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GEEK-FREE SEO

THE GEEK-FREE GUIDE TO
RANKING YOUR SITE IN GOOGLE

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About the Author



[Jonathan Leger](#) is a 7-figure Internet Marketer that's been practicing the art of search engine optimization since the web was born in the early 1990's. He's a software developer by trade, and despite his business success still loves to sit down and hash out projects and case studies in plain-text HTML and PHP code.

Jonathan is also an [internet business coach](#), performs SEO services for his clients and has many popular products in the Internet Marketing and SEO space, including his flagship tool suite:



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Introduction - Yes, You Can Rank In Google!

Ranking in Google has changed a lot over the past couple of years. It used to be pretty simple: put up great quality content, get links to that content and **BOOM!** -- you would rank in Google.

While that's a little more simplistic than it really was, it was certainly much more straightforward and simple to rank then than it is now. There's much more to be aware of today.

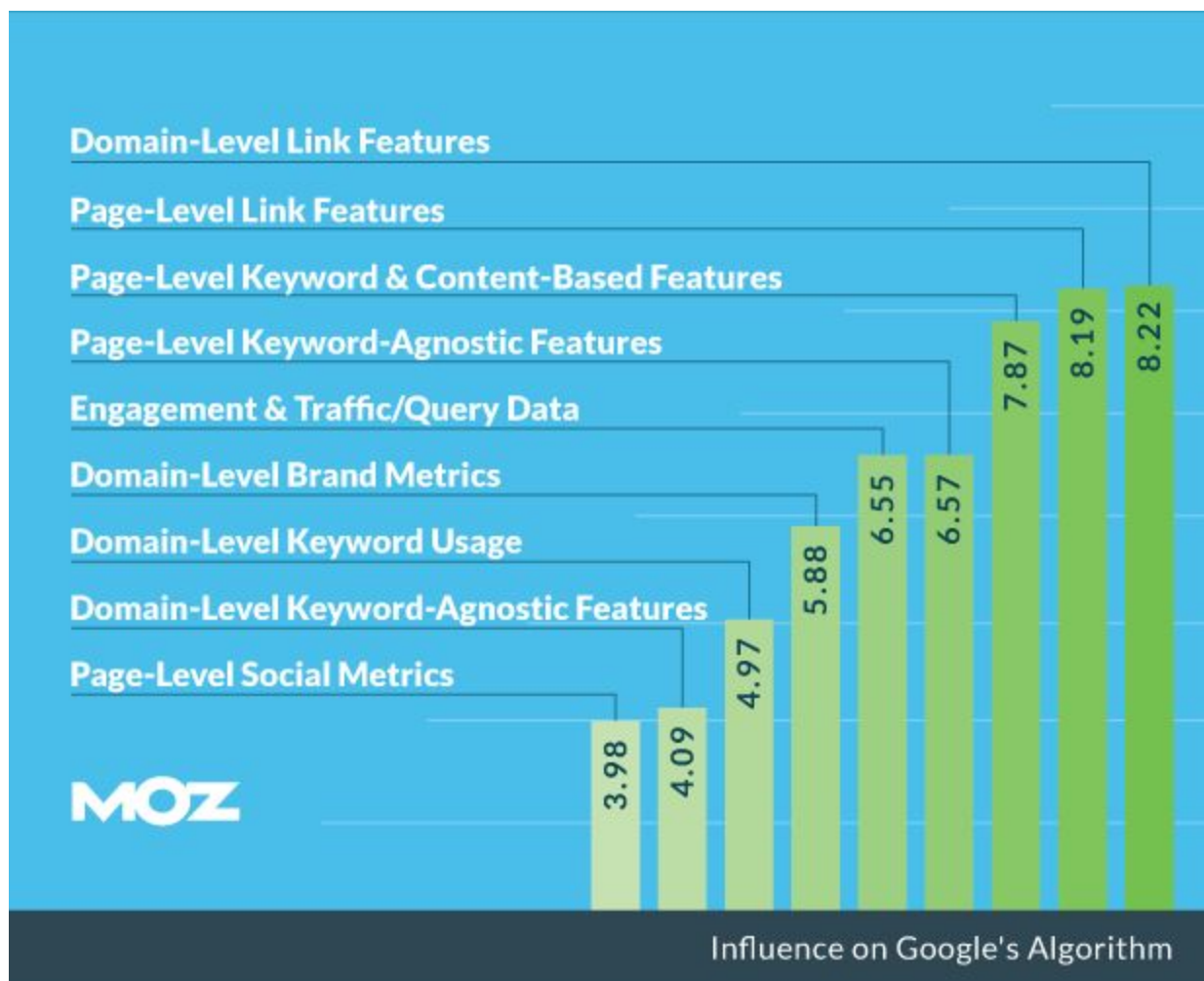
Is it doable? **Absolutely!** But you need to understand *what to do*.

That's why I've decided to give you a comprehensive education on what it takes to rank in Google now. Not an education using just my own personal experience, either. I don't want you to just take *my* word for it.

In the following lessons I am going to walk you step-by-step through the nine things that more than **150 SEO experts** agree are most important to ranking in Google today.

To start off on the right foot, here's an infographic created by Moz (a highly respected SEO company) that breaks down the nine most important ranking factors:

Keep in mind that this isn't just one company's opinion! This list is from a survey of 150 experts.



The nine most important factors are:

1. Domain-Level Link Features
2. Page-Level Link Features
3. Page-Level Keyword & Content-Based Features
4. Page-Level Keyword-Agnostic Features
5. Engagement & Traffic/Query Data
6. Domain-Level Brand Metrics
7. Domain-Level Keyword Usage
8. Domain-Level Keyword-Agnostic Features
9. Page-Level Social Features

DON'T PANIC!

If that list gave you a technical-cross-eyed headache, fear not! That's what I'm here for. I am going to make everything clear and easy to understand for even the most non-technical person.

You see, that's the thing about Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and those of us who practice the art: We understand it just fine. All of the technical mumbo-jumbo makes sense to us because we're techies. I'm a software developer by trade. I've been practicing SEO since the web began about 20 years ago. I understand the mumbo-jumbo because it's what I do.

But as an ordinary human being trying to run a business online, reading some of the content on these SEO sites would make you feel like it's so complicated that you could never possibly understand what it takes to rank your site in Google.

THAT'S SIMPLY NOT TRUE! What you need is a human being to put your SEO education into terms that another human being can understand. That's what I'm going to do over the next few weeks.

QUESTIONS? I'M HERE TO HELP!

If there's any part of this course that you don't understand, you can always email me at:

jonathan@jonathanleger.com

I promise I will do my best to clarify things for you.

Are you excited and ready to begin your Google education so you can start ranking your sites?

Then let's get started!

Lesson #1: Domain-Level Link Features

It's time for your first lesson in the most important ranking factors for Google -- what they are, what they mean and how to go about improving them so you can rank your websites!

DOMAIN-LEVEL LINK FEATURES

What is it?

Domain-Level Link Features is just a fancy way of saying the quality and quantity of links aimed at your entire website.

How important is it?

According to the 150 experts surveyed, domain-level link features are an 8 out of 10 on the scale of importance for ranking in Google.

What can I do to improve it?

You want to get links to all of the pages of your website from other high quality sites, including sites that are important in your market.

Detailed Explanation

Let's say that you have an article posted to a page of your site on the topic of "blue widgets". It's a great article with lots of great content, infographics, videos, images, information, etc. It may even be worthy of winning awards in the widget industry!

But let's say that your competitor also has a page on their site about blue widgets. It's not as good as yours, but it's still good. However, their site has lots of high quality links to all of its pages.

Even if your page--which contains better content--has a good number of high quality links to it, unless your entire site also has lots of good quality links to its other pages, guess who Google is going to rank first? Your competitor!

Why would Google do that?

It may seem counter-intuitive, but it actually makes sense. Google is very focused on returning results from sites that are an authority in their market, sites that have proven themselves as valuable resources for people looking for information in that industry.

Google sees links to a page as votes for the quality of that page. If only one page of your site has lots of "votes", does it make sense for Google to consider it an authority?

No. When you think of somebody who is an authority on a subject, you think of somebody who knows a lot about every facet of the subject -- not just one.

It also makes sense for Google to take the entire site's links into consideration because it makes it harder to trick Google into ranking your site.

Think about it: it may be somewhat easy to get a bunch of good links to one page of your site in some shady way, but to get a bunch of good links to dozens or hundreds of pages of your site? Much, much harder and more expensive.

So by making sure that an entire site has what we call good "link popularity" before it ranks any page on the site, Google is making sure that it's returning the best possible information to the person searching.

Google relies on the authority of the entire site so much that pages with only a few links that are on sites that have lots of links (like Facebook, Amazon, Wikipedia, WebMD, etc.) often outrank pages that have more links to the *individual page* but not as many links to the *entire site*.

[How To Check Your Site's Link Popularity](#)

I personally use [Keyword Canine 3.0](#) (or [KC3](#) as I like to call it) to check the link popularity of a site. You can, of course, use whatever tool you prefer. I just love to use [KC3](#) because I had it developed to show everything that I know Google looks for when ranking a site. It's an SEO tool designed and developed by people who practice SEO. Makes sense, right?

KC3 has what's called a "Domain Dashboard" that gives you a snapshot of how healthy a site is in the eyes of Google and other search engines. It does this by showing you a variety of statistics about the site and page.

Here's an image of the domain dashboard:

The screenshot shows the KeywordCanine interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'Admin', 'Tutorials', and 'Help'. Below that, the 'Dashboard' is active, and 'Tools' is visible. A search bar on the right shows '14480 queries remaining'. The main content area is titled 'Domain Authority' and contains a table with the following data:

Domain	Keywords	Health	Indexed Pages	KC Rank	DA	PA	TF	CF	Social
backyardgardening.org http://backyardgardening.org	1	3 issues	2187 ↑1.25%	2 ↑0%	20 ↑ 1854.05%	32 ↑ 3075.51%	5 ↑0%	24 ↑0%	17 0

The 'DA' column is highlighted with a red box. Below the table, it says 'Showing 1 to 1 of 1 rows'.

Notice the column labeled "DA". That's short for "Domain Authority", and it's an indicator of how likely a domain is to rank in Google based on a variety of factors -- the most prominent being the quantity and quality of the links aimed at the entire site. The higher the number, the more authority the site has and the more likely it's going to rank.

It's important that you keep an eye on that number and work hard to increase it by getting good quality links to your site.

Don't be tempted to get a bunch of low quality links just because it's

easier! At best it will have little to no effect on your rankings, and at worst it will get your site flagged by Google and you'll never rank the site at all.

[KC3](#) also has tools that will let you see whether or not a page is worth getting a link from, but I'll get into that more in another lesson.

Linking Domains, Not Linking Pages

Important Side Note: Google looks at how many different sites are linking to a page much more than how many individual links are aimed at that page. That is, if all of the sites were otherwise equal, having 100 links coming from 100 different websites (1 link from each site) is far better than having 100 links from 5 different websites (20 links from each site).

Just How Powerful Is A Site's Overall Link Popularity?

