

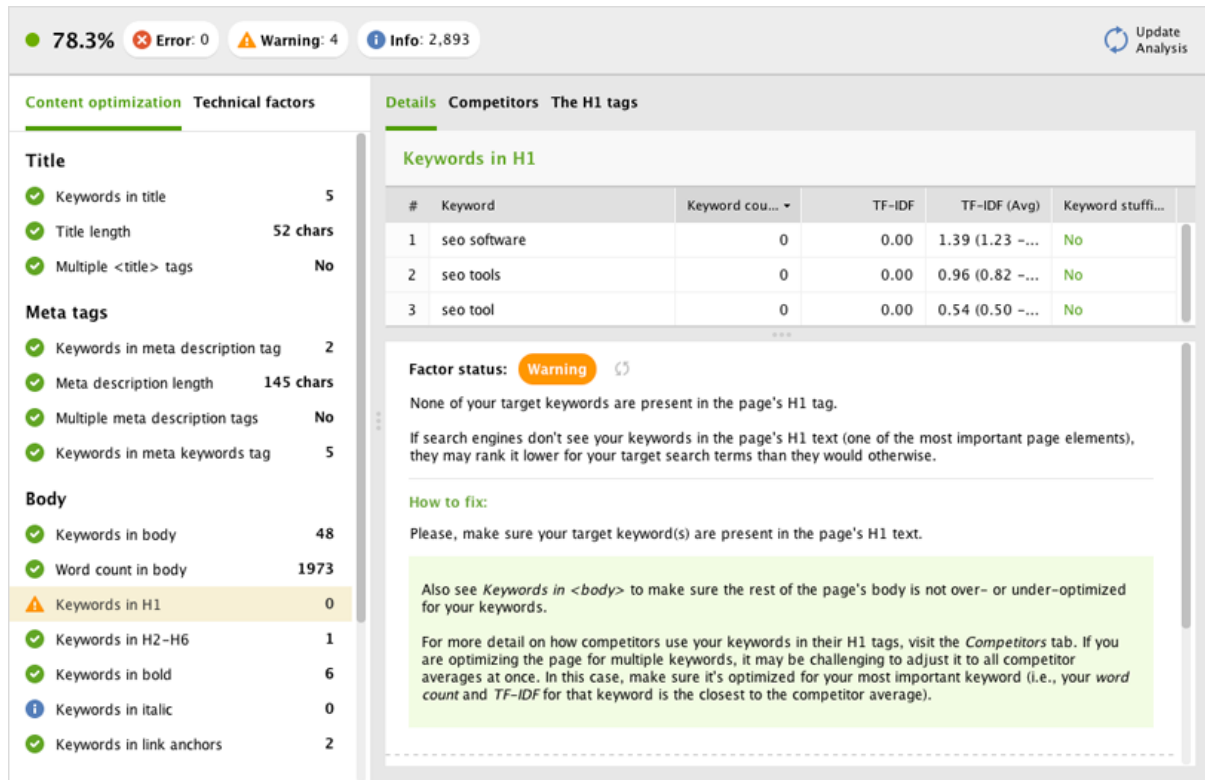


SEO FOR YOUR BLOG: STARTER GUIDE

19 SIMPLE STEPS TO OPTIMIZE YOUR
POSTS FOR USERS AND SEARCH ENGINES

Fix technical issues and improve load speed

To check how “healthy” your blog is from the technical point of view, you can scan it with a tool like [WebSite Auditor](#). Download the tool, create a new project and let the software collect and analyze site’s pages.



Even if you are not tech- and SEO- savvy, try to find some time to dig through the issues found on your website and fix the critical ones. That is crucial. Without it, none of the rest of this stuff even matters. I’d recommend starting the audit with these factors:

✔ Check the resources restricted from indexing

If some pages on your blog are blocked from indexing, people won’t be able to see them in search results. So, make sure that important content is always available for indexing.

✔ Fix broken links and bad redirects

A few broken links here and there are not a huge trouble for your blog, but if a site has hundreds of them, it is logical to conclude that the content has not been updated for quite a long time. Search engines do not favor outdated and abandoned websites.

Also, check the list of redirected pages and fix long redirect chains (page with 2 and more redirects) —

