

Bloggging for Business

Using SEO-optimized blogs to turn Google searchers into loyal customers

February 15, 2024

About SCORE



Successful and experienced executives acting as volunteer consultants

Webinars and workshops, most are free

Free personal mentoring via video, phone, e-mail, or in-person

Resources for small business:

[score.org](https://www.score.org)

siliconvalley.score.org



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Setting the groundwork: What is SEO and why is it important?

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is crafting your website, landing pages, and blog posts to best position yourself to get found by Google searchers making queries around your subject

There are about 70 million new blog posts per month worldwide

42% of the internet is built on WordPress

90% of business have posted a blog in the last 12 months

Google uses a complex algorithm to rank websites, but it boils down to 2 things:

- Original, high-quality content
- Long tail keywords

It's a long-term strategy that builds over time

Google ranks content according to how "helpful" it is to searchers

Your priority for blogs is "evergreen" content that stays relevant over time

Organic/natural search is free but coordinates with paid search for best results

- Don't pay for google ads unless you are optimized for free search

We optimize for Google and let the other search engines follow suit because:

- Google has 92% of overall traffic worldwide
- Bing (3%)/Yahoo (1%)/Ask.com/DuckDuckGo (.5%) make up the rest in US,
- Plus, Baidu (.4%/China) and Yandex (1.6%/Russia)

Before you blog

Optimize the rest of your website to set your self up to get the most bang for your blogging buck

- Pick business keywords that tell Google what your business does
 - Put these keywords on each product and service page along with Home and About
- Make sure each of your website pages have 300+ words on them
 - This tells Google it's a page so can they rank it
- Add meta description and tags to each product/service page
 - Front load with product keywords
- Make sure images are the right file type and size (png vs jpg)
 - Load speed speeds are a key metric and smaller sizes load faster
 - Add alt text to images, especially product images
- Index your website pages
 - [Google Search Console account \(GSC\)](#)
 - Submit sitemap or index pages individually
- Set up tracking so you can monitor results
 - [Google Analytics account \(GA4\)](#)
- Claim your [Google Business Profile/Google My Business](#)

Blogging overview

Decide if you will be writing or delegating to a 3rd party

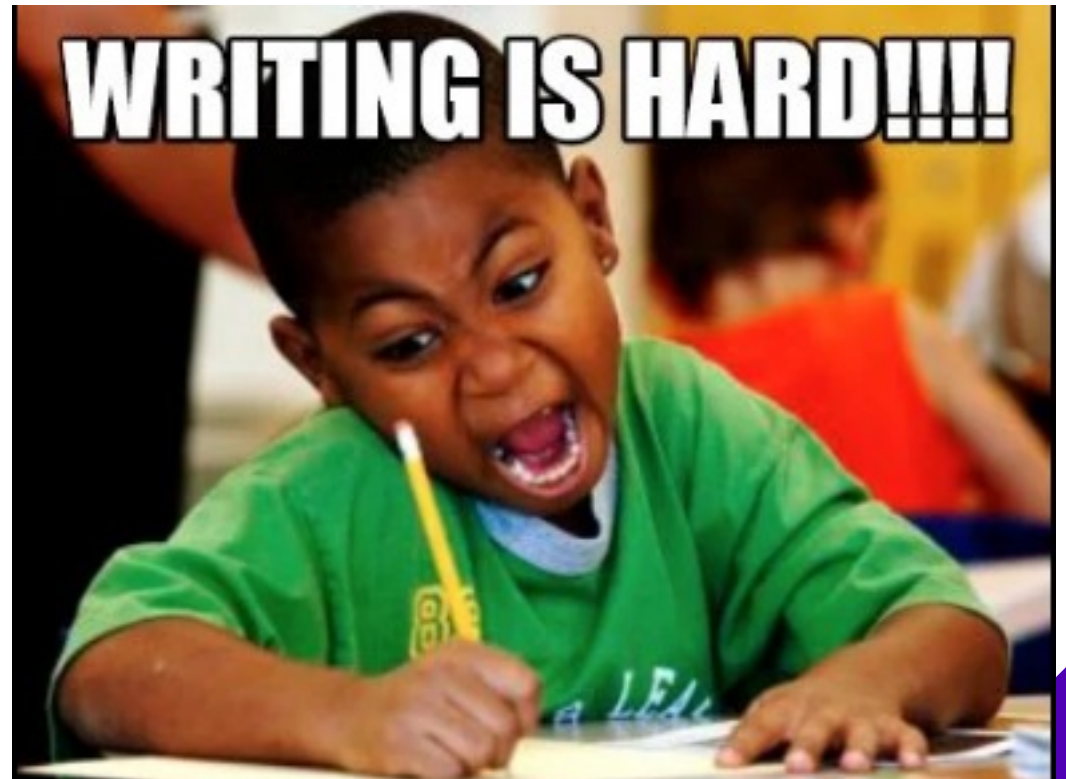
- Each has their benefits and drawbacks, but you need to own the process as the business owner
- Which do you have more of? Time or money?

