

# SEO BASICS

FOR BEGINNERS

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# The Beginners Guide to SEO

*A complete guide for beginners to SEO. Learn the basics of SEO and start exploring the fascinating World of Search Engine Optimization.*

SEO. A three-letter word that can potentially change your life and the fate of your business. Why? Through SEO you can take advantage of the millions of users that use search engines on a daily basis.

Search Engine Optimization is the key to online success. With SEO you can optimize your website for search engines and this means higher rankings in their results, more traffic to your website, and potentially more customers.

If you want to change careers and start making a living online or you want to start selling products or services online or get more customers to your brick and mortar store, SEO is the most valuable and effective digital marketing tool you can use.

## **Who is this guide for?**

This is a complete guide for those that are new to SEO.

We assume that you have no prior experience with search engine optimization or Search Engine Marketing and you will learn everything you need to know in simple terms by avoiding technical terms or jargon that can be confusing for beginners.

## **What to expect from this SEO Guide?**

This is an introduction to SEO and it only touches the basics of SEO. It's a beginner's guide that will teach you the basic SEO concepts and set the ground so that you can move on to the more advanced SEO techniques.

**Please note that Video Content is not available in this free sample guide. To access the full course material including Videos, you need to [register to the full course](#).**

## What to do next?

Once you are done reading this guide, you can continue your SEO learning journey with the [The Complete SEO Course](#), and learn everything you ever need to know about SEO.

It covers both basic and advanced SEO concepts with step-by-step guides, videos, real examples, and SEO case studies.

Our students wrote in their [testimonials](#) that it's one of the *fastest* and *easiest* ways to learn SEO in 2021.

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# How Search Works

*In this topic, you will learn how search engines work. Knowing how search works will help you get a better idea of what we want to accomplish with SEO.*

Video: How search engines work.

Have you ever wondered how many times per day you use Google or any other search engine to search the web?

Is it 5 times, 10 times or even sometimes more? Did you know that Google alone handles more than 2 trillion searches per year?

The numbers are huge. Search engines have become part of our daily life. We use them as a learning tool, a shopping tool, for fun and leisure but also for business.

It's not an exaggeration to say that we reached a point that we depend on search engines for almost anything we do.

And the reason this is happening is very simple. We know that search engines and in particular, Google has answers to all our questions and queries.

What happens though when you type a query and click search? How do search engines work internally and how do they decide what to show in the search results and in what order?

## How Do Search Engines Work

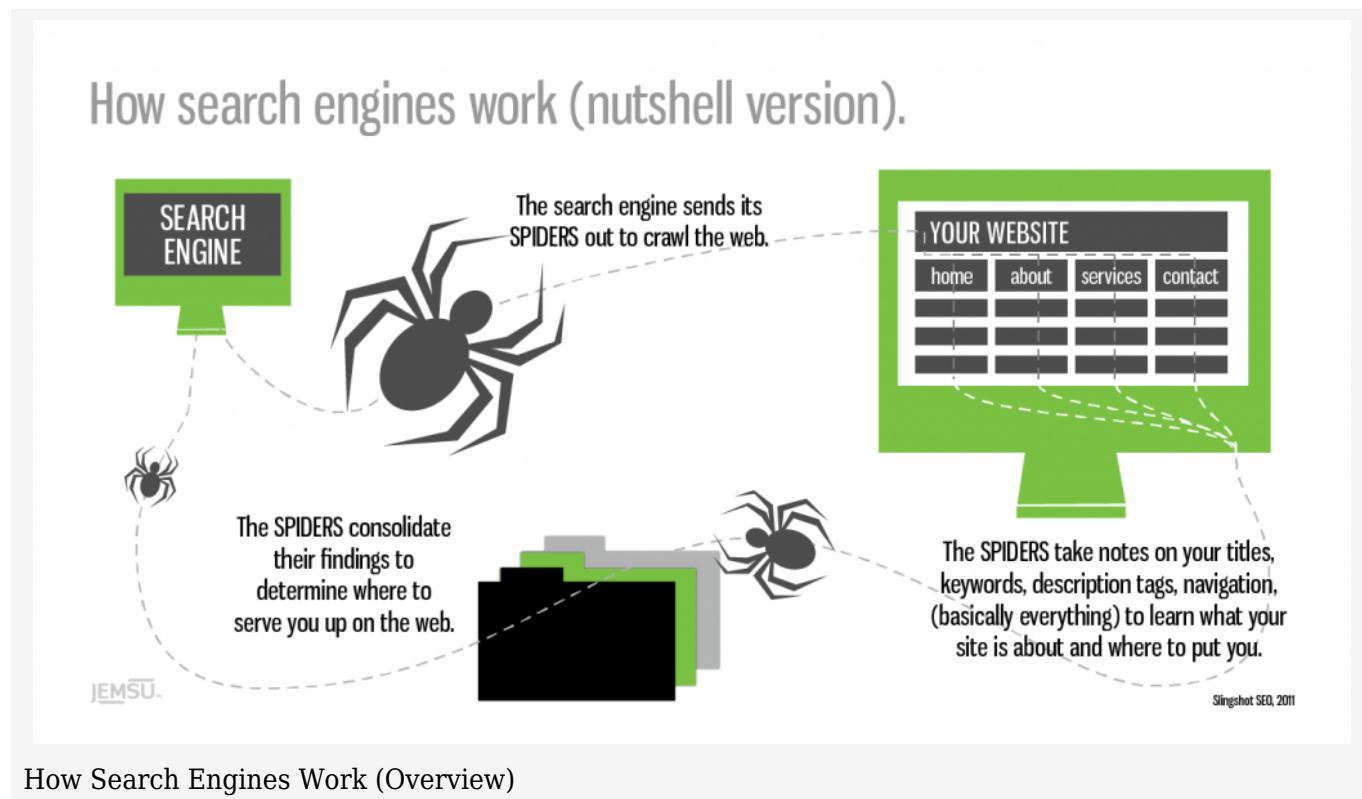
Search engines are complex computer programs.

Before they even allow you to type a query and search the web, they have to do a lot of preparation work so that when you click "Search", you are presented with a set of precise and quality results that answer your question or query.

What does 'preparation work' includes? Three main stages. The first stage is the process of discovering the information, the second stage is organizing the

information, and the third stage is ranking.

This is generally known in the Internet World as Crawling, Indexing, and Ranking.



How Search Engines Work (Overview)

## Step 1: Crawling

Search engines have a number of computer programs called web crawlers (thus the word Crawling), that are responsible for finding information that is publicly available on the Internet.

