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The SEO Book for WordPress 2.5 Blogs

JS-Kit

iceberg software evolved.

Second | Brain ™
beta

http://js-kit.com/   http://www.geticeberg.com/   http://secondbrain.com/

Pamil VISIONS

Table of contents:

Pamil VISIONS

The SEO Book for WordPress Blogs
By Mihaela Lica

Since the release of v2.5 many things have changed for WordPress users. While SEO still has some basic rules, optimizing a WordPress blog is getting easier as new plugins are added and upgraded.

The most important change in WordPress v2.5 (and above) is the new improved dashboard. As with all change this revision triggered much controversy, pros, cons and confusion. Those users familiar with the previous versions of WordPress found it hard to adapt to the new interface, and many beginners found the navigation less intuitive than they expected.

As any SEO professional would tell you, be forewarned that despite the "social media traffic" generated through bookmarking sites and social networks like digg, StumbleUpon, mixx, Second Brain and so on, search engine optimization is still important.

Poorly optimized sites don't do well in social networking, for obvious reasons you'll discover on subsequent pages. The success equation is simple: poor SEO = wasted traffic = poor conversions (lost sales).

This short eBook will reveal the most important SEO aspects for WordPress blogs (and for any other blog or website in general).

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Chapter 1: Hosting

WordPress is the best content management system for blogs and it can also make a decent CMS for standard websites. However, there are some "minor details" any WordPress user needs to understand before reading further.

There are basically two blog solutions offered by WordPress: a CMS software script to download free and use on your own domain, or a free WordPress account where you can signup to create a free blog. However this would be a WordPress hosted blog, which has less flexibility than a professional hosted blog. This is more difficult to optimize for the search engines and according to WordPress TOS, Automattic (WordPress parent company) can terminate your account at any time.

Blogs on wordpress.com will be hosted on subdomains of wordpress.com; subdomains created automatically from your user dashboard. These are ideal to "get your feet wet" if you are new to blogging, but are not suited for professional bloggers.

To run WordPress, your web host needs PhP v 4.3 or greater and MySQL v 4.0 or greater.

Choosing a professional web host and a branded domain for your blog are the best strategy for establishing your online presence.

It is not difficult to choose a host: simply ask the web host, before signing up for a contract, if they fulfill the minimum requirements to host WordPress-based blogs.

WordPress.org recommends a few web hosting companies, but I suggest you choose an even better deal and select a Speedy hosting plan from Top Hosting Center. The plan is not only the most affordable on the market, but it also has great features: WordPress 2.5 auto-install and upgrade, 1 TB disk storage, 33 TB monthly bandwidth, free domain with free dedicated IP, PHP 4/5, unlimited MySQL databases, unlimited email accounts, unlimited domain and subdomain hosting, unlimited FTP, Linux or Windows hosting, dedicated 24/7 live support - all for $ 6.75 per month.

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I recommend Speedy hosting particularly for the dedicated IP feature, which from an SEO perspective makes a huge difference: first it suggests to the search engines that your site is professional. There are different opinions about the whole dedicated IP issue, but the most important aspect is that private SSL certificates are not permitted for sites hosted on a shared IP. If you want to sell products on your site (even an eBook) you should get a hosting plan with a dedicated IP.

To summarize:

WordPress.org provides the software script you need to download and install on your own hosting platform. This should look like: www.yourdomain.com and this eBook will cover the procedures for these users.

WordPress.com provides the free web space for you to signup and create a blog on a wordpress.com subdomain. This will look like http://yourname.wordpress.com and wordpress.com users can also apply the basic SEO strategies in the next chapters accordingly.

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Chapter 2: Installing WordPress and Keeping Your Site W3C Compliant

Some web hosts, especially the ones recommended by WordPress.org and THC (which is my personal recommendation) offer web hosting accounts with the latest WordPress version on auto-install.

This means that you simply need to log into your account control panel for your hosting preferences (account provided by your web host) and click on the button that will automatically install WordPress for you.

Upgrading WordPress with these hosts is usually as simple as the installation process – an upgrade button is almost always present.

When you install WordPress on your domain, remember that it's preferable that you install it in the root directory of your domain or subdomain and not in a folder on your domain. The URL of the homepage should then look like this:

www.yoursite.com or www.site.yoursite.com

and *not* like this: www.yoursite.com/wordpress/

You can choose a theme for your blog from the WordPress.net library, or browse the web for other free themes. Upload your chosen theme into the /wp-content/themes/ folder on your server then go to your WordPress Dashboard > Design > Themes to activate it:

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Choose your favorite theme from those available by simply clicking on the theme's screenshot.

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Choose a W3C compliant theme that respects the web standards WordPress adheres to. This is not mandatory, but it will certainly **help your search engine positioning in the near future**.

There are SEOs who debate the statement above, but I strongly recommend that you keep your blog W3C compliant. Compliant sites are usually accessible, or at least close to being accessible. Even Google treats accessible sites preferentially (see Google Accessible Search). In time, as the search algorithms change, the search engines will start paying more attention to factors people tend to ignore today: usability, accessibility and W3C compliance. These are all signs of quality, and since the search engines want to deliver quality results for their users, W3C compliant sites will eventually rise above those that do not adhere to web standards.

To keep a site W3C compliant you have to take care that at least the html code validates. Of course, this will be difficult for those with limited html coding skills, and while it will not keep the site error free, the WordPress formatting setting **"WordPress should correct invalidly nested XHTML automatically"** will keep the number of errors to a minimum. Be careful, with this option selected. Embedding YouTube videos and other scripts could generate blog template formatting problems. You have to know how to correctly embed videos to solve this problem.

To select **"WordPress should correct invalidly nested XHTML automatically"** go to Settings > Writing as in the image below:

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This solves some of the html validation problems.

To correctly embed videos in your blog you can use Viper's Video Quicktags, which is a WordPress 2.0 or higher supported plugin. This plugin supports YouTube, Google Video, IFILM, Metacafe, MySpace and Vimeo.

Download the plugin to your computer, unzip and upload the files into your /wp-content/plugins/ file on your server. For example, using an FTP client software (I use Total Commander which is a free file management software with built-in FTP client). After the upload, go to your WordPress dashboard in Plugins to activate the plugin, then go to Settings > Video Quicktags to configure your plugin:

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Embedding videos and flash are the trickiest issues a beginner has to face without this handy plugin. Fortunately there are many plugins available for any other type of problem and they are all there to make WordPress the most flexible blog content management system on the Web.

To easily upgrade WordPress when a new release is out, use the wordpress-automatic-upgrade plugin (automatic download) from Techie Buzz. Unzip and upload into your WordPress wp-content/plugins/ folder on your server using an FTP client.

Activate the plugin from Dashboard > Plugins.

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Next go to Wordpress Automatic Upgrade to upgrade to the latest WordPress version.

For many beginners even the FTP notion is scary. It shouldn't be. There are many FTP clients available for free. As I said, I use Total Commander as it is easy and flexible.

If you want to use the same tool, download Total Commander from Ghisler.com, unzip and install on your PC.

To learn how to use all features of Total Commander, see the tutorial here.

