



# Kinsta's Ultimate Guide to Improving SEO

KINSTA



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# **Kinsta's Ultimate Guide to Improving SEO**

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# Introduction

SEO, or search engine optimization, is a major marketing task for any website. But with SEO driving 93% of all website traffic, it goes without saying that focusing on SEO can have dramatic results. This includes pulling ahead of your competitors, increasing your organic traffic, improving your user experience, and more.

SEO certainly worked for us at Kinsta. The very tips laid out in this ebook grew our organic traffic by more than 123% year over year!

Read this ebook to discover:

- How SEO works from a search engine perspective
- Tools and analytics to monitor progress and performance
- Site-wide SEO tips
- How to optimize and maintain your content and media
- Local SEO tips
- And more!

The best part? Besides the obvious time investment, all of these tips can be implemented for free.

# What Is Search Engine Optimization?

Search engine optimization is the process of improving your website so that it ranks higher in search engine results for certain keywords. The goal is to get users to visit your site without directly paying for advertising.

## *How Do Search Engines Work?*

Optimizing your site will help you to achieve positive results on all search engines, but since Google makes up [over 69% of the US search engine market share](#), it's usually recommended to follow Google's best practices.

To understand the SEO techniques described in the following chapters, you must first understand how Google approaches search. Google goes more in depth in their [search mission](#), but to summarize, Google aims to provide the best answers to a user's query in a clear and organized manner.

Google finds this information through **crawling** and **indexing**. First, its website crawlers (collectively known as Googlebot) scour websites and take note of content, new sites or pages, changes to existing content, dead links, and more. This information is then indexed and ready to be served at the next relevant search query.



With Google's search index containing hundreds of billions of web pages, making your website stand out might seem a daunting goal. But if you implement the tips in the coming chapters, we promise you'll see results.

# Understand Your Site's Analytics

Before tackling any SEO tasks, it's good to see where your site's at now to better measure improvements over time and determine which areas you should tackle first.

## *SEO Tools*

There are three main tools that can track changes in your SEO over time: **Google Search Console**, **Google Analytics**, and **Bing Webmaster Tools**. And they're all free to use!

**Google Search Console** is a collection of tools that help ensure your website is healthy and Google-friendly. Use it to diagnose any technical SEO issues, understand your most popular pages, and see where you're ranking to increase your organic traffic.

**Google Analytics** is a reporting service offered by Google to track your website traffic. Use Google Analytics to monitor the performance of your pages and find out about the people visiting your site, along with their browsing behaviors.

Note: It's important to link your Google Analytics account with your Google Search Console account to experience the best reporting metrics. To do this, click **Admin** at the bottom of the left menu and then click **Property Settings**. The dashboard should walk you through the rest of the process from there.

**Bing Webmaster Tools** is a Microsoft service you can use to monitor and maintain your site's presence in Bing. Think of Bing Webmaster Tools as Bing's version of Google Search Console.

## **SEO Metrics**

Once you're set up in Google Search Console and Google Analytics, do a quick SEO audit to use as a benchmark when tracking your progress over time. Here are a few metrics to consider:

### Core Web Vitals

The Core Web Vitals represent a group of measurable performance indicators that analyze how well your website functions from a user experience perspective. This is important because a bad user experience can negatively impact your SEO.

You can check how well your pages perform using the Core Web Vitals report in Google Search Console, which grades pages as "Good," "Needs Improvement," or "Poor." The report provides results for both mobile and desktop, allowing you to review your performance based on the experience your users are getting from any device. Good scores across both will earn you a ranking boost for all visitors.

The report is made up of 3 factors:

- Largest Contentful Paint (LCP), which measures the time it takes to load the main content on a web page.
- First Input Delay (FID), which measures the time it takes for users to be able to interact with elements on your web page.

- Cumulative Layout Shift (CLS), which analyzes how your pages load and whether shifts in the layout could cause users to inadvertently click other elements on your page.

The Core Web Vitals report uses field data to show page performance based on actual user data. As with all of the reports available in Google Search Console, only a sample of URLs is provided. Regardless, this should give you a pretty good idea of the types of pages that have issues.

## Keywords

We'll get into this topic further in Chapter 5, but monitoring your keyword rankings is key to your keyword strategy and research.

Within Google Search Console, you can find information on which keywords your website already ranks for under **Performance** > **Search results**.

Another great tool to track your rankings in any country and on different devices is [AccuRanker](#). In fact, it's one we use at Kinsta to keep track of essential keywords we're focusing on ranking. AccuRanker allows us to track the keywords around a blog post, add a note of what we optimized, and then later return to see how our rankings were affected by the changes.

## Organic Traffic

Within Google Analytics, you can track changes to your SEO over time. **Overview > Acquisition** will highlight the channels that direct traffic to your site, including organic search. Click on the **Organic Search** report to see detailed information on traffic that comes from Google, Bing, Yahoo, and other search engines. Noting what percentage of your visitors arrive via these channels will give you a pretty good idea of how effective your SEO efforts have been.

## Dwell Time

Dwell time refers to how long searchers spend on a website they found on a SERP before returning to view other results. While [Google has denied](#) that dwell time is a direct ranking factor, it's a clear sign of whether a user found the answer to their question.

[Increasing your pages' dwell time](#) isn't exactly a cut-and-dried process, but there are several strategies you can try.

For starters, place important information above the fold where it's easy to find, meaning above the point where users need to scroll to see the rest of your content. Next, ensure your navigation is clear and easy to understand, and cut down on distractions that users may find annoying, like pop-ups and auto-rolling videos. Finally, answer the questions that your users are searching for.

## Bounce Rate

When it comes to websites, “bouncing” is when a user accesses a page of your site but then immediately navigates away from it. You can view your pages’ bounce rates in Google Analytics by navigating to **Behavior > Overview** and looking beneath the main graph.

Bounce rate is not a direct factor for Google or other search engines. But a [high bounce rate is usually considered a bad thing](#) because it means that visitors aren’t sticking around long enough to convert. However, in some cases a high bounce rate is totally normal, particularly when users get the answer to their search query without needing to take any further action (👉 news articles, blog posts, etc).

Users bounce for many different reasons. Sometimes it’s due to the page not serving the user’s needs. It can also be due to confusing site navigation, misleading headlines or links, excessive ads, or even simple mistakes where visitors click on a link or button by accident.

# Lay a Solid Foundation With These Site-Wide SEO Tips

Here's how to lay down the groundwork that will set your site up for SEO success.

## ***Set Up Your Web Tools***

We covered this in the previous chapter, but here's a quick reminder. There are three main tools that will help you on your way to a gold standard SEO: [Google Search Console](#), [Google Analytics](#), and [Bing Webmaster Tools](#).

Revisit the benefits of each in the previous chapter and use the links to learn how to set them up for your site.

## ***Use a Short Brand Domain***

Your website's domain represents your brand and will influence a user's first impression of your site.

We've written an entire post on [choosing your domain](#). Here are the takeaways:

- Choose something relatively short and easy to remember.
- Incorporate keywords if it makes sense.

- Make your domain sound like a brand name.
- Avoid using Exact Match Domains (EMDs).

This last tip is especially important for your site's SEO. EMDs are domains that exactly match the keyword the site is trying to rank for.

For example, if we were trying to use an EMD, our site address might be something like `managedwordpresshosting.com`. While this used to be an effective SEO strategy, it created a lot of problems. Sites were able to rise to the top of SERPs because their domains indicated that they were highly relevant to users' searches, but the quality of many of those websites was very low.

To accommodate for this, Google applied changes to its algorithm so that having an EMD is only helpful if your site also has high-quality content.

## ***Choose Your Preferred Domain***

Once you have selected a short brand domain, there are a few other things you need to take into consideration.

### www Vs Non-www

When you're launching your site, you'll be faced with the decision of choosing to include (or not include) www in your domain.

From an SEO perspective, there is no benefit to having www in your domain.



While using `www` as part of your domain is no longer standard, that's not to say you should always go with a non-`www` address. One reason you still might see sites incorporating it is simply that changing it can be complicated and cause issues. So, many older brands simply continue to use it.

Large companies with a lot of traffic might want to use `www` due to [Domain Name System \(DNS\) records](#). Naked (non-`www`) domains technically can't have a CNAME record used to redirect traffic for failovers. However, there are workarounds for this issue.

Whichever version you choose, [set up redirects](#) so that only one version is accessible. For example, if you visit `www.kinsta.com`, it simply redirects to `kinsta.com`.

## Avoid Duplicate URLs

As mentioned above, you should only allow one version of your URLs to be accessed, with redirects in place to reroute users and crawlers to the correct URL.

There are other ways you can accidentally have duplicate URLs. For example, the following URLs will likely load the same content, but due to casing issues, search engines could index them both as two separate pages:

```
kinsta.com/about-us/  
kinsta.com/About-Us/
```

The same goes for URLs that end with and without a trailing slash:

```
kinsta.com/about-us/
```

```
kinsta.com/about-us
```

And also based on the protocol:

```
https://kinsta.com/about-us/
```

```
http://kinsta.com/about-us/
```

This is bad for SEO because each duplicate version is effectively competing with the original. Redirecting any duplicate URL to its original will ensure all ranking signals go to a single version. This should improve your chances of showing up in search results.

[Redirect rules](#) ensure anyone accessing the wrong version is directed to the correct version.

This video covers how to add redirects to your WordPress site:



## Install a WordPress SEO Plugin

WordPress out of the box is already pretty good when it comes to SEO. However, we'd recommend you also install an [SEO plugin](#) to have full control over optimizing what Google sees from your website.

There are a few options to choose from, but the free [Yoast SEO](#) plugin is the most popular option.

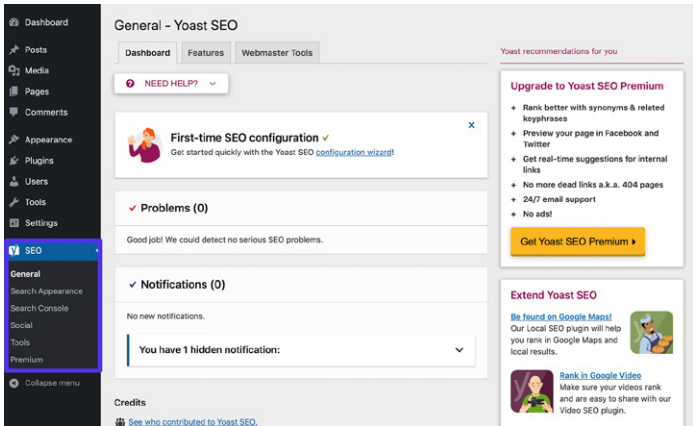


The Yoast SEO WordPress plugin

With Yoast SEO, you can:

- Write better content with page and keyword analysis.
- Edit your [title tags](#) and [meta descriptions](#).
- Automatically generate [XML sitemaps](#).
- [Enable breadcrumbs](#).
- Add social and [schema markup](#).

To install Yoast SEO, download the free plugin from the WordPress repository, and then activate it within your WordPress dashboard. Once activated, a new SEO section will appear in your sidebar, which can be used to optimize your site.

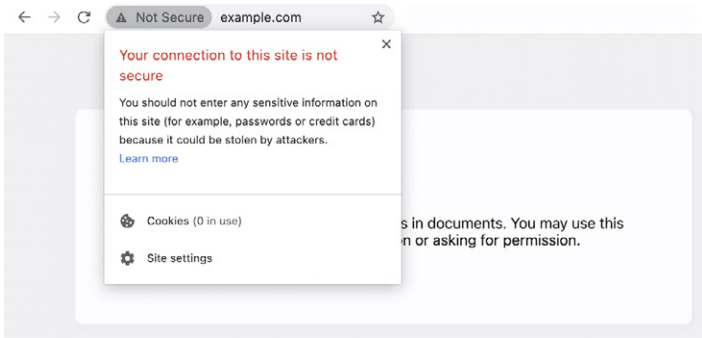


The Yoast SEO settings in the WordPress dashboard

## Install an SSL Certificate

Google states that [HTTPS is a ranking factor](#) due to security being a top priority.

HTTPS (Hypertext Transfer Protocol Secure) is a mechanism that allows your browser or web application to securely connect with a website. It's one of the measures that helps keep your browsing safe and secure. In fact, sites without HTTPS tend to see warnings in Chrome, Firefox, and other browsers highlighting that the website connection is not secure.



An example of a browser notifying the user of an unsecure connection

To migrate from HTTP to HTTPS and benefit from increased security and ranking, you'll need to [install an SLL \(Secure Sockets Layer\) certificate on your site.](#)



An SLL certificate will bring you a step closer to a secure site. Download our free ebook to learn even more ways to limit the risk of hacks or security breaches.