A well-written and researched 600-word blog

- By a freelance writer will cost about \$300-\$600
- Same blog from an agency will cost \$1000-\$1500 (or more)

Finding good, reliable writers is hard. Keeping them is harder

AI might seem like the perfect solution, but it's not that simple



To AI or not to AI



AI is best used to craft outlines and target keywords, then you write it yourself

1. You are promoting your brand
2. You want to win customers, not Google
3. You need to get found, but you are not using blogs as a way to earn money,
4. Blogs are a way to offer benefit to your potential buyers

- Blogging for business is not the place to hand over to AI
- AI gives you mediocre blogs without new info
- New tech takes time and effort to learn and takes away from running your business
- AI will be litigated over the next 2-5 years. Wait.
- Google is trying to figure out the genie they let out of the bottle. It's not going well
 - Google is laying off tech workers (Just laid off about 1000 people with 1-2 rounds coming in the next few months)
 - This may mean google is moving more roles to AI or that they are trying to bank funds for settling AI-based lawsuits
 - Either way, small businesses should think twice before jumping on the AI bandwagon right now

Don't let AI do this to your blogs

Recognize the Fae in old tales:

Count the fingers, count the toes
Count the knuckles, count the knees
Check the shadows, check the mirror
Check the teeth, and check the eyes



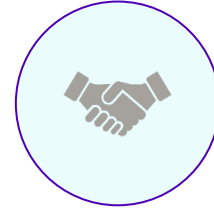
AI Tools to (possibly) use now

1. Note that ChatGPT is free so you should not be paying a lot for AI editing or checking
2. This LLM uses content scraped from internet for training so the litigation will apply to anything created with it
3. Google SGE can scrape your content and use it to produce AI content. If you try to block it, you end up blocking Google from putting your site in ANY Google search result. (How is this not blatant anti-trust/copyright infringement? Stay tuned...)
4. AI tools that will help your content without
 - [Copy.ai](#) to input after you write for suggestions like additional sections you might want to add to compete with similar articles. Decent tool but high learning curve. (Free for 2000 words/mo)
 - [Rytr](#) not as robust as [copy.ai](#) but still workable (Free for 2500 words/mo)
 - [SurferSEO](#) for headings and keyword check (\$828 annual fee). Since you are not creating the content using this tool, but just checking it, you should be okay regarding litigation
 - [Grammarly](#) for spell checking and usage (it's sometimes wrong, BTW) Free to use. Does not use ChatPGT so okay re litigation risk

Why blog?



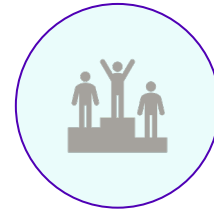
Increase traffic to your site



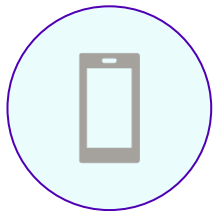
Build trust within your client relationships



Reinforce your brand and message



Set yourself apart from the competition



Help you connect on social media

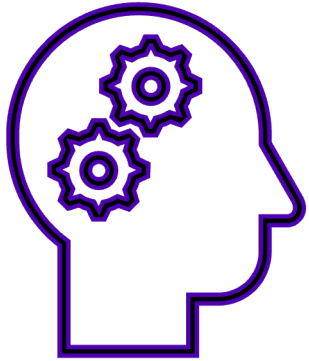


Encourage customers to engage with you

Content strategy overview

1. Determine your audience and narrow searcher intent
2. Brainstorm 20 ideas – let loose and think about anything even adjacent to your business. You'll narrow these down to about 12 and prep them to keep up your cadence
3. Decide what kind of content type is best for each topic
4. Choose your primary keyword for each topic
5. Add related secondary keywords (no more than 8-10)
6. Plan your content using the Sora Creative Content Brief
7. Create outline (use keywords as subheads) & write
8. Include great images (use alt descriptions and naming convention best SEO value)
9. Write meta description with keywords front-loaded
10. Review
11. Publish
12. Promote





1. How to determine searcher intent

- Think like your customer
 - Who is your target audience?
 - What are their pain points?
 - What questions do they ask?
 - How can you help them?
- Study the competition
 - Type your question into the Google search bar
 - Visit the top results' websites
 - What are they doing that you can do better?

SORA CREATIVE CONTENT

Demographics

Age _____

Gender _____

Education _____

Occupation _____

Industry _____

Geographic location _____

Hobbies

Values (pick 2 to 3)

Ways to consume media


Blog post Podcast

Video Book

Technology of choice

Computer Tablet

Smart phone



Download this form for free at
www.soracreative.com/resources

2. Brainstorm topic ideas

- Questions clients ask
- Things your peers bring up during networking
- What your competitors have written about on their blogs
- Search on Google SERP, then check out “people also ask”
- Join a group on Facebook and keep an eye discussions
- Look at Reddit and Quora
- Keep an idea folder
- Take a look at your old stuff to revamp or split off from current content
- Put all of them in a spreadsheet if they seem silly
- Don't just limit to written blog ideas



3. Types of website content

1. Subject matter blog
2. Video vlog
3. Audio podcast
4. Lists & guides
5. Infographics
6. Reviews
7. Opinion pieces
8. Case studies & white papers



Financial Management Insight: Strategies to Help Build Your Future

The decisions you make about money form the basis for your financial future and can help you pursue your goals.



