from PR8 Yale.edu).

### **Links From Competitors**

Links from other pages ranking in the same SERP may be more valuable for a page's rank for that particular keyword.

### **Social Shares of Referring Page**

The amount of page-level social shares may influence the link's value.

### **Links from Bad Neighborhoods**

Links from "bad neighborhoods" may hurt your site.

### **Guest Posts**

Although guest posting can be part of a white hat SEO campaign, links coming from guest posts, especially in an author bio area, may not be as valuable as a contextual link on the same page.

### **Links to Homepage Domain that Page Sits On**

Links to a referring page's home page may play special importance in evaluating a

site's, and, therefore, a link's, weight.

### **Nofollow Links**

One of the most controversial topics in SEO. Google's official word on the matter is:

*"In general, we don't follow them."*

Which suggests, that they do at least in certain cases. Having a certain % of no follow links may also indicate a natural vs. unnatural link profile.

### **Diversity of Link Types**

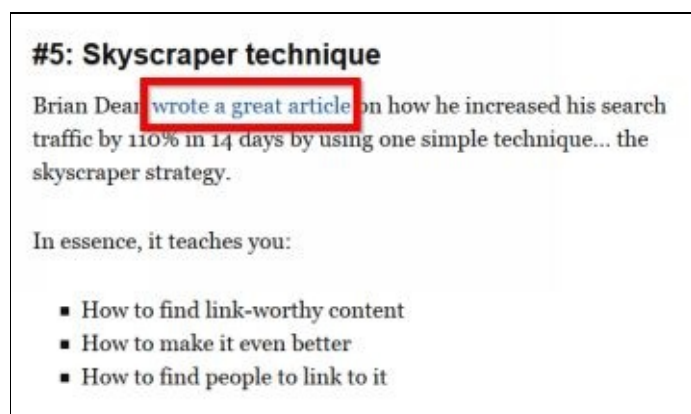
Having an unnaturally large percentage of your links come from a single source (i.e., forum profiles, blog comments) may be a sign of web spam. On the other hand, links from diverse sources is a sign of a natural link profile.

### **"Sponsored Links" Or Other Words Around Link**

Words like "sponsor's", "link partners" and "sponsored links" may decrease a link's value.

### **Contextual Links**

Links embedded in a page's content are considered more powerful than links on an empty page or found elsewhere on the page.



A good example of contextual links are backlinks from geographics.

### **Excessive 301 Redirects to Page**

Links coming from 301 redirects dilute some (or even all) PR, according to a Webmaster Help Video.

## **Backlink Anchor Text**

As noted in this description of Google's original algorithm:

*"First, anchors often provide more accurate descriptions of web pages than the pages themselves."*

Obviously, anchor text is less important than before (and likely a web spam signal). But it still sends a strong relevancy signal in small doses.

## **Internal Link Anchor Text**

Internal link anchor text is another relevancy signal, although probably weighed differently than backlink anchor text.

## **Link Title Attribution**

The link title (the text that appears when you hover over a link) is also used as a weak relevancy signals.

## **Country TLD of Referring Domain**

Getting links from country-specific top-level domain extensions (.de, .cn, .co.uk) may help you rank better in that country.

## **Link Location In Content**

Links at the beginning of a piece of content carry slightly more weight than links placed at the end of the content.

## **Link Location on Page**

Where a link appears on a page is important. Generally links embedded in a page's content are more powerful than links in the footer or sidebar area.

## **Linking Domain Relevancy**

A link from a site in a similar niche is significantly more powerful than a link from a completely

unrelated site. That's why any effective SEO strategy today focuses on obtaining *relevant* links.

### **Page Level Relevancy**

The Hilltop Algorithm states that link from a page that's closely tied to page's content is more powerful than a link from an unrelated page.

### **Text Around Link Sentiment**

Google has probably figured out whether or not a link to your site is a recommendation or part of a negative review. Links with positive sentiments around them likely carry more weight.

### **Keyword in Title**

Google gives extra love to links on pages that contain your page's keyword in the title ("Experts linking to experts".)

### **Positive Link Velocity**

A site with positive link velocity usually gets a SERP boost.

### **Negative Link Velocity**

Negative link velocity can significantly reduce rankings as it's a signal of decreasing popularity.

### **Links from "Hub" Pages**

Aaron Wall claims that getting links from pages that are considered top resources (or hubs) on a certain topic are given special treatment.

