



UX & Conversion

from a holistic SEO perspective

Michiel Heijmans, Marieke van de Rakt,
Joost de Valk, Thijs de Valk

Colophon

© 2015 Yoast

ISBN/EAN 978-94-92320-02-5

NUR 988

Publisher: Yoast

Authors: Michiel Heijmans, Marieke van de Rakt,
Joost de Valk, Thijs de Valk

Editor: Mijke Peters, Marieke van de Rakt

Design: Mijke Peters

Illustrations: Erwin Brouwer

Edition: 1

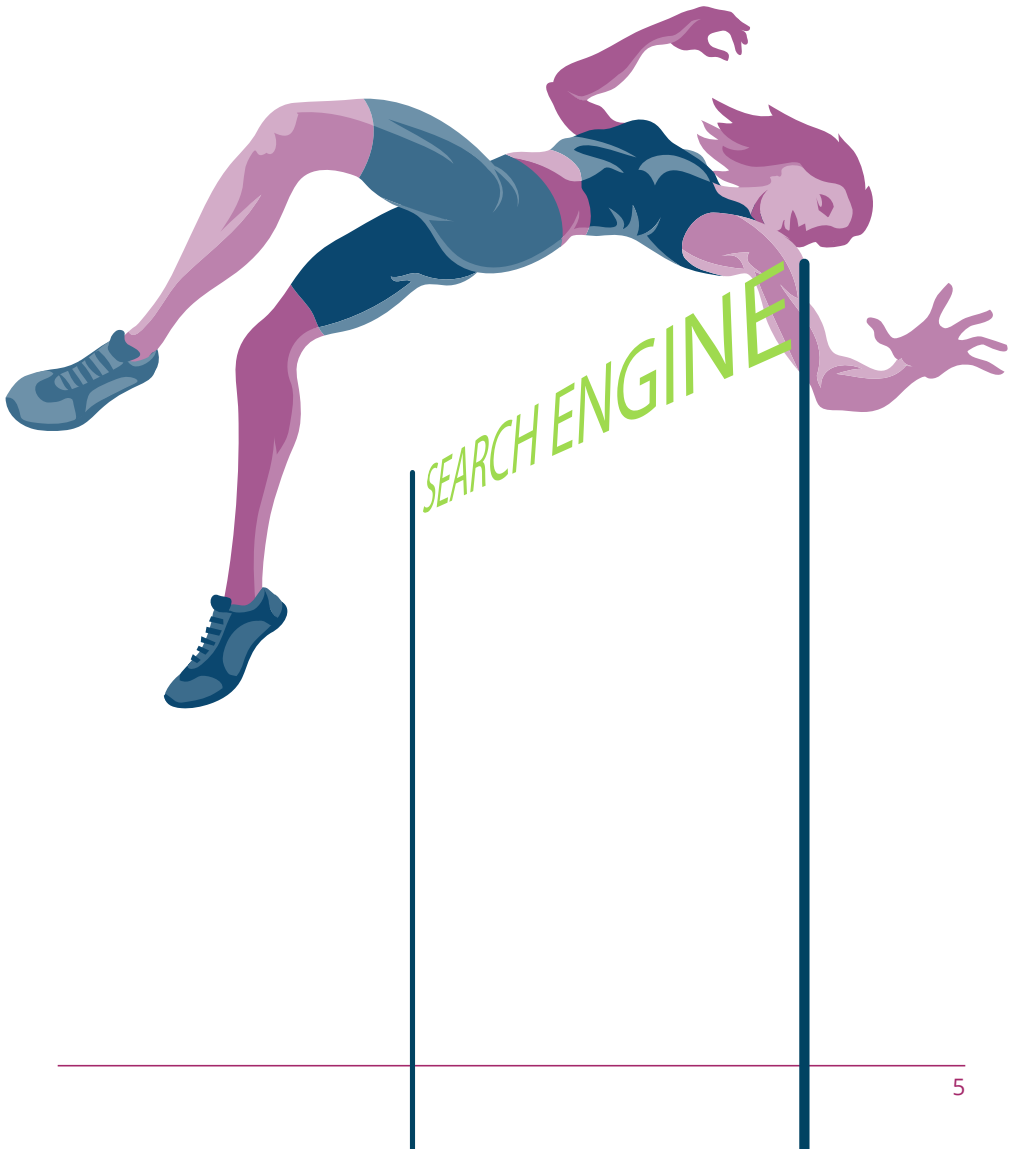
Table of Contents

| | |
|---|--------|
| Introduction | 5 |
| This book | 7 |
| Defining Search Engine Optimization (SEO) | 9 |
| Defining Usability, UX and Conversion | 13 |
| Design and Usability | 19 |
| General Usability | 22 |
| Clarity and Mission | 24 |
| Call-to-action | 30 |
| Menus | 35 |
| Readability | 40 |
| Usability of Specific Pages | 47 |
| Homepage | 49 |
| Landing pages | 53 |
| Checkout | 60 |
| Archive pages | 64 |
| Search result pages | 68 |
| Forms | 73 |

| | |
|---|---------|
| Mobile UX | 79 |
| The importance of Mobile UX | 81 |
| Responsive design | 84 |
| Best practices for Mobile UX | 87 |
| Conversion Research | 94 |
| The importance of doing conversion research | 96 |
| Using statistics for conversion research | 99 |
| Survey research | 103 |
| A/B testing | 110 |
| Analyzing the data of your A/B-test | 118 |
| Epilogue | 126 |
| About the authors | 127 |



Introduction



About this section

In this first section, we will introduce the main topics of this eBook: User Experience and Conversion Rate Optimization. We will also explain the importance of Usability and Conversion Rate Optimization for SEO. Above that, we give a short introduction to general Search Engine Optimization (SEO). This introduction is useful for the understanding of the remainder of this eBook. We will conclude this introductory section with a chapter in which we explain the relation between Design and Usability.



Ranking well in search engines like Google demands an extensive SEO strategy. And SEO is so much more than just a trick. A long-term SEO strategy should focus on every aspect of your website. The technical stuff, the content on your website and especially the user experience of your website should be awesome. To keep ranking well in Google, you should develop – what we call – a holistic SEO approach. Therefore it's very important to offer your audience an amazing User eXperience (UX)! In this book we will help you optimize your website by improving the usability and your conversion rate.

Content of this book

This book covers the most important topics for Usability, UX and Conversion Rate Optimization. It is divided into five sections. The sections can be read in any order you like, but the most logical order is to begin in section 1 and stop reading after you've finished section 5. The information mostly is non-technical and can be read by anyone owning or maintaining any kind of website.

We try to cover the basics, but also provide more in-depth information on every topic. For advanced readers, some basic information will be common knowledge and could be skipped altogether. The chapters are all written by [Joost de Valk](#), [Michiel Heijmans](#), [Thijs de Valk](#) and [Marieke van de Rakt](#).



In this first section we will introduce the main topics of this eBook. The second section of this book is about [General Usability](#) issues. In this section, we will discuss the most important usability issues which apply to every page on your website. The third section of this eBook – [Usability of Specific Pages](#) –, we will look into usability issues on specific pages, like the checkout and the search result page. The fourth section – [Mobile UX](#) – focuses solely on the UX of the mobile version of your website. And finally, in the fifth section about [Conversion Research](#), we will explain how to conduct your own research in order to optimize the conversion on your website.

Search engine - terminology

In this book, we will often write ‘Google’ when we refer to a search engine. Of course, there are many other search engines, like Bing and Yahoo. But since Google pretty much dominates the search engine market, we will only refer to Google in our texts.

Holistic SEO icon

We’ve written this eBook from a holistic SEO view. Whenever we specifically go into SEO or consequences of UX decisions on SEO you will see this icon:





Defining Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

This chapter

User Experience and Conversion research should be a very important part of your holistic SEO strategy. To provide some context to the content of this eBook, we will introduce the very basics of SEO in this chapter. This chapter also appeared in our [Content SEO](#) eBook.

What does Google do?

How does Google find your site?

Search engines like Google follow links. They follow links from one web page to another web page. A search engine like Google consists of a crawler, an index and an algorithm. A crawler follows the links on the web. It goes around the internet 24/7 and saves the HTML-version of a page in a gigantic database, called the index. This index is updated if Google has come around your website and found a new or revised version of it. Depending on the traffic on your site and the amount of changes you make on your website, Google comes around more or less often.

For Google to know of the existence of your website, there first has to be a link from another site in the index – one it already knows – to your site. Following that link will lead to the first crawler-session and the first save in the index.



Google's secret algorithm

After indexing your website, Google can show your website in the search results. Google has a specific algorithm that decides which pages are shown in which order. How this algorithm works is a secret. Nobody knows exactly which factors decide the ordering of the search results. Moreover, factors and their importance change very often. Testing and experimenting gives us, at Yoast, a good feel for the important factors and the changes in these factors.

Google's results page

Google's result page shows 7 or 10 links to sites which fit your search the best. We refer to these results as the organic search results. If you click to the second page, more results are shown. Above these 10 blue links are, most of the time, two or three ***paid*** links. These links are ads; people have paid Google to put these links at the top of the site when people search for a specific term. Prices for these ads vary greatly, depending on the competitiveness of the search term. Similar ads could appear on the right of Google's search result pages as well.

The value of links for search engines

It's very important to have a basic understanding of how Google and most other search engines use links: they use the number of links pointing to a page to determine how important that page is. Both internal links (from the own website) as well as external links (from other websites) could help in the ranking of a website in Google. Some links are more important than others: links from websites



that have a lot of links themselves are generally more important than links from small websites with few external links.

Universal search

Next to the organic and the paid results, Google also embeds news items, pictures and videos in its search results. This embedment is called universal search.

What is Search Engine Optimization?

High ranking in organic search results

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is the profession that attempts to optimize sites to make them appear in a high position in the organic search results. In order to do so, SEO tries to fit a website to Google's algorithm. Although Google's algorithm remains secret, almost a decade of experience in SEO has resulted in a pretty good idea about the important factors. In our view, the factors in Google's algorithm can be divided into two categories:

- 1 There are *on-page* factors which decide the ranking of your website. These factors include technical issues (e.g. the quality of your code) and more textual issues (e.g. structure of your site and text, use of words). For more information about technical issues, check out our blogs about (technical) [SEO](#).



- 2 There are the *off-page* factors. These factors include the links to your site. The more other (relevant) sites link to your website, the higher your ranking in Google will be.

Yoast Tip



You can read more about link building and other off-page factors in the eBook written by Paddy Moogan, [The Link Building Book](#).



Defining Usability, UX and Conversion

This chapter

In this chapter, we explain the central concepts of this eBook. Next to that, we will explain the importance of usability and conversion rate optimization for your SEO strategy.

Defining Usability and User Experience

User Experience

What is User Experience? First, let's agree that user experience is not per se website related. It's the experience you have while visiting a grocery store. It's the experience you have when visiting a concert. It's even waking up in the morning and stepping onto a cold bathroom floor. UX is what you encounter, feel and do while you are using things, visiting shops, eating in restaurants. User experience is about human emotions.

In this book, the aim of optimizing the user experience is optimizing the positive feeling a visitor has when leaving your website. A number of separate things contribute to that user experience. We distinguish three elements which are very important for UX:

- It is the initial feeling a visitor has when landing on either your homepage or any other landing page.



- It's the feeling a user has when he can or cannot find what he is looking for on your website.
- It is the feeling a user has after reading the desired information on your website or after a user bought something from your shop.

These three elements will all contribute to the final feeling or experience a user has when leaving your website.

Usability

Usability is very closely related to User Experience, and is often used when describing UX. While User Experience has to do with the feeling people have while using your website, Usability is about how user-friendly the website is. Do people understand your website? Do they know where to click? Better usability will improve the user experience.

In this eBook, we will talk a lot about changing this (usability) to increase that (user experience). There is a slight difference between these two, but we will use the two terms alongside each other throughout this book.

Defining Conversion

Conversion is also strongly related to UX. Conversion on websites is about turning a visitor into a buyer, subscriber, or returning visitor. The reason they are so closely related is because improving your user experience will generally have a positive effect on your conversion rate.



The aim of optimizing conversion rate is less user-centric than the aim of optimizing for user experience. Optimizing your conversion rate means you just want a higher revenue or more (returning) traffic. However, the road to optimizing for conversion rate is filled with user-centric actions. In general a more easily usable and understandable website will get a higher conversion rate. And obviously, if people have a more positive feeling about your website, which we talked about in the [previous chapter](#), they'll be more willing to buy or subscribe.

Holistic SEO and Usability

At Yoast, we give SEO advice to (small) website owners and large consultancy clients (the Guardian, Facebook). Joost de Valk began his career in SEO over 8 years ago. And although Google has changed its algorithm quite a few times, most of the advice we give at Yoast has remained the same over the years. And this advice is very simple: you just have to make sure your site is really really good. Do not use any 'SEO tricks'; while they might get you ranking quickly, they usually don't work in the long run and might even backfire.

Google's mission is to build the perfect search engine that helps people find what they are looking for. Making your website and your marketing strategy fit this goal is always the way to go. This is what we call holistic SEO.



A holistic approach on SEO means you focus on it all:

- [good technical SEO](#);
- a great [User Experience](#);
- [writing quality content](#);
- making sure [your site is secure](#).

Having an amazing website with high quality content, a great user experience and up-to-date security will not instantly improve your ranking. In the long run though, it will definitely have a positive effect on your SEO!

Attractive websites have a lower bounce rate and a much higher chance to receive social media attention. These are exactly the two things that make sure your website will keep ranking well in the long run. If nobody ever talks about your website on social media, how can Google keep thinking it's a good site?

Awesome websites will also result in higher conversions. If your audience likes and understands your website, the chance of them buying your products or returning to your website is of course much higher.

In our holistic SEO view, usability and user experience of your website should thus be a very important part of your long-term SEO strategy. Attractive, user friendly websites have lower bounce rates and lead to higher rankings in the long run.



