

About Search Engines

A compilation of articles about search engine placement.

Contents

SEARCH ENGINE PLACEMENT TIPS	1
PICK YOUR STRATEGIC KEYWORDS	1
POSITION YOUR KEYWORDS	1
HAVE RELEVANT CONTENT	2
AVOID SEARCH ENGINE STUMBLING BLOCKS	2
HAVE HTML LINKS	2
FRAMES CAN KILL.....	3
DYNAMIC DOORBLOCKS	3
USE META TAGS.....	3
JUST SAY NO TO SEARCH ENGINE SPAMMING	3
SUBMIT YOUR KEY PAGES	4
VERIFY AND MAINTAIN YOUR LISTING	4
BEYOND SEARCH ENGINES.....	5
THE MAJOR SEARCH ENGINES.....	6
AOL SEARCH.....	6
ALTAVISTA	6
ASK JEEVES	6
DIRECT HIT	7
EXCITE	7
FAST SEARCH	7
GO / INFOSEEK.....	8
GoTo.....	8
GOOGLE	8
HOTBOT	8
IWON	9
INKTOMI.....	9
LOOKSMART	9
LYCOS	9
MSN SEARCH.....	10
NBCi	10
NETSCAPE SEARCH	10
NORTHERN LIGHT	10
OPEN DIRECTORY	10

RAGING SEARCH.....	11
WEBCRAWLER	11
WEBTOP	11
YAHOO.....	12
OPTIMIZING REGISTRATION WITH A DIRECTORY	13
YAHOO.....	13
<i>Your Yahoo Submission Made Easy</i>	13
<i>Click the Add URL icon at the top of the screen.</i>	14
<i>Fill out the ADD URL Form</i>	14
SUBMIT.....	15
CHECK YOUR LISTING.....	15
QUESTIONS	15
"NON-NETIQUETTE" THINGS:	16
HOW TO USE HTML META TAGS	17
TWO IMPORTANT META TAGS: KEYWORDS AND DESCRIPTION	17
META ROBOTS TAG	18
IN CONCLUSION	19
META TAGS - WHAT, WHERE, WHEN, WHY?	20
WHAT ARE META TAGS?.....	20
WHAT DOES A META TAG LOOK LIKE?	20
WHAT CAN I INCLUDE IN A META TAG?.....	20
ARE THERE OPTIONAL TAGS?	21
OTHER USEFUL POINTS.	21
ANY SOFTWARE TO HELP ME CREATE META TAGS?	22
QUESTIONS ABOUT THE META TAG.....	22
<i>Can I put my competitors name(s) in my meta tags?</i>	22
<i>Should I use commas or not?</i>	22
<i>I use AOL, and I'm having difficulty putting in meta tags. How do I do it?</i>	22
GENERAL TIPS FOR GETTING LISTED IN SEARCH ENGINES	23
<i>Sites using Netscape frames:</i>	24
<i>Sites using Javascript at the top of their page</i>	24
<i>If your site uses frames</i>	24
KEYWORDS: SOME TIPS	25
SOME ONLINE HELP	25

CHOOSING KEYWORDS	26
THE TITLE TAG	26
THE META TAG	26
CHOOSING KEYWORDS: PRACTICES TO AVOID	28

Search Engine Placement Tips

(Adapted from searchenginewatch.com)

A search engine query often turns up hundreds or thousands of matching web pages. In most cases, only the 10 most "relevant" matches are displayed first.

Naturally, anyone who runs a web site wants to be in the "top ten" results. This is because most users will find a result they like in the top ten. Being listed 11 or beyond means that many people may miss your web site.

The tips below will help you come closer to this goal, both for the keywords you think are important and for phrases you may not even be anticipating.

Pick Your Strategic Keywords

How do you think people will search for your web page? The words you imagine them typing into the search box are your strategic keywords.

For example, say you have a page devoted to stamp collecting. Anytime someone types "stamp collecting," you want your page to be in the top ten results. Then those are your strategic keywords for that page.

Each page in your web site will have different strategic keywords that reflect the page's content. For example, say you have another page about the history of stamps. Then "stamp history" might be your keywords for that page.

Your strategic keywords should always be at least two or more words long.

Usually, too many sites will be relevant for a single word, such as "stamps." This "competition" means your odds of success are lower. Don't waste your time fighting the odds. Pick phrases of two or more words, and you'll have a better shot at success.

Position Your Keywords

Make sure your strategic keywords appear in the crucial locations on your web pages. The page title is most important. Failure to put strategic keywords in the page title is the main reason why perfectly relevant web pages may be poorly ranked.

Search engines also like pages where keywords appear "high" on the page, as described more fully on the Search Engine Ranking page. To accommodate them, use your strategic keywords for your page headline, if possible. Have them also appear in the first paragraphs of your web page.

Keep in mind that tables can "push" your text further down the page, making keywords less relevant because they appear lower on the page. This is because tables break apart when search engines read them.

There's no easy way around this, except to use meta tags. That helps for the search engines that use them. For the others, it may not be that big a problem. Consider how tables might affect your page, but don't necessarily stop using them. I like tables, and I'll continue to use them.

Large sections of JavaScript can also have the same affect as tables. The search engine reads this information first, which causes the normal HTML text to appear lower on the page. Place your script further down on the page, if possible. As with tables, the use of meta tags can also help.

Have Relevant Content

Changing your page titles and adding meta tags is not necessarily going to help your page do well for your strategic keywords if the page has nothing to do with the topic. **Your keywords need to be reflected in the page's content.**

In particular, that means you need HTML text on your page. Sometimes sites present large sections of copy via graphics. It looks pretty, but search engines can't read those graphics. That means they miss out on text that might make your site more relevant. Some of the search engines will index ALT text and comment information, along with meta tags. But to be safe, use HTML text whenever possible. Some of your human visitors will appreciate it, also.

Be sure that your HTML text is "visible." Some designers try to spam search engines by repeating keywords in a tiny font or in the same color as the background color to make the text invisible to browsers. Search engines are catching on to these and other tricks. Expect that if the text is not visible in a browser, then it won't be indexed by a search engine.

Finally, consider "expanding" your text references, where appropriate. For example, a stamp collecting page might have references to "collectors" and "collecting." Expanding these references to "stamp collectors" and "stamp collecting" reinforces your strategic keywords in a legitimate and natural manner. Your page really is about stamp collecting, but edits may have reduced its relevancy unintentionally.

