Search Engine Optimization (SEO) Made Simple

1. What is SEO?

SEO is the process of improving your website so it appears higher in search results when people search for services or information related to your business.

2. Why SEO Matters

- **Visibility:** The higher your site ranks, the more likely people will visit it.
- **Credibility & Trust:** People tend to trust websites that appear near the top of search results.
- **More Traffic & Leads:** More visitors = more chances for business.
- **Long-term Value:** Good SEO work keeps paying off over time.

3. Keyword Research Basics

Keywords are words or phrases people type into Google when looking for something.

- **Start simple:** Think about what your customers would search for.
- **Use tools:** Google Search suggestions, Ubersuggest, or AnswerThePublic can spark ideas.
- **Local focus:** If you serve a specific area, include your city or region
  - *Example:* website design columbia sc

4. Writing SEO Metadata

Each page on your site should have:

- **SEO Title (≈ 50-60 characters):**
  - Be clear, include your main keyword + location if local.
  - *Example:* DuBose Web | Columbia, SC | Web Design & Digital Marketing
- **Meta Description (≈ 150-160 characters):**
  - Short summary of what the page is about, encouraging people to click.
  - *Example:* A web design, website development, and digital marketing agency in Columbia, South Carolina focused on connecting the right people with your business.

5. Best Practices for Using Keywords

- **Use naturally:** Don't "stuff" keywords — write for people first.

- **Headings & Subheadings:** Place keywords in H1 and H2 headers when it makes sense.

- **Body text:** Sprinkle keywords throughout your page copy in a natural way.

- **Alt text for images:** Add short descriptions that include keywords.

- **Consistency:** Stick with your main keywords across pages, but don't overuse them.

6. Google Business Profile

If your business serves local customers, this helps a lot.

- **Claim & verify your profile** at google.com/business.

- **Keep info accurate:** Business name, address, phone number, and hours.

- **Add photos:** Show your team, products, or storefront.

- **Collect reviews:** Ask happy customers to leave reviews — they improve visibility and trust.

- **Post updates:** Share news, offers, or events to keep your profile active.

7. Simple Ongoing Maintenance Checklist

- ☐ Add new content regularly (blogs, service updates, FAQs).

- ☐ Review SEO titles and descriptions every few months.

- ☐ Check your Google Business Profile monthly for accuracy.

- ☐ Encourage new reviews from happy customers.

- ☐ Make sure your website loads quickly and looks good on mobile.

Remember:

SEO isn't magic—it's about consistent effort. Small improvements over time (better content, keywords well-placed, good metadata) add up.

Glossary: Know Your SEO

Alt Text
Copy added to an image to help screen readers describe images to visually impaired users and allow search engines to better crawl websites

Algorithm
A specific set of rules search engines use to discover and rank web pages in order of relevance

Backlinks
Links directing from external websites toward your site—The more high-quality websites that link to your website, the higher your site ranks

Content Audit
The process of combing through and analyzing a website's content to determine areas of opportunity

Crawl/Index
Search engines use information collected by bots that scan, or "crawl", webpages to categorize website information in indexes

Duplicate Content
Refers to similar or identical content that appears on multiple URLs, resulting in search engines being unable to determine which to display in results

External Link
A link on your website that directs to an external source

Google My Business
Free business listing providing the ability to appear on local search results and Google Maps and allows customers to leave reviews

Google Search Console
Free service providing tools to help optimize your website and collect valuable information including search results and keyword suggestions

Heading Tags
Titles and headlines labeled from H1 to H6, giving your pages structure and hierarchy

Internal Link
Links located within the same website to improve usability and navigation between pages and sections

Keywords
Two to five-word phrases that your target audience would type into a search engine when looking for your business or services

Long Tail Keyword
A phrase containing four or more words used to describe a subject in more detail than a shorter keyword to attract a more qualified audience with less competition

Keyword Stuffing
The practice of loading a web page with keywords as a means of manipulating a site's search engine ranking. Search engines are too smart for this and will dock a site's ranking when they catch it.

Meta Title
Also known as a title tag, refers to text displayed on a search engine result page and browser tab to indicate the subject of a webpage

Meta Description
An accurate description of a webpage that utilizes keywords and appears on the search engine results page

Organic Traffic
Website traffic resulting from unpaid search results driven by optimization

Qualified Traffic
Users who are most likely to convert

Redirect Links
Used to forward website pages to another URL when content is relocated, deleted from a site, or a domain name is changed

Sitemap
Tells search engines which pages and files are important on your site

SEO Audit
The process of identifying foundational level SEO issues affecting your website's performance

Robots.txt
Tells search engine crawlers which URLs the crawler can access on your site