

# SEO Basics for Writers

WordAgents offers SEO content to clients all over the world. But what is SEO, and how does it affect your writing?

***The goal and purpose of SEO content is for the article to rank in the Top 10 spots on Google for the target keyword provided.***

We work toward this by using the right keywords the proper amount of times.

## SEO Basics for Writers

At WordAgents, SEO is our bread and butter! Read on for everything you need to know to apply SEO to your next assignment.

### [SEO Basics for Writers](#)

[What is SEO?](#)

[Note: Defer to Client Guidelines](#)

[SEO Basics Quick Checklist](#)

[SEO Basics: Step By Step](#)

[Body Content Main KW](#)

[Body Content Secondary KWs](#)

[Keyword Density](#)

[Finding Keywords \(if none are provided\)](#)

[Meta Description \(as requested\)](#)

[Title tag \(as requested\)](#)

[H1 Tag \(as requested\)](#)

[H2 through H4 Tags](#)

[Write Naturally](#)

[Internal Links](#)

[External Links](#)

## What is SEO?

In a broad sense, Search Engine Optimization (SEO) refers to the practice of positioning a site to attract high-quality traffic. While volume is a consideration, *high-quality* traffic is website visitors that are very interested in the content, service, or product the site offers.

We use various content strategies to attract consumers, and the end goal is to provide them with what they're looking for. The catch is, we have to incorporate SEO the right way in every piece of content we create.

Many companies love SEO because once the content goes live, it's a free way to get Google (and other search engines) to notice their website and, therefore, their business. Because the content we create keeps 'working' for our clients long after it's posted, we're providing a valuable service with a high return on investment.

For a more thorough discussion of SEO, check out trusted SEO authority [Moz's article on the subject](#).

## Note: Defer to Client Guidelines

Many clients provide their own SEO guidelines (including a set keyword a certain number of times, skipping external links altogether, etc.). These materials are intended as a resource to help you shape articles without direct guidance from the client.

**If client instructions exist, defer to the client's preferences.**

## SEO Basics Quick Checklist

1. Use the primary keyword 3-5 times in the body of the content.
2. Incorporate each secondary (LSI) keyword at least once in the body or headers.
3. Don't exceed a 3 percent KW density.
4. Find keywords to use if none are provided.
5. Write a Meta Description if requested.
6. Include a Title Tag if requested.
7. Create an H1 Tag if not provided.
8. Utilize H2 through H4 Tags.
9. Write Naturally.
10. Find Internal Linking opportunities.
11. Add External Links.

## SEO Basics: Step By Step

Need more background on any of the quick checklist items above?

- [Body Content Main KW](#)
- [Body Content Secondary KWs](#)
- [Keyword Density](#)
- [Finding Keywords](#)
- [Meta Description](#)
- [Title tag](#)
- [H1 Tag](#)
- [H2 through H4 Tags](#)
- [Write Naturally](#)

- [Internal Links](#)
- [External Links](#)

## Body Content Main KW

The body of the article (not title/headers) should include the main keyword 3-5 times. A good rule of thumb is to use the primary KW in the introduction, conclusion, and at least one other time in the article body.

Keep in mind that a longer article will need more keyword instances. See Keyword Density for more information.

## Body Content Secondary KWs

Each client-provided or writer-researched secondary keyword should appear in the body content at least once. Secondary keywords, AKA LSI keywords, can be used in headers as well. Long-tail keywords can work well for headers, particularly questions.

**Keyword Note:** On orders that DO NOT have an SEO add-on, we commit to using up to 20 keywords that the client provides. If they provide more than 20, choose the higher-ranked (if noted) words or the more common/likelier to be searched for options.

If the client provides an outline (for example, in Frase) without purchasing an add-on, you are NOT responsible for optimizing the content. However, you are responsible for using any headings, topics, or keywords the client provides (up to 20 KWs).

## Keyword Density

Sticking to one keyword instance for every 100-200 words is a good metric, but keep it natural.

A good rule is to aim for a keyword density of less than 3 percent. While our minimums are 3-5 main keyword instances, this will vary depending on article length. Keeping keyword density in mind prevents you from overusing the terms.

