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# The Small Business SEO Starter Guide

A plain-English, step-by-step plan to help customers find your business on Google without a big budget

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# Introduction

This guide is for small business owners, shop owners, freelancers and beginners who have a website (or are about to launch one) and want more people to find it through search engines. You do not need a technical background. If you can edit a page on your website and use a spreadsheet, you can do everything in this book.

Search engine optimisation, usually shortened to SEO, is the work of making your website easier for search engines to understand and more useful for the people who search. It is not a trick and it is not a one-time task. It is a set of habits that, done consistently, help your pages appear when potential customers search for what you sell.

By the end of this guide you will be able to:

- Explain in simple terms how search engines find, store and rank pages
- Find the words your customers actually type, using free tools
- Plan a clear site structure so every important page has a purpose
- Write titles, meta descriptions, headings and URLs that help both people and search engines
- Create content that answers real questions and earns visits over time
- Check the technical basics: speed, mobile friendliness, sitemaps and Google Search Console
- Earn your first links in honest, low-cost ways
- Measure what is working and follow a realistic 90-day plan

One honest note before we begin: SEO takes time. New pages often take weeks or months to settle into their positions. The steps here are designed to build a strong foundation so that your efforts add up rather than disappear.

# Chapter 1: How Search Actually Works

## The three jobs of a search engine

Every major search engine does three things:

1. **Crawling.** Automated programs, often called crawlers or bots, visit web pages and follow links from one page to another to discover content.
2. **Indexing.** The search engine stores and organises what it found, trying to understand what each page is about, who it is for and how it relates to other pages.
3. **Ranking.** When someone types a search, the engine picks the pages from its index that it believes best answer that search, and orders them.

If a page cannot be crawled, it cannot be indexed. If it is not indexed, it cannot rank. Many small business websites have problems at the first two stages without knowing it, which is why we cover the technical basics later.

## What search engines are trying to reward

Search engines want searchers to be satisfied. In practice, that means they look for pages that are:

- **Relevant** to the words and the intent behind the search
- **Helpful**, with clear, accurate information that solves the problem
- **Trustworthy**, coming from a real business with clear contact details and a good reputation
- **Usable**, loading quickly and working well on phones

You do not need to know every ranking factor. If you consistently build pages that are relevant, helpful, trustworthy and usable, you are working with the search engine rather than against it.

## Search intent: the idea that changes everything

Search intent is the reason behind a search. Broadly, searches fall into four types:

- **Informational:** the person wants to learn ("how to clean leather shoes")
- **Navigational:** the person wants a specific site ("DAD Technologies contact")
- **Commercial:** the person is comparing options ("best leather shoe polish")
- **Transactional:** the person is ready to act ("buy leather shoe polish Lahore")

A product page will rarely rank for an informational search, and a long how-to article will rarely rank for a "buy" search. Matching the type of page to the intent is one of the simplest

ways to improve your chances.

> Tip: Before creating any page, search the keyword yourself and look at the first page of results. If they are all blog guides, a product page will struggle. If they are all shop pages, a blog post will struggle.

# Chapter 2: Keyword Research with Free Tools

## What a keyword really is

A keyword is simply a word or phrase people type into a search box. Good keyword research answers three questions: What do my customers search for? How do they phrase it? Which of those searches can my business realistically win?

## Free tools you can use today

You do not need paid software to start. Useful free options include:

- **Google search itself.** Type a phrase and look at the autocomplete suggestions, the "People also ask" box and the related searches at the bottom of the page.
- **Google Search Console.** Once your site is connected, it shows the actual searches that already bring people to your site.
- **Google Keyword Planner.** Available inside a Google Ads account. It gives rough search volume ranges. You may need to set up an account, but you do not have to run ads to use it. Check the platform's current requirements.
- **Google Trends.** Shows whether interest in a topic is rising, falling or seasonal, and lets you compare two phrases.
- **Your own customers.** The questions people ask on WhatsApp, on the phone or in your shop are some of the best keywords you will ever find.

## A step-by-step keyword process

1. **List your seed topics.** Write down 5 to 10 broad things you sell or do. A furniture shop might write "sofa", "dining table", "office chair", "bed".
2. **Expand each seed.** Type each one into Google and note the autocomplete suggestions. Add words like "best", "price", "near me", "for small rooms", "how to".
3. **Collect questions.** Record the "People also ask" questions. These become blog topics and FAQ sections.
4. **Check rough volume.** Use Keyword Planner or Trends to see which phrases have meaningful interest. Exact numbers matter less than relative comparisons.
5. **Judge difficulty by looking.** Search the phrase. If the first page is full of huge national brands and marketplaces, it will be hard. If you see small blogs, forums or thin pages, you have a chance.
6. **Group and assign.** Group similar phrases together and assign each group to one page on your site.

