

BLUELENA

SEO Fundamentals

Best practices to growing valuable Google Search traffic



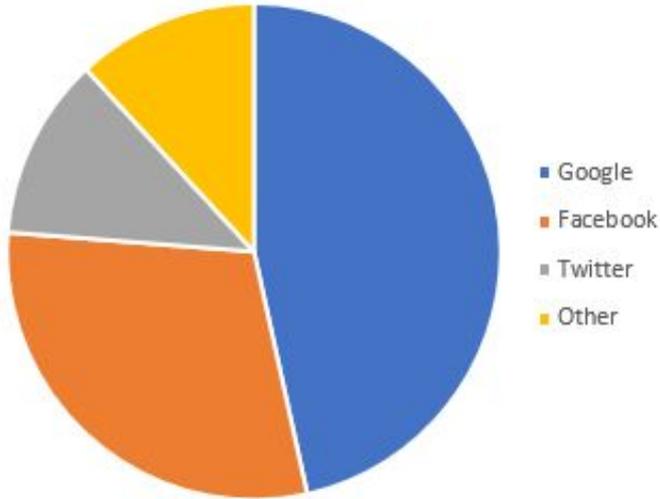
Why does Google matter?



Google drives approximately 60% of all referral traffic to news sites - about twice the size of the next nearest referral source, Facebook.

That is 10% higher than it was a year ago.

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Across the BlueLena coalition, Google is the referral source for **47% of all registrants who ultimately convert.***

Agenda

- What is SEO?
- SEO best practices
- Developing an SEO strategy

Google's Mission



“Our mission is to organize the world’s information and make it universally accessible and useful.”

Google's Mission



Prioritize info that is:

- Relevant
- High-quality
- Clear, concise
- Well-structured language

Good news for publishers!

SEO best practices align well with journalistic best practices.

- Clear, declarative writing.
- Concise headlines and ledes.
- Most important information first.

Google aims to surface relevant information, and news publishers aim to provide relevant information.

What is SEO?

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is the means of ensuring your content is discoverable and well-presented in Google Search results.

Ideally, you want to appear as high up on the first page of a relevant search result.

What's a search result?

The screenshot shows a desktop view of a Google search for "big bayfest". The search bar is at the top with the Google logo on the left and a microphone icon on the right. Below the search bar are navigation tabs for "All", "Images", "News", "Videos", "Maps", "More", "Settings", and "Tools". The search results are displayed in a list format. The first result is a link to "www.bigbayfest.org" with a sub-heading "BAYFEST: Brooklyn's Largest Waterfront Celebration!". Below this is a short description: "Bayfest is Sheepshead Bay's annual all-day music and fun festival, and Brooklyn's largest waterfront celebration, held the third Sunday of May." The second result is a Facebook link titled "BayFest of Sheepshead Bay - Home | Facebook" with a URL and a brief description of the event. The third result is a Twitter link titled "BIG BayFest (@BIGBayFest) | Twitter" with a URL and a description of the event's features. The fourth result is a link to "FestivalNet.com" titled "Bayfest 2020, a Festival in Brooklyn, New York - FestivalNet.com" with a URL and a description of the festival's activities.

Google

big bayfest

All Images News Videos Maps More Settings Tools

About 71,500 results (0.44 seconds)

BAYFEST: Brooklyn's Largest Waterfront Celebration!
www.bigbayfest.org ▾
Bayfest is Sheepshead Bay's annual all-day music and fun festival, and Brooklyn's largest waterfront celebration, held the third Sunday of May.

BayFest of Sheepshead Bay - Home | Facebook
<https://www.facebook.com> ▾ Places ▾ Brooklyn, New York ▾
BAYFEST: Brooklyn's largest waterfront celebration! Sunday, May 18 from noon to 6pm on Emmons Avenue from East 27th Street to Ocean Avene in Sheepshead ...

BIG BayFest (@BIGBayFest) | Twitter
<https://twitter.com> ▾ bigbayfest ▾
The latest Tweets from **BIG BayFest (@BIGBayFest)**. **BIG BAYFEST** Annual all-free celebration of Sheepshead Bay, with music, giveaways, kids fun & more. Sun ...

Bayfest 2020, a Festival in Brooklyn, New York - FestivalNet.com
<https://festivalnet.com> ▾ Brooklyn-New-York ▾ Festivals ▾ Bayfest ▾
BayFest 2020 - 20 bands, dance troupes, and entertainers perform on two main stages along the Sheepshead Bay waterfront. Six hours of FREE entertainment ...
Sun, May 17 Sheepshead Bay, Brooklyn, NY

Desktop

The screenshot shows a mobile view of a Google search for "big bayfest". The search bar is at the top with the Google logo on the left and a microphone icon on the right. Below the search bar are navigation tabs for "ALL", "IMAGES", "NEWS", "VIDEOS", "MAPS", "SHOP". The search results are displayed in a list format. The first result is a link to "www.bigbayfest.org" with a sub-heading "BAYFEST: Brooklyn's Largest Waterfront Celebration!". Below this is a short description: "Bayfest is Sheepshead Bay's annual all-day music and fun festival, and Brooklyn's largest waterfront celebration, held the third Sunday of May." The second result is a Facebook link titled "BayFest of Sheepshead Bay - Home | Facebook" with a URL and a brief description of the event. To the right of the text is a small image of a poster for "17th BIG BAYFEST 2020" featuring "Blues - Jazz - R&B" and "FUNK". The third result is a Twitter link titled "BIG BayFest (@BIGBayFest) | Twitter" with a URL and a description of the event's features.

Google

Big bayfest

ALL IMAGES NEWS VIDEOS MAPS SHOP

www.bigbayfest.org

BAYFEST: Brooklyn's Largest Waterfront Celebration!
Bayfest is Sheepshead Bay's annual all-day music and fun festival, and Brooklyn's largest waterfront celebration, held the third Sunday of May.

Facebook app - Installed

BayFest of Sheepshead Bay - Home | Facebook
<https://www.facebook.com>
BAYFEST: Brooklyn's largest waterfront celebration ! Sunday, May 18 from noon to 6pm on Emmons Avenue from East 27th Street to Ocean Avene in ...

