The Ultimate
SEO Checklist
for Squarespace

How to optimize your website to increase your traffic

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DESIGN

You've gathered your text and images and worked hard to bring them together into a stunning website. Now that it's live, people should be queuing to see it, right?

If you're not getting the traffic you want, you may be missing one important thing... Search Engine Optimization.

This checklist will teach you:

★ What SEO is and why it's important
★ How to find the right keywords to use on your website
★ What settings to optimize to create a strong SEO foundation
★ How to optimize your content so it shows in searches
★ The best practices for using images on your website
★ Ways to speed up your website
★ What backlinks are and how you can use them to your advantage
★ How to let Google know your website exists

Hi, I'm Jessica and I'm a Squarespace website designer. I specialize in helping creative female entrepreneurs that want to grow their business by creating a website that reflects their brand, helps attract their dream clients and converts website viewers into leads and sales.

FACEBOOK GROUP

What is SEO and why is it important? 1

If you have a website, you have probably heard of SEO (or Search Engine Optimization). It seems scary, but I promise it's not as bad as it sounds!

Only about 6% of people will bother going to page 2 of search results when they are looking for something, so if we can get our website to show on page 1, we will have more people clicking through to it. SEO is the strategy used on our websites to make it easier for search engines like Google to find our website and show it higher up in search results, which gives us the best chance of being found.

SEO is a great way to help you get traffic to your website for FREE, and better still, if you do it right, it can help you attract your dream clients, those ones that are ready to take action and buy from you or sign up for your email list!

Just remember, SEO can take time to see results since Google will be comparing your website to others focusing on the same topics, but if you follow the steps here, you should start seeing more search traffic within a few months, and it will continue to grow over time.

This checklist will help you set up a strong SEO foundation that you can build on over time.

Keywords 2

Keywords are the starting point to any SEO strategy. They are basically the terms someone would be typing into their Google search to find your website.

Some things to think about with your keywords:

★ 1 word keywords are too general and competitive, and they likely won't bring you any dream clients or sales
★ About 70% of people's searches online will be longer keywords. Aim for keywords made up of 2-4 words instead of 1 word
★ For example, instead of using **Photography**, you could try **Wedding Photography Tutorial**
★ You will have a better chance of showing in Google since it's more focused, and the people that come through to your website will be more targeted and likely to take action

You want to start out with a collection of about 10-15 keywords that you would like to show in Google search results for. You can add more over time as your website grows and you start showing in search results for some on your initial keywords.

Finding your keywords:

☐ List 2-3 ideas you think people would search to find you or look up your competition to see what they rank for on **SpyFu** so you can get ideas for keywords that you could use

☐ - Log into the **Google Keyword Planner** with a Google account
- You will need to set up an AdWords account by following the prompts (it will ask for your credit card to pay, but once you create the account, you can cancel the ad without being charged)
- Once logged in, click on the spanner icon at the top listed as Tools and select keyword planner on the left
- Select **Find new Keywords**
- Enter your first keyword. You will see average number of searches, how competitive a keyword is, and suggested variations below
- You want to find keywords that are low to medium competition with a high average number of searches per month to use

☐ - Next, search on **Moz Keyword Explorer**
- Enter your first keyword in the search bar, select the country and click log in or sign up to create a free account
- You will see the Volume, Difficulty, Organic CTR and Priority, with additional ideas below
- Aim for keywords on the list that have a high volume of searches and lower difficulty

☐ Once you have your keyword ideas, head to **Google Trends**. You can search your keywords here to see if they are trending up or down or remaining stable over time. If one of your keywords is going down, unless it is a seasonal term, you may want to rethink using it

Now you have your keyword collection, time to move on to strategically updating them on your website!

My Keyword Ideas:

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Settings to Optimize 3

Squarespace has some great features already built in to help with optimizing your website for SEO. Updating the below settings will set you up with the strongest SEO foundation that we continue to build on over time with our content. If you want to know more about these settings, check out **this post**.

Note: You want to include your keywords throughout these settings where they make sense.

