

Web Design & SEO: 6 Tips to Optimize for Better Ranking



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“The best page to hide a body is Page 2 of Google.”

This is a 7-year-old quote from HubSpot founder and CTO Dharmesh Shah. While it’s become more of a running joke among SEO specialists, the idea still holds immense value today.

Say, you’re one of the best [IT companies in Toronto](#) and you need to put the word out that you’re here to serve. A business who wishes to make it through the age of digital marketing relatively unscathed needs to be readily available to its target audiences.

How do you make your business relatively available? By being amongst the first results they see when they search terms like “Toronto IT services” or “[Toronto web design and development](#)“! Less than 5% of the billions of people who use search engines

everyday get past the first page of the Google SERPs—because, why should they look for something that’s already right in front of them, right?

This is why you need to design and develop an SEO-friendly website: to increase organic traffic and to earn first page rankings in Google. Even in the first stages of planning out your digital marketing strategies, web design and SEO should already go hand in hand.

You’re In It to Win It with Web Design & SEO

Web design and SEO share one ultimate goal: to provide users with a great experience. The better UX, the more chances you’ll be able to convert your visitors into paying customers. To do this, your site needs to be: 1) searchable; 2) functional; and 3) visually appealing.

Number 1 is the job of SEOs, while items 2 and 3 are the primary concerns of web designers. While many site owners think that a site that’s pleasing to the eye can easily cover up poor searchability, or vice versa, prioritizing one over the other will still end you up in a bad place. Think, missed opportunities when visitors leave or your Google rankings lowering.

What is the Point of Being “SEO-Friendly”?



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Search engines like Google, Bing, and MSN Search don't know right away what websites exist on the Internet. This is where web crawlers come in: these "spiders" or "bots" crawl each page on every website, interpret the content, and index it in their database. Once indexed, they can then serve the most relevant and valuable web pages to their users based on the topics they search for.

Making your website SEO-friendly means you're helping these crawlers do their job efficiently and effectively while also helping your business get a better chance of getting indexed and ranking on the first page of the search results. To [achieve an SEO-friendly website](#), you'll need a collaborative effort from your SEO and web design teams, as well as SEO strategies that are tailor fit to your business and target customers.

Integrating SEO & Web Design to Rank Better

Simply put, effective SEO draws visitors to your site; great design keeps them there. Most SEO strategies magnify the

importance of rich content and that is irrefutable. Potential visitors are always on the lookout for valuable information and they find these on your blogs, articles, and other website content.

Web design, though, helps elevate their experience when reading through and browsing your website for content. There are also certain aspects of web design that play a huge role in helping a search engine to crawl and index your website or web pages.

To optimize your website for better rankings, take note of these 6 SEO web design tips:

1. Make your website mobile-friendly.

In 2015, Google made mobile-friendliness a ranking factor. Two years later, they introduced mobile-first indexing, which means that the search engine predominantly uses the mobile version of your website's content for indexing and ranking.

This only makes sense: in Canada alone, the number of smartphone users is estimated to have reached 31.38 million in 2020. More than half of all web traffic is coming from mobile devices, which means that more than half of your audience is also likely to be on their mobile phones.

Your business must leverage this by designing a website that's mobile-friendly. If not, your users are going to hate you for it, and they'll be looking into other sites that they can easily pore through in their phones. A website that loads poorly on a phone or tablet also has a high bounce rate, which tells Google that your website is...well, performing poorly, useless, and thus deserves lower rankings.

To avoid these problems, explore the wonders of responsive web design (RWD). Responsive web design allows websites and pages to display on all devices and screen sizes by automatically adapting to the screen, whether it's a desktop, laptop,

tablet, or smartphone. You don't have to create a separate website for each type of device and there is no need for redirects, helping the user to access the content they want to see as quickly as possible.

2. Choose a web design format that's easy to read.

Do you remember websites from the early days of the World Wide Web? Mismatched color schemes, Comic Sans galore, disproportionate font sizes – you name it and you've probably come across them.

Believe it or not, with the web design tools widely available for use today, these kinds of sites still exist in some form. Ads and hyperlinks across the page, as well as text and image placements that do not make sense at all. This is how you tell people to go search someplace else and how you tell Google you're not worth ranking any higher.

Keyword mapping, content building, and [other SEO efforts](#) are useless if the design elements of your page are an eyesore. If no one can get the information they want, what even is the point of having that page?

Web designers understand how to create websites that make it easy for users to take in your content so you get the most for your money. Some crucial design elements that must take SEO into consideration include:

- **Code** – [Website designers in Toronto](#) have a few options when it comes to the code they use to render the major design elements of your site. Flash sites look cool but are difficult to optimize, lessening their chances of ranking well in search engines. Most stick to HTML and CSS, but be wary also of code bloat. Excessive code not only slows the page's loading time, but it also increases the possibility of coding errors that, whilst they may have no direct impact on the site's SEO, may still cause difficulty for the search engine spiders.

