

LEARNING MADE EASY



7th Edition

SEO

for
dummies[®]
A Wiley Brand



Develop an
SEO-friendly website

Understand the secrets
to ranking #1

Analyze results with
improved analytics tools

Peter Kent

E-commerce and digital
marketing consultant

SEO

^{for}
dummies[®]
A Wiley Brand



SEO

7th Edition

by Peter Kent

for
dummies[®]
A Wiley Brand

SEO For Dummies®, 7th Edition

Published by: **John Wiley & Sons, Inc.**, 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030-5774, www.wiley.com

Copyright © 2020 by John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Hoboken, New Jersey

Published simultaneously in Canada

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning or otherwise, except as permitted under Sections 107 or 108 of the 1976 United States Copyright Act, without the prior written permission of the Publisher. Requests to the Publisher for permission should be addressed to the Permissions Department, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030, (201) 748-6011, fax (201) 748-6008, or online at <http://www.wiley.com/go/permissions>.

Trademarks: Wiley, For Dummies, the Dummies Man logo, Dummies.com, Making Everything Easier, and related trade dress are trademarks or registered trademarks of John Wiley & Sons, Inc. and may not be used without written permission. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners. John Wiley & Sons, Inc. is not associated with any product or vendor mentioned in this book.

LIMIT OF LIABILITY/DISCLAIMER OF WARRANTY: THE PUBLISHER AND THE AUTHOR MAKE NO REPRESENTATIONS OR WARRANTIES WITH RESPECT TO THE ACCURACY OR COMPLETENESS OF THE CONTENTS OF THIS WORK AND SPECIFICALLY DISCLAIM ALL WARRANTIES, INCLUDING WITHOUT LIMITATION WARRANTIES OF FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE. NO WARRANTY MAY BE CREATED OR EXTENDED BY SALES OR PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS. THE ADVICE AND STRATEGIES CONTAINED HEREIN MAY NOT BE SUITABLE FOR EVERY SITUATION. THIS WORK IS SOLD WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THAT THE PUBLISHER IS NOT ENGAGED IN RENDERING LEGAL, ACCOUNTING, OR OTHER PROFESSIONAL SERVICES. IF PROFESSIONAL ASSISTANCE IS REQUIRED, THE SERVICES OF A COMPETENT PROFESSIONAL PERSON SHOULD BE SOUGHT. NEITHER THE PUBLISHER NOR THE AUTHOR SHALL BE LIABLE FOR DAMAGES ARISING HEREFROM. THE FACT THAT AN ORGANIZATION OR WEBSITE IS REFERRED TO IN THIS WORK AS A CITATION AND/OR A POTENTIAL SOURCE OF FURTHER INFORMATION DOES NOT MEAN THAT THE AUTHOR OR THE PUBLISHER ENDORSES THE INFORMATION THE ORGANIZATION OR WEBSITE MAY PROVIDE OR RECOMMENDATIONS IT MAY MAKE. FURTHER, READERS SHOULD BE AWARE THAT INTERNET WEBSITES LISTED IN THIS WORK MAY HAVE CHANGED OR DISAPPEARED BETWEEN WHEN THIS WORK WAS WRITTEN AND WHEN IT IS READ.

For general information on our other products and services, please contact our Customer Care Department within the U.S. at 877-762-2974, outside the U.S. at 317-572-3993, or fax 317-572-4002. For technical support, please visit <https://hub.wiley.com/community/support/dummies>.

Wiley publishes in a variety of print and electronic formats and by print-on-demand. Some material included with standard print versions of this book may not be included in e-books or in print-on-demand. If this book refers to media such as a CD or DVD that is not included in the version you purchased, you may download this material at <http://booksupport.wiley.com>. For more information about Wiley products, visit www.wiley.com.