Understanding Social Security and Medicare: America's Retirement Safety Net

Social Security and Medicare rules can be complex. To help maximize benefits, it pays to understand your options.



Higher Education: College Saving and Funding Strategies

College is an investment in your child's future. It requires a savings commitment and knowledge of funding methods.



Investing Basics: Embark on Your Wealth-Building Journey

Weighing the risks and rewards of various investment options can help you develop a sound investment strategy.



Time to Get Tax-Savvy: Managing Your Tax Burden

Understanding tax rules and spotting tax-saving opportunities might help you put the money to better use.



Envisioning Your Retirement: How to Prepare Today for a More Fulfilling Tomorrow

The road to retirement is seldom smooth. You need a sound savings strategy to help overcome obstacles in your path.



Wealth Preservation: Planning to Leave a Legacy

An estate planning strategy could increase the value of your estate and help avoid potential conflicts and delays.



Financial Protection: Using Insurance to Help Manage Life's Risks

Home, auto, life, disability — Protect your financial interests by having the appropriate insurance coverage.

4. Find your target keyword

Keywords are how Google knows to serve your content to answer a search query typed in by a visitor

Business keywords

Product keywords

Topical (blog) keywords

- Take your general idea
- Put it into the Google search bar (not Bing or DuckDuckGo)
- What comes up?
- Is it on target with what you were expecting?
- Would a variation make better sense?
- What does that one bring up?
- Focus on long-tail phrases
- Add the primary keyword to your topic spreadsheet



