

## The Truth About Keywords and Your Copy

An Interview With Search Engine Optimization Professional Robin Nobles

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There is so much talk about keywords these days that I decided to go straight to the source to find out the truth. What relevance do keywords play? Where should they go? Are META tags still important? Are there other places to put them?

To answer these and other questions, I contacted Robin Nobles, Director of Training at the Academy of Web Specialists ([http://www.academywebspecialists.com/more\\_info](http://www.academywebspecialists.com/more_info)). Robin is "Madam Search Engine" if you will! She teaches online search engine marketing strategies and has helped several thousand people increase their search engine rankings.

Robin has led numerous onsite workshops and has spoken at many conferences. As a matter of fact, she just started something new: a 3-day workshop taught at different locations across the U.S. and Canada. Get all the details at <http://www.searchengineworkshops.com>.

Robin has authored three books related to search engine marketing: "Promoting Your Web Site", "Streetwise Maximize Web Site Traffic", and "Web Site Analysis and Reporting". The last two are available through Amazon and other bookstores.

Now you get the benefit of "listening in" as Robin and I discuss the ins and outs of keywords in Web copy.

Also... at the end of the interview, you'll receive your **bonus in a bonus**. Something you'll want to keep and use each and every time you write Web copy!

**KARON:** Hi Robin. You just don't know how much I appreciate you taking the time to answer some questions. You are such a respected professional and I am fully prepared to learn a LOT from you in the next few minutes.

**ROBIN:** You're welcome, Karon. It's my pleasure to be here and answer any questions you have.

**KARON:** Great! Let's start at the beginning with keywords. Are they still the best way to gain high search engine placement?

**ROBIN:** Choosing the right keywords is still the most important thing you can do as a search engine optimizer. If you don't take care of this "step one," none of the other steps will work or fall into place.

**KARON:** So this is where the success of our sites lies, right? All in the keywords?

**ROBIN:** No, not so much the "success of the site", but the success of your search engine placement. Keywords aren't the only thing that's important for total site success. You have to take care of usability issues (like providing contact information), too. But, to get **traffic through the engines** and directories, it's imperative that you spend a lot of time researching the right keywords.

**KARON:** All right. Tell me what you recommend. Are there specific "do's" and "don'ts"?

**ROBIN:** Yes! Don't EVER think that you "know" how your potential customers will be searching for your site. I can almost guarantee that you don't. I made this fatal mistake once, when in a hurry to get up a new site of my own. I'll never make the mistake again. **You must research your**

**keywords** -- find out for sure how customers will be searching when looking for your site.

**KARON:** Yikes! You mentioned that YOU made the mistake of guessing once. Is that the biggest mistake? Are there others that we might be making?

**ROBIN:** Yes, guessing at keywords IS the biggest mistake. The other “biggie” is choosing keywords that are too general.

**KARON:** You mean like “marketing” or “online marketing” or “search engine placement”?

**ROBIN:** Right. General keywords are much more difficult to get top rankings for, simply because of their competitive nature. Even if you're lucky enough to swing good results under general keywords, research has shown that the traffic from those general keywords won't convert to sales.

**KARON:** So what's the point, right? I mean... if I get tons of traffic but no sales, it doesn't do me any good to be ranked #1 in “copywriting”.

**ROBIN:** Exactly! It's better to have focused keyword phrases for your focused content. The bottom line is: you want targeted traffic that converts to sales.

**KARON:** So how do we get those “focused keyword phrases”? I like [WordTracker](#). Do you use that service?

**ROBIN:** [WordTracker](#) is a “**must have**” for anyone who is serious about having a successful Web site. It's a superb service, one I couldn't do without. Plus, they're constantly adding new features or improving existing ones. I wouldn't even consider doing keyword research without it.

**KARON:** I know, I think it's great, too! And they don't charge an arm and a leg, either. You can get a membership for a year, a month, a week or even 1 day for only about \$6.00US.

**ROBIN:** It's great!

**KARON:** OK... so let's work our way over to META tags. Here's a subject full of controversy <grin>! We hear a lot of talk about META tags and how the keywords should be included within them. What's the deal, Robin? In or out?

**ROBIN:** META tags **hold very little importance** in the search engine game these days. Don't sweat over META tags. So many of the major engines don't consider them when determining relevancy. For example, Google doesn't, and neither does Fast or Lycos.

**KARON:** So don't use them?

**ROBIN:** You can still use them. A few engines still place some relevance on them but not many.

**KARON:** So what about other tags?

**ROBIN:** With any tags, use your important keyword phrase **toward the beginning of the tag**. The phrase doesn't have to be the FIRST words, but it does need to be placed toward the beginning of all of your tags.

**KARON:** So if the META tag set isn't the “end all, be all” anymore, where else can we put keywords to boost our rankings?

**ROBIN:** Create good, solid content for your Web pages. Create pages that are highly focused on

one keyword phrase only. Use that phrase in your title tag, META tags, headline tags, link text, and ALT text in images. Use the phrase throughout the body text.

**KARON:** How about links and domain names?

**ROBIN:** Yes! Name your images after keyword phrases. Name your pages after your keyword phrase. Purchase domains that contain your keyword phrase!