[Download The Ultimate Guide to Security Client Sites](#)

## Set Up Friendly Permalinks

A permalink is the link that is used to access a specific piece of content on your site. Each page in your site (including posts, pages, archive pages, and other pages such as the 404 page) will have its own permalink.

By default, WordPress creates messy permalinks whose structure will contain the date and post or page name. For instance:

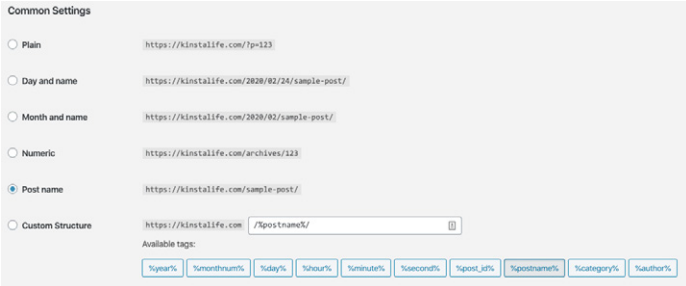
```
https://kinstalife.com/2021/03/31/sample-post/
```

Google usually prefers URLs that are based on your content's title and/or keywords, and shorter URLs are generally better. We recommend using the **Post name** permalink setting, as it is both clean and can benefit your site's SEO:

```
https://kinstalife.com/sample-post/
```

You can change to a **Post name** permalink structure by clicking on **Permalinks** under the **Settings** menu in your WordPress dashboard.

Select **Post name** and click on **Save Changes**:



Common Settings

Plain `https://kinstalife.com/?p=123`

Day and name `https://kinstalife.com/2020/02/25/sample-post/`

Month and name `https://kinstalife.com/2020/02/sample-post/`

Numeric `https://kinstalife.com/archives/123`

Post name `https://kinstalife.com/sample-post/`

Custom Structure `https://kinstalife.com/`

Available tags:

WordPress permalink modification

Note: You may break previous links if you change your permalink structure after the post is live.

If you're changing the permalink structure on an older site, redirect previous URLs to the new ones by taking advantage of the [redirects feature in MyKinsta](#) or leveraging a third-party plugin such as [Permalink Manager Lite](#).

See how easy it is to use the redirects feature in MyKinsta with our **free demo**.

## Set Up an XML Sitemap

An [XML sitemap](#) is a list of URLs that you want to be publicly available. As its name suggests, it's a "map" of your content that helps search engines better crawl your website and understand the hierarchy and structure of your WordPress site.

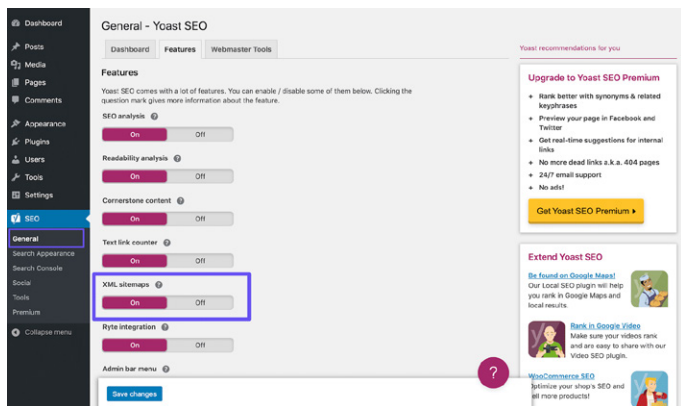
An XML sitemap can improve crawlability through:

- **Faster crawl times:** Sitemaps can help search engine robots crawl your content faster than they would without one. This can also lead to your content getting indexed faster.
- **Prioritized crawls:** Sitemaps let you ask Google to prioritize crawling certain pages on your site by adding metadata.
- **Increased information from rich media content:** If you use a lot of videos and images, Google can take additional information from sitemaps for search.

The Yoast SEO plugin has the ability to automatically generate your sitemap files for you. Here's how to enable or verify this feature:

## Step 1: Turn on the XML Sitemap Setting

Within Yoast SEO, navigate to **SEO > General** in your WordPress dashboard. Toggle the **XML sitemaps** switch on. This should automatically create your sitemap without any extra effort from you.



The Yoast SEO XML sitemap settings



## Step 2: Test Your Sitemap

It's always wise to double-check that automatically generated files have indeed been successfully created. You can view your sitemap index by appending **sitemap\_index.xml** to your domain, like so:

```
https://domain.com/sitemap_index.xml
```

The result should look something like this:

### XML Sitemap

Generated by **YoastSEO**, this is an XML Sitemap, meant for consumption by search engines.

You can find more information about XML sitemaps on [sitemaps.org](https://sitemaps.org).

This XML Sitemap Index file contains 14 sitemaps.

Sitemap	Last Modified
<a href="https://kinsta.com/post-sitemap.xml">https://kinsta.com/post-sitemap.xml</a>	2021-02-12 12:45 +00:00
<a href="https://kinsta.com/page-sitemap.xml">https://kinsta.com/page-sitemap.xml</a>	2021-02-12 12:01 +00:00
<a href="https://kinsta.com/affiliate-academy-sitemap.xml">https://kinsta.com/affiliate-academy-sitemap.xml</a>	2021-01-31 17:02 +00:00
<a href="https://kinsta.com/knowledgebase-sitemap.xml">https://kinsta.com/knowledgebase-sitemap.xml</a>	2021-02-12 12:42 +00:00
<a href="https://kinsta.com/learn-sitemap.xml">https://kinsta.com/learn-sitemap.xml</a>	2021-02-12 11:23 +00:00
<a href="https://kinsta.com/case_studies-sitemap.xml">https://kinsta.com/case_studies-sitemap.xml</a>	2021-01-31 16:35 +00:00
<a href="https://kinsta.com/client_quotes-sitemap.xml">https://kinsta.com/client_quotes-sitemap.xml</a>	2021-02-12 04:16 +00:00
<a href="https://kinsta.com/partner-sitemap.xml">https://kinsta.com/partner-sitemap.xml</a>	2021-01-30 19:29 +00:00
<a href="https://kinsta.com/feature-updates-sitemap.xml">https://kinsta.com/feature-updates-sitemap.xml</a>	2021-01-28 13:17 +00:00
<a href="https://kinsta.com/tool-sitemap.xml">https://kinsta.com/tool-sitemap.xml</a>	2019-08-13 14:37 +00:00
<a href="https://kinsta.com/ebook-sitemap.xml">https://kinsta.com/ebook-sitemap.xml</a>	2020-12-29 21:29 +00:00
<a href="https://kinsta.com/webinar-sitemap.xml">https://kinsta.com/webinar-sitemap.xml</a>	2021-01-18 16:26 +00:00
<a href="https://kinsta.com/video-sitemap.xml">https://kinsta.com/video-sitemap.xml</a>	2021-01-18 16:17 +00:00
<a href="https://kinsta.com/author-sitemap.xml">https://kinsta.com/author-sitemap.xml</a>	2021-02-05 11:04 +00:00

Example of the sitemap we use at Kinsta

You can then click any of the sitemaps within your index, which will allow you to see the URLs referenced in each file.

In the next chapter, you'll learn how to submit this file to Google and Bing for faster indexing and crawling.

## **Optimize Your Website's Speed**

[Website speed](#) is huge when it comes to WordPress SEO. Google announced way back in 2010 that it [does affect your rankings](#).

And page speed matters to your visitors. Here are a few stats to prove the point:

- [One in four visitors](#) abandon a website if it takes more than four seconds to load.
- Almost [70% of consumers](#) say that page speed impacts their inclination to buy online.
- The [highest ecommerce conversion rates](#) occur when pages take under 2 seconds to load.

A couple of ways you can easily improve your site's speed are to [implement a CDN](#), [use a fast theme](#), and [optimize your site accordingly](#).

Your web host also plays a huge role in your site's speed, so investing in a [quality managed WordPress provider is key](#). At Kinsta, some of our clients saw as much as a [200% increase in site speed](#) after making the switch.

Explore our plans.



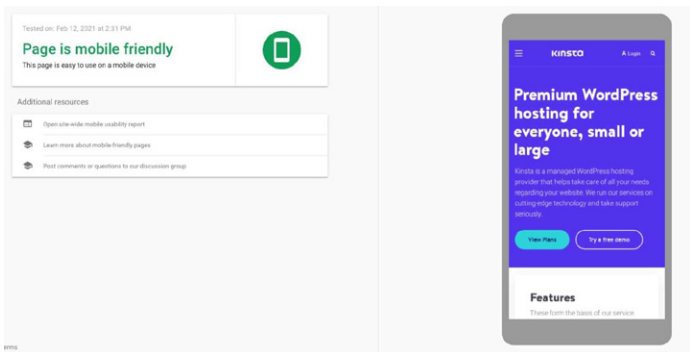
We touched on a few ways you can speed up your WordPress site above. Check out our free ebook for 200+ more performance tips

[Download How Speed up Your WordPress Site](#)

## Ensure Your Site Is Mobile Responsive

Google announced the testing of its mobile-first indexing strategy in 2016. Google's ranking algorithms now primarily use the mobile version of a site's content to rank pages. This is a huge change in how Google is now indexing content.

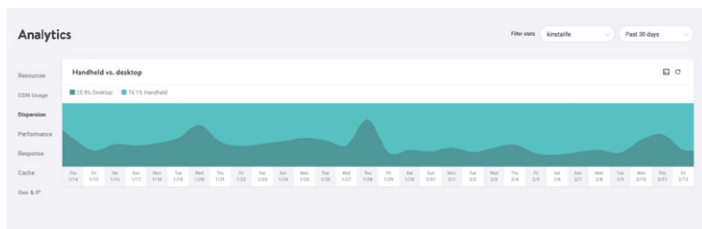
If you don't have a [responsive site](#) yet, drop everything you're doing and get on that immediately. You can use [Google's mobile-friendly tool](#) to see if your current WordPress site passes the test.



Kinsta's website in Google's mobile-friendly test

Another option is to implement [Google AMP](#), which is an open framework that allows websites to build lightweight web pages. While it didn't offer us a lot of improvements, some companies like The Washington Post, Gizmodo, and Wired did see big improvements. Read our [case study](#) to learn more about why we decided to remove Google AMP from our site.

It's also helpful to check [Google Analytics](#) to see how much [traffic your site is getting](#) from mobile devices. If you're a Kinsta customer, you can also view mobile vs desktop traffic in [MyKinsta Analytics](#) and use it to determine how much priority you should place on responsiveness.



MyKinsta Analytics mobile vs desktop traffic report

**Test drive our free MyKinsta demo**  
to see what other analytics options exist.

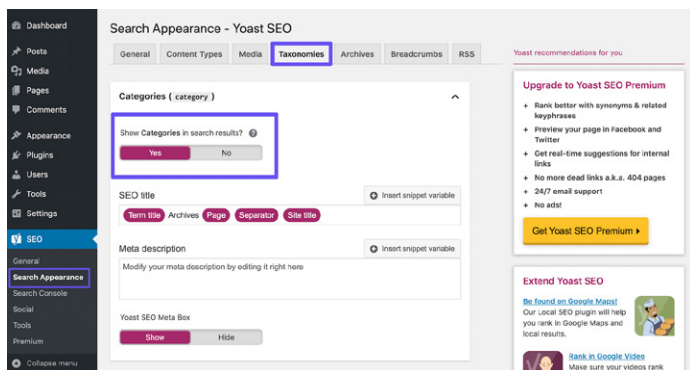
# Index Post Categories

This strategy is optional, but indexing categories in Google can increase the relevancy of your content to boost your page rank, increase your traffic, and improve your WordPress SEO.

A lot of [WordPress themes](#) don't show category descriptions by default. Follow the steps below to index your categories and show them on your site.

## Enable Category Indexing in Yoast

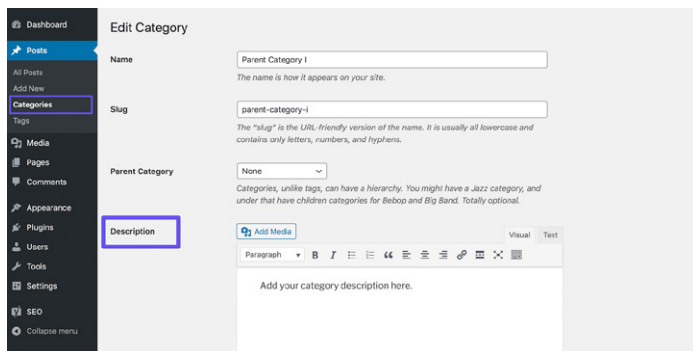
The first thing you'll want to do is navigate to **SEO > Search Appearance** and click on the **Taxonomies** tab. Then check to ensure the **Show Categories in search results** option is enabled. This will also add a category sitemap to your XML Sitemap index, allowing crawlers to easily find and crawl your category pages.