Avoid Search Engine Stumbling Blocks

Some search engines see the web the way someone using a very old browser might. They may not read image maps. They may not read frames. You need to anticipate these problems, or a search engine may not index any or all your web pages.

Have HTML Links

Often, designers create only image map links from the home page to inside pages. A search engine that can't follow these links won't be able to get "inside" the site. Unfortunately, the most descriptive, relevant pages are often inside pages rather than the home page.

Solve this problem by adding some HTML hyperlinks to the home page that lead to major inside pages or sections of your web site. This is something that will help some of your human visitors, also. Put them down at the bottom of the page. The search engine will find them and follow them.

Also consider making a site map page with text links to everything in your web site. You can submit this page, which will help the search engines locate pages within your web site.

Finally, be sure you do a good job of linking internally between your pages. If you naturally point to different pages from within your site, you increase the odds that search engines will follow links and find more of your web site.

Frames Can Kill

Some of the major search engines cannot follow frame links. Make sure there is an alternative method for them to enter and index your site, either through meta tags or smart design. For more information, see the tips on using frames.

Dynamic Door Blocks

Generating pages via CGI or database-delivery? Expect that some of the search engines won't be able to index them. Consider creating static pages whenever possible, perhaps using the database to update the pages, not to generate them on the fly. Also, avoid symbols in your URLs, especially the ? symbol. Search engines tend to choke on it.

Use Meta Tags

As mentioned above, meta tags can help you overcome problems with tables, frames and other trouble areas. Meta tags will also help you control your site's description in engines that support them. You should use meta tags, but keep in mind that they are NOT a guarantee that your site will appear first. Adding some meta tag code is not a magic bullet that cures your site of dismal rankings. For more information, see the tips on using meta tags. Site subscribers have access to extended information about meta tags.

Just Say No to Search Engine Spamming

For one thing, spamming doesn't always work with search engines. It can also backfire. Search engines may detect your spamming attempt and penalize or ban your page from their listings.

Also, search engine spamming attempts usually center around being top ranked for extremely popular keywords. You can try and fight that battle against other sites, but then be prepared to spend a lot of time each week, if not each day, defending

your ranking. That effort usually would be better spent on networking and alternative forms of publicity, described below.

If those practical reasons aren't enough, how about some ethical ones? The content of most web pages ought to be enough for search engines to determine relevancy without webmasters having to resort to repeating keywords for no reason other than to try and "beat" other web pages. The stakes will simply keep rising, and users will also begin to hate sites that undertake these measures.

Consider search engine spamming against spam mail. No one likes spam mail, and sites that use spam mail services often face a backlash from those on the receiving end. Sites that spam search engines degrade the value of search engine listings. As the problem grows, these sites may face the same backlash that spam mail generates.

Submit Your Key Pages

Most search engines will index the other pages from your web site by following links from a page you submit to them. But sometimes they miss, so it's good to submit the top two or three pages that best summarize your web site.

Don't trust the submission process to automated programs and services. Some of them are excellent, but the major search engines are too important. There aren't that many, so submit manually, so that you can see if there are any problems reported.

Also, don't bother submitting more than the top two or three pages. It doesn't speed up the process. Submitting alternative pages is only insurance. In case the search engine has trouble reaching one of the pages, you've covered yourself by giving it another page from which to begin its crawl of your site.

Some search engines have an instant indexing service, as described in the Search Engine Features page. In this case, you should submit all the key pages from your web site, not just the top two or three.

Be patient. It can take up to a month to two months for your "non-submitted" pages to appear in a search engine, and some search engines may not list every page from your site.

Verify and Maintain Your Listing

Check on your pages and ensure they get listed, in the ways described on the Check URL page. Once your pages are listed in a search engine, monitor your listing every week or two. Strange things happen. Pages disappear from catalogs. Links go screwy. Watch for trouble, and resubmit if you spot it.

Keep in mind that a number of the major search engines are now providing country-specific versions of their directories. These mainly work filtering sites by domain. For example, a British edition of a major search engine might only list web sites

with British domains, such as ".co.uk." A British site ending in a non-British domain, such as .com, would be filtered out. If this type of situation applies to your site, you may need to message the search engine so that they can manually include your site.

Resubmit your site any time you make significant changes. Search engines should revisit on a regular schedule. However, some search engines have grown smart enough to realize some sites only change content once or twice a year, so they may visit less often. Resubmitting after major changes will help ensure that your site's content is kept current.

Beyond Search Engines

It's worth taking the time to make your site more search engine friendly, because some simple changes may pay off with big results. Even if you don't come up in the top ten for your strategic keywords, you may find an improvement for strategic keywords you aren't anticipating. The addition of just one extra word can suddenly make a site appear more relevant, and it can be impossible to guess what that word will be.

You should also consider negotiating reciprocal links with sites that do appear in the top ten lists, if you are having no luck. Perhaps some of these sites might be considered "competitors," but you'd be surprised how many are happy to link to your site in return for a link back. After all, your site may appear first when slightly different keywords are used. Links are what the web was built on, and they remain one of the best ways for people to find your site.

Also, remember that while search engines are a primary way people look for web sites, but they are not the only way. People also find sites through word-of-mouth, traditional advertising, the traditional media, newsgroup postings, web directories and links from other sites. Many times, these alternative forms are far more effective draws than are search engines. For some ideas, see some of the links on the Online Publicity page.

Finally, know when it's time to call it quits. A few changes may be enough to make you tops in one or two search engines. But that's not enough for some people, and they will invest days creating special pages and changing their sites to try and do better. This time could usually be put to better use pursuing non-search engine publicity methods.

Don't obsess over your ranking. Even if you follow every tip and find no improvement, you still have gained something. You will know that search engines are not the way you'll be attracting traffic. You can concentrate your efforts in more productive areas, rather than wasting your valuable time.

The Major Search Engines

(From searchenginewatch.com)

Why are the services below considered to be the Major Search Engines? They are all either well known or well used.

For webmasters, these services are the most important places to be listed, because they can potentially generate so much traffic.

For searchers, these well known, commercially backed search engines generally mean more dependable results. These search engines are more likely to be well maintained and upgraded when necessary, to keep pace with the growing web.

Not all of the services below are "true" search engines that crawl the web. For instance, Yahoo and the Open Directory both are "directories" that depend on humans to compile their listings. In fact, most of the services below offer both search engine and directory information, though they will predominately feature one type of results over the other. See the [How Search Engines Work](#) page to understand more about the difference between search engines and directories.

