

# SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION

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**SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION**






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**Search Engine Optimization (SEO) for Small Businesses**

**4 Fundamental Steps to SEO Success:**

- How to figure out what your customers are searching for
- How to optimize your web pages for your target keywords
- How to make sure your website is accessible to both search engines **and** humans
- Essential SEO tools



## Step 1: Learn what your customers are *actually* searching for

- How do you figure this out? The best starting point is to think about how you search for things.
- Before you do anything else, think about what your customers might be searching for and jot your ideas down in a notepad. You could even ask them directly.
- The first step is to figure out the most common way people search for what you do.
- You can use the ideas you've already jotted down to do that. Start by doing a Google search for one of the words or phrases on your list. It doesn't matter how crazy or long this phrase is.



- Imagine that you run a hotel in Dublin, Ireland. It doesn't take an SEO professional to guess that your customers are probably searching for things like:

- *'hotels in Dublin'*
- *'place to stay in Dublin'*
- *'accommodation in Dublin'*

Figure out the most common way people search for what you do.

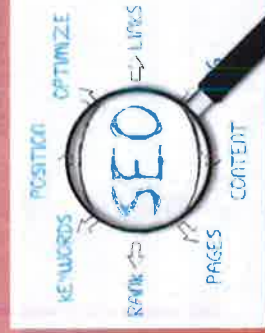
Google

## Step 2: Create Pages Optimized for Search

- Create content that aligns with 'search intent'
  - Wanting to rank for a keyword doesn't mean you deserve to, even if your traditional on-page SEO elements are on-point. That's because of something called *search intent*.
  - In short, there are three main 'types' of searches people make:
  - **Navigational:** They're looking for a specific website, e.g., *'Dublin airport'*
  - **Informational:** They're looking to learn more about a specific topic, e.g., *'things to do in Dublin'*
  - **Transactional:** They're looking to purchase a specific product/service, e.g., *'book hotel in Dublin'*

## Step 2: Create Pages Optimized for Search (cont)

- Use short, descriptive URLs
  - The web address of your site sends a signal to search engines about its topic. Getting this right the first time is critical, and it's hard to change if you're not prepared. In other words, don't go for: `www.example.com/019-563-5539/256.asp` when you could go for something like: `example.com/customers`
  - The other benefit of descriptive URLs is that they often include your target keyword for at least words and phrases, which is good for all major search engines. Look at the `payments.asp` URL if they look unusual.
  - Other important tags: Meta Description, Title, Tags, and Headers



### Step 3: Make Sure Your Website is Accessible to Both Search Engines and Humans

- When doing SEO, it's important to remember that you're working for two separate customers—your human readers, and the bots search engines use to index / list your website.
- **Make sure your website loads fast**
  - Both humans and search engines prioritize the loading speed of websites. Studies suggest that up to 40% of people leave sites that take longer than 3 seconds to load.
  - Using Google's PageSpeed Insights tool can help you find out how quickly your pages load and give you actionable advice on how to further improve their speed.




### Step 3: Make Sure Your Website is Accessible to Both Search Engines and Humans (cont.)

- **Make sure your website is mobile-friendly**
  - Use Google's Mobile-Friendly Test tool to make sure your website is mobile-friendly. Here's what you want to see:



### Step 3: Make Sure Your Website is Accessible to Both Search Engines and Humans (cont.)

- **Install an SSL certificate**
  - HTTPS is officially one of the ranking signals Google uses.
  - You can tell when a site uses SSL because there'll be a padlock in the URL bar: 
  - Not using an SSL certificate can also be a security issue—especially if you're running an ecommerce site or accepting form submissions.
  - Free options like Let's Encrypt (<https://letsencrypt.org/>) allow you to secure your website economically.

### Step 3: Make Sure Your Website is Accessible to Both Search Engines and Humans (cont.)

- **Create a sitemap**
  - A sitemap is an XML file which lists all the pages on your site. Search engines use it to find your content and understand how your pages are connected.
- **Upload a robots.txt file**
  - While the sitemap lays out the full structure of your website, the robots.txt file gives specific instructions to search engine crawlers on which parts of the site they should and shouldn't index.
- **Internally link between relevant posts and pages**
  - The strategic linking of various pages on your website is a great way to increase the speed at which search engines crawl your site, and point them to your most important pages.
  - In our example, we can create a page that targets "Dublin guide", and have it link to separate pages that cover "Dublin sights", "Dublin restaurants", and so on.
  - Backlinks fall into this category as well

## Step 4: Essential SEO tools

- Get registered and claimed on Google Business
  - <https://www.google.com/business/>
- Google Mobile Friendly
  - <https://saa.ch.google.com/tes/umobilefriendly>
- Google PageSpeed Tool
  - <https://developers.google.com/speed/pagespeed/insights/>
- Google Keyword Planner
  - <https://ads.google.com/words/tools/keywordplanner/>
- Google Analytics
  - <https://analytics.google.com/analytics/web/>
- Google Search Console
  - <https://search.google.com/search-console/about>
- Let's Encrypt
  - <https://letsencrypt.org>



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