Contents.

What is SEO?

SEO is a complex, layered discipline. There are different factors involved in running an SEO campaign and many variables that can affect your SEO performance. This will of course be influenced by the geography in which you operate, what your competitors are doing, the search volumes for your target keywords, and your strengths and weaknesses - hence we've created this guide specifically for estate agents.

A helpful way to look at SEO is to consider that a search engine is a tool that provides the best results to a user's search query. For your business to truly succeed in this search landscape, you must do everything in your power to give the best result. Whatever your user needs to make a decision, try to provide it.

Relevancy is key – remember, by providing what the user wants, you're likely to convert more clicks to valuations, enquiries or instructions, so it makes good business sense.

SEO can be complicated, so understanding your current situation and marketplace is key to making the right decisions. And fortunately, for small to medium agencies we can often strip away much of the complexity, and focus on three simple things: content, links, and website design.

An experienced SEO consultant will help you implement a measurable strategy for your agency.

The Benefits of SEO for Estate Agents.

1. Improves Brand Visibility

SEO gives you the power to be the answer to potential customers' search queries. In addition to visibility and traffic increase, SEO contributes to your authoritative voice in your field. Authority then leads to brand trust, which ultimately leads to brand loyalty.

2. Increases Relevant, Local Traffic

Organic traffic is important because it's targeted. Users visiting your website from a search engine's organic results have a very specific intent and if you can provide them with a solution to their query, they'll be more likely to convert.

3. Offers Impressive ROI

Search engine leads offer an impressive close rate in comparison to traditional marketing. However, if your website ranks at the bottom of page two, three, four, or not at all, leads will likely be non-existent.

Remember, the first listing on Google receives **33%** of all search traffic[1].

4. Improves Credibility and Trust

When people search for relevant keywords and phrases, they should find your company at the top of the search results.

A higher ranking can show searchers you're a credible resource. Furthermore, when users go on your website and find helpful material, it serves to build trust (particularly relevant for companies who operate locally). When people find the exact content they're looking for on your website, they'll start to see you as an authority in your field.

Another strategy to boost your firm's credibility is to provide new content via a regular blog. Choose topics using keywords that are related to what your customers are looking for. For estate agents this might be area guides, home buying guides, or lifestyle type pieces.

5. 24/7 Promotion

Once your ranking appears, it will show all day and night, even when you're sleeping. That means your brand is on display and you're getting enquiries and instructions round the clock.

6. Targets the Entire Marketing Funnel

A conversion funnel is a way of visualising the stages your prospects go through before they convert. At the top of the funnel, the customer has realised they have a need (i.e. to sell or rent their property) and they're searching the web looking for a solution. They may go on to make an enquiry, they're just not quite sure which agent to go with - yet.

They'll start to research which agent is best and why, and may be looking for comparisons, reviews, and guides to help them make an informed decision. Answering the customers queries at every single stage of the funnel is super important.

Great content builds brand loyalty and awareness – traits that lead to conversions.

7. Lead Generation

SEO is focused on helping your site rank higher in search engines and drive more web traffic.

SEO can complement lead generation efforts by increasing awareness for the company through organic traffic to the website. The more often your website shows up on Google's first page, the easier it is for prospective customers to find you and learn more about what you do.

SEO is often better than other marketing strategies for generating valuations and enquiries, however used holistically as part of a marketing strategy, it supports other campaigns such as PPC, digital ads and retargeting as well as offline campaigns.

8. SEO Optimises User Experience

SEO targets search engines, and UX targets your website's visitors. Both share a common goal of giving users the best experience. By ensuring best practice throughout the site such as quality headings, a good site structure and easy navigation, SEO performance will be improved but it will also enhance user experience along the way.

The two go hand-in-hand in creating a successful website experience for both your human visitors and search engines.

9. SEO Complements PPC

Integrating your PPC and SEO strategies will help give you valuable insight into your audience. When running PPC, take note of any short or long-tail keywords that are relevant to your site and include these keywords in your SEO campaign. Similarly, you can tap into your SEO keyword data to uncover new keywords on which to bid.

Optimising on page content with PPC data can lead to a lower cost-per-click.

Why is SEO so Difficult to Get Right?

Getting to the top of Google search rankings is essentially the holy grail. Why? Because it means you gain enquiries from your website in an organic way.

Different competitors are all vying for the top spot and if you're not investing in your SEO, your competition almost certainly will be.

So Why Do Businesses Struggle to Understand SEO?

Time: Small and medium business owners are busy — they don't always have time to learn about SEO.

Technical Expertise: SEO doesn't have to be that complicated, but technical expertise and knowledge of how search engines work is a must if you're to make this work, as well as a well structured website and good content creation. Unless you hire an in-house SEO expert, which may not be feasible, an agency who understands the needs of your business can be a good compromise.

Budget: Knowing what needs to be done is only half the battle. Hiring experienced staff to create and implement an SEO strategy can be expensive.

Does My Website Really Matter?

Although web design combines the disciplines of programming and graphic design, it's not just a task for developers. To get the most out of your new website, you need to involve marketers at every step of the way.

Many companies build their marketing and development teams in silos. This is a dangerous mistake that means you're missing out on easy wins during the development phase.

That's because web design isn't just about aesthetics. Great web design affects every aspect of your online presence. Your website is the first thing people see when they want to learn about your brand, and it's also key to boosting your search engine presence.

Web design has a tremendous impact on your SEO. To get the best return on your investment in a website, use web design that appeals to both humans and search engine crawlers.

While aesthetics and content matter, your team also needs to prioritise SEO best practices in your next web design. That's because your web design affects SEO in three main ways.

1. SEO and User Experience Go Hand in Hand

In short, good design boosts your SEO ranking, while bad design negatively impacts your ranking. Search engine bots are trying to mimic the human user experience. What's bad for human users is also therefore bad for search engine bots. If you have a poorly designed site that's hard to use, your customers are going to leave. Search engines pick up on the fact that users are leaving your site and drop your rankings accordingly.

If you have slow load times, hard-to-read text, or outdated site design, you're creating more barriers for people to engage with your site. Embrace good web design practices to keep both human users and search engine crawlers engaged.

2. Quality Visuals and Content Boost Time on Site

Web design boosts your authority, building trust with users. In fact, 38% of users will leave a site if they don't like the design2. If you provide high-quality content and a visually pleasing design, you're able to keep users on-site for longer, which is good for conversions and SEO. High bounce rates are an indicator that something isn't quite meeting your visitors' expectations of your site.

Good design helps people trust your brand and builds reputation. By pairing quality content with amazing visuals and ease of use, you invite users to engage, signalling to search engines that your site is reputable.

3. Makes it Easier for Crawlers to Index Your Site

While web designers should always prioritise the needs of human users, they must also balance the needs of search engine crawlers.

If you make the wrong choices when building your website, particularly your CMS, you can unintentionally make it difficult for crawlers to index your site, damaging SEO rankings. Thanks to web design best practices, your developer will format URLs, meta data, language specifier, content, and images in a way that crawlers can index more quickly, boosting your rankings.

Ten Technical Do's & Don'ts for an SEO-Friendly Website.

1. Use Unique Titles and Descriptions for all Pages

For an SEO-friendly website, all web pages should have their own unique meta titles and descriptions. The titles usually range between 50-60 characters (approx 560 pixels), and the descriptions can go up to 155 characters (approx 1,000 pixels). These titles are crucial for search engine indexing, as they tell visitors what the webpage is about.

