SEO Cheat Sheet for CMS Users

⭐ Quality Content

- Write for your **audience first**, search engines second.
- Regularly **update and expand** upon your content. Keep your pages relevant and valuable over time.

🔑 Keywords/Phrases

Imagine keywords as the **main ideas or topics you talk about in your content**. They are the words or phrases that people are most likely to type into a search engine when looking for information on that subject. If you write about baking, for instance, keywords might be "chocolate cake recipe," "gluten-free bread," or "how to make muffins."

When you're thinking about keywords, just focus on what your audience might search for. What questions might they have? What are they interested in? Use your expertise in the subject matter to guide your choices.

- Before writing, identify your **single primary** and **2-3 secondary keywords**.
- As you write, include them in the copy as appropriate, in particular in headers. Don't overdo it as that can impact the quality of your writing.

T Optimized Page Titles

- Keep titles between **50-60 characters**.
- Include your primary keyword closer to the beginning.
- **IMPORTANT** - Your content management system (CMS) often adds your organization name as a prefix or suffix to your title. This also counts against your 50-60 characters. Keep this in mind if your site does this and consider your title carefully. For example, you may not need to repeat the organization name in your page/ entry title.

🔍 Meta Descriptions

A meta description is **content that search engines often include as part of the the search result** under the title of the page. It is a very brief summary of the page or hook to inspire a click to read that works in concert with the title.

- Write compelling descriptions within 150-160 characters.
- Incorporate the primary keyword(s).
- For Minds On Design Lab site builds, we often map a summary/teaser field of an entry to the Meta Description field. Your site's CMS might be set up for something similar.

🔗 Optimize URLs (your slug)

The "slug" is the **part of the page URL that is unique to the page**. Many CMSs will create a slug automatically for new entries. They build the slug from the title you enter with a "-" between each word. This will include a lot of potential "filler" words like "the", "to", "a", ... Feel free to revise the slug when creating your entries to make the URLs shorter and more concise.

- Use **clear, concise URLs**.

- Include the primary keyword and avoid unnecessary characters.

- Slugs must be unique. If you use a slug that has already been used, CMSs often will append a number to the end to make it unique. You might want to revise further to make your slug more unique and human.

- **IMPORTANT - Once you have published a page/entry you don't want to make a lot of changes to the slug.** Changing a slug might mean a search engine's link gets out of date and gives an error, which is a ding on you. Search engines update in time, but not in real time. There are good reasons though to change a slug on a rare occasion. When you do change a slug of a published entry, make sure a redirect rule from the old URL to the new one is setup. Minds On Design Lab use a plugin called Retour for Craft CMS that helps create these automatically.

H2 Header Tags

- Structure content using **H1, H2, and H3 tags**.

- H1 is generally reserved for your entry/page title.

- H2 should be used as the subheadings in your content. H3s can be added "within" an H2, as appropriate. It is critical you use these in a hierarchy that conveys meaning. Do not think about design at all; think about using these in an outline-like format showing relationships between sections of the page.

  > **H1:** Your first month with your new puppy
  >> **H2:** Feeding your puppy
  >>> **H3:** Times of day
  >>> **H3:** Recommended food brands

Image Optimization

- Use **descriptive file names** (e.g., "landscape_pond_lillies.jpg" not "IMG001.jpg").

- Add **alt-text** to images describing their content. Alt text is important for SEO and accessibility. It should describe the meaning and feeling the image is seeking to express to someone who cannot see the image.

- Consider sizing and **saving images to be as small as possible**, while maintaining quality. This helps ensure the images will be optimized for performance and responsiveness appropriately. In Minds On Design Lab site builds, this is automated to help ensure images are optimized automatically.

Internal Linking

- In your page content, link to other relevant content/pages within your website.

- Use **descriptive anchor text** (the clickable text in a hyperlink). Don't use "Click Here"!

REMEMBER - SEO is an ongoing process, not a one-time task. Regularly review and adjust your strategy based on analytics and changing industry trends.