

# SEO - Keyword within Internal Site Links

With internal site links, you get two chances of hitting the target, yet so many sites are firing blanks.

With the huge uprising of Content Management Systems (CMS) users, surely someone should lay down the law?

In a [previous article](#) I talked about how the URL structure of a website was the most important SEO ranking factor there currently is. I've experimented with this myself and with some sites the improvement can be dramatic and over-night.

Most CMS users, with a little SEO knowledge, can manage to knock together fairly respectable [pyramid structures](#) for a website, yet so many neglect the 'title' tag of a link. The title tag is the small pop-up message you get when hovering over a link. *This tag is your second chance at the target!*

You could be missing the chance to add another keyword / keyphrase and strengthen the 'theme' of a web page.

## ***Why is this so?***

Many are simple forgotten about, but many are down to lack of training. Let's face it, most people churning out articles, are either 'Old Skool'; brought up with typewriters; or youngsters educated on social media sites. Nether are the ideal for generating search-able content.

Admittedly, on many CMS text editors, the field to enter a hover title is buried within a tab marked 'Advanced', with a field name 'Advisory Title'. Even to an experienced web-developer that takes some guessing.

# Top 10 SEO Internal Site Link Tips

- Use Keywords as internal site links
- Use Keywords as link hovers
- Keywords should be relevant to target page title.
- If linking to a file, the filename should also contain the keyword.
- Keep filenames and links as short as possible – 3 hyphens maximum
- Avoid huge drop down menus
- Make sure link appears within the Sitemap.xml
- Do not use keywords to link to restricted access pages
- Make sure all links are valid
- Do not use relative addressing – include the domain name

## SEO – Why Drop Down Menus Are Bad

Some web-sites that lack pyramid structures, with no [linking strategies](#), also employ huge drop down menus above the real page content. Sometimes hundreds of links can be placed next to one another with no separating text. Apart from blowing away any Google Page Rank share bonus, these drop downs void the use of hover text. All SEO bonuses are lost and bad offenders can appear to search engines like they are 'link stuffing'. A double death for any site.

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## [SEO Keywords in Anchor Text](#)

Within a web browser, an access key or page anchor allows a computer user to immediately jump to a specific part of a web page via the keyboard. They also allow a specific part of a page to be shown when linking from one page to another.

## ***What's the difference between an Access Key and a Page Anchor?***

A typical **Access Key** would look like:  
`http://http://www.website-name.com/sub-directory/page.html#1`  
*In this case, pressing 'alt 1' (#1) would take you back to the site's home page.*

An access key can be to section of the on screen page or to another page, not necessarily on the same domain.

A typical **Page Anchor** would look like :  
`http://www.website-name.com/sub-directory/page.html#main-content`

*In this case, the banner and navigation has been skipped and the main body of text (#main-content) is showing without the need for scrolling.*

## **Access Key Accessibility**

Most sighted people will navigate within a page intuitively. If you can see a page, your eyes naturally ignore the navigation and banners and skip to the main content. If you want to find the 'Search' or 'Contact Us' links, the process rarely involves more than scrolling the page. The process is much more difficult if you are partially sighted or blind. For people reliant upon text readers, simply getting to the main text body can take an age on some sites. This is where Access Keys come into their own.

- 5 – Skip navigation
- 1 – Home page
- 2 – What's new
- 3 – Site map
- 4 – Search
- 5 – Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)
- 6 – Help
- 7 – Complaints procedure
- 8 – Terms and conditions
- 9 – Feedback form