To simplify a complicated process, it's enough for you to know that the job of these software crawlers (also known as search engine spiders), is to scan the Internet and find the servers (also known as web servers) hosting websites.

They create a list of all the web servers to crawl, the number of websites hosted by each server and then start work.

They visit each website and by using different techniques, they try to find out how many pages they have, whether it is text content, images, videos or any other

format (CSS, HTML, javascript, etc).

When visiting a website, besides taking note of the number of pages they also follow any links (either pointing to pages within the site or to external websites), and thus they discover more and more pages.

They do this continuously and they also keep track of changes made to a website so that they know when new pages are added or deleted, when links are updated, etc.

If you take into account that there are more than 130 trillion individual pages on the Internet today and on average thousands of new pages are published on a daily basis, you can imagine that this is a lot of work.

### **Why care about the crawling process?**

Your first concern when optimizing your website for search engines is to ensure that they can access it correctly otherwise if they cannot 'read' your website, you shouldn't expect much in terms of high rankings or search engine traffic.

As explained above, crawlers have a lot of work to do and you should try and make their job easier.

As you'll read in this course, there are a number of things to do to make sure that crawlers can discover and access your website in the fastest possible way without problems.

## **Step 2: Indexing**

Crawling alone is not enough to build a search engine.

Information identified by the crawlers needs to be organized, sorted and stored so that it can be processed by the search engine algorithms before made available to the end-user.

This process is called Indexing.

Search engines don't store all the information found on a page in their index but they keep things like: when it was created/updated, title and description of the

page, type of content, associated keywords, incoming and outgoing links and a lot of other parameters that are needed by their algorithms.

Google likes to describe its index like the back of a book (a really big book).

### **Why care about the indexing process?**

It's very simple, if your website is not in their index, it will not appear for any searches.

This also implies that the more pages you have in the search engine indexes, the more are your chances of appearing in the search results when someone types a query.

Notice that I mentioned the word 'appear in the search results', which means in any position and not necessarily on the top positions or pages.

In order to appear in the first 5 positions of the SERPs (search engine results pages), you have to optimize your website for search engines using a process called Search Engine Optimization or SEO in short.

## **Step 3: Ranking**

The third and final step in the process is for search engines to decide which pages to show in the SERPS and in what order when someone types a query.

This is achieved through the use of search engine ranking algorithms.

In simple terms, these are pieces of software that have a number of rules that analyze what the user is looking for and what information to return.

These rules and decisions are made based on what information is available in their index.

### **How do search engine algorithms work?**

Over the years search engine ranking algorithms have evolved and became really complex.



At the beginning (think 2001) it was as simple as matching the user's query with the title of the page but this is no longer the case.

Google's ranking algorithm takes into account more than 255 rules before making a decision and nobody knows for sure what these rules are.

And this includes Larry Page and Sergey Brin (Google's founders), who created the original algorithm.

Things have changed a lot and now machine learning and computer programs are responsible for making decisions based on a number of parameters that are outside the boundaries of the content found on a web page.

To make it easier to understand, here is a simplified process of how search engines ranking factors work:

### **Analyze User Query**

The first step is for search engines to understand what kind of information the user is looking for.

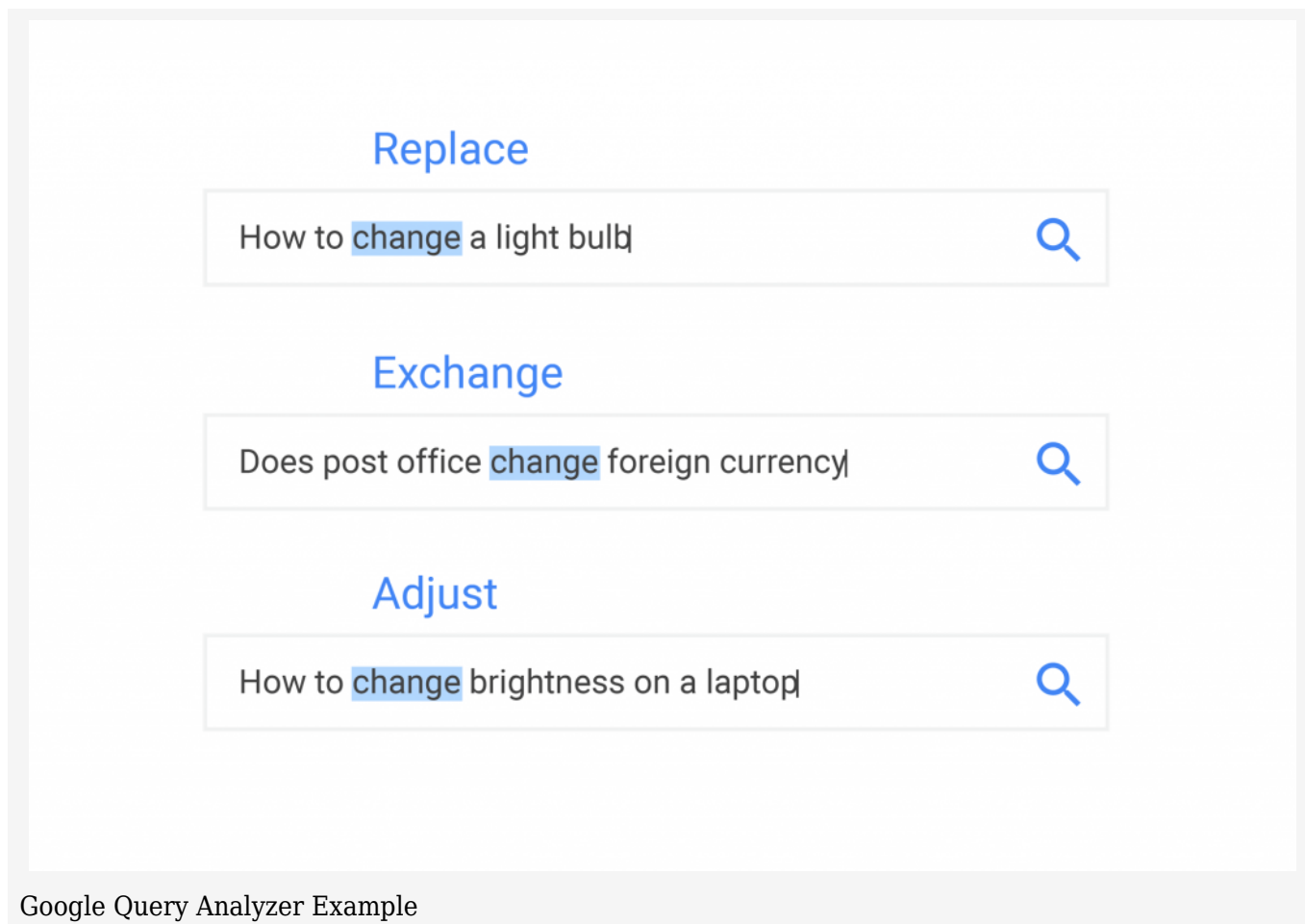
To do that, they analyze the user's query (search terms) by breaking it down into a number of meaningful keywords.

