THE SEO GUIDE FOR BEGINNERS

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6 Steps To Start Ranking

In Google + Free Template

SERPNAV

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Introduction

If you're new to SEO, you've probably asked yourself:

- "Where do I even start?"

- "Which tools should I use?"

- "How do I know if I'm doing it right?"

This guide gives you 5 essential steps to start improving your rankings on Google — the same foundational process I use with my own clients.

Whether you're running a blog, business site or personal brand: these basics apply everywhere.

At the end, you'll also find a list of tools and an on-page SEO checklist templates to help you with your SEO efforts. These template is the exact same one I use in my own SEO campaigns.

Want to dive deeper into SEO after this guide?
Check out the full e-book: *SEO For Beginners – A Step-by-Step Guide to Rank Higher in Google* *(With examples, more tools I use myself & 3 more templates to help you with your SEO efforts)*

1. Understanding SEO – The Fundamental Principles

What is SEO?

SEO (Search Engine Optimization) is the process of improving your website's visibility in search engines like Google.
The goal is to appear higher in search results when people search for topics related to your business, product, or content.

If you rank higher → more clicks → more traffic → more potential leads or sales.

SEO is organic, so you don't pay per click. You earn your spot by providing relevant, high-quality content and optimizing your site technically and structurally.

Why SEO is Important

Most people never scroll past the first page of Google.
If you're not there, your chances of being discovered are slim.

SEO helps you:

- Attract targeted, relevant traffic

- Build trust and authority

- Lower long-term marketing costs

- Get found by people who are already looking for what you offer

It's not just about traffic, it's about the right traffic.

The 3 Core Pillars of SEO

To do SEO properly, you need to understand its 3 main components:

1. **On-Page SEO**
   Optimizing individual pages so Google understands their topic and relevance.
   This includes title tags, meta descriptions, headers, content, images, and internal links.

2. **Off-Page SEO**
   Building authority and trust by earning backlinks from other websites.
   The more quality sites that link to you, the more credibility you have in Google's eyes.

3. **Technical SEO**
   Ensuring your website works properly under the hood.
   Things like site speed, mobile usability, crawlability, and site architecture fall here.

These 3 areas work together. If one is missing, your SEO efforts will always be limited.

How Search Engines Work (Crawling, Indexing & Ranking)

Before your page can rank, Google needs to:

1. **Crawl** – Bots scan your website, following links to discover pages.

2. **Index** – Pages are analyzed and added to Google's search database.

3. **Rank** – Google decides which pages best match a user's search and displays them in order of relevance + authority.

If Google can't crawl or index your content, it simply won't rank (no matter how good your content is)

2. STEP 1: Find the right keywords

Keywords are the foundation of SEO. If you target the wrong ones, you'll attract the wrong audience or maybe none at all.

Here's how to start:

- Think like your audience: What would *they* type into Google?

- Use tools like:

    o Google Autocomplete: Type and see what pops up
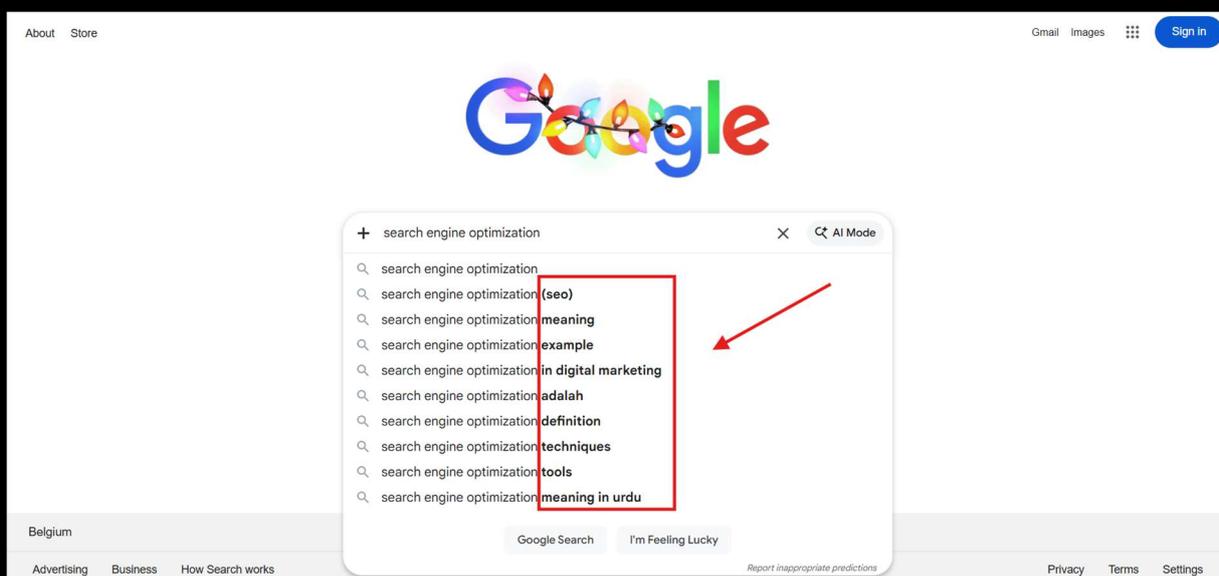
    o SEMRush or Ahrefs: Analyze competitors & keyword difficulty

    o Ubersuggest: Beginner-friendly tool for long-tail keywords

Focus on:

- Low competition + high volume = SEO gold as there are a lot of ranking possibilities, but still with a decent volume

- Long-tail keywords like "*best running shoes for flat feet*"

- Search intent: Is someone looking for info or ready to buy?

