

# Beyond Keywords

Preparing for New Ranking Signals in Google's Future

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# Let's Talk About SEO, Baby!

A lot has changed since 2016-2017...

Some page signals & strategies have gotten less important:

- Keyword Density
- (Low-quality) Backlinks
- “Domain Authority”
- Fixing Broken Links
- Disavowing Links
- Word count

“If you’re building links that are easy to built, Google is likely just ignoring it.”

Marie Haynes



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# Let's Talk About SEO, Baby!

A lot has changed since 2016-2017...

Some page signals & strategies have gotten MORE important, and should be your focus in 2022:

- E-A-T
- Technical Content Organization
- High Authority Backlinks
- Page Experience (formerly CWV)
- Serving User Intent
- SERP Features



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# Focus #1: E-A-T

Expertise: “The expertise of the creator of the Main Content (MC).”

Authoritativeness: “The authoritativeness of the creator of the MC, the MC itself, and the website.”

Trustworthiness: “The trustworthiness of the creator of the MC, the MC itself, and the website.”



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# Focus #1: E-A-T

EAT is now a default:

**If you are not focusing on EAT, assume your competitors\* are**

\*By competitors, I mean your fellow travel bloggers, because that's who we all get compared against.



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# Focus #1: E-A-T

To demonstrate Expertise:

- Talk about your direct experiences (with receipts!)
- Write long, comprehensive posts on the topic (depth)
- Write multiple posts all addressing the same topic (volume)



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# Focus #1: E-A-T

To demonstrate Authoritativeness:

- A strong about page showing your credentials
- Author bio on every post with credentials mention

Credentials in travel blogging: years traveled, travel agent status, books written, etc.



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# Focus #1: E-A-T

To demonstrate Trustworthiness:

- Accuracy in all you write, correct grammar, etc.
- Generally in consensus with other sources
  - Or demonstrate why your advice deviates
- Update content regularly



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## Focus #2: Technical Content Organization

Internal linking is critical for helping Google understand your content.

- Use site:yourdomain.com “keyword” to find linking opportunities
- Link Whisper: <https://linkwhisper.com/>
- Aim for 3+ per new article
- Do this as part of your post-publishing, pre-marketing checklist



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# Sidebar: Other Post-Publishing Tasks

1. Run through the Facebook debugger to get your social metadata correct
2. Run through a link-checker to ensure you're not publishing with broken links
3. Submit for indexing with Google Search Console
4. Add internal links (as already discussed)



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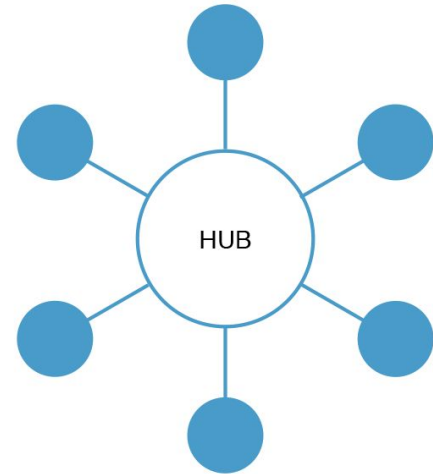
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# Focus #2: Technical Content Organization

Employ a “Hub-and-spoke” content strategy

- Built one authoritative piece of content (hub) that links out to many others (spokes)
- Ensure all spokes link back to the hub too
- Also called “Pillar” or “Cornerstone” content



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# Focus #3: High Authority Backlinks

This doesn't mean fellow travel bloggers!

Ideas for getting high authority backlinks:

- Look into deploying a PR strategy
- Use HARO and a 5% response rate is great
- Connect with freelance writers in your network to help them pitch/write better stories



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# Focus #4: Page Experience (aka Core Web Vitals)

You probably freaked out about this last year, right?

Keep an eye on it, but don't obsess.

Aim to move Reds to Yellows rather than Yellows to Greens.

In the end, the best content still ranks.



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# Focus #5: User Intent

Google is getting much smarter

- New AI algorithms truly “understand” content
- They rely on “user intent” and “needs met” to score content
- We focus on providing the answer the reader expects *when they expect it*



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# Focus #5: User Intent

## Rating “Needs Met”:

- Fully Meets: All or almost all users would be immediately and fully satisfied by the result and would not need to view other results to satisfy their need.
- Highly Meets: Very helpful for many or most mobile users. Some users may wish to see additional results.
- Moderately Meets: Helpful for many users OR very helpful for some mobile users. Some or many users may wish to see additional results.
- Slightly Meets: Helpful for fewer mobile users. There is a connection between the query and the result, but not a strong or satisfying connection. Many or most users would wish to see additional results.



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# Focus #5: User Intent

1. Study the SERP before you start writing

Google can tell you a lot based on the results they show.

For example...



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# Query: Honeymoon in Belize

Google honeymoon in Belize

https://www.theknot.com › ... › Travel › Honeymoons  
**What to Do and Where to Stay During Your Belize Honeymoon**  
Aug 6, 2021 — Best Hotels and Resorts in Belize for a Honeymoon · Matachica Resort · GAIA Riverlodge · Sleeping Giant Resort · Mahogany Bay Resort & Beach Club.

People also ask

- How much does it cost to honeymoon in Belize?
- Is Belize safe for a honeymoon?
- How do I plan a honeymoon in Belize?
- Which is the best spot for honeymoon?

Feedback

https://www.travelchannel.com › ... › Photos  
**The 10 Most Amazing Honeymoon Resorts in Belize - Travel ...**  
Blancaneaux Lodge · Chaa Creek · Kanantik Reef & Jungle Resort · Hamanasi Adventure & Dive Resort · Matachica Resort and Spa · Las Terrazas Resort · Victoria House.

https://www.tripstodiscover.com › most-romantic-hone...  
**10 Most Romantic Honeymoon Resorts in Belize - Trips To ...**  
Blizean Dreams    Blancaneaux Lodge    Turtle Inn    Coco Beach Resort  
Cayo Espanto    Ramon's Village Resort Matachica Resort & ...    Kanantik Reef & Jun...

Results are focused on Honeymoon Resorts – not generic Honeymoon info.



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# Focus #5: User Intent

2. Give the reader the answer\* earlier than you want to

\*Give part of the answer, and tempt to keep reading

- A blurb (targeting a Featured Snippet)
- A table (great for itineraries, etc.)
- A TL;DR



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# Focus #5: User Intent

3. Use Headers & TOCs to help the reader get needs met faster\*\*

\*\* Yes, this decreases ad revenue

Serving user intent will get you more traffic and more revenue overall



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# Focus #6: SERP Features

When you pick a keyword, study the search results page (SERP)

Understand different SERP Features and if/how you can rank in them:

- Featured Snippets
- Knowledge Graphs
- People Also Ask

Also use SERP Features indicate competition *with Google*



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# Thanks so much!

Questions?

You can find/tag me with questions:

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