*A keyword is a word that has a specific meaning and purpose.*

For example, when you type "How to make a chocolate cake", search engines know from the words *how-to* that you are looking for instructions on how to make a chocolate cake and thus the returned results will contain cooking websites with recipes.

If you search for "Buy refurbished ....", they know from the words *buy* and *refurbished* that you are looking to buy something and the returned results will include eCommerce websites and online shops.

Machine learning has helped them associate related keywords together. For example, they know that the meaning of this query "how to change a light bulb" is the same as this "how to replace a light bulb".



They are also clever enough to interpret spelling mistakes, understand plurals and in general extract the meaning of a query from natural language (either written or verbal in case of Voice search).

### **Finding matching pages**

The second step is to look into their index and decide which pages can provide the best answer for a given query.

This is a very important stage in the whole process for both search engines and web owners.

Search engines need to return the best possible results in the fastest possible way so that they keep their users happy and web owners want their websites to be picked up so that they get traffic and visits.

This is also the stage where good SEO techniques can influence the decision made by the algorithms.

To give you an idea of how *matching* works, these are the most important factors:

- **Title and content relevancy** - how relevant is the title and content of the page with the user query.
- **Type of content** - if the user is asking for images, the returned results will contain images and not text.
- **Quality of the content** - content needs to be thorough, useful and informative, unbiased and cover both sides of a story.
- **Quality of the website** - The overall quality of a website matters. Google will not show pages from websites that don't meet their quality standards.
- **Date of publication** - For news-related queries, Google wants to show the latest results so the date of publication is also taken into account.
- **The popularity of a page** - This doesn't have to do with how much traffic a website has but how other websites perceive the particular page. A page that has a lot of references (backlinks), from other websites is considered to be more popular than other pages with no links and thus has more chances in getting picked up by the algorithms. This process is also known as Off-Page SEO.
- **Language of the page** - Users are served pages in their language and it's not always English.
- **Webpage Speed** - Websites that load fast (think 2-3 seconds) have a small advantage compared to websites that are slow to load.
- **Device Type** - Users searching on mobile are served mobile-friendly pages.
- **Location** - Users searching for results in their area i.e. "Italian restaurants in Ohio" will be shown results related to their location.

That's just the tip of the iceberg. As mentioned before, Google uses more than 255 factors in their algorithms to ensure that its users are happy with the results they get.

### **Why care how search engine ranking algorithms work?**

In order to get traffic from search engines, your website needs to appear in the

top positions on the first page of the results.

It is statistically proven that the majority of users click one of the top 5 results (both desktop and mobile).

Appearing in the second or third page of the results will not get you any traffic at all.

## **KEY LEARNINGS**

One of the goals of search engine optimization is to provide Google with the right signals so that during the ranking process, the search algorithm will 'pick up' your site and show it on top of the search results.

We will examine this in more detail in the subsequent lessons, what you need to understand now is that the ordering of the search results is decided by the ranking algorithm after taking into account a number of known and unknown factors.

# What is SEO

*In this topic, you will learn what is SEO.*

Video: What is SEO.

Search Engine Optimization or SEO is the process to follow to optimize your website for search engines.

The SEO process has a set of rules you can apply to your website to make it easier for search engines to index your website and understand your content better.

Remember that crawlers and algorithms are not humans but computer programs and they cannot 'read or see' a website like real users.

Crawlers read the HTML code of a webpage, extract the information they need and add it to the index.

Then it's the job of algorithms to decide which websites to rank higher for certain queries.

During this continuous process, both crawlers and algorithms are looking for clues to help them make the right decisions and websites that can do this more efficiently, rank higher in the search results.

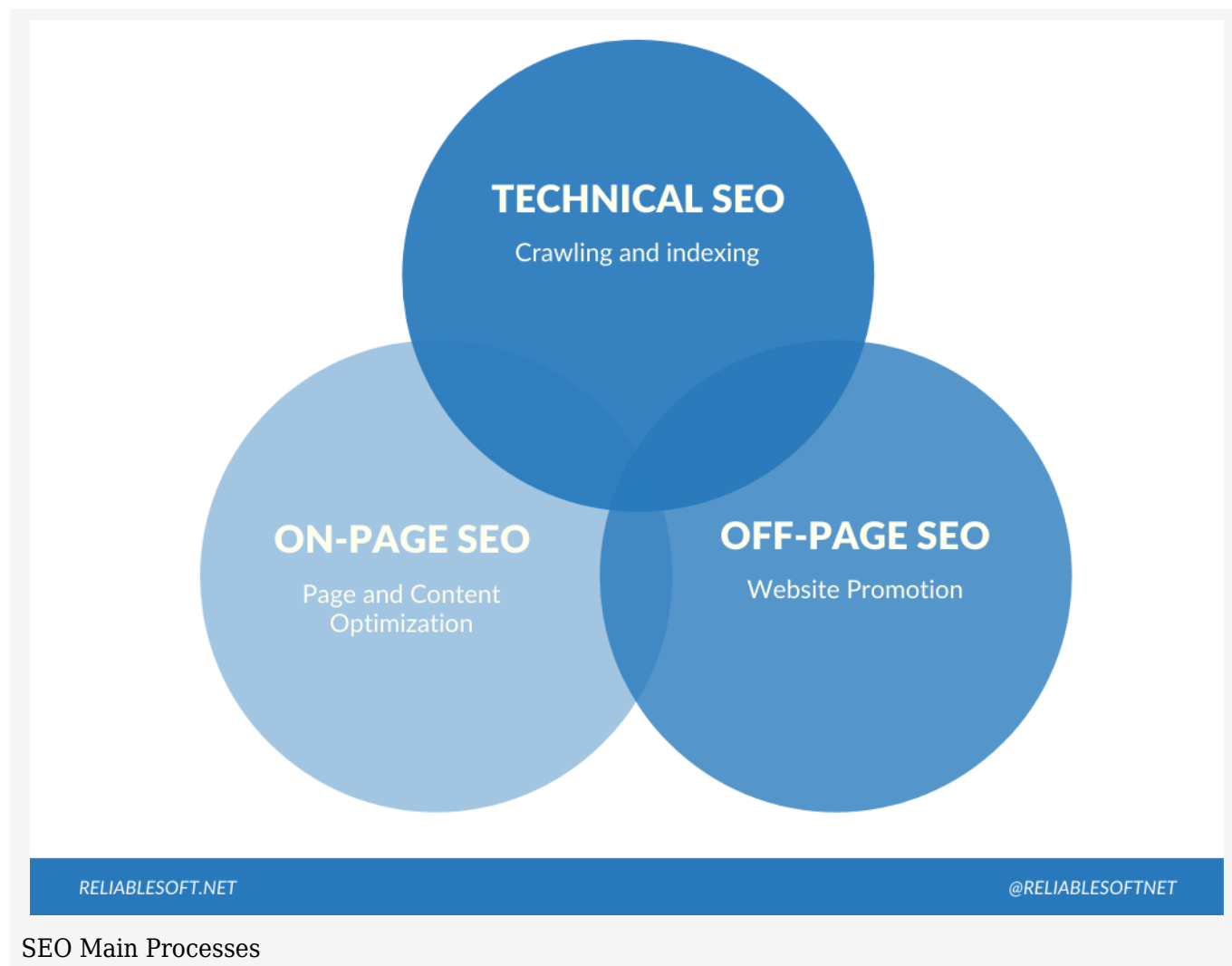
This is what SEO is all about.

