



62 Ecommerce Search Engine Optimization Tips & Ideas

One of the reasons I like [ecommerce SEO](#) is there are a tremendous amount of opportunities to increase the optimization quality of an online store. Unlike service businesses or online brochure websites which typically only have a few pages, a catalog of products creates a great opportunity to increase the amount of content and provide relevance for the search engines.

Here at Best Rank, we spend a lot of time educating clients about optimization and how they can use it to gain a competitive advantage in their marketplace. Having a specialty in ecommerce, my conversations are often about tips and advice on what online store owners can do to improve their rankings and increase traffic. There are plenty of resources for learning SEO online, but not a lot specific to ecommerce. For those interested in getting their hands dirty, I have created a list of 62 Ecommerce Search Engine Optimization Tips & Ideas. Of course there are tips here that apply to non-ecommerce sites as well, but ecommerce SEO does deserve its own list. The list is in no particular order. If you have some tips or feedback you want to share, please feel free to email me at jkreidman@bestrank.com. Here are the tips:

1. **Do a search in Google using site:www.yourdomain.com.** This allows you to see what pages of your website are being indexed and how they look. The results should be keyword rich and have a call to action for users to click.
2. **Do the same site: search in Google for your competitors.** While you are looking at your own indexing, look at your competition. Are their search engine results better optimized or better written? Don't let them win.
3. **Use Google's Keyword Tool to find keywords.** If you have an Adwords account you are probably familiar with Google's Keyword Tool. If not, you can use [Google's External Keyword Tool](#) Be sure set the match type on [exact] so you are looking at the number of searches for that specific keyword.
4. **Don't forget text on your homepage.** Graphics are attractive and are great for visitors. Be sure that there is some html text on the homepage as well. If you have to put it near the footer, fine. Just make sure it is somewhere.

5. **Be sure your homepage title uses your 3 most important keywords.** I prefer to limit any given page to focus on 3 keywords. Some people like 4 and some people 2. Your homepage optimization is really important to tell the engines what your site is going to focus on.
6. **Choose 3 keyword phrases to focus on per category page.** I use the similar 3 keyword rule for category pages as well. I will sometimes use only 2 if it is focused. Of course you are then going to make sure these keywords are used in the title, content, etc.
7. **Be sure the top keyword for the page is the first word in your <title> tag for all category pages.** The first word in your title tag is the most important. For example, if your category is Exam Gloves, you would want to write a title such as: Exam Gloves | Shop Quality Medical Exam Gloves On Sale
8. **Be sure to customize the product page titles.**
If your ecommerce software allows dynamic insertion, use it. For example, if you can tell the system to use specific elements of the product in the title, use it. You can use product names, manufacturer, and SKU. They are all valuable. If you don't have a lot of products and your software allows for custom title writing, be sure to write custom titles.
9. **Format the Title For CLICKS as well as relevance.**
This can apply to categories and products. The formatting of a Title I like to use is "Keyword Phrase 1 | Call To Action or Benefit Using Keyword Phrase 2 and 3 if possible". For example: "Hospital Towels | Wholesale Medical Towels On Sale"
10. **Use .html or .htm for page naming.** If you are using a CMS system and prefer no extensions such as /keyword/ that is fine too. While using .html may be considered old school, it still works. We all know that everyone claims that search engines treat most pages extensions equally, but my experience has seen differently. It's still a good practice.
11. **Use keyword rich page naming.** If your system allows customizing page names use "keyword-phrase.html" for all pages. This means content pages, categories and products.
12. **Use dashes instead of underscores in URLs**
URL naming for all pages including categories and products should use dashes instead of underscores. The search engines see a dash as a space.
13. **Write content for your category pages.** If it makes sense for the visitors to read some sales content prior to seeing product listed, put it on the top. If not, it's fine to put in the footer below the list of products.
14. **Write custom meta descriptions for categories.** At a minimum, do this for your major categories. While no longer directly used in Google ranking algorithm, it still effects rankings indirectly. The meta description can be used to increase click through rates on your search engine result which can then increase your rankings.
15. **Be sure your products have a description.**
I'm always amazed how many people have online stores that contain products with no description.

