Galactic Fed

SEO Best Practices: Creating New Pages in a Site Redesign

Redesigning your website can improve your site's design and functionality toand **boost conversions and sales**.

But if done wrong, it could do you more harm than good. It can jeopardize your existing search engine rankings which can have a severe impact on your traffic.

Having a good SEO strategy in place before making any changes to your site and sticking to some **SEO best practices will allow you to enjoy and benefit from redesigning while avoiding these pitfalls.**

Try to retain the old URLs as much as possible

To ensure continuity with tracking and to best preserve link equity, try to avoid changing the URL of a page if the nature of the content will remain largely the same.

When updating a page to a new URL, 301-redirect the old URL to the new one

When migrating a URL to a new domain or path (or just updating the URL slug of a page to something new), most of the link equity can be retained through a 301-redirect. This also prevents UX issues from users running into 404 errors while accessing a link or a bookmark to the old URL.

Craft thoughtful 50-60 character titles and 120-160 character meta descriptions for new public-facing pages

★ For any page that's intended to rank in search results, it's best to have solid meta copy off the bat. Staying close to, but within the character limit allowed gives you the most freedom to include a target keyword and write compelling copy to draw in the user. Keywords in titles are weighted for relevance (making them an algorithmic factor), while keywords in descriptions will be bolded in search results (making their utility more visual).

★ Going over the length limit won't lead to any sort of penalty, but it will cause the title or description to be truncated in search results. This is not necessarily an issue if you have all the key components of the title or description visible, but make sure keywords and any other words that help define the content are not getting cut off.

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Avoid uploading enormous media files:

Large image and video resources take up most of the user's bandwidth and can lead to poor page load speeds. Make sure images are not overly high resolution for their size on the page, compress files and use efficient file formats where possible, and take advantage of a CDN for faster delivery. (See **here** for how to handle videos)

Avoid unnecessary Javascript-heavy libraries

Render-blocking Javascript is another major contributor to poor page load speeds, so use lightweight, minified libraries, defer loading when possible.

Add alt text to images:

Alt text is an attribute to <img> tags that describes the image for search engine crawlers, and is used by accessibility tools like screen-readers. Most CMSs easily support adding alt text to images, so include a concise description of the image content when adding an image to your media library. For example, a reasonable alt text for **this image** might be "computer screen with Python code". Avoid the use of phrases like "picture of" or "image of", as these are unnecessary extra words and will be read awkwardly by screen-readers ("image of 'image of computer screen with Python code'"). See **here** for more detailed examples of how to write alt text.

Double check links to ensure they work

Broken links lead to poor UX, inhibit search crawlers, and lead to lost link equity to internal pages. Ideally, all your links point to pages that return status code 200. Redirects are okay, but it's still best to just link directly to the final target page.

Include all public-facing pages in the XML sitemap

Having a sitemap helps search engines discover your pages easily, and update more frequently. Typically, the sitemap is hosted at /sitemap.xml, and you should include all pages here that you want search engine crawlers to discover. If you have an excessive number of auto-generated pages (such as /blog/tag/ pages), these can be omitted from the sitemap in order to prioritize the more important pages to crawlers.

Noindex non-public pages and remove them from the XML sitemap

Don't include in the sitemap any pages that are in-development or only meant to be viewed after completing an action (like a /thank-you page after a sign-up flow). These should also have a **meta robots "noindex"** tag to prevent spiders from indexing them.

Avoid creating orphan pages

Make sure any public-facing pages you create are discoverable by following links from the home page, ideally no more than 3-6 clicks deep. Pages that are not linked with the rest of the site are called "orphan" pages and will either be completely missed by search crawlers, or will be treated as having reduced value.

Include a self-referencing canonical link on all pages

It's a standard best practice for a typical page to include a canonical link (a type of HTML metadata tag, not an actual hyperlink) pointing to itself, stripped of URL parameters and standardized to a specific protocol and domain. This helps tell search engines and analytics tools that slight variations on a URL for the same page (like http vs https, www vs no-www, trailing slash vs no trailing slash, or a bare URL vs a URL with lots of UTM parameters stuck on the end) are not, in fact, different pages, and the link equity to different versions of the page should be consolidated

Lead pages with a strong H1 header, and use H2 subheadings to lead subsections of the page

★ Search engine crawlers tend to weight up the content of large, prominent text for relevance, so having a clear H1 header at the top of the page is a general good practice. For articles, having an alternating H2 -> paragraph structure is a good way of making the page more readable both to users and spiders. Though, this should not be shoehorned into pages where an alternate layout makes more sense visually.

★ H1 headers are also a good place to include your target keyword, and H2 headers are good places to include secondary keywords.