## SEO Components

As mentioned in the previous topic, the Google ranking algorithm takes into account more than 255 ranking factors when assessing the quality of a webpage.

To make it easier to handle, the various SEO factors can be grouped into three

major processes.



Each of these sub-processes deals with a number of rules and when applied together the end result is a fully optimized website that can achieve high rankings in Google.

Here is a quick summary of what each process includes. Don't worry if something is confusing now, we will go deeper and explain everything in more detail, in the course lessons.

## Technical SEO

Technical SEO refers to the process of optimizing your website for the crawling and indexing phase.

With technical SEO, you can help search engines *access, crawl, interpret* and *index* your website without any problems.

It is called “technical” because it has nothing to do with the actual content of the website or with website promotion.

The main goal of technical SEO is to optimize the infrastructure of a website.

## **On-Page SEO**

Your goal with on-page SEO is to speak the ‘search engine language’ and help crawlers understand the *meaning* and *context* of your pages.

This is the part where you will start dealing with keywords and content marketing and work on optimizing your pages for particular keywords.

## **Off-Page SEO**

Off-Page SEO has to do with website promotion methods - techniques that go beyond website design and content.

This is a critical part of the whole SEO process but you only have to deal with this after the other two processes (technical and on-page SEO) are completed.

**Note:** When you start learning SEO, you may come across other definitions like local SEO, mobile SEO, eCommerce SEO, and content SEO. These are sub-sets of search engine optimization specific for certain types of websites.

For example, *local SEO* is more suited for businesses that have a physical presence and want to get more customers to their doors while eCommerce SEO is primarily for online shops.

## **KEY LEARNINGS**

SEO will help you get more exposure in search engines. To make it easier to manage, the whole process is broken down into 3 main sub-processes which have to follow in the order shown above i.e. technical SEO, on-page and off-page SEO.

The basic SEO principles are the same for all kinds of websites and then depending on the type of your website (blog, corporate website, eCommerce

website, etc), you can apply specific rules to further improve the search rankings of that website.



# Why SEO

*In this topic, you will learn about the benefits of SEO and why it's very important for the success of an online business.*

If you are wondering why you need to practice SEO, the answer is simple.

## **Rank higher in Search engines**

With SEO you will rank higher in Google and this translates to more website traffic. Traffic (visits), is the single most important element that can determine your website's success or not.

Without traffic, you will not have conversions, sales, subscribers or the attention your website deserves.

## **Drive targeted traffic to your website**

Yes, there are other sources of traffic, for example, traffic from social media networks (think Facebook or Instagram), but no source of traffic is as targeted as organic traffic.

Users that type a search query in Google have a very *specific intent* while users on Facebook are browsing for fun or to catch up with their friends.

This makes a huge difference when it comes to conversions. When you are selling something online, it is more likely to make a sale if you get a visit from Google than from Facebook.

The Google visitor has a need and is looking for a solution while the Facebook visitor may visit your website because of an ad or because of curiosity.

**Note:** A website conversion is when users perform an action you want them to perform. For example, subscribing to your newsletter, buying a product

from your store, visiting your store, submitting a contact form, etc.

## **'Free' Traffic 24x7**

If your SEO is not working then to get traffic to your website, you have to pay for it. This is not necessarily bad provided that you can run profitable campaigns either on Google or Facebook.

The problem is that as soon as you stop paying for ads, your traffic will drop and you are back to square one.

With SEO, this is a completely different story. Once you get high rankings in Google and do all the necessary work to maintain your rankings, traffic will flow in 24x7.

Imagine the benefits this can bring to your business. Users will visit your website and you can make sales or get leads while you are sleeping.

To avoid any confusion and be completely accurate, the word 'Free' is a bit misleading.

Before you can reach the point of getting high rankings for the keywords you want, you will have to do a lot of work and this comes at a cost.

But, that does not change the fact that once you reach this stage, everything else becomes easier and the costs gradually go down.

## **SEO allows you to grow your business**

There are no guarantees when it comes to SEO. Google is constantly making changes to its ranking algorithm and every time they do this some websites may gain or lose rankings.

But, if you don't break any rules and work consistently on your SEO and have a clean history, you can have some sort of prediction as to the expected traffic levels.