Just so you understand how powerful having high quality links aimed at all of the pages of your site really is, take a look at another image. This one comes from [KC3](#)'s Keyword Explorer analysis (I'll show you more of how this works in future lessons):

Page	KC Rank	TF	CF	PageLinks	Site Links
<p>Old Time Radio : Free Audio : Download & Streaming : Internet Archive https://archive.org/details/oldtimeradio At least 112 domains have links to this page that contains old time radio in the anchor text Top Page Anchors: old time radio [69], https://archive.org/details/oldtimeradio [49], [21], old time radio : free audio : download & streaming : internet archive [16], archive.org [12], archival websites [12], archive.org/details/oldtimeradio [6], old radio programs [5], this one [4], internet archive: old time radio [3] Show More</p>	5	54	53	371K links from 235 domains	184M links from 424K domains
<p>RadioLovers.com - Old Time Radio Shows http://www.radiolovers.com/ At least 660 domains have links to this page that contains old time radio in the anchor text Top Page Anchors: http://www.radiolovers.com/ [517], radio lovers [490], radiolovers.com [347], radiolovers.com - old time radio shows [342], radiolovers [244], [200], www.radiolovers.com [191], http://www.radiolovers.com [141], old time radio shows [92], old time radio [72] Show More</p>	4	43	42	33K links from 924 domains	74.2K links from 1.52K domains
<p>The Original Old Time Radio http://www.old-time.com/ At least 694 domains have links to this page that contains old time radio in the anchor text Top Page Anchors: http://www.old-time.com/ [243], [184], old time radio [181], old-time [156], old-time radio [128], http://www.old-time.com [100], www.old-time.com [98], the original old time radio (otr) www pages. old-time radio at its best [69], old-time.com [50], original old time radio [42] Show More</p>	4	37	35	3.24K links from 462 domains	8.35K links from 1.29K domains
<p>OTR.Network Library (The Old Time Radio Network) http://www.otr.net/ At least 888 domains have links to this page that contains old time radio in the anchor text Top Page Anchors: otr.network library (the old time radio network) [459], http://www.otr.net/ [329], www.otr.net [294], otr network [142], [132], otr network library [100], otr.network library [99], old time radio [95], http://www.otr.net [91], otr.net [83] Show More</p>	4	29	39	33K links from 452 domains	42.5K links from 934 domains

That image shows the top 4 search results in Google for the keywords "old time radio". Notice that the page ranked #1 (from archive.org) has the least number of different domains linking to it out of all 4 results (see the PageLinks column).

So why is Google ranking the archive.org page #1 if it has so few different domains linking to it compared to the other results?

Now look at the SiteLinks column. Archive.org has more links to the *entire site* than any of the other results. It has greater *overall* link popularity / authority.

That's the power of having strong link popularity across the entire site. Even if

your page isn't as popular as the competition, if your site is very popular Google will often favor your page over pages from other, less-popular sites.

How To Get High Quality Links

As an SEO professional that has ranked a lot of sites, the number one most difficult thing to do is actually *get the links* from other sites that are needed to rank. So how do you accomplish that?

For me, the absolute **best** method has been to offer free, high quality content to website owners in exchange for a link in the About the Author section of the article. This is known as “guest posting”, and it’s **wildly effective**. The best part about getting articles onto other sites in the same niche that you’re trying to rank in is that you often need *far fewer links* to rank.

An example of how true this is can be seen in the ranking of one of my many sites -- CabbageRoses.net. Take a look at the snapshot on the next page. It shows the results in Google for “cabbage roses” (which gets 2,400+ searches per month).

Look at the number of sites linking to the #1 ranking site (my site, CabbageRoses.net). It only has 55. Yet all of the sites below it have **thousands of linking domains**. That’s the power of getting the *right kind* of links -- links from sites related to the keywords you want to rank for. Virtually all of the links to CabbageRoses.net are links from guest posts on other, related sites.

Page	KC Rank	TF	CF	PageLinks	Site Links
<p>Cabbage Roses - A Cabbage Rose Must Read! http://cabbageroses.net/</p> <p>At least 5 domains have links to this page that contains cabbage roses in the anchor text</p> <p>Top Page Anchors: cabbageroses.net [4], cabbage roses [4], blog on cabbage roses! [1], cabbageroses, what you must know about the most beautiful roses in the world [1]</p>	3	28	32	691 links from 49 domains	723 links from 55 domains
<p>How to Grow Cabbage Roses Home Guides SF Gate http://homeguides.sfgate.com/grow-cabbage-roses-27144.html</p> <p>At least 2 domains have links to this page that contains cabbage roses in the anchor text</p> <p>Top Page Anchors: # [2], cabbage roses [1], homeguides.sfgate.com [1], how to grow cabbage roses home guides sfgate [1]</p>	1	5	17	7 links from 3 domains	327K links from 12.8K domains
<p>Cabbage Roses on Pinterest English Roses, David Austin Roses ... https://www.pinterest.com/optimistic51/cabbage-roses/</p> <p>At least 0 domains have links to this page that contains cabbage roses in the anchor text</p> <p>Top Page Anchors:</p>	0	0	0	30 links from 3 domains	5270M links from 3.28M domains
<p>Cabbage Rose Shell Pink http://www.fiftyflowers.com/product/Cabbage-Rose-Shell-Pink_312.htm</p> <p>At least 1 domains have links to this page that contains cabbage roses in the anchor text</p> <p>Top Page Anchors: shell pink cabbage roses [1], cabbage rose shell pink - fifty flowers [1], [1]</p>	2	20	11	0 links from 0 domains	45K links from 1.6K domains
<p>Cabbage Roses on Pinterest Pink Roses, Colorful Roses and Pink ... https://www.pinterest.com/explore/cabbage-roses/</p> <p>At least 0 domains have links to this page that contains cabbage roses in the anchor text</p> <p>Top Page Anchors:</p>	0	0	0	30 links from 3 domains	5270M links from 3.28M domains

In Summary

So to sum this lesson up, it's important that your site have lots of high quality links coming into all of its pages and not just the page that you're trying to rank in Google. Google very much prefers to rank sites that it considers an authority in its market, and authority sites naturally would have lots of "votes" to most (if not all) of their pages. The next lesson will discuss the second most important factor that Google looks for when ranking a page: **Page-Level Link Features**.

Lesson #2: Page-Level Link Features

The first lesson in this series on how to rank in Google was pretty meaty. It covered a number of important concepts, so I hope you read over it a few times to make sure you understood them.

PAGE-LEVEL LINKING FEATURES

What is it?

Page-Level Link Features is just a fancy way of saying the quality and quantity of links aimed at a single page of your website.

How important is it?

According to the 150 experts surveyed, page-level link features are an 8 out of 10 on the scale of importance for ranking in Google.

What can I do to improve it?

You want to get high quality links to the page on your site that you are trying to rank, including links from sites that are important in your market.

In addition to how popular your site is overall, Google also values how popular each individual page of your site is. You improve the link popularity of your page by getting links to it from high quality sites.

Sites like:

- Authority sites in your market/industry
- Well known journals for your market/industry
- Popular blogs for your market/industry
- High quality directories for your market/industry
- Well known general information sites (like Wikipedia)
- For local businesses, popular review sites (like Yelp)

(Remember: guest articles on other quality sites in your market work great.)

The more of these kinds of high quality links your page has, the more Google will favor it in the search results. While not weighted as heavily as the site's overall link popularity (domain authority), the individual page link popularity is still a very important factor in getting Google to rank the page.

Should You Buy Links?

To expedite things, some people choose to buy links or pay people to create the links for them. This is a common practice, and I won't say it's not effective. Look at the backlinks aimed at just about any site in competitive markets and it's pretty obvious that webmasters are buying links.

If you choose to do this, just keep in mind that there's risk involved. Google does not want to rank websites that buy links or have them created rather than earned. Google is just a machine and often can't tell the difference between the two, but if it gets discovered that your site is using paid links you can pretty much guarantee that your site will be "slapped"--pushed way down or even out of the search results completely.

I won't be hypocritical here. I personally use manually created links (but never links created by software automation). I even run a service that builds these manual links (RankCrew.com). I'm not telling you not to do it, just be aware of the risk.

Link Baiting

Link Baiting is the Search Engine Marketing phrase for creating content that people will want to link to. This is not an easy thing to achieve. You need to really throw yourself into content if you want others to link to it. Be passionate. Make sure it uses visual elements (graphics, infographics or even video), has a lot of depth and usable knowledge. Controversial content also tends to work well as link bait.

Once you have some link bait posted to your site, a great way to start getting it to generate links is through social media. Post a link to the page to Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, etc. Anywhere and everywhere that people might see it and start talking about it. If you have the means, promote the post using the paid advertising/boosting systems of the social media sites you post it to.

If people love it, they'll share it, and some of those who see it will link to it.

Understanding Anchor Text

In years past it used to be very important to make sure that you get the keywords you want to rank for into the anchor text of lots of links aimed at your site. The anchor text is the (typically) underlined text in a link. For instance, in this link -- [click here](#) -- "click here" is the anchor text.

So if you wanted a page to rank for "*blue widgets*", in the past you would make sure that most of the links to your site looked like this: [blue widgets](#)

However, because anchor text was so important in the past, it was heavily used by website owners to influence Google's results, so Google changed the way it looks at anchor text. Now having your keywords in the anchor text more than just a small percentage of the time will have the opposite effect! This is known as "anchor text over-optimization."

Google is pretty good at figuring out what keywords a page should rank for based on the page title, page content and (to a lesser degree) the content of the pages linking to it. Besides that, you can influence what Google thinks your page is about by the way you structure the page (more on that in the next lesson). There's no need to stuff the anchor text of your links with your keywords. It's harmful to your rankings to try and do that now.

Only a few of your links should have anchor text that exactly match the keywords you want to rank for. It's not "natural" behavior for links to always contain keywords in the anchor text, and Google doesn't like to see that anymore. So make sure you just sprinkle your keywords in the anchor text of the highest quality links to your site.

Most of the time your links will contain what links naturally contain: your brand name, your domain name or URL and a variety of other text that isn't keyword related (e.g. "click here" or "this page", etc.).

It's also good to use descriptive anchor text with your primary keywords sometimes (e.g. if your page is about "blue widgets" your anchor text may be "learn about blue widgets here" or "advice on blue widgets" or "how to use blue widgets properly"). Descriptive anchor text is good -- keyword-only anchor text must be used sparingly.

A good rule of thumb is to keep the number of links that use any kind of keyword-rich anchor texts (including descriptive anchor texts) under 10%.