### **Link from Authority Sites**

A link from a site considered an "authority site" likely pass more juice than a link from a small, micro niche site.

### **Linked to as Wikipedia Source**

Although the links are not followed, many think that getting a link from Wikipedia gives you a little-added trust and authority in the eyes of search engines.

### **Co-Occurrences**

The words that tend to appear around your backlinks help tell Google what that page is about.

### **Backlink Age**

According to a Google patent, older links have more ranking power than newly minted backlinks.

### **Links from Real Sites vs. Splogs**

Due to the proliferation of blog networks, Google probably gives more weight to links coming from “real sites” than from fake blogs. They likely use brand and user-interaction signals to distinguish between the two.

### **Natural Link Profile**

A site with a “natural” link profile is going to rank highly and be more durable to updates.

### **Reciprocal Links**

Google’s Link Schemes page lists “Excessive link exchanging” as a link scheme to avoid.

### **User Generated Content Links**

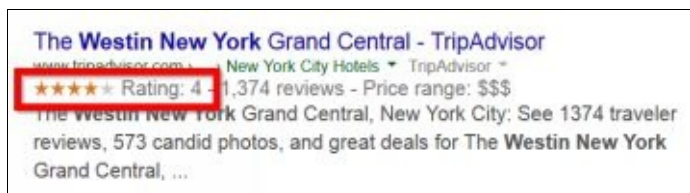
Google can identify links generated from UGC vs. the actual site owner. For example, they know that a link from the official WordPress.com blog at [en.blog.wordpress.com](http://en.blog.wordpress.com) is very different than a link from [besttoasterreviews.wordpress.com](http://besttoasterreviews.wordpress.com).

### **Links from 301**

Links from 301 redirects may lose a little bit of juice compared to a direct link. However, 301 is similar to a direct link.

### **Schema.org Microformats**

Pages that support microformats may rank above pages without it. This may be a direct boost or the fact that pages with micro formatting have a higher SERP CTR:



## **DMOZ Listed**

Many believe that Google gives DMOZ listed sites a little extra trust.

## **TrustRank of Linking Site**

The trustworthiness of the site linking to you determines how much “TrustRank” gets passed onto you.

## **Number of Outbound Links on Page**

PageRank is finite. A link on a page with hundreds of OBLs passes less PR than a page with

only a few OBLs.

## **Forum Profile Links**

Because of industrial-level spamming, Google may significantly devalue links from forum profiles.

## **Word Count of Linking Content**

A link from a 1000-word post is more valuable than a link inside of a 25-word snippet.

## **Quality of Linking Content**

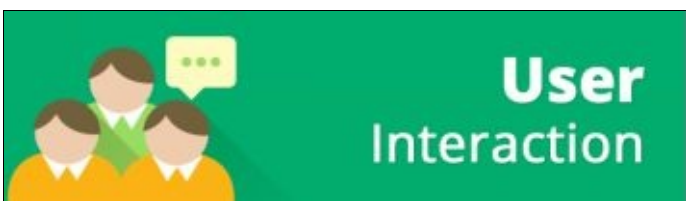
Links from poorly written or spun content don't pass as much value as links from well-written,

multimedia-enhanced content.

## **Sitewide Links**

Sitewide links are “compressed” to count as a single link.





### **Organic Click Through Rate for a Keyword**

Pages that get clicked more in CTR may get a SERP boost for that particular keyword.

### **Organic CTR for All Keywords**

A page's (or site's) organic CTR for all keywords are ranked for may be a human-based, user interaction signal.

## **Bounce Rate**

Not everyone in SEO agrees on bounce rate matters, but it may be a way of Google to use their

users as quality testers (pages where people quickly bounce is probably not very good).

## **Direct Traffic**

It's confirmed that Google uses data from Google Chrome to determine whether or not people

visit a site (and how often). Sites with lots of direct traffic are likely higher quality than sites

that get very little direct traffic.

## **Repeat Traffic**

They may also look at whether or not users go back to a page or site after visiting. Sites with

repeat visitors may get a Google ranking boost.

## **Blocked Sites**

Google has discontinued this feature in Chrome. However, Panda used this feature as a quality signal.

## **Chrome Bookmarks**

We know that Google collects Chrome browser usage data. Pages that get bookmarked in Chrome might get a boost.

