Victoria County CAP Sites Association presents:

The Easy Step Guide to SEO

Search Engine Optimization

Building Stronger Communities Through Technology

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Overview:

SEO is an acronym for "search engine optimization". Optimizing a website for search engines means designing and promoting it in an effective way, so that the website is easily found in a search engine.

The goal of optimizing a website is to have it appear as one of the top results, or even better, the top result for a specific search query.

How well your website is optimized is always relative to specific search terms, since web users search for specific words.

Overview (continued):

Thus, it is impossible to optimize a website for all search terms. You need to come up with a list of appropriate search terms that people would use to find your particular website.

Effective SEO results in more traffic for your website, which is extremely desirable. For commercial websites, for example, more website visitors mean higher profits.

This manual will guide you through the steps you need to take to optimize your website for search engines such as Google.

Lesson 1

Effective Web Design

Design Principles for Google

• Make a site with a clear hierarchy and text links. Every page should be reachable from at least one static text link.

• Offer a site map to your users with links that point to the important parts of your site. If the site map is larger than 100 or so links, you may want to break the site map into separate pages.

• Create a useful, information-rich site, and write pages that clearly and accurately describe your content.

Design Principles for Google (cont.)

• Think about the words users would type to find your pages, and make sure that your site actually includes those words within it.

• Try to use text instead of images to display important names, content, or links. Search engine crawlers don't recognize text contained in images.

• Make sure that your <title> elements and alt attributes are descriptive and accurate.

• Check for broken links and correct HTML.

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Design Principles for Google (cont.)

• If you decide to use dynamic pages (i.e., the URL contains a "?" character), be aware that not every search engine spider crawls dynamic pages as well as static pages. It helps to keep the parameters short and the number of them few.

• Keep the links on a given page to a reasonable number (fewer than 100).

• Use robots.txt to prevent crawling of search results pages or other auto-generated pages that don't add much value for users coming from search engines.

Design Principles for Google (cont.)

- Test your site to make sure that it appears correctly in different browsers.

- Make pages primarily for users, not for search engines.

- Avoid malicious tricks intended to improve search engine rankings.

- Avoid duplicate content.

- Don't use unauthorized computer programs to submit pages, check rankings, etc.

Lesson 2

Keywords

The Key to Getting Found

To really optimize your website for search engines, you need to focus on one thing:

Write relevant, content-rich, search-engine-friendly articles for any keywords, or sets of keywords, that you want to be found for.

Let's say your website is about baseball cards. First, decide on a list of **keywords** for your website. This website really helps with finding good keywords:

www.wordtracker.com

Good Keywords

Good keywords are those that find a good balance between:

1. High Popularity (keyword frequently searched)

2. Little Competition (keyword rarely found on other sites)

Naturally, it is very desirable, but almost impossible to find a keyword that is highly popular, but has as good as no competition.

Keep in mind that whatever keywords you pick they must be relevant to the content your website provides.

Good Keywords (cont.)

Keywords with High Popularity but High Competition:

baseball
baseball card
baseball cards

Keywords with Little Competition but Low Popularity:

american baseball card collections with prices
best selling cards national baseball league 1980-1990
Vernon Smith's baseball card price guide

Good Keywords (cont.)

A good compromise between Popularity and Competition:

baseball card price guide
baseball card prices canada
baseball cards 1950
baseball cards 1988
rarest baseball card list
baseball card collection value
collecting baseball cards usa
michael jordan baseball card
base ball card prices

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Google Adwords Keyword Tool

Keywords	Advertiser Competition ⑦	Approx Search Volume: January ⑦	Approx Avg Search Volume ⑦	Match Type: ⑦ Broad ▾
Keywords related to term(s) entered - sorted by relevance ⑦				
baseball cards		450,000	450,000	Add ≈
baseball card		368,000	368,000	Add ≈
baseball card sets		3,600	3,600	Add ≈
baseball card values		14,800	14,800	Add ≈
baseball card value		27,100	22,200	Add ≈
baseball card prices		14,800	12,100	Add ≈
baseball card collection		2,900	2,900	Add ≈
baseball card price		18,100	27,100	Add ≈
baseball trading cards		6,600	8,100	Add ≈
baseball card boxes		2,400	2,400	Add ≈
topps baseball card		49,500	40,500	Add ≈
baseball trading card		2,900	2,900	Add ≈
baseball card collecting		1,000	1,600	Add ≈
baseball card beckett		3,600	5,400	Add ≈
baseball card pricing		3,600	4,400	Add ≈
baseball card price guide		9,900	14,800	Add ≈
baseball card shop		8,100	8,100	Add ≈
fleer baseball cards		9,900	8,100	Add ≈
vintage baseball cards		3,600	4,400	Add ≈
babe ruth baseball card		5,400	5,400	Add ≈
baseball cards for sale		3,600	2,900	Add ≈