☐ *Site Title & Tagline:* Include your business name and a description of what you do. Your Site Title can be up to 60 characters. Updated through **Design > Logo & Title**

☐ *Site Meta Description:* This is the description that will show in Google results along with your website name. Make it enticing to encourage people to click through, and include a call to action. Updated through **Marketing > SEO**

☐ *SSL:* A setting to secure your website as HTTPS for your viewers. Go to **Settings > Advanced > SSL** and make sure **Secure (Preferred)** is enabled. Also tick **HSTS Secure** so browsers will only load a secure copy of your website

☐ *Page SEO Title & Description:* Similar to Site Title and Site Meta Description but for each individual page, so you can customize each page to make it more enticing for people to click through. To update this, hover over the page, then click on the cog that appears and select SEO along the top of the settings. For blog posts, this will be your blog title and blog excerpt, which you can add by clicking on the Options tab of your blog post, adding the excerpt and saving

☐ *URL Structures:* Any time you create a page, you need to optimize the URL link. Make it short and descriptive, removing any fluff words and adding a hyphen between words. The URL is updated by hovering over a page, clicking the cog that appears on the right and updating the **URL Slug.** An example is:
  ★ The URL will default to your page name, such as **www.yourdomain.com/services**

★ This is easier to read for Google and viewers than **www.yourdomain.com/abcd/wedding.120s.photo/wed-photo**

★ You can optimize it further by showing what the service is, such as **www.yourdomain.com/wedding-photography**

☐ *Blog Settings:* There are 2 blog settings to update. This is done by going to **Settings > Blogging**

★ Turn on **Accelerated Mobile Pages (AMP)** so your website loads faster on mobile phones

★ Update the blog URL structure to remove the date by changing **Post URL Format** to %t so blog posts will show as **www.yourdomain.com/blog/post-title** compared to **www.yourdomain.com/blog/2019/1/24/post-title**

☐ *Business Details:* Add any relevant address and contact details if appropriate so your website will show in local searches. This is done under **Settings > Business Information**

Optimizing your Content & Blog Posts 4

Now that you have your SEO foundation set up, you want to build on it with your content and blog posts. Your aim here is to produce high quality niche content that focuses on your area of expertise. The fewer topics you talk about, the better chance you have of showing up as an authority on the topic and ranking in search results.

Note: Google loves websites that are updated regularly, so even if you don't want to blog, you can share podcast episodes or YouTube videos in a blog post with a summary or what it is about to still receive SEO benefits.

When writing your content, each page or blog post should:

☐ Be a minimum of 600 words to fully answer the question

☐ Include keywords in your page or post title and URL link

☐ Use headings and subheadings throughout the post, including keywords when it makes sense

☐ Include keywords throughout your body text (2-4 times is good)

☐ Don't duplicate content between your website pages

☐ Include links between your posts where appropriate (2-3 links is good)

☐ Check for broken links at least once a year and fix them

☐ Use categories and tags on your posts, but don't go overboard (1-3 categories per post, 5-10 total categories on your blog)

☐ Update old content if it becomes irrelevant or to add in your keywords

Note: Avoid stuffing keywords in randomly. It doesn't help your website to rank any higher as Google sees it as spammy and will penalize you for it. Write so it makes sense to the people reading it and you'll be ok.

Optimizing your Images

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Every image you upload on your website should be optimized for speed and SEO. Google penalizes slow websites, and images are the quickest way to slow a website down! Don't forget to use your keywords where appropriate!

- ☐ Resize your images (1500 pixels wide for a banner image, less if the image won't be used full width)

- ☐ Save images for web at 72dpi

- ☐ Save images as JPEGs when possible as PNGs have a larger file size

- ☐ Compress files using **JPEG Mini** or **TinyPNG**

- ☐ File sizes should end up under 500kb, but if you can get them under 100kb, it is even better!

- ☐ Rename your image before upload to show what is happening in the image instead of the cameras default file name

- ☐ Add captions to every image when you upload it. This is called Alt Text and is the information that will show in Pinterest when someone pins your post, so keywords here will also help for Pinterest. If you don't want the caption to show, you can turn it off after in the image settings

Website Speed 6

Along with compressing and resizing every image you share, there are a couple of other factors to consider for website speed:

★ Minimize the number of fonts you include on your website. A maximum of 2 different fonts is best
★ Minimize the amount of custom code you use on your website
★ Minimize the content on each page by cutting out unnecessary parts or spreading it over multiple pages (this is mostly for index pages that can end up quite large)
★ Set your main blog page to show blog post excerpts rather than full posts
★ Limit the number of videos you use on each page

You can test your website speed at **Pingdom** to see how it is performing, and get ideas about how you can speed it up.