3. STEP 2: Create SEO-friendly content

Great SEO content answers the question better than anyone else.

How to make content that ranks:

- Use your main keyword in the title, URL, H1, and intro

- Break content up with headings (H2, H3) and bullet points

- Write for people first, then optimize for search engines

- Don't forget visuals: include relevant images or graphics (don't forget ALT text)

Structure matters:

- Intro that catch the attention of the reader

- Clear sections that solve their problem

- A strong call to action at the end

4. STEP 3: Optimize your page (On-Page SEO)

Even great content won't rank if your page isn't technically decent.

Here's what to check before you publish:

- Title tag includes your keyword
- Meta description is clear & won't be cut off
- Headings are used in the right order (H1 > H2 > H3)
- Keyword used naturally (no stuffing!)
- Images have descriptive alt text
- Internal links guide users to related content
- Linking to trustworthy outbound websites
- URL is short and readable
- Page loads fast (especially on mobile)

Download & use the free **SEO Checklist** to simplify this process below:

On-Page SEO Checklist – Download HERE

5. STEP 4: Build quality backlinks

Backlinks are still one of Google's strongest ranking signals. But not all links are equal. Quality beats quantity every time.

How to start earning backlinks:

- Guest posts on relevant blogs in your niche

- Linkable assets like checklists, tools, or data-driven content

- Resource pages: Find relevant directories or tools lists

- Broken link building: Replace dead links with your content

- HARO (Help a Reporter Out): Answer journalist questions for links

Pro Tip: **Don't use link exchanging** (Google notices this & hurt your rankings)

6. STEP 5: Improve your technical SEO

Technical SEO makes sure your site keeps running smoothly and crawlable for search engines.

If Google can't access, crawl or index your site properly, your rankings will suffer. No matter how good your content is.

Here's what to check technically:

- **Crawlability**
  Use tools like Screaming Frog or Search Console to ensure pages can be crawled.

- **Indexability**
  Make sure important pages are not blocked by robots.txt or set to "noindex."

- **Mobile Optimization**
  Your site must be responsive. Test it using Google's Mobile-Friendly Test.

- **Site Speed**
  Use PageSpeed Insights or GTmetrix to identify performance issues. Compress images and remove unnecessary scripts.

- **HTTPS Security**
  Ensure your site uses HTTPS. Google favors secure websites.

- **Fix broken links and crawl errors**
  Regularly audit your site and fix 404s, redirect chains, and broken images.

- **Use an XML Sitemap**
  Helps search engines discover all your important pages.

Pro tip: Technical SEO is not just for developers, it's the foundation that supports everything else you do. So make sure your technical SEO is optimized.

7. STEP 6: Track your progress

SEO takes time. But if you don't measure your results, you won't know what's working.

Key tools:

- **Google Search Console**
  Track rankings, impressions, click-through rates & crawl issues

- **GA4 (Google Analytics 4)**
  See how long users stay, where they land, and what converts

- **SEMRush / Ahrefs**
  Monitor keyword movements & backlinks

What you need to track:

- Your top-performing pages

- Keywords with high impressions but low clicks

- Pages with high bounce rate

- Pages gaining or losing backlinks

8. Tools & Template

I.   *Recommended Tools*

- **SEMRush** – Keyword tracking, site audits, competitor research
- **Ahrefs** – Backlink analysis & keyword explorer
- **Google Search Console** – Google's free SEO tool
- **Screaming Frog** – Technical SEO crawler

II.   *Templates*

Below you'll find the on-page SEO checklist to help you with your SEO efforts.

Simply click the **"Download here"** link. The file will open in excel.

You can:

- Customize them to fit your SEO strategy
- Save copies for future use or share with your team

Template:

- *On-page SEO checklist – [Download Here](#)*
- *Complete SEO checklist – [Download Here](#)*

About the Author

Hi, I'm *Milan* – an SEO freelancer and founder of *SERPnav*.

With SERPnav, I help entrepreneurs understand and apply SEO through clear content with actionable tips.
Whether you want to manage SEO yourself or at least grasp the basics before outsourcing. My goal is to make SEO more accessible.

I also offer freelance services on **Fiverr**, including:

- SEO content strategy plan

- On-page SEO optimization

- Blog writing with on-page SEO optimization

- Local SEO

- Total SEO package

Interested in working with me? You can send me a DM on Instagram (@serpnav) or you can contact me on Fiverr.

Want to dive deeper in the world of SEO?

This guide is just the start.

👉 *Grab the full e-book here:*

SEO For Beginners – A Step-by-Step Guide to Rank Higher in Google

Learn all the basics & master SEO at your own pace. The e-book include practical examples, more recommended tools I use myself & 3 more templates to help you with your SEO efforts.