

A Beginner's Guide to SEO (Search Engine Optimisation) in 6 Easy Steps

by

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The Basics

I'm going to assume that you already have the absolute basics covered in that:

- You have a website.
- You've already installed [Google Analytics](#), [Search Console](#), [Bing Webmaster Tools](#), etc.
- You've claimed or created your [Google My Business](#) listing (if relevant).
- You get *some* traffic—not necessarily from search engines.
- You're a local business or organisation with only a few locations or are in a service-based industry.

IMPORTANT NOTE

This guide is for small websites with ~30 pages or fewer (excluding blog posts).

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Before we get started

First things first—we need to cover a few more basics.

Let's begin by making sure that Google has your website indexed.

Being indexed simply means that Google is aware of your website. It doesn't necessarily mean you rank for anything worthwhile, but it does mean there's a chance of your site popping up when people search for relevant queries.

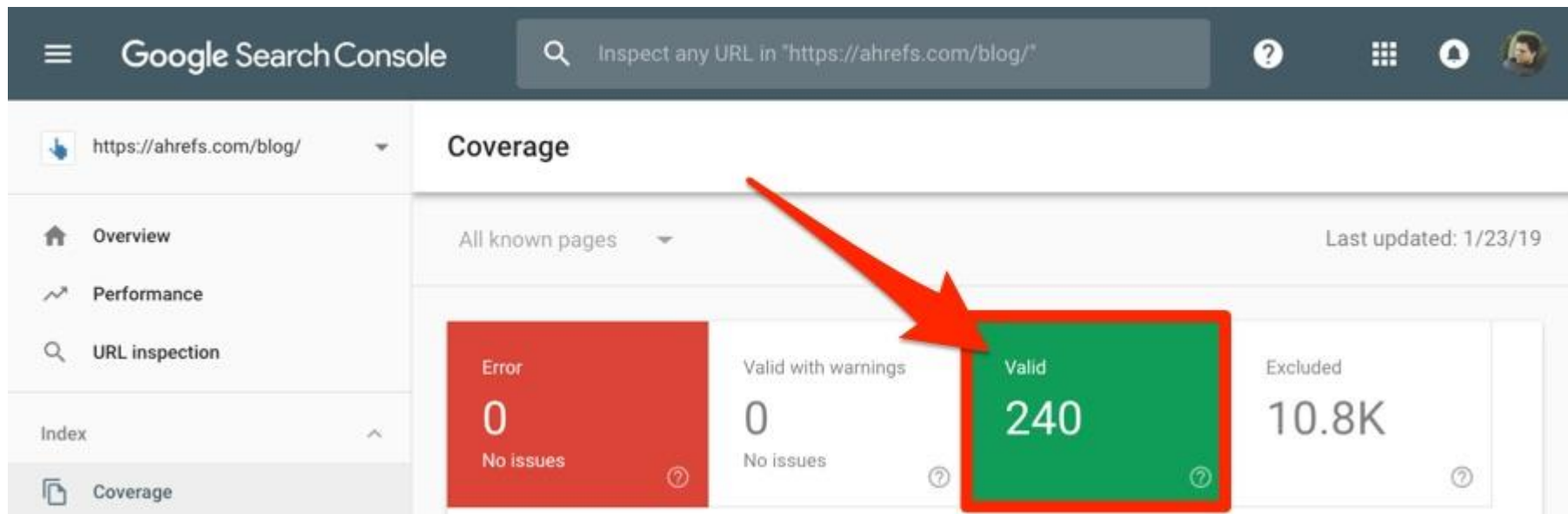
Not indexed = no chance of ever ranking for anything.

Luckily, there are two easy ways to check whether your site is indexed.

The first is with Google Search Console.

[Search Console](#)

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The valid number of pages should be roughly equal to the number of pages on your site.

Not a Search Console user? You should be. It's free, so [sign up](#).

The other, slightly less accurate way is to go to [Google.com](https://www.google.com/), then search for [site:yourwebsite.com](#).

If Google returns at least one result, they know at least part of your site exists. If they return roughly the same number of results as pages on your site, then they likely have all pages on your site indexed—which is good.

If there are no results, then Google has no clue that your site exists.

You can also use the same query in Bing to check for indexation there.

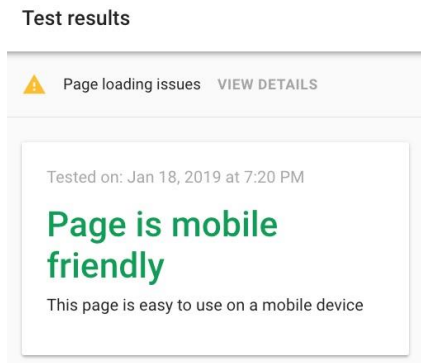
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Not indexed? Ask us to help with submitting to search engines.

