

# SEO for Web Designers – CHECKLIST

Cardinal Web Solutions

The following basic checklist will help you in setting up your site correctly to be properly indexed and maximize ranking with Search Engines. Remember that most of your ranking comes from what happens off your site; if you need help in building backlinks, please contact anyone at the Cardinal Team [www.CardinalWebSolutions.com](http://www.CardinalWebSolutions.com)

**Domain Name** – When picking a new name, try to include relevant keywords.

**Title Tags** – Search Engines read up to 75 characters. Begin with most important keywords separated by commas or bars. Make your Title Tags unique and descriptive for every page within the site

**Description Tags** – Search Engines read up to 150 characters. Remember this is sales copy in paragraph form to display beneath link in Search results. Be sure it contains relevant keywords, it is descriptive, persuasive, and unique for every page within the site.

**Keyword Tags** – Although this is not currently in use, it has been important in the past and may be again. Typically focus on the first 1000 characters putting your most important keywords at the beginning. Words / Phrases should be separated by commas, and this tag should be unique for every page within the site.

**Body Content** – Remember that Search Engines cannot see images – your copy content is what tells Search Engines what your site is about. Copy should be at least 400 words focused on the topic outlined in the Page's Title and Description. Using Headline Tags within the body will emphasize keywords further and organize your content to be well indexed. Emphasize important keywords by putting them at the beginning of paragraphs and sentences where possible and using bold, italics, and underlining. Page content should be focused on the topic and not diluted with irrelevant material to dilute keyword density. Be sure not to use tricks like keyword stuffing or copy the same color as the background.

**Images** – Slow load times due to high resolution graphics hurt a site's Rankings. Be sure all images total less than 100k. Because Search Engines cannot see pictures, be sure to include, Alt Text, use relevant file names, and utilize CSS to render shapes and backgrounds whenever possible.

**Javascript** – Multiple HTTP requests to the server increase load times and hurt rankings. Ideally a site will only have 1 external script, no more than 7. Suture scripts when possible, put CSS in Head and Javascript in bottom of body for progressive loading in XHTML.

**Site Structure** – Flat sites containing pages with focused content are better ranking. Use keywords in your naming convention and avoid irrelevant characters. Use a mod\_rewrite to deliver readable URLs if your site contains dynamic content.

**XML Site Map** – A site map is an electronic index for Search Engines. Be sure to test yours using the Google Webmaster Tools and include it on the main page of your site.