▪ 0 – Access key details

Browser	What to do
Internet Explorer 5+ (PC)	Hold down the ' <b>Alt</b> ' key, press the number of the Access key, release both keys then press ' <b>Enter</b> '
Internet Explorer 4 (PC)	Hold down the ' <b>Alt</b> ' key and press the number of the Access key
Internet Explorer 5+ (Mac)	Hold down the ' <b>Ctrl</b> ' key and press the number of the Access key
Konqueror (Linux)	Hold down the ' <b>Ctrl</b> ' key and press the number of the Access key
Internet Explorer 4.5 (Mac)	Access keys are not supported
Netscape 6 and earlier (PC and Mac)	Access keys are not supported
Netscape 7 (PC)	Hold down the ' <b>Alt</b> ' key and press the number of the Access key
Firefox, Mozilla (Linux)	Hold down the ' <b>Alt</b> ' key and press the number of the Access key
Firefox, Mozilla (PC)	Hold down the ' <b>Alt</b> ' key and press the number of the Access key
Firefox, Mozilla (Mac)	Hold down the ' <b>Ctrl</b> ' key and press the number of the Access key
Safari and Omniweb (Mac)	Hold down the ' <b>Ctrl</b> ' key and press the number of the Access key
Opera	Hold down the ' <b>Shift</b> ' key and press ' <b>Escape</b> ' , release both keys, then press the number of the Access key

**Please note:** This table is not exhaustive, your browser may or may not support Access keys.

# Page Anchors SEO

The URL of a web-page is one of the strongest ranking factors there is. By adding a page anchor, it tells a search engine spider that the target content of a link is particularly relevant.

Form the list above you can see that there are that many names to avoid and they are all one character! So if you had an page with a recipe for 'Summer Berry Cheesecake' a good page anchor would be:  
`http://www.diet.com/cakes/cheesecake.html#summer-berry`

## Good Page Anchors

If you plan your site well, you could generate a small list of page anchors for your most important pages. These page anchors would be clearly 'on theme' and used within the sites 'linking strategy' or '[pyramid structure](#)'. Don't just use random words like 'main-content' or 'right-column', stick in some nice keywords.

In the previous example:  
`http://www.diet.com/cakes/cheesecake.html#summer-berry`, a page about cheesecakes has now been 'themed' for the words 'Summer Berry'. The page may also contain another recipe, for which an additional theme could be added.

## Bad Page Anchors

Although this is one of the most over-looked tricks in the book, but there are limitations. It's not exactly 'Black Hat' but I always use page anchors with a little caution.

Google has a patent on 'Anchor Text Edit Frequency'. If the page anchors are 'off theme', or changed on a frequent basis expect your rankings to go down.

When one site has a link; containing a page anchor; to

another site, it looks suspicious to me. After all, how many of use view the source code of a page before creating a link. When I see one of these #'d links, the detective in me says that link was created by the target site's author and not a genuine person of the street making a recommendation. If I'm thinking this, then surely the guys that write search engine algorithms have too.

I therefore, try to limit how often I use them and make sure I only use them for my 'prime' content.

## Page Anchor SEO Recommendations

- Use Keywords as In-Page anchors
  - Do not repeat keywords more than once.
  - Use descriptive tags, do not just cram with keywords
  - Use less than 50 characters
  - In page anchoring to headers is good.
  - Anchor text should be relevant to target text
  - No more than 2 page anchors per page
  - Limit the number of page anchors across a site
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## Alt Tag SEO

If you are using a CMS? You could be missing a trick. How many authors and copywriters know what the this little tag does?

Ask your self these question:

- Alt tag functions within the browser – name 3.
- Alt Tag Accessibility – when should and shouldn't it be used?
- Al Text SEO – What rules apply to it's usage?

The alt tag has always been one of those tags that many coders have ignored. Now that many sites are created using Content Management Systems (CMS) and off the shelf templates, there usage has decline further. It's not just the owner of the site that is losing out it is the very people that site is trying to attract.

## Alt tag functions

Called '*alt text*'; short for alternative text, these text descriptions are:

- Displayed when the mouse pointer hovers over the image (by most visual browsers)
- Displayed when images are not downloaded (by most visual browsers)
- Read by screen readers and voice browsers

A typical alt tag within the code would look like:

- `<img "./bramley-apple-pie.jpg" alt="Warm Bramley Apple Pie" width="100" height="100" />`

## Alt Text Accessibility

Without the use of the alt tag the usefulness and usability of the page is drastically reduced for visitors reliant on a screen reader and voice browser. Often, images are used to convey vital information, without which, pages can lack all focus (Gallery web-pages are prime culprits).

For small images such as home-page and email icons, especially when they are encompassed in a link (`<a href=....>`) it is acceptable to set this tag to null (`alt=""`). On many pages, if every tiny icon had descriptive text, it could take an age for a text reader to cover a page, by which time the user will have become annoyed and left.

