

## GOOGLE OPTIMIZATION TIPS

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last update: 01.03.2005 | [print this page](#)

***Owning a website is a cool thing in itself, but it's even greater if you're able to welcome a lot of visitors to it. One of the most effective ways to accomplish this, is by making sure your site is easily found through search engines like Google.***

In contrary to what the SPAM flooding our inbox is promising ("submit to 500 search engines!", "Guaranteed Top Rankings!", "Free beer included!"), there is no quick and dirty way to accomplish this. On the other hand, the secrecy and vague terminology used by dedicated SearchEngineOptimization bureaus are mostly a means to mask there's nothing secret or difficult about optimizing your website for search engines. Let's give it a quick start...

### About search engines

The two biggest search engines worldwide are [Google](#) (used by Google / AOL) and [Overture](#) (used by MSN / Yahoo). Google fills it's database mainly by letting robots automatically crawl and index the web. The Overture database is mainly filled through affiliate programs. That will cost you, so let's focus on Google for now. Google is the cooler one anyway...

### A bot visit

You can request a Google robot visit at [www.google.com/addurl](http://www.google.com/addurl). The robot will browse your site and index it's contents. Expect to have to wait for a couple of weeks before this will happen. Also, always list your site at [www.dmoz.org](http://www.dmoz.org). This is Google's webdirectory and, next to the google robot, an important source of the google search API. Dutch sites can be listed at [www.dmoz.nl](http://www.dmoz.nl) (used by [google.nl](http://google.nl)).

### Get your keywords

Your website is not ranked as a whole. Keywords are used to determine the relevancy of your website for particular subjects. So, before buiding your site, make sure you have a relevant set of keywords. Check competing websites for keywords / search terms and use the good ones for yourself. You can get an indication on the frequency people search for a certain keyword (and alternatives to it) at [inventory.overture.com](http://inventory.overture.com). You can find synonyms for certain keywords at [www.thesaurus.com](http://www.thesaurus.com).

### Place your keywords

The most important elements to insert keywords into are the URL (domain name + path + filename) and title of your web page. Also, a low-level URL ([www.mysite.com/page.htm](http://www.mysite.com/page.htm)) is considered more important than a higher level URL ([www.mysite.com/subdir/another subdir](http://www.mysite.com/subdir/another subdir))

/page.htm). Check out the Dutch website [Nu.nl](http://Nu.nl) for a good example. Notice how every newsitem has it's own title in the titlebar and how every item's html file is named after its title. These tricks make you score!

It's also important to use your keywords in the body of your site, frequency (a lot) and proximity (close to each other) are important. The higher in a page, the more important a keyword is considered to be. Text in headline (h1 or h2), bold or caps is considered more important than regular text.

### **Check your keywords**

Once you think you have found the right keywords and you've written your text so that these keywords appear all over the page, it's time to check out how your site is doing. At [googlerankings.com](http://googlerankings.com) you can check your position in Google for the keywords you have chosen. Top of the ranks? Great! Not even close to it? Don't worry, here are some tips to improve your rankings.

### **Tech and formatting tips**

First, make sure your site, especially your homepage, is frequently updated. Google seems to like frequently changing websites, this might be why weblogs tend to score very well at Google.

Second, make sure to have a lot of incoming and outgoing links (especially to and from big, relevant, high-quality websites). If something can be a link, make it a link! By doing so, Google will rank you pages higher as others who are not that *embedded*. This link relevancy system is called *Google Pagerank*. You can check out your pagerank at [pagerank.net](http://pagerank.net). Pagerank works on a scale from 1 to 10. If you have a rank of 1 or 2, you're likely to be way down the search results. If you have a higher rank, your site will appear at the top of the search results, even if there are a lot of competitors for your specific keywords or business.

Third, make sure your site is clean and correctly formatted, preferably in web standards/xhtml. Avoid certain technologies the Google robot doesn't understand. Don't use a frameset for your website. Robots may skip frames or only index the upper one (referring will be a mess anyway). Avoid javascript or Flash menus, only a.href links are followed by a robot. Additionally, all javascript and comments are skipped by search robots.

For the same reason, full-flash websites should be avoided if search accessibility is important (actually, if ANY accessibility is important). If you do feel the strong need to use Flash, all you can do is to make sure you have a keyword descriptive URL and page title.

### **Some last remarks**

Google simply puts a 30 days block upon sites that use trivial keyword tricks (hidden text/div or text in the same color as a background), so don't bother trying this kind of stuff. Detecting and catching a robot with javascript or IP cloacing or using linkfarms to boost your Pagerank are

considered even more illegal. They could get you put out of the ranking for good.

Just remember that a robot will be optimized over and over to be able to judge webpages the way a human does. In the end, if you make sure your site is clean and accessible and your content is good and relevant, websurfers will find you and bytes will flow.

Of course this article only covers the rough basics of search engine optimization. If you feel like I have missed out on something, or you've got an excellent hint to share, please feel free to [post them in the forum!](#) The [diagnostics guide](#) from [GoogleRankings.com](#) is a great resource for more information (there's a list of issues at the left side).

URL: [http://www.jeroenwijering.com/?item=Google Optimization Tips](http://www.jeroenwijering.com/?item=Google_Optimization_Tips)

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