To set up the FTP connection to your blog, open Total Commander > Net > FTP Connect:
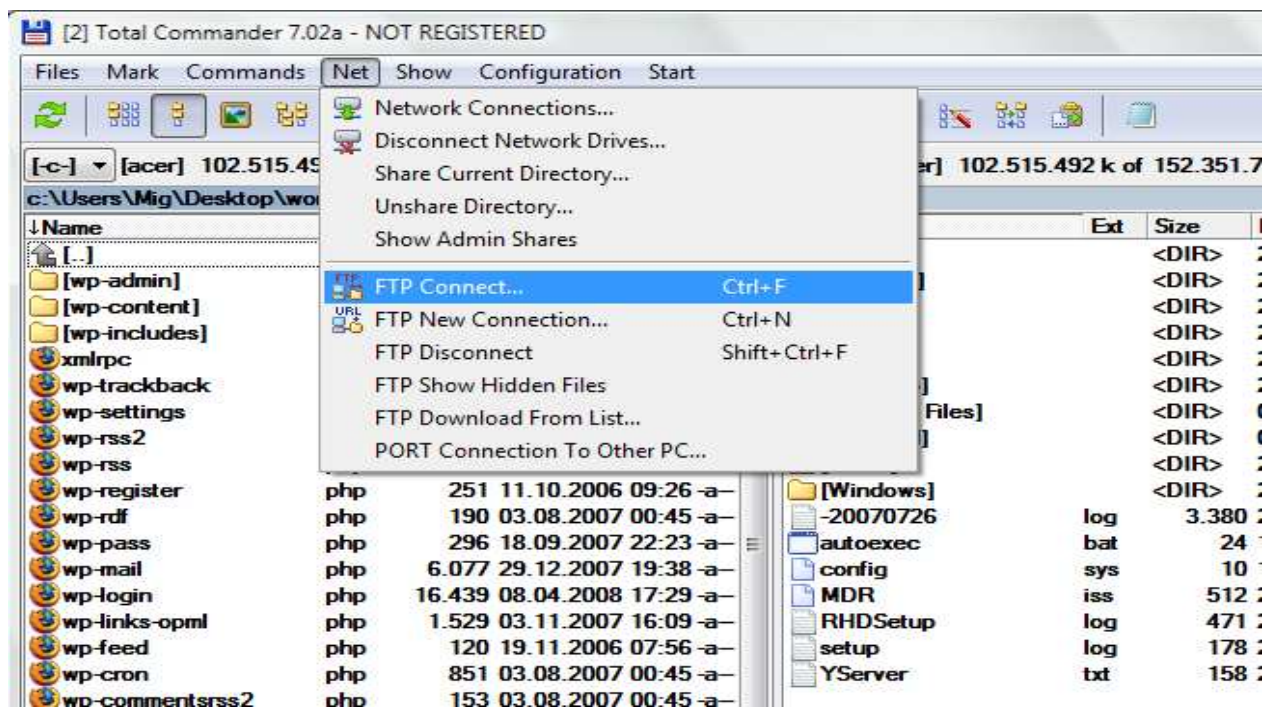
An empty window will pop up ("Connect to ftp server"):
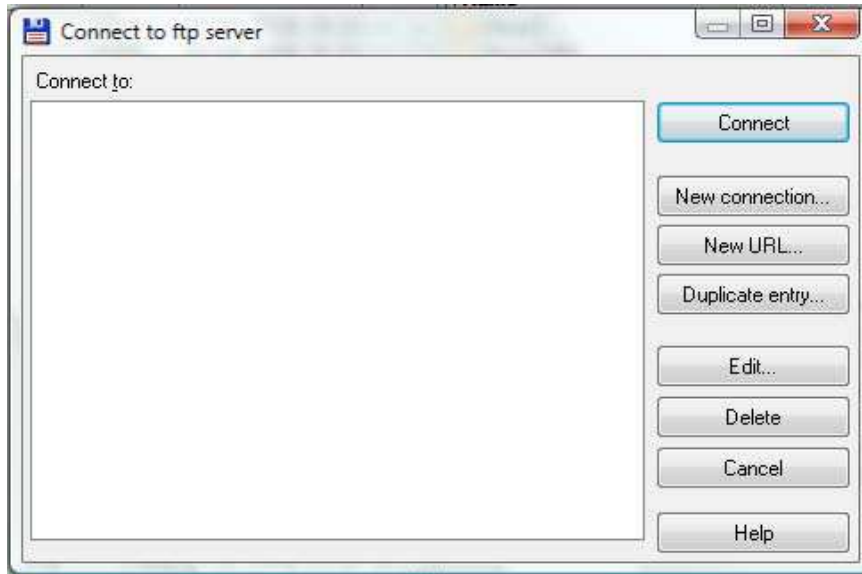
Click on "New connection…" and fill in the fields as follows:
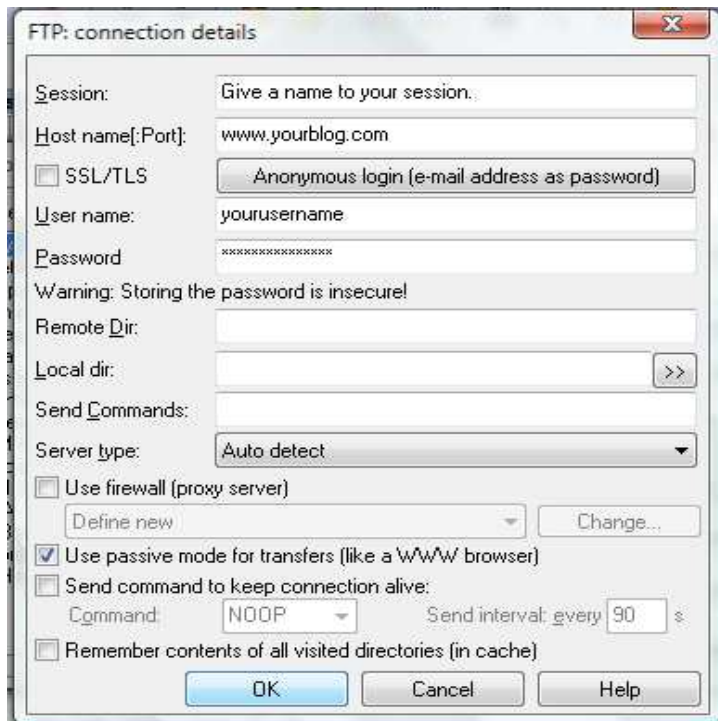
Click OK to end the setup. Now your session's name will appear in the "Connect to ftp server" window. Click on Connect (the first

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button, top right). Your computer is now connected with the FTP
server of your web host.

To upload anything on your FTP server, simply drag and drop files
from the source directory on your PC to the target directory on
your server. You can also select the files you want to copy, with
Insert or the mouse (Ctrl+Click).

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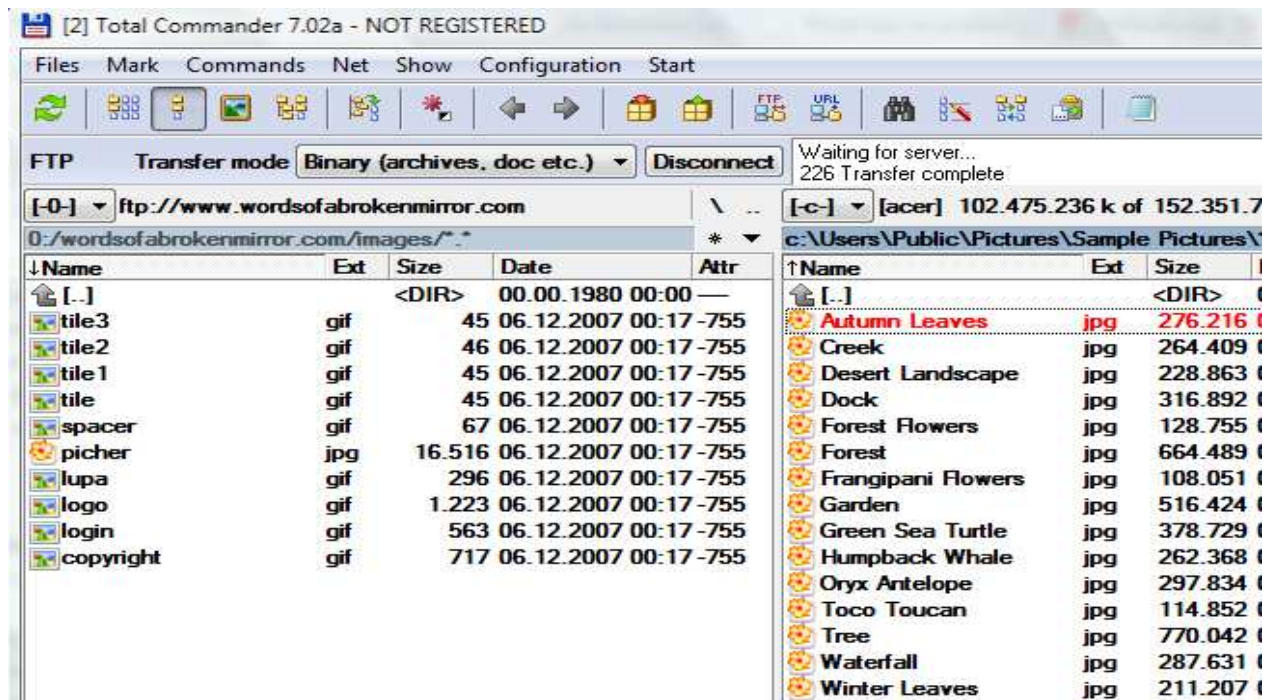
Chapter 3: Optimizing Permalinks