Holistic SEO and Conversion

While Conversion Rate Optimization is not a part of a holistic SEO strategy, it does make for a good supplementary strategy. SEO makes sure that more people find your website. An SEO strategy is focused on attracting more people from the search engines to your website. A conversion strategy focuses on the visitors on your website, turning these visitors into customers. In the end, both strategies can lead to more sales: more people on your website, means more potential buyers, while a higher conversion rate leads to more buyers among the same number of visitors.

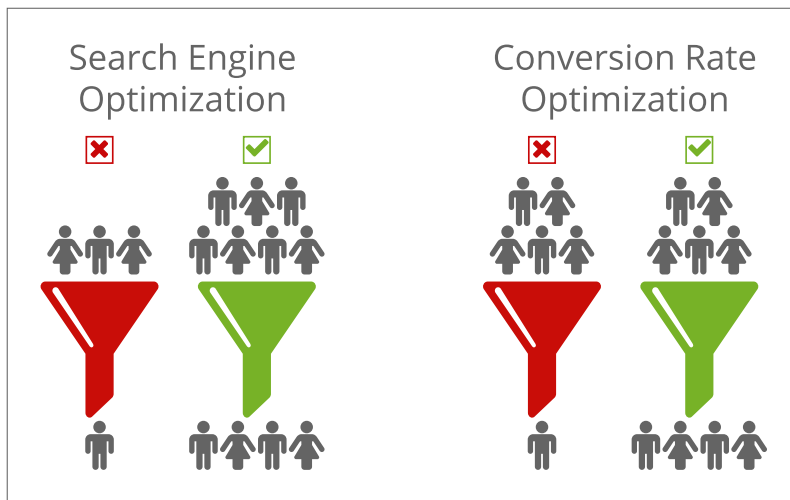


Figure 1: funnels, SEO vs Conversion Rate Optimization



In our vision, you should combine SEO and Conversion Rate Optimization. Combining SEO and conversion means that you focus on attracting more people to your website and at the same time focus on increasing the chances that people will actually buy your stuff. That's a double payoff!

This chapter

In this chapter, we explain why usability and user experience should be important for the creation and adaption of website designs.

Importance of awesome design

Part of a holistic SEO strategy means having an awesome design. The appearance of your website should be appealing to your visitors. If people like the appearance of your website, they will be more likely to stay on your website. A nice appearance will thus decrease your bounce rate (visitors who instantly go back to Google).

What is appealing to a visitor changes. Website designs follow trends and what is trendy and hip now, could well be unappealing and boring next year. And of course, what is beautiful is always in the eye of the beholder.

How important are the aesthetics of a website?

Marieke did [some research](#) about the importance of beauty while designing your website. Looking at the results of some recent scientific studies on the importance of aesthetics and usability, results appear very mixed. Several (recent) experimental studies show relations



between aesthetics and usability (e.g. [Lee & Koubek, 2010](#)). Others (e.g. [Tuch et al., 2012](#)), however, show opposite relations. Studies indicate that if people are frustrated because they can't seem to find what they want on your site, their approval of the design of your website will become smaller. We thus can conclude that aesthetics are important, but usability issues matter even more.

A lot of research shows that the type of website determines whether or not aesthetics are important. Some websites really need a smooth design because of the products they offer (for instance photographers need nice pictures to promote their abilities), while other websites would benefit more from a slightly outdated design (for instance second hand shops).

Next to the type of the website, the purpose of your audience appears to be a very important factor in the relation between aesthetics and usability (e.g. [Sonderegger and Sauer, 2010](#)). For goal-oriented buyers, usability is most important: they want to buy the product and leave your website. For more hedonistic (browsing) buyers, the experience people have by visiting your website is more important, the aesthetics of your site could well convince them to buy your products.

What we can learn from these studies is that the beauty of a design is very important for a website. Your website should have an appearance that is appealing to your audience. And also, usability issues as well as aesthetics are of great importance.



What does this book offer designers?

Designing a website is a creative process. You should take that seriously and make sure your site looks amazing. A lot of usability tips we give to our clients (and in this eBook) could easily be incorporated in such an awesome design. Some tips could make the designing process a bit boring (e.g. you would like to be different, but sticking to what everybody does is the most usable and leads to the most sales). Sometimes usability and aesthetics really bite each other. As a designer you should aim for the perfect balance between usability and design.

You shouldn't choose either one, as both are important. We would recommend to read [section 5](#) and A/B-test if you have to make choices that affect either aesthetics or usability.

In our view, every designer should have some basic knowledge about Usability and UX. They should try to incorporate these issues while developing a new website or while updating an old one. This book is especially suitable for website designers. This book is not going to teach you much about aesthetics or about state-of-the-art designs, but it is going to be a great guide to teach you what is usable and what is not!





General Usability



About this section

In this section, we will discuss all general usability and user experience issues. By general issues we mean issues that apply to every website. We begin by explaining the importance of [Clarity, Mission](#) and [Call-to-action](#). We will conclude this section with chapters about [Menus](#) and [Readability](#).



This chapter

In this chapter we will focus on the importance of a clear purpose on your website. It should be immediately clear to your visitors what it is your website offers them. We will explain this importance and we will give tips on making the purpose of your website clear to your audience.

The importance of clarity

Clarity about what your website offers is the most important usability issue. When a visitor finds your homepage for the first time, it should be immediately clear what your website is about. This is what we call the purpose of your website. It should be extremely clear what your products or services can do for the visitor. It should be clear what your company or brand is about. If possible, it should even be clear what your values and standards are, so the visitor can immediately bond to your company. If the purpose of your website remains unclear, people will not know what to do on your website and will probably leave very soon.

It might seem like a very obvious thing to do: making clear what you sell. But in the process of designing and updating your website, the purpose can go lost. This is why you should critically review your website every now and then and analyze whether or not the purpose of your website remains clear.



What is your mission?

If you want to communicate the purpose of your website to your visitors, it is very important to have your mission clear. The purpose of your website is the reason your website exists. It is the thing you want your visitors to do on your website (read, buy your stuff etc). Your mission is a bit broader than the purpose of your website and consists of the ideas you have about your website and your company.

So, before you start making any improvements on usability, you will have to think about your mission. Do not think too lightly of this. It is really hard to have (and keep) clearly in mind what it is you want to do. To show you, we've made a list of questions you should be able to answer after you've thought it all through:

- What can people do with the products/services you're selling on your website?
- What makes your product unique?
- How will your products/services enhance your clients' lives?
- Why should people buy the products/services on *your* website and not on another (f.i. cheaper or better known) website?
- What's the reason you're offering these products/services, besides making money?

Businesses are born of ideas, some of which are great, some are not. But they're all born out of the idea that what you have to offer is special, and adds something to the market. That benefit, that advantage, that promise, should be reflected on your website.



The first step in improving your usability and user experience is thus to write down your own mission. You have to figure out what makes you stand out from the rest. Take the time and literally write down your mission on a piece of paper. A computer or an iPad will do as well of course. You have to come up with one mission, one message to send to your audience.



Formulating your mission is actually the starting point of many aspects of holistic SEO. It is the first step of executing your keyword research as well. You can read our [Content SEO](#) eBook if you want to learn more about that.

Ways to make your mission clear to your audience

Once your mission is clear, you can check whether or not your mission is reflected on your website. Checking clarity means that you should mainly focus on your homepage and landing pages as these are the pages where your visitors enter your website. Be aware you have literally just seconds to get your most important point across. People's attention span is really short. So you have to make sure you tell all the important stuff first, and tell it quickly.

There are a few ways to make sure your mission and purpose are instantly clear to your audience. You should write decent introductory content, make sure your headlines and taglines are clear and insert nice, suitable pictures.



1 Introductory content

Your homepage and your landing pages should include a clear introduction. In this introduction you explain the mission or the purpose of your website. What is your website about? What do you sell? Make sure this text is really clear and adapt to the language of your audience. This text should not be too long (one or two paragraphs at the most)!

2 Headline and taglines

Another way to communicate your mission to your audience is to make good use of your headline and tagline. The headline is the title of a page or post. A tagline is a small amount of text which serves to clarify a thought. It could be the explanation of the headline, or a description of your brand or company.

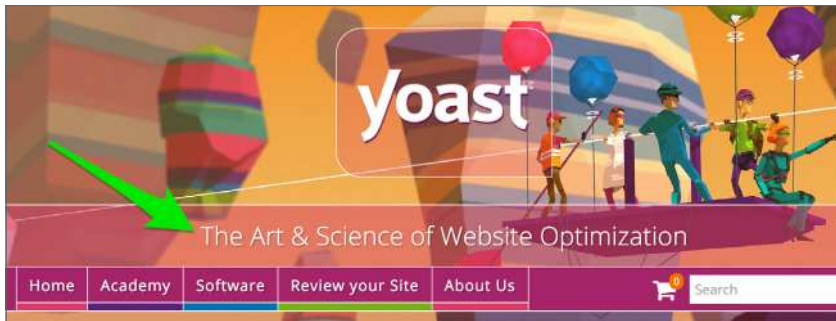


Figure 2: tagline *'The Art & Science of Website Optimization'* on yoast.com

Make sure that headlines and taglines clearly communicate the core goal of your product. This is most easily done by creating a headline for your landing page that attracts your visitors' attention. Below that could be a tagline that really brings home the message of your headline.



If possible, try to write your headlines in an action-oriented way. You can do this by using verbs and sentences that imply an action for the visitor. For instance, we could have a headline saying: ‘*Keep your site optimized with the Yoast SEO Premium plugin!*’. This shows people one of the core values of the plugin, and making it active will motivate a lot more people to actually try it.

Example



Figure 3: homepage pawedu.com

In the above homepage for [PawEdu](#), it is very clear what the purpose of the website is. The three larger words could apply to more websites, but the tagline below it and the image add nuance to these words. In most cases, that could indeed mean getting back to a boring business tagline. Vague descriptions just won't tell your audience what you are doing.



3 A picture is worth a thousand words

A third way to make sure your mission is clear to your audience is to make good use of pictures. For most products, it is easy to find pictures that reflect the purpose of your website. Think about what you want to tell your audience, keep your mission in mind, while choosing pictures.

Yoast Tip



Be original and make or buy your own photo's instead of relying on some stock image that everybody uses.



Figure 4: don't rely on stock image that everybody uses

If you are selling candy, make sure to put pictures of tasty candy on your homepage. If you are selling cruises to Hawaii, you could definitely take some great shots of a tropical island and a nice cruise-ship. For those of you that sell things like consultancy or plugins for that matter, it is more difficult to find suitable pictures.



This chapter

In this chapter we explain the importance of proper calls-to-action. Also, we will give some practical tips on how to improve upon the [calls-to-action](#) on your website.

What is a call-to-action?

A call-to-action is the element – usually a button – you want people to click on when they enter your website. In order to guide your visitor into or through your website, you should give him directions. You give out signs. These signs are your calls-to-action. The most important signs should be made the biggest. Make it as big as possible. Make it stand out.

Although a call-to-action is especially important on a homepage, there should be a call-to-action on every page of your website. The contact form has a call-to-action, of course. Buttons for your own products are also calls-to-action. Make sure you give your visitors directions, show them where you want them to click.



Best practices for good calls-to-action

Making sure you show your visitors where you want them to click does not seem like rocket science. Still, in the process of designing, altering and redesigning your website, the call-to-action can get lost. Review your website on a regular basis and critically analyze the visibility of your calls-to-action. There are a number of best practices for setting up a good call-to-action.

- **No clutter.** If you add a call-to-action, there shouldn't be other elements demanding the visitors' attention. For instance, make sure to avoid social share buttons right below your call-to-action button.
- **Add urgency.** Why should people act at this moment? You could for instance add urgency by adding texts like *'only three slots available'* or *'just one left'*.
- **Size matters.** Make sure people are able to view the button without any trouble. Don't go overboard; don't become too aggressive.
- **Add trust.** A money-back guarantee will make it 'easier' for the visitor to click your order button. A great testimonial below your contact form will lower barriers to contact you.
- **Be clear about the benefits.** *'Sign up now and receive weekly emails about optimizing your website'* is a better text to accompany a newsletter subscription option than just *'Sign up now'*.



- **Right below your price.** Adding the call-to-action right below your price will entice visitors to click the call-to-action – if they like your price. No time to hesitate.
- **Color is important.** If your entire design is using blue and orange, your call-to-action will stand out a lot more if it's green. Using blue will make the call-to-action blend in too much.
- **Be short.** If your call-to-action is a button, don't use 'Buy this product now and get a 20% discount' as the main button text. Use '20% OFF'. Make sure your text fits your buttons.

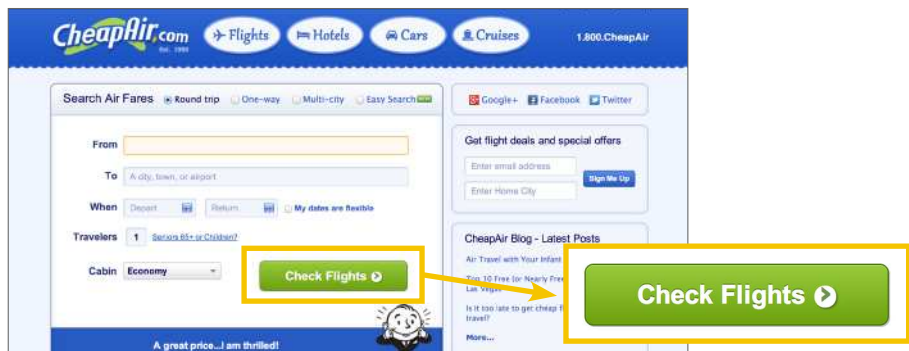


Figure 5: a clear call-to-action on cheapair.com

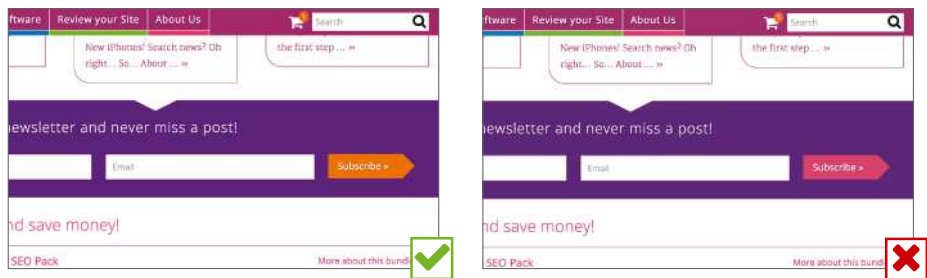


Figure 6: two examples of a call-to-action button



Text on your call-to-action

Your call-to-action will be a button in most cases. You will put some text on this button. We already gave some tips about the text in the previous paragraph (like: be short). When thinking about button texts, a few other things are important:

First of all, you need to be sure you're using an active voice. We've mentioned the necessity of active voice while describing [how to write taglines](#) (chapter 5). An active voice is action oriented, and thus literally calls people to action. And that's exactly what you want. Make people want to click your button!