Backlinks 7

When people share a link to your website, it is called a backlink. Google uses backlinks to see that you an expert at what you do and that people find your content relevant, so the more people link to you, the higher Google will show your website in search results.

Another benefit of people sharing links to your website is that their audience is able to click through to find out more about you, and this referral traffic will also help to boost your SEO efforts.

Some tips for backlinks:

★ Aim for backlinks from sources relevant to what you do to show your authority on the topic
★ Backlinks from more established and popular websites will have more value than smaller, less established sources. Aim for the higher quality backlinks to make your efforts more worthwhile
★ Masses of links from irrelevant sources won't help. Google caught onto that practice long ago and will penalize you for it

Some ideas for you to get backlinks:

★ Write amazing, in-depth content that people want to share or refer to in their own posts
★ Guest blogging on other websites
★ Being a guest on someone's podcast
★ Doing roundup type posts and contacting the people you feature so they may share the post
★ Writing testimonials for people that you enjoyed working with

Traffic & Social Media *8*

The way social media platforms are set up, any links shared on them are not considered a backlink from Google. However, they can still help drive traffic to your website and they still show Google you are well established and active online, which does help with SEO.

To make use of social media traffic for SEO:

☐   Connect any social media accounts you are active on to your website under ***Settings > Website > Connected Accounts***

☐   Include a Social Links block in your website footer or anywhere else on your website you want people to be able to click through to your social accounts, which will automatically populate with any of your connected accounts

☐   Turn on all social sharing buttons so people can share your blog posts. This is under ***Marketing > Share Buttons***

☐   Include a link to your website on all of your social media account profiles (Facebook, Pinterest, Instagram, LinkedIn, etc)

☐   Share new blog posts on all of your social media accounts so people can click through to your website to read them

Google Search Console *9*

Well done! Now you have set your SEO foundation, optimized your website content and images and are getting traffic through to your website, so you're well on your way to showing in the top Google results.

The thing is, it can still take Google awhile to find your website and scan it so that Google can show your website in search results.

Instead of waiting for this to happen automatically, which can take weeks or months, you can speed up the process by submitting your website to Google Search Console. I recommend doing this step when you first set up your website SEO or when you make any major updates to your website.

To submit your website to Google Search Console, you can follow the steps **here**.

Short on time & not sure where to start? 10

While you are setting up a new website, even if you are short on time, you should really take the extra time to set up your SEO foundations as you go, since it will save you countless hours in the future by needing to make changes.

If you have an existing website and don't have a lot of time to work on your SEO, I would recommend starting with solid keyword research so you can really figure out what the best keywords to drive traffic to your website will be.

With the keywords you have collected, next focus on optimizing any new content and images that you use on your website going forward so you won't have to go back to optimize the new content.

When you next have time to work on your SEO, it would be best to optimize your Squarespace settings so you can set your SEO foundation, and then set up the links between your website and all of your social media accounts.

At this point, you will have a great SEO foundation so you should submit your website to Google Search Console to start showing in search results as soon as possible.

As you have more time, you can work back and update your old content to include your keywords, focusing on your most important website pages (home and sales pages), and then your most popular content and resubmitting your website to Google Search Console each time you make big changes.

It takes time to go through your website to optimize it for SEO, but small changes over time can have big gains in the amount of targeted traffic you can bring to your website, so it is well worth taking the time to make as many of these updates as you can.

Just remember, SEO can take time to see results, but as your website starts ranking for each new keyword, you will be growing your search traffic and will start to see a big impact!

Want to save time and have someone else take care of your SEO set up for you?

SEO set up is included as part of my website design package, where we partner one-to-one to build your dream website in 2 weeks.

Don't know how to get started? Let's jump on a free consultation call to chat about how we can turn your website into a money maker!

BOOK A FREE CONSULTATION CALL