

# SEO - Search Engine Optimization basics by Jeniffer Thompson

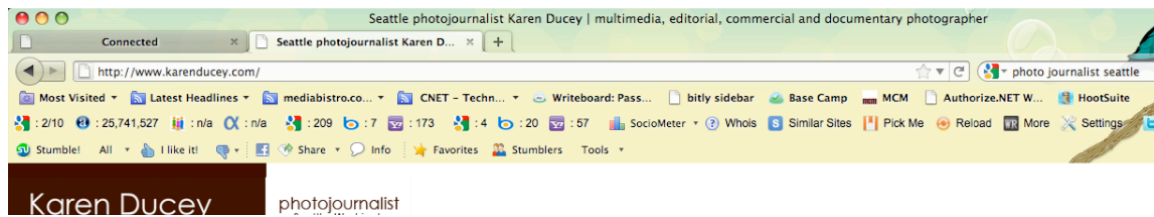
Search engine technology is always changing—the key is to **consistently** write **fresh, relevant content** that reaches your audience, that is **accessible to search engines**, and encourages others to share your content with their online network and **link back to your site**.

**The Building Blocks of SEO:** Search engine algorithms are constantly changing, but there are three things constant that will help you gain better ranking within the search engines.

1. **Well-written Title Tags and keyword placement**
2. **Fresh, relevant content & landing pages**
3. **Inbound links & anchor text**

## I. Title & Description Tags

A title tag appears at the top of your browser window (directly above the address bar).



Optimize it:

For title tags, Google will show up to 66 characters including spaces on a SERP (Search Engine Results Page), everything else will be replaced by an ellipsis—so if you decide to write a longer tag be sure to fit the most important terms within those first 66 characters so your audience will see them in the SERP.

For description tags, Google will show from 125 to 150 characters including spaces. You can define the description tag within the code of your site, using a plug-in like “All in One SEO” or “Headspace” (for WordPress blogs), or search engines will pull the text that includes the first mention of the search term from your site. In some cases people forget to include their company name within the text of their home page and so search engines show the copyright information within the search result because that is the first place on the site where their company name is mentioned.

## Write For Your Audience


Your title tag should speak to your audience; include keywords that tell people what you do and define the benefits of what you offer—this will encourage someone to click on your link.

Include keywords that are relevant to the content of THAT page. If your title tags are not relevant to the content of that page, you are more likely to have a high bounce rate on your website.

**Bounce Rate:**

A bounce is literally when someone has landed on your site and bounced right off without looking around further—a high bounce rate is bad. Typically, you can expect a higher bounce rate if you are running a pay-per-click campaign, or if you are getting a lot of traffic through search engines. Of course, this is because we cannot accurately guess what people are looking for every time, nor can we control their environment (though we can surmise within relative accuracy what people want when they search for specific terms). For this reason, your title tag **MUST** be relevant to the content of that page. On the other hand, if your traffic is coming in direct and then leaves right away, you can tell that you need a better marketing funnel and more sticky content. A good bounce rate to shoot for is around 40 to 60%. A site that receives a lot of traffic is bound to experience some bounce. Another thing to pay attention to is the length of time that a person spends on your website, which pages are most popular, and which pages do people exit from most frequently—hopefully it's after they either purchased from you or opted-in to your subscriber feature.

Write unique tags for each page: both your title & your description tags should be based on the content of that page. The more relevant your content is the more likely someone is to click your webpage and stay there. Think of each page on your website as an opportunity to engage and draw in your audience. Below is an example of how your result will appear in a SERP. The search term for this result was “photojournalist Seattle.”

[Seattle photojournalist Karen Ducey | multimedia, editorial ...](#)   
Seattle photojournalist Karen Ducey specializes in multimedia, documentary, news, and commercial photography in the Pacific Northwest.  
[www.karenducey.com/](http://www.karenducey.com/) - Similar

Avoid duplicate content; search engines will de-index you for keyword stuffing, and or repeating the same thing over and over again. It's okay to rewrite text and present it in a different way but blatant duplication is never good for your audience or the search engines.

FYI: Writing an effective title tag is not an exact science. The first thing you need to do is create a list of keyword phrases that you think your audience might search for when looking for a book/product/service like yours. As a general rule of thumb you should also optimize for your name, company name, product and book title. Come up with additional keyword phrases that include the benefits of what you offer. For example my company offers “author websites” and “Internet marketing,” so these would be good keywords for me to concentrate on.

