

## The Strider Guide to SEO Lingo

Your prospective customers have a problem, and you've got the solution. They're searching for sites like yours in Google, Yahoo and Bing. They're looking for information, or perhaps they know what they want and are ready to buy right away.

So how do you ensure that when they tap a search in to Google, your site comes up at the top of the results?

### Rising To The Top: The Art of SEO

The answer is Search Engine Optimization. In a nutshell, SEO is the art of getting your website to the top of the rankings, so that when your prospective customers search for your products or services - or information related to them - your website is what they see first.

Thousands of people are out there searching for exactly what you offer – and if you don't get your website in front of them, you're leaving money on the table.

Fortunately, SEO offers a fantastic return on investment – not least because your competitors are probably doing it badly, or perhaps not even doing it at all.

***The problem is, SEO can be overwhelming.*** SEO is marketing, but it's very technical, and it changes every year.

That's why we've written a guide to all the SEO Lingo you might hear thrown around. Use this to understand the big-picture marketing concepts, as well as a reference guide for the technical nitty-gritty.

We've grouped terms under the main relevant areas: Search Engines, General SEO & Methods, Technical Terms, Online Marketing, Keywords and Link Building. We hope it helps.

## The Search Engines

Search engines are the sole reason SEO and online marketing exist. Google, Yahoo and Bing have enabled millions of businesses to be found by potential customers – understand how they work, and you'll be well positioned to reach your prospects with an effective digital marketing strategy.

**Search Engine.** A website that lets you search the web for the pages, images and data you're looking for. Google, Bing and Yahoo are all search engines. When you search, they display a list of results that they think are closest to what you're searching for. Think of them as big directories of web pages.

**SERP.** This stands for 'Search Engine Results Page'. It's what pops up after you type a phrase into a search engine. It's a list of links to relevant pages, with descriptions of each link's content underneath its listing. Some SERPs (like Google's) have paid adverts along the top and sides.

**Index.** A search engine's index is its directory of web pages and files. When you search in Google, you'll only be shown results that they've included in their index. A web page is 'indexed' when it's been found and included by a search engine.

**De-indexing** refers to when a page has been removed from a search engine's index. This is generally a bad thing for businesses – it means they can't be found by prospects searching in that search engine.

**Search Engine Spider.** This is a program used by search engine companies to find web pages. Spiders "crawl" the internet, bouncing from page to page on the web via the links between them. When they find a new page, they index it – unless they think it's spam.

**Bot / Crawler.** Like spiders, a bot or crawler is a program that crawls the web, accessing new pages. Bots and crawlers are sent out by different organizations to access and record data from pages. They may do this for a number of reasons, including academic research and market research.

**Universal Results.** Most search engines index all kinds of media, such as pictures, videos, product pages and news articles. Google's universal results display whatever media is relevant to the keyword typed in at search, so you might see links to images, videos and articles all on one results page.

**Organic Results.** These are the listings on a results page that are there purely because of their relevance to the search terms. Paid adverts on results pages don't count as organic results.

**Algorithm.** This is the formula a search engine uses to decide what order to rank web pages in. Only select employees at a search engine know the full 'recipe'. We know that algorithms are incredibly complicated, take hundreds of factors in to account, and are modified frequently.

Some factors we know to be important in ranking algorithms include site age, size and quality and quantity of backlinks.

**Penalty.** Search engines sometimes penalize sites that they feel are violating their guidelines. A penalty usually involves a drop in rankings, or in severe cases, removal from their index. Penalties can be manual, when a search engine engineer finds and flags a site, or algorithmic, whereby it's automatically applied according to the search engine's rules.

A sharp drop in rankings doesn't necessarily indicate a penalty – if a site had high rankings due to volumes of a certain kind of backlink, and the search engine suddenly devalues links of that type, a natural drop in rankings will follow.

**Sandbox.** Some people have noticed that new websites often don't appear in SERP rankings (particularly Google's) until the site is a few months old, at which point they suddenly pop up. This period of absence is termed 'The Sandbox'. The Sandbox ranking pattern is a theory that hasn't been confirmed by Google or other search engines.

**'Panda' Update.** A big update to Google's ranking algorithm in 2011, Panda's main impact was to devalue sites made up of large volumes of thin, poor quality content. Many businesses suffered loss of rankings despite seemingly good content, but many others in fact saw increased rankings.