# Alt Text Usability

There was a brief period when most people had moved away from slow dial up connections, to super fast, high speed broadband. During this era, the speed that images loaded at was often insignificant. So, because of this, web-designers increased the resolution and size of images. Now, with the widespread usage of web enabled mobile phones, the average connection speed has been dropping quite sharply. For mobile users trying to view huge images, the alt tag is again very important.

For mobile users trying to download pages with large images, the alt text is important as it lets the user know the reason for the long loading time

## Alt Tags SEO

Unlike a human, a search engines' spider does not have eyes. Spiders rely upon the alt text for categorising the content of a web page. This where our old friends 'keywords' come into play. I've always considered images on a page to be very good. Lets face it, a good image can hold a humans' attention for several seconds, if they also get a search engine spiders' attention; everyone is happy.

When writing copy for a page; being old school SEO; I start with a list of keywords and key-phrases, that I would like to put somewhere on the page. However, like this page, the text just doesn't seem to go to plan. On a customer's web-page, I'd rely on the hidden text, like alt tags on images or title tags on links to fill the gaps.

## Alt Tag SEO Tips

- Every significant image should have alt text
- Keywords in alt tags are good
- Do not repeat keywords more than once.

- Use descriptive tags, do not just cram with keywords
- Use less than 50 characters
- Do not keyword stuff alt tags!

## Alt Tag SEO Warnings

Some sites have been penalised heavily for keyword loading these tags. Search engine algorithms change almost on a daily basis. There have been several major updates that have seen sites guilty of keyword stuffing disappear off the scope, probably never to be found again. Remember, keywords within alt tags is good, but the the alt text must still be meaningful, readable and brief.

I've seen some sneaky use of the alt tag on web-site templates, where the alt is set the the web-address of the template's originator by default. Many people using these templates are simply using them either for speed or because of a lack of coding knowledge, so these tags are; in many cases; left unchanged. This is just one of many reasons why I never use web-templates for anything other than visual inspiration. It's your website, so why advertise someone else's for free?

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## How To Give Your Keywords Prominence

Keyword prominence is an important factor in search engine optimisation, but how much is under your control and how much is under the web-developers control?

Search engines judge a page by keyword frequency, proximity and prominence. So logic says you should place a keyword as close to the top left hand corner of the screen as possible.

On a well laid out web-page this should place it close to the `<body>` tag, but this may not always be the case.

## Keyword Prominence Mistakes

CSS (Cascaded Style Sheets) are used by most professional web-developers to lay out sites, with most of the pages sharing similar collimated structures. CSS allows a web-developer to position columns against the right or left hand side of the screen (`float:left;` `float:right;`). This means that within the code, a screen may read either from left to right or unfortunately from right to left. In short; especially if you are using a CMS; the proximity of text to the `<body>` tag is often out of your control. Structuring webpages for SEO is a subject that is overlooked by a large proportion of web-developers. Luckily, at Vertical Marketing, we have the experience to approach things correctly from the outset.

A common negative factor; that can effect have a huge negative effect on keyword prominence is Drop Down Menu's. From an SEO point of view these are a nightmare. The more links and drop downs on a page, the further key words and key-phrases are pushed down the code.

One customer asked why their current site didn't rank well for certain phrases. After just 5 seconds, it was quick to see they had nearly 250 hidden links within a massive menu structure, yet there were less than 100 words visible on the page. Also above the drop down menu was an animated Flash Banner and a search box with embedded javascript. Although at a glance the key-phrase appeared close to the top left of the screen, within the code it was 5 screens worth of code down.

In the good old days, search engines directed most traffic to a website's homepage. As search engine algorithms have evolved more and more traffic is directed straight to pages that have content relevant to a user's search phrase.

For the majority of B2B companies, the home page will always

be number one within analytics. Ideally, this should not be the case, but why is it so?

The sad answer is, many of them have more money to spend. This often means, someone has requested fancy rotating banners, lots of java-scripted functions and drop down menus. Keyword prominence has been completely forgotten, mis-understood or ignored.