Second, make sure your button text is specific for what people are doing. Do not put 'click here' on a button. 'Send' is also just too generic. Use something like 'Sign up!' for a newsletter, or 'Contact us' for a contact form. The text has to explain what the button will do. Use small and simple words. You need to keep your button text as simple as possible. People have to immediately understand what it means.



Figure 7: make sure your button text is specific

Visual cueing

A great way to get people to pay attention to your calls-to-action is by use of visual cueing. Visual cueing basically means directing your visitors' gazes. You can do this with colors or textual directions, but the most effective way is shapes. And there's one shape that's



unparalleled when it comes to visual cueing: the arrow. We use the term 'arrow' in a broad term, as it can be an actual arrow, or more of a triangle shape.

On wheelofpersuasion.com you can find a great explanation on this. Especially this picture makes it very clear.

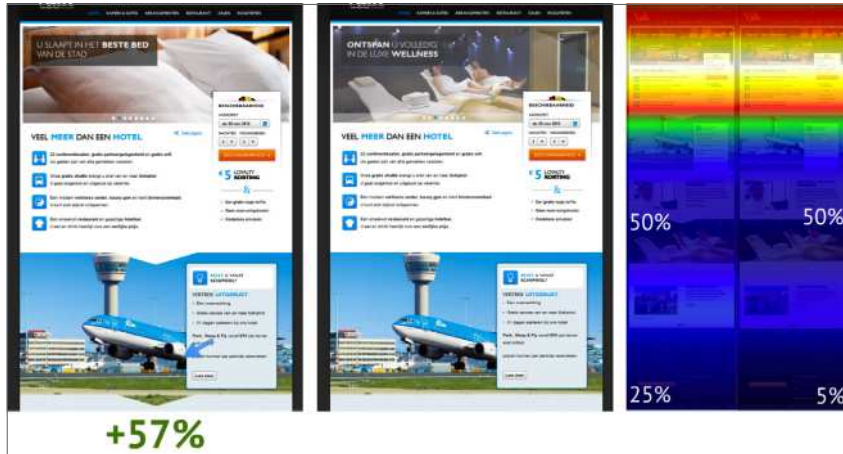


Figure 8: the arrow, unparalleled when it comes to visual cueing

So adding those simple triangles in the images resulted in a huge increase in people scrolling down to the bottom of the page. But even more amazing: they had a 57% increase in conversion. So this already shows that keeping and directing your visitor's visual attention pays off. Obviously, this is a process that every parallax website should be taking advantage of!



This chapter

In this chapter, we will explain the importance of menus for SEO. Also, we give practical tips to improve your menu.

Main menu

The main menu indicates the various sections of your website in a clear and informative way. This menu is the most global navigation on your website. It should consist of a number of main menu items (not too much!) that tell your visitor which corner of your website could be visited for what information. Your main menu should reflect the structure of your website. Do not flood the menu with unrelated items but think about which categories make sense to your visitors.

Visitors use your menu to find things on your website. The menu helps them to understand what your website is about. So your menu is a very important tool to communicate your purpose.

Submenu

The submenu should contain details of a main menu item. When the main item is Mac, the submenu should read something like MacBook, MacBook Air, MacBook Pro, iMac. Note that these submenu items should also be present on the Mac page.





Figure 9: main item Mac and submenu on [apple.com](https://www.apple.com)

There are many ways to add a submenu, the most common is where the submenu drops down below the main menu item when hovering your mouse over that item. You could also add an indication (like a downwards pointing arrow) in your main menu item to show that it contains a submenu. Otherwise, visitors will not know that a submenu exists!



Figure 10: arrow indicates a submenu on [walmart.com](https://www.walmart.com)





Importance of menus for SEO

Your menu structures your website. Structure of your website is of great importance for your SEO. That is because the way your site is structured will give Google important clues about where to find the most important content. Your visitor uses your menu to see through the structure of your website. Google needs that same structure to understand what your site is about, and how easily it will find and index content relevant to your site's purpose and intent. In our [Content SEO](#) eBook we teach you, step by step, how to set up a decent site structure.

If your menu is not focused, has too many items and you can't seem to get them down, you should really dive into site structure some more.

Menu usability tips

Main level and sublevel

Preferably, the top level items of your main menu should take up just one line in your menu. Besides the fact that adding a second line for your menu isn't really user friendly, it just looks less professional as well. If your site is not too big, create at most one sublevel. Keep it simple and realize there are more ways to get from one page to another. Your menu isn't the only navigational option on your website. If you cannot fit all your categories in your menu, perhaps your website tries to cover too much. What is your mission? Does everything your website covers actually belong to this mission?



Menu items should be related

For the majority of websites, the menu starts with the Home item and ends with the Contact item. Everything between these two items should be related somehow. If you have a website about diving, your menu could have the items: freediving, scuba diving and spear-fishing. It is clear that these items have a link between them, and therefore the menu feels natural. If these menu items had been freediving, scuba diving and Dakar Rally, that wouldn't feel natural, right? Keep things on-topic. If you have a diving website and want to write about your Dakar experience, you can squeeze in a blog post or link to a specialized, optimized site about it. It doesn't belong in your menu.

Menu visibility

For most visitors of your website, the menu will be the main navigation on your website. If you write long articles and people have to scroll down a lot, make sure you add a sticky menu. That way, your menu stays in the screen while people scroll down.



Figure 11: sticky menu



Breadcrumbs

People who have clicked on an item on your menu, should be able to find their way back. Guide them with the use of breadcrumbs. Breadcrumbs are the links, usually above the title post, that look like: *Home » Yoast Academy » Courses*. They are good for two things. First of all, they allow your users to easily navigate through your site. And secondly, they allow search engines to determine the structure of your site more easily.



Figure 12: breadcrumbs

These breadcrumbs should link back to the homepage, and the category the post is in.



This chapter

Make sure people can read your texts properly. Reading from screens is hard, so make sure you do not make it any harder than it already is. In this chapter, we will explain the importance of typography and give tips on how to improve the typography on your website.

Typography, readability and legibility

The readability of a particular text depends both on its content (for example, the complexity of its vocabulary) and its typography. Readability is about arranging words and groups of words in a way that allows the readers eye to access the content easily and in a way that makes sense.

Typography is the science of arranging your letters in order to make written text readable and appealing. Before digitization kicked in, typography was a specialized occupation, nowadays typography is something everybody has to deal with, at least everybody who owns or maintains a website. Typography involves selecting typeface (font family), font size, line length, line-spacing and letter-spacing. When choosing a typeface you have to take legibility into account. Legibility is the ease with which a reader can recognize individual characters in text.



Typography

Typography is the science of arranging your letters in order to make written text readable and appealing.

Typography is the science of arranging your letters in order to make written text readable and appealing.

Legibility

Legibility is the ease with which a reader can recognize individual characters.

Legibility is the ease with which a reader can recognize individual characters.

Figure 13: the difference between typography and legibility

Why is typography important?

Easy reading helps learning and enjoyment, so what we write should be easy to understand (source: [Wikipedia](#)). Research shows that you should limit the length of your text as people tend to stop reading if a web text is too long. However, for SEO purposes, your blogs or articles should not be too short (minimum of 300 words). A lengthy article has more chances to rank in the search engines. If you choose to write a lengthy article, one should focus even more on choosing the right typography.



Font

Fonttype

For the best presentation of your website, you have probably been thinking about what kind of font to use. Fonts can set a mood, enhance a tone of voice or totally ruin the user experience or usability of your website.

Yoast Tip



Fonts matter. And as we can basically use any font on any website nowadays, be sure to pick the right one for your website and audience. Use [Google Fonts](#) (free) or [Adobe Typekit](#) (paid) and pick the fonts that suit your website the most.

Font size

The preferred paragraph font size for a website has increased quite a bit over the years. Ten years ago, a font of 10 pixels allowed you to add more text to a page and made your page look more like a book. With the growth of computer screens, nowadays 16 pixels is very normal. Is there a minimum? Not really, although we recommend using at least 14 pixels. That size is a good read on both the larger desktop screens and our mobile screens.



Font color

What font color to use is largely depending on the type of website you have and what design your website uses. In general, we say that using a black font on a white background is still the best read. The general thought is that outlines are sharper and letters are easier to distinguish and identify.

The one thing you should do regarding font and background color, is test the contrast. There are a number of tools available, all with their own kind of contrast checker. A really easy and good one is [Colorable](#) – it will allow you to enter the foreground (text color) and background (background color) and it will tell you immediately if the contrast is right or wrong and what score the combination of colors gets. Colorable is based upon the [WCAG accessibility guidelines](#). These same guidelines are used to create [Contrast Ratio](#), which will appeal to a lot of developers as it is available on Github. We've been using the last one for ages and love the feature where you can use the arrow keys to brighten or darken a color to make the contrast right. Use these tools to your advantage; your audience will thank you for it.

Whitespace

Next to font size, you also want to make sure that the text has sufficient room to breathe. If you are using a larger font size, but forget to add whitespace for headings and paragraphs, your text will still be unreadable. Especially on a mobile device. Make sure to use sufficient white space.



Whitespace isn't just for between headings and paragraphs. Whitespace is also related to the line height of your text. If you neglect to add a proper line height, your well constructed sentences become one big block of letters. This is far from user-friendly and will make your page very unappealing for a visitor.

Whitespace


White space is also related to the line height of your text. If you neglect to add a proper line height, your well constructed sentences become one big block of letters.

White space is also related to the line height of your text. If you neglect to add a proper line height, your well constructed sentences become one big block of letters.

Figure 14: make sure you use enough whitespace

Because the whitespace of a specific text increases your text's legibility, people will actually have a better and quicker understanding of your text. This means you'll get your point across more quickly and more easily.

Headings

 The importance of headings for SEO is (as far as we can see) not very big anymore. Does that mean that we can just stop using headings like H1 and H2? No, most definitely not. These headings are still very useful.



From a usability point of view, we use headings to:

- **Summarize your page.** Headings make sure the visitor can simply scan the page and grasp the general idea (and decide to read the full article).
- **Divide the page into digestible parts.** Longer pages need headings. Any article without headings might as well be in Chinese as it will all be one big blur of letters.
- **Identify sections on a page,** like in your sidebar or footer, or even in the main part of your web page.

Yoast Tip



Besides these usability reasons, the use of headings also allows for better accessibility, increasing user experience for the visually challenged visitors of your website as well.

Typography of links

The importance of links for SEO is covered in our [two previous eBooks](#). The design of the links in your texts itself however, is important as well. Make *absolutely* clear what's a link and what isn't. You can do so by:

- using **a different color** (make sure you pick a whole different color!)
- adding an **underline** (very user friendly for the visually challenged visitors)
- although not commonly practiced anymore, use **bold text**



To emphasize the link you can easily combine two of the options above. In particular, *just bold for your links* doesn't suffice. Using bold and a different color is an option. Of course using an underline is still one of the best options; this will immediately identify a word or combination of words as a link. Make sure you change the style when hovering your mouse cursor over the link. Remove the underline or change the color. The link is already identified, just make sure there is a change in styling of the link to confirm that.

Line length

Another thing to consider when it comes to readability is the length of your text lines. You can find a number of studies about this online, but there doesn't seem to be a default solution for this. It all depends on the font type used, and the size of your font.

In [Readability: the Optimal Line Length](#), Christian Holt mentions a number of suggested text lines, stating these should be 50 to 65 or 75 characters. Ilene Strizver even takes text alignment in account in her article [Line Length & Column Width](#). She states that non-justified text should be 9 to 12 words per line, and justified text should be 12 to 15 words.

From our experience, 10 to 15 words is indeed a good read. Is that exact science? No, definitely not. It's our experience from reading and reviewing over 1,000 websites.





Usability of Specific Pages



About this section

In this section, we will discuss usability and user experience (UX) issues for specific pages. We will cover best practices for respectively: your homepage, landing pages, checkout pages, forms, archive pages and your search result pages. We will help you to further optimize these pages improving both the UX and your conversion rate.



This chapter

In this chapter we want to explore the main purpose of your homepage and give tips on how to optimize your homepage to make it totally awesome!

What is your website about?

The first homepage optimization tip is to optimize for clarity, something we already discussed in [chapter 5](#) (Clarity and Mission). Your purpose and your mission, the uniqueness of your website, should be reflected on your homepage.

Is your homepage just a large list of products and services, or did you actually take the time to write a decent welcome for your visitors? One of the most annoying things a website owner can do, is actually write ‘*Welcome to our website*’. By welcoming your visitor, we mean telling or showing your visitor what can be found on your website.

What is your main product or service? What can be found on your website about your products about your company? And most important: what is the main benefit (USP; Unique Selling Point) for the visitor? But clarity isn’t the only thing that matters on your homepage.