**'Penguin' Update.** Another big Google update, Penguin arrived in April 2012, and penalized sites with large volumes of manufactured backlinks, and sites with link profiles that were "over-optimized" for particular keywords. As with Panda, results for businesses were mixed – some lost out, and some gained from the change.

The Penguin update raised the bar for effective SEO – mass production of low-quality backlinks suddenly became an ineffective ranking strategy.

**Knowledge Graph.** A relatively new feature in Google, the Knowledge Graph is a way of displaying relevant information about topics that Google "knows" a lot about. For popular searches, you'll see a Knowledge Graph entry appear on the right hand side of the search results, usually containing some description of the topic and links to related pages. Just search for "Mona Lisa" in Google to see how it works.

## General SEO

**SEO.** Search Engine Optimization! The process of optimizing a website so that it ranks as highly as possible in the search engine results, for searches relevant to what the website offers.

**SEM.** This stands for "Search Engine Marketing". It's the overall process of getting your business in front of your target market via the search engines. SEM includes paid advertising as well as SEO.

**On-Page Optimization.** The practice of tweaking factors on your website in order to make it rank higher in the search results. Examples of on-page factors that affect rankings are your site structure, site load speed, and the presence of relevant keywords in your content.

**Off-Page Optimization.** SEO Activity dedicated to improving your site's rankings which doesn't involve making any changes to your site. Examples include link building, distributing content to other sites, and submitting your site to directories.

**Local SEO.** The process of ranking a website for geographically localized searches. When people search for a business or service in a certain area, search engines like Google will display 'local organic results'—a list of businesses with their locations placed on a map.

If your business serves a local area, then local SEO can help you get found in the search engines by prospects based in that area.

## **Types of SEO Methods, from Black to White**

There's more than one way to rise to the top – you can stay in the search engines' good books, or try to beat the system. The former is the route to long-term success online, and the latter is becoming less viable every day.

**Black Hat.** SEO methods that are overtly condemned by search engines, and designed to exploit loopholes in their ranking algorithms. Examples are comment spam, unreadable machine-generated "articles" with embedded links, and networks of spammy sites created for the sole purpose of pointing links back to a website.

Search engines want rankings to be natural, not 'gamed' – they invest lots of money in rooting out black hat methods. Websites with a black hat SEO signature are at risk of ranking penalties and de-indexing if detected.

**White Hat.** SEO methods that are based in creating value for humans, rather than trying to find loopholes in ranking formulas or 'beat the system'. White hat techniques are looked upon favorably by search engines.

On-site keyword optimization and content marketing are examples of White Hat SEO – they're ways of helping your prospects find and consume useful information relevant to the products and services that interest them.

**Grey Hat.** SEO methods that are somewhere between white and black, or a mixture of both. They may include techniques that the search engines take no clear stance on one way or another, but could be expected to carry some risk.

'Grey Hat' also sometimes refers to black hat methods designed to look like white hat techniques.

## Technicalities

SEO has more than its fair share of technical terms. Some pertain to websites, and others to the structure of the internet.

**Content.** This is the information on a web page that is consumed by humans. Articles, videos, pictures, podcasts, sales copy and forum discussions are all forms of content.

**Duplicate Content.** Simply content that is duplicated – either referring to multiple copies of the same page on your own site, or a page or article that has been republished elsewhere.

Duplicate content on your own site can hurt your rankings – ideally, every page should be unique.

If your content has been republished elsewhere, it won't do your rankings any harm – it may even help. Search engines are good at determining who published the content first, and who's reprinting.

**HTML.** This stands for 'Hyper Text Markup Language'. HTML is the language of the web, and it's what web pages are coded in. Internet browsers read HTML files and display them as the web pages you see when you browse the net.

**Meta Tags.** Part of the HTML file of a web page, a meta-tag provides additional information about the page to a search engine. Common meta tags are the Title, Description fields, which search engines use to determine how to list the page in their search engine results pages.

**Canonical Tag.** This is a piece of information that can be placed in the HTML file of a web page. It allows you to tell search engines that a page is a copy of another page, and reference the original which sits on either the same site or a different one.

The Canonical Tag helps you make clear which page is the original, and thus avoid a penalty for duplicate content.