Library of Congress Control Number: 2019918161

ISBN 978-1-119-57957-1 (pbk); ISBN 978-1-119-57959-5 (ePDF); ISBN 978-1-119-57960-1 (epub)

Manufactured in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Contents at a Glance

Introduction	1
Part 1: Getting Started with SEO	5
CHAPTER 1: Surveying the Search Engine Landscape	7
CHAPTER 2: Search Results, Deconstructed	21
CHAPTER 3: Your One-Hour, Search Engine-Friendly Website Makeover	33
CHAPTER 4: Beating the Competition: Planning a Powerful Search Engine Strategy	53
CHAPTER 5: Making Your Site Useful and Visible	73
Part 2: Building Search Engine-Friendly Sites	89
CHAPTER 6: Picking Powerful Keywords	91
CHAPTER 7: Creating Pages That Search Engines Love	111
CHAPTER 8: Designing for Speed	143
CHAPTER 9: Designing for Mobile	153
CHAPTER 10: Using Structured Data Markup	161
CHAPTER 11: Avoiding Things That Search Engines Hate	173
CHAPTER 12: Dirty Deeds, Done Dirt Cheap	195
CHAPTER 13: Bulking Up Your Site: Competing with Content	213
CHAPTER 14: Finding Traffic Through Local Search Marketing	239
Part 3: Adding Your Site to the Indexes and Directories	267
CHAPTER 15: Getting Your Pages into the Search Engines	269
CHAPTER 16: Submitting to the Directories	285
CHAPTER 17: Product Search: Remember the Shopping Directories and Retailers	295
Part 4: After You've Submitted Your Site	319
CHAPTER 18: Using Link Popularity to Boost Your Position	321
CHAPTER 19: Finding Sites to Link to Yours	347
CHAPTER 20: Even More Great Places to Get Links	371
CHAPTER 21: Social Networking — Driven by Drivel	385
CHAPTER 22: Video and Images: Putting Your Best Face Forward	393
CHAPTER 23: Beyond the Basics	403
CHAPTER 24: When Google Bites Back: A Guide to Catastrophe	415

Part 5: The Part of Tens	435
CHAPTER 25: Ten-Plus Myths and Mistakes.....	437
CHAPTER 26: Ten-Plus Ways to Stay Updated.....	445
CHAPTER 27: Ten-Plus Useful Things to Know.....	451
Index	465

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	1
About This Book	1
Foolish Assumptions	2
Icons Used in This Book	3
Beyond the Book	4
PART 1: GETTING STARTED WITH SEO	5
CHAPTER 1: Surveying the Search Engine Landscape	7
Investigating Search Engines and Directories	8
Search sites, indexes, and engines	9
Search directories	9
Spidered directories	11
Pay-per-click systems	11
Keeping the terms straight	12
Why bother with search engines?	13
Where Do People Search?	14
It's all the same!	16
Search Engine Magic	16
How do they do it?	17
Stepping into the programmers' shoes	17
Gathering Your Tools	19
CHAPTER 2: Search Results, Deconstructed	21
The Big Two: Organic and PPC	22
Looking at Local Results	24
Checking Out Shopping Results	25
Staying Current with News Results	26
Viewing Video and Image Results	27
And Plenty More	28
Getting Friendly with Social Results	29
Collecting Bits n' Pieces	30
CHAPTER 3: Your One-Hour, Search Engine-Friendly Website Makeover	33
Is Your Site Indexed?	34
Google	34
Yahoo! and Bing	36
Taking Action If You're Not Listed	36
No links	37
Unreliable Web Server	38

robots.txt is blocking your site	38
robots meta tags are blocking pages	38
Unreadable navigation	39
Dealing with dynamic pages	40
Bad domain name	41
The canonical tag.	42
Picking Good Keywords	42
Examining Your Pages	43
Using frames	43
Looking at the TITLE tags	45
Examining the DESCRIPTION tag.	46
Giving search engines something to read	47
Getting Your Site Indexed	50
 CHAPTER 4: Beating the Competition: Planning a Powerful Search Engine Strategy	 53
Don't Trust Your Web Designer	54
Understanding the Limitations	55
Eyeing the Competition	56
Getting a "gut feel" for the competition	57
Why is my competitor ranking so high?	59
Going Beyond Getting to #1	60
Highly targeted keyword phrases	60
Understanding the search tail	61
Controlling Search Engine Variables.	63
Keywords	63
Content	64
Page optimization	64
Submissions	65
Links.	65
Time and the Google sandbox.	65
Determining Your Plan of Attack.	67
Look Away a Few Minutes	68
Two Things to Remember	69
 CHAPTER 5: Making Your Site Useful and Visible	 73
Learning from Amazon.	73
Revealing the Secret But Essential Rule of Web Success.	75
The evolving, incorrect "secret"	76
Uncovering the real secret.	76
Showing a bias for content.	77
Making Your Site Work Well.	78
Limiting multimedia	79
Using text, not graphics	79