Best practices for your homepage

A second objective of your homepage is to give guidance to your visitor. You should make sure your homepage guides your visitor to your main pages. Of course your homepage needs an introduction and tagline as we discussed in chapter 5. These would however be useless if your homepage wouldn't allow the visitor to click to the pages where the deal is closed, the product is sold or the contact form can be filled out. We will discuss 6 important ways to guide your visitor through your homepage.:

1 Images and CTA (as an alternative to sliders)

At Yoast we [don't like sliders](#). Sliders decrease your page's focus. The focus is divided with a slider, while it should be very clear what the page is about. Read Thijs' post about sliders for more information. Still, a slider is used very often to promote homepages. And, used in the right way it definitely could work. If your important stuff is put in a slider which only comes up every now and then, the important stuff gets little attention. The lack of attention these pages get, is one of the reasons why we don't like sliders.

The area you use for your slider can actually be a great spot for guidance. Add an image of your featured product and include a great [call-to-action](#) (CTA) button. Make sure this button stays in place. If you want to rotate that image with every browser refresh, we will be the last one to stop you. That is a great way to make your homepage appear different with every visit. Just make sure you are sending one message (or using one main call-to-action) per image.



2 Menu

The most obvious way to navigate your audience on your homepage is of course the menu. Have you thought about what is in your menu? Is it structured and focused? We already covered menus in [chapter 7](#).

3 Products

If you have an online shop, the possibilities for guiding your visitors through your homepage are endless. Don't add the entire category list in your sidebar. Focus on your most visited categories and add these in a prominent spot on your homepage. Add your best selling product to the homepage, perhaps in that larger image we've already mentioned. Be creative. Your homepage is the best spot on your site to announce a new product, for instance. If your shop has a sale, make sure that people notice it on the homepage.

4 Search as a call-to-action

In around 80% of the sites we review, the search bar is located in the header or footer. If you are selling thousands of products, or if you have written over a hundred articles on your site, chances are that a search bar will come in handy for your visitor. Why not make that one your main call-to-action and list it as the main element on your website? Definitely make sure your search result pages look decent. Read more about search result pages in [chapter 13](#).



5 Contact

You also have to realize that a (returning) visitor could just be looking for your contact details. List a link to your contact page where one would expect it. That could be in the last spot in your menu, but could also be an address in your footer, or a (short) contact form in the sidebar.

6 Do not clutter!

Do not go overboard in guidance on your website! Do not clutter your homepage with all kind of actionable guides, but pick two or three that make sense on a site like yours. And focus on these.

Example



Figure 15: a great example of a focused homepage

[TrendyPeas](#) has even thought of making that call-to-action a distinctive color. One could argue about the hamburger menu in the top right corner, but fact remains that this 'extra' menu puts all focus on the main menu and the 20% off in the center of the main image.



This chapter

In this chapter we want to explore the main purpose of your landing pages. We also give tips on how to optimize your landing pages to make sure you guide and convert the visitors on your website!

What is a landing page?

A landing page is a page where your visitors ‘land’ (arrive) from other sources, such as search engines or social media. It’s a page that’s optimized to evoke a certain reaction from the visitor, such as buying a product or subscribing to a newsletter.

You can have separate landing pages for different sources; a landing page for people coming from Google, one for people coming from Facebook, etc. You can also have different landing pages for the different keywords people use to find your website in Google. You should have landing pages for all keywords you want to be found on and customize these landing pages accordingly.

Yoast Tip



Read our [Content SEO](#) eBook for more info about how to construct landing pages.



Landing pages should be designed in such a way that they offer the visitors exactly what they were looking for. Try to design these pages so they fit the expectation of your visitors and subsequently guide them through your funnel.

Product pages vs landing pages

If you have a shop and offer few products, your product pages will be landing pages. Take our own company as an example. Our plugins all have product pages and these pages are the pages people enter our site when searching for our plugins in Google or after they clicked on an ad in Facebook.

If you have a large shop, product and landing pages could very well be different. People will search for specific products, but also for certain categories. If you own a webshop selling clothes, people could search for a specific brand of jeans or for jeans in general. You should make sure both function as landing pages.

Best practices for landing pages

There are a few things that you should take care of on your landing page in order to navigate your visitors from the landing pages through the checkout. We will discuss 5 best practices for landing pages. And focus more on the checkout process in the next chapter.



1 Focus

Focus is especially important on your landing pages, since this is where you're selling your products! Make sure you only have one thing people can focus on and not a lot of different things. If people come to your landing pages because they are looking for the ballet shoes you are offering on your website, you want to guide these visitors to your checkout.

For most landing pages it's usually pretty easy to figure out what you want people to see most prominently. If you're selling a product, your landing page for that product should focus on the 'Add To Cart' button, also known as the call-to-action. Think about the placement, color and text of your call-to-action (see [chapter 6](#)).

2 Safety signs

Safety signs are basically security signs and logos that [increase the trust of the website for visitors](#). They make sure people feel like your landing page is a safe place. Of course, some safety signs seem to be more effective than others. Generally, though, having a security sign works better than having none.

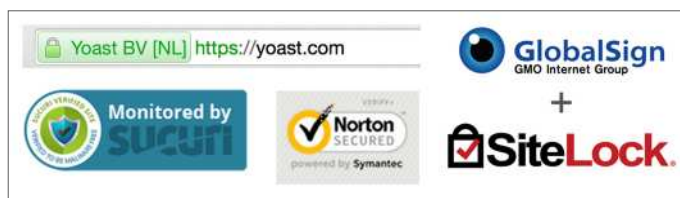


Figure 16: add security signs to increase trust



3 Payment options

People also prefer your webshop supporting more than just one payment option. And if people see your landing page has (multiple) trustworthy credit card logos, they'll feel safer on it! But most importantly, about 60% of your visitors will simply abandon their transaction if their preferred payment option isn't or appears not to be available. So make sure these signs and logos are easy to find on your landing page.



Figure 17: support more payment options

4 Images

Images are said to have a big impact on navigating your visitor from your landing page through your website. If you're selling physical products, having decent images on your landing pages can have a really big impact. This way people will better understand what they're buying. It's basically a replacement for actually touching and seeing a product in a physical store. People can envision themselves using the product.



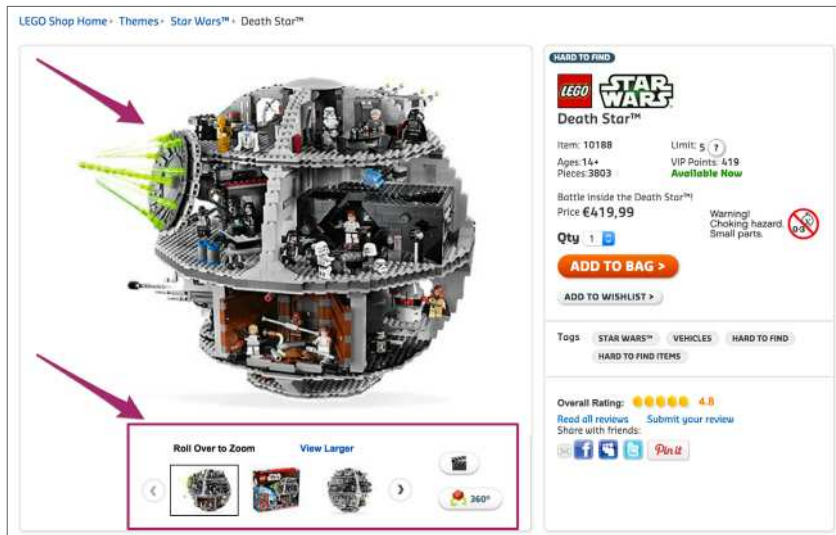


Figure 18: Death Star™ video and (360°) images on shop.lego.com

5 Testimonials

Another important part of your landing pages should be testimonials. Testimonials are basically (little) stories by customers explaining why they feel your product or service is excellent. Stories like this will greatly increase the trust of your visitors, especially because it's not just you bragging about yourself. Thijs wrote a very [insightful post about why testimonials work](#).

You should definitely make sure that you use photos with your testimonials. This adds to the credibility of those testimonials. Your audience will be more convinced if the testimonials look more legit. It goes without saying that you should never make your testimonials up yourself. Testimonials should always be real and legit.





A good way to convey that your testimonials really are legit, is by using video testimonials. This will obviously take more time, but videos are great for getting a message across.

Testimonials of influential people usually have more impact. There are some people that are so well-known in their field of work that their opinion really carries weight. So with testimonials from influential people, the product will be perceived as better or more trustworthy.

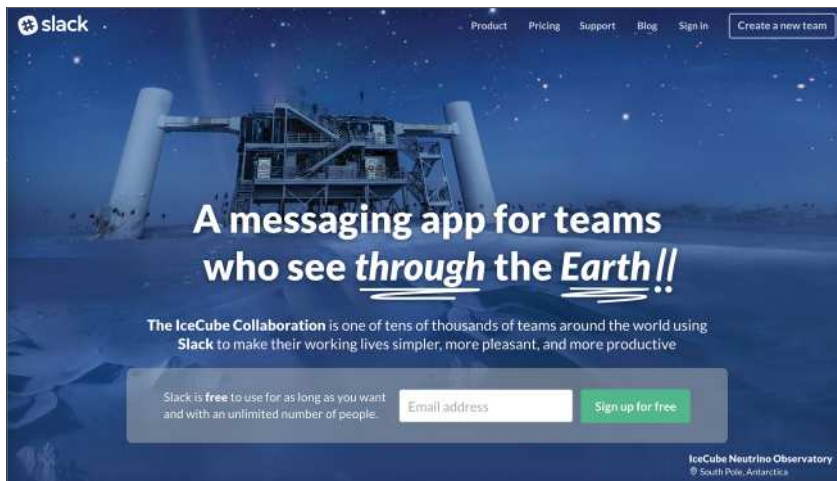


Figure 19: testimonial The IceCube Collaboration on slack.com



Example



Figure 20: the HelpScout landing page, no clutter and focused

The [HelpScout](#) landing page works really well. It's clean, has almost no clutter and is focused what it should be focused on. Clicking the blue call-to-action will actually bring up a video that both explains the product and has video testimonials. Scrolling down you'll get great visual representations of the product and more information and testimonials. Also, they end the page with some security and safety notes, showing why they're a safe choice.



This chapter

We have covered homepages and landing pages in the previous 2 chapters. But what happens when people click on your call-to-action button and enter your checkout process? In this chapter will teach you the basics how to improve your checkout page. This chapter also appeared in our previous eBook: [Optimize your WordPress site](#).

What is the checkout page?

The last step in your process is always the checkout page; your website's cash register. Although a lot of your visitors might go here, that doesn't mean they'll actually buy your products. Make sure you're being clear enough and offer them enough feedback and validation so they know they're heading the right way. Make them want to complete the order.

Shopping cart abandonment

In the checkout process you'll usually still lose a lot of people. These people do not finish their sale. This is a bit weird: in a real shop it would be like people adding items to their basket, going to the counter, letting you scan all the items and tell them the total price. And then, they would leave. Without paying, without products. In a physical shop, this does not happen that often. On the internet, it is



quite common. Read more about shopping cart abandonment in one of [Thijs' posts](#). Luckily, there are quite a few things that can really help you let your visitors actually complete their transaction.

Best practices for checkout page

Progress bar

Make clear to your visitors how far along in the checkout process they actually are. You can easily do this by adding a progress bar. A progress bar is a bar, that shows the progress of your visitors! It will give structure to the process, explaining people how far along they are in the shopping process. Every step of your checkout process should be in this progress bar. The progress bar also gamifies the process of buying something. This means that people will want to make it to the end of the process, simply to reach the end of the progress bar. After completing one step, you should give a clear 'pat on the back', like: 'you have successfully filled out your address!'

Make sure that your progress bar shows the steps your visitors have already completed. Do not make your checkout process too long (5 steps is long enough!). Gamifying will not work in long checkout processes, people will get tired of your checkout process then.

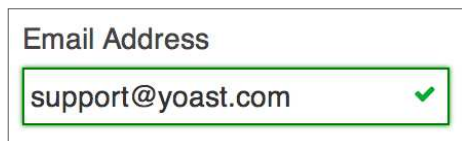


Figure 21: progress bar, gamification



Inline validation

Inline validation means that you give your visitors immediate feedback on whether they've done the right thing. In your checkout process you could add a check which immediately shows people whether they used a valid email address, home address or credit card number.



A form titled "Email Address" with a text input field containing "support@yoast.com". A green checkmark is visible at the end of the input field, indicating successful validation.

Or not so much:



A form titled "Email Address" with a text input field containing "supportyoast.com". A red 'X' icon is at the end of the input field, and a red error message "Please enter a valid email address" is displayed to the right of the input field.

Figure 22: inline validation, immediate feedback

This will prevent people from making a lot of mistakes and then having to refill everything. Also, it makes people feel good to get validated. It's a bit difficult if you cannot write code, but it is definitely worth it if you have the technical skills. In you want to read more about inline validation, please read Joost's post on [checkout field validation tips and tricks](#).



Increase cache expiration time

Don't you just love it when the shopkeeper still knows your name and what product(s) you were looking at the day or week before? People love that same thing with online shops. They want to be able to leave items sitting in their cart, feeling safe it'll still be there later on. About 30% of people wait for at least 12 hours until they make their purchase. So you need to make sure you're saving all this data! The best way to do this would be by increasing the cache expiration time on your checkout pages. You can read more about caching in chapter 24 about speed of our [Optimize your WordPress site](#) eBook.



This chapter

If you have a website with quite a number of articles and posts (a blog, a news site, an informative site) you should have some kind of system in which you present all of your content to your audience. How do you archive your old posts? In this chapter, we explain how to best do this for both usability and SEO purposes.

Archives by taxonomy

If you're searching for a post on a specific topic on a site, would you go to the monthly archives? Or would you start browsing by tag or category? The latter makes far more sense right? People hardly ever use date archives. In the majority of cases, archives by date are not the most useful archives on a blog.

Both for SEO and usability reasons, you should make archives on the base of content. Articles and posts that are alike, should be linked to one another and put in the same taxonomy. This makes more sense to your audience and to Google. The taxonomy pages will be the pages your audience uses to search through your archive.



