

# What No One Told You About How Search Engines Work

by  
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Elgé Premeau, the eMarketing Strategist, shows you how to attract clients via the internet. Custom designed for your business, she creates internet marketing strategy, infrastructure and content that appeals to your target markets. She never loses sight of the fact that the high ranking websites, eNewsletters, blogs, info products and social networking programs she creates must result in income for you . Elgé is a life-long learner and has made it her personal mission to explain doing business online in plain English. [www.eMarketingStrategist.com](http://www.eMarketingStrategist.com).

## Introduction

There are a lot of things about doing business online that internet marketing experts assume you know but no one takes the time to explain.

I may be an internet marketing expert now but 10 years ago I wasn't. I remember the frustration of not being able to find a simple answer to a question like "How do search engines work?" Over the years, I have made it my mission to identify the fundamentals of doing business online, take the "geek speak" that's all over the internet and translate it into plain English.

In this article you will learn how a search engine works, the important components of an actual search and the top misconceptions people have about search engines. It's important to understand these concepts and misperceptions because uneducated or unethical internet marketing consultants use the general public's lack of knowledge to their advantage. When you know how the internet really works, you're more likely to make smart online marketing decisions.

# How Search Engines Work

Given the immense size of the internet, it's hard to believe there was a time when search engines relied solely on humans to decide what to rank a web page for and where to place it in the search results. Website owners submitted their sites to directories and a directory employee decided which category to put the site in. With the exponential growth of the internet, it wasn't long before this system became impractical. The human system has been mostly abandoned now in favor of crawlers.

A crawler-based search engine uses a complex mathematical algorithm to decide what a webpage is about and where to position that page in the search results. Search engine algorithms are kind of like the recipe for Coke or Pepsi; each company has its own closely guarded recipe it doesn't share with anyone.

A crawler-based search engine has three main components: the crawler (also called the spider), the index and the search engine software.

- The **crawler** is a computer program that reads the source of the web page, scanning text and following links to other pages on the site. What the crawler/spider looks at and how much weight it gives to each component depends on that particular search engine's algorithm. The findings go into the index.
- The **index** is like a huge book with every page the spider has found. Because there are so many web pages on the internet (with several billion more added every day), it can take up to a few weeks for a spider to crawl and index a site. Until a page has been indexed, it's not available in the search results.
- The third part of a crawler-based search engine is the actual **search software**, Google for example. You put a search term into Google, and it sifts through all the pages in the index and displays what it thinks are the most relevant results for your search term.

As a business owner trying to get people to your website, your main concern is the crawler. You want it to find you, and you want to give the crawler all the information it needs to rank your website for the search terms your customers use.

# Anatomy of a Web Search

The web page that displays your search results is called the “search engine results page” or SERP for short. You might not realize that the search engine results page contains clues as to how easy or difficult it will be to rank for a certain key phrase. However, for that data to be of any use you have to understand what it is telling you.

On the following page is a picture of a search engine result page. The colored text below corresponds to the colored boxes on the next page. I recommend looking at them side-by-side so you can see which explanation goes with which section.

## #1 - Search Term (aka Key Phrase)

This is the word or phrase you are researching. The terms “search term” or “key phrase” are pretty much interchangeable. The primary difference between the two depends on what end of the transaction you’re on. When you’re searching for something, it’s a search term. When you’re a business owner trying to get your website to rank for it, it’s a key phrase.

## #2 - Results

“Results 1- 10 of 5,180,000” means you are looking at the first page of results and there are 5,180,000 possible results for the search term “growing dahlias.” When you go to the second page, you will be looking at Results 11 – 20 of 5,180,000. The third page will display results 21 – 30...you get the idea.



When people see that there are over 5 million results they tend to think “Oh no! I’m competing against 5 million other websites! That’s not true. What this number REALLY means is that there are over 5 million web pages with the words “growing” and “dahlias” *anywhere on the page*. Most of the pages with “growing” on them have nothing to do with dahlias so they are not really competition.