Yoast SEO's Show Categories in search results setting

## Write Category Descriptions

Enter your category description under the specific post category that you want to index. You can do this by navigating to **Posts > Categories** and clicking on **Edit** under the **relevant taxonomy**. Don't forget to press **Update** when you're done.



Adding a category description

## Create a Professional Site Footer

If you scroll down to the bottom of your WordPress website, you may find a couple of credits that you didn't put there. One will likely be the standard "Powered by WordPress" link that's applied to every WordPress site. The other is often a credit that points back to the theme developer's site.

## A Simple Post with Text

by admin / August 2, 2008 / 1 Comment

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Sed eleifend urna eu sapien. Quisque posuere nunc eu massa. Praesent bibendum lorem non leo. Morbi volutpat, urna eu fermentum rutrum, ligula lacus interdum mauris, ac pulvinar libero pede a enim. Etiam commodo malesuada ante. Donec nec ligula. Curabitur mollis semper diam. [Read More >](#)

Neve | Powered by WordPress

A theme credit and the “Powered by WordPress” link in a footer

While these links aren’t incorporated with bad intentions, they don’t look particularly professional. And since links have a significant impact on your WordPress SEO, we’d recommend removing them. Check out our guide to [removing the “Powered by WordPress” link](#) from your footer. As for any theme credits that may be included, you might be able to delete them via the Customizer.

The screenshot shows the WordPress Customizer interface. On the left, the 'Customizing - Footer Copyright' panel is open, displaying the 'Copyright' section with the following code: `<p><a href="https://themeisle.com/themes/neve/">Neve</a> | Powered by <a href="http://wordpress.org">WordPress</a></p>`. The 'Publish' button is visible at the top right of the panel. On the right, the 'Recent Posts' and 'Recent Comments' sections are visible. At the bottom, the footer area is shown with the 'Neve | Powered by WordPress' text highlighted in a blue box, and a 'Close' button is visible next to it.

Removing the theme credit in the Customizer

Alternatively, you may be able to remove this link by editing your theme's **footer.php** file. This can be a little trickier, so it's best to stick with the Customizer if possible.

## ***Craft Key Pages to Build Your Credibility***

This tip isn't about a direct ranking factor, but it's still important.

There are a few key page pages that every quality and credible website should have:

- **An “About” page:** This should provide basic information about your brand, your mission, and what you have to offer visitors. It often helps to frame this content as a narrative, such as by describing how your brand came to be.
- **A “Contact” page:** Displaying a physical address (if your business has one), phone number, email, and other relevant contact details show users there's a real person behind your site. It also makes it easy for them to reach out to you with questions about your products or services, which can help you land sales.
- **“Disclosure,” “Privacy Policy,” and “Terms and Conditions” pages:** The legal pages needed for your website will vary somewhat depending on the type of content you produce. If you provide any advice (such as through blog posts) or incorporate affiliate links, a disclosure page is ideal. Any site that collects user data should be [GDPR compliant](#) and/or [CCPA compliant](#). If you sell products or services online, you'll want to list your terms and conditions.



## Reverse Engineered



Jon Penland spoke with Donata Stroink-Skillrud, President of Termageddon and Vice-Chair of The Privacy Committee of the American Bar Association, about why companies need a privacy policy

[Listen to Donata's podcast episode](#)

Besides these pages, adding some social proof to your site can help increase your trustworthiness as well. Links to your social media accounts and [testimonials and reviews from clients](#), customers, or users are ideal.

# Help Search Engines Crawl Your Site

As mentioned in Chapter 1, search engines use bots to crawl and index your site. While this is done automatically, there are a few ways in which you can help these bots find the information you want them to. These tips will also help you make the most of search engine result page (SERP) features.

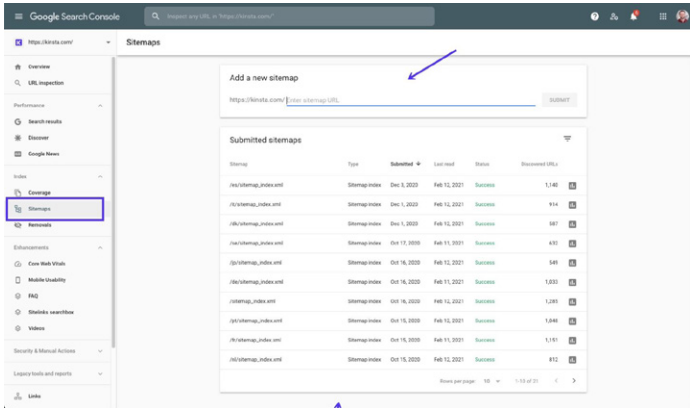
## ***Submit Your XML Sitemap to Google and Bing***

In the previous chapter, we explained how to create an XML sitemap. Next, we'll cover how to submit it to search engines.

### Google

In Google Search Console, click into **Sitemaps** under the **Index** section. Then input the location of your sitemap file, and click **Submit**.

You'll then see how many pages/posts have been submitted and how many are actually indexed. Google will now automatically crawl your sitemap file on a regular basis.

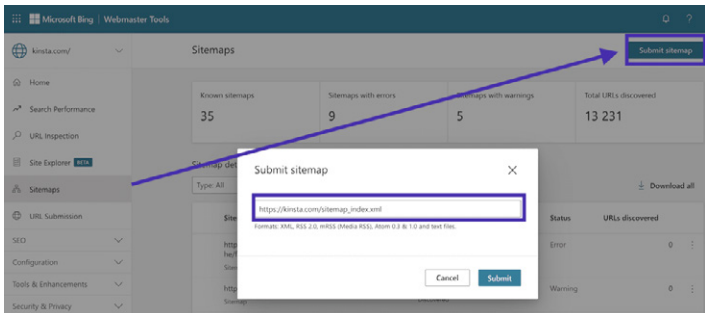


Submitting a sitemap to Google Search Console

## Bing

It's also recommended you submit your sitemap to Bing Webmaster Tools.

After logging in, click **Sitemaps** in the side menu, then click the **Submit** sitemap button, and add your sitemap index URL.



Submit a sitemap to Bing Webmaster Tools

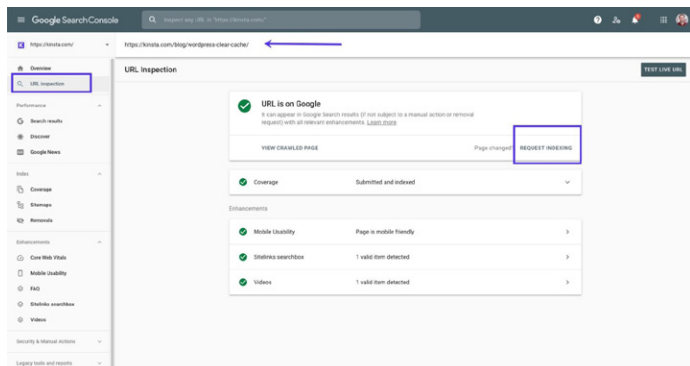
## Request Crawling for Faster Indexing

Googlebot is pretty good at discovering new pages naturally through crawling and XML sitemaps. This process can take anywhere from a few minutes to hours or days. While in most cases their automatic crawling will serve your needs, there may be instances where you want to request indexing.

This is where the [Request Indexing](#) tool in Google Search Console comes in handy. This tool can be useful when testing how your pages are ranked after making updates to a page. It's worth noting that there's often a delay, so don't expect to see your updated pages indexed instantly.

Within Google Search Console, click on the **URL Inspection** option under **Overview** in the sidebar, and enter the URL of the page you want to request for indexing.

There, you should see a box that tells you whether the URL you've specified is available in Google. Below this, there's a button labeled **Request Indexing**. Click on it to request a crawl for this URL.



The URL Inspection tool in Google Search Console

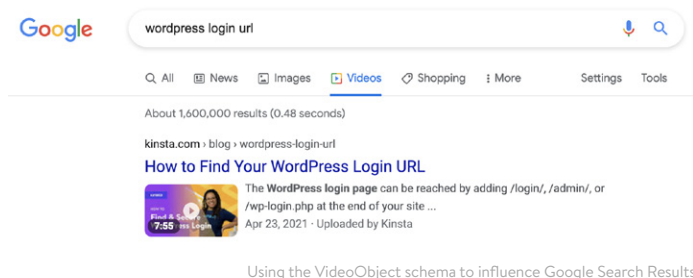
If Google isn't able to access your page for some reason, you may see an error message instead. It's wise to periodically [check your most important pages](#) using the URL Inspection tool to identify indexing errors and ensure that your pages can be properly displayed in search results.

## Apply Schema Markup

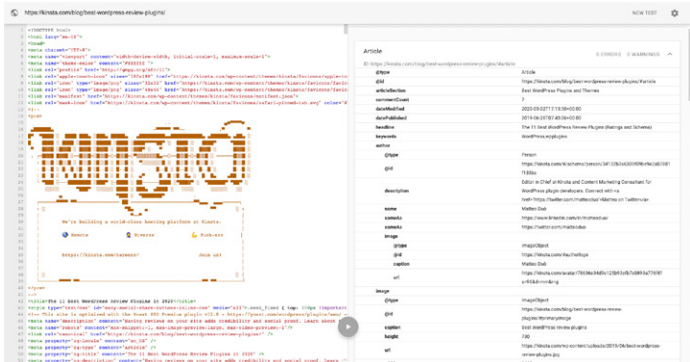
[Schema markup](#) is a type of metadata (referred to as microdata) that helps search engines deliver more and better data to visitors. It's added to the HTML within the pages on your site to give individual elements extra properties, such as what kind of information they include and what the context is.

### Schema Markup Example

If we do a search for “WordPress login URL” in Google’s video search, you’ll see our blog post ranking at the top, which features a video on this topic. By adding structured data, we were able to instruct Google on how to display the video, providing the thumbnail image, video URL, video duration, and more.



If you plug the Kinsta website into [Google's structured data testing tool](#), you'll find that there's even more microdata included in our site.



Kinsta's structured data schema

(There's also a rather cool Easter egg there in the form of the logo and other graphical information rendered as code!)

Inspecting the results of the data testing tool shows schema markup data types being used, some of which are:

- **@type:** WebPage
- **publisher @type:** Organization
- **publisher sameAs:** <https://www.facebook.com/kinstahosting> (there is also data for Instagram, Twitter, and other social media channels)
- **isPartOf name:** Kinsta Managed WordPress Hosting

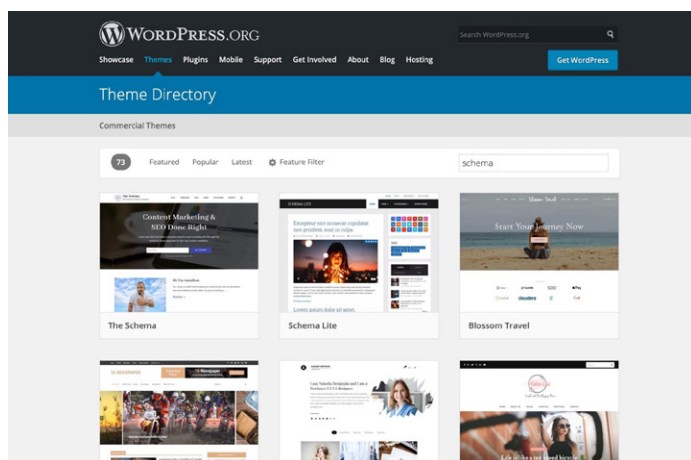
Generally, what you want to see is zero errors and some kind of return on the right side of the screen. If it's completely blank, that means your WordPress site doesn't have any schema markup added to it.

This is just a sample of the microdata provided about Kinsta. You can find the rest via the [Google Structured data testing tool](#).

## Add Schema Markup to Your WordPress Site

There are different ways you could use to add the schema.org markup.

You can install a [theme that has schema markup already included](#). Search for “schema” in the WordPress theme directory to see different options.



Schema theme search results

## Add Schema Markup via a Dedicated WordPress Plugin

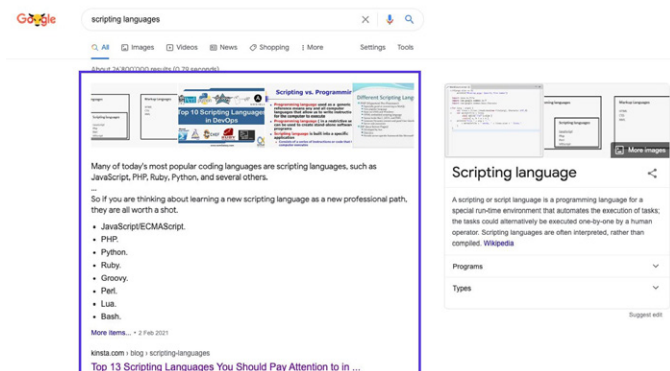
If you don't want to download a new theme, you can use a schema markup plugin. Yoast SEO automatically adds some structured data to your pages, with additional features available (at a cost) to further enrich your content.

