

# PART I: SEO

## MODULE 1: UNDERSTANDING SEO

### A. Why It's Important for a Writer to Know SEO

OK, let's begin!

As you now know, it's incredibly valuable as a freelance writer to possess some knowledge of SEO. Understanding how content reaches the top of search engine results—and staying current on SEO trends—gives you a huge advantage as a writer.

This means: **You will earn higher paying writing jobs.**

Now, don't worry – you don't need to know *everything* about SEO in order to stay competitive. There's plenty of agencies out there who can worry about all the intricacies. Your main focus as a writer should always be on just that, *the writing*.

But a writer who knows how to apply SEO principles into their work will always have the leg up over a writer without these skills. And when you can meet the true needs of a client and better serve them, you are simply going to earn more as a writer.

### B. What is SEO?

Before we get into the nitty gritty of SEO - we first have to know just what exactly it *is*. So what is SEO?

**Search Engine Optimization** is the process of influencing a website's visibility to be placed higher in a search engine's results page (commonly abbreviated as **SERP**).

Basically, SEO is about trying to get your website to rank well on search engines like Google and Bing so that people have an easier time finding you!

## C. The Importance of SERP Ranking

If you watched the Intro video, then you know what's financially at stake for businesses to win the search engine races. 50% of all website traffic is through organic searches. And *nearly half* of a website's sales are the result of search engine traffic.

What's even more staggering is that 33% of all search engine traffic goes to just the number 1 result in a Google search. Wow!

OK, so what if your webpage doesn't make it to the top? What if you miss the first page entirely, and get to the very top of the *second* page?

Brace yourself. Traffic drops a sobering **95%** from the 1st page to the 2nd. Ouch...

So it's pretty obvious why business owners and marketers obsess over SERP rankings. It's a life-or-death scenario...

The good news is that the basics of SEO are not difficult to understand. And, once you grasp the fundamentals, you'll see that most of the results can easily be achieved by writers like you—and *not* by only the expensive SEO agencies.

## D. How Google and Search Engines Work

Alright, so we know the game. Now let's understand the rules.

How do search engines like Google actually find web pages and determine how they rank?

Google has sophisticated bots, also called **spiders**, that scour the entire web and scan *a//*the content of every page. They send this information back to Google, and their algorithms then determine where this content should be placed in search results.

These results are based on **keywords**. Essentially, if you search for "hotels in Paris" – then Google is going to serve you relevant sites where the words "Paris" and "hotel" appear in its main content.

The results are also determined by **links**. When enough different sources link to the same page, then this tells Google that the content must be pretty top-notch, and so will boost it to the top of results.

Not all links are the same, though. A link from a **high authority site**, like the New York Times, will carry much more weight than a random person's blog that launched yesterday.

So can you cheat the system? Can you toss a bunch of high-demand keywords into your site, or somehow send an influx of bogus links to your site, in order to climb the ranks?

The short answer is No.

Google is incredibly sophisticated. It's engineered to be pretty air-tight, and it will definitely detect less savory SEO tactics.

We'll get into this later, but this is the difference between what's called "White Hat SEO" and "Black Hat SEO". Tactics designed to mathematically cheat the system are black hat – and they almost never end well.

We're focused on white hat strategies—ways to organically influence search rankings. And more often than not, this is achieved through smart and focused writing.

## **MODULE 2: SITE RANKINGS**

### **A. The Top SEO Influencers**

Google considers many factors when ranking a web page. In fact, there are **200 known Google ranking factors!**

Not all of them are equal, of course. And, at least for writers, it's not expected that you commit every single one of them to memory.

In this course we're going to cover the most important ones you should be concerned with. It's pretty much certain that, if you focus your efforts on optimizing the following factors, your site will be much more competitive as a result.

In no particular order, let's review these top ranking factors that influence a site's SERP:

## 1. **Relevant, Useful Content**

This is a big one. Search engines strongly favor content that is *valuable* and *unique* – and that gives people something they actually want to read.

As a writer, this is perhaps the most important factor you should focus on.

But there's a lot that goes into how you develop the right kind of content. Here are some requirements that you should fulfill:

### **Current & Fresh**

Certain types of content are naturally going to rank higher than others, based on the current significance of the topic.

For instance, a recent news article on a currently trending topic is obviously going to rank better than a news article from three months ago. Google knows people want to stay up-to-date on today's top stories.