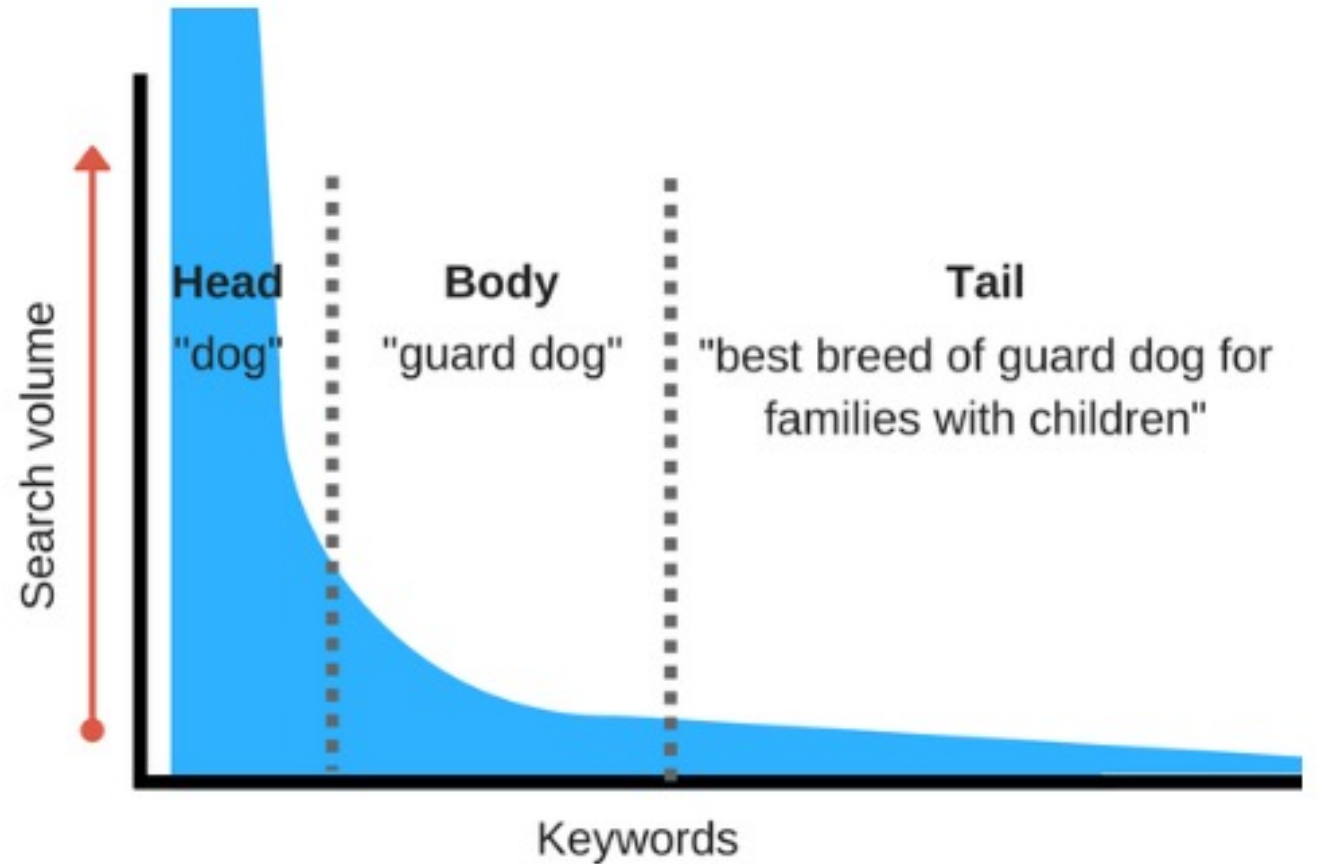
About Keywords

Keywords are how Google knows to serve your content to answer a searcher query

<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Keywords unlock the <i>intent</i> of the content on a given page or post2. They are specific, related terms and phrases in your website copy3. They focus around the content of <i>that</i> blog post4. Search engines recognize them as significant, especially when used together	<h3>Keyword purposes</h3> <p><i>Navigational</i> Looking for a specific web page "Solidigm"</p> <p><i>Informational</i> Research for a purchase or task "How do I pick the right SSD?"</p> <p><i>Commercial</i> Ready to make buying decision "SSD vs HDD for data centers"</p> <p><i>Transactional</i> Buying now "Where to buy Solidigm 60TB SSD"</p>	<h3>Types of keywords</h3> <p><i>Head keywords</i> 1 to 2 word phrase Hard to rank for "Honey benefits"</p> <p><i>Body keywords</i> 2 to 3 word phrase Slightly less hard to rank for "Local honey benefits"</p> <p><i>Long tail keywords</i> 4 or more word phrase Easier to rank for in our industry "Local honey benefits for allergies"</p>
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What is "long-tail"