In my opinion optimizing permalinks is the first step after
finishing installing WordPress. By default, and many bloggers are
not aware of the problem, this is how WordPress defines your
URLs:
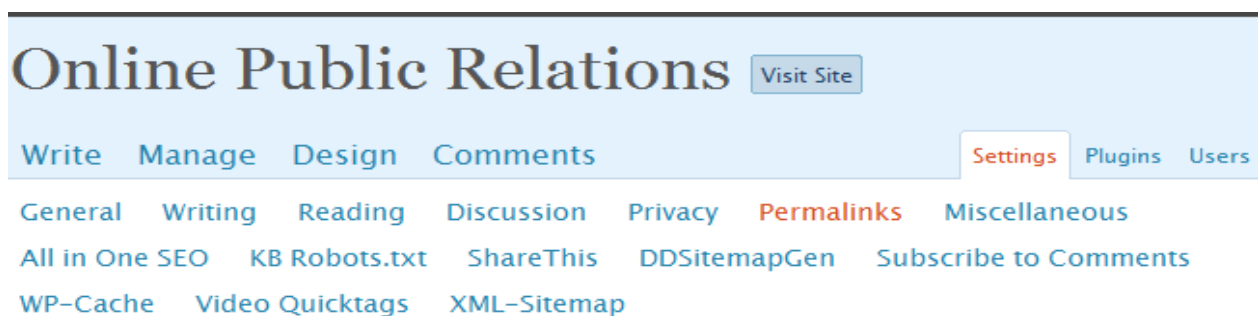
» **http://www.yourblog.com/?p=123**
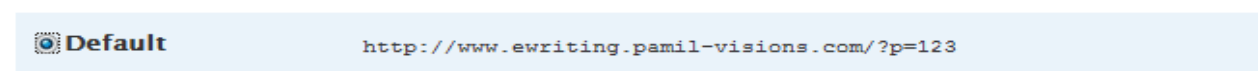
The search engines are able to index such URLs. However, from an
SEO point of view, this URL is meaningless. Not having relevant
keywords in the URL **lowers your chances of ranking well in the
SERPs (search engine positioning results)** for a specific search
query.

To customize the Permalinks with keywords, you go to your
Dashboard > Settings > Permalinks and select **Date and name based**
or type into the custom box the following code (to take out the
date from the URL): **/%postname%/**

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This is the most SEO friendly structure for the Permalinks. I keep the year/month/day structure just to remember when I wrote a specific entry. On some WordPress themes using just **/%postname%/** to define a permalink might cause some problems. Sometimes this command makes it impossible for the blogger to access the wp-admin folder or the stylesheets.

Avoid numeric URLs like

» **http://www.ewriting.pamil-visions.com/?p=123**

and

» **http://www.ewriting.pamil-visions.com/archives/123** at all costs.

If the title of your post (blog entry) is too long, you might have a problem. There are special situations when the search engines will penalize a blog entry for such a practice and send it to the supplemental results. To avoid this situation you could write a different **post slug** when you write your entry.

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Just go to `Dashboard > Write > Post` and write your post's title as you usually do. The permalink will appear automatically under your title. Click Edit to shorten the URL:
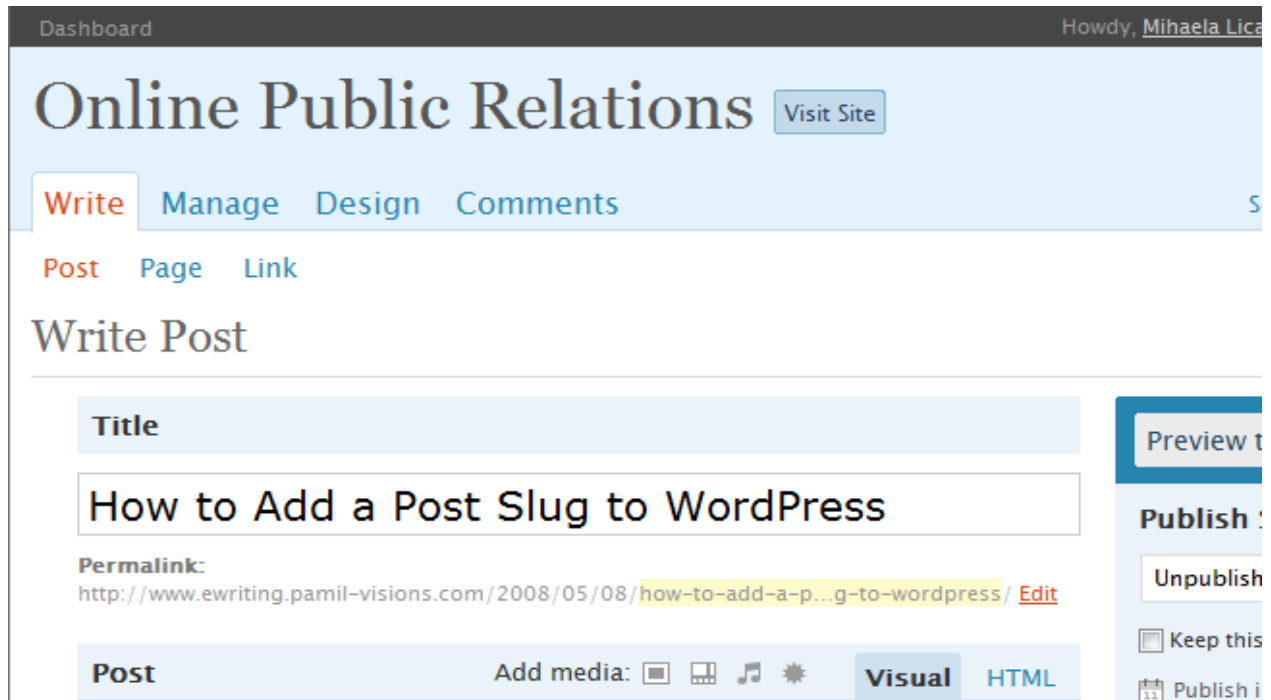
and type in **the most important keywords of your entry and save:**

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This will allow you to have a long title for your entry and a shorter URL:

Or for blogs using a shorter domain name and the **/%postname%/** permalink structure:
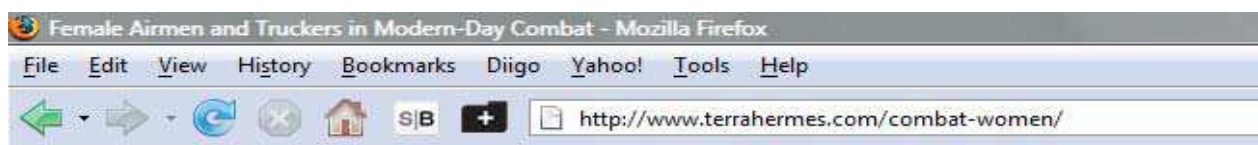
The technique has more advantages:

- It avoids the spamdexing penalty since you don't repeat the exact same keywords in both the page title and the URL.
- It provides the search engines with relevant information of what your post is all about.
- It reduces the risk of URL wrapping when sent in email.
- Short URLs are easier to write down and remember.