AOL Search

AOL Search allows its members to search across the web and AOL's own content from one place. The "external" version, listed above, does not list AOL content. The main listings for categories and web sites come from the Open Directory (see below). Inktomi (see below) also provides crawler-based results, as backup to the directory information. Before the launch of AOL Search in October 1999, the AOL search service was Excite-powered AOL NetFind.

AltaVista

AltaVista is consistently one of the largest search engines on the web, in terms of pages indexed. Its comprehensive coverage and wide range of power searching commands makes it a particular favorite among researchers. It also offers a number of features designed to appeal to basic users, such as "Ask AltaVista" results, which come from Ask Jeeves (see below), and directory listings from the Open Directory and LookSmart. AltaVista opened in December 1995. It was owned by Digital, then run by Compaq (which purchased Digital in 1998), then spun off into a separate company which is now controlled by CMGI. AltaVista also operates the Raging Search service, below.

Ask Jeeves

Ask Jeeves is a human-powered search service that aims to direct you to the exact page that answers your question. If it fails to find a match within its own database, then it will provide matching web pages from various search engines. The service went into beta in mid-April 1997 and opened fully on June 1, 1997. Some results from Ask Jeeves also appear within AltaVista.

Direct Hit

Direct Hit measures what people click on in the search results presented at its own site and at its partner sites, such as HotBot. Sites that get clicked on more than others rise higher in Direct Hit's rankings. Thus, the service dubs itself a "popularity engine." Aside from running its own web site, Direct Hit provides the main results which appear at HotBot (see below) and is available as an option to searchers at MSN Search. Direct Hit is owned by Ask Jeeves (above). See the Using Direct Hit Results page to learn more about Direct Hit.

Excite

Excite is one of the more popular search services on the web. It offers a fairly large index and integrates non-web material such as company information and sports scores into its results, when appropriate. Excite was launched in late 1995. It grew quickly in prominence and consumed two of its competitors, Magellan in July 1996, and WebCrawler in November 1996. These continue to run as separate services.

At the present time, Excite does not make use of tags. Since keywords and summaries are automatically generated by Excite, you have less control over their creation. However, there are still a few things you can do. Excite's software looks for common words or themes within a page. It then selects sentences for the summary that either contain these words or convey the overall theme. The words within these sentences are also used as keywords for which the site can be searched.

1. Especially at the beginning of your page, be as concise as possible and limit non-descriptive sentences. If the Excite robot comes across a number of ambiguous phrases, it will have to look deeper and deeper into your site to determine its theme and site summary. Along the same line, too little text will also force the robot to travel further into the site for more information in order to establish a theme.
2. Excite's indexing software places preference on complete, punctuated sentences. If you have content, such as a quote, at the top of your page that you do not want Excite to include in your site summary, do not display it as a complete sentence. This will lessen the chance that the quote will be included, but will not guarantee its exclusion.

FAST Search

Formerly called All The Web, FAST Search aims to index the entire web. It was the first search engine to break the 200 million web page index milestone and consistently has one of the largest indexes of the web. The Norwegian company behind FAST Search also powers some of the results that appear at Lycos (see below). FAST Search launched in May 1999.

Go / Infoseek

Go is a portal site produced by Infoseek and Disney. It offers portal features such as personalization and free e-mail, plus the search capabilities of the former Infoseek search service, which has now been folded into Go. Searchers will find that Go consistently provides quality results in response to many general and broad searches, thanks to its ESP search algorithm. It also has an impressive human-compiled directory of web sites. Go officially launched in January 1999. It is not related to GoTo, below. The former Infoseek service launched in early 1995.

1. InfoSeek supports both the keywords and description <META> tags. Your description can include up to 200 characters of text and the keywords can include up to 1000 characters of text. Do not repeat versions of a keyword more than seven times. If you do, InfoSeek will disregard the entire keyword list.
2. If you do not make use of the description <META> tag, InfoSeek's agent will simply insert the first 200 characters after the <BODY> tag as the web page description. Hence, if your Web document does not contain <META> tags, at least try to make your first 200 words accurately describe your Web site.
3. InfoSeek also indexes the ALT attribute in the tag. If the majority of your home page consists of graphics, you can describe your page with the ALT attribute.

GoTo

Unlike the other major search engines, GoTo sells its main listings. Companies can pay money to be placed higher in the search results, which GoTo feels improves relevancy. Non-paid results come from Inktomi. GoTo launched in 1997 and incorporated the former University of Colorado-based World Wide Web Worm. In February 1998, it shifted to its current pay-for-placement model and soon after replaced the WWW Worm with Inktomi for its non-paid listings. GoTo is not related to Go (Infoseek).

Google

Google is a search engine that makes heavy use of link popularity as a primary way to rank web sites. This can be especially helpful in finding good sites in response to general searches such as "cars" and "travel," because users across the web have in essence voted for good sites by linking to them. The system works so well that Google has gained widespread praise for its high relevancy. Google also has a huge index of the web and provides some results to Yahoo and Netscape Search.

HotBot

HotBot is a favorite among researchers due to its many power searching features. In most cases, HotBot's first page of results comes from the Direct Hit service (see above), and then secondary results come from the Inktomi search engine, which is

also used by other services. It gets its directory information from the Open Directory project (see below). HotBot launched in May 1996 as Wired Digital's entry into the search engine market. Lycos purchased Wired Digital in October 1998 and continues to run HotBot as a separate search service.

HotBot supports both the keywords and description <META> tags.

If you strongly believe that your site was not ranked as high as you thought it deserved in a search query, HotBot allows you to send them an email to bugs@hotbot.com. Be sure to include the URL of the search page.

iWon

Backed by US television network CBS, iWon has a directory of web sites generated automatically by Inktomi, which also provides its more traditional crawler-based results. iWon gives away daily, weekly and monthly prizes in a marketing model unique among the major services. It launched in Fall 1999.

Inktomi

Originally, there was an Inktomi search engine at UC Berkeley. The creators then formed their own company with the same name and created a new Inktomi index, which was first used to power HotBot. Now the Inktomi index also powers several other services. All of them tap into the same index, though results may be slightly different. This is because Inktomi provides ways for its partners to use a common index yet distinguish themselves. There is no way to query the Inktomi index directly, as it is only made available through Inktomi's partners with whatever filters and ranking tweaks they may apply.