## **Think Local—Optimize Regionally**

One of the best ways to ensure that your keyword phrase ranks well is to choose a term that has a low amount of competition (of course this does you no good if no one is searching for that term). If your service or topic is regional than this will help your ranking tremendously. It's much easier to be a big fish in a small pond than a little fish in an ocean of competitors. For example, "Yoga" is a broad term with a massive amount of competition, but "Yoga, San Diego" is a term you could gain ranking for in a fairly short period of time.

To determine how much competition you have, do a search for that term in your favorite search engine and see how many results come up. The term "Yoga" renders 340 million results in Google. The term "Yoga San Diego" renders 25 million. Even more specific, "Yoga San Diego downtown" renders 12 million. You get the idea.

Your goal is to appear on the first page, or better yet, within the top three results of a SERP, anything beyond the second page will likely be ignored.

## **II. Strategize Your Content**

Once you have your list, search for those terms in the various search engines to find your competition. It's a good idea to emulate those who are ranking in the top three spaces of the SERP.

A popular method for attaining higher search ranking for a specific term is the use of landing pages, or anchor pages. These are static pages that target specific keywords. Concentrate on writing copy that uses your desired term about 10% of the time, this is known as keyword density; avoid repetitive use of your term as this is considered "keyword stuffing" and could get your site de-indexed for that term. Typically sites whose pages are de-indexed have hidden text, or have keywords stuffed within the meta data of that page, so you are not likely to experience this problem if you focus on writing relevant, information-rich content with keywords that are used appropriately and in context."

## **Optimize Your Images**

Every image you add to your website can be optimized and indexed by search crawlers. Let's say for example you specialize in hot-air balloons and you have several great photos of hot-air balloons on your website. It's very likely that those images will appear in a SERP if you use "hot-air balloon" as the title of your image (for example: hot\_air\_balloon.jpg), as well as the description tag of that image and the alt tag.

The following snap shot shows my search results for the term "hot air balloon," which rendered Wikipedia first and a list of images second. Notice how when I hovered over one of the images it revealed the URL of the site that used that image, this method has further optimized this site for the term: HotAirBalloon.jpg—the description however could use some help; the folks over at [www.thundafunda.com](http://www.thundafunda.com)

would have served themselves well to add a more inviting description for their potential readers. The company offers interior designs and wallpaper, this image is a missed opportunity to tell people what they do and to further optimize their other search terms.

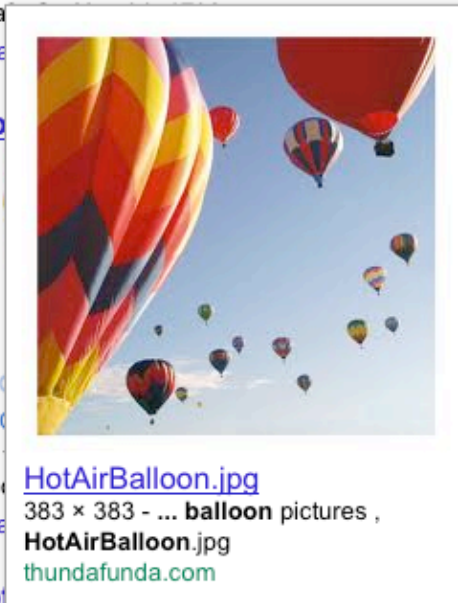
► [Hot air balloon - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)   

[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hot\\_air\\_balloon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hot_air_balloon) - Cached

The **hot air balloon** is the oldest successful human-carrying flight technology. It is in a class of aircraft known as balloon aircraft.

[Hot Air Ballooning on Wikipedia](#)

[Images for hot air balloon](#)



[Hot Air Ballooning](#)  

[www.hotairballooning.com/](http://www.hotairballooning.com/) - C

**Hot air ballooning's** home on the web. If you want to become a balloon pilot, or find out more about hot air ballooning, visit our website today.

[Classifieds - Balloon Rides - Ballooning](#)

[HotAirBalloon.jpg](#)

383 × 383 - ... **balloon** pictures ,

[HotAirBalloon.jpg](#)

[thundafunda.com](http://thundafunda.com)

How balloons fly, how

[HowStuffWorks "How Hot Air Balloons Fly"](#)

[science.howstuffworks.com > ... > Transportation > Flight > Modern](http://science.howstuffworks.com/transportation/flights/modern) - Cached

**Hot air balloons** use simple principles from physics to create the serene sense of natural flight. Learn about buoyancy and the control of **hot air balloons**.