The longer your keyword phrase the better your chances of ranking for it



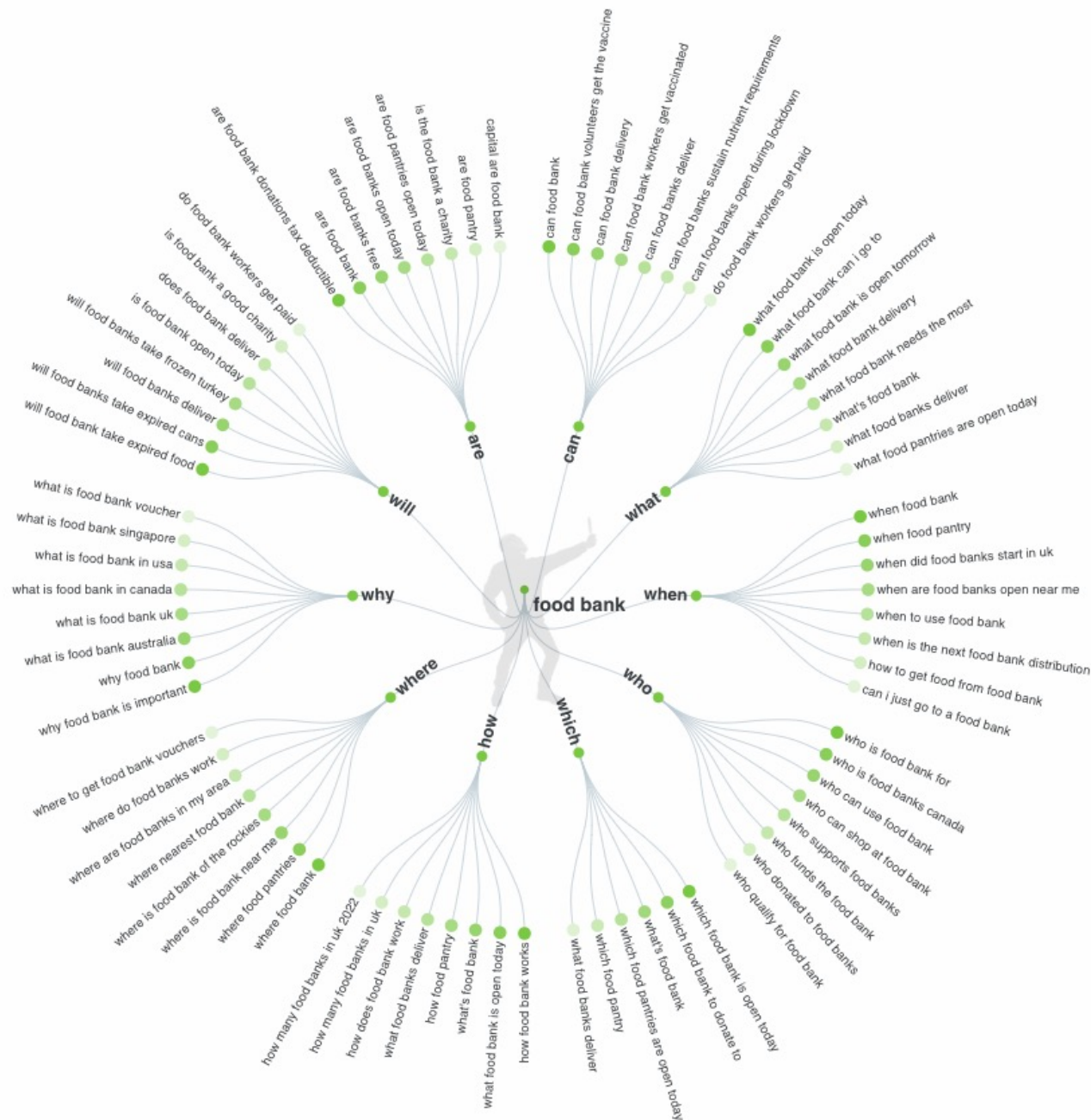
5. Secondary keywords

- Put your primary keyword into your tool
- Find variations
- Make sure Google understands your blog article intent
- 6 to 10 secondary keywords – no more
- Keep your keywords focused
 - Narrow, narrow, narrow
- Once you start to stray from the original topic
 - Make a new blog
 - Create a new content brief
 - Add it to your blog tracker spreadsheet

The screenshot shows the keyword.io interface. At the top, there's a dark teal header with the logo 'keyword io', 'Free Keyword Tools', 'PRO', and 'Login'. Below the header, a search bar contains the text 'what to look for in a web designer' and a dropdown menu is set to 'United States (en)'. A blue 'SEARCH' button is to the right. Below the search bar, there's a filter input field with the text 'Filter your keywords here by typing or choosing one of the generated' and a 'Filter Ideas' dropdown. The main content area shows a list of 118 keywords, with 3 selected. The selected keywords are: 'how to choose a web designer', 'how to find a good website designer', and 'what to look for in a web designer work'. The interface also includes 'Clear' and 'Export' buttons, and a '3 of 118 keywords selected (118 visible)' indicator.

Create a free account or just use their search box on the home page:

Answer the public
[answerthepublic.com](https://www.answerthepublic.com)



- Create a Google Ads account but don't buy ads
- Use their free tool to search for and save keyword ideas

Keyword ideas

local honey United States English Google Aug 2021 – Jul 2022

Broaden your search: + honey + local produce + sweeteners + local meat + local milk + local beeswax

+ 1 more Add filter 334 keyword ideas available COLUMNS Keyword view

<input type="checkbox"/> Keyword (by relevance)	Avg. monthly searches	Three month change	YoY change	Competition	Ad impression share
Keywords you provided					
<input type="checkbox"/> local honey	10K – 100K	0%	0%	Medium	–
Keyword ideas					
<input type="checkbox"/> local honey near me	10K – 100K	0%	0%	High	–
<input type="checkbox"/> raw honey near me	1K – 10K	0%	0%	High	–
<input type="checkbox"/> local raw honey near me	1K – 10K	0%	0%	High	–
<input type="checkbox"/> honey farms near me	1K – 10K	0%	0%	Low	–

Binoculars Buying Guide – How to Choose the Best Binoculars for your Outdoor Adventures

▲ Cecily Whiteside 📅 December 1, 2021

Binoculars shopping can be confusing with so many numbers and specs to understand. And the price differences between one pair and another can be staggering. When asking yourself “what do the numbers on binoculars mean?” the manufacturer’s information isn’t always clear.

We’ll take a look at what it all means in this binocular buying guide so you understand binocular numbers, pick the best magnification for binoculars that’ll fit your use, and know exactly why you are spending more for benefits that will actually make a difference in your viewing.

Once you understand binocular specs, you can read those binocular reviews and tell the difference between high-end binoculars and cheap ones. That way if you decide to shell out your hard-earned cash, you’ll be confident you’re getting your money’s worth. If you want some great options you can read our article: Best Binoculars for Outdoor Adventures. For the skinny on how to shop for binoculars, read on.



Photo by Pawel Janiak on Unsplash

Magnification:

The first number in a binocular description on the packaging is magnification. Generally, the best magnification for binoculars is either an 8 or 10 magnification. If the package says 8 x 30, then the

Keyword

+ [binoculars buying guide](#)

+ [binocular buying guide](#)

+ [how to pick binoculars](#)

+ [binoculars buyers guide](#)

+ [understanding binocular numbers](#)

+ [guide to buying binoculars](#)

+ [what to look for when buying binoculars](#)

+ [compact binocular buying guide](#)

6. The blog content creative brief

1. Headline

- Start with a working headline
- Refine it after you've finished the article
- Use a keyword or 2 (no more)
- Don't get cutesy

2. URL

- This should be the same as the headline, shortened if needed
- Leave out unnecessary words like "a" or "the"
- Make sure your primary keyword is in the URL
- Use all lower case letters
- Don't use numbers, even for numbered lists
- Don't include dates in the URL
- Use hyphens between words (no underscores or other characters)
- **Make URLs simple to read so the search engine can read it too**

3. Overview

- Stream of consciousness paragraph on what the blog is going to offer the reader
- No need to go to great lengths
- This is VITAL if you are hiring a freelance writer or having someone else write is so they understand your intent
- Searcher intent
- One sentence declaration of what the searcher is looking for
- Gives you or your writer a better chance of meeting that intent

