



# Your website content: A best practice guide

**SPINDOGS**



# Contents

- 04 Introduction
- 05 Planning your content
- 10 Writing your content
- 14 Adding your content
- 18 Working with images
- 21 Ecommerce websites



# Introduction

Whether you've got a great new website and you're ready to populate it with new content, or you're looking to review and improve your current website content, there are some best practice guidelines we always recommend. Search performance, page speed and user experience can all be greatly affected by what content you add and how you add it.

Here's our easy to follow guide for best practice content addition. If in doubt, contact your Project Manager (PM), Business Partner (BP), or the Spindogs Support Team and we'll be happy to help – maximising your digital potential is what we do best.

# Planning your content

## Keywords

Keywords are an important part of search marketing and your choice of keywords and how they are included on the page can make a significant difference to your ranking performance. It's important therefore to plan your approach to keyword targeting from the outset, ideally prior to the creation of any content.

## Choosing Your Keywords

Undertaking a thorough keyword research process to help you identify competitive keyword opportunities is a must – Spindogs can assist with creating detailed keyword research if required and understanding what terms currently perform well, how your audience is using search and the gaps on your competitors' sites should inform what content you write and how you write it.

If Spindogs are not providing keyword research for your project, here are a few helpful tips on how to choose your keywords:

- 1. Use Google Search Console**  
This incredibly useful tool will help you identify your search ranking performance over the last 16 months, giving you valuable insight into which pages are performing well and for which search terms.
- 2. Think like your audience**  
Many of your target audience will reach your site having typed in a question (e.g. how do I write a will?), a research-driven query (e.g. best vacuum cleaners 2023) or have an intent based query (e.g. buy Nike trainers online). Try websites such as Answer the Public for suggestions on question related terms.
- 3. Do a Google search**  
Try using the auto-suggested keywords when typing in your focus keyword. The auto-suggest is based on popular terms relating to your search and may provoke some new ideas.
- 4. Shoe, shoes, or trainers?**  
Don't just settle for the obvious. How else can your product or service be described – try using a thesaurus or semantic keyword tool for further ideas of how to target audience.
- 5. Check Google Ads Keyword Planner**  
Whether you advertise on Google Ads or not, the keyword planner tool is useful for understanding monthly search volumes and competitiveness of terms.



# Keyword Mapping

Once you have identified your keyword opportunities, it's important to carefully consider where on the website they will be used.

We always recommend creating a keyword map in conjunction with keyword research as this enables you to see, at a glance, how your keywords will be used across the website relative to other pages. Contact us or check out our resources page on our website for our SEO content template.

When creating your keyword map it's important to consider the following:

## 1. Choose only one focus keyword per page

Trying to compete for too many keywords on a single page can result in poor performance.

## 2. Don't forget semantic keywords

A semantic keyword is a word or phrase that is related to another word or phrase in meaning. For example, the words "dog" and "canine" are semantically related because they both refer to the same animal.

When search engines crawl your web page, they look for keywords that are relevant and related to your content. By using semantically related keywords, you can increase the chances that your page will be found by people who are searching for information on the page topic.

## 3. Don't use the same focus keyword on more than one page

This can cause duplication issues or create competing pages, both of which are bad for SEO. Ideally avoid your semantic keywords being repeated elsewhere too.

## 4. Track your performance

Use tools that help keep track of your ranking performance over time, and monitor improvements when the site launches.

# Site Structure

Your website should be a sensibly structured and an easy to navigate experience for your users.

Making sure your pages are properly nested and where you would expect to find them, it seems like an obvious thing to do, but over time the bigger picture structure can easily become neglected as new pages are quickly added or removed and the needs of your organisation change.

When launching a new site or making some major updates, it's a great opportunity to review your site structure, but ensure the following is considered:

## 1. Create a sitemap

This will break down how your pages will link to each other and their hierarchy within the navigation. It's important to test whether the journeys your users will take through it make sense. Spindogs can assist with running user journey workshops, but minimally ask a few of your clients what they think.

## 2. Export your current sitemap

A free tool such as Screaming Frog will help if you have a small site, otherwise Spindogs can help you export and review your existing site maps.

## 3. Plan your redirects

Map your current sitemap and structure against your new site structure and ensure that 301 redirects are implemented – the Spindogs SEO Content Template is a good place to do this.

## 4. Nest your URLs sensibly

e.g. [www.domainname.com/services/service-name/](http://www.domainname.com/services/service-name/)

- Changing URLs is fine if they are redirected to the new or appropriate alternative page.
- Make sure URLs are easy to read and contain the page's focus keyword if possible.
- Use breadcrumbs within your site structure where possible.