It's also worth checking that your website is mobile-friendly using [Google's Mobile-Friendly Test tool](#).

Google reported in 2015 that over half of their searches come from mobile devices, so this is no longer a luxury — more a necessity.

This is what you want to see:



Not seeing that? Ask us for help.

Now let's get started with this SEO stuff!

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1. Create a logical website structure

Here's what Google says in their article listing steps to a Google-friendly site:

Build your site with a logical link structure. Every page should be reachable from at least one static text link.

In plain English, that means that your site should make sense to navigate. Your homepage should link to your other important pages (about, content, services). Your Services page should list and link to pages describing individual services. And so on.

This may sound obvious, but I've found that with small business/organisation websites especially, this often isn't the case.

Things usually start pretty logically, but as pages are added over time, things can fall apart.

How do you fix this? The trick is to try to look at your website with fresh eyes and make sure it has a logical structure.

Start at your homepage and see if you can logically find - and navigate to - all your important pages quickly and easily.

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2. Keep your site free of broken pages and links

Broken stuff on a website is never good. Not for visitors, and not for SEO.

Think about it: what does a website with broken pages and links say to you? Most likely that it's rarely updated, neglected, and that the site owner doesn't care about keeping their website functioning properly.

Let's start by finding broken (404) pages.

Here's what Google says about these:

While it's normal to have Not Found (404) errors, you'll want to address errors for important pages linked to by other sites, older URLs you had in your sitemap and have since deleted, misspelled URLs for important pages, or URLs of popular pages that no longer exist on your site. This way, the information that you care about can be easily accessed by Google and your visitors.

Such links are bad because they waste "link equity." That effectively means that votes (links) to your site aren't counted because they lead to a dead end.

You can fix these in two ways:

1. Reinstate the dead page (if you deleted it by accident)

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2. Redirect the dead page to an appropriate alternative (i.e. either the new location of that page or a similar page or post)

If the page has no referring domains, it's generally okay to leave as is.

If you need help with this let us know and we will be happy to help.

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3. Make sure every page has an enticing meta title and description

Every page on your website needs a unique meta description and title. These are what you typically see in the Google search results:

First sight wedding videos

<https://www.firstsightvideos.co.uk/> ▼

Wedding films & Sheffield wedding photography- across UK and beyond. Home of stylish cinematic wedding videos & photography. Yorkshire wedding videos ...

Google can change these dynamically, so they will sometimes differ from the title & meta description set by your website.

Not only should every page on your website have a unique meta title and description, but they also need to:

- Not exceed the length at which Google begins to truncate them in the search results.
- Entice search engines users to click-through to your site.
- Contain your target keywords (optional – but recommended).

We have a tool to check your tags. Let us know if you want help with this.

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4. Polish your written copy

Most pages on your website will have some written copy—and this needs to be on point.

Google looks at the content on a website to help understand whether that website or web page is a good result for a particular query. If there is little or no content on your web pages—or if that content isn't well-optimised—then they're going to have a difficult time doing that.

That's not to say that you have to write 2,000-word essays on every page.

Some pages might warrant that, but others might be okay with a couple of hundred words.

Generally speaking, here are some SEO “rules” for website copy:

1. **Include some copy on every page.** How much? That's up to you—I'd personally recommend at least 100–200 words as a general rule of thumb.
2. **Use one H1 tag on each page.** This serves as the heading of the page. Quite often, this is the same as the meta title—but it doesn't have to be.
3. **Use H2-H6 tags as appropriate.** These are subheadings. Use them to create a hierarchical structure of importance on each page.
4. **Don't shoehorn keywords into your copy.** Be aware of the keywords you're targeting, but don't force them where they don't belong—and certainly don't overuse them!

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5. Make sure spelling and grammar are on point.

PRO TIP

Don't forget that all copy should be engaging and well-written if you actually want to attract new clients or customers. If that isn't currently the case, you may wish to hire a professional copywriter to rewrite it.

This isn't so much an SEO tip as a conversion rate optimization and branding tip.

For most small businesses/organisations, the homepage is going to be the most crucial page copy-wise.

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5. Get citations by listing your business on the web

Google doesn't only look at the copy and structure of your website when determining where you should rank. They look at many off-page SEO factors too—one of which is citations.