16. **Do not use the manufacturer provided description.** It's great that you have 20K products in your store. But if your descriptions are the same as the other 500 websites that carry the same products, how are you going to differentiate your content for the engines? If you are required to use manufacturer descriptions, try to add Editor's Comments or something additional content of your own to give the product a more personal touch.
17. **Use keywords in your product description.** If you are selling a hospital towel, be sure to use the term hospital towel in your description. Increase the relevance of the page.
18. **Use Related Products to increase internal linking and indexing.** Related products on product detail pages are a great way to offer users additional options but they are also great for assisting the search engines in indexing deeper parts of your site.
19. **Use graphic text instead of html text for heavily repeated elements.** For example, in your design template, you might use "View Cart" or "My Account". Consider using graphic text for these. They provide no value for engines. Also consider this for "More Info" or View More" on the brief product info on a category page.
20. **If you have graphic navigation, create additional text link based navigation on the footer.** Since search engines like text, give them what they want. You can always duplicate the main navigation in text within the footer.
21. **Use lower case in URL naming.** Use "/hospital-towels.html" not "/Hospital-Towels.html" Some platforms of servers will treat upper case and lower case differently, essentially where it may think there are two different pages if the cases are used differently in two different places. Plus, it just doesn't look good.
22. **Use CSS for product tabs on detail product pages.** If you use product tabs to organize content, make sure they are engine friendly using CSS. This content is often quality information that the engines like to see. Avoid java script or ajax as the content won't be indexed.
23. **Name your product images using keywords.** For our example, use "hospital-towel.jpg". If you have more detailed product naming you can use "abc-hospital-towel-companyx.jpg". You can also incorporate the SKUs.
24. **Use alt text on the product images.** Let the engine know what the image is. In addition to the name use keywords in the alt tags. ``
25. **List the manufacturer name on the product page.** If you sell products manufactured by other companies and that manufacturer could potentially be searched, it's worth putting in on the product detailed page. You can do this as a bullet, in the content, or wherever you deem appropriate. Make sure it is text so the engines can read it.

26. **List the manufacturer SKU of the product on the product page.** If there are multiple options for the product (like Small, Medium, Large) and each option has a different SKU, consider adding a table or list lower on the page that displays all SKUs as text. SKUs are great tools for bringing quality converting traffic.
27. **Consider using the manufacturer SKU to append the product <title>.** If SKUs make sense in your industry, use them where you can. Of course don't use the SKUs if you don't have room. Keywords come first.
28. **Make sure your pages load fast.** There are plenty of websites, software and tools that offer free speed tests to determine if a page load is quick enough. If your page loads slow, usually these tests will tell you what is wrong. Use their advice and fix the problem. Google is now using page load speed as one of its ranking factors.
29. **Product pages should be accessible within 2-3 clicks max.** This is important for crawlers (and user experience).
30. **Use breadcrumb navigation.** Be sure to provide the user a path with links back home such as "Home > Hospital Towels > ABC Hospital Towels By Company X" This improves search indexing and the user experience.
31. **Create an html sitemap.** Include major content pages of the site as well as major categories. If you have great internal linking this may not be necessary for the engines but it still can be helpful for the user experience.
32. **Create an XML sitemap.** An XML sitemap can then be submitted to both Google & Bing to let them know the pages of your site. There are free XML sitemap generators online.
33. **Register with [Google Webmaster Tools](#) and [Bing Webmaster Tools](#).** Both of these a great resources to learn about your site, how the search engines are seeing it, and how to improve it.
34. **Submit your sitemap to Google & Bing's webmaster tools.** Both of these services are free and allow you to submit your sitemap so you can tell the engines which pages to index.
35. **Submit products to Google Products.** In addition to optimizing your website for search engines, you'll want to [optimize your products for Google Products](#). It's free and many websites are able to get a good deal of traffic from it.
36. **Get keywords from your on-site search.**
Monitor your on-site search. Choose a threshold (maybe 10 searches, maybe 100, maybe 1000, depending on your visitor volume). When you see a keyword that has been searched that many times and doesn't have an existing page optimizing it, find a place to use it or create a landing page specific to that keyword and make it a part of your sitemap.

37. **Automate on-site search to create keyword pages.** This takes the previous technique a step further and automates the process. For example, once a search is done for a specific keyword X amount of times, a landing page is automatically created and populated with those search results. With certain site search platforms it is possible to create SEO friendly search result pages such as <http://www.yourdomain.com/search-term> or <http://www.yourdomain.com/search-term.html>. Put those generated URLs in a sitemap.
38. **Optimize graphics.** You can typically reduce the size of the file quite a bit without affecting the image quality. This will help your pages load faster.
39. **Create a robots.txt file.** This file can be used to give search engines instructions on what to index. Its most often use to tell engines what not to index. Of course you do want to be careful on what you display because people can mis-use the information.
40. **Include sizing, color, or manufacturer in product name if warranted.** For example, in our hospital towel example, you might use “Blue Hospital Towels 20 x 20 by ABC Company”.
41. **Get customer reviews for your products.** Solicit your customers for feedback and comments if they are not posting it themselves. It usually takes a little pushing in emails or phone calls. There are 3rd party services that will give you product reviews and these are good for user experience but not for the engines. Numerous sites share the reviews so the products reviews are not “original” content on your site.
42. **Write Editor comments on product detail pages.** Consider writing your own personal info about the product. While your business may not be allowed to personally recommend or condemn the product, you should be able to write information that you feel is relative.
43. **Reduce duplicate content.** Try not to have the same product in too many categories. Don’t use the same description for multiple products. If the product is the same as another except for sizing or some small attribute, consider joining them together and improving the user experience with a dropdown that allows someone to select which option they desire.
44. **Include a blog.** Everyone suggests it and they are right. The engines like fresh content. Your visitors will too if it’s worth reading. If you are not going to post regularly yourself, consider hiring someone else to do it. There are plenty of writers who would love to get exposure. Try to use www.yourdomain.com/blog rather than blog.yourdomain.com so the content counts toward your URL.
45. **Product names should contain keywords.** If you have product name such as “Cotton 20 x 20” it really has no meaning to an engine. You would want to name the product “Cotton Hospital Towel 20 x 20 by ABC”. While the product might be called Cotton 20 x 20 internally, it needs to have keywords to have meaning to the engines.