## 5. Mitigate ranking risk

If implementing a new site structure be sure it won't hurt how the site is currently ranking – Spindogs can advise on this if you are unsure.

- If you are planning to remove sections of the site (e.g. technical PDF documents or historic blog posts) check if they drive a lot of the search traffic to the site before making a more informed decision to either keep or redirect them – if they don't absolutely have to be removed we would usually recommend keeping or repurposing old content.
- Spindogs SEO Launch service is designed to mitigate any search or ranking performance loss when launching a new site – ask your PM/AM for further details.



# Page Titles and Meta Descriptions

Two of the most easily influenceable but often underused areas for SEO performance are your page titles (also known as browser titles) and meta descriptions.

These are the snippets of text that are displayed in search results. In Google, for example, the blue/purple section is your page title and the black text below the URL is your meta description. Take advantage of your page titles and meta descriptions with the following best practice:

## 1. Never leave your page titles or meta descriptions empty

Search engines will complete them on your behalf, so it's best to retain control over what your customer sees in SERP (search engine results page).

## 2. Keep titles under 60 characters

Page titles should ideally be fewer than 60 characters long and contain the focus keyword. An example page title format is usually:

**\*Description of page containing keyword | Brand Name\***

Some brand names can be quite long, in which case going beyond 60 characters will be fine, if not visible in search.

## 3. Keep meta descriptions between 50 and 160 characters

Meta descriptions can be up to 160 characters and should also contain the page keyword. Meta descriptions are a brief description of the page that should encourage users to click on that search listing.

## 4. Don't copy your titles and descriptions

Avoid duplicating page titles or meta descriptions on multiple pages, this is not good for SEO as the pages will then compete against each other.

# Hierarchical

Hierarchical headings (or H tags) are most familiar to content editors as H1s, H2s, H3s and are often seen in WYSIWYG editors. The font choice, size and colour of your H headings are typically defined as part of the website design process, and control over how they are presented is minimal.

While tempting to use as a formatting tool for making pages look nicer, they actually serve a greater structural and SEO purpose and using them as a visual aid should be avoided. Your H tags tell search engines what your page is about and what is most important on the page, as well as serving to break up content into more easily readable chunks. Here's our top tips for H1s and beyond:

When launching a new site or making some major updates, it's a great opportunity to review your site structure, but ensure the following is considered:

## 1. Each page should include only one H1

- Your H1 should contain the focus keyword.
- Minimise the length (it's not a sentence), but avoid one or two-word H1s

## 2. Hierarchical headings should be present on all pages

Use a variety of hierarchical headings (H2, H3, H4 etc) where appropriate, to split content up and make it more easily readable.

- H2s and beyond can be lengthier than your H1 – questions are often great as a sub-heading for example.
- Ensure hierarchical headings are not placed in a <div> tag.

## 3. Use the skeleton test

A great tip when constructing your content is to remove all of your body content and leave only the H tags as a page skeleton – if you can understand what your page is about, then it's a good sign that you have properly implemented your H tags.

Use your [Spindogs SEO Content Template](#) to plan your H headings alongside your focus keywords, page titles/meta descriptions and redirects.





# Writing your content

Creating valuable website content isn't just about sitting at the keyboard and bashing out a load of pages.

Crafting compelling content that your audience wants to read alongside delivering content that successfully serves search engines is a tricky balancing act.

## Creative considerations

Making your content readable and relatable is a key first step to engaging with new audiences as well as providing reassurance to existing audiences. While there are no right ways or wrong ways to write about your organisation or to structure your page, experience dictates certain best practices will ensure the best possible foundations for audience engagement.



### Focus on your audience

Make sure your content isn't too inward facing. Consider the benefits of your service or product to the end user rather than the functional mechanics of it. Make it something they want to know more about.



### Avoid insider jargon

It can be very easy to resort to terminology that is used on a daily basis internally, but means nothing to the audience. Try the 'Grandparent check' – if your grandparent can understand what you do, then in most instances your audience will too.



### Establish a tone of voice

If you don't have brand guidelines in place ensure your website copy retains a consistent tone. Are you corporate or offbeat, formal or informal? A tone of voice workshop and brand guidelines are a sensible place to start – Spindogs can assist with developing your tone of voice if needed.



### Calls to action

Ensure your content has an intent and purpose, and gives your audience a further step in the journey. Whether it's to take an action such as purchasing or submitting a form, or to continue on to further information, make the journey as easy as possible by using calls to action to signpost.



### Maintain consistency

Ensure your terminology, phrasing, casing and spelling is consistent throughout (e.g. in-house, in house, In-House etc.). Creating a brand copy style guide is a great way to ensure consistency across all brand touchpoints, not just your website.