## Choosing the right keywords: a worked example

Imagine a small online shop that sells handmade leather wallets. It considers three phrases:

- "wallet" — very broad, mixed intent, dominated by big retailers
- "men's leather wallet" — commercial, competitive
- "handmade leather wallet for men Pakistan" — specific, transactional, much less competition

The shop decides to target the third phrase for its main category page, and to write blog articles for questions like "how to care for a leather wallet". Longer, more specific phrases (often called long-tail keywords) usually have fewer searches, but the people using them know exactly what they want.

Here is some simple arithmetic to show why this matters. Suppose, as an example, the specific phrase brings 120 visitors a month to the shop and 2 out of every 100 visitors buy. That is 120 × 0.02 = 2.4, so roughly 2 to 3 sales a month from one page. If the average order is Rs 4,500, that page produces around 2.4 × 4,500 = Rs 10,800 a month. Ten pages like that, each targeting a different specific phrase, could together produce around Rs 108,000 a month. These are illustrative numbers, not predictions, but they show how many small wins add up.

## Build a simple keyword map

Create a spreadsheet with these columns:

| Page | Main keyword | Supporting keywords | Intent |
|---|---|---|---|
| Home | handmade leather goods Pakistan | leather wallets, leather belts | Navigational / commercial |
| Wallets category | handmade leather wallet for men | slim wallet, bifold wallet | Transactional |
| Blog post | how to care for a leather wallet | clean leather wallet, condition leather | Informational |

The rule is one main keyword per page. If two pages target the same phrase, they compete with each other, which is often called keyword cannibalisation.

# Chapter 3: Site Structure That Makes Sense

## Why structure matters

A clear structure helps visitors find what they want in a few clicks, and helps search engines understand which pages are most important. A messy structure hides your best pages.

## The simple pyramid

Think of your site as a pyramid:

- **Top:** Home page
- **Second level:** Main category or service pages (for example, "Wallets", "Belts", "Bags", or "Web Design", "SEO", "Social Media")
- **Third level:** Individual products, service details or blog posts

As a rule of thumb, try to keep every important page within three clicks of the home page.

## Steps to plan your structure

1. List every page you have or plan to have.
2. Group them under 4 to 8 main categories. Too many categories confuses people.
3. Make sure each category has a clear, keyword-based name, not a clever one. "Leather Wallets" beats "The Pocket Collection".
4. Add the main categories to your top navigation menu.
5. Link from category pages down to products or sub-pages, and from those back up to the category.

## Essential trust pages

Every small business site should have:

- **About** page with who you are, where you are based and what you do
- **Contact** page with phone, WhatsApp, email and address if you have one
- **Policies** such as shipping, returns, refunds and privacy, if you sell online
- **Reviews or portfolio** where you can show real work or genuine customer feedback

These pages may not rank for many searches, but they build trust with both visitors and search engines.

# Chapter 4: On-Page SEO Essentials

On-page SEO means the things you control on each individual page. Get these right on your most important pages first.

## Title tags

The title tag is the clickable headline that usually appears in search results. It is one of the most important on-page elements.

- Put the main keyword near the beginning
- Keep it roughly 50 to 60 characters so it is less likely to be cut off
- Make each page's title unique
- Add your brand name at the end if there is room

Weak: "Home | Products | Shop" Better: "Handmade Leather Wallets for Men | Brand Name"

## Meta descriptions

The meta description is the short summary that often appears under the title in search results. Search engines may rewrite it, but a good one can encourage more clicks.

- Aim for roughly 140 to 160 characters
- Describe the benefit clearly and include the main keyword naturally
- End with a reason to click, such as free delivery or cash on delivery, if true

Example: "Shop handmade leather wallets for men, stitched by hand in Pakistan. Slim and bifold styles, cash on delivery available nationwide."

## Headings

Headings organise your page for readers and help search engines understand topics.

- Use **one H1** per page, usually the page title, including the main keyword
- Use **H2** headings for main sections and **H3** for sub-sections
- Write headings that describe the section, not vague ones like "More Info"

## URL slugs

The slug is the end part of the URL. Keep it short, readable and descriptive.

- Good: yoursite.com/leather-wallets/slim-bifold
- Poor: yoursite.com/product?id=4821&cat=7

Use lowercase letters and hyphens. Avoid changing slugs on pages that already rank; if you must, set up a 301 redirect from the old address to the new one.

## Internal links

Internal links are links from one page on your site to another. They help visitors discover more pages and pass importance around your site.

1. When you publish a new blog post, link to the related product or service page.
2. Go back to two or three older related posts and add a link to the new one.
3. Use descriptive anchor text, such as "our handmade leather wallets", rather than "click here".
4. Make sure no important page is an orphan, meaning nothing links to it.

