

LEARNING MADE EASY



4th Edition

# Search Engine Optimization

ALL-IN-ONE

for  
**dummies**<sup>®</sup>  
A Wiley Brand



**Bruce Clay**

**Kristopher B. Jones**

Founder, LSEO.com



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# Introduction

Internet marketing is a dynamic marketing channel because of its accuracy and ease in tracking traffic. It also generates new opportunities for communication and marketing at breakneck speeds.

In the early days of the Internet, search engines evolved to bring the web to users who were looking for sites, products, and like-minded users. These days, savvy marketers know that showing up on search engine results pages is a fruitful way to reach potential new customers. But landing your business's website in that precious spot high on the results pages is far from guaranteed. Search engine optimization (SEO) grew out of the need to persuade search engines that your site offers the best content for a particular topic.

Search engine optimization isn't a difficult discipline, but it is complex because of its many different parts that you need to tweak and adjust so that they work in harmony. And as far as marketing disciplines go, SEO is a wildly moving target. This latter quality makes a book on search engine optimization a challenging undertaking, often requiring a focus on broad concepts rather than specifics. Many of those specifics change or even fade away so often that they can need to be replaced or updated a hundred times just while this book is being updated for the newest edition.

To keep pace with the unavoidably fluctuating nature of SEO recommendations and search engine guidelines, your business needs to avoid chasing search engine algorithms. Instead, your goal should be simply to present your pages as the most relevant for a given search query. Resist the urge to assume that one aspect of search engine optimization is more important than another. Keep in mind that to succeed, all the various aspects of your SEO endeavors need to work together.

## About This Book

Throughout this book, we reference tools as well as experts (ourselves and others) in the field. Search marketing, as an industry, is very active and excels at knowledge sharing. Although we cover the basics here, we strongly urge you to take advantage of the community that has developed since search engine optimization began. Truly, without the search marketing community, we couldn't have written this book.

We hope that you keep this book near at hand, picking it up when you need to check for answers. For that reason, we attempt to make each minibook stand on its own. If something falls outside the scope of a particular minibook, or requires a mention in one but more detail in another, we refer you to the correct chapter or minibook for more information.

Search engine optimization has grown and changed over the years, along with the search engines themselves, and it continues to change at such a fast pace that sometimes the tools and features of the search engines become outdated even soon after this book's publication. For example, over the course of writing this book, Google changed the name of its webmaster tools platform from Google Webmaster Tools to Google Search Console and modified the layout of local search results pages multiple times. This changeability means that you may have to research the most current tools and features available to you at any given moment.

This book uses the following conventions:

- » Text appears in brackets when it represents a search query that an Internet user might type into a search engine's search box, like this: [when is Mother's Day].
- » Web addresses and programming code appear in monofont. If you're reading a digital version of this book on a device connected to the Internet, you can click or tap the web address to visit that website, like this: [www.dummies.com](http://www.dummies.com).

## Foolish Assumptions

We wrote this book for a particular sort of person. We assume that you, the one holding this book, are a small-business owner who's pretty new to Internet marketing. You might have a website, or maybe you're thinking about finally diving into this online thing; either way, we presume that you have already figured out how to connect to the Internet and use a search engine.

We also assume that you're either somewhat familiar with the technologies that power websites or that you have access to someone who is. HTML, JavaScript, and other technologies are broad topics on their own. We don't expect you to know everything there is to know about JavaScript programming or HTML, but we also don't spend time explaining them to you. If you don't know how to program in these technologies, find a capable programmer to help you in your journey of developing your business's online presence. For a primer, you may want to seek out the *For Dummies* titles devoted to these topics.



# Icons Used in This Book



TIP

This icon calls out suggestions that help you work more effectively and save time.



REMEMBER

Try to keep items marked with this icon in mind while you optimize your website. Sometimes we offer a random tidbit of information, but more often than not, we talk about something that you'll run into repeatedly, so you should remember it.



TECHNICAL  
STUFF

SEO can get pretty technical pretty fast. If you're not familiar with the terminology, it can start to sound like gibberish. We marked the sections where we get extra-nerdy with this icon so that you can be prepared. If these sections go over your head, don't worry: You can move on without understanding every nuance.



