

## Lesson no. 5 – Optimizing Content for Search Engines

### OPTIMIZING CONTENT FOR SEARCH ENGINES



Content needs SEO to stand out in the din of mediocre blog posts clogging up the internet these days, and Google has said that one of the top three ranking factors for organic search is “content.”

#### **Step 1: SEO your content strategy**

Too many marketers are still waiting until the end of content creation to bring in SEO as a promotional tool. They try to figure out what they’ve just created, so they can plug in a few keywords and links.

But an effective content marketing strategy should start with keyword and user intent research. Once you know what queries your audience is using, and what kind of content they are looking for, you can design a content strategy that answers their specific questions and helps move them through the funnel.

## Step 2: Design good content

Good UX is good SEO. When users are engaged, they consume more content, interact with it and share it. From the overarching structure to the details of the layout, make sure you are designing good content.

There are plenty of philosophies about which characteristics make content “good” — or “sticky” or “thought leadership.” They are all worthy considerations, and every piece of content should cover at least a few:

- a) Simple/Clear/Coherent
- b) Unexpected
- c) Concrete
- d) Credible/Valid/Experienced
- e) Emotional
- f) Entertaining
- g) Inspiring
- h) Educational
- i) Relevant
- j) Deep/Thorough
- k) Practical
- l) Novel/Unique (in value, not just in content)
- m) Trustworthy

And as you continue to design content, keep your audience in mind: you are writing for people, so search engines can also understand — not vice versa.

## Step 3: Create correct content

Is there anything as unsettling as a typo in an otherwise great piece of content? No. There isn't. While there is no evidence, at this time, that grammar is a ranking signal, it's a UX/credibility concern.

Additionally, citing sources and linking to other authorities is good technique, but it's also good SEO — those outbound links demonstrate to search engines that you know your stuff, and that you're associating with the right crowd.

## Step 4: Check your keyword usage

You started with keywords and user intent research, of course, so this is *not* about figuring out which keywords apply to the piece of content in question. This *is* about examining how that keyword is being used in said content.

It's true that keyword stuffing is very, very out. It was never cool in the first place, but now — thanks to Google — it's also ineffective (if not dangerous). It's also true that Google is very savvy about keywords. None of that, however, means that keywords are "dead." It just means SEO needs to use them better.

(It is also worth noting that users look for keywords. Google is smart enough to recognize common synonyms, but when a user types in a keyword, he/she is looking for that bolded keyword on the SERP.)