# Technical considerations

While writing content for your website can become a chore for many – Spindogs’ content team is always on hand to write content for you – implementing some the following technical guidelines will certainly help.

## Use your keyword map as the basis for your content creation activities

If you choose to amend the focus keyword while writing (it’s not always an exact science when planning in advance) then make sure it doesn’t compete with one of your other pages and update the map accordingly.

## Use the focus keyword in the most important areas

Include your focus keywords in the page title, meta description, H1 and within first 100 words of content

- Include the semantic alternatives throughout the body content.

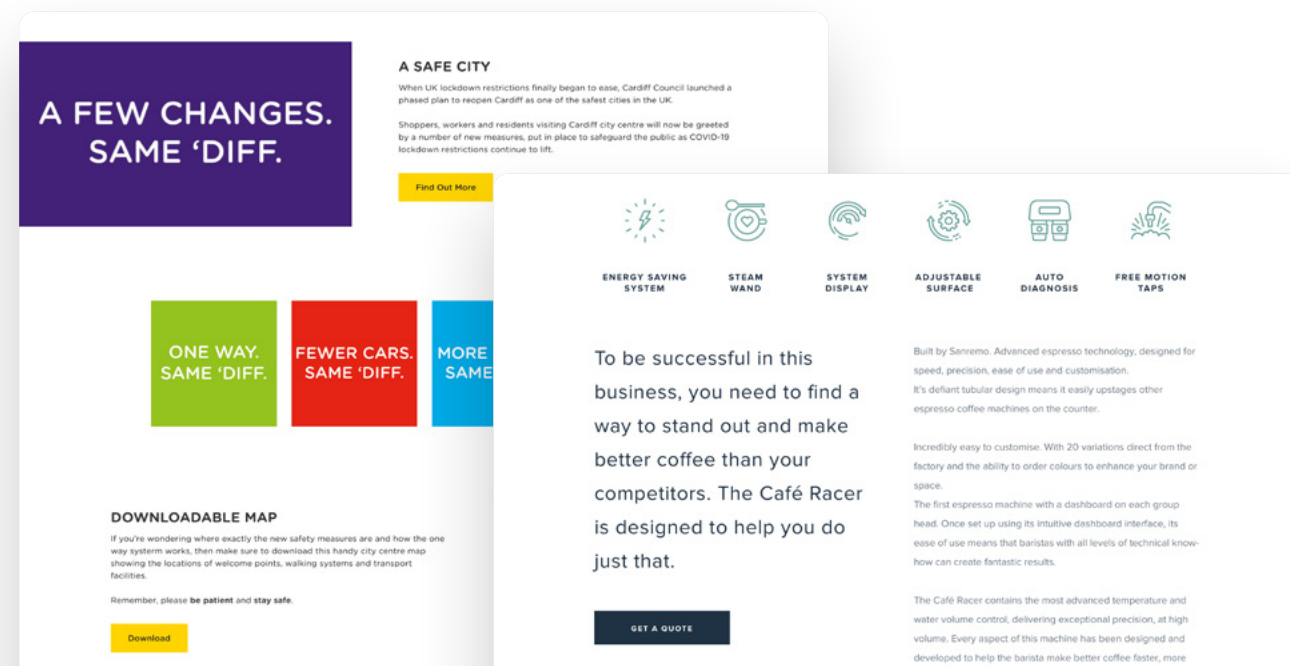
## Bitesize our content

Break up your copy using lesser H tags (H2’s H3s etc.) to make it easier to read.

## Use the focus keyword in the most important areas

Try to not have pages that are less than 300 words as this is classed as ‘thin’ content.

- If writing blog posts, 600+ words perform better which is known as ‘long form’ content. If you can stretch to 1,500 words or more, then even better!



## Include a Table of Contents

When writing long-form content, consider the inclusion of an anchor-linked Table of Contents so that readers can jump to a specific part of the page when reading.

## Talk subjectively

In many instances writing in the abstract about a subject area can increase the authority of the page.

