WORDPRESS TECHNICAL SEO BEST PRACTICE

Contents

Title Tag

The title tag is the first information users see when they find your page in search results and is an important search ranking factor. Each page should have one (1) unique title tag, and they can be seen as title tags the blue link text in search results, or as the name of a tab in your browser window.

Requirements:

- Do not duplicate title tags across pages.
- Capitalize the first letter of each word in the title tag, except for 'stop words' (a, and, the, on etc.)
- Length: Most SEO best practice documents you will find will say to keep your title tags less than 60 characters. This is because Google shows up to about 60 characters in the SERPS. However, Google does read the Title tag past 60 characters, therefore RDI recommends titles be written as follows:
  - Keyword focused Title Tag | Brand Name – three or four extra keywords
    - Make sure the visible portion of the title tag (the first 60 characters or so are highlighted in green) makes a logical phrase and does not get cut off visually.

The first 60 characters will be the visible portion of the Title Tag. Make sure the first 60 characters reads well, fits into this format, and includes the brand name so that it will look nice and not get cut off in Google.

Google will read past the visible title tag, and this gives us the opportunity to add a couple more keywords.

Fever Chart Guide - When to Go to the ER | CHOC - How to Break a Childs Fever
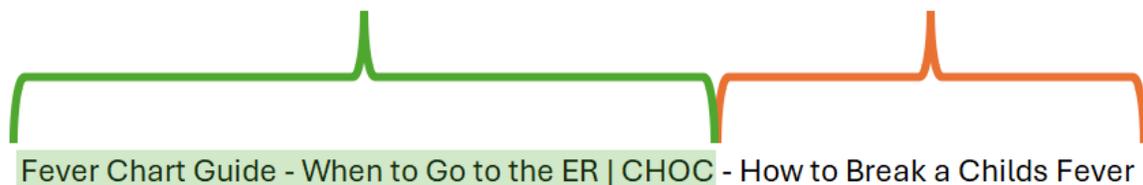
Meta Description
The meta description is the second piece of information users read when discovering your pages in search results. Each page should have one (1) meta description, and they can be seen in search results below the blue link text.

A properly written meta description includes a call to action, uses relevant keywords, and describes your page to the user. Great meta descriptions make your search results more attractive and help click-through rates (CTRs). However, the meta description is not a search engine ranking factor.
Requirements:
- Do not duplicate meta descriptions across pages.
- Length: 70-155 characters, including punctuation and spaces

H1 Tag
The <h1> tag is the primary heading stating the central topic of a page. Each page should have one (1) unique <h1> heading tag. <h1> heading tags can be seen as the title of a blog post or article, the name of the product on a product detail page, or as the first heading on any page of content.

The <h1> heading should use the primary keyword similar to the title tag to create consistency for users. Make sure the <h1> tag is visible to users. The <h1> tag is a significant search ranking factor.

Requirements:
- Do not duplicate <h1> headings across pages.
- Length: <70 characters, including spaces and punctuation
- For articles, blog posts, and other journalistic content:
  - The <h1> should be the title of the content.
- For other pages:
  - The <h1> should include the primary keyword and describe the primary topic of the page.

H2-H6 Tags

The <h2> through <h6> tags are subheadings that expand the primary topic and add structure to page content. Each page, when possible, should use subheadings (i.e., <h2> - <h3>) that are helpful and relevant for your audience. Subheadings should support the logical journey for users and be appropriate subtopics for the page.

Using subheadings to organize content into relevant sections makes pages more readable and engaging for users, reducing bounce rate. Subheadings are a minor search ranking factor but can significantly improve the user experience when used correctly.

Requirements:
- Subheadings are optional but should be accessible for content creation purposes.
- Use should support page content and naturally include relevant secondary keywords for that topic.
- Common site elements such as navigation menus, footers, sidebars, and calls-to-action **should not** use heading tags. If there is no other option, only use lower priority tags (i.e., h3) for these site elements.
- Length: <70 characters, including spaces and punctuation

Page Copy

Copy is the text appearing in the body section of a web page and often the primary content on a page. Each page should contain relevant copy that describes the page's topic and supports the user on their journey navigating your website. Write page copy that demonstrates your expertise to satisfy your intended audience. When writing copy, naturally use your audience's most popular relevant keywords to attract their attention.