2. Ensure a Clean URL Structure

The URL of your webpage must be clean and follow best practices for search engine indexing. For permanent links, ensure that they're all lower case, descriptive, separated by dashes, and contain keywords organically for more visibility.

3. Limit Flash and JavaScript

JavaScript and Flash are programming languages that search engine crawlers have a difficult time reading. While you can do interesting and out of the box design elements with these languages, try to limit how often you use them.

Never put critical content inside a Flash or JavaScript element on your site. Many search engines won't be able to see this content and those that do require special optimisation.

4. Design a Simple and Clean Navigation

Your site should be simple and easy to navigate. Users shouldn't have to dig for what they need; your navigation should be straightforward. The same goes for search engine crawlers; the more barriers they must go through to find relevant information, the lower your SEO score.

Clean up your navigation. Simplify URLs so they're short and easy to remember. Remove any duplicates and limit categories where possible.

5. Optimise Images

Website images with a large size can increase the page loading speed, which in turn affects the usability of the website and SEO.

Ensure that your images are optimised and add alt text for search engine crawlers to understand what the image is about. This is especially important for estate agency websites due to the vast amount of images thanks to property pages.

6. Prioritise Readability

Your web design needs to be easy to read. Don't use tiny fonts, weak colours, or jarring design elements. If you're unsure about certain design elements, ask people to test your website. Use tools such as WAVE Evaluation Tool.
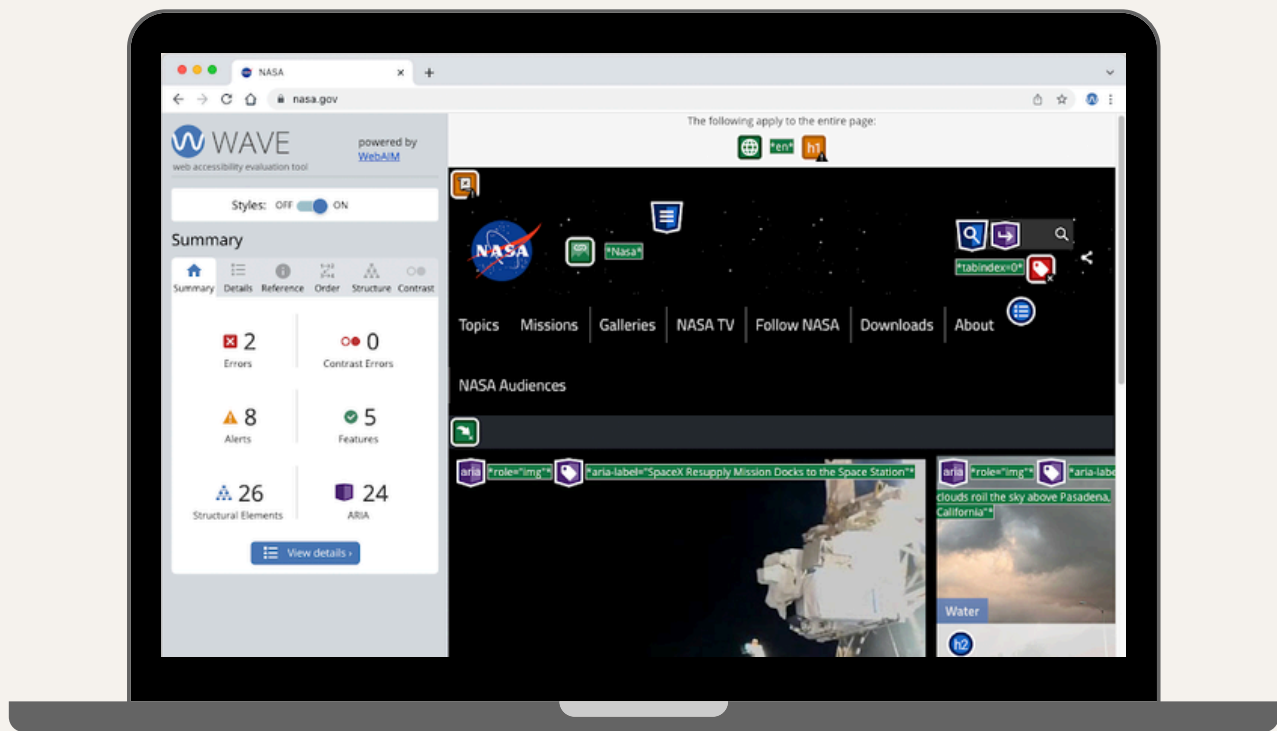
7. Create a Proper Content Structure

You must ensure that your website has a proper content structure, as it makes it easy to index the website. The general structure of your webpage should have these elements:

- Header
- Page Title
- H1 Tag
- Content with Subheadings (H2, H3 tags for well-structured content distribution)
- Author Bio/Information, Sharing Options
- Footer

8. Use Responsive Design

Every device type has a different screen size. Your web designers should use responsive design to ensure appropriate resizing. Responsive design means you only need to design your site once, saving time and money. Search engines like Google reward mobile-friendly, responsive sites.

If you have a meta viewport this will allow your site to scale up and down on different devices.

If you want to test how mobile-friendly your site is, try the Mobile-Friendly Test tool.
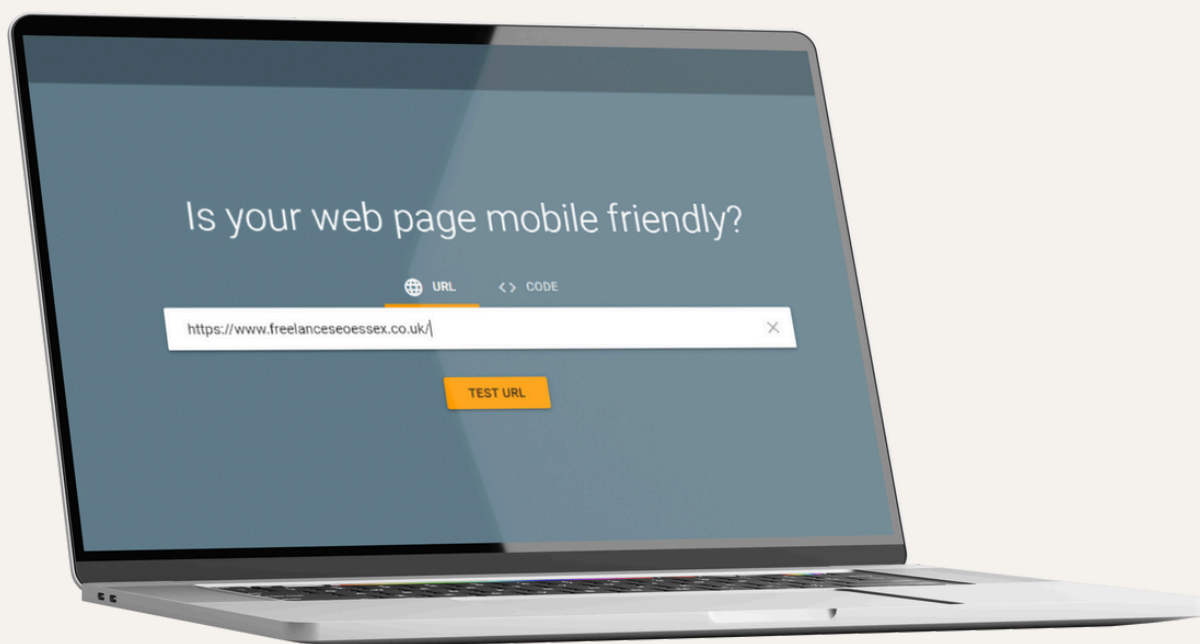
9. Speed Things Up

A slow website is the death knell of your conversion rate. Your website needs to be fast loading to keep users on site, which in turn helps your SEO rankings. A 100-millisecond delay in load time can decrease your conversions by 7%3. It will also increase your bounce rates.

