

# Google SEO 2007

How to Get a Top Ranking  
With Search Engine Optimisation



**THE COMPLETE GUIDE**

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## Preface

You know the importance today of having a website that is ranked highly in the search engines. If you are not in the top 20 for your category, it is unlikely you will get much traffic from *any* search engine. A number of people never go past the first page in a search result. As such, a top 10 ranking is needed to bring lots of visitors to your site.

Google is undisputedly the most important search engine in the world today. A top 10 listing on Google can bring almost more traffic to your site than the other major search engines combined.

But do you know the rules that Google plays by? Do you know where best to focus your efforts? Do you know what the most important factors are for a top ranking on the Google search engine? There is no book in the currently that is focused solely on Google and how to achieve top rankings on this search engine!

*Google SEO* is a comprehensive how-to guide for getting your website ranked highly on Google. Whether you are a beginner or have more advanced knowledge, this guide has something for you. It pulls timely information from a variety of sources into one end-to-end process for you to follow. More importantly, this process has been field-tested and proven to work in getting top rankings on Google.

This guide does assume that you do have a working knowledge of HTML and how websites are put together in general. *Google SEO* can benefit Web-savvy business decision makers, webmasters, and general Internet marketers. Beginning to intermediate Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) specialists will also find this guide to be of use in that the information is all in one place, rather than scattered around.

Because each chapter builds on what came before it, it is recommended that you read this book from beginning to end. To put it all together, there is a step-by-step checklist at the end as well as several Appendices that you will find useful.

The focus of this book is to give you the maximum results using the minimum amount of your money. There are numerous success stories of business people getting top rankings on Google using no pay-per-click (PPC) advertising. As such, this guide only sparsely covers the paid forms of advertising you can do on Google – like Google AdWords™. However, given the potentially long timeframe that SEO results can take for *new* websites in competitive markets, using Google AdWords as a way to drive traffic in the interim can be a smart idea.

While you are going through this book, there is one important thing to remember:

***Getting a top ranking is only part of it.*** Yes, you can receive lots of traffic to your site, but you still need to convert these visitors to satisfied customers. If you do not have a web site with compelling, fresh and useful content, intuitive navigation, a simple ordering system, and a reason to return, all of your efforts will be wasted. Put another way, getting lots of traffic is only half the equation to success on the Web – you still need to make sales. This means making sure you have a professional and easy-to-use web site with products, services, or information that visitors need. This seems obvious, but is

often overlooked!

Are you ready for massive amounts of traffic to your site? Are you ready to blow past the competition? Are you committed to success? Will you finish this book and implement Google SEO ? Then let's get started...

Best regards,

Andy Burrows  
Buzzhosting SEO

## PART I – Google and Keywords

This section of the book lays the foundation for all your work. You must understand the concepts and perform the tasks discussed here, even if you feel they are basic or you know them.

The first chapter deals with how Google works, while the second chapter discusses the important concept of *keywords* and how they form the basis of your success with Google.

Before we continue, there are a few terms that you should know. These terms are the most often misunderstood by beginners. There are other terms you'll need to know, but let's get through these first.

**Rank, ranking:** a website's actual position in the free (unpaid) section of a search engine results page for a search term. It is meaningless to speak of website rank without specifying what search word or phrase you are ranked for. When someone says to you "My website is #1 on Google", you need to ask "OK, but for which search term?"

**PageRank:** Google's patented system for specifying a web page's *importance*, PageRank (PR) is a single, albeit important, factor that influences ranking. Many people confuse a page's rank (what position they are on a search results page) with a page's PageRank (PR) value. They are totally separate.

**Keywords:** Keywords for those words and phrases that define what a web page is all about. When someone enters a search term or phrase into Google, Google tries to find those web pages that match the search phrase best. Some people confuse keywords with the META "Keywords" tag. They are not the same thing.

**Page title:** The title of a web page is the text contained between the <TITLE></TITLE> tags at the beginning of an HTML file and is displayed in the top bar of a browser. It is *not* the first heading of a web page or any other large text that may be displayed at the

top of a web page. This is an important distinction to know.