### Naming conventions:

- File name: as above, this image is named HotAirBalloon.jpg—if you do not title your image, it will look more like “IMG\_5641.jpg” (the default file name from your camera). Adding a location would further optimize this image: hot\_air\_balloon\_san\_diego.jpg for example. I recommend that you use lower case letters, no spaces, and keep the file name short—this ensures that a server doesn’t choke when serving up the file. By short, I mean try to avoid a long sentence that confuses the server, like “HotAirBalloonPhotoTakenOnVacationInSanDiego.jpg as an example. Also, some servers are not setup to handle file names with caps (better to play it safe).
- Description tag: this is added in the backend code of your site (the HTML image tag). WordPress makes this process very simple. WordPress also allows you to add an image title, which is what appears when someone hovers over that image.

- Alt tag: this is short for alternate text or alternate attribution and it allows a screen reader like JAWS (computer software for the visually impaired) to read the text since the user cannot physically see it. Alt tags are also indexed by crawlers.

### **File Size Matters**

Before you upload an image to your website, ensure that it is optimized to the web. It should be no more than 72 dpi with a pixel width of 1200 pixels or smaller (most browsers are 1200 pixels wide, so anything larger will not fit on the screen anyway). I recommend 900 pixels maximum for any image you upload to your site. As an example, the text on this page is about 900 pixels wide. You can size your images in a program like PhotoShop, PhotoShop Elements, iPhoto or you can use online tools like [www.webresizer.com](http://www.webresizer.com) and <http://www.photoshop.com/tools/expresseditor?wf=editor>, which both allow you to both resize and crop your images. WordPress now allows you to crop images as well.

### **Choosing a URL and sticking with it**

Once a URL has been assigned to a website, and the content on that website gets indexed, the URL itself gains ranking. For this reason, it is not advised to switch URLs—ever. You can however, buy numerous URLs and point them all to the same place.

If you ever find yourself salivating over someone else's URL - you might be able to buy it. First, check to see who owns it by looking it up at [www.whois.net](http://www.whois.net). I've had luck with buying desired URLs on more than one occasion.

### **In-Bound Links**

How popular are you? Google places a lot of emphasis on the number of incoming links your site has, specifically those that come from other high-ranking sites. There are a number of ways to get incoming links:

- Social media accounts like Facebook and Digg
- Online directories like Yahoo! Yellow Pages and the DMOZ
- Blog Directories
- Regional directories like Yelp
- Blog commenting. Read a blog post on how to use blog commenting to build your online platform: <http://bit.ly/qbYxjz>

There are many free tools you can use to check and see how many incoming links your site has, here are two:

- [www.BlueBackLinks.com](http://www.BlueBackLinks.com)
- [www.BackLinkWatch.com](http://www.BackLinkWatch.com)

## Anchor Text

Anchor text is literally the text you use to hyperlink to another page on your own site or someone else's website. For example, let's use the term "Author Websites San Diego." This is a nice keyword phrase because it is both regional and specific. The best way to optimize a site for this term is to:

1. Write relevant content about this topic on my site's home page.
2. I would then highlight the first mention of this term on my home page and link it to a new page (landing page) on my site that is dedicated to this concept. The sentence might read: Monkey C Media specializes in author websites in San Diego. I would then highlight and link the words "author websites in San Diego" to the new page on my site—the highlighted text is my anchor text.
3. For this new page, I would ensure that the extension is also "Author Websites San Diego," which would look like this:  
<http://monkeycmedia.com/author-websites-san-diego>

## In Summary—Your SEO Checklist:

1. Fine-tune your list of keywords.
  - a. Use a tool like Wordtracker or Google to come up with a good list of terms. Your goal is to create terms that are relevant to your content, but also have a low amount of competition.
    - i. Google: [bit.ly/ifwtwa](http://bit.ly/ifwtwa) keyword (free tool)
    - ii. Wordtracker: <http://www.wordtracker.com> (paid svc.)
2. Study your competition by running competitor sites through a keyword density checker. This will tell you how many times that terms appears and where.
  - a. <http://webconfs.com>: this site includes several tools that will help you create a solid SEO campaign.
  - b. <http://tools.seobook.com>: it's a good idea to use more than one keyword density checker because no system is perfect (use your results as a gauge to fine-tune your efforts).
3. Create unique title and description tags that are relevant to the content of that page.
4. Create landing/anchor pages for each of your most coveted keyword phrases.
5. Write well-written, informative content that offers value to your audience.
6. Include optimized images on your landing pages.
7. Utilize your keyword phrases as anchor text when linking within your own website (create landing pages where 10% of the content utilizes

your desired phrase); encourage others to use your keywords when linking back to your website.

8. Allow others to share your content on social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, Digg, etc.
9. Create personal or company profiles on other sites that you to link back to your own site (like a Google profile for example).