

# What is Search Engine Optimization and Why Does it Matter?

*Presented by The Muses Guide*



Over 400 million searches are performed every day on the various search engines. 84.8% of web users find websites through search engines. Every day people are searching for the information, products, and services you offer! But are they finding you? If you're not ranked well in the search engines, chances are they aren't. Ready to find out what SEO is? Read on!

## **Terms You Need to Know**

<b>SEO</b>	Search Engine Optimization, the changes made to a web page that increases the rankings of the page in the search engines by ensuring a site is accessible, search engine friendly, and relevant to the terms targeted. Also known as organic SEO.
<b>SEM</b>	Search Engine Marketing, includes both organic SEO and paid search engine placement (such as the Google AdWords program or Overture).
<b>Search Engine</b>	A website with a form that surfers can use to search for web pages about the information or products they want.
<b>Key Phrase</b>	Two or three word phrase that searchers use when they are looking for sites like yours.
<b>Spider</b>	Robots that crawl the web indexing the content of web pages to be included in a search engine's database.
<b>Index</b>	A giant database of all the information the search engine spiders have gathered. The index is what you're searching when you type in a search at a search engine.
<b>Algorithm</b>	The special, unique formula each search engine uses to determine which pages in it's index are most relevant to a searcher's request.
<b>Crawler-Engine Directory-Engine</b>	A search engine whose index is built by robots, like Google. Also known as Human-Powered Engine. Index is built by real people who look over each website and determine whether to include it. DMOZ.org is an example.
<b>Black Hat SEO</b>	The term referring to tricks and techniques designed to fool the search engines and rank well by unethical means. Avoid.
<b>White Hat SEO</b>	The term referring to SEO that follows ethical behavior and the guidelines of the search engines.

## What is Search Engine Optimization?

Search engine optimization (commonly known as SEO) is the process of creating or editing a website so that it is search engine friendly and ranks well in searches for the targeted key phrases. Basically, it's **making your site relevant to the key phrase you want to rank well for.**

It includes many components, such as:

- ✓ Key phrase research
- ✓ Validating a web page's code
- ✓ Ensuring the proper title and meta tags are included
- ✓ Creating a search engine friendly page structure and navigation
- ✓ Writing key phrase rich copy
- ✓ Using heading tags and other formatting correctly
- ✓ Converting dynamic content to static content where ever possible
- ✓ Moving javascripts and stylesheets to external files
- ✓ Naming images and including alt text that boosts relevancy
- ✓ Links in and out of the page
- ✓ And much, much more...

A reputable SEO firm can be worth their weight in gold. But if your budget doesn't allow outsourcing of your SEO, don't panic! You CAN learn search engine optimization with the right resources. The best foundation for gaining this knowledge is to begin with an understanding of how search engines work.

## How do search engines work?

Spider search engines (like Google) are robot powered and work by "spidering" the internet and adding the pages they crawl into their database. They start with one page and crawl around the internet following links from page to page and website to website.

Human-edited engines (also known as directories, like DMOZ) are human powered and each site submitted is reviewed before it's added to the database.

Once you've submitted your web site to the search engines, they first store the URL in a temporary database, then send their spiders out to crawl your site (you may see this in your statistics if you watch). Most engines take anywhere from 2 to 6 weeks to crawl a site.

When someone goes to the search engine and enters a phrase to search for, the search engine searches through it's database and returns the pages which are relevant to that phrase. Search engines use hundreds of factors to decide which pages are most relevant. They also use multiple databases, which is why if you search for a phrase one day, then come back and search the next day (or even the next hour), you may get slightly different results.

**The one and only goal of the search engines is to deliver the most relevant content possible to the searcher.** Why? Because it's the only way searchers will continue to use the search engine. Have you ever searched for a phrase only to find the results weren't what you were looking for? I have. And it usually causes me to go try a different search engine to see if a different one can give me what I'm really looking for. Relevancy is crucial.

## **Why Does it Matter if Your Site is Optimized for the Search Engines?**

You need traffic! You won't make any sales of your products or services if no one can find your website. You can have a beautifully designed website and fantastic products or services, but somehow you have to help people find you in order to share those wonderful products and services and succeed in making sales.

Search engines are sending millions of surfers a day to the products and information they search for. The number of people online is growing at amazing speeds. Search engines give us the opportunity to reach these people with our websites.

**Searchers are the perfect website traffic – they already know what they want and are actively seeking it.** This type of traffic will provide a much higher conversion rate than random banner advertising, plastering your city with ads, or other comparable advertising methods.

You have two main options to get a steady stream of this targeted traffic to your website. You can work on optimization and get “organic” listings. Or you can pay for a spot in the ad listings.

“Build it and they will come” doesn't apply online. But “optimize it and they will come” does!

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