



Keyword Guide:

How to Use Keywords to Improve
Your Small Business's SEO

TREEFROG MARKETING



Ready for your ideal clients to find you on Google?

Hey, friend! I'm so glad you're here! Because, the fact that you're reading this means you're ready to make search engine optimization (SEO) part of your marketing strategy.

We've been working with small businesses since 2000, and as a result, we understand how incredibly hard you work to serve your clients, serve your team, and manage your business. Because of this, **we believe your website deserves to be found where your ideal clients are already looking for your products and services: on the first page of Google.**

SEO is a particularly powerful marketing tactic for small businesses, because 97% of people use Google when they're in need of a local product or service.

As a result, if you can get your website and content to the first page of Google, you can get your information in front of potential clients who are:

1. Actively looking for your product or services
2. Likely ready to book or buy

How would your business and life change if your ideal clients could find your information on a daily basis?

Let's find out by tackling one of the biggest pieces of a successful SEO strategy—keywords!

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If you want your website & content to rank well on Google, you have to know how to choose & use strategic keywords.

There are a lot of moving parts to a successful SEO strategy—and if you want your website and content (blogs, videos, any other content that's on your website) to rank well on search engines, you have to know:

1. How to choose strategic keywords
2. Where to put keywords on your website





What are keywords & how do they help Google users find your content?

[Moz](#) defines keywords as, “Ideas and topics that define what your content is about. In terms of SEO, keywords are the words and phrases that searchers enter into search engines.”

In other words, **keywords are the words or phrases that people Google, and as a business owner, you want to include relevant keywords on your web pages and in your blog posts so that you can get your website in front of potential customers who are specifically looking for your products, services, or content.**

Back in the day (the 1990s more specifically), search engines scanned web pages specifically looking for keywords. As a result, web copywriters would “keyword stuff,” meaning they would put their keyword on a web

page as many times as possible so search engines would display their web page first. Today, search engines rank content based on relevancy, quality, and authority. In other words, Google tries to rank the most helpful, relevant, reliable content first—regardless of how many times a keyword is included. Basically, if you want your content to rank well, think quality of content—not quantity of keywords.

Now, this does not mean that keywords don't matter. With Google's current algorithm, keywords are what link a user's search to your content and help Google determine what kinds of searches you can help Google users with.

So, your goal is to include keywords on your website that mirror what people are searching, as well as to provide content that is helpful and relevant so that your website can become a reliable online resource.

What are “long-tail” keywords, & why should you use them instead of “head” keywords?

A common mistake that small business leaders make is optimizing their websites for broad keywords (head keywords) instead of specific keywords (long-tail keywords).

We'll discuss the difference between head and long-tail keywords below, but basically, it's important to understand that it will be much easier and more beneficial for your website to rank for long-tail keywords than for head keywords.



Head Keywords

Broad keywords—also called “head keywords”—are usually one or two words. For example, let’s pretend you own a plumbing company. For your business, examples of head keywords might include “plumbers,” “water softeners,” “plumbing repairs,” “water heaters,” and other broad words or phrases that describe your products and services.

Head keywords have high search volumes, so it’s a common mistake for people to think that these are the keywords they should be using to optimize their websites. But, this is not the case, especially for small businesses.

We’ll stick with our plumbing company example. The average plumbing company won’t be able to rank on the first page of a Google search for “plumbers” (a head keyword) because there are so many plumbing companies and resources in the world with websites.

Right now, if you Google “plumbers,” 421,000,000+ results appear. That’s a lot of online competition!

So, how can you help your ideal clients find you? You need to optimize your website with long-tail keywords that your ideal clients will actually be searching for.

Long-tail Keywords

Long-tail keywords are more specific keywords—ideally made up of four or more words (three words work occasionally)—that better mirror a searcher’s intent. Long-tail keywords are more powerful than head keywords because, according to [Neil Patel](#), “Long-tail keywords are how people actually search the internet.”

Think about when you search for something. Do you type in one or two words? No. You type in a question or add a description so you can find results that are more relevant to what you need. Examples might include “substitute for sesame oil,” “best pizza near me,” or “how to improve your small business’s SEO.” In fact, [70%](#) of all Google searches are specific like these examples.

Now, let’s pretend that you’re a plumber in Lafayette, Indiana and that your target audience is Lafayette, Indiana homeowners. You don’t need to rank well for “plumbers.” Instead, you need to rank well for searches that are relevant and specific to your target audience.