## Make use of website design functions

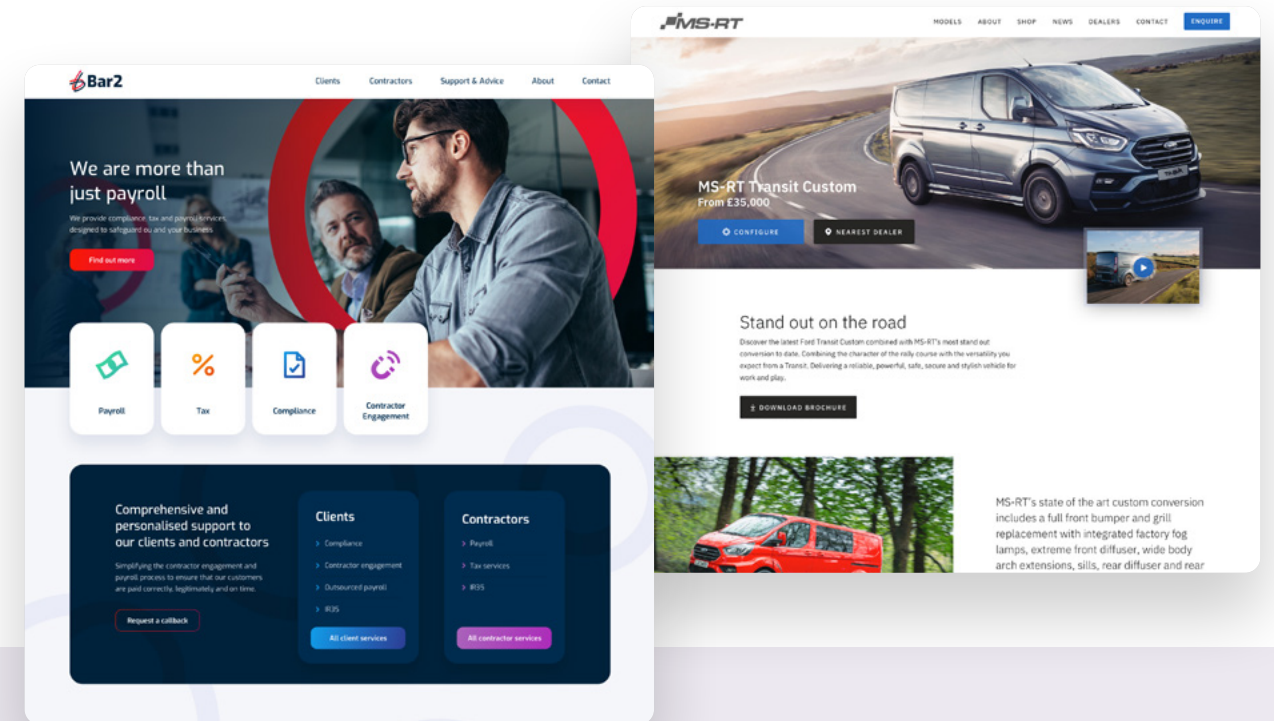
On category or top-level pages, a good way to

## Include CTAs

Make sure each page has at least one call to action or internal link.

## Build internal links

Take advantage of your content by linking to other relevant landing pages by turning keywords into hyperlinks – don’t go crazy though, only a handful per page is necessary.



Take advantage of Spindogs’ expert content team. We cover the following services and more:

1. Keyword research and mapping
2. Tone of voice development
3. Content audits
4. Website content
5. Blogging
6. Style guides



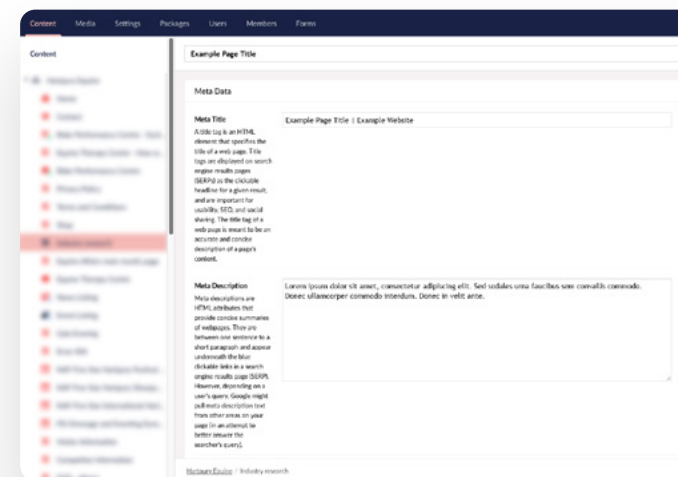
# Adding your content

Most content management systems (CMS) will enable you to easily edit and add content to your site. While specific CMS training is provided by Spindogs when you launch your site, here are a few handy tips to remember when adding content to your Umbraco and WordPress sites.

## Umbraco websites

### SERP page titles and meta descriptions

The page name is defined and edited in the field at the top of the content page. This will be continue to be visible as you scroll down the page editor screen. Your SERP Page Title will default to a combination of your page name and website name, as defined in the CMS, but can be edited within the field 'Meta Title'. You can also create and edit your SERP Meta Description in the field below. If left blank, Google will add their own meta description on your behalf.



