



AWESOME
TECH TRAINING

Basics of SEO for small businesses

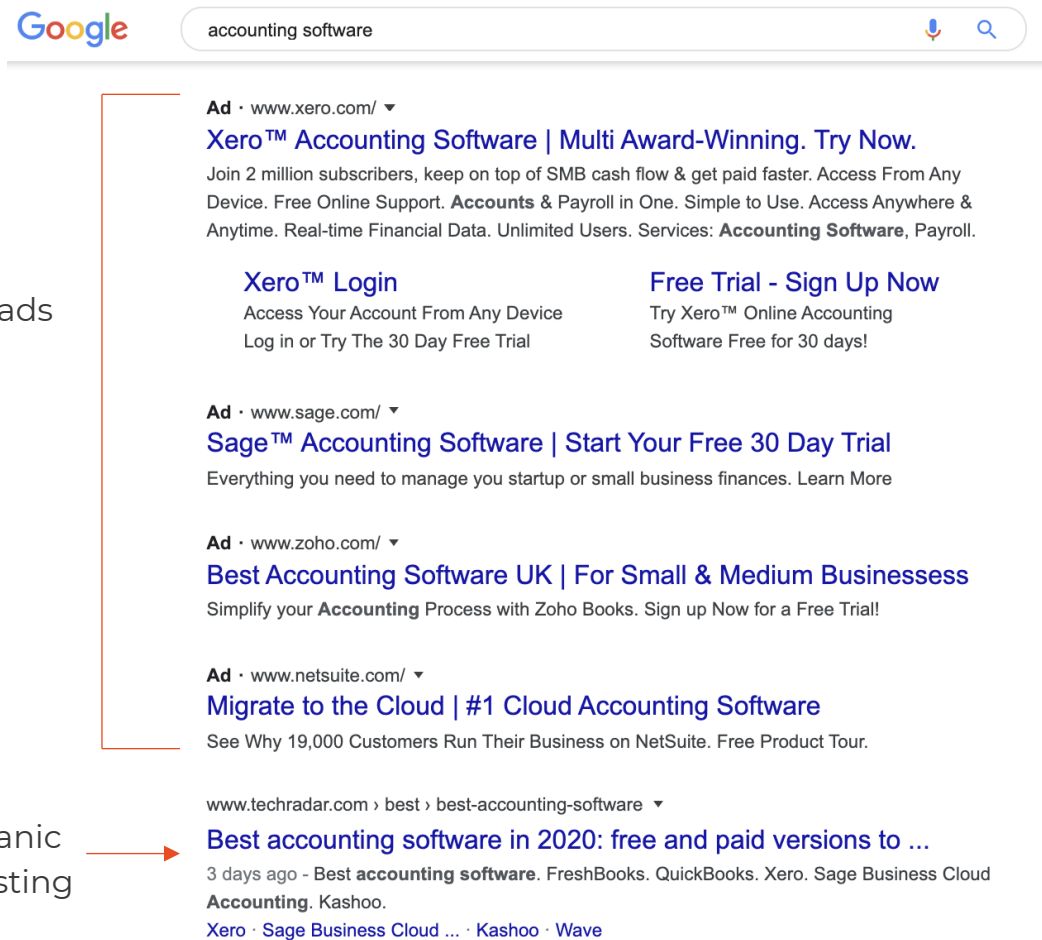
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What is organic search?

When you run a search in Google, you'll see that there are two types of listings shown in the results. In the example below I have run a search for 'accounting software'.



The screenshot shows a Google search for 'accounting software'. The results are divided into two sections: 'Paid ads' and 'First organic search listing'.

Paid ads:

- Ad • www.xero.com/ ▼**
Xero™ Accounting Software | Multi Award-Winning. Try Now.
Join 2 million subscribers, keep on top of SMB cash flow & get paid faster. Access From Any Device. Free Online Support. **Accounts & Payroll** in One. Simple to Use. Access Anywhere & Anytime. Real-time Financial Data. Unlimited Users. Services: **Accounting Software**, Payroll.
Xero™ Login Access Your Account From Any Device Log in or Try The 30 Day Free Trial
Free Trial - Sign Up Now Try Xero™ Online Accounting Software Free for 30 days!
- Ad • www.sage.com/ ▼**
Sage™ Accounting Software | Start Your Free 30 Day Trial
Everything you need to manage you startup or small business finances. Learn More
- Ad • www.zoho.com/ ▼**
Best Accounting Software UK | For Small & Medium Businesses
Simplify your **Accounting** Process with Zoho Books. Sign up Now for a Free Trial!
- Ad • www.netsuite.com/ ▼**
Migrate to the Cloud | #1 Cloud Accounting Software
See Why 19,000 Customers Run Their Business on NetSuite. Free Product Tour.

First organic search listing:

www.techradar.com › best › best-accounting-software ▼
Best accounting software in 2020: free and paid versions to ...
3 days ago - Best **accounting software**. FreshBooks. QuickBooks. Xero. Sage Business Cloud **Accounting**. Kashoo.
[Xero](#) · [Sage Business Cloud](#) ... · [Kashoo](#) · [Wave](#)

The first four listings that you see are adverts. You can see whenever something is an ad as it will have the word Ad next to the listing. All the listings with 'Ad' next to them are running paid advertising campaigns using Google's Adwords platform.

You won't always see ads at the top of every search. Google only shows ads if there are companies who are prepared to pay for their ad to be shown against a particular search term.

The fifth listing – www.techradar.com – is the first of what's called the 'organic search' listings. These are the sites that Google is listing because it considers that they best match the terms that the user has searched for. Techradar has not paid Google for this listing.

The paid ad listings and the organic search listings are completely separate. You cannot get to the top of the organic search listings by paying Google. You get there by building a good quality website with useful content that answers the questions that people searching on Google have. In this document we'll outline the key strategies that can help you to perform well in organic search.

Why bother with organic search?

You might think that there's little point in investing time and effort into organic search when the organic search listings always appear below paid ads. Doesn't everyone just click on the ads? In fact, estimates suggest that only around 10% of people click on one of the ads – the vast majority of the traffic goes to the organic search listings and this is the main reason why time spent optimising your site for organic search is time well spent.

Search engine traffic is extremely targeted. It enables you to talk to people who you know are actively looking for your products or services. By searching, they're telling you that they're interested in learning more, in effect asking you to market yourself to them.

Appearing in Google search is also an important branding tool. It tells people that yours is a serious business. For these reasons, you can achieve a high conversion rate from clicks to sales from Google search traffic, generally much higher than that achieved by other digital media such as banner ads and emails.

Search engine marketing can be extremely cost-effective when compared to other sorts of digital marketing. It's time consuming and can be labour intensive but there's no direct cost associated with it in the way that there

is with social media advertising or Google pay per click advertising or even email marketing.

How does Google search work?

The first step of the process is that Google 'crawls' the web using co-called 'spiders' – automated programs that search the web looking for information. When a spider hits your website it then stores information about each page, using the information on each page to determine what it's about.

Google is crawling the web in this way all the time. It crawls the same site multiple times, repeatedly checking pages to see if there have been any changes and updating its records accordingly.

A copy of each page is made and stored in Google's massive data centres. This repository of web pages is Google's so-called 'index' and it's this index that provides the results you see when you run a search.

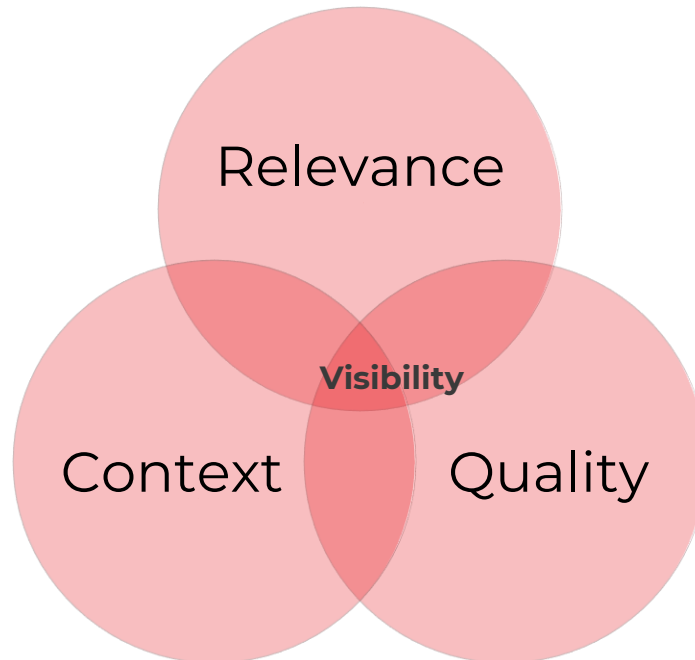
When you run a search, Google's aim is always to provide you with the page that best provides the answer to your question. To do that it uses a complex algorithm to calculate the value of each individual web page as it relates to a particular query. The page that scores the highest is shown at the top of the search engine results page (SERP).