Requirements:
- Each page should contain at least 100 words of relevant, unique text copy.
- Aim for at least 300 words in blog posts, but 1000+ is ideal.
- The more complex a topic, the more copy is required to demonstrate your expertise on that topic.

Using SEO Friendly-URL Structures
SEO friendly URLs contain words that clearly explain the content of the page, and they're easy to read by both humans and search engines. Using SEO friendly permalink structure improves your chances of getting better positions in search results.

Here is how you can check and update your WordPress site's permalink structure: You need to visit the Settings » Permalinks page. Select the post name option and then click on the 'Save Changes' button to store your settings.
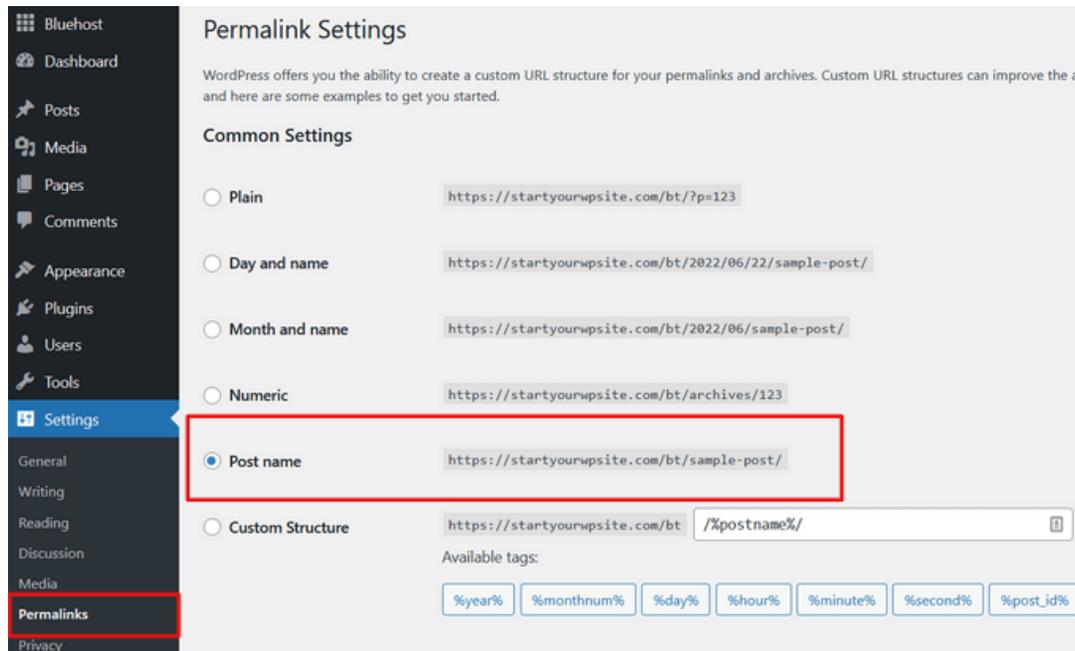
Use a Secure Connection
Visitors are more likely to trust a website that uses a secure connection (HTTPS instead of HTTP). You can make your website secure by installing an SSL certificate.

Install Yoast SEO Plugin
Employ Yoast SEO, to streamline meta title and description management, XML sitemap generation, and redirect handling, optimizing your site's search engine performance.

Use a Caching Plugin
A caching plugin can help improve your website's loading speed by storing static content in the browser's cache.

Keep Plugins to a Minimum
While plugins offer a ton of functionality and flexibility for building a website with WordPress they also come with a big downside. Adding too many plugins can introduce large images, fonts, javascript, css, and third-party resources that slow your pages down.

Page-Speed

Using Asset CleanUp or Asset CleanUp Pro, a plugin allows you to remove unused css, javascript, and more from your pages. This almost always speeds up the site and can improve conversions as fewer users bounce away due to slowness and your bandwidth requirements are also lowered.

Optimize Your Robots.txt
WordPress comes out of the box with a well-made Robots.txt file and most websites generally will not need to make any changes to it. There are situations, though, where you might want to leverage the Robots.txt file to manage how robots are allowed to crawl your website.

One such example is when SEO bots need to crawl your website to gather data. Sometimes, these bots can get a little overly aggressive in their crawling, leading to real impacts on the experience for your users. You could reduce potential problems by giving the bots a crawl delay.

Another usage case for the Robots.txt file might be blocking foreign search engines for crawling your website if visits to your website from these countries are not relevant. For example, blocking Yandex, a Russian search engine, might be a good idea for a website based in California, that only services local users.