**On-page factors:** SEO factors influencing rank that are associated with elements on YOUR website, such as content, title tags, navigation links and code.

**Off-page factors:** SEO factors influencing rank that are associated with elements on OTHER websites, primarily links that point to your website.

## Chapter 1 - The Importance of Google

So why a special guide just on Google? Aren't there hundreds of search engines out there that need to be worried about? There *are* many other search engines, but Google is the most prominent, most used, and most important of them all.

Google also currently provides search results to other "partner" search engines and directories. This means a # 1 ranking on Google will most likely land you a # 1 ranking on these partner sites as well! I say "likely" because the partner sites tend to blend their results a little bit so the rankings across the partners may not be exact.

Specifically, a # 1 ranking on Google for a specific search term also means a # 1 ranking on AOL, Netscape, Earthlink, CompuServe, Lycos, iWon.com, Go.com and AT&T Worldnet!

With its partners included, Google alone is responsible for powering **over 70%** of all search engine traffic to websites.

Clearly, Google is where you need to focus your website promotion efforts first. After you have applied the techniques discussed, have monitored your results, and then refined your efforts over time, you should start seeing dramatic results. The two other major search engines of importance – Yahoo and MSN Search, look for the same things as Google in terms of ranking sites. So if you get it right for Google, you have also gotten it right in general for the other search engines!

## Chapter 2 - How Google Works

This chapter explains those elements of the Google ranking process that will matter most to you. It is not meant to be an exhaustive inside look of how Google ranks pages – only a handful of persons at Google know this closely-guarded information.

Google, like other search engines, uses automated software to read, analyze, compare, and rank your web pages. So you need to know what elements and factors Google cares about, and how important these factors are in relation to each other.

This is an important concept: Google uses automated software that looks at code and

text, not human beings. This means the visual elements of your website that may matter to you – like layout, colour, animation, Flash, and other graphics, are ignored by Google. The Google search engine is like a blind person reading a book in Braille – anything that is graphical, spatial, or visual in nature is simply not seen.

As such, ***you need to start thinking like the Google search engine.***

## So What Is a Ranking?

A ranking on a search engine is a web page's listing and relative placement on a results page (known as a SERP) for a certain search query. As an example, if you type "house plans" into the search box at Google, you will get those listings displayed (10 listings per page by default) that Google deems most relevant to the search phrase *house plans*, sorted in order of relative importance.

The most ***relevant*** and most ***important*** web pages are listed in descending order. For Google, page *relevancy* is dependent on how well a web page "matches" a specific word search. Page *importance* on the other hand is dependent on the *quality* and quantity of links that point to your web page from other websites. The concept of link *quality* is important and will be discussed in a later chapter.

If your site does not appear in the top 20 for your most important keywords (search terms), you might as well forget getting much traffic from Google or from any other search engine. Because many people never go past the first page for a search result, you really need to be in the top 10.

It is debatable how much more traffic a #1 ranking gets compared to say, a #3 or a #10 ranking. Those listings "above the fold" on a page (anything higher than #4 or #3 depending on your monitor size and resolution) do get clicked more than those below the fold. Above the fold is anything displayed on the page before you have to start scrolling downward.

A recent study provides some interesting numbers on the subject of ranking vs. percentage of clicks for that position. This study tracked the number of times people clicked on a listing on Google for a given search query:

### **First Page:**

1st position: 30%

2nd position: 15%

3rd position: 7%

4th position: 5%

5th position: 4%

6th position: 4%

7th position: 2%

8th position: 2%

9th position: 3%

10th position: 5%

**Second Page:**

1st position: 6%

2nd position: 4%

3rd position: 2%

4th position and beyond <1%

As you can see, if you aren't on the first two pages, you might as well forget getting clicked. When was the last time you went to the third page of a search query versus just starting a new search query?

## When Google Comes Visiting

To be listed in Google's search database (or index), Google visits your site using automated programs called *robots* or *spiders*. Such programs "read" each and every page of your website, starting typically with your home page and then following each link to all other web pages on your site. When a search engine robot or spider visits your site, it is said to *crawl* or *spider* your site.

