

# CREATING A WEBSITE THAT WORKS FOR YOU

A Search Engine Optimisation Guide

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# Purpose & Goal of a Website

There are about 2 billion websites online and a whopping 82% of those are inactive. In other words, they're idle, neglected or abandoned.

These figures are estimates as other things come into play, however, you get the idea.

*Creating a website is easy but managing one is hard.*

With a plethora of website templates and tools, you can create one in no time, but will the website work for you? Before creating a website you need to know these 3 things:

## Purpose & Goal

Before you create a website ask yourself the following:

- What's the website goal?: Is the website for getting customers/people or just for reference
- What information am I going to put there?
- How will I get traffic (people) to the website: direct, word of mouth, or from Google
- Who's going to maintain and manage the website?

These questions will help you decide whether it is worth it to create a website or not. You need to treat a website as a long-term strategy and investment.

Without a clear goal and strategy, you can create a website that's dead in 3 months.

## Traffic source

Traffic is people to your website. You can get traffic through outbound means, e.g. word of mouth, sharing etc. These methods require constantly reaching out to people.

However, you can get free organic traffic from **inbound** methods like search engines

If you want to scoop customers from this pool of traffic you need to learn what's called **Search Engine Optimisation**. People are paid lots of money to do search optimisation.

You'll learn about SEO soon in this book.

# **Maintenance and Management**

A website needs regular check-ups and updates. Avoid 404 errors, expired hosting, outdated SSL certificates, and content.

You need to constantly check and update your website content otherwise your website may go offline for days and drop rankings without you knowing.

# What is SEO?

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is the process of improving a website's visibility on search engine results pages (SERPs). In short, SEO is about ranking your website on top of search results.

SEO has evolved significantly, requiring businesses and individuals to adopt strategic approaches rather than outdated methods like keyword stuffing. Today's search engines prioritize high-quality content, user experience, and authority.

## Benefits of SEO

- Free organic traffic (unlike paid ads)
- Attracts potential customers on autopilot
- Long-term benefits; you optimise once and get traffic in the long run
- High conversion rates from targeted traffic
- Increased brand visibility and trust
- Competitive advantage in your industry
- Helps establish credibility and authority in your niche

## How Search Engines Work



Figure 0.1 Search crawling and indexing

Search engines like Google and Bing use bots (spiders) to crawl and index websites. A bot is a piece of code that mines for content across the web. The process includes:

1. **Crawling:** Bots explore websites to collect content and metadata.
2. **Indexing:** Data is stored and organised in the search engine's database.
3. **Ranking:** Algorithms determine which pages best match(answer) a search query and show those first.

## Submitting a Website to Search Engines?

To ensure Google or Bing finds your website, submit it through **Google Search Console** and **Bing Webmaster Tools** respectively. You can also submit your site to other search engines as well.

*Search engines can discover new websites automatically if there's a link of the new website on another known website.*

## What are SERPs?

SERP stands for Search Engine Results Page—the page that displays search results. The goal of SEO is to get into the top 10 results because **75% of users never go past the first page**. SERPs include organic results, paid ads, featured snippets, local Business Listings, and more recently, AI overviews.

Understanding different SERP features can help you optimize your content better. Some SERP elements include:

- **AI Overviews:** AI-generated quick answers.
- **Featured Snippets:** highlighted answers at the top of search results
- **People Also Ask (PAA):** related queries users often search
- **Local Pack:** Google My Business results for location-based searches

# The 4-Step approach to ranking a website

I have broken down SEO into 4 steps that will help rank your website

1. [Keyword Research](#)
2. [On-page SEO](#)
3. [Technical SEO](#)
4. Off-page SEO

## 1. Keyword Research

A keyword is a word or group of words used in searching. Here are examples

- "laptop"
- "weathering"
- "car rental"
- "car rental near me"
- "Toyota hilux rental price per day"
- "which iPhone has the best camera"
- "Affordable iPhone for vlogging"

You have to create content/pages with the keywords appearing naturally in the content.

You don't have to use exact wording, e.g. car rental can be written as car hire.

