

Article Organization That Draws in Readers

Helping communities to help themselves

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A quick definition or two

SEO (Search Engine Optimization) is a multi-discipline field that aims to increase traffic and site visibility through organic placement on search engine results pages, or SERPs. SEO concerns include everything from keyword usage to site architecture to page load speed, and SEO best practices are constantly evolving.

Content includes on-page elements that are of interest to and have value for a user. Boilerplate copy, navigation, and advertising are not considered content in the SEO sense. Search engines are getting better at reading non-HTML text, content in rich media format is still difficult for search engines to parse. This includes text in Flash files, images, photos, video, audio, and plug-in content.

Crawling is the search engine process of interpreting a page's content and following links to other pages.

PRO-TIP: A strong Main Page explains the community to visitors and search engines. It should include a unique, descriptive text and link to the most important article and category pages.



What can I do?

These are five of the most important things users can do:

- 1) Write unique, in-depth content.
- 2) Focus each page on a single topic.
- 3) Add relevant links to each page to ensure all pages can be found.
- 4) Complete stubs and build wanted pages.
- 5) Share content with those who are as passionate about the topic as you are!



PRO-TIP: Select the most commonly used name for all article titles (as it's most likely to be searched). Use the language it is most commonly written in (if not English) and include variations in the first paragraph.

Don't bury the lede (aka the lead)

As you can see with most searches, the lead paragraph represents the page in search results. Your page **must have** some narrative text (not wrapped in a template or table) to be crawled effectively. Even on data-heavy pages, having some narrative describing the article topic dramatically improves ranking.

The best leads and articles create unique, descriptive content that can be found and understood by both human users and search engines.



PRO-TIP: Having multiple notices or message boxes before your content starts is not only harder for humans to read, but search engines have trouble with them, too. Correctly classified templates help, but are not a cure.

Don't bury the lede (aka the lead)

- Use natural language, but look for opportunities to include related keywords in the body of the article.
- Include synonyms and grammatical variations to cut down on repetition and create a broader range of ranking signals
- Is there an opportunity to answer a question? Respond to the most common questions about the topic at the *beginning* of the article.

Overall, try to avoid things that make pages hard to read or hard to find.



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It's all connected

Links are essential to search engine crawling and ranking.

- Include relevant links to other article pages (both in the article body and in templates like infoboxes).
- Link only the *first* instance of a word in the body of an article.
- Make sure each new page has at least one link coming into it from another article. **No orphaned pages!** (Check [Special:LonelyPages.](#))
- Minimize red links by linking to high-quality articles on another wiki where applicable.
- Link to (and from) the equivalent page in other languages where applicable.

Redirects in moderation are acceptable, but overuse and thin content may drop a communities ranking. The shortest path to a moderately size page is best.



PRO-TIP: Use Special:Insights to check for Dead-end and Wanted pages. Broken redirects, Double redirects, and Orphaned pages can be located with Special pages.

Stretching thin content

"Thin content" has little or no value to users, driving them away to other results fast.

Content quality can be judged algorithmically through a metric called "time to long click". Think about how you behave when you stumble upon a great blog post or article in search results—you spend some time on the page, scroll down a bit, and might click around to explore other content on that site. That is a long click.

On the other hand, some search results are just not what you are looking for—you click back to the search results page almost immediately (short click) and move on to the next result, indicating to Google that the first result didn't provide much value. Stub pages that appear in search results are more likely to result in a short click than a long one.



PRO-TIP: Stubs should be a high priority for communities to build from, and give new editors a real chance to contribute. Make sure they're listed in Special:Community.

A war on stubs

Incomplete articles are a natural part of a collaborative site like FANDOM, but our goal should be to minimize the number of thin content pages in our communities. Focus on the most important articles and build those first (e.g. complete the main Spider-Man article before moving on to alternate reality versions). One completed article is far better than multiple stubs and redirect pages created to make our content seem relevant in comprehensive searches.

This article is a stub.



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When to merge

Alternate articles and subpages are only important if they make sense on their own. This is particularly important for data-heavy articles with limited narrative!