## Keyword Prominence Tips

- Place your opening paragraph as close to the <body> tag as possible.
- Emphasise keywords
- Keywords should be visible on screen without scrolling

Some search engines now reportedly use 'Heat Maps'. The human brain naturally processes information better that is closer to the top central portion of the screen. Therefore, this area is treated as 'hot'. Off screen, small footer text, is treated as 'cold'.

## Keyword Prominence Conclusions

Keyword prominence is one of the most important factors there is in on-page optimisation. How close a keyword or key-phrase is to the beginning of a webpage indicates to search engines how important the author considers it to be.

The more complicated the code on a page, the less prominent a keyword or phrase will appear. With all these scripts, banners and menus, a search engine will consider the visible words to have come in last place and therefore totally un-important. Remember, often the most clicked on link on many pages is the pause button on those annoying banners.

Have you ever asked why forum sites seem to be dominated many search engine result pages (SERPs), with the top 10 containing

several printer-friendly, text only versions? The reason is, forum sites often have very simple page structures; just one column, a tiny header with just a home page link, followed by solid text and pictures. The printer-friendly versions have even less embedded code; making them perfect for a search engines algorithms. KISS! (keep it simple stupid).

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## Bringing Keywords Into Order

A lot of Search Engine Optimisation revolves around trying to predict the random methods people use to find a site.

To complicate matters further, *keyword order* will have an impact upon organic search rankings.

Keyword order will not just impact the visible text within a page, it will affect the URL, the title tag, header tags etc. Often there can be huge gains or losses in organic rankings, simply by changing the order of keywords.

You may be forgiven for thinking that you'd want to place the words in an order that sounds natural, as this is how the majority of people type, but there is also a significant proportion of the population that use a random order, ignoring all short words (prepositions such as : on, in, to etc).

For a given search phrase, the competition for the naturally speaking version will always be higher.

Take 'Audi Quattro' (Natural)  
6,590,000 search results.  
40,500 global monthly searches

For 'Quattro Audi' (Un-Natural):  
1,320,000 search results

1,000 global monthly searches

*To get these statistics, sign up for a Google AdWords account and use their Google AdWords Traffic estimator.*

This will not always be the case, the trick would be to find a key-phrase where the 'Un-Natural' search, had fairly low search results, but high global monthly searches.

In short, 'No competition and lots of people looking'.

## **How to predict keyphrases**

With the launch of 'Google Instant' when you begin to type a phrase into the search box, the results are automatically populated before the 'Google Search' submit button is clicked. Now when a user begins typing they often stop half way through their intended search phrase and click one of the suggestion. With Google the number one search engine, these short key phrases or even single words are favoured strongly.

1. Taking each word of your keyphrase in isolation, begin typing it slowly into the Google's, search box.
2. Make a note of all the suggestions given within the drop down menus.
3. Take a compiled list of all these phrases and enter them into Google one by one.
4. Note down the number of search results for each
5. Using the Google AdWords Traffic Estimator, enter each phrase, setting the Advanced Options and Filter's Match types to 'Exact'
6. Note down the estimated traffic for each phrase.

Although larger, you should have a list somewhat similar to the 'Audi' one.

# SEO problems with Keyword Order

Not only can finding the magic keyword order be initially time consuming, it will also need re-assessing periodically. Not everyone has this much time to spend on every page of their website, so what are the solutions?

The simple solution is 'Theming'. When writing a piece of copy, try to encompass the whole subject wherever possible. Including such things as:

- Product Features
- History
- Development
- Advantages
- Images
- Usage
- Similar Pages
- References

Obviously, you'd give the page Title, url and H1 tag your No.1 keyphrase, but for each of the items in the list above use less popular combinations. It is also worth remembering that punctuation can be very handy for getting words into an unnatural **order**. **Keywords** can also be broken up with the use of breadcrumbs:

[Keyword](#) > [SEO](#) > [Order](#) > [Keyword Order SEO](#)

Google would read '**Keyword SEO Order**' and '**Keyword Order SEO**' as the same

Listing keywords

- how to order words for SEO
- keyword order SEO
- ordering keywords for SEO
- optimise keyword order
- SEO keyword order

- etc etc...