*You need to be aware of the terminology used by the people you're targeting*

### Keyword Intent

Keyword intent refers to the underlying purpose or goal behind a user's search query. It's important for SEO because understanding intent helps create content that aligns with what users are actually looking for, which can improve a website's chances of ranking higher.

There are 4 types of keyword intent:



**Navigational Intent:** This occurs when users are searching for a specific website or brand. They likely already know the name of the site or brand they want to visit and are looking for it directly. Example: "Facebook login"

**Informational Intent:** Users with informational intent are looking for information or answers to questions. They are not necessarily looking to make a purchase, but rather to learn about a topic. Example: "weathering" or "Benefits of SEO", "How volcanoes form"

**Transactional Intent:** This type of intent is associated with users who are ready to make a purchase or engage in a transaction. They are searching for products, services, prices, or deals with the intent to buy. Example: "Buy iPhone 16"

**Commercial Investigation Intent:** Users with commercial investigation intent are not ready to make a purchase just yet, but they are actively comparing products, reading reviews, or gathering information to inform a future purchase decision. Example: "Best gaming laptops in 2025", "iPhone 14 price", "Best car rental company in Harare"

## **Short & Long-Tailed Keywords**

Keywords can be short (one word) or long-tailed (group of words).

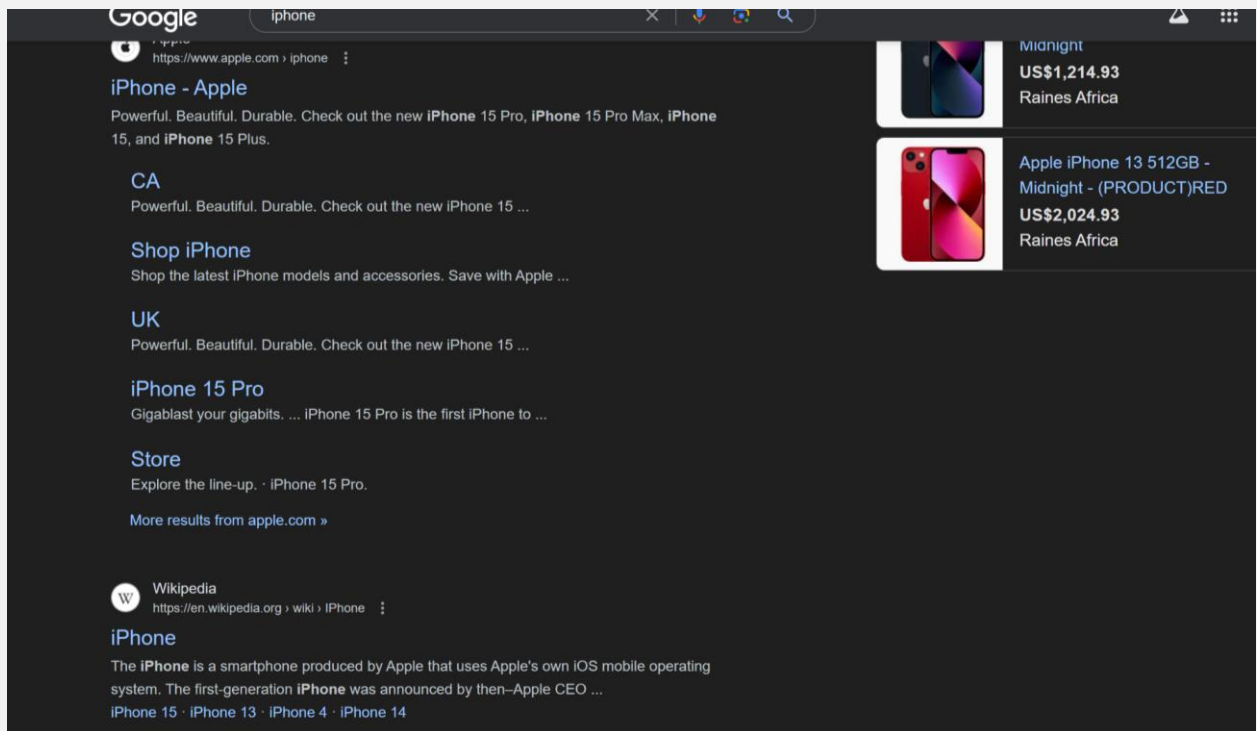
Short keywords are one or two-word queries, e.g. construction, iPhone, car rental etc.