Don't be cute	80
Making it easy to move around	80
Providing different routes	81
Using long link text	82
Don't keep restructuring	82
Editing and checking spelling	83
Ugly doesn't sell	83
Panda — Google Endorses Good Design	86
Keep It Fresh (Perhaps)	88

PART 2: BUILDING SEARCH ENGINE-FRIENDLY SITES 89

CHAPTER 6: Picking Powerful Keywords 91

Understanding the Importance of Keywords	92
Thinking Like Your Prey	95
Starting Your Keyword Analysis	96
Identifying the obvious keywords	96
Looking at your website's analytics	96
Examining competitors' keyword tags	97
Brainstorming with colleagues	97
Looking closely at your list	97
Using a Keyword Tool	101
Making Sure You Understand Your Tool	104
Working with Your Tool	105
Choosing Your Keywords	106
Cam again? You might be missing the target	107
Ambiguous terms	107
Very broad terms	107
Picking combinations	108
Using Your Keywords	109

CHAPTER 7: Creating Pages That Search Engines Love 111

Preparing Your Site	112
Finding a hosting company	112
Picking a domain name	112
Site speed	114
Mobile readiness	114
HTTPS	115
Seeing Through a Search Engine's Eyes	118
Understanding Keyword Concepts	121
Picking one or two phrases per page	121
Checking prominence	122
Watching density	122
Placing keywords throughout your site	123

Creating Your Web Pages.....	123
Naming files	124
Creating directory structure.....	125
Viewing TITLE tags	125
Using the DESCRIPTION meta tag.....	127
Tapping into the KEYWORDS meta tag.....	130
Using other meta tags.....	131
Including image ALT text	133
Adding body text	133
Creating headers: CSS versus <H> tags	134
Formatting text	136
Creating links	136
Using other company and product names	137
Creating navigation structures that search engines can read	139
Blocking searchbots	139
CHAPTER 8: Designing for Speed	143
The Importance of Speed.....	143
What Is Site Speed?	144
So How Is My Site Doing?	145
Speeding Up Your Site	147
Picking the right host	148
Using HTTP/2	149
Fixing your site.....	150
Site-speed plug-ins and caching	151
Using a CDN	151
Speeding up mobile pages.....	152
CHAPTER 9: Designing for Mobile	153
How Mobile Affects SEO.....	153
Is Your Site Mobile Friendly?	154
Making Your Site Mobile Friendly	157
Mobile-First Indexing	158
Accelerated Mobile Pages (AMP).....	159
Web Light — Google's Trick for Speeding Up Pages.....	160
CHAPTER 10: Using Structured Data Markup	161
Creating Rich Snippets	163
A Special Case: Video and Images.....	167
Pick Your Data Format	168
Providing Knowledge Panel Information	169
Getting Help	170
Data Highlighter.....	170
Markup Helper.....	171
The Structured Data Testing Tool	171

The Structured Data Dashboard	171
CMS plug-ins	172
CHAPTER 11: Avoiding Things That Search Engines Hate	173
Understanding Content Value and Thin Content	174
Avoiding Image, Video, and Animation Problems.	176
Avoiding image problems.	176
Keeping content out of video?	177
Flush the Flash animation	178
Links That Aren't Links	178
Avoiding Complicated URLs	180
Managing Dynamic Web Pages	181
Understanding dynamic-page URLs	182
Fixing your dynamic web page problem	183
Avoiding Session IDs in URLs	184
Foregoing Frames	187
The HTML nitty-gritty of frames	189
Handling iframes	190
Considering JavaScript and AJAX	191
Fixing Bits and Pieces	192
Avoid the urge to copy and paste from MS Word	192
Forwarded pages	192
Special characters	193
CHAPTER 12: Dirty Deeds, Done Dirt Cheap	195
Tricking Search Engines	196
Deciding whether to trick	196
What the Search Engines Want to See	197
Do these tricks work?	198
Concrete Shoes, Cyanide, TNT — An Arsenal of Dirty Deeds	199
Keyword, stacking, stuffing, and spamming	199
Hiding (and shrinking) keywords	200
Big lists of keywords	203
Hiding links	203
Duplicating pages and sites	203
Page Swapping and Page Jacking	204
Doorway and Information Pages	204
Using Redirects and Cloaking	206
Understanding redirects	206
Examining cloaking	207
Structured Markup Strategies	209
Much, Much More	210
Tricks Versus Strategies	210
Link Tricks	211
Paying the Ultimate Penalty	211

