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SEO TIPS

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1. Use keywords

Keywords are essentially the search terms that one would use to find your post on Google. It may sound like it needs to be one word, but actually it's usually best to use a short phrase. For example, if your post is about fashion, it's not advisable for your keyword to be "fashion." Rather, try something like, "Fall Fashion Trends 2015." Imagine what someone might search on Google and go with that. For help selecting a keyword, try the [Google Adwords Keyword Planner](#).

While we're on the subject of keywords, it's important to use your keywords in several places in each blog post:

- **Meta description:** this is the short description that pops up under your post's title in search results.
- **Your post URL.**
- **Post title:** This one is very important!
- **Headlines:** Google likes when you use short, easy to read paragraphs. To break up your text, it's recommended that you use headlines (like your H1 and H2 settings) and include your keyword in at least one of these headlines.
- **In the first few sentences of your blog post.**
- **Additionally, it's best to use your keyword in 1-2% of your post's content.** So, if your post is 500 words, you'd want to use your keyword about 5-7 times. Be careful not to overuse your keyword though. This is called Keyword Stuffing, and Google views it as spam.

2. Inbound links are essential.

An inbound link is when someone links to your site from another website. The better

that site, the more SEO juice it gives you. For example, if Forbes.com linked to your site, it makes you look more credible in the eyes of Google. As such, they'll rank you more highly. However, even if Forbes isn't pimping you out, it's still great to get inbound links from just about any credible source. How can you do this?

- **Create great content.** If people LOVE what you're writing, they're more likely to share it or link to it in one of their own posts.
- **Write guest posts.** Guest posts usually allow you to include a link back to your site, at least in your author bio. Not only are they a great way to get yourself in front of a new audience, but they will help you get your site's link out there on (hopefully) more highly ranked sites.

3. Combine your business and blog sites into one domain.

My blog and business are both on the same site (thenectarcollective.com). I don't use sub-domains (such as design.thenectarcollective.com), because these are basically viewed as two different sites. This means that design.thenectarcollective.com won't get SEO power from thenectarcollective.com.

Most business sites include static pages that are rarely updated and only include a few pages, max. Blogs, however, are consistently updated and can have hundreds or even thousands of pages. This does wonders for ranking you more highly in search engines, since you have more content that can be ranked. Therefore, your blog and business sites shouldn't be two separate URLs (unless they're totally different from each other).

4. Narrow your focus.

If Google can't pick out a clear focus from your blog post, it's not going to rank you

highly in search results. Google is looking for the BEST content for search queries, so it generally seeks out the most specific, credible information.

5. Use clean permalinks without numbers.

The links to your posts can play a large role in how highly they rank. Aim for clean links, like “tnc.com/freelance-design-tips” rather than “tnc.com/2015/05/freelance-design-tips” or the worst, “tnc.com/?p=145.” Need some help changing your permalinks to the proper structure? [We can help >>](#)

6. Improve your page load speed.

This is big. If your site is slow, Google will rank you lower. Google knows that people don't want to wait around while your homepage takes 10 seconds to load, so instead it will choose faster sites to appear first. Clean up your site by removing unnecessary junk from your sidebar, make sure your images are sized for web (shoot for 800px wide or less), and perhaps install a plugin like GZip Ninja Speed Compression.

7. Don't forget your Images!

Make sure to include your keyword in the description, title, and alt attribute settings for your images. Also, name your images something that relates to your post, such as “freelance-design-tips.JPG” instead of IMG_28945.JPG.”