## **Google Toolbar Data**

Search Engine Watch's Danny Goodwin reports that Google uses toolbar data as a ranking signal. However, besides page loading speed and malware, it's not known what kind of data

they gather from the toolbar.

## **Number of Comments**

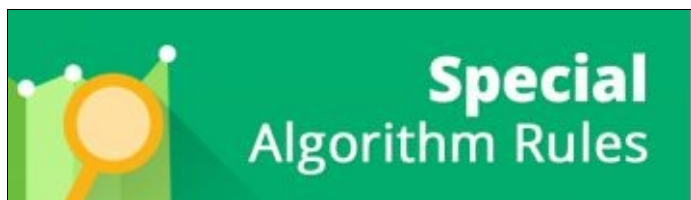
Pages with lots of comments may be a signal of user-interaction and quality.

## **Dwell Time**

Google pays very close attention to “dwell time”: how long people spend on your page when

coming from a Google search. This is also sometimes referred to as “long clicks vs short clicks”.

If people spend a lot of time on your site, that may be used as a quality signal.



## **Query Deserves Freshness**

Google gives newer pages a boost for certain searches.

## **Query Deserves Diversity**

Google may add diversity to a SERP for ambiguous keywords, such as “Ted”, “WWF” or “ruby”.

## **User Browsing History**

Sites that you frequently visit while signed into Google get a SERP bump for your searches.

## **User Search History**

Search chain influence search results for later searches. For example, if you search for “reviews”

then search for “toasters”, Google is more likely to show toaster review sites higher in the SERPs.

## **Geo Targeting**

Google gives preference to sites with a local server IP and country-specific domain name extension.

## **Safe Search**

Search results with curse words or adult content won't appear for people with Safesearch turned on.

## **Google+ Circles**

Google shows higher results for authors and sites that you've added to your Google Plus Circles

## **DMCA Complaints**

Google "down ranks" pages with DMCA complaints.

## **Domain Diversity**

The so-called "Bigfoot Update" supposedly added more domains to each SERP page.

## **Transactional Searches**

Google sometimes displays different results for shopping-related keywords, like flight searches.

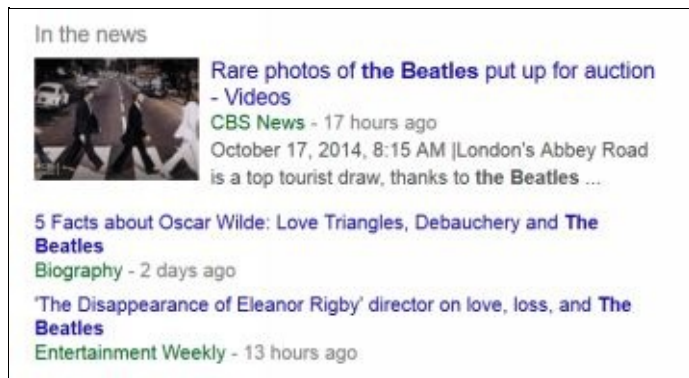
## **Local Searches**

Google often places Google+ Local results above the "normal" organic SERPs.



## **Google News Box**

Certain keywords trigger a Google News box:



## **Big Brand Preference**

After the Vince Update, Google began giving big brands a boost for certain short-tail searches.

## **Shopping Results**

Google sometimes displays Google Shopping results in organic SERPs:



## **Image Results**

Google elbows our organic listings for image results for searches commonly used on Google Image Search.

## **Easter Egg Results**

Google has a dozen or so Easter Egg results. For example, when you search for “Atari Breakout” in Google image search, the search results turn into a playable game! Shout out to Victor Pan for this one.

## **Single Site Results for Brands**

Domain or brand-oriented keywords bring up several results from the same site.



### **Number of Tweets**

Like links, the tweets a page has may influence its rank in Google.

### **Authority of Twitter Users Accounts**

It's likely that Tweets coming from aged, authority Twitter profiles with a ton of followers (like Justin Bieber) have more of an effect than tweets from new, low-influence accounts.

### **Number of Facebook Likes**

Although Google can't see most Facebook accounts, it's likely they consider the number of

Facebook likes a page receives as a weak ranking signal.

### **Facebook Shares**

Facebook shares, because they're more similar to a backlink, may have a stronger influence than Facebook likes.