Inktomi (HotBot) supports both the keywords and description <META> tags.

If you strongly believe that your site was not ranked as high as you thought it deserved in a search query, HotBot allows you to send them an email to bugs@hotbot.com. Be sure to include the URL of the search page.

LookSmart

LookSmart is a human-compiled directory of web sites. In addition to being a stand-alone service, LookSmart provides directory results to MSN Search, Excite and many other partners. Inktomi provides LookSmart with search results when a search fails to find a match from among LookSmart's reviews. LookSmart launched independently in October 1996, was backed by Reader's Digest for about a year, and then company executives bought back control of the service.

Lycos

Lycos started out as a search engine, depending on listings that came from spidering the web. In April 1999, it shifted to a directory model similar to Yahoo. Its main listings come from the Open Directory project, and then secondary results

come from the FAST Search engine. Some Direct Hit results are also used. In October 1998, Lycos acquired the competing HotBot search service, which continues to be run separately.

Lycos creates Web site titles and descriptions from the text of your Web page. Lycos' search agent selects a portion of the site that well represents its theme. It then displays this section as the site's description.

The keywords are also chosen via artificial intelligence by Lycos' spider. With this in mind, do not open your page with an image map. If you do, Lycos will not be able to take an abstract for your document.

MSN Search

Microsoft's MSN Search service is a LookSmart-powered directory of web sites, with secondary results that come from Inktomi. RealNames and Direct Hit data is also made available. MSN Search also offers a unique way for Internet Explorer 5 users to save past searches.

NBCi

NBCi is a human-compiled directory of web sites, supplemented by search results from Inktomi. Like LookSmart, it aims to challenge Yahoo as the champion of categorizing the web. NBCi launched in late 1997 and is backed by NBC. It was formerly known as Snap but had a name change in late 2000.

Netscape Search

Netscape Search's results come primarily from the Open Directory and Netscape's own "Smart Browsing" database, which does an excellent job of listing "official" web sites. Secondary results come from Google. At the Netscape Netcenter portal site, other search engines are also featured.

Northern Light

Northern Light is another favorite search engine among researchers. It features a large index of the web, along with the ability to cluster documents by topic. Northern Light also has a set of "special collection" documents that are not readily accessible to search engine spiders. There are documents from thousands of sources, including newswires, magazines and databases. Searching these documents is free, but there is a charge of up to \$4 to view them. There is no charge to view documents on the public web -- only for those within the special collection. Northern Light opened to general use in August 1997.

Open Directory

The Open Directory uses volunteer editors to catalog the web. Formerly known as NewHoo, it was launched in June 1998. It was acquired by Netscape in November

1998, and the company pledged that anyone would be able to use information from the directory through an open license arrangement. Netscape itself was the first licensee. Lycos and AOL Search also make heavy use of Open Directory data, while AltaVista and HotBot prominently feature Open Directory categories within their results pages.

Raging Search

Operated by AltaVista, Raging Search uses the same core index as AltaVista and virtually the same ranking algorithms. Why use it? AltaVista offers it for those who want fast search results, with no portal features getting in the way. RealNames

The RealNames system is meant to be an easier-to-use alternative to the current web site addressing system. Those with RealNames-enabled browsers can enter a word like "Nike" to reach the Nike web site. To date, RealNames has had its biggest success through search engine partnerships. See the Using RealNames Links page for more information about RealNames.

WebCrawler

WebCrawler has the smallest index of any major search engine on the web -- think of it as Excite Lite. The small index means WebCrawler is not the place to go when seeking obscure or unusual material. However, some people may feel that by having indexed fewer pages, WebCrawler provides less overwhelming results in response to general searches. WebCrawler opened to the public on April 20, 1994. It was started as a research project at the University of Washington. America Online purchased it in March 1995 and was the online service's preferred search engine until Nov. 1996. That was when Excite, a WebCrawler competitor, acquired the service. Excite continues to run WebCrawler as an independent search engine.

WebCrawler relies on the statement within the <TITLE> tag to use for the name of your page. While other search engines will derive a summary from the <BODY> text of the document, Web Crawler will default to the URL if you fail to include a title.

In conclusion, do not make it your goal to appear in the top ten list of every search engine. This would not only be a very difficult task, but would most likely end in disappointment. You are virtually guaranteed to have varying success rates with different search engines due to the collection of variables that play a role in every search result. These variables include size of database, method used for determining relevancy, policy on spamming, use of <META> tags and more. Hence, optimize your listings by capitalizing on the indexing criteria shared by search engines. If you have a favorite or preferred search engine that you feel strongly about being yielded as high as possible in a search, customize your Web pages accordingly. Just keep in mind that this might lessen your perceived relevancy on another.

WebTop

WebTop is a crawler-based search engine that claims an extremely large index. In addition to listing web pages, WebTop also provides information from news sources, company information and WAP-related content in its search results. The company

also offers the WebCheck tool (formerly called k-check), which is an Alexa-like search and discovery tool. WebTop is backed by Bright Station, the company that acquired some search technology and other resources from the former Dialog Corporation. The Dialog search service itself is now owned by a different company, the Thomson Corporation.

Yahoo

Yahoo is the web's most popular search service and has a well-deserved reputation for helping people find information easily. The secret to Yahoo's success is human beings. It is the largest human-compiled guide to the web, employing about 150 editors in an effort to categorize the web. Yahoo has over 1 million sites listed. Yahoo also supplements its results with those from Google (beginning in July 2000, when Google took over from Inktomi). If a search fails to find a match within Yahoo's own listings, then matches from Google are displayed. Google matches also appear after all Yahoo matches have first been shown. Yahoo is the oldest major web site directory, having launched in late 1994.

Optimizing Registration with a Directory

(From olynnet.com)

Since directories are hierarchical databases organized by subject, subject category selection would logically be the most critical aspect of linking your site to a directory. Give some thought to which category(s) your URL should be placed in, as this location will ensure the right people (those interested in your site) will be visiting your link. URL registrations can quickly become complex process when every directory contains a different sub-categorization scheme.

There unfortunately is no formula or exact method for correctly placing one's site into a subject-oriented guide. However, here are a few tips:

Do not assume a category (i.e. Entertainment) means the same thing on every directory.

Take the time to drill down within the directory until you come to the subcategory most appropriate for your site. If you find many organizations similar to your own listed, you're probably in the right place.