**Pagerank.** This is a central pillar of Google's ranking algorithm. It's one of their methods for measuring the relative authority of a web page on the internet. Pages are awarded a pagerank between 0 and 10, and you can view pagerank with a variety of browser plugin programs.

All things being equal, a link from a high pagerank page is more valuable than one from a lower pagerank page.

**Traffic.** The flow of visitors that arrive at a web page or site. Traffic is usually expressed in terms of unique visitors per month.

**Redirects.** These are technical methods of redirecting one URL address to another. If a redirect to page B is present on page A, then when a visitor accesses page A, their browser will automatically redirect to and load page B. This may occur quickly, without page A even being displayed.

Redirects are useful for websites that have changed address – they allow the old site address to point to the new one, without having to ask users to manually click the new address. Redirects are technically implemented as pieces of code on the web host’s server.

**Landing Page.** The first page a visitor ‘lands’ on after clicking a link to your website from a search engine results page or advert. ‘Landing Page Optimization’ is the art of tweaking landing pages to get larger proportions of visitors to take the desired action – enter their email, buy a product, or click through to another page on your site.

An optimized landing page is said to be ‘high converting’, because it converts a large proportion of visitors into leads or customers.

**Splash Page.** An introductory page that visitors are shown before they can access your website. Splash pages might include graphic logos, animations or forms. They’re often seen as detrimental to conversion, as they pose an extra barrier between the visitor and what they’re looking for on your site, and can drive users away.

They do have their uses, however : for example, they’re useful for sites that need visitors to confirm their age before entering.

**Doorway Page.** A poor quality page created for the sole purpose of ranking and capturing traffic for a certain keyword. Usually thin on quality and quantity of content, doorway pages tend not to add value for visitors, and are frowned upon by search engines. Google’s Panda update was designed to diminish the rankings of thin doorway pages.

**Responsive Design.** The art of creating websites that automatically adjust to the visitor’s device and browser in order to be as user-friendly as possible. A page created under responsive design principles will be easy to read and navigate on PCs, Macs, smartphones and tablets. It may also adjust in real-time if the user changes their screen resolution or browser window size.

Responsive design is becoming more important as people access the internet from an increasingly wide range of devices.

**Mobile Site.** A version of a web site specifically designed to be accessed on smartphones. Mobile sites need to have larger buttons, smaller blocks of text and simpler navigation than traditional websites, due to the smaller screen space on a smartphone.

Many businesses create mobile sites to complement their original site, and configure things so that the right site loads depending on what device it’s accessed from.

**Mobile Theme.** A ready-made mobile site design that can be used to quickly produce a website. They have a definitive look and feel, hence the term “theme”. They often have a degree of customizability so they can be tailored to the needs of particular businesses.

**Robots.txt.** This is a file that can be included on your website. It’s a way of telling bots and spiders that they aren’t allowed to access your site. You might want to forbid a bot from accessing your site for a

number of reasons: for example, if you don't want to be part of a company's market research, or if you want to keep sensitive pages private.

Note, if you include a search engine's Spider in your robots.txt, they will be unable to index your site.

**Sitemap (XML).** A Sitemap is a file that contains a list of all the pages on your site, along with some other data about each page, such as the date of last update and the frequency of updates.

Sitemaps help search engines crawl your website, although these days they aren't essential. Many platforms such as Wordpress have options for creating XML Sitemaps easily.

**URL.** A web page's URL is its web address. The term itself stands for "Uniform Resource Locator". In a browser, the URL can be found in the address bar, usually starting with "http://..."

**URL Parameters.** These are terms found in URLs that show that the page was generated dynamically.

Some websites use URL parameters to generate pages based on the data your computer sends when it requests the webpage from the server. For example, a site might use URL parameters to generate a customized page based on data you entered in to a web form.

URL parameters include the '=' sign. You can spot a dynamically generated page when you see URL parameters like 'title=Main\_Page' or 'category=shoes'.

**SSL** stands for Secure Socket Layer. It's a form of security used on e-commerce websites to ensure that credit card and payment details are encrypted and transferred securely over the internet.

A site's SSL certificate acts as proof to buyers that the site is protected, and should be obtained from a reputable security vendor to be credible.

