

NIA Quick Tips for Search Engine Optimization

This tip sheet is intended to help staff plan and optimize for search while writing and reviewing web content. If you have questions about this content, please contact Emma Montgomery.

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is a strategy for optimizing the quality of content to improve the ranking in search results. This helps increase the volume of traffic to a website and connect users to valuable information. This is important because over 75% of users access the NIA website (nia.nih.gov) using a search engine like Google or Bing.

Key words and key phrases. Integrate key phrases or key words into the page copy, headings, and page summaries when possible.

- Establish at least one, and no more than four, key words or key phrases.
- Avoid jargon and unknown words that users are unlikely to search for.
- Be specific. The more specific the key words and phrases are to the page you are writing for, the more effective they will be.
- It may be helpful to consider:
 - Words and phrases people may type into a search bar to find this content.
 - How this page is different from the rest of the site.
 - Specific content on this page that isn't available somewhere on the website.

Page summary for search engines. This is used by search engines, and it does not appear on the web page. The summary (e.g., meta description) is a short, unique description of page content that is 150-160 characters.

- Draft a simple and unique description summarizing the entire page.
- Write full sentences.
- Use the correct language for the audience (general public, scientists, etc.).
- Avoid prioritizing dates over other information.
- Don't make a long list of keywords.
- Don't make it too short, or too long.

Page title. The title of the page should tell readers and search engines what the page is about and the type of content available on the page.

- Avoid generic titles.
- Create unique page titles. When refreshing content verify the page title isn't duplicative.
- Include a keyword or phrase in the title if possible.

Headings. Headings create hierarchy and structure that help users and search engines understand what the web page is about.

- Draft descriptive headings.
- Aim to keep headings under 70 characters.
- Include a keyword or phrase in the heading if possible.
- Use plain language if possible.
- Don't create a list of keywords instead of an informative, relevant heading.
- Avoid jargon.