Find a [complete list of SEO plugins here](#).

## Optimize Your Content for Google Featured Snippets

A **featured snippet** (also known as a position zero result) is a brief summary of an answer to a user's question. They are arguably one of the most valuable SERP features.

Featured snippets are displayed at the top of SERPs and are pulled from a webpage. The goal is to provide users with a quick and direct answer to their question without having to even click through to a specific search result/website.



Google featured snippet example



Because featured snippets take up a lot more space than the traditional blue link and description, there are positive implications on the number of clicks your page can receive, so earning featured snippets is a great way to drive more traffic to your website.

There's no magic recipe to get your content into feature snippets, but from our personal experience, we found the following can help:

- Focus on keywords that you already rank for in positions 1 to 10. The more impressions each query has, the more traffic you're likely to get if you can move into position zero.
- Add schema markup to help Google understand what your content is about and how it fits into your website.
- Use header tags (<H1> – <H6>), bulleted lists, and numbered lists effectively.
- Structure your posts in an organized fashion.
- Keep your paragraphs short. Featured snippets tend to be around 40 – 50 words in length.
- Use questions as headings and answer them below (questions often trigger featured snippets).
- Use high-quality images and videos.

## Optimize Your Content for Google Sitelinks

[Google sitelinks](#) appear under the first search result on a SERP. They are internal links to the website, presented with a short description. Sitelinks are often found when performing a brand search, and they help the user navigate around your website.

## Sitelinks

### Kinsta Managed WordPress Hosting - Powered By Google Cloud

<https://kinsta.com/>

The best managed WordPress hosting, powered by Google Cloud and LXD orchestrated Linux containers. Let us handle caching, security, updates, and more.

#### Plans

Check out Kinsta's managed WordPress hosting plans ...

#### Blog

The Kinsta blog focuses on all kinds of WordPress tutorials. It ...

#### Login

Log in to the MyKinsta dashboard and manage your WordPress ...

[More results from kinsta.com](#)

#### About Us

About us. Kinsta was founded in 2013 with a desire to create the ...

#### Features

Clients - Advanced Features - WooCommerce hosting ...

#### Affiliate program

The Kinsta affiliate program complements its high quality of ...

Google sitelinks in SERPs

Google sitelinks improve your click-through rate (CTR), build trust and credibility, increase brand and product awareness, and allow users to browse your site in more depth.

Unfortunately, sitelinks aren't something that you can enable, activate, or simply opt into. It's up to Google to enable them for a website they think is authoritative for a given query.

Luckily, there are a few things you can do to increase your chances of having sitelinks.

## Have a Unique Website Name

Google search sitelinks are predominantly found for brand searches, so having a unique brand name will help you to rank in the first position.

A generic name like “The Digital Agency” will struggle to rank, because it’s hard for Google to know whether the user is searching for a digital agency in general or this specific company.

Ambiguous company names can sometimes rank well in the right conditions. For example, a search for “apple” will bring up results for the tech giant rather than the fruit, because Google understands a user’s intent.

However, without having an incredibly strong brand presence, it’s difficult to rank for a fairly generic name.

## Rank at Position #1 for Your Brand Name

Google sitelinks are only assigned to the first search result, so you need to be ranking at #1 if you want to stand a chance of getting those sitelinks.

## Use Structured Data

Structured data, like the [breadcrumbs schema](#), helps Google and other search engines better understand your website. We covered schema just a few pages back.

## Use Clear Website Structure and Navigation

Websites with complicated or unclear structures are harder for search engines to crawl and difficult for users to navigate.

Ensure your homepage is the main page of your website and that all other pages branch off from there. Use clear headings and an intuitive structure to organize your pages and split everything into relevant subcategories wherever possible.

As seen in Chapter 3, it's also good to have the “standard” webpages covered, such as [About](#), [Contact](#), and Products/Services. These are very easily understood by Google and users alike, and make great landing pages from the SERPs.

## ***Optimize Your Content for Google Discover***

[Google Discover](#) is Android's content suggestion service. It's basically a feed of content that Google thinks users will find relevant, based on their search history and other content they've read. As we mentioned earlier, mobile traffic is growing like crazy, so optimizing your posts for this platform can only help you.

Since Google Discover isn't search-based, keyword research and optimization won't help you get your posts into users' feeds. There are, however, several actionable steps you can take to improve your chances:

- Create high-quality content.
- Use images and videos in your posts.
- Create evergreen content (more on that in Chapter 7), as well as new, timely posts at regular intervals.

- Build trust with your content by [incorporating social proof](#).
- [Translate your content](#).

When it comes to the images you include in your posts, you may also want to consider [enabling large image use for Google Discover](#). Statistics show that this leads to an increase in CTR, page view duration, and user satisfaction.

You can track how much traffic Google Discover is sending to your website, along with which pages are appearing, by heading to the **Discover** report in Google Search Console.

# Optimize Your Content With Keywords

We first introduced keywords in Chapter 1 as a metric you should be aware of while optimizing your site for SEO.

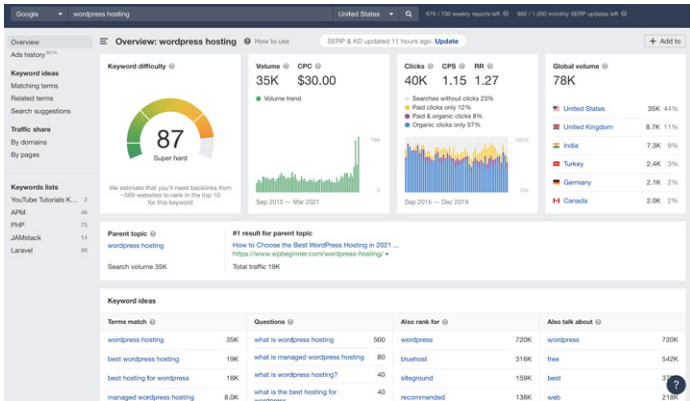
Keywords are words or phrases that represent what your site's content is about. They're used by search engines to bring relevant content to users' queries.

Before you go adding keywords to your content, here are a few strategies you should consider to get the most return out of your efforts.

## ***Do Keyword Research***

Keyword research is the act of finding and vetting keywords to target in an SEO campaign.

This is done using a number of free and/or paid tools that show you what people are searching for on Google and other search engines. A few of our favorites include [KWFinder](#), [SEMrush](#), and [Ahrefs](#).



A search for “WordPress hosting” in Ahrefs

## Why Is Keyword Research Important?

The quality of your keywords is the difference between a successful marketing campaign and a waste of time. Why? Because you can create the best content and build incredible links that score you #1 Google rankings and still get zero benefits in terms of business growth or revenue if you target the wrong keywords.

## How to Do Keyword Research

Here’s a quick summary on how to determine which keywords you should focus on:

1. Find keyword ideas based on key terms, related search, [long-tail keywords](#), and LSI (Latent Semantic Indexing, also known as synonyms or related keywords).

2. Check the true keyword difficulty and search volume.
3. Determine [user intent](#).

[Find more in-depth instructions on keyword research here.](#)

## ***Always Use a Focus Keyword***

You definitely should be writing for your visitors and customers, but write smart.

A focus keyword is exactly how it sounds: It is the central keyword to a page on your site that should always be in mind when creating content.

In the Yoast SEO plugin, set the focus keyword that you want to write about. For example, for this [blog post on SEO](#), we used the focus keyword “WordPress SEO.” You can see that Yoast SEO analyzes the keyword density, and is reporting that it’s a little low:

The screenshot shows the Yoast SEO analysis interface for the keyword "WordPress SEO". At the top, there are links for "+ Add synonyms" and "+ Add related keyphrase". Below that is a question: "Did you know Yoast SEO Premium also analyzes the different word forms of your keyphrase, like plurals and past tenses?" with a "Go Premium!" button. The "Analysis results" section is divided into "Problems (3)" and "Good results (11)".

**Problems (3)**

- **Keyword density:** The focus keyphrase was found 1 time. That's less than the recommended minimum of 2 times for a text of this length. [Focus on your keyphrase!](#)
- **Keyphrase in subheading:** [Use more keyphrases or synonyms in your higher-level subheadings!](#)
- **SEO title width:** The SEO title is wider than the viewable limit. [Try to make it shorter.](#)

**Good results (11)**

- **Outbound links:** Good job!
- **Internal links:** You have enough internal links. Good job!
- **Keyphrase in introduction:** Well done!
- **Keyphrase length:** Good job!

Example of a focus keyword



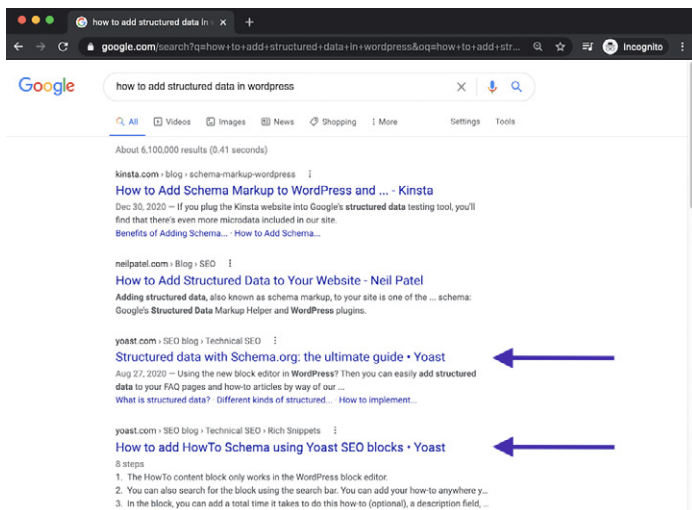
It's also wise to include your focus keyword in your title tag, H1 header, within the first paragraph, in image alt text and image file names when possible, and in your meta description.

## ***Avoid Keyword Cannibalization***

Keyword cannibalization occurs when two or more pages on your [WordPress site](#) compete for the same keyword. While this can sometimes result in both pages ranking, it's usually easier to focus all of your efforts on a single page, rather than diluting page authority across multiple pages. This, in theory, will help your single version rank even higher.

If you're lucky enough to have more than one page ranking in the first two positions, you can count yourself lucky and move on to review another keyword.

In the example below, we can see Yoast ranking with 2 results. By combining these two pages and the signals that go with them, they could stand a better chance of moving up in the rankings:



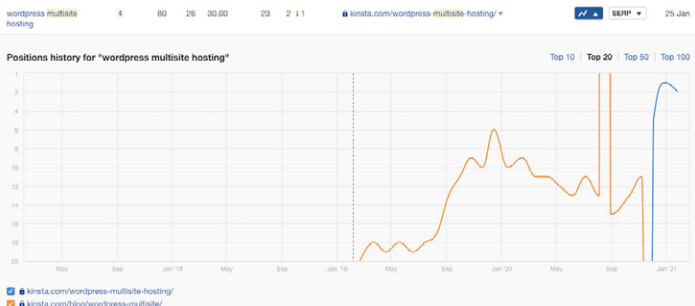
Example of keyword cannibalization

Keyword cannibalization can also lead to unstable rankings, causing your pages' positions to fluctuate. It may be unclear to search engines which is the most relevant page to be used. This means one page may rank well for a few days, then the other page may take its place, but in a lower position.

## ***How to Check Keyword Cannibalization***

There are several ways to check whether keyword cannibalization is causing issues for your WordPress site. Using a tool like Ahrefs will allow you to check if more than one page ranks for your target keywords.

For one thing, you can quickly see any ranking shifts, which is where different pages jump in and out of the rankings.



Example of keyword cannibalization in Ahrefs

You could also use Google Search Console to see when multiple pages rank for the same keywords.

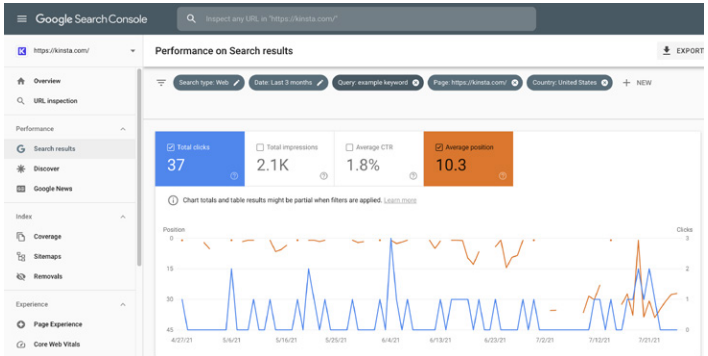
In the **Search Results** section, select the **Queries** tab, then filter **Rows** by **Position**, where **Position** is smaller than **20**. This will show the first two pages in Google's results.

