

Content Writing Checklist for Non SEOs

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Content Writing Checklist

#	Recommendation	Rationale	Status
1	Core Topical Focus	Each page should focus on a single core topic to optimize SEO. This includes using the topic in key elements like H1, URL, title tag, and image alt text. Sub-topics should also be related. Read more.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	SERP Research	Understand what ranks well by analyzing the top 5 search results for your topic. Identify common sub-topics and include them in your content. Read more.	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	Content Organization	Use a clear structure with subheadings (H2, H3) and short paragraphs. Each section should focus on a sub-topic, with only one H1 at the start. Read more.	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	Formatting for Featured Snippets	Format content to increase the likelihood of being featured in Google's snippets. This includes using concise paragraphs, lists, and tables where appropriate. Read more.	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Citing Reputable Sources	Boost content credibility by citing sources like government, academic research, industry experts, and recognized publications. Avoid less credible sources like Wikipedia or outdated materials. Read more.	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	Image and Visual Aid Optimization	Choose the right file format and optimize the file size. Use descriptive file names and alt text for images. Ensure images are contextually placed and responsive. Read more.	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	Internal Linking	Add links to related content within your site. This helps in content discoverability, link juice distribution, and content clustering. Use relevant anchor text for these links. Read more.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Further Details:

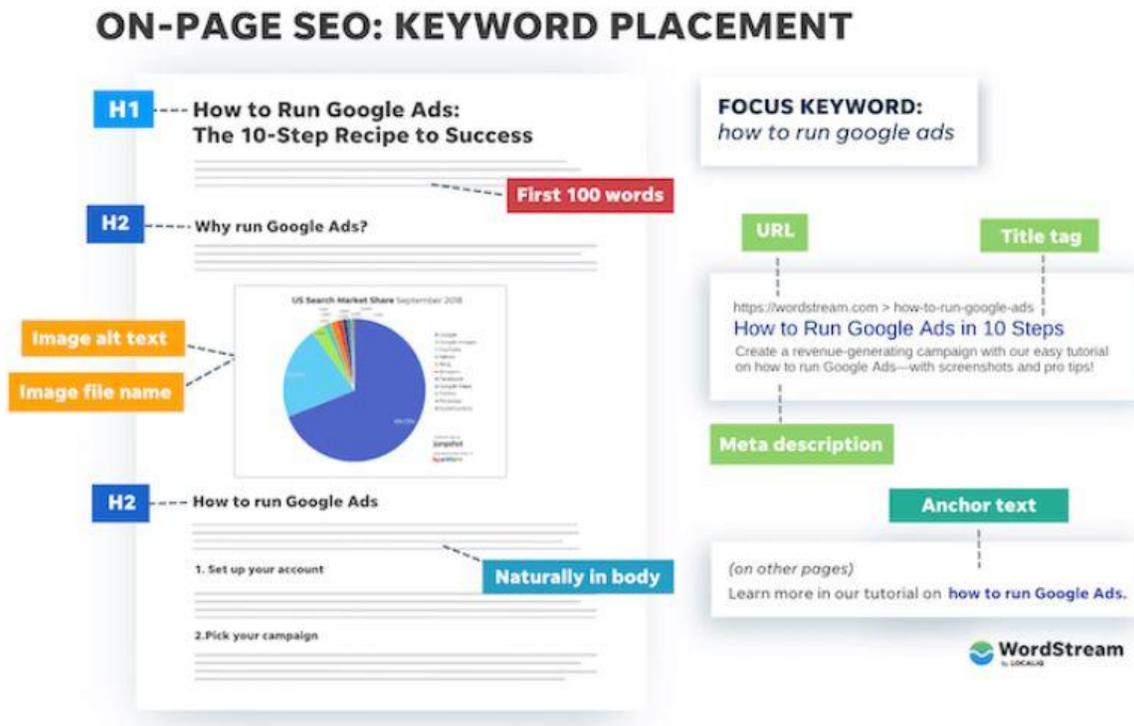
1. Topical Focus – one defined topic per page

A golden rule of SEO is “One Page, One Topic”. What I mean by this is that, a single web page should be laser focused on one specific topic. In the case of core site content, this may be a product or service.