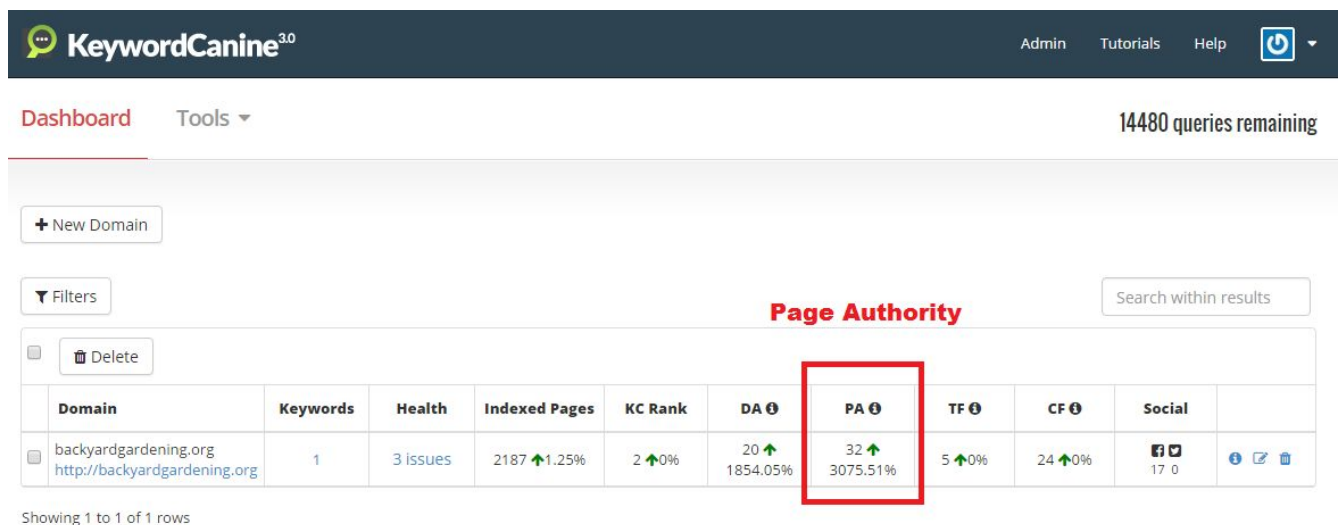
Like I said, Google does still look at anchor text to determine relevancy, but it doesn't like to see a lot of exact keywords in the anchor text. One way to get around this limitation is if your domain name contains the keywords you want to rank for (as an example, I have a site called "backyardgardening.org").

Having links with the domain or url as the anchor text ("backyardgardening.org" or "http://backyardgardening.org") will not be penalized by Google, and yet still

contain the keywords you want to rank for and helps push your site towards better rankings for those keywords.

[How To Check A Page's Link Popularity and Anchor Text](#)

Once again I'll refer to [Keyword Canine 3.0](#) (or [KC3](#)) -- the only SEO tool I use anymore. The Domain Dashboard tool that I showed you in the previous lesson shows you the authority of any individual page you give it:



The screenshot shows the KeywordCanine 3.0 dashboard. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'Admin', 'Tutorials', and 'Help' links. Below that, the 'Dashboard' and 'Tools' tabs are visible, along with a '14480 queries remaining' indicator. A '+ New Domain' button is present. A 'Filters' dropdown and a 'Search within results' input field are also shown. The main content area features a table titled 'Page Authority'. The table has columns for Domain, Keywords, Health, Indexed Pages, KC Rank, DA, PA, TF, CF, and Social. The PA column is highlighted with a red box. The data row shows the domain 'backyardgardening.org' with a PA of 32 (up 3075.51%) and a TF of 5 (up 0%).

Domain	Keywords	Health	Indexed Pages	KC Rank	DA	PA	TF	CF	Social
backyardgardening.org http://backyardgardening.org	1	3 issues	2187 ↑1.25%	2 ↑0%	20 ↑ 1854.05%	32 ↑ 3075.51%	5 ↑0%	24 ↑0%	f v 17 0

Notice the "PA" column. That stands for "Page Authority", and it's an indicator of how likely a page is to rank in Google based on a variety of factors -- the most prominent being the quantity and quality of the links aimed at that page. The higher the number, the more authority the page has and the more likely it is to rank in Google.

You want to get that number as high as possible by building high quality links to your page. [KC3](#) also has another powerful tool, the Backlink Report, that's able to show you a list of all of the links aimed at any page of your site and what their quality is like:

Backlink Report

URL	http://backyardgardening.org/	
Links Shown	35	
PageLinks	202 links from 14 domains	
SiteLinks	448 links from 39 domains	
Created	2015-09-07	
Expires	2015-10-07	

Unique Class-C IPs	12 (31%)
EDU Domain Links	0
GOV Domain Links	0

Page Authority and Anchor Text

Anchor Text Breakdown	
backyardgardening.org	21
visit website	6
	6
[Other]	2

KCRank Breakdown	
5	1
3	2
2	4
1	3
0	25

NOFOLLOW Breakdown	
NOFOLLOW	23
DOFOLLOW	12

Notice the Anchor Text Breakdown. It shows you how many times each anchor text appears in links to your site. Also notice that not one link contains the exact phrase "backyard gardening", and yet backyardgardening.org ranks very well for those keywords. (The same is true of CabbageRoses.net--very few links contain the exact phrase it's ranking for--"cabbage roses".)

Remember: you want to keep the number of links that contain your keywords to just a few (under 10%). Also, you want to try and get links from pages that are themselves well-linked (in [KC3](#) that means a higher KCRank value).

You also want to make sure that you have plenty of *DOFOLLOW* links, since those are the ones that Google says they will count as votes toward the popularity of your page. If a link is *NOFOLLOW* (see the pink highlighted number in the above image), that means the website owner is telling Google "do not count this link as a vote."

[Understanding the Relationship of Page Authority to Domain Authority](#)

If you recall from lesson #1, Google values the link popularity of your entire site more than the link popularity of any individual page. However, the site's overall link popularity is the sum total of the popularity of each individual page. That means that it's important to get quality links coming into each individual page, because that's what ultimately determines the "authority" of your site as a whole.

Let me illustrate this concept. The human face is made up of many pieces: the eyes, nose, ears, mouth, teeth, hair, chin, cheeks, jaw etc. Having just one great feature doesn't make a person beautiful. A person may have a great nose, but if that's the only great feature on their face few people would think of them as beautiful. People may admire an individual's hair, but hair alone doesn't make you beautiful either.

But put great eyes, a nice smile and good hair on a person and wow! Suddenly they're a real looker. It's the combination of great features that matters. Whereas individually those features may not be considered "beautiful", put them together and what you have is suddenly more than the sum of its parts.

Well, Google is looking to rank "beautiful" sites. Sites that have a number of great features (pages). The more great features (pages) it finds on the collective "face" of your site, the more beautiful it is in Google's eyes and the more likely it is to rank.

Improving the link popularity of the individual pages of your site gives the site a collective "face lift" in Google's estimation. Focusing all of your attention on one great page or one great section of your site isn't usually enough. You want to make all of the pieces come together in one beautiful collection that is more than the sum of its parts.

When you've accomplished that, your site becomes an "authority" site, the kind of site that Google loves to rank.

If the Page Authority statistic can be likened to the individual features of your site's "face", the Domain Authority statistic represents the beauty of a site overall. So work hard to make yours a "perfect ten."

In Summary

To sum this lesson up, getting high quality links into the individual page that you want to rank is very important. Even if Google values the site's overall link popularity the most, it still puts weight on an individual page's authority. And since the domain authority is the sum of the individual pages' authority, it only makes sense to increase the link popularity and authority of each individual page as much as possible.

The next lesson will discuss what's known as the "on-page" factors that Google looks for when determining if a page should rank: **Page-Level Keyword & Content-Based Features.**

Lesson #3: Page-Level Keyword & Content-Based Features

We're moving right along in how to rank in Google using the most recent proven techniques. Much has changed in the way Google scores your site for ranking purposes, so it's important that you stay up to date.

Page-Level Keyword and Content-Based Features

What is it?

Page-Level Keyword and Content-Based Features basically covers how well optimized everything is that's visible on the page you're trying to rank: the title, the headings, the page body, the images, etc.

How important is it?

According to the 150 experts surveyed, proper content optimization scores a 7.8 out of 10 on the scale of importance for ranking in Google.

What can I do to improve it?

Start with a piece of very high quality content. Nothing else matters if you don't do that first. Only after you have an article you are proud to put your name on and share with people do you proceed to do any of the following...

Make sure that your primary keywords appear at the beginning of the title, meta description and page headline. The primary keywords should also appear in the page body two or more times (but not too much) along with other related keywords for the page topic. Secondary keywords should appear in the title/body/subheadings if appropriate. Having proper descriptive ALT tags on your images also matters. Some highlighting of important keyword phrases using bold and italics is a good idea as well. Use a top-down, broad-to-narrow structure with subheadings.

Detailed Explanation

In the previous lesson I used an illustration about what makes a person's face beautiful. It's not just one element of the face, it's many elements combined.

The same thing is true of the content of your page. There are many elements that will improve Google's scoring of how relevant your content is to the keywords being searched by the user.

In the past, having a lot of high quality links to your page was enough to get you ranked. High quality links are still very important to ranking in Google, but they are not the only factor required. In the past it was possible to rank a page whose content was very poor (and sometimes almost non-existent) based solely on the quality, quantity and anchor text of the links.

Those days are gone. If you're still daydreaming about that era, wake up and smell the double tall breve latte with a dash of cinnamon. Just like modern-day coffee drinkers have gotten more sophisticated and demanding in their tastes, so too Google is requiring more from you if you want to feed its addiction for quality content.

So what is Google looking for when it crawls the pages of your website?

Here's the quick list:

- Your page needs to target a single, narrow topic
- Your primary keywords should be at the beginning of the page title
- Your primary keywords should appear in the page URL
- Your content needs to be broken up into related subtopics with proper headings
- Your primary keywords should be used in the page headline
- When appropriate, your keywords should be emphasized with bold and/or italics
- Your primary keywords should appear in the content body two or more times
- You should use related secondary keywords in the various elements of the page
- Images on the page should have descriptive ALT tags

Before we get into the details of these things, let's talk a bit about Google versus human beings.

Man versus Machine

You're a human being (I trust). You can read an article and immediately know what it's all about. You can pick out the subtopics and concepts, people and places involved just by reading it. And when you're done you can write a brief summary of what you just read and email a recommendation (or not) to a friend. The article doesn't have to be formatted in any special way for you to do this. Your brain is a marvel of software engineering in that respect.

Google, however, is a machine. While pretty darn good at what it does (for a machine), it cannot "understand" what it reads in the way you do. It doesn't instinctively know what an article is about or if it constitutes high quality. It can only guess at this by using signals that it's been designed to look for.

Your job as a website owner is to add those signals to your content to help Google understand what it's about and interpret it as high quality. Your goal should not be to trick Google into this, but to try and help Google come to this conclusion.

I like to call the result of this process **structured quality**. None of the suggestions below should be taken if doing so will hurt the human estimation of its quality. A human being can easily see if your content is good or not (and that estimation matters in the rankings, too, as you'll see in another lesson). You want to take that same high quality content that humans would love and tweak it in ways that help Google come to that same conclusion.

In short, do not sacrifice quality to achieve technical perfection. It does you no good to get a page to rank in Google if the people who arrive on the page don't want to stay there!

Just like a face does not require every facet to be perfect in order to be seen as "beautiful", the pages of your website do not have to follow every single process below exactly to do well in Google. The list below is a checklist of *guidelines*, not *absolute musts*. While most of the suggestions can and should be implemented most of the time, all of the suggestions do not have to be implemented all of the time.

Got it? Okay then, let's dig into each one of these a little more.

What Google Wants, Google Gets

Your page needs to target a single, narrow topic

Google wants to see pages that are topical -- not driven solely by keywords -- and that topic should be sufficiently narrow. For example, your website may cover a variety of different kinds of insurance, but your site should be broken up into sub-sections for each kind of insurance (life, auto, health, etc.).

Each page in the sub-sections should cover a specific narrow topic ("Should college students have life insurance?", "Lowering auto-insurance premiums with a bad driving record", etc.) The idea here is to keep it fairly narrow. You don't want to try to cover a huge, broad area of your site topic in one article.