### **Authority of Facebook User Accounts**

As with Twitter, Facebook shares and likes coming from popular Facebook pages may pass

more weight.

### **Pinterest Pins**

Pinterest is an insanely popular social media account with lots of public data. It's probable that Google considers Pinterest Pins a social signal.

### **Votes on Social Sharing Sites**

It's possible that Google uses shares at sites like Reddit, Stumbleupon and Digg as another type of social signal.

### **Number of Google+1's**

Although Matt Cutts has gone on the record as saying Google+ has "no direct effect" on rankings, it's hard to believe that they'd ignore their own social network.

### **Authority of Google+ User Accounts**

It's logical that Google would weigh +1's coming from authoritative accounts more than from accounts without many followers.

### **Known Authorship**

Google CEO Eric Schmidt famously claimed:

*"Within search results, information tied to verified online profiles will be ranked higher than content without such verification, which will result in most users naturally clicking on the top (verified) results."*

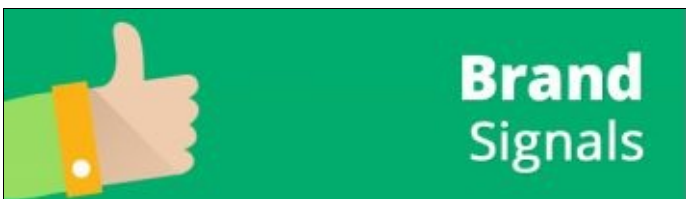
Although the Google+ authorship program has been shut down, it's likely Google uses some form of authorship to determine influential content producers online (and give them a boost in rankings).

### **Social Signal Relevancy**

Google probably uses relevant information from the account sharing the content and the text surrounding the link.

### **Site Level Social Signals**

Site-wide social signals may increase a site's overall authority, which will increase search visibility for all of its pages.



### **Brand Name Anchor Text**

Branded anchor text is a simple, but strong, brand signal.

### **Branded Searches**

It's simple: people search for brands. If people search for your site in Google (i.e., "Backlinko twitter", Backlinko + "ranking factors"), Google likely takes this into consideration when determining a brand.

### **Site Has Facebook Page and Likes**

Brands tend to have Facebook pages with lots of likes.



## **Site has Twitter Profile with Followers**

Twitter profiles with a lot of followers signal a popular brand.

## **Official LinkedIn Company Page**

Most real businesses have company LinkedIn pages which help rankings.

## **Employees Listed at LinkedIn**

LinkedIn profiles may work for your company is a brand signal.

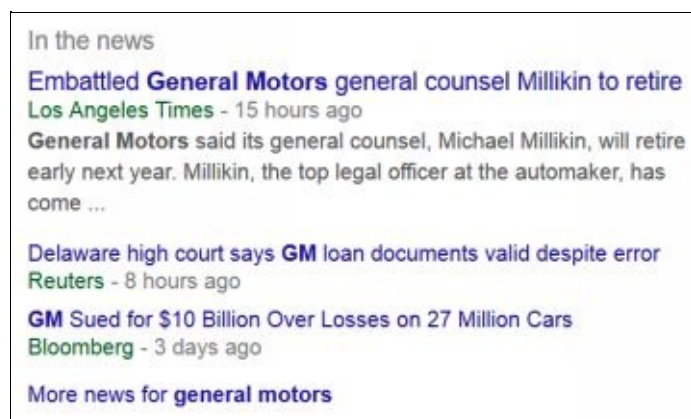
## **Legitimacy of Social Media Accounts**

A social media account with 10,000 followers and two posts are probably interpreted a lot differently than another 10,000-follower strong account with lots of interaction.

## **Brand Mentions on News Sites**

Really big brands get mentioned on Google News sites all the time. In fact, some brands even

have their own Google News feed on the first page:



## **Co-Citations**

Brands get mentioned without getting linked into Google likely looks at non-hyperlinked brand mentions as a brand signal.

## **Number of RSS Subscribers**

Considering that Google owns the popular Feedburner RSS service, it makes sense that

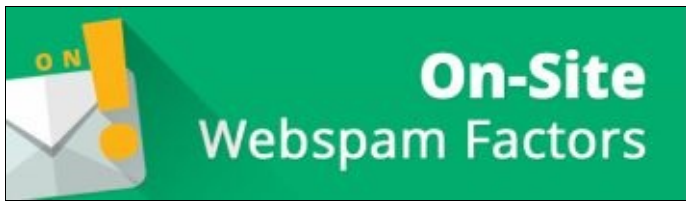
they would look at RSS Subscriber data as a popularity/brand signal.