Next, select **Clicks**, **Impressions**, and **Average Position**, then review high-impression keywords with a position greater than **1**.

By clicking each keyword and selecting the **Pages** tab, you can reveal whether more than one page on your site ranks for the selected query.

You may want to add your target country to the filters at the top, particularly if you have your content translated into other languages.

By checking the **Position** and **Clicks** for each page, you can quickly uncover situations where pages are jumping in and out of the rankings as a result of keyword cannibalization.



Keyword cannibalization seen in Google Search Console

# Improve Your On-Page SEO

Having a clear idea of which keyword(s) to focus on is just step one. You'll next need to structure your posts and pages in a way that search engines understand which keyword to focus on.

Here are a few ways you can improve your on-page SEO.

## ***Include Your Focus Keyword in Your Title Tag***

Title tags are one of the main ways that Google can understand what your page is about.

Title tags are often confused with the headers you see on a page. While they often have the same content, the HTML behind them plays different roles in search engines. Here's how [this blog post on WordPress and Drupal's title tag would look in HTML](#):

```
<title>WordPress vs Drupal - Which One is Better in 2021?</title>
```

And here is how the first header of the page, "WordPress vs Drupal - Which One is Better in 2021? (Pros and Cons)" looks in HTML:

```
<h1>WordPress vs Drupal - Which One is Better in 2021? (Pros and Cons)</h1>
```

Finally, here's how the blog post appears in Google — as you can see, the title tag is the most apparent portion of the search engine result:

<https://kinsta.com> › [blog](#) › [wordpress-vs-drupal](#) ⋮  
**WordPress vs Drupal - Which One is Better in 2021?**  
Jul 9, 2021 — [Drupal Advantages](#) · Custom content types and views – while **WordPress** does offer custom post types, most people consider **Drupal's** custom content ...

How a title tag appears in Google search results

Keep length in mind when writing your title tags. What Google will show varies, but a good rule to aim for is 55–60 characters or 600 pixels. Here's a [handy SERP preview tool](#) to make sure your title tags aren't too long.

Get your focus keyword in the title, but keep it natural. It's often the first thing people see in SERPs, so make a good impression to encourage them to click and read more on your site.

## ***Write Meta Descriptions to Increase Click-Through Rate***

If the title tag is your page's headline, the meta description is the one-line summary enticing people to read on.

Meta descriptions do not directly affect your SEO, but they do affect your CTR. The higher your CTR, the more relevant Google will deem your content, therefore ranking your page higher. So, in a sense, meta descriptions can indirectly affect your rankings.


You can set your meta description manually in the Yoast SEO plugin by clicking on the **Edit Snippet** button below the editor.

## Snippet Preview

[https://kinsta.com > blog > meta-description-wordpress](https://kinsta.com/blog/meta-description-wordpress)

### How to Add Meta Descriptions in WordPress (Improve CTR up to 5.8%)

**Meta descriptions** directly affect your click-through rate. Need to add **meta descriptions** to WordPress? Learn how with this guide and give your SEO a boost.



### SEO title


 Insert snippet variable

How to Add Meta Descriptions in WordPress (Improve CTR up to 5.8%)

### Slug

meta-description-wordpress

### Meta description

 Insert snippet variable

Meta descriptions directly affect your click-through rate. Need to add meta descriptions to WordPress? Learn how with this guide and give your SEO a boost.

Meta description in Yoast SEO plugin

Previously, there was a 156 character limit for meta descriptions. Google updated this in December 2017 to 320 characters but then reverted the change back to 150–170 characters. Anything over that might not be visible in SERPs.

It's also wise to include your focus keyword in your meta description. Google will highlight the search term in bold when displaying it in search results, like in this search about alternative search engines:

## 21 Alternative Search Engines To Use in 2020 - Kinsta

Feb 13, 2020 - Google isn't the only search engine out there. Check out the best **alternative search engines** for encrypted data, more privacy, and cool search ...

Bolded keyword in the meta description

Here's how to write better meta descriptions:



### *Use Proper Heading Tags*

Googlebot checks HTML header tags such as H1, H2, H3, and so forth to determine the relevancy of your site's content. Generally, the best practice is to have a single H1 tag per post or page, and then multiple H2s and H3s underneath that.

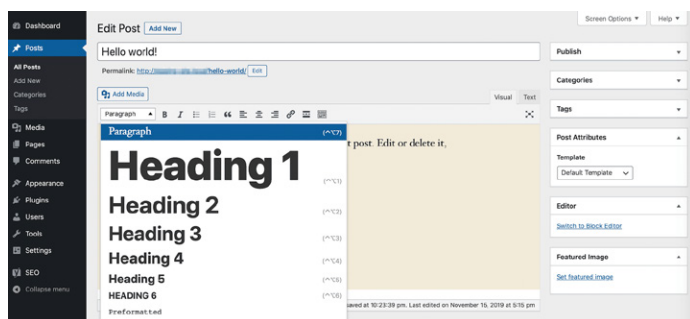
Header tags can be thought of as a hierarchy of importance. The H1 tag is your most important header and should contain your focus keyword. Additional headers could also include your keyword or long-tail variations of it.



That said, note that headers should just be used to split up your content for easier consumption – not as a means to stuff keywords into prominent places in your pages.

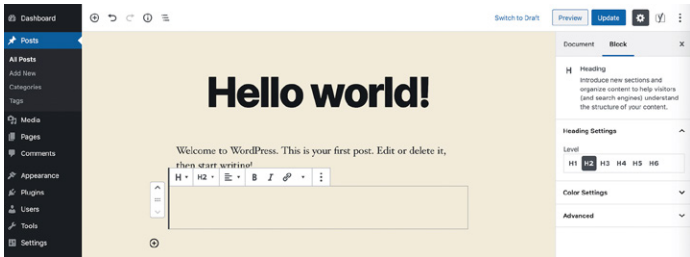
Most WordPress themes, if coded properly, will automatically assign the title of your page or post as the H1 header. You can then assign H2, H3, H4, etc. headers within your post or page.

You can create a header in the [Classic Editor](#) using the dropdown in the visual editor.



Adding a header in the Classic Editor

This automatically assigns to the selected text the HTML tags that Google will need to read your headers. In the Block Editor, you can use the header block to achieve the same effect.



Adding a header in the Block Editor

## Use Short URLs

Google likes sites that are clean, organized, and structured. Short URLs can also improve your CTR.

Unfortunately, WordPress' auto-generated slugs and permalinks aren't always ideal.

For instance, in this [blog post about URLs](#), WordPress' original permalink would have been something like:

```
https://kinsta.com/blog/what-is-a-url-explained-learn-how-to-get-most-out-your-sites-url
```

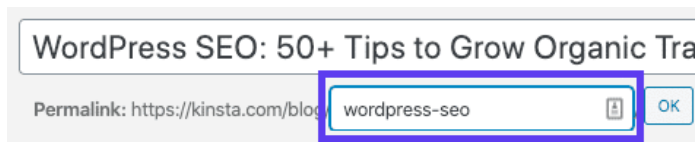
This link is too long and isn't ideal for sharing or SEO. To circumvent this, we opted for a shorter URL:

```
https://kinsta.com/blog/what-is-a-url
```

Here's how to shorten your URL for a WordPress post or page:

## Step 1: Find the Permalink Setting

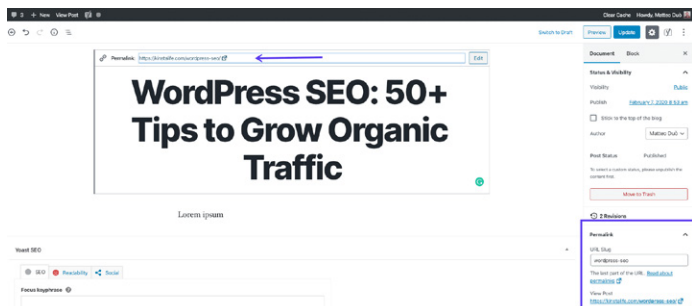
In both the Classic and Block Editors, you'll find a permalink setting that enables you to [edit your post's slug](#), or the portion of the URL that appears after the final forward slash (/). In the Classic Editor, it appears directly underneath the post's title.



Accessing the permalink setting in the Classic Editor

Click on the **Edit** button to enable the slug field.

In the Block Editor, you can find this option in the **Document** tab of the right-hand sidebar under **Permalink**, or at the top of your heading block.



Accessing the permalink setting in the Block Editor

The necessary text field will already be visible.

## Step 2: Edit Your Post's Slug

Next, simply type in the new slug for your post. Remember to separate words with hyphens and use lowercase characters.

Each post and page on your site must have a unique URL, so you can't repeat slugs you've already used. Doing so will cause WordPress to automatically add "-1" to your slug to differentiate the two entries.

### ***Pay Attention to Word Count***

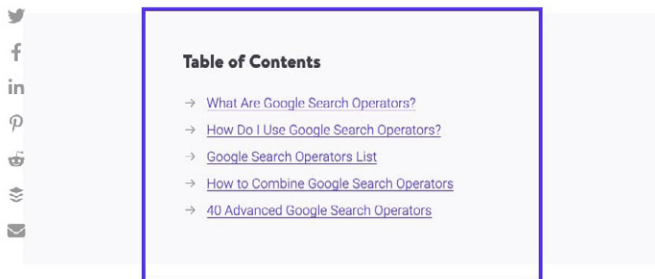
The old saying "Content is King" is still alive and well. Google and visitors love high-quality content.

Long-form content has time and time again [proven to win on search engine results pages \(SERPs\)](#).

Another advantage of long-form content is that over time, you'll also start ranking for several long-tail keyword variations in addition to your focus keyword. This can extend to cover hundreds of popular search terms and phrases.

# Incorporate Anchor Links in Longer Content

With longer content, it's best to include [anchor links](#).



## What Are Google Search Operators?

Google search operators (sometimes called *Google advanced search operators* or *Google search commands*) are special commands that extend the capabilities of

Anchor links in a Kinsta blog post

Anchor links are excellent for improving user experience, as they enable readers to get right to the answers they're looking for. In a long post where some readers may just need a portion of the information your content provides, anchors are very helpful and prevent the need for excessive scrolling.

Additionally, your anchor links may also appear under your posts' titles on SERPs in the form of [Google Site Links](#), as seen below:

People also ask	
Can you add fonts to WordPress?	▼
How do you change the font in WordPress?	▼
Can you use Google fonts in WordPress?	▼

[Feedback](#)

kinsta.com › blog › wordpress-fonts ▼

## WordPress Fonts: Everything You Need to Know (2020 Edition)

Mar 4, 2020 - But to give you an idea, here are the five major types of font styles you might want to use on your site: Script. Script font example (Image source: Cadillac) Display. Display font example (Image source: Disney) Modern. Modern font example (Image source: Vogue) Serif. Serif font example (Image source: T-Mobile) Sans ...

[Most Common Font Styles](#)

[Why WordPress Font](#)

[How to Gather Inspiration](#)

Anchor links in Google SERPs

This increase in information can help you generate more organic traffic.

## Create an Internal Linking Strategy

Internal links are links that point from one page or post on your site to another page or post on the same site. They're not only key to SEO but also to [site navigation](#).

You can incorporate internal links when referring to other content you have written or when linking to your own landing pages.

Moz has a great article on [why internal links are important](#), but in short:

- They help users navigate your website, which can lead to more content being consumed and more time spent on your site.
- They help establish a site structure and hierarchy of information.
- They help grow your site's authority by passing value through links.

We recommend adding at least 3–5 internal links to each post or page you write. Depending upon the length of your content, you may add even more.

To add internal links to your content, highlight the word or words you want to add your link to. This will be your anchor text. Then use the hyperlink tool to paste your link, or search for it.

**Note:** Don't add internal links that don't make sense. Be sure that there's a direct correlation between the link and the anchor text you choose.

# Maintain Your Content

You've already learned that content should be relevant, entertaining, compelling, and valuable. Not only does quality content drive website traffic, but it also establishes your site's authority.

But you can't just publish content and forget about it. Just like anything else, some maintenance is required.

## ***Update Old Content and Focus on Evergreen Content***

Google considers content "freshness" when ranking results, so going through your posts and modifying them to better reflect changes in your industry can boost your visibility significantly.

**Evergreen content** is content that is always relevant, no matter when you read it.

One of the main advantages of evergreen content is that you can share it over and over again, and keep building up backlinks (more on backlinks in Chapter 9) and social signals for it.

While some updates will still be required as most industries change slightly over time, the level of maintenance needed for evergreen posts is much lower than regular news. If you have the choice of publishing evergreen content vs news, it's wise to go for the long-term play.