Remember that Google is ranking each page on your site, not your site as a whole. Google will show whichever page from your site it thinks is most relevant to someone's search query. That could be the home page, but it could also be any of the other pages on your site that Google knows about.

What is Google looking for?

The specifics of Google's algorithm are secret in order to try and prevent people from simply 'gaming' the system. However, we do know some of the elements that Google takes into account when determining the ranking of individual pages.

Broadly, there are three aspects of each page that Google will consider.



We'll briefly consider what each of these elements means in turn.

Relevance

Relevance is the extent to which Google believes that your page will help the searcher to answer the question they've asked. Does your page solve their problem? Does it give them what they're looking for? Does it accurately match their interests? Would the searcher understand why they've been directed to this particular page?

Quality

Quality is about the extent to which your page provides a good user experience in ways other than just how relevant it is. For example, is it well written, logical and clear? Is it grammatical? Not too spammy? Is there enough information on the page to enable people to answer their question or find what they are looking for?

Context

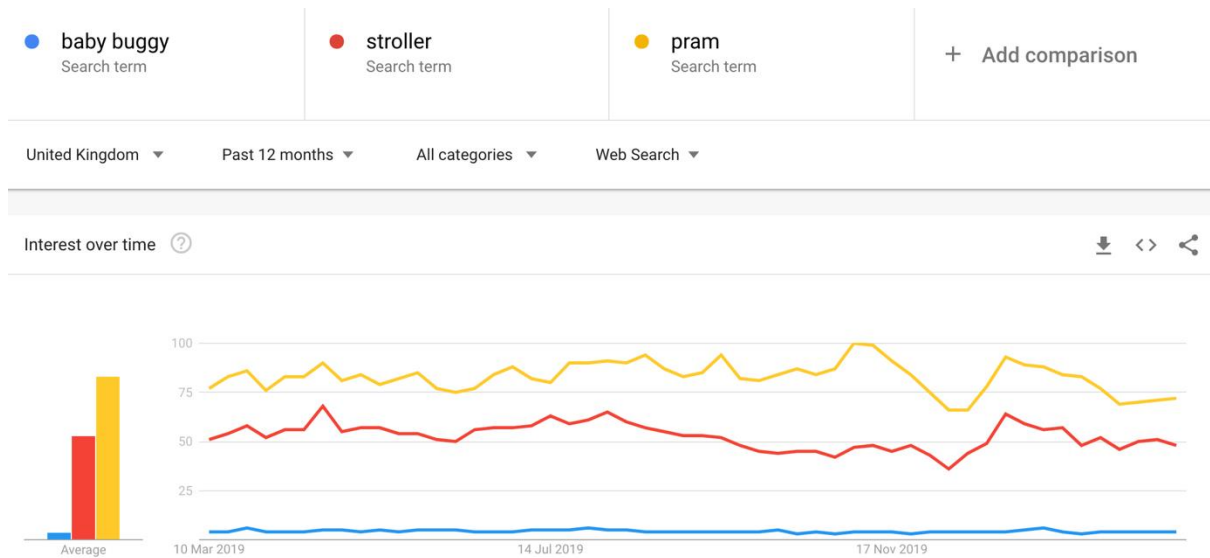
Context is about Google's assessment of whether your page is factual. Is it well-timed? On topic? Does it render well on whatever device someone is using to view it? Does the page load quickly for them?

Understanding your customers

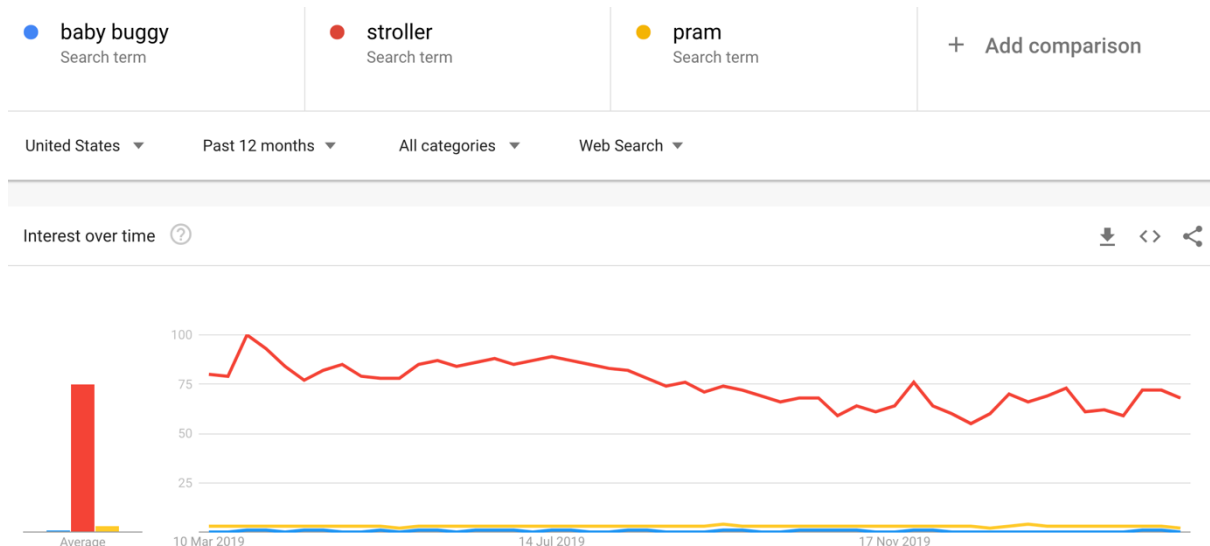
The first step of successful SEO is to put yourself into the shoes of your customers. What are the search terms people are likely to be using when they're searching for the products or services that you offer? It's important here to think about the terms that your customers actually use themselves, rather than the terms that you use internally when you talk about your business, as they may not be the same.

For example, Parcelforce discovered that rather than searching for 'parcel delivery' people actually searched for 'overnight deliver' or 'next day delivery'. At Awesome Tech Training we worked with a client who referred internally to their product as a 'service solution' whereas potential customers just searched for 'software'.

Search terms can also vary by geography. For example, whether you use the term baby buggy, pram or stroller will strongly depend on whether you're in the US or in the UK. Below is a screen grab from [Google's Web Trends](#) tool showing the relative number of searches using each term in the UK over the last 12 months.



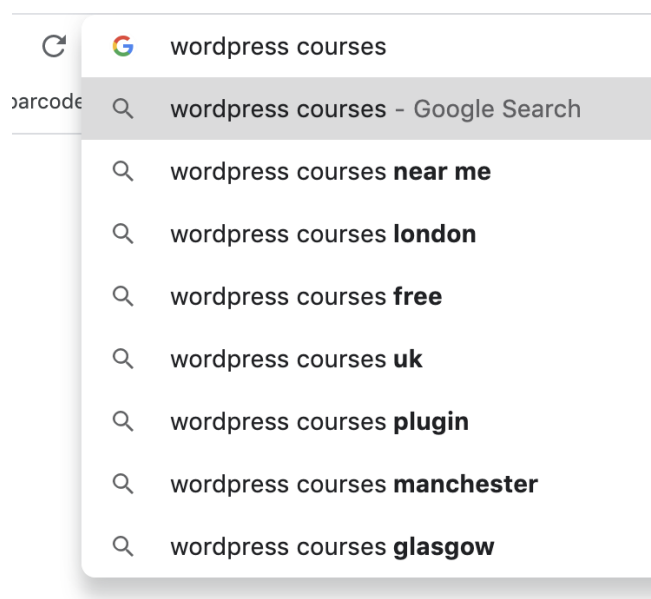
Clearly, if you're marketing this product in the UK you will want to be using the terms 'stroller' and 'pram' rather than 'baby buggy'. However, look at what happens if I change the geographical region to the United States.



'Baby buggy' and 'pram' are virtually unused as search terms in the US – 'stroller' is the most popular option by a huge margin.

How can you find out what search terms people use?

- If you have set up your website to be tracked using Google's Search Console (we have a video on our website showing you how to [set Google Search Console up on your WordPress site](#)), then you'll be able to see the search terms for which Google is showing your site as well as the number of clicks that each generates.
- Talk to your salespeople or anyone in your business who deals directly with your customers and find out about the questions that they're most commonly asked.
- Use a tool like [Google Web Trends](#) to learn more about which search terms are popular in your market.
- Run some searches yourself and look at the sorts of sites that Google shows you – are these your competitors?
- Look also at the suggested other queries that Google will show you using its autocomplete feature when you run a search. When I run a search for 'WordPress courses' Google suggests some other commonly run similar searches, as you can see in the image below.



