



22 SEO Actions You Can Take Today

WWW.FUELYOURPHOTOS.COM



INTRODUCTION

Our goal with this SEO guide is to give you very specific action items that you can complete on your own.

We are basing this list on the most common issues that we find across photography sites. We also narrowed this down to include ONLY factors that are likely to impact ranking.

Keep in mind that not every item on this list will apply to your site. You should also use each formula with discretion. While we've tried to make each tip as widely applicable as possible, every scenario is unique.

If you'd like to learn more of the fundamentals of SEO, check out our full course. If you need more personalized attention, check out our consulting options.

— COREY POTTER & DYLAN HOWELL

INTRODUCTION

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01. Google My Business Optimisation

If you are a local business, Google My Business is the way you'll give Google official information about your business that can be displayed in map searches, and in the "map pack" on organic searches. It is also where you'll collect Google reviews for your business.

The best general advice that we can give is to fill out every piece of information that applies to your business, and to keep your information and photos up to date (update the photos at least 2 times a year).

Specifically, here are a few things you can do to optimize your GMB listing:

1. Make sure you use the correct canonical URL

Be sure to enter the correct URL for your site.

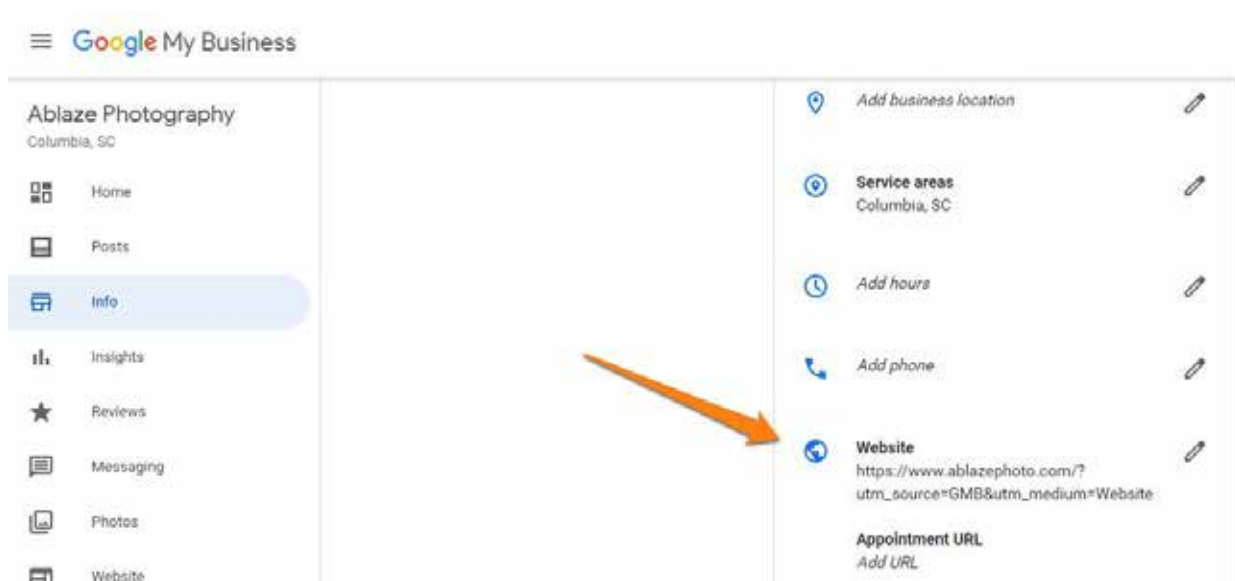
Pay attention to whether or not your site resolves to http or https, www or non-www. You can use this tool to see which is the canonical version of your domain: <https://varvy.com/tools/redirects/>

Pro Tip: You can also add a UTM code to the end of your URL if you'd like to see separate data in Search Console and Analytics when your site shows up in the map pack or knowledge graph panel. I recommend adding:

?utm_source=GMB&utm_medium=Website

So for my site, it would look like this:

https://www.coreypotter.com/?utm_source=GMB&utm_medium=Website

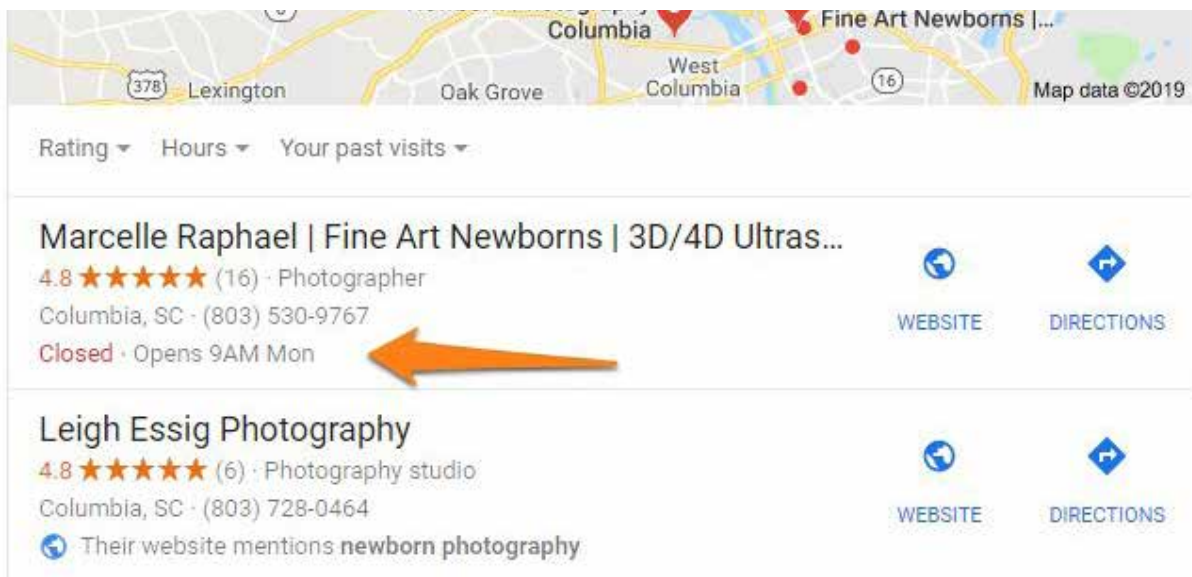


01. Google My Business Optimisation

2. Consider your “Hours” carefully

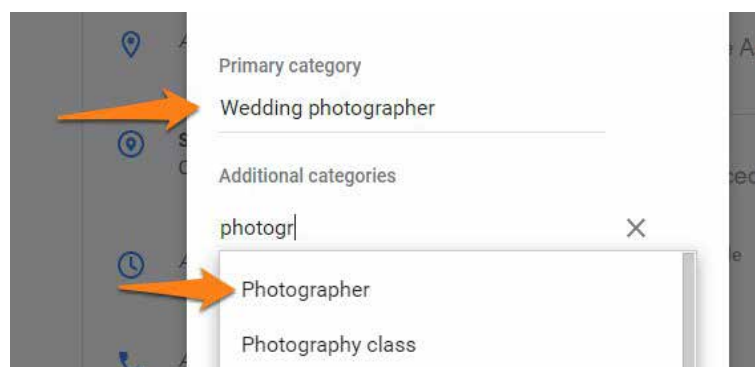
If you have a studio location that has regular open hours, you should enter these accurately, as they are displayed at your studio.

However, many photographers don't have regular hours and are by appointment only. In this case, I recommend setting the hours for any time you are willing to answer calls or receive emails. This way if someone is searching for a photographer at night, they won't see “closed now” on the map pack.



3. Choose multiple categories if applicable

For example, if you are a wedding photographer, you can choose both the “Wedding Photographer” category and the “Photographer” category.



01. Google My Business Optimisation

4. Use an actual address if at all possible

Yes we know that most photographers are based out of their homes and don't have a storefront or studio. However, our studies have shown that having an address listed on Google My Business makes it significantly more likely for you to show up in the map pack. Use your home address if it is your legal business address.

You can also get creative in some cases, just be sure that whatever address you choose actually represents your business in some way if someone shows up there. P.O. Boxes and other mailbox stores are not permitted by Google.

More information here: <https://support.google.com/business/answer/3038177?hl=en>


5. Fill out the business description

This is an excellent place to include your main value proposition, and anything that customers may need or want to know about your business. You have up to 750 characters to describe your business.

More information here: <https://support.google.com/business/answer/3039617>

Reviews from the web

4.9/5 Facebook · 128 votes

 Send to your phone

Send

Reviews ?

Write a review

Add a photo



"Truly one of the best portrait / wedding photographers in the Pacific Northwest."



"Would highly recommend him."



"Awesome artist and all round great guy!"

[View all Google reviews](#)

From Dylan M Howell Photography

"My name is Dylan and I'm a wedding photographer based in Portland, Oregon. I've been a photographer for 7 years. Documenting hundreds of weddings and elopements in some of the most incredibly gorgeous little corners of the world. A few years back, I decided to move to Portland, Oregon. I wanted to be closer to the nature of the Pacific Northwest, to be near the ocean, and to surround myself with interesting and artistic people. Through my travels, I never find a place that feels more like home. I'm often asked why I shoot weddings and the answer is simple. There is no better workplace. Where else are you surrounded by love, beauty, happiness and joy every time you go to work?"

Posts from Dylan M Howell Photography

[View previous posts on Google](#)

01. Google My Business Optimisation

6. Use posts for additional visibility

Posts are temporary updates that are associated with your Google My Business listing. Google has excellent resources available about how to use posts, which you can find here:

<https://support.google.com/business/answer/7662907?hl=en>.

If you want to really test and track posts, we recommend adding UTM tracking to your posts, and testing consistently for 3-6 months to see if the posts are bringing more visibility and traffic to your website! (The view + click tracking shown below the posts themselves is notoriously inaccurate.)



01. Google My Business Optimisation

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02. Home Page Title

There are two common issues with home page titles.

1. They are too long or significantly over optimized
2. They are not optimized at all (eg. “Home”)

The simplest formula for a home page title is:
Your Business Name: Main Keyword

Or

Main Keyword | Your Business Name

When it comes to length, use this tool: <https://www.fuelyourphotos.com/serp-preview/>

You don’t need to stuff the title with keywords, repeat variations of the keyword, or try to get many locations or specialties into one title. The more specific you can be, the more effective your title will be.

Pro Tip: grouping phrases together allows Google to be more confident that the words belong together. For example, “newborn and family photographer in Columbia, SC” prioritizes “family photographer in columbia sc” as a keyword phrase.