## SEO Rules for Keyword Proximity

- Directly adjacent is best.
- Un-natural phrases are OK, especially if there is no competition and lots of people looking.

<b>Keyword proximity (for 2+ keywords)</b>	#10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Directly adjacent is best.</li><li>- When adjacent, punctuation between words is acceptable (<i>key. Word</i>) but less desirable</li><li>- Try to keep keywords within the same tag. e.g &lt;p&gt;</li></ul>
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- When adjacent, punctuation between words is acceptable (*key. Word*) but less desirable
- Where possible, try to keep keywords within the same tag. e.g <p>

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## SEO Font Definitions

Did you know that if you make text **Bold**, it is not only more visible to your readers but to search engines as well?

What things should I be highlighting? Are *italics* the same as underlines?

We've put together some hot tips on SEO font definitions.

# Typical font definitions

- Use Keywords in <strong> tag
- Use Keywords in <em> tag
- Use Keywords in <li> tag
- Use Keywords in <u> tag
- Use Keywords in <font> tag

From experimentation I'd say there is little difference between any of these tags. However, I would say it is very important to use these tags on relevant words.

In the same way as a copywriter would have a list of topics he would like to cover within an article, an SEO guru would have a list of words he would like to highlight in some way. These words are not his major keywords, chosen for the page, they are words that purely strengthen the theme of a page.

I use font definitions when I need to highlight certain SEO key-phrases that wouldn't make much sense as headers. For instance if you had a page about a DVD player, good words to highlight would be 'BluRay' or 'MP4 compatible'.

- Don't overdo it, a page that is all bullet points or has every other word in a different font face is difficult to read. Keep it readable, you don't want a bounce.
  - Don't waste your font definitions. How many pages have you seen where the only highlighted phrase on a page is 'Read More'?
  - With the exception of bullet points, embed highlighted words and phrases within sentences.
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# Keyword in header Top 5

An eye catching headline is good for drawing in readers, but do search engines work the same way?

Putting a keyword or key-phrase within a header is not as simple as you'd first think. Web page headers are more like the smaller navigational heading you'd find inside a magazine than the ones you find emblazoned across the front cover.

From a page ranking perspective, a header (H1, H2, H3, H4 etc.) is slightly different to those you would read on the front of a newspaper. After all, headers are invisible to the user within SERPs (Search Engine Results Pages) yet are argued to be the 8<sup>th</sup> most important on-page ranking factor. For a person to read the web page's header, they have already arrived at your page. The header has already performed its invisible SEO function before a page even loads. A magazine on the other hand uses headlines to make their publication stand out from the crowd, forcing you to part with cash.

The question is, should you sacrifice keywords within the header for a comic one liner?

In the case of the H1 tag I would always say NO, but then again I'm an SEO nerd not a copywriter. Personally, I'd use other methods of keeping a person on the page: a clear informative image, a free give-away or similar. I always make sure the H1 header of any page is closely related, if not identical to the page title (<title> tag) and the page url. You only have one H1 tag on any page – *so use it carefully!*

With the H2, H3, H4 etc tags you have a certain degree of extra freedom. Don't go overboard, as random sentences can dilute the theme of a page, making it hard for a search engine to index. Personally, where I have several keywords or key-phrases that I have chosen for a page, I assign them across these headers in descending order of priority. I make sure

that only one keyword / key-phrase is used within each tag. Finally, when coding, I make sure the tags read in a logical order down the page.

- H1
  - H2
    - H3
  - H2
    - H3
    - H4

Do not repeat headers and do not waste them on phrases such as 'Contact Us', 'Terms and Conditions' etc.

Don't forget, if you must have a 'showbiz header' you could always use large type font, saving your H1 for SEO.

## 5 Keyword in Header Tips

- Primary keyword in H1 tag
- If possible, separate Hx tags for each keyword
- Only one H1 tag
- Use keyword only once in each header
- H1 tag should reflect title tag of page

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## Individual Keyword Density in Body Text

Individual keyword density differs from overall keyword density, in that it is the density of each keyword or key phrase. It is not the density of all keywords lumped together (overall).