https://adwords.google.com/select/KeywordToolExternal

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Keywords

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Lesson 3

Writing Powerful Articles

Powerful Articles: Overview

Writing powerful articles that are search engine friendly consist of several components:

1. Quality content

2. Good page titles

3. Good meta descriptions

4. Good URL structure

5. Meaningful anchor texts

6. Efficient use of headings

7. Good use of images

Quality Content

Writing information-rich articles with quality content is the most important thing you can do for your website. There are other technical details that really help getting found, but good content is crucial, above all things.

Using the keywords of your choice (roughly 2-5 per article), you incorporate them in an organic way into your writing. Use the keywords as often as possible, but not too often either.

Your article should read smoothly, while giving away a lot of useful information, hopefully about the specific keywords that the article focuses on.

Quality Content (cont.)

Good practices for content:

• **Write easy-to-read text**
Users enjoy content that is well written and easy to follow.

• **Stay organized around the topic**
It's always beneficial to organize your content so that visitors have a good sense of where one content topic begins and another ends. Breaking your content up into logical chunks or divisions helps users find the content they want faster.

Quality Content (cont.)

• **Use relevant language**
Think about the words that a user might search for to find a piece of your content. Users who know a lot about the topic might use different keywords in their search queries than someone who is new to the topic.

For example, a long-time baseball fan might search for [nlcs], an acronym for the National League Championship Series, while a new fan might use a more general query like [baseball playoffs]. anticipating these differences in search behavior and accounting for them while writing your content (using a good mix of keyword phrases) could produce positive results.

Quality Content (cont.)

- **Create fresh, unique content**
New content will not only keep your existing visitor base coming back, but also bring in new visitors.

- **Offer exclusive content or services**
Consider creating a new, useful service that no other site offers. You could also write an original piece of research, break an exciting news story, or leverage your unique user base. Other sites may lack the resources or expertise to do these things.
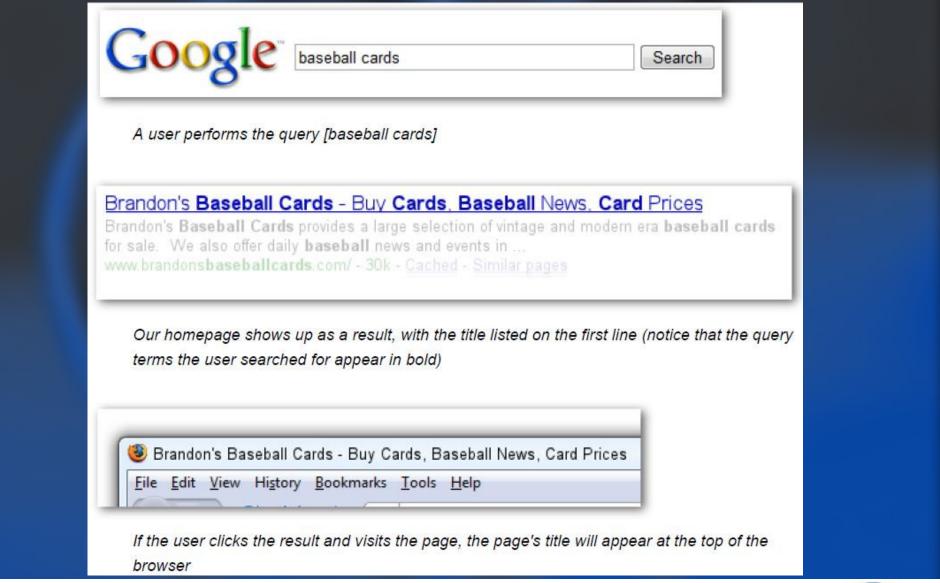
Good Page Titles

Good practices for page <title> tags:

- **Accurately describe the page's content**
  Choose a title that effectively communicates the topic of the page's content.
- **Create unique title tags for each page**
  Each of your pages should ideally have a unique title tag, which helps search engines know how the page is distinct from the others on your site.
- **Use brief, but descriptive titles**
  Titles can be both short and informative. If the title is too long, search engines will show only a portion of it in the search result.