Do not choose a less fitting category because it's either alphabetically desirable or doesn't contain many other links. If it is not appropriate, there is no reason to believe anyone clicking that category would be interested in visiting your site.

If you cannot find an appropriate category, do not hesitate to suggest a new one. This advice even applies to Yahoo!! Do you think the Yahoo! staff thought of all 22,000 headings all by themselves?

Yahoo!

Since Yahoo! is well ... Yahoo!, it will be discussed separately. It actually is unique from all other directories in that you could be listed on Yahoo! without having submitted your URL. They make use of a robot that searches for new sites at certain Internet locations (i.e. announcement sites, etc.). Despite Yahoo!'s implementation of this search robot, mostly all of their new additions still come via their "Add URL" form.

Your Yahoo Submission Made Easy

For Internet users, Yahoo! is one of the more notoriously difficult submission forms to successfully complete. In actuality, the Yahoo! submission form is far from a mind-numbing experience. We have outlined the necessary steps below. If you follow them, it will not only simplify the process for you, but also enable you to gain the greatest advantage possible through your submission.

Find your Yahoo category.

From Yahoo's home page, drill down and locate up to 2 Yahoo categories that best describe your Web site. A good indicator that you have found an appropriate sub-category is when you scroll down and see sites already listed that are similar to your

own, or, even more so, find a direct competitor! If after searching through a number of Yahoo categories, you still are not sure where to place your site, try searching by a keyword you would want your site to be found under. Existing Yahoo categories will be displayed with the search results.

TIP: Yahoo requires commercial sites to be placed within a Business and Economy subcategory - either under Companies or Products and Services. Personal Home pages must go in the Entertainment/People category. If your site is regionally specific, add it to the appropriate subcategory under the Regional heading category.

TIP: If suggesting more than one category, press the ADD URL icon when on the category of your first choice. Then enter the string of the second category into the Additional Categories field. To avoid making a typo to a long string, copy the URL located within the Address or Location field of your browser.

To do this, highlight the text after `http://www.yahoo.com/` with your mouse. Right mouse click and release the mouse over 'copy'. For example:

*Business_and_Economy/ Companies/ Music/ CDs_Records_and_Tapes/
Online_Shopping/*

Click the Add URL icon at the top of the screen.

After finding the category you wish your site to be placed within, click the Add URL icon at the top of the screen. This will take you to the Yahoo submission form with the Category fields already pre-filled.

Fill out the ADD URL Form

Two particularly important fields are the Title and Comments fields. Yahoo does not allow you to suggest keywords in their submission form. Instead, it will use both the Title and Comments fields to derive search words for your site. Therefore, think carefully about what keywords you want Yahoo to list you under and construct your Title and Comments fields around them. Do not, however, just submit keywords separated by commas. Enter complete, coherent phrases/sentences.

Example of a poorly constructed title:

Brian's Music Store

Example of an optimized title:

Brian's Music Store, CD's for sale

TIP: Your title should not exceed 50 characters (including spacing).

Example of a poorly constructed Comment: Click to this page to listen to a wide variety of music sure to fit your interest.

Example of an optimized Comment: Pop, Rock, New Age and Alternative CD's. Many artists, your favorite music, CD's on sale.

TIP: Your comment should not exceed 20 words or 200 characters (including spacing).

Yahoo has employees visit the URL of submissions to verify that the category you selected is appropriate and that the title and comments are accurate. As a result, do not exaggerate what is located on your site. In the end, your site will simply not get listed.

Submit

Once you have completed the form, click the Submit button to send your Web site information to Yahoo. If the form has been filled out properly, Yahoo will display a screen that thanks you for the submission. If there is an error in the submission form, Yahoo will display a screen informing you that the submission has failed and, depending on the error, tells you why the submission failed. In the case of a failure, press the Back key on your browser, make the necessary changes and resubmit.

Check your listing

Yahoo states that it should take two weeks for your site to be listed. They recommend you do a search for your URL. If your site is not listed, then resubmit your entry using the Add URL function in Yahoo. For more information, check out Where's My Site on Yahoo.

Questions

When will I need to inform search engines and directories of updates to my Web pages?

Here are some general rules and indicators for knowing when you need to make updates to your listings. For more detailed information on the process involved in making updates to each directory, consult the Submission Hints and Tips accessible within the Submit It! Gold and Pro versions.

For search engines: Make updates to listing:

If your URL changes, you will need to resubmit. Some search engines have Dead Link forms for you to fill out. Those that do not will drop the old URL from its records the next time it tries to visit your site at the old address and is unable to find it. If the content of your site changes so extensively that the abstract no longer adequately describes your site. These changes, however, will be taken into account when the indexing agent next visits your site to refresh its information. Resubmitting will hasten this process.

For directories: Make updates to listing:

If your Web site address (URL), description, or category classification changes, you will need to inform the webmaster of that directory.

If your category classification has changed and you are now inaccurately located within the directory's index.

Do not make updates to listing:

If there have been minor changes made within the site that do not alter the site's description.

If the content or purpose of the site remains the same, you are not misleading anyone who chooses to visit your site based on the original description.

"Non-Netiquette" Things

There are several "tricky" things you can do to try to get your URL listed higher or more times on a search engine results page. We are listing these alternatives, but are in no way recommending them as these Web site promotion methods may be viewed as "cheating" by some members of the Internet community. In fact, some of the search engines are starting to penalize people that use these tricks. The reason why we list these tricks is to help you understand why some sites always show up multiple times or always at the top.

Placing mass amounts of hidden keywords <!software manufacturer, software manufacturer,...> at the bottom of your document . Search engines calculate keywords by how many times they appear on a page. It is important to be aware that search engines may penalize you for excessively repeating keywords. At present, InfoSeek and Lycos are two examples and others may adopt similar policies in the future. Changing your name to A1 Enterprises or !Rob's Restaurant in order to appear at the top.

Our suggestion is that you pick something descriptive instead. You might appear at the top by changing your name, but be skipped over because the new one does not evoke a professional or trustworthy company image.

Changing your <TITLE> regularly so when robots revisit your site to refresh their information, they will interpret the new title to mean the existence of a new site.

The result being your page will be listed more than once in a search.

How To Use HTML Meta Tags

By Danny Sullivan Editor, SearchEngineWatch.com

Updated: December 15, 2000

Before we start, let's make it clear:

Meta tags are not a magic solution. Meta tags are not a magic solution. Meta tags are not a magic solution.