WARNING

If you see a Warning, take extra care. This icon denotes the times when getting something wrong can nuke your site, tank your rankings, and just generally devastate your online marketing campaign.

## Beyond the Book

You can find a little more helpful related information at <https://www.dummies.com/>, where you can peruse this book's Cheat Sheet. To get this handy resource, go to the website and type *Search Engine Optimization All-in-One For Dummies Cheat Sheet* in the Search box.

## Where to Go from Here

The best thing about this book is that you can go anywhere from here. Although we've written it like a regular instruction manual that you can read from beginning to end, we also want you to be able to use it as a reference or a go-to guide for tricky problems. So, start anywhere you want. Jump into mobile website design or take a crack at creating great content for blogs and social media.

If you're brand new to SEO, we recommend that you start at the beginning. After that, it's up to you. Good luck and have fun. Just because this is business doesn't mean that you can't enjoy the ride.



# 1

## **How Search Engines Work**

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- » Identifying search engine users
- » Discovering why people use search engines
- » Pinpointing elements for getting high keyword rankings
- » Defining relationships between search engines

## Chapter **1**

# Putting Search Engines in Context

**T**he Internet offers a world of information, both good and bad. Almost anything a person could want is merely a few taps on a screen or a couple clicks of a mouse away. A good rule of thumb for the Internet is that if you want to know about something or purchase something, there's probably already a website just for that. The catch is actually *finding* it. This is what brings you to this book. You have a website. You have hired what you hope is a crack team of designers and have unleashed your slick, shiny, new site upon the web, ready to start making money. However, there is a bit of a problem: Nobody knows that your site exists. How will people find your website? The most common way that new visitors will find your site is through a search engine. A *search engine* is a web application designed to hunt for specific keywords and group them according to relevance. It used to be, in the stone age of the 1990s, that most websites were found via directories or word-of-mouth. Somebody linked to your website from his website, or maybe somebody posted about it on one of his newsgroups, and people found their way to you. Search engines such as Google, Yahoo, and Bing were created to cut out the middleman and bring your user to you with little hassle and fuss.

In this chapter, we show you how to find your audience by giving you the tools to differentiate between types of users, helping you sort out search engines, identifying the necessary elements to make your site prominent in those engines, and giving you an insider look at how all the search engines work together.

## Identifying Search Engine Users

Who is using search engines? Well, everyone. A significant amount of all visitor traffic to websites comes from search engines. Unless you are a household name like eBay or Amazon.com, chances are people won't know where you are unless they turn to a search engine and hunt you down. In fact, even the big brands get most of their traffic from search engines. Search engines are the biggest driver of traffic on the web, and their influence only continues to grow.

But although search engines drive traffic to websites, you must remember that your website is only one of a half trillion websites out there. Chances are, if someone does a search, even for a product that you sell, your website won't automatically pop up in the first page of results. If you're lucky and the query is targeted enough, you might end up somewhere in the top 100 of the millions of results returned. That might be okay if you're only trying to share your vacation photos with your family, but if you need to sell a product, you need to appear higher in the results. In most cases, you want the number one spot on the first page because that's the result everyone looks at and that most people click.

In the following sections, you find out a bit more about the audience available to you and how to reach them.

## Figuring out how much people spend

The fact of the matter is that people spend money on the Internet in increasing numbers. It's frightfully easy: All you need is a credit card, a computer with an Internet connection, and something that you've been thinking about buying. Revenue from e-commerce in the United States amounted to 431.6 billion U.S. dollars in 2020. The Statista Digital Market Outlook estimates that by 2025, revenue will increase to 563.4 billion dollars. (<https://www.statista.com/statistics/272391/us-retail-e-commerce-sales-forecast/>). Combine that with the fact that researchers are projecting over 275 million online shoppers (over 80 percent of the U.S. population) by 2024 (<https://www.statista.com/statistics/273957/number-of-digital-buyers-in-the-united-states/>), and you're looking at a viable means of moving your product. To put it simply, "There's gold in them thar hills!"