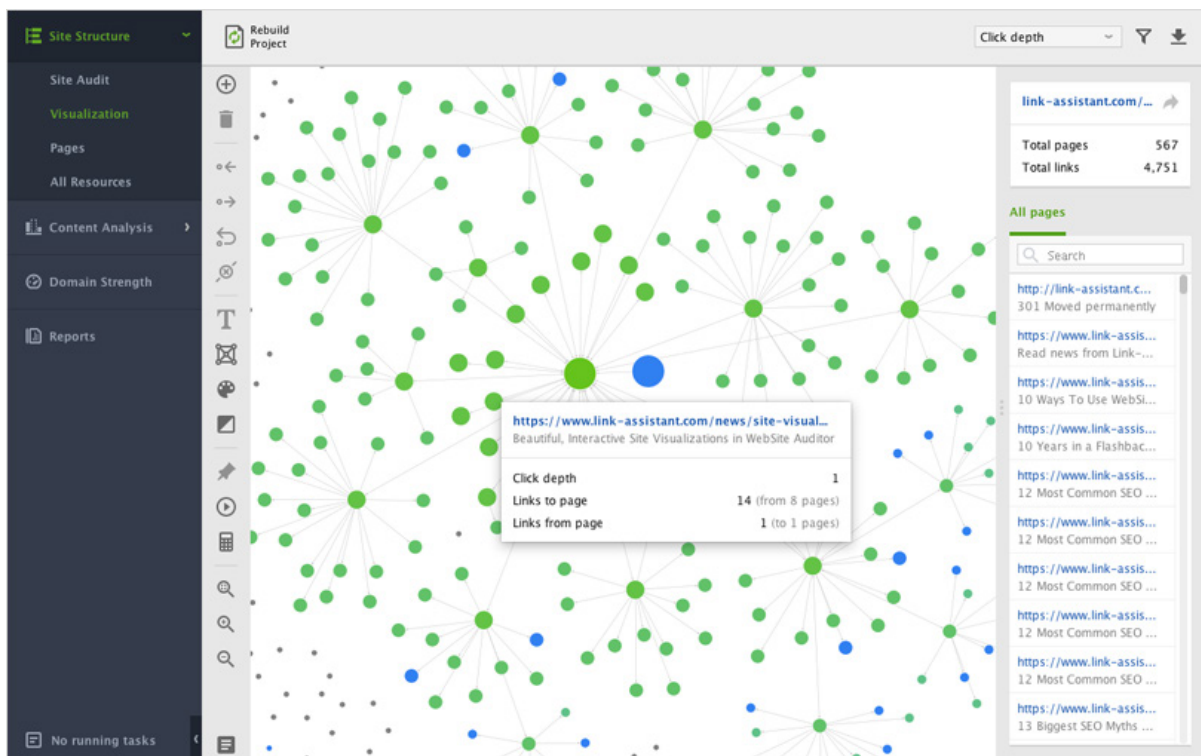
these can badly impact the indexing of your blog content.

✔ Optimize your blog to improve its load speed

Site speed is known to be a search engine ranking factor and for a reason - it greatly influences user experience, something Google's crazy about. So, why risk your rankings and ignore site's performance?

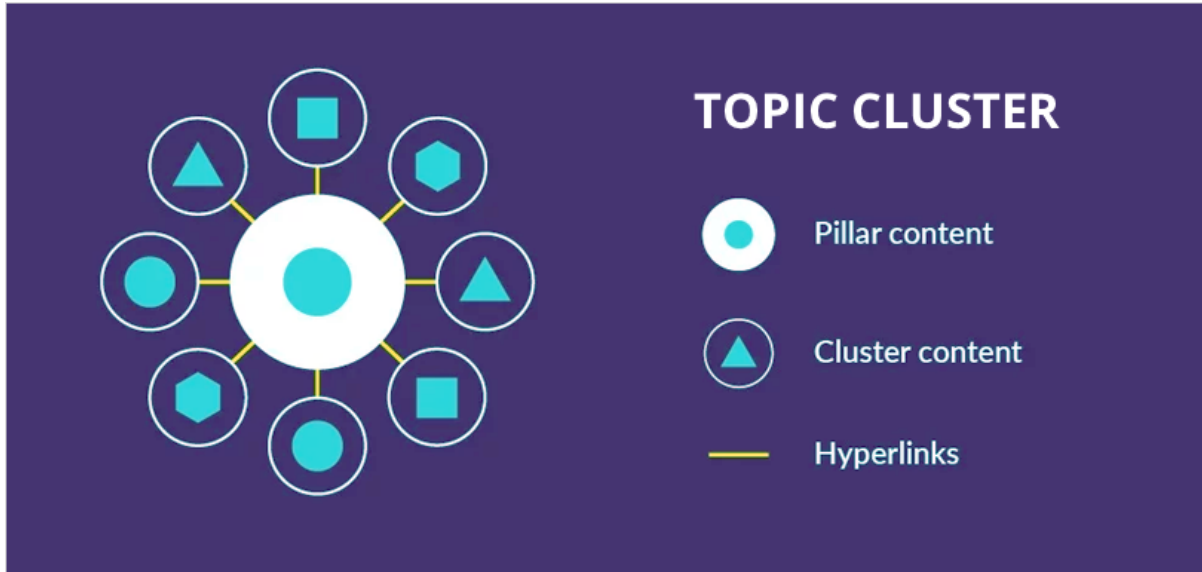
✔ Check structure-related issues on your blog

If you switch to the *Visualization* tab in WebSite Auditor, you'll see the graphical representation of your blog:



Here you can take a quick look at the structure of your blog, check the internal links, and analyze click depth.

Make sure that your most important posts are not more than two clicks away from blog's homepage. This visualization will also help you plan your blog structure using the so-called topic clusters. The **topic cluster** model consists of a single central 'pillar' page linking to multiple items of cluster content that all link back in turn to the main pillar page.



If you decide to use this system, you'll need to choose the specific topic, your pillar content (and it's going to be one of your top important landing pages too), and surround it with relevant posts (cluster content). Pillar content and cluster content get connected via hyperlinks. And it'll be cool if you manage to create cluster content using different formats, such as how-to guides, video reviews, webinars, photo stories, downloadable content, etc.

✔ Make your blog mobile-friendly

Last but not least, make sure that your blog is responsive to different screen sizes and shapes. Again, this impacts user experience and your search rankings and traffic.

Content optimization		Technical factors	
✔	Page size	475.6 KB	
✔	Server response time	0.2 sec	
✔	Too many redirects	No	
⚠	Uncompressed resources	2	
⚠	Uncompressed images	5	
i	Uncached resources	14	
i	Unminified resources	4	
⚠	Render-blocking JavaScript/CSS	5	
✔	Above-the-fold content prioritized	Yes	
Page usability (Mobile)			
✔	Mobile friendly	Yes	
✔	Viewport configured properly	Yes	
✔	Too small text	0	
⚠	Too small tap targets	3	
✔	Content outside viewport	0	
✔	Page uses plugins	0	

Factor status: Correct

Great job! This page is mobile-friendly.