Twitter app - Installed

BIG BayFest (@BIGBayFest) | Twitter

Mobile

TIP: Do a domain search

The Google logo is centered at the top of the search interface, rendered in its characteristic multi-colored font.

site:mydomain.com|

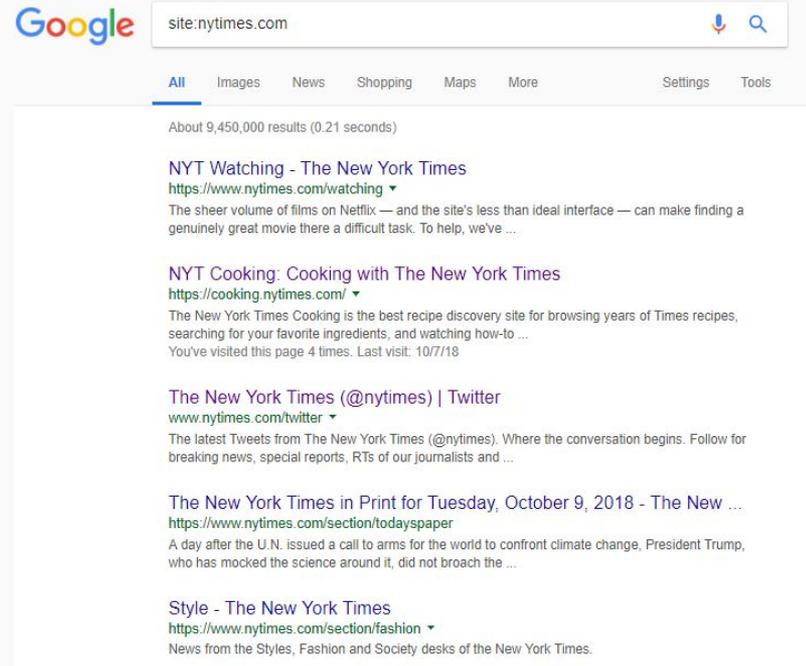


Google Search

I'm Feeling Lucky

TIP: Do a domain search

- Shows if you have any major errors
- Shows what Google considers your most important pages
- Are your category archives showing up? Are your stories?

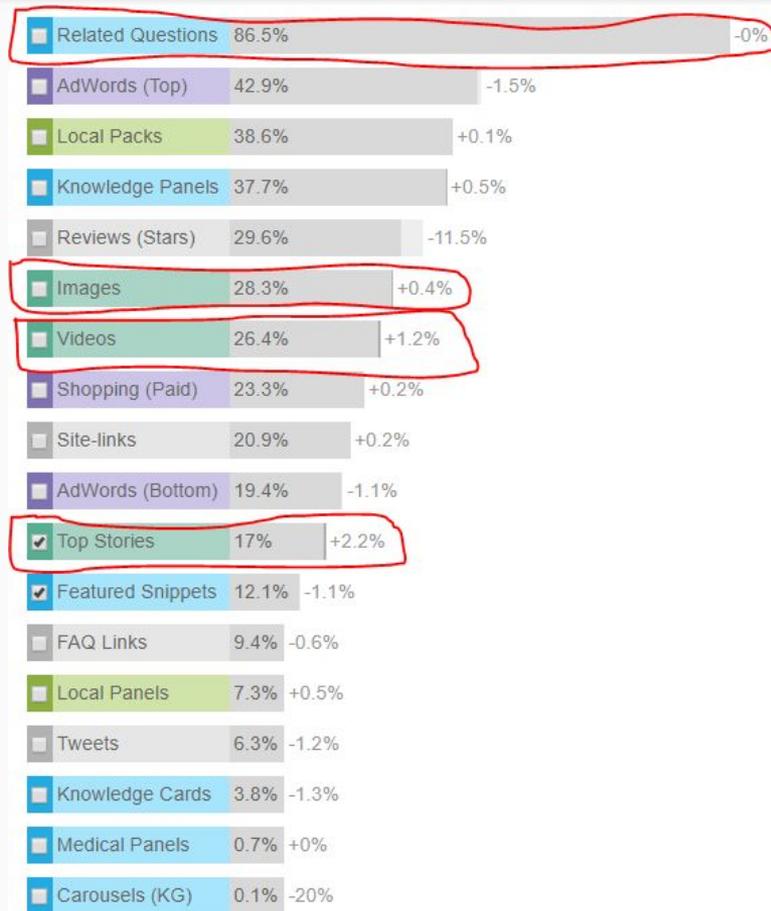


The screenshot shows a Google search interface with the query 'site:nytimes.com' entered in the search bar. The search results are displayed below the navigation tabs (All, Images, News, Shopping, Maps, More, Settings, Tools). The results include:

- NYT Watching - The New York Times**
<https://www.nytimes.com/watching>
The sheer volume of films on Netflix — and the site's less than ideal interface — can make finding a genuinely great movie there a difficult task. To help, we've ...
- NYT Cooking: Cooking with The New York Times**
<https://cooking.nytimes.com/>
The New York Times Cooking is the best recipe discovery site for browsing years of Times recipes, searching for your favorite ingredients, and watching how-to ...
You've visited this page 4 times. Last visit: 10/7/18
- The New York Times (@nytimes) | Twitter**
www.nytimes.com/twitter
The latest Tweets from The New York Times (@nytimes). Where the conversation begins. Follow for breaking news, special reports, RTs of our journalists and ...
- The New York Times in Print for Tuesday, October 9, 2018 - The New ...**
<https://www.nytimes.com/section/todayspaper>
A day after the U.N. issued a call to arms for the world to confront climate change, President Trump, who has mocked the science around it, did not broach the ...
- Style - The New York Times**
<https://www.nytimes.com/section/fashion>
News from the Styles, Fashion and Society desks of the New York Times.

That's just the front door

Side doors to search



Side doors to search

- Related questions
- Knowledge panels
- Images / Videos
- Top stories
- Articles for you
- ... many more

Top stories



'It's absolutely surreal,'
New Jersey woman
loses four family
members to coronaviru...

WCVB Boston
18 hours ago



**New Jersey's first
recovered coronavirus
patient defends
restrictions: 'Somethin...**

Fox News
17 hours ago



Time to rally

Together, let's support local businesses, the backbone of our communities. Here's how...

**Coronavirus NJ: An
urgent call to save small
businesses | Siekerka**

APP.com
52 mins ago

→ More for new jersey

People also ask

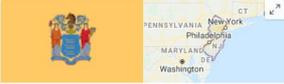
What is New Jersey is famous for? ▾

Is New York a part of New Jersey? ▾

Is New Jersey a good place to live? ▾

Is New Jersey Safe? ▾

Feedback



New Jersey

US State

New Jersey is a northeastern U.S. state with some 130 miles of Atlantic coast. Jersey City, across the Hudson River from Lower Manhattan, is the site of Liberty State Park, where ferries embark for nearby Ellis Island, with its historic Immigration Museum, and the iconic Statue of Liberty. The Jersey Shore includes notable resort towns like historic Asbury Park and Cape May, with its preserved Victorian buildings.