- If you have a Google AdWords account, then you can use the Keyword Planner tool to get an idea of what sorts of search terms people are using in your market and the volume of searches for each term.

Focus on long tail keywords

Short search terms and brief phrases are extremely competitive. There are many, many organisations all trying to rank on Google for the same terms which can make it virtually impossible for a small business to compete. But why would you want to compete for these very brief keywords? If you're a plumber in Aylesbury specialising in dishwasher repairs you don't want your site to be listed every time anyone searches for 'dishwasher', or even for 'dishwasher repairs'. You're interested in people who are searching for 'dishwasher repairs in Aylesbury' or something similar.

People increasingly use longer search terms and questions when they're Googling. These longer search terms are referred to as 'long tail search terms'. They generally get less search traffic as fewer people use them, but they tend to have a higher conversion rate because they're so specific, so targeting these long tail search terms can be a very effective strategy for small businesses.

An additional benefit of targeting these kinds of search terms is that the search tells you much more about what it is that the searcher is actually looking for, giving you a much clearer idea of where they are in the sales cycle, for instance. The fact that someone's searching for 'knee pain' doesn't really reveal any useful information about what's in their mind at the time they ran the search. However, if someone searches for 'best way to prevent knee pain for runners' or 'does running cause knee pain' or 'physio near me knee pain' that gives you much more insight into what's in their mind and what kind of solution they might be looking for.

It is perfectly possible for very small businesses to compete effectively with much larger organisations in Google search performance if it is clever

about the kinds of search terms that it targets. One of our clients is a small software reseller with virtually no marketing budget that regularly beats IBM, one of the world's largest tech companies with a multi-million-dollar marketing budget, in organic search across numerous long tail search terms. It does this by understand the questions its clients typically ask and producing highly targeted content designed to answer specifically those questions.

Technical SEO

Once you have a good understanding of who your customers are and what they're likely to be searching for, the next stage of the process is to ensure that Google knows that your site exists and that it can access all relevant parts of it. This is known as technical SEO and there are a number of elements to this, as we will discuss below.

Set up Google Search Console

Google Search Console is a free tool to help organisations to track how their website performs in Google's organic search. We have a guide to [setting up Google Search Console on a WordPress site](#) available on our website.

Once you have Search Console up and running, it will show you how much organic search traffic you're getting as well as the keywords for which Google is displaying your site. You'll be able to see your average position in the search engine results page for those keywords, how many times your pages appeared in search and how many people clicked through from the listing.

Google Search Console also includes a range of diagnostic tools to help you identify problems with your site that may hinder its performance in search such as broken links or slow loading pages.

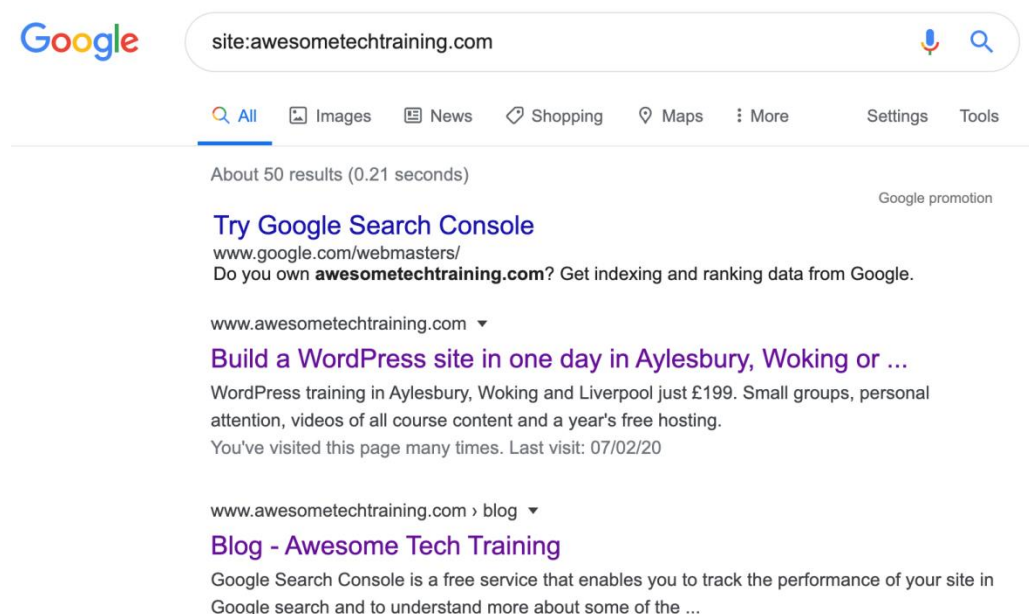
Set up Google Analytics

You should also make sure that you have Google Analytics running on your site. Google Analytics lets you access a vast amount of data about the performance of your site. In summary, it provides information about who is coming to your site and where they have come from and what they do whilst they're on your site that you can use to enhance your marketing activities as well as identifying those pages that are attracting the most traffic and those that are not performing so well.

If you don't yet have a Google Analytics account then check out our short video [guide to setting up a Google Analytics account](#) on our website. Once you've got your account up and running we also have a video guide showing you [how to add the tracking code to your WordPress site](#).

Perform a Google site search

If your site is already up and running, then running a site search in Google will tell you what pages Google has in its index. Simply search for `site:yoursitename.com` and Google will list all of the pages from your site that it has indexed.



This gives you a starting point to be working from. There may be pages in this list that you're unaware of – pages that you don't want to be visible in search for whatever reason – and you may also find that there are pages you want to direct traffic to that Google isn't aware of for some reason.

Submit a sitemap to Google

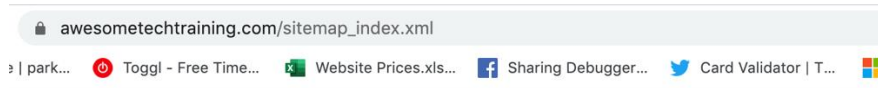
If you're working with a new site, then once you're ready to put it live you should also submit a sitemap to Google. To do this you'll need to have Google's Search Console set up to track your site. Submitting a sitemap tells Google that your site exists and that you'd like it to be indexed and included in search.

You don't *have* to submit a sitemap as there are other ways Google can find your site, for example by following a link to it from another site. However, it can take a long time for Google to find a new site this way if no one is linking to you, or the sites that link to you are themselves very rarely visited by Google. For that reason, it's always a good idea to submit a sitemap to Google yourself.

If you're using WordPress then there are various plugins that you can install which will generate the sitemap for you (note, we're talking about an .xml sitemap here rather than a page on your website that might act as a sitemap for human visitors to the site).

We use the [Yoast SEO plugin](#) (which we will talk about more later on in this document) to generate our sitemap. If you're using this plugin you just need to make sure that you have the sitemap feature turned on and then Yoast will automatically generate your sitemap for you.

To check whether you have a sitemap already generated for your site go to [yoursite.com/sitemap.xml](#) and see what comes up. If you have a sitemap, you'll see something like the screen below.



XML Sitemap

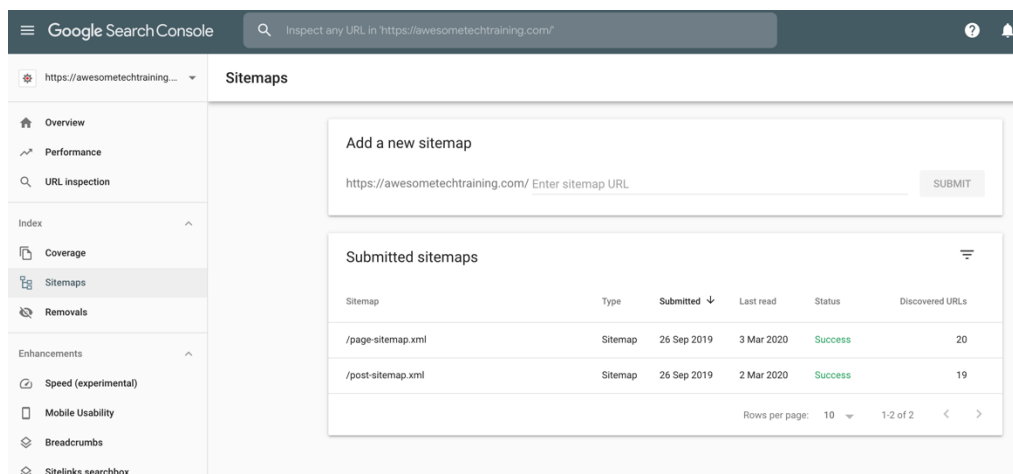
Generated by **YoastSEO**, this is an XML Sitemap, meant for consumption by search engines.

You can find more information about XML sitemaps on sitemaps.org.