For many years the keyword tag dominated search engine ranking factors. These days are long gone. Many of the big players included don't even use it. If you have optimised for 3 key-phrases, then you will have 3 individual keyword density scores. Although you can add 1,000 characters to this tag, search engines are very wary of long tags and may consider the site 'spam'. Keep the whole tag down to 10-12 words.

Each key-phrase should have greater than 1% density but less than 6%

- $>1\% \rightarrow < 6\%$  – (each keyword/ total words)

Although this is ranked behind overall keyword density, if you have optimised for just 2 or 3 phrases then it will take priority.

There is an obvious balancing act and trade-off between individual and overall. You want to create a strong 'theme' to a page but a heavily focused page may be a little too niché.

As a guideline, aim for at least 3 key-phrases but less than 7 total. The more copy you have on a page the more key-phrases you can insert.

For 3 different keywords (appearing twice each) and 300 words of copy:

$$100\% \times (2 \times 3) / 300 = 6\% \text{ (overall density)}$$

For the same keyword appearing 3 times and 300 words of copy:

$$100\% \times 3 / 300 = 3\% \text{ (individual density)}$$

For the same keyword appearing 30 times and 1000 words of copy:

$$100\% \times 30 / 1000 = 3\% \text{ (individual density)}$$

The danger is, the more copy on a page the less focussed it can become. Don't ramble and get the copy proof-read by somebody unfamiliar with the subject. If they get to the end of the first paragraph and yawn, you've failed. Keep the text

friendly and aimed at a secondary educated student, rather than their 'geekie' white haired professor.

Keywords within content is still a very significant ranking factor. However, these keywords no longer need to be declared within the keyword meta tag.

The problem...

Suppose you sell a unique product. Your website is the only place on the planet where someone can buy it. Your site is light on content because you only sell one product. That product has a generic product name, such as 'golden block'.

Because other sites have loads more content on various different 'golden block' subjects, your listing doesn't appear until page 100 of results.

The solution....

- Concentrate content on the type of product / service and not the brand name – 'Golden Block' is a non-starter!
- Place that page within a 'themed' branch of your website, offering a page on every possible piece of info you think a customer could use
- The keyword density of this page needs to be at the upper end of the range
- The body word count needs increasing
- Lose any excessive scripting, the big banners, condense the page html and compress images etc.

There is a definite bias towards keyword and total word count. Sometimes, it may seem that you can get your point across in 10 words and yet other sites with 1,000 words of boring, rambling or inappropriate content beat you in search results. It is then you need to look at your analytics, see which phrases people are actually arriving at the site with and see if you can't throw them some kind of biscuit. They are obviously looking for an answer, so try to guess what their

question is and provide them with a detailed and relevant answer. Sure, this answer maybe slightly off topic, but the website needs to follow demand.

Look at the competition, grab their keywords and beat them at their own game. Don't copy content, even a single sentence, generate fresh 'lively', detailed content that is broken down into headed subject areas.

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## How dense are my words?

You need text on a web page. Having a page that is constructed purely in flash, java-script or of images is next to worthless. Sure, sites as popular as Facebook can get away with this, but you are not them. Real words rule the roost!

In my time, I've seen some truly awful attempts at getting keyword density spot on. Everything had been sacrificed to get exactly 5% and 300 words. The developer was all smiles, yet when I read the page it was like Yoda reciting Haiku. Every sentence was utter nonsense. If I didn't have my 'evaluation hat' on I'd click instantly click away. By doing all that hard work, the developer had shot himself in the foot.

I'm a big advocate of getting professional copywriters to write web pages. The pages are interesting, they keep me entertained and they tell me what I want to know in a language that I can understand. My dictionary can stay in the bottom drawer and I might even bookmark the site for future reference.

Thats the beauty (and also danger) of CMS web sites. The copy is generated by those that are best informed. Providing copywriters are fed the write keyword info well in advance,

everybody should be happy.

My advice with any website is planning and control. For a website to be successful, content not only has to be good, it has to be 'On Theme'. For instance, placing an article about 'Formula One Racing' on a site about 'Traditional Cakes' dilutes the 'theme' of the website. Weakly themed websites, that do not have a strong pyramid structure, are at a major disadvantage. You wouldn't get a recipe book out to get racing results would you? The same applies when Google indexes a site.

