

SEO BEGINNER

SEO Quick-Start Kit

Your First Steps to Search Engine Visibility

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Section 1: SEO Glossary

WHY THIS MATTERS

SEO has its own language. Before you can optimize anything, you need to understand what people are talking about. This glossary covers the 25 terms you will encounter most often.

The Basics

SEO (Search Engine Optimization)

The practice of improving your website so it appears higher in Google search results. Higher rankings = more people find you.

SERP (Search Engine Results Page)

The page Google shows after you search for something. It includes organic results, ads, featured snippets, and more.

Organic Traffic

Visitors who find your website through unpaid search results (not ads). This is the traffic SEO helps you get.

Keyword

A word or phrase people type into Google. Example: "best running shoes" is a keyword. Your goal is to rank for keywords your audience searches.

Long-Tail Keyword

A longer, more specific search phrase. "Best running shoes for flat feet under \$100" is a long-tail keyword. Easier to rank for and often converts better.

Search Intent

The reason behind a search query. Someone searching "buy Nike Air Max" wants to purchase (transactional), while "how to clean running shoes" wants information (informational).

Ranking

Your position in search results. Position 1 is the top result. Most clicks go to the top 3-5 results.

On-Page SEO Terms

Title Tag

The clickable headline shown in search results. It tells Google and users what your page is about. Keep it under 60 characters.

Meta Description

The short description under the title in search results. It does not directly affect rankings but influences whether people click. Keep it under 160 characters.

Alt Text

A text description added to images. It helps Google understand what the image shows and makes your site accessible to screen readers.

Anchor Text

The clickable text in a hyperlink. Instead of "click here," use descriptive text like "SEO beginner guide" — it helps Google understand the linked page.

Canonical URL

Tells Google which version of a page is the "official" one. Prevents duplicate content issues when the same content appears at multiple URLs.

Technical SEO Terms

Crawling

How Google discovers your pages. Googlebot (a program) visits your site and follows links to find new content. If Google cannot crawl your page, it cannot rank it.

Indexing

After crawling, Google stores your page in its database (index). Only indexed pages can appear in search results.

Sitemap

An XML file listing all your important pages. It helps Google find and understand your site structure. Most CMS tools generate one automatically.

Robots.txt

A file that tells search engines which pages they can and cannot crawl. Located at yoursite.com/robots.txt.

Core Web Vitals

Google's speed and user experience metrics: loading speed (LCP), interactivity (INP), and visual stability (CLS). Faster sites rank better.

Schema Markup

Special code that helps Google understand your content better. It can enable rich results like star ratings, FAQ dropdowns, and recipe cards in search results.

Authority & Links

Backlink

A link from another website to yours. Think of it as a vote of confidence. More quality backlinks = higher authority = better rankings.

Domain Authority

A score (0-100) predicting how likely a site is to rank. Higher authority sites rank more easily. Built through quality content and backlinks over time.

Nofollow

A tag on a link that tells Google "don't count this as a vote." Used for ads, sponsored content, and user-generated links.

Performance Metrics

CTR (Click-Through Rate)

The percentage of people who click your result after seeing it. If 100 people see your listing and 5 click, your CTR is 5%.

Bounce Rate

The percentage of visitors who leave after viewing only one page. A high bounce rate may signal that your content does not match what visitors expected.

Impression

Each time your page appears in search results, that counts as one impression — even if nobody clicks.

Modern SEO Features

Featured Snippet

A highlighted answer box at the top of Google results (position zero). It pulls content directly from a webpage to answer the query quickly.

AI Overview

Google's AI-generated summary at the top of search results. It synthesizes information from multiple sources to give a comprehensive answer.

Section 2: SERP Anatomy Guide

WHAT YOU SEE ON GOOGLE

A Google search results page is not just a list of 10 blue links anymore. Understanding each element helps you know what to optimize for.

Top of the Page

SERP ELEMENT

AI Overview (AIO)

- AI-generated summary at the very top of the page
- Pulls information from multiple sources and synthesizes an answer
- Shows source links so users can click through for details
- Not present for every query — mostly informational searches

SERP ELEMENT

Paid Ads (Google Ads)

- Appear at the top (and sometimes bottom) with a "Sponsored" label
- Advertisers pay per click — these are not organic results
- Up to 4 ads can appear above organic results
- SEO does not affect these — they require a paid ad campaign

Featured Content

SERP ELEMENT

Featured Snippet

- A highlighted box answering the query directly — "position zero"
- Can be a paragraph, list, table, or video
- Content is pulled from a ranking page (great free exposure)
- To win: structure content to directly answer the question in 40-60 words

SERP ELEMENT

People Also Ask (PAA)

