

## **SEO Writing 101:**

# **How to Write Effective, Traffic Attracting Online Content**

### **Module 1:**

#### **In this section you will learn:**

1. Why learning how to write search engine friendly content is an essential, profitable skill for writers.
2. The key differences between print and online writing.
3. One simple, obvious, and absolutely essential thing to drastically improve your online writing.
4. How to write online titles versus print titles.
5. Three practical online writing tips. Use them and watch your traffic grow.

# 1. Intro

## Why Technology is Making Creativity Profitable

**I feel that every writer should know more about the technical aspects of writing online content.**

This is often called SEO (search engine optimization), a term which means simply “optimizing” content so that search engines can properly analyze, categorize, and decide how relevant your content is to searchers/readers.

So this a course about writing for machines, the search engines.

But pleasing machines isn’t the benefit of mastering these essential skills. The real prize lies at the end of the machines, the millions of humans every day looking for new blogs, websites, and online communities.

Because with some basic knowledge, the world is the new market for writers. A market accessible from anywhere by anyone.

The book is dead. Print is dead. TV is dead. The age of the big glossy magazine is close to being dead. With these changes, the next ten years presents an enormous opportunity for online writers.

That’s what this course is about: learning how to use search engines to get your writing out there in the world.

Learning how to help search engines analyze your content--helping them recognize your content as high quality, relevant writing that people want to read (which I’m sure it is).

I want to show you how to flood your site with visitors, fans, customers, and peers.

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You no longer need huge publishing companies or marketing agencies to get your writing or your business out there in the world.

Just you. A laptop. And the power of knowing how to use the power of the search engines to your advantage.

Think I'm trying to hype you up?

I am. Because you should be excited. This is the best time in human history to be a writer or business owner.

But content creation has new rules. It has a new medium. And that new medium changes how we write, how we read.

To harness the power of search engines, it requires a little strategy, a little technical knowledge, and little bit of change from your old print writing habits to online.

But that's enough of the evangelism. It's time to get into the meat.

# Module 1: Why Writing Online is Different than Print

**On the surface, print and online look the same.** The computer screen is just a paperless book. That's why so many people don't bother learning how to write online. They just write their blog post as if it were a feature in a magazine or like a weekly column in a newspaper.

This is a big mistake.

By assuming print and online writing are the same, you are only thinking about the reading surface—the way computer screens resemble paper.

The real battle for readers and online attention doesn't happen on the screen. It happens on the search results page.



How do you get Google to feature your website on the 1st page, choosing you over millions of other sites?

How do you get Google to decide that your site, more than any other site that talks about the same topic, is the best, most relevant site?

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This course will try to give you some answers to those questions, focusing on proven (and completely ethical and legal) SEO techniques. The result will be better search engine results, higher traffic, and more effective ways of presenting your content to online readers.

## **Search Engines are the Key to Online Writing Success**

While SEO (search engine optimization) is only one factor that determines how many visitors Google sends to your site, in many ways SEO is the most important.

Without a solid SEO foundation to your website, it becomes difficult for readers to find you. So while things like links, exposure in media, and offline promotion are important to building an audience for your website, SEO is really the first step to getting your content out into the world.

That's because search engines are the gate-keepers of the internet. They determine what content is important, and they can turn a little website into a huge website, if you have great content and use an effective SEO and keyword strategy.

If people can't find your site, then they can't promote it, interview you, or send you new business. For that reason, you have to train yourself into knowing how search engines work, how they respond, and how they analyze content.

That's really the new big difference between print and online: online writers have to have technical knowledge of search engines, especially if you run a small unknown site.

You have to write for people. And for machines.

## **The Logic of Search Engines**

The first step is to understand the logic behind the creation of search engines.

Why is Google the world's best search engine?

Simply, because they deliver the most relevant content to readers/searchers. If Google turned up crap that didn't help anyone find what they were looking for, people would try a different engine.

The success of Google is providing the best, most relevant content. Your success as a writer depends on you helping Google achieve its goal of pleasing people with high quality, highly relevant content.