Keep your website in optimum condition by regularly auditing your source code and tweaking them to the benefit of your visitors by:

1. Using unique and descriptive title tags
2. Writing accurate killer meta descriptions
3. Adding structured data (e.g. your rating, location, price range, or hours) so search engines can understand more about your business
4. Including your main keywords in <H1> headings
5. Adding alt text to featured images
6. Placing a canonical tag on webpages for better ranking boosts
7. Making sure your pages can be indexed



Photo by [Christina Morillo](#)

- **Text** – Whether it's the typeface, colour, or size, the text on your website must be readable enough for your users to get the information they need from you. Basic no-nos include “light on white” and “dark on black”

colour schemes. Consider using web-safe fonts such as Arial, Verdana, and Georgia. Line length, line height, and letter spacing all come into play in ensuring the readability of your webpage.=

- **Negative space** – Give your visitors space to “breathe” when they’re browsing your content. Often called “whitespace” (although it doesn’t necessarily have to be white), negative space is the space between graphics, columns, images, text, margins and other elements that helps the elements in a page make sense. Whitespace is a good way to organize text, organize elements and guide users’ attention to certain elements. Know why the Google homepage feels comfortable and oh-so-easy to use? That’s because it’s not too crowded—because of whitespace.

3. Speed up your website and pages.

There’s no faster way to turn visitors (and potential customers) away from you than making them wait for ages for a page to finally load. The longer it takes them to get to the content they need from your website, the more likely they’re going to click the “back” button and look for something else.

Your web design affects your site speed and page speed. Your site speed determines how fast or slow users can get from point A to point B across different pages in your site, while page speed focuses on how long or short your user has to wait for the content in a specific page in your website to fully load.

Google has indicated site speed (and as a result, page speed) as one of the signals used by its algorithm to rank pages. Your website speed affects Google’s ability to crawl it: the slower your site speed, the less pages Google can crawl, the less of your webpages are going to get indexed.

Page speed is crucial to user experience: those with a longer

load time tend to have higher bounce rates and lower average time on page, which, again, are tell-tale signs for a search engine to keep you off page 1 of the SERPs.

Google's PageSpeed Insights gives you valuable insight into how fast your site loads across all devices. According to Moz.com, here's what you can do to make your site faster:

1. Enable file compression.
2. Minify CSS, JavaScript, and HTML.
3. Reduce redirects.
4. Remove render-blocking JavaScript.
5. Leverage browser caching.
6. Improve server response time.
7. Use a content distribution network.
8. Optimize images.

4. Optimize your images, too.

High quality copy is king, but you need to make images the queen in your webpages. Side by side, clean copy and appealing images make for an attractive website that screams, "Hi, we're legit!" to your visitors. When uploading images to your site, don't forget to:

- **Use descriptive and logical file names for your images.** Help search engines "see" your images by providing context in the file name.
- **Keep file sizes as small as possible.** Large high-quality images, while visually appealing, can slow down page load times—which decreases the quality of your UX, increases your bounce rate, and ultimately damages your rankings.
- **Add alt tags.** These "alternate" descriptions help search engines determine what is being depicted. When users mouse over an image, they can read the description, too. Alt tags also help visually impaired users (and users whose browsers do not support your files) understand

what is being shown, which is important for accessibility reasons.

