



PRACTICAL TIPS FOR GETTING FOUND ONLINE

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Note: The following links may change over time. The information in this document is not designed to replace your Web Developer. The goal is to provide you with tools to take steps independently to improve your organic SEO. These steps will also prepare you to talk further with your Web Developer.

Table of Contents

Passwords	2
Definitions	2
Search Your Name and Email	2
Test Your Site	3
Analyze Your Search Results	3
Search Terms.....	4
Current Content	4
New Content	5
Google likes:.....	5
Google doesn't like:	5
Create a Web	6
Clear Writing	6
AODA.....	7
Accessibility Steps	7
Tip Keyboard Navigation.....	7
Accessibility Test Sites.....	7
Security	8
Test for Malware:.....	8
Tech.....	8
Image and PDF Management Sites	8
Security Information	9
SEO Tools:	9
Goal Setting – Steps you will take:.....	9

Passwords

Create a password story e.g. I like to eat fish and chips at least 1x a week if not 2x;)!! Becomes the password: lltfac@l1xawin2x;)!!

Make password management easy with a Password Manager: LastPass <https://www.lastpass.com> or Bitwarden <https://bitwarden.com>

An option is a Password Generator: <https://my.norton.com/extspa/idsafe?path=pwd-gen>

Definitions

SEO – Search Engine Optimization – How easy is it for bots to find and index the content of your website?

Search Engines – This is the program you use to search online, including Google, Bing, Yahoo, Duck Duck Go.

Ranking – This refers to the page your site shows up on in a search. You want to be on page one or two which puts your site in the top 20.

Cache – A temporary memory storing a record of your online activity on your computer. You must clear your cache before searching for your site if you want a true picture of how your site does in search. If you are not sure how to do this, ask Google e.g., “How do I clear my cache in Chrome?”. Google does well with “how to” questions.

Bots – This is short for robots – it is a computer program that search engines use to scan the internet looking for the content on your site. Note: most of the traffic on the Web are bots not humans and many of them are ‘bad bots’.

Browser – This is the computer program you use to access the Internet including Opera, Firefox, Internet Explorer, Microsoft Edge, Google Chrome, Safari.

Search Your Name and Email

Google your name: Assess what you find. Add your name, picture and profile to your website if it is not currently on the site. LinkedIn is also a good place to add information about your organization and your role. Ideally, your Team and Board should have a profile and picture on the site.

Google your email address: If you are getting a lot of spam, it may be that your email address is online and not encrypted. If your website comes up in this search, ask your web developer to encrypt all email addresses on your website. If it comes up on other sites, contact them and ask them to remove your email and replace it with a link to the contact page of your site.

Test Your Site

1. Clear your cache
2. Open Google
3. Enter a search term
 - a. Search what people would search if they were looking for your programs and services
 - b. Ask people what they would search to find you
 - c. Search from the point of view of your different audiences
4. Document
 - a. Keep information on each search term you use
 - b. Record the page your site was on – your page rank (you don't need to go beyond page 5)
5. Repeat
 - a. Return to Google and enter another search term
 - b. Note: If you have opened some sites between searches clear your cache again.

Analyze Your Search Results

1. Rank
 - a. Did your site come up on page one or two?
 - b. Who came up ahead of you?
 - c. What is it about their site that worked?
2. Meta Descriptions - the 'blurb' that came up under your site on a search page
 - a. What does it say?
 - b. If you are not happy with the meta data you can change the content on your site or ask your Web Developer to add a meta data plug-in to your site
3. Repeat
 - a. Complete this every few months, using the same search terms
 - b. Document any changes

Search Terms

Note: Learners will likely search outcomes (e.g., Grade 12) and community partners will likely search programs (e.g., academic upgrading). Write to both audiences.

The challenge - very few people in our audience will search “literacy” or “digital literacy” so it is important to include words on your site that describe what you offer e.g. “Zoom training”.

