

THE ESSENTIAL

# SEO GUIDE





# Introduction

## Hello fellow SEO web managers!

Welcome to your SEO Copywriting Guide. This guide includes easy-to-digest insights into how to use SEO to be found by your online target audience and is authored by Yoast SEO.

Yoast SEO (formerly WordPress SEO by Yoast), is the most complete SEO service that currently exists for WordPress users. The service analyses your selected search words and phrases within snippet previews, SEO titles and meta descriptions to help correct your focus when trying to attract the right traffic.

And here at Quest, our websites are built on WordPress as it's one of the best, if not the best, Content Management System [CMS], when it comes to SEO.

Search engines use complex, and jealously guarded, mathematical formulas called algorithms to determine how sites rank. Good SEO involves the work that goes into making your website an authority in the eyes of search engines like Google, so that they'll recommend you to users, by ranking you higher.

Just like building a successful company, SEO requires both expert knowledge and time. No business becomes an expert overnight, and certainly not without regularly working at it.

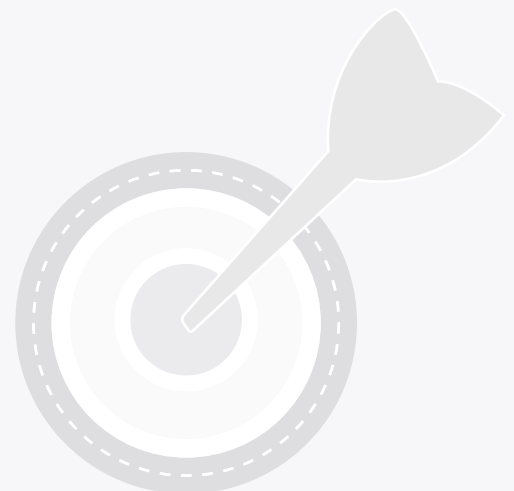
We hope you enjoy this guide.

Cheers



Ngā mihi (thanks)

**Hamish Lowry** | Founder



# Contents

**SEO copywriting is both a key element and a challenge in every SEO strategy.**

As search engines index text, the content of your website should be fine-tuned to the (ever-changing) algorithms of search engines. On top of that, your text should be written in such a way that your audience enjoys and understands your writing.

In this Complete Guide to SEO Copywriting, we'll talk you through the process of keyword research and the three stages of the writing process.

This guide should help you to write the SEO-friendly and readable articles you need on your website.

**This Complete Guide to SEO Copywriting covers:**

1. SEO copywriting and holistic SEO
2. Before writing - always start with keyword research
3. Three phases of writing an article:
  - a) Phase 1: Preparing your text
  - b) Phase 2: Writing your text
  - c) Phase 3: Correcting your text



# SEO copywriting and holistic SEO

In our view, your primary goal should be to build and maintain THE BEST website. Ranking in Google will come automatically if your website is of extremely high quality.

Google wants to serve their customers. Their mission is “to index all the world’s information and make it universally accessible”. Of course, Google also wants to make some money, but if they want to make the world’s information accessible, they’ll have to show people results that fit their wishes. People would otherwise stop wanting to use Google.

So, let’s agree on Google’s willingness to show people the best results: if your website is the best in your niche market, Google wants to rank it high.

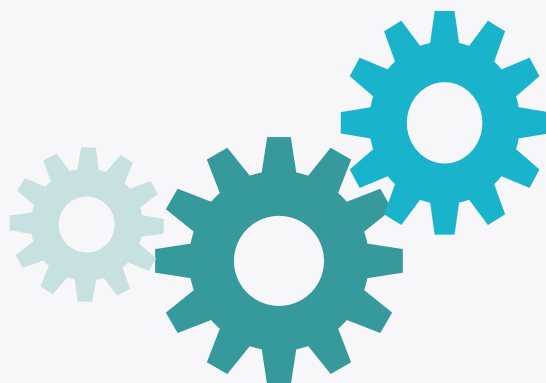
Holistic SEO is an interdisciplinary marketing strategy aimed at making the best website in a specific niche market. In order to do so, the technical design of your website should be excellent, the UX of your website flawless and all security aspects covered. Take a look at the Quest portfolio for some [great examples of quality website design](#).

Most importantly, the content of your website should be well written and aimed at the audience your website serves. Such an approach asks for rather advanced SEO copywriting skills.

To make sure your website is the best in your niche market, the text on your websites should be nice and easy to read. Without making any concessions to the quality of your text, you should tweak and fine-tune your text to the specific demands of search engines.

The process of SEO copywriting strongly resembles the process of writing any other text. It’s hard work and some of us have more writing talent than others.

We can’t all be Hemingway, but with some training, anyone should be able to do some proper SEO copywriting.



# Before writing: always start with keyword research

The very first step of SEO copywriting has little to do with writing. You'll have to decide what you're going to write about. What topics do you want to be found for? You'll need to use the keywords you want to rank for. Therefore, the first step of SEO copywriting is keyword research. Keyword research can be defined as the activities you undertake in order to compile an extensive list of keywords and key phrases which you would like to rank for.