## Images

Images can slow a site down and are often ignored for SEO. Fix both problems:

- **Compress** images before uploading. Free online compressors can reduce file size a lot without visible quality loss.
- **Resize** images to the size they display at. A 4,000-pixel photo shown at 800 pixels wastes bandwidth.
- **Name files** descriptively: brown-leather-bifold-wallet.jpg, not IMG_2231.jpg.
- **Write alt text** that describes the image for people who cannot see it, for example "Brown handmade leather bifold wallet, open, showing card slots".

# Chapter 5: Content That Ranks

## What "good content" means in practice

Good content answers the searcher's question better and more clearly than the alternatives. It does not need to be long for the sake of being long. It needs to be complete, accurate and easy to use.

## Types of content that work for small businesses

- **Category and service pages.** Explain what you offer, who it is for, prices or price ranges where possible, and how to order or book.
- **Product pages.** Original descriptions (not copied from suppliers), sizes, materials, care instructions, delivery details and genuine reviews.
- **How-to guides.** Answer practical questions your customers ask.
- **Comparison pages.** "Bifold vs trifold wallet" or "Shopify vs WooCommerce for a small store".
- **FAQ sections.** Short answers to common questions, added to relevant pages.
- **Local pages.** If you genuinely serve several areas, a page per area with real, specific information. Avoid copying the same page and only swapping the city name.

## A simple process for writing a page that ranks

1. **Pick one keyword group** from your keyword map.
2. **Study the top results.** Note what they cover, what they miss and the format they use.
3. **Outline your page** with H2 and H3 headings that cover the topic fully.
4. **Write for a person first.** Use short paragraphs, simple words and specific details.
5. **Add proof of experience.** Real photos, your own process, actual prices, and lessons from your work.
6. **Add internal links** to and from related pages.
7. **Finish the on-page basics** from Chapter 4.
8. **Publish, then improve.** Revisit the page after a month or two using Search Console data.

## Show experience and trust

Search engines increasingly value content that shows real-world experience. Small businesses have an advantage here because you actually do the work. Include:

- Photos you took yourself of products, your workshop or completed projects
- Step-by-step explanations of how you do things

- Clear author or business details
- Honest pros and cons, not just sales language

## Updating old content

Updating existing pages is often faster than writing new ones. Every few months:

- Correct outdated prices, dates and details
- Add answers to new questions customers have asked
- Improve titles on pages that appear in search but get few clicks
- Merge thin, overlapping posts into one stronger page and redirect the old addresses

> Tip: AI writing tools can help with outlines and first drafts, but always edit heavily, add your own experience and check every fact. Thin, generic content rarely ranks well for long.

# Chapter 6: Technical Basics Without the Jargon

## Speed

Slow pages frustrate visitors. To check speed, use Google's free PageSpeed Insights tool. Enter a page address and it will give suggestions.

Common fixes for small business sites:

1. Compress and resize images (the biggest win for many sites)
2. Remove apps, plugins or scripts you no longer use
3. Use a lightweight, well-maintained theme
4. Avoid large auto-playing videos and heavy sliders on the home page
5. Choose reliable hosting; on WordPress, a caching plugin often helps

Do not chase a perfect score. Focus on making the page load quickly for real visitors on a normal phone connection.

## Mobile friendliness

Many of your visitors will be on phones. Google primarily uses the mobile version of a site for indexing and ranking. Test your site on your own phone:

- Is the text readable without zooming?
- Are buttons large enough to tap easily?
- Does anything spill off the side of the screen?
- Do pop-ups block the content?

## XML sitemaps

An XML sitemap is a file that lists the pages you want search engines to know about. Shopify creates one automatically at yoursite.com/sitemap.xml. On WordPress, most SEO plugins create one for you. You will submit it in Search Console.

## Robots.txt and noindex

The robots.txt file tells crawlers which areas they should not crawl. A "noindex" setting tells search engines not to include a page in results. Both are useful, but a wrong setting can hide your whole site. A common mistake on WordPress is leaving "Discourage search engines from indexing this site" switched on after launch. Check it.

## Google Search Console: setup steps

Google Search Console is free and is the most important SEO tool you can use.

1. Go to Google Search Console and sign in with your Google account.
2. Add your property. The "Domain" option covers all versions of your site but needs a DNS record; the "URL prefix" option can be verified with an HTML tag or file.
3. Follow the verification steps. Shopify, WordPress plugins and most hosts have simple guides.
4. Submit your sitemap address under the Sitemaps section.
5. Use the URL Inspection tool to check whether a specific page is indexed and to request indexing of new pages.
6. Review the Pages (indexing) report for errors such as "Not found (404)" or "Excluded by noindex tag".

Interfaces change, so check the platform's current menus if the names differ.

# Chapter 7: Simple, Honest Link Building

## Why links still matter

When other reputable websites link to yours, it signals that your site is worth visiting. Quality matters far more than quantity. One relevant link from a respected local or industry site is worth more than many links from random, low-quality directories.

