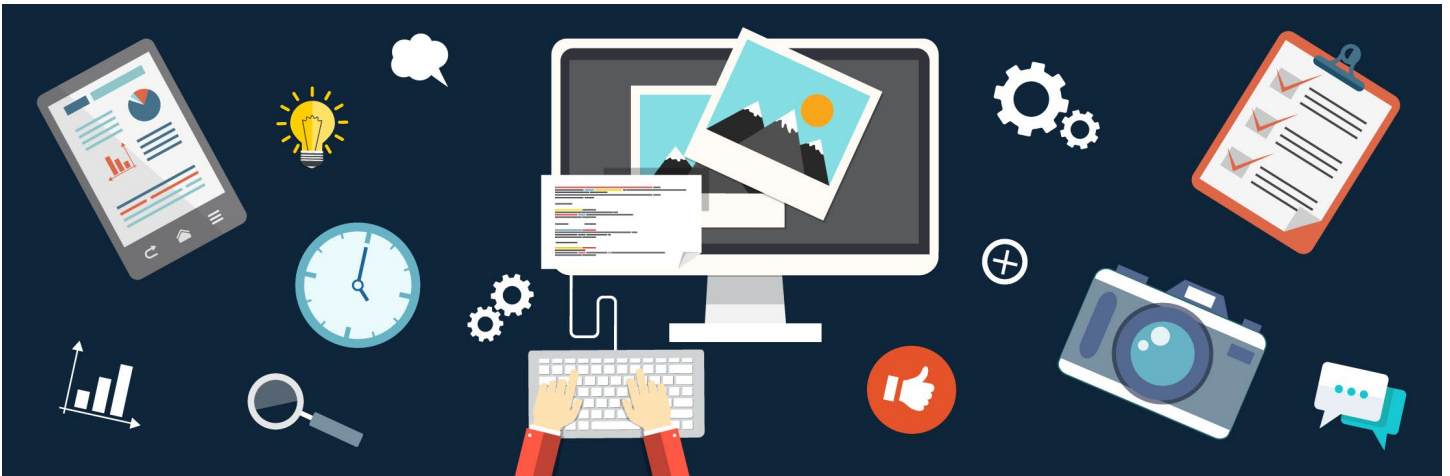


**WP**engine®

# HOW TO OPTIMIZE YOUR IMAGES FOR BETTER SEO

WHITE PAPER



To give your site's search engine ranking a massive boost, it's imperative to optimize your images for SEO. In this paper, we'll take a look at several SEO tips for your visual content that'll help drive more traffic to your website, ultimately increasing your bottom line.

But first, here's a brief explanation why visual content is integral to your web strategy.

## The Importance Of Visual Content

A picture is not only worth a thousand words, it can be worth thousands of pageviews.

We live in a world where visuals dominate. Cameras are more accessible than ever and visual content is a key element on the web — it adds pizzazz to your content and keep users engaged. In fact, articles with visuals get [94 percent](#) more views than those without.

Thanks to the emergence of billions of smartphones worldwide, our attention spans are now shorter than ever, even below that of a [goldfish](#).



According to scientists, goldfish can hold a thought for longer than humans. Image credit: [Telegraph](#)

When creating content, it's important to keep this in mind. The human brain processes visuals [60,000](#) times faster than text.

Since our attention spans have become shorter due to our need for instant gratification, splitting up text-heavy articles with images will increase your chances of a visitor staying on your site rather than losing attention and abandoning it.

Visuals can also help your site's SEO, that is, if you do it right. Let's take a look at some simple SEO tricks you can put into practice to easily enhance the SEO of your content.

## SEO Best Practices For Images

Images are important to SEO — if done correctly, they'll show up at the top of Google Images and link back to your site, bringing you a ton of traffic you may have missed out on otherwise. To help achieve higher rankings for your site, here are some SEO best practices for your visual content to get the most traffic from search engines.

## Naming Your Images

Google's ranking algorithm calculates images, so properly naming your images can help your site rankings. Before naming and uploading an image, you should first decide on a proper keyword to use.