The group of individuals from LBS organizations generated the following search terms. Try using them in your test searches. Ask who would search these terms - which people in my target audience? Then look on your site for these terms. Place names are important too. Add the search term followed by your location e.g., “Learning online Peterborough.”

Search terms:

- Free literacy for adults; free classes; free training; free learning; free adult learning
- Grade 12; adult grade 12; upgrading; upgrading for adults; adult learning; GED prep; math help; diploma; spelling; go back to school; English school; English class; learn English; improve math; math classes; academic upgrading; reading help; improve reading; writing; ESL; dyslexia
- Literacy; literacy support; Deaf Literacy; Deaf Literacy in Ontario, Literacy and Basic Skills; literacy upgrading; Basic Skills; Adult Literacy; OALCF
- Computer training; computer help; computer classes; computer learning; basic computers; learn to use a computer
- Remote learning; online learning; learn online; learning online; training online; online training
- Tutoring help; tutoring; one-to-one tutoring support
- Small classes
- Volunteering
- Job search help; job skills training
- Resources

Current Content

- Open your Home page and search for keywords
 - Use CTRL F (find) to open a search box
- Search other pages of your site for keywords
 - Critical information should be on your Home page, near the top
- Add missing keywords to your current content

New Content

Google loves fresh content so make some changes to your content every few months. Blogs are a good method for adding new content. Remember Bots get bored - create something new for the Bots.

1. Write to your audience(s)
 - a. Guess (anticipate) what they will be looking for
 - b. Guess (anticipate) what questions they will be looking to answer
2. Fresh Content
 - a. Add a blog to your site or add new posts to your blog
 - b. Add or change page content every few months
 - c. Add new pages with fresh content
3. Make sure the content is logical and relevant
4. Keywords – Work keywords into your content naturally

Google likes:

1. Testimonials
 - a. Consider testimonials from learners and partners
 - b. Write testimonials for partners so they can put it on their site and link back to you; linking back and forth is ideal
 - c. Your human visitors will love testimonials too
2. FAQ pages
3. Call to Action
 - a. What do you want people to do after they read the content on the page?
 - i. Call, email, drop in, read more?
 - b. Have a call to action at the end of each page e.g., “contact us for more information.” Make it a bit different with each page; make it an easy step to take. Remove barriers.

Google doesn't like:

1. Tricks
 - a. Never use tricks (such as hiding content), you can get delisted
2. Duplication
 - a. Avoid duplication of content on your site or on the site of another organization
 - b. Write a summary in your own words and then link to the original source

Create a Web

Add links to other sites and to pages inside your site.

Note: Avoid saying 'click here'. It is best to describe where you are taking them and hyperlink the text. "Click Here" doesn't tell the Bots anything.

1. Link to other sites in your network
 - a. Do you link to others e.g. partners, support organizations? Are you a member of the Chamber? Add logos with links to any organization you belong to as a member. Check links regularly.
2. Ask your partners to link to you from their site – offer your logo
3. Link to pages on your site
 - a. Google loves it if you link within your site - e.g., to learn more visit our testimonials page (and hyperlink Testimonials Page)
4. Link to blog posts on your site
5. Link to Social Media
 - a. Only if active
6. Link to YouTube

Clear Writing

It is important to use clear writing techniques on your site.

To learn more, visit the Learning Networks of Ontario for information about the Clear Writing Course: <https://learningnetworks.ca/clear-writing/clear-writing-online-course/>

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AODA

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act - It is important to make your site accessible for persons with disabilities. The things that make your site accessible to people, make it readable by Bots. You may need help from your Web Developer. Your website needs to be as accessible as you can make it.

Accessibility Steps

1. Structure

- a. Include content on primary (parent) pages e.g., the main tabs should open a page not just a drop-down menu.
- b. Each tab opens a page (not a PDF)
- c. Use headings e.g., Heading 1, Heading 2 and Heading 3. Always in descending order.
- d. Make sure the tab matches the URL - when you open your site and look at the About page, the URL should end with /about

2. Site Maps

- a. If your site does not have a site map you can ask your Web Developer to add an HTML site map
- b. Google loves site maps too - you can ask your Developer to add an XML site map – these are site maps for Bots

3. Screen reader friendly

- a. Can someone using a screen reader navigate your site and get the information they need?
- b. Add 'alt text' (alternative text) to any images. This means describing each picture with text. Robots and screen readers can't see images; only text.

