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The SEO Mindful

A practical writing guide

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4 easy steps to becoming SEO mindful in your online writing

When asked how do you find information on the internet, what's the likelihood that the answer will be to "Google it"?

Search engines, like Google work in very specific ways when they look at website content, which is why as a content writer, it's important to be mindful of how a search engine works and to be mindful of this process when you craft your content. By understanding how a search engine examines your blog content, you can understand what to look out for and how to write content that's easier for your audience to find.

SEO mindful writing is where keywords and SEO considerations come secondary to the quality and editorial considerations of the content, but they are still a factor. By being SEO mindful, writers understand the fundamental of how search engine optimisation works and can make considered decisions with their content creation that have SEO in mind.

That's right - the writers need to make the decisions, not the SEO guy.

Step 1: Understand that Search Engines rely on Keywords and Search Queries

The words that users enter into the Google bar are collectively known as “keywords”. Google receives 4.7 million keyword searches everyday ranging from single word entries to fully considered turns of phrases and questions, some quite philosophical in their nature.

The most important tip to being SEO mindful is to consider what keywords users use to search for the topic that you are writing about.

Note that the topic that you are writing about comes first. You don't need to have 100 or even 10 of these, just think about 2-3 terms that are relevant to what you're writing.

Example:

*I want to write an article about **5 tips to save money Christmas shopping**. What are users most likely to search for if they're looking for this information?*

“save money on Christmas gifts”

“Christmas sales”

“cut costs on Christmas shopping”

Step 2: Research - finalising your list to 2-3 keywords that are relevant to your article

Once you have a few ideas of what users will search for it's worth taking the time to run them through a tool such as Google's Keyword Tool. This tool gives you suggestions for additional words related to your search.

The Google Keyword Tool can be found here:

<https://adwords.google.com/o/keywordtool>

Keyword	Competition	Global Monthly Searches <small>?</small>	Local Monthly Searches <small>?</small>
<input type="checkbox"/> save money on christmas shopping ▾	-	91	-
<input type="checkbox"/> christmas sales ▾	Medium	165,000	9,900
<input type="checkbox"/> cut costs on christmas shopping ▾	-	-	-

From our quick keyword research for our terms, we see that there's insignificant volume for the terms "save money on christmas shopping" and "cut costs on christmas shopping", which indicates that users don't really search for these terms.

Meanwhile, there are many more searches (165,800 globally and 9,900 within Australia) for the term "christmas sales" so we should look at this term as a good term to consider. The keyword tool also provides some *recommendations* for other keywords that you can consider.

Let's try one more term, "christmas savings"

Keyword	Competition	Global Monthly Searches <small>?</small>	Local Monthly Searches <small>?</small>
<input type="checkbox"/> save money on christmas shopping ▾	-	91	-
<input type="checkbox"/> christmas sales ▾	Medium	165,000	9,900
<input type="checkbox"/> cut costs on christmas shopping ▾	-	-	-
<input type="checkbox"/> christmas savings ▾	High	6,600	170

Here we can see that there's a bit more global search volume around this term compared to the other ones. So in this group of 4 suggestions – we would likely use "christmas sales" and "christmas savings" in our content creation.

But how do I know these keywords are good enough? Or what if I can't find anything?

You can keep researching keywords until you find something more appropriate, but at some point you will have to make a judgment call and decide "this is okay, let's get on with the writing!" [Being SEO mindful](#) means that you've spent some time to think about SEO and have made some important decisions for SEO purposes – which already puts you ahead of the game!

If you really can't find any terms that are relevant to your topic, try "going up a level" and **think about the more generic category or sub-category** that your blog content falls under and pick 2 words that users would use to search for that category. In this case, that could be "Christmas sales" or "Christmas savings" etc.

Step 3: Where do I put these keywords?

Understanding how Search Engines look at your content

Knowing where best to put your keywords involves understanding how search engines like Google examine your content.

Google reads your content a bit like how you would construct an outline - that is it looks for relevance at the Highest Level before it drills down into the specific facts or details.

- I. Article Title (In the `<title>` tag)
 - a. Article Heading (In the `<h1>` tag)
 - i. Article Sub heading (`<h2>`)
 1. Point 1 (paragraphs `<p>` or bullet point lists ``, ``)
 - ii. Article Subheading 2 (`<h2>`)
 1. Point 1 (paragraphs `<p>` or bullet point lists ``, ``)
 2. Point 2 (paragraphs `<p>` or bullet point lists ``, ``)

Starting from the top, Google looks at the **Article Title** first to get an idea of what your article is about. It will look at the **Article Heading** (which should pretty much be the same as your Article Title) and then the **Article Subheadings** to find out what types of detail you go into around your topic. Only then will it consider the relevance of the specific points you make in the paragraphs within your content.

So when considering where to put keywords, you should keep this hierarchal consideration in mind. A general guideline to follow

- **1 focus keyword in the article title and heading** (your article title should pretty much be the same as your article heading with some minor sub-edits)
- **1 focus keyword in article subheadings** (where appropriate. Use your best editorial judgment as to whether you need subheadings in your article)
- **2-3 keywords used in the article copy** – they should relate closely to the focus keyword in heading and sub-heading

Example:

Using our Christmas savings example – here's how our article can be structured to be SEO mindful with our selected keywords.

- I. 5 tips for great **Christmas Savings**
 - a. 5 tips for great **Christmas Savings**
 - i. Shop post **Christmas sales**
 1. More details on big savings from stores can be realised after Christmas as stores clear out their inventory etc.
 - ii. Look for second hand decorations
 1. Charity stores, etc

*Please note that using the right formatting and tags (<title>, <h1> etc) is VERY important – Google **does not care** how the text looks (bigger or bolder does not mean more important to the search engine, even if it makes sense for the user).*

Make sure that you are using the correct tags on your CMS.

Step 4: Effective interlinking, images and more

Congratulations! You've written your first SEO mindful article. You did some keyword research, picked a couple of words to focus on because these are the terms that users are typing to look for your content and now you've written a strong editorial piece with some of these words in mind, using the above outline suggestion to guide you towards where to include keyword terms.

The final step is to think about **what else users might be interested in reading about that's relevant to your article**.

You mentioned post Christmas sales in your article, do you have another article about Boxing Day sales? Or you talked about buying a second hand tree, didn't you write a great blog post last year about how to dispose of your Christmas tree?

This is your opportunity to **link back (or interlink)** to those useful articles so you can create relevance and help users find more helpful content that is relevant to what they are currently reading. You can also link to other types of pages including product pages or contact us forms.

The important thing to remember with linking to other articles is to link to the articles using keyword terms that are relevant to the content. For example, if you're going to link to an article about "Christmas decorations" you want to make sure you choose relevant words to link with:

- ✓ When shopping for [Christmas decorations](#), try visiting charity stores and other second hand shops, you'll be amazed at the selection for holiday items!
- ✗ Charity stores are a great place to shop for Christmas decorations. Click [here](#) to read more about choosing Christmas decorations.

The second example is not ideal because the word "here" does not relate to the content the link directs to.

Working with images

If you're going to be uploading images with your blog content, it's important to optimise your image properties as well. When optimising images check that:

1. Your **image file name describes the image**. For example, "christmas-decorations.jpg" is a preferred file name to "img4031-300px-HD.jpg"
2. You **include a descriptive "alt text"** with your image upload. Alt attributes were originally intended to allow something to be rendered when viewing of the image is not possible, such as in the case of users who are vision impaired. Now, search engines also read the alt attributes contained in an image tag and use this information to further interpret the meaning and nature of page content.

This is usually an option on your blog CMS.