Governor: Phil Murphy (Democratic Party) *trailing*

Capital: Trenton

Minimum wage: 10.00 USD per hour (Jul 1, 2019)

Videos



**New Jersey Gov. Murphy
Gives Update On The
Coronavirus ...**

NBC News
YouTube - 3 days ago



**Gov. Phil Murphy: First
New Jersey drive-thru
testing site was a 'big
success'**

MSNBC.com - 18 hours ago



**Coronavirus in New
Jersey: Update on March
20, 2020**

NJ.com
YouTube - 19 hours ago

Best practices can get you in the front and the side doors

Keywords + Reputation = SEO!

Keyword opportunities

- Headlines
- Descriptions
- Heading tags
- Image tags

Reputation building:

- Internal linking
- Publicizing

Best practices - Keywords

It all starts with keywords

- Ask: What question does my article answer? What words would people use to search for it? (user intent)
- *Often* the main **actors** and **actions** at the heart of the story.
 - People, places, things - full names, as people would search for them
- *But not always*. Remember - what is always the most useful thing in the story?
- Use keywords prominently, but not at cost of readability
- Compare your keywords (we'll come back to this)

Where to use your keywords - Headlines

- Most important place
- Must include keyword, preferably phrased as someone would search
- Be descriptive of the page contents
- 60 characters
- NO PUNS OR WORDPLAY!
- Try to get your keywords at the beginning
- If longer than 60 characters, make sure those first 60 stand alone

Where to use your keywords - Excerpts

- Appears sometimes, but not always in search results
- Should entice the user to click through
- Should offer more context
 - If headline is about a shooting in Midwood, the description can clarify a violent shooting in Midwood, Brooklyn and not a film shooting in Plaza Midwood, NC.
- Should include keyword and/or variant (ie. Phil Murphy in headline, NJ governor in description)
- Human readable; no keyword stuffing
- 160 characters

Exercise

Story: Amid coronavirus concerns, Gov. Phil Murphy announces that New Jersey schools will be closed.

What's your headline?

Exercise

Story: Amid coronavirus concerns, Gov. Phil Murphy announces that New Jersey schools will be closed.

- Gov. Murphy closes NJ schools
- NJ schools closed amid coronavirus concerns, Phil Murphy says
- Coronavirus school closures: All NJ public and private schools to shut down

The winner

www.nj.com › coronavirus › 2020/03 › coronavirus-school-closures-... ▼

Coronavirus school closures: All N.J. public and private ...

7 days ago - While about half of the state's **school** districts already **shut down**, **Gov. Phil Murphy** **ordered** all **schools** to be closed. ... Coronavirus **school** closures: All N.J. public and private **schools ordered** to **shut down** by Wednesday. ... "All **schools** in New Jersey, **public**, **private**, **parochial**, from pre-K through grade 12, ...

“Coronavirus school closures” is exactly how people might search. Phil Murphy making an announcement is secondary. The types of schools - public, private, parochial - cover specific queries.

Remember

Consider:

- What info are people searching for?
- Put those phrases in front
- Use more specific variants that add context or speak to other searches in the description and throughout the body of the article

TIP: SEO headlines vs on-site headlines

- Some CMS software have additional fields or plugins to create headlines and descriptions specifically for search.
- Use these! The way you appeal to readers surfing your site is different from how you appeal to them on search (and social)
- If using an SEO headline in addition to an on-site headline, Google News and other aggregators use the on-site headline, which can be more appropriate for people actively seeking out news.

TIP: SEO headlines vs on-site headlines

Keyword? My headline has it

Permalink: <http://www.nedberke.com/seo-keywords-tuto>

Add Media

Paragraph

B *I* ☰ ☰ “ ☰ ☰

Ipsum lorem dipsum do. Ipsum lorem dipsum do. Ipsum lorem dipsum do.

Yoast SEO

[Need help?](#)

[Go Premium](#)



Snippet Preview



This is a rendering of what this post might look like in Google's search results. [Learn more about the Snippet Preview.](#)



Keywords in search titles are powerful

[www.nedberke.com](#) > seo-keywords-tutorial

"Search terms" is another way to say keyword, and also offers more context.



Edit snippet

SEO title

[+ Insert snippet variable](#)

Keywords in search titles are powerful

Slug

seo-keywords-tutorial

Meta description

[+ Insert snippet variable](#)

"Search terms" is another way to say keyword, and also offers more context.

Close snippet editor

Where to use your keywords - Subheds

Google can read heading tags (h2, h3, etc) as secondary headlines, and gives extra weight to them. This is an opportunity to appear in “Related questions” and/or to emphasize secondary keywords

- Same rules as headlines - concise, keywords first, be descriptive of section content

Where to use your keywords - Images

Image meta-data can also be used to tell Google what your story is about. Importantly, it helps surface your images in Image search results and Image boxes -- which can make your page more prominent on a results page.

- Use optimized filenames (short, descriptive) - philmurphywaving.jpg
- Use alt text that describes the photo contents - NJ Gov. Phil Murphy stands at a podium and waves.

It all starts with keywords

- Ask: What question does my article answer? What words would people use to search for it? (user intent)
- *Often* the main **actors** and **actions** at the heart of the story.
 - People, places, things - full names, as people would search for them
- *But not always*. Remember - what is always the most useful thing in the story?
- Use keywords prominently, but not at cost of readability
- Compare your keywords (we're now back to this)