Examples

BAD:

Too short/unoptimized

Home

Home – Ablaze Photography

Ablaze Photography

Too long/over-optimized

Ablaze Photography – Columbia Wedding Photographer | Weddings, Engagements, Elopements | Charleston, Greenville, Columbia Weddings

Columbia, Greenville, Charleston & Myrtle Beach Wedding and Engagement Photographer | Ablaze Photography

Family Photography, Newborn Photography, Maternity Photos, Baby Photography, Children’s Portraits and Fine Art Portraiture in Columbia SC

02. Home Page Title

Examples

GOOD:

Ablaze Photography: Wedding Photographers in Columbia, SC
Columbia Wedding Photographers | Ablaze Photography
Family & Newborn Photographer in Columbia SC | Ablaze Photography

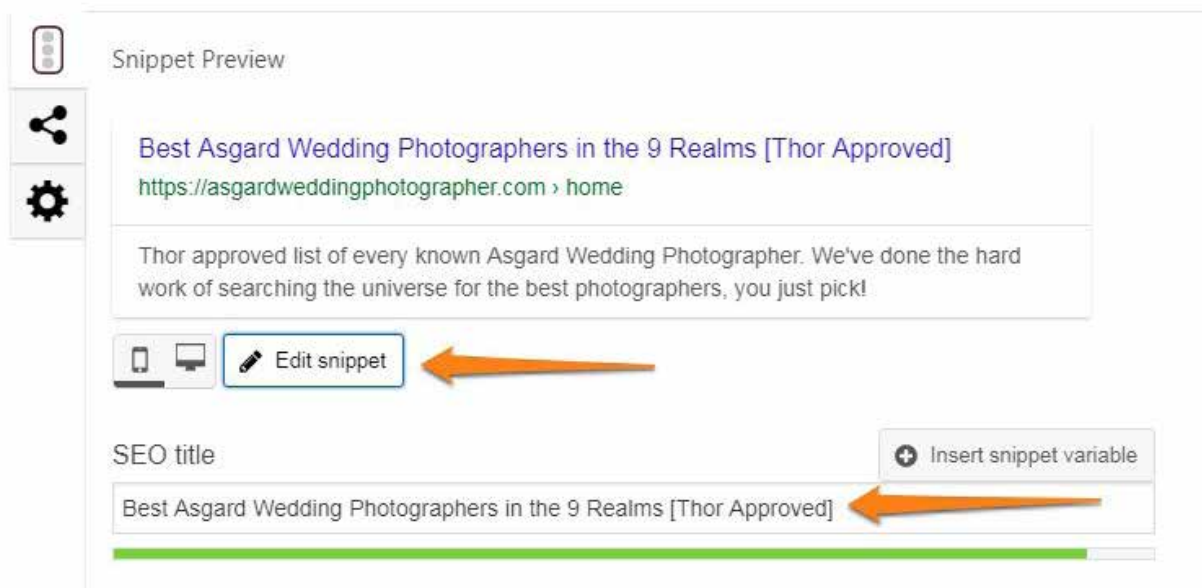
CREATIVE:

The Only Wedding Photographer in Columbia with 24 Hour Turnaround
Ablaze Photography | Voted Best Columbia Wedding Photographer 2019
Columbia Wedding Photographer {Clear & Simple Pricing} Ablaze Photography

WordPress (Yoast)

Most likely if you are using WordPress you are using Yoast or a similar plugin to manage your SEO. If you aren't using Yoast, it is likely that the interface will be very similar.

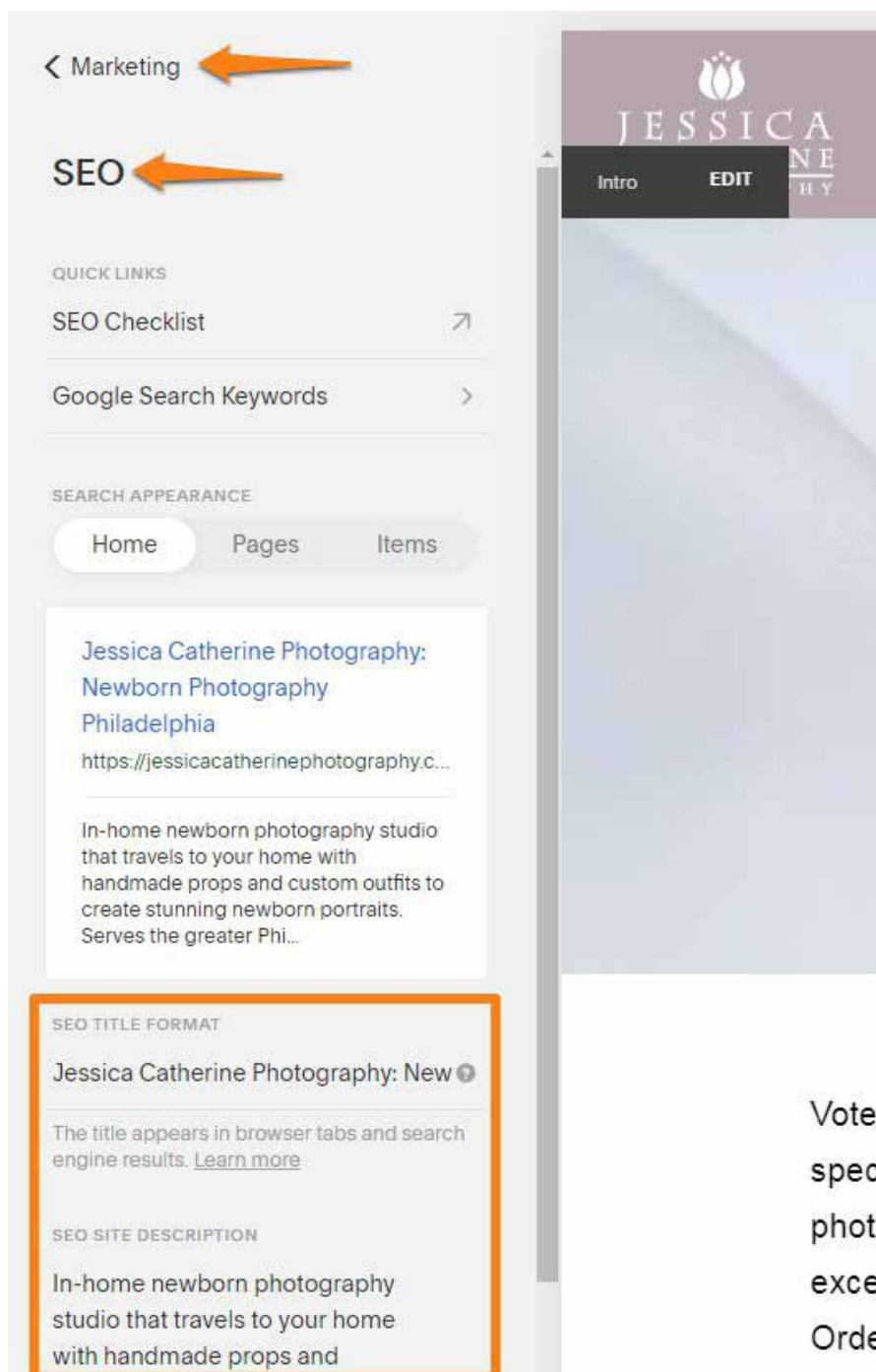
With most plugins you edit the home page title on the home page itself, but in some cases there may be another place within the plugin's settings where you need to edit the home page title.



02. Home Page Title

Squarespace

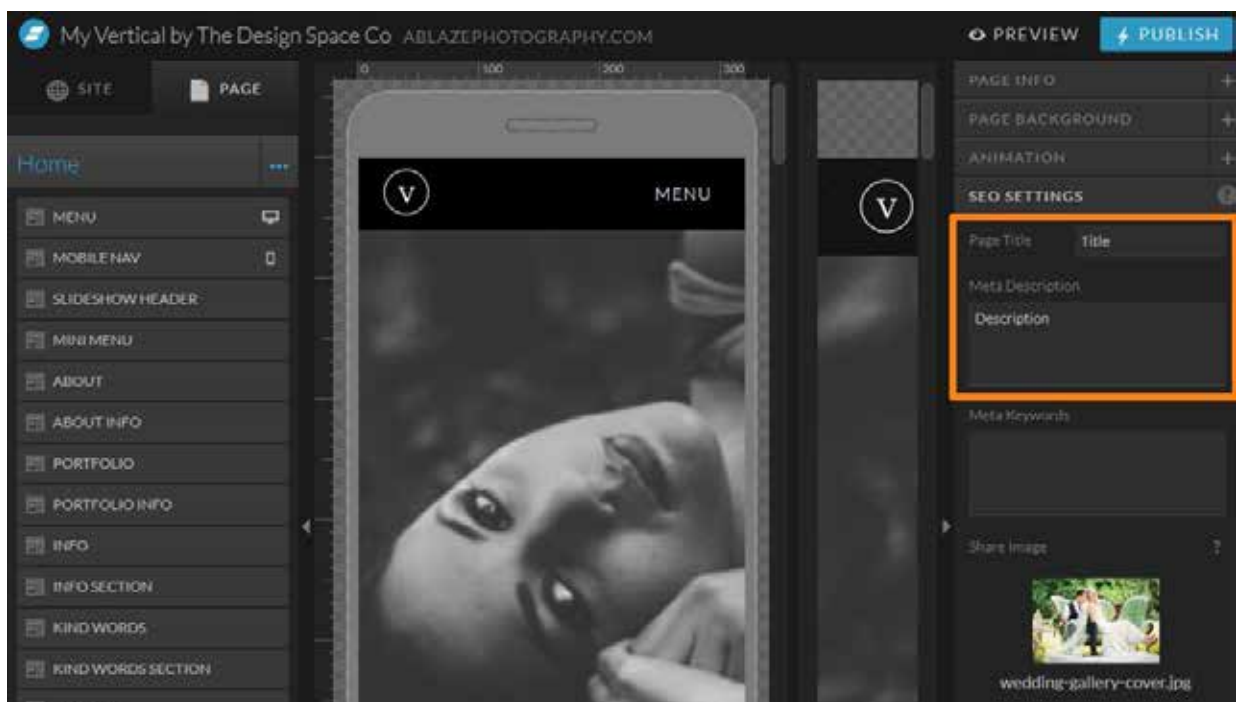
Note that on Squarespace, you can set a “format” using merge tags or you can just go ahead and write the home page title in this field directly, which is what I recommend.



02. Home Page Title

Showit

If your home page on Showit is a Showit page, you'll edit the title in the SEO settings. If it is a WordPress page/template, you'll need to go over to WordPress and edit the title there (follow the same instructions as above and use the Yoast plugin).



03. Better Meta Descriptions

When it comes to SEO, ranking is only the first part of the equation. Next, you need to get someone to CLICK your link and visit your website.

Your meta description is like a little mini ad to get people to click your link. You get to convince people that they should click your link instead of any other links on the page.

The hard part is that you only have about 156 characters to make your pitch. In some cases, Google may use up to 320 characters, but to be safe, you should get the most important part of the message into the first ~140-150 characters.

Pro Tip:

Use a tool like <https://www.fuelyourphotos.com/serp-preview/> to check the length of your title or meta description.

Many SEO tools or audits (including the Yoast plugin) will tell you to put your exact match keyword right at the beginning of your meta description. This is often a terrible idea, especially if you already used it in the title and URL.

Try to use some variation of your main keyword so that it will be bolded in the results, but using an exact match keyword isn't going to improve your ranking directly.

Use your meta description to deliver your main value proposition. Think about the main things clients love about your business or service. If you aren't sure, ask some previous clients why they decided to book you or their favorite part about working with you.

Take a look at the current set of top ranking pages and look for common phrases, or clues about the main intent behind the search term.

03. Better Meta Descriptions

Examples

BAD

Columbia wedding photographer specializing in wedding photography in Columbia SC. Get in touch for all of your Columbia wedding photography needs.

Welcome to my site. I'm glad you came. I'm Corey and I'm a Columbia Wedding Photographer.

Columbia wedding photographer serving Charleston, Greenville, Charlotte, Myrtle Beach, Atlanta, the whole Southeast, and the entire world!

GOOD

Columbia wedding photographer focused on capturing moments and connections. We have your photos edited within 24 hours of the end of your wedding.

Make sure you never forget how tiny and adorable your newborn baby was during their first week of life. Classic studio newborn photography in Columbia.

Your family changes every year! Don't wait another year for perfect family portraits that will let you remember this time forever. Serving Greenville SC.