**IP Address.** IP stands for 'Internet Protocol'. Every computer on the internet is assigned a unique IP address, which is a number that allows it to be identified on the web. IP addresses are essential for sending and receiving information over the internet – all data gets 'labelled' with the address it's being sent to. A typical IP address is simply four blocks of numbers strung together.

A **shared IP address** is used by hosting services to house multiple websites. If your host has your site on a shared IP address, you'll share the same IP address with several other websites.

A **unique** or **dedicated IP address** is one that is permanently assigned to a particular machine. If you buy a unique IP address, your site will be the only one on the internet with that IP address.

Generally, shared IP addresses are perfectly fine for most businesses, and a unique address is only required in special circumstances. There's also little (if any) SEO advantage to having a unique address.

## Keywords

Keywords are central to SEO – they're the means by which search engines match their results to what their users search for. Getting your keyword strategy right is one of the most crucial aspects of SEO and online marketing.

**Keyword Phrase.** A collection of words that a searcher types in to a search engine. The search engine will display results that it thinks are most relevant to the phrase that was entered.

That's why it's so important to optimize your website for particular keyword phrases that you want your business to rank highly for.

You want to get found when someone types in a search for the particular product or service that you offer, and also by people who search for informational phrases related to the problem your product solves.

**Keyword Research.** The practice of determining the most profitable keywords to target on a business' website, in order to generate high volumes of traffic, leads and sales.

Keyword research is done with special tools that use large databases of Search engine keyword data.

A **Keyword Strategy** for a business involves determining which keywords to target based on the monthly volume of searches they receive, the number of competing pages, and how likely a search from that keyword is to convert to a lead or sale.

**Keyword Density.** This refers to the number of times that a particular keyword appears on a given web page. It's expressed as a percentage of the total words on the page.

If you want a page to rank in searches for a particular keyword phrase, then it makes sense to include that phrase on the page a few times – doing so tells the search engines that your page is “about” that topic, and that they should rank it highly in searches for that phrase.

Aiming for a precise Keyword Density is no longer important – just aim to put your target keyword in your content a few times, without compromising content quality.

**Keyword Stuffing.** The outdated practice of filling a page with keywords to dominate the rankings. It worked in 2001, but not anymore.

Search engines prefer keywords to be naturally included where appropriate – overstuffing is now detrimental to rankings.

**The Long Tail.** This is the group of long and obscure keyword phrases that only get a few searches per month each, but because of the huge number of them, make up a significant proportion of the total number of searches.



A big chunk of your traffic will come from “long tail” keyword phrases.

## Online Marketing

The wider online marketing landscape includes SEO along with some other quite different methods. Your overall online marketing strategy can (and probably should) make use of multiple marketing channels to reach your customers.

**PPC.** Pay-Per-Click advertising. These are adverts that appear at the top and sides of Search engines Results Pages, Facebook pages and many content sites. Adwords is Google’s Pay-Per-Click advertising program.

Businesses create adverts and pay a dollar amount for every click their advert receives. They choose their text and maximum per-click price, and their adverts are shown according to their relative position amongst the bids of other competitors. PPC allows very precise advertising campaigns to be run, where the return-on-investment can be precisely measured.

PPC is fundamentally different from SEO – you can buy your way to the top of the adverts instantly with a big enough budget. SEO is a longer-term strategy, but is often more cost-effective when done properly.

**Social Media Marketing.** The process of promoting your product and service through social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter. Social Media is a great avenue for finding and connecting with prospective customers, interacting publically with them and generating social buzz around your offerings.

**Web 2.0.** This refers to the parts of the web that are more than just static sites. They’re interactive, and often social. Social networking sites, blogs, content sharing sites, and web applications are all considered ‘Web 2.0’.

**Analytics.** The field of taking measurements related to your online business, analyzing them, and generating insights that you can act upon to improve business results.

Your business’ website generates volumes of data about your visitors’ behaviors, which can be recorded and analyzed with the right tool. Popular analytics tools include Google Analytics, Webtrends and KISSMetrics.

**Unique Visitors.** This metric represents the number of individual people who visited a given page or site. Unique Visitors per Month is the most common form. It’s notably different from *Visits*, which can include multiple visits from the same person.

**Pageviews.** A common metric in analytics tools, “Pageviews” represents the average number of pages looked at by individual visitors.