This XML Sitemap Index file contains 10 sitemaps.

| Sitemap | Last Modified |
|---|-------------------------|
| https://www.awesometechtraining.com/post-sitemap.xml | 2020-02-27 19:06 +00:00 |
| https://www.awesometechtraining.com/page-sitemap.xml | 2020-02-17 16:16 +00:00 |
| https://www.awesometechtraining.com/product-sitemap.xml | 2020-03-06 10:25 +00:00 |
| https://www.awesometechtraining.com/lp_course-sitemap.xml | 2019-11-18 16:52 +00:00 |
| https://www.awesometechtraining.com/lp_lesson-sitemap.xml | 2019-11-18 16:53 +00:00 |
| https://www.awesometechtraining.com/lp_quiz-sitemap.xml | |
| https://www.awesometechtraining.com/tribe_events-sitemap.xml | |
| https://www.awesometechtraining.com/category-sitemap.xml | 2020-02-27 19:06 +00:00 |
| https://www.awesometechtraining.com/product_cat-sitemap.xml | 2020-03-06 10:25 +00:00 |
| https://www.awesometechtraining.com/author-sitemap.xml | 2020-02-27 16:39 +00:00 |

You then need to log into your Search Console account, navigate to the sitemap area and simply enter the address of your sitemap in the 'Add new sitemap' box. This tells Google that your site exists and that you'd like it to be added to Google's index.

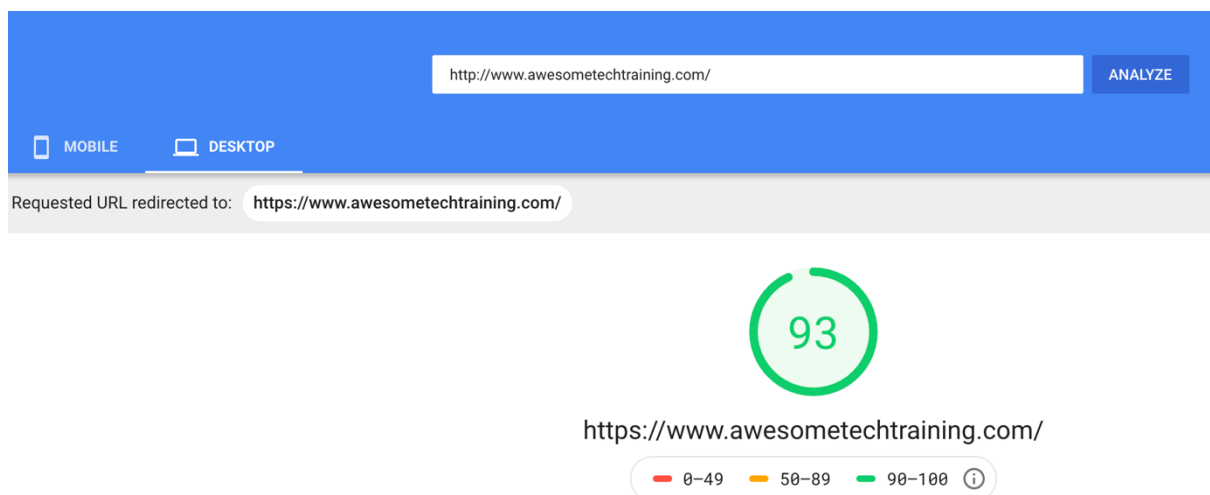


Make sure that the site runs quickly

All else being equal, Google will rank a fast site over a slow one. That's because Google's main focus is on ensuring a positive user experience, and

slow sites do not offer this. If your site is slow then you can really struggle to get traction in Google's rankings.

[Google's PageSpeed Insights tool](#) will tell you how fast your site is, giving it a score out of 100 for both mobile and desktop speed, as well as making recommendations as to ways that you could improve its speed. Simply go to the tool, enter your URL and Google will score your site's performance on both mobile and desktop.

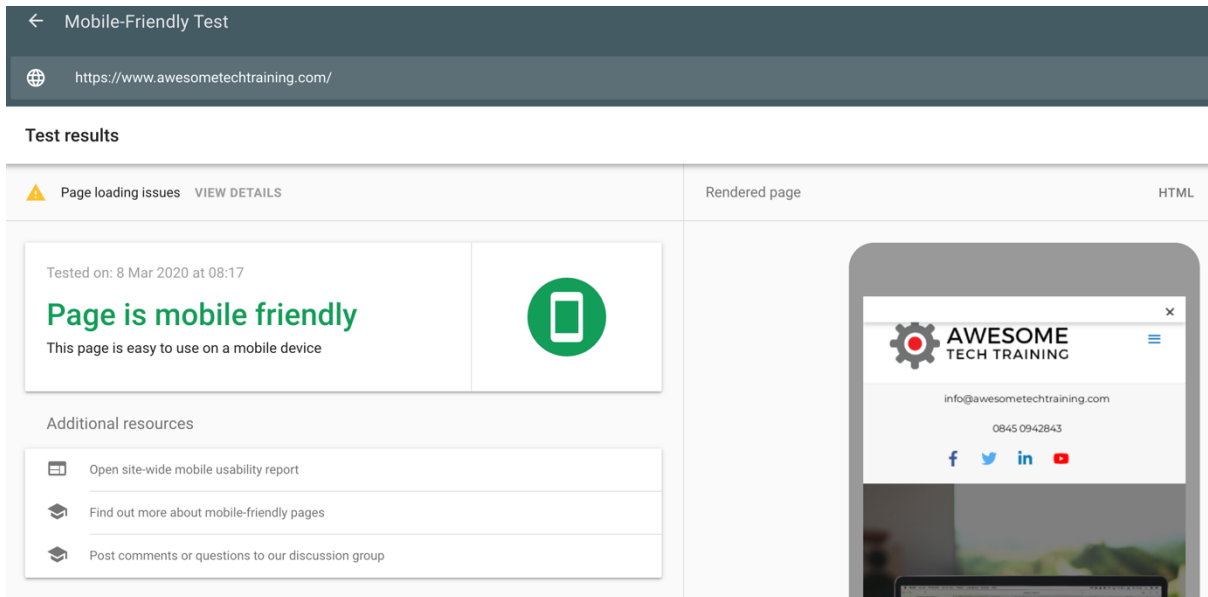


As part of this process Google makes recommendations for things you can do to improve the speed of your site.

Make sure the site runs well on mobile devices

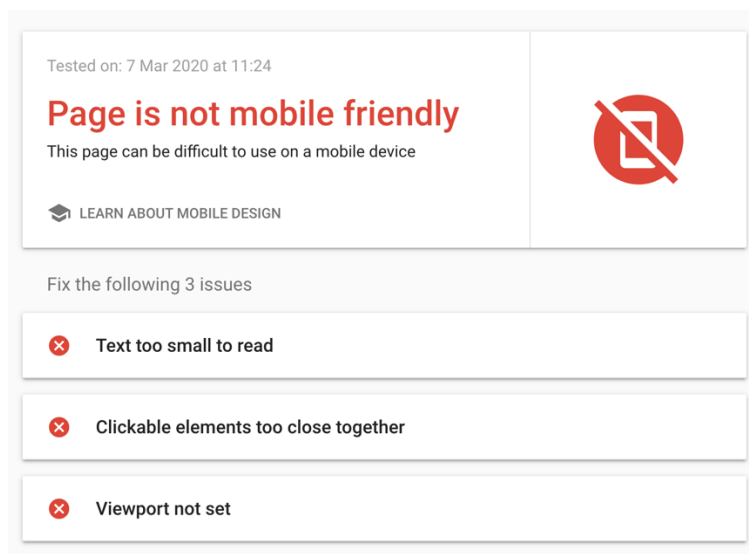
More than half of all web traffic now comes from mobile devices rather than from desktop computers. For that reason, Google penalises sites that do not offer a good user experience on mobile so if you want to generate organic search traffic to your site you need to make sure that your site works well on mobile devices. For example, if you're using WordPress make sure that you have selected a responsive theme (although these days it would be hard to find a theme that isn't responsive).

Google offers a [mobile friendliness testing tool](#) which you can use to check to what extent it considers the pages on your site to offer a positive mobile experience. As with the PageSpeed Insights tool, you simply enter the URL of the page you want to check and Google will tell you whether it is mobile friendly or not.



The screenshot shows the Google Mobile-Friendly Test interface. At the top, the browser address bar shows the URL <https://www.awesometechtraining.com/>. Below the address bar, the page is titled "Mobile-Friendly Test". The main content area is divided into two columns. The left column, titled "Test results", contains a green checkmark icon and the text "Page is mobile friendly" in green. Below this, it says "This page is easy to use on a mobile device". There is also a section for "Additional resources" with links to "Open site-wide mobile usability report", "Find out more about mobile-friendly pages", and "Post comments or questions to our discussion group". The right column, titled "Rendered page", shows a preview of the website as it appears on a mobile device. The preview shows the "AWESOME TECH TRAINING" logo, contact information (info@awesometechtraining.com, 0845 0942843), and social media links (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube).