Since the mobile-friendly algorithm works on a page-by-page basis, you should make sure that all your main landing pages are mobile-friendly too.

About this SEO factor:

According to Google, the mobile-friendly algorithm affects mobile searches in all languages worldwide and has a significant impact on Google rankings. This algorithm works on a page-by-page basis - it is not about how mobile-friendly your pages are, it is simply are you mobile-friendly or not. The algo is based on such criteria as small font sizes, tap targets/links

Brainstorm ideas, set goals, and research keywords

Now that we know our blog posts are 100% crawlable and can be accessed by users and search engines, we can safely turn to a more “entertaining” part of your blog optimization — **content planning** and **keyword research**.

First things first — how do you come up with new catchy ideas? If you blog on a regular basis, I bet you’ve already hit the point when the words just dry up. The good thing is that inspiration may come just as you’re doing regular keyword research for your posts.

Here are the steps I’d strongly recommend you to follow before you start writing:

✔ Determine the goal and the audience of your new post

For instance, your goals may look the following way:

- Get in the top 10 search results in Google for the “Best Christmas decorations ideas” keyword.
- Achieve at least 50 sign-ups.
- Get 1,000 unique page visitors per month.
- Earn \$1,500 on affiliate commissions.
- Increase your social media following by 10%.

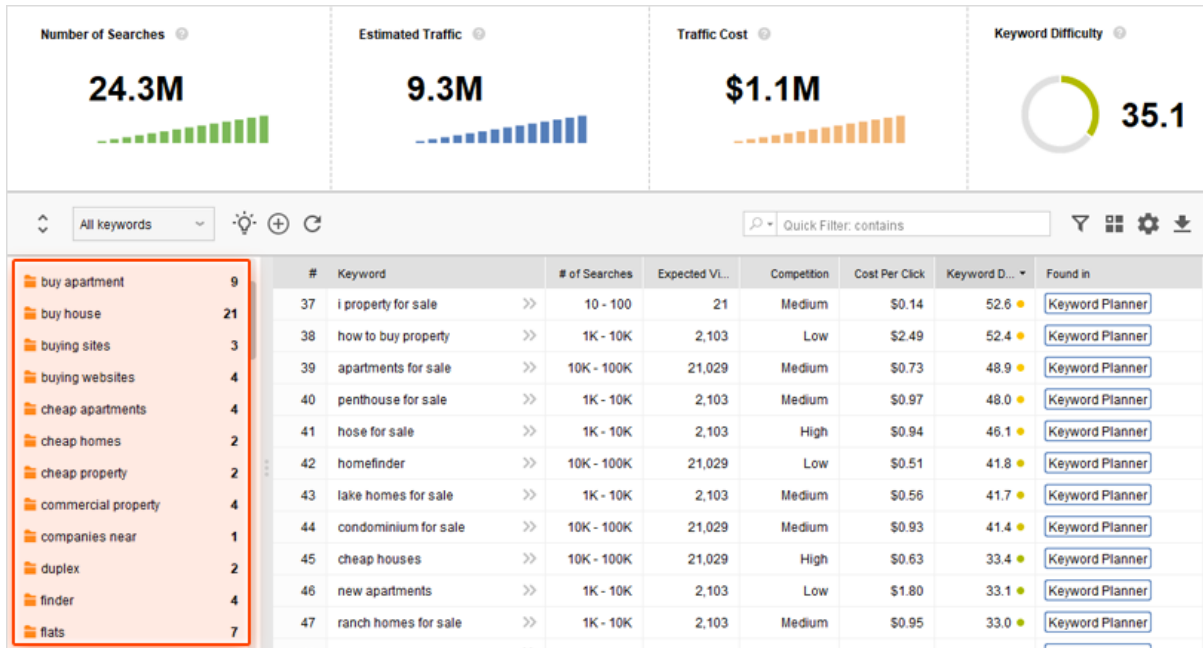
Well, you get the idea! You can keep your goals pinned on the fridge or stuck to your monitor to remind you of what you’re planning to achieve.

✔ Find 3-5 related key phrases that have similar search intent

How do we find semantically related groups of key phrases? [Rank Tracker](#) can help you with the task.

Say, you’re in the mood for writing a post on “how to choose an apartment to buy.” In Rank Tracker’s *Keyword Research* module switch to *Keyword Suggestions* and select *Google AdWords Keyword Planner* (you may choose other sources later to expand the list) and type in your keyword — “how to choose an apartment to buy” in our case.