**Conversion.** This is the practice of increasing conversion rates – that is, the percentage of visitors to a web page or site who take a desired action, such as clicking “Buy Now”. Factors like design, copywriting and site structure all affect conversion rates.

**Content Marketing.** The art of creating valuable content for your target market to consume. Content marketing is primarily used to provide useful, relevant information to your prospects. It allows you to create awareness of your products and services, deliver your message and build trust, credibility and authority in the eyes of your prospects.

Types of content can include informative articles, blog posts, white papers and Youtube videos, to name a few.

**Inbound Marketing** is marketing that *earns* the attention of customers, instead of buying it. Distributed articles, guest posts on blogs, podcast appearances, and organic rankings in search engines are all examples. Inbound marketing is usually content marketing – i.e. producing and distributing valuable, relevant information that ties back to your business.

**Authority.** The degree to which you’re perceived as an expert or definitive source of information in your industry. Authority in the eyes of the search engines leads to high rankings, and authority in the eyes of your prospects generates trust, engagement, leads and sales.

**Bounce Rate.** The percentage of visitors who viewed a page on your site and left without clicking a link to another page on your site. It’s a good way to tell if a page is ineffective: a high bounce rate means a page isn’t doing its job of getting visitors to make a purchase or click through to another page.

**Engagement.** The degree to which users ‘engage’ with your business online. Difficult to quantify, but definitely important. Low engagement is when a visitor reads a page and leaves, high engagement would be when they comment on an article and sign up for your newsletter.

## Links

Links are the foundation of the internet, and vital to SEO. They call it the “Web” because of the links that bind it together. The quality and quantity of links to your website are big factors in your online success.

**Link.** A piece of text or image that, when clicked, takes users to a new page. Each link is encoded with the URL web address of the page it points to.

**Backlink.** A link on an external page that points back to a page on your site. Good backlinks are very important for high rankings – search engines take them as signals that your content is useful, relevant and authoritative. A page with many links from related high-quality sites will be considered an authority resource, and will rank highly in search results.

Backlinks are also known as inbound links.

**Anchor Text.** In a text link, anchor text is the actual words that link to a different page when clicked. It usually appears as blue text with an underline.

**Internal Link.** An internal link on a website points to another page on the same website. Your website's internal link structure is an important factor in ranking highly in the Search engines.

**External Link.** An external link points to a page on a different website. External links to other authoritative, related websites may also help with your own rankings, but should be placed sparingly.

**Link Building.** The process of deliberately garnering external links from other websites that point to your site, in order to improve your search engine rankings. Many methods of link building exist, and they range from White Hat (natural and favored by search engines) to Black Hat (cheating the system, risk of a ranking penalty if caught).

Links can be built directly, for example, by submitting content to sites in return for a link, and indirectly, by creating and sharing high-quality or provocative content that generates interest and links from others around the web (see Link Bait below).

**Link Bait.** This is a piece of content produced with the intention of gaining links from other websites. An inflammatory blog post may be effective link bait, as it will generate strong reactions and heated debate, and thus lots of links from other blogs.

**Link Juice.** This simply refers to the beneficial impact of good backlinks. "Getting more link juice" means getting more good backlinks to improve your rankings in Search engines.

**Link Exchanges / Reciprocal Linking.** The out-dated practice of directly swapping links with another website owner to improve rankings. Search engines have wised up, and direct link exchanges no longer confer large ranking benefits.

**Paid Links.** Backlinks that are bought directly from other website owners. A paid link buyer generally pays a lump sum in return for a backlink from a particular page, for a guaranteed minimum period.

Although officially frowned upon by search engines, paid links can be hard to identify, and the practice is still fairly widespread.

**ALT Text.** Short for "Alternative Text", Alt Text is text associated with an image that provides a basic description of that image. It helps search engines decide what an image is of, so they can display it in search results for relevant keywords. The actual text is embedded in the HTML of the page that the image sits in.

## **SEO, Online Marketing And The Future**

SEO will continue to change rapidly, but our guide includes the most up-to-date definitions, along with many that will stay evergreen.

It's an exciting time for online businesses - digital marketing is still a young industry. Many small companies are still scrambling to pull together a web presence. Get your SEO strategy handled now, and you'll be able to leapfrog your competition and reap serious rewards.