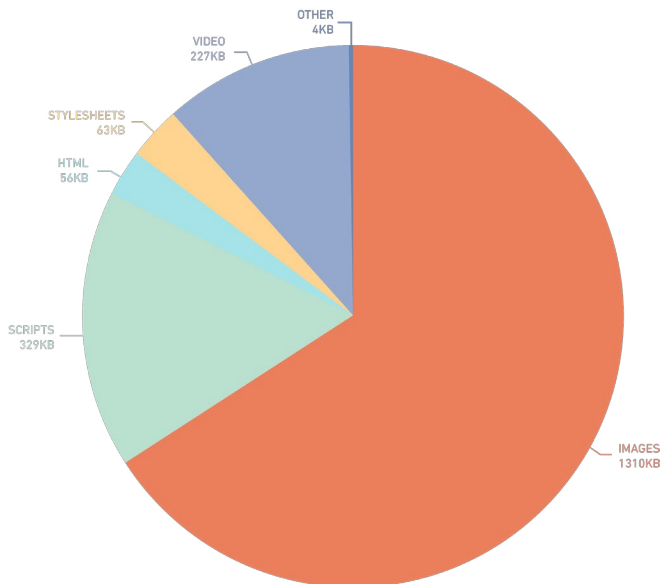
In the image's filename, you should include relevant keywords from a specific subject. Instead of uploading your image as "IMG\_6594.JPG" try using a keyword rich name like "Lionel-Messi-Argentina-Soccer" if you have a picture of Lionel Messi playing soccer for his home team. (You could also add in the term "Football" or "Futbol" to get more global reach.)

It's also important to use dashes ( - ) and not underscores ( \_ ) when separating keywords, as Google looks at underscores as a joiner of words, rather than a separator.

In addition, be sure to include your main keywords at the front of the file name, not the end.

## Compress Images For Faster Load Times

Images can be the culprit to a slow site, as they make up around **60 percent** of a page's size. Therefore, optimizing your images for web upload will speed up page load time, ultimately preventing Google from penalizing your site rankings due to slow page load times.



Source: [Soasta.com](http://Soasta.com)

A number of tools can help you with image size optimization, including: [ImageOptim](#) (Mac), [Trimage](#) (Windows), [RIOT - Radical Image Optimization Tool](#) (Windows), [Optimizilla](#) (online), and [PunyPNG](#) (online).

If you're on WordPress, try using a plugin like [WP Smush](#) to resize and optimize your images, removing any extraneous metadata to prevent unnecessary bulk being added to your site.

Images that load faster due to being optimized for web will make your site load faster, and in return give you better SEO.

## Give Your Images Alt Text

Alt (alternative information) text was originally intended for the visually impaired, but is also used by search engines to interpret what your content is. Since search engine bot crawlers cannot technically "see" your images, these fields act as clues to what your visual content contains.

The text you use in the alt text section will help search engines understand the context of your image. Therefore, your alt text description should be as accurate and descriptive as possible, and contain your main keywords. Think about how you would describe the image to someone who is visually impaired?



Here's an example of alt text you could use for the above image, and what it looks like in HTML (the bolded text):

```

```

Note that you shouldn't just input keywords (aka "keyword stuffing"). Google will actually penalize you for this, as it can look spammy and results in a negative user experience.

According to [Google webmasters](#), alt text "provides Google with useful information about the subject matter of the image. We use this information to help determine the best image to return for a user's query."

A better user experience = better  
SEO = more traffic = increased  
bottom line.

## Understand The Differences Between Alt Text And Image Titles

Title tags and alt tags are commonly confused with one another. Let's take a look at how they differ...

While the alt tag is used by search engine crawlers to determine what your content is, title attributes provide extra information about the subject and are not crawled by bots. Therefore, image title tags aren't as important to your site's SEO, however they do result in an improvement of accessibility online.

Here's what the HTML title attribute looks like (in bold):

```

```

If an image is missing, the alt text will show in its place, however the title text appears in a popup in certain browsers when a visitor hovers their mouse over the image.

## Choose Unique, Compelling Images (And Test Them)

Try to avoid  [cliché stock photos](#) as best as possible. If other sites are using the same photos as your site, why should yours rank and theirs not?

It's important to set yourself apart by using high-quality, visually stunning, and unique imagery that doesn't fall into the "I've seen that a dozen times already" category. If possible, shoot the photography yourself, which will help with brand identity and also be more likely to rank higher.

However if using your own photography is not feasible, there are plenty of free stock photo options out there. [Flickr.com](#) has [creative](#)

[common](#) images you can use, and there's also these [free stock photo options](#), most of which don't require attribution.

