

Search engine optimization: What is it and why should we care?

Although I had previous experience in editorial positions, as an editor-in-chief for the first time, and for a new journal, I have had a steep learning curve in the past 18 months. All editors want the science published in their journal to be disseminated as widely as possible in order to stimulate new discoveries and to provide essential new knowledge to readers. Therefore, one of my important jobs is promotion of new scientific discoveries published in *Research and Practice in Thrombosis and Haemostasis (RPTH)*, so that our authors have maximal exposure for their work.

As outlined in our vision for *RPTH*,^{1,2} as an open-access journal published only online, we aim for unrestricted access to high-quality thrombosis and hemostasis research. The advantage of open access publishing is that anyone can read your work; there are no barriers. However, your potential readers have to be able to find your work to read it! To this end, for the use of our authors we provide information about search engine optimization (SEO) from our publisher Wiley on our website, and I am extracting that information here.³ This information provides strategies to increase the discoverability of your work. It's worth a few moments of your time to review it.

Most scientists do not think of themselves as marketers, but marketing your science is important. This will improve your reach and your reputation in the field. SEO is a well-known concept in the marketing world to improve search rankings of web content. In scientific publishing, SEO involves constructing your manuscript so that users are guided to it online because it is easily found by search engines. In other words, SEO allows your manuscript to be listed higher on the list of results from search engines. Being higher on the list means that more readers will find your work. SEO is accomplished through use of keywords, best-practice website design, and the very nature of our open-access content.

Why is SEO important in science? Just like most commercial websites online, more than half of visitor traffic to Wiley's Online Library comes via search engines like Google.³ Will your work be found by these engines? Wiley works on our behalf to enhance this, but authors have a role to play as well. Essentially, SEO is all about marketing your science so that it can be found, read, and cited.

As shown in the Table, Wiley suggests five tips for authors to increase the discoverability of their articles.³ You might recognize some of these as items that you are confronted with when following those "tedious author instructions" of some journals, and perhaps you never knew why they were rules (eg, requirement of a short title). Yes, there is a reason for these rules! To benefit from these tips, start by identifying 2-3 keywords related to your article. A

keyword can be one word or a phrase. You want to use keywords that are well known in the field (like "anticoagulation" or "venous thromboembolism").

Table Five tips for SEO

Article Preparation

Search engine friendly article title

Optimize the abstract

Use keywords throughout the article

Use consistent author names/initials

After Publication

Build links

Tip 1. Search-friendly article title. The title should be short and contain your keywords within the first 65 characters. If your title is long, consider moving part of it to the first few sentences of the abstract.

Tip 2. Optimize the abstract. The first two sentences are most important to search engines, so make them count; include your essential findings and keywords there. Repeat the keywords 3-6 times in the abstract. Express your findings concisely.

Tip 3. Repeat, repeat, repeat your keywords (but not too much). You've started by including them in the title and abstract. Now repeat them in your identified keywords on the manuscript submission site, incorporate them into article headings, and use them in the text. Search engines actually penalize work for "keyword stuffing," which can lead to removal of the work from the search engine, so be cautious not to overdo it. Article headings are helpful to provide structure to your work and help the search engines find it, especially if they incorporate your keywords.

Tip 4. Consistent author names. Use authors' names/initials consistently across time in published work; eg, keep the middle initial every time.

Tip 5. Create links to your published article. Work with more "inbound links" is easier for Search Engines to find and to highlight to searchers (eg, it is moved up the list of results). Links to your article can be made on social media sites and institutional websites. Google values websites ending in ".edu".⁴ Writing a blog about your article is also a good idea. If there is a Wikipedia page related to your work, add information about your article and a reference to it.⁴ Many

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RPTH authors and readers actively discuss RPTH articles on social media sites like Twitter and LinkedIn. If you are interested in doing this, get started using our social media guide on the RPTH website (<http://rpth.isth.org>).

We live in a highly connected world. At RPTH we think that by fostering the best SEO practices possible, the articles we publish will have a greater impact. Scientists don't usually think about this, but they should. I certainly have learned a lot and am going to expand my personal publishing practices by using these simple strategies.

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