



# Online Essentials

CHEAT SHEET

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How to sell better with SEO and Ecommerce -  
Your 2017 Guide.



**VU ONLINE**

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Helping businesses take the next step in their digital growth.

1. UNIQUE DESCRIPTIONS
2. QUALITY, QUANTITY AND FREQUENCY
3. TONE OF VOICE
4. KEYWORD SELECTION
5. SHORT TAIL OR LONG TAIL
6. EXPERTISE
7. LINK BAITING
8. KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE



## INTRO

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Running a successful online shop isn't just about having the goods, it's about how you present them as well.

It doesn't matter whether your ecommerce site sells directly to customers, auctions its merchandise or is host to third-party sellers. Unique and well-crafted product descriptions are vital to performing well in search rankings and attracting as many customers as possible.

We are going to work through how you can best get your expertise out there.

Grab a cuppa and roll up your sleeves...

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## 1. UNIQUE DESCRIPTIONS

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# Keep it original



The first step to making sure your business has the best possible product descriptions is writing unique ones. It can be tempting to use the descriptions straight from the manufacturer's website but this creates duplicate content, and duplicate content is bad.

## Why it matters

Using ready-made descriptions is the ecommerce equivalent of a journalist claiming a press release as their own work. Google doesn't like that just as much as it doesn't like unoriginal entries for goods in online shops. The pages containing them will be punished in the search results and are quite likely not to appear in them at all. Bing is also a stickler for duplicate content, so it's always important to stay original.

Shortcuts such as editing the existing descriptions to make them more unique may help to avoid Google's traps but creating your own quality descriptions will help boost rankings, improve sales and show you're knowledgeable about what you sell.

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## 2. QUALITY, QUANTITY AND FREQUENCY

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# Find a balance



Quality, quantity and the frequency with which you post the descriptions are all important factors to consider when creating your content. Quality goes without saying and the more useful the content is to your customer, the higher it will rank.

It's hard to put an exact figure on quantity, but good product descriptions should be at least 200 words long. Generally speaking a few hundred words, around 300-500, will be enough to avoid duplicate content, allow for a natural distribution of keywords and give you room to show off your expertise.

## Why it matters

Frequency will be determined by how often you update your stock but it's worth publishing on a schedule and keeping to it, as Google likes and rewards regularity.

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### 3. TONE OF VOICE

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## It's how you say it



Although Google can't detect tone of voice, your audience can and it's important to write in the right style for what you're selling and who you're selling to.

Being too serious and using long words isn't going to help you sell toys, just as being too jovial probably won't get people coughing up for coffins.

Finding the butter zone when it comes to tone of voice will help you to engage with your customers and keep them coming back for more, while not alienating those outside your core audience.

## Why it matters

Finally, a great tip to avoid duplicating the manufacturer's description is to sell the benefits of the product rather than describe its features.

This approach of "selling the sizzle" will not only help your products to perform better in Google's searches, but will also make your copy more engaging and more likely to sell the product it's describing.

Now it's time to focus on keywords – the little lighthouses that will guide your audience to the information they're looking for.

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#### 4. KEYWORD SELECTION

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## Creative keywords



The Google AdWords keyword tool is a powerful way of analysing the popularity of a keyword and how much competition there is for it in the search rankings.

For keywords with a high level of competition it will be harder to make it to the top of their search engine results page (SERP). For lower competition keywords it will be easier, though they tend to generate less (but more relevant) traffic.

To find out how keywords have performed over time and in specific locations, Google Trends is another useful service. Trends simply displays the popularity of search terms over time in graph form, clearly showing whether a keyword is attracting more interest or is falling out of fashion.

Because of changes in Google's privacy policy it is now hard to extract information on keywords from analytics software with most queries appearing as 'not provided'. While on-site search information can be a useful substitute, there are a few other tricks that are able to provide a valuable insight into the keywords you should be using on your site.

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## Why it matters

If it happens that your keyword of choice is not doing so well, Trends will offer more popular alternatives.

## 5. SHORT TAIL OR LONG TAIL

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# Pin a tail to the keywords



When it comes to keywords there are two types – short-tail and long-tail. Short-tail keywords are basically one or two words in length, and because they’re so common are very hard to rank for.