Now that you've decided on an image, how do you know if it will fare well with your clientele and site visitors?

There is no exact science to this, but you'll want to monitor it over time to see which images perform the best with your audience, and develop insights about that data.

One example is to test images on social media to see which visual gets better engagement. Just be sure to keep all other variables the same so it doesn't distort your data. For instance, the social text and headlines shouldn't change between images. Also be cautious of the time and day you post something, as that could factor in with a higher (or lower) engagement.

The more you test images and develop insights, the better your taste will become for good photography and visuals that perform well and rank higher on Google.

## XML Image Sitemaps

Image sitemaps help get your images noticed by Google, including those that can't be crawled (e.g. images loaded by JavaScript code). Sitemaps give search engines more information about the images available on your site so they can understand and index your content better. That way none of your images ever go unseen by search engines.

If you're on WordPress, these plugins can help you create a sitemap: [Google XML Sitemaps](#), [Yoast SEO](#), [All-in-One SEO Pack](#), [Udinra All Image Sitemap](#).

For non-WordPress sites, there are many tools that can assist in creating a sitemap, including: [Screaming Frog](#), [Dynamapper](#), and more.

Once you've created a sitemap, you'll then want to submit it through [Google's](#) (or other search engine's) webmaster tools.

## Visual Placement

The placement of visuals within a blog post or web page can make a significant impact on how it ranks on Google. If you place an image closer to the search text, it is likely to rank better.

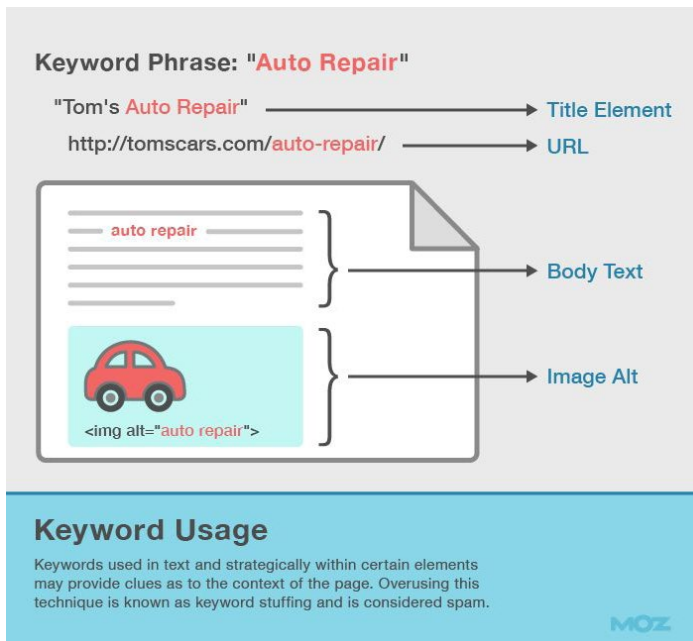
Also note that adding a keyword rich caption to your image counts as search text and can help with better image SEO. Just don't overdo it on captions, unless it adds something valuable to the image.

## Final Thoughts

Along with these essential tips, keep in mind that a page that ranks higher will result in higher ranking images. Therefore, you'll want your main keyword to be peppered throughout the page, including the title, header (e.g. H1, H2...), URL, and within the body of the text. But be sure not overstuff your content with the keyword...only use it where it makes sense.

Search engines use the context surrounding the image to better dissect what it is, so if you place an image somewhere and the context isn't relevant, then it is less likely to rank.

Once you incorporate these image SEO strategies into your content workflow, you should start seeing improvements in the quality of your content and search engine rankings in no time.



Source: Moz

Better SEO is just one of the many things you can do to improve the quality of your site and your bottom line. Check out WP Engine's state-of-the-art **hosting plans** to learn how you can achieve digital greatness through speed, scalability, security, and support.



## **About WP Engine**

*WP Engine powers amazing digital experiences for websites and applications built on WordPress. The company's premium managed hosting platform provides the performance, reliability and security required by the biggest brands in the world, while remaining affordable and intuitive enough for smaller businesses and individuals. Companies of all sizes rely on WP Engine's award-winning customer service team to quickly solve technical problems and create a world-class customer experience. Founded in 2010, WP Engine is headquartered in Austin, Texas and has offices in San Francisco, California, San Antonio, Texas, and London, England.*

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