The use of taxonomies



The reason you should make use of taxonomies for SEO purposes is that your site will get more structure (or at least Google will understand it better). In WordPress you have two standard ways of using taxonomies: you can use categories and you can use tags. The difference has to do with structure. Categories are hierarchical, so you can have sub-categories and sub-sub-categories, whereas tags don't have that hierarchy. You can consider categories to be the table of contents of your website, and tags the index.

Taxonomies can go wrong!

A lot could go wrong with taxonomies when people start using them randomly. The structure of your taxonomies is important. As taxonomies group your content, you should keep in mind where these could be used, how they are used and where they are linked. Do not create too many categories. Do not create too many tags. If every post or article receives yet another new tag, you are not structuring anything. Make sure tags are used more than once or twice. Make sure tags group articles together that really belong together.

Make your taxonomies visible

A lot of people forget to make their taxonomies visible to a visitor. What would be the use of these taxonomies in that case? So your posts are nicely archived for yourself? That would be a waste of that taxonomy. In some themes, the categories and tags are instantly



shown as you add them to your post. But, some themes neglect to do so. You should make sure these tags and categories are in fact shown, preferably at the bottom of your article.



Figure 23: taxonomies

Best practices archive pages

Clear introduction

Your taxonomy page should give your reader a clear introduction of what to expect in the articles you grouped together. WordPress will then automatically list the most recent articles or posts within this taxonomy.

Ideally, you would like your most important (and perhaps your most recent) articles to appear first on your archive pages. Your cornerstone content articles (see our [Content SEO](#) eBook) should definitely be on that list.

However, changing the order of the articles within a taxonomy will take some coding and development (at least in WordPress). Our



advice is to make sure you link to your most important content in your introductory text on every archive page. In that way, your most important articles will always appear on your archive page. Re-read your archive pages every now and then and add or change the most important content.

Pagination

People do not want to click through an endless collection of posts. Suppose your blog has 1,000 articles and you're listing 10 articles per page, that would give you a hundred archive pages. If you would link these pages just by adding an Older (Previous) posts link and a Newer (Next) posts link, that would mean you would have to click 99 times to get to the last page. There is no need to make it that hard.

By adding a numbered pagination, linking for instance the first, second, third, tenth, twentieth, thirtieth, up to the ninetieth and last page, you reduce the number of clicks. Jumping every 20 pages will already lower that number to 10, of course. Pagination will allow your users to click through your archive in a rather simple way.



Figure 24: you don't want to click each page to get to page 50



Figure 25: you should be able to skip pages




This chapter

Internal search is the search that is on your website itself. It's the search widget in WordPress and the product search in WooCommerce. Make no mistake: if your website has over twenty pages, your website should most definitely have that internal search option.

There are a number of best practices for that internal search option, which we will cover in this chapter.

Internal search for informational websites

 It doesn't matter if your website is the wikipedia of golden retrievers, or you simply have a blog about your three-year-old. If your website is packed with content, you really want to add that internal search option. The thing is when someone lands on your website from Google, they are looking for a specific piece of information about a certain subject. When they can't find it immediately after clicking that link in Google, there are only a few options to prevent that user from clicking back to Google immediately. An internal search option instantly raises the chances of people staying on your website. This will reduce your bounce rate and increase your chances of ranking.



Characteristics of a good internal search option

Try to think about the internal search option as a user, not as a website owner or developer. What would you say is required for that search option to work for you? I think there are a few characteristics that work for any visitor:

- It should be **visible**. If you want people to use that search option, don't hide it in your website's footer. Adding it to either the top of your sidebar, or in your header, would be a much better option.
- It should be **clear** that it's a search option. Very important. If it's just an input field without heading, submit button or watermark explaining it's a search option, it simply won't work for the majority of your visitors.

Example



Figure 26: redesign 2012 vs redesign 2015

We will emphasize our internal search option more in our new redesign. The larger magnifier icon already makes a huge difference. But besides that, we have also lifted the internal search option from our sidebar to the right side of the menu. The search option is equally important for us as our shopping cart and all main menu items.



Best practices for internal search result pages for informational websites

The internal search field is only step one of an internal search option. Step two is the search result page itself. In our reviews, we check a number of characteristics of a search result page:

- **The search keyword is highlighted in the search result pages**

If you want to decide on what result to click, you'd like to scan the results and quickly click one. Internal search result pages are a means to an end, a tool, not a destination itself. Highlighting the keyword used in search (like Google does), improves scanning these results a lot.

- **The search result pages contain text snippets with the keyword**

It's really hard to decide on a result with just the title shown on an internal search result page. There is a reason Google sometimes ignores your suggested meta description and shows a text snippet of your page containing the keyword. It helps your visitor. That goes for internal search results as well.

- **Search results are ranked by relevancy**

To all you WordPress users out there: WordPress now orders search results by relevance (since 3.7). Make sure to update. That being said, plugins like [SearchWP](#) can still help you improve your internal search results a lot, and make you manage that relevance. In the old days, WordPress results were ordered by date (newest content first), which made absolutely no sense. Serve the best result first.



- **Internal search results are not indexed by Google**

Make sure that these pages are not indexed by Google. Noindex, - follow these internal search result pages.

Internal search for webshops

We'd like to elaborate a bit on internal search for webshops. Internal search is perhaps even more important for these websites. There is a reason larger webshops add so much focus on their internal search: you will buy their stuff if you can easily find the product you are looking for.

In a larger product collection or on a large internal search result page, a filter is really important. We use it all the time, no matter what kind of webshop. Sizes, colors, material. All these filters will help you find that one desired product. And as a webshop visitor, you utilize these filters, without it feeling as an extra step, right? Shopping is a different process than finding information. It's really convenient that this webshop provides these filters. We're always happy with filters in webshops.

Best practices for Internal search result pages for webshops

There are two kinds of internal search result pages in webshops:

- Actual internal search result pages
- Category pages



Both basically look the same, right? The main difference is that the category pages are presented after clicking a link, most probably in the menu, and the search result pages are presented after an actual search query.

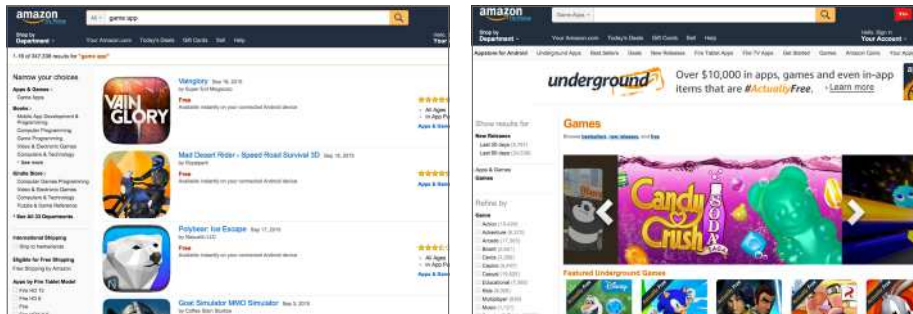


Figure 27: [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com), internal search result page and category page

For both pages, the same characteristics apply as for informational pages:

- Highlight the search keyword
- Add text snippets containing the keyword
- Rank results by relevance
- Make sure internal search results are not indexed by Google

There is one extra characteristic we'd like to add here.

- Make sure a product image is shown in your internal search results. This makes searching a lot easier. For instance, with books (and even eBooks), we'd rather pick the one with a nice cover than the boring alternative. Make sure there is an image available.



This chapter

Every website should have a form. In our opinion, you should definitely have a contact page. You want people to be able to contact you very easily. A contact page is just so much more user friendly than a `mailto` link. In this chapter we'll share our views on how you should optimize each variety and how to optimize forms in general.

Different types of forms

There are three major types of forms on websites: the *checkout form* (we've already covered that one in [chapter 11](#)), the *contact form* and the '*request a quote*' form.

Contact forms

Contact forms are probably the most common kinds of forms you'll find on the web. However, we see a lot of contact forms that look like no one ever thought about them.

Privacy

Try to look at the contact form as the equivalent of someone coming up to a salesperson in a physical shop. In an actual store, you'd



expect the salesperson to be open, friendly and helpful. Now consider what you'd think about that salesperson if he/she was telling you *"Tell me your name, date of birth and occupation before you ask me any questions!"*. That would probably result in you walking out the door, right? So why should your website be any different?

Tone of voice

The tone of voice is very important for people to feel safe enough to ask a question. And tone of voice is just as much determined by what's said as by what's not said. So not having any text near your contact form will not absolve you from needing a decent tone of voice. You need to invite visitors to ask you a question and explain the process of how you'll handle their question. The last thing you want to do is confuse or piss off customers right before they want to ask you a question. They'll either leave your site or they'll be angry while contacting you.


Example of a good contact form

Our own contact form actually changes based upon the type of inquiry that is made. If you are contacting us about a site review, we'll ask only the things we need to know and send your inquiry to the right department. If you're interested in sending us press releases, we'll kindly ask you not to and show no contact form at all.



Contact Form

What do you want to contact us about? *

General Inquiry *  Form might change

Your name *

First Last

Email *

Website

Subject *

Your Message *

Be short and concise. We get tons of email, the shorter and simpler your message is to digest, the higher the chance we respond.

Contact Yeast

Figure 28: our contact form changes based upon the type of inquiry

Example of a contact form that could be much better

Some forms just don't invite the visitor to use it, like Figure 27. The form fields don't match the design of the website and the submit button looks as if the website owner just doesn't like getting emails. Even the Captcha (means to prevent automatic, repetitive sending of the form) looks unreliable.



OUR SERVICES
PATIENT & VISITOR GUIDE
HEALTH & WELLNESS
ABOUT US
FOR HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

PATIENT & VISITOR GUIDE

Hospitals & Facilities
Your Hospital Stay
Phone Directory
Visiting a Patient
Contact a Patient
Gift Shops
Food and Vending
Parking
Lost and Found
Lodging
Speak Up to Improve Your Care
Understanding the ICU
Billing
Health Guides
Financial Assistance Program
Summary

Contact a Patient

If you can't be there, you can still show your care by sending your friend or loved one a message.
 Volunteers are pleased to deliver notes to patients at ~~Centers for Disease Control and Prevention~~ Hospitals.
 Please do not include personal or confidential information in the form below.

To contact a patient by phone, call ~~800-368-6768~~.

** Indicates required information*

Patient Name *

Hospital * ☒ ~~Centers for Disease Control and Prevention~~ Hospital ☐ ~~Washington~~ Hospital

Room Number

Your Name *

Your E-mail *

Message

Authentication *

If the challenge words are too difficult to read, [click here](#) to refresh.

Type the text

Privacy & Terms

Figure 29: this forms doesn't invite the visitor to use it

'Request a quote' form

A 'request a quote' form is a form where you ask the person you're contacting to set a price or make an invoice for your (specific) needs. Sometimes it can definitely be helpful to ask for more information in a 'request a quote' form. It all depends on the setup of your business, your website and your form. The same premise still holds though: if you don't really need certain information, don't ask for it.



Pricing information

Half the time I see a ‘request a quote’ button or form, I feel kind of cheated. These kinds of forms really make me feel the website owner just doesn’t want to share their usual pricing, because they can see if they can make more money off of you. So you should be clear about the reason you’re not communicating your prices.

Yoast Tip



If you’re not communicating your prices you should preferably show people a price range they can expect. This will not only filter out people that aren’t interested in that price range, but it’ll also give people like me a better idea of what they can expect. And that alone can help increase your response rate and conversion rate.

Best practices for forms

Focus your form

Just as with everything else on your website, you need to focus your forms. No matter what kind of form it is, make sure you break it down to the bare necessities. If you don’t need personal information, don’t ask for it. The fewer the fields, the shorter the form and the higher the response rate on that form.

The fields in your contact form need to be clearly visible. Don’t be tempted to use ‘slick’ form design that will basically make the fields transparent. It must be clear where people should enter the details.



And, of course, make sure your call-to-action (the send button, in this case) is visible and clear. We can't stress this enough. If people can't find that button, then all the form optimization in the world won't help you.

Decent erroring and validation

One of the other things that can be implemented for any kind of form are inline erroring and validation (see [chapter 11](#)). People don't want to be told they've made a mistake filling out your form after they already hit the send button. Make sure these errors and validations appear right when the user is done filling out the field.

Make sure people understand how to fill out your form and, in the rare event of a mistake, make the errors so ridiculously clear, they won't ever be able to make that mistake again.





Mobile UX



About this section

Mobile UX has become very important. People use their mobile phones to search, read and shop online. More than half of Google's search queries are actually done on mobile devices. Therefore your website simply needs to be mobile friendly.

In this section, we will explain the importance of a good mobile website for both UX issues and your SEO strategy. We will also give practical tips on how to improve your mobile user experience.



The importance of Mobile UX

This chapter

In this chapter, we will explain the importance of Mobile UX. In the following chapters, we will focus on how to improve your Mobile UX.

The importance of Mobile UX for SEO

In april 2015 Google announced a new update which included the performance of websites on mobile devices as a ranking factor. In the SEO-world this update is known as ‘Mobilegeddon’. Consequences of this update are rather simple: if your website isn’t deemed mobile friendly, it won’t rank well in mobile search results.

Whether mobile search is important for your company depends on the market you’re in. Numbers differ, but it seems in most western countries 50–60% of searches is conducted on a mobile device now, with that number rising every year. Not ranking well in those search results as a result of this Mobilegeddon update means you’re not ranking well for the majority of people searching.

Also, the more location dependent your business is, the more important mobile search becomes. People use their mobile device especially when searching for local businesses. For restaurants, bars, shops etc. the impact of this change is hard to dismiss.



Desktop search?

This Mobilegeddon update probably doesn't not impact desktop search *directly*. But Google is known to use click through rate (CTR) from the search results as a ranking factor, which we're guessing will be impacted. If your website isn't shown in the mobile results, people who searched on one of your keywords on their mobile devices won't be able to click on your site. Your total CTR will therefore decrease.

