



# Tips for Book Authors: Writing and Search Engine Optimization

Write for your audience. The goal of search engines like Google is to provide their users the best user experience. Therefore, the best results are delivered when you provide the audience with what they expect. Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is not a set of tricks. It's helping Google to present your book chapter to the right audience.

## The Importance of Search Engines and Optimization

In the first place you of course write for human readers, but in this age of information technology much of the content you write is crawled and indexed by search engines. Some simple optimization steps can help your work to be found, then read, used and cited in others' work. This will likely result in links to your book and chapters which will further increase the visibility of your work. Search engines rank webpages using a complex algorithm: over 200 factors determine in which order pages are displayed in search results. Springer optimizes its websites to help search engines find and index our content as best as possible, but of course it all starts with the content itself.

### 1. Selecting the keywords

Who is the audience for the book and the content in the chapters? What is the main topic of the book and the individual chapters? Which words would the audience use in search engines to find the information a chapter in the book provides on this topic? Put yourself in your audience's shoes and select a phrase of 2-4 words that best describes the chapter's content.

### 2. Title of your book and its chapters

For search engines, but for users as well, the title is the first impression of book and chapter. It's the most valuable element for search engines to determine the relevancy of an article on a search query. Therefore it is important to use the right keywords in titles, to provide a good description of the content of a book and chapter. Guidelines for a good title:

- Use the selected words in the title. Preferably start the title with those words, as words earlier in a title will get more value
- Make the title descriptive, avoiding indirect references
- Remember chapters are individual items indexed and are not always presented in the context of the book.
- On average only the first 55 characters (including spaces) will be shown in Google. So use the most important words within the first 55 characters.

### Summary

- 1) Selecting the keywords
- 2) Title of your book and its chapters
- 3) Headings
- 4) The content (abstract)
- 5) Synonyms and related words
- 6) Authority (links)

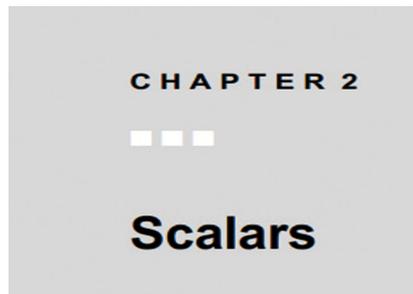


Figure 1:  
Scalars - Perl's basic data type

A book about the programming language Perl has a chapter explaining Scalars and it has the title "Scalars". In the context of the book it is clear that this chapter discusses Scalars specific for Perl, but indexed in Google that is not easy to determine. A title like: "Scalars: Perl's basic data type" would help to confirm that and helps the user to decide if this is relevant for them.

### 3. Headings in chapters

Headings will help search engines like Google and users to better understand the content and structure of your chapter. Just like the title should be a description of the book/chapter, the headings should describe the section or paragraph. Use the relevant keywords. If it is possible and makes sense, combine the earlier selected words for the book or chapter with more specific words for the section.

### 4. Content of chapters

The selected keywords should appear in the content of the article. Depending on the length of the text, the keywords should occur at least once and for a selected set preferably 3-4 times in a text of 200 words. Keep in mind to write for your audience. Make sure the text is still readable. Do not overuse keywords as this might have negative effects.

### 5. Synonyms and related words

Users might use synonyms or related words to find the information provided in the article. To match the search query, it is recommended to use synonyms and related words. Besides, those words help search engines like Google to better understand the topic. Example: when in a text words like red, Italy and sports car are used, Google might "think of" Ferrari. The best tool to find related words and synonyms are the Google search results: look for the normal results, which other words show up? And in some cases Google might provide a set of other related search phrases.

### 6. Authority (Links)

Google and other search engines regard links as votes for webpages. You can help the ranking of your book's pages by creating links. On profile pages, social media (e.g. posting the link to twitter) and blog posts, there are many options for links.