That's not to say that timeless content such as a product review isn't going to rank well—but if it's important that your site stays current, then it'd be a good idea to update your content or publish new articles to keep fresh.

### **Accurate**

Content that's full of false information wasn't good enough for your high school teachers—and it's certainly not going to fly with Google either.

People turn to search engines for simple answers to things all the time—but they can also depend on them for critical matters like medical dosages, legal terms, or other things where accuracy is required.

Google cross-references content through a database of trusted sources. So, when in doubt, check with these trusted sources (like Wikipedia) if writing about a topic that requires accurate research.

## In-Depth

It's not about necessarily being *long*, but the content you write needs to adequately solve a need.

Being detailed with your work makes for a more enjoyable read. It also closes the gap on the competition, so readers don't need to look elsewhere in their search.

To produce some really standout material, it'd be wise to research your competitors and see how their articles were structured.

At the bare minimum, you'll want to include the same essential information that's found on those sites. But if you can go a step further – and add key information *not* found on those sites – then there's a better chance Google will value your site as being more authoritative.

## Topical Authority

You'll hear me talk several times about a site's **Domain Authority (DA)** in this course. This is a metric developed by Moz to measure how sites compare with each other based on their organic traffic.

Domain Authority, however, does *not* directly influence SERP.

What I'm referring to here is **topical authority**—and, all other things being equal, it *will* lead to better rankings compared to another site.

As a writer, it's important to specialize your content rather than being a generalist. Being able to write with authority on a subject not only makes you a more compelling author, but Google actually favors it.

If you're writing an article on a niche topic, like “no-till farming” for example, it's much better that the content appear on a site that focuses *only* on that topic – rather than as a ‘one-off’ piece on something like Wired.

In fact, it will perform better in search results than even on a more generalized farming site with a seemingly higher domain authority.

So keep your content focused. Choose a specialized niche topic. And make sure that content is published on highly specialized websites for the best chance at ranking well.

## 2. Backlinks

We're going to talk about backlinks *a lot* in this course.

Understanding how they influence a site's rankings, and how to acquire them, is an essential practice of any online writer.

We'll get knee-deep into this topic a bit later. There's a lot of ground to cover here.

For now, just know that, aside from the quality of your content, backlinks are what's most directly responsible for your site's ranking.

They're a big deal.

## 3. Search Intent

Put simply: Google wouldn't survive very long if it failed to serve people exactly what they needed. So the search intent of a user is certainly a prominent factor in rankings.

If someone uses a strong signifier word like "buy" in a search query, then they're most definitely looking for e-commerce sites in the search results. Informational pages such as a tutorial, for example, would not meet the search intent.

We're going to take a deeper dive into search intent soon when we discuss keyword research. Tailoring your content based on a user's search phrases will help you maximize your chances of earning high ranks.

## 4. User Experience

How a site is structured and optimized can determine if it's ultimately a pleasant or awful user experience to navigate. That experience is incredibly important in the eyes of Google.

I know as a writer you don't have much sway over the coding aspect of a site, which of course isn't your responsibility. But if you're going to be guest blogging for a site, your efforts will be better spent on one that you know offers a great user experience.

Is the site well-organized? Is the content easy to find? Is the content useful and relevant?

Do the visual elements come together for a seamless, gratifying experience? Is the typography pleasant and easily readable? Are the words supplemented with beautiful, relevant images?

## Page Speed

Getting a bit more technical – how fast does the page load?

We've all become extremely impatient in this day and age with lightning-fast internet speeds. So if a page takes too long to load—and by too long, I mean **more than 3 seconds**—then you may be risking a poor user experience.

To check a site's page speed, you can test it out in the [Google Search Console](#).

As a general rule of thumb, it's best to keep a page's total file size below 500kb. So keep that in mind if you're using several images in your content.

## Mobile Friendliness

No sense in denying it: most people are browsing the web from their phones these days.

As such, Google made mobile friendliness a major factor in its ranking algorithms. However, in 2019 Google actually took this even further...

Not only is it important that a site is mobile-friendly, but the site's mobile version is now predominantly what Google uses for indexing and ranking.

This **mobile-first indexing** means a site's mobile user experience should be the primary concern for web developers and content creators.

Make sure all the same content exists on the mobile version as on the desktop version.

Also, don't hide content that requires user interaction, such as swiping or clicking to reveal text; the crawlers won't see this content.