Long-tailed are broader and specific queries, usually questions. For example, "How to create a website with WordPress", "Which iPhone has the best camera", etc.

Both types of keywords have pros and cons.

While short-term keywords have high search volumes they're also more competitive. Because they're not specific you'll be competing with other websites not in your niche.

For example, look at the following search results for the query "iPhone".



The top results have the Apple website itself, encyclopedias like Wikipedia and some big stores. The intent here could be transactional, the searcher wants to buy an iPhone, or informational, i.e. the searcher wants to read about iPhone, hence Google shows Wikipedia

If you have a new website try going for long-tailed keywords, especially if you're in competitive niches. You need to answer specific user questions to win, e.g. affordable iPhones for video content creation.

Here are some free tools to get long-tailed keywords:

- [Ahrefs keyword explorer](#)
- [Keyword io](#) for finding long-tailed keyword
- [MOZ Keyword](#)
- [WordStream](#) keyword research tool
- [Google trends](#)

You can use Google search itself and analyse the “People Also Section” to see what people are asking and create content around that. For example, let's say you're in the car rental space, input “car rental” and analyse the “People Also Ask/Search” section or the Auto Complete that appears below the search input. Use the keyword suggestions and create content/pages around them.

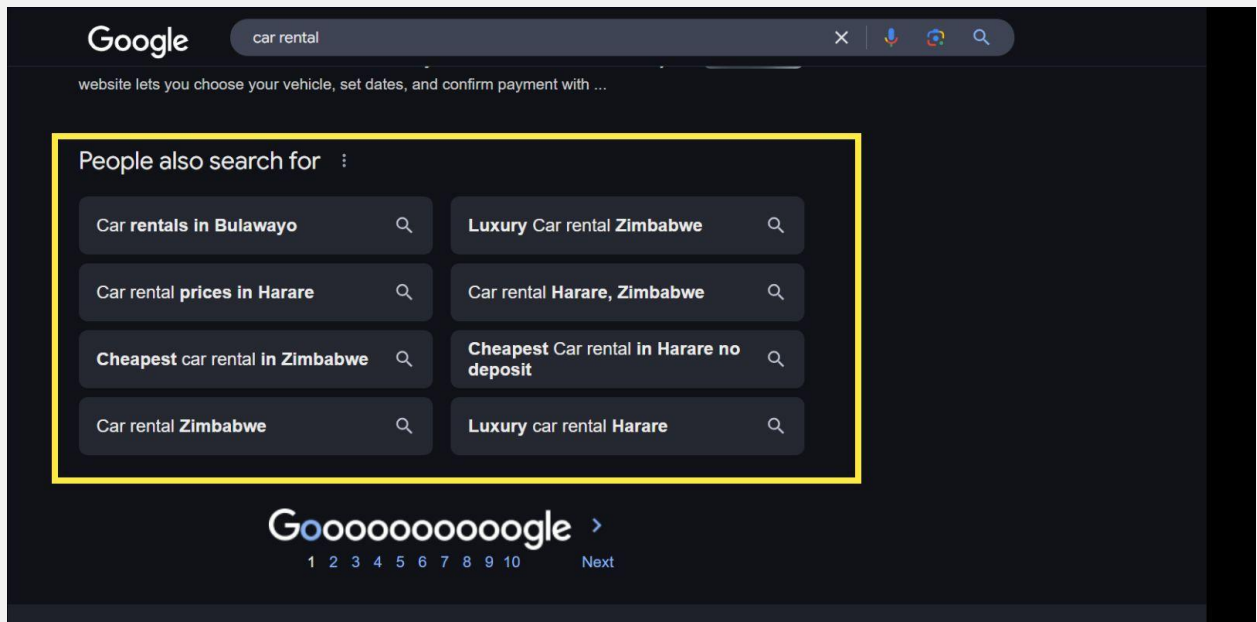


Figure 0.1 People also search for section on Google

## On-Page SEO

This involves optimizing your website's pages and content.