Good Page Titles: Examples

Google | baseball cards | Search

A user performs the query [baseball cards]

Brandon's **Baseball Cards** - Buy **Cards**, **Baseball** News, **Card** Prices
Brandon's **Baseball Cards** provides a large selection of vintage and modern era **baseball cards** for sale. We also offer daily **baseball** news and events in ...
www.brandons**baseballcards**.com/ - 30k - Cached - Similar pages

Our homepage shows up as a result, with the title listed on the first line (notice that the query terms the user searched for appear in bold)

Brandon's Baseball Cards - Buy Cards, Baseball News, Card Prices
File   Edit   View   History   Bookmarks   Tools   Help

If the user clicks the result and visits the page, the page's title will appear at the top of the browser

Good Page Titles: Examples

```
<html>

<head>

<title>Brandon's Baseball Cards - Buy Cards, Baseball News, Card Prices</t

<meta name="description" content="Brandon's Baseball Cards provides a lar

</head>

<body>

...
```

Good Meta Descriptions

Good practices for description <meta> tags:

- **Accurately summarize the page's content**
  Write a description that would both inform and interest users if they saw your description meta tag as a snippet in a search result.

- **Use unique descriptions for each page**
  Having a different description meta tag for each page helps both users and search engines, especially in searches where users may bring up multiple pages on your domain.

Good URL Structure

Good practices for URL structure:

• **Use words in URLs**
URLs with words that are relevant to your site's content and structure are friendlier for visitors navigating your site. Visitors remember them better and might be more willing to link to them.

• **Create a simple directory structure**
Use a directory structure that organizes your content well and is easy for visitors to know where they're at on your site. Try using your directory structure to indicate the type of content found at that URL.
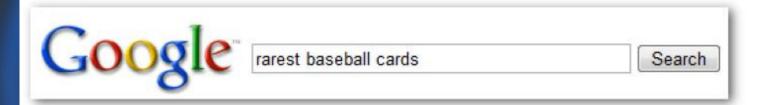
Good URL Structure: Examples

POST BY: Kevin   ON DATE: Oct. 10, 2008 2:30PM

Hey, I found this article on the rarest baseball cards. These cards are FTW

The link is http://www.brandonsbaseballcards.com/articles/ten-rarest-baseball-cards.htm

Google [rarest baseball cards] [Search]

A user performs the query [rarest baseball cards]

Top Ten **Rarest Baseball Cards** - Brandon's **Baseball Cards**
These ten **baseball cards** are the **rarest** in the world. Here's the story behind each **card** and how much you could expect to pay for them at auction. Many will ...
www.brandons**baseballcards**.com/articles/ten-**rarest-baseball-cards**.htm - 34k -
Cached - Similar pages

A deeper page, with a URL that reflects the type of content found on it, appears as a result

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Meaningful Anchor Texts

Good practices for anchor text:

• **Choose descriptive text**
The anchor text you use for a link should provide at least a basic idea of what the page linked to is about.

• **Write concise text**
Aim for short but descriptive text - usually a few words or a short phrase.

Meaningful Anchor Texts (cont.)

- **Think about anchor text for internal links too**
Paying more attention to the anchor text used for internal links can help users and search engines navigate your site better.

```
<a href="http://www.brandonsbaseballcards.com/articles/ten-rarest-
   baseball-cards.htm">Top ten rarest baseball cards</a>
```

This anchor text accurately describes the content on one of our article pages

Efficient Use of Headings

Good practices for heading tags:

• Imagine you're writing an outline
Similar to writing an outline for a large paper, put some thought into what the main points and sub-points of the content on the page will be and decide where to use heading tags appropriately.

• Use headings sparingly across the page
Use heading tags where it makes sense. Too many heading tags on a page can make it hard for users to scan the content and determine where one topic ends and another begins.

Efficient Use of Headings: Example


```
</head>

<body>

<h1>Brandon's Baseball Cards</h1>

<h2>News - Treasure Trove of Baseball Cards Found in Old Barn</h2>

<p>A man who recently purchased a farm house was pleasantly surprise
dollars worth of vintage baseball cards in the barn.  The cards were
in newspapers and were thought to be in near-mint condition.  After
the cards to his grandson instead of selling them.</p>
```

Good Use of Images

Good practices for images:

• **Use brief, but descriptive filenames and alt text**
Like many of the other parts of the page targeted for optimization, filenames and alt text are best when they're short, but descriptive.