You can check a site's mobile friendliness by referring to the "Mobile Usability" report inside the Google Search Console.

Now that you're familiar with how a site's search ranking is determined, let's break down each one and explore how you, as a freelance writer, can utilize these factors to your advantage...

# MODULE 3: CREATING COMPELLING CONTENT

## A. Write for Humans

Some SEO “experts” out there believe that climbing search rankings is purely a numbers game. The thought is that, since Google is basically a mathematical algorithm, it can somehow be fooled by Black Hat techniques.

What you need to realize is that **You are not creating content for a robot, you are creating it for human beings.**

Search engines are smart. They know not to serve people content that’s overly stuffed with matching keywords, or low-authority pages that are nothing more than spam.

*There are no real shortcuts in SEO.* Some people don’t want to hear this, because they’re hoping they can climb the ranks with minimal effort. It doesn’t work like that.

Probably the single most important lesson you can pull from this course is this:

No matter what technical skill you have with SEO, no matter how well you optimize keywords or read the data – ***none of it matters unless you create compelling content.***

Yes, it requires more effort to pull off—but the rewards are worth it. Content that is useful, relevant, and serves a purpose will always rise to the top.

So your mission as a writer is to **Find out what people need, and then give it to them.**

## B. Original Content

One way you can do this by **creating original content that can’t be found anywhere else.**

Let’s say you happen to be an expert in audio engineering – and through your experiences, you’ve discovered that *nowhere* is there a really great, detailed guide on “How To Remove Static from a Recording.” (I’m sure in reality there’s *dozens* of guides on this subject, but we’re being hypothetical here.)



This is obviously something that would benefit tons of people. Although it's a niche topic, it's probably something people search for constantly – and they keep coming up empty-handed.

*Bingo!* If you applied your knowledge in audio engineering—and your skills as a writer—to produce a valuable, unique guide on the subject... People are going to love you. (And so will Google!)

## C. Improve Existing Content

Another way your content can climb the ranks is by **replacing older, lesser content with something better**.

Maybe there's already a guide on how to remove static from audio recordings, and it sits right at the very top of search results. But when you read it... it just isn't compelling. It's not well written, it's confusing, it omits important information. And you think to yourself: "I can *definitely* write something that's more useful than this!"

Well, remember Google is designed to give people what it believes is the most relevant and high-quality content that's out there.

This is actually the most common approach writers take to generating high-ranking content: They find the things people really want—and they improve what already exists.

# MODULE 4: KEYWORD RESEARCH

## A. Give The People What They Want

When developing content ideas, the bulk of your energy will be spent on **Keyword Research**.

If you're a business, your goal is to tailor your services or product page so that customers can easily find what you're offering.

For freelance writers, the process is largely the same: It entails doing some detective work to find what people need, and then developing quality content around that.

This is essentially determining:

- *What* people are searching for.
- *How* they're searching or it – what words and phrases they're using.
- *How many* people are searching for this content.
- and *Why* they're searching for it. What is the true intent behind their phrasing?

Let's assume you already have a general idea of what you want to write about. We'll again use the topic of audio engineering as an example.

It's a broad topic - but how can we develop a piece of content that is *guaranteed* to serve a need and generate heavy traffic?

Let's break down the process...

## **B. Gathering Ideas**

The easiest way to gather a list of keywords is to open up Google and start typing.

Let's say you want to write about microphones. Maybe you want to write an article about which microphones are best for podcasts.

If you start writing the word "microphones" in a Google search, it will automatically list "microphones for podcasting" pretty high in the search suggestions. This tells us this is an extremely popular topic – and likely one that has some stiff competition.

Let's add some more ideas to our list. Maybe...

- Best Microphones for interviews
- Best microphone under \$200
- Best sounding microphones
- Microphones with no background noise

We're just gathering ideas right now. They're all in a way related to our chosen topic—and next, we're going to narrow them down and find which one gives us the best shot at ranking.

### **C. Beating the Competition**

Fire up [Google Keyword Planner](#). It's a free tool used for Adwords; it gives a rough indication of search volume for keywords.

