

What are the most common search engine optimization mistakes that keep cropping up? Here are 10 of the most shameful SEO mistakes.

Do you remember the house that Jack built? No, I can't remember much about the nursery rhyme either, other than it became less about Jack's house as each of the inhabitants ate one another...

When webmasters build a site, often they get carried away with the design or rankings, forgetting SEO best practices that will safeguard the integrity of their site.

If you want the website that you built to stand the test of time, don't make these terrible SEO mistakes. Or your site will be eaten up by the next Google Penguin update.

# Top 10 shameful SEO mistakes



Top image courtesy: [https://www.facebook.com/TheTreasureTree?hc\\_location=timeline](https://www.facebook.com/TheTreasureTree?hc_location=timeline)

Over the past 13 years, [Receptional](#) have carried out numerous SEO audits for a variety of clients' websites. And in that time, we've seen it all. From poor website copy to outrageous attempts to manipulate Google PageRank, I've whittled the main offenders down to just ten.



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## 2 Broken links

A broken link is the name given to a hyperlink that no longer points to its intended destination. You've been won over by an article's sales spiel and you're desperate to see what's on the other side of the link, like the example below:



Obviously anybody in their right mind would click a link that promised to make look 10 years younger, and then, argh! It's broken!

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Sites naturally accumulate broken links: however they're a major nuisance to your visitors and Google doesn't like them either. But, if they're so natural, why does Google penalize you for them?

It's because bad links will earn you a bad reputation. And people with online reputations aren't viewed as authorities on anything (apart from getting bad reputations, that is).

Anyway, Google downgrades rankings of sites with lots of issues like this, so don't be a rebel without a cause. Do some regular housekeeping on your site.

## 3 Copied copy

Do you remember instances from your school days when a student copied another student's work? It was considered the sin of all sins. There were sharp intakes of breath when little Johnny cheats-a-lot stole Perfect-Pat-with-a-cherry-on-top's work.

When performing SEO audits for clients' websites it's common to find that another website has ripped off all of their original content. Or worse still, it's the other way round.

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Crafting unique, compelling copy can seem like a tall order. But stealing it from a competitor is not only illegal: Google can push your site so far down the rankings that no-one will ever find it, and in severe cases, de-index the whole website, so just don't do it.

## 4 Duplicate content



I'm talking about duplication within your own site, not stealing copy from other websites. Duplication happens in a number of forms so I've separated two of the most common types below.

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Luckily these issues are easily solved, so don't take an axe to your site just like that!

## 4 Duplicate content that appears in more than one location

This type of duplication is detrimental to SEO, but often happens on large sites or ecommerce sites that have several pages listing the same set of products. Multiple pages with the same content present a search engine with a number of problems:

- Which version should I retrieve for the search query?
- Which versions should I include/exclude from my indices?
- Which version should I direct the link juice to? Or should I just spread it across the variations?

All of the above can cause lower rankings and a loss in traffic.

The most effective method to combat this is to implement 301 redirect rules from the lower quality pages to the preferred web page.

## Non unique title tags and meta descriptions



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This is a repeat offender. I regularly see websites with the same page titles on many, if not all of their web pages.

Sometimes CMSs (content management systems like Drupal and Joomla) auto-generate page titles, but that doesn't mean you should let this continue. Many SEOs will tell you the title tag is one of the most important on-page SEO factors. Because it's true!

Page titles should be unique and reflect the content of the web page so that:

- A search engine crawler can index it correctly
- It tells a searcher that your content is relevant to what they're looking for
- It makes sense and looks click-worthy in tweets

Also, you shouldn't overlook meta descriptions. They're your web page's sales pitch in the search results, so you should aim to make these as persuasive and descriptive as possible within the 160 character limit.

## 5 Links from non-credible sources



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Links to your site are like votes of confidence. Imagine George Foreman telling you that you have a pretty good right hook. You'd feel like a champ. It's a real compliment coming from someone who actually knows a thing or two about boxing.

This is the type of quality that you should focus your link building efforts on. Although it's highly unlikely that I, a seven stone female, would be a good match for a heavyweight champion, it will be a lot easier for you to get a link from a credible source related to your industry.

Although links from quality sites are harder to get than links from directories, quantity should not be a substitute for quality. A link from an authoritative blog is more likely to boost your rankings and traffic than a couple of hundred links from low quality sources.

## 6 Meta keyword tags

Webmasters who still use meta keywords are like someone insisting their nylon tracksuit is a credible fashion statement. At one point, long ago, search engine algorithms took meta keywords into account, but now they have a negligible impact on SEO.

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Meta keywords can be found in the header element in a website's HTML code:

```
<meta name="keywords" content="Buy wine online , buy cheap wine online ,
```

They're an inadvertent way of publicizing your digital strategy to rivals who can take the keywords, input them into a pay per click campaign and steal your visits, so don't use them. Ever.

## 7. Avoiding analytics



*Image*

*courtesy:*

[http://doyoubelieveindog.blogspot.co.uk/2012\\_10\\_01\\_archive.html](http://doyoubelieveindog.blogspot.co.uk/2012_10_01_archive.html)

After you've implemented your terrible tactics, why not neglect to measure your website's data?

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Seriously, if you're not measuring your website's data then you cannot possibly have any business objectives. Surely you'll want to know which areas of your site are performing well and not so well in order to grow and optimize your site better?

Setting up conversion goals and weekly reports are only the beginning. You'll need to monitor which phrases are converting, rather than terms that are driving most traffic.

Make sure you have Google Analytics and Google Webmaster Tools configured to your website, so you're able to analyze your data in specific detail.

## 8. Not optimized with the right keywords

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Image courtesy: <http://www.vulgart.be/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/Magritte-La-trahison-de-image.jpg>

Once you've built your website or blog, you'll need to populate your pages with words that not only suit the purpose of your site and match the products you sell: they should also be the words that reflect what people actually type into search engines.

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So if you're a party planner, for example, you probably don't want to describe yourself as an "organizer of social gatherings" on your site. To make sure that you're using the keywords that people are actually search with, check out the tools like [Semrush.com](#) or [Ahrefs](#)

It may seem obvious to write website copy that will reflect your customers' vocabulary, but you'd be surprised how many companies try to rank for totally unrelated keywords. They're either enormous fans of Magritte or they REALLY don't want people to visit their site.

Aim to be as specific as possible. Using broad keywords may yield large amounts of visits but it may not be the type of traffic that converts.

Read [The long tail of keyword research \(and why single keywords are for losers\)](#) to find out about being specific.

## 9 Not allowing your site to be crawled

Matt Cutts, Head of Search Spam at Google, recently cited this as one of the biggest mistakes people make when creating their websites.

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In a [video about basic SEO mistakes](#) Cutts explains that if you make your content difficult for a search engine crawler to find, Google can't index it and won't rank it.

By configuring [Google](#) and [Bing Webmaster Tools](#) to your site, accessibility to it is constantly monitored.

## 10 Irrelevant anchor text links

Anchor text is the name given to the clickable hyperlink text on a web page.

Creating cleverly phrased anchor text links is a coveted skill in the SEO world because they're the main source of food for a search engine crawler.

Going from page to page, a crawler uses links as indicators of the theme of the pages it's heading to – and how to rank them. So whenever I see *click here* used as an anchor text link, I see a wasted opportunity to build a link.