If you mix two or more different topics on a page it becomes incredibly difficult to optimise the page for all topics and ensure that it ranks in a high position for queries relevant to all those topics.

As a content writer, you usually won't need to worry about this as the general focus topic of the post will be provided to you within the brief based on detailed keyword research that's already been carried out Velocity Growth.

You will even be provided with sub-topics within that primary topical focus too. The primary topic and keywords relevant to the topic should then be the focus of key elements of your page like the H1, the URL, the title tag, image alt text tags and file names, etc.



2. SERP Research – understand what it takes to rank well

You will have been provided with a content brief that outlines the key page topical focus along with a few sub-topics that we would recommend. However, it's always a good idea to do your own SERP (Search Engine Results Page) research to understand what other sub-topics are included within content that currently ranks well for searches relevant to your target topic. The process is pretty easy:

1. Ensure that you are in the same location as your target market (or using a VPN to trick Google into thinking that you are), simply do a search closely related to the topic of your post.
2. Open the top 5 results for that search in new tabs.
3. Review the content within each of the top 5 results and identify:
 1. Any sub-topics or themes that appear over and over again across the top ranking examples
 2. Any sub-topics that appear in any of the articles that you, as an SME, feel would be relevant / helpful to your target audience
4. Incorporate these new sub-topics into your content outline.

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You can use this [handy Google Sheets document](#) to get a quick high level overview of the structure of each of the top results for a certain query. How to use this doc:

1. Create a copy of the document for yourself.
2. Just replace the URLs in the “URL” row with the URLs of the top ranking results for your query
3. Then the H1s and H2s on those pages will be displayed in rows underneath

	A	B	C	D	E	F
1	URL:	https://velocitygrowth.com/blog/pdf/how-do-you-use-google-tag-manager-to-track-file-downloads-on-your-website/	https://www.analyticsmama.com/boost-track-pdf-downloads-with-google/	https://siteturners.com/blog/how-to-track-pdf-downloads-with-google-analytics-4/	https://seo-hacker.com/track-pdf-downloads-oooon/	https://absentdata.com/track-pdf-downloads/
2		How do you use Google Tag Manager to track file downloads on your website?	Track PDF Downloads with Google Tag Manager - Template	How to Track PDF Downloads Using Google Tag Manager and Google Analytics	Loading...	Track PDF Downloads in Google Tag Manager
3		A Step by Step Guide	Using Google Analytics 4?	GTM to the Rescue: Track PDF downloads with Google Tag Manager		
4		Step 1: Set up a Google Analytics account	Table of contents	1. Configure the Variable Setup		
5		Step 2: Create a new tag in Google Tag Manager	New to Google Tag Manager?	2. Configure the Trigger Setup		
6		Step 3: Configure the tag settings	How to Track PDF Downloads with GTM	3. Configure the Tag Setup		
7		Step 4: Trigger the tag		Tracking PDF Downloads with Google Tag Manager: Somewhat Technical, But Powerful		
8		Step 5: Save and publish the tag	Trigger			
9		Step 6: Test the tag	Variables			
10	Headings	More How-To Guides	Google Analytics Tag			
11		How To Create Instagram Carousel Ads	Test the setup			
12		How To Create impactful Instagram Stories	Publish the container			
13		How To Create impactful Instagram Video Ads	Why limit yourself to just PDF? Track other files too!			
14		How To Create impactful Instagram Shopping Ads	Container Template			
15		How To Set Up Instagram Ad Retargeting	Check the GA Reports			
16		How To Create Instagram Ad Designs Using Best Practices	Create a Google Analytics Goal			
17		Intersected link	Bonus: Advanced Tracking of File Downloads with Google Tag Manager			
18			What if a File Link does not Contain a File Extension?			
19			FAQ			
			Final Words			

3. Content Organization – clear, logical structure.

Organize your content with a clear and logical structure – users don't want to see long, unstructured, seemingly never-ending lines of text. Neither do search engines. Search engines love structure.