### Quality Content

You need to have some form of written content to succeed with SEO.

Create valuable content that answers people's questions. Use the keywords you have gathered above to create quality and relevant content.

Content can be in the form of blog posts, comprehensive service/product pages, images, or videos. These will help you get found in different searches, e.g. content, image and video searches.

Your written content must show **EEAT**:

- **Experience:** real-world and hands-on experience.
- **Expertise:** your content must look like someone knowledgeable in the field wrote it.
- **Trust:** your content must be trusted. Are you showing the writer's name and bio, or citing trusted sources?
- **Authoritativeness:** do others know the writer/website?

Your content doesn't have to tick all boxes above but must be comprehensive enough to answer the searcher.

### Elements of good content:

- Use headers: one H1, H2, H3 for subdivisions in your content
- Use short paragraph for easy readability.
- Use lists where possible, .e.g. showing steps.
- Insert images, videos where possible.
- Include stats and research data where possible.
- Add a summary/conclusion at the end.
- Add a FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions) section where applicable.
- Ensure content aligns with user intent; does the searcher wants to buy, or gathering information

## Structuring Website Content

A typical website has static and dynamic pages. Static pages don't change frequently, e.g. about, home, contact pages while dynamic pages change often, e.g. blog posts.

To structure your blog, create a hub or category page that links to articles that fall under that category.

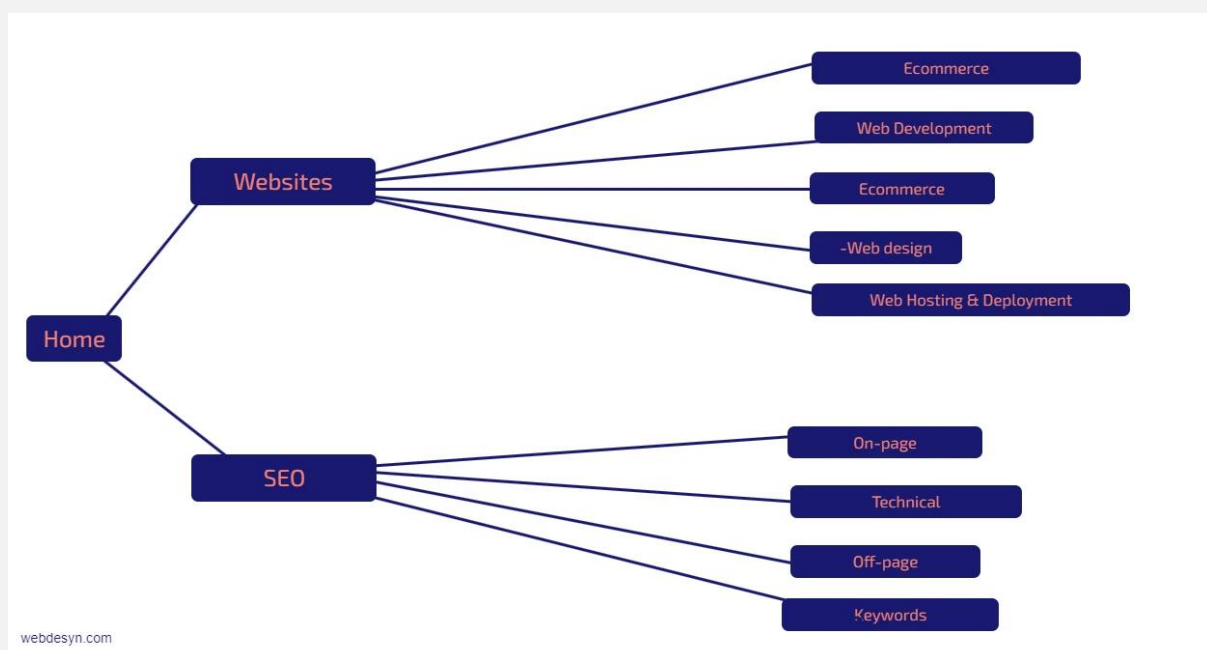


Figure 2 Basic structure for blog categories

## Titles & Meta Descriptions

The [title and meta description](#) are HTML elements used to describe a web page for both search engines and users. They look like this in HTML:

```
<!DOCTYPE html>
<html>
<head>
  <title>Toyota Hilux Car Rental Harare</title>
  <meta name="description" content="Toyota Hilux for hire. Price $100 per day. Available in Harare" />
</head>
```

The title is displayed at the top of a browser tab or window when someone visits your webpage. It is also the clickable headline in search engine results. The title should be descriptive, concise (usually under 60 characters), and include relevant keywords to help with ranking.