Google aims to please users. And that isn't a bad goal for writers either.

Remember that search engines were designed to help humans. As there are billions of pages online, the real goal of search engines is finding relevant content for people.

**Relevancy is one of the key factors** that determines whether your page will be sent any traffic.

Think of it like this. In a traditional library, all books are given an equal place.

The reader goes and walks down the aisles perhaps looking for something or just browsing. But all books are equal, they each have a place on the shelf according to an ordering system.

In online writing, the **best books are all at the front**. And by "best," Google simply means the most relevant. When someone has a problem and wants information on that problem, these books seem to consistently satisfy the reader (we will talk about the way Google is able to tell that later).

Google has sorted them all, and when someone says "book on car mechanics," Google says here are the 10 books that most people read on "car mechanics." (This is called being on the 1st page of Google).

So the **first step to writing better online content** is thinking about how to make your content more readable. How can you quickly convey the importance and value of your page to both readers and search engines?

Helping people and search engines figure out what your page is about (without having to slog through your writing, or be led down some narrative path) is the single most important element of good search engine strategy from on-page optimization to larger strategies such as link-building.

Let's take a look at some of the basics.

## Rule 1: Quickly Communicate What Your Post is About

**Search engines search for and promote the most relevant content.** They want to match a search query such as "How do I change the battery in my car" with the most relevant answer such as "5 easy steps to changing the battery in your car."

Quickly communicating what your post is about remains the first law of writing search engine content. And by that I mean, giving a literal, explicit description of the main

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subject of your post. Your title is the single factor that people (and search engines) use to determine whether your post is relevant to them.

One of the biggest mistakes you can make is to **not** quickly communicate to a reader what your post is about.

If you don't let them know **the point of your post**, what your deal is about, in about 1.2 seconds, they will hit back and be gone for ever.

The reason is because when people read online they skim pages first. They ask themselves: Should I read this page or is it a waste of time? Is this site what I am looking for?

According to a recent study, 80% of people's total time spend reading online is spent skimming. That means, only 20% of pages get read. You have to fight hard to be one of those 20% of pages that actually get read, shared around, and boosted up to the top of Google.

So if a person is typing into Google "career blog for English major" and the title of your post is. . . "The aesthetics of helplessness," you stand in danger of Google and the person reading not knowing exactly what your post is about.

Assume that people won't read your post for more than a second.

So while "Careers for English majors: Ten Steps to Finding a Job with Your English Degree" is a slightly more bulky and crappier title, it is much more effective for search engines and people.

When writing for search engines (and people) online, we have to be more **literal**, a little more "keyword" focused—mostly because there is so much information out there, people (and search engines) are looking to sort the irrelevant stuff from the helpful, on-topic stuff.

Having a simple, descriptive, literal title can do most of that work for you, helping both search engines and people quickly be able to determine what your post is about.

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Every reader counts. If someone lands on your website, you have to do your best to keep them and turn them into a reader.

If you are unable to persuade people to stay on your website, Google interprets this as “this person came, determined it wasn’t useful and then left.” As a result, your website gets pushed further down the heap, and another one gets pushed up.

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In technical terms, this is called “bounce rate”: the number of people who leave your site without clicking through to another page. A high bounce rate signals to Google that your site isn’t very valuable to people. And so, Google begins to rank your site worse and worse.

When people land on your site and then leave fast, it’s a bad reflection on you. And a bad reflection on Google.

And Google only wants to look good. It puts its favorite people in the front, and pushes the losers to waste away in the pit of eternal solitude, down there at the dark bottom of the internet with the other 5 billion web pages nobody reads.

## Rule 2: The Title Is the Most Important Part of SEO

**The most important thing** you will learn in this course is this: Your title is the best place to tell search engines what your post is about.

If you learn anything in this course, please make it this:

The title is the most important element of SEO.

Yes, what you call your article is the single most important thing you can do to improve your SEO.

Surprisingly, this is a little hard for print writers. Online writers are forced to write practical titles that quickly communicate what a post is about.

The reason why the title is the most important part of writing search engine friendly content is because Google has hardwired its search algorithm to place great value on the title.