Subheadings and paragraphs are essential for making sure users and crawlers can easily scan, read, and understand your content. Subheadings should be used to introduce new sub-topics / sections and to break down content further within those sections. From an SEO perspective you should use the following “rules” as a guide:

- H1 should be used only once within your content – at the very start – and should include the title of your article. This title should incorporate keywords that are closely aligned with your core topic.
- H2s should be used frequently to break up content further. Each sub-topic provided by Velocity Growth, or discovered in your own SERP research should ideally be incorporated into a H2, where logical (sometimes it will make more sense to use a H3)
- H3s should be used for further segmentation of content within H2 sections – think of them as subheadings within your sub-topic sections.

Within all of these sections, paragraphs should be short and focused, with one main idea per paragraph. Outside of using subheadings and concise paragraphs, you should also make use of other formatting methods to boost user engagement and also SEO visibility which brings us to our next tip...

4. Formatting – use it to encourage featured snippets.

Featured snippets are auto-generated rich results on the Google SERP. They provide quick answers to user queries from Google's index and tend to take up prime SERP real estate above the fold. By formatting your content in a manner that encourages Google to display it as a featured snippet, you can increase your chances of your content ranking at the very top of the Google SERP.

There are number of different types of features snippets including:

- Paragraph snippets – the most common type of snippet – they answer answers within the featured snippet block and may also unclude an image. Generally, they answer “How To / Who is/ What is” type search queries.
- List snippets – show answers in a step-by-step form, numbered list, or a bulleted list. They answer queries on recipes, DIY tasks and “How To” type queries.
- Table snippets – usually an HTML table pulled from the page. Tend to answer questions on pricing, rates, and data.

How to optimize for featured snippets?

- Generally speaking, to encourage Google to use your content as a paragraph featured snippets, when explaining key concepts or answering key questions, you should use short, focused paragraphs of around 40-60 words – it can also help if this is immediately preceded by a H2/H3 that is focused on the concept.
- To encourage Google to use your content in their list featured snippets you should, you guessed it, use ordered and unordered lists within your content where relevant (again, it helps if they are preceded by a topically focused h2/h3).
- And, surprise surprise, if you'd like to encourage Google to use your content in their table snippets – use tables in your content – especially when comparing things like product features, prices, etc.

5. Reputable Sources – use them for all facts, figures, claims.

Citing sources in your content, especially in content that falls within the [YMYL](#) umbrella can enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of your content. As we've already discussed, search engines, especially Google, prioritize content that appears authoritative and reliable. When making any disputable claims or discussing facts, figures, trends or statistics, etc. you should always try to include reputable sources to boost credibility.

You'll notice that sites that rank well in the area of health, fitness, medical advice, etc. tend to include sources / references either as hyperlinks within their content or in a dedicated section at the bottom of each article.

healthline Health Conditions ▾ Discover ▾ Plan ▾ Connect ▾

NUTRITION | Special Diets Healthy Eating Food Freedom Conditions Feel Good Food Products Vitam

How we reviewed this article:

Share this article

[SOURCES](#) HISTORY

Healthline has strict sourcing guidelines and relies on peer-reviewed studies, academic research institutions, and medical associations. We avoid using tertiary references. You can learn more about how we ensure our content is accurate and current by reading our [editorial policy](#).

- Ashraf SA, et al. (2020). Cordycepin for health and wellbeing: A potent bioactive metabolite of an entomopathogenic medicinal fungus *Cordyceps* with its nutraceutical and therapeutic potential.
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7356751/>
- Ashwagandha. (2022).
<https://medlineplus.gov/druginfo/natural/953.html>
- Astragalus. (2020).
<https://nccih.nih.gov/health/astragalus>
- Chandrasekhar K, et al. (2012). A prospective, randomized double-blind, placebo-controlled study of safety and efficacy of a high-concentration full-spectrum extract of ashwagandha root in reducing stress and anxiety in adults.
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.4103/0253-7176.106022>
- Cheng J, et al. (2015). An evidence-based update on the pharmacological activities and possible molecular targets of *Lycium barbarum* polysaccharides.
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4277126/>
- Choi E-K, et al. (2019). Supplementation with extract of *Gynostemma pentaphyllum* leaves reduces anxiety in healthy subjects with chronic psychological stress: A randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled clinical trial.

