

How to Optimize Web Copy

To make your content findable in today's Internet-fueled marketplace, you need to optimize the text on at least some of your web pages for search engine. This means identifying appropriate keyword phrases that you want search engines to associate with each page and incorporating them appropriately in your text, headline, and meta data.

By strategically incorporating appropriate keywords into your web pages, you should be able to improve your rankings for certain search terms. Just keep in mind that a variety of factors affect your ability to rank highly in search results (see The Basics of SEO for more information).

To stay organized during this process, we recommend creating two documents — a Word file that contains your web copy and an Excel spreadsheet where you list your keywords and some of their key statistics.

Let's get started and walk through the process of optimizing your web copy.

Step 1. Research Your Keywords

First you'll need to think about which keyword phrases are most important to your firm. Make a list of any general and specific terms that describe what you do. While you may not be in a position to rank for many of these terms today, they provide a path for uncovering other long-tail keywords that can bring you a steady stream of qualified visitors to your pages.

The two most important criteria to consider when choosing a keyword phrase are the keyword's *difficulty* and *search volume*.

1. **Difficulty:** This rating is often presented as a number between 1 and 100, indicating the relative competitiveness of a given keyword phrase. Higher numbers indicate that the keyword phrase is more difficult (or competitive) to rank for. In other words, the more pages across the web that contain a keyword phrase, the more authority your website will need in the eyes of the search engines to allow your own page to rise to the top of search results. (Authority is a measure applied to

either a web page or an entire domain that predicts how likely a site is to rank for competitive keywords.)

While there are a number of tools that measure difficulty, [Moz's Keyword Difficulty Tool](#) rises above the rest. Your difficulty threshold, measured on a 0-100 scale, will depend on a number of factors, including how well your website is optimized for SEO, what industry you are in, and the online sophistication of your competition. With that caveat in mind, most firms are able to target keywords with a difficulty rating under 50.

Note: Moz requires a paid subscription. If you'd like to give it whirl, a 30-day free trial is available. If you can't afford Moz, give [KW Finder](#) a try. It's free, and while we have found it to be less accurate than Moz's tool, it's an acceptable alternative.

The screenshot displays the Moz Keyword Difficulty Tool interface. At the top, there's a search bar with the instruction: "Enter keywords to see keyword difficulty and Bing search volume. Once you've submitted a keyword, you can request a ranking factors report for any keyword." Below the search bar is a "Check Difficulty" button and a status indicator "0 of 400 keywords checked today".

The main section is titled "Keyword Difficulty and Analysis" and includes an "Export to CSV" button. Below this, there's a table with the following data:

Keyword	Keyword Difficulty	Bing Search Volume (Exact Match)		SERP Analysis Reports	
		Local	Global	Basic	Full
management consulting services for Google US	50%	114	176	View	08/03/15
management consulting companies for Google US	53%	32	45	View	08/03/15
management consultancy services for Google US	60%	13	55	View	08/03/15

Moz's Keyword Difficulty Tool

2. **Search Volume:** This rating is presented as a number that indicates, on average, how many times per month people search for a particular keyword. More specific, long-tail keywords tend to be searched for less often, while more general keywords are searched for more often. There are a number of tools that can show you search volume for a particular keyword, but we recommend Google's free [Keyword Planner](#) (you'll need to sign up for a free Google AdWords account).

Again, your ideal search volume varies depending on the context — in this case, how narrow or broad the keyword phrase is and how frequently the keyword phrase is used around the web. There is no optimal target threshold for search volume, as it varies widely by

context, but typically a search volume between 50 and 10,000 searches per month is appropriate for most professional services firms.

Keyword Planner
Add ideas to your plan

Your product or service
management consulting Get ideas Modify search

Targeting [?]

- All locations [?]
- All languages [?]
- Google [?]
- Negative keywords [?]

Date range [?]

Show avg. monthly searches for: Last 12 months

Customize your search [?]

- Keyword filters** [?]
- Keyword options** [?]
 - Show broadly related ideas
 - Hide keywords in my account
 - Hide keywords in my plan
- Keywords to include** [?]