Finding the best keywords

- Google Trends
- Google auto-fill
- People also ask
- Related search

Get familiar with Google Trends

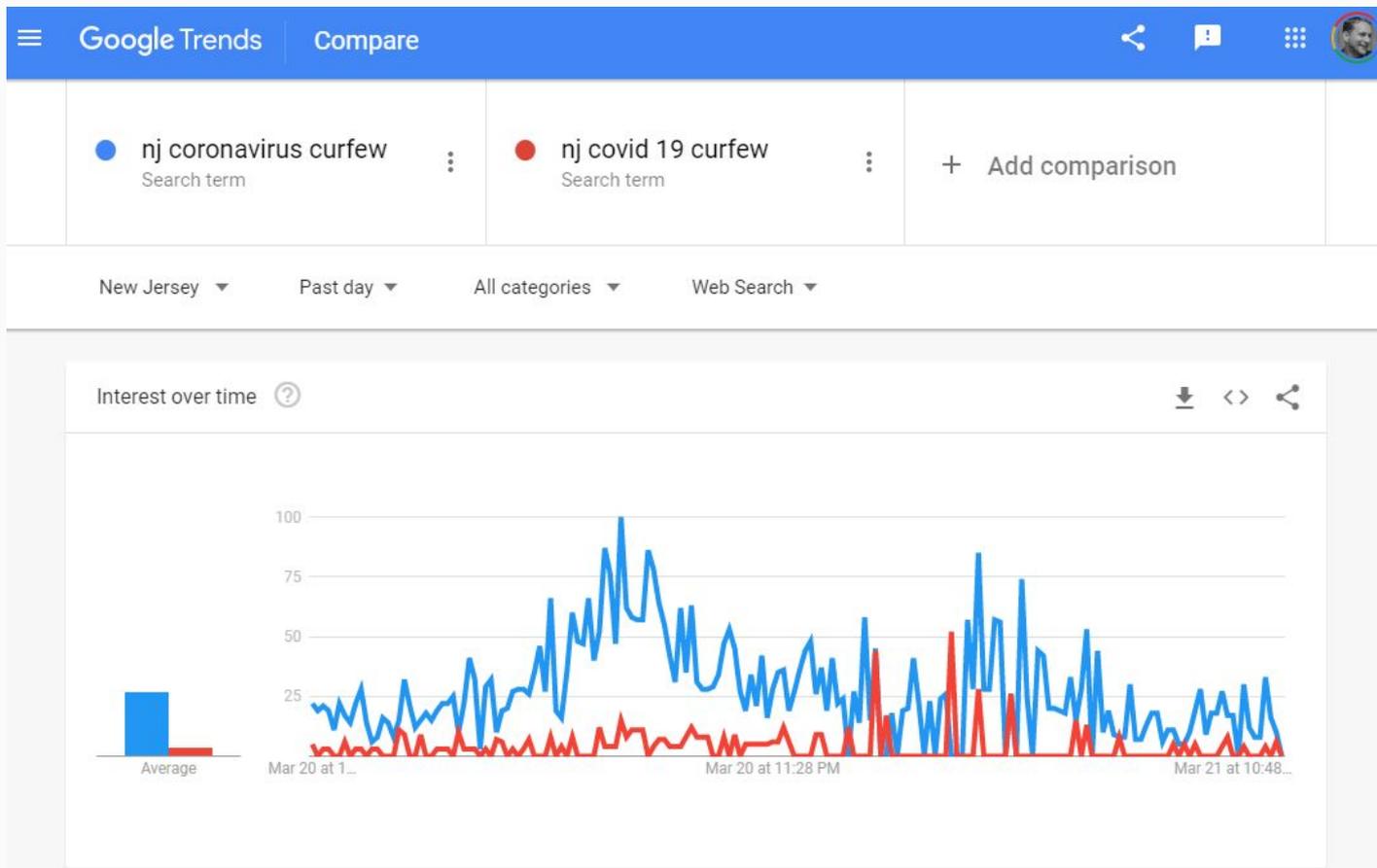
Google Trends: <https://trends.google.com/>

- Compare keywords to determine what's best
- Surface related keywords
- Limit scope geographically and see how people use terms in your locale
- See what other topics people in your area are searching

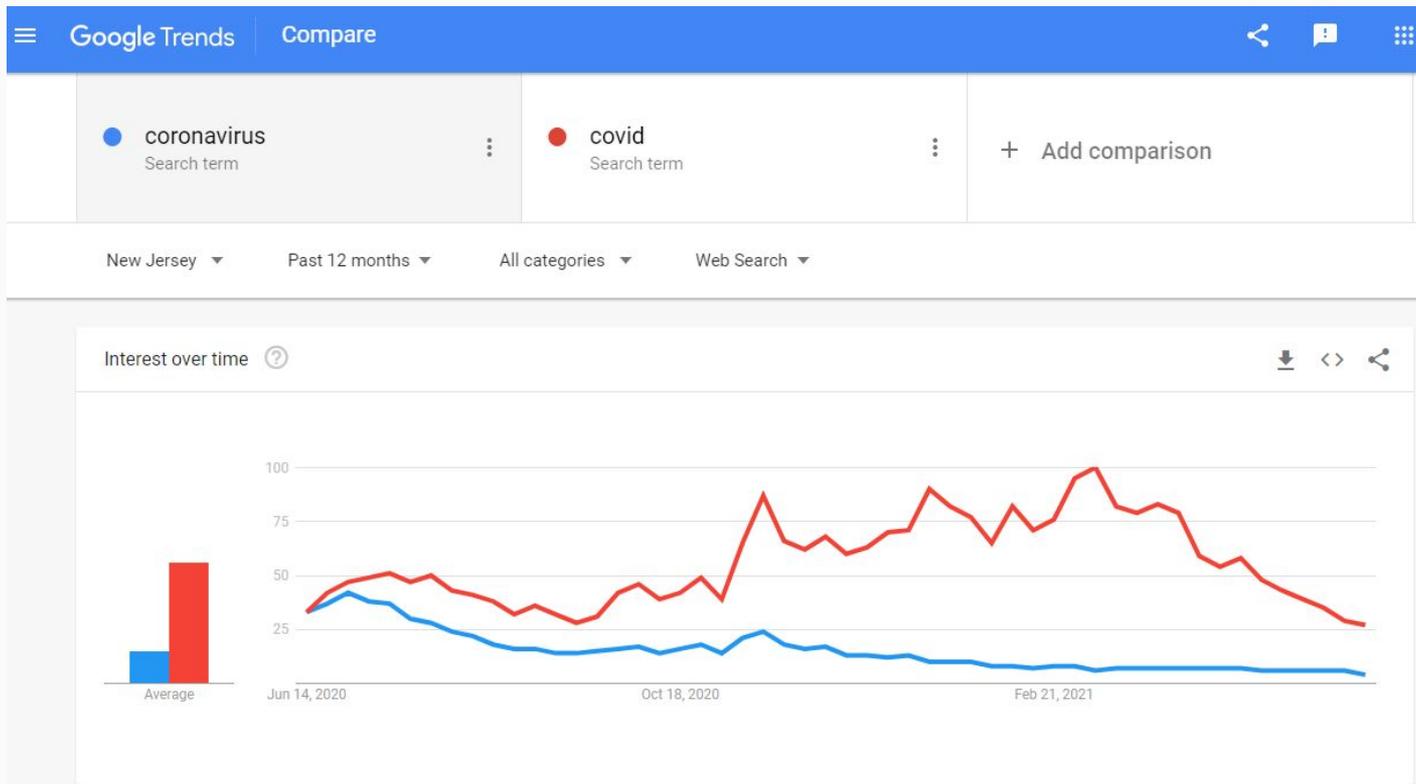
Know the right keyword at the right time. They evolve.

- “coronavirus” vs “covid”

See how search terms shift over time



See how search terms shift over time



Find related keywords / story ideas

nj coronavirus curfew

Interest by metro ?

Metro ▼



Related queries ?