Source: <https://www.healthline.com/>

Choosing credible sources

You should always choose trustworthy sources such as:

- government institutions
- educational institutions
- peer reviewed academic research (try <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/> or <https://scholar.google.com/>)
- industry experts
- recognized news / niche publications

Some sources have useful information but may be less credible as a source / citation. It's best to avoid referencing these types of sources directly within your content, however they can often lead you to other more reputable primary sources that are worth linking to and referencing.

- wikipedia
- general websites and blogs
- social media
- entertainment publications
- outdated materials

6. Images and Visual Aids – use them frequently and optimize them

Imagery and visual aids are a crucial and often overlooked SEO opportunity for additional SEO visibility and traffic.

In one study back in 2020, [MOZ](#) claimed that images are returned for 27.3% of search queries on Google. In my own experience I have seen websites for which images can be a major source of traffic, with some sites owing up to 36% of organic traffic to image results on the Google SERP.

This data suggests that well optimized, relevant, useful images and visual guides within your content can be a play a huge role in enhancing the online visibility and discoverability of your content and your brand.

Here are some tips for image SEO optimization:

1. **Choose the Right File Format:** Use the appropriate file format for your images. JPEG is best for photos with a variety of colors, PNG is better for images with transparency or text, and WebP offers high-quality results with smaller file sizes.
2. **Optimize Image File Size:** Large images can slow down your website, affecting user experience and SEO. Compress your images to reduce file size without sacrificing quality. Tools like Adobe Photoshop, TinyPNG, or ImageOptim can be used for this.
3. **Use Descriptive File Names:** Instead of generic file names, use descriptive, keyword-rich file names. This helps search engines understand what the image is about and improves its chances of ranking in image search results.
4. **Alt Text is Crucial:** Always add alt text (alternative text) to your images. Alt text improves accessibility for users with screen readers and acts as a placeholder if the image fails to load. It should accurately describe the image and can include relevant keywords.
5. **SEO-Friendly URLs for Images:** Ensure that the URLs of your image files and the pages they are on are SEO-friendly and descriptive.

7. Internal Linking – add links to other related content where relevant

Whilst including links to other pages within your site may not have a direct impact on the page you are writing content for, it will help to boost other related pages and the performance of the overall site when done logically and consistently.

Internal linking is a critical aspect of SEO for several reasons, particularly in terms of content discoverability, “link juice” distribution, and content clustering:

- **Content Discoverability and Indexability:** Internal links help search engines discover new content on your website. When search engine bots crawl a page, they follow links within the page to find other pages. Without internal links, some pages might remain undiscovered, especially if they are not directly linked from your main navigation or sitemap. When it comes to indexing, Google kind of sees internal links as “votes” – the more internal links pointing to a blog post, the more likely Google is index it.
- **Distribution of Link Juice:** ‘Link juice’ refers to the value or equity passed from one page to another. Internal links distribute this link juice throughout your website, helping to increase the page authority of less prominent pages. When high-authority pages on your site link to lower-authority pages, they share some of their authority, boosting the SEO performance of those linked pages.
- **Content Clustering and Contextual Relevance:** Internal linking can be used to create content clusters, where you link related content together. This approach helps in establishing topical relevance and authority. By creating a cluster of content around a specific topic and linking these pieces together, you signal to search engines that your site has a depth of content on that particular subject. This can enhance the overall topical strength of your site and improve the rankings of individual pages within those clusters.

With this in mind it’s important to ensure that you add hyperlinks to other articles on your site wherever relevant within your content. When adding internal links, make sure that you use a relevant anchor text, ideally including keywords relevant to the page that you are linking to. Using “here” / “click here” / “read more” is not advisable – be descriptive in your anchor texts.

If you’d like to learn more about writing SEO friendly content [click here.](#)



If you’d like to learn more, check out our article on [writing SEO friendly content.](#)