CREATIVE

[start a story to build curiosity]

Many people don't realize this, but the main reason I got started as a wedding photographer is because of an interesting thing I observed when I was...

[also works very well for blog posts]

I would have never believed I was at 701 Whaley if you blindfolded me and walked me into this wedding. It was literally like I stepped into a different...

04. Indexation Cleanup

1. Image attachment pages

When Google crawls a website, it saves information about the site to the “index.” Think of the index as a giant library of all of the data Google has collected from the internet.

As a site owner, you have the ability to control what Google saves to the index (at least to some extent). You can request that Google leave certain pages out, or even request that certain pages be removed from the index.

The main thing you need to understand is that Google looks at all of the pages of your site to determine the overall “quality” of your site. In an ideal world, you want Google to index ONLY the high quality pages of your site.

There are a few common types of pages that clutter the index and lower your site’s overall quality. Here are the most common, and steps for making sure they don’t bring down the quality of your site.

[sandduneengagement-17 | Jess Woodhouse](https://jesswoodhouse.com/sand-dune-engagment/sandduneengagement-17/)

<https://jesswoodhouse.com/sand-dune-engagment/sandduneengagement-17/>
Home · Recent Work · About · Contact · Home · Recent Work · About · Contact · Archives.
sandduneengagement-17. READ MORE · @jess_woodhouse_...

[sandduneengagement-1 | Jess Woodhouse](https://jesswoodhouse.com/sand-dune-engagment/sandduneengagement-1/)

<https://jesswoodhouse.com/sand-dune-engagment/sandduneengagement-1/>
Home · Recent Work · About · Contact · Home · Recent Work · About · Contact · Archives.
sandduneengagement-1. READ MORE · @jess_woodhouse_...



These are image attachment pages.

You don't want to see these in web searches.

On WordPress (and some other platforms) a separate URL is generated for every single image that you upload. These are typically low quality results, and while you want the images to be indexed, you don’t need a separate page dedicated to each image.

If you are on WordPress, you can use your SEO plugin to redirect all image attachment pages to the image itself.

If you have hundreds or thousands of these indexed, use this Yoast Search Index Purge Plugin.

04. Indexation Cleanup

1. Tag Archives

[new york wedding – Destination Wedding Photographer | Jonas ...](#)

jonaspeterson.com/tag/new-york-wedding/

Tag: new york wedding. (preview) david & patricia, high falls, new york. READ MORE. Follow me. @JONASPETERSON INSTAGRAM. Jonas Peterson 2018 |

[oman – Destination Wedding Photographer | Jonas Peterson ...](#)

jonaspeterson.com/tag/oman/

CONTACT · PRESETS. Tag: oman. Kim & Chris ~ The Chedi Hotel ~ Muscat READ MORE. Follow me. @JONASPETERSON INSTAGRAM. Jonas Peterson ...

[photoshop – Destination Wedding Photographer | Jonas Peterson ...](#)

jonaspeterson.com/tag/photoshop/

... London 11 June 2019 · WRITER'S BLOCK – Stockholm 18 June 2019 · CONTACT · PRESETS. Tag: photoshop. Leaving Las Vegas READ MORE. Follow me.

Search for:

Site:yourdomain.com /tag/

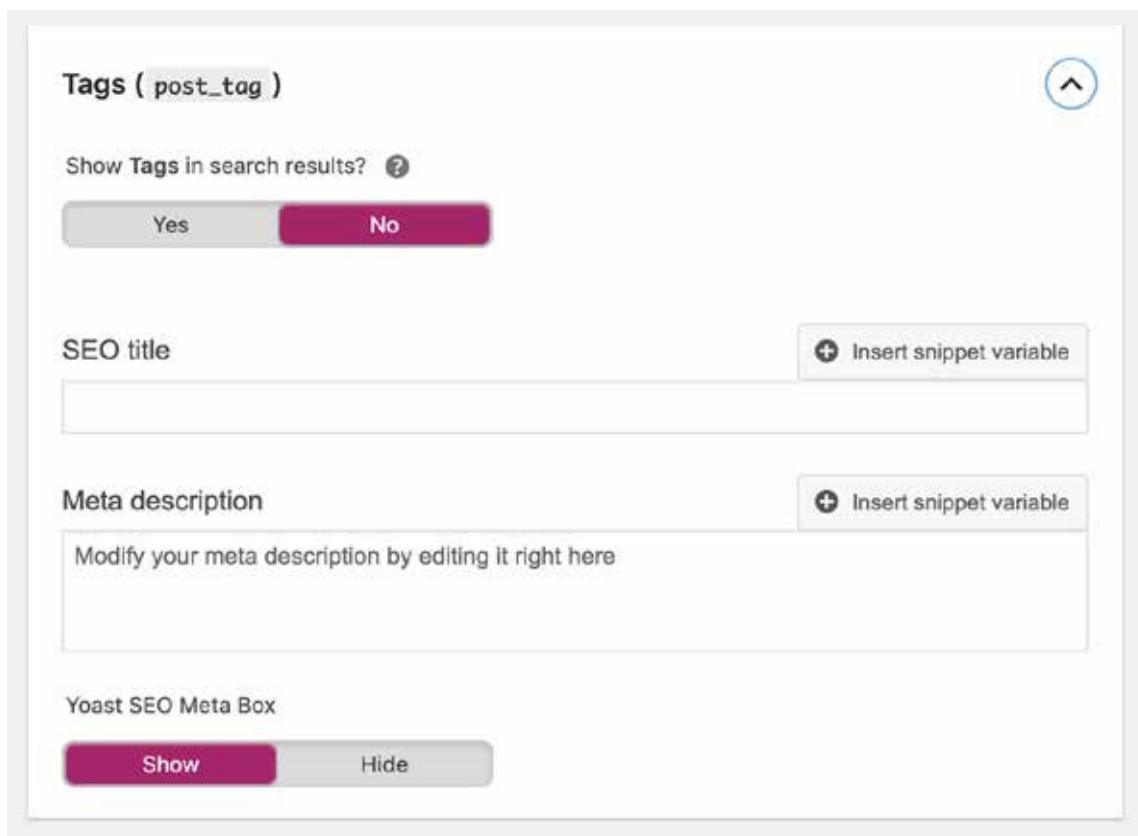
Or

Site:yourdomain.com inurl:tag

The vast majority of photographers are using tags in a way that is likely hurting them more than helping. If you aren't 100% sure that you know what you are doing with your tags (creating a useful internal linking structure and valuable resource pages with unique content), you are probably better off noindexing or not using tags at all.

How to - Wordpress

Yoast => Search Appearance => Taxonomies => Show Tags in Search Results = No

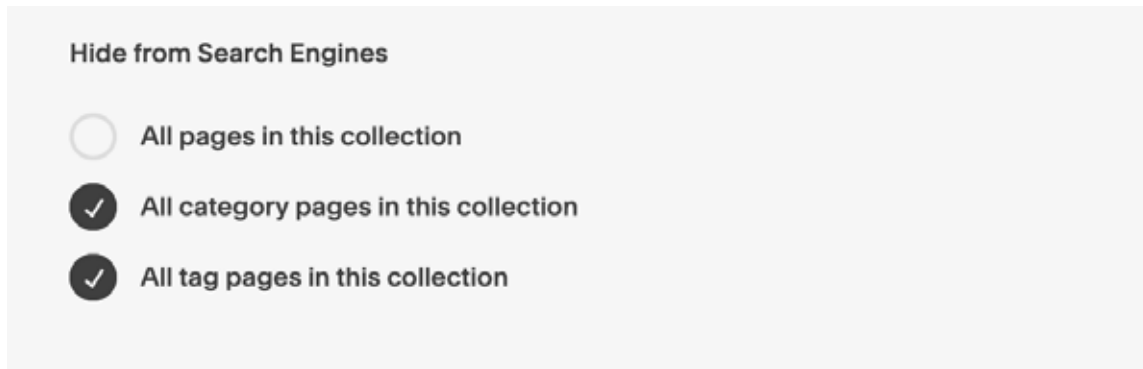


The image shows a screenshot of the Yoast SEO meta box for a tag archive. The title is "Tags (post_tag)". Below the title, there is a question "Show Tags in search results?" with a help icon. Two buttons are visible: "Yes" (disabled) and "No" (active). Below this, there are two text input fields: "SEO title" and "Meta description". Each field has an "Insert snippet variable" button to its right. The "Meta description" field contains the text "Modify your meta description by editing it right here". At the bottom of the box, there is a "Yoast SEO Meta Box" label and two buttons: "Show" (active) and "Hide" (disabled).

04. Indexation Cleanup

How to - Squarespace

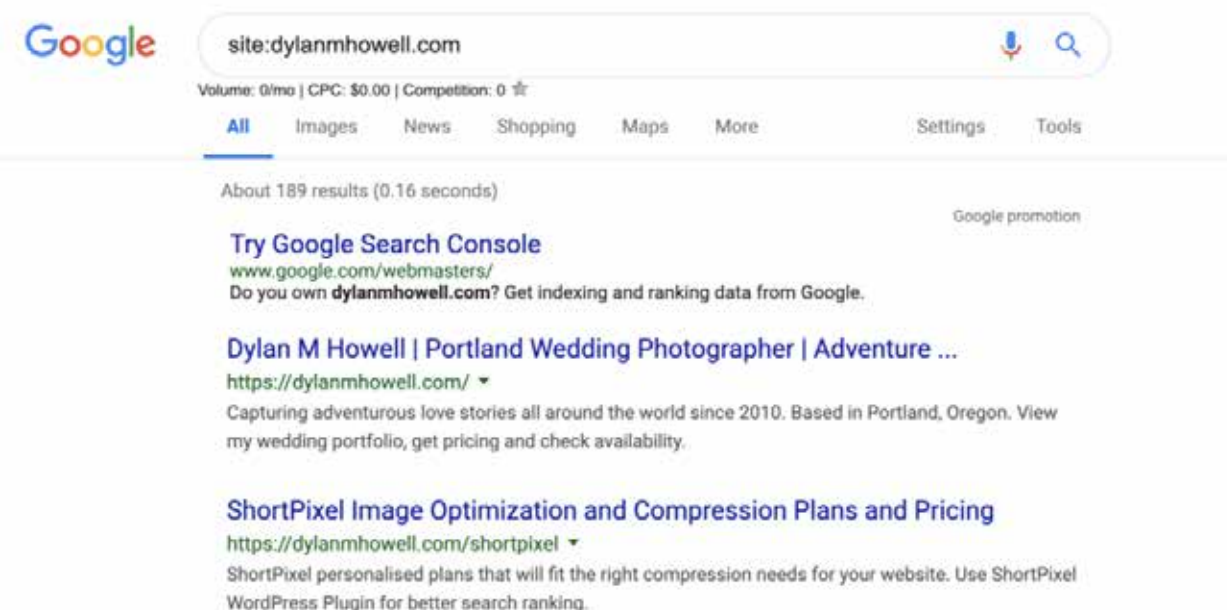
Blog page settings => SEO settings => Hide from Search Engines => All tag pages in this collection.



3. Template Pages (especially latin placeholder)

I'm always surprised by how many websites still have live template pages that are indexed by Google. Usually these came with the theme or design and have latin text on them. Sometimes they are "test" pages that someone set up to test a new layout or design. Make sure your demo, template, and test pages are noindexed or deleted so they do not get indexed by Google.

To see which pages you have indexed, you can quickly perform a site operator search. You simply append "site:" to the start of your URL, without https or www.