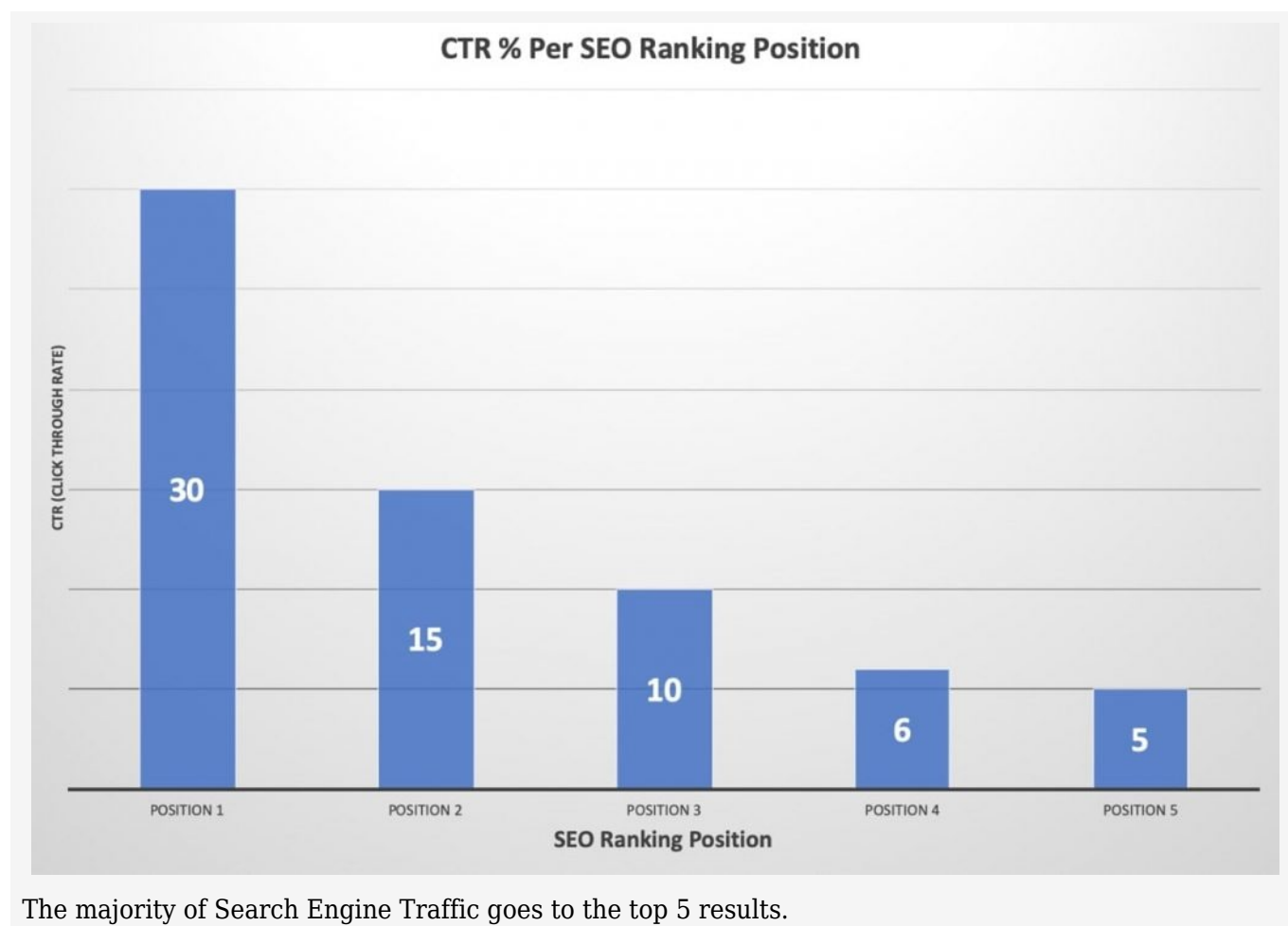
This means that you can plan and execute the growth of your business.

For example, if you are selling services online and you know that for the past year

you got 10 leads per month on average (from organic traffic), you can assume that this number will be similar next year and get new personnel to handle the extra workload, etc.

**Note:** Organic traffic is a term used to describe traffic coming from Google (and other search engines), that is not paid for. This is not the same as *paid traffic* where you pay per click when someone clicks on a Google or Facebook ad and visits your website.

## Top positions get the majority of search traffic



What does this mean? It's simple. If you want to get traffic from Google and take advantage of the benefits of SEO, you need to rank not only on the first page of the results but on one of the top 5 positions.

Pages on the first page of Google get 73% of the clicks and pages in the top five

positions to get 67% of the clicks.

## **Other benefits of SEO:**

Besides the above advantages, there are numerous other benefits of practicing SEO.

- Brand awareness - Websites in the top results are seen by thousands of users every time they search for a relevant query and this improves brand awareness.
- Brand trust - Users trust Google's results and the websites that appear on the top.
- Increase in social shares - High ranking websites get more shares and mentions in social media networks.
- More backlinks - Other webmasters are more likely to reference (link) websites that appear in the first pages of Google.

### **KEY LEARNINGS**

With SEO you can get more exposure in search engine result pages and this means more organic traffic to your website. Organic traffic is targeted and the most valuable source of traffic since it converts better than other sources of traffic.

Although there are no guarantees, if you manage to have solid SEO results for a period of time and you don't intentionally or unintentionally break any rules, you can take advantage of all the benefits of SEO and get free traffic to your website 24 X 7.

# Technical SEO Basics

*In this topic, you'll get an idea of what is technical SEO and its role in the whole SEO process.*

Before even thinking about keywords and content, you need to work on your technical SEO.

Any problems with technical SEO can *literally* destroy your efforts, that's why it is important to get your technical SEO right *before* proceeding to the next steps.

In short, with technical SEO you help search engines access, crawl, interpret and index your website without any problems.

The main stages of technical SEO are described below. Don't worry if something is not clear now, everything will be covered in detail in the Technical SEO lesson. This is just an introduction to help you distinguish between technical SEO tasks and non-technical tasks.

## **Domain configuration**

In the SEO world, a domain with www in front is not the same as a domain with no www in front.

Google considers these to be two different websites:

- <https://www.example.com> (with www)
- <https://example.com> (with no www)

Having two websites with exactly the same content is not a good thing for SEO, and through technical SEO, you can 'tell' Google which domain version you prefer to use.

## Which pages to include in search engines index

By default, search engine crawlers will try to index all pages that are publicly available on the Internet.

Sometimes this is not what you want for various reasons. For example, you may have pages that are for your employees only or pages that you want only Facebook visitors to see.

You can control which parts of your website you want search engines to index through a file called *robots.txt*. This file resides in the root folder of your website and provides crawlers with instructions as to which files/directories of a website they can access.

## Website structure and navigation

Site structure is very important for SEO. Websites need to have a hierarchical structure that is simple to navigate both by crawlers and users.

If you are starting a website now, you should spend some time thinking of how your website will be structured.

A common mistake made by many designers is to concentrate on the appearance of a website, without thinking about structure and navigation.

When crawlers discover a website, they start the indexing process from the homepage and then they follow all links from there.

This means that you need to make sure that any page of your website is accessible in less than 3 clicks, by following links from the homepage.

## URL structure

Besides choosing a good domain name and designing a site structure that is easy to use, you should also optimize your URLs.

The URLs, also known as *slugs* or *permalinks*, should accurately describe what the page is all about.