Overview articles are important and have their place, but most of the sub-section articles should focus on a specific, narrow topic. And when you do write long overview articles, it's a good idea to break up each section into another page. So, for instance, the first page may cover why life insurance is important, the second page may cover the ins and outs of term life insurance, the third may cover whole life, etc.

Your primary keywords should be at the beginning of the page title

This one is simple. If you're targeting the keywords "Life insurance for college students", that should be at the beginning of your page title (e.g. "Life insurance for college students - why it's important.") And keep your page title under 75 characters.

Your primary keywords should appear in the page URL

For very long-tail keywords (keyword phrases with 5 or more words) this may not be practical, but for shorter keyword phrases it's a good idea.

Your content needs to be broken up into related subtopics with proper headings

Virtually no topic worthy of a full page article has zero subtopics that need to be discussed. So break up your article into subtopics. "Life insurance for college students" can be broken up into, for example: Why college students need life

insurance, When should a student get insurance, How much life insurance should you get?, etc.

Without over-doing it, use keywords that are related to your primary topic in the subtopic headings. Your primary keywords/topic should be sufficiently narrow, but your subtopics should really dig into the details. This is where keyword research becomes important (more on that in the next section).

Your primary keywords should be used in the page headline

Another simple one. Just make sure that the primary headline on your page contains your primary keywords. And make sure that the headline is visible "above the fold". That is, it should be seen by the visitor as soon as the page loads -- they shouldn't have to scroll down to see it.

When appropriate, your keywords should be emphasized with bold and/or italics

Do not overdo this! But when it makes sense, bold or italicize your keywords (either primary or secondary).

Your primary keywords should appear in the content body two or more times

In addition to the page title and headline, your keywords should be in the body of the page at least twice -- but not too many times. Your use of the keywords

should sound natural when you read it out loud. If it sounds excessive out loud, it is.

Google will break the page down into all of the keywords and phrases that appear on the page. Any keyword or phrase that only appears once won't be seen as any more important than any other phrase. You don't want that. You want Google to realize that your primary keywords are important. But you don't want to look like you're stuffing your keywords in the page either.

Remember, make it sound natural when it's read out loud.

You should use related secondary keywords in the various elements of the page

As I mentioned before, no topic is made up of just one single set of keywords. There are other, related keywords that would naturally appear in the topic. For instance, your primary keywords may be "life insurance for college students", but within that topic you will likely also talk about "term life insurance for college students" or "whole life college policies", etc.

Those are "long-tail" keywords. By themselves they don't get searched for much in Google, but that also means that their competition is generally much lower. Having multiple long-tails in your page makes it less keyword-driven and more topical (a plus in Google's estimation) and also gives your page a chance to rank for multiple keywords. And let me tell you, those small search numbers for long-tails can really add up.

Just be sure to always read the content out loud to make sure it flows well and sounds natural. If it sounds like you're trying too hard to push keywords into your article, you can bet that Google's going to see it that way too.

Read it out loud. Read it out loud... *read it out loud for cryin' out loud!*

Images on the page should have descriptive ALT tags

This one is easy to overlook because you can't see the ALT tags of your images when you're looking at the page (not unless you hover your mouse over them). It's important that you add the ALT tag, though, because it helps add to the overall relevancy of the page.

Most site building software will let you right-click an image and set the value of the ALT tag.

Example of Page Content that Google Loves

It's often better to see how things work than to just read about it, so I went ahead and dissected a top-ranking page in Google so you can see how it incorporates many of the suggestions listed above.

Take a look:

Primary Keywords: Clicker Training

Rank in Google: #3

Page URL: https://www.aspca.org/pet-care/virtual-pet-behaviorist/clicker-training-your-pet



We fight for animals. Will you join the fight? Become a Member >

Pet Care

Home > Pet Care > Virtual Pet Behaviorist > Clicker Training > Your Pet < Keywords in Body #1

Clicker Training Your Pet < Keywords at beginning of primary heading (and heading is above the fold)

Facebook Twitter Pinterest G+ Google+ Email Print

Keywords in URL

Keywords in subheading

Keywords in body #2

Broken into related subheadings

Broken into related subheadings

Keywords in subheading again

What Is Clicker Training?

Clicker training is a method of animal training that uses a sound—a click—to tell an animal when he does something right. The clicker is a tiny plastic box held in the palm of your hand, with a metal tongue that you push quickly to make the sound. Most people who've heard of the clicker know that it's a popular tool for dog trainers, but clickers can be used to train all kinds of animals, wild and domestic—from lions to elephants to household cats, birds and rats!



How Does the Clicker Work?

The clicker creates an efficient language between a human trainer and an animal trainee. First, a trainer teaches an animal that every time he hears the clicking sound, he gets a treat. Once the animal understands that clicks are always followed by treats, the click becomes as powerful a reward to the animal as money is to people. When this happens, the trainer can use the click to mark (identify for the animal) the instant the animal performs the right behavior. For example, if a trainer wants to teach a dog to sit, she'll click the instant his rump hits the floor and then deliver a tasty treat. With repetition, the dog learns that sitting earns rewards.

So the click takes on huge meaning. To the animal it means: "What I was doing the moment my trainer clicked, that's what she wants me to do!" The clicker in animal training is like the winning buzzer on a game show that tells a contestant she just won money! Through the clicker, the trainer communicates precisely with the dog, and that speeds up training.

Although the clicker is ideal because it makes a unique, consistent sound, you do need a spare hand to hold it. For that reason, some trainers prefer to keep both hands free and instead use a one-syllable word like "Yes!" or "Good!" to mark the desired behavior. In the steps below, you can substitute the word in place of the click to teach your pet what the sound means, just as you would with a clicker.

Giving the Clicker Meaning

It's easy to introduce the clicker to your pet. Spend 30 minutes or so teaching him that the sound of the click means "Treat!" (For the sake of simplicity, let's assume that you're going to clicker train a dog.)

- 1. Sit and watch TV or read a book with your dog in the room. Have a container of treats within reach.
2. Place one treat in your hand and the clicker in the other. (If your dog smells the treat and tries to get it by pawing, sniffing, mouthing or barking at you, just close your hand around the treat and wait until he gives up and leaves you alone.)
3. Click once and immediately open your hand to give your dog the treat. Put another treat in your closed hand and resume watching TV or reading. Ignore your dog.
4. Several minutes later, click again and offer another treat.
5. Continue to repeat the click-and-treat combination at varying intervals, sometimes after one minute, sometimes after five minutes. Make sure you vary the time so that your dog doesn't know exactly when the next click is coming. Eventually, he'll start to turn toward you and look expectant when he hears the click—which means he understands that the sound of the clicker means a treat is coming his way.

Troubleshooting

If your pet runs away when he hears the click, you can make the sound softer by putting it in your pocket or wrapping a towel around your hand that's holding the clicker. You can also try using a different sound, like the click of a retractable pen or the word "Yes" or "Bingo."

Clicker Training Basics

Once your dog seems to understand the connection between the click and the treat, you're ready to get started. Keep these guidelines in mind to ensure your clicker training success:

- 1. Click just once, right when your pet does what you want him to do. Think of it like pressing the shutter of a camera to take a picture of the behavior.
2. Remember to follow every click with a treat. After you click, deliver the treat to your pet's mouth as quickly as possible.
3. It's fine to switch between practicing two or three behaviors within a session, but work on one behavior at a time. For example, say you're teaching a dog to sit, lie down and raise his paw. You can do 10 repetitions of sit and take a quick play break. Then do 10 repetitions of down, and take another quick break. Then do 10 repetitions of shake, and so on.
4. Animals, like children, have short attention spans. Keep training sessions short (15 minutes or less), and stop before you or your pet gets tired of the game.
5. End training sessions on a good note, when your pet has succeeded with what you're working on. If necessary, ask him to do something you know he can do well at the end of a session.
6. Some trainers like to click and then deliver a "jackpot"—a bunch of treats—when their pet has accomplished a particularly challenging task. Big efforts deserve big rewards!

It's important to note that the page has most, but not all of the components that help Google determine a page's topic and quality. Remember, beauty is the combination of many facets, not necessarily all of them.

[How To Break A Topic Down Into Keywords](#)

When you sit down to create an article for your site, you usually have the primary keywords in mind already. Once you do, the next step is to take that topic and break it into smaller subtopics that you can create subheadings for, and to find related secondary keywords that you can use in the articles as well.

I love [Keyword Canine 3.0](#) for this, because it has a tool (the Keyword Explorer) that will show you all of the keywords Google feels are related to your topic -- and how difficult they are to rank for. There's not much sense in trying to target one page for a variety of very difficult keywords. You want to find related keywords that are easier to rank for, which improves your chances of catching those extra visitors in addition to the ones hitting your page for your primary keywords.

For example, let's say that I wanted to write an article on how to train a dog using a clicker device. In [KC3](#) I simply entered the primary keywords "dog clicker training" in the Keyword Explorer and clicked Explore Keywords.

I then filtered the results to only show keywords with less than 100 monthly searches and at least 4 words in the keyword phrases. That gives me the

low-competition, long-tail keywords that I can work into my article as subheadings and secondary keywords.

Here's what I found:

dog clicker training United States Explore Keywords Analyze Keyword

Keywords (655)

Select list Save to list Create new list Remove Keywords: None Easy Medium Hard Fierce Search within results

Clear Table Filters Monthly Searches

Bulk Analyze Delete Mark as keeper

	DF	Keyword	Competition	Monthly Searches	Approximate CPC	Country	Keeper
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		how to train a dog tricks		90	\$0.99	United States	★
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		how to teach a dog no		90	\$0.00	United States	★
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		how to toilet train a puppy		70	\$0.54	United States	★
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		training tools for dogs		70	\$1.47	United States	★
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		dog training clicker app		70	\$1.00	United States	★
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		clicker training a puppy		50	\$2.63	United States	★

There's some great stuff there! You can imagine subheadings in the dog clicker-training article like: "How To Teach A Dog 'No'", "How To Clicker-Train A Dog To Do Tricks", "Clicker-Training Puppies", "Apps To Help You With Clicker Training", etc.

That's why a great tool like [KC3](#) is invaluable when planning the content for your site. You no doubt already know the primary topic you want to write about (but if you don't, [KC3](#) can help you with that too). But it's easy to overlook the many,

many secondary keywords that you can work into the great topical articles that Google loves to see.

In Summary

Google isn't ranking sites based only on their link popularity anymore. Links are still very important, but other factors are also very important. Remember that the SiteLinks and PageLinks were rated an 8 out of 10 by 150 experts, but the importance of page-level content was rated a 7.8 out of 10 -- not far behind.

Create topical content for your pages and not content that targets a single keyword. Make sure you're using related subheadings and secondary keywords. A top-down, structured approach that goes from the broader topic into more narrow subtopics works best and makes it easy for Google to figure out the path your content is following.

And for goodness sake read that page out loud before you publish it!

The next lesson will discuss more page-level features that are unrelated to the topic or keywords of the content.

Lesson #4: Page-Level Keyword-Agnostic Features

So far in this SEO course we've covered the importance of your site and pages having plenty of high quality links, as well as the correct way to create structured quality content that wins Google's favor.

PAGE-LEVEL KEYWORD-AGNOSTIC FEATURES

What is it?

Page-Level Keyword-Agnostic Features just means everything about a page that doesn't have to do with optimizing for your keywords.

How important is it?

According to the 150 experts surveyed, this kind of content optimization scores a 6.5 out of 10 on the scale of importance for ranking in Google.