So keep your URLs short and if possible, static. No query strings like **/?p=123** and no other changes. However, if your blog is quite old, has many links and has a good Google PageRank (PR), any change in your URL structure might cause the loss of PR, rankings, links and valuable traffic.

Sometimes WordPress will give an error message when you try to change your permalink structure:

You should update your .htaccess now.

If your .htaccess file were <u>writable</u>, we could do this automatically, but it isn't so these are the mod_rewrite rules you should have in your .htaccess file.

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WordPress will give you the code in the text field below:

```
<IfModule mod_rewrite.c>
RewriteEngine On
RewriteBase /
RewriteCond %{REQUEST_FILENAME} !-f
RewriteCond %{REQUEST_FILENAME} !-d
RewriteRule . /index.php [L]
</IfModule>
```

Create an empty text document, paste the code and rename the document .htaccess. Then upload the new document in the WordPress root folder of your blog.

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Chapter 4: Basic SEO Techniques Made Easy

Just as it appears at the very top of your browser, on-site SEO starts with the page title. This is not a headline, or the visible title of an article, but the title displayed by the browser on the upper left corner of your screen.

The <title> tag is contained in the <head> section of an .html page. It is a stand-alone element and not really a meta tag, but it is the most important step you need to take in optimizing your website, whether it's a blog or static Web page.

This tag is what Google and the other search engines index in their results to link to your website.

It is the "first impression" and your only chance to make the Google user click on the result pointing to your website. This is a mirror of the quality you offer on your website.

By default WordPress shows a page title as Post Title: Name of the blog

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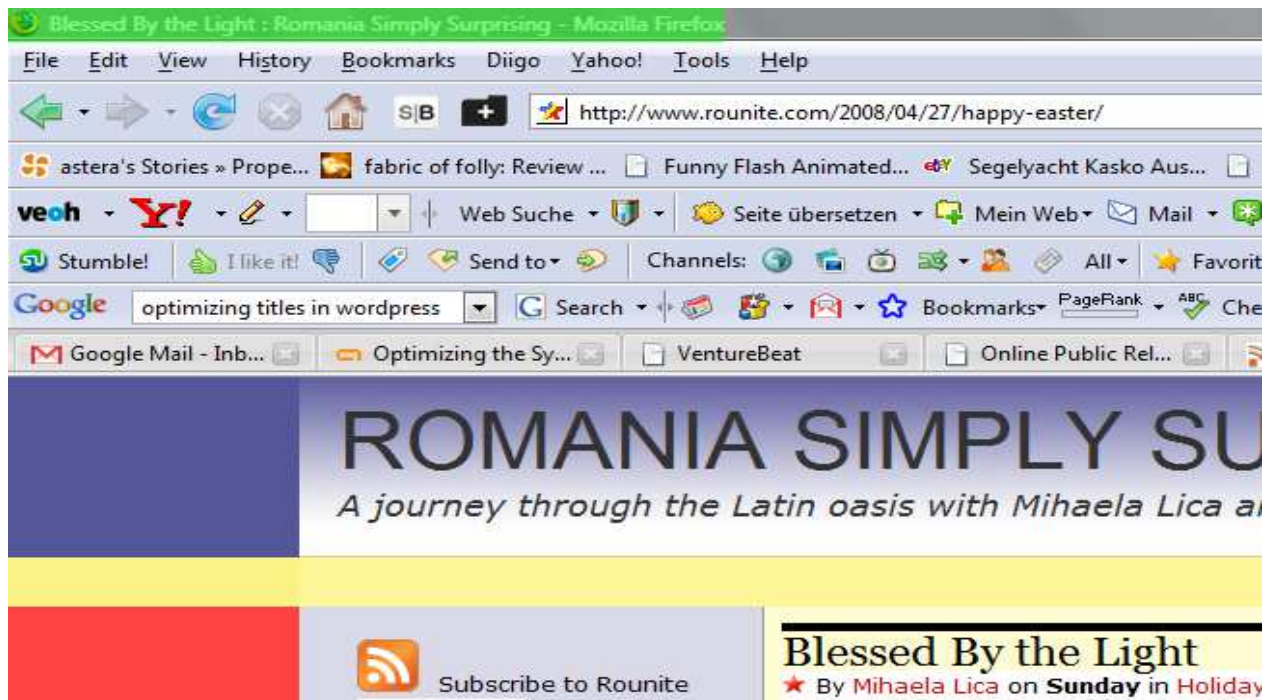
There is one more thing you should know: page titles should not be identical with the title of your blog entry. This is a little SEO trick that will help you get your pages indexed in the search engines with titles that are more appealing than the actual titles of the specific blog entries they refer to.
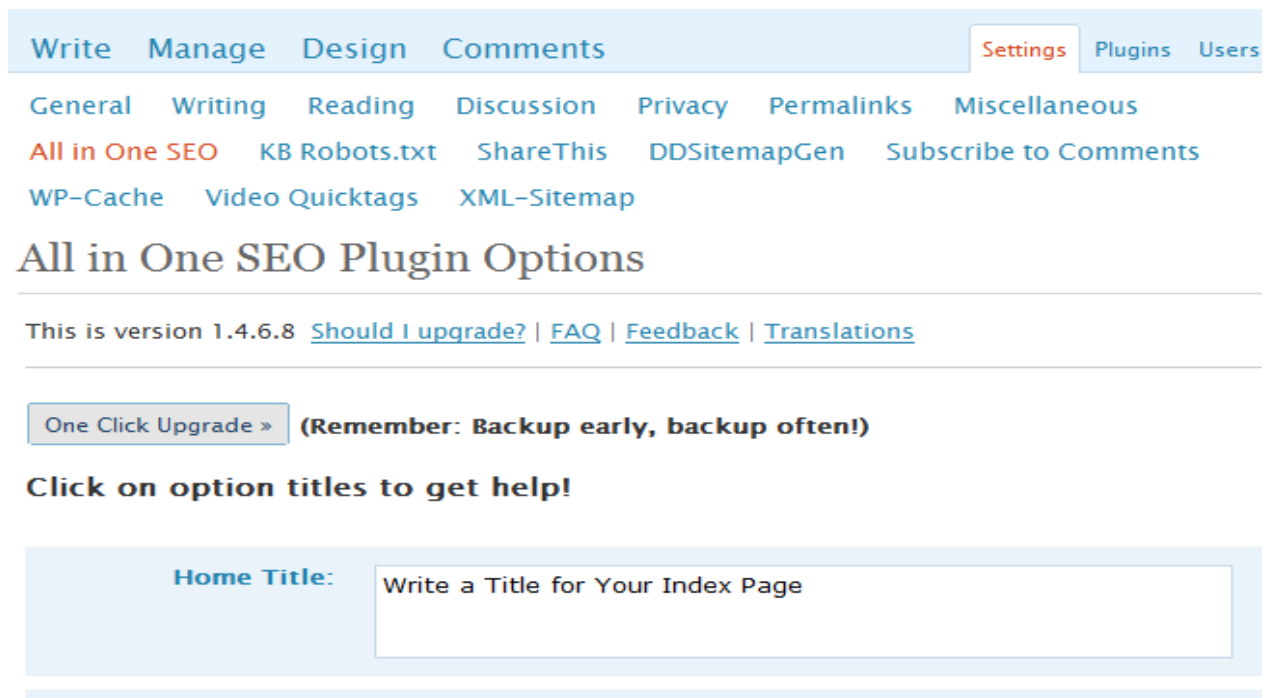
Here are some guidelines to write good page titles:

- *Do not stuff your page title with keywords.*

- *Do not write page titles that are longer than 67 characters (including spaces). It's OK if you do, but it is pointless. 67 is the maximum number of characters Google will index and if your page title is longer it will appear truncated in the search results. Yahoo! is more tolerant (about 76 characters) so if you optimize your site for Yahoo! feel free to go over the 67 limit.*

- *Write appealing page titles that summarize the content of the page.*

- *Use simple language and try to give a logical meaning to what you write: a natural flow of the language, even when you use keywords.*

Pamil VISIONS

It sounds fairly difficult to make WordPress display the titles
you want, doesn't it? Don't worry — it is not difficult. As I
said at the beginning of the eBook, there is a plugin for every
need, and this is the beauty of working with WordPress. So hurry
up and download the <u>All in One SEO Pack Plugin</u>.