## **Practice Content Pruning**

Content pruning involves removing dated content from your site if it can't be updated and improved.

While it can be nerve-wracking to delete content you've worked hard to create, it's better to have less content that's all of high quality than to have a lot of posts that aren't valuable to visitors.

This will also allow you to make better use of your "crawl budget," i.e. the number of pages on your site that Google crawls within a given period of time.

Content pruning is an art. We don't recommend that you go and delete half of your site's posts at once. Take a look at the work that's involved in this case study where HubSpot [removed 3,000 posts from their blog](#).

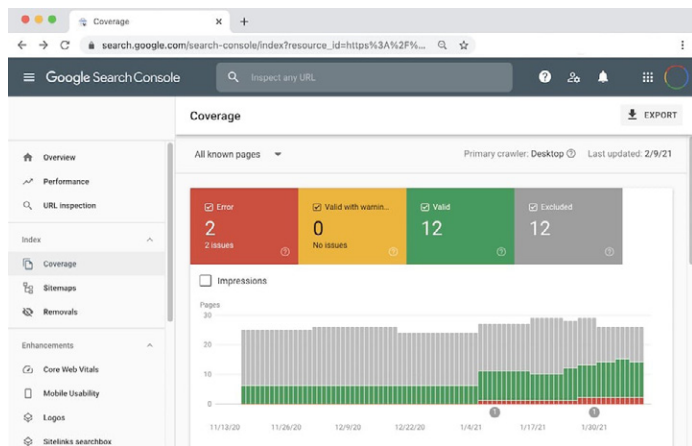
If you do decide to remove content, [create 301 redirects](#) so visitors and page authority don't get lost.

## **Fix Broken Links**

[Broken links](#) are bad for your WordPress site for a few different reasons:

1. Broken links negatively impact user experience.
2. They waste your crawl budget in Google. Every 404 page that a Googlebot encounters as a result of a broken link is a live page that Google could have crawled instead.
3. They do not provide the SEO benefits you're looking for in an internal linking strategy.

To find broken links in Google Search Console, navigate to the **Coverage** section. Here you'll see a report that notes pages on your site with errors and warnings, as well as content that's valid or excluded.



Coverage report in Google Search Console

If you click on the **Error** box and scroll down to the **Details** section, you'll see a list of any problems Google encountered while crawling your site. This includes 404 errors, which usually indicate broken links.

While broken link plugins for WordPress exist, we don't recommend them, as they tend to hurt the overall performance of your site.

Other SEO tools like Ahrefs can also help you to identify broken internal links, both on your site and from other websites.

## ***De-Index Duplicate Content***

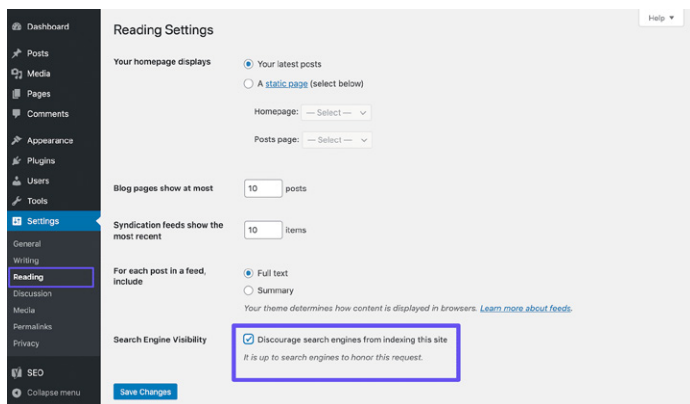
It might sound silly to have two identical copies of the same content, but it happens more often than you might think. One common reason for this is when a staging site is indexed by Google.

Having multiple copies of your content indexed can lead to some serious SEO problems. While Google doesn't formally penalize you for having duplicate posts or pages, it can still have an [impact on your rankings](#).

The main problem is that when presented with two identical pieces of content, Google doesn't know which one to rank. Hypothetically, this means that your staging site could start appearing in place of your actual web pages, which would be awkward, to say the least.

In this case, the simplest way to take care of this issue is to de-index your staging site.

WordPress allows you to do so easily. Navigate to **Settings > Reading** on your staging site, and select the checkbox next to **Discourage search engines from indexing this site**.



De-indexing a WordPress site

If you're using a [Kinsta staging environment](#), you can rest assured it will be automatically set up to not be indexed by search engines.

Other examples of duplicate content include www vs non-www (as seen in Chapter 3), as well as the use of parameters in URLs.

The general rule to prevent this type of duplicate content is to use a self-referencing canonical tag on every page. A canonical tag highlights your preferred version of your URLs. For instance, this [blog post on SEO](#) contains the following canonical in the <head>:

```
<link rel="canonical" href="https://kinsta.com/blog/wordpress-seo/">
```

You can also add redirect rules to your [WordPress .htaccess file](#) to make sure that users and bots are always redirected to your canonical URLs.

# Optimize Your Site's Media

Media, e.g. images, videos, and really any visual on your site, can bring your site from boring to beautiful. Here's how to optimize your media to receive its full SEO benefits.

## ***Use High-Quality Images***

Adding images and graphics to your content benefits your site in a few ways:

- Your images can rank in Google Image Search, generating more organic traffic for your site.
- Images can help demonstrate your posts' relevancy to search engine crawlers.
- Visuals make your content more interesting, appealing, and reader-friendly.

In the next section, you'll learn how to optimize these images so that they don't slow your site down.

## ***Optimize Your Images for Performance***

Images make up [on average 21%](#) of a web page's overall weight. Large images slow down your web pages, which creates a less-than-optimal user experience.

Optimizing images for performance is the process of decreasing their file size. It can be done prior to uploading images to WordPress in a tool like Adobe Photoshop or Affinity Photo. It can also be performed using plugins. The primary goal of formatting your images is to find the balance between the lowest file size and acceptable visual quality.

We cover [image optimization in depth on our blog](#), but here are some general best practices:

- If you're using a WordPress plugin, opt for one that compresses and optimizes images on the server itself. This will reduce the load on your site.
- Use vector images whenever possible.
- [Use a CDN](#) to serve up your images quickly to visitors across the globe.
- Remove unnecessary image data or metadata.
- Crop the white space and recreate it by using CSS to provide the padding.
- Use CSS3 effects instead of JavaScript as much as possible.
- Save your images in the proper dimensions (though remember that WordPress now supports [responsive](#) images to serve them up without resizing them with CSS).
- Always use **.ico** file format for your [favicon](#).
- Use web fonts instead of placing text within images.
- Use raster images only for scenes with lots of shapes and details.
- Reduce the bit-depth to a smaller color palette.
- Use lossy compression where possible.
- Use compressed GIFs for animation.
- Use PNG if you need high detail and high resolutions.

- Use JPG for general photos and screenshots.
- Automate the process as much as possible.
- In some cases, you might want to [lazy load images](#) for a faster first-page render.
- Export images as “optimized for web” in tools such as Photoshop.
- Use WebP in Chrome to serve up in smaller images.



If you've optimized your images but are still suffering from a slow site, there may be other issues at play. Discover other ways to improve performance in our free ebook.

[Download How to Speed Up Your WordPress Site](#)

## ***Add Alt Text to Your Images***

Alt text refers to the alt attribute, or alternative text, that is applied to images on your site. Alt tags are used by screen readers for visually impaired users, providing extra context for images.

For example, if someone was using the Dragon Naturally Speaking software, alt text could actually help them navigate the page better.

These pieces of descriptive text are also used by search engines to get a better understanding of an image's content and how it relates to the content around it.

When viewing your site's HTML, you can spot alt attributes within `<img>` tags, like so:

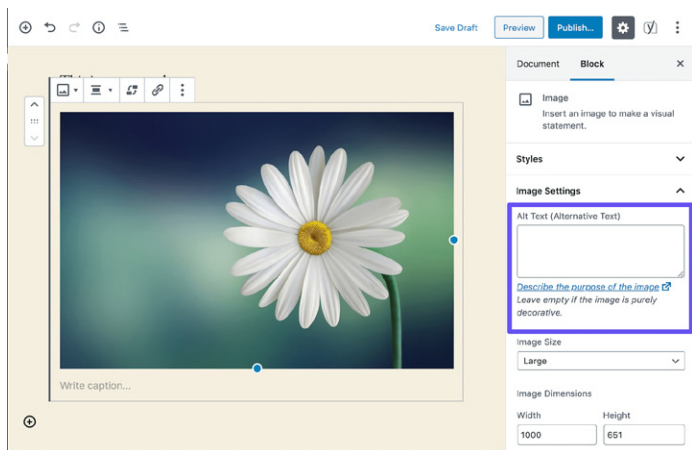
```

```

You should always add alt text to your images. If you haven't done so yet, you can go back and do it now.

With WordPress, you don't need to know any code to add alt text. You can simply type it in by selecting an image in your [Media Library](#) or by clicking on an image within the WordPress editor.

In the Block Editor, you'll find the **Alt Text (Alternative Text)** field in the **Block** tab of the sidebar, under **Image Settings**.



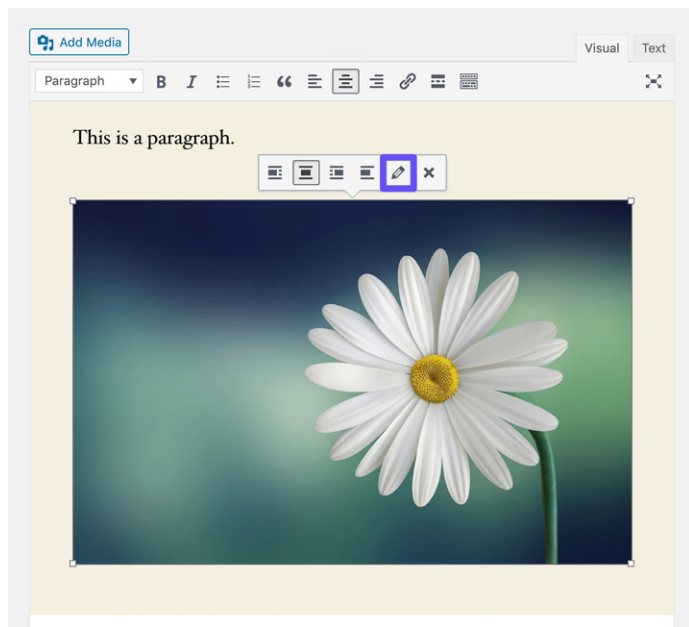
Adding alt text in the Block Editor

To add alt text in the Classic Editor, follow the steps below.



## Step 1: Open the Image Settings

Open your post or page in the Classic Editor. Then click on the image for which you want to add alt text. You'll see a toolbar appear above it.

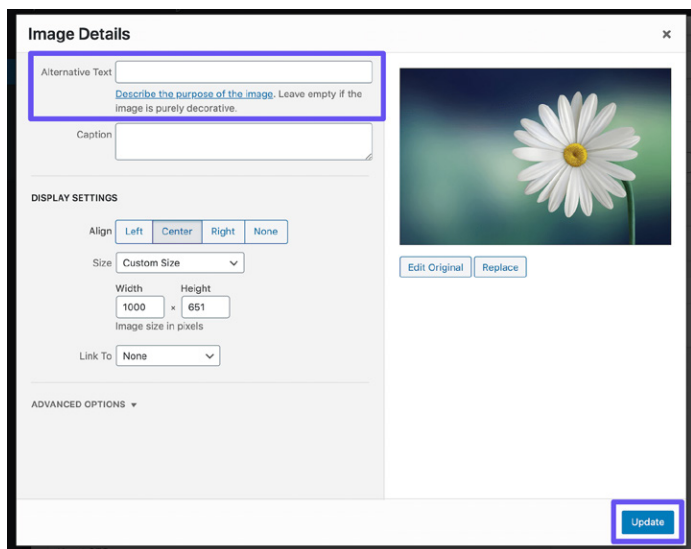


Opening the image settings in the Classic Editor

Click on the pencil icon to open the image settings.

## Step 2: Add Alt Text in the Relevant Field

If you're running the latest version of WordPress, the **Alternative Text** field should be the first one in the resulting window.



Adding alt text in the Classic Editor

Click on the blue **Update** button when you're done.

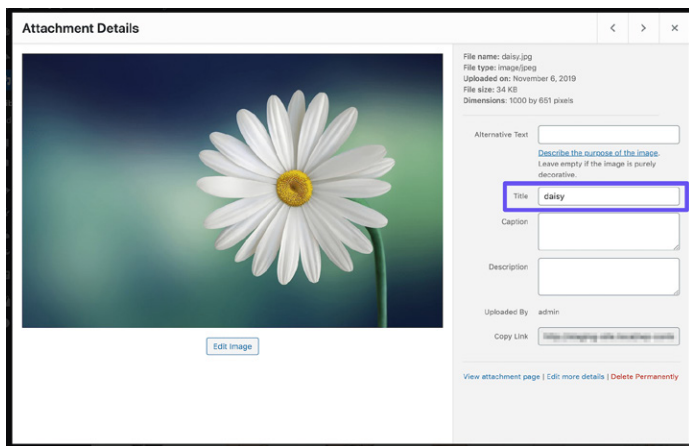
It can be beneficial to add your focus keyword here if it's applicable to the image. However, don't just add your focus keyword as an alt text across all of your images. As with all things SEO, do this in moderation. Google doesn't like spamming.