Meta tags provide a useful way to control your summary in some search engines. The search engines that support meta tags can be found on the Search Engine Features page.

Meta tags can also help you provide keywords and descriptions on pages that for various reasons lack text. Examples are splash pages and frames pages. They might also boost your page's relevancy. However, simply including a meta tag is not a guarantee that your page should suddenly leap to the top of every search engine listing. They are a useful tool but, as said above, not a magic solution.

Two Important Meta Tags: Keywords and Description

There are several meta tags, but the most important for search engine indexing are the description and keywords tags. The description tag returns a description of the page in place of the summary the search engine would ordinarily create. The keywords tag provides keywords for the search engine to associate with your page.

Before getting into further specifics, let's assume you have a page without the tags. The page is titled "My World," with a header that says "Welcome to My World," then a giant graphic image, then a link at the bottom that says "enter." (Did I mention I hate your page?). Search engines that index this daring creation will probably return a listing like this:

My World Welcome to My World

Now let's fix it. Let's assume that within "My World" is a site chock full of information about stamp collecting. Here visitors can find out about stamp prices, stamp conventions, stamps for sale and trade, the history of stamps and much more. We'll use the meta tags to communicate this without destroying the image you've worked so hard (ahem) to create. The meta tags go inside the header tags, so that everything looks like this:

EXAMPLE 1

```
<HEAD> <TITLE>My World</TITLE> <META name="description"
content="Everything you wanted to know about stamps, from prices to history.">
<META name="keywords" content="stamps, stamp collecting, stamp history, prices,
stamps for sale"> </HEAD>
```

Now your listing will look something like this in search engines that support the descriptions tag:

My World Everything you wanted to know about stamps, from prices to history.

Notice how the description matches what's in the description tag? That's exactly what the meta description tag does. It lets you control the description that appears.

What about the meta keywords tag? It gives your page a chance to come up if someone types in any of the words listed. For example, someone might enter "stamp collecting," which will match with one of the keywords in the tag. Without that tag, there would be no chance at all, since "stamp collecting" doesn't appear on the page or in the description tag.

Should you have different variations for keywords, such as shown in the example? It may help you with some search engines and not at all with others.

Having "stamp collecting" together as a word vs. "stamp" and "collecting" can help if someone is searching for the exact phrase "stamp collecting." In general, try not to worry about it too much. You'll drive yourself crazy trying to cover which engines understand plural forms as a default choice vs. those without a thesaurus vs. those that do phrase searching as a default setting. Still with me?

Remember, you are using these tags to help make up for the lack of text on your pages, not as a way to successfully anticipate every keyword variation a person might enter into a search engine. The only hope you have of ever doing that is to have good, descriptive pages with good titles and text that is not buried on the bottom of the page by JavaScript, frames tags or tables. The meta tags are a tool to get around these aforementioned problems.

Meta Robots Tag

One other meta tag worth mentioning is the robots tag. This lets you specify that a particular page should NOT be indexed by a search engine. To keep spiders out, simply add this text between your header tags on each page you don't want indexed. The format is shown:

EXAMPLE 2

```
<HEAD> <TITLE>Page I Don't Want In Search Engines</TITLE> <META  
NAME="ROBOTS" CONTENT="NOINDEX"> </HEAD>
```

You do NOT need to use variations of the meta robots tag to help your pages get indexed. They are unnecessary.

Be aware that not all search engines support the meta robots tag. As an alternative, all the major search engines do support the robots.txt convention of blocking indexing. See the Search Engines Features page for more about that. If you use a robots.txt file, there is no need to also use meta robots tags.

In Conclusion

Definitely add meta description and meta keyword tags to your web pages. Some search engines will give you a boost if you have them. But don't expect that to necessarily be enough to put you in the top ten. Meta tags are mainly a design element you can tap into, a crutch for helping information-poor pages better be acknowledged by the search engines.

Meta tags - what, where, when, why?

(From olynnet.com)

What are meta tags?

The Meta tag in html is not a required tag when you're creating your web pages; many pages don't use the tag at all, and I must confess that I've not used it on my home page, although I put it into this page by way of demonstration.

To put it briefly, the meta tag is used by search engines to allow them to more accurately list your site in their indexes. Sometimes. If you simply produce your home page and register the URL with a search engine, or a number of search engines, their spider programs will (eventually) toddle along to your site to index it. Now, each of the search engines does this slightly differently.

AltaVista for example will grab everything in your document and index it, but will only show the first 250 characters in its description. Consequently, if your site included say, 'Thanks to:....' right at the beginning, this is what AltaVista would show in its description, and it wouldn't give the viewer any idea of what your site actually covered. Of course, not all search engines work this way; I'd suggest you ferret around a little bit to see exactly how the popular engines work, and certainly the major two or three such as AltaVista,

Lycos, Yahoo, Infoseek and Excite. It therefore makes sense to ensure that your opening paragraph is carefully written to ensure it accurately reflects what your site covers. However, you may be able to exert a certain amount of control over how your site is indexed by the use of the meta tag. (I should however point out that not all search engines will use this tag - AltaVista does, but Excite doesn't, for example. It's not a total cure-all therefore, but you won't miss out by putting the tag in, and it may well work well in some cases.

What does a meta tag look like?

You should insert the meta tag element at the top of your document, just after the <TITLE> element. It follows the usual form of tags, i.e. <META name="something" content="something else"> but note that you don't have to have a </META> at the end of the tag, the way that you do with something like <BOLD> bold </BOLD>. However, make sure that each tag does not include any line breaks, since some search engines get a little bit tetchy about this.

What can I include in a meta tag?

There are basically four major meta tags that you can use:

```
<META name="resource-type" content="document">
```

The only resource type that is currently in use is "document" This is the only tag that you need to put in for indexing purposes, but use of the others is a good idea.

```
<META name="description" content="a description of your page">
```

Depending on the search engine, this will be displayed along with the title of your page in an index. "content" could be a word, sentence or even paragraph to describe your page. Keep this reasonably short, concise and to the point. However, don't be so mean with your description that it's not an appropriate reflection of the contents!

```
<META name="keywords" content="a, list, of, keywords">
```

Choose whatever keywords you think are appropriate, separated by commas. Remember to include synonyms, Americanisms and so on. So, if you had a page on cars, you might want to include keywords such as car, cars, vehicles, automobiles and so on.

```
<META name="distribution" content="one of several">
```

Content should contain either global, local or iu (for Internal Use). To be perfectly honest, I can't quite get my head around this one; its supposed to list available resources designed to allow the use to find things easily, but I still don't quite get it. My advice is to stick to "global".