Tip Keyboard Navigation

Can you navigate the website with a keyboard - using the tab key – if the tab key doesn't work the site is not accessible. It should go through the whole menu and all the links on the page.

Accessibility Test Sites

AODA resource: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/how-make-websites-accessible>

Contrast checker: <https://webaim.org/resources/contrastchecker/>

Accessibility evaluation tool: WAVE Accessibility Evaluation Tool: <https://wave.webaim.org>

Test your site but note, you will likely find errors – most sites have at least a few errors – talk to your Web Developer if they are critical.

Privacy Statement and handling & storage of sensitive personal data (PIPEDA):

<https://www.priv.gc.ca/en/privacy-topics/privacy-laws-in-canada/the-personal-information-protection-and-electronic-documents-act-pipeda/>

Security

1. Your site needs an SSL certificate
 - a. Check and make sure your site URL starts with “https” not just “http”.
 - b. Look for the lock at the start of your URL
2. Malware protection – ask your Web Developer – there are things you can add to your site e.g. security plug-ins

Test for Malware:

If you have malware on your site Google will usually add a warning. You can do your own test:

<https://sitecheck.sucuri.net>

Tech

- The speed of your site is important
- Large images will slow your site
 - Images you have on your site need to be under 150 pixels and cropped to 800 x 600 (ballpark)
- Large PDFs will affect the speed of download
- Security – No Malware
- Your site needs to be mobile responsive
 - Look at your site on your phone – is it easy to navigate?

Image and PDF Management Sites

- Speed test (loading speed is critical for SEO): <https://tools.pingdom.com>
- Image Editor: <https://www.befunky.com/features/resize-image>
- PDF compression: this one lets you set the amount of compression; 72 dpi is good for screens: <https://www.pdf2go.com/compress-pdf>
- Another PDF Compression tool: <https://smallpdf.com/compress-pdf>
- Creative Commons 0 (CC0) Image Sites
 - <https://unsplash.com>
 - <https://pixabay.com/>
 - <https://www.pexels.com>

Note about Images: Images need to be stock images you have purchased a license to use, Creative Commons no-attribution required images, or images that belong to you.

Security Information

The importance of SSL:

<https://www.linkedin.com/business/learning/blog/productivity-tips/why-encrypting-your-website-is-now-something-you-need-to-do>

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbestechcouncil/2018/05/18/why-an-ssl-certificate-is-important-for-your-company-website/>

SEO Tools:

A good list of resources you can use to improve your sites' SEO: <https://www.webgnomes.org/blog/10-seo-analysis-tools/>

Goal Setting – Steps you will take:

- Test the speed of our website
- Test the accessibility of our website
- Ask our Web Developer about security
- Check for the 'lock' in front of the URL – SSL Certificate
- Test our site for accessibility
- Try moving around our site using our keyboard – tab key
- Add alternative text to the images on our website
- Strengthen passwords in our organization
- Get a password manager e.g. LastPass
- Google my name
- Google my email address
- Use Google + keywords to search for our site
- Search our site for keywords (using CTRL F)
- Edit the content of our website – adding keywords
- Write new content for our website
- Add links from our site to other websites in our network
- Add links between pages on our website
- Ask organizations in our network to link to our site
- Start a blog – add to our blog
- Add a FAQ page to our site
- Add testimonials to our site
- Add a call to action link or button at the end of each page on our site
- Check the size of PDFs on our site and shrink if needed
- Check the size of images on our site and reduce the size if needed
- Have someone search for something on our site – client, peer, friends and observe how easy it is for them to find it
- Set a schedule for testing our site in search every few months
- Set a goal to be on page one or two with at least two important keywords