Blog Content Creative Brief

Headline:	
Meta description:	
URL:	/
Overview:	
Searcher intent:	
Target keyword:	
Secondary keywords:	
Word count:	
Competition:	
My related articles:	
Outline:	(Introduction) 75 to 100 words (Body) 1000 words Subhead 1 Subhead 2 Subhead 3 Conclusion 50 words
Other notes:	

Download it at

www.soracreative.com/resources

The blog content creative brief

4. Word count

- Need 300 words for your blog to rank as a “page”
- Posts between 1000 to 2000 words tend to rank better in Google than shorter ones
- Posts over 2500 words rank best
- Longer “skyscraper” posts take a lot of time and effort
- Shorter posts can fill a gap when you’re pressed for time
- It’s fine to have one of either of these every now and then
- Target 1000 to 2000 word range most of the time
- Keep your content to be tight. No fluff. No extra. No meaningless words.

5. Competition

- During your topic search you may come across articles that you like and want to emulate, but really you want to beat them in the SERPs.
- Put the top couple for your target keyword in here.
- Imagine there is a bullseye on them.

6. Related articles

- You want to cross link among your website blogs and pages. When you mention something that you’ve already written about, include a hyperlink to that article.
- You can include a related article link list at the bottom of the blog
- You can use it as a “learn more about this topic” section
- If you have a writer writing this for you, they can use previous articles for background and your style

Blog Content Creative Brief

Headline:	
Meta description:	
URL:	/
Overview:	
Searcher intent:	
Target keyword:	
Secondary keywords:	
Word count:	
Competition:	
My related articles:	
Outline:	(Introduction) 75 to 100 words (Body) 1000 words Subhead 1 Subhead 2 Subhead 3 Conclusion 50 words
Other notes:	

Download it at

www.soracreative.com/resources

7a. Outline

Writing yourself?

- Create a coherent flow
- Lay out what you are going to write
- Use keywords in your headings and subheadings
- Research additional experts

Hiring a writer?

- Ask them to do a detailed outline
- They do this part after researching the topic
- You review it thoroughly before they flesh out the piece
- Add or change so that it includes keywords in the headings and the flow works for your purposes

Headline:	Heading1
Meta description:	This is what searchers will see in Google SERP
URL	https://www.yourbusinessURL.com/blog/lower-case-title-of-blog
Overview:	Flavor of the article; describe what you want people to get from the article upon reading
Target keyword:	Main focus of article in a Google search
Secondary keywords:	Related keywords for this article idea (no more than 9)
Searcher intent:	Who is reading your post and why (ID a person)
Word count:	350 words is a page in Google. 500-1500 rank better on SERPs. 2000-2500 words is ideal
Writer/email:	If you are contracting out your writing, this helps communication
Competition:	Find inspiration articles
Outline:	Intro 50 words 1.Heading2 1. H3 2. H3 2.H2 1. H3 2. H3 3.H2 Conclusion 50 words
Related articles on the same site:	From my blog to link to internally with a "read more" or "related blogs" list or category/tag
Other notes:	Helpful to remember where you got the idea, why you think its worth your time/money, or where you can go to fill out the idea more fully

7b. Article draft

Writing yourself?

- Use your expertise
- Research additional experts

Hiring a writer?

- Give them all the parameters and set them loose

A few suggestions:

- Intro: Under 100 words so you don't lose the reader by putting in fluff at the beginning
- Body: Plenty of subheadings, bullets, and numbered lists
- Conclusion: Recap the key points of your blog quickly and simply

Edit the draft

- If you write, wait at least 24 hours to let it rest
- When you review it, be ruthless in cutting out fluff.
- My standard questions for editing is "After I read this paragraph am I smarter than before I read it." If the answer is no – I ax or send it back for a rewrite

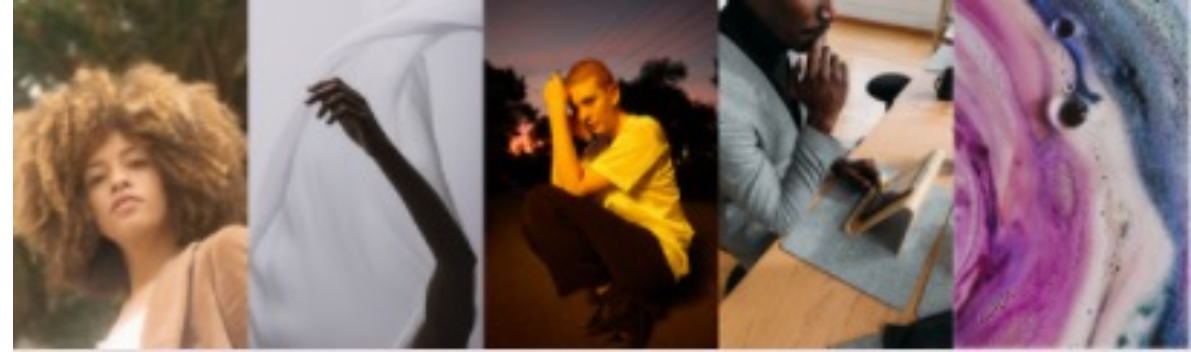
Headline:	Heading1
Meta description:	This is what searchers will see in Google SERP
URL	https://www.yourbusinessURL.com/blog/lower-case-title-of-blog
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Searcher intent:	Who is reading your post and why (ID a person)
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Other notes:	Helpful to remember where you got the idea, why you think its worth your time/money, or where you idea more fully