- Expandable question boxes related to your search
- Each answer links to a source page
- Great opportunity — answer these questions on your page to appear here
- New questions load as you expand existing ones

Main Results

SERP ELEMENT

Organic Results

- The traditional "10 blue links" — the main results SEO targets
- Each shows: Title tag (blue link), URL, Meta description
- Position 1 gets roughly 27% of all clicks
- Results beyond page 1 get less than 1% of clicks

SERP ELEMENT

Knowledge Panel

- Large box on the right side with entity information
- Appears for businesses, people, places, and organizations
- Pulls data from Google Business Profile, Wikipedia, and other sources
- You can claim and edit your Knowledge Panel via Google

Specialized Results

SERP ELEMENT

Local Pack (Map Results)

- Shows 3 local businesses with a map for location-based queries
- Includes business name, rating, hours, and address
- Requires a Google Business Profile to appear here
- Critical for businesses serving local customers

SERP ELEMENT

Image Pack

- Row of images that appears for visual queries
- Clicking opens Google Images or the source page
- Optimize with descriptive filenames, alt text, and surrounding content
- Often appears for product, recipe, or how-to queries

PRO TIP

You do not need to target every SERP feature. Start with organic results first. Once you rank on page 1, then optimize for featured snippets and PAA.

Section 3: First-Week Action Checklist

YOUR FIRST 7 DAYS

SEO success starts with a solid foundation. This checklist walks you through the essential setup tasks for your first week. Do not skip these — everything else builds on them.

Day 1-2: Set Up Your Tools

- Set up Google Search Console (free) — this shows how Google sees your site
- Verify your site ownership in Search Console (follow the guided steps)
- Set up Google Analytics (free) — this tracks who visits your site
- Install an SEO browser extension (MozBar, SEOquake, or Detailed SEO are all free)

Day 3-4: Check Your Technical Foundation

- Submit your sitemap to Google Search Console (Settings 'Sitemaps')
- Run a mobile-friendliness test at search.google.com/test/mobile-friendly
- Check your site speed at PageSpeed Insights (aim for 90+ on mobile)
- Verify your robots.txt is not blocking important pages (yoursite.com/robots.txt)

Day 5-6: Audit Your Top Pages

- Review title tags on your top 5 pages — are they descriptive and under 60 characters?
- Review meta descriptions — do they include a reason to click? Under 160 characters?
- Check that every page has exactly one H1 heading
- Verify all images have descriptive alt text

Day 7: Keyword Research Kickoff

- Identify 3 target keywords your audience would search for
- Google each keyword and study the top 3 results — what do they do well?
- Check "People Also Ask" boxes for each keyword — these are content opportunities
- Create a simple spreadsheet tracking your keywords and current rankings

DO NOT OVERTHINK IT

You do not need fancy tools to start. Google Search Console and a free browser extension are enough for your first month. Add paid tools only after you understand the basics.

Section 4: 5 Quick Wins You Can Do Today

IMMEDIATE IMPACT

These five improvements take less than an hour total and can improve your SEO starting today.

1

Rewrite Your Homepage Title Tag

Replace generic titles like "Home | My Company" with keyword-rich titles like "Affordable Web Design for Small Businesses | YourBrand". This alone can improve your click-through rate.

2

Add Alt Text to Your Top 10 Images

Go through your most important pages and add descriptive alt text to every image. Describe what the image shows, naturally including relevant keywords where appropriate.

3

Fix Your Internal Links

Link from your homepage to your most important pages. Link from blog posts to related services. Use descriptive anchor text — "our SEO services" not "click here".

4

Answer a "People Also Ask" Question

Google your main keyword, find a PAA question, and add a clear answer to your page using that question as an H2 heading. This can help you appear in the PAA section.

5

Claim Your Google Business Profile

If you serve local customers, claim your Google Business Profile at business.google.com. Add your hours, photos, and services. This is free and essential for local SEO.

What's Next?

You Have the Foundation — Now Build on It

This Quick-Start Kit gives you the language and the initial setup. The real work is applying these concepts consistently over time.

You now know 25 essential SEO terms

You understand what every element on Google looks like

You have a week-by-week setup plan

You have 5 improvements to make right now

Ready to Go Deeper?

1

Take the Full AI SEO Course

Learn SERP decoding, audience targeting, and search intent in depth — with hands-on exercises. Available on Udemy at [udemy.com/course/seo-get-to-number1-in-google-search/](https://www.udemy.com/course/seo-get-to-number1-in-google-search/)

2

Retake the SEO Quiz in 30 Days

After applying what you learned, retake the quiz at aruntastic.com/seo-quiz. Track your improvement.

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Online educator with 200,000+ students across 190 countries. Teaching SEO, GEO, and AI-powered search optimization on Udemy since 2015.

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