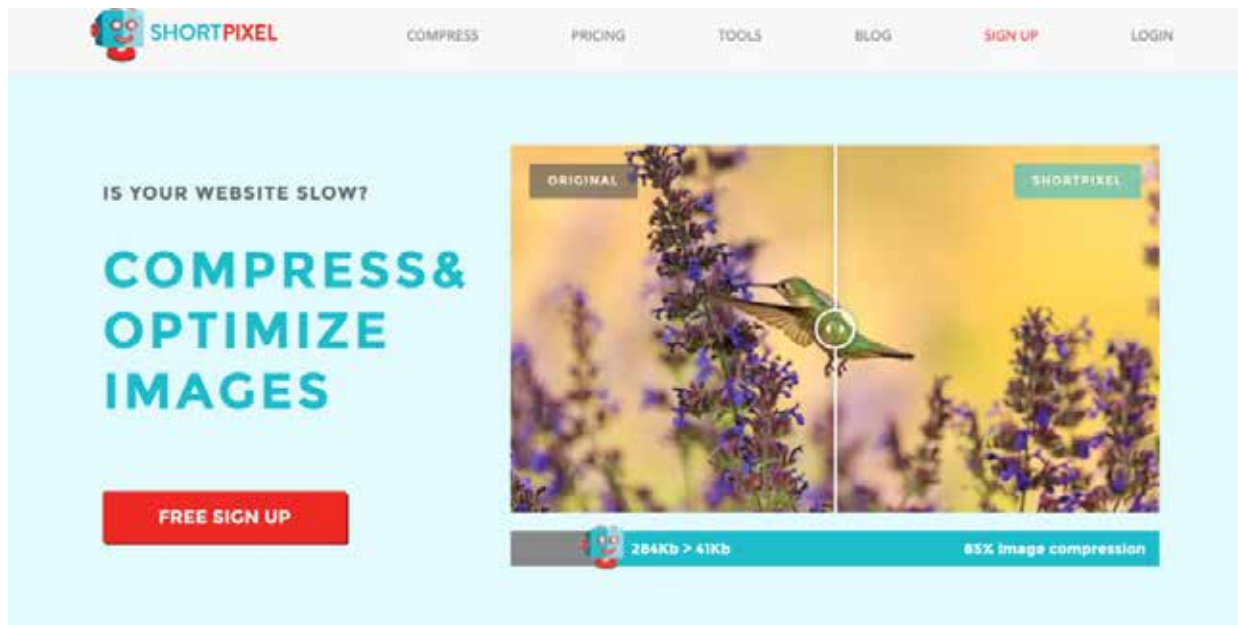


05. Image Compression

On photography sites, images are responsible for a disproportionate percentage of overall page weight. Across the entire internet, 21% of the average web page consists of image files. With photography sites, it's typically closer to 60-80%.

This is both a challenge, but also a sizable opportunity. If you can optimize your individual image file sizes, you're much more likely to have a speedy website experience for your audience.

Our favorite tool is called Short Pixel. It has a web based compression tool for use on website platforms like Squarespace and Wix. If you're on WordPress, they have a plugin that can run compression on all of your previously uploaded images.



We typically see a 40-60% reduction in image file size by using this tool, it's the best out of all we tested. We've used tools to compare the before and after image quality from a pure data perspective and it's typically most seen in edges and bright whites. Skin tones can also be slightly flat in comparison.

05. Image Compression



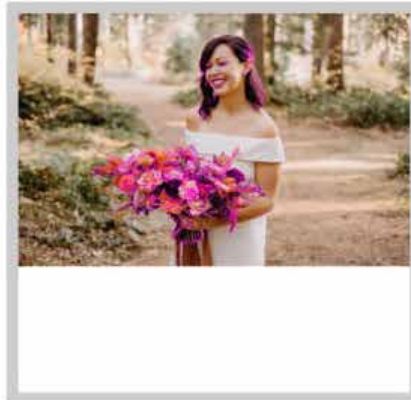
Compare two images?

Drop two images on the boxes to the left. The box below will show a generated 'diff' image, pink areas show mismatch. This example best works with two very similar but slightly different images. Try for yourself!

Don't have any images to compare?

Use example images

Use example images with alpha



Ignore nothing Ignore less Ignore colors Ignore antialiasing Ignore alpha

Use original size Scale to same size Pink Yellow

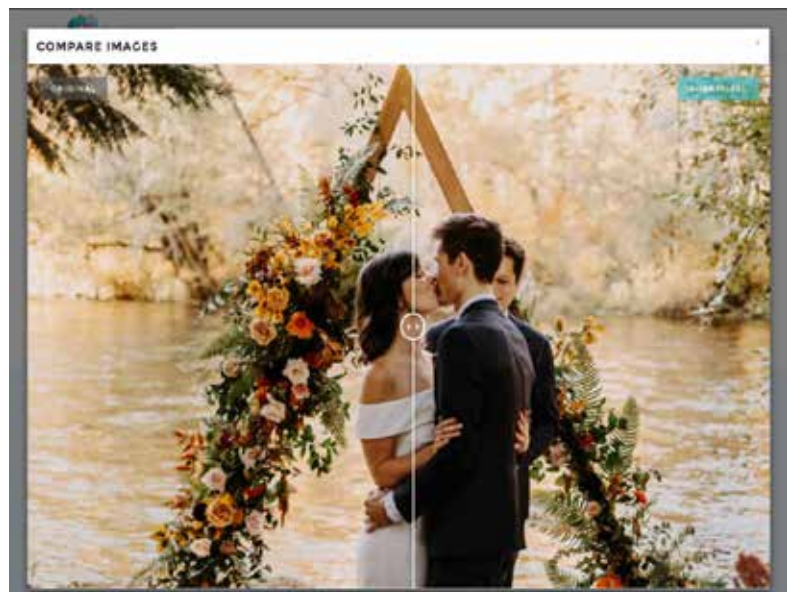
Flat Movement Flat with diff intensity Movement with diff intensity Diff portion from the input

Opaque Transparent

Use the built-in before/after slider to see if the loss of quality is noticeable on your images.

We recommend you use the “Glossy” setting and follow image pixel dimensions that are specified by your website developer or theme builder.

If you're on a platform other than wordpress, take care of replacing the images on your most important pages first, then you can go back and re-do blog posts when you have time.



06. Mention “Pricing”

This is a short and simple tip!

When someone searches for a photographer, one of the main things they want to find is pricing information. Google is in the business of giving people exactly what they want, as fast as possible.

When you have a page that you want to rank for “wedding photographer in {your city}” you should mention pricing on THAT page. Even just mentioning the word “price” and including a dollar sign with a number is a strong indicator that the page contains pricing details.

Again, you don’t have to include full pricing details on the home page, you can link to a pricing page, but at least allude to pricing on the home page.

Bonus tip: “Pricing”, “Investment”, or “Information” is often the most clicked link in a photography site’s main navigation.

07. Link to Cornerstone Content from Your Home Page

For the sake of this guide, cornerstone content is any piece of content on your site that you want to rank for a particular topic. Google *typically* only wants to show one result per domain for any given topic (notice that I'm not saying "keyword" – a topic contains many keyword variations).

So imagine Google comes to you and says "hey, we know you are an expert on {whatever topic}, which page of your site do you want us to show in the results when people search for that topic?"

However you answer that question... that page is the cornerstone content for that topic. It should be the hub for all things related to that topic on your site. A comprehensive and authoritative resource for someone searching for that topic.

Video about Cornerstone Content from the Course! [Click to watch on YouTube...](#)



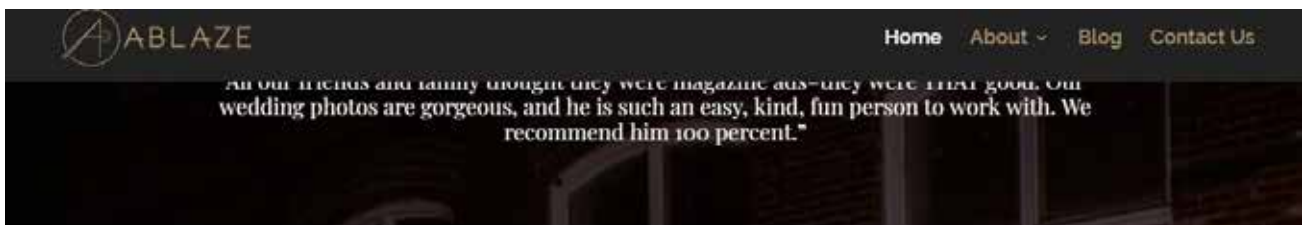
07. Link to Cornerstone Content from Your Home Page

After you've done the hard work to create cornerstone content, you should link to it from your home page. There are two reasons that you should do this:

Your home page often has the highest page authority of any page on your site. The authority from your home page passes through to the pages that you link to from the home page. Having content only one click away from the home page also shows a crawler that it has a high priority.

You want to make sure that visitors can find your most valuable content easily when they land on your home page. Often cornerstone content is buried deep on a site and visitors never stumble across it unless they find it via search.

On the Ablaze Photography website I link to 3 blog posts that are hand chosen as my most important cornerstone content. You can do this on most platforms or themes by showing a blog grid and filtering by category. Then just add a "featured" category to the posts you want to show here!



THE 6 Wedding Planners in Columbia, SC you NEED to Interview!

AWESOME VENDORS

What can a Columbia wedding planner do for you? Planning and then executing a successful wedding can take a lot of work. Brides are typically going to be busy enough with their careers that they're simply not going to have the time and energy to cover every essential.



19 Best Places To Take Engagement Photos in Columbia, SC

COLUMBIA, ENGAGEMENT

One of the questions I get asked most frequently is "Where should we take our engagement photos in Columbia?" Many of the sessions that I post are on family owned property, or the clients have special permission from a friend to use the location. I always recommend.



7 Of My Favorite Wedding Venues in Columbia, SC

COLUMBIA, WEDDINGS

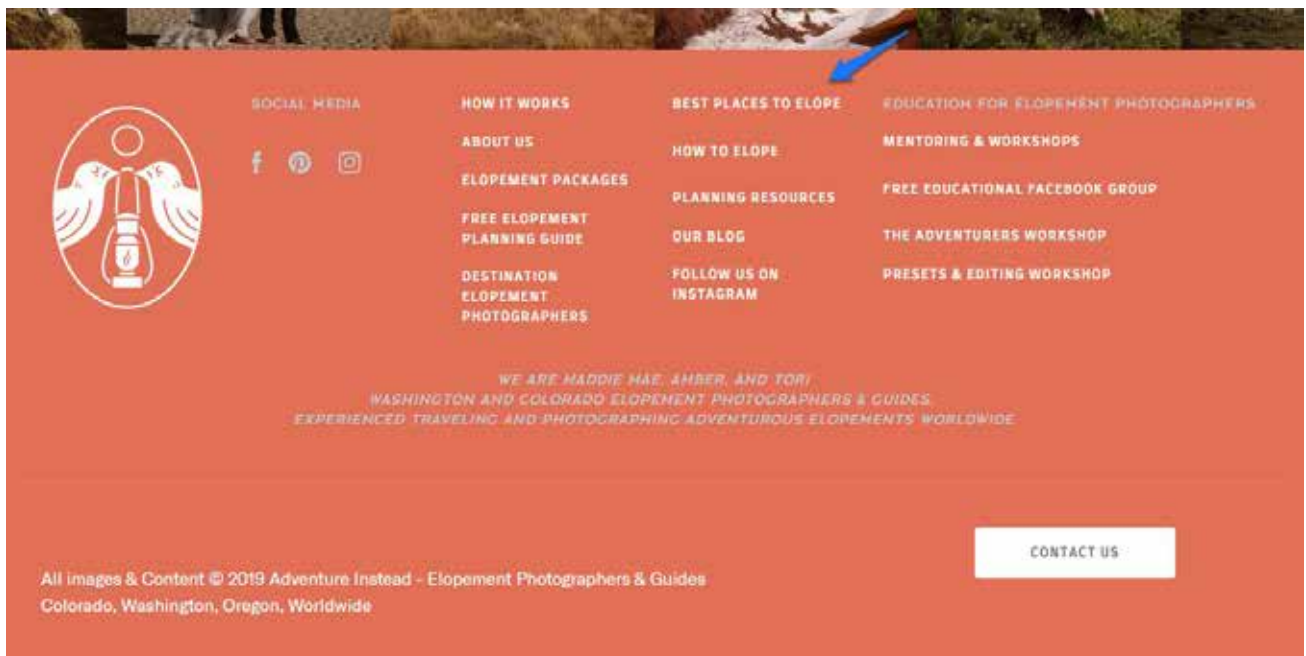
Looking for a place to get married in Columbia? I've had so many people ask me what venues are nice, because they just didn't know where to start looking! There are SO many great venues in Columbia, but today I'm going to share 7 of my favorites! I'll show one of my...