If your site is not mobile friendly Google will make recommendations regarding how you can fix these issues.



The screenshot shows the Google Mobile-Friendly Test interface for a page that is not mobile friendly. The main content area is divided into two columns. The left column, titled "Test results", contains a red X icon and the text "Page is not mobile friendly" in red. Below this, it says "This page can be difficult to use on a mobile device". There is also a link to "LEARN ABOUT MOBILE DESIGN". The right column, titled "Fix the following 3 issues", lists three issues: "Text too small to read", "Clickable elements too close together", and "Viewport not set". Each issue is preceded by a red X icon.

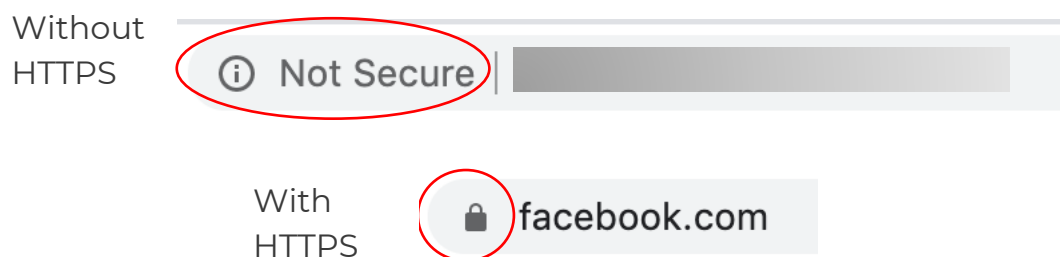
Check for broken links

A large number of broken links within your site can also hamper your performance in Google search. This is because broken links do not offer a good user experience for visitors, and also because they can make it harder for Google to identify all of the pages that are included on your site.

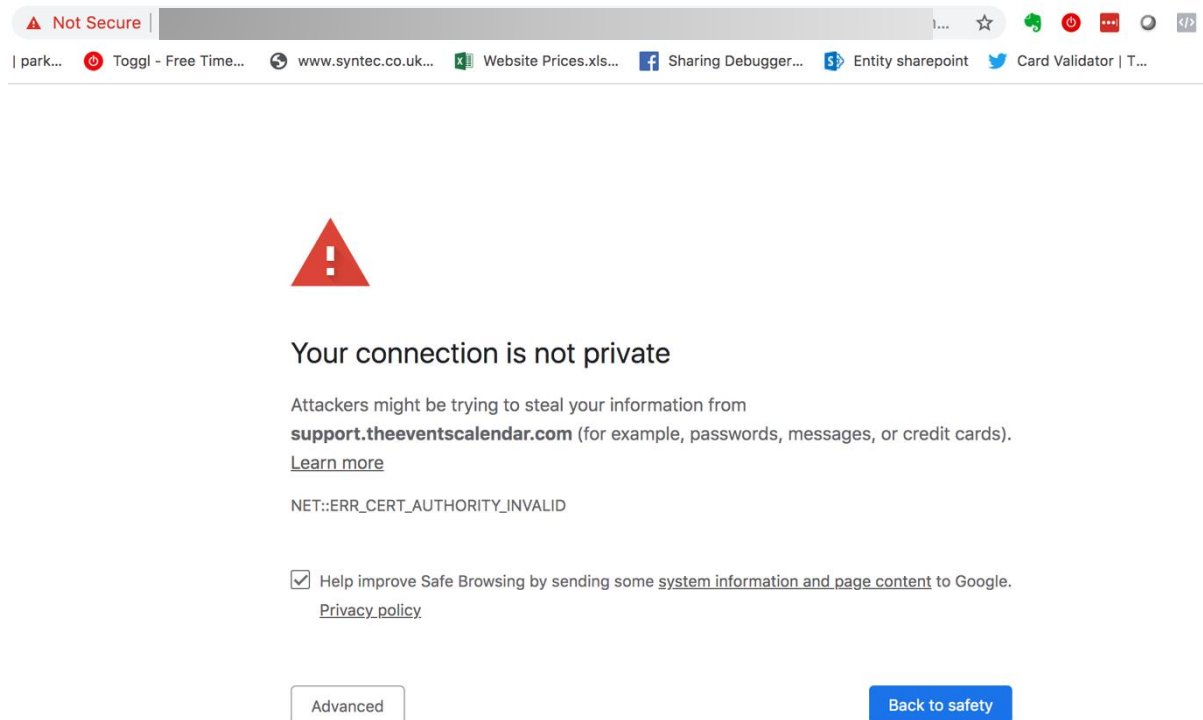
There are numerous [free broken link checkers online](#) that you can use to perform this check and Google Search Console will also alert you if it finds broken links.

Ensure your site is running on HTTPS rather than HTTP

A good online experience for a user also involves being able to trust the site that you're visiting. This is why Google now gives a ranking boost to sites that run on HTTPS rather than on HTTP. Running on HTTPS is also a good idea because it reassures customers. Browsers now flag up sites not running on HTTPS as 'not secure' which does not create a great impression.



HTTPS connections let a browser talk to your website through an encrypted channel – that stops anyone from “listening in” to the connection and potentially gaining personal or confidential information. If you have an HTTPS site, it also shows visitors that you are who you say you are. The browser would show a large error if the HTTPS details don't match the site, or if something doesn't look right.



Your hosting company should offer you the option of running your site with HTTPS. HTTPS connections need a certificate which proves who you are and is used to create the secure channel. Sometimes there can be a charge for the certificate and that charge can get quite expensive.

However, there is now a push for cheap or even free certificates that are only valid for a short period. Buying a multi-year certificate is a very bad idea nowadays because Google, Apple and Firefox are starting to trust these less. Indeed, Apple has announced that from September 2020 it will only trust certificates that are valid for a year or less.

Look out for certificates from [Let's Encrypt](#). These are free, last for 90 days and can be renewed automatically.

Have a network of internal links within your site

When a search engine spiders your site it arrives on a page of your site (typically your home page) and then follows all the links it can find on that page to visit all your second level pages, then follows all the links it can find

on those pages to visit your third level pages and so on until it cannot find any more links to follow.

You can make it easier for a search engine to find all the pages on your site and understand the structure of your site by ensuring that you have a good network of internal links between the different pages on your site.

On page SEO

On page SEO is the process of helping Google to understand what each page of your site is about. Your job is to make it as easy as possible for Google to understand the extent to which your page is relevant to someone's search query.

Search engines read pages in the same way that people do

Google uses the same kinds of cues that a human reader would use to determine what your page is about. This is why Google's advice is always to write for the person rather than for the search engine.

- Incorporate target keyword phrases throughout your page, but make sure that you do this in a natural way and to avoid so-called 'keyword stuffing'. Google can penalise your site and push it down the rankings if it thinks you are trying to manipulate the search results using keyword stuffing. Make sure you have used the keywords naturally within the first 100-150 words of the page as Google, like a person, will assume that information coming earlier on the page is more important and more relevant than information that appears later down.
- Target keywords should be included in your site name if possible, in the URLs and titles of individual pages. By default, WordPress now takes the title of your page or post and turns that into the URL so it's important to write good, descriptive, keyword-rich page titles. Avoid the temptation to indulge in wordplay, puns or deliberately obscure

titles – make sure the title of the page and the URL of the page both describe what information someone will find on the page.

- Google understands synonyms and different spellings so write naturally and incorporate a mix of terms in your writing. Don't worry about things like the difference between UK and US spelling – Google knows that color is the same as colour.
- Use keyword phrases in highlighted elements of the page copy such as headings and subheadings, bullet points, captions, any text that is emboldened or highlighted in some other way, link text and other visually significant elements. Google will scan a page just in the way a person would and assumes that these elements contain the most important information on the page.
- Use your keywords in your H1, H2 and H3 tags. These are the HTML tags that identify the headings and subheadings on your page. Your H1 tag should be used for the heading of the page – the most important piece of information. H2 headings are for second level subtitles, H3 for third level subtitles and so on down to H6 (although you would rarely go beyond H3 or perhaps H4). By flagging something up as a heading using a H tag, you're letting Google (and human readers) know that this is a significant or important piece of information so make sure these tags are nice and descriptive and contain your keywords.
- Make sure there's enough text on each page. A common mistake people make it to assume that no one will spend time reading content. This is not the case. If people are searching for information and your page provides what they're looking for then they'll take time to read it. If someone is considering buying a product or service, they generally want more information about the product or service, not less. They can always skip over the bits they're not interested in and focus on the bits they care about the most.