You can also use the Robots.txt file to keep bots from crawling sensitive pages such as your login pages. Google, by default, removes pages like /wp-admin from the index already, but there might be additional pages you don't want a search engine to crawl. You can block their crawling inside of your Robots.txt.

Add Structured Data
Adding Schema.org markup to WordPress is generally straightforward, but in some cases, it may require manual insertion of HTML code.

You can incorporate Schema.org markup by selecting themes that natively support Schema, using the Yoast plugin (which supports some Schema types) learn more [here] , using one of the dedicated plugins for adding Schema, or manually adding it to the pages, blog posts, theme code, and templates.

Optimize Image File Size
Image file size is one of the main culprits behind slow loading webpages on millions of sites. Oftentimes, a high-definition image is uploaded to the web, only to be displayed in a 300×300 block.

If you have enough server resources, use a solution that optimizes your images after they are uploaded to your website. One such service is Kraken.io.

Minify and Combine your CSS and JavaScript files
Minifying or combining your CSS and JavaScript files can help reduce their file size, which can improve your website's loading speed.

Submit Your Sitemap to Search Engines
XML Sitemaps now come standard with WordPress. Additionally, you can use the ones generated by Yoast or other plugins. Submit them to Google Search Console and Bing

Webmaster Tools. This will help search engines index your website and start showing it in search results.

To submit your sitemap to Google Search Console, go to the "Sitemaps" tab and enter the URL of your XML sitemap. To submit your sitemap to Bing Webmaster Tools, go to the "Sitemaps" tab and enter the URL of your XML sitemap.

Use a Good Hosting Provider
A good hosting provider will have fast servers and reliable uptime. This will help your website load quickly and be available to visitors. There are a variety of hosting providers available. CHOC currently uses WP Engine for most websites. Some good alternative hosting providers for WordPress websites include Bluehost, HostGator, and SiteGround. WP Engine and these alternative providers offer fast servers and reliable uptime, which can help your website load quickly and be available to visitors.

A good host will provide you with:
- One-click, easy WordPress install.
- Fast loading speed (one of the key ranking factors for Google).
- SSL certificate (important ranking factor).
- Staging environment (to test your ideas).
- Reliability (your site won't crash during high traffic).
- Technical Support.

Here are the minimum features recommended in a WordPress host:
- SSD Drives
- Unlimited Connections
- No Inode Limits
- Auto Renewing SSL Certificates
- Fast Support
- Plenty of Bandwidth

Use a CDN
A CDN (content delivery network) can help improve your website's loading speed by delivering your content from servers that are closer to your visitors. Without a CDN your users requests for content go to your host's physical location which then sends the content back to the users. This can add several extra milliseconds or seconds of page load time depending on where your servers are physically located and where your users are physically located.

There are many different CDN offerings available these days, including some that are free of charge. One example of a free service is Cloudflare. Using a free CDN can greatly speed up your website, increase user satisfaction, and improve your site's visibility on search engines.

Use DNS-Prefetch / Preconnect For Third-Party Content
When a browser processes a webpage, it may delay the loading of certain objects until all resources are ready. This can be problematic for a website that rely heavily on third-party content such as fonts, icons, javascripts, and css files. When the browser realizes it needs a resource, it opens the connection, requests the resource, and then closes the connection. Having this occur once or twice on a webpage is not a significant issue. However, modern web

documents often experience a dozen or more of these events while the page is loading. This results in content loading unevenly and slowly on the page, causing it to shift around quite a bit.

The solution for these situations, which most WordPress site owners will find themselves in, is to use either DNS-Prefetch or Preconnect tags in the section of a theme.

Optimize Your .HTACCESS File
Apache based servers will have an HTACCESS file but IIS and Nginx servers will not. If you have an Apache based hosting server AND you can edit the HTACCESS file you want to optimize it for your WordPress install. WordPress should come preloaded with some optimizations already for URL rewrites.

You can add more optimization to your htaccess file for things like GZIP Compression, Expiry Dates, Cache Control, Spam Blocking, Stop directory browsing, and 301 Redirects.

Building 301 Redirects in Your .HTACCESS File Instead of a Plugin
To reduce exposure to too many plugins, you can build 301 redirects directly within the HTACCESS file instead. Make sure that you only redirect using a plugin, or by using the .HTACCESS file, not both. In most cases it's usually more user friendly to use an SEO plugin to manage redirects.

