

**Last Update July 25th, 2017** As many of you will know, I love WordPress. I use it on most of my affiliate sites which make me thousands of dollars per year and I also use it on my blogs, and business sites such as this one.

I'm certainly not alone when it comes to utilising this CMS though — tens of millions of sites online are powered by the software.

For all the great things there are to be said about WordPress, though, out-of-the-box SEO certainly isn't one of its strong points.

As I use the software so much and make a lot of my income thanks to search engine traffic, I have come to learn what works best in terms of optimising your WordPress setup.

Before I share my tips for getting more search traffic to your blog, I want to state that the following recommendations should be used with a little bit of caution.

The majority of recommendations here are very obvious and totally fine, but there are others which some people may disagree with.

Everything I share here has worked very well for me and the many clients I have worked with, but I will mention on specific steps if any of them may be frowned upon by others.

Now that I have the “don't sue me” disclaimer out of the way, we can get onto the good stuff.

## The Basics



I thought it would be a good idea to split the “obvious” suggestions from the not-so-obvious and slightly more advanced tactics that I will share later in this piece.

### Title Tags

The title tag has long been thought of as the most important on-site factor in telling search engines what your site (or a page) is about.

By default on older versions of WordPress, post titles would display as “Blog Name >> Post Title”. As your homepage is probably already ranking for your site name, you’re not helping yourself by putting your site name at the start of your title. You don’t need to rank for it more than once.

Instead of leaving things this way, I personally like to remove the blog name altogether. This isn't just because I think it looks better, but because it works. A client I worked with last year received a **massive boost in search traffic** when we removed their brand name from title tags on their blog posts.

To change your title tags, I recommend you install this [awesome SEO plugin](#). Once installed, log into your WordPress admin and go to Settings >> All in One SEO Pack. From there, I have entered the following:

- Home Title: Raising Status : RaisingStatus (This is the phrase I'm trying to get my site to rank for and a brand name)
- Post Title: %post\_title%
- Page Title: %page\_title% | %blog\_title%

Those are the main ones, and I recommend you tweak the rest to your preferred preferences. The post and homepage titles are the most important.

## Meta Tags

When you search for a site in Google, you'll see a snippet of content under the page link. To control this, you can customise your meta description tag for the page.

Similarly, you can also add keywords to your tag to tell search engines what your site is about. Though I should mention that Google announced a few months ago they do not crawl the keywords tag anymore.

A good few years ago the keywords used to be important as search engines had less ways to determine what a site is about. Now that technology is so advanced, search engines have better ways of determining rankings and relevance. I still like to put the keywords in there (for other search engines) and do this by enabling 'dynamic' keywords with the All in One SEO pack.

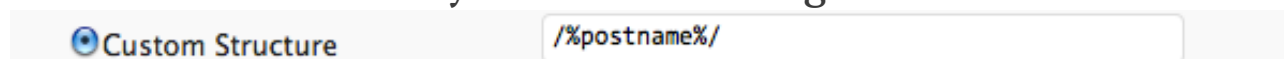
As far as descriptions go, there is no ideal way to automate the process. The best descriptions are hand written, and the plugin HeadSpace will allow you to configure them for each individual post. **HeadSpace** also allows you to auto-fill a posts meta-description based on the description of your category so if you post a lot, that may be useful for you.

## Permalinks

Permalinks are simply the URL's for your posts. By default, post titles tend to look like raisingstatus.com/?p=38 but if you look at the URL for this post you will see www.raisingstatus.com/get-in-touch . I'll let you decide which one you think looks better.

Not only does this new format tell someone what your page is about before clicking on it, the words in the URL will also be highlighted in search engine results if your post is relevant to the search query.

To change your permalinks, simply go to Settings >> Permalinks. I currently use the following format:



Some people like to have categories in there but I like to keep URL's as short as possible. A **friend** pointed out that the quickest solution (in terms of querying your database) is to use `/%post_id%//%postname%/`. I would only really recommend this if you have a massive site built on WordPress, but it's interesting to note.

It's best to do this on a fresh blog, but if you're making this change on a new blog then make sure you install a redirection plugin. It will move your old URL's properly and in a search engine friendly manner.

PS: Also remember to shorten the post slug when you are writing an article, as by default the URL will use all of the words in your title.

## Focus On a Keyphrase

Unless you're very into branding, it's a good idea to try to optimise your site around a keyphrase that can send you search traffic. Most blogs end up getting the majority of links to their homepage, so it's a good idea to try and leverage those links by getting search engine rankings for a relevant phrase.

For RaisingStatus, I'm aiming to rank for the phrase 'Northampton Wordpress'. Although it is fairly competitive, it has a decent search volume and it's relevant to what this site is about: helping you build remarkable sites that others naturally want to share.

The [Google external keyword tool](#) is a good place to start to see which phrases are popular in your audience. Make sure you select 'All Countries and Territories' on the left and then 'Exact match' on the right hand side to get accurate results.