CHAPTER 13:	Bulking Up Your Site: Competing with Content	213
	Creating Content Three Ways	214
	Writing Your Own Stuff	215
	Summarizing online articles	216
	Reviewing websites and products	216
	Convincing Someone Else to Write Content	217
	Using OPC (Other People's Content)	218
	Understanding Copyright — It's Not Yours!	219
	Hunting for Other People's Content	221
	Keywords	221
	Product information	222
	Websites and e-mail newsletters	223
	Government sources	224
	Content Syndication	225
	Traditional syndication services	229
	RSS syndication feeds	229
	Open content and copyleft	231
	Search results pages	232
	Press releases	232
	Q&A areas	233
	Message boards	233
	Blogs	234
	A Word about Duplicated Content	235
	"Content Is King"	236
CHAPTER 14:	Finding Traffic Through Local Search Marketing	239
	Why You Shouldn't Skip This Chapter	240
	Understanding Local Search Marketing's Importance	240
	Looking through Local Search	241
	How Does Local Search Work?	243
	Search terms	243
	Partner and localized sites	243
	IP numbers	244
	Two Ways to Reach People Locally	246
	"Localizing" Your Web Pages	247
	Keywording the pages	247
	Use the Geo meta tags	249
	Registering for Local Search	250
	Yahoo!'s Listing Confusion	250
	Grabbing control of (or adding) your business listing	252
	Increasing the odds	255
	The Local Directory Listing Services	256
	The benefits of business directories	257
	Don't forget local directories	258

The Other Side of Local: Review Sites	259
Removing bad reviews	261
Diluting bad reviews	262
Identifying important review sites	263
Working with the Yellow Pages	263

PART 3: ADDING YOUR SITE TO THE INDEXES AND DIRECTORIES 267

CHAPTER 15: Getting Your Pages into the Search Engines 269

Linking Your Site for Inclusion	270
Submitting to the Major Search Engines	271
Simple Link Submissions to the Major Systems	271
Working with the Webmaster Accounts	272
Submitting an XML Sitemap	273
Submitting URLs	278
Pinging search engines	279
Using If-Modified-Since	280
Using Webmaster Tools, Too	281
Submitting to Secondary Systems	283

CHAPTER 16: Submitting to the Directories 285

Pitting Search Directories Against Search Engines	285
Why Are Directories So Significant?	288
Submitting to the Search Directories	289
The General Directories	289
Finding Specialized Directories	290
Getting the link	291
Using “Local” Directories	293

CHAPTER 17: Product Search: Remember the Shopping Directories and Retailers 295

Understanding Where People Search for Products	296
Working with the Product Indexes	298
Google Shopping Ads	300
Connexity: Yahoo! Shopping, PriceGrabber, Shopzilla, and more	301
Bing Shopping	303
Amazon product ads	303
Shopping.com	303
Pricewatch	303
Exploring More Shopping Services	305
The Classified-Ad Sites	305
Working with E-Commerce Marketplaces	306
Working with eBay	307
Working with Amazon	307

Managing Your Data	308
The data you need	309
Formatting guidelines	310
Creating your spreadsheet	311
Getting those product URLs	311
Creating individual sheets	313
Creating and uploading your data files	316
Multichannel, automated data management	317
PART 4: AFTER YOU'VE SUBMITTED YOUR SITE	319
CHAPTER 18: Using Link Popularity to Boost Your Position	321
Why Search Engines Like Links	322
Google: All about links	322
Links: The gift that keeps on giving	323
Understanding Page Value and PageRank	324
PageRank — One part of the equation	325
The PageRank algorithm	326
Measuring PageRank	329
Leaking PageRank	331
Pseudo PageRank Alternatives	332
Page Relevance	333
Hubs and Neighborhoods	334
Trust in TrustRank	335
Inserting Keywords into Links	336
The Googlebomb lives	337
PageRank versus Keywords	338
Get a good mix	339
Good Links and Bad	339
Recognizing Links with No Value	340
Identifying links that aren't links	341
Identifying nofollow links	343
Recalling a Few Basic Rules about Links	344
CHAPTER 19: Finding Sites to Link to Yours	347
Controlling Your Links	348
Converting good links to bad	348
The perfect link text	348
Doing a Link Analysis	350
Google	350
Link popularity software	351
Generating Links, Step by Step	353
Register with directories	355
Ask friends and family	355
Ask employees	356