For example, consider these two URLs:

- <https://www.example.com/343/bg/page.html>
- <https://www.example.com/what-is-seo>

The first is an example of a bad URL, while the second is an example of an SEO friendly URL.

Notice how easy is to understand what the second URL is all about. Users and search engines have a big clue as to what to expect from that page before even looking at the actual content.

### **The page is not found (404 error)**

Sometimes when you click a link you end up seeing an empty page or a page with some technical terms you don't understand. This is not a good experience for users or for crawlers.

There are ways to control how your website will behave in such situations. Instead of showing users an empty 404 page, you can give them options on how to find what they are looking for.

### **Page speed**

Google likes fast websites and decided to reward them by giving them a small ranking boost.

Your job as an SEO is to make sure that your website loads as fast as possible. This means you need to check your server infrastructure and a lot of other things that are related to site speed.

### **Website security**

Besides speed, Google (and users) like secure websites. Installing an SSL to make your website https is no longer optional.

### **Mobile-friendliness**

More than 60% of searches are now performed on mobile devices. This means that your website has to be mobile-friendly and offer a great experience to users

on mobile.

Google is taking mobile very seriously and that's why they created a *mobile-first index* that is used to better serve mobile searches.

Part of your technical SEO review is to test your website on different mobile devices and ensure that it loads fast and easy to use.

### **Multilingual websites**

When you have a website that is available in more than one language, there is a special SEO configuration for that.

When you have a post that is too big and is broken down into a number of pages, there is also a way to deal with that so that Google can understand that it's the same post but broken down into multiple parts.

### **KEY LEARNINGS**

The above are just some of the parameters you need to check or configure related to technical SEO. That's the part of SEO that you may require the assistance of a developer if you don't have the technical knowledge to do the changes yourself.

What you need to understand at this stage is that technical SEO settings are not directly related to the actual content of a website but have to do with the website infrastructure.



# On-Page SEO Basics

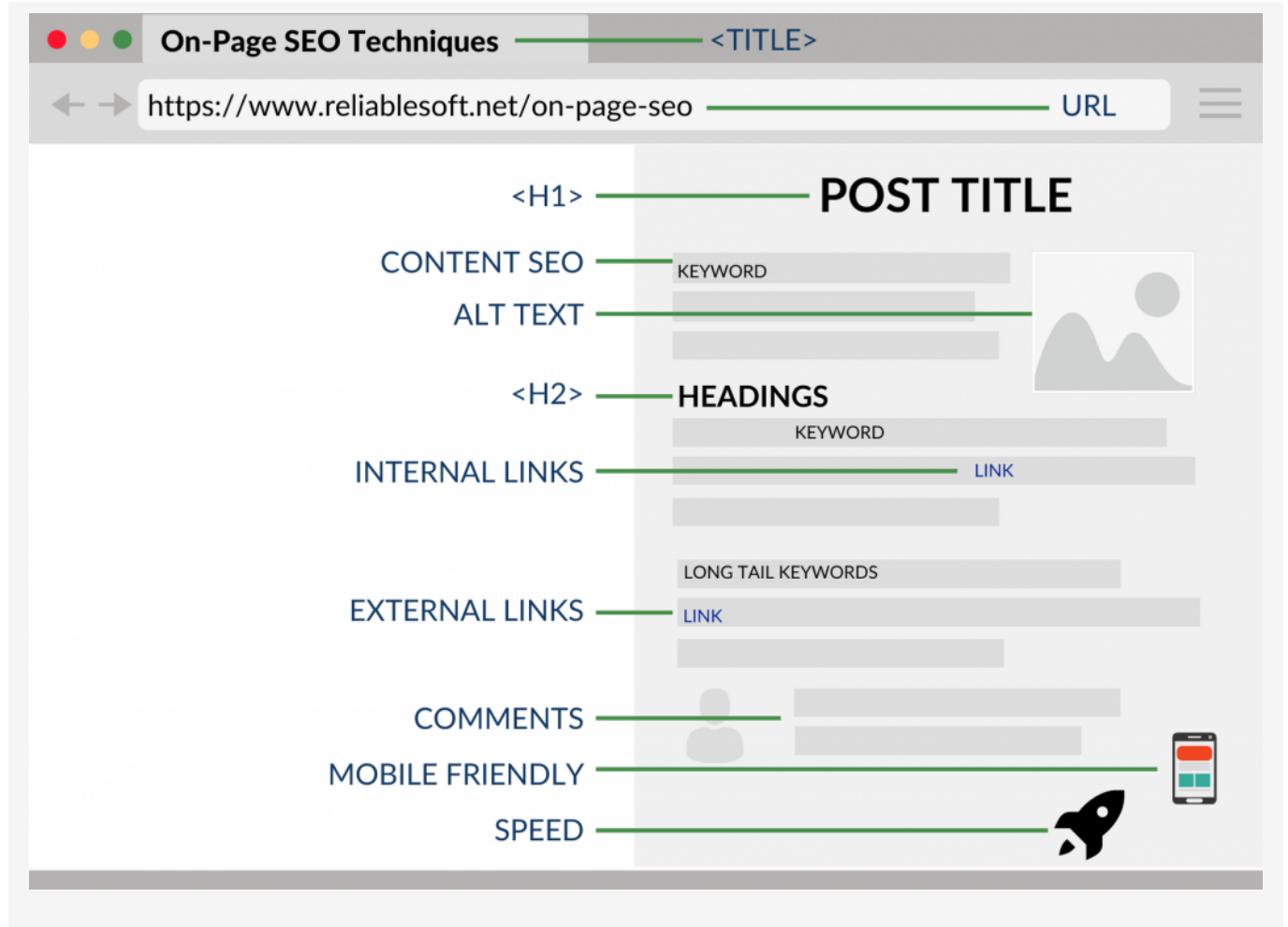
*In this topic, you'll get an idea of what is on-page SEO and its role in the whole SEO process.*

The main goal of on-page SEO is to help search engines understand the *meaning* and *context* of your content.

The on-page SEO process can be broken down into two parts:

- Part 1: Optimizing page properties like the page title, page headings, etc.
- Part 2: Optimizing the actual content

## Part 1 - Page properties optimization



## **Page title**

Each and every page of your website needs to have a unique title. The title of the page was a very important SEO factor since the beginning of Google, and it is important today.

The page title is what users see in the search results and the first element that crawlers read.

A good title should be interesting for the users to click, descriptive of the page content and to include keywords that users (and search engines) recognize.

## **Page Description (Meta Description)**

The meta description is a short summary of the page and is not visible on the page content but it is shown in the search results.