Search volume trends [?]

Average monthly searches

Columns [?] Download Add all (801)

Search terms	Avg. monthly searches [?]	Competition [?]	Suggested bid [?]	Ad impr.	Add to plan
management consulting	22,200	Medium	\$4.90		»

Show rows: 30 1 - 1 of 1 keywords

Keyword (by relevance)	Avg. monthly searches [?]	Competition [?]	Suggested bid [?]	Ad impr.	Add to plan
management consulting firms	3,600	Medium	\$5.65		»
management consultant	6,600	Medium	\$4.40		»
management consultancy	2,900	Low	\$4.80		»

Google's Keyword Planner

Note: Be careful not to choose a keyword phrase that has a search volume that is too high. A high search volume means that keyword phrase is very saturated and you are likely to have a difficult time breaking through the noise to rank for it.

Example:

Suppose your web page is about “transportation consulting services”. You might consider optimizing your page for the keyword “transportation consulting.” According to Keyword Planner, there are an average of 110 searches a month for “transportation consulting,” and according to Moz’s Keyword Difficulty Tool the term has a difficulty rating of 41. These are reasonable difficulty and search volume numbers for most professional services firm — making this a strong keyword choice.

See *How to Conduct Keyword Research* for more information — coming soon.

Step 2. Set Up a Keyword Spreadsheet (Excel)

After you've identified the keyword phrases you want to use, create a Microsoft Excel document that includes columns for the following:

1. **Title/link** — the current title of each page and its respective URL (these will be displayed in your search engine results)
2. **New suggested title** — your new page title, which should include your selected keyword
3. **New suggested keyword** — the keyword you would like to use in your title and in your page content
4. **New search volume** — the search volume of your new keyword, taken from Google's Keyword Planner tool.
5. **New difficulty** — the difficulty of your new keyword, taken from Moz's Keyword Difficulty tool.

This document will help you stay organized. Your spreadsheet should look similar to the one below:

	A	B	C	D	E
1	Title / Link	New Suggested Title	New Keyword	New Search Volume (Monthly)	New Difficulty (0-100)
2	Travel Expense Management: Send Your Key Players on the Road with Confidence	Travel Management Systems: Send Your Key Players on the Road with Confidence	travel management system	590	33
3	Are You Operating in a Franken-Cloud?	Are you operating in a frankencloud?	frankencloud	50	30
4	Valuing Start-Up Companies	How to Value a Business: Start-Up Companies	how to value a business	6600	47
5	SaaS, IaaS and PaaS: What's the Difference?	IaaS vs PaaS vs SaaS: What's the Difference?	IaaS vs paas vs saas	260	47
6	Adaptive Live 2015 Recap	Adaptive Insights Review: Adaptive Live 2015 Recap	adaptive insights review	90	23

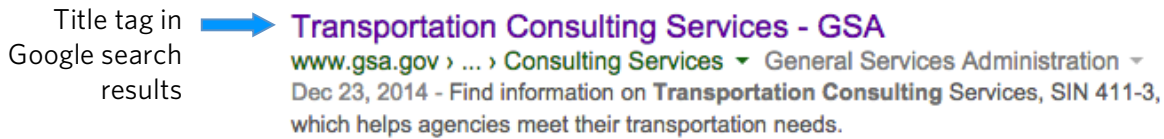
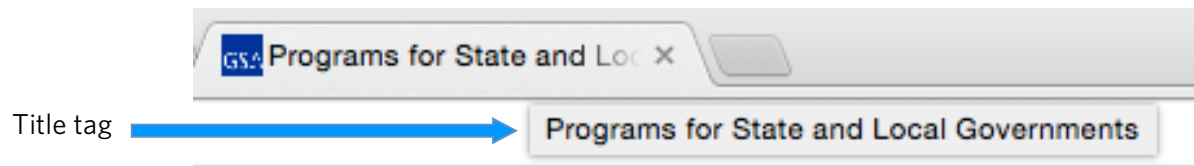
Step 3. Write the Title Tag, Header Tag, and Meta Description for Your Page

There are three critical pieces of meta data that affect the findability of your web pages: your title tag, primary header tag (also called an H1), and your *meta description*. These are called meta data because they are not actual content of your page. Instead, they describe aspects of your page.