Rising ▼



- | | | |
|---|--------------------------------|------|
| 1 | nj lockdown coronavirus | +90% |
| 2 | italy coronavirus | +70% |
| 3 | is there a curfew in nj | +50% |

Find related keywords / story ideas

● **nj curfew**
Search term



● **nj lockdown**
Search term



+ Add comparison

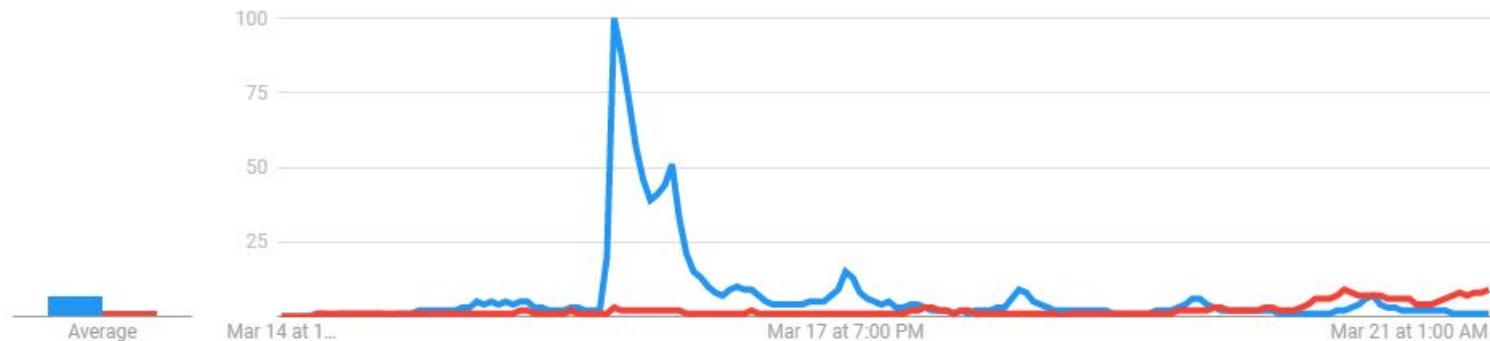
New Jersey ▾

Past 7 days ▾

All categories ▾

Web Search ▾

Interest over time



Find the right keyword at the right time

● nj curfew
Search term

● nj lockdown
Search term

+ Add comparison

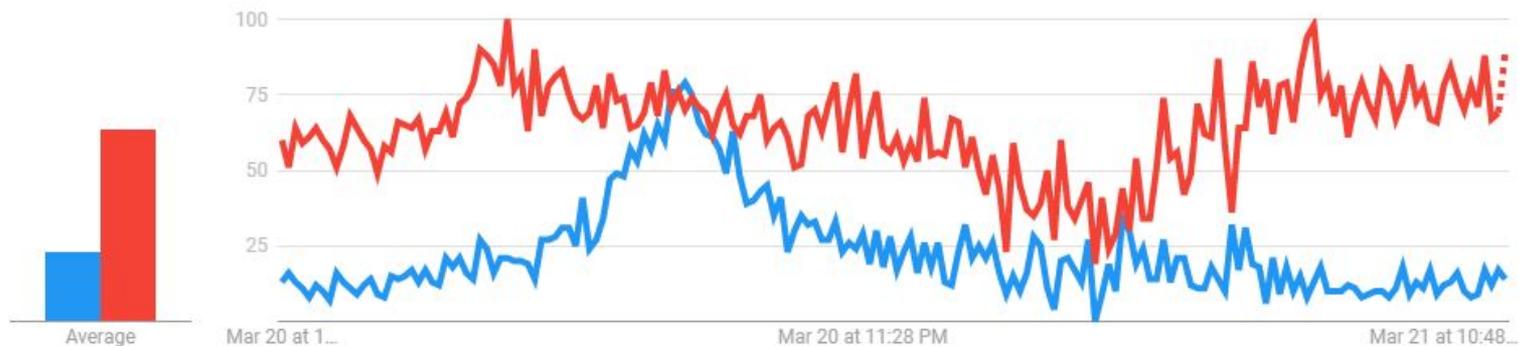
New Jersey ▾

Past day ▾

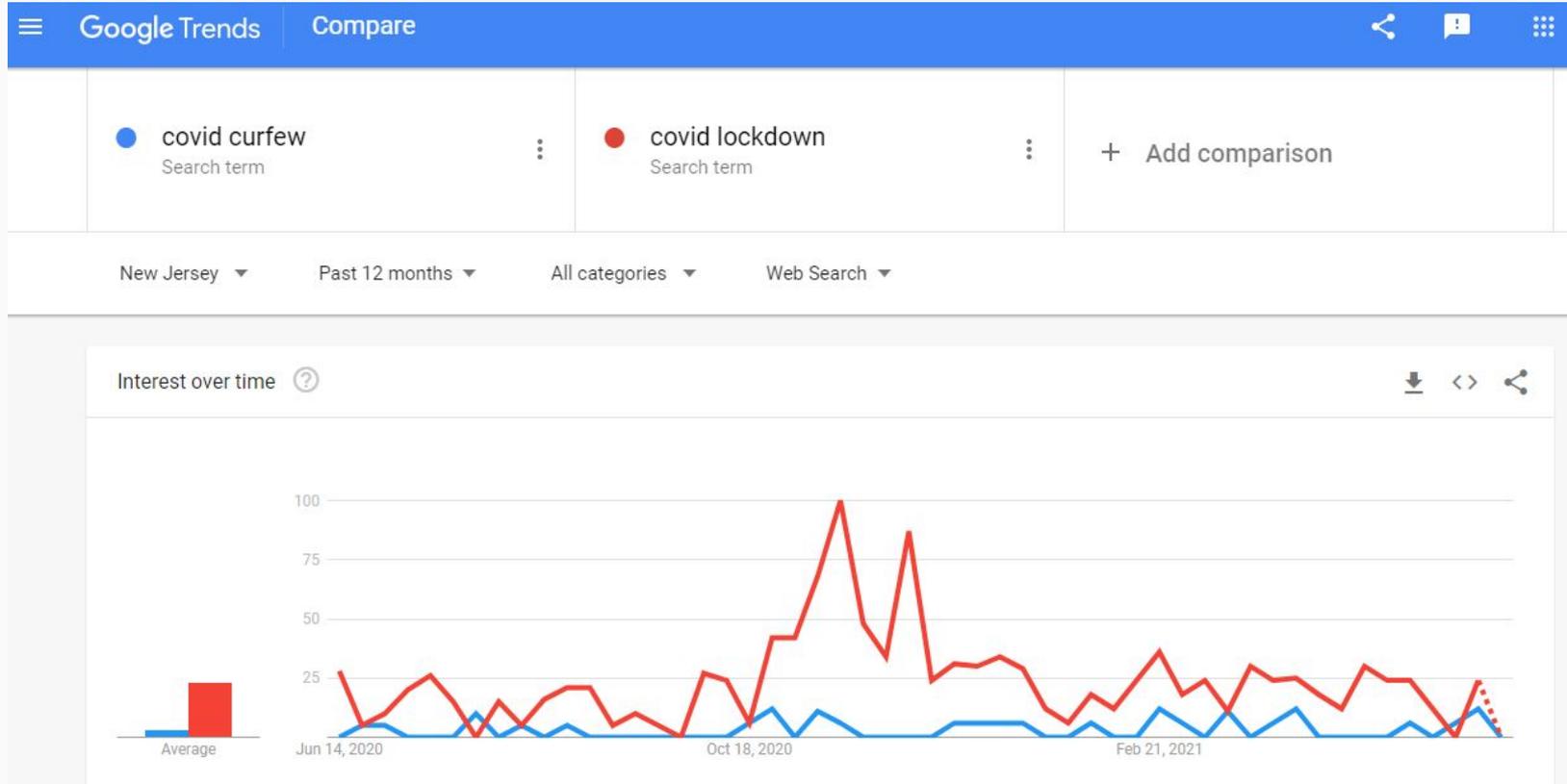
All categories ▾

Web Search ▾

Interest over time ?

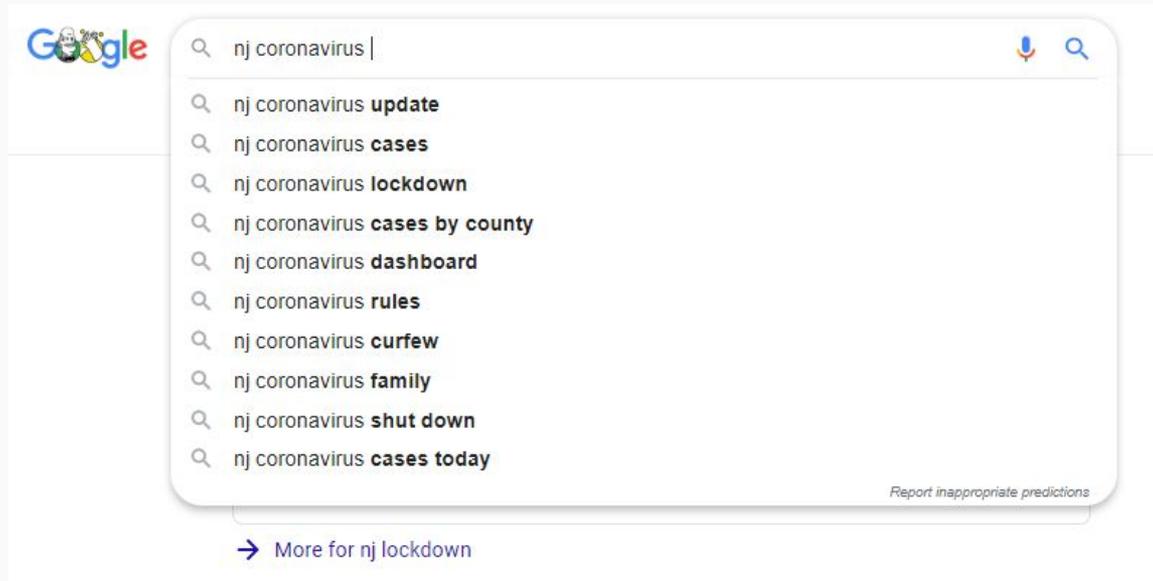


Find the right keyword at the right time



Finding keywords with auto-fill

When you begin typing in the Google search box, it will suggest terms to complete your search. These are the top 10 most searched for phrases -- and can be a great way to find new keywords and story ideas.



People also ask



This section presents common questions around specific search terms. Many of the pages it features are “best guesses.”

Stories that answer these questions, and use similar phrasing in headlines and subheadings can rank high for in-demand search terms.

Related searches

Searches related to rutgers university ranking

rutgers university ranking **qs**

rutgers **university--newark** ranking

rutgers university **world** ranking **2019**

rutgers university ranking **forbes**