Google will lower your search engine rank as a result.

10. Embed Internal Linking

Internal linking creates a map of your website for search engine crawlers. It helps crawlers in associating relevant web pages together and creating a strong internal architecture to boost your website's SEO friendliness. When using internal links, use descriptive anchor text to create relevancy and help users and search engines understand where they are being directed to. An example would be to link back from the branch pages to relevant blogs.

Top SEO Tips for Beginners.

1. Target Relevant Primary and Secondary Keywords

Keyword research is the foundation of any good SEO strategy. If you know how to use keywords effectively, you can develop content that attracts more people to your website. The first step is to identify your page's primary and secondary keywords.

Your primary keyword is the main focus of your content. You only need to pick one primary keyword per page. It should be relevant to the subject of the page as well as your brand, services and properties.

Your secondary keywords support the main topic. You will probably have several of these. Often, they're longer than the primary keyword and represent the subtopics you're covering. Try to include them naturally in your page content, but don't force them if they don't fit.

You can use the Keyword Magic Tool to research primary and secondary keywords.

2. Write Quality, Original Content

If you want users to find and return to your site, you need quality content that is original, comprehensive, and has a long shelf life. This is especially important on pages such as area guides and branch location pages, as it shows potential customers that you're a thought leader in that specific location, enabling them to build a trusted relationship with you. What's more, search engine algorithms are designed to detect unique content. Those who practice good SEO and publish trustworthy original content are likely to increase searches.

Ideally, your content should be comprehensive. That means the content you publish answers everything a user might want to know about that topic. Comprehensive pages help show search engines that you're an authority on that topic.

The SEO Content Template Tool helps content writers craft SEO-friendly content by providing a template of recommendations based on target keywords. After entering a keyword or group of keywords a template will be generated.

Finally, evergreen content has long-term value, which will continue to be relevant and generate traffic over a long period. Consider topics that will bring long-term value to your readers without needing significant updates, avoiding seasonal, topical or time-sensitive stories which may lose their relevancy over time. This type of inbound marketing continues to produce results while your focus is elsewhere.

3. Format Your Content for Search Engines and Target Featured Snippets

If you want the content you write to perform well, make sure you're answering the questions your audience is asking. One way to do this is to target featured snippets. These are known as position 0, i.e. they are listed above first position.

Featured snippets appear at the top of the search results page on Google. They're designed to answer a user's question without requiring them to leave the page. They're highly visible, helpful, and likely to attract organic traffic since they appear before numbered results. An example of this could be content that answers question-based keywords such as "Is Essex a good place to live in for families?"
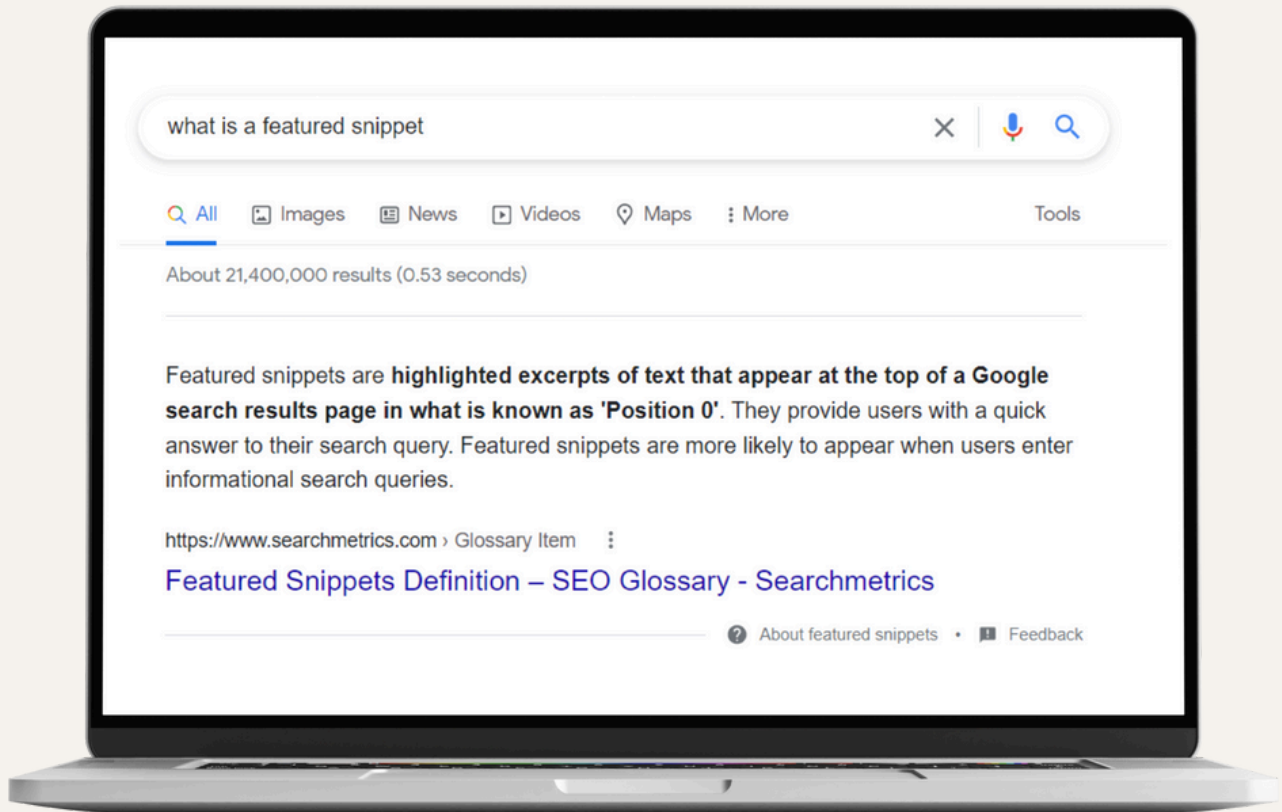
These positions are highly sought after and to win one, you need to optimise your content to target them. The strategies you use to target featured snippets can make your content more helpful to readers and improve your SEO anyway, even if you don't win the snippet in question.