Here's what we get running the phrases above:

best microphones for podcasting, best microphones for interviews, best microphones under \$200, Best sounding microphones, microphones with no background noise

Broaden your search: + microphones + best microphones + microphones for interviews + music recording + podcasts + m

Exclude adult ideas ADD FILTER 395 keyword ideas available

<input type="checkbox"/> Keyword (by relevance) ↓	Avg. monthly searches	Competition
Keywords you provided		
<input type="checkbox"/> best microphones for podcasting	1K – 10K	High
<input type="checkbox"/> best microphones for interviews	100 – 1K	High
<input type="checkbox"/> best microphones under \$200	10 – 100	High
<input type="checkbox"/> best sounding microphones	10 – 100	High
<input type="checkbox"/> microphones with no background noise	0 – 10	–
Keyword ideas		
<input type="checkbox"/> best mic for podcasting	1K – 10K	High
<input type="checkbox"/> microphones for podcasting	10K – 100K	High
<input type="checkbox"/> best mic for rap vocals	100 – 1K	High
<input type="checkbox"/> best microphone for voice over	100 – 1K	High
<input type="checkbox"/> best kick drum mic	100 – 1K	High
<input type="checkbox"/> best condenser mic under 200	100 – 1K	High
<input type="checkbox"/> best podcast microphone 2019	100 – 1K	High
<input type="checkbox"/> best studio mic	100 – 1K	High
<input type="checkbox"/> best podcast microphone 2018	10 – 100	High
<input type="checkbox"/> best home studio mic	100 – 1K	High
<input type="checkbox"/> best mic for voice over	100 – 1K	High

OK, so it looks like the podcasting idea is by far the most popular topic. Aside from the “interviews” keyword, I’d say there really isn’t a reason to pursue the other ideas.

“Best microphones for podcasting,” however, is a highly competitive search phrase. Unless we’re writing for a website with unbeatable domain authority, there’s little chance we’ll get noticed. We need to dig further...

This is where we’ll begin looking at **Long-Tail Keywords**.

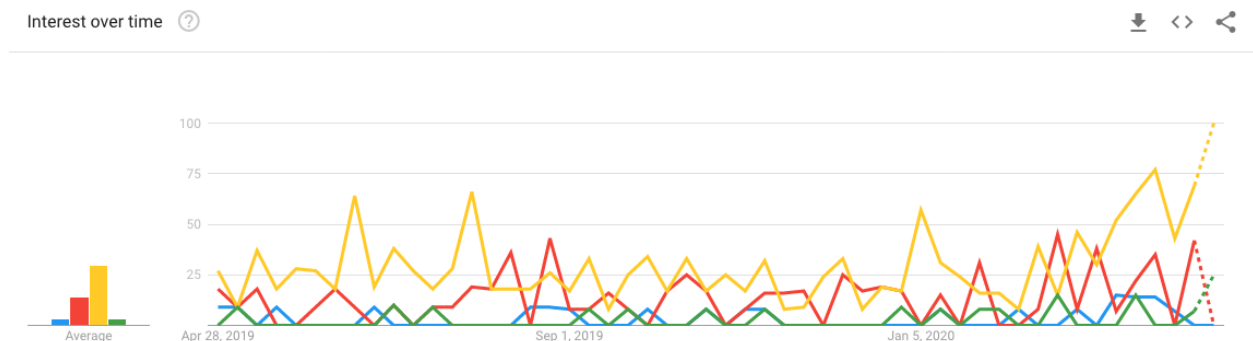
We're trying to add terms to the keyword phrase that will lessen the competition, and still provide something relevant and useful to people.

We can see that "podcasting" is a hot topic. By following this train of thought, I've decided to add "how to record a podcast" to the list. We get similarly good results – but according to Google, there's slightly lower competition.

Keywords you provided			
<input type="checkbox"/>	how to record a podcast	1K – 10K	Medium
<input type="checkbox"/>	popular podcast microphones	10 – 100	High
<input type="checkbox"/>	best microphones for podcasting	1K – 10K	High
<input type="checkbox"/>	best microphone for vocals	1K – 10K	High
<input type="checkbox"/>	cheap podcast microphones	100 – 1K	High

OK, maybe we're getting somewhere...

Let's look a bit further. Open up [Google Trends](#). This will show us the interest level of keywords over time based on organic traffic.



Interesting. The blue line is "best microphones for podcasting." The yellow line, however, is "how to record a podcast."

OK. So we can see that there is definitely high demand in learning how to record a podcast. (Seems people are interested in starting their own podcast at home—most likely on a budget.)

How can we tailor our content to provide something useful on the topic?

Well, we need to put ourselves in their shoes. We need to think like our readers – and understand *why* they're searching for these terms.