## Add Image Title Tags

The image title text doesn't influence your SEO and is not crawled by Google or Bing, but titling an image appropriately could improve your user experience.

Use image title text to add tooltips to images. This can be a great way to incorporate a call to action (CTA) when someone hovers over it on your site.

Just as with alt text, you don't need to know any code to add title text in WordPress. You can add it via the Media Library by clicking on an image and filling in the **Title** field.



Adding the image title attribute in the Media Library

You can also add a title tag to your images with the Classic Editor by opening the **Advanced Options** dropdown and adding your text to the **Image Title Attribute** field.

## ***Name Your Image Files Wisely***

Images files are more important than most website owners know. With a few correct best WordPress SEO practices, you can see a nice boost both on SERPs and in Google Image Search.

Some guidelines include:

- Always name your image files with actual words related to your content before uploading them to WordPress. For example, instead of **DC0000.jpg**, name the image **wordpress-seo.jpg**.
- Always include hyphens between words in the image file names. File names like **wordpress\_seo.jpg** or **wordpressseo.jpg** are not readable by Google.
- Include your focus keyword if applicable.
- Always include your focus keyword in the featured image.
- Keep your filenames lowercase. This keeps your image URLs clean and will retain consistency for all of your URLs.

## ***Make Sure Images Are Accessible if Using a CDN***

Traffic from images can add up over time, so it's important to verify that your images can be crawled by search engines.

If you're [using a CDN](#), ensure that your images aren't being blocked by your CDN provider's **robots.txt**.

If you use the Yoast SEO plugin, add the following code to the bottom of your **functions.php** file (but first the domain and CDN domain with your own):

```
function wpseo_cdn_filter( $uri ) {  
return str_replace( 'http://yourdo-  
main.com', 'http://cdn.yourdomain.  
com', $uri );  
}  
  
add_filter( 'wpseo_xml_sitemap_img_  
src', 'wpseo_cdn_filter' );
```

Check out our [Guide to Image Optimization](#) to learn more about how to get your images to show up in search results.

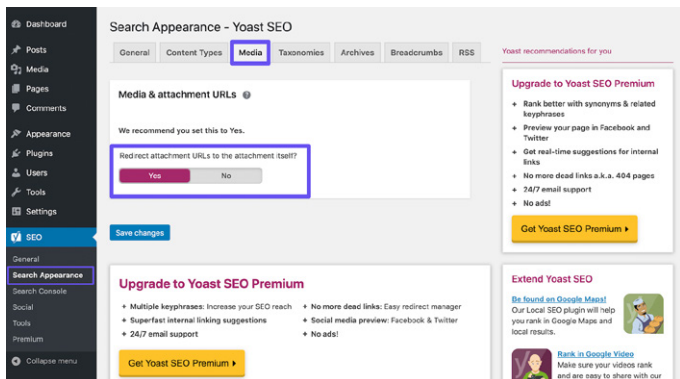
We also recommend watching this [Search Central Lightning Talk](#) from John Mueller at Google, which offers a lot of useful tips for best-practice image optimization.

## ***Don't Index Image Attachment Pages***

Whenever you [upload an image in WordPress](#) and insert it into a post or page, it creates a separate attachment page on which the image resides. If you aren't careful, Google might actually start indexing these pages. Since they have no value, it can be a waste of your crawl budget.

Additionally, if someone clicks on an image attachment page in search results, all they'll see is the image and not the content in the post. This lack of context will increase your bounce rate.

If you notice this on your WordPress site, the Yoast SEO plugin has a redirect option to fix it. Simply navigate to **SEO > Search Appearance** and click on the **Media** tab.



The Yoast SEO attachment redirects setting

Now enable the “**Redirect attachment URLs to the attachment itself**” option.

You can check how well your images are performing in Google Image search by reviewing the **Image** search type filter in the **Search Results** report in Google Search Console.

## Take Advantage of Videos

There are two ways in which you can get the most out of video. We'll discuss both here.

## Repurpose Written Content in Video Assets

People like to consume content in different ways. Some are happy to read through long blog posts, while others prefer to watch video content. If you offer your users both options, you can target a wider audience.

YouTube is a Google-owned platform that has grown rapidly in recent years, moving up to take the second spot in the list of [Top 100 Most Visited Websites by Search Traffic](#). This means that adding video versions of your content will help you target new visitors across a new channel.

Optimizing videos for YouTube (known as YouTube SEO) is a whole different discipline that you can read more about in [our guide to YouTube SEO](#).

## Optimize Videos for Video Search

The **Video** tab in Google allows you to search for video content. While Google is pretty good at pulling videos in from web pages, you can encourage Google to include your videos (or other people's [videos you've embedded in your pages](#)) by providing more context using the [VideoObject schema](#).

As we mentioned earlier, the VideoObject schema can be used to feed Google with more details about your videos, including the title, description, and thumbnail image.

We've found that the videos we include, together with structured data, often perform well in Google's video results, particularly for keywords that we also rank well for in Google Search.

You can check how well your videos are performing in Google search console by selecting the **Video** search type filter in the **Search Results** report, as well as by selecting **Videos** in the **Search Appearance** tab under the **Web** search type.

# Build Credibility With Backlinks and Sponsored Content

We talked about internal linking strategies in Chapter 6. Now it's time to have links to your site added into outside content. These are referred to as backlinks.

## ***Build Quality Backlinks***

Backlinks are important as they boost your credibility, drive traffic to your site, and act as a reputation management tool.

Generally, it's a good sign if the number of referring domains linking to you is on an upward trend. This means that over time, more and more websites are linking to yours.

Ahrefs can get an overview of your backlink profile. You can see the total number of backlinks to your site, the number of referring domains, organic ranking keywords, and more. This platform's backlink notifications are also helpful.

Quick tip: Share the pages that link to your site on social media. This helps build social signals for them on their page, which in turn can lead to more awareness and more links, which can build up their page authority. Links from sites with higher page authority are beneficial to your WordPress SEO too, so it's a win-win.



## Focus on External Links With High Domain Authority

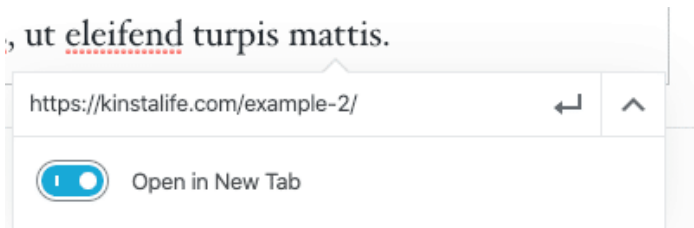
Just like adding internal links, you should also add some external links to high domain authority sites. This shows Google that you're linking out to high-quality content that's relevant to yours. Plus, it improves the user experience by providing your visitors/users with additional information.

This can also be a great way to start conversations with other brands. If you link to another company in your post, shoot them a quick email or tweet after you publish it and ask for a share.

When adding external links, a nice little trick to keep people on your site is to make the link open in a new tab or window.

Some people may argue that they don't like this, but it can help encourage users to come back and browse your site later on when they might have otherwise forgotten about you.

In the Block Editor, you can set a link to open in a new tab by clicking on it, then clicking on the dropdown arrow and toggling the switch.



Setting a link to open in a new tab in Block Editor

In Classic Editor, open your link settings and select the **Open link in a new tab** checkbox.

This will add the `target="_blank"` element to your link's HTML tag. The result will look like this:

```
<a href="https://kinsta.com" target="_blank">Kinsta</a>
```

## ***Know the Difference Between Nofollow, Dofollow, Sponsored, and UGC Links***

There are several basic types of links on the internet when it comes to SEO.

### Dofollow Links

By default, every link you create in WordPress is a dofollow link. Google crawls these types of links when analyzing your site. This helps build authority and affects your rankings, since link "juice" is passed from the linking page.

You may have heard people say that you need more backlinks. If so, they were probably referring to dofollow links from other high authority sites.

## Nofollow Links

Nofollow links contain the rel attribute of nofollow, as seen below:

```
<a href="https://kinsta.com"
rel="nofollow">my link</a>
```

Nofollow links tell search engine crawlers to ignore them. That is not to say that nofollow links aren't important, though. They can still generate traffic, even if they don't pass authority and influence your rankings. You can read our tutorial on different ways to [add nofollow links in WordPress](#).

Nofollow links are often used when a link is placed at the request of the linked website. This is because links pass value between pages, so should occur naturally. Manipulating sites to link to you is against Google's guidelines, so ignoring this could cause your site [to be penalized](#).

Generally, a natural backlink profile includes a good ratio between dofollow and nofollow links.

## Sponsored Links

Sponsored links contain the `rel` attribute of `sponsored`, as seen below. This is used to show that a link is sponsored.

```
<a href="https://kinsta.com"
rel="sponsored">my link</a>
```

Sponsored links are often used as part of [paid campaigns](#), where the goal of the sponsored link should be about driving traffic rather than passing value from the linking page. It is [against Google's guidelines](#) to pay for links that pass value, so it's important to make sure any sponsored links use the sponsored link attribute.

## User Generated Links

UGC links, or User Generated Content links, contain the `rel` attribute of `ugc`, as seen below:

```
<a href="https://kinsta.com"
rel="ugc">my link</a>
```

UGC links are used to show when a link has been created by users – for instance, when links are included in the user comments section at the bottom of a blog post.

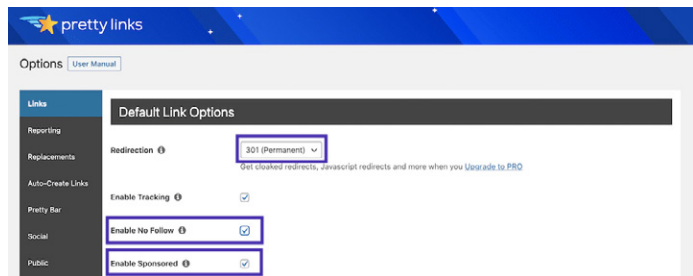
## Add Sponsored Attribute in Affiliate Links

A lot of WordPress bloggers and even some businesses use affiliate links on their websites. Affiliate links are generally used when you want to track a commission or referral of a product or signup between websites.

Unfortunately, Google usually frowns upon [affiliate links](#) if they aren't set up correctly. Some sites have even been penalized for having a lot of affiliate links. To safely use affiliate links, they should always include the `sponsored` attribute.

A great way to keep track of your affiliate links and always make sure they use the sponsored attribute is to use an affiliate plugin such as [Pretty Links](#) or [ThirstyAffiliates](#).

Pretty Links enables you to create easy and short affiliate links that include the sponsored attribute and also redirect with a 301. Simply go to **Pretty Links > Options** in your WordPress dashboard to enable these settings.



The Pretty Links Options page

You can select the relevant redirect type from the dropdown, and select the **Enable No Follow** and **Enable Sponsored** checkboxes to make all of your affiliate links include the `nofollow` and `sponsored` attributes. The addition of the `nofollow` attribute will ensure all search engines understand that it's not a natural link.

### **Kinsta's Affiliate Program**

If you're a Kinsta customer or simply an online entrepreneur looking to diversify your income streams, [Kinsta's affiliate program](#) is a great way to earn extra money while recommending top-tier WordPress hosting.

Depending on the plan, Kinsta affiliates can earn up to \$500 USD with every referral. They also receive an additional 10% monthly commission for the lifetime of the referred customer's tenure. With a churn rate under 4%, Kinsta affiliates stand to enjoy a consistent monthly recurring income through their referrals.

[Learn more about Kinsta's affiliate program](#)

## ***Consider Negative SEO***

[Negative SEO](#) is a topic that many people don't know how to deal with.

As seen earlier in this chapter, backlinks help improve your SEO. Unfortunately, there are unethical players who may aim to penalize your site by backlinking from inappropriate or spammy sites.

Not only is this malicious use of links against Google's guidelines, but your site could also lose traffic and possibly be excluded from search results.

To avoid getting caught in a link scheme, monitor your backlink profile regularly. If you see any sudden spikes in backlinks or links using unusual, often adult-themed anchor text, investigate them quickly.