Also: if 50% of searches happens on mobile devices, it's a major discovery method. People can only share URLs or link to them etc. when they've actually found your site. This ties back to rankings, so this *will* impact desktop search quite heavily in the long run.

The importance of Mobile UX for conversion

As about half of the searches in Google is done on a mobile device, most websites would attract a lot of visitors using a mobile device. If you want these mobile visitors to buy stuff on your website or become regular visitors, you should offer them a great user experience. So the usability of your website should be awesome on a mobile device. The importance of mobile UX will only increase in the following years.



Check whether or not your site is mobile-friendly!

Google made a [complete guide to mobile-friendly sites](#). There's also a [mobile-friendly test](#), which will give you either of these responses:

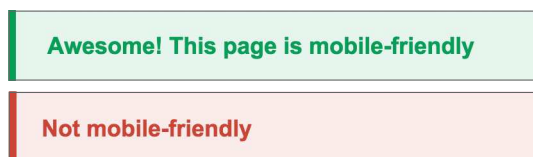


Figure 30: Google mobile-friendly test results

And when you get the message the page is not mobile-friendly, they'll obviously also tell you why it's not. This might be a nice tool to use for new pages, for example. However, it's only per page, so this is probably not the best option in case you want to check your entire site. That's why you can also check the Mobile Usability section in your [Google Search Console](#). This will give you a list of all the all the pages Google found errors on.

If your website is not mobile-friendly according to this test, you really have work to do! This mobile-friendly test actually passes a lot of sites that aren't that mobile-friendly. If your site doesn't pass this test, it must work really bad on mobile devices. Chances are very high your site will not appear anywhere near page 1 in the mobile results of Google.

Yoast Tip



Even if your site *does* appear to be mobile-friendly, you should keep on top of it and evaluate your mobile website very regularly.



This chapter

In this chapter, we emphasize the importance of a responsive design. We will first explain what a responsive design is and give tips on how to test whether or not your design is responsive.

What is a responsive design?



Figure 31: theguardian.com example of a responsive website

A responsive website will scale to any size automatically, without trying to show the entire website on a much smaller screen (such as a smartphone). We use internet on our smartphones, on our tablets and on our desktop. These screens have very different sizes and therefore ask for other features. On your desktop you click with your mouse, while on tablets and phones you click with your thumb. A responsive design automatically scales to the right format, making sure your website looks decent on all screens.



For most of you, developing a responsive design yourselves will not be possible. That requires some serious coding and developing. If you choose a (WordPress) theme, make sure to choose one that's responsive. If you work with a developer or a web development agency, you should ask them to make your website responsive. And when designing a website, make sure to design different mobile interfaces.

Make a mobile version!

The first step in making a responsive design is to design the mobile version of your website. Don't just take the desktop website, reduce browser width to 320 pixels and see how you can make that look good. That won't do. The mobile version (phone and perhaps also a tablet-version) has to have some different features and often less content. In the next chapter of this section, we will give you lots of tips on how to design your mobile version.

With the mobile and regular site designed, it is time to decide where to break your design for different devices.

Break it down

After you have designed your mobile and desktop website you will have to think about breakpoints. At what point (at what browser width) will you decide to show people the mobile version instead of the desktop version? These are just choices you have to make. In



order to make these choices, you should do some testing. Look at how your website looks in different formats. Borrow that iPad and judge the quality your website, test your website on different mobile phones and on desktops with different resolutions. Your website should look at least decent (and preferably awesome) on all possible devices. Keep testing, even after you have chosen your breakpoints. Alter them if necessary.

Mobile first

It could be a real good thing to start designing a new website with the mobile version. If you design the mobile version first, you have to think about what is really important. The mobile design just doesn't provide that much space. It forces the designer to think about what is really important. It makes it easier to really grasp the purpose of the website.



This chapter

In this chapter, we will discuss the most important best practices regarding UX on your mobile website.

Use a task based design

Design your mobile website and its structure with the mobile user in mind. Think about the reasons visitors use their mobile phones to check your website.

Check your Google Analytics in order to know which pages are most visited amongst your mobile audience. You can easily check this in Google Analytics, for instance at *Audience » Mobile » Devices* by adding a [secondary dimension](#) for Destination Page. Decide on top tasks for your mobile website and optimize mobile UX to make sure these are accessible with the most ease possible.

If someone finds your website and starts browsing it, make sure they can easily find and complete what they wanted to do. The use of a mobile phone most of the times implicates being on the go and a lesser attention span. Distractions are everywhere. Design your mobile UX to make sure they get things done, before switching to other apps instead.



Hamburger menu

We all know that hamburger icon and adding that as a substitute for your menu seems logical: it's a space saver. Most menus fold out vertically, but some fold out to the left or right. Sometimes the word 'menu' is shown instead of the hamburger icon.

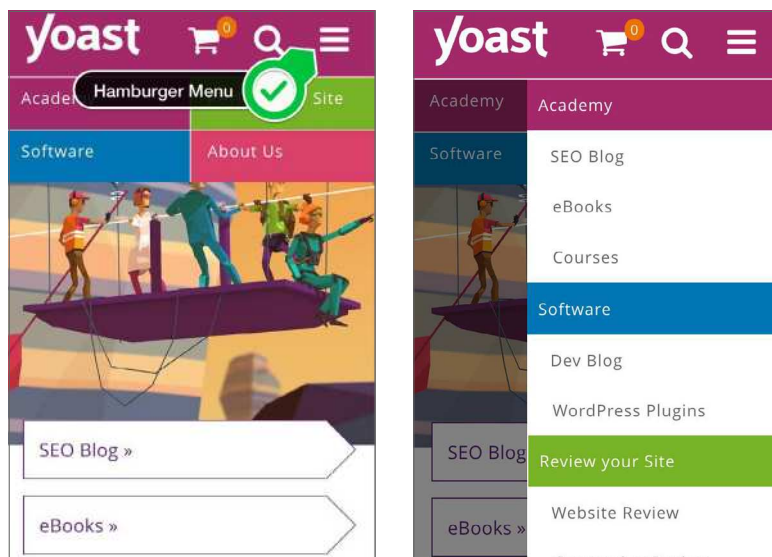


Figure 32: hamburger menu

Yoast Tip



Your mobile menu should stay focused, especially when your website also has a drop down menu. Consider creating great landing pages for your main menu items and just forget about the submenu for your mobile website. It will be more convenient to focus on mobile search instead.



Add a sticky menu with a search option

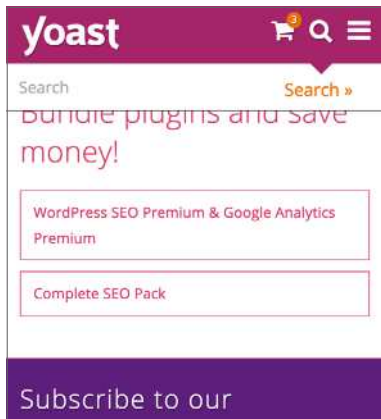


Figure 33: make sure your search option is always available

One of the main elements of mobile UX is search. As the small mobile device does not allow you to put everything in your mobile menu, you want the search option to always be available. When scrolling a page, when clicking to another. Show that search option in the main content area in that case, and make it available via the sticky menu on other pages (see [chapter 7](#) on menus).

One more thing about mobile UX related to search: having the option is just step one. Make sure your internal search result pages look really good as well. The search results should be ordered on relevancy, for instance, on both desktop and mobile. But what stands out most is the lack of separation of results. Make sure individual results can be distinguished.

Use short forms

As on your desktop website, your mobile site could or should aim for conversion. Buying products, or getting a quote for your services. Subscribing to your newsletter or simply filling out a contact form are all actions that need user input. On a mobile phone, six-page forms ruin the UX even more than on an desktop.



For optimal UX, you want to keep forms as short as possible. Remove all the things you want to ask but don't really need. Newsletter? Just the email address (with a type=email input field). Quote? Last name and email address. Shop? Delivery address and invoice address. Or at least an option to copy the delivery address to the invoice address.

Tone it down

Your desktop site probably looks fantastic using all the rainbow colors that were available, but on your mobile website, the effect will be negative. There will be less focus. Your website doesn't have to be black and white only, but a nice white background, black letters and one or perhaps two supporting colors is really enough for a better mobile UX.

Large touch surfaces

We have already mentioned this before. It's so obvious, yet still not common. Mobile websites are usually browsed with a thumb. Google Insights checks this under [Size Tap Targets Appropriately](#). And we need to be able to click elements with that thumb as well.

In the article [Designing for Mobile Part 3: Visual design](#), Elaine McVicar mentions these numbers:

“Ideally, buttons should be between 44px and 57px on a standard screen and 88px to 114px on a high-density (retina) screen. This allows enough area for the average fingertip to easily activate a button.”



There is one thing that is closely related to button hit areas; touch elements can be too close. It's really annoying to click a link and end up somewhere else, just because the link next to it is too close to the link you wanted. It's in [Google Page Speed Insights](#) as well, like the button hit areas. That tool is not the holy grail of mobile UX, but if Google can test it that easily, why not keep it in mind when designing your mobile website, especially when designing elements like a mobile menu or footer links.

Make your fonts large enough

Font size is really important for mobile UX. You can't just use all the desktop font sizes on your mobile website as well. There are two reasons for that:

- 1 The mobile screen size. You don't want the title to fill the screen, you want to make sure the article starts within the first view of the page. Neither do you want the base font (like your paragraph font) to be too small to read without having to pinch and zoom.
- 2 You'll create a mess when using more than three font sizes. The size differences will be much more visible. That's why we advise limiting the number of font sizes to two, maybe three.

Optimize for speed

Another major factor for the right level of mobile UX is speed. The faster a website loads, the better the user experience. Especially when your visitor is travelling, and probably has a slower internet



connection than in the office or at home, speed is a factor. In our website reviews, we use multiple tools to check site speed. Most of the time, there are two main areas of improvement. The first one always seems obvious to us: image optimization. Of course you can simply hide all or most images, but that is a lazy design solution. Truth be told, I'm guilty of hiding for instance images sometimes as well, to prevent them from loading. You should at least reduce image size using [PunyPNG](#) or [JpegMini](#). Next to that, you should combine and minify the CSS and JavaScript files that are loaded. The less connections to the server that need to be made, the faster your website will be and the better the mobile UX.

In-text links

Make sure your links are clickable on a mobile phone. We're not just referring to your telephone number (which is of course really important; make sure people can call you with just one click!). But if, for instance, your sidebar contains a list of categories, make sure visitors can click one link at a time, and the sidebar is not crammed with links, so clicking one is nearly impossible without zooming. There needs to be sufficient white space around that link.

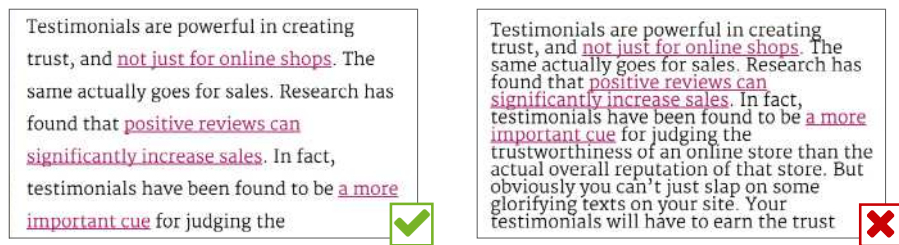


Figure 34: make sure your links are clickable on a mobile phone



Test your mobile UX again. And again.

When serving a responsive website to your visitors, you need to make sure that every change on your desktop site is also tested on the mobile version of your site. That is the only way you can make sure your mobile website is always up to date.





Conversion Research



About this section

A lot of usability and user experience issues seem quite logical and straightforward. Be aware though, that what works for user experience on one website might not work for the next website. Moreover, what leads to many sales on one website, will not always lead to many sales on the next. If you want to improve both user experience as well as your conversion rate, you should do some testing. In this section, we will explain how to track your data and test the conversion of your website.



The importance of doing conversion research

This chapter

In this chapter, we explain the importance of doing your own conversion research in order to improve your conversion rate. We will also show you how to track your data using Google Analytics.

Why do conversion research?

In the previous sections of this eBook, we have covered the importance of User Experience. We gave practical tips and best practices you could use on your website. You can definitely improve your user experience with this info. In most cases a better UX also leads to more conversions. However, things that work on one website, could well be totally wrong for the conversion rate on another website. Your website is unique and your audience is unique. In order to further improve your conversion rate you should do some research.

Conversion research: more than just A/B testing

If you know just a little about Conversion Rate Optimization, you will definitely have heard about A/B testing. With an A/B test you can check whether your original page or a variant of this page



converts better (leads to more sales). A/B testing is the best known way of testing in the field of conversion rate optimization. However, there are other ways to do conversion research. Before doing any A/B testing, you should take a good look at your statistics. We will show you which statistics you should study particularly. Also, survey research could be a very good way of doing research in order to increase your conversion rate.

How to start your research: track your data!

In order to do any research, you should track your data. Tracking your data means that you gather statistics about the visitors on your website. How long do they stay on a page? Where do they click? How many of them actually make a purchase? Tracking your data can be done with a package like [Google Analytics](#). This can give you great insights into how people behave on your site.

Yoast Tip



If you would like to know more about the motives or behavior of your audience (and maybe more characteristics of your audience), you should simply ask them (see [chapter 20](#)).



What is Google Analytics?

Google Analytics is a tool that tracks the visitors on your website. It provides very insightful statistics of your website and how people use it. Google Analytics can give you detailed information about:

- How many visitors have been and currently are on your website (and specific pages).
- Where those visitors came from.
- How much time visitors spend on your page(s), on average.
- Which pages visitors visit subsequently.
- Where visitors leave your site.
- Page speed.
- If your visitors watch a video or download a PDF file (requires extra tracking code).
- How your visitors go through your sales process.
- and much more...