Unzip and upload into your /wp-content/plugins/ folder, where, as
a matter of fact, you should upload all your plugins from now on.

Next, go to your WordPress Dashboard > Plugins and activate the
All in One SEO Pack. To configure your plugin, go to Dashboard >
Settings > All in One SEO and follow the next simple steps:

Write	Manage	Design	Comments		Settings	Plugins	Users

General   Writing   Reading   Discussion   Privacy   Permalinks   Miscellaneous

All in One SEO   KB Robots.txt   ShareThis   DDSitemapGen   Subscribe to Comments

WP-Cache   Video Quicktags   XML-Sitemap

All in One SEO Plugin Options

This is version 1.4.6.8 Should I upgrade? | FAQ | Feedback | Translations

One Click Upgrade » (Remember: Backup early, backup often!)

Click on option titles to get help!

Home Title: Write a Title for Your Index Page

Pamil VISIONS
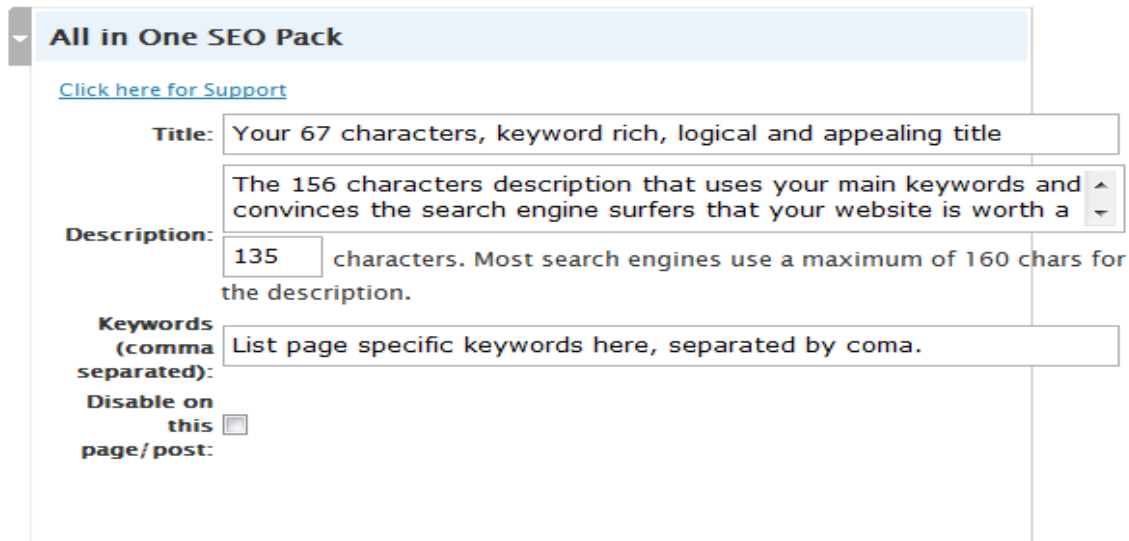
Home Description:	Write a keyword rich description for your blog. It has to make sense and to read well.
Home Keywords (comma separated):	write keywords, relevant keyphrases,
Rewrite Titles:	☑
Post Title Format:	%post_title%
Page Title Format:	%page_title% | %blog_title%
Category Title Format:	%category_title% | %blog_title%
Archive Title Format:	%date% | %blog_title%
Tag Title Format:	%tag% | %blog_title%
Search Title Format:	%search% | %blog_title%
Description Format:	%description%
404 Title Format:	Nothing found for %request_words%
Paged Format:	- Part %page%
Use Categories for META keywords:	☑
Use noindex for Categories:	☑
Use noindex for Archives:	☑

Click update options to save the new settings. These will define a unique title and meta description for your index page, enabling you to create different titles, different meta descriptions and different meta keywords tags for each other blog entry and blog page.

To write the ideal page titles for your each of your posts, you'll need to go in your Dashboard > Writing > Post and scroll down to All in One SEO Pack. Read my instructions in the fields and try to stick to the guidelines as closely as possible.

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All in One SEO Pack

Click here for Support

Title: Your 67 characters, keyword rich, logical and appealing title

Description: The 156 characters description that uses your main keywords and convinces the search engine surfers that your website is worth a

135 characters. Most search engines use a maximum of 160 chars for the description.

Keywords (comma separated): List page specific keywords here, separated by coma.

Disable on this page/post:

As I already explained, Google doesn't index page titles that are longer than 67 characters including spaces.

In the meta description case writing more than 156 characters including spaces is pointless too. 156 is Google's limit.

Sometimes the search engines do not display the meta description in their results, but a snippet of your page content. This is because the search engines are smart enough to recognize within your content the most relevant terms for a specific search query. This is also the undisputed proof that trying to trick the search engines is foolish.

When the search engines display a snippet of the content of the page as the description of your site, there is nothing you can do to make that description appealing - all you can do is write appealing Web copy every time.

However as the search engines show the meta description in their results, it is in your best interests to write it well. A good description will appeal to the surfers, making them click on your link, perhaps even bypassing the higher ranked search results in favor of yours.

Writing meta descriptions is not difficult at all:

Pamil VISIONS

- *The meta description tag needs to be page specific. Use a different one for every page of your site.*

- *Do not stuff it with keywords. DO use your main keywords as they occur naturally in the flow of the text.*

- *If they index it, they're not ignoring it. So the meta description tag does matter for the Search Engines. **Use it.***

If you write with SEO in mind, use the inverted pyramid style and make sure that the first paragraphs of your blog entries are keyword rich and relevant to the content of the page.

The inverted pyramid style is a broadly practiced journalistic style: start with the conclusion to capture the attention of the readers. This is more a summary of the news and acts like a teaser.

For example:

"The U.S. space shuttle Atlantis ended a two-day journey to the International Space Station on Sunday, slipping into a berthing port to deliver more solar-powered panels and a new crew member to the orbital outpost. **Full Article**"– Source: **Reuters**

You should be careful with the keyword density: if you use too many keywords, it might look like spamdexing and Google might penalize your site by not giving it the deserved SE rankings.

Write for your readers: use keywords as they occur naturally, and you'll be safe.

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Chapter 5: Avoiding the Duplicate Content Penalty

OK, this is going to be a difficult one but not impossible…

First of all: don't copy content from other sites. It is unethical and Google penalizes duplicate content. Although it will not ban your site from its results forever, Google will send the "guilty" entry to the supplemental results. Once you are there, it is difficult to come out.

The whole purpose of SEO is to optimize a site to rank naturally in the organic search engine results for relevant terms and relevant content. So, please, **don't copy**!

There are many similar titles on the Web: Top 10 SEO Mistakes, Top 10 Tips to… etc. Google shows less than half of these content pages in its results – precisely because it is trying to avoid duplicate pages.

So no matter how cool these Top 10 or Top 100 titles are, avoid them. Come on, it shouldn't be so difficult to come up with a nice, unique title! If you need help with your titles, use this headline analyzer to determine the emotional marketing value (EMV) of your title.

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"The SEO Book of Wordpress Blogs"

Your Headline's <u>EMV Score</u>:   **16.67%**

This score indicates that your headline has a total of 16.67%
Emotional Marketing Value (EMV) Words. To put that in perspective,
the English language contains approximately 20% EMV words.

And for comparison, most professional copywriters' headlines will have
30%-40% EMV Words in their headlines, while the most gifted
copywriters will have **50%-75%** EMV words in headlines.

A perfect score would be 100%, but that is rare unless your headline
is less than five words.