These searches might include “Lafayette, Indiana plumbers,” “plumbing companies in Lafayette, Indiana,” “water softener installation in Lafayette, Indiana,” or “24/7 plumbers in Lafayette, Indiana.”

These long-tail keywords are more specific to your target audience and have less competition, meaning you’re more likely to rank well. For example, only 3,660,000 results appear when you search “Lafayette, Indiana plumbers.” This seems like a lot, but this is significantly less than the 421,000,000+ listings for “plumbers”!

Basically, according to [HubSpot](#), long-tail keywords offer you the path of “least resistance” and are more likely to put you in front of your target audience.

Please Note: Long-tail keywords aren't just location specific. That said, if you have a service area, making your long-tail keywords location centered for the main pages of your website is often very effective. After all, your ideal clients are likely searching for products or services near them. For example, a Lafayette, Indiana homeowner needs a plumber, they're going to look for plumbers in their city. They likely have no interest in hiring a plumber out of New York or Chicago.



How do you identify strategic long-tail keywords for your website?

While common sense will get you a long way, you don't want to choose your long-tail keywords without looking at data.

Before we get into the nitty gritty, there are a few things that you should note about keywords:

1. Keywords should **mirror** what your ideal customer is searching for based on their “search intent.”

As you choose your keywords, the most important question to ask yourself is, “What is my ideal client searching for?” After all, your goal is to help your best potential customers find your website and content.

2. You need a long-tail keyword for **every** web page & blog post.

If you want a web page to be found, you need to optimize it with a long-tail keyword.

3. Every web page and blog post needs a **different** long-tail keyword.

You cannot use the same long-tail keyword on more than one page. Every web page needs a long-tail keyword that's unique to it.

4. Your long-tail keyword needs to be **relevant** to the page you're using it on.

If your keyword isn't relevant—meaning if you use a keyword that has no relation to the content on a web page—search engines will notice this, and your search engine ranking can be affected negatively.

For example, if you're a law firm wanting to improve your search engine rankings for your business and corporate counsel services, you wouldn't want to make the keyword for your page about estate planning “best business lawyers in Indianapolis,” because this keyword doesn't have anything to do with estate planning.

5. Long-tail keywords have **four or more words**.

Remember, Google users don't typically Google a word or two. They usually want specific answers for specific problems or questions. As a result, they typically use four or more words, so your long-tail keyword for each page should also contain four or more words.

Now, you can occasionally get away with three words. Just ask yourself, “What would my ideal client search for?”

6. Your long-tail keyword should have a **search volume of 100-1000 searches per month**.

Ideally, you want to choose long-tail keywords that have 100-1000 searches per month or less. (We'll discuss how to find this data below.) Again, this sounds counterintuitive—especially when you see that some keywords receive thousands or millions of searches—but keywords with lower search volumes are both easier to rank for and more likely to put your website and content in front of potential clients who are looking for your services specifically.



HOW TO IDENTIFY LONG-TAIL KEYWORDS

As you're choosing long-tail keywords for both web pages and blog posts, refer to this list.

Now, let's talk about actual steps and tools you can use!

1. Create a spreadsheet.

First, create a spreadsheet so you can keep track of which long-tail keyword goes with which web page or blog post.

In your spreadsheet, include columns for:

- The name of the page/blog post
- The page/blog's long-tail keyword
- Average monthly searches
- Any sub keywords you'd like to keep in mind (While you don't want to make head keywords your main keywords, you can still include them in your copy and in other elements.)
- Notes (This isn't necessary, but I like to have a "notes" section simply so I don't forget anything important.)

Then, list all of your web pages (home, about, etc.) in the first column.



Page/Blog Post	Long-tail Keyword	Avg Monthly Searches	Sub Keywords	Notes
Home				
Services				
• Plumbing Repairs				
• Water Softeners				
• Water Heaters				
• Emergency Plumbing				

Page/Blog Post	Long-tail Keyword	Avg Monthly Searches	Sub Keywords	Notes
About				
Careers				
Schedule Service				

While you'll likely build or update all of your web pages at once, you will (or at least you should) be adding blogs and other content to your website on a regular basis. So, every time you add something new, you'll want to return to this spreadsheet to:

- Make sure you haven't already used a long-tail keyword
- Add the new blog post or page and its long-tail keyword so you have a record that you can easily refer to as you add new content to your site



2. Brainstorm potential long-tail keywords.

Next, you need to brainstorm a list of potential long-tail keywords that you think you'd like to rank well for and write these ideas down.