Avoid thin content

Google considers pages that are too short to be a bad user experience. It's called 'thin content'. Google's recommendation is that pages should typically have at least 300 words of copy. Of course, that's not practical on every page and it definitely doesn't mean that you should waffle on just in order to get the word count up, but all else being equally interesting and well written long copy will rank better than a shorter page.

Optimise your images

Your choice of images can help a human reader to understand what your page is about very easily. However, Google cannot easily look at your image and tell what it is, so you need to give it a helping hand. There are a number of ways of doing this.

- Give your image files descriptive file names. If you take photos with your phone or use a stock photography site to provide your images, you'll often find that the default image name is a long string of letters and numbers that does not reveal anything about what's actually in the picture. You should change this to something more descriptive. For example, if you run a recipe website and have a picture of a chicken casserole then give the image a name like `chicken_casserole.png`.
- Use the alt tag feature to provide further information about the image. Whenever you load an image into your WordPress media library WordPress will give you the option of adding an alt tag to the image. The alt tag is where you can describe either what the image is or what its purpose is. Not only does this help Google to understand your images but it also helps your site to be more accessible to people with visual impairments who might be using screen reading software to access your site. Screen reading software will read out the alt tag to enable the visitor to understand what the image is. In WordPress you can add image alt tags whenever you load a new image into your media library.

Attachment Details



File name: rachel-and-steve-in-woking-feb-2020-scaled.jpg
 File type: image/jpeg
 Uploaded on: February 9, 2020
 File size: 735 KB
 Dimensions: 2560 by 1920 pixels

Alternative Text Describe the purpose of the image. Leave empty if the image is purely decorative.

Title

Caption

Description

Uploaded By Lorna Walker

Copy Link

Smush 13 Images reduced by 54.7 KB (4.1%)
 Image Size: 735.0 KB
[View Stats](#)

[View attachment page](#) | [Edit more details](#) | [Delete Permanently](#)

- Keep an eye on image size. All else being equal, Google will give priority to sites that run quickly over sites that are slow, and one of the main factors that can slow your site down significantly is image size. Loading a lot of large image files onto your site is a good way to make the site slow.
- If you're using WordPress then there are plugins that can help you to optimise your images more effectively. We recommend [Smush](#) which will resize and compress your images for you as well as enable lazy loading on your site (note, lazy loading will be included as standard in the next major WordPress update) and we have a video on our website showing you [how to install this plugin, explaining what lazy loading is and how to activate it.](#)

Develop good quality content that meets the needs of searchers

Ultimately, the secret of SEO is to have genuinely useful content that answers the real questions asked by people in your target market. There's no magic trick here. If you have good, useful, relevant content that people

want to read, and that Google can find and understand then you'll be able to use it to generate traffic to your website.

It's important to have content on your site for people who are at different stages of the buying process. Generally, people spend some time thinking about a purchase before they make it and they're likely to be using slightly different search terms and after different kinds of content depending on where they are in the buying process.

Someone who is only just starting to think about making a purchase or in the very early stages of research will use different search terms and need different content to someone who is well advanced in the process and is looking to compare a couple of different suppliers, or after more detailed information about pricing.

The search term someone uses will tell you something about where they are in the buying process. If I'm searching for 'advice for building a new conservatory' the chances are that I am pretty early in the process of thinking about getting a new conservatory. If I'm searching for 'best conservatory supplier in Aylesbury' then that probably indicates that I am much further along the decision-making process and am getting ready to make a purchase.

Offering content on your site that appeals to people at all stages of the buying process is an important part of your SEO strategy.

Build a network of inbound links to your site

Google looks for signals indicating that your site contains valuable and trustworthy content. One of the most important signals that it uses is the number and source of inbound links – links you have coming in from other sites to your site.

Good quality inbound links – that is links from sites that are themselves considered to be high quality – will boost the SEO performance of your site. That's because Google takes the willingness of other sites to link to

you as an indication of the quality of your content. Links from spammy, low quality sites will not give you any SEO boost.

The best strategy for building up the inbound links to your site is to have good quality, useful content that such sites will want to link to. Long content tends to work better than short here as well because a longer page is likely to contain more useful information that someone else might want to link to.

Be very careful about actively soliciting such links as Google will not value links it considers to be ‘unnatural’ – that is any links that it deems are there in order to try and manipulate your page ranking. Such unnatural links can actively damage your search performance. There is advice on Google’s Webmasters site regarding [what sort of links you should avoid](#).

Update your site regularly

Google aims to provide searchers with the most relevant and recent information. It also wants to direct people to sites that are live and actively being managed rather than those which are static and have not been touched in years. Regularly adding new content to your site will increase the frequency with which Google indexes it.

Keep informed on updates to Google’s algorithm

Whilst Google does not reveal exactly how its algorithm works, it does generally let people know when the algorithm changes and will sometimes reveal the specific purpose of a particular algorithm change. Whenever it does this it is a good idea to pay attention to whatever Google says is important and do those things on your site. Sites such as [Moz](#) provide regular updates on known changes to the algorithm.

The ever-changing nature of Google’s algorithm means that SEO is a continuous process. It’s not something that you do once when you’re building your site and then never have to think about again. It’s something you need to be keeping an eye on all the time.

That said, whilst it's useful to have a general understanding of the different elements that Google considers important, it's a mistake to become a slave to trying to manipulate your page according to those different elements.

What Google wants is an informative page that answers the user's query effectively whilst offering a good experience to the user. Google's own advice to website owners is 'write for the person, not for the search engine'. If you keep that thought in mind as you're putting together your site, then you will be developing pages that have effective SEO built into them from the start.

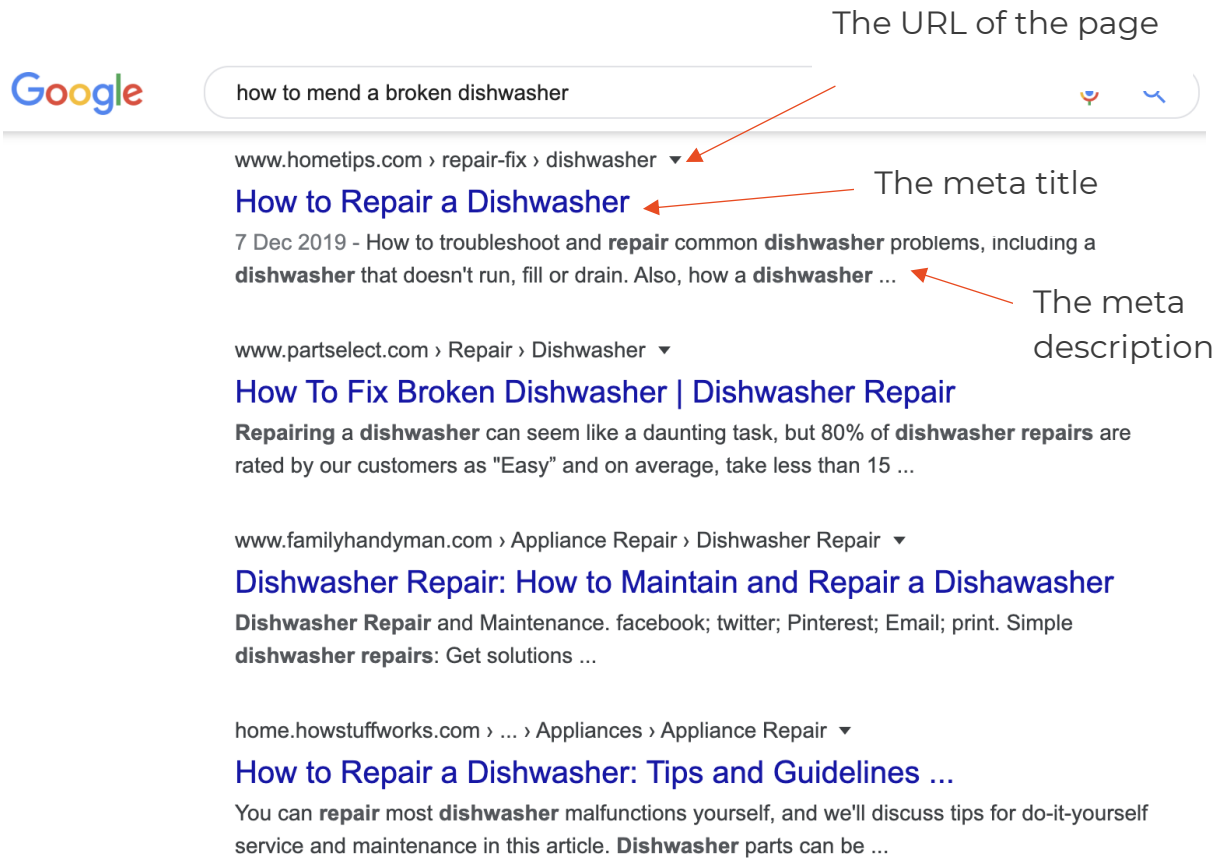
Encourage people to click through to your site

SEO isn't just about getting your site to appear in the search listings in the first place. That's only half the battle. You then need to encourage people to actually click through from your search listing to your website. It's true to say that most people will click on one of the first three organic search listings, so a big part of SEO is getting as high up the listings as you can.