**KARON:** Wow! Still lots of "legal" places to put them. Great!

**ROBIN:** Oh yes. META tags are not the only place search engine spiders and bots look.

**KARON:** So, do you have any other proven tips or tricks that will help with indexing and rankings?

**ROBIN:** Oooo... don't say "trick" <smile>! Stay away from "tricks," because they will generally have a short life span. Instead, concentrate on providing the best content you can for your Web site. Don't do anything on your pages that you would be ashamed for an engine to see. Give the engines what they want to see: relevant and unique content. Give your users what they want to see: relevant and unique content.

**KARON:** So it primarily comes down to words?

**ROBIN:** It absolutely comes down to words! Use your tags effectively, and focus focus focus. With each page, let there be no way for the engines to mistake what the focus (keyword phrase) of the page is. Create new pages for additional keyword phrases, and bring in traffic through those windows or doors. Keep your entire site focused on one area. Move other focuses to other Web sites.

**KARON:** What about link popularity?

**ROBIN:** Yes... that's another important tool. Get other popular and related Web sites to link to you. Be sure your site is listed in all of the major directories, and in any "vertical" directories and engines for your topic areas. Link popularity is crucial these days so do not skip over this very important area.

**KARON:** Robin, you're the best! Thanks for giving us the privilege of a "one-on-one" session with you. I'm going to go put your advice to work right now!!

**ROBIN:** Glad to be of help, Karon!

**===== KEEP THIS FOR FUTURE REFERENCE.  
USE IT EVERY TIME YOU CREATE WEB COPY! =====**

Remember the FREE bonus in a bonus I mentioned? Well here it is! It's Robin Nobles own, personal **Search Engine Checklist**. It contains all the ins and outs of legally including keywords in every nook and cranny of your Web site.

These are places where search engine spiders crawl but most people never think of! This comes straight from Robin's book "**Web Site Analysis and Reporting**" which is available here: <http://www.robinsnest.com/books.html>.



## Search Engine Checklist

Name of Engine: \_\_\_\_\_

Name/URL of Page: \_\_\_\_\_

Keyword Phrase: \_\_\_\_\_

Check	Answer	Notes
<b>Keywords</b>		
Are you using a highly focused keyword phrase, rather than a keyword that's too general?		
Are you optimizing the page for 1-2 keyword phrases only?		
Are you using regional keywords, if appropriate?		
Are you using the longest version of your keyword phrase?		
Are you using specific product names and services as keywords?		
<b>Where to Place Keywords</b>		
Are you using your keyword phrase at the beginning of all tags, including the title, description, headline, etc.?		
Are you using your keyword phrase at the beginning of your body text?		
Are you using a title tag?		
Are you using a description META tag if appropriate for this engine?		
Are you making use of headline tags, possibly in a graduated format?		
Are you using your keyword phrase to create effective link text?		
Are you overusing your keyword phrase?		
What is your keyword weight for the page?		
Is your page close to the root domain?		
Are you using your keyword phrase in ALT text if this engine considers the contents of ALT text?		
Did you name the page after your keyword phrase?		
If the page is in a subdirectory, did you name the subdirectory after the keyword phrase?		
Did you change the names of your images to reflect the keyword phrase?		
Are you using subdomains?		
Is the domain named after your keyword phrase?		
Are you using keywords in a <style> tag?		
<b>Titles and Descriptions</b>		
Is your title tag captivating and designed to bring in traffic?		
Is your keyword phrase used toward the beginning of		

the tags?		
Are your tags written with a capital letter starting the tag, and followed by all lower-case letters, unless you're using proper nouns?		
Are you using your company name in the title tag instead of a keyword phrase? Don't!		
Is your title easy to read?		
If this engine uses the content of description tags, is the description tag captivating and designed to attract business?		
Is your description tag easy to read?		
If this engine doesn't use a description META tag, is the first text on your page appropriate as a description of the page in the search engine results?		
<b>Navigation/Linking</b>		
Are you linking to all important pages of your site from this page?		
If you own additional domains, are you linking to those pages too, if they're related in content?		
Are you linking to popular sites that are related in content to your site?		
Are you using effective link text when linking both on and off your site?		
Are you using a site map containing links to all important pages of your site? If so, have you added some content to the page as well?		
Are you working toward building a good, solid related link popularity?		
<b>Problems</b>		
Does the page begin with text rather than a graphic, if at all possible?		
Are you using technology that could create ranking problems, such as frames, lengthy JavaScript, database-delivered content, etc.?		
Does your HTML editor stick in any irrelevant tags that could be hurting your ranking?		
If you're using tables, do you use your keyword phrase in the left cell of the tables?		
If you're using frames, have you created a mini Web site in a <noframes> tag and added valuable content in this manner?		
If your site is database delivered, have you created static pages as well?		
If you're using lengthy JavaScript, have you moved most of it to a separate .js file?		
If you're using an image map, have you provided text links to interior pages as well?		
<b>Spam</b>		
Are you using a redirect tag?		
Are you using keyword stuffing in tags or in the body text?		
Are you using tiny text?		

Are you using hidden text?		
Is your keyword weight too high?		
Are you using keywords that don't pertain to the content of the page?		
Does the page contain links only? If so, add content!		
Is this page a mirror of another page?		
Do you have other pages optimized for the same keyword phrase?		
<b>Other</b>		
Is the page full of valuable content? If not, did you add content through a <noframes> tag?		
How long is the page? The average word count for top-ranking pages across the board is 450 words.		
Is your data segregated, to where the focus of each page is kept separate?		