Citations are online mentions of your business, which usually display your business name, address, and phone number—collectively known as **NAP (Name, Address, Phone)**.

Here's why you should care about citations from an SEO point of view:

1. **Citation signals are one of the top local ranking factors.** Moz says that this is the case for Google's "snack pack" and "regular" organic search results.
2. **Google isn't the only search engine people use.** Imagine that you're looking for a local plumber. You might use a search engine like *checkatrade.com*, which specialises in finding trusted tradespeople in your local area.

So where do you start? Perhaps the most important citation of all—at least from the perspective of ranking and appearing in Google for relevant terms—is [Google My Business](#). Why is it so important? Have you ever Googled a business and seen something like this in the search results?

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starbucks sheffield



All

Maps

Images

News

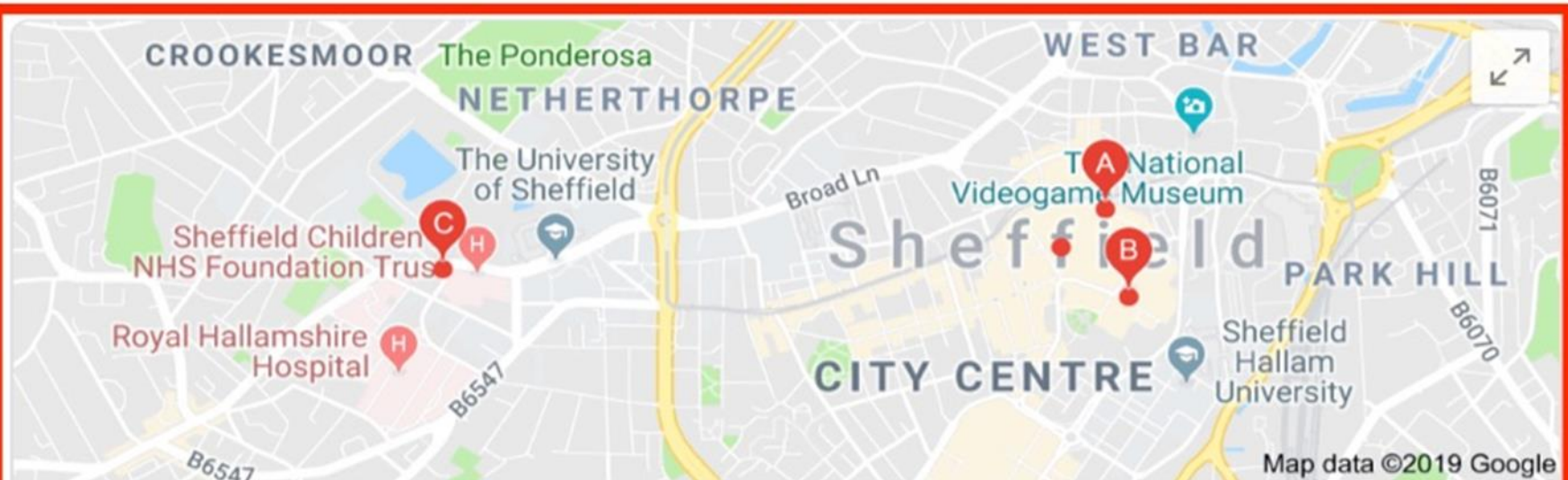
Shopping

More

Settings

Tools

About 91 results (0.45 seconds)



Hours ▾

A Starbucks Coffee
4 Fargate · 0114 275 0358
Closed · Opens 7:30AM Sat

[WEBSITE](#) [DIRECTIONS](#)

B Starbucks Coffee

[WEBSITE](#) [DIRECTIONS](#)

That's known as the "map pack," and there are two things you should know about it:

1. **It often appears at the top of the search results for local terms.** This means that it pushes down the "regular" organic listings. Even if you rank number one in organic search, you will often still get beaten by the map pack.
2. **It pulls data from Google My Business listings.** These are free business profiles from Google. In their words, "Your Business Profile appears right when people are searching for your business or businesses like yours on Google Search or Maps."

I wrote this guide on the assumption that you already have your Google My Business profile set up, but setting up a basic profile isn't everything. You also need to make sure it's optimised.

That means doing things like:

- Choosing the right category (very important!)
- Adding more categories
- Uploading relevant photos
- Adding your opening hours
- Adding details about individual services
- Adding additional phone numbers
- Adding relevant amenities

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I'm not going to go any deeper into Google My Business optimisation here, but we are available to help if you would like more information.

