Periodic Table of SEO Elements

Search Engine Land's Periodic Table of SEO Elements (originally known as The Periodic Table Of SEO Ranking Factors when it debuted in 2011) is a globally recognized and widely used tool designed to help you understand the essential elements of a winning SEO strategy.
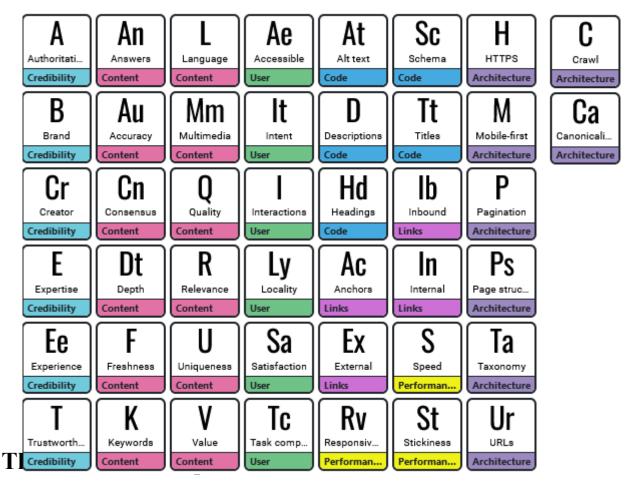
This resource is ideal for helping those new to SEO, as well as clients or stakeholders, understand the major factors that will lead to success with sustained effort over time.

You'll find the 44 SEO elements arranged into groups, which are explained below. No single element or group matters more than any other element or group in this table.

When it comes to SEO, doing everything – and doing it well – is what matters. It's all connected.

That said, some elements in this table may matter more than others for gaining greater visibility in search engines, especially depending on what vertical, market or niche you operate in.

Bottom line: we don't know exactly how the algorithms used by search engines are weighted, so to assign any "scores" to these various elements would be purely speculative.

The table is organized into groups of similar elements. Each element in the table represents a factor that you need to consider to be successful in SEO.

The main table consists of seven groups – Content, Architecture, Code, Credibility, Links, User and Performance.

Content

Without content, you literally can't rank for anything in the search results. But just publishing content for the sake of publishing content, without a plan or strategy, won't get you far, either.

The Content group of the SEO Periodic Table explores the key elements for publishing content that Google and search engines want to reward with rankings and visibility. Most of these elements are considered on-page SEO activities, or possibly content marketing.

- **Quality:** You should create high-quality content that is helpful or useful for your target audience or customer. The content should be well-written and error-free.

- **Keywords:** To reach your target audience, you need to know what words they use. Make sure you incorporate target keywords naturally. And avoid excess keyword usage (repeating words in your text won't help you rank better).

- **Freshness:** Creating timely content is important in some markets. Also, make sure to update content or remove stagnant pages to retain or improve rankings.

- **Relevance:** Make sure the topic of your page meets or exceeds the informational needs of the people who will ultimately consume the content.

- **Accuracy:** Your content should deliver on its promise. Avoid being clickbait.

- **Depth:** Publish comprehensive content. This doesn't mean aiming for a certain word count. Instead, make your content thorough – aim for substance.

- **Uniqueness:** Differentiate your content. Find ways to add substantial value or originality.

- **Answers:** Create content that completely answers questions people ask.

- **Multimedia:** Images, video and audio can help set content apart – and also could lead to visibility in other search features.

- **Language:** Your content should match the language of your target audience. If you want to reach English U.S. speakers, your primary language should not be French.

- **Consensus:** In some verticals, it's important to align content with a majority of high-quality sources.

- **Value:** Each content piece you publish should have a clear focus or purpose for existing – and the primary purpose shouldn't be to rank high in search results.

Architecture

A great site structure can help your SEO efforts. A bad site structure can mean ongoing frustration and mediocre SEO results.

The Architecture group of the SEO Periodic Table explores the key elements for creating a website that is easy for web crawlers to crawl and people to navigate while making it clear what your website and pages are all about. Most of these elements fall under on-page and technical SEO activities.

- **Crawl:** You need to create a website that search engines can easily crawl, enabling them to fully render the content of all pages.

- **Taxonomy:** Structure websites for discovery and topical authority by interlinking topics and subtopics, and optimizing around entities (people, places, things and ideas/concepts).

- **Page structure:** Strike the right balance between your main content, supplemental content and advertising. Users and search engines should be able to distinguish these three parts of the page.

- **Mobile first:** All SEO is mobile SEO. Design for the mobile experience first – but your site should offer the same user experience regardless of device.

- **URLs:** Keep URL structure simple. Use descriptive words.

- **Canonicalize:** Use canonicals and redirects to avoid duplicate content and consolidate content.

- **Pagination:** Split content wisely across a series of component pages.

- **HTTPS:** Make your website secure for visitors.

Code

While it's technically not visible to end users, clean and valid code plays a critical role in SEO. You may not need to know how to code or do any coding yourself, but you should understand HTML, structured data types and programming languages (e.g., JavaScript, Python) and how they can impact SEO.

The Code group of the SEO Periodic Table explores the key elements for enhancing the user experience and helping search engine crawlers render and understand your content. Most of these elements are part of on-page and technical SEO activities.

- **Titles:** Write descriptive, optimized titles that attract clicks.

- **Descriptions:** Meta descriptions should describe what the pages are about.

- **Headings:** Add relevant keywords to headings and subheadings.

- **Image Alt:** This key accessibility practice can boost image SEO.

- **Schema:** Use structured data to identify entities and enhance SERP snippets.

Credibility

Google's Search Quality Evaluator Guidelines emphasize the importance of a concept known as E-E-A-T, which stands for Experience, Expertise, Authoritativeness and Trustworthiness. Stanford's Guidelines for Web Credibility, which pre-date E-E-A-T, offer 10 guidelines for building the credibility of any websites.