## D. Search Intent

People use search engines for basically three types of reasons:

1. **Navigation** - They want to go somewhere specific
2. **Information** - They want to learn about something
3. **Transaction** - They want to buy something

If someone searches for “how to record a podcast,” then clearly they’re looking for information. But this person may *also* be curious to learn about various equipment needed for podcasting. So something like a microphone comparison or review may be useful for them, since they’re likely going to be purchasing audio equipment soon for their podcast.

## Checking Forums

There are a couple ways you can delve deeper into search intent. Sometimes it’s helpful to see what real people are asking around in forums and places like Reddit or Quora.

What you can do is search in popular subreddit threads – maybe in this case something like [/r/podcasting](#).

After combing through a lot posts, maybe you find some commonalities. Let’s suppose people are asking for advice on what kind of gear to buy for podcasting. Maybe something more specific, like asking how to record podcasts on their smartphone.

Seems like a reasonable question – and probably one that’d make for a useful article!

## Google Suggestions

Another option is to return to Google, and see what it suggests as a related search at the bottom of the page...

### Searches related to how to record a podcast

[how to record a podcast on iphone](#)

[how to record a podcast on discord](#)

[how to record a podcast on a mac](#)

[how to record a podcast interview](#)

[how to record a podcast remotely](#)

[how to record a podcast with skype](#)

[how to record a podcast on your phone](#)

[podcast recording software](#)

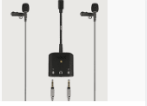

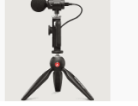
Hmm... look at that! “How to record a podcast on iPhone.” I think we’re onto something...

From here, it’s up to you to decide the best approach for your content. It largely depends on the site you’re writing for and their audience. Remember the **three types of search intent**.

This is what search results look like for “How to record a podcast on iPhone.”

See how to record a podcast on iPhone

Sponsored

 <p>RØDE SC6-L Mobile Interview Kit <b>\$199.00</b> Moment Free shipping</p>	 <p>BM800 Professional Condenser Microphone Pro <b>\$28.00</b> Wish</p>	 <p>Shure MV88+ Microphone Video Kit <b>\$249.00</b> Moment ★★★★★ (182)</p>
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**Just follow these steps:**

1. Find the Voice Memos app on your iPhone.
2. Choose a topic you'd like to talk about.
3. Write out an outline for a short 5-10 minute episode.
4. Open up the Voice Memos app and **record** your episode!
5. Repeat over and over again: practice **recording** that same episode dozens of times.

how to record a podcast on iPhone

[How to make a podcast \(and submit it to iTunes\) - Justin Jackson](#)

About Featured Snippets Feedback

People also ask

- How do you create a podcast on iPhone?
- How can I record a podcast for free?
- What is the best podcast app for iPhone?
- What software do I need to record a podcast?




Feedback

www.podcastinsights.com > create-podcast-on-iphone

[How To Create A Podcast On An iPhone \(Or iPad\) In 2020](#)

Jan 1, 2020 - We'll run through a few different options and iPhone apps that will allow you to record, edit, and even publish a podcast right from your phone.

Videos

 <p>5:02</p> <p><a href="#">How to Podcast with an iPhone or iPad (Best for Travel ...)</a></p> <p>Pat Flynn YouTube - Jul 24, 2019</p>	 <p>8:14</p> <p><a href="#">How to Record Podcasts Using an iOS Device</a></p> <p>Stevie Richards YouTube - Apr 21, 2016</p>	 <p>3:41</p> <p><a href="#">How to Record a Podcast on your iPhone with Bossjock ...</a></p> <p>BrassyBroadJen YouTube - Nov 29, 2017</p>
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Right at the top we have product suggestions (**Transactional**).

Then we have a **Google Featured Snippet**. Featured Snippets are a content creator's dream! Google basically takes a snapshot of content that it finds most relevant and useful and puts it right at the top of results. Looks like someone wrote a How-To article. If you think you can write a better page than what you see here, then that would definitely be a worthwhile effort.



Then we have several **Informational** pages:

Looks like another How-To guide. I'm sensing a pattern here...

Next there are some **Video** selections—

Video could be a whole separate course in itself, so we won't be getting too far into it here. A lot of the elements are outside your control, like production values and creative direction—but I will say this: *Video is nearly unbeatable for SEO.*

Google often reserves the very first search results for highlighting video content. So having a relevant video on YouTube is almost like a fast pass to the top of SERP.