First, choose which content you want to optimise to target a featured snippet. Use the SEMRush Keyword Magic tool to identify relevant keywords with the search intent and SERP feature you want to target.
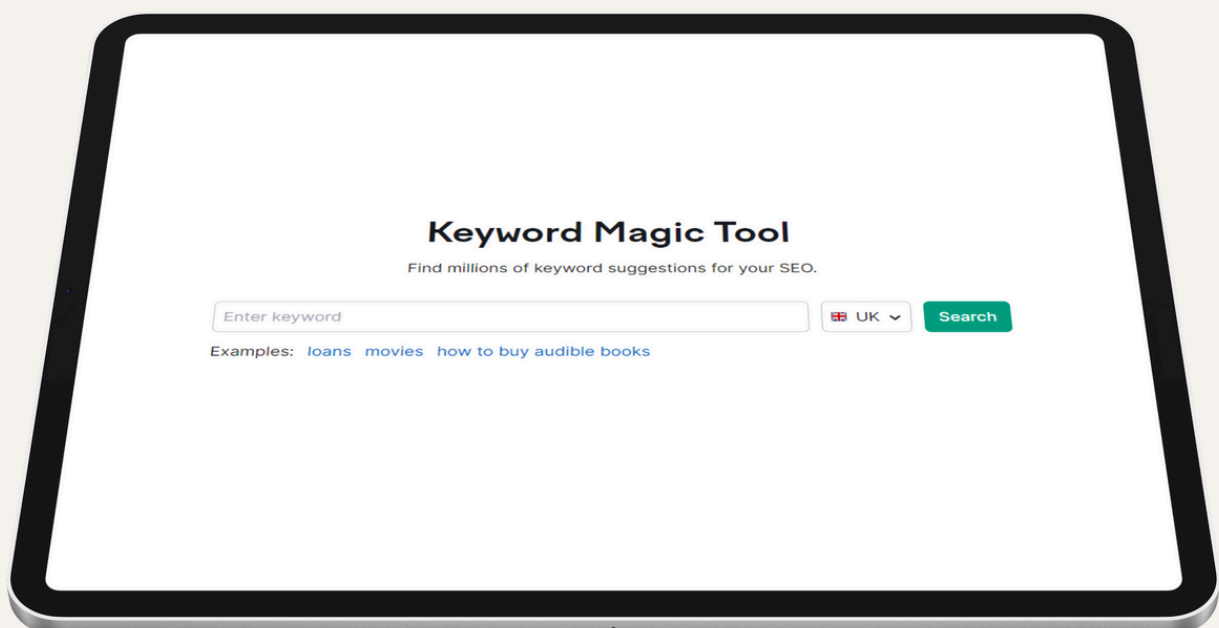
Then, search for that keyword yourself to see what type of content is currently featured and how it's formatted – for example is the snippet a bulleted list or a table? These observations will give you an idea of how to edit your content.

Make sure your content both asks and answers the target question in the snippet as clearly and concisely as possible. Studies show that a piece of content that asks a question is more likely to have a featured snippet.

Organise your page using headings and subheadings. Headings and subheadings make it easy to understand or search your page, which can help improve your search ranking. Try to use short, direct sentences and use plain language where possible.

## 4. Optimise Your Page Title and Meta Description

Your page title and meta description might be the first thing your audience ever sees and will determine if the user clicks on your page; whilst this is not a ranking factor, a good meta description will improve click through rate (which is a direct ranking factor!). That's a lot of power for so few words, so make sure they're impactful.

This is particularly important to implement on branch, location and property pages, i.e. pages that will rank for your biggest keywords. These searches will likely look something like "Estate Agents in Chelmsford" or "Properties for Sale in Billericay" and will get the most monthly searches.

Here are a few tips to remember:

- Keep your page title between 50 and 60 characters (approx. 560 pixels)
- Keep your meta description under 155 characters (approx. 1,000 pixels)
- Include your target keyword
- Communicate what your page is about and what makes it unique
- Make sure your title and meta description are unique for every page

Use the SEMRush Topic Research tool to look at other successful headlines related to your subject to generate ideas.
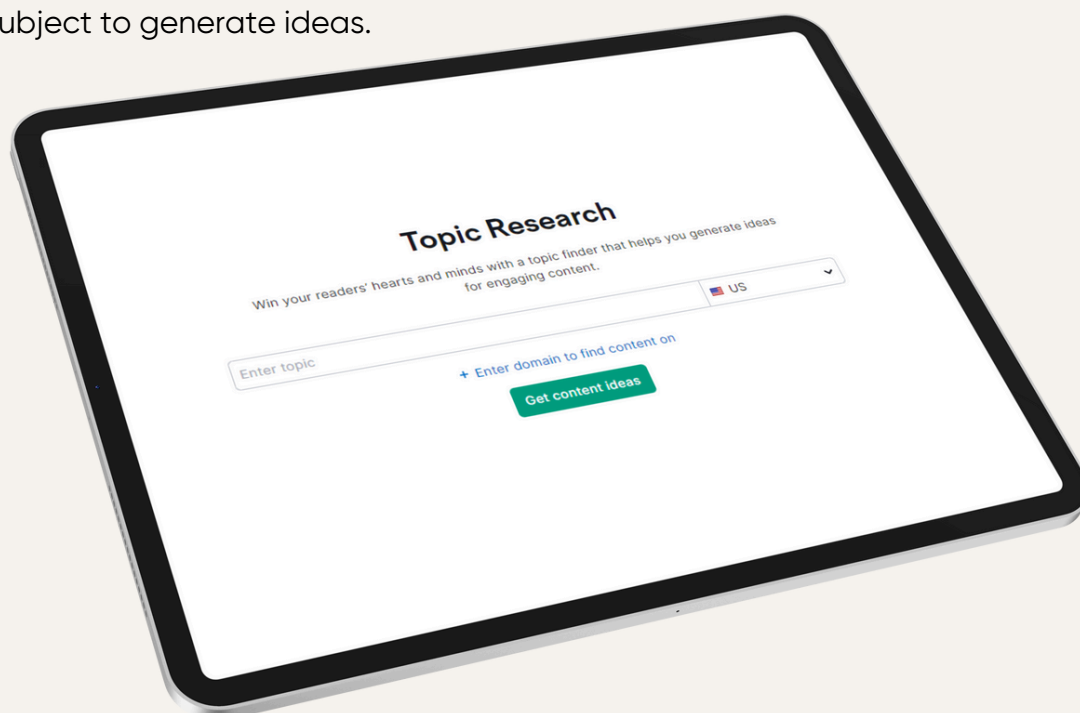
The SEMRush SEO Content Template tool can also suggest some keywords you might want to include.
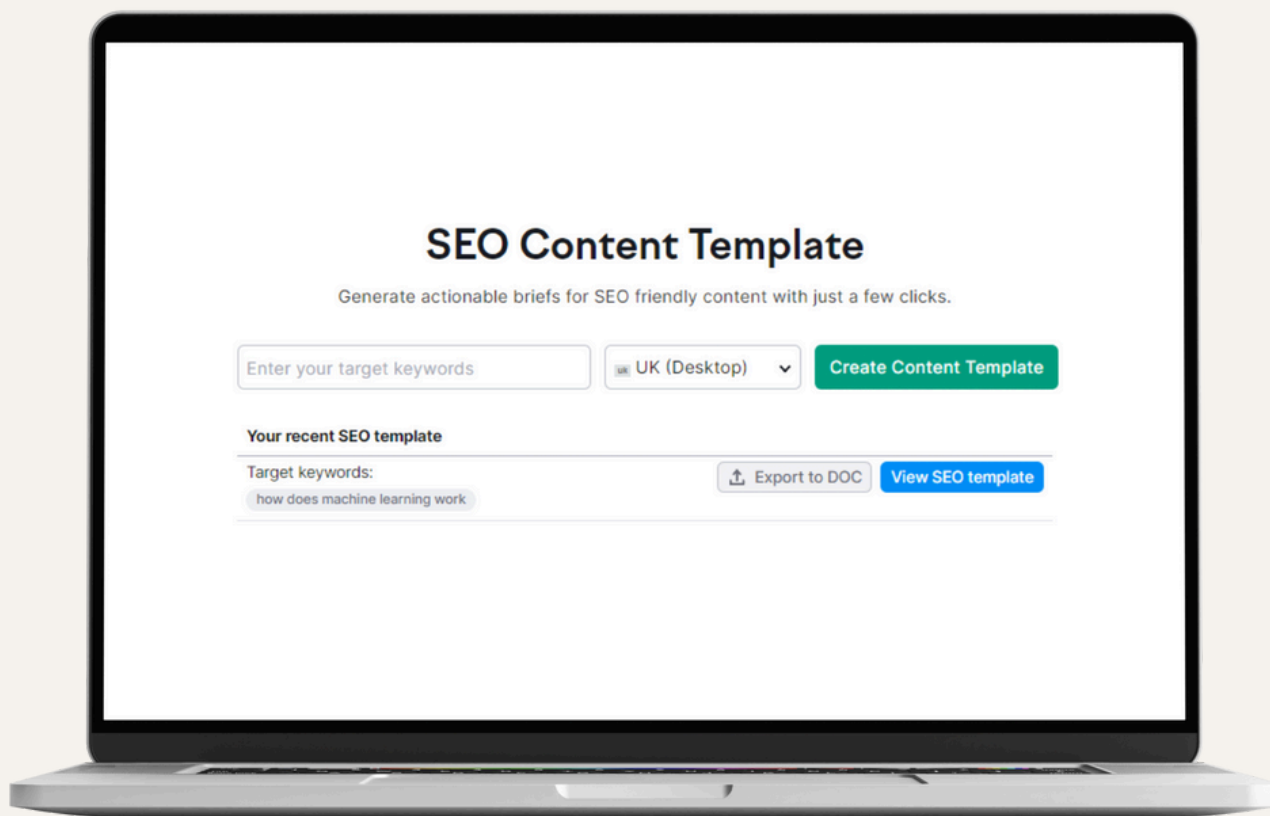
5. Use Short, Descriptive URLs