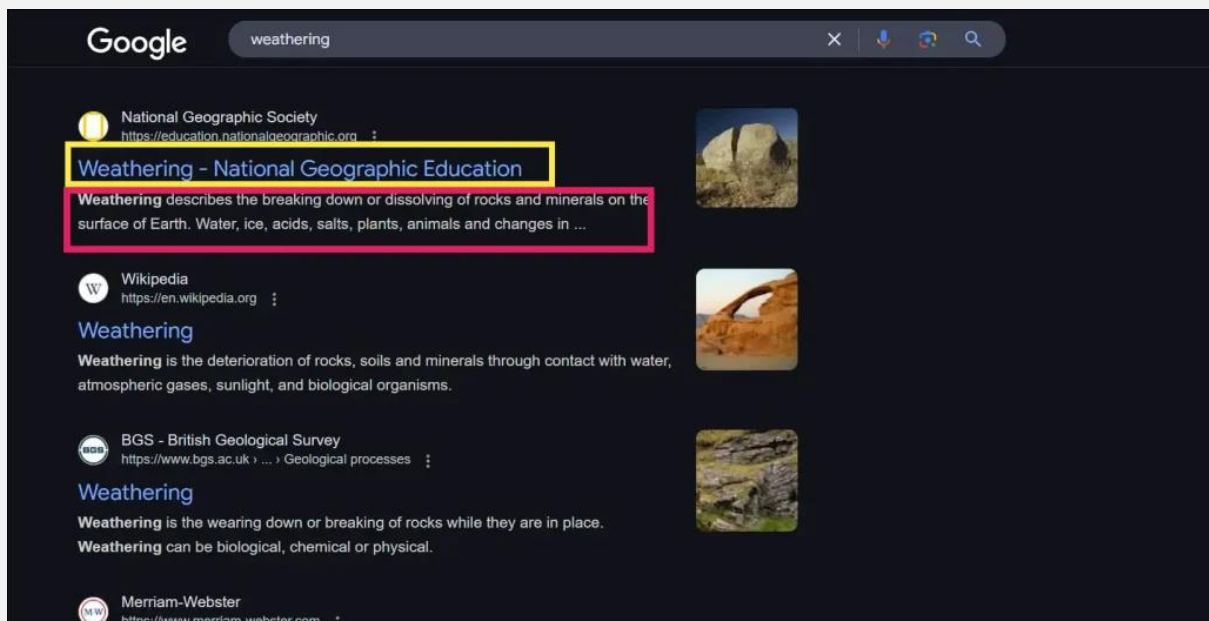


Figure 0.3 Title in yellow, meta description in pink

The meta description briefly summarises the page's content, typically between 150 to 160 characters. It appears under the title in search engine results and provides users with a snapshot of what the page is about.

A well-written meta description can improve click-through rates by enticing users to visit the page.

*Google can substitute your meta description with one that's relevant to the user's search.*

How to write good titles and meta descriptions that encourage clicks:

- Insert your keywords
- Use power words to encourage clicks, such as "Ultimate," "Best," "Step-by-Step".
- Use numbers, e.g. "10 ways to increase website speed".
- Use "How" and "What" for information searches.

## Internal & External Linking

If you're starting, target **long-term keywords** which are specific and detailed e.g. "termite fumigation in [city]", "Core i7 8GB DDR4 laptop for sale", "what happens if you crash a rental car?" instead of short-term keywords like laptop, car rental.

- Internal linking connects pages within your website, improving user navigation and SEO. Search bots can also discover new pages through internal links.
- External link/cite other credible sources to enhance content trustworthiness.
- Anchor text (blue text) should be descriptive and keyword-relevant to the target page.