Besides the fact that people are ravenous for video content—and that its demand is growing more and more every day—you're really hitting two birds with one stone. Google and YouTube are the crowned kings of search engines. YouTube itself handles more daily searches than Bing, Yahoo, AOL and Ask combined!

So not only will you appear on the world's second largest search engine, but you also have a better chance at ranking on the *#1* search engine as well...

If you ever have the opportunity to write content for video, I strongly suggest pursuing it.

So all in all, I think it's safe to say that "How to record a podcast on iPhone" is a search engine gold mine. Lots of opportunities to produce some standout content here.

You have some choices. Ultimately, the direction you take will require a final bit of research into search intent.

You could write about a popular microphone that's designed specifically for iPhone podcasting. This could serve as a great marketing piece, while also being helpful to people looking for information.

Or you could write a detailed guide in selecting the proper equipment for mobile podcasting, and how to set it all up so the reader is ready to start recording. If you pulled off the ultimate "How-To" guide, it might stand a great chance at being a Featured Snippet.

Whatever you decide, remember this:

1. Offer something highly desired that doesn't yet exist.
2. Or improve something that already exists. Find the missed opportunities and make it better.
3. Make sure it's relevant and useful to what people are searching for.
4. Make sure there's enough traffic being generated around the topic...
5. ... But not something that's too competitive - or you'll have a harder time being found.

## E. Helpful Tools

A lot of the legwork I've just talked about can be hugely simplified—and even improved—if you're willing to invest in the right tools.

If you can afford it, I highly recommend a Lite or Standard plan with [ahrefs](#). Their [Keyword Explorer](#) and [Content Gap](#) tools can give you really incredible details about how the top sites on Google are ranking. You'll have a much easier chance at finding your competitors' weaknesses – and how to exploit that to outrank them.

Another great option is [Moz Pro](#). Really great tools for keyword analysis.

If you run a blog, then [SEMrush](#) is designed to help you increase traffic and understand your audience.

It's not *mandatory* that you have any of these tools—you can certainly be successful without them. But if you're serious about becoming a valuable, competitive freelance writer - it might be worth the investment in the long run.

## F. Content That Ranks The Best

Finally: Is there a type of content that tends to rank better than others?

Well, nothing's guaranteed of course – but there *are* certain types of content that tend to bring in more traffic. I'll talk about three of them:

## How-To Guides

Remember that one of the primary reasons people use search engines is to learn information. I don't know the statistics, but I'd guess that 80% of informational searches begin with the words "How to..."

People love "How-To" guides. They get straight to the point of a topic, and they (ideally) present information in a clear, easy-to-follow way. This is exactly the type of content Google prefers indexing.

They're useful, they're relevant – and they're a fantastic way for writers to gain exposure.

## Research-based Articles

Feel like taking a deep dive into a subject? The Internet can always use more authoritative articles.

It's a common misconception that high traffic and leads are dependent on the *quantity* of your posts. In reality, just a few *quality* posts will work wonders. I know of several content marketers who've earned *thousands of dollars* just from one single, high-performing post.

These articles stand the test of time because there's nothing else like it out there.

Granted, these types of posts take time to write. They're not quick little blurbs. They require research, planning, and expertise to pull off.

But if you can answer a burning question that people need—and put in the work that few others are willing to do—then you will stand unchallenged for a long time.

## Infographics

We've talked a lot of about words... but what about visuals?

The SEO value of images (and video) cannot be overstated.

**Infographics** are especially great at condensing information down into something easily absorbed. We naturally process information faster when we can see it. We also remember it better.

Not to mention that infographics are more easily shared across devices. They will spread like wildfire.

A lot of it's dependent on the designer, but your involvement in creating an infographic is very similar to how you'd approach an article. You still will need to do keyword research, understand search intent, and find a way to provide useful information—but do it all in an extremely economical way.

Don't be fooled by the lesser word count. Explaining complex information in a simple, clear manner is quite the challenge. Strive for clarity; a confusing infographic can be worse than no infographic at all.

Since search engines can't index words that are embedded in an image file, it's important that you also pair the infographic with some text that covers the main keywords. This will help the crawlers understand what kind of content is on the page.

In order to rank high in SERP, images—just like everything else in your content—needs to be optimized...

...which brings us to our next lesson.