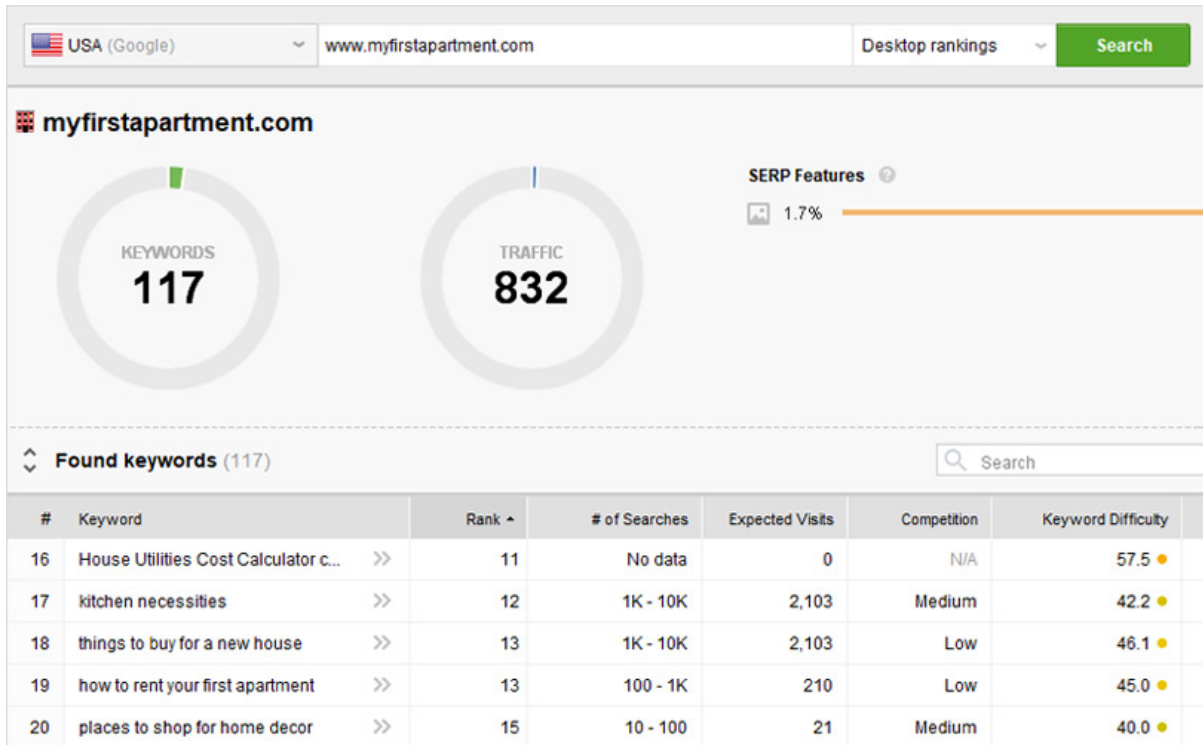
After Rank Tracker finishes collecting keyword ideas, you’ll see them neatly organized in groups in the *Sandbox* module:



Just by looking at these groups of phrases, I can already mark out the structure of my future post (or posts, if it's going to be a series):

- Is buying an apartment a good investment?
- An apartment or a house — which is better?
- Questions to ask when viewing an apartment.
- Flat buying checklist.
- Apartment hunting tips.
- Things you need for your first apartment.

Not enough ideas? Then take a page that's ranking high for your topic and analyze it in the *Ranking keywords* module. Here you'll see a list of keywords the site's already ranking for:



You can select the most relevant keywords and add them to your *Target Keywords* right away or look through these keyword ideas later in the *Sandbox* module.

And if you need even more phrases for your posts, check out the rest of the research methods in Rank Tracker — *Autocomplete tools*, *Related searches*, *Domain Research*, *Related Questions*, and *Keyword Combinations*.

Done? Let's move on to the next step.

✔ Check your keywords for traffic and competition

You should have an extensive list of keyword ideas by now, but how do you choose the 3-5 phrases for the post? You'll need to take a closer look at keyword metrics and select the queries with the highest potential.

Generally, you should look at:

- Search volume.
- Competition.
- Keyword difficulty.

Keywords with high search volume and low to moderate competition are the best, but sometimes you may see that all keyword ideas have high competition. In this case, you need to dig deeper and discover how difficult it really is to rank for this key phrase.

In Rank Tracker go to *Target Keywords > Keyword Map*. Select the words you want to analyze and press *Update Keyword Difficulty*.

Rank	Page URL	Difficulty score	InLink Rank	Domain InLink Rank	Sites linking to page	Sites linking to domain
1	https://www.zillow.com/...	80.7 ●	79 ●	91 ●	56	47082
2	https://www.zillow.com/...	74.6 ●	65 ●	91 ●	6	47082
3	https://www.trulia.com/	92.0 ●	87 ●	83 ●	5503	22957
4	https://www.realtor.com/	95.0 ●	88 ●	90 ●	10018	29143
5	https://www.homes.com/	88.8 ●	86 ●	79 ●	3620	6134
6(1)	https://www.marketwatc...	27.4 ●	N/A ●	94 ●	0	75693
7	https://www.claytonhom...	84.5 ●	87 ●	78 ●	880	1109
8	https://money.cnn.com/...	27.6 ●	N/A ●	100 ●	4	39464
9	https://www.wsj.com/art...	28.0 ●	N/A ●	99 ●	7	875150
10	https://www.hud.gov/pro...	29.8 ●	4 ●	94 ●	5	105471

You'll see a keyword difficulty score next to each keyword — the higher the score, the harder it'll be to rank.

✔ Don't forget to analyze search intent when picking keywords

When you pick your primary and secondary keywords (it's handy to manage it in the *Keyword Map* module of Rank Tracker), remember that **searcher's intent** behind all of these terms and phrases should be the same so that the same content can serve it.

There are three main categories of search intent — navigational, informational, and transactional (or commercial).

Under *Keyword Map*, you can assign keywords to the related pages and you can tag them as either "informational" or "transactional". Or set color markers if you don't fancy tags.