Contact association sites	356
Contact manufacturers' websites	356
Contact companies you do business with	357
Ask to be a featured client	357
Submit to announcement sites and newsletters	357
Create a little linkbait	358
Find sites linking to your competition	358
Search for keyword "add url"	359
Mention your site in discussion groups	360
Working with blogs	361
Pursue offline PR	362
Give away content	362
Apply for online awards	362
Advertise	362
Use a service or buy links	363
Just wait	364
Fuggetaboutit	365
Be Careful Whom You Link To!	368
CHAPTER 20: Even More Great Places to Get Links	371
Got Content? Syndicate It!	371
The Duplicate Content "Problem"	372
Four syndication technologies	374
Getting the most out of syndication	376
Article libraries: Getting the word out	376
Syndicating Outreach and Guest Blogging	378
Syndicating Utilities and Infographics	379
And More Link-Building Ideas	381
PR and Link Building	382
The nofollow Curse	382
Who's Going to Do All This Work?!	383
CHAPTER 21: Social Networking — Driven by Drivel	385
Just What Is Social Networking?	385
Beware the Social Networking Hype	387
The Drivel Factor	388
The SEO Benefits of Social Networking	389
Getting links through social networking sites	389
Grabbing search engine real estate	391
Promotional Benefit	391
The social networking sites are search engines	392
Social Networking — A Book in Itself	392

CHAPTER 22:	Video and Images: Putting Your Best Face Forward	393
	The SEO Benefits of Video	394
	Videos on your site	395
	Playing the video search engine game	398
	Grabbing search engine real estate	399
	Ranking Images	400
CHAPTER 23:	Beyond the Basics	403
	What's on the Page?	403
	Organic Results	404
	Sitelinks Below Organic Results	404
	Search Boxes	406
	Special Organic Formatting	406
	Knowledge Panels	408
	Featured Snippets	408
	Local Results	410
	Image and Video Results	410
	PPC (Pay Per Click) Advertising Results	410
	Shopping Results	411
	News Results	411
	Twitter Results	411
	Getting Multiple Results on the Search Results Page	412
CHAPTER 24:	When Google Bites Back: A Guide to Catastrophe	415
	How, and How Much?	415
	Imposing a penalty	416
	The Google spam team	417
	Is It Really a Penalty? A Little Analysis	418
	Is the site still indexed?	419
	Check with Google Search Console	419
	Has Google flagged your site as "suspicious"?	421
	Has the number of pages in the index significantly changed?	422
	What happens when you search for your domain name?	422
	What happens when you search for the domain name minus the TLD?	422
	What happens when you search for a text string in your <TITLE> tag?	422
	What happens when you search for a text string in your home page?	423
	Try a penalty checker	423

Pulling It All Together: Have You Been Penalized?	424
Dealing with Manual Actions	426
Reconsideration requests	427
Psychological warfare?	428
Dealing with “Algorithmic Actions”	429
Digging Your Way Out of the Hole	430
Finding on-page problems	432
Finding link problems	433
Finding domain name problems	433
Sitting and waiting	433
PART 5: THE PART OF TENS	435
CHAPTER 25: Ten-Plus Myths and Mistakes	437
Myth: It’s All about Meta Tags and Submissions	437
Myth: Web Designers and Developers Understand Search Engines	438
Mistake: You Don’t Know Your Keywords	438
Mistake: Building the Site and Then Bringing in the SEO Expert . . .	439
Myth: \$25 Can Get Your Site a #1 Position	439
Myth: Google Partners Get You #1 Positions	440
Mistake: You Don’t Have Pages Optimized for Specific Keywords . .	440
Mistake: Your Pages Are Empty	441
Myth: Pay Per Click Is Where It’s At	441
Mistake: Ignoring Site Usability and Aesthetics	442
Mistake: Believing Everything You Read	442
CHAPTER 26: Ten-Plus Ways to Stay Updated	445
Let Me Help Some More	446
The Search Engines Themselves	446
Google’s Webmaster Pages	446
Google’s Search Engine Optimization Starter Guide	447
Google Search Quality Raters Guidelines	447
Bing SEO Tips	448
Matt Cutts and John Mueller	448
Google’s Webmaster Help YouTube Channel	449
The Official Google Webmaster Help Group	449
Search Engine News and Tips Sites	450