07. Link to Cornerstone Content from Your Home Page

Jenny Grimm uses a boldly simple navigation, where the only options are to navigate to her cornerstone pages for each genre.



Adventure Instead has a great example of a footer that links to several of the most important cornerstone pages on the site.



08. Merge Info Page & Gallery to Create Cornerstone Content


Photography sites often have separate pages to handle pricing/info, portfolio galleries, and recent work (blog posts).

If you can combine all of this relevant information into one cornerstone page, you'll give users a better experience. This will also be a page that meets the typical searcher intent for a person looking for more information about photography services. It gives them all of the information they're typically looking for, without the need to browse multiple pages.

<https://www.jeannewittphotography.com/family-photography/>

<https://jennygrimm.com/chicago-family-photographer>

<https://dylanmhowell.com/oregon-elopement-packages/>




a family session

Each family session that I do is completely unique- there are no two families that are identical! And that's what I try and capture- a collection of images that is uniquely YOURS. My consistency factor is that I shoot with a whole lot of LOVE and joy. Family is at the heart and epicenter of my life, and I can't wait to show your family what your world is all about.


Expect these sessions to take approximately an hour. Upon booking, we will work together to customize your look and the perfect location (either outdoors or in home).

VIEW MORE FAMILY STORIES HERE.

Investment starts at \$750.



BOOK A FAMILY SESSION



09. Include Information/Info/ Pricing in Your Main Navigation

When tracking clicks on many photography websites, we have observed that as many as 60% of visitors will click a link labeled “information” or “pricing” in the main navigation before taking any other actions (including scrolling).

If you have multiple specialties, consider following the advice in the previous tip (combining pricing with galleries to create cornerstone pages), but if you have a single focus, consider having a page dedicated to pricing and other information (like FAQ).

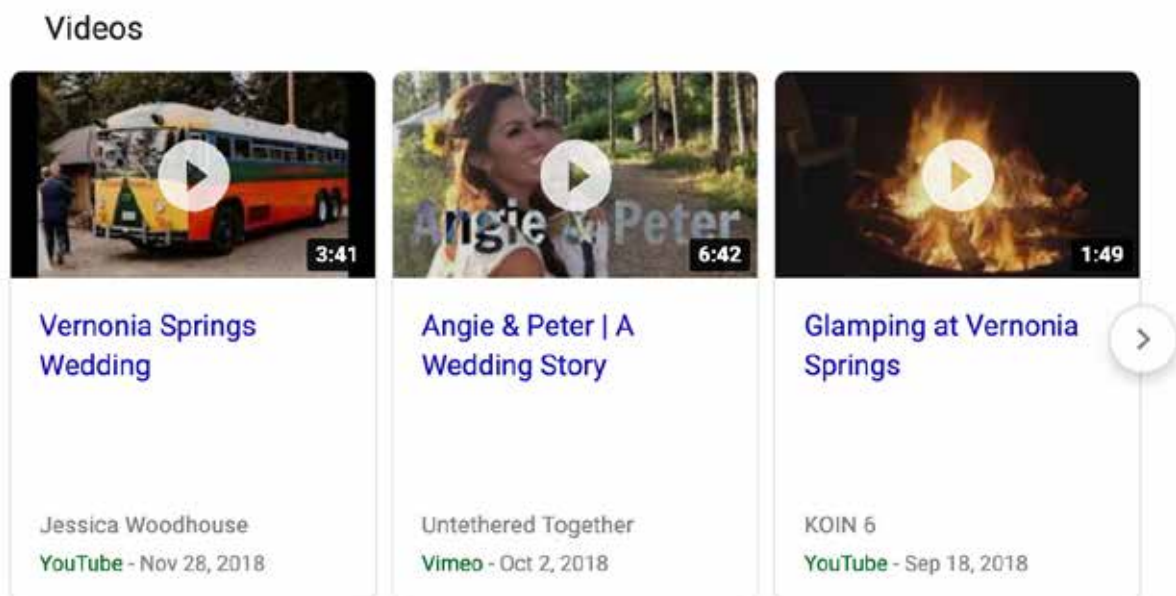
Even if you have separate cornerstone pages with their own pricing information, it may be worth keeping a “pricing” link in the main navigation. Then you could have a page that links to more information on the cornerstone pages.

Before you ask, “Investment” will work in the main navigation as well, but so far the best performing words we’ve seen are “Pricing” and “Information.”

10. Use a Video To Rank

You might have noticed that Youtube is taking over more of our attention than ever. Ranking on Youtube can bring significant traffic to your site on its own, but you can also use these videos to improve your rankings in Google's search results.

The quickest wins will be seen by targeting terms that already include a video in the search results. This shows that Google already thinks that a user would find a video result useful.



Simply create a video that covers the topic you're optimizing for, upload it to youtube, and embed it on your page. The headings and text around the video will send signals to Google in regards to the contents of the video.

You can also rank with the video alone, without even embedding it on a page, just optimize the title and description of the video on YouTube with the keyword you are targeting.

11. Pick the Right Keywords

For the purpose of this guide, we won't talk about all the intricacies of keyword research, or the variety of tools available to help you find the right keywords.

Instead, we'll give you three simple steps to make sure you are using the right keywords.

1. Install the Keywords Everywhere extension for Chrome

Keywords everywhere is a free extension you can add to Chrome and get estimates for keyword volume right in a Google search.

The data provided by Keywords Everywhere isn't 100% perfect (no tool is), but it should be enough to give you some additional ideas and a rough estimate of whether there is any search volume for that term.

2. Use your intuition and a Google search

Think about how you would search for the service or topic that you want to rank for. Go do that Google search and observe the titles of the pages that are ranking. Look at the suggested terms at the bottom of the page. Look at the Keywords Everywhere suggestions.

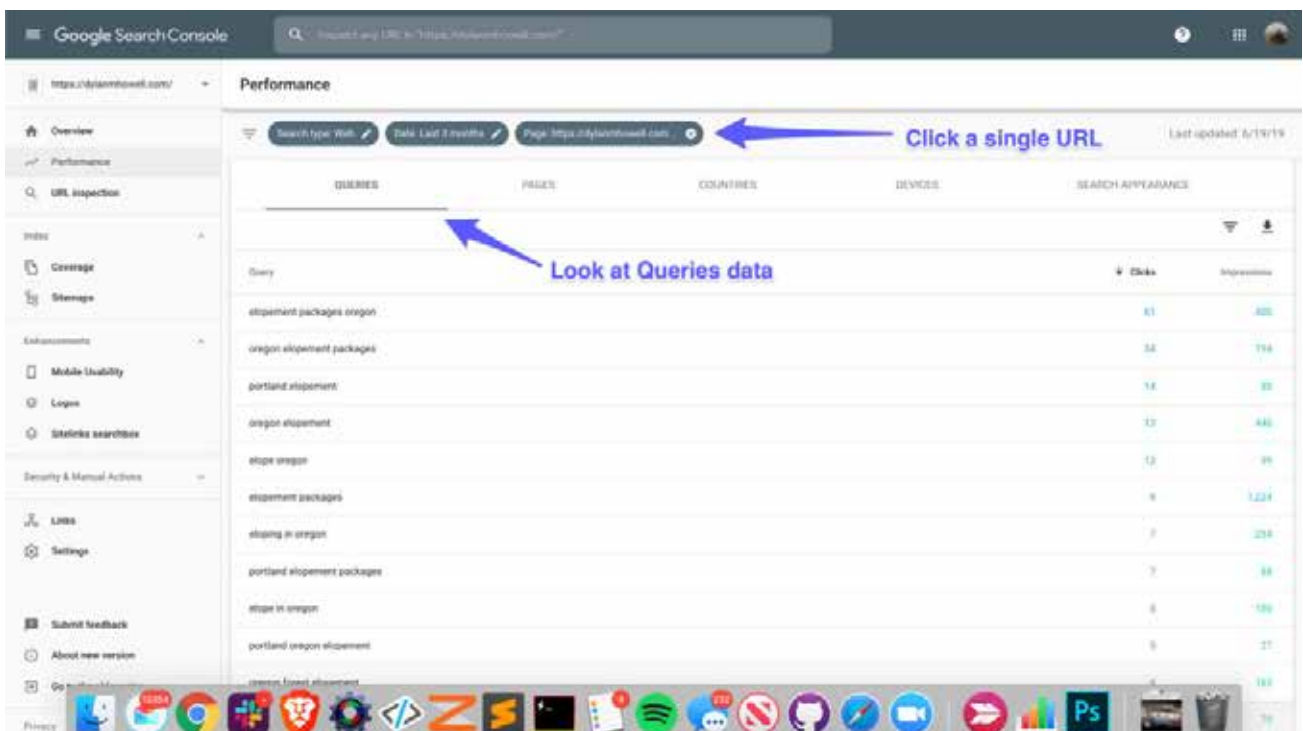
Based on this, pick a keyword that you believe makes the most sense for the page you are optimizing.

11. Pick the Right Keywords

3. Use Search Console to confirm that you've used the right keywords and tweak as needed

Once you have optimized your pages and have given Google some time to index and rank them, it is time to go back to Search Console and see how real humans are actually searching.

Just open the performance report, add a URL filter, and flip back over to the queries tab. This will give you a good idea about the terms that are bringing impressions and clicks, and possibly even give you ideas for new topics you can include to increase the overall relevance for your main keywords.



12. Set Up Search Console

SEO without Search Console is like driving blindfolded. If you don't have Search Console set up, do that right now.

Pro tip: set up a domain property by adding a txt record to your domain, and you'll be able to see traffic across all versions of your domain. However, you may still need a separate property for the primary canonical address to access certain tools and features.

More information about setting up Google Search Console:

<https://www.fuelyourphotos.com/guide-to-search-console/>

13. Citations & Social Profiles

Google collects information about your brand from many sources around the web. One way to increase your authority and legitimacy is to appear in all of the places that someone would normally expect to find a business like yours.

Here is a list of places you can set up a profile or business listing:

Social Platforms

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Instagram
- Pinterest
- Flickr
- Medium
- LinkedIn (personal and business profile)
- Youtube
- Vimeo
- Tumblr

Other Citations

- Bing
- Yelp
- Wedding Wire
- The Knot
- Foursquare
- Mapquest

There are also regional and specialty specific citations that can be a great place to have your business listed. Do a search for your target keyword and go through the first 10 or 20 pages of results. Make a list of all of the directories that are listed, and start submitting your business to those!