## **Main heading (H1)**

Besides the page title, another important on-page SEO element is the main page heading.

In the HTML language, this is the `<h1>` tag of a page. Good SEO practices dictate that a page should only have one h1 tag.

Subheadings (H2, h3) - Besides the H1, a post or page needs to have multiple sections to make it easier to read by users. The use of headings should be done hierarchically. In other words, the main title is H1 and then subheadings can be H2 or H3.

## **Optimization of images, audio, and video**

Not all content is text. A website can also publish videos, audio (podcasts) and images.

Google cannot easily understand what an image is all about or what kind of content is presented in a video.

To make their job easier, there are some SEO rules to follow to make your images and other multimedia elements SEO friendly.

For example, when adding an image to a page, you can make use of the ALT text to describe the image in words. Search engines when they find the image, they will read the ALT text and add it to the appropriate category in their index.

Before we continue, it should be noted that Google algorithms **rank web pages** and not web sites. In other words, the most important factor is the quality of the content of a particular page. Google will never rank a page if the website is of low quality but the opposite is also true. Just because the website is of high quality, it does not mean that all web pages will rank high.

## Part 2 - Content optimization

Content optimization is all about the content and this is the stage where you should spend most of your time.

There is a saying in SEO, 'Content is King' and this is tightly related to the reason Google has become so successful.

Google has a very simple mission "to provide users with high-quality results so that they can come back for more searches".

This means that if your content is not *great*, you will not survive from the quality checks made by the Google algorithms during the ranking process.

Even though your content is not going to be read by humans but by computer bots, their process is so advanced that they can easily identify good content from low-quality content.

What you need to understand at this stage is that the *quality of your content* is the most important ranking factor of all. A website with great content can do well in search with or without SEO.

**What do we mean by high-quality content?**

High-quality content has the following characteristics:

- It is unique for the particular web site and has not to be published online before.
- It's thorough and explains a topic in detail.
- It is well-formatted.
- It's unbiased and tells both sides of a story
- It's authoritative based on experience, research studies, and data.
- It's SEO friendly.

## **KEY LEARNINGS**

On-page SEO is not hard. When optimizing your content, you should first think about the user and what they like to see in an article or page and then start thinking about SEO.

What you have read above it's just the tip of the iceberg of on-page SEO. If you're confused, don't worry, everything will be covered in detail in the On-Page SEO lesson.

# Off-Page SEO

*In this topic, you'll get an idea of what is off-page SEO and its role in the whole SEO process.*

I have mentioned before that one of the important factors used by Google algorithms is the quality of the content. Another equally important factor is how popular a webpage is on the web.

Popularity, in this case, refers to how many references/mentions/backlinks a webpage has from other related pages on the web.

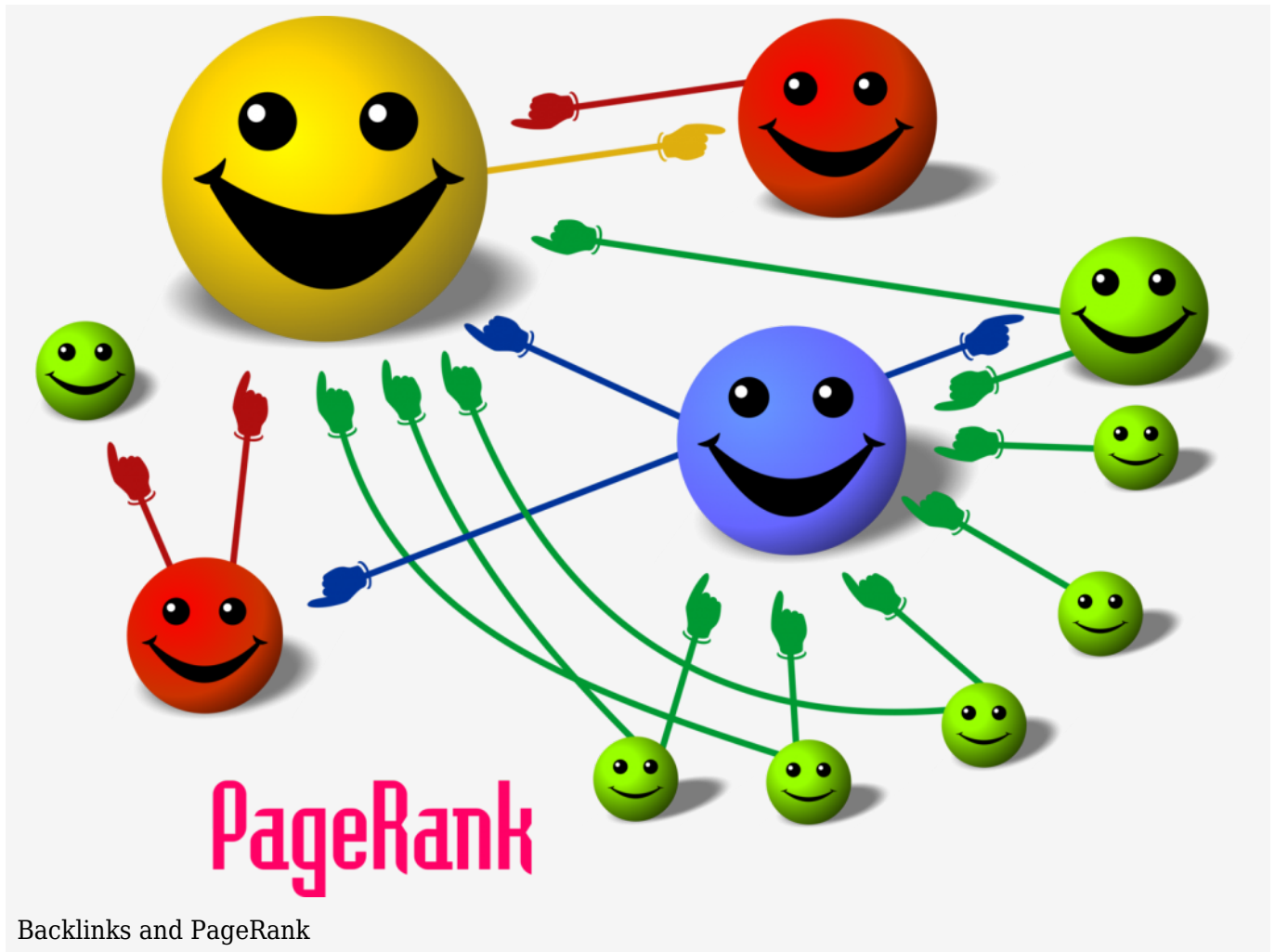
The process of promoting your website on the web to increase its popularity is called off-page SEO.