To determine potential long-tail keywords:

Use common sense.

Think like your ideal client. What are they searching for? What do they need from you? Is your location or service area important? What's important to your ideal client when they're looking for a service like yours? Do specific values matter?

With long-tail keywords, search intent is very important because your goal is to get your website in front of those who are actively looking for what you have to offer. So, start by brainstorming a list of keywords that you think your ideal client might be looking for.

For example, if you're a Lafayette, Indiana plumber who specifically takes on residential work, keywords that might come to mind right away include:

- Lafayette, Indiana plumbers
- Plumbing companies in Lafayette, Indiana
- 24/7 plumbers in Lafayette, Indiana

Don't overthink this. Just think like your dream client.

Use online keyword tools.

While common sense will likely get you far, there are also several online tools (many of which are available for free or have free versions) that will give you even more keyword options, including:

- [Google AdWords' Keyword Planner](#)
- [MOZ's Keyword Explorer](#)
- [The Keyword Tool](#)
- Google's "Related Searches" section (This appears at the very bottom of a Google search. Search for a long-tail keyword you think could be relevant; scroll to the bottom of the search results; and look at the "Related Searches" section to see if any of these common searches could make good long-tail keyword options for your website or content.)
- Google's "People also ask" section (This appears under the first few Google search results and includes dropdown options where you can see answers to other similar questions.)
- Google's drop-down suggestions (As you type a search into Google's search bar, other options populate. Sometimes, this is a great place to find other long-tail keyword options.)

Avoid using industry terms.

As you explore long-tail keyword options, avoid using industry terms—terms that you use in your industry but your ideal client likely doesn't.

For example, as a marketing agency for small businesses, we know that our clients don't commonly search for or say "GA4." Instead, they say and search for "Google Analytics" or "how to find out how many people have visited your website."

Everyone's ideal client is different. As you choose keywords for your website, you just need to be sure that you're thinking like yours.



3. Search for your brainstormed ideas.

After you have a list of possible keywords, it's time to start eliminating some so that you are left with a list of the best, most strategic options.

To do this, start by literally Googling your brainstormed ideas. This will help you see how your competitors are ranking for these keywords and if your long-tail keyword and content ideas are relevant to your ideal customer. (If there isn't content available, you either have a beautiful opportunity to rank well by creating content about a topic that has yet to be produced or nobody is searching for such content.)

Googling your ideas can also help you decide how you should format your content. For example, maybe you have a blog idea, and when you look at similar blogs, you can see that the blogs about that topic that are ranking best are in a list format. This suggests that a list is the best way for people to consume information about this topic.

Again, as you search for your brainstormed ideas, eliminate the ideas that don't prove to be a strong fit.

4. Find the average number of monthly searches.

Next, it's time to determine which keywords are most effective based on data. Using [Google AdWords' Keyword Planner](#), type in each possibility (while paying attention to other options that populate) and look at the long-tail keyword's average number of monthly searches (in the "Avg. monthly searches" column).

Note: You can use other tools; however, we like [Google AdWords' Keyword Planner](#), because it provides data straight from Google. If the goal is to rank well on Google, it only makes sense to use Google's information.



As a reminder, **your ideal long-tail keywords will have between 10-1000 average searches per month.** Like we talked about before, it sounds like a good idea to look for keywords that have thousands or millions of searches per month, but that isn't the case.

Remember, your goal is to get your website in front of your ideal customers—not the masses. And, it's very difficult to appear on the first page of Google search results for general keywords.

Cut your brainstorming list down until it only contains keywords that meet the qualifications you need.

Note: Google may not have data for all long-tail keywords. While Google knows almost everything, it does occasionally fall short. If you're convinced that a long-tail keyword will work but Google's Keyword Planner will not display the long-tail keyword, or the average number of searches aren't available, don't panic. Instead, type your long-tail keyword idea into a Google search and see what appears. If you want your business listed with the results that appear (maybe competitors show up), you likely still have a good long-tail keyword choice. It's probably just so specific or niche that Google doesn't have the data you're looking for.



5. Choose keywords for your web pages & blog posts.

Now, it's time to actually choose your long-tail keywords for each web page and blog post.