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Google figures that a title is a good place to figure out what a post is about. Makes sense.

So remember you are writing for machines. Machines have to “read” your post and figure out what it is about.

If you call your post about grouchy academics “The Sour Grapes Search Committee” Google is going to assume you are talking about fruit, perhaps a committee on bad fruit.

That’s because search engines don’t understand irony or allusions. That’s why, it’s best to keep clever wordplay and puns in the body.

Use your title as a telegraphic message to readers and search engines about the literal theme of your post.

### Rule 3: Online Titles are Different Than Print

Print writers and online writers craft very different titles. Often print articles will have titles with puns, clever allusions, and other artful things.

But an online writer has to think about keywords (more on those later) and how to tell a search engine the main theme of the article.

So a print writer might write a title like this:

“Is it loyalty or desperation?”

Once we read the article, we find out that “loyalty or desperation” actually refers to the challenge of young soldiers in Iraq who often don’t have any other career options other than staying and fighting.

This type of title doesn’t work online for two reasons.

One, people will have to read your article before they know the topic. This is bad online as most people only skim for a few seconds. They need to know right away what the topic is.

Two, search engines are machines. They can’t read irony or artfulness. So if your title says “loyalty or desperation,” then they assume you are talking about those words--loyalty and desperation--and not talking about young Iraq soldiers.

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The best thing you can do to write better SEO titles is to save artfulness, irony, and cleverness for your actual post.

Your title is a telegraphic communication to search engines and readers, providing a rapid way for people to say, yes this is what I am looking for, or no, that's not it.

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## How to Write a Proper Title

Remember that 80% of people that read your blog will begin with a search.

The best way to write titles is to think about how your post answers a search question.

So while it is unlikely that somebody searching for info on young Iraq soldiers will search for "loyalty or desperation?", they might begin with a search question like this:

*"Why do young Iraq soldiers continue to fight?" Or, "Reasons why Iraq soldiers don't quit?" Or, "Morale of Iraq soldiers?"*

An effective online title will anticipate the fact that people find their blog through search engines.

That last paragraph was important: **an effective online title will anticipate the fact that people find their blog through search engines.**

That's why an effective online title would be something like:

*"Updates on Iraq Soldier Morale: Loyalty or Desperation?" Or, "The reality of Iraq Soldier Morale: Desperation, not Loyalty." Or, "Why Iraq Soldiers Don't Quit: It's more about Desperation than Loyalty."*

So: Write more literal titles. Try to think about what question your post answers to your readers.

Communicate first. Then be clever.

*On the web, readers navigate through their own little paths, cutting corners, going in and out of websites, and trying to get the most relevant content as quickly as possible.*

*It is your job to provide clear markers for readers, letting them know that this is what they are searching for.*

*Titles are the best way to clearly indicate to search engines and readers what your webpage is about.*

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Next week, we will also talk about the 10 biggest mistakes new online writers make (and how to fix them).

And as we have some basic theory under our belts, we will be dealing with more practical techniques--stuff you can incorporate right away in your writing to start getting more traffic to your site.

Happy writing.

### **Practical Online Writing Checklist**

1. **Write strategic, literal titles.** Remember that the title is the most important element of SEO. Google's search algorithm's places great emphasis on the title--so if your title says "My beginning" and your post is really about your first term at college, then you are working against yourself. Be direct and descriptive.
2. **Help your reader (and search engines) know what your post is about. . .FAST!** Use descriptive titles and and subheadings to make sure that someone can figure out what the topic of your post is within 1-2 seconds of landing on your page. Online readers typically "skim" a page before they invest the time to read it--ignore this online reading habit at your own risk.
3. **Don't copy the big boys and girls.** After reading this lesson, you will probably encounter a blog post in the *New York Times* or some other

huge site that breaks all the rules I have set out. Remember that context is everything online. Big online websites have large audiences and have massive trust with Google (high page rank which we will discuss later). Google will promote anything a reputable website puts out, especially favoring it over a smaller, unknown site. Large sites do not need to follow the same rules—and often will have vague, arty titles, and long winded introductions. Many large sites do not even bother with SEO optimization because of time restraints. You should be careful about copying that style for your own site as the majority of your traffic will have to won from search engines. (Bonus tip: Major sites that report breaking news—such as celebrity scandals—often have excellent SEO techniques as they compete for searches such as “Tom Cruise Oprah Incident” and can be used for some SEO inspiration).