What can I do to improve it?

Make sure your content is of optimal length (long is good), easily readable and functional, uses Open Graph markup and structured data when appropriate, is unique, loads fast and (if possible) resides on a secure server (HTTPS).

Any webmaster could be forgiven for focusing only on the links to their site and the quality (and Google-friendliness) of their content. But there's more to making sure Google's happy with the pages of your site than just those (admittedly very important) things.

There are many other factors that you want to check as well. They are:

- Your content should be the right length
- Your content should be easily readable and functional
- Make sure your content is unique to your site
- When appropriate, use Open Graph data in your content
- When appropriate, use structured data in your content
- The pages of your site should load fast for Desktop and Mobile users
- If possible, host your site on a secure server (HTTPS)
- Let's get into detail about each one of these factors.

Digging Into The Details

Your content should be the right length

Google is ranking longer content these days. In fact, an extensive study done by our friends at Moz shows that, across the board, pages ranking from position 1 to 10 in Google average between 1,500 and 2,000 words of content. Gone are the days of 500 word articles being sufficient. You want to provide in-depth quality content.

Your content should be easily readable and functional

I'm not talking about the quality of the words here -- that should already be a given based on the previous lesson. I'm talking about the way the content is structured so it's easy on the eyes.

Web content is very different from book or magazine content. Paragraphs should contain fewer sentences. Numbered and unnumbered lists should be used wherever possible for easy digestion of tips and facts. Subheadings should be plentiful and make it clear what content resides in the paragraphs beneath them.

You should also be using instructional images, infographics and (when appropriate) video.

Make sure your content is unique to your site

This may already be obvious to you, but you want the content on your site to be unique to your site whenever possible. Copyscape is the go-to tool for checking the uniqueness of the pages of your site. While it's possible to rank 100% duplicate content (despite what people who don't really understand Google's stance on duplicate content say), it puts you in direct competition with every other site that posts the same content. Who needs the extra competition?

When appropriate, use Open Graph data in your content

Open Graph is a set of HTML tags created by Facebook in 2010. These special tags let you tell Facebook how the information on your page should appear when somebody posts a link to your page on Facebook.

It wasn't long before Twitter and Google+ followed suit and started using Open Graph data as well (Twitter has it's own set of special tags for this).

These tags go in the HEAD section of the HTML of your page. How to add these tags is beyond the scope of this course, but if you Google it you'll find it's very easy to do.

While Open Graph data does not influence Google's ranking directly, it certainly does make it easier for people to share your pages in social media, and it makes what they share more attractive. Easy sharing means more eyeballs seeing the content you want, and that can result in more links to your site -- which do, of course, influence Google.

When appropriate, use structured data in your content

Google supports a variety of what's known as "structured data" formats. Like Open Graph data, structured data is simply a set of special tags that tell Google what the information on a page is for.

You can tell Google the names of your products, their prices, the average review score and how many customers have reviewed it. You can provide map data, authorship data and a whole lot more.

Like with Open Graph data, I can't go into full detail about how to use structured data on your site, but what you need to know is just a quick Google search away.

The pages of your site should load fast for Desktop and Mobile users

Google is all about improving user experience, and sending people to pages that load slow is not a good experience for anybody. So you want your pages to be as light and fast-loading as possible -- both for desktop and mobile users.

This means making sure your images are compressed as much as possible (without making them look awful), and that you're not loading any unnecessary scripts or content on the page.

It's also a good idea to enable gzip compression for your site. How to do that is beyond the scope of this course, but it's very easy. Just search Google for ".htaccess enable compression". It's just a matter of making a small change to one file in your site's home directory.

If possible, host your site on a secure server (HTTPS)

Google has indicated that it slightly favors secure sites now, quite likely due to the all of the "data breach" headlines in the news over the past year.

How To Check Your Site For All These Factors

Most of these factors are easily checked by looking at your page, but some of them require software tools. I, of course, use [Keyword Canine 3.0 \[KC3\]](#).

From the Domain Dashboard, [KC3](#) tells me the load speed for any page, both for desktop and mobile users:

The screenshot shows the KeywordCanine 3.0 interface. A modal window titled "Domain Health Breakdown" is open, displaying performance metrics for the domain backyardgardening.org. The background shows a dashboard with a table of domains and a search bar.

Significant	
Page speed score	Speed: 74 Load time: 1.6s
Mobile support	Speed: 67 Usability: ■

Minor	
Social links present	No
Secure site?	No

Keywords	
backyard gardening	
Saturation	Yes

The background dashboard includes a table with columns for Domain and Keywords, and a search bar with the text "14467 queries remaining".

I know from experience that if a page loads slow Google will knock it down in the rankings. I had a site recently that I loaded too many scripts onto, taking the load speed down to a score of 65/100 -- and the rankings plummeted.

So be sure to stay on top of the load speed of your pages!

[KC3](#) also shows the byte count and word count of the page content, and as part of its Domain Health checks to make sure that Open Graph variables are present. Both important metrics to keep track of for any site you're trying to rank.

In Summary

In addition to links and high quality content, Google also likes to see a variety of other traits on your pages. Long, well-structured articles that load fast and are unique to your site are your best bet if you want to get good marks from big G.

The next lesson will discuss **Engagement & Traffic/Query Data**.

Lesson #5: Engagement & Traffic/Query Data

We're at the halfway point of your Google-ranking education. By now you know a lot about what it takes to rank in Google. In fact, what you know so far is enough for you to get your pages ranked -- at least initially.

But you don't want to stop there, because getting ranked and staying ranked are two different animals. We'll discuss the second beast today.

ENGAGEMENT & TRAFFIC/QUERY DATA

What is it?

Engagement and Traffic/Query Data is just an overly-technical way of asking "Are people sticking around and interacting with my site?" and "Am I making the most out of my presence in Google?"

How important is it?

According to the 150 experts surveyed, engagement and traffic data scores a 6.5 out of 10 on the scale of importance for ranking in Google.

What can I do to improve it?

You want your pages to really catch and hold people's attention so that they don't show up on your page and immediately click the "Back" button, and you want the way your pages are listed in Google to also catch people's attention so you get a high click-through rate (CTR) from the search engine result pages (SERPs).

Detailed Explanation [Engagement]

Let's say you're driving through a new town and decide you need a few items from the store. The first store you see looks great from the outside, so you pull in, park and go inside -- only to find that the store is poorly organized and doesn't have much of what you need.

What would you do? You'd leave quickly and go to the next store.

You don't want your website to be like that store. Remember: it's possible to get the right kind of links and make your page content technically perfect so that Google thinks the content must be quality.

But Google can't understand what it extracts from your site. It can only guess at the quality of a page based on the signals it finds there. So what will happen next is Google will put your pages into the search results because they appear to be good on a technical level, and watch to see what people do after they click-through to your site (and watch if people click-through at all).

If a lot of people click-through but immediately click the "Back" button and return to Google's search results (or few people ever click-through), Google makes the assumption (and rightly so) that the searcher didn't find what they were looking for on your page. That is, your page wasn't a good match for the search terms they typed into Google.

You can probably guess what Google will do if that continues to happen -- yank your page from the search results for those keywords.

That's why it's easier to get your pages to rank initially than it is to keep them in the rankings long-term. You can fool Google because it's a machine, but you can't fool real people, and people's failure to stick around on your site means you won't fool Google for long, either.

Having a lot of people hit the "Back" button quickly is called having a high "bounce rate". The "bounce rate" is the percentage of people who leave immediately after landing on your page. You want that number to be as low as possible.

To accomplish this you need to make sure your site is engaging and keeps people around for as long as possible.

A few ways to do this are:

- Use informational images: charts, graphs and infographics
- Use engaging video
- Use "related pages" links below the primary page content
- Encourage user participation with comments or feedback
- Use interactive elements on the page

Let's get into each one of those a bit:

Use informational images: charts, graphs and infographics

Informational images are a fantastic way to keep people around. People are generally very visually oriented. If they see a long article with no images they will go cross-eyed and say "no way I'm reading all that!" That results in a high bounce rate.

But if you break up the content with large, informational images, suddenly it's a different story. Showing people what you want them to know rather than just telling them makes it much easier on their eyes (and brain).

Charts, graphs and (especially) infographics are wonderful teaching tools and keep people eating up your content.

Liberal use of subheadings are good for this, too, since they break up the page, making each chunk of content appear smaller and more easily digestible. Just

make sure the subheadings use a larger font or a different color (or both) so that it clearly defines segmented areas of the content.

Use engaging video

Note the word "engaging" here. If you have video on the page, make sure it immediately grabs people's attention and keeps it all the way through.

I know it annoys some people, but especially on product sales pages I like to have the video start automatically. People can't help it -- they're drawn into watching the video even if they don't want to be. The human brain is wired to pay attention to movement, and video is all movement.

But there are limits to how much of this people will take, too. While you want to captivate and engage them, if you make the video too long people will click away after a while. Even if on a technical level the bounce rate stays low because the visitors stuck around for the first couple of minutes of the video, you will have lost what could have been a repeat visitor and potential customer.

Short, punchy videos work best -- 5 to 10 minutes at the absolute most. And only do 10 minutes if the video is broken into segments that cover different subtopics or is super engaging.

Use "related pages" links below the primary page content

When your visitor is done reading the content that kept their attention, give them somewhere else to go on your site that's related to what they just saw. Provide links to other pages of your site that cover a different aspect of the topic they are clearly interested in. That's a great way to lower the bounce rate and increase a user's time-on-site.

Encourage user participation with comments or feedback

Good or bad, people love to share their opinions--just read the news on any website that allows comments to see how true that is! So give your visitors a way to do just that. Encourage commenting (even if it needs to be moderated). Give them a feedback form to fill out or a short survey to take about what they just read.

Use interactive elements on the page

By "interactive elements" I mostly mean tools. If you have a page on getting a mortgage loan, include a calculator on the page that lets the visitor see what their monthly payment would be at certain interest rates. If your page is on weight loss, give them a Body-Mass-Index (BMI) calculator.

If you load these tools using javascript or an inline frame (HTML IFRAME), then you can copy the tool onto all of the pages that are related to the same topic and only have to make changes to the tool from one place.

To quote Jean Luc Picard from Star Trek (and show how much of a geek I am), "ENGAGE!"

Detailed Explanation [Traffic/Query Data]

If engagement is what your store is like on the inside, the traffic/query data tells you what your store looks like on the outside. You may have a wonderful selection of goods that are well laid out and the friendliest staff in town, but if your store doesn't draw people's attention from the outside, few people are going to stop in to see how awesome it is.

Again, your site is the store, and how it appears in Google's search results represents the outside look of that store to the people searching.

Google Webmaster Tools will show you the queries that your pages are showing up for and what your click-through rate (CTR) is for those keywords. CTR is just a measure of what percentage of people who see your page actually click on the link in Google's results to visit it.

Naturally if your page shows up for a lot of keywords but nobody ever clicks on it, that does you no good. Even worse, if that happens for too long Google may decide to pull your page from the results for those keywords because it's not improving the user experience.

This again is where hitting all of the signals that Google is looking for isn't enough. You may have your keywords at the start of your page title and in the meta description of the page (which Google will often show as the site description in the search results), but if that title doesn't grab a human being's attention you're not doing yourself any favors.

So make sure that you work hard to improve your page title (primarily) and meta description. Use catchy wording, not boring technical language. Taking the time to study the art of copywriting will do you a world of good here.