### **Brick and Mortar Location With Google+ Local Listing**

Real businesses have offices. It's possible that Google fishes for location data to determine whether or not a site belongs to a big brand.

### **Website is Tax Paying Business**

Google may look at whether or not a site associated with a tax-paying business.



### **Panda Penalty**

Sites with low-quality content (particularly content farms) are less visible in search after getting hit with a Panda penalty.

### **Links to Bad Neighborhoods**

Linking out to “bad neighborhoods”, like pharmacy or payday loan sites, may hurt your search visibility.

### **Redirects**

Sneaky redirects are a big no-no. If caught, it can get a site not just penalized, but de-indexed.

### **Popups or Distracting Ads**

The official Google Rater Guidelines Document says that pop-ups and distracting ads is a sign of a low-quality site.

### **Site Over-Optimization**

Includes on-page factors like keyword stuffing, header tag stuffing, excessive keyword

decoration.

### **Page Over-Optimization**

Many people report that, unlike Panda, Penguin targets individual page (and even then just for certain keywords).

### **Ads Above the Fold**

The “Page Layout Algorithm” penalizes sites with lots of ads (and not much content) above the fold.

### **Hiding Affiliate Links**

Going too far when trying to hide affiliate links (especially with cloaking) can bring on a penalty.

### **Affiliate Sites**

It’s no secret that Google isn’t the biggest fan of affiliates. And many think that sites that monetize with affiliate links are put under extra scrutiny.

### **Autogenerated Content**

Google isn’t a big fan of auto-generated content. If they suspect that your site’s pumping out computer-generated content, it could result in a penalty or de-indexing.

### **Excess PageRank Sculpting**

Going too far with PageRank sculpting — by not following all outbound links or most internal links — may be a sign of gaming the system.

### **IP Address Flagged as Spam**

If your server’s IP address get flagged for spam, it may hurt all of the sites on that server.

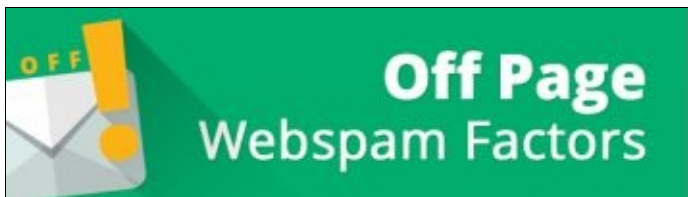
### **Meta Tag Spamming**

Keyword stuffing can also happen in meta tags. If Google thinks you’re adding keywords

to

your meta tags to game the algorithm, they may hit your site with a penalty.

Home Title:	Meta Tags: Why You Need to Use Meta Tags
Home Description:	Love meta tags? Then make sure to use meta tags on all of your site's pages. Gotta love meta tags!
Home Keywords (comma separated):	meta tags, meta tag usage, meta description tag.



### **Unnatural Influx of Links**

A sudden (and unnatural) influx of links is a sure-fire sign of phony links.

## **Penguin Penalty**

Sites that were hit by Google Penguin are significantly less visible in search.

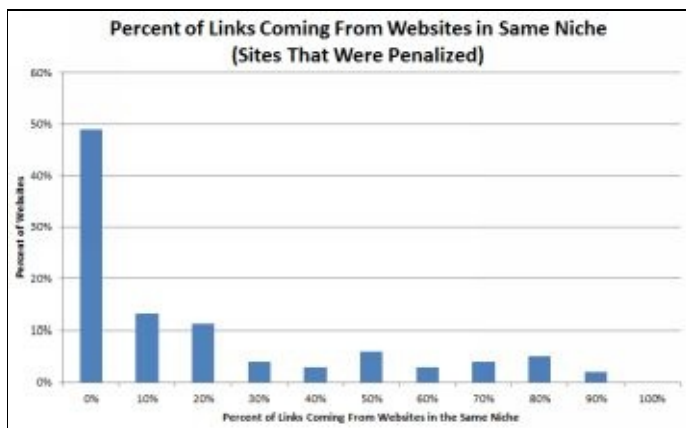
## **Link Profile with High % of Low-Quality Links**

Lots of links from sources commonly used by black hat SEOs (like blog comments and forum

profiles) may be a sign of gaming the system.