Using statistics for conversion research

This chapter

Google Analytics provides for a lot of valuable data to start investigating and optimizing the conversion rate of your website. In this chapter, we will show you which data you should be tracking and analyzing.

Intensive Care Pages

Although it's very tempting to start off your testing right away, there are a few things you should think about first. Otherwise your energy and resources might be directed the wrong way. How do you know which pages to test?

In order to find the pages you need to test, the 'Intensive Care Pages', you'll need to know what the top priorities of your website are. For most people doing conversion rate optimization that's pretty easy: making money. Finding the right pages to optimize is a bit harder when you're making money on them, because you have to look at a lot more than just the amount of pageviews and your bounce rate. We'll tell you the best ways to find your Intensive Care Pages.



Use your tracking

There are two key statistics you need to be aware of:

Exit Rate

The Exit Rate is not to be confused with bounce rate. Exit Rate is the percentage of people leaving your site, when they've viewed more than one page on your site. So people leaving a page, but staying on your website, will not be counted towards your exit rate. They need to be actually exiting your site.

Page Value

Page Value is basically the average amount of money people spend after having visited a page. So if a bigger portion of the visitors to a certain page buys something on your website, the page value of that page will go up.

Finding your intensive care pages

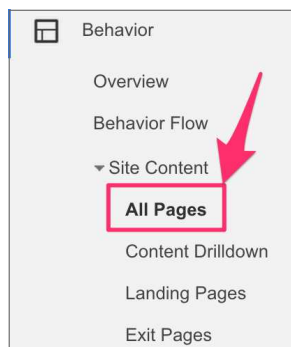


Figure 35: Behavior tab,
Google Analytics

When you're making money with your website, the combination of the two statistics *Exit Rate* and *Page Value* is what should be your first concern. In Google Analytics you need to select *All Pages* under *Site Content*. You'll find *Site Content* under the *Behavior tab*.



In this window (Figure 36) you'll be able to order your pages by *Page Value*. In order to get some relevant data, you should set an advanced filter:



Figure 36: Google Analytics, advanced filter

Of course make sure the numbers after *Greater than* are actually relevant for your website.

You'll now be able to see your most important and valuable pages. Are there any pages with a high exit rate and a high page value? Those are your Intensive Care Pages!

Note: in order for this to work, you do need to have [Ecommerce Tracking](#) set up in your Google Analytics.

What should you do differently?

After you've found your Intensive Care Pages, you're probably left wondering what it is that needs improvement on those pages. Google Analytics offers a great feature called [In-Page Analytics](#). This allows you to see what percentage of people are clicking on what clickable part of your site. This can give you great insight whether the focus of that page is actually where you want it to be.



You could also use other tools such as [click heatmaps and scrollmaps](#) to make the data even more understandable. However, such tools aren't available in Google Analytics and should be implemented separately.

Yoast Tip



At Yoast we use [crazyegg](#). This tool allows you to make click heatmaps, scroll heatmaps and more. It can be easily set up for your website, by adding a little bit of code (much like how Google Analytics works). And this small adjustment makes sure you get invaluable insights on how people behave on your website!

Another great way to find out why people leave your pages, is to simply ask them using surveys. We'll cover surveys in the following chapter.



This chapter

In this chapter, we will teach you the basics of doing a survey. Surveys are really the easiest and least intrusive way to get direct feedback from your visitors. And you can just ask the questions you're interested in. We'll explain the purpose of doing a survey and give practical tips on how to set up a survey and to (start to) analyze results. This chapter also appeared in our previous eBook: [Optimize your WordPress site](#).

Knowing your audience: do a survey

[Google Analytics](#) gives some information about your visitors. But besides that, you are pretty much clueless about your audience. If you have a webshop, you'll know some things about the people who buy your stuff. You probably know where they live, maybe you know how old they are and whether they are men or women. However, you'll only have information about those people who decide to buy something. You're still left entirely in the dark about the intentions and characteristics of people who don't buy your products. The only way to really get an idea of your audience, their characteristics and their intentions is to ask your audience questions.



Why is it important to know your audience?

Of course you'll have some idea of what your audience looks like. You have an image of a visitor in mind when you're writing an article for your blog, or when you're adding products to your webshop. If you have a personal website with your scientific work on it, it is to be expected that your audience will consist of people with a personal or professional interest in your expertise. Why should you do a complicated survey and annoy your visitors with questions you already have the answers to?

Multiple audiences

It could well be that you're reaching people who are somewhat different than the audience you had in mind. Or perhaps, you're reaching multiple audiences. Imagine you have a arts and crafts webshop on which you reach both the die-hard arts and crafters as well as people who shop incidentally. Next to that, you could be reaching people who shop to do arts and crafts with their children, while another group visits your website for professional materials. These different groups within your audience could very well be looking for slightly different products. Also, it could well be that in order to be convinced to buy your product, these different groups need a different approach.



Adept marketing strategies

Knowing your audience better allows you to adjust your marketing strategies on your audiences, making them more effective. Also, it allows you to consider making adjustments to your assortment on the base of your audience's preferences. Read [Marieke's post](#) on [yoast.com](#) for more explanation about the advantages of knowing your audience.

Setting up a questionnaire

It seems so easy. You just put some questions in a survey and present them to your audience. They'll choose between some categories you've made up between coffee and lunch. Creating survey questions is, however, quite complicated. If your questions aren't well formulated you could be measuring the wrong thing. And if your questions are of bad quality, your results will be absolutely useless. Questions should be valid, meaning that they have to measure what you want them to measure. And questions should be reliable, meaning that questions should be answered in the same way by the same people, regardless of other factors (read more about validity and reliability in [box 1.1](#)).

Open questions or multiple choice

You should think about the type of questions you want to formulate. The type of questions you choose depends largely on the number of people you'll reach. Open questions (in which you will allow people to type their answers) will give much information, but the information



will become overwhelming if you have too many respondents. If you have many respondents, multiple choice questions are much easier to analyze.

Formulating survey questions

Here are some guidelines you should bear in mind if you're formulating questions for a survey:

- 1 Make sure your question isn't vague. For instance, don't ask *'have you ever visited my website?'* but *'how often did you visit my website in the last year?'*.
- 2 Make sure that your question is understandable, try to avoid complicated terms and long sentences.
- 3 Make sure you ask only one thing in your question. For example, don't ask people whether they like your products and your service. It could well be that they like your products but they don't like your service and that makes the question impossible to answer.
- 4 Make sure your question is not suggestive but neutral. Formulations like: *'don't you also think'*, should be avoided.
- 5 Make sure that your question is applicable. You should only ask people what they thought of your products, if these people have actually used your products. So you'd have to ask whether they've ever bought one of your products, before asking such a question.



- 6 Think about the answering possibilities you give people. Make sure you give all possible answering possibilities. Be aware that answering possibilities give context to your respondents.
- 7 Think about the order in which you ask your questions. You want people to fill out the entire questionnaire. Give everybody the same clear introduction. Begin with easy and non-threatening questions. Asking for income at the beginning of a survey is not wise. Make sure the questions follow a logical order. Pay attention to context! If you ask people about their opinion of your products after you asked them about your service, you could have influenced people by your previous questions.
- 8 Always make sure you test your questionnaire on some individuals who could be part of your audience.

Box 1.1: Validity and Reliability

Validity:

The validity of a measurement tool (for example a question in a survey) tells us the degree to which the tool actually measures what it claims to measure. Sometimes it is referred to as accuracy.

Reliability:

Reliability is the extent to which a measurement gives consistent results. So, if you pose the same question to the same person twice, will the answers be the same? A reliable measurement tool results in the same answers over and over again.



Difference between reliability and validity:

Imagine a person of 200 pounds stepping on the scale 5 times and getting readings of 15, 250, 95, 140 and 500 pounds. This scale is not reliable, because the reading is different every time. If the scale consistently reads 150 pounds, the scale is reliable, because the readings are the same. However, the scale is not valid, because the weight is wrong. It does not measure what you want it to measure.

So how do you collect the data?

After you conscientiously formulated your questionnaire, you can set up your online survey. There are numerous free (and premium) packages that allow for an online questionnaire. For example [Polladdy](#), but other packages could work fine as well. You can set up a questionnaire that pops up when people enter a certain page on your website. You can also send a link to your questionnaire in your newsletter. It is really easy to create a questionnaire in such an application.

Subsequently, people will fill out the online questionnaire and the data are stored in the online application of your choice. Some packages allow for uploading of the results in an Excel file. You can then do analyses in any statistical package. If you are not such a statistics nerd, you can leave the data in the survey package and start analyzing within the package.



Analyzing your data

Most common survey packages instantly present your results. At Yoast we usually work with Polldaddy because of the beautiful integration with [WordPress](#). Polldaddy presents frequencies and percentages in an easy to grasp format. Polldaddy also allows for filters, which makes it easy to analyze specific groups. For most website owners, those tables are all they need. You can see what people answered to your questions.

Yoast Tip



If you want to do more sophisticated analyses, you should make sure to upload your results in an Excel format. You can use Excel to do your analyses, but we would recommend using SPSS or R.



This chapter

In this chapter, we will teach you the basics of setting up a A/B test. The aim of such a test is to investigate whether a change in the design or content of your website leads to a higher conversion rate. This chapter also appeared in our previous eBook: [Optimize your WordPress site](#).

What is A/B testing?

A/B testing means you'll test the page of a website as it is now (A), against a variation of that page (B). Visitors are shown one of the two variations. These variations are randomly assigned to the visitors. Comparing the outcomes of the two different versions allows you to analyze whether a variation actually leads to more conversions: more sales, or more returning visitors. You could for instance change the color of your call-to-action button, to see if that leads to more clicks and sales.



Figure 37: test A against variation B



In your optimization process, A/B testing is one of the easiest and fastest ways to get results. When your website is important for your business, you should realize this: optimization is never over. Optimizing your website using A/B testing really is a continuous and on-going process.

Hypothesize first

Before making any A and B variations, it's really important to think about what you're going to do. If you want to run a test, you should first hypothesize. You should be able to explain what you're changing on your website and why. What effect do you think the change will have? And what are you basing that expectation on?

One way to come up with ideas for changes in (the design of) your website is to look for other people or websites that have (had) similar issues. What works for other websites, could work for your site as well! In this book, we have made numerous suggestions about design or content, these should definitely give you ideas about possible improvements! In [chapter 11](#) we told you that adding a progress bar could help increase your sale, because such a progress bar gamifies the checkout process. You could run an A/B test to check whether a progress bar in fact increases the sales on your website as well. Your hypothesis is that version B (with progress bar) will get more conversions because people will be more willing to complete the checkout progress because of the gamification.



Doing A/B test after formulating hypotheses will prevent you from running tests that make no sense at all. And not running tests that you don't need in the first place saves you time.

Investigate

If you want to hypothesize, you first need to have some idea what pages you could make some improvements. You can investigate your website in the two ways we've already discussed:

- 1 You should really investigate the statistics of your website and find your Intensive Care Pages ([chapter 19](#)).
- 2 The second way to investigate upon possible improvements of your website is to do a survey ([chapter 20](#)). The results of your surveys could really pinpoint the mysterious issues you've uncovered in Google Analytics.

Tools you can use to set up an A/B test

In order to set up your A/B test, you need a tool that allows you to show a different version of your site, which will be randomly assigned to different people. There are several ways of creating your test variations, but the easiest way is by using an A/B testing tool.

Our personal favorite A/B testing tool is [Convert](#) (check convert.com/yoast for an awesome free offer), because they simply have the best support and could help us in ways none of their competitors could.



Convert makes sure that half of your visitors views the old page (version A), while the other half will visit the new and improved page (version B).

To get started

In order to get started you need two versions of the page you're improving. Subsequently, you'll need a tool like Convert to analyze your results. This A/B testing tools make it possible to create variations without any knowledge of coding whatsoever.

Tips for setting up A/B tests

There are a few things you need to be aware of, when you're setting up your tests:

- 1 When setting up A/B tests, you shouldn't be afraid of making big changes. People are often seduced by others saying that making a minor change gave them a huge increase in sales and revenue. But don't fool yourself: this most probably won't be the case for you. So to get big improvements in sales, you'll need big changes.
- 2 Don't stare at the conversion rate of the individual products too long. The only thing that should really matter to you is your revenue. Sometimes a variation with a lower conversion rate actually earns you more. People might buy more, or more expensive products from you due to the changes you've made.



- 3 Check if what's being tracked by the A/B tool is actually accurate. Unfortunately, it happens all too often that your A/B tests are missing some sales. So keep an eye on your data!
- 4 Have patience with your tests. We usually tell people to leave tests running for *at least* 7 days. This will make sure the differences in days are always accounted for.

Multivariate Tests

Explaining what multivariate testing is, seems quite easy. In fact, when you look up multivariate testing on Wikipedia, it says the following:

“In internet marketing, multivariate testing is a process by which more than one component of a website may be tested in a live environment. It can be thought of in simple terms as numerous A/B tests performed on one page at the same time.”

However, we find this to be oversimplifying things a bit. With A/B tests you're testing different versions of a complete page. This is not what you do with a multivariate test (MVT). With a MVT you're testing elements within a page.

So let's say you have 2 versions of a headline, 2 versions of an image and 2 versions of a block of text. With a multivariate test you will test every possible combination against the others to figure out which



combination yields the best conversion rate. And this is where things get tricky, because in the setup we mentioned above, there are already 8 combinations ($2 \times 2 \times 2 = 8$):

| | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Heading A Image A Textblock A | Heading A Image A Textblock B | Heading A Image B Textblock A | Heading A Image B Textblock B |
| Heading B Image A Textblock A | Heading B Image A Textblock B | Heading B Image B Textblock A | Heading B Image B Textblock B |

Figure 38: a multivariate test with 8 combinations

Advantages

The first advantage of multivariate testing is that you can see the effect small changes on your site have. Of course, small changes can also be tested with an A/B test, but that's suboptimal as you can only test one small change at a time. Generally, A/B tests are used for the big changes and multivariate testing is used for optimizing smaller elements.

