

# SEO (Search Engine Optimization)

SEO (search engine optimization) is one of the best ways to advertise your website in today's Internet-driven world. The purpose of having SEO is simple: to make your website more visible to potential visitors searching online. But before a search engine like Google or Bing lists your site in its search results, it must discover, crawl and index the site in order to recognize it. We'll explain how this works and how you can get your website noticed.

## Top Tips

### Discovery

The process of being organically discovered by a search engine can be lengthy. A better approach is to explicitly "tell" the search engine about your site by submitting it directly. For example, you can submit your site directly to Google and directly to Bing. Once these search engines know your site exists, they will eventually send web crawlers to scan it.

### Crawling

Crawling occurs when a search engine discovers new or updated pages using programs called web crawlers. These crawlers follow the web of links from one web page to another. This is why links to your site from other sites greatly increase the chances of your site being discovered by a search engine.

### Indexing

When a web crawler finds a site, it scans all textual information and indexes what it finds relevant. This indexed information is used by search engines to process search queries. Since web crawlers can only scan text information, rich media content such as videos and images cannot be indexed.

Search engines determine what text is relevant and important based on how an actual visitor viewing a site would process information. For example, someone might read the title and headers of a page before reading any body content. Some text at the start of a paragraph might be interpreted as useful while other text might be seen as a string of useless keywords and not worth looking at. As a site owner, you need to make sure that your pages have descriptive and relevant text in addition to your photos. Be sure to place that text on the page in a layout visitors will find useful.

### Text is King!

It cannot be stated enough how important text is to SEO. Search engines require your website be filled with useful, well-formulated, and organized text in order to be indexed. You can create an amazing website filled with photos, slideshows, and useful interactivity. But without informative text, web crawlers may determine your site is not worth indexing. We do not suggest you overload your site with an overabundance of text. A large amount of pointless text may do more harm than good. It may even cause pages on your site to be considered pointless and not worth indexing. Think about how a visitor to your site would take in your text information, and determine if any of it was useful or memorable.

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## Links are Queen!

Filling your site with useful text and submitting it to every search engine for indexing is a small but important part of SEO. This alone will not automatically return your site for every relevant search query.

The larger factors for site ranking relate to statistics such as how many visitors come to your site, number of links to your site, where these links are originating from, and how long your site has been active with relevant content. Many of these factors are out of your control and only slowly improve over time.

One thing you can do to help your ranking is to get well-known sites with relevant content to link to your site. If you are interested in having a higher rank in relevant search queries, you should promote your site and work to increase the number of inbound links. However, even if you have all the right content, search engines will not return your site in search results if you currently have a very low ranking. With a very low ranking, even direct submissions to search engines may not help. Search engines may simply consider your site irrelevant. Increasing your ranking will take time.

## Custom domain name

To maximize traffic to your site, consider buying your own custom domain name. Search engines index custom domain names faster, and it makes your website stand out. The length and simplicity of your name are important. You want to pick a professional name that people will remember and one that doesn't include too many hyphens so it will not appear spammy.

## Features offered by Zenfolio:

### Site description

It is important to provide a website description under Preferences » Search Engine Tools. This description gives search engines a summary of what your site is about. Most search engines will use this field as a short textual preview of your site's homepage in the search results.

### Webmaster tools

Most modern search engines provide Webmaster Tools. These tools allow you to monitor how search engines crawl and index your site. They also allow you to see how relevant your pages are to different search criteria used by potential customers. Zenfolio allows you to integrate your site with two major search engines: Google and Bing. More information on this is available [here](#).

### Sitemap

Sitemaps provide a structured outline of your site and all its pages. Submitting a sitemap to search engines is a great way to ensure all your pages are crawled and indexed. Zenfolio automatically creates a sitemap for your site, which is located at: [http://your\\_Zenfolio\\_site/sitemap.xml](http://your_Zenfolio_site/sitemap.xml). More information on this is available [here](#).

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Be sure to replace the 'your\_Zenfolio\_site' part with your actual site address. You can then provide this sitemap to search engines using Webmaster Tools.

## Titles, captions, keywords, and categories

It is very important to provide textual content on your pages so that search engines can index them. Search engines only "read" text information. Rich media content like videos, images, and Flash objects cannot be indexed by web crawlers. Pages with no text information cannot be indexed at all. Make sure to include relevant text in your [Display Name and Home Page Title](#), [Welcome Message](#), [About Message](#), gallery and photo [titles](#), [captions](#), and [keywords](#).

## Custom Domain Name

With Unlimited, Premium, and Premium Business subscriptions you can assign a custom domain name. This is very useful as search engines index custom domain names faster. More information on how this works with Zenfolio is available [here](#).

## Blog

Blogs are an excellent advertising and marketing tool, used to provide commentary and keep customers and prospective clients informed of your activities. A typical blog combines text, images, and links so they also help quite a bit with SEO. More information on Blogging within Zenfolio is available [here](#).

## SEO Checklist

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Site description | <input type="checkbox"/> Page copyright     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Visible keywords | <input type="checkbox"/> Custom domain name |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Image titles     | <input type="checkbox"/> Sitemap            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Captions         | <input type="checkbox"/> Blog               |

Check out this Photographer's Corner article on SEO from the ZenBlog: <http://bit.ly/19RmhIP>

## Discussion Questions

1. Has anyone seen SEO make a large difference for their business?
2. Are there any webmasters in attendance? Have you tried the Zenfolio webmaster tools?
3. If you are having trouble with SEO, are you willing to pull your site up to look together at the checklist?