**URL Alias**  
Using the `umbracoUrlAlias` property on a page in Umbraco gives you the ability to set up one or more different URLs for a single page.

The page structure of your site might create long URLs, and you may want to use a shorter one, the `umbracoUrlAlias` will do that for you. Or a page may have previously existed with a different URL, and you want to catch the traffic going to that URL and get them to look at this page, the `umbracoUrlAlias` will do that for you as well.

**Navigation Title**  
Please enter the title to be displayed in the navigation. If this is left blank, the page title specified in the SEO section of the page will be used. If that is also left blank, the page name (initially specified during the creation of the page) will be used.

### Navigation title and URL

To edit how your URL looks in search, scroll to the bottom of the page editor screen and insert a URL alias into the 'URL Alias' field.

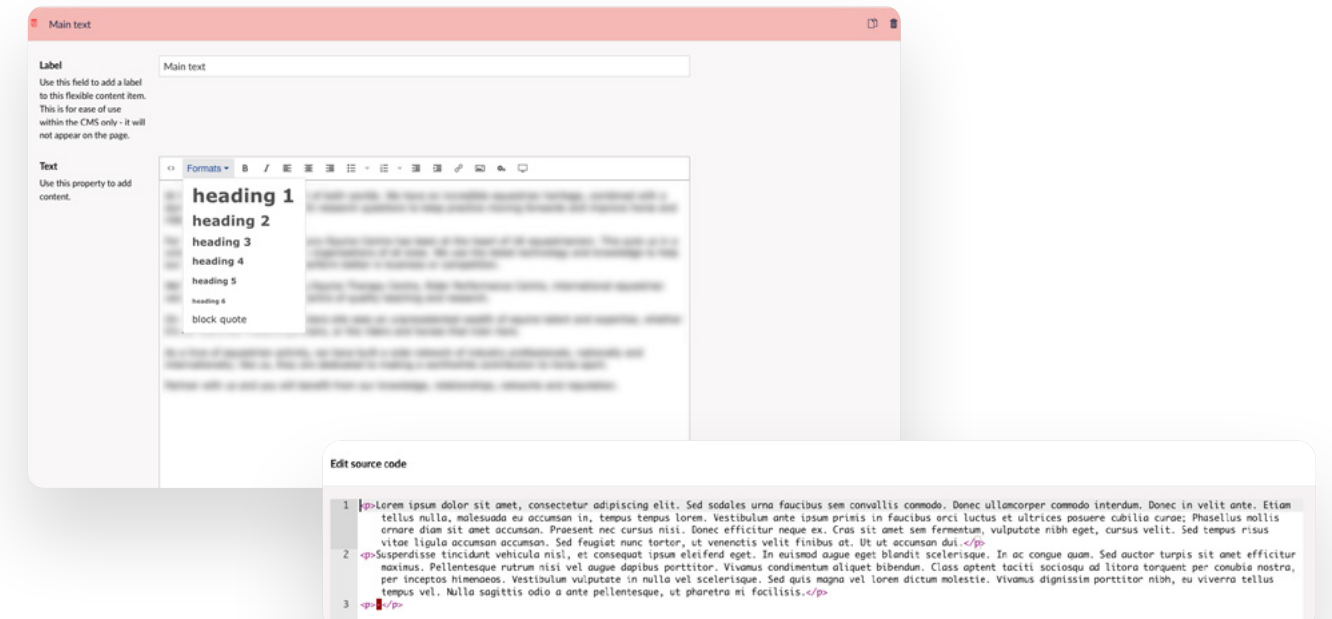
Similarly if you wish your page to have a different title displayed in the navigation – e.g. your page may be called 'Contact Us', but in the navigation you would prefer just 'Contact' – you can add your preferred display name within the 'Navigation Title' field.

## Adding content and hierarchical headings

The WYSIWYG editor allows you format your content based on a series of pre-defined categorisations. Your various H tags and body copy style will have been defined during the website design process. Simply select 'Formats' from the drop-down menu and choose your content format.

When adding your content, it's often easier to copy and paste, either from an existing website or a Word document. Be careful however, as you may copy pre-existing formatting into the WYSIWYG, resulting in your content appearing odd on the website.

It's often best practice to paste into the source code, rather than the visual editor of the WYSIWYG. To do this, simply select the `< >` symbol and add your content into the unformatted text block. You can then edit the formatting with the WYSIWYG visual editor.



**NOTE:** Your website may have bespoke functionality or alternative configurations included that results in a different method of adding content to those indicated. This will be covered in CMS training with your PM. Screenshots shown are from Umbraco 8.