#	Keyword	# of Searches	Tags	Expected Visits	KEI	Competition
1	homes to buy	1K - 10K	transactional	2,103	2.475 ●	Medium
2	buy home in usa	100 - 1K	transactional	210	0.163 ●	High
3	how to buy a home	1K - 10K	informational	2,103	2.475 ●	Medium
4	what you need to buy a home	10 - 100	informational	21	0.025 ●	Medium
5	where to buy a home	10 - 100	informational	21	0.016 ●	High
6	buying a home	10K - 100K		21,029	24.750 ●	Medium
7	best way to buy a home	100 - 1K		210	0.248 ●	Medium
8	find a home to buy	100 - 1K		210	0.248 ●	Medium

Create and optimize your post

Now that you know whom you're targeting and which questions you're going to answer, it's time to get creative and write the post.

✔ Identify the needs and solutions for your readers

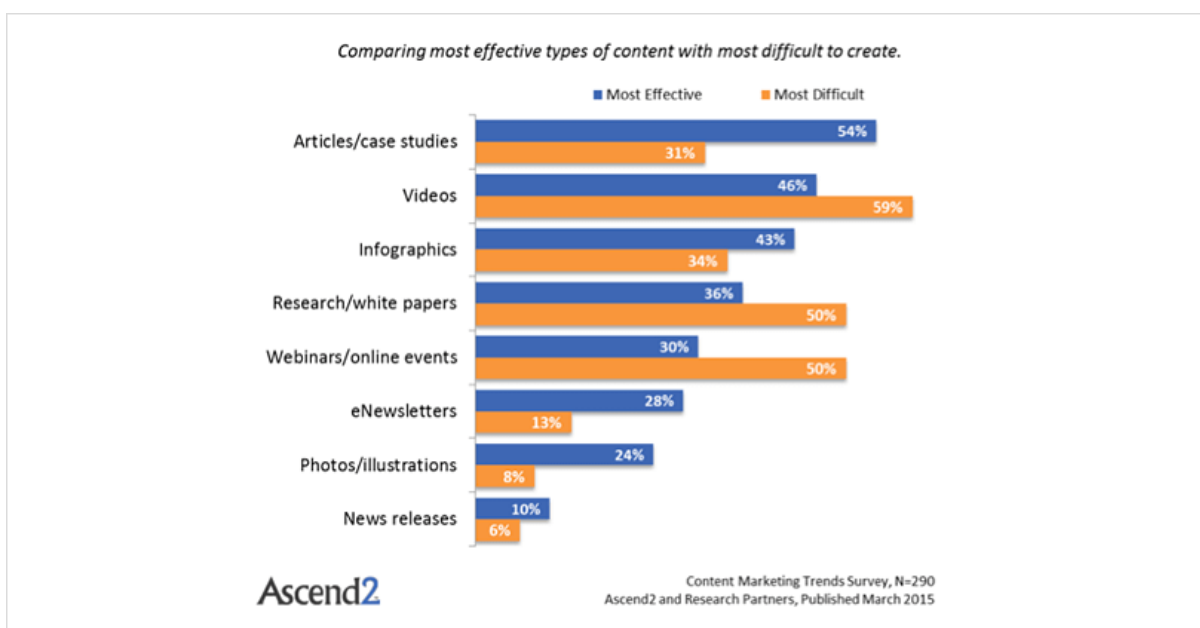
If you're still hesitating about the topic of your post, keep in mind that top 3 popular categories of blog posts

- answer a question,
- provide a numbered list (checklist),
- provide a guide or a how-to tutorial.

Do some SERP investigation to see what Google finds relevant for your topic/keywords and see if there are any **content gaps** that you can fill with your blog posts. If you find those holes and manage to fill them with your unique content, you have a very good chance of taking over the top ranking positions.

✔ Plan to add different types of content

Now you should also think about the types of content you'll add to your posts. To make your content more useful, consider adding images, videos, graphs, polls, quotes, infographics, and links. Hard to choose? The Content Marketing survey conducted by [Ascend2](#) compares the most effective types of content with the most difficult to create:

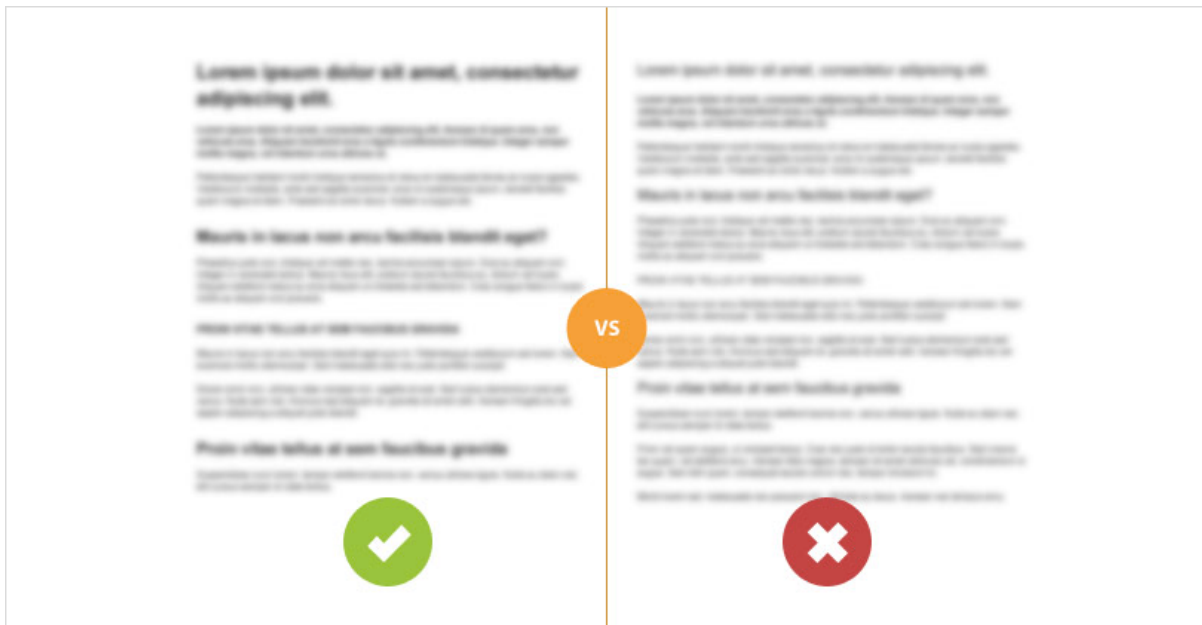


As you can see, case studies may require less effort than white papers, but can prove much more effective.