rutgers university **acceptance rate**

rutgers university **tuition**

rutgers **university--new brunswick**

rutgers university **address**

More keyword ideas!

Best practices - Building your reputation

Links! Links! Links!

- Internal links
 - Try to include at least 3 links to other stories on your site within the first third of your article.
 - Choose relevant anchor text - this is the text you actually link. Text should be descriptive (ie. the “Maplewood police departments internal audit” rather than “the report”)
- External links
 - Ask for them
 - Social media counts (particularly Twitter)

Best practices review

- Brainstorm keywords
- Compare them to maximize reach
- Use them in headlines, ledes, image data and sub-heds
- Cross link
- Publicize

Developing your SEO strategy

How to approach SEO beyond the day-to-day

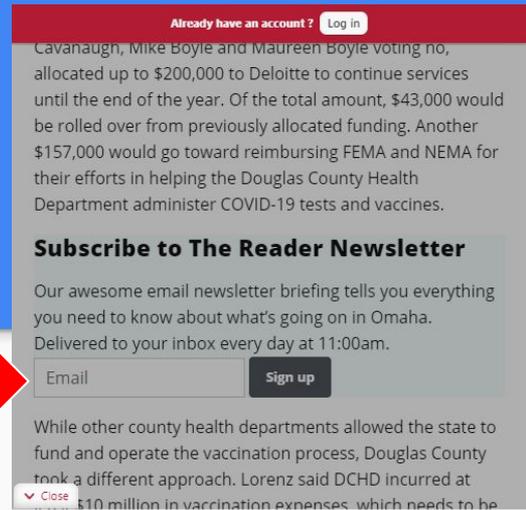


Audience development

Focus on **audience development**, not traffic

- Audience development is about reaching the right people, and building an ongoing relationship. Email is a great tool for this.

Inline signup



Already have an account? [Log in](#)

Cavanaugh, Mike Boyle and Maureen Boyle voting no, allocated up to \$200,000 to Deloitte to continue services until the end of the year. Of the total amount, \$43,000 would be rolled over from previously allocated funding. Another \$157,000 would go toward reimbursing FEMA and NEMA for their efforts in helping the Douglas County Health Department administer COVID-19 tests and vaccines.