Once you have this keyphrase, you can use it in:

- The title tag for your homepage
- The heading of your site
- Your logo
- As anchor text in links from other websites

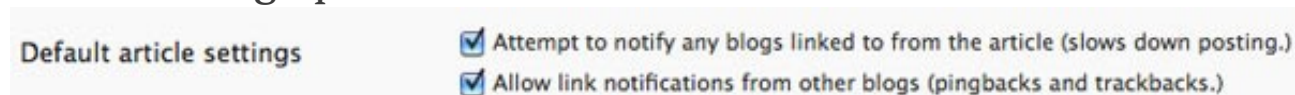
The first and last items on this list are going to be the most crucial to helping you achieve higher search engine rankings.

## Turn on Pingbacks

One way to get more links to your site (which increase search engine rankings) is actually to link to other people. If you are regularly supporting a site, it's very likely that they're going to

return the favour. Especially if they're in the same industry. I recommend turning on the option in WordPress (if it's not already enabled) which notifies other blogs when you have linked to them.

To do so, head on over to Settings >> Discussion, and choose the following options:



## Use Alt Attributes Religiously

I've noticed fairly recently how much emphasis Google seem to be putting the alt attribute when it comes to not only ranking images highly, but also ranking your posts highly as well.

Consider a search for the term 'minimalist marketing' and here is my friends site result.

[Minimalist Internet Marketing: My Personal Guide](#)

**minimalist-marketing** Minimalism seems to be a hot topic these days and rightly so. People like clutter-free living and getting things done. ...

[www.viperchill.com/minimalist-internet-marketing/](http://www.viperchill.com/minimalist-internet-marketing/) - Cached -

The text minimalist-marketing, which I have highlighted, is actually not written anywhere on the page like that. Instead, it is the alt attribute for one of his images. WordPress applies alt attributes to images automatically, but they are generated based on the file name.

Therefore, if you save your images as “minimalist-marketing.jpg” or whatever your content is about, then WordPress will automatically generate that text.

The alt tag is a way to tell search engines what your images are actually about. Not only will it help you get more search traffic to your images, but I think it helps the overall rankings of a page, as well.

## Interlink

Interlinking simply means that you link from your blog posts to other blog posts. For example, I sometimes recommend guest blogging as a great way to build your authority in your niche and will then link to a guide on [guest blogging](#). I also use the anchor text of the search query I'm trying to rank for if it doesn't making my writing look robotic.

Not only is this useful in terms of SEO, but it also gives your readers more posts to read and thus increases your pageviews.

## WWW or Non-WWW

On a lot of sites (and probably yours if this section title makes no sense), there are two ways to access them. For example, if you head on over to test.com, you will see it is both accessible at <http://test.com> and <http://www.test.com>. Try this on your own site and see if it is the same.

By default, WordPress handles this redirect for you, but it uses a 302 redirect. A 302 tells search engines the redirection is only temporary, but you really want to tell them it is permanent so that all of your link weight goes to one place. To do this, you need to implement a 301 redirect.

You can choose which one you want Google to list in Google Webmaster Tools, but it's still necessary to do this. Whether you want to choose the www version or the non-www version of your site is completely up to you.

You will need to be able to edit your .htaccess file which can be found in the same folder that you installed WordPress on your server. Here is how the code in mine looks:

```
# Begin 301
RewriteEngine On
RewriteCond %{HTTP_HOST} !^www\.raisingstatus\.com [NC]
RewriteRule ^(.*)$ http://www.raisingstatus.com/$1 [L,R=301]
# BEGIN WordPress
<IfModule mod_rewrite.c>
RewriteEngine On
RewriteBase /
RewriteCond %{REQUEST_FILENAME} !-f
RewriteCond %{REQUEST_FILENAME} !-d
RewriteRule ./index.php [L]
</IfModule>
# END WordPress
```

I do have other code in my .htaccess for specific redirects, but that is all you need to redirect your site from the non-www version to the www version. Also, **remember to change raisingstatus.com to whatever your domain name is.**

If you want to redirect from the www to the non-www (which I do on a few sites), then swap lines 3 and 4 with this:

```
RewriteCond %{HTTP_HOST} !^raisingstatus\.com [NC]
RewriteRule (.*?) http://raisingstatus.com/$1 [R=301,L]
```

If that gives you any errors or doesn't seem to do anything, make sure that your host allows you to edit the .htaccess file (most will).



## The Next Level



I've just shared some of the most common tips you'll find online about optimising WordPress, but now we're going to go a bit deeper and share some slightly more advanced tactics.

If you only do the above, then that's a great start, but there are still areas you can improve upon.

### **Noindex Archive, Category, Pagination or Tag Pages**

On RaisingStatus, I only use categories and I manually create my own sitemap, but I know that a lot of people have date based archives, categories, and tag pages. These might be great for usability, but for search engines, they're really just lots of pages with links to your other pages.

In other words, the search engines don't need to crawl through all of them to find your blog posts. For that reason, I apply the Noindex option to my Archives and Tag pages, and do this by

installed the [All In One SEO Pack](#) I mentioned earlier. There are settings in the admin panel to help you decide what you want to block.