You'll need to repeat much of this process every time you add a new page, blog post, or piece of content to your website. However, as you build your website or start making SEO updates across your current site, it's helpful to reverse engineer choosing your keywords by exploring keyword options, determining which keywords are your most strategic options, and then determining how these keywords can naturally fit into your website or content.

So, once you have your list of possible long-tail keywords and have the data needed to back up your potential choices, go back to your original spreadsheet and identify a relevant long-tail keyword for every web page and blog post.

In this case, “relevant” means that there is a connection between each page and its long-tail keyword.

Some people assume that if they simply use a long-tail keyword on a page, the page or the rest of their website will rank well for the keyword. However, if your long-tail keyword doesn’t relate to the content on the page, your Google ranking may be harmed—not helped.

For example, let’s go back to our Lafayette, Indiana plumbing company example. If you have a web page about water heater installation and repair but make your long-tail keyword “best water softener companies in Lafayette, Indiana” because you’re trying to increase your search engine rankings for your water softeners services, your long-tail keyword is not relevant to your web page.

So, work your way through your spreadsheet and determine which long-tail keywords work best for each page, and record the keyword’s average number of monthly searches.

Here’s an example of what long-tail keywords could look like for a Lafayette, Indiana plumbing company. I’ve also included short explanations for each choice in case you find this helpful.

Example: Long-tail Keywords for a Plumbing Company in Lafayette, Indiana

Page/Blog Post	Long-tail Keyword	Avg Monthly Searches	Sub Keywords	Notes
Home	Plumbers in Lafayette, Indiana	100 - 1K	Plumbing Company in Lafayette, Indiana Plumbing Repairs Water Softeners Water Heaters Emergency Plumbing Services	When this business's ideal client needs plumbing assistance, data shows this is what their client is most likely to search for. But, this keyword is still very niche as it has between 100 and 1K searches per month.
Services	Plumbing Services in Lafayette, Indiana	10 - 100		Average monthly searches for this keyword are a little low, but this is still a keyword that is commonly searched for and helps Google see what the small business does and where they serve. This long-tail keyword also describes the page well.
• Plumbing Repairs	Plumbing Repair in Lafayette, Indiana	100 - 1K	Water Heaters Sewer Lines Sewer Repair	This is a strong long-tail keyword. It has between 100 and 1K searches per month, and correlates with the business's goal of offering service repairs.

Example: Long-tail Keywords for a Plumbing Company in Lafayette, Indiana

Page/Blog Post	Long-tail Keyword	Avg Monthly Searches	Sub Keywords	Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water Softeners 	Water Softeners Lafayette, Indiana	10 - 100	Water Softener Installation Water Softener Repair	This search is very niche, but this small business needs this web page, because their ideal client needs this information.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water Heaters 	Water Heaters in Lafayette, Indiana	0 - 10	Water Heater Installation Water Heater Repair	This search is even more niche, but this business needs this web page, because their ideal client needs this information.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency Plumbing 	Emergency Plumber Lafayette, Indiana	100 - 1K	24-hour Plumber in Lafayette, Indiana	This keyword describes the service offered, and data supports that it is a strong keyword.

Example: Long-tail Keywords for a Plumbing Company in Lafayette, Indiana

Page/Blog Post	Long-tail Keyword	Avg Monthly Searches	Sub Keywords	Notes
About	Lafayette, Indiana Plumbers	100 - 1K	West Lafayette, Indiana Any Other Cities Client Serves	This is another strong keyword, and we are using it here, because the "About" page describes what this business does as a Lafayette, Indiana plumber.
Careers	Plumber Jobs in Lafayette, Indiana	0 - 10		This is very niche, but we only want people to find this web page if they are looking for plumbing jobs in Lafayette.
Schedule Service	Contact Example Plumbing	0 - 10		We only want people to find this page if they want to contact this company and/or schedule a service.

For some businesses, location matters. For others, it doesn't.

When you choose keywords for a web page or blog post, the most important factor to consider is search intent. In other words, if potential customers want to find products or services like yours, what will they Google?

Many small businesses have service areas or physical locations that customers have to travel to (e.g. plumbers, restaurants, healthcare providers, lawyers, etc.). If your location matters to your ideal customers, you'll likely want to make the long-tail keywords for the main pages of your website location specific.