Also, by using a multivariate setup, you're able to not only test the effect of changing one element, but you're also able to test the combined effect (interaction effect) of several elements. Will changing an element still have the same effect if you change another element on that same page?



These are questions you wouldn't be able to answer with an A/B test, but you can answer them with a multivariate tests. With multivariate tests you can pretty accurately see what the effect of each element is in which setup or situation.

Limitations

The biggest drawback of multivariate testing is that you need an even bigger amount of traffic and especially conversions than you do for an A/B test. We always say you should have at least 100 conversions on each variation. So if your multivariate test has 3 different versions of 3 different elements, you'll need at least 2700 conversions ($3 \times 3 \times 3 = 27$ combinations with each at least 100 conversions).

And that's a lot for most websites, especially if we're talking sales on a specific product. For most websites this also means that the page needs to have quite some traffic on it, since most conversion rates aren't that high.

Secondly, the multivariate test setup looks at a lot more variables than an A/B test and also looks at how these variables interact. This means there's a much bigger chance that mistakes or errors can occur in the reporting. So you should check your multivariate test results even better than your A/B test results.



Multivariate or A/B?

If you find your hypotheses are about changes that drastically change the page's layout or look, then you're better off choosing for an A/B test. As said, A/B tests give you the possibility to find out whether one (version of a) page performs better than the other.

If, however, you find that your hypotheses are about small changes (f.i. text on your calls-to-action) then multivariate testing could be a good choice. But you have to be sure your page meets the criteria for multivariate testing that we mentioned above.



Analyzing the data of your A/B-test

This chapter

Once you have executed your A/B test, you have to analyze your data and conclude which of the versions of your website converts your audience best. After that analysis, you can make the changes in your design final (or stick to your original design, depending upon the results of your test.)

Interpreting your results

Before you can actually *start* interpreting your A/B test results, you need to be sure that your test has been running for *at least* 7 days. This means that you'll have corrected for the fact that some days get you more traffic, sales or anything else than others.

Sometimes it can be hard to actually know what's going on when looking at the results of your A/B test. So let's walk you through what we always look at in the results in [Convert Experiments](#).





Figure 39: results A/B test (Convert)

Conversion / Visitors

We're using Convert for our A/B tests, and when a test is done, it will give us a chart that looks something like this one. There's a lot going on here, which can be quite daunting. First of all, it shows quite clearly that Variation 1 is the winner. However, we're always very careful when it comes to this. Let's show you why:

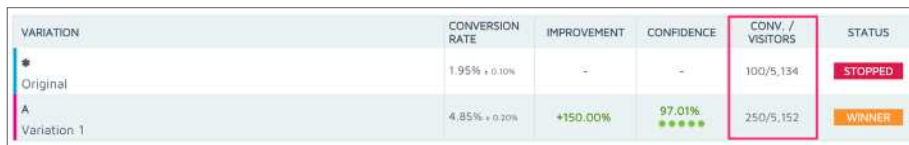


Figure 40: Variation 1 is the winner

This chart shows you that there's a pretty big jump in the conversion rate, the improvement is 150% and a nice confidence level. Please note that you should aim for a minimum of 100 conversions per variation.



The graph

The next thing to check is the graph:

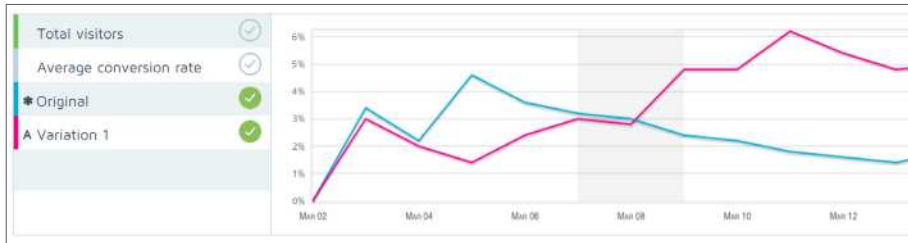


Figure 41: the graph shows the conversion rate of the original and a variation

Take a look at the trend of the test. This graph shows the conversion rate of the original version and the variation. The original version (blue line in this case) and the variation (purple line) should not be too close during the duration of the test. If there's just a spike at the end that made the test variation the winner, you know the results aren't trustworthy. In this case, it looks pretty good, as the variation outperformed the original pretty soon.

Be sure you also look at the Y-axis (the vertical one) to make sure the differences aren't really small, for instance less than 0.1%. The Y-axis tends to change with results, so small differences can look like big ones.

Other statistics

Convert will give you quite some other statistics that could be interesting and important to look at.



| |
|--------------------------|
| VISUALS/GOALS |
| CONV. RATE |
| CONVERSIONS |
| TOTAL REVENUE |
| REVENUE P. VISITOR |
| AVG. PRODUCTS P. VISITOR |

Figure 42: statistics

The conversion rate and amount of conversions are obvious ones, but you should be mostly interested in the revenue stats. Which version got you the most total revenue and revenue per visitor? You could also be looking for a higher adoption rate of your product (more people using your product) instead of more revenue. In this case you should look at the bottom one: average products sold per visitor:







| <div> <div>A</div> <div>Variation 1</div> <div>WINNER VARIATION</div> <div>STOPPED</div> <div>This test is completed</div>  </div> | VISUALS/GOALS | REVENUE COMPLETE SEO PACK |
|---|--------------------------|---|
| | CONV. RATE | +150.00% (4.85%) ●●●●● |
| | CONVERSIONS | 250 |
| | TOTAL REVENUE | \$  |
| | REVENUE P. VISITOR | +181.40% (\$ ) ●●●●● |
| | AVG. PRODUCTS P. VISITOR | +93.75% (2.13) ●●●●● |
| <div> <div>* Original</div> <div>STOPPED</div> <div>The original page as seen on the site (before the experiment)</div>  </div> | VISUALS/GOALS | REVENUE COMPLETE SEO PACK |
| | CONV. RATE | (1.95%) |
| | CONVERSIONS | 100 |
| | TOTAL REVENUE | \$  |
| | REVENUE P. VISITOR | 0.00% (\$ ) |
| | AVG. PRODUCTS P. VISITOR | 0.00% (1.10) |

Figure 43: the differences between the variations



These statistics will be available per variation and will give you some detailed information on what the difference between the variations actually was. So be sure to look at these and use them for your interpretation!

Some things to keep in mind while testing

Conversion research can be really useful. Once you get the hang of it, you can quickly test and get results. Some people can go a bit overboard in their ‘test-hunger’. We would advise you to remain critical to the test and to stay aware of the limitations of the tests.

Just tools

Conversion tools are aptly called ‘tools’. You can compare them to a hammer; you’ll use the hammer to get some nails in a piece of wood, but you won’t actually have the hammer do all the work for you, right? You still want the control, to be sure the nails will be hit as deeply as you want, and on the spot that you want. It’s the same with conversion tools; they’re tools you can use to reach a desired outcome, but you shouldn’t let yourself be led by them. It is of great importance that you’re always aware of what you are testing and nuancing results in the light of possible period effects and relevance.



Period effects

We would advise people to test in full weeks, but not much longer than 2 weeks if you do not want to pollute your results with period effects. Period effects are effects of things that happen while your test runs that could possibly interfere with the results of your test. Let's give you an example:

Imagine you have a site for nerds and you try to sell plugins. You're doing an A/B test on your checkout page. Then you write a phenomenal blog about your stunning wife and a whole new (and very trendy) population visits your website. It could be that this new population responds differently on the changes in your checkout page than the old nerdy population. It could be that the new population (knowing less about the web) is more influenced by usability-changes than the old nerdy population. In that case, your test-results would show an increase in sales based on this new population. If the sudden increase in trendy people on your website is only for a short period of time, you will draw the wrong conclusions.

Running tests for longer period of times will only work if you keep a diary in which you write down all possible external explanations. You should interpret your results carefully and always in light of relevant changes in your website and your population. If you want to read more about period effects you can read Marieke's post about the [Science of Conversion Rate Optimization](#).



Sufficient visitors

Also, we would strongly advise to only run tests if a website has sufficient visitors. If your website has very little visitors, A/B testing just isn't that informative.

Conversions are very skewed. A conversion rate of 5 % would be really high for most sites. The Z-statistic which is used in most conversion rate tests is actually not designed for such skewed datasets. This statistic will become unreliable if conversions are below 5 % (some statistical handbooks even state 10 %!).

This unreliability issue does not mean that the Z-statistic is useless. With very large amounts of data the statistic regains reliability. But... especially on sites with small amounts of visitors (and therefore very little conversions) one should be very careful interpreting the significance. We think you should have at least 30 conversions a week to do proper testing. Note: that is our opinion, not a statistical law!

In our opinion, not the significance, but the relevance should be leading in deciding if changes in your design lead to an increase in conversions. Is there a meaningful difference (even if it is not significant) after running a test for a week? Yes? then you are on to something... No? then you are probably not on to something...



Finally: Choose and Implement!

If you have run your A/B tests and analyzed the results of your test you are ready to declare a winner! After that, you should implement the design which converted best on your website. In many cases, you will not have a clear winner. Both versions lead to the same amount of conversions. You can then conclude that the specific change you thought was important is not that important for conversion issues. If there is not a clear winner, you can implement both A or B to your website.

Yoast Tip



The result of your test can also be a trigger for more tests. Especially as the results of your test are surprising, you may want to run some more tests. Running multiple test is a great way to keep on optimizing the conversion of your website.



Epilogue

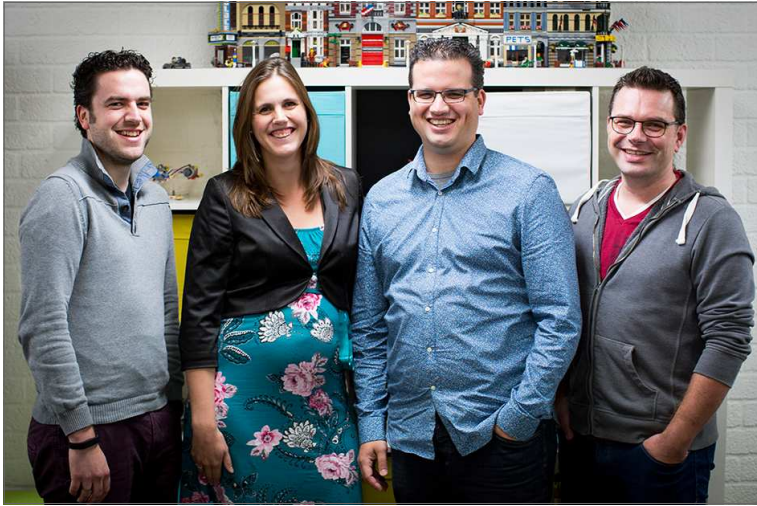
You have reached the end of this eBook. In this eBook, we tried to teach you all about usability and conversion. If you are reading this, you will now have all the knowledge you need to provide your website with an awesome user experience. Besides that, you will know the basics of doing conversion research. We have presented all the information from a holistic SEO perspective. User Experience and SEO can go – and should go – hand in hand.

If you want to further optimize your website, you should think about optimizing your content and thinking about technical SEO improvements. You could read our eBook about [Content SEO](#). If you want to make sure all angles of your SEO and user experience are covered, you should definitely check our [Website Reviews](#) as well.

Also, we have a really amazing [online training](#) (as of october 12th 2015) about SEO which will give you very many tips about optimizing your website for search engines. We are currently developing a training on usability as well.

While writing this eBook, we had a lot of help and feedback from our colleagues of the Yoast-family! A special thanks to Erwin Brouwer for the amazing illustrations and to Mijke Peters for the design of this eBook and for her ability to critically review and edit all of our texts.

About the authors



From left to right: Thijs, Marieke, Joost, Michiel

(Photo: Nienke van Denderen)

Michiel Heijmans

[Michiel](#) (1974) has worked almost everywhere. In the last couple of years he was a general manager of a local web design company. After that, he started his own business (internet consultancy and websites, 2009) and met Joost during these years. In April 2011, he started working together with Joost and February 2012, they sealed that cooperation with a contract. In 2015, Michiel became partner at Yoast. He is mostly handling human resource related issues and supervises our website reviews.

Michiel is married to Esther, they have two daughters together.

Thijs de Valk

[Thijs](#) (1986) is a behavioral scientist with a Master's degree in Developmental Psychology. He joined team Yoast in December 2012 and learned a lot in a very short period of time; doing website reviews, conversion reviews, support and performing conversion optimization (A/B) tests on yoast.com. Thijs became partner at Yoast in 2015 and is currently Marketing & Sales Manager. He is responsible for the flow of sales and improvements in the conversion department.

Thijs is married to Jorien, they are expecting their first child.

Joost de Valk

[Joost](#) (1982) is a web developer, SEO and online marketer. He started his career in IT working at several companies, ranging from enterprise hosting to online marketing agencies, allowing him to work with several large businesses around the world.

In May of 2010 Joost founded Yoast, which focuses on software development (currently mainly WordPress plugins) and consulting in SEO, WordPress optimization and online marketing/content strategy. Current clients include the Guardian, eBay, Disney Interactive and the European Patent Office. Yoast sells multiple WordPress plugins, Website Reviews and eBooks and is expanding quickly.

Marieke van de Rakt

[Marieke](#) (1981) studied Sociology and Communication Sciences at the Radboud University in Nijmegen. She obtained her PhD in Social Sciences in January 2011. Since then, she has worked as a researcher and as a teacher at different companies and universities. As of September 2013, she focused her attention solely on her activities at Yoast.

Having a solid academic background, Marieke focuses on (quantitative) research and on strategic management. Besides that, she loves to write texts and posts for [yoast.com](#). Together with Joost, Michiel Heijmans and Thijs de Valk, she runs Yoast.

Marieke van de Rakt and Joost de Valk are married and live in Wijchen, the Netherlands. They have four wonderful children (3 sons and a daughter) together.