Improving your URL structure can significantly impact your on-page SEO with relatively little effort. A clean URL can help search engines understand your page and give you a more user-friendly appearance in the results.

An effective URL should:

- Be easy to understand
- Include your primary keyword
- Be short; URLs under 70 characters are preferable
- An example would be www.smithsestates.co.uk/branches/estate-agents-in-chelmsford or www.smithsestates.co.uk/properties-for-sale-in-brentwood

6. Generate Backlinks From High Authority Websites

Backlinks, or external links leading to your site, are a critical ranking factor. Links from reputable sources can increase your site's authority and improve your SEO over time.

A good way to find out what backlinks to target is to find out who your competitors get their backlinks from. Use the SEMRush Backlink Gap Tool to compare your current backlink profile with your competitors and find new opportunities.
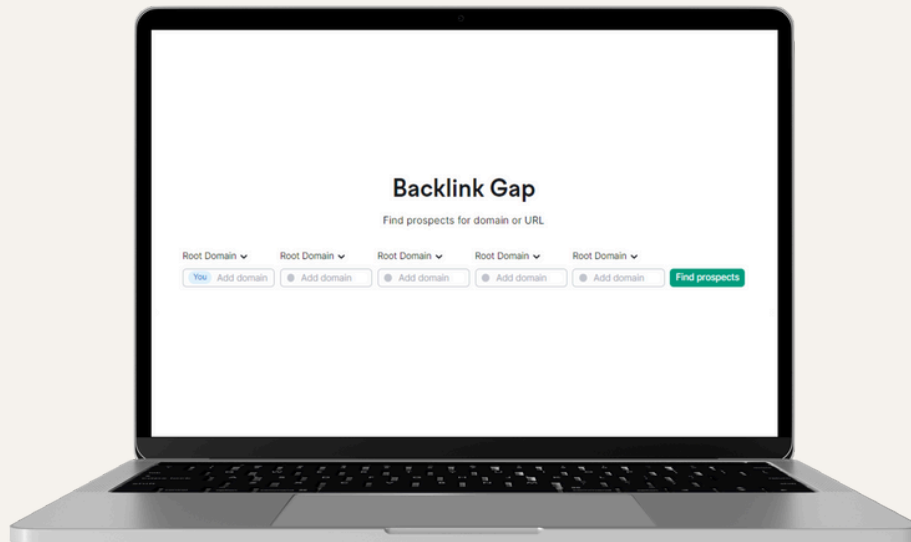

Other ideas for generating links include:

- Guest posting
- Reach out to publishers or press teams
- Get listed in industry directories

7. Improve Loading Speed

Page load time doesn't just impact user experience. It can also affect your SEO. If a page loads too slowly, users are unlikely to stick around, increasing your bounce rate. A page's loading time is one of the three Core Web Vitals and a ranking factor. Large files such as images can impact speed and reducing the size of specific elements of your site can help.

Google Page Speed Insights is a free SEO tool that scores your desktop and mobile page speed on a scale of 0 to 100.
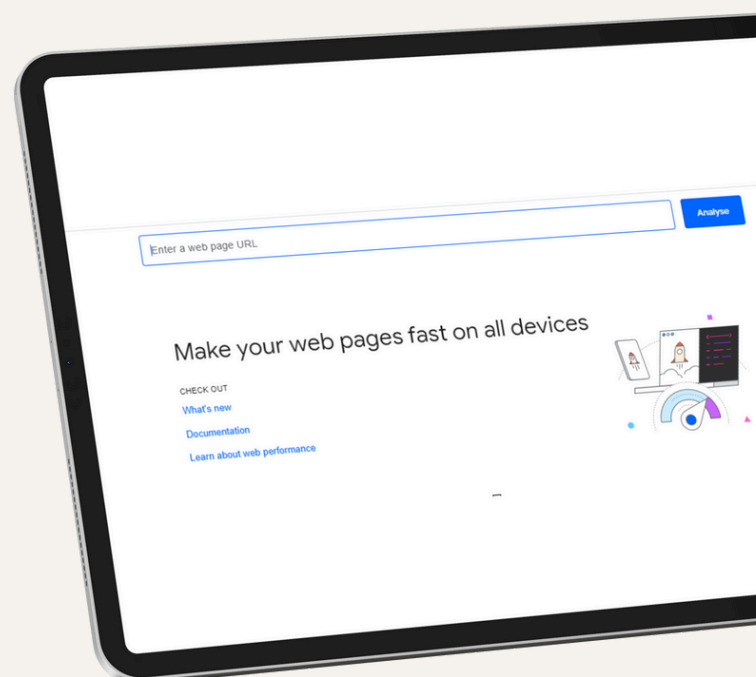
How Important is Local Search for Estate Agents?

Local search is a game-changer for estate agents looking to attract buyers, sellers, landlords, and tenants in their target areas. With more people searching online for property listings and estate agency services, ensuring strong local SEO can make the difference between being found or being overlooked. Here's why local search matters and how estate agents can optimise their online presence effectively.

1. Branch Pages: Your Local Hub Online

If your agency has multiple branches, dedicated branch pages are essential. These should include:

- The branch's name, address, and phone number - consistent with Google My Business (GMB) and directory listings.
- A unique description about the team, services, and expertise in that specific area.
- Embedded Google Maps for users to know exactly where to find you.
- Local testimonials or reviews from clients who have bought, sold, or rented through that branch.
- Ensure you optimise the meta data, URLs, content and internal links as already outlined in this guide.