CHAPTER 27: Ten-Plus Useful Things to Know	451
Checking Your Site Rank.	451
Checking for Broken Links	453
Assessing Traffic with the Alexa Toolbar	454
Finding Your Keyword Density	455
Analyzing Your Site's Traffic	455
Tracking Phone Calls.	457
Checking for Duplication and Theft	458
Using 301 Redirects.	458
You Need an Attractive Site	459
Using SEO Tools	460
Fixing Your Reputation	461
Working With Multiregional and Multilingual Sites	463
Partially Blocking Google	464
INDEX	465

Introduction

Welcome to *SEO For Dummies*, 7th Edition. What on earth would you want this book for? Can't you just build a website and let your web designer get the site into the search engines? All web designers and web design firms say they can do that for you, after all. Or can't you simply pay someone to do a little SEO work for you? SEO firms and consultants are as common as beer vendors at a baseball game. If you have a website and you're not getting emails from SEO companies, you're in a tiny minority!

Well, unfortunately, it's not that simple. (Okay, fortunately for me, because if it were simple, Wiley wouldn't pay me to write this book.) The fact is that search engine optimization is a little complicated. Not brain surgery complicated, but not as easy as "Sure, we'll do the SEO when we build your site." (No, you can't trust your web developer to do this for you; they all offer the service, but very few understand SEO! In fact, web designers and developers hate it and only offer the service because all the competition claims to provide it.)

The vast majority of websites don't have a chance in the search engines. Why? Because of simple mistakes. Because they trust firms that shouldn't be trusted. Because the people creating the sites don't have a clue what they should do to make the site easy for search engines to work with. Because they don't understand the role of links pointing to their site, and because they've never thought about keywords. Because, because, because. This book helps you deal with those because and gets you not just one, but dozens, of steps ahead of the average website Joe.

About This Book

This book demystifies the world of search engines. You find out what you need to do to give your site the best possible chance to rank well in the search engines.

In this book, I show you how to

- » Make sure that you're using the right keywords in your web pages.
- » Create pages that search engines can read and will index the way you want them to.

- » Avoid techniques that search engines hate — things that can get your website penalized (knocked down low in search engine rankings).
- » Build pages that give your site greater visibility in search engines.
- » Get search engines and directories to include your site in their indexes and lists.
- » Turn up the search engines' Local search results (you know, on the little map that often appears).
- » Get into the product and shopping indexes.
- » Encourage other websites to link to yours.
- » Make the most of social networking and video.
- » Keep track of how your site is doing.
- » And plenty more!

Foolish Assumptions

I don't want to assume anything, but I have to believe that if you're reading this book, you already know a few things about the Internet and search engines. I presume that you

- » Have access to a computer that has access to the Internet.
- » Know how to use a web browser to get around the Internet.
- » Know how to carry out searches at the web's major search engines, such as Google and Yahoo!

Of course, for a book like this, I *have* to assume a little. This is a book about how to get your website to rank well in the search engines. I have to assume that you know how to create and work with a site or at least know someone who can create and work with a site. In particular, you (or the other person) must know how to

- » Set up a website.
- » Create web pages.
- » Load those pages onto your web server.
- » Understand a little (not a lot) of HTML (HyperText Markup Language), the coding used to create web pages.

There are many ways to create websites these days. You may be creating the site by hand, writing the HTML directly—but probably not. These days, you’re more likely to be using some kind of *content management* tool, a system that manages page creation for you, insulating you from the underlying HTML to a great degree; a tool such as WordPress or another “blogging” system, or Drupal, or an e-commerce system, such as X-Cart, Volusion, or BigCommerce.

That’s fine. Most such systems these days take SEO into consideration and provide tools to help you optimize your site (though not all do!). Still, you need to know at least a little about HTML; when I refer to a `<TITLE>` tag or meta tags, or whatever, you’ll understand what I’m talking about. I don’t go into a lot of complicated code in this book; this isn’t a primer on HTML. But to do search engine work, you (or someone on your team) need to know what a `<TITLE>` tag is, for instance, and how to insert it into a page, either directly or using the content-management system’s tools; how to recognize JavaScript (though not how to create or modify it); perhaps, depending on the tools you are using, how to open a web page in a text editor and modify it; and so on. So a little basic HTML knowledge is handy to optimize a site for the search engines. If you need more information about HTML, take a look at *Beginning HTML5 and CSS3 For Dummies*, 5th Edition, by Ed Tittel and Chris Minnick (John Wiley & Sons, Inc.).