How To Check Your Site For All These Factors

[Keyword Canine 3.0](#) doesn't yet have a tool that ties into Google's Webmaster Tools or Google Analytics -- but that's slated for a future upgrade. I'm very eager to get that into the tool soon, so I don't think it will be too long. And of course upgrades are free to all users, so if you happen to be one you'll get it at no extra cost.

For now, though, just make sure you're monitoring Google Webmaster Tools [WMT] and Google Analytics [GA] and keeping track of your Bounce Rate [GA], Time-On-Page [GA] and query CTR [WMT].

In Summary

Being technically awesome at ranking pages in Google is a fantastic skill to have, but you can't just stop there. You need to appeal to human beings at least as much as you appeal to Google's algorithms, because it's the people that will be buying from you or making your advertisers happy.

Lesson six will discuss **Domain-Level Brand Metrics**, a metric that in years past Google's algorithms had little interest in but that has become increasingly important.

Lesson #6: Domain-Level Brand Metrics

It's time for lesson number six of your Google-ranking education.

Congratulations for making it this far! The fact that you're still following and learning means you're pretty serious about establishing your name in Google.

And establishing your name -- otherwise known as "branding" -- is what today's lesson is all about.

DOMAIN-LEVEL BRAND METRICS

What is it?

Domain-Level Brand Metrics basically means all of the stuff you're doing to establish what people think of when they think of your domain name.

How important is it?

According to the 150 experts surveyed, domain-level brand metrics scores a 5.8 out of 10 on the scale of importance for ranking in Google.

What can I do to improve it?

You can issue press releases (on and off-line), use video commercials (on and off-line), engage the news media (on and off-line) and interact with your customers through social media, email and forums.

Detailed Explanation

When you think of the word "amazon", what comes to mind? Lush, rich forests where medicines are found? The world's largest river? Spear-wielding natives in loin cloths?

I bet the first thing that came into your mind had nothing to do with any of that. I bet you thought of the e-commerce entity, Amazon.com.

You thought of Amazon.com because Amazon has done a marvelous job of establishing their brand. I remember way back when Amazon was first created and only sold books. I remember their commercials and wondering why they chose the name that they did since it had nothing to do with books and had no connection to the company, location or anything else.

Yet now the first thing I think of when I hear the word "amazon" is Amazon.com, too. That's because branding works.

I have a brand. My brand is my name. Granted my brand is a speck of dust in comparison to the gigantic boulder of Amazon, but the name Jonathan Leger

holds certain meaning in the Internet Marketing space. People expect a certain level of quality, integrity and product from me. I aim to deliver on all of those things.

You want to establish yourself and/or site as a brand, too. When people think of your domain name, you want them to associate it with certain good things.

Some examples: Wal-Mart is associated with low prices. Rolex is associated with the finest of watches. Ferrari is associated with fast cars. All of those companies have built a brand around what they want to be known for.

In order for you to build a brand, you need to know what you want to be known for, too. So ask yourself a few questions:

- What is my company the best at?
- What sets us apart from other people?
- What are people looking for and expecting when they come to us?

Once you know those things, it's time to get to work. When you create a new product, you issue a press release (or an email blast). Maybe you contact the news media to see if they'll cover it. Or maybe you use link bait (remember our discussion about that?) to attract the media's attention without you ever having to be in touch with them at all.

Traditional companies use television commercials and online commercials to build their brand. If that's the kind of business you want to build, you can do the same.

A very important way to build your brand is to interact with your customers. Whether it's through personal responses to email, social media, customer forums, whatever. When people know you're listening to what they want and need, you're building trust in your brand that will bring them back to you again and again.

I often get emails from customers who tell me that they own almost every product I've got on the market. They trust me and what I've built because of my long history of working hard to make sure that I only sell what works. That's a big deal in the Internet Marketing industry. There are a lot of sharks in these waters, so being a person of integrity really stands out.

How Branding Helps With Ranking

What does all of this have to do with ranking in Google? Directly, almost nothing. But indirectly it has everything to do with your ranking.

Just like social media activity leads to people sharing and talking about your site which leads to links which leads to rankings, so, too, branding leads to buzz and viral activity that indirectly results in the signals Google wants to see before it ranks your site.

While having an offline magazine do a write-up on your company has no direct impact on Google, it triggers a lot of discussion among people -- and at least some (if not most) of that discussion takes place online. That online discussion results in links to your site, which leads to ranking.

Building a brand also affects your ranking in another way: if you have a trusted brand, when your pages appear in the search results people will skip over other links to click on yours because they know your name. Rightly or wrongly, humans naturally trust things they know more than things they don't, which is why branding is so important.

When more people click-through to your site instead of others, that increases your query CTR (remember that from the previous lesson?), which sends Google the message that your page is more relevant and makes for a better user experience than other pages in the same search results. That can move your page up higher in the rankings, which results in more traffic to you.

Many times when I email my list to show off a new case study site and the rankings I've achieved, just the fact that so many of my readers go to Google to check it out and click on the site in the results will increase the ranking (albeit temporarily) because the query CTR skyrockets. After a few days of the digital dust settling, the ranking returns to where it was before.

Query CTR matters!

How To Check Your Site For All These Factors

Social media is definitely the best way to check on the status of your brand. If you search Twitter, for example, and your name or site is never mentioned in any tweets, you have no brand.

If you search Twitter and your name/site gets slammed in the tweets, you have a brand, but it's not a good one.

When people say negative things about your brand, listen to them! It can be hard to swallow your pride and admit that you have a problem, but clearly if people aren't saying overwhelmingly positive things about your brand, you do have a problem. Be willing to confront those problems and work on them.

Respond to the comments you see about your brand. Ask people questions. Try to offer personal help. Doing that can turn those negatives into positives and will improve your brand over time.

If you don't have a brand at all, work hard to build your brand through social media presence. Distribute quality information to people who are interested in your market. Answer questions. Accept feedback. Reach out to other people in your industry and establish relationships with them.

It's hard work, but in time it will result in positive branding of your business. That positive branding will, in turn, result in more love from Google.

In Summary

Setting yourself apart from other businesses in your market is tough to do, but it's necessary if you want to achieve real success. When you're building your brand don't even think about Google -- think about the reputation of your business and the repeat customers that having a good reputation will bring. The effort you put into that reputation, that brand, will pay off with Google in the long run, too.

Lesson number seven is up next, which deals with **Domain-Level Keyword Usage**.

Lesson #7: Domain-Level Keyword Usage

We're nearing the finish line of the Google-ranking course. I hope you've been able to put what you've learned so far into practice on your site. This next lesson is pretty straight-forward, but important none-the-less.

I'm going to be talking about Domain-Level Keyword Usage in this lesson, so let's get right into it.

DOMAIN-LEVEL KEYWORD USAGE

What is it?

Domain-Level Keyword Usage is simply whether or not your domain name is an exact match of your primary keywords or partially contains your primary keywords.

How important is it?

According to the 150 experts surveyed, domain-level keyword usage scores just under 5 out of 10 on the scale of importance for ranking in Google.

What can I do to improve it?

When creating a new site you can make sure the keywords you want to rank for are at least partially contained in the domain name, if not the entire keywords. Avoid domain names with hyphens or numbers.

Detailed Explanation

If you're old enough to remember the days when people used to use phone books when needing to find a business' phone number, then you probably remember the businesses that would name themselves things like A1 Auto Sales, 123 Cleaners and the like.

They did that because they knew that when the names were sorted to be put in the phone book, their business name would come up first. Since many people wouldn't be looking for a specific business to call, they would likely call the first one on the list and A1 Auto Sales would have the first chance to make the sale.

Akin to that, when the web was born people would buy up domain names that matched popular keywords. They did this because when the web was in its infancy many people would just type keywords in as domain names to see what came up (e.g. "rosegardens.com"). This kind of traffic is called "type-in traffic."

When search engines started to become a thing, having the keywords people were looking for in your domain name became a very important ranking factor as

well. This continued to be the case with Google for many years even though Google relied primarily on links for ranking.

Exact Match versus Partial Match Domains

There are two types of keyword-rich domain names:

- **Exact Match Domains (EMD)**
- **Partial Match Domains**

An exact match domain is a domain that is exactly the site's primary keywords (rosegardens.com). A partial match domain contains the keywords, but is not exact (rosegardensforyou.com), or which contains some of the keywords but not all of them (rosegardening.com is a partial match of "rose gardens").

Google used to highly favor EMDs, so much so that there was a huge market for selling great EMDs. I remember those days with fondness because it was so easy to rank those sites back then.

As with many things in SEO, Google has changed the way it looks at EMDs and partial match domains to try and prevent webmasters from being able to game their search engine.

Many SEO experts believe that EMDs still carry some weight with Google, just not as much as they have in the past. Partial keyword match domains are believed to help you a little bit with relevancy scores but not very much.

The Real Value of Exact Match Domains

For me, the biggest advantage of EMDs has nothing to do with the domain name itself being a ranking factor. I strongly feel that an EMD's greatest strength is your ability to get keyword-rich anchor text aimed at the site without any penalties from Google.

If your site name was rosetoday.com, for instance, and you wanted to rank for the keywords "rose gardens", you would have to be very careful how often you used the exact keywords "rose gardens" as the anchor text of your links.

(Remember, the rule of thumb is to use keyword-rich anchor text less than 10% of the time.)

But if your domain name is rosegardens.com, you can link to that as much as you want using your domain name and full url as the anchor text (e.g. "rosegardens.com" or "<http://rosegardens.com>"). Google doesn't penalize you for that because that's the domain name of your site, but you still get your primary keywords into the anchor text -- which is very valuable.

I've mentioned this before, but my BackyardGardening.org site benefits greatly from this. Despite not having any links with the anchor text set to "backyard gardening" (or anything keyword-rich at all), it has ranked in the top 3 for its keywords for a couple of years now. CabbageRoses.net is similar, although its rankings are more recent because it's newer.

How To Choose A Great Domain Name

In addition to the SEO value of an exact match domain name, there can also be real value to your visitors (and potential visitors). Here's a list of guidelines to follow when choosing a domain name:

Register .COM whenever possible

If you're not concerned with branding or getting type-in traffic, you can ignore this guideline (obviously I ignored it with BackyardGardening.org and CabbageRoses.net). But if you're looking to build a brand, people will expect the .COM domain. If you own the .NET/.ORG and somebody else owns the .COM -- guess who's going to get the traffic when all the potential visitor can remember is that your domain was "rosegardens something-or-other."

Keep it short

Again, this only matters for branding purposes. You don't want a long, difficult domain name. You want it to be fast and easy to type in. Especially with mobile users long domain names are painful to get to. I always groan when I have to type a domain like "waytoolongTOTYPEONAMOBILE.COM".

Make it memorable

If you're not trying to get the keywords into the domain name, coming up with something very memorable is wise. The top search engines make this point

pretty clear: Google, Bing, Yahoo. The names have nothing to do with what the site is about, but who can forget names like those?

Don't use hyphens or numbers

If rosegardens.com is taken (and of course it is), it can be tempting to register rose-gardens.com instead. While you could do that, there are a couple of problems with the practice:

- People may not remember the hyphen and your competitor will get the visitor
- You won't get the exact match benefits from Google
- Hyphens in the domain name actually hurt your ranking a little bit

Do the keyword research first

Make sure you do solid keyword research before just grabbing an exact match domain just because it's available.