## Links to avoid

- Buying links or link packages
- Large networks of low-quality sites that exist only to sell links
- Spammy comments on blogs and forums
- Automated link-building software

These can harm your site and are against search engine guidelines.

## Practical link ideas for small businesses

1. **Google Business Profile and key directories.** Create a complete Business Profile and list your business on reputable local and industry directories. Keep your name, address and phone number identical everywhere.
2. **Suppliers and partners.** Ask suppliers, manufacturers or partner businesses if they list stockists or partners on their sites.
3. **Local community.** Sponsor a local event, school activity or sports team and ask for a mention on their website.
4. **Helpful resources.** Create something genuinely useful, such as a sizing guide, a price calculator or a checklist, that others want to reference.
5. **Expert contributions.** Answer journalist or blogger requests in your area of expertise, or write a guest article for an industry website with a real audience.
6. **Unlinked mentions.** Search your business name. If someone mentions you without linking, politely ask them to add a link.

# Chapter 8: Measuring Results and Your 90-Day Plan

## What to measure

Focus on a few numbers that connect to business results:

- **Impressions:** how often your pages appeared in search (Search Console)
- **Clicks:** how often people clicked through (Search Console)
- **Click-through rate (CTR):** clicks divided by impressions
- **Average position:** a rough indicator of where you appear
- **Organic sessions:** visits from search (Google Analytics)
- **Conversions:** orders, calls, form submissions or WhatsApp chats from search visitors

## Using CTR to find quick wins: a worked example

Imagine a service page that, over three months, had 4,000 impressions and 60 clicks. Its CTR is 60 / 4,000 = 0.015, or 1.5 percent. Its average position is around 8.

The page is showing up but not being clicked. You rewrite the title and meta description to be clearer and more appealing. If the CTR rises to 3 percent with the same impressions, clicks become 4,000 × 0.03 = 120. That doubles the visits without any new rankings. Pages with high impressions and low CTR are often the easiest improvements available.

## Set up tracking

1. Connect Google Search Console (Chapter 6).
2. Install Google Analytics 4. Shopify and most WordPress plugins offer simple integrations; check the platform's current settings.
3. Mark your key actions, such as purchases or contact form submissions, as conversions or key events.
4. Create a simple monthly spreadsheet recording clicks, impressions, organic sessions and conversions.

## Your 90-day SEO plan

| Period | Focus | Key tasks |
|---|---|---|
| Days 1 to 30 | Foundation | Search Console, Analytics, sitemap, fix indexing issues, keyword map, site structure |
| Days 31 to 60 | On-page and content | Optimise top 10 pages, write 4 to 6 helpful articles, add internal links, compress images |
| Days 61 to 90 | Authority and review | Business Profile, directories, partner links, update weak pages, review data |

### Days 1 to 30: Foundation

1. Verify Search Console and submit your sitemap.
2. Install Analytics and set up conversions.
3. Check that the site loads on https and works well on mobile.
4. Fix any "noindex" mistakes or broken pages.
5. Complete keyword research and build your keyword map.
6. Tidy your navigation and make sure trust pages exist.

### Days 31 to 60: On-page and content

1. Rewrite titles, meta descriptions and headings on your 10 most important pages.
2. Improve product or service descriptions with original details.
3. Publish 4 to 6 helpful articles based on real customer questions.
4. Add internal links between related pages.
5. Compress and rename images and add alt text.

### Days 61 to 90: Authority and review

1. Complete or improve your Google Business Profile and ask happy customers for honest reviews.
2. List on a handful of reputable directories.
3. Reach out to suppliers, partners and local organisations for links.
4. Review Search Console: find pages with high impressions but low CTR and improve them.
5. Plan your next 90 days based on what the data shows.

# Quick-Start Checklist

☐ Verify your website in Google Search Console

☐ Submit your XML sitemap

☐ Install Google Analytics and track key conversions

☐ Confirm your site uses https and is not set to noindex

☐ Test every key page on your phone

☐ Build a keyword map with one main keyword per page

☐ Organise your site into 4 to 8 clear categories

☐ Write unique titles and meta descriptions for your top 10 pages

☐ Use one H1 and logical H2 and H3 headings on each page

☐ Shorten and clean up URL slugs on new pages

☐ Compress images and add descriptive alt text

☐ Publish at least four articles answering real customer questions

☐ Add internal links between related pages

☐ Complete your Google Business Profile and request honest reviews

☐ Review Search Console data monthly and improve low-CTR pages

# About DAD Technologies

DAD Technologies is a Pakistan-based digital agency helping businesses grow with ecommerce, digital marketing, web development and AI automation. Explore our free tools and guides at dadtechnologies.com, or contact us for a free consultation.