**Keyword density = Number of keyword instances (CTRL + F in Google doc to find them) / total word count**

For example, 6 keyword instances / 1,000-word article = .006 or .6%

With this example, you've met the minimums, but you *could* add a few more KW instances if they come up naturally.

Another example, 30 keyword instances / 1,000-word article = .03 or 3%

This article is acceptable but look at it critically. Reading through, you *might* notice it begins to feel repetitive or forced. Removing a few main key terms, or using secondary keywords in some sentences, can help it read more naturally. As-is, this would be the maximum allowable density — anything higher, and Google may penalize the page or post.

## Finding Keywords (if none are provided)

Keywords can help you focus the article and will also help you with outlining/research if the client hasn't provided much guidance.

The main topic may work as a keyword. Other great ways to find related keywords are via the "People Also Ask" section on Google or "Searches related to "x" (topic)." Short phrases can be helpful, and questions can work for FAQs or headings.

Google your main KW, and read/skim the top article on the subject. Use similar keywords in your writing. Most of these will flow logically; a search for "banana prices" turns up phrases like "how much do bananas cost" and "banana prices 2020" or "price of bananas at Target."

## Meta Description (as requested)

Not every client will request a meta description. But when they do, it needs to include the main keyword. Adding a secondary keyword or two is great as well, but the description should read naturally.

Meta descriptions are limited to 160 **characters** maximum; Google truncates them to fit. The character count includes spaces.

## Title tag (as requested)

Clients may request a title tag, which functions as a secondary title of the article (different from the H1 Title in the article). Title tags often include the website name, because these appear on search engine results pages (SERPs).

This is the title that readers will hopefully see when they search for the client's relevant keywords. It should include the primary keyword as close to the beginning as possible and span no more than 50 words.

## H1 Tag (as requested)

Many clients provide a title or working title when they order from WordAgents. Should the client not include a title or specifically request that our team writes one, craft it carefully.

H1 tags should aim to include primary plus secondary KWs in a way that grabs readers' attention. These titles can vary in length, but a good goal is 40 to 60 characters.

## H2 through H4 Tags

H2 through H4 tags refer to the headers you'll use to shape the article body. Headers 2-4 are helpful for breaking up the content into smaller chunks (about 150-200 words per section) while incorporating secondary keywords in natural ways.

Unless a client requests otherwise, don't go deeper than H4 with your headers. Similarly, if the client has outlined specific headers, defer to their instructions.

In the absence of a client outline, use secondary keywords and additional keyword research to determine what readers want to know about a subject. Depending on the client's request and the content type, including an FAQ section can also be a helpful way to incorporate keywords while targeting the appropriate audience.

## Write Naturally

Some keywords are tough to work with, especially question format (typically secondary KWs). Don't use quotes to phrase question KWs unless absolutely necessary. Instead, use them as headers where possible, or start a paragraph with the question itself.

For example:

KW: how much do bananas cost

Wrong: If you're asking yourself, "how much do bananas cost," then...

Better: How Much Do Bananas Cost? [H2 or H3 etc.]

Better: How much do bananas cost? The price can vary...

Long-tail keywords are sometimes awkward. To make them work in your copy, add stop words to make them make sense.

Stop words can include articles, conjunctions, pronouns, prepositions, etc.

\*\*\*Note that with SEO add-ons, tools may not pick up keyword strings with stop words.

## Internal Links

When clients provide us with a website link, internal linking is one way to support their site's SEO. Linking to related posts with the main key term or topic as the anchor text can help readers find what they're looking for *and* show Google that our client is the authority in their niche.

If the client has multiple posts on similar topics, be sure to check out the content and determine the nuance. An internal link to the same topic using the same primary keyword constitutes keyword cannibalization, which is detrimental to a site's SEO.

## External Links

External links are another way clients can build credibility in their niche. The key is linking to helpful resources that don't compete with the client's topic or industry. Avoid linking to pages that answer the same question your content does.

For example, if the client's article is about SEO and they're an agency selling services, you won't want to link to a competitor's explanation of SEO.

Keeping the reader on the page is a priority, but if they *do* want to leave, the resources they depart for should be valuable and non-competitive.