Steps to implementing redirects via the .htaccess file:

1. Start by inserting a new, blank line within your .htaccess file. If this is your first 301 redirect, allow a margin of space from existing sections, or consider including a header for better organization (see examples below).
2. Type the term "Redirect" (omit quotation marks and ensure no preceding spaces), signaling the server that a new redirect is to be established, prioritizing it over any pre-existing ones.
3. Follow this with a space, then the digits "301" (without quotes), maintaining a space between "Redirect" and "301" to signify that a 301 (Moved Permanently) status code is being applied.
4. Next, add another space and provide the complete path of the original page, excluding the domain name and starting with a "/". For example, if redirecting an outdated 'contact' page, the path should resemble "/contact/" (avoid quotation marks).
5. Then, insert an additional space followed by the full path to the new page. For example, if the updated page is a new 'contact us' page, the path should be "/contact-us/".
6. Upon completion, you have successfully configured a manual 301 redirect.
7. Note: Remember each manual 301 redirect in your .htaccess file will need to be on its own line. You should always keep them all together to make finding and editing them easier in the future.

Improve the authority of your website 's content with Author's, Reviewer's & Editor's Bio pages
Google places significant emphasis on the credibility and expertise of the sources from which content originates, particularly valuing the authority of websites on topics that align with the qualifications and expertise of the organization, brand, or authors behind the site. This focus on authoritative content is especially pronounced in sectors like healthcare, where accuracy and reliability are paramount.

Consequently, it is advisable to prominently feature the content author's name on articles and any webpages where it is relevant. Furthermore, linking the author's name to a comprehensive biography page that outlines their credentials and areas of expertise is strongly recommended. This approach not only enhances the trustworthiness of the content but also aligns with Google's preference for authoritative sources.

At CHOC, we are fortunate to have a wealth of opportunities for our content to be reviewed by physicians and other medical professionals. We strongly encourage leveraging these opportunities to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the information we publish online. Moreover, it is highly recommended to highlight the involvement of these qualified individuals by prominently displaying their review contributions on the articles and content. This practice not only underscores the credibility of our information but also reinforces CHOC's commitment to providing trusted and authoritative health resources.

1. Display Author Names on Posts

   - Use a Theme That Supports Author Displays: Many WordPress themes automatically display the author's name on posts. Choose a theme that offers this feature and aligns with your site's aesthetic. You can check this in the theme's documentation or demo.
   - Customize Your Theme: If your theme doesn't show author names by default, or if you want to customize how it's displayed, you can edit your theme files. Typically, you'll modify the single.php or content.php file to include the the_author_posts_link() function, which displays the author's name and links to their author archive page.

2. Create Detailed Author Bio Pages

   - Utilize the Default WordPress User Profile: WordPress allows users to fill in their profile information, including biographical info, in the Users section of the dashboard. Encourage your authors to complete their profiles. This bio can be displayed on their author archive page or linked from their author name on posts.
   - Custom Author Pages Plugin: For more detailed author pages, consider using a plugin that allows for custom author pages. Plugins like "WP Author Bio" or "Molongui Authorship" offer enhanced features for displaying author bios, social links, and more.
   - Custom Development: For a completely customized solution, you may need to develop a custom author page template. This involves creating a new template file in your theme and using WordPress's template hierarchy to associate it with author pages. You can then design this page to include detailed biographical information, credentials, and any other relevant information.

3. Link to Author Bio Pages from Articles

   - Automatic Linking: If you're using the the_author_posts_link() function, WordPress automatically links the author's name to their archive page. If you've enhanced this archive page with detailed bio information, you're set.
   - Manual Linking: For more control, you can manually link to an author's detailed bio page from their name on each post. This is especially useful if you've created custom bio pages outside

the default WordPress system. You'll need to edit the post template or individual posts to include these links.

4. Enhance Visibility and SEO

- Author Schema Markup: To further enhance the visibility and credibility of your authors, consider adding schema markup to your author pages. This helps search engines understand and display information about the author, improving the search presence of your content.
- Consistent Updates: Ensure that author profiles and bios are regularly updated to reflect their current roles, accomplishments, and credentials. This not only aids in maintaining credibility but also keeps the information useful for readers.
- Implementing these steps on your WordPress.org site will significantly contribute to establishing your site's authority in your industry, meeting Google's criteria for credible and authoritative content.