As you set up each of these citations, be sure to note your login information in a spreadsheet so that if you ever need to change the details, it will be readily available to you.

Bonus Tip: Make sure that your NAP (Name, Address, and Phone number) are **exactly** the same on every one of these citations. If you ever change this information, make sure to change it everywhere.

Bonus Bonus Tip: There are services that will sign up for citations for you. A few popular options are Whitespark, BrightLocal, and The Hoth.

14. Submit to Publications

Backlinks (links to your site from another website) are like votes of confidence. They tell Google that someone else believes your site is worth mentioning. Each link helps build trust and authority into your domain and brand.

One of the easiest ways to obtain backlinks for photographers is to get their work featured, published, or credited online.

If you make submitting your work a part of your regular workflow, you are much more likely to get featured (and obtain backlinks) regularly.

One way to do this is to use a service like Two Bright Lights or Matchology.

Don't worry about getting big name publications every time, getting the smaller features consistently is going to be just as valuable in the long run. Submit each session non-exclusively to several publications. When you have something outstanding, save it for submission to a bigger publication.

Some publications won't use Two Bright Lights or Matchology, and you'll need to submit to them manually. Make a list of your targets, figure out their submission process, and add it to your regular workflow.

Most of our students who start using Two Bright Lights are able to get featured within a few months of trying, and we know some people who have racked up over 50 links in a year using this method!

15. Get Google Reviews

Getting reviews on Google can be like pulling teeth. However, many SEOs believe that Google reviews can account for up to 15% of local ranking signals (source: <https://moz.com/local-search-ranking-factors>).

One tactic for getting an initial surge of reviews is to ask past clients to review you. Instead of just asking them to go leave a Google review (which can be kind of awkward), use this method to get people excited about leaving you a review!

Start by posting wherever your audience follows you. This could be a personal post on Facebook, a post to your FB business page, an Instagram post, an Instagram story, an email, or anything else that works for you to get the attention of your previous clients.

Instead of just asking for a review, ask them if you have ever taken a photo that was meaningful to them. If so, ask them to post that photo as a Google review, and write a sentence or two about what the photo means to them. This makes it much less awkward to write about YOU, and lets them write about themselves or someone they love.

Pro Tip: give people a direct link to leave a review.

Here's an official Google support answer on how to do this (and no, Google does not frown on this).

<https://support.google.com/business/answer/7035772?hl=en>

16. Be Sure Your Site is Secured with an SSL Certificate

An SSL certificate ensures a secure connection between your host and the browser. If your website address begins with `https://` (note the “s” for secure), then you are using an SSL certificate. HTTPS has been confirmed as a ranking factor, and many browsers are aggressively warning people not to visit sites without it!

Most modern website platforms and hosting companies include free SSL certificates. In these cases, turning the option on can be as simple as clicking “enable” in your control panel. However, there are a few other things to check if you convert to HTTPS or if you are already using HTTPS on your site.

Check your home page, an internal page, a blog post, and your sitemap. Try visiting an `http` page and make sure it is redirecting to `https`. If not, just Google how to “force https” on your host or platform.

Make sure there is no “mixed content.” This typically comes from embedded content, but can also happen when your database hasn’t been updated with the correct site address. Be sure that you have the `https` property or a domain property set up in Search Console. Update your website address in Google My Business.

Be aware that in some cases this can get pretty technical, especially if you are using an old theme or platform. The good news is that there are a variety of companies, contractors, and freelancers who can help fix any issues that arise for a very reasonable price.

17. Add Internal Links to Your Most Important Content

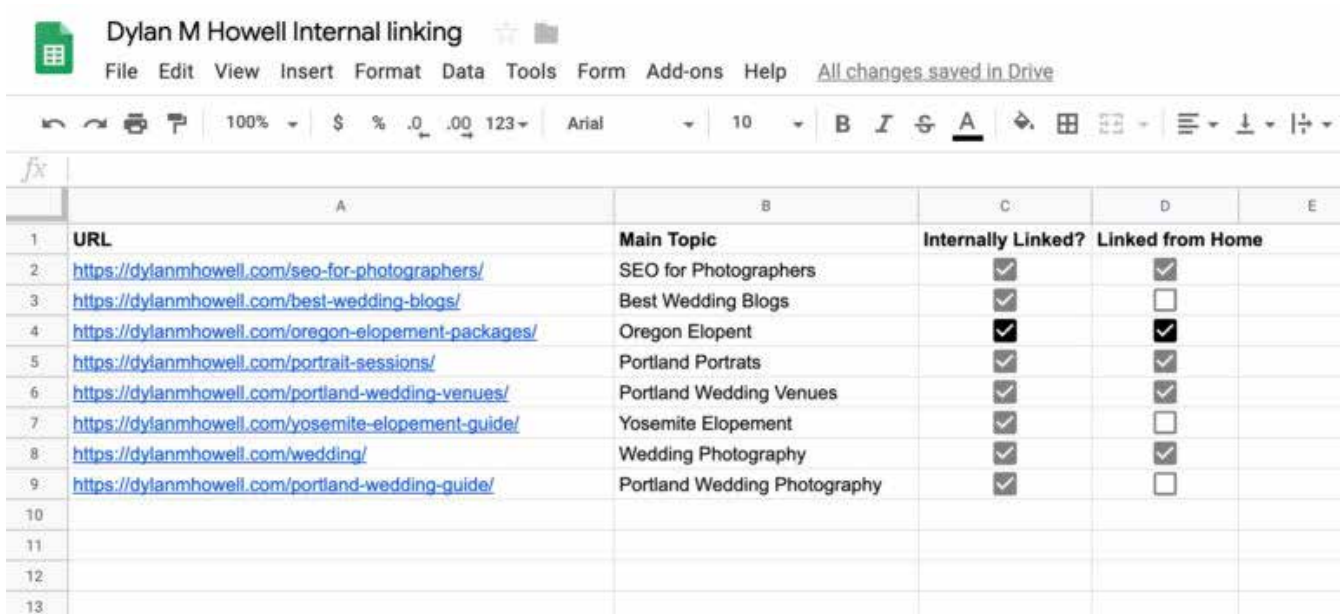
Internal links are links from one page of your site to another page on your site.

These links allow crawlers (like Googlebot) to access the content on your site. The words you use as anchor text (the clickable text of the link or the alt text of an image link) also give those crawlers context about the topic of the page they will be visiting.

There are other important things at play, like the “depth” of a page on your website, and the way that authority flows through links, but we won’t get into the technical details in this guide.

Since we already gave a tip about linking to cornerstone content from your home page, the action item for this tip has to do with your blog posts and other “supporting” content.

For this task, I find it easiest if you have a list of pages on your site, and the topics they cover. I keep these in a spreadsheet.



The screenshot shows a Google Sheet titled "Dylan M Howell Internal linking". The sheet contains a table with the following data:

| | A | B | C | D | E |
|----|---|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| 1 | URL | Main Topic | Internally Linked? | Linked from Home | |
| 2 | https://dylanmhowell.com/seo-for-photographers/ | SEO for Photographers | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |
| 3 | https://dylanmhowell.com/best-wedding-blogs/ | Best Wedding Blogs | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| 4 | https://dylanmhowell.com/oregon-elopement-packages/ | Oregon Elopent | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |
| 5 | https://dylanmhowell.com/portrait-sessions/ | Portland Portrats | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |
| 6 | https://dylanmhowell.com/portland-wedding-venues/ | Portland Wedding Venues | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |
| 7 | https://dylanmhowell.com/yosemite-elopement-guide/ | Yosemite Elopement | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| 8 | https://dylanmhowell.com/wedding/ | Wedding Photography | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |
| 9 | https://dylanmhowell.com/portland-wedding-guide/ | Portland Wedding Photography | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| 10 | | | | | |
| 11 | | | | | |
| 12 | | | | | |
| 13 | | | | | |

17.

Add Internal Links to Your Most Important Content

Once you have your list of important pages, you want to find opportunities to link to these important pages from other pages on your site.

First, we'll find opportunities that might pass the most authority. I use Ahrefs for this, but I'll show how to use a free Moz account to find some of the top opportunities.

Go to Moz Link Explorer and type in your domain (you'll need to register a free account and log in).

Click the "Top Pages" link on the left.

The screenshot shows the Moz Link Explorer interface for the domain <https://dylanmhowell.com>. The left sidebar is set to 'Top Pages'. The main content area displays a table of the top 10 pages on the site, ranked by Page Authority (PA).

| URL | PA | Linking Domains | External Links | Outbound Domains | Status Code | View Links |
|---|----|-----------------|----------------|------------------|-------------|----------------------------|
| Dylan M Howell Portland Wedding Photographer Adventure EL... | 37 | 236 | 3,229 | 6 | 200 | View Links |
| A Brief History of Fashion Photography | 32 | 37 | 42 | 6 | 200 | View Links |
| www.dylanmhowell.com | 32 | 38 | 271 | 0 | 301 | View Links |
| cdn.dylanmhowell.com/_ads/2014/10/vsco-film-06-review.jpg | 29 | 12 | 34 | 0 | 404 | View Links |
| dylanmhowell.com/best-wedding-blogs-2017/ | 28 | 12 | 14 | 0 | 301 | View Links |
| Top 25 Portland Wedding Venues [Updated for 2019] | 27 | 7 | 7 | 36 | 200 | View Links |
| VSCO Film 06 Review - Before and After Images | 27 | 7 | 9 | 24 | 200 | View Links |
| cdn.dylanmhowell.com/_/yosemite-wedding-photographer.jpg | 27 | 7 | 32 | 0 | 404 | View Links |
| What's changing in SEO for Photographers for 2019 [examples] | 27 | 7 | 8 | 24 | 200 | View Links |
| cdn.dylanmhowell.com/_her-gear-0011-e1447708767683.jpg | 26 | 6 | 12 | 0 | 404 | View Links |

17. Add Internal Links to Your Most Important Content

This list will be sorted by page authority. Look for content pages where you can easily insert natural links to other important content on your site.