Well-optimised branch pages help search engines understand your local presence and improve rankings for searches like "estate agents in [Location]."

2. "Properties for Sale in [Location]" Pages

Buyers often search using phrases like "houses for sale in [Location]" or "flats for sale in [Location]." To capture this traffic:

- Create dedicated landing pages for each location you serve.
- Include up-to-date property listings, with images, descriptions, and pricing.
- Add area-specific insights (e.g., "Why buy in [Location]?") to provide context for buyers.
- Ensure your pages load quickly and are mobile-friendly.

These location-based property pages help you rank for high-intent search queries, directly connecting you with active buyers.

3. "Properties for Rent in [Location]" Pages

For estate agents dealing with lettings, ranking for "flats to rent in [Location]" and similar terms is crucial. Apply the same principles as sales pages but focus on:

- Rental market trends and average pricing in the area.
- Advice for tenants and landlords.
- Key local amenities like transport links, schools, and shopping districts.

These pages improve your visibility in searches from tenants and landlords alike.

4. Area Guides & "Living in [Location]" Pages

Potential buyers and tenants often research an area before committing. Creating area guides not only enhances user experience but also improves SEO. A well-structured guide should include:

- An overview of the location, highlighting its appeal.
- Transport and commuting information (trains, buses, road links).
- Schools and education options for families.
- Shops, restaurants, and entertainment options.
- Property market insights, covering trends and prices.

Search engines reward in-depth, valuable content, so these pages can help your agency rank higher while building trust with potential clients.

5. Google My Business & Maps Optimisation

Your Google My Business (GMB) listing is crucial for local searches and map rankings. To optimise it:

- Ensure your agency's name, address, and phone number match exactly across all platforms.
- Add high-quality images of your branch and recent listings.
- List services (e.g. property valuations, sales, lettings, property management).
- Post regular updates, property highlights, or local market insights, as well as frequently asked questions
- Use Google Posts to engage local searchers with news and offers.
- You can even add a vieiwng button

A fully optimised GMB profile increases your visibility in Google's Local Pack (the top three local results shown in searches like "estate agents near me.")

6. Collecting and Managing Local Reviews

Reviews are a major trust factor for both clients and search engines and also boost rankings. Encourage happy buyers, sellers, landlords, and tenants to leave positive reviews on Google, Trustpilot, or Facebook.

- Send a follow-up email asking for feedback.
- Make leaving a review easy with a direct link.
- Respond professionally to all reviews, positive or negative.

A steady stream of genuine, positive reviews can boost rankings and credibility, making potential clients more likely to choose your agency.

Why Local Search is Essential for Estate Agents

- Higher visibility: rank for searches like "estate agents in [Location]" and "houses for sale in [Location]."
- More leads: connect with buyers, sellers, landlords, and tenants actively looking for properties or agents.
- Competitive advantage: stand out from rival agencies in search results and map listings.
- Stronger local reputation: build trust through area guides, reviews, and optimised branch pages.

By investing in local SEO, estate agents can ensure their agency stays top of mind for local property searches, attracting more business in their target locations.

Why Am I Not Getting the SEO Results I Hoped For?

Google's algorithms are a complex system used to retrieve data from its search index and instantly deliver the best possible results for a query. The search engine uses a combination of algorithms and numerous ranking factors to deliver web pages ranked by relevance on its search engine results pages (SERPs).


In its early years, Google only made a handful of updates to its algorithms. Now, Google makes thousands of changes every year.

Most of these updates are so slight that they go completely unnoticed. However, on occasion, the search engine rolls out major algorithmic updates that significantly impact results.

If your page loads too slowly, look for page elements that might be increasing your load time. For example, do you have unnecessary plugins or bloated code on your page? Try removing them to increase your page speed.

You can check your site for this and other factors using the SEMRush Site Audit tool which has around 130 checks for various SEO issues, including overall site health, number of SEO errors, warnings and notices and robots.txt errors.
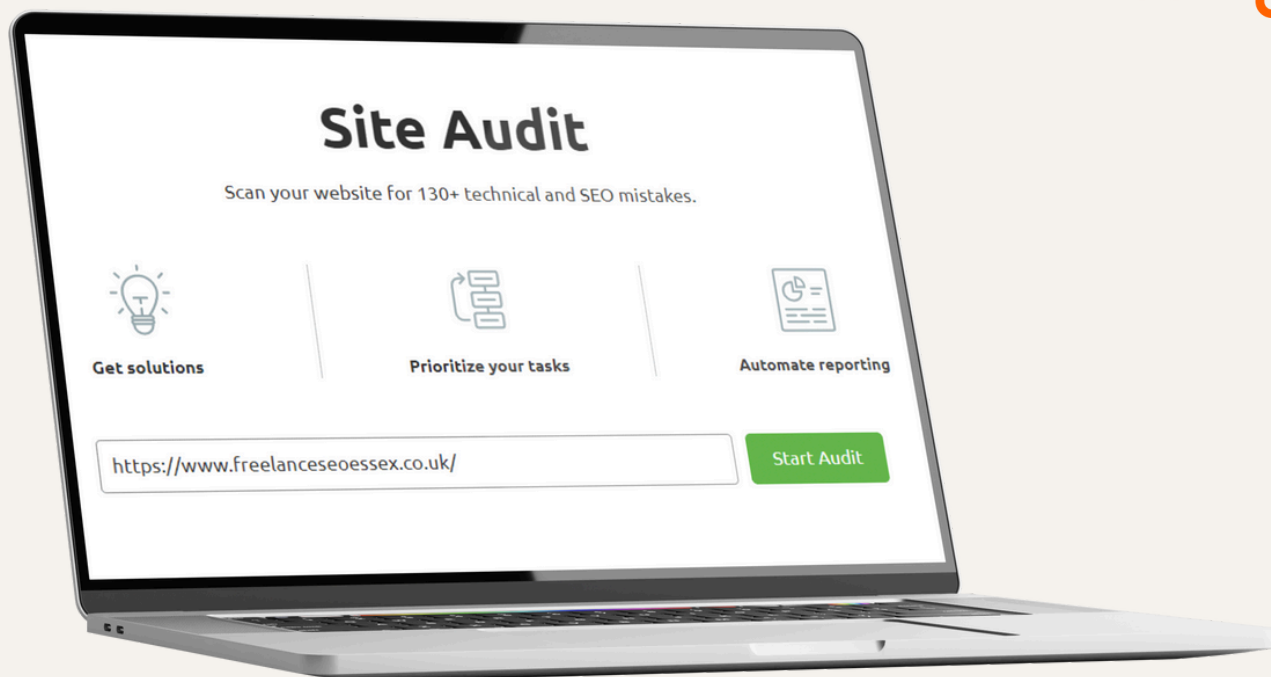
1. Use a Mix of Internal and External Links

Using internal and external links effectively can improve crawlability, user experience, and credibility.

Internal links direct users to other pages on your site. They help search engine crawlers find your content and encourage users to stay on your site for longer. For example, you could link between related blog posts to help your audience find more information on a topic they're researching, whilst staying on your site.

External links lead the user to another website. You can use these to link to websites with quality, authoritative content on the topic you're writing about. Remember to qualify your external links before adding them, as linking to low-quality content could negatively impact your credibility.

2. Optimise Your Graphics

It's hard to resist a colourful graphic or an image that perfectly captures the essence of a topic. If you create images for your website, make sure they're optimised.