While neither of these concepts are direct ranking signals, they can help guide your understanding of what the search algorithms want to reward.

The Credibility group focuses on elements that impact your reputation, which can in turn influence your organic search visibility. These elements touch upon all areas of SEO, as well as brand marketing.

- **Trustworthiness:** Demonstrate accuracy, honesty, safety, and reliability in all your content across your entire website. This element overlaps with Experience, Expertise and Authoritativeness.

- **Experience:** Content creators should demonstrate first-hand or life experience relating to a topic.

- **Expertise:** The content should be created based on skills or deep subject matter knowledge or familiarity related to a topic.

- **Authoritativeness:** You want to become a recognized, "go-to" resource based on what the web says about you (via links, mentions and other signals).

- **Brand:** The way people perceive and identify a brand (your logo, colors, fonts, slogans, etc.) on the web. All assets become part of your brand story (e.g., expert articles, references, reviews, recommendations).

- **Creator:** Education level, professional experience, peer judgment, citations, achievements and credentials all contribute to brand perception and E-E-A-T.

Links

Links mattered in a big way once Google burst onto the scene with its then-revolutionary PageRank algorithm in 1998. Google made clear that links were a major factor in how well a website would perform in search – though over time, it put more of a focus on "quality" and "quantity."

The Links group focuses on elements involving links to and from your website – as well as critical context links can provide to users and search engines. Link building, specifically where the goal is acquiring backlinks, has traditionally existed as its niche within SEO. Internal and external links tend to be owned by on-page and/or technical SEO.

- **Anchors:** This is the text that other sites use when linking to yours, or the text you use when linking to internal or external webpages. Anchor text should be short, provide context and be relevant to the linked resource.

- **Inbound:** Your content should attract quality links from trusted, relevant and popular third-party websites – the types of links you'd find valuable even if Google didn't exist.

- **Internal:** These links guide users – via navigation, breadcrumbs and in-content links – to pages on your own site. Internal links also can signal which pages you value most.

- **External:** Link out to reputable, credible, useful third-party resources to add value for your audience/users.

User

One of [Google's core beliefs](#) is "Focus on the user and all else will follow." This is exactly why you must focus on understanding what matters most to your users – and then figure out the smartest way to give it to them. Google is also watching everything people do within Search results.

The User group of the SEO Periodic Table explores elements that are all about people – and providing the best user experience possible. All of these elements are driven by people, so any actions you take here involve uncovering actionable insights that will help your SEO efforts better serve your audience or users.

- **Accessible:** Provide an accessible experience for all

- **Intent:** Understand the true meaning (e.g., fears, needs, wants) behind keywords or topics.

- **Interactions:** Search engines track and analyze SERP clicks, hovers, scrolls, swipes, query chains and more.

- **Locality:** Create unique, authentic experiences for a country, region, state, city, town or neighborhood.

- **Satisfaction:** Think user utility. Fully satisfy people so they leave and go to a competitor.
- **Task completion:** Help people achieve goals. Lead people to key website conversion points.

Performance

After you've architected and optimized your pages, how do they actually perform in the real world for users? Many of these elements might not be as impactful for rankings, but poorly performing pages can frustrate people, which can negatively impact engagement, conversions and revenue.

The Performance group of the SEO Periodic Table explores elements that can help create a better on-page experience for your users. Most of these elements are part of technical SEO.

- **Speed:** Pages should load quickly, on any device.
- **Responsiveness:** Reduce time between a user interaction and updated page content.
- **Visual stability:** Movement of content on your page (e.g., text, images, buttons) should be minimal upon page load.

The SEO Periodic Table (version 7, 2024 edition)

There you have it, the science and art of SEO, decoded.

Hopefully, the SEO Periodic Table serves you well as the first visual aid you turn to when trying to plot out an SEO strategy for the properties you own or manage.

Again, the relative importance of factors for your individual website will vary (yes, it depends!). Still, this updated Periodic Table provides a foundational understanding of the space as it exists in 2024.

While SEO is indeed an art, it is also a science. We hope the SEO Periodic Table serves as an essential reference for your experiments and planning.

History of Search Engine Land's SEO Periodic Table

2024 update

The 2024 SEO Periodic Table strips back much of the expansion that took place in 2021. Namely, the Niches group of Local, News and Ecommerce SEO has been removed. The reason for the change: to eliminate redundancy and restore the original vision for the table: explaining the big picture, universal, foundational elements of SEO that matter.

The Toxins group has also been eliminated in the 2024 update. This is because if you truly focus on the overarching best practices found in the SEO Periodic Table, you shouldn't be doing things that could get you into trouble and lead to serious algorithmic downgrades or even manual actions.

Other changes include two renamed groups:

- **Code:** Formerly HTML.
- **Credibility:** Formerly Reputation.

We also added a new group – **Performance**.

The Periodic Table (7th edition) was compiled and written by [Danny Goodwin](), Managing Editor, Search Engine Land & SMX, using feedback and contributions from a panel of search industry experts who each have at least 15 years of experience in SEO, including [Barry Schwartz](), [Nichola Stott](), [Eric Enge]() and others.

Past SEO Periodic Table updates:

- 2021: [Search Engine Land's updated SEO Periodic Table is now live]()
- 2019: [The Periodic Table of SEO Factors gets major overhaul for 2019]()
- 2017: [The Periodic Table of SEO Success Factors: 2017 edition now released]()
- 2015: [The Periodic Table Of SEO Success Factors: 2015 Edition Now Released]()
- 2013: [Updated: The Periodic Table Of SEO Success Factors]()
- 2011: [Introducing: The Periodic Table Of SEO Ranking Factors]()