For example, someone with frozen pipes in Lafayette, Indiana doesn't care about plumbers in San Diego. They need someone nearby who can help them ASAP. As a result, people are going to search for plumbers by location (e.g. "plumbers in Lafayette, Indiana.")



With this in mind, it's strategic and beneficial for location-based small businesses to optimize the main pages of their website (home, about, and service/product pages) for location-specific keywords. Because, optimizing your website with location-based keywords will help Google understand where you serve your customers and mirror what your ideal customers are likely searching for, making your website much more likely to rank well locally.

However, if your small business offers products and services nation or worldwide (e.g. digital services or products that can be shipped), location likely doesn't matter. As a result, you'll want to make the long-tail keywords for the main pages of your website specific to how your ideal customers are searching for products or services like yours on Google.

For example, if you have an app that allows users to schedule their social media posts, you might use "social media scheduling app" as a long-tail keyword. If you offer virtual personal training, your long-tail keyword for one of your service pages might be "online personal trainer for women." Or, if you make and ship mid century modern furniture, the long-tail keyword for your home page might be "custom mid century modern furniture."



How do you use long-tail keywords on your website? Where do you put them?

You've completed your list of long-tail keywords. Now what?

Your keywords won't do you any good if they stay in a spreadsheet, so let's break down where to put them on your website!

Every page or blog post's long-tail keyword should appear in its:

- Copy
 - Title
 - Headings (not all)
 - Body
- Metadata
 - SEO Title
 - Slug
 - Meta Description
- Images
 - Image titles
 - Alternative text

If you don't know what these items are, don't panic! We'll go through each.

Let's pretend . . .

So, we are going to stick to our example of being a plumbing company in Lafayette, Indiana. Through research, you've decided the best long-tail keyword for your home page is "plumbers in Lafayette, Indiana."

Now, let's break down exactly where to put this keyword on the page.





Copy

The long-tail keyword for every web page or blog post needs to be included throughout the page/post's copy (the words on the page).

With this in mind, try to include your long-tail keyword in the following areas of each page/post's copy:

Title

You want to include your long-tail keyword in the title of every web page and blog post on your website. That said, web page and blog post titles function a little differently, so here's what you're going to want to do for each:

Web Page Titles

Your web page title is the title of the page. To include your long-tail keyword in your web page title, you simply want to include your long-tail keyword at the very top of your web page as an H1 heading. (Note: Only titles should be formatted as H1 headings.)

Now, your title may not be your long-tail keyword exactly. But, it does need to include your long-tail keyword.

For example, as a Lafayette, Indiana plumbing company, the top of your home page might read "Experienced, Reliable Plumbers in Lafayette, Indiana," which includes your long-tail keyword as well as makes for a compelling heading on your website.

Essentially, you just need to make sure your long-tail keyword is included at the very top of your website as an H1 heading.

Blog Post Titles

For most of this guide, we'll stick to our Lafayette, Indiana plumber home page example. However, I do want to take a moment to discuss blog titles from an SEO perspective.

When you write titles for your blog posts, you have two goals:

- To create a title that makes people want to click check on your post.
- To include your long-tail keyword in the title.

For example, maybe you write a blog post about when to replace a water heater. You determine that “signs it’s time to replace your water heater” is your best long-tail keyword option. To make the blog more interesting, you could title it “5 Unmistakable Signs It’s Time to Replace Your Water Heater.”

***Note:** Most blog systems (e.g. Wordpress) will automatically make your title the H1 heading, meaning you likely don't need to do this manually. All other headings should then start with H2 and subsequently use H3, H4, etc.*

Headings

Every page of your website—whether it’s an informative page or a blog post—should use headings. No matter what web platform you use, you will have options to make headings H1, H2, H3, H4, etc. (Note: Only use H1 headings for page titles. This makes it easier for Google to understand your web pages.)

To include your long-tail keyword in the headings of our example home page, you might have a heading above your list of services that reads, “We are plumbers in Lafayette, Indiana that offer..”

There isn’t a magic number of times to include long-tail keywords in your headings. You simply want to include your long-tail keywords and make sure they don’t sound spammy or unnatural.

Body

In addition to including your long-tail keywords in your title and in headings, you also want to include your long-tail keywords in your body copy (your normal paragraph text).