I, of course, use [Keyword Canine 3.0 \[KC3\]](#) for this. Its Keyword Explorer makes it a snap to find great keywords that get decent traffic while being easy enough to rank for that the EMD can really make a difference.

To demonstrate this, I ran the keywords "rose gardens" through the Keyword Explorer, filtered for only keywords that contained the word "rose" and sorted it

to show the keywords with the most monthly searches first (by clicking on the Monthly Searches column header).

I then went through and analyzed half a dozen of the keywords to see how tough they would be to rank for. I was pleased to find that not only was the competition not bad despite getting a few thousand searches a month, there were also some exact match domains available for three of the six keywords I searched for!

Here's the image:

The screenshot shows the KeywordCanine 3.0 interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'Admin', 'Tutorials', 'Help', and a power icon. Below that, 'Dashboard' and 'Tools' are visible, along with '14398 queries remaining'. A search bar contains 'rose gardens' and a dropdown menu is set to 'United States'. There are buttons for 'Explore Keywords' and 'Analyze Keyword'. Below the search bar, it says 'Keywords (372)'. There are several control buttons: 'Select list', 'Save to list', 'Create new list', 'Remove Keywords' (with options: None, Easy, Medium, Hard, Fierce), and a search box with 'rose'. There are also 'Clear Table' and 'Filters' buttons. The main table has a toolbar with 'Bulk Analyze', 'Delete', and 'Mark as keeper'. The table columns are: DF, Keyword, Competition, Monthly Searches, Approximate CPC, Country, and Keeper. The data rows are:

DF	Keyword	Competition	Monthly Searches	Approximate CPC	Country	Keeper
	garden roses	<div style="width: 20%;"></div>	3600	\$0.83	United States	★
	cabbage roses	<div style="width: 20%;"></div>	2400	\$0.97	United States	★
	miniature roses	<div style="width: 60%;"></div>	1900	\$0.42	United States	★

At the time of my writing this, the following domain names were available:

- gardenroses.net
- miniatureroses.net
- cabbageroses.com, .net and .org

(Well, cabbageroses.net was available -- but I picked it up because it was such a good find! The .COM was for sale for \$1,500 or so, but for my purposes it wasn't worth that much to me. CabbageRoses.net is now ranking #1 for "cabbage roses"--which gets 2,400+ searches a month in Google.)

It took me less than five minutes to find those using [KC3](#). See why you need to invest in a good SEO tool? It makes you life so much easier.

[Taking Advantage Of Your EMD](#)

I've shown you this [KC3](#) image before, but I think it's worth a second look:

The screenshot shows a 'Backlink Report' window from Keyword Canine 3.0. The report details backlinks for the URL <http://backyardgardening.org/>. Key statistics include 35 links shown, 202 page links from 14 domains, and 448 site links from 39 domains. The report also includes an anchor text breakdown, KCRank breakdown, and NOFOLLOW breakdown. Red arrows highlight the 'PageLinks' and 'Expires' fields.

URL	http://backyardgardening.org/	
Links Shown	35	
PageLinks	202 links from 14 domains	
SiteLinks	448 links from 39 domains	
Created	2015-09-07	
Expires	2015-10-07	

Unique Class-C IPs	12 (31%)
EDU Domain Links	0
GOV Domain Links	0

Page Authority and Anchor Text

Anchor Text Breakdown	
backyardgardening.org	21
visit website	6
	6
[Other]	2

KCRank Breakdown	
5	1
3	2
2	4
1	3
0	25

NOFOLLOW Breakdown	
NOFOLLOW	23
DOFOLLOW	12

That's from [Keyword Canine 3.0](#)'s Backlink Report, and it shows the counts, anchor text breakdown and strength of the links aimed at BackyardGardening.org.

Having a tool that can keep track of what links you have aimed at your site is invaluable for exact match domains. You want to see how many of your links contain your domain name or url, and make sure you're getting links from valuable pages (in [KC3](#) that means pages with high KCRank).

In Summary

Your choice of domain names can play a key role in your ranking in Google and the building of your brand, so be sure and choose wisely. Avoid long, difficult domain names. If you're not worried about branding, going after an exact match domain (EMD) can help your ranking -- especially because linking to it with your domain name or url in the anchor text can be a big ranking booster and you won't get penalized for it.

Lesson #8: Domain-Level Keyword-Agnostic Features

You've come such a long way since you first started this SEO course. I'm proud of you for staying with me and working to improve your knowledge and SEO skills. The fact that you're sticking to this all the way through really shows that you have the motivation that it takes to be good at this.

DOMAIN-LEVEL KEYWORD-AGNOSTIC FEATURES

What is it?

The Domain-Level Keyword-Agnostic Features covers everything about your site as a whole that is not related to the keywords you're targeting in your domain name. It covers a wide breadth of metrics and data, from the domain name length to the uniqueness of your content to the number of crawl errors and more.

How important is it?

According to the 150 experts surveyed, Domain-Level Keyword-Agnostic Features scores a 4 out of 10 on the scale of importance for ranking in Google.

What can I do to improve it?

Make sure that taken as a whole your site has fresh, unique content, is mobile-responsive and fast loading, has no crawl issues that result in error pages, contains the proper "trust signal pages" (details below), lists contact information (including a physical address if possible), is hosted with other quality sites and has a short, memorable domain name.

Detailed Explanation

Have you ever been driving down the road and passed another car that had one part of the body that wasn't painted? Maybe the fender or the hood was the flat gray color that a car body has before it's coated with a nice glossy paintjob.

It doesn't matter how nice the rest of that car is, does it? That one ugly part makes the whole thing unattractive. I often wonder if people are just trying to save money by not having it painted or if they just haven't made it to the body shop to have the job finished yet.

By all means make sure every part of your site's "body" is "painted"!

As I've said in many places within this course, Google looks at your site as a whole at least as much as it looks at the individual pages of your site when determining whether or not to rank the pages. Google wants to know that your whole site is quality before it hands over its most precious commodity--its users.

That means that you need to keep tabs on how your site as a whole performs. There are a number of factors to look at. First I'll give you the list, then we'll walk through each one of them in detail.

As a whole, your site should:

- Have unique content on all of its pages
- Be designed for desktop and mobile users
- Get good "query CTR" across all of the pages
- Have fresh content posted regularly
- Have fast-loading pages
- Have pages with low bounce rates
- Return few or no error pages when crawled
- Have all of the necessary trust signal pages
- Display your company's contact information
- Be hosted with other quality sites
- Have a short, memorable domain name

It sounds like a lot, but there's nothing complicated about any of these things. Let's go through each one.

Have unique content on all of its pages

This one may be obvious to you. Your pages should be unique to your site. Don't post content to your site that's already found elsewhere. If your site is just

a duplicate of other sites, it is adding nothing of value to the web that can't be found elsewhere, so why should Google show the pages in its results?

Be responsive to mobile devices

More people search Google using mobile devices than desktop/laptop computers now, so Google wants to see sites that support all of those devices.

Get good "query CTR" across all of the pages

If you recall from a previous lesson, the "query CTR" is the percentage of people that click on your page when it's listed in Google's search results for a given set of keywords (query).

If your site has a high query CTR across the board, that tells Google that your content is engaging across the board. Google wants to improve its users' search experience by including results that people want to click on. So make sure that your pages are pages that people want to click on.

Have fresh content posted regularly

Again, this may seem obvious. Even if your home page stays the same, make sure you're posting new, high quality content to the site regularly. Google likes fresh sites more than stale sites. Some content is ever-green and never goes stale. If your site has that kind of content, too, great! But you should try to add new content as well.

Besides, the more fresh quality content you have on your site, the more pages Google has to show people searching for information and therefore the more opportunity for traffic from Google your site has. And of course, the more fresh content you have, the more reasons your visitors have to come back.

Have fast-loading pages

Nobody likes a page that loads slow. So make sure your pages all load quickly.

Have pages with low bounce rates

As I also stated in a previous lesson, Google wants to see visitors that leave its pages and don't immediately hit the "Back" button. It wants to know that they found what they were looking for, otherwise your page will get yanked from the search results for those keywords.

So make sure your pages are engaging and get people to stick around.

Return few or no error pages when crawled

Make sure your internal (and external) links all work and don't go to missing pages. Using a good content management system (CMS) like Wordpress or Joomla will typically prevent you from having any crawl issues.

Have all of the necessary trust signal pages

At the very least, every site should have the following pages:

- Legal / Terms of Use
- About Us
- Contact Us

Depending on what your site is offering, it's usually good to also add:

- Privacy Policy
- Earnings Disclaimer
- Copyright Notice
- Anti-Spam Policy
- Billing Policy
- Cookies Policy (especially for European sites)

Google looks for these pages because they show you're a "real" business and not just some fly-by-night.

Display your company's contact information

Displaying your contact information on all of your pages is a good idea too, especially if you're wanting to rank for local keywords (e.g. "plano texas plumber"). It's a trust signal and lets Google know where you're physically located so it can rank the pages better to people searching in that area.

Having a phone number is great, too, even if it's just an 800 number that goes to voicemail or has a message instructing people to contact you via a help desk or email address or whatever. Real businesses have a phone number, so yours should, too.

Be hosted with other quality sites

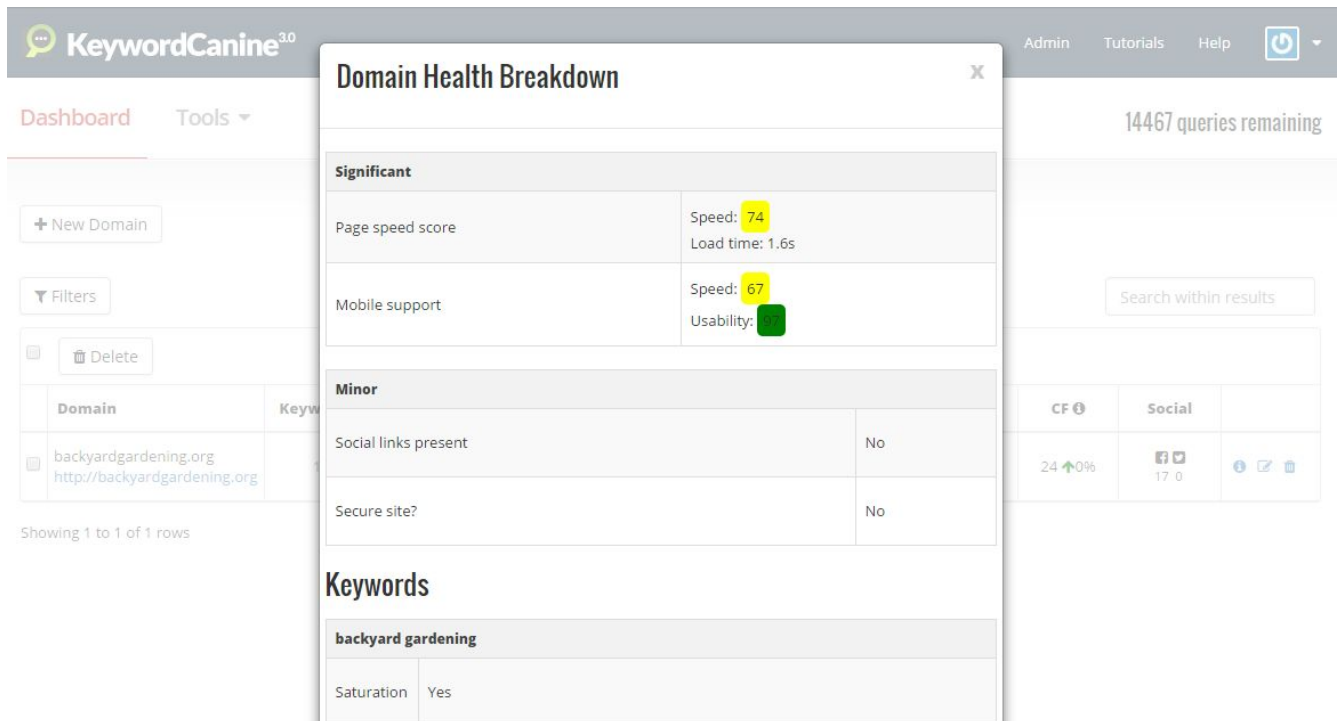
If you use shared hosting, this is out of your control. But if possible, make sure that your site isn't hosted on a server with a bunch of low quality / spammy sites. You can ensure this by using private hosting rather than shared, or having a dedicated IP address for your domain name.

