

Topic | Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)

Tutorial 21

What are keywords

Keywords are the key to a successful web strategy. This tutorial will cover everything you need to know about keywords from research to implementation on your website.

Reading time: 20 minutes | Prerequisites: None

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1. What are keywords?

Keywords, by definition, are words used as reference points for finding other relevant information.

In the online space, they become the link between users and search engines. Combinations of keywords are often referred to as key phrases.

For your business, they are the password to online marketing success.

Imagine you are the owner of the “Sand Castles Motel” in Manly, Sydney. Your pages should contain a mixture of the following keywords: accommodation, beach, overnight, Manly, budget, family etc.

Search engines determine how relevant webpages are to user queries by looking at how keywords are organised on each webpage. **It is vital to ensure that you use keywords in appropriate places throughout your webpage, as this is fundamental to how search engines rank your site.**

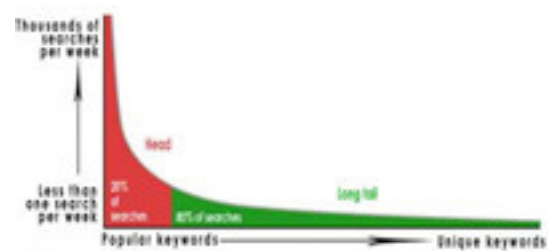
Getting into the mindsets of your customers by researching what words, terms, or jargon your everyday customers use is first and foremost. Remember, your potential clients do not know industry jargon so speak to them in their language.



2. Why unique keywords are crucial

Google reported in 2007 that **25% of searches conducted every day are unique searches** that they had never seen before.

“The Long Tail” theory, when applied to search, highlights that the **majority of the world’s demand for information through search engines originate on rare, unique keyword combinations.**



The Internet has revolutionised the way in which consumers shop. There are more and more choices that have resulted in consumers becoming more selective and demanding in their choices in products and services. The fact that unique queries are becoming more common highlights why they should not be ignored. Successful online businesses use these Long Tail keyword combinations to their advantage by researching their target market and using the information to create content-rich websites that cater to specific consumers needs.

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Below is a brief example of Popular vs. Long tail keywords for an accommodation property in Darwin

Popular keywords	Long tail keywords
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hotel Gold Darwin • Accommodation Darwin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Romantic getaway in Darwin • Weekend escape in Darwin

3. Keyword research strategy

The Long Tail paragraph above demonstrated the importance of keyword research. This section will go through the steps you should follow to find your keywords.

a). Brainstorm and competitor analysis

My business

First start by identifying the core offerings of your business, these are the offerings that you do best and what sets you apart from your competitors. You should try to really pinpoint these offerings and have no more than three or four keyword combinations.

Example: if you were a small hotel in Queenstown New Zealand, one of your core offerings would be "ski accommodation Queenstown"

If you have an existing site, go through its pages and identify at least 3 offerings (3 x combinations of 3 to 4 keywords). Do not just focus on your main activity (e.g. accommodation for the Queenstown example above) but also what other services you offer (ski hire? ski tours?)

Fill out the table below with each of your offerings and list related keywords using the bullet points provided:

Core offering 1:	Core offering 2:	Core offering 3:
.....
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ... • ... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ... • ... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ... • ...

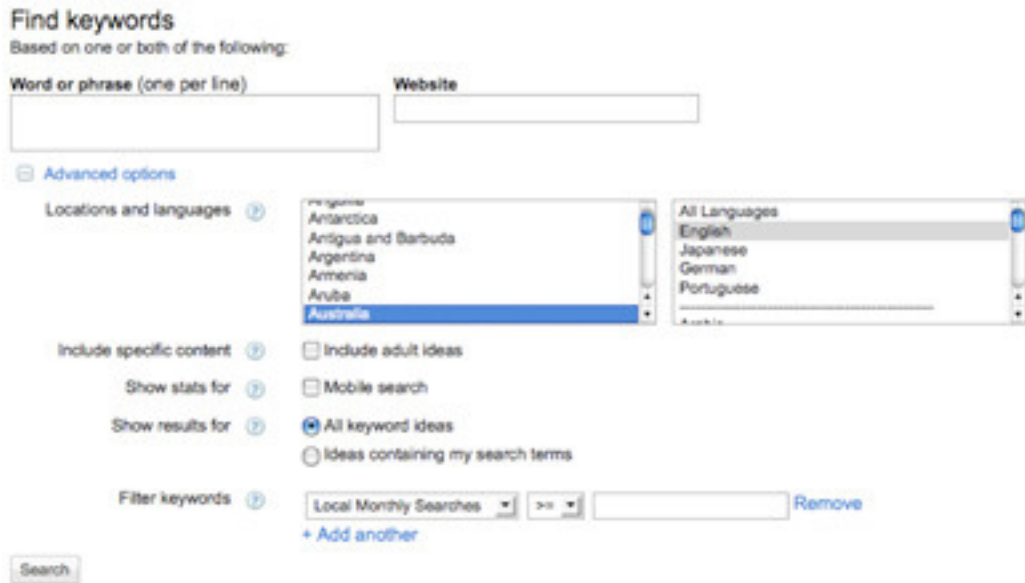
• ...	• ...	• ...
• ...	• ...	• ...
• ...	• ...	• ...
• ...	• ...	• ...