For example, you could include your long-tail keyword in the “guide” section of your website by saying something like, “As Lafayette, Indiana plumbers, we’ve been serving customers with both repair and installation services since 1982.”

Like with headings, there’s no magic number of times to include your long-tail keyword in the copy. In case you need a hard number, I would aim to include your long-tail keyword at least three times in the body of a web page or blog post. Remember, you simply want to include your long-tail keyword where you naturally can.

Metadata

You might not think you're familiar with metadata; however, you see metadata every time you use Google.

Metadata is data that describes a web page and includes three elements:

- SEO titles
- Meta descriptions
- Slugs

Google uses metadata to display sites, and metadata helps searchers determine if a link is relevant to their search.

We'll talk about how to determine the text for each of these elements below, but it's important to note that you need to determine how you can insert your metadata into your website.

Your website builder (whether you use WordPress, [Showit](#), Squarespace, Weebly, or whatever else) should have a convenient place where you can easily insert your metadata. Typically, if you go to the backend of a page (where you can edit the page), there will be a spot with blanks ready for you to fill in.

If you are a Wordpress user (or if you have a Wordpress blog as a [Showit](#) user), we highly recommend installing [SEO Yoast](#)—a plugin that makes adding SEO information to your website easy.

Now, let's break down each metadata element and how to use them!



SEO Title

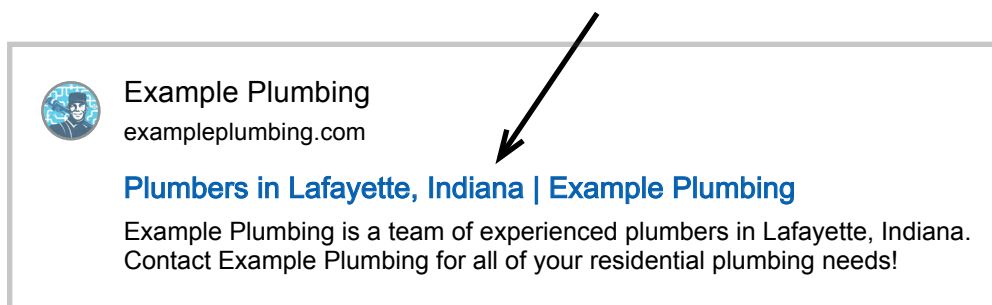
Your SEO title (also called a title tag) will appear as the heading of a search engine listing. (It's the blue text on Google.) You want this text to be 50-60 characters so Google doesn't cut your SEO title off (if you can help it) and quickly give searchers a preview of what they will find if they visit your web page.

Having a strong, straightforward SEO title is important because it's the first thing searchers will notice and can entice searchers to click on your website.

Whether you're working on a web page or a blog post, we recommend making your SEO title "Your Long-tail Keyword | Your Business Name."

Home Web Page Example: Plumbers in Lafayette, Indiana | Example Plumbing

Blog Post Example: Signs It's Time to Replace Your Water Heater | Example Plumbing




The image shows a search engine result snippet for 'Example Plumbing'. It includes a circular profile picture of a person, the business name 'Example Plumbing', and the website 'exampleplumbing.com'. The title of the result is 'Plumbers in Lafayette, Indiana | Example Plumbing', which is highlighted in blue. Below the title is a short description: 'Example Plumbing is a team of experienced plumbers in Lafayette, Indiana. Contact Example Plumbing for all of your residential plumbing needs!'. A black arrow points from the top right towards the title text.

Meta Description

Your meta description is the description that appears underneath the SEO title on a search results page and should describe the web page.

This description is another way you can entice searchers to click on your link. Your meta description should contain 150 to 160 characters, tell searchers what they'll find on the web page, and include your longtail keyword.


Example: Example Plumbing is a team of experienced plumbers in Lafayette, Indiana. Contact Example Plumbing for all of your residential plumbing needs!



Example Plumbing
exampleplumbing.com

Plumbers in Lafayette, Indiana | Example Plumbing

Example Plumbing is a team of experienced plumbers in Lafayette, Indiana. Contact Example Plumbing for all of your residential plumbing needs!



Slug

Your slug is the portion of your URL that follows your domain (the part of your URL after the forward slash).

Readers won't spend a lot of time looking at your URL, but search engines will scan it to determine if the content on your page is relevant to a user's search.

Your slug—except on your home page, which we'll discuss below—should include your long-tail keyword with each word separated by hyphens.