- Ensure you're using the image size and file type that works best for your readers. Large images can slow the page and unsupported file types can lead to loading issues.
- Always include descriptive alt text for each image to help make your site more accessible for screen readers, and avoid embedding important text elements in your images.
- Create descriptive names and logical URL structures for all images to help optimise them for search.
- Provide context for your images by placing them beside relevant text on your page. If possible, try to place your most important image near the top of the page.
- Add localisation to your image to enhance geographical optimisation.
- Always remember to test your pages on both mobile and desktop.

3. Conduct Regular Site Audits

Performing regular site audits helps to ensure your site remains both functional and user-friendly. It's also an excellent way to catch issues you might have missed, like broken links, orphaned pages, or slow load times before they have a significant impact.
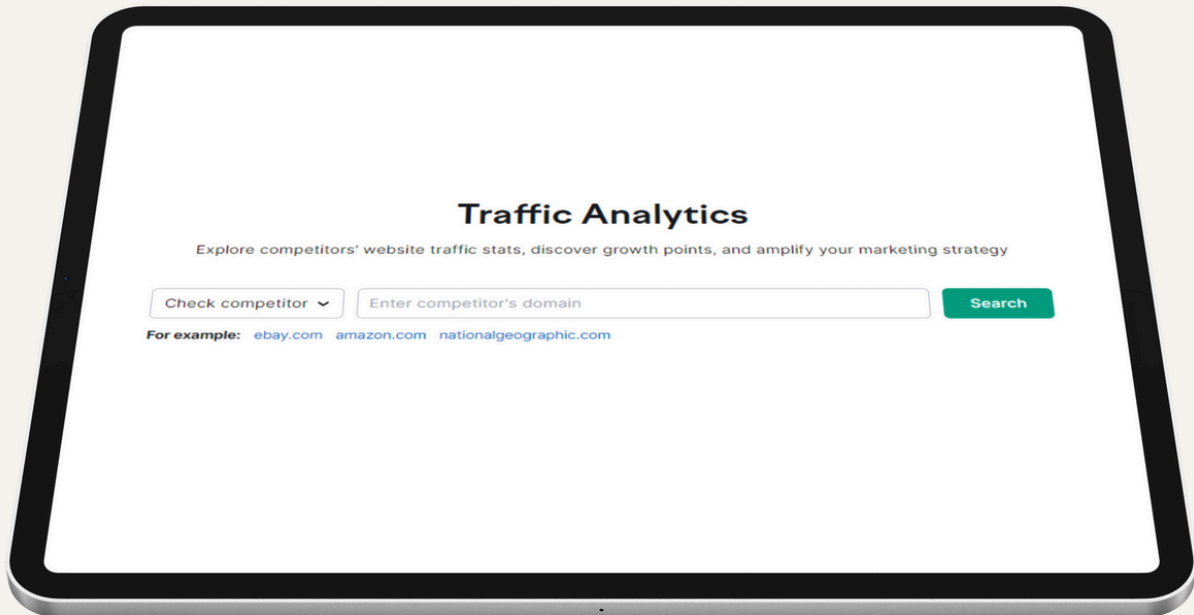
4. Study Your Competitors

Chances are, your biggest competitors are targeting similar audiences and creating similar types of content. By analysing your competitors' websites, you can learn more about the content they're producing and get some new ideas for your own content.

The SEMRush Market Explorer tool can help you track key players in your market and how much traffic they generate.
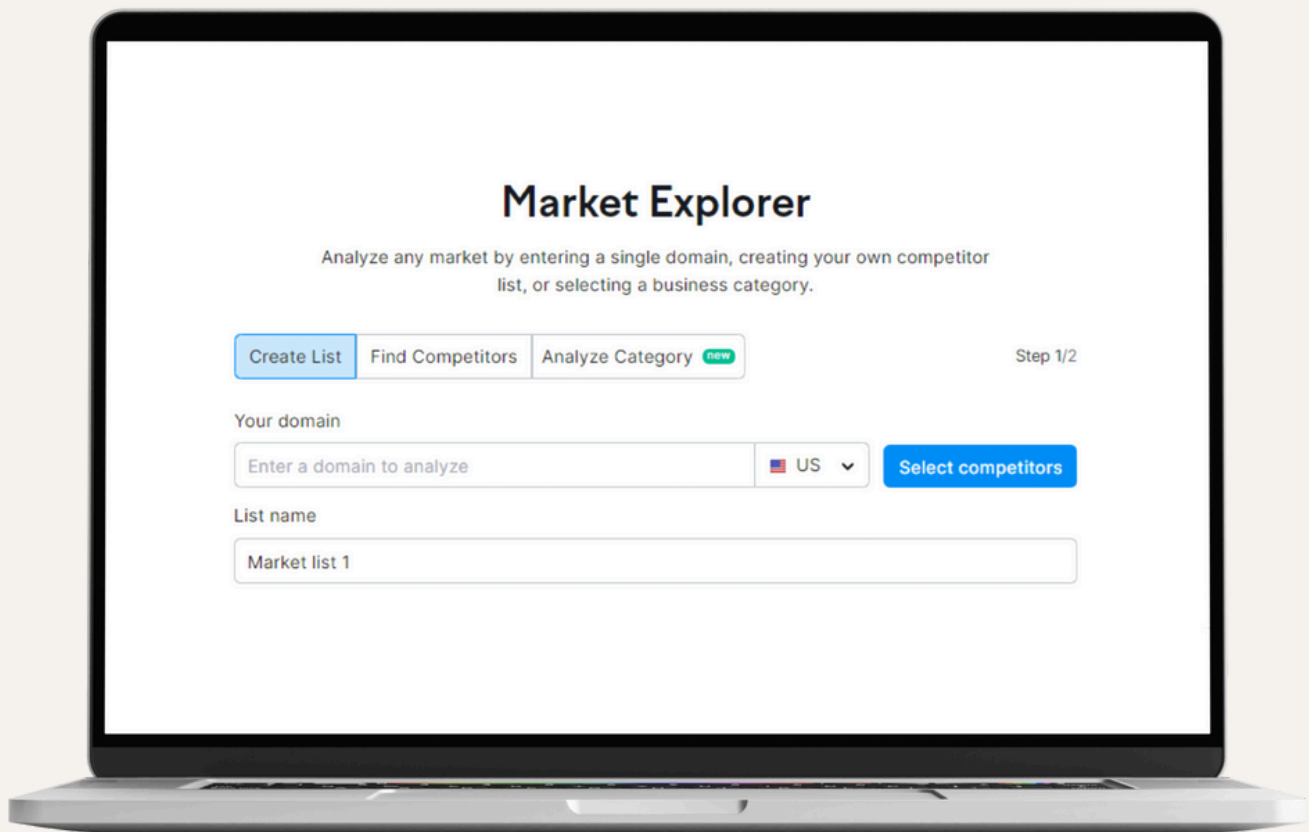
The SEMRush Traffic Analytics tool can show you how much traffic your competitors receive and from which sources and channels.