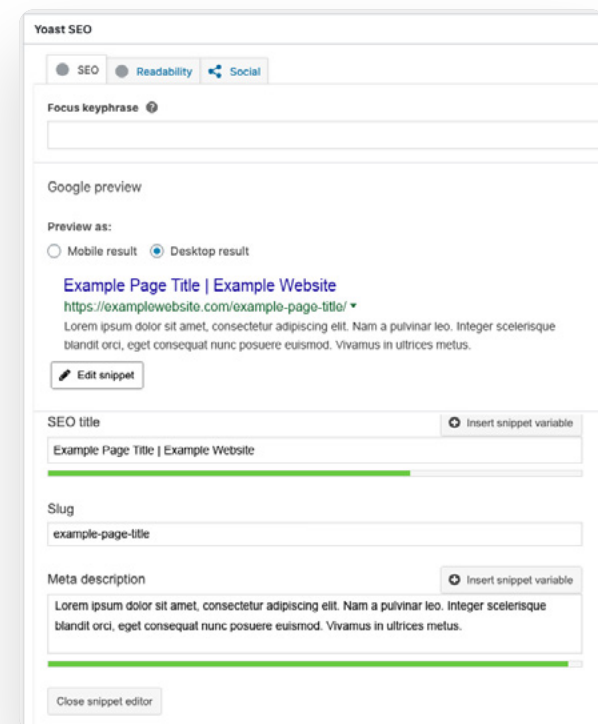
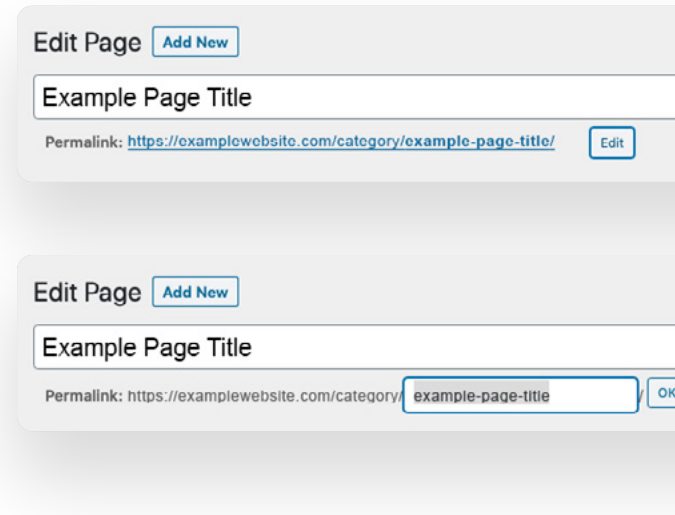
# WordPress websites

## Navigation title and URL

Your page name is defined and edited in the field at the top of your page editor. The name you choose to enter will appear within the URL for the page and will be included within your navigation and SERP descriptions as default.

To edit the URL simply click 'Edit', amend the URL to your new choice, and select 'OK'.

Remember if doing this on an active site, that you will also need to apply a 301 redirect for the old URL, to ensure continuity of user experience and minimise SEO impact.



## SERP page titles and meta descriptions

Many WordPress installations come with the Yoast SEO plugin as standard. You can use this plugin to edit and update your SERP descriptions as well as scoring your on-page content for SEO performance.

To edit your SERP descriptions, click on 'Edit Snippet' below the visualisation of your SERP appearance.

Your SERP Page Title will default to a combination of your page name and website name, as defined in the CMS, but can be edited within the field 'SEO Title'.

You can also create and edit your SERP Meta Description in the field below. If left blank, Google will add their own meta description on your behalf.

