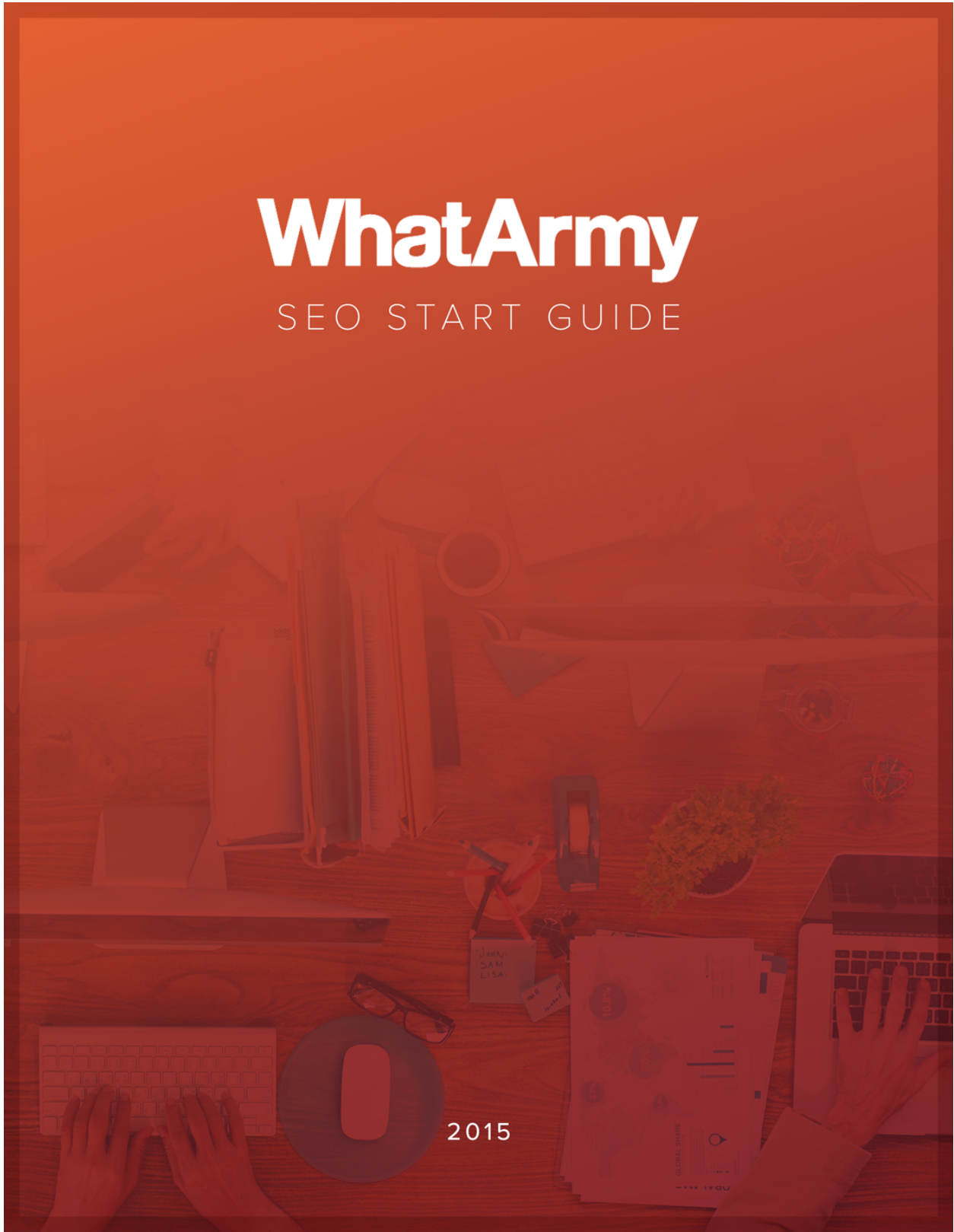


# WhatArmy

SEO START GUIDE

2015



## INTRODUCTION

When it comes to SEO, you just can't game the system. There are no shortcuts that will last, and I assure you we have tried them all.

There is good news, however:

1. Even though there is a seemingly infinite number of things you can do to improve SEO, doing just the 9 things below can have HUGE impact.
2. Google sets the standard, and they even give us the rules.