✔ Make your post scannable

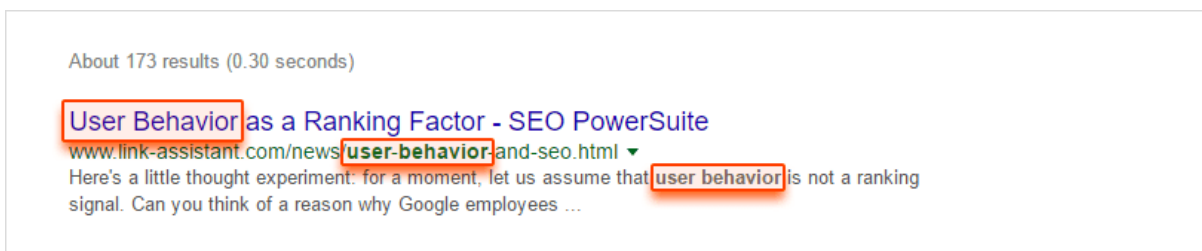
If you can't scan the post you've written yourself, there's little chance other people will. Here's what you can do to improve this:

- Break up your content with subheads.
- Add bulleted lists.
- Create deep captions for your images and graphs.
- Highlight the most important parts and calls-to-action.



✔ Optimize on-page elements

Make sure the most important keyword (the highest search volume with moderate competition) goes exactly matched in page's title, headline, and possibly URL.



After that, you can use two to four secondary key phrases in such elements, as

- content (pay special attention to the first two paragraphs),
- meta description,
- images' alternative texts,
- subheadings,
- link anchors.

There's no absolute formula on how many keywords you should use in the post, but be careful not to over-optimize your pages. You can get some on-page tips in [WebSite Auditor](#).

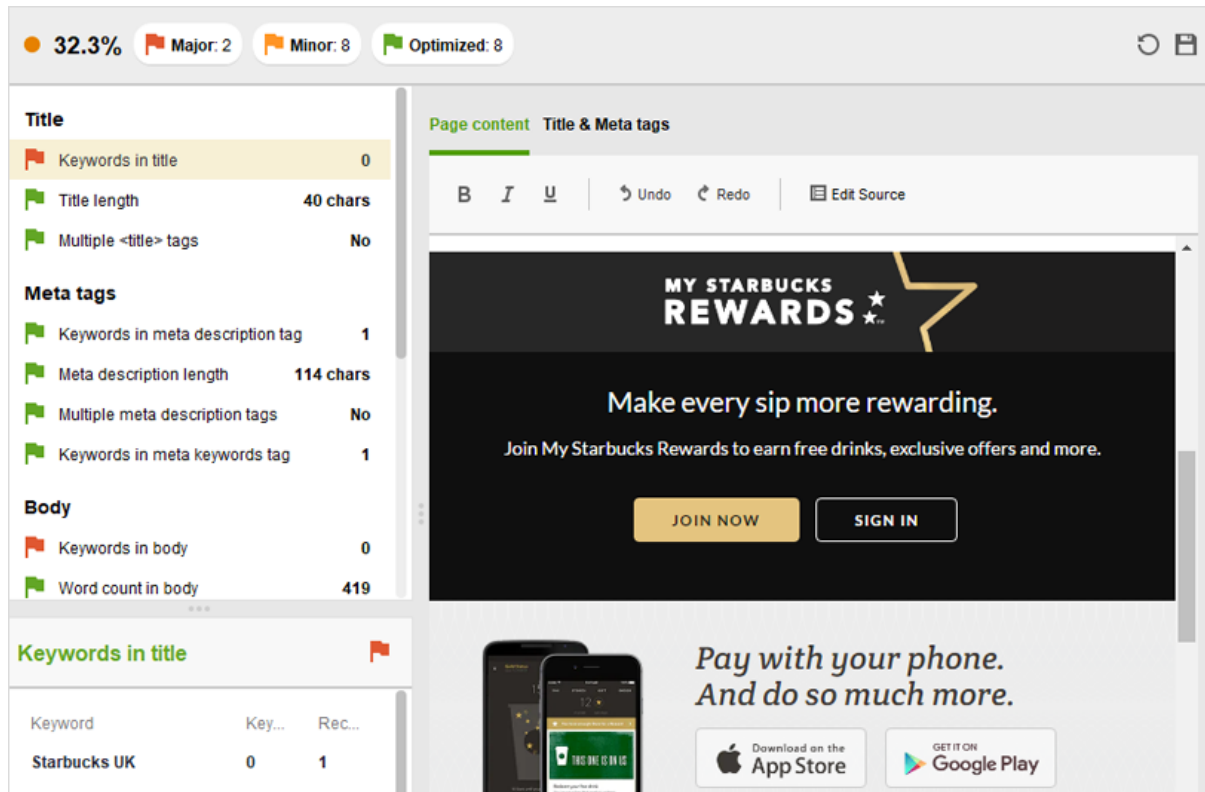
Under the *Page Audit* tab (in the *Content Analysis* module), you will see the average keyword usage stats of your top ranking competitors and where your website lags behind or, on the contrary, goes overboard with keyword usage.

