Tips for Authors: Writing and Search Engine Optimization

Write for your audience. The goal of search engines like Google is to provide their users the best user experience. Therefore, the best results are delivered when you provide the audience with what they expect. Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is not a set of tricks. It's helping the right audience to find what they are looking for.

The Importance of Search Engines and Optimization

In the first place you of course write for human readers but in this age of information technology much of the content you write is crawled and indexed by search engines.
Some simple optimization steps can help your work to be found, then read, used and cited in others' work. This boosts the ISI Impact Factor of the journal your article is published in and will further raise the visibility of your article.
Search engines rank WebPages using a complex algorithm: over 200 factors determine in which order pages are displayed in search results. Springer optimizes its websites to help search engines find and index our content as best as possible, but of course it all starts with the content itself.

Summary
1) Select the keywords
2) Title of your article
3) Headings
4) The content (abstract)
5) Synonyms and related words
6) Authority (links)

1. Select the keywords

Who is the audience for the article? What is the main topic of the article? Which words would the audience use in search engines to find the information this article provides on this topic?
Put yourself in your audience's shoes and select a phrase of 2-4 words that best describes the article's content.

2. The title of your article

For search engines, but for users as well, the title is the first impression of an article. It's the most valuable element for search engines to determine the relevancy of an article on a search query. Therefore it is important to use the right keywords in the title, to provide a good description of the content of an article.
Guidelines for a good title:
► Use the selected words in the title. Preferably start the title with those words, as words earlier in a title will get more value.
► Make the title descriptive.
► Only the first 65 characters (including spaces) will be shown in Google. So use the most important words within the first 65 characters.

Example: "Inference and self-reference"
It's positive that **the title is short**, within the 65-character limit. However, the title is **not descriptive** and without any context users will have no idea what it is about.
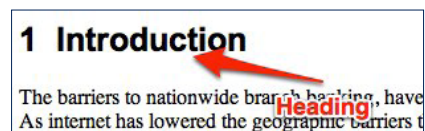
Example: "Does banner advertising affect browsing for brands? Clickstream choice model says yes, for some"
It's good that **the title is descriptive**; it clearly shows what the article is about. However, it's a **long title**. A better title in this case would be: "Banner advertising affects browsing. Does it do so for brands?"

3. Headings in the article

Headings will help search engines like Google and users to better understand the content and structure of your article.

Just like the title should be a description of the full article, the headings should describe the section or paragraph. Use the relevant keywords. If it is possible and makes sense, combine the earlier selected words for the article with more specific words for the section.
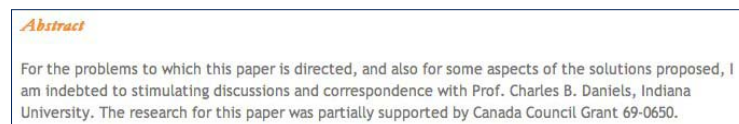

In this case a better heading would have been: Introduction to …

4. Content of the article

The selected keywords should appear in the content of the article. Bear in mind that in most cases only the abstract will be visible for search engines. S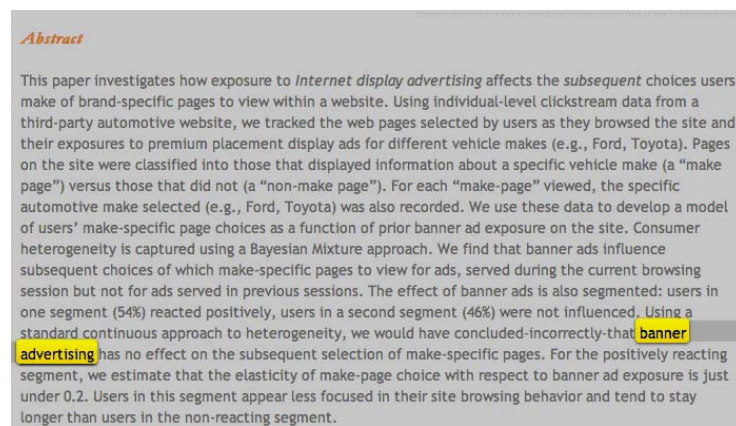o make sure to use the selected keywords in the abstract. Depending on the length of the text the keywords should occur at least once and preferably 3-4 times in a text of 200 words. Keep in mind to write for your audience. Make sure the text is still readable. Do not overuse keywords as this might have negative effects.

Example: Abstract of the inference and self-reference article

The keywords used in the title for this article are "inference and self-reference." It is recommended to also use keywords in the abstract, to make it clear for Google (and users) that this is the subject of your article. However, this abstract doesn't provide any description of the article at all and therefore it is impossible for Google to determine the subject.

Example: "Does banner advertising affect browsing for brands? Clickstream choice model says yes, for some"

The abstract is a good and clear description of the article's content. It contains one exact match on the phrase Banner Advertising.

5. Synonyms and related words

Users might use synonyms or related words to find the information provided in the article. To match the search query, it is recommended to use synonyms and related words. Besides, those words help search engines like Google to better understand the topic.

Example: when in a text words like "red, Italy and sports car" are used, Google might "think of" Ferrari.

The best tool to find related words and synonyms are the Google search results: look for the normal results, which other words show up? And in some cases Google might provide a set of other related search phrases.

Searches related to **marketing and economics**
advertising and economics   marketing and **finance**
finance and economics   **armchair** marketing **vs** economics
accounting and economics   **quantitative** marketing and economics
marketing and **economy**

Example: "Does banner advertising affect browsing for brands? Clickstream choice model says yes, for some"
The abstract on Banner Advertising is full of synonyms and related keywords. To name a few:
► Banner ads
► Internet display advertising

6. Authority (links)

Google and other search engines regard links as votes for webpages. You can help the ranking of your article pages in the search results list by creating links to and from your article. Personal profile pages, social media (e.g. posting the link to twitter) and blog posts there are good options for links.