While the overall EMV score for your headline is 16.67%, your
headline also has the following predominant emotion classification:

Intellectual

Your headline carries words that predominantly appeal to most
people's intellectual sphere. Intellectual impact words are especially
effective when your goal is to arouse curiosity, and when offering
products and services that require reasoning or careful evaluation.
The majority of words with emotional impact in the English
language fall in this Intellectual category. Intellectual impact words
are the most-used of all three categories, and have the broadest
appeal to people in general.

Now that we have dealt with the **do not copy** issue, let's move on
to other problems you are probably not aware of.

WordPress is the best blogging platform available. It's highly
flexible and customizable, so, although not perfect, it can be
optimized to achieve the best results.

For example, WordPress has RSS feeds for posts and comments,
monthly archives, daily archives, category archives, page
archives and so on. To each (category archive, page archive,
feed, etc) it assigns a different URL. But all these different
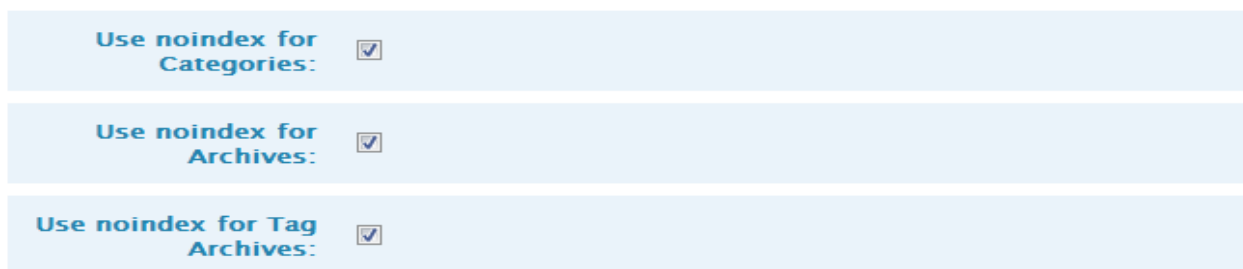URLs have the same content.

Each category archive is a collection of previous posts. If you
have just one entry in a category (or any other archive for that

Pamil VISI●NS

matter) the archive page is identical with the post page (the same content but a different page title and a different URL).

When your home page contains not excerpts, but the full text of the post, you are dealing with a case of duplicate content again, because the home page duplicates the post page. Even the previous/next pages present the same drawback.

The feeds duplicate the content of the site too. Google prefers to display RSS feeds (XML formatted and not the FeedBurner feeds) first in the search results instead of showing the original blog entry or the original comments.

If you followed the steps described in the previous chapter that told you how to configure the All on One SEO Pack plugin, you should already have solved most of these issues. If you didn't follow the steps carefully, go back and select the following:

Use noindex for Categories:	☑
Use noindex for Archives:	☑
Use noindex for Tag Archives:	☑

You can also use a robots.txt file to prevent the search engine bots from crawling feeds and any pages you don't want to have indexed.

But use the robots.txt file carefully, because any false command might stop the spiders from crawling your site altogether.

The robots.txt file is something you can do yourself(it doesn't come predefined by WordPress). Simply open a new document in any text editor and paste the following code:

```
User-agent:  *
# disallow all files in these directories
Disallow: /cgi-bin/
Disallow: /stats/
Disallow: /wp-admin/
Disallow: /wp-includes/
Disallow: /wp-content/themes/
```

Pamil VISIⓄNS

```
Disallow: /trackback/
Disallow: /*?*
Disallow: */trackback/


User-agent: Googlebot
# disallow all files ending with these extensions
Disallow: /*.php$
Disallow: /*.js$
Disallow: /*.inc$
Disallow: /*.css$
Disallow: /*.gz$
Disallow: /*.cgi$
Disallow: /*.wmv$
Disallow: /*.png$
Disallow: /*.gif$
Disallow: /*.jpg$
Disallow: /*.cgi$
Disallow: /*.xhtml$
Disallow: /*.php*
Disallow: */trackback*
Disallow: /*?*
Disallow: /z/
Disallow: /wp-*
Allow: /wp-content/uploads/


# allow google image bot to search all images
User-agent: Googlebot-Image
Allow: /*

# allow adsense bot on entire site
User-agent: Mediapartners-Google*
Disallow: /*?*
Allow: /about/
Allow: /contact/
Allow: /wp-content/
Allow: /*.php$
Allow: /*.js$
Allow: /*.inc$
Allow: /*.css$
Allow: /*.gz$
Allow: /*.cgi$
Allow: /*.wmv$
```

Pamil VISIONS

```
Allow: /*.cgi$
Allow: /*.xhtml$
Allow: /*.php*
Allow: /*.gif$
Allow: /*.jpg$
Allow: /*.png$

# disallow archiving site
User-agent: ia_archiver
Disallow: /

# disable duggmirror
User-agent: duggmirror
Disallow: /

Sitemap: http://www.yoursite.com/sitemap.xml
```

Save the file as robots.txt and upload it to your server in the main root directory.

Source of the code: <u>robots.txt optimized for SEO</u>

This works only when your blog is on its own domain or sub-domain, and **it doesn't work for blogs installed on subdirectories** like: http://yoursite.com/blog/.

If you don't know how to upload a file, this <u>robots plugin</u> will guide you through all the steps of the process. It will also add an editable robots plugin directly to your WordPress theme — so you'll be able to make any changes directly from your **Dashboard.**

Pamil VISIONS

Chapter 6: Creating Google Sitemaps

For this task you'll need a Google Sitemap Generator for WordPress and one able to create compliant sitemaps in the format supported by Google, Yahoo and MSN.

This is the plugin I use.

Sitemaps are particularly useful because they give valuable information to the search engine spiders on how often to scan your site, which pages are more important, which have a lower priority and so on.

The advantage of using Sitemaps is that you are able to view reports on crawl results and statistics. You'll also see the most used search queries to find your site and the search queries that get the most clicks.

To submit your Sitemap to Google go to Google Sitemaps, create an account, and follow all the easy steps described by Google to identify yourself as the owner of the site and to validate your submission. You'll need to go through a similar process to submit your sitemap to Yahoo! (you need a Yahoo! email account), but MSN is simpler: just submit your sitemap URL here.

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Chapter 7: Other On-page SEO Techniques

Of course you've always heard "content is king," and you should know by now that this is true. But as the Web changes, content is no longer reduced to "text." Images, video, sound and text together make the king and the kingdom.

Let's take a look at a few HTML code elements that bear SEO value.

Give your article a title and make sure it's coded between the proper <h></h> tags.

<h1>Your Main Headline Is Coded Like This</h1> - and usually in WordPress blogs this is the title of the blog.

This means that the title of your article should be coded between <h2></h2> tags.

The <h1> is a unique tag. You cannot repeat it on the same page. You cannot place it randomly in the HTML code either. <h1> is first, then <h2> and <h3> follow logically. All the other header tags from <h2> to <h6> can be repeated: their purpose is to be used as titles -- and not to make something bold. Do not include entire paragraphs in your H tags either.

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Usually WordPress will include your article title between <h> tags by default – the CSS stylesheets and php files already include the codes that define the html structure of the page.

It would be too extensive a task to explain how to change these tags for beginners. Just keep in mind that <h1> and <h2> tags are usually already there. If you want to insert subheadings in the body of the article it's logical to use <h3> tags.

The WordPress editor doesn't have "insert subheadings" by default. If you want to insert them, you'll have to use the html editor. Go to "Write Post" (or "Write Page" if you need to write a new page)from the WordPress dashboard. Then use the html editor to code the subheadings in the text yourself:

Write Post

Title

Article Title Goes Here

Permalink: http://www.ewriting.pamil-visions.com/2008/05/11/text-format/ Edit

Post   Add media: Visual **HTML**

b | *i* | link | b-quote | del | ins | img | ul | ol | li | code | more

lookup | close tags

<p>Open HTML editor in the WordPress dashboard and insert content. paragraphs are coded between P tags.</p>

<h3>This Is a Subtitle</h3>

<p>Subtitles help you split up a complex article and act as signposts for your readers. They also help for better formating.</p>

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> *Format your text to be readable. An uncluttered Web page is a readable Web page.*

From an SEO perspective it is **highly recommended that you include the most important keyword phrase of your page in the article headline.**

My suggestion is that if you cannot find a way to make that keyword phrase fit in the title naturally, then just forget it. Write a title that inspires people to read your article instead.