Long-tail keywords consist of three words or more and generally don’t need to be used so often on a page to help it rank well. Because long-tail keywords are more specific, the pages they’re featured on are more likely to be relevant to the people performing the searches. And when it comes to ecommerce more specific is more helpful. For example if your niche is multi-coloured men’s footwear made from napped leather, it’s going to be more beneficial for your customers that you rank well for the long-tail keyword “blue suede shoes footwear” than poorly for “men’s shoes”. This will help people find the shoes they’re looking for, and distinguish it from information about the song.

Searchers are also asking more questions than before, so it also might be worth posing a question in the form of a heading. If you’re selling kitchenware, people might be wondering “what is the best way to store jam” and your pots with the kitschy lids may be the answer they’re looking for.

## Why it matters

The key is to approach the problem as a consumer and think of the question that your content is an answer to.

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## 5. SHORT TAIL OR LONG TAIL (CONT.)

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While taking this two-pronged approach will help with your SERP success, it's important to keep monitoring the performance of keywords to identify which ones are working and which ones aren't, so you can make the necessary tweaks and improve your rankings.

Even when one keyword is working well, fluctuating tastes and search trends mean that regular performance monitoring is essential.

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How you write your product descriptions and choosing the right keywords will help your site to be indexed better by Google, but to really rank high you're going to need good quality inbound links. And quality sites only link to quality content.

## 6. EXPERTISE

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# Demonstrate Your Expertise

Rewriting manufacturers' product descriptions to make them more original is one thing, but to really stand out you're going to need to show off the things you know that your customers don't.

Useful information that isn't common knowledge is not only valuable to you, but will encourage potential customers and will encourage others in your field to link to you.

One way to approach writing a product description rich in useful information is to think about it like writing a magazine article. Magazines, whether print or online, aren't selling products directly but they want to provide readers with the information they need to make informed buying decisions.

A technology site might review the latest smartphone, and a motoring website the latest family saloon, but they won't just rattle off a list of specifications. They'll provide insights into the product that you won't get from a simple spec sheet.

## Why it matters

Ultimately people are paying you for your products not your knowledge, so don't be afraid to give what you know away for free as it will boost your sales.



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## 7. LINK BAIT

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# Baiting your Links



Linkbait might have negative connotations in the world of SEO but it is a perfectly legitimate tactic, and one that can seriously improve traffic to your ecommerce store.

If you have knowledge that can't be found anywhere else, or think you can present in a better way, then it's time to share it. If you're writing about something that has already been well-covered, then there are a couple of key ways you can show your expertise in a more original way.

One way to add value to your descriptions and demonstrate knowledge of your products is to offer some kind of resource that will help people to use your product.

This could take the form of a top ten list (for example, top ten microwave recipes for white goods sellers) or even an instructional video. And showing off your knowledge in a blog is another strong tactic.

## Why it matters

While this is a more indirect way, and requires a store to have a blog first, it can draw people to your site who might not be looking to buy something and convert them into customers.

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## 8. KNOWING YOUR AUDIENCE

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# Who are you talking to?



If your niche is very specific, say you're selling decorative teapots or customised skateboards, then you'll probably already know who your audience is. However, if you have a more varied inventory of goods, or sell a product that has broad appeal, then it might be less easy to determine the demographic, or demographics, you should be targeting.

Established businesses will have less work to do as they'll either already be aware of their audience or have enough information at their fingertips to quickly come to some conclusions.

Existing customers can be surveyed for their opinion and feedback, while pages that are already performing well will offer guidance on tone and style for pages that are under-performing.

For startups it's less easy to establish the right tone of voice and determine the keywords you should be using for your product descriptions. A good starting point is gathering feedback from family, friends and the people you do business with. It's also worth finding someone who's already been successful in a similar niche to you and see the audience they're targeting, the tone of voice they use and the keywords they rank well for.

Another tactic is to put yourself in a potential customer's shoes, if you were buying your product what factors would make you want to buy it?

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## 8. KNOWING YOUR AUDIENCE (CONT.)

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Social media is also your friend when it comes to gathering feedback. Whether it's through direct interactions on your social media accounts, or through likes, shares and comments on your product pages, you'll be able to assess what's working while improving social media engagement.

### Why it matters

Whether you're well-established or just starting out, Google Analytics can be a valuable source of information about who your audience is, showing where they came from, what they looked at and what their response was.

### We hope you enjoyed this ebook

If you'd like any further advice on content marketing please see the related articles in the [news section](#) of our website or why not [send us a message](#).

We're a friendly bunch and would love to hear from you.

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