46. **Category names should contain keywords.** While your site might have an overall theme which helps the user know what they are choosing in a category, it doesn't tell the engines. In our example of a site selling medical supplies, the term "Towels" has context for the user. A search engine may have some idea what that category is about but you are going to get a lot more benefit from naming it Hospital Towels or Medical Towels. Use descriptive keywords for category names.
47. **Do SEO friendly Press Releases.** Whether you do it yourself, use a service, or have a professional write it, consider using some keywords and creating keyword anchor text links in the release. You'll only want to include 2 or 3 links at most. It's a good way to build relevant backlinks to your site when the release is published on other websites.
48. **Submit articles to Social Bookmarking sites.** While submitting alone may not get your article seen by too many users, it still can create a link back to your site. Do enough good submissions and people will begin to trust you and the articles can get some traction.
49. **Get included in Google Places.** Essential for any business that relies on the local market, [Google Places](#) can drive local traffic to your website. It's another great free service from Google.
50. **Write Guest Blogs.** Blog owners will often welcome additional content to their site. Contact some blog owners with sites relative to your products and ask them if you can write an informational article to be included on their site. If they don't offer for free, it can even sometimes be worth paying to have the article published if they have a big enough audience and traffic.
51. **Participate in related discussion forums.** If your industry has any kind of community around it, try participating in forums or community groups. Answer questions as an expert and become an authority. Once you are a trusted member, communities often then let you put a link to your website in your signature file.
52. **Create a discussion forum.** You can become a resource for product information related to your industry and generate related content. As users begin to participate with you, the content that is generated by the forum can be good food for the search engines. There are discussion forum scripts and software that is search engine friendly.
53. **Use H1 tags on category and product pages with keywords.** <h1> to <h6> are used to define the headings on a page. Don't forget to use them as they help the engines understand what the page is about. Be sure to use your keywords wisely in them. If you properly name your categories and products, your h1 tag should be easy.
54. **Increase internal linking.** Within the content you generate, whether on custom pages, in categories, or as product descriptions, don't be afraid to link to other parts of the site.
55. **With internal links, be sure to use keyword rich anchor text.** When linking within your site, it's still important to use good anchor text.
56. **Create specific manufacturer/brand pages.** Create landing pages for each brand/manufacturer. If ABC Company is one of the brands, create a page called "/abc-company.html".

57. **Create a manufacturer/brand sitemap.** If you carry other manufacturer's products, create a page that lists all of the brand and then links to their prospective pages. Brand names are typically very good keywords.
58. **Generate content for manufacturer/brand pages.** In addition to the products, write optimized related content for the page, explaining what the brand or company is about and attributes or features about their products.
59. **Ask the brands to write special content.** Depending on what kind of relationship you have with a brand and the amount of business you provide them, you may have an opportunity to get original content from the brand. Let them know you would like to create a special page just to feature their content and wanted original content for it. They want you to sell their product so they may be inclined to participate.
60. **Optimize manufacturer/brand pages.** Do a custom title tag, meta description, h1, image names, alt tags, and all of the other elements we already discussed.
61. **Use plural keywords for categories and singular for products.** While this will depend on the types of products you sell, as a general rule I like to use plural keywords for categories and singular for products. For example, Hospital Towels would be used within the category, then Hospital Towel would be used for a specific product. This provides you the ability to optimize for both plural and singular keywords which are both important for attracting traffic.
62. **Don't stop optimizing.** This does not mean to keep changing your keywords and technical structure often (unless it needs to be improved). It means it is an ongoing process. If you add products, make sure they go through your optimization process before or when they are posted. Generating original content should be part of your ongoing business. Whether this be adding information to products, writing articles, blog posts, or using social media to create links. If you continue to optimize, you will continue to improve your search engine results and generate more traffic.

There is a lot to digest here. Implement these tips and you'll be on your way to dominating over your competition. If you have tips to add or questions, please feel free to email me at jkreidman@bestrank.com. If you should need assistance with search engine optimization for your online store, be sure to check out our [ecommerce seo services](#). We would welcome the opportunity to work with you.

To Your Success!

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