Use plenty of white space, pretty much as I did in this book, to make it easier for the readers to follow your ideas. White space makes the page look less cluttered.

To create a paragraph break simply write your text within <p></p> strings like this:

<p>One paragraph that explains one idea.</p>

<p>Another paragraph that continues the previous idea and adds something new or a paragraph that contains a new idea.</p>

<p>To create a break within a paragraph you can use <br/>. The next sentence will follow immediately after the first (no space between them).</p>

To help the readers remain focused, use bulleted lists if you have to enumerate features, benefits or other similar text content elements.

The bulleted list should not be coded within <p></p> strings.

This is how a bulleted list (also called an unordered list) should be coded:

```
<ul>
<li>first list item</li>
<li>second list item</li>
<li>third list item</li>
</ul>
```

If you prefer using numbers instead of bullets, you will need to create an ordered list:

```
<ol>
<li>first list item</li>
<li>second list item</li>
<li>third list item</li>
</ol>
```

 lists can also be included directly from your WordPress editor (same goes for <ol> lists) as in the image below:
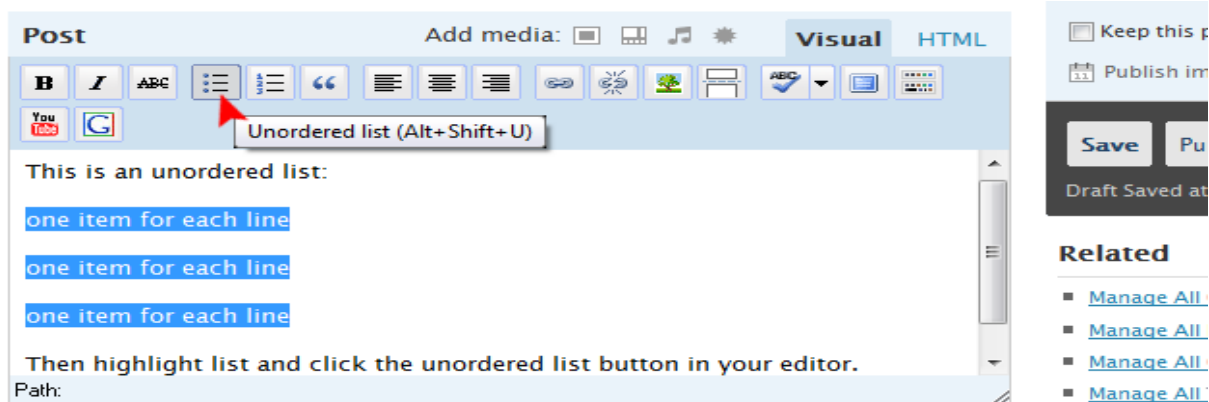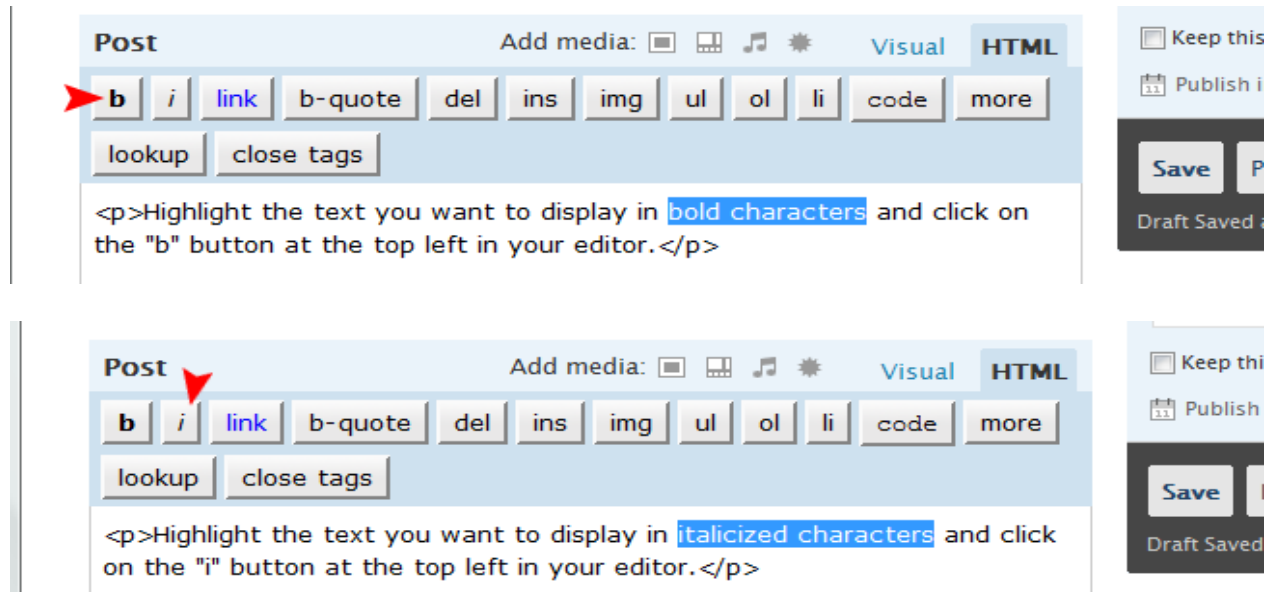
Use **bold** or *italicized* characters to emphasize ideas.

To bold a group of words insert into the HTML code: **your very important idea**.

To italicize a group of words insert into the HTML code: *your very important note*.

<strong> and <em> can also be included directly from your WordPress visual or HTML editor as in the images below:

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 I do **not** recommend you   <u>underline</u> words. It will just
confuse the readers, because people tend to see text that is
underlined as being a link.

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Chapter 8: Optimizing Images

The search engines take into consideration the entire content of a Web page. That's why the image files you display on a Web page should be related to the topic.

Create harmony between text and images to boost your SEO score.

The search engines want you to create harmonious content and not a soup of mismatches. But because they read only text, the search engines need your help to understand images and other collateral files and that's the advantage you have over the bots.

You have to apply the most basic SEO principles to help the bots understand the content of the image and sound files. **You need to target keywords and write, yep, you guessed it, text.**

Use keywords to name the image files. For example an image file called cloudy-sky.jpg will usually rank higher than cloudysky.jpg or cloudy_sky.jpg. That's because cloudy-sky has a more logical spelling (for both the search bots and the people) than cloudysky or cloudy_sky. There are SEO voices that contend that Google doesn't parse keywords in URLs when they are run together, but I wouldn't count on this as a general rule. There are enough exceptions.

The image file name is not the only factor to making images rank.

The search engines look at the content around the images (and video and sound files) to judge their content. They take most of the information they need from that text. It is important to have the content and the images interrelated.

Although they don't ignore your HTML image optimization work, the search engines place more weight on the content around the images than the content on the images themselves.

This is the reason why you should write a snippet that summarizes the content of the image, in the immediate vicinity of the image. This is also why you shouldn't stuff your ALT and title attributes with keywords.

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A correctly optimized image from an HTML point of view would be:

…where you replace width and height with the actual sizes of the picture you want to display on your website.

Also, "keyword focused" doesn't mean that if you have a picture of a strawberry you write "SEO chart." Describe the picture. Write "fresh strawberry" or, if you insist on including "SEO", find a way out like: "fresh strawberry adds beauty to SEO content."

