

## 13.6: Keywords

### Keywords

The last set of factors are **keywords**. **Keywords** are terms you include on your web pages to communicate with search engines and people (Moz, 2024c). They help you clearly identify the ideas and topics that your webpage is on. Keywords are what link your webpage to the search engine result page to the search query of people. Keywords need to represent your content well and naturally but also address what people you want to attract to your website are searching for.

The central implication of this is that *you should be creating webpages to rank on specific search queries that people you want as customers are searching for*. This is why representing the customer and understanding the need, goals, and challenges of personas are so important!

For example, for the search query "how to bathe a cat," the webpages positioned on these keywords are likely to rank first. This is because these webpages are "telling" search engines: "Look at our keywords; we have created a webpage specifically for this search query." As a result, search engines can assume that these webpages will be better at answering the need of people for a specific search query. People who get good search results that answer their needs are happier about the search engine, which they will continue to use. The goal of search engines is to have people coming back to using them. By helping search engines answer exactly what people are searching for, you are making sure you rank higher.

How do you position webpages on keywords? Basically, by putting keywords in a few key places on your website to "talk with" a search engine and indicate what search query a certain webpage is meant to rank on. To "talk" to a search engine, you want to put the keywords on which you want your webpage to rank on in the following few specific places:

### Top On-page Factors






-  Page title
-  Meta description
-  Page URL
-  Headings (the titles) in the webpage
-  The 'body' (the text)

Figure 13.5 Top On-Page Factors

Take the webpage of Moz.com on 'What are Keywords' as an example: <https://moz.com/learn/seo/what-are-keywords> (Moz, 2024c).

This page clearly aims at positioning itself on search queries related to keywords, and more specifically "what are keywords." Why? It has these specific keywords repeated over and over again in the five aforementioned places:

- The page title is "Keywords – SEO Best Practices [2020]." You can easily find any page title by looking at the page source (right click within a web page and click on the option "view page source" in the menu of your web browser).
- The meta description is "In terms of SEO, 'keywords' are the words and phrases that searchers enter into search engines, also called 'search queries' to find what they are looking for. A well-optimized website will have keywords and related topics in their content to make it possible for people to find their website via..." (emphasis added)
- The page URL is '<https://moz.com/learn/seo/what-are-keywords>' (Moz, 2024c)
- The phrase 'What are keywords' is repeated three times in the first four headings:
  - 'What are Keywords?'
  - 'Why are keywords important?'
  - 'What are long-tail keywords?'
- Keywords and related words are repeated over and over again in the body.

The top factors associated with keywords are anchor, body, density, total, and meta.

**Keywords in anchor** are not controlled by the owner of a website. Rather, as previously explained above, they are controlled by whoever is linking to your site. We thus won't be considering them in this section.

The rest of the keyword factors are controlled by the website owner.

- **Keywords in body** refers to the keywords used throughout your text in a given web page. Ideally, you want to create a tight semantic network of keywords that relate to one another. For example, let's say you are creating a page to rank on the keywords 'best dresses at the 2020 Oscar.' You can put these main keywords to indicate to search engines that this is what you want to rank on in the URL, page title, and one or a few headings. But repeating these keywords over and over again in the body of the text won't feel natural and will hinder user experience. As a result, you can come up with synonyms to use in the body:
  - Best: Top, talked about, fashionable
  - Dresses: attire, robes, outfits
  - Oscar: academy awards, red carpet, statuette

Using this approach will not only help you create a webpage that fares better for user experience, but it will also help you have keywords in the body, in high density (i.e., highly represented in ratio vs. the total number of words), and a lot of them in total.

- **Keywords in meta** refers to having the keywords in the [meta elements](#) of your webpage, which, for the sake of this course, will be represented by page title and meta description (Wikipedia, 2024e).

To recap, search engines consider more than 200 factors, but the top factors used to rank websites can be grouped into three categories:

- User experience
- Backlinks
- Keywords

When doing search engine optimization, your role is to create webpages that directly address specific search queries. This will help you craft content that will provide a great user experience and tie your webpage to specific keywords associated with a search query. In the world of search optimization, this is referred to as **on-page optimization**, which is achieved by making changes to the page code, content, or structure of the website to make it more accessible for search engines and improve the user experience.

The other type of optimization discussed is **off-page optimization**, which focuses on building backlinks. Strategies to improve backlinks might involve creating highly shareable content and public relations activities to bring attention to the content you have created. For example, a strategy we used in a firm I worked in was to create benchmark studies (studies that compare competitors based on a set of variables and provide some baseline). These were heavily shared by firms and discussed in the media, which drove traffic to our website. Companies such as McKinsey are continuously producing free content in website sections such as their "[Featured Insights](#)" to generate discussions around their firm.

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