

# How to Optimize Your Website for Search Engine Indexing: SEO Demystified

*Search Engine Optimization (SEO)* is a process that involves using tactics both within and outside of a website to assure that the website is indexed in Search Engines, like Google and Bing, and that both the brand and the website are highly ranked in searches for relevant keywords and phrases.

**SEO is not as hard as the SEO guys make it seem.**

Search Engine Optimization does not require any addons, subscriptions, or extensions to be added to your website, does not require you to purchase advertising, and does not require an SEO expert or specialist. In fact, most SEO occurs within the design of a website by understanding basic html and tag semantics and using markup to highlight keywords and phrases. This sounds more complicated than it actually is. This guide will walk you through the steps needed to Optimize a Website for Search Engine Indexing and Submit a Website to Google and Bing.

## Step 1: HTML SEO Basics.

*Hypertext Markup Language (HTML)* uses *Elements*, which are indicated by *Tags* such as `<h1>` to indicate a level 1 heading or `<p>` to indicate a paragraph.

### Required Tags for SEO

There are some html tags that are required in order to be indexed by search engines, starting with the `<title></title>` tag. This is your first and most important opportunity to highlight keywords specific to your site. A website title should convey the name and location of your company, an indication of your category of business, and a brief tagline which incorporates some keywords. Titles should be fairly short, no more than 60 or so characters. Example: `<title>KDG Web Solutions Athens, TN | Helping Local Businesses Succeed</title>` The semantic meaning of the title tag is simple: a Title. Give it a name that includes keywords that YOU would use to search if you were searching for your own goods and services.

The next required tag for SEO is the *Meta Description*. The format for this tag is a little different than other html tags. the structure for this tag looks like `<meta`

name="description" content="50 to 80 words describing the business, the website, services, or products." />. Here, you get to tell search engines exactly what keywords you want to rank for by including them in a natural sounding way in the content (it should be speaking to the potential customer in a natural seeming manner, and avoid stuffing keywords. This tag is also used in the search engine results pages to summarize the page for the listing, so it will be what searchers see in the serps - so the content you use here shapes a potential customer's *First Impression*. Remember: First Impressions Last. This is your best opportunity to woo your customer before they ever visit your business.

Both the website title and the meta description tags are placed within the head tag of a website and are absolutely required in order for a website to be indexed by search engines.

## Robots Meta Tag

The Robots Meta Tag is not actually required, but it is useful for giving specific instructions to search engine crawler bots regarding page indexing. You will need to provide instructions for bots to index the main page of the site, and follow links which results in a bot automatically crawling and indexing all linked pages which are not expressly excluded. The Robots Meta tag should look like this: <meta name="robots" content="index, follow" />

## HTML Semantics

Each predefined html tag has a semantic meaning which should be considered when designing a website. Many designers will use these tags simply to style their content, without considering their semantic meaning. For example, there are a total of six heading tags (<h1> through <h6>) each with both inherited and individual semantic meanings. A level 1 heading indicates a headline, should be used only once on a page, and its correct usage is essential to search engine optimization. A website is a collection of webpages, and each page should have a single unique h1 heading that effectively uses keywords and phrases to summarize the page. The h2 through h6 tags have a slightly lessening importance in descending order. H2 has less weight than h1, h3 has less weight than h2, and so on. Where the h1 heading should be used only once per page, a page can contain multiple h2 through h6 tags. Each heading tag gives high importance to its content for SEO purposes. In other words, the content inside of these tags becomes keywords or key phrases with importance commensurate to the weight of the tag with h1 having the highest importance, and h6 having the lowest. Consider heading tags to be page subtitles and use them to frame and format your content.

The *paragraph tag* (<p>) is used to indicate a paragraph and really isn't very useful by itself for SEO, but can and should contain attribute tags - such as the strong and b tags which can further assign importance to keywords and phrases within the paragraph.

The *Strong*(<strong></strong>) tag is the next most weighty tag with SEO connotations. It assigns a heavy weight to its content, which also assigns the content a high importance to search engines. Strong should be considered to mean "This is the most important content to consider here" and should be used to markup brands, products, services, service locations, or important information. Limit the length of strong content to one word to just a few words.

The *Bold*(<b></b>) tag is similar in use to the strong tag, but is less weighty, therefore less important for consideration as key content. Bold tells a search engine that its content may be common words, but its important. Bold should be used to markup descriptive words/phrases such as "all natural", or "hand-crafted".