The screenshot displays the 'Content optimization' section with a 78.0% score, 0 errors, 383 warnings, and 282 info items. It lists various optimization factors like 'Keywords in title', 'Title length', and 'Meta tags'. The right-hand side shows a 'Details' tab for 'The <title> tag' with a 39.3% TF-IDF score. Below this is a table comparing keywords across different URLs.

#	Keyword	TF-IDF Score	TF-IDF	TF-IDF...	Keyw...	Key...	Word C...	Wor...	Key...
1	SEO book	78.6%	0.45	0.57 (...)	1	1 (1 ...)	9	7 (3...)	No
2	SEO guide	0.0%	0.00	0.63 (...)	0	1 (1 ...)	9	8 (5...)	No

URL	Title	Keyword co...	TF-IDF	Total word ...
http://www.seobook.com/	With Organic Results Below t	0	0.00	12
https://www.brightedge.com/blog/se...	Best SEO Books 2017 - Top f	1	0.45	9
https://www.amazon.com/SEO-Boo...	Amazon.com: SEO Book: aarc	1	0.50	7
https://www.amazon.com/Best-Sell...	Amazon Best Sellers: Best Se	0	0.00	7
https://twitter.com/seobook?lang=en	SEO Book (@seobook) Twitt	1	0.71	4

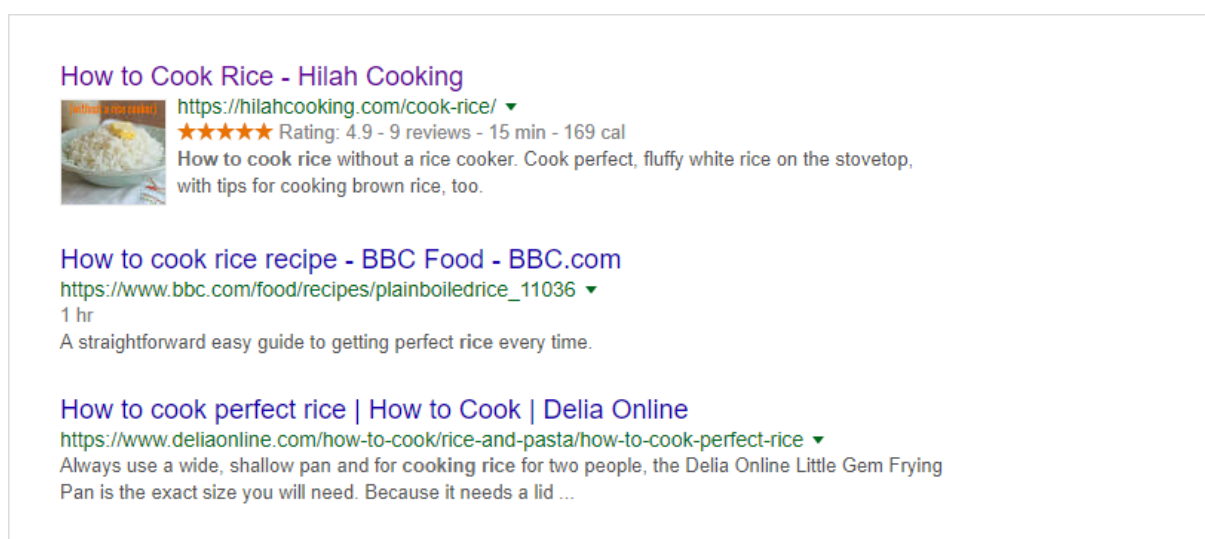
By switching to the *Content Editor* tab, you can add or remove extra keywords and see the stats recalculated for you as you type.



After you finish optimizing the page, you can save it by clicking *Save page* and then upload to your server.

✔ Use rich snippets and Schema markup

Some blog posts in search results just stand out way more and get clicks like crazy, right?



If you have some visuals, recipes, or a good featured snippet opportunity (list posts, how-to instructions, etc.), you should definitely add markup to your content. Check out [this guide](#) on

structured data for beginners to learn which type to choose and how to implement it correctly on your blog.

✔ Proofread the post

Well, this one's obvious. Nobody will take you seriously if you often mix up "weather" and "whether," or "affect" and "effect." If you can't be careful with your words and grammar, why should anyone trust you?

When proofreading your post, make sure you check the 3 main aspects:

- spelling,
- grammar,
- consistency.

You can also use such tools as [Hemingway App](#) and [Grammarly](#), or hire a freelance proofreader to get this task done faster.

Plan outreach and link building

Let's see how you can ensure your post gets the desired attention and backlinks.

✔ Make it easy to share your post

Don't know where to place the sharing buttons? The social sharing tool AddThis provides some [insight](#) on this question. They recommend to:

- Pick a prominent position.
- Keep your button near the top of the page.
- Place the button in close proximity to the content being shared.
- Watch out for navigation.
- Avoid putting sharing in the footer.
- Avoid putting sharing below the fold.

Also, keep in mind that “near-zero” sharing buttons can provide negative social proof.

✔ Share your post on social media and bookmarking sites

Use the power of Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, and YouTube to let the world know your new post's out. If appropriate, share an Instagram story or a short video on Facebook telling people about your new guide and how it can help them solve their problems.