However, not everyone just clicks on the first listing. People generally look at the first few listings, consider which one they think is most likely to answer their question or provide them with the information they're after, and then click on that one. So how can you encourage them to click on your link rather than any other?

There are various different elements of the listing that you can control, as shown in the example below.

The URL of the page



Google

how to mend a broken dishwasher

www.hometips.com › repair-fix › dishwasher ▼

How to Repair a Dishwasher

7 Dec 2019 - How to troubleshoot and **repair** common **dishwasher** problems, including a **dishwasher** that doesn't run, fill or drain. Also, how a **dishwasher** ...

www.partselect.com › Repair › Dishwasher ▼

How To Fix Broken Dishwasher | Dishwasher Repair

Repairing a **dishwasher** can seem like a daunting task, but 80% of **dishwasher repairs** are rated by our customers as "Easy" and on average, take less than 15 ...

www.familyhandyman.com › Appliance Repair › Dishwasher Repair ▼

Dishwasher Repair: How to Maintain and Repair a Dishwasher

Dishwasher Repair and Maintenance. facebook; twitter; Pinterest; Email; print. Simple **dishwasher repairs**: Get solutions ...

home.howstuffworks.com › ... › Appliances › Appliance Repair ▼

How to Repair a Dishwasher: Tips and Guidelines ...

You can **repair** most **dishwasher** malfunctions yourself, and we'll discuss tips for do-it-yourself service and maintenance in this article. **Dishwasher** parts can be ...

As we've already discussed, it's a good idea to give each page on your site a keyword-rich URL that makes it clear what the page is about, both to human visitors and to Google.

Your listing then includes two elements known as the meta title and the meta description. If you do nothing, then Google will pick up the title of your page (that you gave the page when you set it up) and display that as the meta title. It will then look for the first few lines of copy on your page and display those as the meta description.

Whilst that may look perfectly fine, if you leave it like this, you're missing an opportunity to write something that's a bit more tailored and designed to encourage people to click through and the first few lines of copy on your page may not do this. Also, you might find that the first few lines of copy aren't really suitable for display this way – take a look at the example below.

[removeandreplace.com](#) › [Home DIY Repair](#) › [Dishwasher Repair](#)

5 Common Dishwasher Problems - Tips and Tricks To Fix

3 Feb 2018 - Uploaded by RepairClinic.com

As a result, we are faced with challenges and problems from our digital **dishwashers** that may need **repair** ...

Think of your meta titles and meta descriptions as your chance to write a little advert for your page, giving people information they need about what's on the page and persuading them that yours is the best option for them to click through to. You certainly don't have to spend time writing tailored meta titles and meta descriptions but it's a bit of a missed opportunity if you don't. So how do you do this?

We use a plugin called Yoast SEO on our WordPress site which gives you the ability to craft individual meta titles and meta descriptions for each page or post on your site. Installing this plugin adds a new section to the bottom of each page in the WordPress backend where you can then add the relevant information.

Yoast SEO

☒ SEO ☐ Readability ☐ Social

Focus keyphrase ?

Google preview ^

Preview as:
☐ Mobile result ☒ Desktop result

Build a WordPress site in one day - Aylesbury, Woking, Solihull or...
<https://www.awesometechtraining.com/build-a-website-in-one-day-with-wo...> ▼
WordPress courses in Aylesbury, Woking, Solihull & Liverpool just £199. Small groups, personal attention, access to course videos and a year's free hosting.
[Edit snippet](#)

SEO title [+ Insert snippet variable](#)
Build a WordPress site in one day - Aylesbury, Woking, Solihull or Liverpool

Slug
build-a-website-in-one-day-with-wordpress

Meta description [+ Insert snippet variable](#)
WordPress courses in Aylesbury, Woking, Solihull & Liverpool just £199. Small groups, personal attention, access to course videos and a year's free hosting.
[Close snippet editor](#)

There's a character limit for both (this varies a bit depending on what kind of device someone is using – currently it's 72 characters for the meta title and 172 for the meta description if being viewed on mobile, and a little less if viewed on desktop).

We've got a quick video guide to [using Yoast to add meta titles and meta descriptions](#) available on our website.

Local SEO

If you're operating a business where your physical location is important then you also need to think about local SEO.

Understanding local search

If you run a local search (where geographic location is relevant to the thing you're searching for) you'll often see a slightly different layout in the results that come back.

In the example below I have searched for 'curry house near me' and, as you can see, there are three local businesses listed *before* you get to the standard organic search results. This area at the top of the local results page is variously known as the 'snack pack results' or the '3-pack' and it shows the three local businesses that Google considers to be most relevant to my query.

Latest figures suggest that around a third of clicks go to the listings in this '3-pack' section so it's important to try and rank for this area as well as for the standard organic search listings below it.

curry house near me



[All](#)
[Maps](#)
[Shopping](#)
[News](#)
[Images](#)
[More](#)
[Settings](#)
[Tools](#)

About 238,000,000 results (0.71 seconds)

Find results on



THE 10 BEST Indian...



Indian restaurants and...



Rating ▾ Hours ▾ Visit history ▾

Desire Indian Restaurant

4.3 ★★★★★ (113) · Indian

40 Kingsbury

Closed · Opens 6PM

Late-night food · Casual · Groups



Bucks Balti House

4.4 ★★★★★ (115) · £ · Indian

120 High St

Closed · Opens 5:30PM

Late-night food · Cosy · Casual



Golden Bengal

4.1 ★★★★★ (60) · Asian

Villiers Buildings, 1-2 Buckingham St

Closed · Opens 5:30PM

"Food that is very close to what Indian food should be!!! As most ..."



[More places](#)

www.tripadvisor.co.uk › ... › Aylesbury Vale › Aylesbury ▾

THE 10 BEST Indian Restaurants in Aylesbury, Updated ...

Hotels near Waddesdon Manor. Hotels near Abbots View AlpacasAbbots View Farm. Hotels near Wendover Woods. Hotels near Claydon House. Hotels near Buckinghamshire Railway Centre. Hotels near Tiggywinkles Wildlife Hospital Visitor's Centre. Hotels near The Bucks Goat Centre. Hotels near Coombe Hill.

www.tripadvisor.co.uk › ... › Aylesbury › Aylesbury Restaurants ▾

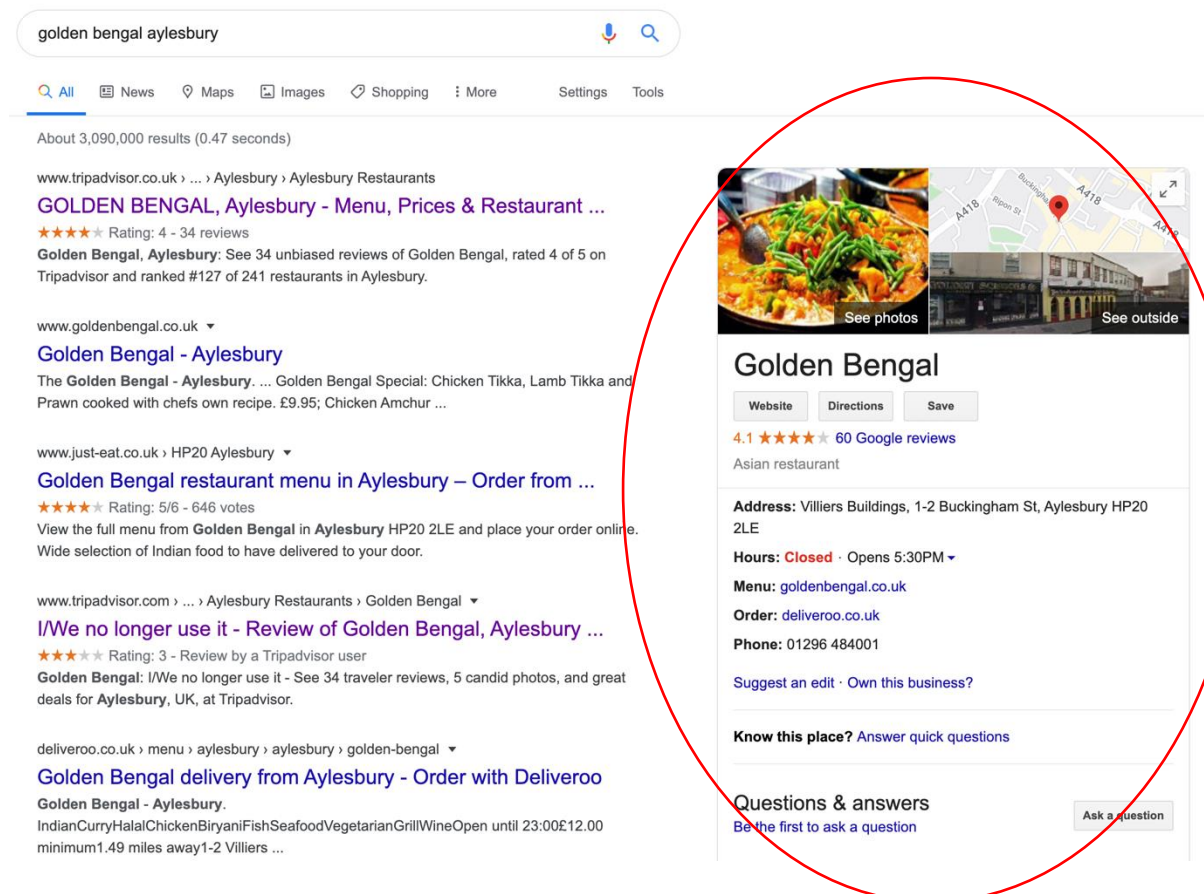
The 10 Best Indian Restaurants with Delivery in Aylesbury

