

Five Ways to Improve your Site's Ranking (SEO)

Follow these suggestions to improve your search engine optimization (SEO) and watch your website rise the ranks to the top of search-engine results.

1. Publish Relevant Content

Quality content is the number one driver of your search engine rankings and there is no substitute for great content. Quality content created specifically for your intended user increases site traffic, which improves your site's authority and relevance. Fine-tune your web writing skills.

Keywords

Identify and target a specific keyword phrase for each page on your website. Think about how your reader might search for that specific page with search terms like:

- masters in engineering management
- what is biomedical engineering?
- title IX resources
- northern lights
- how to apply for scholarships?
- application deadline

Multiple Keyword Phrases

It is very difficult for a webpage to achieve search engine rankings for multiple keyword phrases—unless those phrases are very similar. A single page may be able to rank for both “biomedical engineering jobs” and “biomedical engineering careers”. Ranking for “student affairs” and “dean of students” or “gender discrimination” and “violence reporting procedures” with a single page is unlikely.

If you want to rank for multiple keywords phrases with your website, you will need to make a separate webpage for each keyword phrase you are targeting.

Placing Keywords

Once your keyword phrase is chosen for a given page, consider these questions:

- Can I use part or all of the keyword phrase in the page URL (by using keywords in folders)?
- Can I use part or all of the keyword phrase in the page title?
- Can I use part or all of the keyword phrase in page headings and subheadings?

Answering yes to these questions can improve your search engine ranking. Be natural and user-friendly, though. For instance, you do not want the word “engineering” to show up three or more times in the URL or have the phrase Northern Lights repeated in the page title and every heading. Readability and usability still trump search engine optimization.

Content

Beyond page URL, title, and headings, content is most influential on search engine rankings. Repeat your keyword phrase several times throughout the page—once or twice in the opening and closing paragraphs, and two to four more times throughout the remaining content.

Don't forget to use **bold**, *italics*, heading tags (especially an H1), and other emphasis tags to highlight these keyword phrases—but don't overdo it. You still want your language and writing style to read naturally. Never sacrifice good writing for SEO. The best pages are written for the user, not for the search engine.

2. Update Your Content Regularly

You've probably noticed that we feel pretty strongly about content. Search engines do, too. Regularly updated content is viewed as one of the best indicators of a site's relevancy, so be sure to keep it fresh. Audit your content on a set schedule (quarterly for example) and make updates as needed.

3. Metadata

When designing your website, each page contains a space between the <head> tags to insert metadata, or information about the contents of your page. If you have a CMS site originally produced by the UMC web team will have pre-populated this data for you. However, it is important for you to review and update Metadata as your site changes over time.

Title Metadata

Title metadata is responsible for the page titles displayed at the top of a browser window and as the headline within search engine results. It is the most important metadata on your page.

For those with a CMS website, the web team has developed an automated system for creating the meta title for each webpage based on your page title. This adds to the importance of using well-thought-out page titles rich with keyword phrases.

Description Metadata

Description metadata is the textual description that a browser may use in your page search return. Think of it as your site's window display—a concise and appealing description of what is contained within, with the goal of encouraging people to enter. A good meta description will typically contain two full sentences. Search engines may not always use your meta description, but it is important to give them the option.

Keyword Metadata

Keyword metadata is rarely if ever used to tabulate search engine rankings. However, you should already know your keyword phrases, so it doesn't hurt to add them into your keyword metadata. You'll want to include a variety of phrases. As a general rule, try to keep it to about 3-7 phrases with each phrase consisting of 1-4 words. A great example would be "computer science degree."

4. Have a Link-Worthy Site

Focus on creating relevant links within the text. Instead of having "click here" links, try writing out the name of the destination. "Click here" has no search engine value beyond the attached URL, whereas "Michigan Tech Enterprise Program" is rich with keywords and will improve your search engine rankings as well as the ranking of the page you are linking to. Always use descriptive links by linking keywords—it not only improves search engine optimization, but also adds value to your readers, including those with disabilities or who are using screen readers.

5. Use Alt Tags

Always describe your visual and video media using alt tags, or alternative text descriptions. They allow search engines to locate your page, which is crucial—especially for those who use text-only browsers or screen readers.

These are only a few of the many methods for improving your search engine ranking. If you want to learn more, we recommend the following resources:

- blogs.mtu.edu/webmaster—specific post about SEO and Usability
- www.moz.com—professional blog and SEO tools
- www.google.com/webmasters/tools—a great reference for understanding your Google site stats

Source: Michigan Technological University