Are there optional tags?

Yup, there's a whole bunch of 'em. I've put in a couple of examples below:

```
<META name="copyright" content="copyright statement">
```

Pretty obvious what this one's for.

```
<META HTTP-EQUIV="varname" content="data">
```

This binds the varname to an HTTP header field. An http server might use this to process a document. This one's a tad more tricky. If you included the following example:

```
<META HTTP-EQUIV="keywords" content="car, cars"
```

 then, as part of a GET command the server would include the word car and cars in the HTTP response header.

```
<META HTTP-EQUIV="refresh" content="0; url=homepage.htm">
```

This can be used in the HEAD section of the index.html file to redirect it to homepage.htm. The figure after content is the time in seconds that the browser waits before moving on.

There are a few others that you can include, such as "revisit-after" and "rating" if you want to be really comprehensive.

Other UsefulPoints

There is no need to index every single file that you've got on your site - just choose a few representative samples. The description tag should not simply restate the title of

the page; it should describe the page. The tag can also be used in the creation of dynamic documents, and when I've explored this a little bit further, I'll add more information on this.

Is there software to help me create meta tags?

Yes, there are a few of these things about. One that I've been told of is at <http://www.hisoftware.com/taggen.htm>. I've not tried it out myself, but it looks interesting. I'm currently downloading a trial version, to see what it's like. I'll let you know. <http://www.ukoln.ac.uk/metadata/dcdot/> This site will automatically try and generate meta tags based on the Dublin core for you. Seems to work well, though it's a little enthusiastic about the number of keywords it generates!

Questions about the meta tag

Can I put my competitors name(s) in my meta tags?

Sounds like a good idea when you first think of it doesn't it? I mean, if you put your competitors names in your meta tags, and someone searches for them, they may find you instead and buy a product from you, rather than them. Unfortunately, life isn't that simple. In the UK (where I'm based) there are laws against passing yourself off as another company - I wouldn't get very far if I tried to open a shop called Harrods, for example. You'll find that putting in meta tags is probably going to be regarded in exactly the same way by the British courts. (Please bear in mind here that I'm not a lawyer, and I'm not giving legal advice; this is just my opinion.) I suspect that you'll find the same thing in other countries around the world, and you'll end up in a whole bunch of trouble if you try and do it. Of course, there is nothing to stop you stressing the products themselves that you sell, in common with that of your competitors, in your meta tags and you may find that this works rather better than putting in their names anyway!

Should I use commas or not?

Some people do, some people don't. I've yet to be convinced that either is the best approach. For what its worth, I do.

I use AOL, and I'm having difficulty putting in meta tags. How do I do it?

Can't help with that one, I'm afraid. Since I'm not an AOL person, I can't get access to their authoring tool, so I don't know how it works. I have had a lot of people asking me this one, so it's a problem that a lot of people have - you're not alone! All I can suggest is that you contact AOL technical support and see if they can come up with something to help. However, I've also had people writing to me saying that AOL technical staff members don't know the answer themselves!

General Tips for Getting Listed in Search Engines

(From Olynet.com)

1. Use keywords in the <TITLE> of your document making it as descriptive as possible. When visiting your site, an agent will go first to the <TITLE> tag. For clarification purposes, the <TITLE> tag is what a browser will display in its title bar and is not simply the first line of HTML that shows up on your page. (Although your first words of introductory text should be descriptive as well). Search engines will display the text located between the <TITLE> tags when your web page is listed in a search. By making your <TITLE> descriptive, you'll be better off than those who only have keywords within the text of their page. It will also be helpful when people bookmark your web site. If a more descriptive name appears in a person's hot list, it will be easier to find your site at a later date.

For example, instead of using <TITLE> Suncorp </TITLE> as the title of Suncorp's home page, <TITLE> Suncorp: Tanning Supplier </TITLE> would be much more descriptive. It would also place greater emphasis or relevancy on "Tanning Supplier" when calculating keywords.

2. Use <META> tags, which allow you to provide even more detail about your Web pages and thereby gain greater control over how your pages are indexed. Not all search engines make use of <META> tags, but adding these tags to your pages will make them more accessible to the search engines that do. <META> tag codes are inserted within the <HEAD>--- --- <HEAD> tag. The basic syntax is:

```
<META name="description" content="a health and fitness center located in Atlanta">
```

This will control what appears as the summary of your Web page and will be displayed after the title of your document in the index listing. The content of the description should clearly convey what one can expect to find when linking to your site.

```
<META name="keywords" content="running, weight control, nutrition, aerobics, cholesterol, Georgia">
```

This will allow you to provide extra information about your page to the search engines without it being visible to the reader. While search engines do take these keywords into account when indexing your page, they are still going to index the entire contents of your page as many sites do not include <META> tags. Since this is the case, there is no need to be redundant. Include keywords that will not necessarily be derived when a robot visits your site. In other words, "health" and "fitness" need not be included in your list of keywords as it is part of your <TITLE>. Robots index both the description and keyword <META> tag contents as searchable words. Hence, your site will come up in a search if someone typed in "nutrition" or "health center" from your description. One way to maximize the usefulness of keywords is to incorporate singular and plural cases of words as well as active and passive verbs. For example, diet, diets, and dieting will yield similar but somewhat

varying results in a search. Since you're able through <META> tags, why not guarantee you come up on all of them.

Do not, however, excessively repeat keywords in a keyword <META> tag as search engines may penalize you for this. At present, InfoSeek and Lycos are two such examples and others may adopt similar policies in the future. The penalty will most likely be the spider disregarding the <META> tag and extracting keywords from the content of your page- as is usually the case. However, some Submit It! users have reported being dropped from a search engine's database and felt keyword repetition played a role in the removal of their listing.

Who should definitely make use of <META> tags?

Sites using Netscape frames:

The main HTML file contains the <FRAMESET> tags, but fails to provide robots with any real useful information for selecting a Web site's abstract. Therefore you should include a description summarizing the contents of the frames on your page with <META> tags.