This checklist is WhatArmy's take on the 9 things you should consider doing that will have the highest impact on rankings. Once you have implemented these, you can move on to more advanced concepts. We will address those in the next few weeks. (For example, how mobility will affect ranking, page speed, linking, etc.)

## SIMPLE GUIDING PRINCIPLES

First and foremost, provide great, relevant content written for humans (not search engines) and then use the playbook given to us BY GOOGLE to make sure we play by the rules. Focus on the most important things FIRST and improve over time.

Just going through our simple checklist will make a HUGE improvement, give you the best shot at being indexed properly and give you a great foundation to build upon.

There are an infinite number of things you can do to help with SEO. Below is our checklist of the ones WE have found to have the most impact for our clients. To save time and money ensure these things are always done BEFORE you do any off-site tasks or pay for outside SEO services.

## WHERE WE LEARN

MOZ

<http://moz.com/beginners-guide-to-seo>

Google - Guide PDF

<http://static.googleusercontent.com/media/www.google.com/en/us/webmasters/docs/search-engine-optimization-starter-guide.pdf>

# SEO CHECKLIST

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## 1. Set up a Google Webmaster Tools account

- a. This will provide insight into how Google sees you, suggested improvements, warnings, etc.

## 2. Choose your 3-5 targeted keyword concepts

- a. What do people type into Google to find you or your product/services?
- b. Assign your keyword concepts, 1 per page.
- c. We favor being specific vs general. Example:
  - i. Does someone search for a “roofer”? Or do they search for “remove ice dam bedford ma”? The results for the latter are WAY more relevant. You want to be THERE!
    1. Search google for “roofer.” ([link](#))
    2. Search google for “remove ice dam bedford ma.” ([link](#))
  - ii. Getting top placement for “roofer” is WAY harder to achieve than “remove ice dam bedford ma.” And although there is less search traffic, the quality of this traffic is higher because it is more relevant.
- d. If you are a local product/service, consider using your service area (town/state, etc.) in your keywords.

## 3. Make sure your site can be searched

- a. This is typically controlled by a simple text file called robots.txt. ([MOZ OVERVIEW](#))
- b. For Wordpress users, we often see failure when the site is not set to be indexed. ([HOW TO CHECK](#))
- c. You can test this in Google Webmaster Tools under “Robots.txt Tester.”

## 4. Title tag

- a. Great overview ([MOZ OVERVIEW ON TITLE TAG](#))
- b. Use your most important keyword and try to place it at the beginning.
- c. Use your company name.
- d. Keep to 50-60 characters.

## 5. Meta Description

- a. Great overview ([MOZ OVERVIEW ON META DESCRIPTION](#))
- b. Either you tell Google the description, or they will just take some text from your page. You are better off providing the description.
- c. Keep to 150 - 160 characters.
- d. Write for your visitor, not for the search engine.

## 6. Content - Properly using keywords on your pages

- a. Use your keyword towards the top of the page.
- b. Use it 2-3 times on the page.
- c. Use the keyword at least once in a headline (H1).
- d. When linking internally within your site, use your keywords.
  - i. Example using our recent post:
    1. CORRECT - Ever ask yourself [when is it time to update my website?](#)
    2. INCORRECT - Please check out my post [HERE](#) (link).

## 7. URL structure

- a. If possible, use the keyword in your URL.
- b. Use hyphens ( - ) to separate words vs. underscores ( \_ ).
- c. Attention Wordpress users - make sure you set Wordpress to use correct permalink structure for pages or posts. If not you will end up with links that don't add SEO value. Here's an example:
  - i. CORRECT URL - <http://whatarmy.com/when-is-it-time-to-update-my-website/>
  - ii. INCORRECT URL - <http://whatarmy.com/?p=224>

## 8. Image Alt Text

- a. Search engines do not know what your picture is all about so you must tell them by using Alt Text.
- b. Use your keyword in at least one Alt Text.

## 9. Make sure it is "crawlable"

- a. Make sure all pages are linked through navigation.
- b. Have a site map generated and let Google know where it is through Google Webmaster Tools.

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Please let us know if you have any questions! Keep in mind that these best practices change as search engines improve how they determine rank.

Best of luck!

**The WhatArmy Team**

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