## **Linking Domain Relevancy**

The famous analysis by MicroSiteMasters.com found that sites with an unnaturally high amount of links from unrelated sites were more susceptible to Penguin.



## **Unnatural Links Warning**

Google sent out thousands of “Google Webmaster Tools notice of detected unnatural links”

messages. This usually precedes a ranking drop, although not 100% of the time.

## **Links from the Same Class C IP**

Getting an unnatural amount of links from sites on the same server IP may be a sign of blog

network link building.

## **“Poison” Anchor Text**

Having “poison” anchor text (especially pharmacy keywords) pointed to your site may be a

sign of spam or a hacked site. Either way, it can hurt your site’s ranking.

## **Manual Penalty**

Google has been known to hand out manual penalties, like in the well-publicized Interflora fiasco.

## **Selling Links**

Selling links can impact toolbar PageRank and may hurt your search visibility.

## **Google Sandbox**

New sites that get a sudden influx of links are sometimes put in the Google Sandbox, which temporarily limits search visibility.

## **Google Dance**

The Google Dance can temporarily shake up rankings. According to a Google Patent, this may be a way for them to determine whether or not a site is trying to game the algorithm.

## **Disavow Tool**

Use of the Disavow Tool may remove a manual or algorithmic penalty for sites that were the victims of negative SEO.

## **Reconsideration Request**

A successful reconsideration request can lift a penalty.

## **Temporary Link Schemes**

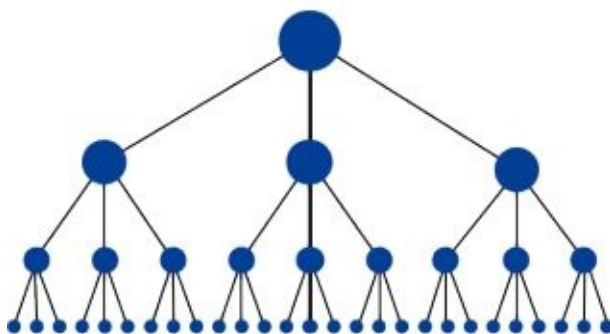
Google has (apparently) caught onto people that create, and quickly remove, spammy links. Also, known as a temporary link scheme.

## Part 3: SEO Tips

### Chapter 1: SEO Tricks



1. **Get a Google Plus Account:** By creating a Google Plus account and linking it to your website, whenever your website appears in Google search, people will see your face next to it. This makes the results much more clickable because there is a picture instead of just plain text. All you have to do after creating the account is go to “about” and then hit “links” and then edit the links to add your own website to the “contributor to:” section, Google will do the rest. All you have to do is include a link to your Google plus page somewhere on the website, so Google knows it’s yours.



**Get a Google Places Page:** If your 2. business has a brick-and-mortar component to it, you should list the address on Google. Google is beginning to put emphasis into local search so that people can find places in their area. The trick to optimizing your business in local search is to have your physical address mentioned across the web and getting plenty of good reviews. Since this is a new area of SEO, the competition is low, and it may provide an opportunity for you to

outrank some of your local competitors.

3. **Optimize Your Internal Link Structure:** Your less successful website pages may be weighing your site down. Try boosting your lower performing pages through links from your more successful pages. Also, try to make sure that the content on each page is relevant to the pages title!



4. **Use Your Competitors Strategy:** Make sure to do competitive research of companies that rank above you for your keyword. Copy the structure of their content, not the actual text (google will find out that you are copying and penalize you). The word count and frequency of keywords may hold the key to success in that industry.

5. **Make a youtube video:** Videos are 50x more likely to end up on the first page of search compared to plain text. Make sure you include a keyword-stuffed youtube video as part of your marketing/SEO strategy because it is a great way to get your information seen as well as a good way to rank highly in search.



6. **Make Your Content Matter:** By making helpful tips and how-to guides, you are making your website irresistible to people. They will share the site with social media even if you don't ask them to. This is how you get your earned media and eventually scale your business.

7. **Get Easy Backlinks:** With this website, you can find platforms that allow you to post a link to your web page that counts as a free backlink.