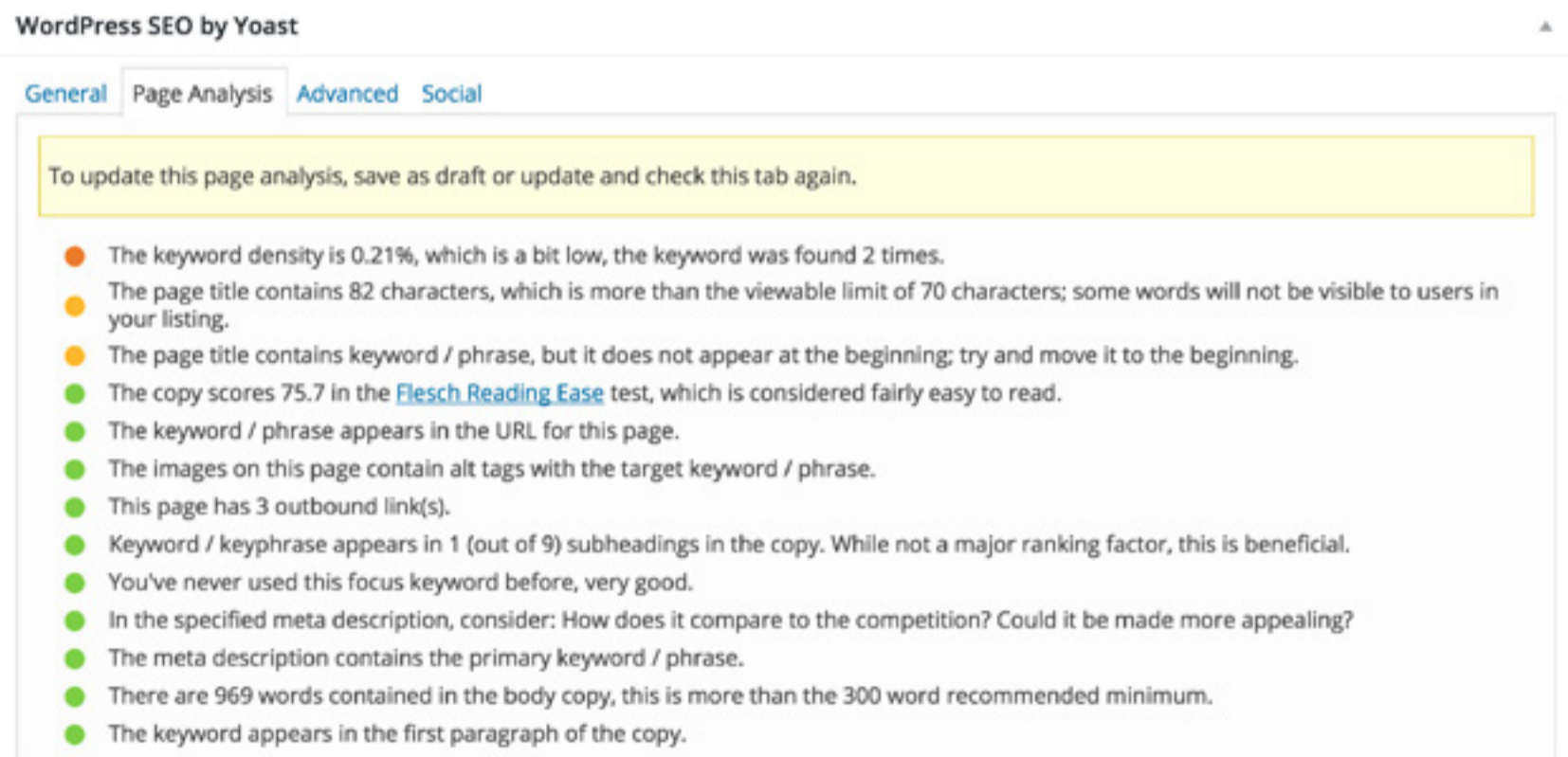
8. Don't use text images in your design.

Wherever you can, always use text, rather than images. For example, don't use a navigation menu, category buttons, or an “about me” on your site that is saved as an

image. As smart as Google is, it can't read your images, so that very important text is getting completely skipped over. Do you use images for important things like your menu or categories? [We can help you fix that with proper coding, too >>](#)

9. Use an SEO plugin like Yoast.

Yoast helps you to make sure that you're using keywords in all the right places. It also has a neat "page analysis" tab under each post, which lets you know what you did well and what you could improve. Here's a screenshot of one of my recent page analyses. Insightful!



10. Write lengthy articles.

Your posts should be at least 300 words long, but more is certainly better. If you have tons of too-short posts, Google will assume you're not including enough useful information and will rank you lower.

11. Add fresh content regularly.

Google wants to share the freshest, most useful content, and favors sites that are constantly sharing new posts and articles. Aim to blog at least once a week, but the more, the better!

12. Link to previous posts within new posts.

If you continually write about certain topics, be sure to link back to your older posts within your newer ones. This leads search engines to believe you're an authority in your field, as you've accumulated a lot of great content on a specific topic.

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Melyssa Griffin is the founder and editor of [The Nectar Collective](#), where she helps bloggers, business owners, and creatives achieve their goals and lead lives and businesses they love. She's also [a designer](#) who has worked with 100+ clients to build well-loved blogs and websites. Catch up with Melyssa [on Instagram](#) or say hello [on Twitter](#)!