**Important:** Google will not add a new web page to its index unless there is at least one other web page in its index that links to that page. So don't fret over submitting your site to Google directly. Instead, you need to get another website to link to your website first.

Website crawls are performed by the main Google spider, called **Googlebot**. The more "popular" your site, the more often it typically is crawled by Google. Highly ranked sites and sites that update content frequently (like news and blog sites) get crawled daily.

If interested, you can check your server log files for the user-agent "Googlebot". This will tell you when Google crawls your site. You can also check by IP address although this method is not as accurate as Google uses different IP addresses for their robots, which can change over time.

Google updates its main index more or less continuously although major "updates" still happen several times a year. These major updates correspond to major ranking algorithm changes. These updates have all been named – you may have heard about Florida, Bourbon, Allegra or Jagger in the forums.

For new websites, I advise you to make your site live as quickly as possible, even before you are completed. Given that Google prefers sites that are older, it no longer makes sense to wait until every "i" is dotted and "t" is crossed before going live with a new site. Instead, create an overall skeleton of your site, with a reasonably finished Home page and other important pages and make it live. Add new content, or update the content, on at least a monthly basis. Google also prefers sites that add or update content regularly.

This strategy has to do with what is called the **Google Sandbox** or the aging factor. The Sandbox is a set of filters applied to new websites whereby the site cannot rank well (or at all) for any competitive keywords for 6 – 24 months. Also called the *aging delay*. New sites can rank well for very niche, unique keyword phrases, such as their company name, but that's about it. It is for this reason that new sites need to be made live on the Web as soon as possible in order to “start the aging clock”.

**Important:** It is critical that your website is up and running when Google visits you by following a link from another site. If your site is down, your listing on Google may disappear until the next update! The reason is that Google thinks your site doesn't exist and may remove it from the index after a couple of attempts.

## How Google Ranks Pages

Google uses a sophisticated and proprietary algorithm for ranking Web sites that uses over 100 different criteria in the calculation, each of which is given a specific weighting which can change over time. Because the algorithm can change, *specific techniques that used to work well may no longer work as well over time*. This is important to remember when your site's ranking seems to change for no apparent reason. For this reason, optimizing your site should not be considered as a one-time task. You should always try, test, and refine your efforts.

The Google algorithm can be broken down into two major groups of factors:

**On-page (keyword) factors.** Keyword factors involve how, where and when keywords are used. Meaning how well your website is optimised for your most important keywords, and if those same keywords appear in your content and in links. Keyword factors determine *page relevance*.

**Off-page (link) factors.** These include the quantity and *quality* of links that point to your site. Link factors determine *page importance* and are related to Google PageRank (PR). Links play a VERY important role in getting high rankings, particularly for competitive markets.

Very simply put, Google finds pages in its index that are both *relevant* and *important* to a search for a particular term or phrase, and then lists them in descending order on search results pages.

## On-Page Factors and Page Relevance

Keywords are intrinsically related to search terms – words and phrases that people enter into a search engine to find specific information. Most people enter 2 to 5-word phrases in Google to find what they are looking for. Google in turn analyzes all pages in its index and lists the pages which contain those search terms. Each web page usually contains one or two keywords that are repeated more often than others throughout the site. These keywords dictate the “theme” of a website.

In addition, Google analyses other sites that contain links to your site. Specifically, Google looks to see if the text of a link (the clickable portion) that points to your site also contain those same keywords.

## Off-Page Factors and Page Importance

Page importance is all about links - their quantity, quality, and strength, which we will discuss later on. This part of the algorithm includes Google PageRank (PR).

Google looks for links that point to your site from other websites. Google believes a link from website A to website B is a “vote” for the importance of website B. In this way, other websites add votes for your website, which in turn helps increase a pages PageRank value on your site. Each page on your site has a PR value. Usually the PR value is the highest for the home page as most people will link to your home page rather than another page on your site.

The more web pages that link to your site, and the more important in turn those pages are, the more important Google thinks *your* site is and hence the higher your PageRank value. Moreover, it is the quality, as well as the quantity, of links that matter – not all links are valued the same. Keep in mind that PageRank is but a single (albeit important) factor used in ranking.