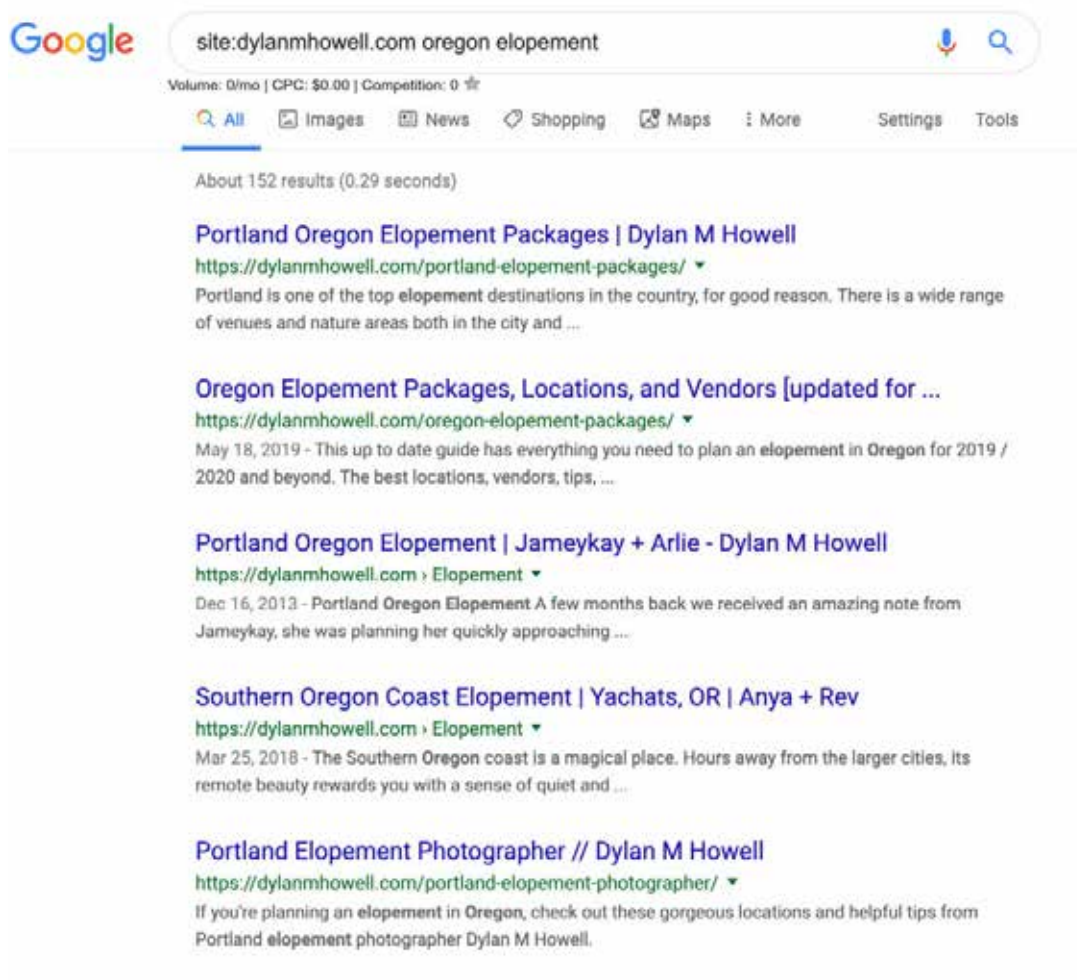
Second, we'll find opportunities based on relevance.

Go to Google and type `site:yourdomain.com` and then a space, and then the main keyword or topic for the page you want to link to.

So for example, let's say you are adding internal links to a page about "The Millstone at Adams Pond". Your search in google would be:

Site:ablazepphoto.com the millstone at adams pond
(obviously replace the domain with your own, and the keywords with your own).

Google will return a list of pages that it believes are most likely related to the keywords you entered. Open the relevant pages and make sure to add links to your cornerstone page for this topic.



18. A blog post that you should write TODAY

We have an entire list of over 200 blog post ideas that you can reference any time you want. But we're going to make it even easier for you by telling you the posts that are MOST likely to bring you a significant amount of traffic to your site.

1. A list of locations to take [engagement, family, senior, headshot] photos

This post usually does extremely well in search engines. It has many benefits and side effects that we won't get into. Just trust us and go write this post.

<https://www.ablazephoto.com/columbia-engagement-session-locations/>

<https://www.katyweaver.com/portland-engagement-photo-locations/>

<https://www.katyweaver.com/portland-senior-photo-locations/>

2. A list of the top wedding venues in your city (if you are a wedding photographer)

It might seem like everyone and their mom is making these lists, but we promise, there is still room to compete here. Just make your list better than what is currently on the first page and you have a great shot at ranking.

<https://dylanmhowell.com/portland-wedding-venues/>

<https://www.samhurdphotography.com/baltimore-wedding-venues/>

<https://jesswoodhouse.com/weddings/30-best-wedding-venues-in-portland-oregon/>

3. A roundup post where you showcase the best photos you have from a particular type of session.

This one is a bit vague, but we wanted to give something that would work well in almost any photography genre. Here are a couple of examples:

17 Cake Smash Photos That Will Make You Spit Out Your Milk

14 of The Funniest Engagement Photos With Dogs in Columbia SC

Try not to Cry When You See These 9 Father Daughter Dance Photos

19. Get the keywords and backlinks that work for your competitors

A quick way to put together an SEO strategy is by studying the competition. If you have a list of the backlinks your competition has, you'll have a great starting point for your own link building efforts.

There are paid tools that provide this data:
Ahrefs, Semrush, Moz, Majestic, Mangools

Most of these tools have either limited access with free accounts or trial periods available. We recommend compiling a list of backlink opportunities. Moz is probably the best option if you want to leverage their free data, it shows the ~45 top backlinks and 50 top keywords for each competitor. This is typically enough for most photography sites.

A manual option would be to do searches for your competition's brand.. And then use the negative search operator for inurl and their domain. This will show all sites that aren't their own, but mention their brand.

Example: Dylan M Howell -inurl:dylanmhowell.com

The image shows a Google search interface. The search bar contains the query "Dylan M Howell -inurl:dylanmhowell.com". Below the search bar, there are navigation tabs for "All", "News", "Images", "Videos", "Shopping", "More", "Settings", and "Tools". The search results are displayed below, showing "About 8,080,000 results (0.64 seconds)". The first result is "Dylan M Howell Photography - Home | Facebook" with a URL "https://www.facebook.com > Places > Portland, Oregon > Photographer" and a rating of 4.9 stars based on 128 votes. The second result is "Dylan Howell (@dylanmhowell) • Instagram photos and videos" with a URL "https://www.instagram.com/dylanmhowell/" and 38.3k followers. The third result is "Dylan M Howell Photography - wedding photographer - Oregon ..." with a URL "https://junebugweddings.com/vendors/wedding.../Dylan-M-Howell-Photography" and a description of the photographer. Below the search results, there is a section titled "Images for Dylan M Howell -inurl:dylanmhowell.com" which displays a grid of six images: a person carrying a bag, a portrait of a man, a couple on a beach, a person on a motorcycle, a couple in a snowy landscape, and a couple in a desert landscape. At the bottom of the image grid, there are two buttons: "More images for Dylan M Howell -inurl:dylanmhowell.com" and "Report images".

19. Get the keywords and backlinks that work for your competitors

The keywords reports are very similar to backlinks. This data is very important as we often see photographer sites optimized for keywords or topics that don't actually bring traffic or convert to revenue.

If you simply look at a top competitor in your target market and assume that they're ranking for the keywords that their main pages are optimized for, you might be led astray.

A great example of this would be "Destination Wedding Photographer" or "Adventure Wedding Photographer" related keywords.

| Keyword | KD | Volume | Clicks | CPC | CPS | RR | SF | Parent topic |
|------------------------------------|-----|--------|--------|--------|------|------|-----|----------------------------------|
| destination wedding photographer | 2 | 400 | 279 | \$5.00 | 0.70 | 1.48 | | destination wedding photographer |
| adventure wedding photographer | 26 | 30 | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | | elopement photography |
| destination elopement photographer | N/A | 0-10 | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| adventure elopement photographer | N/A | 0-10 | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |

Thousands of photography sites are targeting these terms, but there is no search volume. If you looked at the sites with an SEO tool, you'd see that they are unlikely to get any organic traffic from those terms. On the other hand, they might be getting their traffic from certain wedding venues, locations, or posing guides that are somewhat hidden on their site.

This data is key to a successful SEO strategy. We don't want to waste time on vanity rankings, instead focus in on keywords (or topics) that have high search volume, lower competition, and the correct intent.

20. Get rid of your Instagram Widget

Instagram widgets are a popular trend on photography websites. Photographers love how it automatically updates and shows off a recent selection of their best work.

However, an Instagram widget has three major downsides.

They often cause performance issues (they slow down your site)

They often break or become unverified (leaving a public message saying the widget is broken)

Most importantly, they take people AWAY from your site, likely to be distracted by notifications, hashtags, and browsing their feed.

Your goal with your website should be to lead people down a specific path that leads to them contacting (and booking) you. Your website is YOUR platform. You have control over the user experience. Get rid of the distractions, and ask people to take the next action that will lead to them booking you.

If you get most of your inquiries from Instagram and if it converts better than your website, by all means send people to your Instagram. Otherwise, try getting rid of the feed, especially on your home page. If you want, replace the feed/widget with a simple Instagram icon in the footer.

There are other technical work arounds to having a feed of your latest instagram images on your site, without taking the performance hit. They would need to save the image from instagram's server and host them on yours instead. This eliminates the requests to instagram and allows you to use the correctly sized/optimized images.

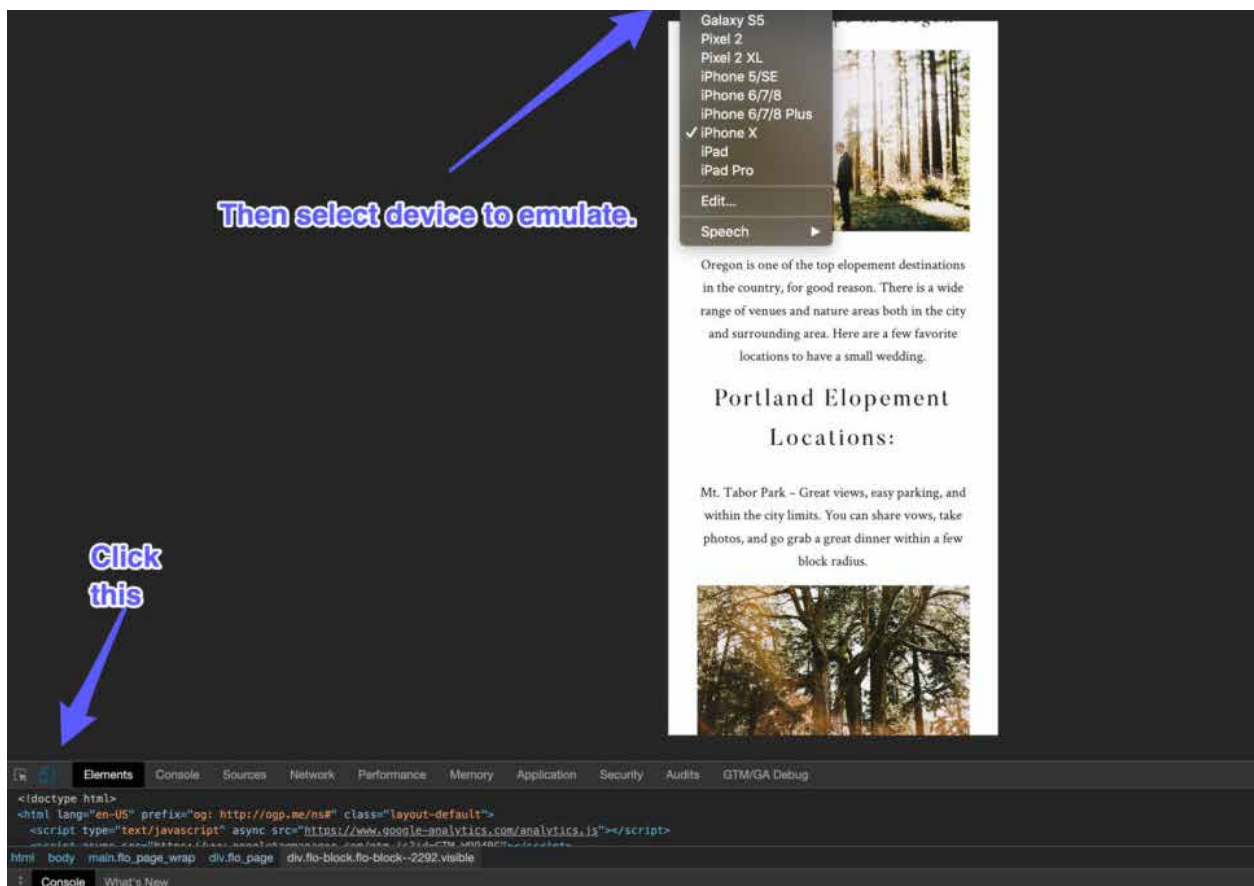
21. Check Your Website On Your Phone

By now, Google has transitioned almost all existing websites and any new websites to what it calls “Mobile First Indexing”. This means that they are requesting the mobile version of your website as they crawl and index its content.