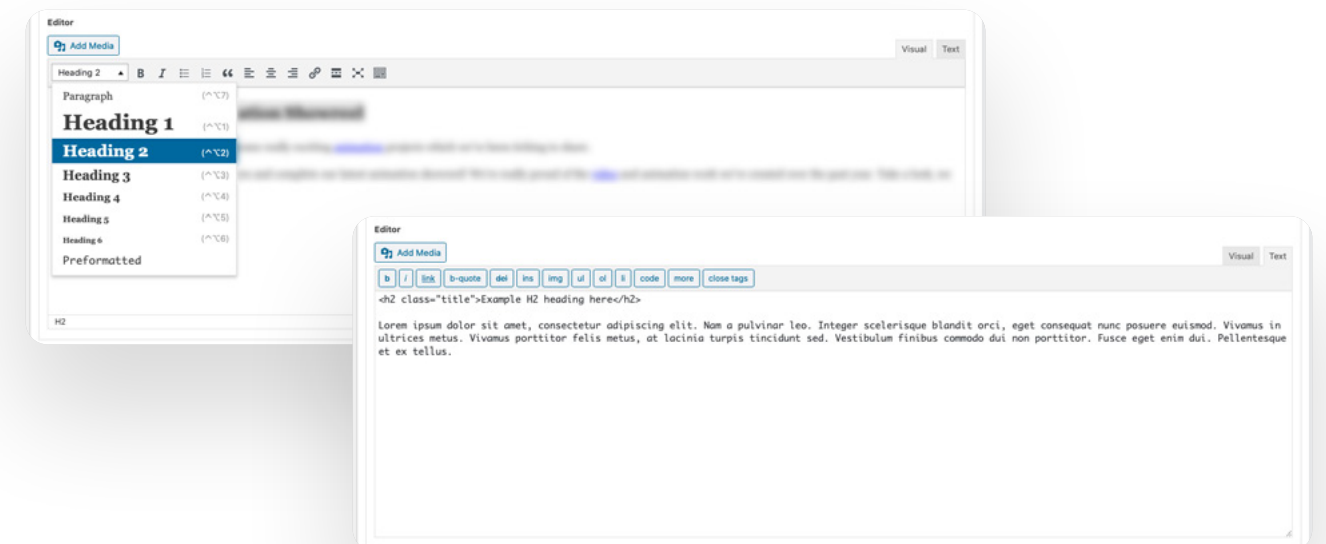
Yoast provides guidance on the length of your SERP descriptions, with green being the sweet spot of not too little, and not too much.

## Adding content and hierarchical headings

The WYSIWYG editor allows you format your content based on a series of pre-defined categorisations. Your various H tags and body copy style will have been defined during the website design process. Simply select 'Headings' from the drop-down menu and choose your content format.

When adding your content, it's often easier to copy and paste, either from an existing website or a Word document. Be careful however, as you may copy pre-existing formatting into the WYSIWYG, resulting in your content appearing odd on the website.

It's often best practice to paste into the source code, rather than the visual editor of the WYSIWYG. To do this, simply select the 'Text' tab and add your content into the unformatted text block. You can then edit the formatting with the WYSIWYG 'Visual' tab.



**NOTE:** In many instances your H1 will be defined in the CMS based on your choice of page title or banner heading. Ensure you don't add additional H1s elsewhere through the WYSIWYG editors.

# Working with images

Your website design is a framework for showing off your organisation, but ensuring that your content and imagery works in harmony with the framework is what truly makes the difference between your site appearing sophisticated and well-considered, and it feeling amateurish and problematic for users.

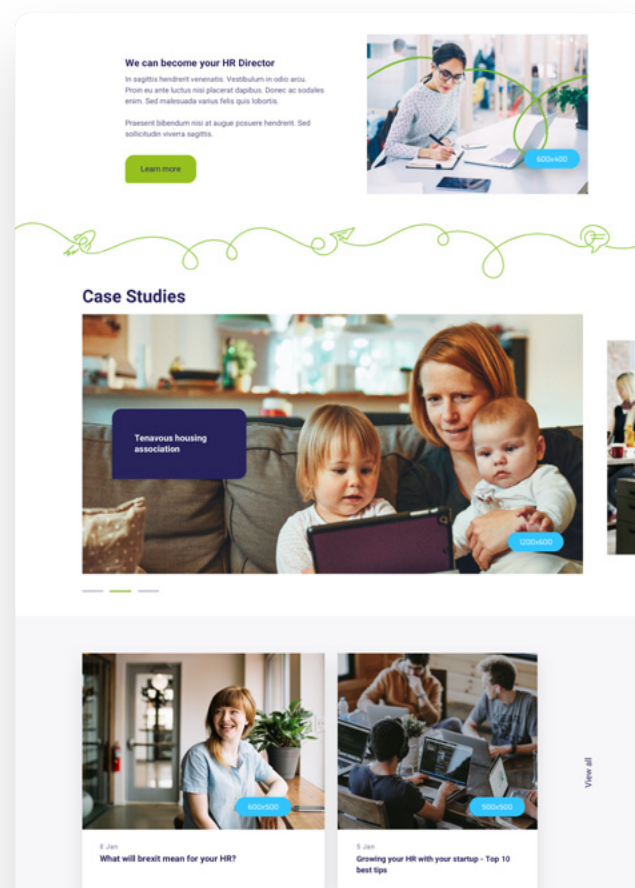
So, you've got an image block and an image you want to add – simply upload and away we go, right? Not quite. While the websites we build may allow for some in-CMS scaling, or responsive cropping of your images, they can't make bad images better, or stop super high-resolution images slowing down your page loading speed (page speed is a key component of both user experience and SEO). There are some important considerations to both your choice of image, and importantly how it's added to your website.