Still, Google My Business isn't the only place you should be listed.

It also pays to list your business in the other "big" directories (Hotfrog, Acxiom, Thomson Local, etc.), and also relevant industry-specific directories that are likely to send business your way.

For the big directories, you can use a service like Moz.

Just enter your business name and Moz will check which of the "big" recommended directories you're already listed on, and which you should create profiles on. **Or contact us for help with this.**

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6. Ask for links from the businesses with whom you're affiliated

Link building—it's something we have to talk about.

Links are the foundation of the original PageRank formula, which is the formula on which Google is based. Google has also admitted that links are one of the top three ranking factors (as of 2016).

Furthermore, when we referred to studies of almost one billion web pages, we found a positive correlation between referring domains (links from unique websites) and traffic.

The problem? Link building can be daunting and time consuming, especially for small business/organisation owners.

So, I'm not going to cover any elaborate strategies. I'm simply going to recommend one thing as a starting point: ask for links from businesses with whom you have existing relationships—e.g., suppliers, stockists, etc.

Have a look at [this page](#):

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We are really excited to share that our Energy Balls can now be found in:

- [Boots](#)
- [CruS2h](#)
- [Harvey Nichols](#)
- [Holland & Barrett](#)
- [Planet Organic](#)
- [Sainsbury's](#)
- [Selfridges & Co.](#)
- [Starbucks](#)
- [Ocado](#)
- [Waitrose](#)
- [WHSmith Travel](#)
- [Whole Foods Market](#)

**links to
suppliers'
sites**

We are also thrilled to be stocked in multiple smaller independent stores. Please find the full list of the shops here:

London

- [Amberstage](#)
- [Another Space](#)
- [Apples and Bees](#)
- [Barrecore](#)
- [Bio Organix](#)
- [Black Truffle Ltd](#)
- [Brixton Wholefoods](#)
- [C&D Food & Wine](#)

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This is a “stockists” pages. Lots of businesses have these—they list and link to all of the businesses that stock their products. Think about whether you sell any third-party products. If you do, these pages are an easy source of links. Find them by Googling something like: [site:brand.com intitle:"stockists" OR intitle:"where to buy"](#)

NOTE. Replace *brand.com* with the website of the brand whose products you sell.

If you find any pages like the one shown above, reach out and ask if they’d be open to listing you there too.

Don’t sell other brands’ products? Look for similar pages from your suppliers and other businesses you work with.

[site:brand.com intitle:"our customers" OR intitle:"our clients"](#)

Struggling to find any such pages? There’s always the option of providing such businesses with testimonials. These often end up getting featured on their sites along with a link.

The best links, as far as Google is concerned, are “back-links”. That is where other sites put your website URL onto their sites, and there is then a link back to your website. But doing this is not straightforward and not something you can do yourself unless you have the necessary knowledge and expertise. You would really need to have a professional [SEO service](#) in place for that.

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Going further...

Here are some other SEO tasks you might want to consider doing yourself going forward:

1. **Improve site speed:** Google says that 53% of mobile website visitors will abandon the page if it takes more than 3 seconds to load. Many things can make your site slow—plugins, bloated HTML, etc. Check how fast your web pages load using Google’s PageSpeed Insights tool or GTMetrix. If those tools report a slow website, it may be worth hiring someone to improve your site speed.
2. **Add schema markup:** [Schema](#) markup can help Google to understand your website better. It can also change how your web pages appear in the search results. If you’ve ever Googled a recipe and seen review stars, cooking time, and other data in the search results, that is thanks to schema markup. For small businesses/organisations with a physical location, I would recommend looking into the Schema [LocalBusiness](#) markup. If you have product or service pages on your site, look into Schema [Product](#) and Schema [Service](#) markup. **Note.** Implementing such markup correctly can be complicated, so it’s best to ask for help with doing this.
3. **Start a blog (or work on your existing blog):** Blogging is one of our main sources of new business and leads at many businesses.

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Alternatively.....

As you can see SEO is not a 5 minute task, but if you think about the lifetime value of a new customer to your business/organisation it should be something that you take seriously.

So, if do-it-yourself SEO management sounds too challenging have a look at the details of our professional SEO Service by clicking on this link: [SEO Brochure](#)

I look forward to hearing from you if you would like to discuss your SEO, or any other aspects of your Web Marketing.

Mike O'Brien, Director
Beresford Online Limited

P.S. If you have a hard copy of this Guide, and would like a digital copy so you get click on the links etc please email me at mike@beresfordonline.co.uk and I will be pleased to email a copy to you.

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