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*This is an advertisement. . . . For me.*

## **My services:**

### **One-on-One SEO Strategy and Website Analysis**

Writers and business owners know that just one consultation can help you save hours of learning and avoid big SEO mistakes that cost your blog traffic. My personal analysis identifies SEO mistakes you might be making, saving you the trouble of slowing learning this stuff. (But please keep reading the course, as it covers many practical tips).

With my personal SEO analysis, I visit your site and then build you a detailed report on your internal linking, LSI (latent semantic indexing), point out problems, suggest improvements, and help you develop a strategic keyword list. This gives you the resources and insights into SEO, helping to fix any problems and increase your website’s traffic.

I then go through the report with you, helping you to implement the changes, fix the errors, and develop content that attracts links and readers.

### **SEO Tactics and Experience—in a Few Hours, Not Years.**

You get access to the full-range of tactics and ideas that allow you to detour around the typical low-traffic first-time blog that can eat up hundreds of your hours of time producing content that few people are able to find. You can benefit from my experience as being the principle SEO writer for TV-Gorge.com (a website that receives 3 million plus hits per month) and as a SEO content writer and strategist for dozens of small local business, a real estate blog, and a few industrial websites.

As most of you reading this also read my site Selloutyoursoul.com, I completely value and respect your time and attention. That means, your **satisfaction is absolutely guaranteed** and all services are fully-refundable if they don't produce the results you expect. Even further, I also pre-qualify sites to make sure that my services are right for your site.

Signing up with me is easy—Just choose the type of consultation you prefer:

### **Package 1: Advanced Website Analysis and Personal SEO Strategy—\$379**

8 hour, detailed analysis of your website and personal hands-on coaching (via Skype or telephone), unlimited email support, keyword research tutorial, and a jam-packed report (covering linking structure, LSI, meta-content, and keyword density) as well as a targeted keyword strategy statement for \$379. I visit your site, look at your analytics, and then perform in-depth keyword research, developing you a guideline for both keywords and search-based strategy. Your new **Keyword Strategy Statement** will act as a blueprint for creating new content, allowing you to be successful in your niche. It will also be effective for tweaking any existing content, bringing more traffic to existing site pages.

In addition I also perform two check-ups (after two weeks and one month) to make sure you are making progress and to check on your SEO efforts. Perfect for businesses or serious writers.

### **Package 2: Comprehensive Website Analysis and SEO Strategy—\$97**

4 full hours of website analysis, keyword analysis, and a jam-packed report of my SEO recommendations that you can implement yourself for \$97. I visit your site, check and fix common problems, and then perform keyword research to help you target your content. Also includes, a 20 minute call or 30 minutes of back-and-forth email to help you implement the changes. This is a good starter package with some advanced help.

### **Package 3: Basic Website Analysis and SEO Report—\$29**

1 hour, SEO check-up. I visit your site, identify common problems, and then give you a jam-packed report of tips, recommendations, as well as suggest solutions to any major problems. After you get my report and analysis, you can have a 15 minute call or 20 minutes of back-and-forth email to help you implement the changes. Quick, targeted, and only \$29. Perfect for light-weight blogs or writers looking to accelerate their SEO knowledge, and to make sure they aren't making costly mistakes.

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With any of these 3 packages, you will save hours and hours of time. I am a writer too, so my goal is to educate quickly about what you need to know about, help you identify any big SEO mistakes—and then let you get back to writing great content.

To get some more info, email [Selloutyoursoul6@gmail.com](mailto:Selloutyoursoul6@gmail.com) with “Website Analysis and SEO Coaching” in the subject line. Please mention the type of package you are interested in. You can also call me at 250-889-7194.

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