Icons Used in This Book

This book, like all *For Dummies* books, uses icons to highlight certain paragraphs and to alert you to particularly useful information. Here’s a rundown of what those icons mean:



TIP

A Tip icon means I’m giving you an extra snippet of information that may help you on your way or provide some additional insight into the concepts being discussed.



REMEMBER

The Remember icon points out information that is worth committing to memory.



TECHNICAL
STUFF

The Technical Stuff icon indicates geeky stuff that you can skip if you really want to, although you may want to read it if you’re the kind of person who likes to have the background info.



WARNING

The Warning icon helps you stay out of trouble. It’s intended to grab your attention to help you avoid a pitfall that may harm your website or business.

Beyond the Book

In addition to what you're reading right now, this product also comes with a free access-anywhere Cheat Sheet with fingertip facts about search engine optimization. To get this Cheat Sheet, simply go to www.dummies.com and search for "SEO For Dummies Cheat Sheet" in the Search box.

At www.SearchEngineBulletin.com, you find all the links in this book (so that you don't have to type them!). You'll also find additional useful information that didn't make it into the book.

1

Getting Started with SEO

IN THIS PART . . .

Understanding how search engines work

Deciphering search results

Connecting your pages to search engines

Evaluating your competition

Making your site friendly for visitors and search engines

- » Discovering where people search
- » Understanding the difference between search sites and search systems
- » Distilling thousands of search sites down to three search systems
- » Understanding how search engines work
- » Gathering tools and basic knowledge

Chapter **1**

Surveying the Search Engine Landscape

You've got a problem. You want people to visit your website; that's the purpose, after all — to bring people to your site to buy your product, or find out about your service, or hear about the cause you support, or for whatever other purpose you've built the site. So you've decided you need to get traffic from the search engines — not an unreasonable conclusion, as you find out in this chapter.

So where do you start? You know you want to have your site appear in Google, of course. . . but as big as Google is, it isn't everything. A lot of searches are carried out at sites *other than* Google. But when you start to consider other search options, the field starts to get crowded. There's AOL.com, Yahoo.com, and Bing.com, of course. But there's more; what about DuckDuckGo (a search site focused on privacy), DogPile.com, Ask.com, Baidu.com, Yandex.com, StartPage.com, and SwissCows.com?

And don't forget the nontraditional "search engines." Many searches are carried out at Amazon, Craigslist, eBay, and other shopping-related sites. Then there's sites such as YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook.

So where do you direct your attention? Well, I've got some good news. While you definitely need to consider more than just Google, the overall picture of search engine "targets" can be simplified. The point of this chapter is to take a complicated landscape of scores, maybe hundreds, of search sites and whittle it down into the small group of search engines that really matter. (Search sites? Search systems? Don't worry; I explain the distinction.)

Investigating Search Engines and Directories

The term *search engine* has become the predominant term for *search system* or *search site*, but you need to understand the different types of search, um, thingies that you're going to run across.

Although out on the Interwebs you will hear the term *search engine* a lot, perhaps almost exclusively, I like to sometimes use the term *search site*. Why? Because many search sites don't have their own search engines; rather, they partner with a search engine to provide their site visitors with search results.

Take, for instance, AOL.com (www.aol.com). One may be forgiven for thinking that AOL.com is a search engine; after all, it has a big search box right at the top, and if you enter a phrase and press Enter, or click a colored SEARCH button, you get search results.

INDEX ENVY

A few years ago, Yahoo! and Google used to compete to see who had the largest index; Google used to even publish the number of indexed pages on its home page; at one point the statement under the search box said that Google had indexed 15 billion pages.

Oh, the good old days . . . how things have changed. Now Yahoo! no longer has its own index (it gets search results from Bing), and forget billions of pages; now Google has found *trillions* of pages! In 2015, Google reported that it had discovered 60 trillion pages, though not all were indexed; today Google's How Search Works page (www.google.com/search/howsearchworks) states that the index itself contains "hundreds of billions of pages," and contains about 100 million gigabytes of data. (It's been saying that for a couple of years at least, so we're getting into fuzzy number territory. The bottom line? The index is *yuge*!)

However, AOL doesn't own a search engine, despite the fact that you can search at the AOL site. (Indeed, *many* people *do* search at AOL, around a couple of hundred million times a month). Rather, AOL gets its search results from the Bing search engine. Another example is EarthLink.net; this site (owned by an Internet Service Provider that used to be one of the top companies back in the 1990s) has a search box, but the search results come from Google. Hence my desire to differentiate between search *sites* (places where you can search) and search *engines* (the systems that actually do all the work). It's an important distinction.