So, get a big sheet of paper, identify your vertical markets (themes) and generate content to strengthen those vertical and horizontals.

## **How many words should I place within the <body> tag?**

Don't get too hung up about this one. You'll need 100 to 300 words minimum, with at least 250 being a good goal to keep in mind when creating content. Don't spend hours counting every word. Quickly look at a web page, multiply the rough line count by the average words per line. If the web page has 1,000 words do not get in a sweat – every sentence may be very interesting.

The goal of any body text is to keep a user on-page for at least 10 seconds; less could contribute to a bounce by search engines.

Keep in mind how a search engine will categorise a page; if the page has less than 100 words or is made up mostly of part numbers and unknown brand names then there will be no obvious 'theme' for the search engine to store results. If it is important to display these brand names or part numbers, then do not add them into your total word count.

When creating content bear in mind the other pages within that branch of the website. The idea being, if several pages discuss related but not identical subjects, the 'theme' of that website branch is strengthened. Imagine if you walked into a bookshop looking for a specific recipe. First you'd look for the Cookery department, then the shelf with the cake books, you'd pick the biggest book and flick to the relevant section. If that bookshop only had one cookery book with 1 cake recipe, you'd always shop elsewhere after that.

## Overall keyword density

- 5 – 20% – (all keywords and phrases/ total words)

Some 'Hot Topics' have been reported to have different keyword spamming densities, but as a general guideline this figure is correct. It is recommended that a page have 250 – 300 words, although too many can make a page lack focus.

Using 300 words, you should have 15 – 60 keyword occurrences. With 300 words on page and 3 target keywords or phrases, each keyword should appear 5 – 20 times.

If you have 1,000 words and you have 3 key-phrases on the page, then you really need to review the content as it could lack focus.

Take your copy and paste it into a MsWord document. Do a search for each phrase, deleting all instances. Now do a search for each distinct word. For instance, the tag below contains: cherry, pie, recipe and for. Delete them.

```
<meta name="keywords" content="cherry pie, cherry pie recipe, recipe for cherry pie">
```

How many words are left?

If you started with 300 words and have 250 left – 50 words were keyword related.

100% x 50 / 300 = 17% overall density.

## **Keyword prominence and proximity**

A keyword or key-phrase should be as close to the tag as possible. The keyword needs to be visible on a small screen monitor or phone without the need to scroll. If your key-phrase only appears within the site footer, you need to start again. If two keywords appear adjacent to each other they will gain a higher ranking bonus than if they were 20 words apart. Punctuation between words is 'ok' and is still given ranking preference.

## **Placement of the first paragraph**

Many web developers ignore this rule and as a result are heavily penalised. Imagine a website that has a huge scrolling java-script banner, followed by a series of drop down menus containing hundreds of links. After which the very first phrase within the HTML is 'Home Page'. They score a big fat zero in optimisation terms!

Page layout is important not just from a visual standpoint, but from an invisible coding perspective. An automated web spider cannot interpret java-script, read text hidden within images etc. It will start at the top of your code and read logically through it line by line. If the first 100 lines are non-descriptive links such as 'home page', 'contact us', 'products', like the rest of us it will get bored. A spider has a finite window of time to index a site, if it has to read through the same 100 links on every page before it gets to anything worth reading, the game is lost.

Many web designers place the index page on the left. Although this has become an expected location by many human visitors, especially as they read from left to right, it doesn't mean that the HTML has to be constructed in this order. CSS can be used to float elements left or right giving the web-coder

greater flexibility.

How many sites have you seen where every page has a massive banner and only 2 lines of text showing? Annoying isn't it? Having to scroll down before content is visible can be very frustrating. You are trying to keep people on your site not leave them with tired fingers! You only have to look at your analytics to see that some visitors spend less than 2 second on a page. If you have a high bounce rate, this page needs serious attention. Swallow your pride, lose the big useless banners, drop the javascript and go back to basic printed text. Take forum sites, they often have tiny generic banners with only a couple of 'smilie' images on page, yet dominate search results. Why? Words, words and more words, plus, a lot of sentences are very descriptive and relevant to the page subject.