So, if your blog is titled “5 Unmistakable Signs It's Time to Replace Your Water Heater” and has “signs it's time to replace your water heater” as its long-tail keyword, your slug would mirror the example below:

Example: signs-time-replace-water-heater



Example Plumbing

exampleplumbing.com › signs-time-replace-water-heater

Signs It's Time to Replace Your Water Heater | Example Plumbing

Aug 3, 2023 – Wondering if it's time to replace your water heater? Here are five unmistakable signs that it's time to replace your water heater.



Stop Words

When you write slugs, you want to omit “stop words,” which are extremely common words that most search engines skip over in order to save space in their databases and to speed up the process of crawling/indexing.

Examples of stop words include: “a,” “an,” “and,” “the,” “in,” “of,” “to,” “is,” “that,” “for,” and “with.” You can see a complete list of stop words [here](#).

As you write slugs, simply omit these words.

Home Page Slug

Every web page and blog needs a slug except for your home page. Think about when you go to a major company’s website: amazon.com, forbes.com, etc. There isn’t a slug after the name of the website because you want the URL for your home page to be clean and simple.



Photos

It's also important to optimize your images for search engines. This can be accomplished through both:

- Image titles
- Alt text

Image Titles

Rather than uploading files with image titles like “KAR1009.jpg,” it’s important to give your images titles that help search engines better understand the photos.

Additionally, you want to make sure that the titles of images contain the page/blog’s long-tail keyword when applicable. So, as you write web copy and determine which images you are going to use in a blog post, provide image titles for these images. And, when relevant, use the long-tail keyword.

If the image has nothing to do with the long-tail keyword, don’t include the long-tail keyword; just describe the image. But, if you’re working on, your “5 Unmistakable Signs It’s Time to Replace Your Water Heater” blog, your long-tail keyword is “signs it’s time to replace your water heater,” and you have a an image of a leaking water heater, your image title might be as follows:

Example: signs-time-replace-water-heater-leaking.jpg

Note: You also want to remove stop words from image titles.

It’s easier to rename images before uploading them; however, your web builder likely also lets you rename or add titles to images after they’ve been uploaded.

Alt Text

Alt text—also called “alternative text” or “alt tags”—is a words-based attribute that can be added to a photo to describe the content.

Alt text appears if an image won’t load and is the description those who are visually impaired are given when using your site. Alt text can also help put images on Google Images.

Alt text should describe the photo, be no more than 125 characters long, and include your long-tail keyword if applicable.

So, if your long-tail keyword is “plumbers in Lafayette, Indiana” and the page features a photo of your team, your alt text may look like the example below.

Example: Example Plumbing—a team of plumbers in Lafayette, Indiana—smiling in front of Example Plumbing shop.



WARNING! Don't keyword stuff!

It's going to take a while to optimize your website with keywords. Now, what you don't want to do is spend hours optimizing your website and then not rank any better because you "keyword stuffed."

While you want to include long-tail keywords in the places we've discussed, it's very important that the keywords read naturally and don't come across as spammy. If you shove your keywords into unnatural places, search engines will realize this, and your search engine rankings will most likely be affected.

For example, it's a bad practice to include a paragraph like, "Example Plumbing is a team of plumbers in Lafayette, Indiana. Every member of the team really likes working as plumbers in Lafayette, Indiana. When the team isn't serving as plumbers in Lafayette, Indiana, they wish they were serving as plumbers in Lafayette, Indiana."

This is extreme, but you get the point. You want your long-tail keywords to be natural, organic parts of your content and metadata.