Writing tips



- Organize your blog into sections and subsections
- Reference anything beyond common knowledge or your own expertise
- Use consistent grammar, formatting, and punctuation across all of your blogs
- Show your personality and be an ambassador for your brand
- Use first person to better connect with the reader
- Use short sentences and paragraphs
- Spell out acronyms the first time you use one (with it in parentheses after that first instance)
- Avoid passive tense
- No salesy language or jargon
- Use bullets and numbered lists when possible

8. Add photos to make your blogs visually interesting



Tabletop Sculpture – David Day
ddaysculpture.com



David Day Sculpture
ddaysculpture.com

Resize images *before you upload them* so they don't slow down your site

Everything always 72 dpi

Choose 70% to 80% when exporting from your editing software

- Panoramic or full width images: 2560 pixels wide
- Header images: 1200 pixels wide
- Background images: 1920 x 1080 pixels (16:9 ratio)
- Other images: under 1000 pixels wide
- Thumbnails 800-900 pixels wide
- Logos: 250 x 100 pixels PNG

Choose the right file type for the image

JPG for images

PNG for charts, graphs, logos

PNG for transparent backgrounds

GIF for animations

SVG for logos, illustrations, drawings

ADOBE LIGHTROOM JPG EXPORT AT 1500px



QUALITY	FILE SIZE
100	1,614 KB
90	1,149 KB
80	827 KB
70	641 KB
60	400 KB



Use a compression tool on your website to keep image sizes small so your images load quickly

Wordpress plugins:

[ShortPixel](#) (recommended)

[Imagify](#) (no longer has one-time credits)

[EWWW Image Optimizer](#)

[Kraken](#)

[Robin Image Optimizer](#)

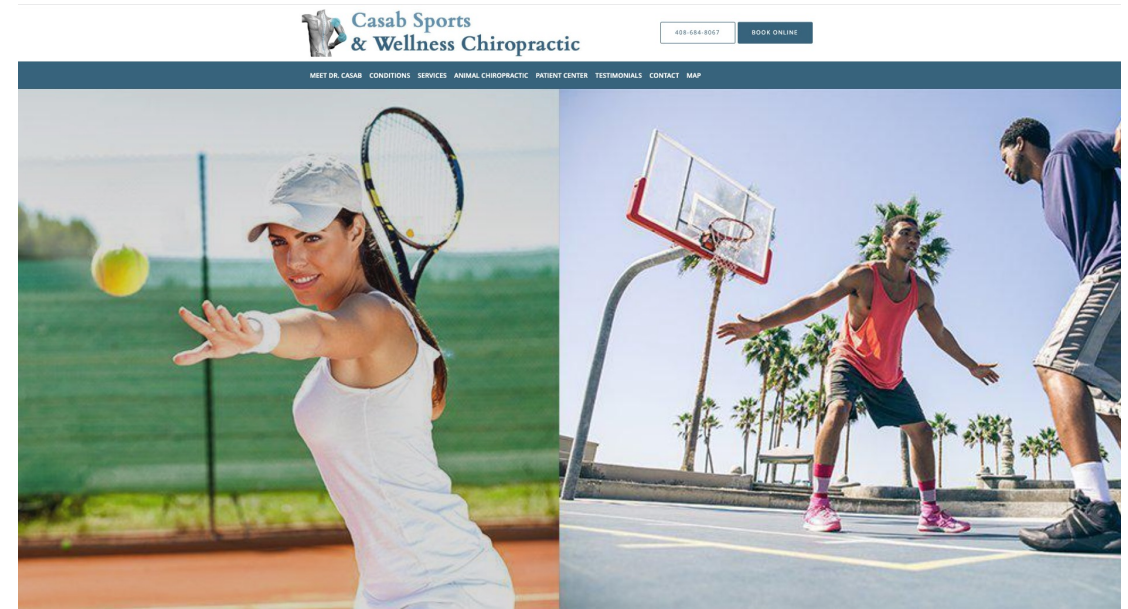
[Optimole](#)

[ImageRecycle](#)

[Optimizilla](#)

[Smush Image Compression and Optimization](#)

[Optimus](#) (limited to 100 KB images in the free version)





Best to use your own photos whenever possible but....
Stock photos are okay too!