In addition to the popular social media networks, you may also submit your post to the social bookmarking sites and online communities:

- [Reddit](#)
- [Digg](#)
- [Stumbleupon](#)
- [Growthhackers.com](#)
- [Hacker news](#)
- [BizSugar.com](#)
- [Blogengage.com](#)
- [ManageWP.org](#)
- [Techspy.com](#)

If you want to find other niche-specific sites, launch [LinkAssistant](#), create a new project and click on the *Look for prospects* button. Select the type of link prospects you're looking for (Forums, Directories, etc.) and hit *Next*.

Step 1: Select Prospect Search Method

Please select what type of link prospects you'd like LinkAssistant to search for and pick the corresponding method below. Each of the methods offered here gives you chances to find some new link building opportunities you'd never thought about.

 Guest Posting Discover blogs that allow guest posts and offer your writing services.	 Reviews Look for people who review products or services in your space.
 Commenting Find posts relevant to your keywords. Join the conversation and link to your site.	 Giveaways Find opportunities to join giveaways and offer your products or services there.
 Forums Find relevant forum conversations you can join to voice your opinion and build brand awareness.	 Links Pages Find the resource and links pages that will likely add a link to your website.
 Links Submission Forms Find pages with link submission forms.	 Directories Find quality business directories to get your website listed there.

Now type in the keywords related to your topic and let the tool collect the data from the Internet. That's it!

✔ Place links from older posts

If you have relevant posts that you've already published, why not put some links (and even redirects) there pointing to the new content? That's a win-win case — people reading older posts will be able to discover this new piece, while the search engines will index and rank the new post faster.

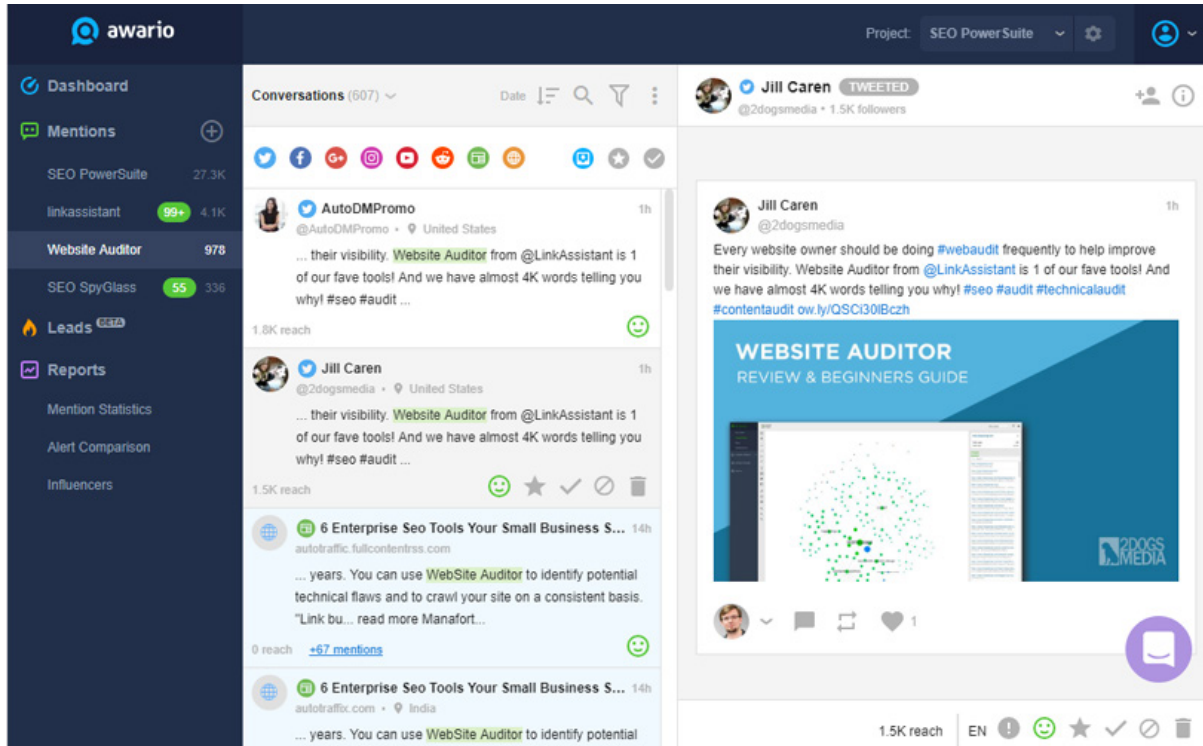
✔ Reach out to influencers

First of all, if you've mentioned a person or a company in the new post, let them know about it. You can do that the following way:

- Send an email if you've already communicated with this influencer. Just give a heads up, don't be pushy about sharing your post.
- @Mention them in a tweet.
- Mention them in a Facebook/Instagram/Google+ post.

The chances are quite high that the mentioned person will share your post.

The second option is to get in touch with influencers who already know you and share your content. You'll need to use a social media monitoring tool, such as [Awario](#), to see who's talking about you and your blog. Create a new alert for your blog's URL or name and let the tool collect the mentions from the whole web:



Mark out the social media accounts with the highest reach and get in touch with their owners. Once again, there's no need to plead to share your post — instead, you should outline why this post can be useful to the person's followers and subscribers.

I Summary

Now, do not expect to get instant results after you follow the above steps — most probably, you'll need to repeat the routine for dozens of posts to see what's exactly working for you. It may happen that you'll need about 30 minutes for keyword research and on-page optimization, and a day or two to promote the post on social media sites and communities.

The important thing is to experiment and analyze. And then one day, you'll just see that most of your posts keep getting new traffic, backlinks, and higher rankings.