Proper keyword research consists of the following three steps:

## **Step 1: Formulate a mission**

Before starting the actual keyword research, you should think about your mission. Your mission is the thing that makes you stand out from all the other blogs. While formulating your mission you should answer questions like: who are you and what is your blog about? What makes it special? Take the time and literally write down your mission. If you want to know more about formulating your mission, make sure to read our post about the mission of your website.

## **Step 2: Make a list of relevant keywords**

Once you have formulated a clear mission, you can start making a list of all the search terms (keywords) you want your website to be found for. If your mission is clear, you should have little trouble coming up with search terms that apply to your niche market and your unique selling points. Those will be keywords you want to be found for.

In order to come up with good terms you really have to get inside the heads of your audience. How are they most likely to find you? What would they search for on Google? At the end of your keyword research, you should have a list of all the relevant search terms people could use. Also, think of combinations and nuances within these terms.

Eventually, you should make a useful overview. Such an overview will be a great help in your SEO copywriting process. Creating a table can help with this. Try to come up with combinations of keywords as well. And order the keywords by some kind of priority – which of the keywords are especially important to rank for (very close to your mission) and which ones are less important? When choosing which keywords to tackle first, you should also consider how likely it is that your pages will rank for that specific keyword. In many cases, focusing on less popular and less competitive keywords can be a good strategy for SEO copywriting at first.

## **Step 3: Construct landing pages**

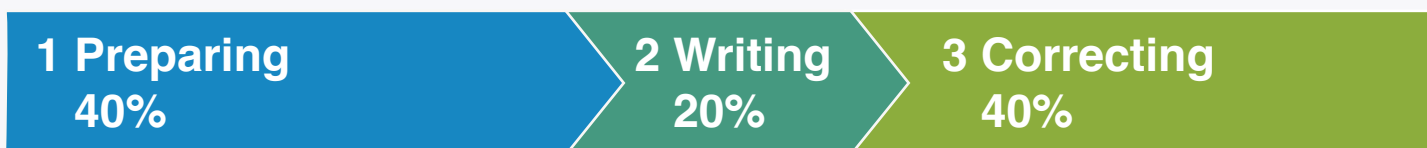
The final step of keyword research is to create awesome landing pages for the keywords you want to be found for. [A landing page](#) is a page that is tailored to draw in visitors who reached your blog through a specific keyword. This could be a dedicated page or a blog post optimized for a specific

keyword. Do make sure your visitors can find their way through your blog from every landing page. And make sure you make a landing page for every relevant keyword you come up with.

Your keyword research will give you much direction on what to blog about. You'll have to unlock content around a specific word. A word is not a topic though. Next to a keyword (or key phrase), you will need an angle, a specific story around that keyword.

## Three phases of writing an article

Once you've decided upon a topic or a story you want to write, the actual SEO copywriting begins! In our view, the writing process consists of three stages: preparing, writing and correcting.



### Phase 1 of the writing process: preparing your text

The first phase of the actual SEO copywriting process is preparing your text. Before you put your pen to paper, or your fingers on the keyboard, take some time and think about what you're going to write. You probably have a topic in mind, but before you start writing, you should have clear answers to the following questions:

- ¥ What is the purpose of your piece? Why are you writing? What do you want to achieve?
- ¥ What will be the main message of your post? What is the central question you want to answer?
- ¥ Who are your readers?
- ¥ What information do you need to write your piece?
- ¥ In what order will you present your information? What will be the structure of your article?

#### Text structure

The most important element of preparing your text is setting up the structure of your text. The structure of the text on your site is important for SEO copywriting. If your content is clearly structured, your chance to rank well in Google will be higher.

It really pays off to think about the structure of your piece before you start writing. The structure is the skeleton of your text: it will help the reader grasp the main idea of your text.

Posts or pages with a clear structure will also result in higher conversions on your website. If your message is properly understood by your audience, chances are higher that they'll buy your products or return to your website.

If you want practical tips on how to set up the structure of a piece of writing, you can read the Quest blog for an example creating a [clear blogpost structure](#).

## Phase 2 of the writing process: writing your text

After the initial preparation, you can start the actual writing process. This will take about 20 % of the total time you spend on your article.

### Just write!

The most important tip for this phase of SEO copywriting: just write. People often have trouble coming up with the first sentence (or the first paragraph for that matter). You can skip writing that first paragraph altogether. Just put down a couple of words referring to the content that first paragraph should have and start writing the second paragraph. Beginnings and endings are easier to write once you've fleshed out the body of your post.

If a sentence isn't grammatically correct or sounds awkward, just keep going and don't worry about it just yet. You can rewrite these things in the next phase, which is editing. In the writing phase, it is important to stay in the flow of writing.