Subscribe to The Reader Newsletter

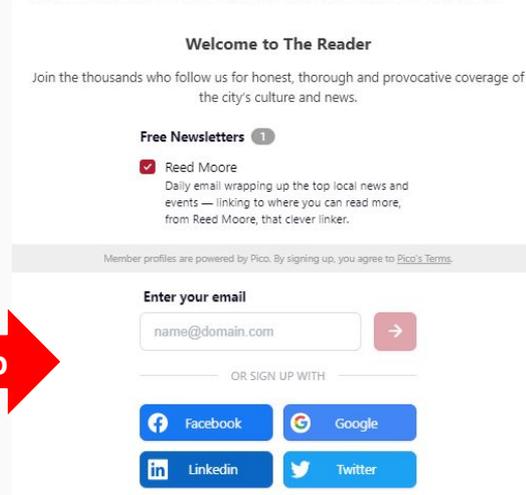
Our awesome email newsletter briefing tells you everything you need to know about what's going on in Omaha. Delivered to your inbox every day at 11:00am.

Email

While other county health departments allowed the state to fund and operate the vaccination process, Douglas County took a different approach. Lorenz said DCHD incurred at least \$10 million in vaccination expenses, which needs to be

[Close](#)

Pico popup



Welcome to The Reader

Join the thousands who follow us for honest, thorough and provocative coverage of the city's culture and news.

Free Newsletters 1

- Reed Moore
Daily email wrapping up the top local news and events — linking to where you can read more, from Reed Moore, that clever linker.

Member profiles are powered by Pico. By signing up, you agree to [Pico's Terms](#).

Enter your email

OR SIGN UP WITH

Finding the right audience

The most famous search optimized article of all time, from Huffington Post in 2011.

Generated lots of traffic.

But did it generate the right traffic?

THE HUFFINGTON POST
FEBRUARY 6, 2011

FRONT PAGE POLITICS BUSINESS MEDIA ENTERTAINMENT COMEDY SPORTS S
LIVING HEALTH DIVORCE ARTS BOOKS RELIGION IMPACT EDUCATION COL

←

What Time Does The Superbowl Start?

First Posted: 02/ 5/11 08:49 PM | Updated: 02/ 5/11 08:49 PM

Inspiring Funny Typical Scary Outrageous Amazing Infuriating Extreme

Read More: [Predict The News](#), [Prediction](#), [Super Bowl 2011](#), [Super Bowl 2011 Time](#), [Super Bowl Time](#), [Superbowl 2011 Time](#), [Superbowl Time](#), [What Time Does The Superbowl Start](#), [What Time Is The Super Bowl 2011](#), [Sports News](#)

SHARE THIS STORY

Are you wondering, "what time does the Superbowl start?"

It's a common search query, as is "what time is the super bowl 2011," "superbowl time" and "superbowl kickoff time 2011," according to Google Trends [the evening before the Super Bowl](#).

It's easily answered too. [Super Bowl 2011](#) will take place on Sunday, Feb. 6, 2011, at 6:30 p.m. Eastern Time and 3:30 p.m. Pacific Time.

Finding the right audience

Users turn to Google to get their questions answered.

Not everyone is a likely news reader. What common characteristics define your audience? Parents or single? Homeowners or renters? Gardeners or nightclub patrons?

Beyond updates to breaking news, what might a likely news reader turn to Google for?

Finding the right audience

- Basic information about local events (What's your Super Bowl?)
- Government/civic info
- "Help, I just moved here" guides
- Local resources
- Reviews and business information*
- Road closures, transportation, weather*

Make sure these things are highly optimized, including relevant inter-linking and highly visible callouts to sign up for the newsletter. (Don't just rely on the built-in form).

Make time for it

1. Set aside one-hour every 6 months for brainstorming SEO content. During this time, draft ~26 ideas
2. Set aside one-hour a month for optimizing existing content
3. Aim to produce one a week

PUT THE HOURLY SESSIONS ON YOUR CALENDAR
AS A RECURRING EVENT!

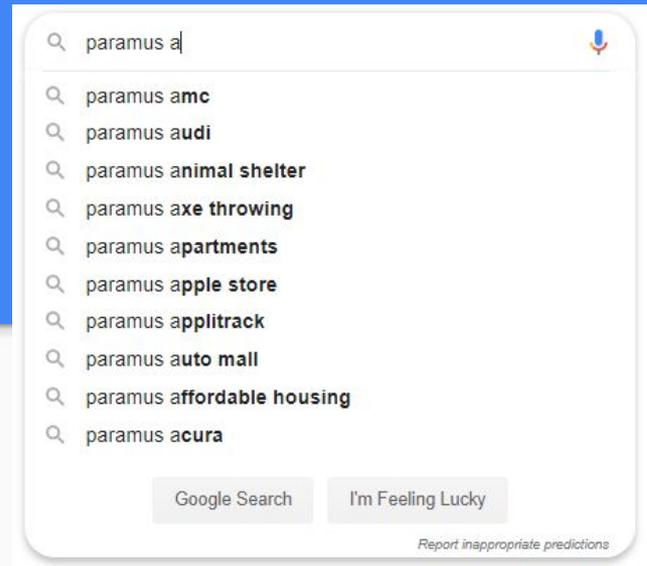
Brainstorming tips

Auto-fill will give you a lot of ideas.

Try your town followed by each letter of the alphabet.

Think creatively about **useful** content that answers questions.

Look at existing results and branch off of them.



Brainstorming tips - Google Trends

Related topics 

Rising    

1	Stew Leonard's - Supermarket company	+750%
2	Toys"R"Us - Topic	+250%
3	Toys"R"Us - Clothing retail company	+200%
4	CEC Entertainment Inc. - Company	+130%
5	Best Buy - Electronics store in Paramus, New J...	+110%

< Showing 1-5 of 14 topics >

Related queries 

Rising    

1	stew leonard	Breakout
2	ikea restaurant paramus	Breakout
3	big lots paramus	Breakout
4	paramus coronavirus	Breakout
5	stew leonard paramus nj	Breakout

< Showing 1-5 of 25 queries >

Brainstorming tips - Analytics

Look at what articles are already bringing people from search.

Acquisition > All Traffic > Channels > Organic Search

Change primary dimension to “Landing Page”

What might they be searching for?
Would they be interested in following local news? Are there opportunities to do more?

The screenshot shows the Google Analytics interface. On the left, the navigation menu is visible with 'All Traffic' and 'Channels' highlighted. The main area shows the 'Explorer' section with a line chart for 'Users' from March 15 to 17. Below the chart, the primary dimension is set to 'Landing Page'. A table below shows acquisition data for various landing pages, with some rows redacted.