## #3 - Sponsored Link

If you run a Google Adwords campaign, your ad could show up either across the top or down the right-hand column. That’s why there are two #3’s in the SERP image on the next page. Where your ad is displayed depends on how many Advertisers there are and how much you are willing to pay to get your ad shown.

## #4 - Organic Search Results

The results in the main section of the SERP are commonly called “organic search results.” Unlike the Sponsored Links, the pages listed here did not pay to be here – at least not directly. The website owner may have paid someone to help improve their website’s rankings or the page could just be the most pertinent result for the search term used.

growing dahlias - Google S... x

http://www.google.com/search?source=ig&hl=en&rlz=&q=growing+dahlias&aq=f&oq=&aqi=g1

Web Images Videos Maps News Shopping Gmail more ▾ Web History Search settings Sign in

**#1**

Google  Search [Advanced Search](#)

**#2**

Web [Show options...](#) Results 1 - 10 of about 5,180,000 for growing dahlias. (0.27 seconds)

**Growing Dahlias #3** Sponsored Link  
[www.Dahlias.com](http://www.Dahlias.com) You Won't Find A Better Selection All Orders \$50+ Get Free Gift!

**Planting, Growing and Caring for Dahlias #4**  
 A 'how to' guide to the care, **growing**, and propagation of **Dahlia** plants, with tips on planting, digging and winter storing.  
[www.thegardenhelper.com/dahlia.html](http://www.thegardenhelper.com/dahlia.html) - [Cached](#)

**Growing Dahlias**  
 The high point of **growing dahlias** is enjoying the flowers. They may appear any time in July, depending upon the varieties and types you're **growing**. ...  
[www.extension.umn.edu/distribution/horticulture/dg1115.html](http://www.extension.umn.edu/distribution/horticulture/dg1115.html) - [Cached](#)

**How to Grow Dahlias**  
**Growing dahlias** from seed can be fun! Mixed seed will produce all kinds of flowers in an array of colors. Start by spreading potting soil mix in a low, ...  
[www.dahlias.com/howtogrowdahlias.aspx](http://www.dahlias.com/howtogrowdahlias.aspx) - [Cached](#)

**How to grow dahlias, guide to dahlia selection and planting and ...**  
 Guide to **growing dahlias**. **Dahlia growing** information. How, when and where to plant **dahlias**. Garden **dahlia growing** and variety selection of **dahlias**.  
[cgdahlias.com/dahlia\\_growing\\_tips.html](http://cgdahlias.com/dahlia_growing_tips.html) - [Cached](#)

**Dahlia.com - Dahlia Growing Tips, Dahlia Buying Resources, Dahlia ...**  
 Hamilton **Dahlia** Farms is located in the fertile sandy loam farm country near Holland, Michigan. Founder, Harvey Koop started **growing dahlias** in 1950 and ...  
[www.dahlia.com/](http://www.dahlia.com/) - [Cached](#)

**Dahlia Growing Tips - Dahlia.com - Dahlia Growing Tips, Dahlia ...**  
 One pinching is sufficient for most **dahlias**; small **growing** types can be given an additional pinching. Tall-**growing dahlias** should be staked to support the ...  
[www.dahlia.com/dahliatips.html](http://www.dahlia.com/dahliatips.html) - [Cached](#)

**Growing Dahlias, HYG-1245-92**  
 They are also thought to require a great deal of care. **Dahlias** require some special care, especially lifting for winter storage. However, with minimum.  
[ohioline.osu.edu/hyg-fact/1000/1245.html](http://ohioline.osu.edu/hyg-fact/1000/1245.html) - [Cached](#)

**How to grow Dahlias**  
 Finally a single source for **Dahlias** for the home owner.  
[www.backyardgardener.com/plants/gdal.html](http://www.backyardgardener.com/plants/gdal.html) - [Cached](#)

**Dahlia bulbs, dahlia flowers, dahlia pictures, growing dahlias**  
 Buy **Dahlia** Tubers Online at Dan's **Dahlias** - Award winning **dahlias** since 1983. 100% satisfaction guaranteed. [Shop our online catalog to find the perfect](#)

