SEO Best Practices
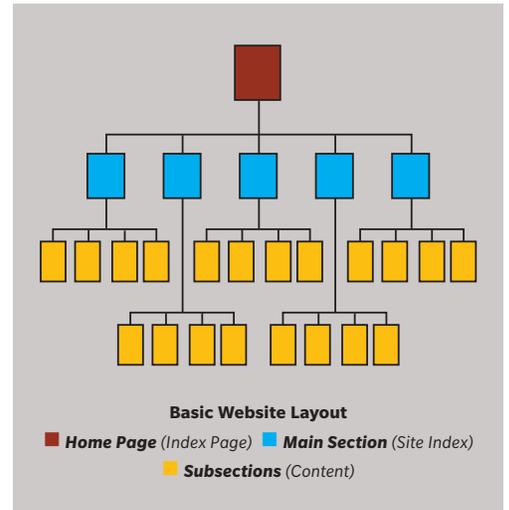
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY FULLERTON

1 SITE ORGANIZATION

A disorganized website in which webpages are placed haphazardly and not maintained regularly leads to bad search results. It's basically garbage in, garbage out.

- **BEST PRACTICE** When building a website, consider how the site will be organized first. Break information into separate sections or folders and place related-webpages in their appropriate sections. Google's algorithm looks for organization of folder names, file names, and page content to build a contextual map of a website which ultimately improves search results. Site organization is also good for ATI.

- *EXAMPLE OF BAD ORGANIZATION*
  CALIFORNIA
  ◦ Fullerton ◦ Sonoma
  ◦ San Diego ◦ San Mateo

- *EXAMPLE OF GOOD ORGANIZATION*
  SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
  ◦ Fullerton ◦ San Diego
  NORTHERN CALIFORNIA
  ◦ San Mateo ◦ Sonoma

- **SEO AUDIT**
  SEO auditing tools can help identify errors and offer solutions.
  Resources: Moz, SEOQuake, SEMRush, Woorank

Basic Website Layout
■ *Home Page* (Index Page)   ■ *Main Section* (Site Index)
■ *Subsections* (Content)

2 META DESCRIPTIONS

Meta descriptions are extremely important in getting users to click through the search engine results page to your website.

- **BEST PRACTICES**
- Write compelling meta descriptions
- Use 150 to 160 characters
- Avoid duplicate meta descriptions
- Do not use quotes or any non-alpha characters
  (Google cuts them out of the meta description)

A Leading CSU | California State University, Fullerton
https://www.fullerton.edu/ ▼
CSUF is a top public university and a leader within the California State University system. The University prepares students to have an impact on the Orange...

Meta Description

3 HEADER TAGS AND KEYWORD PHRASES

A header tag, also known as an H1 tag, is much like the subject line of your web page.

- **BEST PRACTICES**
- Use one H1 tag per page
- Use your keyword phrase once in your H1 tag
- Use H1 tags on pages to which you are trying to drive unique traffic (SEO page)
- Use H2 tags if there are multiple sections
- Avoid ambigious titles like 'Curiouser and Curiouser'
- Use more H2 subheads and H3 labels
- Do not make links out of headers
- Screen readers scan headers for relevant information.

CSUF NEWS SERVICES
Governor's Signature Gives Nursing Pilot Program Permanence — *H1*
Doctoral Program to Add New Concentration — *H2*

4 IMAGE ALT TAGS AND FILENAMES

An alt tag is the image name. Alt tags are good for SEO and accessibility. Someone using a screen reader will hear what that image is.

- **BEST PRACTICES**
- Name your image in a way that describes what they are
- Use dashes between the words, rather than underscores (purple-hat.jpg rather than purple_hat.jpg)
- Do not use non-alpha characters in your image or file names *(so no %, &, $, etc)*
- Not 'students in chem lab' but "CSUF students working in chemistry lab at College of Natural Science and Mathematics."
- Min. 7 characters; max. 80 characters

Photo Option   Single Photo ▲▼
Which photo option would you like?