I recommend that you allow one of them to be followed (e.g. normal pagination, or categories) and then block the rest to “preserve” link juice.

## NoFollow Certain Pages

I did say there may be some tactics that people frown upon in this post, and this is the first. The Nofollow attribute was first introduced by search engines to help stop spam on the web from ranking in search results. That’s why, by default, all links to commenters on your blog are automatically no-followed.

No-following sculpting, as it is commonly referred, is simply about keeping and diverting link juice (link weight) to the pages where you want it to go. For example, on every page on my site there is a link to the contact form. Does it really need to be a powerful page?

Just linking to the page once is enough to have it indexed in Google, and that’s all that matters for a number of my pages. Similarly, I nofollow links to my about page, my category links and my RSS feed. This means that the ‘weight’ from backlinks I’m getting to my own post won’t be spread to those pages.

A typical text link looks like this:

```
<a href="http://www.raisingstatus.com">RaisingStatus</a>
```

To make it nofollow, you would change the link like so:

```
<a href="http://www.raisingstatus.com"  
rel="nofollow">RaisingStatus</a>
```

Again, Google have recently mentioned that they frown upon this (in some circumstances — not most) so use it at your own risk.

## **Nofollow Your Read More Link**

If you show full posts on your homepage then you don't need to worry about this. If, however, you just show a snippet of content, then it's likely you also have a "read more" or "continue.." link in there somewhere.

As your post title already links to the page with perfect anchor text, there's no need to give juice to the read more link which simply takes people to the same page.

In your Theme Editor (Appearance >> Editor) open the relevant file (usually index.php), find the following text:

```
<a href="<?php the_permalink() ?>"
```

Then simply add

```
<a href="<?php the_permalink() ?>" rel="nofollow"
```

That's it. You must make sure you are changing the *read more* permalink, and not the permalink to your post titles. If you're unsure which is which, then make sure you contact your theme author. There are too many examples for me to go through them all here.

## **Turn Off Comment Pages**

Unless you receive hundreds of comments per post (or you're really, really picky about page speed), there really is no need to have paginated comments on your site. Older versions of WordPress never had this, but if you recently installed WordPress 2.7 from scratch, you'll find that paginated comments is the default option.

These can be turned off in Settings >> Discussion and will ensure that your site doesn't have tons of duplicate pages that are all showing very little unique content.

## **Sign-Up to Google Webmaster Tools**

**Google Webmaster Tools** is a must-use service for anyone who cares about search engine traffic to their sites. Not only will it tell you which key-phrases you are ranking highly for in Google, but it will also notify you when your site has been hacked, or if you have any broken links.

Sometimes you may find that another blogger has linked to you incorrectly and that a lot of visitors are landing on a 404 page. Because GWT makes you aware of this, you can redirect that page somewhere relevant to keep the link value and keep the visitors who are landing on your site.

## **Building Links**

If you implement even just half of the suggestions I've presented here then you will probably have better on-site optimisation than 95% of the blogs in your industry. It's essential to focus on content creation and engaging in your audience when building a blog, but it's silly to neglect a huge traffic source when you can make all necessary changes in just an hour.

It's also silly to write a guide on SEO without mentioning the most important factor in getting traffic from search engines (besides relevance): backlinks. Backlinks are simply links from other sites, to yours. Generally, the site ranking 1st for a search query in Google is going to have a lot more links than the site ranking 10th, or even 5th. It's important that you spend time

building links to your site so that the on-site optimisation that you've put in place can actually have an effect.

I won't go into all of the ways that you can build links to your site as there are some great articles out there on the web, but I will list some of my favourite:

- **Guest Posts** – I really like links from guest posts as they send traffic, they're relevant, and you can usually customise the anchor text of the link to be anything you want. If you want to learn more about this method, I'll link to another detailed guide [here](#).
- **Write Awesome Content** – There's nothing better than writing an article that gets tons of links from relevant bloggers. If you put enough work into your content and regularly engage with other bloggers in the niche, they're going to link to your posts.
- **Link Out** – When you link out, people link back. I don't recommend link exchanges or filling up your blog roll, but if you find something on another site that your audience might enjoy, don't be afraid to share it. You never know, that big blog might just send their 5-figure audience your way.
- **Collaborate** – Collaborating with other influencers in your niche is not only a great way to connect with more people, but it's also a good way to get people talking about you. Oftentimes when I have interviewed people, they will link back to the interview from their own site. I also see people doing group projects which involve over 20 people and then end up having them all promote the one resource. If you can get other people involved, they're going to help you spread the word.

Finally, don't make the same mistake I did and scratch your head for two weeks wondering why your blog isn't indexed. It turns out that a lot of one-click WordPress install solutions block search engines by default. You need to turn this off by going to Settings > Privacy.

Alternatively, you can ignore everything I've just written and still do quite well by remembering one thing: **search engines follow people.**

**Note:** As with everything SEO related, people have their disagreements on what works and what doesn't. As stated at the start, these are things that **work for myself** and have when I had clients.

Feel free to only implement certain things or try your own methods. I have updated parts of this post with information from people way smarter than I am.