## **Let's take it from the beginning.**

Back in the 1990s when Google was at its early stages, Larry Page and Sergey Brin created a system to calculate how valuable a page is.

They thought that a page that has more references (links) from other pages on the web is more important and useful to other users than pages that have fewer references or no references at all.

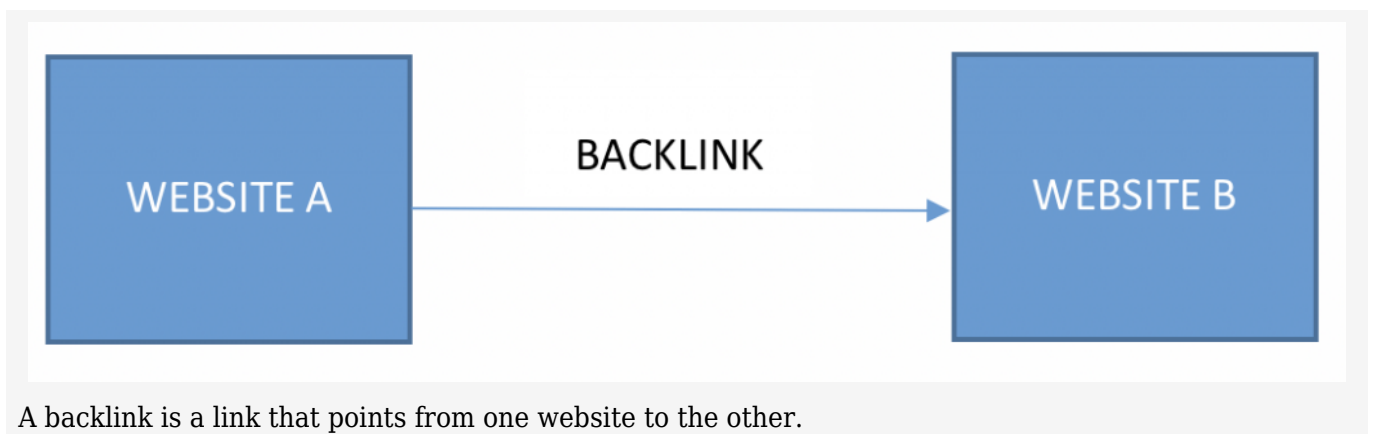
They called this system *PageRank*.



As you can see in the diagram above, backlinks make a website stronger and more popular and this means higher rankings in the Google search results.

### **What is a backlink?**

A backlink is a link that points from one domain to the other. For the website that links out, it is called an “outbound link” and for the website that receives the link, it is called an “inbound link”.



*Backlinks act as a vote of trust and this is taken into account by the Google algorithm during the ranking process.*

## **Importance of backlinks in SEO**

Over the years Google tried to find a way to rank websites that were less reliant on backlinks.

Despite their efforts and a number of tests performed, they concluded that webpages with a greater number of inbound links are indeed more useful to users than pages with fewer links. So, backlinks are still very important for SEO.

A website with great content and good on-page SEO can get to the first page of Google. A website with great content, good on-page SEO and backlinks can get to the top positions.

## **Link Building**

From the above statement, it is clear that in order to achieve high rankings in Google, you need backlinks. The obvious question is how to get them? Are all links equal?

This is how the term *link building* was born. As Google grew in popularity, webmasters realized the importance of backlinks and they started building links from other websites to satisfy the algorithm needs, get higher rankings and more traffic to their websites.

It was not long that the situation went out of hand. The web was flooded with websites that their sole purpose was to provide links to other websites without adding real value to the web or to users.

These were known as *link farms* and later as *article directories*.

The end result was that low-quality websites started appearing at the top of Google search results not because they provided great value to the users but because they had a lot of backlinks.

Google's priority was (and still is), to provide a great experience for users so they took a number of actions to protect their search results.

## Google Penalties

This is how Google penalties were born. Google added more rules to their ranking algorithm to differentiate good links from bad links.

Websites with a lot of bad backlinks get a penalty, and as a result, their rankings are reduced or they disappear completely from the Google index.

## What is a good link?

- A link added by a webmaster without monetary compensation
- A link coming from a related website
- A link coming from a website that is trusted by Google
- A link that adds additional value to the users of that website.

Any links that don't fall in one of the above categories are considered *bad links* and should be avoided if you want to stay out of trouble.

## How can you get backlinks to your website and improve your rankings?

In a nutshell, the best way to get links from other websites is to create superb content that other webmasters will find useful and will reference it from their websites.

This is also called *natural link building* and it's the safest way to improve your Google rankings.

The problem is that although you may have great content on your website, not a lot of people can find it (since it has low rankings) and this means fewer chances of getting links.

In the Off-Page SEO lesson, we'll see how to safely get more backlinks and improve your rankings.



## KEY LEARNINGS

I know from experience that beginners to SEO find it difficult to understand the concept of links and link building but this is perfectly fine.

Link building is one of the most challenging parts of SEO and it takes time and experience to get it right. The *Off Page SEO* lesson explains everything you need to know about link building and off-page SEO in general.

What you need to understand at this stage is that backlinks are important in SEO. Google and other search engines take them into account when calculating the position a website will appear in the results, for a given search term.

It's not a numbers game. In other words, it's not how many backlinks you have but from where these links are coming. Links from websites that already have good Google rankings have more value than links from forums, article directories or other low-quality websites.

When building links, you should not forget that violating any rules (i.e. by buying links or participating in link exchange themes), will get you into trouble. When your website is under a Google penalty, it will lose its rankings and it's very difficult to recover.

If you are starting out now, your priority is not off-page SEO. You should first make sure that you create an easy to use website with high-quality content and then worry about links.

## Next Steps

SEO is a dynamic discipline. The web is growing fast and search engines are constantly changing their algorithms to provide the best possible results to users. On the other end, thousands of webmasters and SEOs are trying to rank their websites high in the results and get a share of the traffic.

SEO is not about cheating search engines but making their job easier. Crawlers have to visit millions of pages and if they cannot find the right signals to understand what your website is all about, they will move on to the next.

Without good content, don't expect to rank for anything; that's how the online world works. Websites that can produce high-quality content on a regular basis win the race.

### **WHAT TO DO NEXT?**

The purpose of this lesson was to give you an overview of what is SEO and how it works.

Your next step is to start working through the lessons one by one (preferably in the order shown in the menu) and create a list of things to check/optimize on your website. Each lesson has a checklist and you can use that as a guide.



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