5. Foolproof your site architecture.

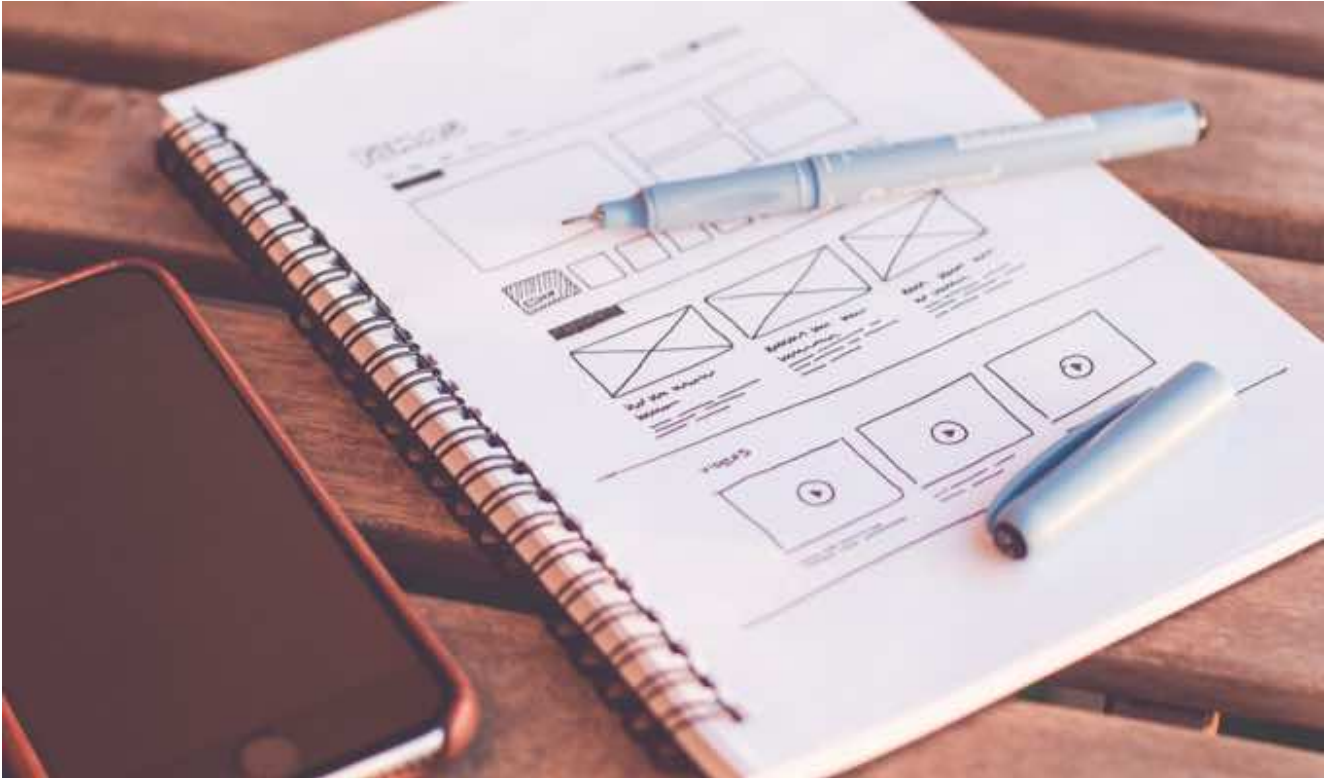


Photo by picjumbo.com

Every website has some form of structure which determines how its pages are linked together. The more organized and well thought-of this structure is, the easier users and web crawlers can find what they're looking for on your website. Good site architecture also sends link authority around your website, which you need in order to rank better in search engines.

When building or improving your site structure:

- **Keep your navigation simple.** Your site hierarchy should be logical and the balance between categories and subcategories should be limited. [The easier it is for your users to find what they need, the more likely they'll convert.](#) A good navigation experience also lessens your bounce rate, as your users are less likely

to get confused and leave your site.

- **Create a URL structure that follows your navigation hierarchy.** Your pages should have a descriptive URL that describes the content on the page. Include a few relevant keywords and divide them by hyphens, not underscores. Compared to random numbers and letters, descriptive URLs help search engines understand your pages and make your pages easier for your visitors to remember.
- **Provide a site map.** Search engines need a guide that details all the pages and content on your website. A site map does just that and gives you the opportunity to tell search engines which pages in your site offer the best value and are the most important for ranking. Sitemaps also contain important metadata about your web pages to give them a better chance of ranking highly.

6. Keep long-form content that's highly engaging.

At the end of the day, your content will be what draws your visitors into your website. And it's not just any kind of brief, generic article we're so used to posting in the past. Users are now more drawn to personalized and interactive content: besides information, they also want to feel that you're thinking of them when you write about stuff they care about. For your business to matter to them, they have to matter to you.

- **Word Count** – While remaining highly debatable, the ideal word count for long-form content currently sits within the 2000 to 3000-word range, depending on the complexity of the topic. 1000 might be a good figure to start with, but if you're aiming for content that's insightful and data-driven, your article might come short in providing value to your users.
- **Formatting** – We've discussed web design format earlier in this article, but this time let's zoom in on how articles appear in the user's eye. It's not enough that

you've got something informative to give your users; they also have to be able to read the information without difficulty. For your long-form content to be readable, you can do the following:

- Break the text up into sections with headings, bullets, and numbers to make your content easier to follow.
- Insert visual and interactive content in between breaks.
- Help your users find information faster with intuitive scrolling.
- Include social sharing buttons so users can more easily share your content online.

Rise Up the Ranks with Web Design & SEO

Never second-guess integrating your business' web design and SEO efforts. To survive the digital marketing game, your website needs to be primed in both aspects so you can provide great value to your visitors and eventually convert them into customers.