My competitors

Repeat the task above. However, this time use a competitor’s or another website that provides a similar service. Do as above but with your competitors or other websites that provide a similar service. If you are unsure of your competitors, Google your three core offerings and look for someone similar to you in the search results. Try and identify 3 more keyword combinations (that differ from your own).

Core offering 1:	Core offering 2:	Core offering 3:
• ...	• ...	• ...
• ...	• ...	• ...
• ...	• ...	• ...
• ...	• ...	• ...
• ...	• ...	• ...
• ...	• ...	• ...

You can also use the Google AdWords keyword tool to extract the keywords held in your competitor’s website. Go to <https://adwords.google.com/select/KeywordToolExternal> and write the website address (www.websiteaddress.com) under the website box.



Doing so will not only provide you with a selection of keywords that your competitor has been using in their site but will also suggest you many other related keywords. You don't have to use all these keywords within your site's content but they are a great indication of what your target market is interested in. You may therefore want to consider using them when developing new content using a blog for instance.

When provided with the results of the Google AdWords keyword search focus on the "Local Search Volume" column and change the Match Type from Broad to Exact.

Keywords	Advertiser Competition	Local Search Volume: August	Global Monthly Search Volume	Match Type: Exact
Keywords related to term(s) entered - sort by relevance				
[kangaroo island]	<div style="width: 25%;"></div>	18,100	27,100	Add Exact
[kangaroo island accommodation]	<div style="width: 25%;"></div>	2,900	2,400	Add Exact
[kangaroo island hotels]	<div style="width: 25%;"></div>	2,900	8,100	Add Exact

b). Broad search

You should have 6 keyword combinations as well as their respective list of keywords. It is now time to broaden your search and run your core offerings through two free online tools to complete your list:

Quintura

Quintura.com is a visual search engine that allows you to see what words are related to your search query: www.quintura.com



Reason behind trip	Keyphrase 1:	Keyphrase 2:	Keyphrase 3:
What is the theme behind the holiday? E.g. snow trip? Honeymoon? Related keywords: Related keywords: Related keywords:

4. Where to use keywords You now have an optimal list of keywords and keyphrases to use in the content throughout your website. Decide on the focus of each individual page of your site and then attribute the relevant keywords or keyphrases to its content.

This section will show you exactly where to put the keyphrases in the structure of your page's content.

a). Title tag

Use your keyphrase in the title tag and complement it with related keywords.

E.g. Luxury ski accommodation in Queenstown

b). Headings

Use your keyphrase or its related keywords in the H1 (header 1) and use related keywords in H2 and H3 when possible. Remember that you do not want your content to be overloaded with keywords and sound unnatural.

E.g. Chalet accommodation for your ski or snowboarding trip

c). Image Alt attribute

Aim to use an image that is related to the page's theme and use your keyphrase or its related keywords in the text of the image alt attribute.

d). URL

Use the keyphrase or the main keyword in the page address (the URL). If your content management system doesn't allow you to do this, ask your web developer to see if some necessary changes could be made in order to reach the style of the address shown below (using keywords and hyphens).

E.g. www.mylodge.co.nz/ski-accommodation-queenstown.html

e). Page copy (content)

Use your keyphrase and its related keywords at least 2-3 times in the page's content itself. Try and bold the keyphrase or appropriate keywords once at least.

f). Meta description

Even though it has been established that the Meta description (the information below the site's listing in a search engine) doesn't primarily affect search engine rankings, you should still include your keywords in it, as this will gain your customers' attention because it usually reinstates what they have searched for originally.

g). Hyperlinks

Keywords should also be used in hyperlinks. However, the keywords used in links to a page should be the keywords indentifying the linked page and not the theme of the page the link originates from.

E.g. Imagine I am on a different page than www.mylodge.co.nz/ski-accommodation-queenstown.html. For instance, I could be on the page about prices. If I want to add a link within the prices page that takes customers to the accommodation page, I would use the accommodation keywords in the link. It could look like something like this:

Visit our page about our [skiing accommodation offer in Queenstown](#)

5. Keyword ranking in search engines

Once you have optimised your site for your most profitable keywords it is important to continuously assess how they are ranking on search engines. You could "Google" these keywords once a month however this wouldn't be the best use of your time. There are free tools such as the SEOBook RankChecker that allow you to set up a search which you can save and run once a month (or whenever you wish).

The SEOBook RankChecker tool is available as a plugin for your Firefox browser. You can download it from SEOBook.com by following this link:

<http://tools.seobook.com/firefox/rank-checker/>. If you wish you may also download the SEOBook toolbar which will provide you with RankChecker and a series of other search engine optimisation tools. Ensure you watch the introduction video which is on the same page.

6. Key learning outcomes

- Keyword research is crucial in order to give your website the most chances to rank high on search engines for the keywords your target market is most likely to use
- Once the keywords have been found they need to be strategically placed in each page of your website
- You then need to assess how you are ranking for these keywords on a monthly basis
- You can conduct your own keyword research and search engine optimisation or pay a search engine optimisation company to do it on your behalf.

7. Related material

Related tutorials

- Search engines 101
- Critical components of optimising a website
- Understanding inbound links to my site

Related websites

- Better understanding keywords: www.searchengineguide.com/keywords/
- SEO book: www.seobook.com