Have a short, memorable domain name

I went through this in the last lesson as well, but it's worth repeating. Don't have a long domain name that's tough to spell or type or remember. While it doesn't have much effect directly on Google's ranking of your site, it certainly has an impact on visitors returning later without needing to use Google. That's especially true of mobile users since it's so much harder to type out long domain names on a mobile device.

How To Keep Tabs On These Factors

I use [Keyword Canine 3.0](#) to keep track of whether or not the pages of my site are mobile responsive and fast loading. The Domain Dashboard shows you all of that:



The screenshot shows the KeywordCanine 3.0 interface. A modal window titled "Domain Health Breakdown" is open, displaying performance metrics for the domain "backyardgardening.org". The dashboard in the background shows a search bar, filters, and a table with one row for the domain. The modal window is divided into sections: "Significant", "Minor", and "Keywords".

Significant	
Page speed score	Speed: 74 Load time: 1.6s
Mobile support	Speed: 67 Usability: ■

Minor	
Social links present	No
Secure site?	No

Keywords	
backyard gardening	
Saturation	Yes

[KC3](#) will also warn you if you don't have the proper trust signal pages by adding an item to the 'Health Issues' listed for your site.

For checking on the query CTR and crawl errors I use Google's Webmaster Tools.

For tracking a site's bounce rate I use Google Analytics.

To see if your site is hosted on the same IP with other quality sites (or not), search Google for "reverse ip lookup" or "sites hosted on ip" and plug your site/ip address into one of the tools that come up. Check the other sites over and, if needed, change your hosting.

In Summary

There are lots of factors that Google looks at across your site when deciding whether or not your site as a whole is of good quality or there's an ugly fender that makes the whole car unattractive. None of the factors are complicated or difficult to implement, so there's really no excuse for not making sure everything is in order.

The last lesson in this SEO course is going to cover in detail something that doesn't have a direct impact on Google's rankings but has a **HUGE** indirect impact: **Page-Level Social Metrics**.

Lesson #9: Page-Level Social Features

You've reached the last lesson in this series on how to rank in Google. We've covered everything from link building to structured quality content to branding. You quite literally know everything you need to know about building the kind of sites that rank well in Google -- with one exception.

That final piece of the pie is the subject of this last lesson.

PAGE-LEVEL SOCIAL FEATURES

What is it?

Page-Level Social Features are all of the interactions that take place for that page across the major social media sites (Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, etc.). People posting the page to their social media accounts, as well as liking/favoriting/sharing the social posts.

How important is it?

According to the 150 experts surveyed, Page-Level Social Features scores just under 4 out of 10 on the scale of importance for ranking in Google.

What can I do to improve it?

Make sure the content of your site is super engaging. Think "link bait."

(Remember that from way back in lesson number two?) Have trusted, honest friends and associates read the content and give you their feedback. Better yet, have people who don't know you very well read it -- they're more likely to be honest with you about what needs improving.

Detailed Explanation

Google has publicly stated that they do not take social signals into account in their search algorithm -- at least not yet. That is, the number of likes you get on a Facebook post or the number of times your page is tweeted or retweeted does not have any direct impact on Google's ranking of the page.

My personal belief about why Google hasn't incorporated those numbers into their algorithm is simple: it's just way too easy to game. You can get thousands of likes / tweets / retweets for a couple of bucks on a variety of "SEO services" sites. Some of these services use long-standing social accounts from real people that are virtually impossible to distinguish from any other account.

If those actions had a significant direct impact on Google's algorithm, for twenty bucks or so you could rank for anything!

That's not to say that getting a link from a famous social profile page isn't a great thing -- it is. It's just not any different from getting a link from any other page that

is very well linked. There's nothing "magical" about the fact that the page happens to be a social media profile page. Google has stated that the number of fans / followers / shares / likes / retweets doesn't mean anything to them (yet).

It's worth noting though that there is some debate about this among SEO practitioners. Not all agree with my stance, though I've not seen any hard evidence to the contrary.

If It Doesn't Count, Why Care?

Google is being smart by not counting those things directly in the rankings. Besides, there's simply no need to count them, because real shares and posts and likes and engagement will naturally also result in what Google does count: links to your page. And it's a lot harder to fake links (and much easier to spot fakes) than it is with social media forgery.

In order to get real social media engagement, you need to be sure that the pages of your site have a Facebook Like/Share button, a Tweet This button, a Pin this button (for the images on the page), and yeah, why not, even put a Google+ button (it only takes a few seconds to add and maybe somebody in the vast wasteland of Google+ will actually see it and link to your page).

Having social buttons won't get you anything if the page isn't engaging, though. So make sure that your content is high quality. Not just in depth and factual, but entertaining. Make people smile or laugh, or nod and say "so true." Make things

that are usually difficult to understand easy by using word illustrations or infographics.

And by all means have a company Facebook page, Twitter account, Pinterest account and (I suppose) a Google+ page. Every time you add a page to your website, write an engaging post or tweet about it and link to it.

Effective Social Media Posts

When you create a post or tweet, be sure to use related, popular hashtags. That helps your posts show up in the search results of the social sites and delivers more engagement and visitors.

Whether it's a post to Facebook or a Tweet, be absolutely sure to always include an awesome image that really catches the attention. Text posts are not enough! Statistics show that posts and tweets with images get more than three times as many views and interactions. They're just so much more noticeable. You're competing for people's attention on their timelines, so you need to stand out.

If you have the means, boost the posts and tweets with those platforms' paid options. With Facebook even five bucks can result in thousands more people seeing your post. If that post gets a lot of likes and shares from that five dollar boost it can end up getting out to tens of thousands of people.

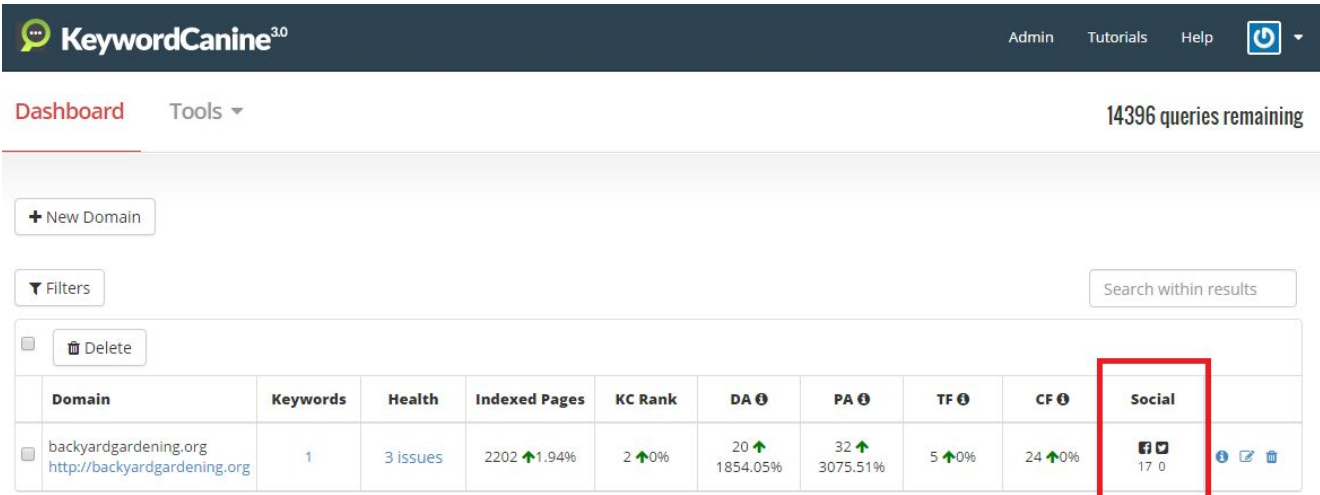
Be absolutely sure your post is engaging and eye catching! I had a post on Facebook to a high quality article reach more than 21,000 people and generate

close to 2,000 page visitors in 3 days without any paid boosting at all. And it was a practical, informative article (no flying kittens or laughing babies).

Work just as hard on the way you write your social media posts and tweets as you do the actual page content itself. Trust me, it will pay off!

How To Track Your Social Presence

As you probably expected, I use [Keyword Canine 3.0 \[KC3\]](#) to keep tabs on the social metrics of my sites. The Domain Dashboard shows you the Tweets and Facebook Likes of all of your sites (by far the two most important social metrics) -- and updates the numbers daily:



The screenshot shows the KeywordCanine 3.0 interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'Admin', 'Tutorials', and 'Help'. Below that, the 'Dashboard' is active, and 'Tools' is visible. A search bar on the right indicates '14396 queries remaining'. A '+ New Domain' button is present. A 'Filters' dropdown and a 'Search within results' input are also visible. A table lists domain metrics, with the 'Social' column highlighted by a red box. The table contains one row for 'backyardgardening.org'.

Domain	Keywords	Health	Indexed Pages	KC Rank	DA	PA	TF	CF	Social
backyardgardening.org http://backyardgardening.org	1	3 issues	2202 ↑1.94%	2 ↑0%	20 ↑ 1854.05%	32 ↑ 3075.51%	5 ↑0%	24 ↑0%	17 0

Rather than having to go back and forth between all of my sites checking their Twitter and Facebook plugins to see what the counts are, KC3 displays it all in one nice list.

KC3 will also warn you with a 'Health Issue' in the Domain Dashboard if your site doesn't link to any social profile pages. A nice reminder to make those things accessible to your visitors.

In Summary

Well there you have it. You now know everything anyone needs to know to rank their site in Google. A lot of gurus claim there's some kind of specialized, secret knowledge that only the elite have. Not true.

In fact, much of SEO is just common sense. Google's goal is to make the user experience of the searcher as positive as possible so that people keep going back to Google again and again when they need to find something. If you focus on making the visitor experience as positive as possible as well, then what you're doing will align with what Google wants most of the time.

There are a few things that common sense isn't enough to understand, but we covered all of those things in this course. So you're good!

I hope you've already been applying what you've learned as you go along. If you haven't, now's the time.

Where To Go From Here

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Niche Jet Authority Sites



You know how to rank your site in Google now, but does your site **scream** authority from the moment your visitors land on the page? It should. If it doesn't, then it's time to consider letting an experienced team with a proven track record build your site for you

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