Use the SEMRush Organic Research tool to get an overview of their organic search performance, including their top-performing pages.
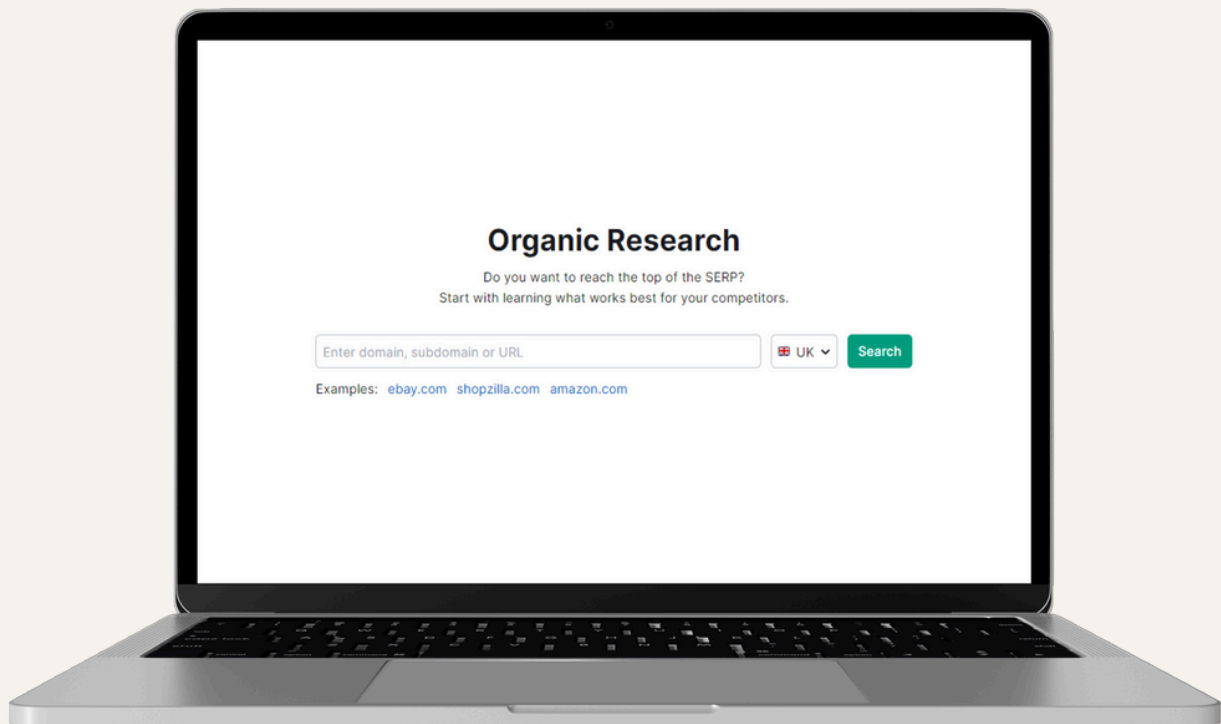
Use the SEMRush Keyword Gap tool to identify keywords your competitors rank for that you're missing out on.
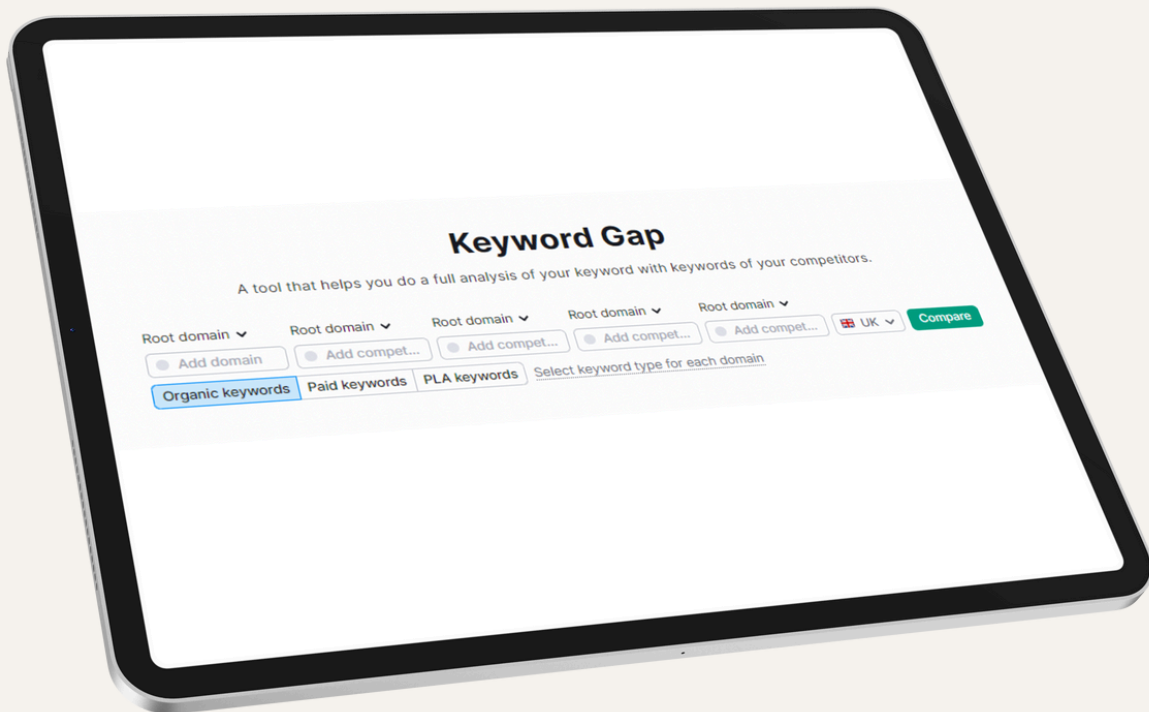
How Do I Keep Up with Google Algorithm Changes and Continue Learning?

With the amount of information available on the web, finding what you need would be nearly impossible without some help sorting through it. Google ranking systems are designed to do just that; sort through hundreds of billions of web pages to find the most relevant, useful results in a fraction of a second, and present them in a way that helps you find what you're looking for. These ranking systems are made up of not one, but a whole series of algorithms.

There are several ways to keep up with Google's algorithm changes. One way is to track your site's web traffic and search rankings on a regular basis – fluctuations often indicate something has changed. You can also check Google's search central blog, where they outline their named updates as they roll them out.

Google's X (formerly Twitter) account @searchliaison usually announces major updates and can be a good source of information.

To give you the most useful information, search algorithms look at many factors, categorised into four areas, Expertise, Experience, Authority and Trust, also known as 'EEAT'.

The weight applied to each factor varies depending on the nature of your query. To help ensure that search algorithms meet high standards of relevance and quality, a rigorous process is followed using both live tests and thousands of trained external Search Quality Raters from around the world. These Search Quality Raters follow strict guidelines from Google that define the goals for search algorithms and are publicly available for anyone to see, albeit a very long read.

Google prioritises 'quality first', however with each algorithm released, people eventually find ways to push low-quality sites higher in the search results. Many algorithm changes are attempts to close these loopholes so that search users are rewarded with high-quality sites that accurately match search intent.

One thing every digital marketer knows: Google's algorithm is constantly changing, and as it does, the digital landscape continues to evolve. That's why educating yourself about SEO is crucial if you want to stay ahead and keep winning.

Luckily, with blogs, eBooks, podcasts, videos, webinars, and more, you've got tons of resources at your fingertips.

Resources:

1 - https://www.rivalmind.com/what-are-the-benefits-of-seo

2 - https://www.g2.com/articles/web-design-statistics

3 - https://unbounce.com/landing-pages/7-page-speed-stats-for-marketers/

4 - https://www.semrush.com/blog/featured-snippet/

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