## **Paragraph placement guidelines**

Basically, you have around 1 second to grab attention, some say a decent image can get you 2, but words rule the roost. Those words need to be visible, readable by spiders, easy to read and very descriptive. Capture the audience and get them to read other pages on your site. If a visitor spends 2 seconds on your page then instantly goes back to Google to see the next result, they haven't found the answer they were looking for. Try to make your content understandable by a 'newbie', if you need a dictionary or a degree to read anything, go back to basics.

The first sentence on any page should ideally contain around 15 – 30 words and be highly relevant to the 'theme' of that page.

## **Common paragraph placement mistakes**

Some web pages only display content when you expand a certain section or select a tab. Target content is hidden to both the

visitor and trawling spider. The most significant problem can be canonicalisation.

When you click on tabs they can append variables to the url

- `www.domain-name/folder/page.html`
- `www.domain-name/folder/page.html?show-hidden=true`

Search engines will see these two urls as duplicates of each other (canonicalised). A duplicate penalty will be given and there is no guarantee that the correct url of the two is listed. Even worse, if a particular url has a user ID appended; with 'My Shopping Cart' tab being prime offenders; only that user can see that tab. The search engine has still listed it. A visitor clicking on that link will get a 404 error or be re-directed to a page with different content. This will get you duplicate errors, dynamic content errors, and 404 missing page errors. You don't want any one of these on your site!

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## [Is the description meta tag still used?](#)

This tag isn't used in search engine rankings, so isn't using it just a waste of time?

I often hear *'Well, if xyz site doesn't used it then I'm not either...'*.

So, what are the reasons for still using this tag and why do some still say that it is the No. 4 SEO ranking factor?

The quick answer is *'We're not machines, we're human beings!'* – and as such we have a different perspective.

The meta description tag is often used as the page

description below the page heading in Google search results.



It's a shop window for humans. Without it, you'd have nothing to tell passers by what's inside. It's one method of targeting traffic. Imagine one shop with boarded over windows and another with a display of fresh food. If you were hungry, which one would you visit? – *same principle?*

The better your shop window the more 'hits' you'll get, and therefore you'll be more popular with search engines because of your traffic and not the tag. It's in-direct, but you can see its importance.

Google and Ask no longer place so much emphasis on this tag (for ranking), but it has been proved that it is still used within its algorithms.

- The <meta description should be a 70 words or 2–3 sentences long (ideally well under 200 characters – maximum 350)
- It should describe the page
- Some search engines use this description when displaying search results
- Keywords are important, but it is important not to 'keyword stuff'
- Write a sensible description and avoid automated tools for generating meta description
- Include your popular keywords in the meta description as they will be bold when displayed in search engine results

Although not a significant search engine ranking factor anymore, it is still used by all popular search engines when displaying search engine results. Different search engines place varying levels of importance on this tag.

Some report this tag to be dead, but studies have shown that it is used, especially when surfing on less popular 'niché'

topics. In conclusion, this tag is still used, but the algorithm is a lot more complicated.

Use longer, more descriptive words, trying not to repeat any of them. Avoid words such as the, a, home, contact us etc. 350/70 gives an average of 5 characters per word. The closer you get to 70 words and 150 characters the better. Any tag over 200 characters is too long.

It is important not only to optimise the meta description tag, but also to create interest with the user. You need to spur user interaction and create a positive impression. The tag needs to be easy and quick to read. Remember, a user will only spend a couple of seconds scanning a whole page of search results (SERPs). If you can create an emotional response to a headline: even better.

## How long should a meta description be?

Various web browsers display different numbers of characters, depending upon user settings. Typically you should use the following as a guide only:

- Google usually ignores this tag, displaying a snippet of text from the page body instead. But for more 'niche' results 150 – 158 characters including spaces and hyphenation (truncating at end of nearest word) may be displayed  
**Remember...** Niche phrases are often your \$\$\$ keywords
- Yahoo displays up to 160 characters including spaces
- Bing displays 150 characters including spaces
- Ask does not display text from this tag, using snippets from the main body instead. Even if a word only appears within the meta description, it will display the first sentence from the page body
- Internet Explorer supports 350 characters.