*Sites that are highly optimized for on-page factors can outrank sites that are less optimized but have higher PageRank.*

PageRank value is assigned after comparing every page in the Google index against one another. This is billions and billions of web pages.

Note that PageRank does NOT factor in keywords or phrases used on your site.

## Top Things Google Looks For

Although Google looks at over 100 different criteria (which can change in importance over time) for ranking pages, here are the top aspects or elements that are **currently** deemed a “must-do” if you are serious about a top ranking. Other elements will be discussed later on that are also important. The following are listed in approximate order of importance, with the first two items being more important than the others:

1. Keywords used in link text – both on *your* site and especially on *other* websites that

point to your site. And the more links you have on other sites that point to your site and that contain your most important keywords, the better, all else being equal.

***This is extra important if you are targeting broad, generic or otherwise “competitive” search terms.***

2. Keywords used in the title of your Web pages (between the <TITLE> tags).
3. Keywords used in headings (H1, H2) and in the body of your Web pages.
4. The PageRank (PR) of your web pages, which in turn is dependent on the number of links that point to your site from other sites. The importance of these incoming links in turn is dependent on the PageRank of the linking page, which in turn is dependent on the number of incoming links to that page, and so on.
5. Web pages that contain at least 200 words of relevant text content. The more web pages on the site, the better chance of ranking well for a larger number of keyword phrases.
6. How often the content on your site is updated. You should update your site once a month if possible.
7. How fast you are obtaining new links (too many links too fast is a bad thing).
8. How old the site is, how old individual web pages are, and how old links to a site are. In general, the older the site and the older a link is, the better. So don't wait unnecessarily before launching a new site, a new page or obtaining new links to your site.

Put simply, to rank well on Google, you need to optimize your website for your best keywords, get as many important and relevant sites to link to your site as you can, make sure the text of those links contain your best keywords, and don't do anything that looks "excessive", "unnatural", "manipulative" or "spammy" to Google. Keep it looking natural and act as if the search engines didn't exist.

**Important:** You should also read the Google Patent Papers. In them are additional factors that Google may look at in determining rankings. For more information, see Appendix C for the link.

So let's continue by looking at the foundation of SEO in the next chapter – keyword research, analysis, and selection.

## Chapter 3 – Keyword Research & Analysis

This is where your most important efforts begin. ***Do not skip the tasks in this chapter as they form the foundation of your entire effort.*** It is critical that you research and determine the most important and relevant keywords for your website.

Time spent upfront in this endeavour will reap great rewards later. If you fail to complete this important step, your chance for a top ranking is greatly diminished.

## So What Are Keywords?

In the context of the Web, a keyword is a term that a person enters into a search engine to find specific information. Most people enter search phrases that consist of between two and five words. Such phrases may be called *search phrases*, *keyword phrases*, *query phrases*, or just *keywords*, but they all mean the same thing.

Your most important keywords are those **best** and **most relevant** search phrases you want your website to be found for on a search results page in Google. Good keyword phrases are specific and descriptive. It is better to have 100 highly-qualified visitors who find your site listed in Google under a particular search phrase than to have 1,000 visitors who find your site listed under a generic search phrase and then aren't that interested in what you offer once they get to your site.

**Important:** Your ultimate objective shouldn't be just to get lots of traffic to your site from high rankings (although this is important), but instead should be to get a high sales conversion. Having a #1 listing in Google means nothing unless you can convert visitors to your website into satisfied customers or have them at least take a next desired action like filling out a form.

The more targeted and specific your chosen keywords are, the greater the chance that visitors to your site will find what they are looking for. You want a high "click-to-sales" or high "visitors-to-customers" ratio. As such, you need to start thinking like your customers. Determine what it is that they need, what problems they have, and what solutions you can offer to help them.

So how do you determine which keywords are most important and relevant for your website? There are two main methods, as follows:

1. By using an online keyword tools. The gold standards are KeywordDiscovery (<http://www.keyworddiscovery.com>) and WordTracker (<http://www.wordtracker.com>). Do this first and spend time doing it right.
2. By analyzing your website traffic statistics. Do this later over time to validate the results of method 1 and to find new keywords.

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