Single Image   /2017fa/_image/disability-awareness.jpg ▢ Clear
Image for single photo: 600px x 400 px

Single Alt   five women in wheel chairs with their arms raised in the air
Alternative text for single photo

5 INTERNAL PAGE LINKING WITH ANCHOR TEXT

Internal linking refers to a link on a page that points to another page on the same website. Internal linking strengthens those keywords internally, allows users *(and search engine robots)* to navigate through the website, and tells the search engines that the page is relevant for that keyword phrase.

- **BEST PRACTICE** When linking to another page on the same site from within content, select good anchor text (keywords) to use in the actual link and do this often. **For example: "We offer a wide range of web design services," rather than "Click here for our services."**

During his nine years of service at CSUF, Reid chaired the University's 40th-anniversary public relations and marketing subcommittee, arranging for NASA astronaut and Titan Tracy Caldwell Dyson to be the distinguished alumni speaker for the celebration's launch. Eight years later, he was among invited guests at the Kennedy Space Center to witness the launch of Space Shuttle Endeavour, Caldwell Dyson's maiden voyage as a mission specialist, and wrote about the experience.

6 CONTENT IS KING

While high-quality, in-depth, long-form content is shown to increase rankings, studies also show that shorter content used on web sites can drive traffic when you incorporate SEO best practices.

BEST PRACTICE
- Include keywords within content
- Visuals *(photos with SEO)*
- H1 and H2 headers that include keywords
- Keyword rich meta descriptions

7 KEYWORDS

Your **SEO keywords** are the key words and phrases in your web content that make it possible for people to find your site via search engines.

BEST PRACTICE
- Keyword research *(free tools on WordStream)*
- Use keywords in the **title** of the page
- Use keywords in the **URL** *(e.g., online-petstore.com/parakeets/snacks/gourmet)*
- Use the keyword and variations *(e.g., "gourmet parakeet snacks")* throughout the page copy
- Use the keyword in the **meta tags**, especially the meta description
- Use the keyword in any **image file paths** and in the images' alt text
- Use the keyword as the **anchor text** in links back to the page from elsewhere on the site

Title	Kinesiology Experts to Share Olympic Stories
Description	CSUF faculty members and alumni connected with 2016 Olympics will share their stories and research at a Nov. 2 panel
Tags	Olympics, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Andrea Becker, Traci Statler, kinesiology, John Gleaves, Larnie

8 MOBILE FRIENDLY

As an increasing amount of web traffic comes from mobile devices, having a site that is not responsive to different screen sizes and shapes will negatively impact usability, especially for local searches.

- **RESOURCES** Google's mobile friendly testing tool

9 SPEED IS GOOD

Search engines value sites that provide a good user experience and the speed of your site is a huge factor. A slow loading site will increase your bounce rate, as visitors lose patience and leave.

- **RESOURCES** •PageSpeed tools • Gift of Speed • GTMetrix

10 SHORT URLS

Google likes sites that are clean, organized, and structured; this includes using short URLs. They can also help improve your click-through rate. Each URL has to be unique.

BEST PRACTICE
- **NO** https://kinsta.com/blog/wordpress-seo-checklist-50-tips-017/
- **YES** https://kinsta.com/blog/wordpress-seo/

11 OTHER, COOL SEO

Your **SEO keywords** are the key words and phrases in your web content that make it possible for people to find your site via search engines.

- **USE SYNONYMS IN YOUR COPY** Synonyms are great, and using natural language that's influenced by keyword research (rather than just pure keywords) is highly encouraged.
- **NO DUPLICATE CONTENT** Duplicate content can dilute the value of your content among several URLs. Use 301 redirects, canonical tags or use Google Webmaster Tools to fix any duplicate content that might be indexing and penalizing your site.
- **BROKEN LINKS** Search engines rank websites by crawling their links. If there are dead links on your website, it can stop search engine spiders from crawling your site and, thus, indexing it. They are also bad for ATI.

BEST PRACTICE
- Regularly remove all out-dated information, broken links, and unneeded pages.
- Link to 508 ATI tips for content editors.