### Using Strong and Bold Together

Strong and Bold can be nested within the heading and paragraph tags, but not within each other. Some examples of properly nested combinations of tags would be:

- Strong within heading/paragraph: <p><strong>KDG Web Solutions, Athens, TN</strong> </p>
- Bold within heading/paragraph: <p><b>Digital Marketing Experts</b> </p>
- Strong and Bold together in a heading/paragraph: <p><strong>KDG Web Solutions, Athens, TN</strong><b>Digital Marketing Experts</b> </p> (Remember: Strong and Bold CAN be nested within headings/paragraphs, but CANNOT Be nested within each other.

### SEO for Website Images

Images provide several opportunities for keyword inclusion - starting with the image filename. Filenames for images can and should contain hyphenated keywords. For example, for a photo of Pappa Greene's Large Deluxe Pizza with the filename "IMG01.jpg" think: "pappa-greenes-pizza-large-deluxe.jpg". The img "alt" tag is required by ADA Mandate, and another opportunity to markup keywords since keywords included in the attribute get a great deal of weight in indexing. The img element can also have a "title" attribute, which displays the content on hover, and gets a small amount of indexing importance. An SEO optimized img element would look like:

```

```

## Step 2: Google and Bing Search Consoles

Next, you will need a Google Search Console (aka Google Webmaster Tools) account. This account will serve as your dashboard for initially submitting your site for indexing, and for uploading/maintaining sitemaps. Sitemaps are not required for this approach, and are beyond the scope of this guide. We will be using manual url submission. To signup, visit <https://search.google.com/search-console> and follow the prompts to "Get Started". If you already have a gmail account, you can use it here. Once signed up, you need to create a property which is Google Speak for adding your website. You will click the top-left dropdown and choose "Add Property". Because of varying methods for adding DNS records, I will not cover DNS Properties here. After choosing to add a property, you will use the "URL Prefix" Option to verify your site ownership for Google. Enter your site url and tap "Continue". First, Google will try to automatically verify the domain, but this will most likely fail. Google will next generate a simple html file which you will download from Google, and then place in the root of your website. This simply means uploading the file to your server or host. Leave the filename unchanged, upload it, then head back to the Google Search Console. Click the "Verify" Button, and Google will check the file that you uploaded to your site to simply verify its existence and content. After verification, leave the file on your site so that you won't have to verify again later. Note that if you have both http and https versions, you will need to create a separate property for each. The hard stuff is done for Google. All that's left is to point Google Searchbots to your index or main page by typing your full url into the url inspection tool at the top center of your console and submitting. That's it, you're indexed (unless you got warnings or errors that will need to be fixed and rechecked before they can be indexed). Waiting time for indexing to propagate can vary from nearly instant to 48 hours or more. Generally, new websites that are not already indexed get priority, so its best to request indexing for a specific url only after its final publication because subsequent crawls of indexed urls are not prioritized. Most of the time, newly submitted urls will be indexed within minutes. In most cases where indexing is delayed, you will find that Google has sent you a message regarding errors that prevented indexing with links to help for fixing the issues.

INDEXING WITH LINKS TO HELP FOR FIXING THE ISSUES.

Now, head over to <https://www.bing.com/webmasters/> and you will repeat a nearly identical process to the Google Search Console setup to complete your Bing Webmaster Tools setup. Follow the prompts to add your website, to verify ownership, and then to submit your index page url. Your website is now Optimized for Search Engine Indexing, and will shortly have all of its pages included in both Google and Bing searches. Chances are, if you are performing these steps for the first time, you will see a huge jump in your site search result ranking within a few days. By choosing good, relevant keywords and phrases, this strategy WILL get you to the coveted top positions of search results for those keywords very rapidly.

There are even more simple to follow and implement methods for getting your website indexed and ranked in Google and Bing that we will continue to share in our guides. In the meantime, consider finding, Creating, claiming, verifying, and standardizing any listings on review and listings sites for your business. We'll cover how to do this, and the most important listings to create/claim in a future guide. Some other off site steps can be taken to help further boost brand awareness and trust, and overall SEO include creating Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn pages for your business. Be sure to use your standardized listing details in the page details (i.e., ALL business information should be uniform across all of your pages and listings and you should not provide email addresses if you want to avoid spam/phishing. The business name, phone, location, website, hours of operation and every other provided detail should be identical across all sites, and should match the data included on your website. Adding your website url to your pages, then social media links to your site creates "Backlinks" which will improve your SEO.

\*\*\*\*This is not meant to be an exhaustive guide to html or to SEO. Consider it an intro to html semantics in SEO. I have covered the most important and useful html tags for SEO optimization, but there is much more to html than I can cover in this guide. To learn more about html, a quick search will yield nearly unlimited free resources and references.\*\*\*\*