## Image format, compression and sizing

Handling and optimising your images prior to upload can make the difference between a visitor staying or leaving due to poor load times or user experience. Some key considerations when adding your images to your website include:

### Choose the most appropriate image format

Where possible, images should be a JPG as they offer the best compression opportunities. New technology such as WebP offers even greater compression, may require additional development to implement correctly – contact your PM/AM for further details. Additionally, images with transparent backgrounds will likely be saved as a PNG while animations will typically be saved as WebP or MP4.



### Keep to the image ratio

As with the physical size of your image, ensure that your image ratio matches that of the block you are adding to – for example don't add a square image to a rectangular block as it will result in cropping of your image and an unnecessarily large image for the space.

### Ensure all images are saved at 72dpi

Many print resolution images are 300dpi which, if uploaded to your website, will slow your loading speeds and increase your page size.

### Ensure all images are correctly sized

Tailor your images for the image block you are adding to. If you have an image block of 100 pixels in width, unless the image scales when responding to new screen sizes (e.g. gets bigger on mobile), then ensure your image isn't 3000 pixels in width. Adding images larger than the space they are displayed in is unnecessary and will result in larger page sizes and lower page speeds. We would recommend allowing 20% extra to account for changing desktop sizes.

### Add 'Alt Tags'

All images should contain an 'alt tag' which is a small description of what the image is. This is good for accessibility and SEO. Alt tags should be as concise as possible, describe what is happening in the image and contain the focus keyword if it's relevant.

### Compress images

Before uploading your images to the site compress them to reduce the file size even further. Online tools such as Compress JPEG or PNG Gauntlet can compress images for you.





# Choosing images

Your choice of image can make or break the perception of your organisation. A poorly scaled or cropped image can leave you looking amateurish, while cheesy stock choices at best leave you looking like all the rest and at worst leave you devoid of any personality.

While Spindogs can help guide your image choices through creating brand guidelines or art directing professional photography for you, the following tips will help keep your site looking it's best at all times.

## 1. Are your images appropriate?

Make sure the images included on the website are relevant to the content and your brand.

## 2. Keep it light

Don't overfill pages with images (unless it is a gallery page).

## 3. Avoid stock photography

Try to use your own professional photos as much as possible instead of stock imagery – it helps make you more relatable and conveys brand personality better.

## 4. Consistency of image

If you do have to use stock, ensure that the choices are consistent – lighting, angles, and composition all make a difference, and if they don't match then your site can appear jarring.

## 5. Be aware of the fold

Keep header image height within the boundaries of the image block, so the more important content shows before the fold.

# Ecommerce websites

Most of the advice in this guide applies as much, if not more so to ecommerce or product-driven websites. There are however some specific areas to address which can make a huge impact on SEO, including:

## Ensure you sensibly assign your keywords

Many product-driven websites create pages that compete against themselves. A sensible general keyword for your category and subcategory pages is usually best, with product specific keywords assigned to your product pages. Your Spindogs SEO Content Template will be helpful as a reference point.

## Images sell

Be sure to include good quality images, and include images of the product in-use or from different angles where possible. Ideally avoid relying on supplier provided images, as many of your competitors will have the exact same images on their sites.

## Include a unique product description

Minimally 150 words, and longer if possible, ensure your product is described in a way that is uniquely yours – no copying and pasting from supplier data.

## Don't use the same description for multiple products

If a product only has a minor differentiator (such as colour or size), consider using a Canonical reference to a primary version of the page. This will need developer help, but Spindogs Support and your PM/AM are on hand to help.

## Avoid internal competition

Use unique page titles and meta descriptions for each product.

## Contain products by URL

An alternative for products with varying sizes, colours or weights – consider if can they be included on the same page and share the same URL. This will reduce internal competition.

## Prepare for zoom

Many product pages will incorporate a zoom function. Ensure your original image is of a high enough quality to make this feature worthwhile.

## Breadcrumbs

Use breadcrumbs as part of your navigation as they help both user experience and SEO through the building of internal links.

## Build internal links

Create referring internal links to category pages or important products from within your product pages. These are often best done through a 'recommended products' or a 'customers also bought' section.

## Share some detail

Include technical product information where possible – size, materials etc.



## Get in touch

To find out more about how we can support your digital journey, contact us on:

**e** [Info@spindogs.com](mailto:Info@spindogs.com)

**t** 02920 480 720