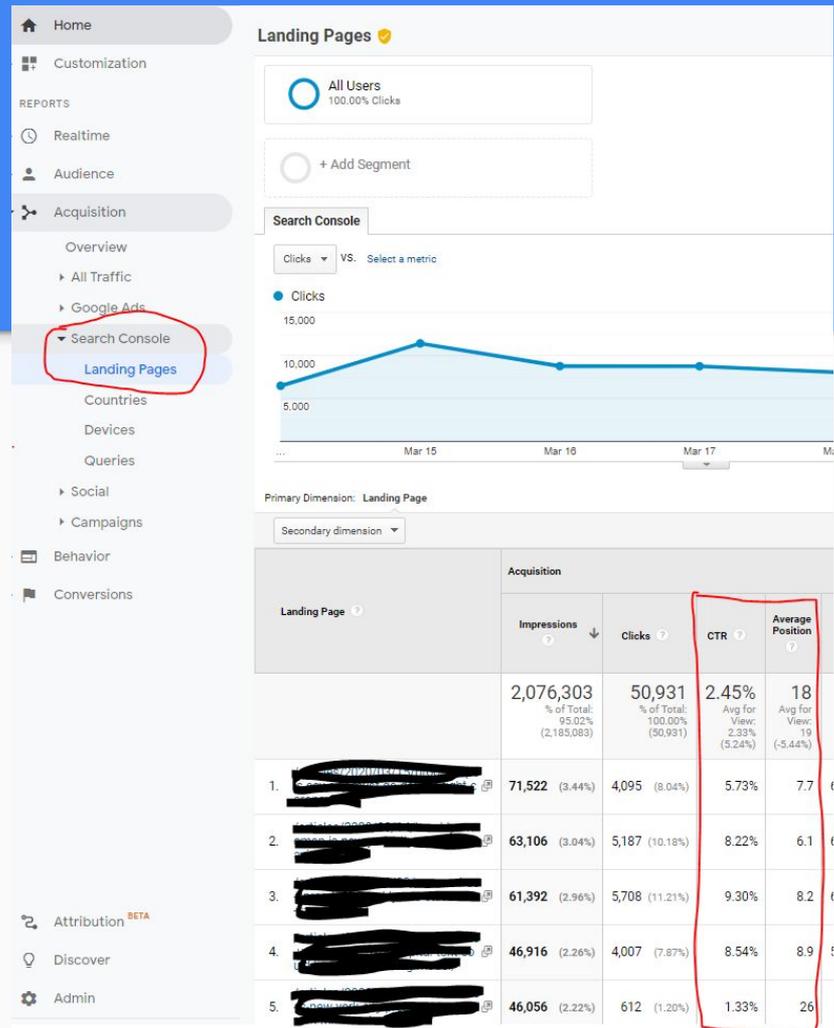
		Acquisition		
Landing Page		Users	New Users	Sessions
		82,268 % of Total: 49.14% (167,429)	74,495 % of Total: 52.50% (141,897)	92,554 % of Total: 48.45% (191,043)
1.	[REDACTED]	15,526 (17.98%)	15,282 (20.51%)	16,574 (17.91%)
2.	[REDACTED]	6,613 (7.66%)	5,721 (7.68%)	7,177 (7.75%)
3.	[REDACTED]	6,209 (7.19%)	4,019 (5.39%)	6,594 (7.12%)

Optimizing - Analytics

Google Search Console shows you opportunities to improve existing content. Look at the pages that are attracting search traffic, and see how they're ranking.

Low positions and CTRs suggest there's an opportunity for improvement. Ideal positions are 1-3.

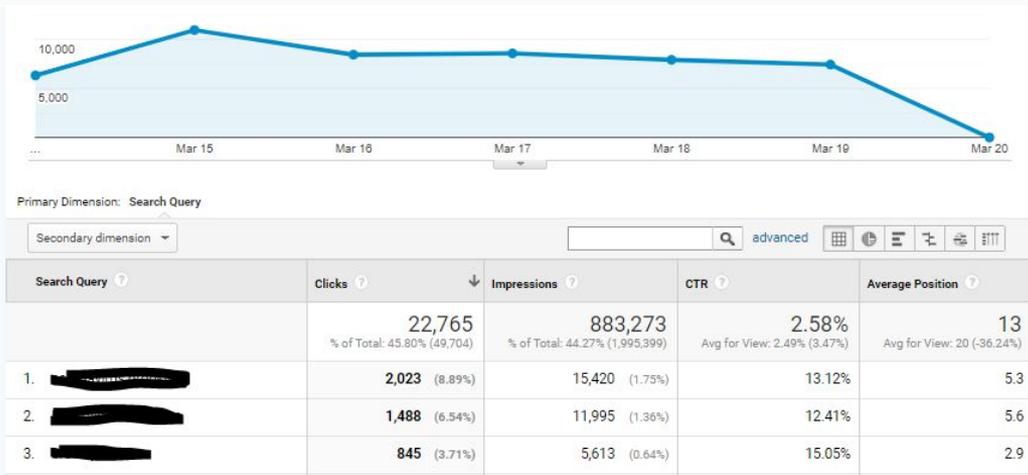
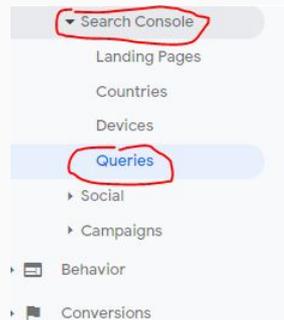
Edit the article's headline and first graph, and more links to the article from related posts.



Optimizing - Analytics

The Queries tab shows you what search terms users are entering that end up with your page in results (impressions).

Again, low positions and CTRs suggest there's an opportunity for improvement. Ideal positions are 1-3.



If there are a fair number of impressions and a decent position, but the click through rate looks low, try doing the search for yourself and see what else surfaces. It may be that you're ranking well but your headlines looks less relevant to a user's intent. Consider rewriting it.

Also brainstorm ideas off of these queries, and make sure to cross link all the relevant pages to increase your relevance!

Bonus: [Prioritizing your SEO content ideas.](#)

Review

- Think about your keywords (the foundation of SEO)
- Use them in headlines, ledes, image data and sub-heds (keyword best practices)
- Cross link & publicize (relationship improving best practices)
- Dedicate time to regularly brainstorm & execute SEO content (building a strategy)
- Dedicate time to regularly optimizing SEO content (building a strategy)

Good luck!

More resources:

- [5 SEO Best Practices for News Publishers](#)
- [Google's SEO Starter Guide](#)
- [Google Search vs Google News](#)
- [Google Search Console Guide](#)
- [SiteLiner tool](#) (Broken links, duplicative content, etc)

BlueLena can help you with SEO strategy!

This falls under strategic coaching we provide as part of our support hours.

Contact me for more information:

Ned@bluelena.io