Title Tag

The title tag is a description of your page that appears in the current page tab of most modern web browsers. It is also the bolded header in search results. This tag helps visitors understand what the page is about and is an important place search engines look for keywords. Keep this title tag under 55 characters in length.

Example: www.GSA.gov



The H1 Tag

Every headline and subhead on your page should be marked with a hierarchical H tag in the HTML source. The most important headline — usually the first one on the page — should be designated H1. The H1 headline should contain a page's keyword phrase, as search engines look to this primary head as an important source of keywords.

Subsequent subheads can be tagged as H2s, H3s, etc., depending on where they fall in the hierarchy of headings. It can be beneficial to include your keyword in one or more of these subordinate heads, but it is not essential.

All of these heading tags are invisible on the web page, but they can be seen if you view the source code or if you go to that page in your content management system (CMS). Your CMS should have a WYSIWYG editor that makes it easy to apply, view, and edit these tags.

Example: www.GSA.gov

H1 tag → **Transportation Consulting Services**

The [Transportation, Delivery, and Relocation Solutions \(TDRS\), Schedule 48](#), includes transportation consulting and related services, and Special Item Number (SIN) 411-3 to aid government agencies in meeting their transportation needs.

SIN 411-2 includes such offerings as transportation management, and security and technology. It also offers outsourcing, market research, product evaluation, E-Commerce, benchmarking, risk assessment, and policy development and change management.

Meta Description

A page's meta description is a short statement contained in the header section of your page's HTML code. It describes the content of your page. Your meta description is not visible unless a visitor views a page's source code. When your page appears in search results, however, it is that helpful bit of descriptive text you see below the page title. To keep Google from truncating your description, make sure it is no longer than 155 characters.

Example: www.GSA.gov

Meta description
in a Google
search result



Transportation Consulting Services - GSA

www.gsa.gov › ... › Consulting Services ▾ General Services Administration ▾
Dec 23, 2014 - Find information on **Transportation Consulting Services, SIN 411-3**,
which helps agencies meet their transportation needs.

Step 4. Optimize Your Body Copy

Once you have identified the keyword phrases you want to use in your pages, create a Word document that contains your keywords, tags, and body copy all in one place. Highlight the keyword to ensure you are using it with optimal frequency.

You should try to use the keyword phrase once for every 100 words of copy. For example, if your copy is 200 words long, you should have used the keyword twice.

Keep in mind that you are writing for humans, not just search engines! If your keywords don't fit naturally into the copy, you may want to rethink your keyword selection.

Example:

Keyword:
Transportation Consulting

Current Home Page Web Copy

Title: Services

H1: Work We've Done

Meta: In recent years, XYZ LLC has done **transportation consulting** for 40 large companies, including ...

Copy: Here at XYZ LLC, we pride ourselves in our work and providing first class services to the government. As a trusted advisor, XYZ provides clients with expertise in the latest technology for transportation. We have established ourselves as the leader in the transportation industry by exceeding expectations and delivery results consistently.

Recommended Home Page Web Copy Changes

Title: Consulting Services | **Transportation Consulting** | XYZ LLC

H1: Consulting Services | **Transportation Consulting**

Meta: XYZ LLC specializes in a wide variety of consulting services for the federal government, including **transportation consulting**.

Copy: Here at XYZ LLC, we pride ourselves in our work and providing first class services to the government, which include financial consulting, **transportation consulting**, security consulting, and logistics consulting. As a trusted advisor, XYZ provides government clients with expertise in the latest technology for transportation. We have established ourselves as the leader in the transportation industry by exceeding expectations and delivery results consistently. We have received numerous awards for **transportation consulting**, including...

Step 5. Update Your Website

Once you are happy with the copy and tags in your Keyword Spreadsheet and your Word Document, you can implement them on the live site. You can either make the changes yourself if you know how to access to your CMS or you can ask your web expert to make the changes for you.

Repeat these steps for each page you wish to optimize.