WordPress is a great tool for optimizing images. It has everything you need to insert the image source code of an image to have it properly optimized for the search by default. All you have to do is to save your images with proper names and to fill in all the fields (some will be filled in automatically by WordPress, including Dimensions and Class):
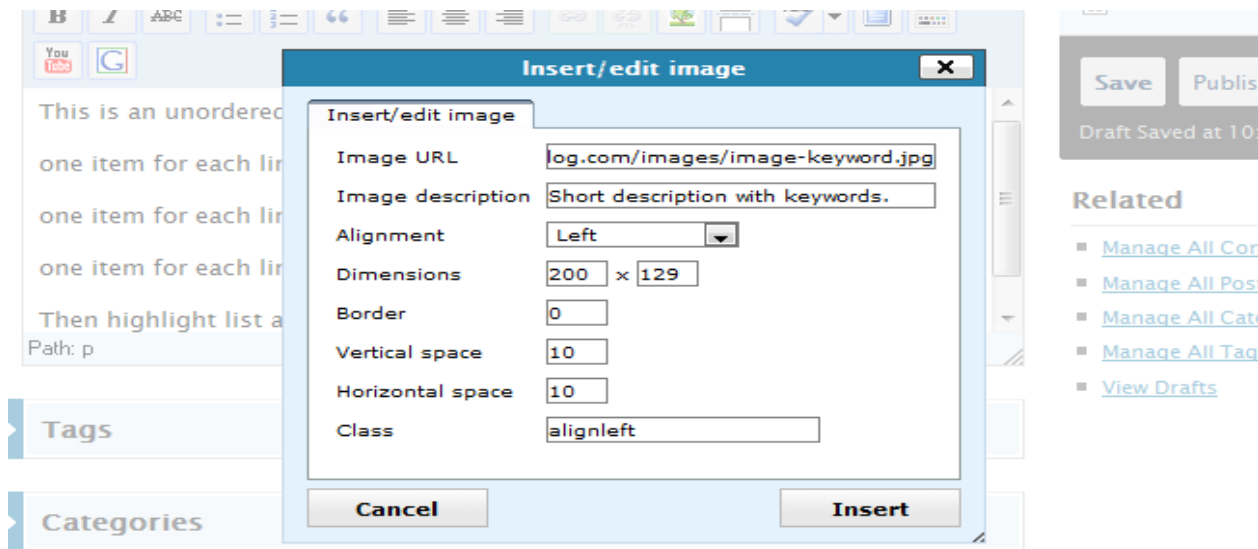
The "image description" field is the very "ALT" SEOs talk so much about.

The primary purpose of inserting ALT attributes for images was to explain the content to the users, not to the search engines.

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If the search engines don't place so much weight on ALT attributes and image titles why should you include them?

First for accessibility reasons: people who are surfing with their images turned off will still know what the image is all about.

Then, if you use correct descriptions for your images, the general SEO scores for the Web page as a whole will be higher. That's because you will have created that harmony between text, images and site that the search engines are looking for in order to rank your website.

Remember:

- use keywords in the image file names
- do not unite the keywords but separate them with dashes, not underscores
- include keywords in the image ALT attributes
- place the image in the immediate vicinity of keyword-related content
- keep the number of unnecessary images per page as low as possible (unless you are displaying a photo gallery or product search results)

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Chapter 9: Pinging

Each time you publish new content on your blog, WordPress notifies ping servers about the updates, if they are defined. To define these servers, go again in your **Dashboard,** click on **Options** then **Writing.** Scroll down to find the following box:

Update Services

When you publish a new post, WordPress automatically notifies the following site update services. For more about this, see Update Services multiple service URIs with line breaks.

```
http://rpc.pingomatic.com/
http://rpc.technorati.com/rpc/ping
```

Update Options »

Insert in this box, one per line, each ping server you want to notify (a big list here).

Another solution would be to use the services provided by Autopinger (http://autopinger.com/). This is free and quite flexible. You can either become a member and sign up for an automatic Ping Me button or submit your site manually.

You need to use such services because you need the Web to know when something happens on your blog. This has a lot to do with both SEO and SMO (social media optimization) as some of these servers index your news and provide for valuable links.

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Chapter 10: Important Linking Tips

"SEO is a marathon, not a sprint."- Aaron Wall.

When you start your linking campaigns, avoid spamdexing techniques like Fave trains or other strategies that create unnatural linking to your site.

For proper, long-term results, **manage your linking campaigns at a slow pace**.

Once a month you could get a large number of links to the same post, assuming that your post is really a resource. It's important that each webmaster links to your entry in his/her way, to ensure "natural" linking. The moment you become a "guru," fast-paced linking will be no problem.

For young sites… **handle with care**.

The number of links doesn't really matter. The quality of the site linking back to you is more important.

Then you have to ask yourself — how is that site linking back? Is it a blogroll link? This is useful if it brings traffic.

Is it a link in a random list (like those fave trains)? This will not bring much value for your Google score (PageRank). It will, however increase your Technorati scores and ranks. With Technorati we don't speak about SEO, but about SMO (social media optimization).

Is it a contextual link with a good, keyword targeted, alternative text? You scored! That's what you need to rank high in the SERPs (search engine positioning results). Take a look at the list below to learn how to determine the value of a link.

1. Contextual links carry more weight than any other links because the search engines identify them as "link recommendations." Such links are enclosed within the content of a page — for example the text of an article. Links with anchor text based on relevant keywords for the content of

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the website pointed to are more valuable than "click here" links.

2. Although a link might be on a PR0 (PageRank 0) page, this doesn't mean that the value of the link that page gives to another site is low. On the contrary: content related to the page the link points to will prove its SEO value in time.

3. Links with good anchor text on a "related links" page are really valuable when you manage to be at the top of the list (better exposure), you have a keyword rich and catchy title (or anchor text) and there are not more than 50 other links on the same page.

4. Directory listings are good when they are in the right category and they bring you targeted traffic. So you should only pay for listings in popular (authority) directories. If you have the chance to submit your site to free directories, do take advantage of the opportunity and vary the anchor text (seen by the SE as micro content) as often as possible to generate unique links.

5. Stay away from porn, gambling and booze sites, as well as from link farms and other bad neighbors. Do not use automated programs like SEO Elite to exchange links. This is a spamdexing technique, even worse than the Fave trains.

6. There is now a new linking trend: three-way linking. Site A requests a link from site B and provides in exchange a link on site C. Basically: B links to A and C links to B, creating a chain of "one-way" links instead of reciprocal links. Nothing wrong with the principle, except that the technique is meant to fool the search engines and to artificially inflate rankings for site A, because site C is generally a link farm or a low quality site that has nothing to lose anyway. So don't fall for such link exchange requests.

7. Paid links are tricky. Buying links or banner space on popular websites is pure advertising and advertising is good. Are the search engines going to penalize your site for buying links? It depends. If your site's ranking count depends solely on link popularity and for this purpose you use only paid linking strategies, your rankings might (as a

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matter of fact **will**) drop, while you will still have the traffic from the sites on which you advertise. There are too many websites that use the link-buying strategies to artificially inflate link popularity. The search engines already know that and, while they do not technically penalize the webmasters for advertising their websites, they don't give them any link popularity.

8. *Dive into social media for better links*: target bloggers and social bookmarkers to comment on your products and services by building link bait strategies. A good article will attract attention and motivate people to link to (or bookmark) that page. You'll probably find your article mentioned in forums, blogs, discussion groups, social bookmarking sites and so on.

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To Conclude…

These tips should help you increase your SEO rankings. Sure, there are other tips and tools you could use, like adding keyword tags and various plugins — for example excerpt plugins (kind of "**read more**") to reduce the duplicate content issues by displaying only the first few lines of your post on the homepage.

I also recommend the JS-kit plugins suite (ratings, comments, navigator, polls, reviews and advisor) that can be easily implemented in any website and will enrich user experience by adding a plus of interactivity to the site.

But this really depends on how you want to display the content for your readers. Remember: they are more important than the search engines.

I think this is about all you need to give you a good start. The rest is dependent on your writing and networking skills.

I do plan new eBooks on Social Media Optimization and Networking, but these are distant projects, so for now I hope these tips help.

There are enough good resources online for you to learn how to master these skills till my books are ready. I'll let you discover them alone: **research is part of the learning process.**