

Top SEO Skills to Learn in 2022

1. Keyword Research Skills

An essential first step towards becoming a successful SEO professional is to develop keyword research skills.

Keyword research involves discovering what words or phrases are relevant and critical to your business and what users search for most frequently.

This research can then be leveraged and used when creating content (i.e., blogs, websites, etc) that will make your page more successful in an organic search - your page will rank higher in search engines and generate more organic traffic. In essence, you are making sure that content you create is relevant to your target audience.

The first step of successful and effective keyword research is *choosing a generic topic, and then using a keyword research tool, which will reveal additional keywords related to your chosen topic*.

2. Technical SEO Skills

In addition to keyword research, technical SEO skills will help you upgrade the back-end of your website - ensuring your pages are indexed correctly by search engines and, therefore, discovered by your target audience.

Optimising page speed, sitemaps and URL structures are just some of the tactics and elements you can perfect to ensure that search engines can crawl, index and understand your website better. The better the search engine can understand your website, the more likely it will be ranked on the first page of search results.

Additional aspects of SEO include:

1. Removing broken links
2. Implement robots.txt files to guide search engines in their crawls
3. XML Sitemaps
4. Basic HTML + CSS skills
5. Optimising Page Tags
6. Schema Markup
7. Managing Metadata

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3. Google Search Console

A fantastic free tool you can use to better understand how your site performs on Google is Google Search Console.

Some of the key features on Google Search Console are:

1. Adding and verifying your website with Google
2. Knowing your position on Google
3. Tracking search performance (by region)
4. Pinpointing site clicks and impressions
5. Identifying issues recognized by Google when your site is crawled

The primary benefit of this tool is that it tells you exactly where you need to invest your SEO skills and improve your site and its performance.

4. Google Search Analytics

Another key tool for any expert SEO is Google Search Analytics - this helps you reliably track, measure and analyse your site's performance with accuracy and clarity.

The great thing about Google Search Analytics is that its data can be used to inform both SEO, or any other digital/online marketing strategy.

With Google Search Analytics, you can:

1. Analyse how many people visit your website.
2. Reveal traffic demographics (i.e., age, gender, region, etc)
3. Understand which pages receive the most traffic Gain awareness regarding how many people are bouncing from your website/pages
4. Learn which channel generates the most traffic

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5. Link Building Skills

Most SEO experts rely on credible websites to link back to their website to build site credibility, and thus improve their Google ranking. This tactic is called 'link building'.

Although this is incredibly powerful, link building is often the most difficult SEO skill to develop. For a strong start, the main things you need to know are:

1. How to identify link opportunities that can positively contribute to ranking development
2. How to acquire said links
3. How to run link building campaigns *without violating Google's link building guidelines*

6. On-Page SEO Skills

On-Page SEO skills concern optimising page content according to 2 main goals:

1. Helping users find what they are looking for as quickly and efficiently as possible
2. Giving search engines enough information to accurately understand what your page is about

Some on-page SEO tactics include:

1. H1 tag optimization
2. Keyword frequency
3. Meta description optimisation (this provides potential visitors with a sneak peak of the information they can find on the page prior to clicking)
4. URL optimisation
5. Well-written and high-quality content

A common trap amateur SEOs fall into is over-stuffing pages with links and keywords - this is dangerous as most of the time this can backfire on you. On-page SEO has no shortcuts, it's all about creating high-quality content.

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High-quality content meets the target users search intent. This can be classified as content that:

1. Matches the commonly searched keywords
2. Provides valuable information and content surrounding the keyword/it's subject matter

7. Mobile SEO Skills

Although it's sometimes easy to forget, mobile SEO is extremely important - especially considering that mobile usage accounts for 61% of total search engine share of the internet. Some essential aspects of successful mobile searches and websites include fast loading pages that are responsive and provide a smooth user experience.

Mobile SEO differs from traditional SEO in the following ways:

1. Search Engine Results Page (SERP) vary more widely than on desktops, mainly due to user location (and GPS tracking)
2. Mobile view alters the structure and layout of the SERP and the website itself

8. Local SEO Skills

Websites whose rankings are dependent on location-aware search queries should pay special and particular attention to Local SEO. This typically applies to websites and businesses that have physical locations/hubs.

The primary aim of local SEO is to ensure that nearby searchers discover your website. Some ways this can be achieved are:

1. Optimising the Google 'My Business' listing
2. Consistent online directory listings (i.e. Yelp, Foursquare, TripAdvisor)
3. Creating high-quality website location pages

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9. CRO Skills

As a professional SEO, your ability to convert visitors into customers is referred to as CRO (Conversion Rate Optimisation).

This skill is vital because it directly relates to the revenue and profit of the business - this is what brings all the other SEO skills you invested over the finish line. You can have lots of traffic on your website, but what good is that traffic if it doesn't convert into actual sales?

Some CRO skills worth learning are:

1. A/B testing web pages
2. Conversion research
3. Website analytics
4. PPC
5. Testing
6. Copywriting

CRO is particularly important for SEO managers because it ensures traffic is capitalised and sales opportunities are maximised.

10. Hands-On Experience with Popular SEO Tools

The final piece of SEO expertise is having some hands-on experience with SEO tools. This means practicing using all necessary softwares and tools so that you can accurately deploy the skills you've been working on.

Another essential benefit of developing your hands-on experience is solidifying your understanding of how search engines crawl your site, what (and why) issues occur on your site, and what is already working. A strengthened understanding will help you better shape your SEO strategy in the first place.

Without practice, your work will not be streamlined and your results will be second-class.

Some essential tools you should become fluent in are:

1. Ahrefs
2. Semrush
3. Moz
4. Screaming Frog

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Conclusion

Developing your SEO skills is a learning process - combining technical SEO skills with a strong understanding of search engine functionality and web page components takes time and practice. To achieve this, it's essential to combine communication and critical thinking, in addition to your technical skills.

Be patient! Improvements happen gradually over time. Continuous learning is what will set you apart and strengthen your abilities. A key balance that will help boost both your confidence and abilities in mind is between SEO theory and hands-on experience.

SEO from 5 years ago is not the same as SEO today. Continuous learning takes place for both SEOs, and the search engines themselves. Staying in the loop with Google algorithm updates (or any other search engine) is make-or-break. You can't improve results according to algorithm processes that are no longer in practice!

If you stay proactive and don't lose your confidence, you will be an expert before you know it.