

Title: Writing SEO Titles and META Descriptions
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Titles

Title tags are used on search engine results pages (SERPs) to display preview snippets for a given page, and are important both for SEO and social sharing.

The title element of a web page is meant to be an accurate and concise summary of a page's content. This element is critical to both user experience and search engine optimisation. It creates value in three specific areas: relevancy, browsing, and in the search engine results pages.

The title on every web page should be unique and not a duplicate of any other title of any other page on the website

Optimal Length for Search Engines

Google typically displays the first 65 characters (including spaces) of a title tag, or as many characters as will fit into a 512-pixel display. Keep in mind that search engines may choose to display a different title than what you provide in your HTML if they feel that an alternative is more relevant. Titles in search results may be rewritten to match your brand, the user query, or other considerations.

Why Title Tags are Important for SEO

A title tag is the main text that summarises a web page. Title elements have long been considered one of the most important on-page SEO elements (the most important being overall content), and appear in three key places: browsers, search engine results pages, and external websites.

Browser

Title tags often show up in both the top of a browser's window and in tabs.

Search Engine Results Pages

Title tags appear as the clickable link in SERPs

External Websites

Many external websites, especially social media sites, use the title tag of a web page as its link anchor text.

Optimising Your Titles

Because title tags are such an important part of search engine optimisation, implementing best practices for title tags makes for a terrific low-effort, high-impact SEO task. Here are critical recommendations for optimising title tags for search engine and usability goals:

Be Mindful of Length

As stated above, search engines will truncate titles in search results that exceed a certain length. For Google, this length is usually 65 characters, or 512 pixels wide. If the title is too long, search engines will show an ellipsis, "... " to indicate that a title tag has been cut off. That said, length is not a hard and fast rule. Longer titles often work better for social sharing (these can be specified separately in some content management systems as part of the Open Graph Protocol). In the end, it's usually better to write a great title that converts and get clicks than it is to obsess over length.

Place Important Keywords Close to the Front of the Title Tag

The closer to the start of the title tag a keyword is, the more helpful it will be for ranking—and the more likely a user will be to click them in search results.

Leverage Branding

Many people recommend using the brand name at the end of a title tag instead, and there are times when this can be a better approach. The differentiating factor is the strength and awareness of the brand in the target market. If a brand is

well-known enough to make a difference in click-through rates in search results, the brand name should be first. If the brand is less known or relevant than the keyword, the keyword should be first.

Consider Readability and Emotional Impact

Creating a compelling title tag will pull in more visits from the search results. It's vital to think about the entire user experience when you're creating title tags, in addition to optimisation and keyword usage. The title tag is a new visitor's first interaction with your brand when they find it in a search result; it should convey the most positive message possible.

Meta Descriptions

META descriptions are HTML attributes that provide concise explanations of the contents of web pages. Meta descriptions are commonly used on search engine result pages (SERPs) to display preview snippets for a given page. Optimal Length for Search Engines is approximately 330 characters (including spaces)

What is a Meta Description?

Meta description tags, while not important to search engine rankings, are extremely important in gaining user click-through from SERPs. These short paragraphs are your opportunity to highlight content to searchers and to let them know exactly whether the given page contains the information they're looking for.

The meta description should employ the keywords intelligently, but also create a compelling description that a searcher will want to click. Direct relevance to the page and uniqueness between each page's meta description is key. The description should optimally be between 300 and 330 characters.

Write Compelling Copy

The meta description tag draws readers to a website from the SERP and thus, is an extremely important part of search marketing. Crafting a readable, compelling description using important keywords can improve the click-through rate for a given webpage. To maximize click-through rates on search engine result pages, it's important to note that Google and other search engines **bold** keywords in the description when they match search queries.

Recommended Length

Meta descriptions can be any length, but search engines generally truncate snippets longer than 340 characters. It is best to keep meta descriptions between 300 and 330 characters.

Avoid Duplicate Meta Description Tags

As with title tags, it is important that meta descriptions on each page be unique. One way to combat duplicate meta descriptions is to create a dynamic and programmatic way to make unique meta descriptions for automated pages.

Quotes Cut Off Descriptions

Any time quotes are used in a meta description, Google cuts off the description. To prevent meta descriptions from being cut off, it's best to remove all non-alphanumeric characters from meta descriptions. If quotation marks are important in your meta description, you can change them to single quotes rather than double quotes to prevent truncation.

Sometimes it is OK to Not Write Meta Descriptions

Although conventional logic would hold that it's universally wiser to write a good meta description, rather than let the search engines scrape a given web page, this isn't always the case. Use the general rule that if the page is targeting between one and three heavily searched terms or phrases, go with a meta description that hits those users performing that search. If the page is targeting long-tail traffic (three or more keywords)—for example, with hundreds of articles or blog entries, or even a huge product catalogue—it can sometimes be wiser to let the engines extract the relevant text, themselves. The reason is simple: When search engines pull, they always display the keywords and surrounding phrases that the user has searched for. If a webmaster forces a meta description, they can detract from the relevance the search engines make naturally. In some cases, they'll overrule the meta description anyway, but a webmaster can not always rely on the engines to use the more relevant text in the SERP.

When choosing whether or not to add a meta description, also consider that social sharing sites like Facebook commonly use a page's meta description tag when the page is shared on their sites. Without the meta description tag, social sharing sites may just use the first text they can find. Depending on the first text on your page, this might not create a good user experience for users encountering your content via social sharing.