- If a reader finds an article because they searched for a given term, and there's not enough narrative in that article to let them read for 30 seconds, there's a good chance that it's a stub.
- If it's not a stub because there's not enough material to fill that article, it's likely that page should be merged into another comprehensive article.
- If there are only minor differences between articles (e.g. a character has different statistics between versions or editions of a game, but the narrative is the mostly the same), those articles are usually best merged.

 It has been suggested that this page be merged with...



PRO-TIP: Using simple but descriptive section headings lets readers jump straight to the right place from the Table of Contents. Subpages have an obvious relationship with the main article and an explicit link back to it.

Are they really that different?

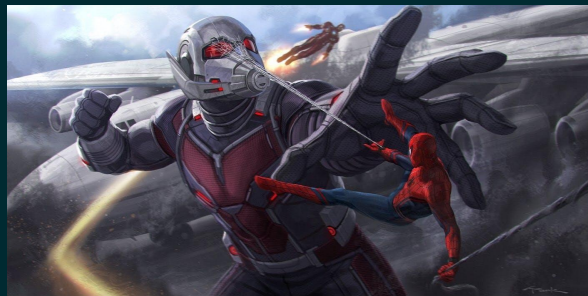
From a search perspective, remember that data in templates and tables is largely ignored. If the remaining text is not enough to tell the search engine the difference between two articles, it may treat those articles as duplicates (which lowers your ranking) and readers can't find what they are looking for.



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Now it's too long!

Page length alone is not good or bad! What matters a lot more is that the content on the page is targeted around a single keyword (without being a complete avalanche of everything you know about the topic). If you read through it and think: oh okay, this is all about one thing, there's not a lot of repetition or generic text here, and there are links pointing people to related articles; then it is a good indication that it belongs as one article.



PRO-TIP: Categories are great sources of context, but they shouldn't be treated like hashtags. They should be applied when there's something to say about every article in the category.

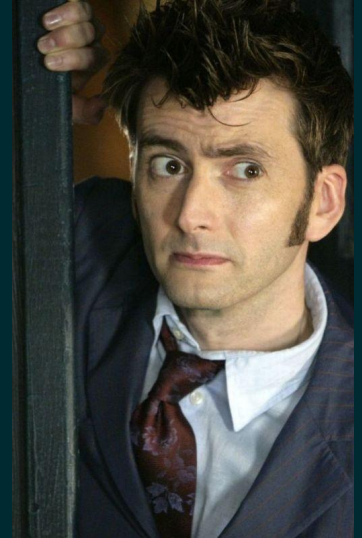
What's in a name?

Users (and search engines) prefer accurate page titles and good organization. Section headings and titles are very strong signals, so try to include the most common search terms as early as possible.

- Doing so makes it more obvious that a page is the most relevant result – and without relying on Google to grasp the relationship between the terms (e.g. 'Wolverine' and 'James “Logan” Howlett’).
- Casual fans (i.e. search engine users) can tell it is the "right" result from a quick scan through a search results page.

That being said, fictional universes are complex! However you organize, be sure to be consistent and include links from "main" articles to related or alternate-universe articles and image galleries (e.g. Legends and Canon on Wookieepedia). Strong internal links strengthen the relationships between pages and help both users and search bots find the right content.

PRO-TIP: Upload photos and videos using descriptive file names; spiderman-slinging-webs.jpg is better for SEO than img012.jpg. Descriptions in the File page provide more keywords and appear in search results to give context.



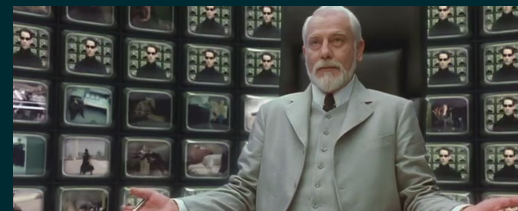
Picture that.

Adding relevant images to your text is a great way to keep readers on an article, but it's great for search engine ranking, too!

Any gallery of images should ideally have captions or labels to describe images. These don't just help readers, but search engines also identify images this way.

Creating entire pages of image-based templates and navigation without supporting text is particularly harmful to search rankings.

It's easy to overuse images, especially in navigation. Ideally, they should be distributed in and around the text narrative.



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