For instance, [here's what one marketer](#) woke up to one morning:

Link text (60)	Total backlinks	Juicy links	Nofollow links %	Toxic links %	Linking domains	Linking pages	EDU	GOV
buy viagra uk	191 <span>▲14</span>	171 <span>▲9</span>	-	10%	36	191	-	-
viagra	94 <span>▲10</span>	69 <span>▲17</span>	-	26%	34	94	-	-
cialis 20mg	90	72 <span>▲1</span>	-	20%	37	90	-	-
viagra online	87 <span>▲2</span>	53 <span>▲9</span>	-	39%	39	87	-	-
cheap viagra	82	54 <span>▲10</span>	-	34%	34	82	-	-
generic cialis	82 <span>▲1</span>	59 <span>▲3</span>	-	28%	36	82	-	-
viagra for sale	82 <span>▲1</span>	52 <span>▲8</span>	-	36%	35	82	-	-
buy cialis online	80 <span>▲2</span>	55 <span>▲7</span>	-	31%	34	80	-	-
generic viagra online	79 <span>▲1</span>	53 <span>▲9</span>	-	32%	34	79	-	-
natural viagra	78 <span>▲1</span>	49 <span>▲6</span>	-	37%	36	78	-	-
cialis dosage	77 <span>▲2</span>	50 <span>▲12</span>	-	35%	33	77	-	-
ed pills	77 <span>▲3</span>	56 <span>▲7</span>	-	24%	32	77	-	-
canadian pharmacy	76 <span>▲4</span>	58 <span>▲7</span>	-	23%	36	76	-	-
kamagra	76 <span>▲1</span>	54 <span>▲8</span>	-	28%	29	76	-	-
cialis online	76 <span>▲3</span>	47 <span>▲8</span>	-	37%	36	76	-	-

Spammy links

To help sites that have been targeted, Google created the Disavow tool. It allows you to create a list of URLs and domains you want Google to ignore. This can protect your site from any drop in SEO, but use it with care, as you wouldn't want to end up disavowing legitimate links that are helping your SEO.

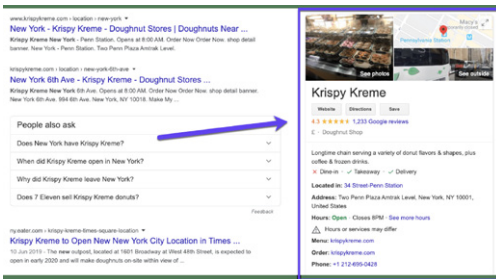
# Implement Local SEO

Local SEO is extremely important, especially for small businesses with a local presence. If you have a business that sees customers in person, you especially will want to create Google My Business and Bing Places accounts.

## Register With Google My Business

[Google My Business](#) is a free service you can use to promote your business in Google Search and Google Maps. Implement it to give customers easy access to your opening hours, address, phone number, website, services, and more. And like all Google products, it comes with handy analytics to see how customers are interacting with your profile.

How will this help your business? Growing your local leads and your Google My Business profile go hand in hand. When people search for a product or service near them, they're generally looking to purchase something.



An example of a Google My Business listing

Here's how to set yours up:



## Step 1: Go to the Official Google My Business Site

Visit the [official Google My Business page](#) and click the **Manage Now** button.

If you're not already signed into your Google account, it will ask you to sign in before going any further. Quick tip: Make sure you're signed in to the account that you want to be associated with the Google My Business listing you're creating.

## Step 2: Find Your Business or Create a New Listing

Search for the name of your business, even if you haven't set up a listing. It's not uncommon for someone to have already listed your business. If it doesn't show up, click **Add your business to Google**.

## Step 3: Set Up Your Name and Category

Add your business name and then select a category that best describes your business. From an SEO perspective, this step is important if you want to show up in Google's results page when customers are searching for a product or service that you offer.

Set your primary and secondary categories, and take advantage of Google's auto-generated suggestions if you're feeling stuck.

## Step 4: Set the Address of Your Business

This step helps Google differentiate between businesses with brick-and-mortar locations and businesses without in-person service. Choose the one that best fits your business.

Note: Even if you do not provide in-person service, you can still select a location at which you serve customers, which will help bring new relevant customers to your business.

## Step 6: Add Your Contact Details

Help customers get in touch by including contact details in your listing. Adding your website to your Google My Business profile can potentially drive a customer to your site, where you can more easily convert them. Likewise, listing your phone number gives customers a way to contact you directly.

## Step 7: Finish and Verify Your Listing

Once you've filled in the relevant information, you can submit your listing.

In order for your Google My Business listing to show up, you need to verify it. This can take a couple of days, although you can optimize your listing while you're waiting.

The most common way to verify your business is by mail — a postcard with a verification code will be mailed to you. We highly recommend that you don't make edits to your business name, address, business category, or request a new code during this time, as it might slow down your verification process.

Depending on the type of business listing you're trying to manage or get listed, you may also be given the option to verify by phone or email, or use Google's instant or bulk verification systems.

# Optimize Your Google My Business

Now that you've set up your account, optimize it to increase your return on investment. Do this by:

- Keeping your listing information up to date
- Uploading photos to your listing
- Adding information about your products/services
- Building up your profile's FAQ tool
- Publishing Google posts
- Getting customer reviews

Quick tip: Download Google My Business's free mobile app, useful for on-the-go changes to your profile.

## Register With Bing Places

Bing now allows you to use your Google My Business information to create a Bing Places account, saving you lots of time and making it a no-brainer to get listed with both services.

**Tim Hortons**  
<https://www.timhortons.com>  
Home of Canada's favourite coffee. Join Tims™ Rewards and start earning rewards today.

**Find a TIMS Menu Item**  
Tim Hortons Nutrition Information | Find a Tims Menu Item

**TIMS Rewards**  
Home of Canada's favourite coffee. Join Tims™ Rewards and start earning rewards ...

**Store Locator**  
Home of Canada's favourite coffee. Join Tims™ Rewards and start earning rewards ...

**Get in Touch**  
Tim Hortons relies entirely on our own advertising, research, marketing and product ...

**Corporate**  
Tim Hortons celebrates its 50 th anniversary, paying homage to its humble roots by ...

**Sandwiches**  
Sandwiches, Wraps & More | Tim Hortons

**Snacks and Baked Goods**  
Snacks and Baked Goods | Tim Hortons

**Breakfast**  
Tim Hortons Premium Blend. Our Coffees. Different ways to enjoy Tim Hortons Coffee. ...

Search results from timhortons.com

**News about Tim Hortons**  
<bing.com/news>

**Tim Hortons announces opening date of new Sheffield restaurant and drive-thru**  
A drive-thru branch of much loved Canadian brand Tim Hortons is set to open in Sheffield next week at ...  
examinedive - 23h

**NEW BBQ Pulled Pork & Buffalo Chicken Ranch Creveboles**  
220

**FOR LEASE**

**Live Policy**

**Tim Hortons**

[Website](#) [Directions](#)

**Menu**

1361 Rue Charlevoix, Montréal QC H3K 3A3 • + 1 km  
450-935-6902  
Open Closes 11 p.m. • Hours may vary  
Dine-in Delivery  
Suggest an edit • Your business? Claim now

**Order online**

[Website](http://www.timhortons.com)  
[www.timhortons.com](http://www.timhortons.com)

**Reviews from the web**

<b>Yellowpages</b> 3.0/5 1 review	<b>Pagesjaunes</b> 3.0/5 1 review
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An example of a Bing Places listing

# Use Social Media to Increase Traffic

Social media may not directly impact your website's SEO ranking, but it's useful in enhancing your brand's reputation and distributing content.

## ***Claim Your Social Profiles***

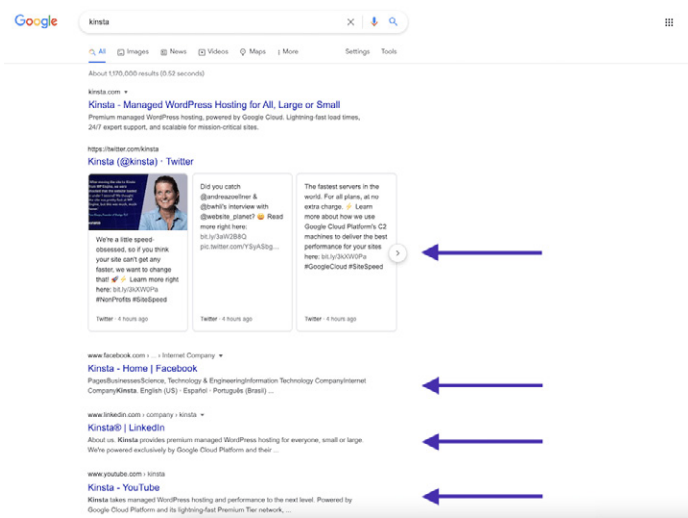
It's wise to claim all of your social media profiles as soon as possible, even if you have yet to create your business. Most backlinks from social media profiles are `nofollow` (see Chapter 9), meaning they won't help your SEO, but they can still send you a lot of traffic.

Another big advantage of this strategy is that social media profile pages can often rank very well in SERPs. This can be huge for branding, as it allows you to have more control over the first search results that your visitors will see.

Let's take Kinsta as an example.

If you Google "Kinsta", you can see that our Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and YouTube profiles all rank on the first page. If you're very active on Twitter, you may also qualify for a special search result featuring your 3 most recent tweets, as seen in the Kinsta brand SERP.

Using social media profiles can be an instant win for your brand, and requires very little effort.



Kinsta's brand SERP

## Utilize Social Signals

“Social signals” include online activity related to your brand that doesn’t happen on your WordPress site itself. This includes tweets, shares, upvotes, and other similar indications of your brand’s quality.

Do social signals affect SEO? The answer, unfortunately, is not cut and dry.

In the past, we’ve seen posts trending on these sites immediately start ranking on page one of Google. After they’re no longer trending, these posts’ rankings tend to fluctuate and eventually settle down to where they’re actually going to rank more long-term.

What causes this to happen? Our theory is that the combination of the mass amount of traffic and social signals causes Google to deem these posts as very relevant, therefore bumping them up in the SERPs. Many SEO specialists will debate this, but we've seen this happen first-hand quite a few times.

Below is an example of something we wrote with decent keyword volume that skyrocketed in SERPs the very next day, which appears to be because we were able to gain a lot of social traffic to it:

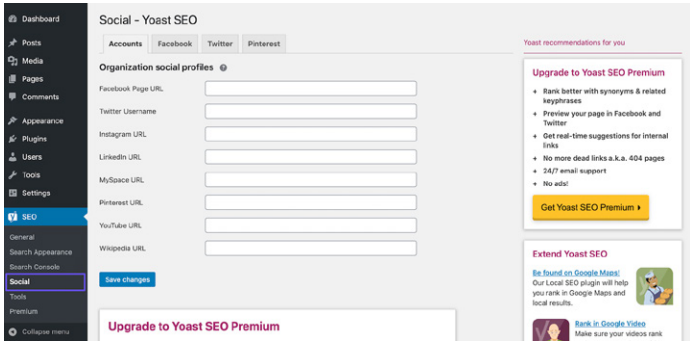
KEYWORD	LOCATION	RANK	+/-	URL	SEARCHES	VISITORS	POTENTIAL	TIME AGO
seo	Tags							
long-tail variation 1		12	↑ 254	/domain.co...	720	0		7 hours
long-tail variation 2		12	+ ↑ 2	/domain.co...	260	0		7 hours
focus keyword		19	↑ 163	/domain.co...	1,900	0		7 hours

Social signals traffic

The biggest takeaway is that shares, social signals, and heavier traffic do most likely influence your rankings, one way or another. Creating a buzz around a piece of content helps to get it in front of more people, which also often leads to more links as others reference your content from their own content. So we recommend taking advantage of social media as much as you can.

## **Specify Social Markup**

The Yoast SEO plugin also allows you to add social markup. This helps Google connect your social media profiles to your website, which is used to feed your brand's knowledge panel.



The Yoast SEO social settings

Simply list your social media profiles in order to associate them with your website using structured data.

## Conclusion

SEO is critical to the success of any business. SEO is a marathon, not a sprint, but working through this ebook is sure to get you one stride closer to the coveted top position of SERPs.

Finally, we can't stress enough how seriously Google takes page speed due to how it can impact your site's user experience. Did you know that:

- 1 in 4 visitors abandon a website if it takes more than 4 seconds to load
- 46% of users don't revisit poorly performing websites
- Website owners have a mere 5 seconds to engage visitors before they consider leaving

At Kinsta, we use state-of-the-art technology like Nginx, PHP 8.0, LXD software containers, MariaDB, and compute-optimized VMs to make sure your website loads in the blink of an eye.

So if you want to boost your site speed and maximize your SEO efforts, choose Kinsta as your hosting provider.

**See why Kinsta's the right managed  
hosting provider for you**





**KINSTA**