## Image Optimisation

=



```

```

- Use descriptive file names and alt tags. The alt tag is an img attribute used to describe an image. Most CMSs like WordPress provide an easy way to write the alt description.
- Compress images to improve page speed.
- Utilize WebP or Avif formats for faster load times.

## **User-Friendly URLs**

- Good: [yoursite.com/car-rental/harare/toyota-hilux](https://yoursite.com/car-rental/harare/toyota-hilux). This url has keywords, car rental, Harare, and Toyota Hilux
- Bad: [yoursite.com/?id=12123&pos=2](https://yoursite.com/?id=12123&pos=2)

# Technical SEO

Technical SEO is mainly concerned about the underlying and technical parts of a website that helps with crawling and boosting rankings.

- **Website architecture and structure:** Ensure your website is easy to navigate. Remove unnecessary blot and code that hinders navigation and crawling.
- **[Mobile-responsive](#):** Ensure website content fits 100% without zooming and pinching on mobile; elements must stack on top of one another for vertical scrolling.
- **[Website Speed](#):** Ensure your website loads quickly, e.g., by using a fast server, reducing file sizes, and implementing minification and compression techniques.
- **Robots.txt:** Make sure nothing is blocking pages from being crawled, e.g. in the [robots.txt](#) file or [meta noindex](#) tag
- **[XMLsitemaps](#):** Create XML sitemaps to make search engines find your pages easily
- **Website security (SSL):** Use https instead of http.
- **Page Redirects:** Using correct 301 redirects.
- **Crawl budgets:** Make sure search engines aren't crawling irrelevant pages/URLs, e.g. thin pages without value, feed pages etc.
- **Breadcrumbs:** Navigational hierarchy of a page, e.g. *Home > Car Rental > Pickups > Toyota Hilux*
- **Featured Snippets:** Special result displays that appear in search results, e.g. images, star ratings, etc. These can require [structured data setup](#).



# Off-Page SEO

Off-page SEO involves activities outside your website to build authority and trust in search engine's eyes. Backlinks are links to your website from other reputable sites. These matter to search engines as they signal trust. Here's how to get backlinks:

- **Guest Blogging:** Publish content on authoritative websites with a link back to your site.
- **Content Suggestion:** You can reach out to publishers/writers **if you** think you have a valuable piece of content that deserves to be linked to in one of their articles. The article should offer value for it to be considered, e.g. some statistics, new findings, unique points etc.
- **Creating linkable content:** Create linkable assets such as full-guide articles, statistical articles, free tools, e.g. calculators, converters, etc. These can get links naturally.
- **Social Media & Forums:** Share content on social platforms like Facebook, LinkedIn, Quora, and Reddit.
- **Local Directories:** Submit your business to Google My Business, Yelp, and local listing sites, e.g. The Directory Zim and Zim Yellow Pages
- **Brand Mentions:** Encourage people to talk about your brand online or leave positive reviews on your Business profiles.

# Advanced SEO

## Local SEO

Optimize for location-based searches, i.e. town, city, country

- Include local keywords in title, meta description and body (e.g., "Car rental in **Harare**, pest control **near me**").
- Claim your **Google My Business** listing.
- List your business in local directories and yellow pages.
- Encourage people to leave positive reviews on your Business listings

# Measuring SEO Success

Tracking and analysing SEO performance is essential for growth. Use tools like:

- [Google Analytics](#): Measures traffic and user behaviour. GA can be complicated for beginners. You can use Clicky which is more lightweight. It's FREE but you can pay for upgrades.
- [Google Search Console](#)/[Bing webmaster tools](#): Tracks rankings and indexing issues.

*If you're using WordPress you can use the Google Site Kit plugin, which sets up both Search Console and Analytics.*

Key metrics to track in Search Console:

- **Organic traffic**: Growth in website visitors from search engines.
- **Click-through rate (CTR)**: Percentage of users who click on your result.
- **Impressions**: Number of people seeing your website in the SERPs but not clicking (this is usually higher than clicks)
- **Indexed Pages**: Check if important pages are being indexed. Search Console will tell you the reason why some pages are not indexed in the SERPs.

# **Want Us To Create A Website That Works For You?**

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