### Guard the structure of your text

While writing, use the structure you established in your preparation phase as an outline. Try to write the paragraphs according to that plan. Make sure you write clear paragraphs. We advise you to start each paragraph with the most important sentence. Then explain or elaborate on that sentence. A reader will be able to grasp the most important content from your article, just by reading the first sentences of your paragraphs.

### Make sure your text is readable

Reading from a screen can be hard. If you want your readers to read your entire blog post, you should make sure it's easy to read. Posts that are nice and easy to read will result in more returning visitors and a higher conversion rate. Most importantly, make sure your text isn't too difficult for the audience you're writing for.

### Use some of our style tips

Some of us are natural writers and do not need many tips for their SEO copywriting. They are able to write an attractive, fun, readable text in a few minutes. Others lack that skill. Attractive writing is a matter of talent, but practice surely helps! If you want to develop an attractive writing style, you should read a lot. Reading (novels, blogs, magazines, whatever) will inspire you to write your own awesome articles. It will teach you how other people form their sentences and build their paragraphs. It teaches you how to use jokes and how to play with language. Finally, lots of reading allows you to create a gut feeling about what makes a nicely readable text.

### Take a break every now and then!

SEO copywriting can be an intense process. If you write for long periods of time, you'll discover that

concentrating will become harder. The exact time span will, of course, be different for every individual. If you notice that your mind starts to wander, that'll be the time to take a break.

Speaking for myself, I'm not able to write for more than 20 minutes (but to be honest, my attention span is quite short). At that point I get up to take a walk, look at my Facebook timeline or make a cup of tea. Even a minute-long break can be enough to return to your writing with a fresh and renewed level of concentration and creativity.

## Phase 3 of the writing process: correcting your text

Once you've concluded the actual writing process of your piece, you'll have a first draft of your article. This first draft is the thing you will improve upon in the final phase of writing. The final step will still take much of your time.

The correcting phase is the phase in the SEO copywriting process in which you should 'kill your darlings'. You should read and re-read and re-re-read your post and correct any awkward formulations, unclear phrasing and jumbled paragraph structure. Let's look at five steps you should take in order to properly correct your article.

### Step 1: Read slowly (and out loud)

You can start this phase by reading your piece slowly (and maybe even out loud, this can really help). Each sentence should be grammatically correct and the spelling must be flawless. You should be very critical of your own work.

### Step 2: Focus on sentences

Start by making sure each and every sentence is correct. Focus on the spelling of words and rephrase awkward formulations. Make sure sentences are grammatically correct. And check for readability: make sure your sentences aren't too long.

### Step 3: Focus on paragraphs

If all sentences in one paragraph are approved, look at the structure within a paragraph. Focus on that first sentence in every paragraph. Does that first core sentence really capture the thing you wanted to state in that specific paragraph? And are the sentences within a paragraph presented in a logical order. Do you use transition words in order to make clear what the connection between sentences is?

### Step 4: Check text structure

Check whether the structure between paragraphs is clear. Are the topics in your text presented in a logical order? Or do you need to make some changes?



You should also check your headings and subheadings. Make sure your focus keyword is in one of those headings and subheadings. But equally important, make sure the headings help your readers to grasp the structure of your text.

### **Step 5: Ask for feedback**

The very final step in your SEO copywriting process is asking for feedback. After editing your text, you should ask people for feedback. At Yoast all the posts we write are read by at least two of our colleagues before we publish them online. Feedback allows for the perspective of someone else than the writer and almost always leads to large improvements in the post.

It will be really useful to let someone from your audience proofread your post to test whether or not the message is communicated properly. Also, feedback from someone with proper writing and grammar skills will help you improve your blog post even further.

#### **Want to learn more about Google Ads?**

Download our free guide, [The Essential Step-by-Step Google Ads Guide](#), which features Ads advice from Quest and Google!



### Next Steps: SEO is a process

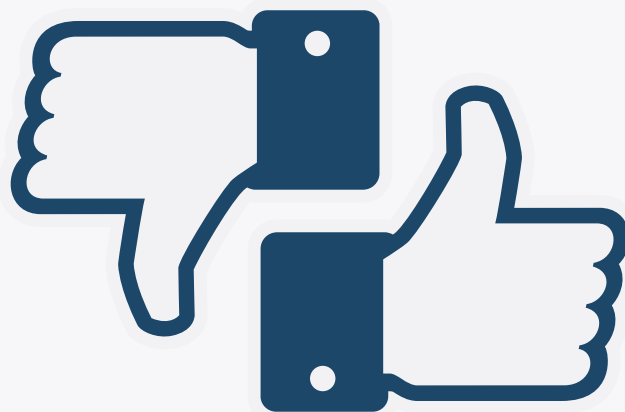
SEO copywriting works best when you follow a strict process and make sure your text is as good as can be. While not everyone is a natural writer, SEO copywriting is something you can get better at with practice.

If you would like further help with SEO, [contact the friendly team at Quest](#).



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