Search sites, indexes, and engines

Let me quickly give you a few simple definitions:

- » **Search site:** A website where you can search for information on the web.
- » **Search engine:** A system that collects pages from the web, saves them in a massive database, indexes the information, and provides a mechanism for people to search through the data.
- » **Search index:** The index containing all the information that the engine collected and searches.
- » **Search directory:** A system that contains some basic information about websites, rather than about collected and indexed web *pages*.



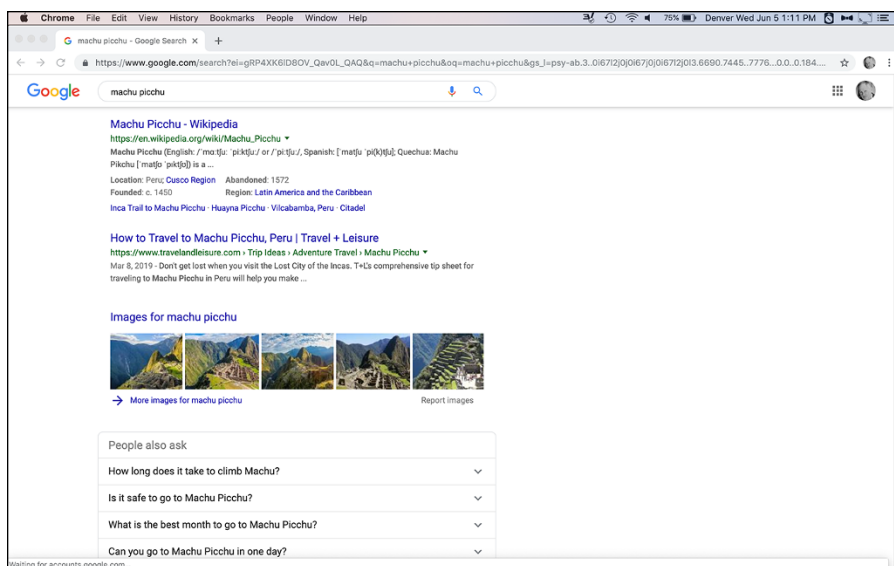
TECHNICAL
STUFF

Large search-index companies own thousands of computers that use software known as *spiders*, *searchbots*, or *robots* (or just plain *bots*) to grab web pages and read the information stored in them. These systems use complex *algorithms* — calculations based on complicated formulae — to index that information and rank it in search results when people search. Google, shown in Figure 1-1, is the world's most popular search site.

Search directories

Before there were search engines, there were search directories. A *directory* is a categorized collection of information about websites. Rather than containing information *from* web *pages*, it contains information *about* websites. In fact, before Google was even a twinkle in its fathers' eyes, Yahoo! directory was America's dominant search site; "The Google of the 1990s," as I've seen it described.

FIGURE 1-1:
Google, the
world's most
popular search
engine, produced
these results.



Directories are not created using spiders or bots to download and index pages on the websites in the directory; rather, for each website, the directory contains information, such as a title, description, and category, submitted by the site owner. The most significant search directories in recent years were owned by Yahoo! (<http://dir.yahoo.com>) and the Open Directory Project, affectionately known as DMOZ (pronounced “dee-moz”) due to its original name — Directory Mozilla — and its domain name, www.dmoz.org; see Figure 1-2; the Open Directory Project was actually a volunteer-managed directory owned by AOL. (You can see an archived version at <https://dmoz-odp.org/> if you’re interested.) Google used to have a directory, based on DMOZ data, at <http://dir.google.com>, but that’s long gone.

These directories had staff members who examined all the sites in the directory to make sure they were placed into the correct categories and met certain quality criteria; Yahoo! charged \$299 a year for the privilege of being listed in their directory.

However, search directories are simply nowhere near as important today as in the past. Yahoo! directory has gone, Google stopped using DMOZ data, and not long after that DMOZ itself closed its doors.

These directories became irrelevant to average users; most users didn’t even know they existed . . . and now they don’t.

However, directories *may* still be useful to your SEO efforts. There are still thousands of small, specialized directories, focusing on particular industries, hobbies, jobs, sports, cities, and so on, and these directories can be an important way to get traffic to your site. Chapter 16 addresses this topic.