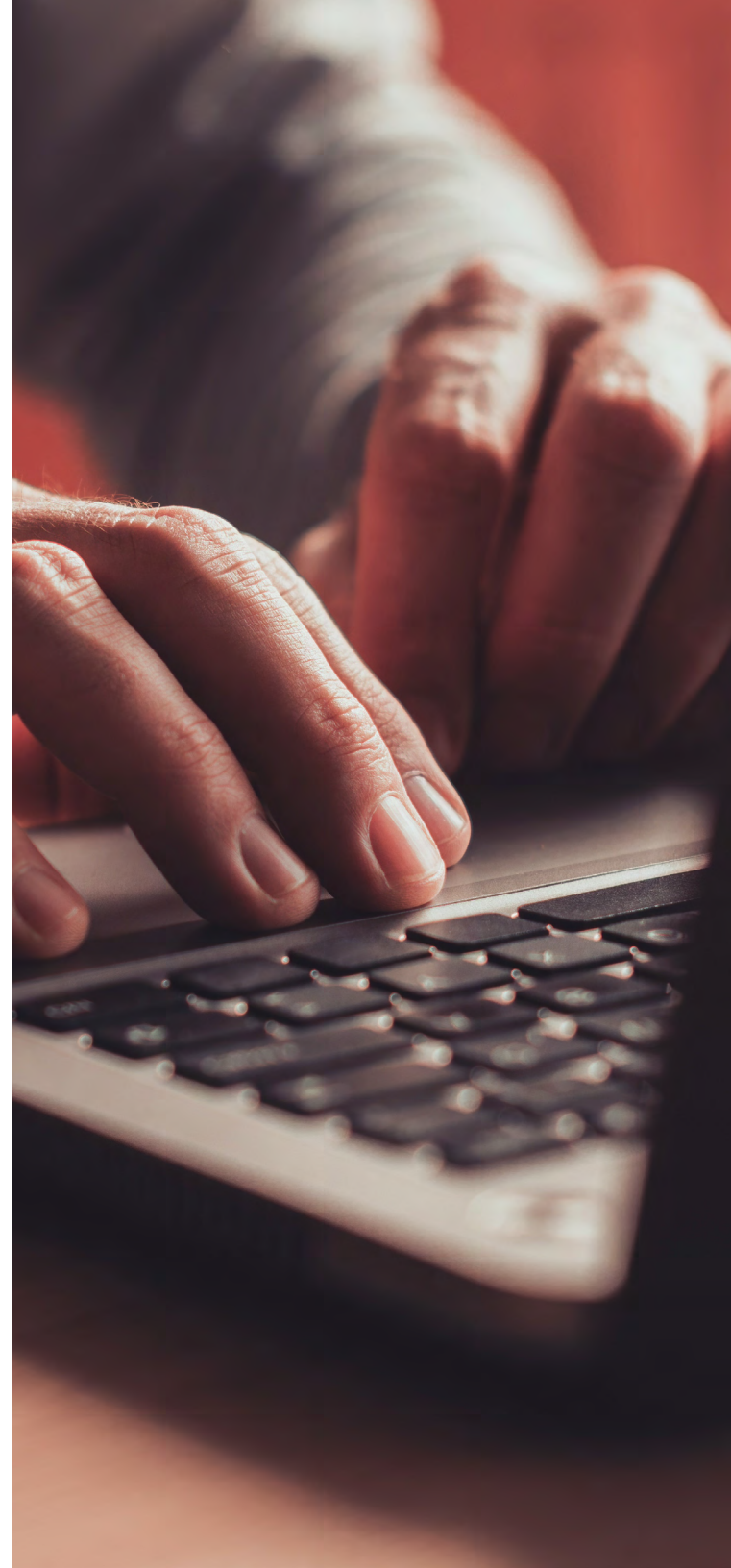
SEO is the key to getting your information in front of potential customers who are **ACTIVELY** looking for your products or services.

Identifying and implementing keywords is just step one of improving your search engine rankings. But, knowing how to use strategic keywords can **DRASTICALLY** increase the chances of your web pages and blog posts (assuming they're well written and helpful to your ideal client) appearing on the first page of Google.

There are a lot of moving parts to implementing an effective SEO strategy, but in our opinion, SEO is worth the investment. Because, the fact of the matter is that when people need a local service, they go to Google to find it. In fact, **97%** of people use Google to find local businesses.

As a result, if your website doesn't appear on the first page of Google, you're missing out on business. However, when your site does rank on page one, people who are actively looking for what you have to offer can easily find you. It doesn't get any more strategic than that!

With this in mind, as a small business, you can't afford not to implement a successful keyword or SEO strategy.





Want your website to *actually* help your small business grow?

SEO is a critical piece of web development, but it isn't the only step. If built strategically, your website has the power to be your most effective marketing tool. But, if developed poorly, building or investing in a new website is a waste of time and money.

If you want a website that regularly generates leads and helps you reach your business goals, schedule a discovery call to talk about [marketing partnership](#) options. Our team is ready to use our proven, science-based system to help you develop an SEO-optimized website that successfully converts prospects into paying customers.

[Schedule a Discovery Call](#)