

# GOOGLE RANKING FACTORS CHECKLIST

BACKLINKO

You already know that Google uses over 200 ranking signals to rank sites and pages. Visit <http://backlinko.com/google-ranking-factors> to see them all.

But which of the 200 have the biggest impact? Or more importantly, which factors should YOU focus on to get higher rankings for your site?

Well you're in luck because I've put together this checklist that will show you how to make sure you tap into each of the 10 most important Google ranking factors.



1

## KEYWORD IN BEGINNING OF YOUR TITLE TAG

Google gives more weight to keywords found in the beginning of a title tag.

For example, let's say you wanted to rank for the keyword "weight loss tips" and you were deciding between two headlines:

### HEADLINE #1

Weight Loss Tips: 10 Strategies for Shedding Pounds

OR

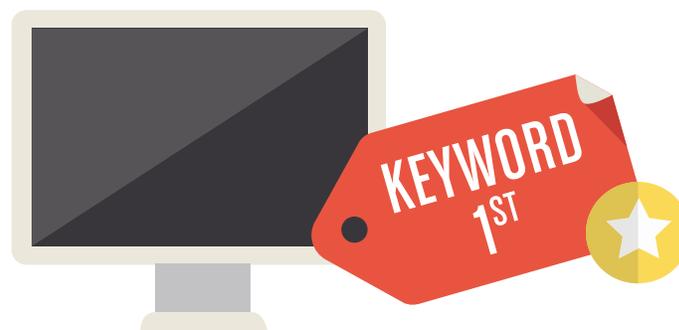
### HEADLINE #2

How to Drop 10 Pounds With These Weight Loss Tips

Google would see the headline #1 as MORE about the topic of "weight loss tips" than the second one.

So you'd want to go with **headline #1**.

**ACTION STEP:** Include your target keyword in the beginning of your title tag.



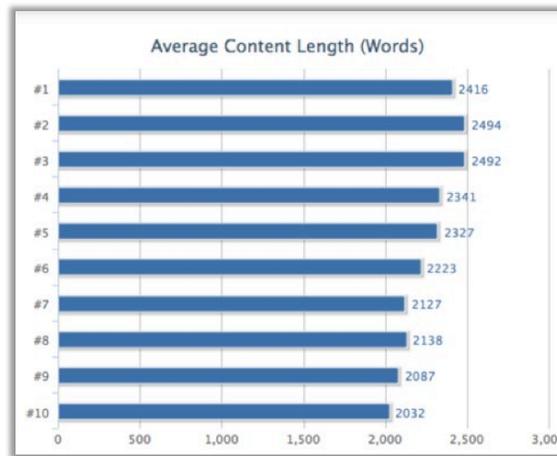
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## 2

## CONTENT LENGTH



Several industry studies (like [this one](#) by SERPIQ) have shown that longer content (1500+ words) ranks significantly higher in Google:



As you can see, the top 10 results have an average of 2000 words.

**ACTION STEP:** Write at least 1500 words for content that you're trying to rank in Google.

## 3

## PAGE LOADING SPEED



This is HUGE.

Page Speed is one of the few ranking signals that Google has publicly confirmed. It's that important.

You can easily evaluate and improve your site's loading speed using Google's own PageSpeed Insights tool.

**ACTION STEP:** Use the Google [PageSpeed Insights](#) tool to figure out your site's loading speed.

Wordpress plugins [W3 Total Cache](#) and [WP Smush It](#) (both free) can help speed things up.



## 4

## KEYWORD PROMINENCE AND POSITIONING



Sure, Google may not pay much attention to keyword density these days. But that doesn't mean they stopped using keywords...far from it!

Including your target keyword in strategic places on your page – like in your URL, in the beginning of your article and in H2 tags – sends a message to Google that your page is about that keyword.

**ACTION STEP:** Include your target keyword in the beginning of your title tag, in the first 100 words of an article and in an H2 or H3 tag. You can learn more advanced on-page SEO strategies at: <http://backlinko.com/on-page-seo>

## 5

## PAGE AUTHORITY/PAGERANK



The authority of your page – determined by the quality and quantity of inbound links – is by far the most important ranking signal that Google uses.

The fact is, unless your page is authoritative, Google isn't going to rank it (why would they?).

**ACTION STEP:** Incorporate white hat link building strategies like [Guestographics](#) to build your page's authority.

## 6

## DOMAIN AUTHORITY



When ranking a page, Google also factors in the authority of the domain as a whole (that's why sites like Amazon and YouTube rank for almost everything).

You can check your Domain Authority using [Open Site Explorer](#).

**ACTION STEP:** Build up your Domain Authority by creating (and promoting) awesome content. For example, with [The Skyscraper Technique](#).



## 7

## LINK RELEVANCY



As we already went over, a link's authority (as measured by the PR of the linking page) is really important.

But Google is paying more and more attention to the *relevancy* of the links pointing to your site. In fact, an ex-Google recently employee stated that "[relevancy is the new PR](#)").

So make sure that most of your links come from sites that are on the same topic as yours. So if you ran a site that sold organic food, make sure you're getting links from other pet-related sites...not sites about trucks and tattoos.

**ACTION STEP:** Focus on building links from authoritative AND relevant sites.



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## DWELL TIME



What tends to happen when a Google searcher lands on your page?

Do they stick around and visit other pages on your site...or do they quickly bounce back to the search results?

Google pays VERY close attention to how people interact with your site in Google. The amount of time they spend on your site – known as dwell time – is a super-important ranking signal.

**ACTION STEP:** Make the “above the fold” area of your pages compelling and clutter free. The more interesting that area is, the higher your dwell time – and rankings – will be.

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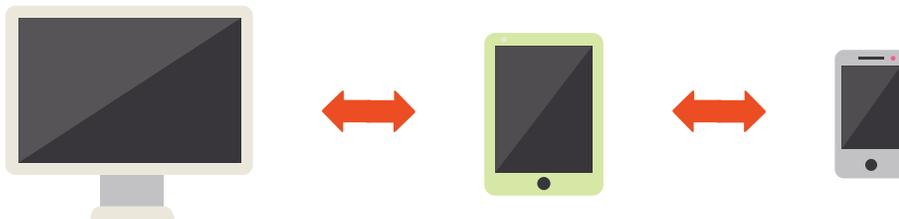
## RESPONSIVE DESIGN



More than half of the web’s traffic now comes from a mobile device. Google’s official stance is that they prefer Responsive Design vs. a separate mobile website ([source](#)).

A fast-loading, mobile-friendly responsive design can give you higher rankings for people searching on smartphones and tablets.

**ACTION STEP:** Make sure your site loads quickly for mobile users and runs on a responsive design.



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## THIN OR DUPLICATE CONTENT



Google wants to rank sites that have robust, original content. In my experience, many older sites have accumulated “junk” pages over the years, like archive and category pages. Junk pages are thin, duplicate or both – which can hold down your site’s rankings.

**ACTION STEP:** Do a site audit and delete or “noindex” thin pages or pages with duplicate content.