<http://backlinko.com/17-untapped-backlink-sources>



## Chapter 2: SEO Checklist

Here are a few more technical tips for improving SEO. Use this as a final checklist for your SEO activity. The following list is loosely ranked from most important to least important, so try to work through the list one at a time and feel free to skip over some if you want to see which ones you can knock out today.

Write Great Content

Write Unique Content



Add new Content All The Time

Create a Good Keyword Phrase

Write a Site with Accessible HTML

Use a Keyword Phrase in Your Title Tag

Get a Domain With Your Keyword Phrase

Use the Keyword Phrase in Your URL

Aim For Content That's 3-7% Primary

Keyword

Aim For Content That's 1-2% Secondary Keyword

Use Keyword Phrases in Headlines

Use Keyword Phrase in Anchor Text of Links

Ask For Other People To Link To Your Page

Try to Get Keyword Phrase Inside Incoming Links

Try to Get Links From Profitable Sites

Try to Get Links From Similar Sites

Try to Get Links From .edu and .gov Sites

Create as Much Content as You Can

Keep Site Content Within One Theme

Keep your Site Live as Long as Possible

Create a Sitemap

Create an XML Sitemap or Google Sitemap  
Use 301 Redirects or Permanent Redirects  
Use 302 Redirects only for longer URLs  
Get as Many Inbound Links as You Can  
Put Your Keyword Phrase in the First Paragraph  
Put Your Keyword Phrase at the Top of the HTML  
Put Your Keyword Phrase in Alternative Text



Increase the Font Size of Your Keyword Phrase  
Format Your Keyword Phrase to Stand Out  
Write a Descriptive Meta Description  
Link Your Page From Within Your Site

Put Up Links That Flow Within The Text  
Keep Asking For Inbound Links  
Get Linked on DMOZ and Yahoo  
Periodically Check your Outbound Links For Page Rank  
Link All Major Images  
Keep Your Pages Up to Date  
If You Use Frames, Use the No-Frames Tag  
If You Use Flash, Always Include Alternative Text  
Use Flash For Non-Critical Pieces of a Page  
Keep Your Pages Close to The Root Directory  
Use the Meta-Keyword Tag and Include Your Keyword Phrase  
Keep Your Keywords Together  
Use the Keyword Phrase in Your Meta-Description  
Set Your Language Meta Keyword  
Optimize a Few Secondary Keywords  
Use Your Keyword Phrase in Named Anchors



Use Different Forms of Words for Your Keyword Phrase

Use Synonyms in Your Keywords

Don't Link a lot To External Sites

Register a Separate Domain Instead of a Sub-Domain

Register a .com Domain Over a .biz or .us Domain

Use Hyphens to Separate Words in Domains

Use Hyphens or Underscores to Separate Words in URLs

Write Short Pages

Include Text Transcripts of Podcasts and Videos

**Here are a few things to avoid:**

Don't Host Your Site With a Host That Allows Spammers

Don't host Your Site With a Host That is Down a lot

Don't Write Your Content With Javascript

Don't omit Alt Text for Images, Especially Ones Inside Text

Don't Use Click Through Images instead of Text Links

Don't Misspell Keywords in Your Content

Don't Try to Optimize for More Than 2-3 Keywords and Phrases

Don't Use Your Keyword Phrases Too Much

Don't Rely on Links From Domains With the Same IP

Don't Have More Than 10 Words in Your URL

Don't Use URL Parameters if You Can Avoid it

Don't Use Dynamic URLs

Don't Use Session IDs

Don't Rely on AdSense or AdWords to Boost Your Rankings

Try to Get Your Site Off Link Farms

Don't Link to Link Farms

Don't Create Pages of Links



Don't Get Into Link Circles

Don't Have Broken Links on Your Site

Don't Use the Meta Refresh Tag to Redirect Users

Don't Use 302 Redirects

Don't Make Constant Minor Changes to Content

Don't Separate Content Artificially

Don't Violate Copyright or Other Laws

Don't Write Bad or Incorrect HTML

**Here are a few things you should avoid because it may cause your site to be banned:**

Never Redirect to Another Domain

Never Link Invisible Images

Never Include Invisible Text on Your Pages

Never Create Doorway Pages

Never Display Different Content to a Spider Than to Customers

**I hope you have enjoyed this book about SEO. Hopefully, with this knowledge will help you achieve your SEO goals and I wish you the best of luck!**