• **Supply alt text when using images as links**
If you do decide to use an image as a link, filling out its alt text helps search engines understand more about the page you're linking to. Imagine that you're writing anchor text for a text link.

Good Use of Images (cont.)

• **Store images in a directory of their own**
Instead of having image files spread out in numerous directories and subdirectories across your domain, consider consolidating your images into a single directory (e.g. brandonsbaseballcards.com/images/). This simplifies the path to your images.

```
<img src="http://www.brandonsbaseballcards.com/img/2008-world-series-
baseball.jpg" alt="2008 Signed World Series Baseball" />
```

Lesson 4

Promoting Your Website

Submit your Site

- Submit your website to the major Search Engines

- Submit your Sitemap using Google Webmaster Tools

- Submit your website to free directories such as dmoz.org.

- Reach out to those in your site's related community. Make sure all the sites that should know about your pages are aware your site is online. It is important that you receive static incoming text links from other high-quality, topic-related sites, with a descriptive link text that accurately portrays the content of a page.
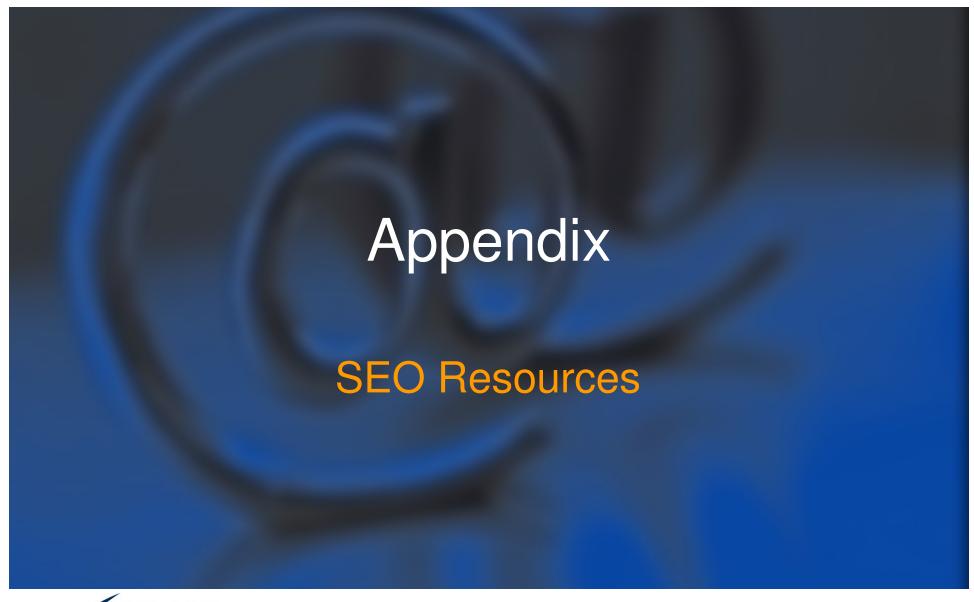
Further Promotional Steps

- Promote your website offline.

- Blog about new content or services.

- Use social media sites such as FaceBook.com for promotion.

- Add your business to Google's Local Business Center. This will promote your website on maps.google.com.

- Add links and articles about your website on wikipedia.org.

Appendix

SEO Resources

Online SEO Resources

- Google's SEO Starter Guide
http://www.google.com/webmasters/docs/search-engine-optimization-starter-guide.pdf

- Google Webmaster Help
http://www.google.com/support/webmasters/

- SEO Chat
http://www.seochat.com/

- Search Engine Guide
http://www.searchengineguide.com/

- SEO on Wikipedia
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Search_engine_optimization

Online SEO Resources (cont.)

- ## Wordtracker Keywords
http://www.wordtracker.com/

- ## Self SEO
http://www.selfseo.com/

- ## Google Adwords Keyword Tool
https://adwords.google.com/select/KeywordToolExternal

- ## Marketleap
http://www.marketleap.com/

- ## Good Keywords
http://www.goodkeywords.com/

Online SEO Resources (cont.)

- Tourism Keys
http://www.tourismkeys.ca/

The End