



Articles: Choosing your Keywords

Introduction

This article assumes you already know what a ‘meta-tag keyword’ is and know a little about their importance to search engines. In this article I will attempt to explain the art of choosing the most appropriate and best performing keywords for your web pages.

As you should already know keywords contained within your websites’ meta tags are extremely important in allowing search engines to determine the content of your web pages. In order to make sure that these keywords are bringing your site up within Search Engine Results Pages (SERPS) and driving visitors to your site, the most important factors in determining your keywords are:

- Relevance.
- Choosing keywords that people actually search for.
- Choosing keywords without too much competition.

Relevance

All your keywords should ALWAYS be relevant to the content within the page they describe. Adding keywords to your site just because they are commonly searched for words is not recommended. Not only will it frustrate visitors who are looking for other information, but it may well get your site black-listed from search engine rankings.

Highly relevant keywords will attract visitors who are actually interested in the products and services your website offers. At the end of the day, it is better to attract fewer visitors who actually have an interest in your website than it is to attract more visitors who leave immediately.

Choosing Keywords people search for

Although your keywords should all be relevant, sometimes it is best not to be too specific.

For example, I once discovered a new fossil (honest!), it was new to science so I named it, wrote a paper on it and had it published. I didn’t ever build a web page dedicated to it, but if I had the most used keyword and most relevant word would have been the fossils name (Trypanites fosteryeomani). You might therefore think that it would be



sensible to use this as one of my most important keywords... However, that would (at least to start with) have been wrong. No one else has ever heard of this fossil, so it is very unlikely that anyone would ever type its name into a search engine. And sure enough, a quick check shows that during Dec 2004 there wasn't a single search for this term within a particular, popular search engine.

I would therefore need to be more generic with my choice of keywords. The fossil itself was a trace fossil of a worm from the Jurassic, so keywords/phrases such as 'fossil', 'trace fossil' or 'worm trace fossil' may be more successful.

There are several tools available that allow you to check the number of times a particular word or phrase has been searched for. It is important to choose keywords that are regularly searched for and these tools can help in this decision. It is also worth including common misspellings of your most relevant keywords as your competitors may not have thought of this when choosing their keywords.

Choosing keywords without too much competition

The section above may lead you to believe that choosing very generic keywords is your best bet as they are often searched for. However, if you get too generic in your choice of keywords then you will be competing with many more websites for the top spots in the SERPS. If we go back to our fossil example we can see what I mean. A quick search in Google brings up the following numbers of results:

- Trypanites fosteryeomani – 1 result (something I once wrote in a forum!)
- Jurassic Worm Trace Fossil – 4,320 results
- Trace Fossil – 407,000 results
- Fossil – 9,120,000 results

As you would expect, the more generic we get, the more results we get. It can be seen then that choosing the best keywords is a matter of balancing the number of times the keywords are searched for against the number of other sites competing for rankings with those keywords. The best keywords will be those that are searched for often but have few competing sites (assuming the keywords are relevant to your content).



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I find that it is best to have a balance between the generic and specific keywords relating to your web page and using key-phrases is a useful way of achieving this. In this way the entire key-phrase can be specific to your particular page, but the individual words within it are fairly generic.

e.g. Affordable Website Design Wales (4 generic keywords to create a specific key-phrase)

To Summarise, choosing keywords is an essential part of producing a successful website. Your keywords need to be highly relevant to the content of your page and specific enough to reduce competition. They also need to contain some generic keywords that are often searched for. As always, the single most important factor is relevancy and good content to go with the keywords.

Pixelwave Design offer a thorough, comprehensive keyword analysis for your website as part of its SEO services. Please contact me for more details.

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