Hotels near Waddesdon Manor. Hotels near Abbots View AlpacasAbbots View Farm. Hotels near Wendover Woods. Hotels near Claydon House. Hotels near Buckinghamshire Railway Centre. Hotels near Tiggywinkles Wildlife Hospital Visitor's Centre. Hotels near The Bucks Goat Centre. Hotels near Coombe Hill.

Claim your Google My Business listing

The first thing to do, if you have not already done it, is to claim your Google My Business listing. Latest statistics suggest that only around half of businesses have done this, but it really is the cornerstone of effective local SEO.

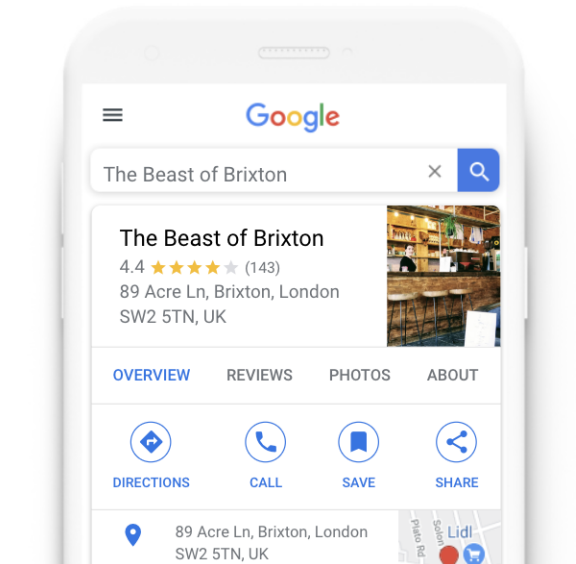
Google My Business is a free service from Google that enables you to manage your business's online presence across Google Maps and Search, making it easier for local customers to find you. When you run a search, you'll see the Google My Business information on the right-hand side of the search results page.




The screenshot shows a Google search for "golden bengal aylesbury". The search results on the left include links to TripAdvisor, the Golden Bengal website, Just Eat, and Deliveroo. On the right, a detailed Google My Business listing for "Golden Bengal" is displayed, circled in red. The listing includes a photo of food, a map, and the following information:

- Website:** goldenbengal.co.uk
- Directions:** (button)
- Save:** (button)
- Rating:** 4.1 stars (60 Google reviews)
- Address:** Villiers Buildings, 1-2 Buckingham St, Aylesbury HP20 2LE
- Hours:** Closed · Opens 5:30PM
- Menu:** goldenbengal.co.uk
- Order:** deliveroo.co.uk
- Phone:** 01296 484001
- Actions:** [Suggest an edit](#) · [Own this business?](#)
- Know this place?** [Answer quick questions](#)
- Questions & answers:** [Be the first to ask a question](#) (button)

Start by visiting the Google My Business page and searching for your business. Here you can either start the process of claiming a business that Google is already aware of, or you can add your business to Google.



Find and manage your business



Can't find your business?

[Add your business to Google](#)

Before you can start adding information via your Google My Business account you will need to verify the address of your business and that you're authorised to manage the account. Google will send a postcard to your business address with a code on it that you will then need to enter into your Google My Business account to complete this process. Once that's done you will then be able to manage the account.

Start by making sure that all the information contained within Google My Business is up to date and that you've provided all the information that you can. This includes things like:

- Opening hours
- Physical address
- Telephone number
- Category of the business
- Website address

You can then enhance your listing with additional elements that will make it more attractive to visitors and provide them with more information.

- Sharing photos
- Add a logo and cover photo to your listing
- Reply to customer reviews
- List events that you have coming up

You can also use Google My Business as a microblogging platform and add posts to your listing that will appear to potential visitors.

Be consistent across all your channels

Make sure that you use the same business name, address and telephone number across all your channels. Whatever you enter in your Google My Business account should be what you use on your website (check your headers and footers as well as your contact us page) and across all your social media channels. Consistency here is vital as this is one of the ways that Google can triangulate your location and hence the relevance of your business to a local user's search.

Make sure your site is mobile friendly

We have already talked about this as it's important for all SEO, but it's particularly important for local SEO because people are much more likely to be searching for local information on a mobile device and the extent to which a site works well on mobile has a significant effect on the likelihood of someone clicking through to it.

Add location pages to your website

If you have a number of different physical locations then consider adding a page for each of them to your site giving information such as address, phone number, opening hours, a unique description of each location, parking information, special promotions running in that location, details about the staff in each location, customer reviews and testimonials that relate to that location and so on. Add a Google Map to each of your location pages.

Do not simply create different versions of the same page for each location. Let's say you're a plumber operating in Aylesbury, High Wycombe, Bicester and Milton Keynes. It's a big mistake to simply have four different versions of the same page, just with the names of the different locations changed on each one. The information on each page needs to be specific to each location.

If you have just a single location, then make sure that you have a comprehensive About Us page that is locally descriptive.

Get listed in relevant directories

There are numerous directory sites available that will list local businesses. It can be useful to add your local site to these, assuming that they are relevant and of sufficient quality. Some are nationwide organisations such as [Yell.com](https://www.yell.com), some are specific to certain kinds of businesses such as [Checkatrade.com](https://www.checkatrade.com) and some are focused entirely on businesses in certain locations such as [Bucks Business First](https://www.bucksbusinessfirst.co.uk).

Do some research to find out what the most relevant directories are for your particular type of business and in your area. Some will charge you for listing so it may not be possible to be listed in all of them so start with those that you think are likely to be most relevant to your potential customers.

Make sure that the information you include in your listing is consistent with that you use elsewhere on the web. As already discussed, it's important to make sure that your business name, address, telephone number and other contact details are the same wherever they appear.

Generate locally relevant content

Think of opportunities to generate genuinely useful content that's relevant to your local area. If you're blogging, try and come up with ideas for blog posts that have some kind of local angle to them. For example, Aylesbury is a hard water area so if you're a plumber based in Aylesbury you might

consider writing some blogs advising local people of what steps they need to take to deal with scum and scale in such a hard water area.

Think about building up a network of relationships with other local business. Are there opportunities to guest blog on their sites? To generate a network of links between your sites? To build a network of businesses focused on a particular area?

Don't neglect Bing and Apple Maps

Our focus throughout this document has been on Google as that's where the vast majority of searches are performed, but there are of course other search engines and mapping services available and if you're going for a 'belt and braces' approach then you should ensure that your site is listed with each of them as well.

In general, what works well for Google SEO will also work for Bing and for other search engines so it's not a case of having to 'reoptimise' all your content for each search engine but rather of making sure that you're listed in their local directory.

[Bing Places](#) is Bing's equivalent of Google My Business – you can claim your business and work through the listing process there in much the same way as you've done for Google. If the physical location of your business is important then you should also claim your [Apple Maps listing](#).

How we can help you

At Awesome Tech Training we aim to help small businesses take control of their web presence.

We run regular *Build a Website in One Day Using WordPress* courses across the country, giving people the skills needed to set up a new WordPress site or get to grips with the one they already have.

Check out forthcoming dates and book your place on our website:

www.awesometechtraining.com

We blog regularly about digital marketing for small businesses, with a particular focus on WordPress and we also have a growing series of video guides covering all aspects of running your own WordPress site.

To be alerted whenever we have new content available you can [sign up for our email newsletter](#) or follow us via our social channels.

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