



[web hosting](#)   [domain names](#)  
[web design](#)   [dedicated servers](#)  
[eCommerce](#)   [managed hosting](#)

## New At Aplus.net

June 2009

- ▶ Aplus.net was named the #1 Unix/Linux host by Web Host Directory.
- ▶ Aplus.net has added [new SSL offerings](#).
- ▶ Interested in multi-touch? [View our ReadWriteWeb post](#).

### Featured Blog posts

- [Face-to-Facebook Small Business Marketing](#)
- [Make Business Contact Chain Reactions with LinkedIn \(part one\)](#)
- [How do I know I need a shopping cart?](#)

## Search Engine Optimization Basics: SEO Techniques for the Beginner



Search engine optimization, or SEO, plays a key role in driving traffic to websites. The following two sets of techniques, if applied carefully, can help raise a website's ranking in search engines like Google™, Yahoo!®, and Bing™.

The first set of SEO techniques is visible to searchers, in addition to search engines.

Because URLs are shown on Search Engine Results Pages (SERPs), and search engines partially determine results based on keywords, each URL should describe the landing page it links to in language searchers typically use to find the page. Additionally, searchers tend to click on shorter URLs, so keep these descriptions succinct.

### Quick Links

Get Started at  
[Search Engine Land](#)  
[SEO Book](#)

Similarly, links within documents should contain descriptive anchor text. This tells the searcher what he or she will find after clicking the link, and for Search Engines it associates those keywords with the linked page.

### Need Help?

[Knowledge Base](#)  
[Technical Support](#)  
[Control Panel](#)

Descriptive, keyword-rich SERP text entices searchers to click through and tells search engines what information the webpage contains. Title text, which should contain no more than 65 characters including spaces, will appear on SERPs. Meta description text, which should contain between 145 and 155 characters including spaces, may or may not appear on SERPs—but write it as though it will and in a way that it is helpful to the searcher.

Keywords are also important webpage content. Although many content chunks will not show up on the SERP, keywords can still influence a webpage's ranking and will help the searcher find the required information after clicking through to the site. Header tags tell search engines what a page is about, should contain keywords because they are given more "weight" than other page text, and should never be duplicated.

Lastly, creating a custom 404 (error) page with links to active sections of the website can keep visitors who might otherwise leave the site.

The second set of SEO techniques applies mainly to search engine robots that catalog websites.

The presence of an XML sitemap at the root level of a webpage, which should be named sitemap.xml, can make it easier for a search engine to find pages within a website. In addition, a robots.txt file tells search robots what areas of a website are accessible so you can "hide" parts of your website from search engines if they are not extremely beneficial to the searcher.

Since search engines can't "see" images, image file names should be descriptive and images should contain descriptive alt text.

Finally, any time a webpage is moved, set up an HTTP 301 redirect status code. This lets the search engine pass SEO equity along to the new page.

SEO requirements are constantly changing, making it essential to conduct continual research on the process. For more information on SEO techniques and other online marketing tips, visit [Search Engine Land](#), [SEOMoz](#), or [Search Engine Watch](#).

## Buzzword: SEM (Search Engine Marketing)

SEM is a form of Internet marketing used to promote a website and its products or services in search engines (Google™, Bing™, Yahoo!®, etc.). The ultimate goal of SEM is to increase a website's visibility in the search engine result pages (SERPs) by moving it to a higher ranking. This is achieved through SEO (search engine optimization), PPC (pay-per-click) marketing, social media and any other methods which improve a company's brand in search engines and achieve maximum exposure.