Sites using JavaScript at the top of their page

If JavaScript code makes up the first several hundred characters on your page, you should use <META> tags to provide a description for your page. An indexing agent's search logic is programmed to place more emphasis on the text located at the top of your page than the content it combs through towards the bottom. Use ALT tags especially if your site contains multiple photos or graphic-image maps at the top of your home page. Some search engines will take into account the text within an ALT tag when creating your site's description and keywords. In addition, you will be greatly appreciated by all people who visit your site with their Auto Load Images option turned off or by those who prefer to use character browsers. ALT tags are placed after an image file and generally look like the following:

```

```

If your site uses frames

If your site utilizes frames, you should be aware that search engines treat frames as if they are links within your main page. As a result the engines will review and index your main page and, at a later date, return to index each individual frame just as it will return to index all other internal links within your web site. Therefore, in order to have your main page (typically titled index.htm or default.htm) indexed accurately and efficiently, we recommend that you add some descriptive text between the <noframes> and </noframes> tags of the HTML source coding of your main page. The noframes tags are usually placed below your frame set information. The frame set information is designated by <frameset> and </frameset>. This text should include your most important keywords and keyword phrases. Adding this text will provide the search engines with content from which to derive keywords for indexing. After this change has been made to your Web site, the page itself will appear exactly the same to anyone using a browser that supports frames. However, users of browsers that do not support frames (i.e. Netscape 1.0 or lower) will now be able to successfully view your home page.

Keywords: Some Tips

Rhonda McGuinness

Most search engines are case insensitive, with the exception of AltaVista and Infoseek. There is no need to capitalize every keyword. Some people like to, but you really only need to capitalize those terms that would naturally be that way, i.e. place names, etc. Also, include the capitalized abbreviated terms such as CSS (short for Cascading Style Sheets) where again, naturally you might expect the term to be capitalized, along with the term in lower case.

The same goes for plural forms of words. If you would naturally expect them to be plural, then use that form.

Also, don't feel the need to enter misspelled words into your keywords. The various misspelling of words could waste up to 10 words. It seems likely that the searcher, upon discovering the spelling error, would search again with the proper spelling. Besides, there's already poor enough spelling on the web. The only exception would be for keywords that are very difficult to spell.

Some Online Help

Using a thesaurus might help you come up with some terms you might not have thought of. Try Roget Thesaurus.

Have a look at what keywords are actually being used. Sites like Search Voyeur at Magellan and MetaCrawler's Metaspy can tell you what words are being searched for at that exact moment, and more importantly, how searches are done. Searchers are still for the large part, using only one or two terms for each search.

Dog Pile - Top 200 Search Words from the popular Metasearch engine

Yahoo! *Top 200 Search Words*

Searchterms.com *Top 100 Search terms each month.*

After you have your keyword list, send your list to all of your buddies, business associates etc., and listen to their opinion. Everyone has their own techniques for searching online, they might think of some you've missed.

Choosing Keywords

Rhonda McGuinness

Use a mix of your key words in the following places on your site. Different search engines use the following in different ways, but including them all in your page will enable you to have a site that ranks reasonably well throughout.

The Title Tag

Try to make your title as descriptive as possible using your keywords, but remember, this tag will be used by the search engines as the title of your listing -

```
<title> cooking, cook, recipes, </title>
```

is not as attractive as

```
<title> Gourmet vegetarian recipes, holiday cooking tips, cookbooks and more  
</title>
```

If the two listings were near each other in the results of your search, which one would you be more likely to click on?

If you want your site to look it's best in all of the major search engines, aim for a title length of 60 characters.

The Meta Tag

Keywords Attribute is the most obvious place to enter your keywords.

```
<META name="keywords" content="cooking, cook, vegetarian, vegetables, holiday meals, gourmet meals, food recipes, healthy nutrition, cookbooks, vegetarian cookbooks, healthy diet, weight loss information, ingredients, gourmet recipes, non-meat meals, restaurant, food preparation, Veggies">
```

Be careful how often you repeat words in your keywords. Common knowledge online says to repeat a word no more than three to seven times.

Many people expect miracles from this tag, but it is actually only one method of helping your site rank better. Search engines index them on a character count, each letter, space and comma are counted as a character and approximately 1000 characters are permitted. Although the above example uses only 231 characters, it is more important to have keywords that actually reflect what is on the web page than it is to dream up every possible search term and include it.

Since this meta tag is counted by characters, the question of whether to use commas and spaces frequently comes up. The use of the comma is part of the specifications for the tag. Besides, it keeps your key phrases all nice and neat.

The Meta Tag - Description Attribute is used by some search engines to give you the opportunity to write your own description of what your site is about.

```
<META name="description" content="A resource for great vegetarian recipes, cookbooks, everything a gourmet chef might need">
```

A description length of 150 characters will cover all of the majors, although some allow as many as 395.

Use keywords in the ALT Attributes of your IMG Tags. alt="vegetarian main dish" instead of alt="dish". The ALT attribute is required by the specification, so use it to your advantage.

In the text of the site - when you write the copy, try to have your keywords near the top of the page inside the copy of your site.

If your site design is built with frames, use the Noframes tag, add meta tags and include a short description of what your site is about.

Use your keywords on each page of your site, refining the terms to specifically reflect that page. In the above example, a page inside the site that goes over nutritional data could use keywords more reflective of that topic.

Choosing Keywords: Practices to Avoid

Rhonda McGuinness

A common practice in the past was to include your keywords inside HTML comment tags.

```
<-- placing a long list of essentially hidden keywords here -->
```

It was thought this would help raise your site's ranking in a search engine. The search engines in their constant battle to defeat spamdexing are on to this technique and you are in peril of losing your rank or being banned from the search engine altogether if you use this.

Another practice was to include hidden keywords within the text of the site with the text color the same as the background of the website. This of course is not invisible to search engine's spiders, or to lynx browsers for that matter. The search engines are also penalizing website owners for using this. The only exception is Excite, which as of this writing, was still allowing this practice; they could of course change their mind any time.

Make sure that your keywords reflect what is actually in your website. Although it might be tempting to include some of the most searched for words, search engines are also watching for this, and will drop your ranking.

Several search engines, in an attempt to serve relevant results to searchers, ignore altogether certain words. The most ignored words include - web, and html. Using these words as one of your keywords is a waste!

Also to be avoided is the use of another business' trademarks. It may result in a legal tangle for you. Trademark law is invoked if you use another companies registered trademark in a way the might confuse consumers. Companies can make an argument if you use their trademarked words in your keywords.