**Sponsored Links #3**

**Buy Quality Dahlia Tubers**  
 Guaranteed Wholesale and Retail **Dahlias** from Hamilton **Dahlia** Farm!  
[store.hamiltondahliafarm.com](http://store.hamiltondahliafarm.com)

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**Dahlias** Direct from the Grower  
 Free Shipping on \$ 50.00 orders  
[www.dahliabarn.com](http://www.dahliabarn.com)

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[www.Shopping.com/Home\\_Furnishing](http://www.Shopping.com/Home_Furnishing)

[See your ad here >](#)

# Top 6 Misconceptions about Search Engines

## 1: Search Engines Consider Your Website as a Whole

Search Engines Don't See Your WEBSITE. They See Your WEB PAGES. Think of it as if your website is an anthill. When you look at your website, you see the entire ant hill. Search engines, however, see all the individual ants and each "ant" gets its own ranking.

## 2: You Have One Home Page

Since the search engines consider each page on its own merits, any page on your site could be the first page a new visitor lands on. That's why you need to look at each page and ask yourself, "If this were my entry point to this website, could I find what I'm looking for from here?"

Website owners tend to assume visitors start on the home page and drill down from there. Because of how search engines work, this is rarely the case. While your home page might rank well for your company name and a few generic search terms, your internal pages with rank for highly specific search terms. For example if your website sells running shoes, your home page might rank for "running shoes" but if someone searches on "men's Mizuno Wave running shoe" the first page of your site they land on will likely be a deep internal page.

## 3: Your Home Page Is the Highest Ranking Page

While your home page may rank for your company name and a few other key phrases, it won't rank for all the key phrases you want to target. It's important to know which pages on your site are ranking for your most important key phrases. If your Contact Us page or Terms of Service is the highest ranking page for your main service, that's a problem. You want your Services pages to rank for the key phrases that describe what you do.

## 4: Search Engines Care about What You Want

Search engines are in the business of giving searchers what they want. They are NOT in the business of helping you market your business. You are not their customer. Searchers are their customers. This may seem obvious, but business owners lose sight of this point when they complain about not ranking for a search term that isn't on their website. If your biggest selling product is "shiny blue widgets," then the words "shiny blue widgets" need to be all over your website.

## 5: There Are Experts Who Know for Sure What the Search Engines Are Looking for

Remember that algorithm described above in "How Search Engines Work"? Each search engine's algorithm is like a secret recipe. Coke and Pepsi don't share trade secrets and search engines don't, either. Although there are a lot of smart people trying to figure it out, no one knows for sure what the search engines are looking for and how much weight they give each factor they consider.

# The Biggest Misconception About Search Engines?

## 6: Improving Your Website's Rankings Is Hard

Although the search engines don't share what factors they consider and how much weight they give each one, a lot of smart people have spent a lot of time trying to figure out what it takes to get to the #1 spot in the search results. As a result, we have a pretty good idea of what you need to do to give your website every chance to rank well.

In the most basic sense, improving your website's rankings boils down to adding more pages to your site and getting more links to your site. The tricky part is knowing how to do this in a way that works to your benefit. As they say, "the devil is in the details."

There are plenty of books that explain how to improve your rankings; however, they tend to assume you want to become a search engine optimization expert. I haven't found any that are written in plain English for people who just want to learn enough to make smart marketing decisions. That's why I wrote "**Search Engine Optimization in Plain English: The 5 Building Blocks of Higher Rankings.**" In it I answer questions like:

- Why doesn't my website show up in the search results?
- What IS "search engine optimization"?
- What do the search engines see when they look at my website?
- How should I program my site to give it every opportunity to rank well?
- What can I do if my website isn't built the way the search engines want?

In "**Search Engine Optimization in Plain English**" I also:

- Reveal the games self proclaimed search engine optimization "experts" play to get you to pay for unnecessary services
- Show you how to organize your website for better rankings
- Show you how to improve your chances of ranking well by adding your key phrases to your web pages
- Explain how to use linking to your advantage
- Provide hand picked resources to help you learn more, fast.

Best of all?

**Search Engine Optimization in Plain English is free!**

Download your copy at

[www.eMarketingStrategist.com](http://www.eMarketingStrategist.com)