Places to find free or cheap photos

<https://www.pexels.com/>

<https://pixabay.com/photos/>

<https://freerangestock.com/>

<https://www.stockvault.net/>

<https://www.freeimages.com/>

Naming convention for blog photos

For hero images

- Use the exact name of the blog for the photo as well.
You don't want your blog to show up with someone else's clickable photos on the SERP because then you only have a 50/50 chance that they click your blog link vs the photos link.
- Alt text should describe the photo as if to someone vision-impaired

For photos within the blog

- Use descriptive names that relate to the blog topic
"wealth preservation comparison chart" or
"wealth preservation professional consultation, use differentiator if you have multiple photos"

For all images

- Use hyphens in your image URLs rather than underscores
- Include your tagline keyword in the name of your website photos
"heartbox-photography-portrait-photo-maria-smith" or
"david-day-sculpture-abstract-art-piece-running-with-patience"



**Understanding Social Security and Medicare:
America's Retirement Safety Net**

Social Security and Medicare rules can be complex. To help maximize benefits, it pays to understand your options.



**Higher Education:
College Saving and Funding Strategies**

College is an investment in your child's future. It requires a savings commitment and knowledge of funding methods.



**Investing Basics:
Embark on Your Wealth-Building Journey**

Weighing the risks and rewards of various investment options can help you develop a sound investment strategy.



**Envisioning Your Retirement:
How to Prepare Today for a More Fulfilling Tomorrow**

The road to retirement is seldom smooth. You need a sound savings strategy to help overcome obstacles in your path.



**Wealth Preservation:
Planning to Leave a Legacy**

An estate planning strategy could increase the value of your estate and help avoid potential conflicts and delays.



**Financial Protection:
Using Insurance to Help Manage Life's Risks**

Home, auto, life, disability — Protect your financial interests by having the appropriate insurance coverage.

Add alt text

backpacker with headlamp in snowy landscape

Permalink: <https://happycampergear.com/best-headlamp-for-camping/headlamps-2-pexels-s-migaj-762420/> [Edit](#)



[Edit Image](#)

Alternative Text

backpacker with headlamp in snowy landscape

[Describe the purpose of the image.](#) Leave empty if the image is purely decorative.

Caption

Photo by S Migaj from Pexels

1. Use alt text on photos the matter for ADA and SEO
2. Don't bother with decorative images
3. Describe the image as if to a visually impaired person

- Be specific & keep it short: you get 125 characters, make them count
- Don't make value judgements or assumptions
- Don't be salesy
- Be truthful
- Don't repeat yourself
- Don't start with "image" and waste 6 characters
- Use one keyword

How to add alt text

Attachment details



Edit Image

Uploaded on: July 24, 2020

Uploaded by: [Cecily Whiteside](#)

File name: camping-in-co-scaled.jpg

File type: image/jpeg

File size: 101 KB

Dimensions: 1333 by 1000 pixels

Original image: [camping-in-co.jpg](#)

Alternative Text

Orange tent with sleeping bags and shoes with beer tent

[Describe the purpose of the image](#). Leave empty if the image is purely decorative.

Title

Happy Camper Gear best places to camp in colorado

Caption

Description

File URL:

<https://happycampergear.com/wp-content/uploads/2020>

[Copy URL to clipboard](#)

[View attachment page](#) | [Edit more details](#) | [Delete permanently](#)

9. Meta description

- 165 characters
- Keyword (or 2)
- People friendly
- Sometimes Google will ignore it anyway....



happycampergear.com › how-to-pick-the-best-camp-c...

How to Pick the Best Camp Chair for You - Happy Camper Gear

Nov 30, 2021 – Learn about camping chair types and which features to keep in mind no matter what the uses you have for your camp chairs.



<https://happycampergear.com> › how-to-pick-the-best-ca... ⋮

How to Pick the Best Camp Chair for You - Happy Camper

Nov 30, 2021 – Our all-around pick for the **best classic camping chair** is the Coleman **Camping Chair with Built-in 4 Can Cooler**, with its low price and ...



Review, Publish & Promote

10. Review

- Is it easy to read?
 - Short sentences
 - Short paragraphs
 - Consistent grammar
 - Correct punctuation
- No fluff
 - Ask “are they smarter after reading this paragraph?” if not, cut or rewrite
- No jargon
 - Spell out acronyms the first time you use them
- Headings make sense
 - Break up long blocks of text
 - Use numbers and bullets
- Your personal brand/style comes through
- Have someone else read it through if possible

11. Publish

- Read it over all the way through after you go live
 - Sometimes it looks different than you imagined once it’s on the page
- Do you have a clear CTA?
 - Buy
 - Schedule
 - Call
 - Sign up
 - Fill out
- Look at it in desktop and mobile
 - Is formatting good?

12. Promote

- Cross channel
 - Can you reuse this in another way?
- Social media links
 - Post and get interactions

Your Own SCORE Mentor



Take advantage of this free service to help you make great business decisions.

When challenges arise, you can find mentors with relevant skills.

Review mentor profiles and request a free consultation with your choice.

score.org/find-mentor

siliconvalley.score.org/find-mentor



Request Mentoring:



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Spread the Word

Thank you for attending our class!

If you have any issue with our class or SCORE, please email: workshop405@scorevolunteer.org

If you believe that we have helped you, please tell business acquaintances or write a [Google Review](#). This will help other entrepreneurs find SCORE and access resources.



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Cecily Whiteside

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