For most modern responsive websites, that is totally fine. The main issue to watch out for is content that is hidden on the mobile view. Pay careful attention to any links or copywriting that might be missing on your mobile pages. If it’s not showing on mobile, google won’t be taking it into consideration when making indexation and possibly ranking decisions.

There are a few ways to check. First is by pulling out your phone and manually looking at the content.

You can also use Chrome Dev Tools to emulate a mobile device. Simply go to View -> Developer -> Developer Tools. Then, click “Toggle Device Toolbar” and select the device you’d like to emulate.



21. Check Your Website On Your Phone

This will allow you to fully test out your site from your computer, but as it would appear to a mobile user.

It's also important as the demographics of the internet shift to a more mobile perspective that we test our sites using mobile devices. Make sure that a mobile user has the same great usability as a desktop user.

Things to check here:

Pagespeed – Mobile connections are often limited and the processing power used to render complex javascript can be a challenge on anything less than a flagship phone. Make sure that the site doesn't feel sluggish when browsing from your device, try turning off the wifi as well.

Font Size – Make sure that your fonts are legible on mobile, we typically recommend at least a size 12 font.

Contact form – Make sure that the boxes are easy to input and that the form works correctly.

General styling – Look to make sure that the overall design is scaling properly, that images aren't either taking up too much space or resized too small.

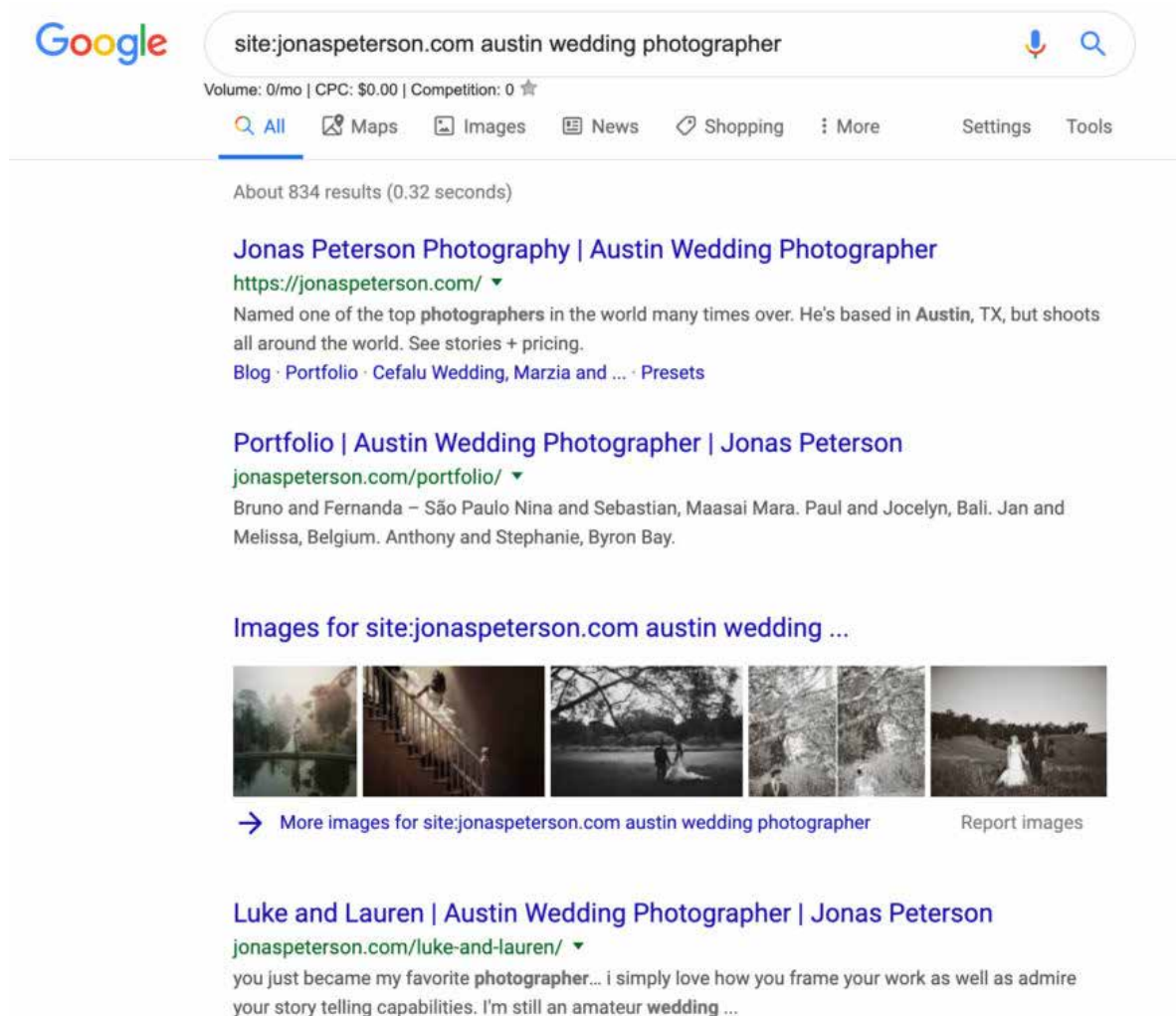
22. Don't repeat main keyword across multiple pages

We've talked briefly about cornerstone content, and also given a tip about linking to cornerstone content from supporting content, but we can't stress enough how important it is to be clear about which page on your site you want to rank for any particular topic.

When more than one page is optimized for the same term, Google may get confused and not be sure which page to show. This is called keyword cannibalization, because your pages are "eating each other" and making it impossible for any page to gain the traction it deserves.

There are two ways to check for keyword cannibalization on your site.

First is the same site:domain + keyword search we used when talking about internal linking. Go to Google and type yourdomain.com plus any keyword or topic. If you see multiple pages using the keyword in the titles, there is a chance these pages could be competing with each other.

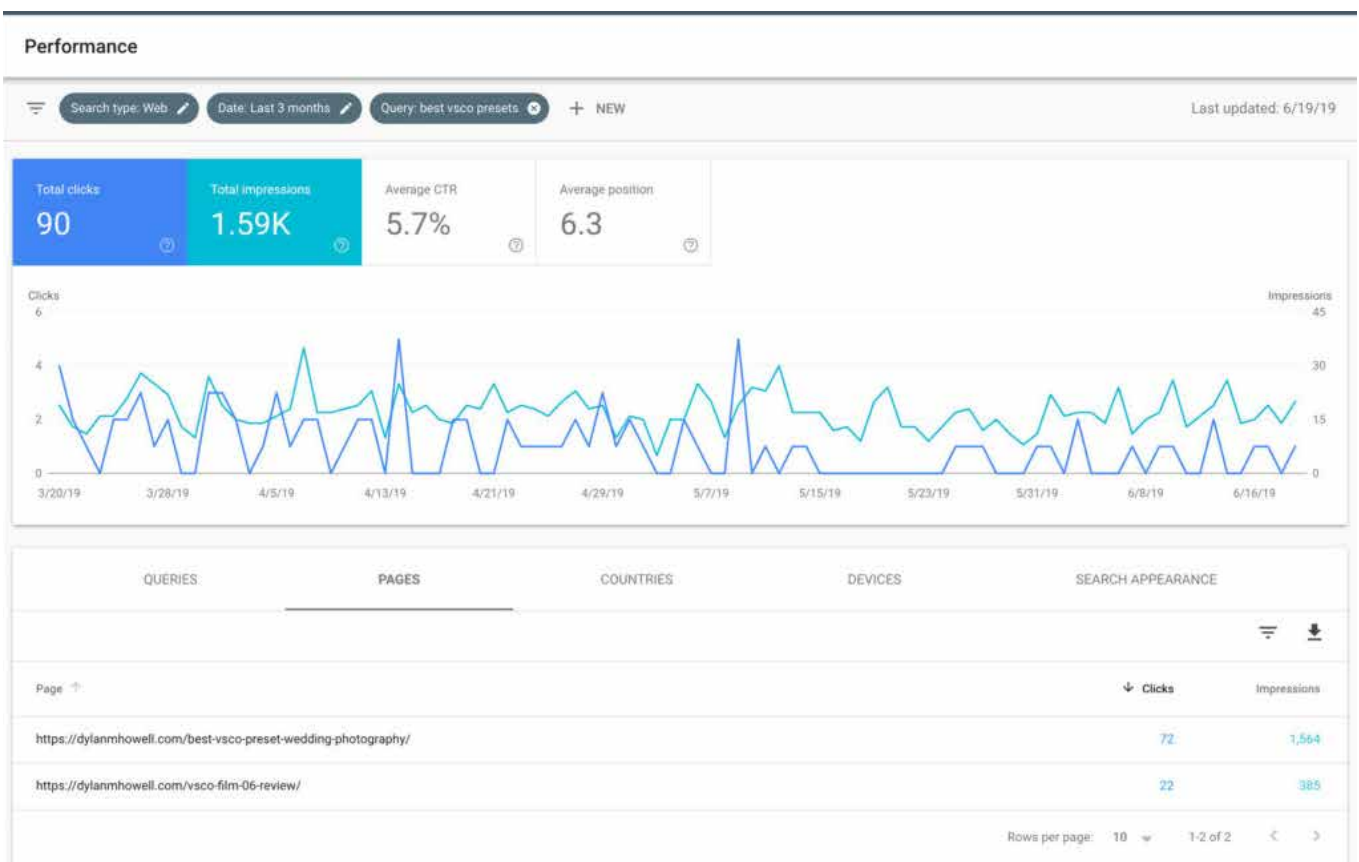


The screenshot shows a Google search interface. The search bar contains the text "site:jonaspeterson.com austin wedding photographer". Below the search bar, there are navigation links for "All", "Maps", "Images", "News", "Shopping", "More", "Settings", and "Tools". The search results show "About 834 results (0.32 seconds)". The first result is "Jonas Peterson Photography | Austin Wedding Photographer" with the URL "https://jonaspeterson.com/". The second result is "Portfolio | Austin Wedding Photographer | Jonas Peterson" with the URL "jonaspeterson.com/portfolio/". Below these results, there is a section for "Images for site:jonaspeterson.com austin wedding ..." showing a grid of five wedding photos. The bottom result is "Luke and Lauren | Austin Wedding Photographer | Jonas Peterson" with the URL "jonaspeterson.com/luke-and-lauren/".

22. Don't repeat main keyword across multiple pages

If you find that you have pages targeting the same keyword, you should also check Search Console to see if Google is likely confused about which page to show.

Just open up the performance report and add a query filter for the term you are checking. Now click over to “pages” and see how many URLs are listed here. If you have multiple URLs getting anything more than a FEW clicks, you likely have an issue with keyword cannibalization.



To fix this, you need to choose which page will be your “cornerstone” page for this topic, then start to “de-optimize” the other pages. Take the main keyword out of the URL (make sure to redirect the old URL to the new URL or to the cornerstone URL), re-write the page title to target a unique keyword (not just a variation, but something completely new), and make sure the content of the page or post doesn’t optimize for the keyword too extensively. Make sure to link from this “de-optimized” page to the cornerstone page using the main keyword as anchor text.

For full step by step instructions and a demonstration of this process, check out our course!



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