



# **SIMPLE SEO KEYWORD RESEARCH**

**A COMPLETE GUIDE**

**by Morgan McBride  
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## **About the author**

I am Morgan McBride and I have been blogging at CharlestonCrafted.com since 2012.

I worked in accounting and data analytics and am now a full-time blogger and content creator. In all of my roles, I most enjoyed teaching, mentoring, and helping others and I am so excited to teach you SEO!

I developed a passion for SEO after migrating Charleston Crafted to MediaVine and becoming obsessed with maximizing and optimizing traffic.

All of the techniques that you will read here have been combined from hundreds of hours of podcasts, videos, courses, and conferences.

I specifically made this course under one hour so it is doable. I have personally purchased classes that are dozens of hours long and felt overwhelmed and intimidated.

The goal of this class is to show you how to strategically grow your business by using keyword research to plan and write content that people actually want to read.

## **How to use this class**

If you are here, you probably already know how powerful SEO is. Google search traffic is a fantastic way to grow your reach. That means more ad money, more page views, new readers, and potentially more sponsors. So, SEO = \$\$\$.

However, SEO requires research. You might luck out and magically rank on something. But, to systematically rank on a lot of things (and therefore drive a lot of traffic), you need a system.

This is the system that I use for basic SEO keyword research. It's not fancy or highly sophisticated.

But it works.

I tripled my organic search traffic in six months and it continues to grow.

This is all a part of my strategic plan to be less dependent on social media, like Pinterest and Facebook, for my traffic. In my experience, SEO is a lot more stable and hands-off once you have it built. While things can change with Google, I don't need to worry about posting everyday like I do on social media. I am able to really strategically grow my site by making my posts rank well through SEO and letting other people come to me.

I hope that this class helps you to grow your site, too. A rising tide raises all boats and I love seeing the blogging community growing and succeeding!

## Basic Keyword Research

I am going to outline the tools that I use to do keyword research. Except for SEM Rush (which I see as a nice-to-have, not a need-to-have), they are all free. So, there is no excuse not to get started today!

### Where do I start?

I suggest that you go through this class with a topic in mind. I call this your “starter keyword.” In my world (DIY + home renovation), I would use a project that I want to work on. You can pick any topic that you are hoping to blog about, or maybe one that you have already blogged about.

### What do I do with my keywords once I find them?

I have included a worksheet at the back of this book. I suggest using it to track your findings as you do your keyword research. You can then use the keywords that you found for a few things:

- Subheadings within your main blog post
- FAQs at the end of your main blog post
- Spin off blog posts or, as I call them, branches of your “content trees”

## Content Trees

Content trees are blog posts that are all related and branch off of one main blog post.

The main blog post will be the meatiest post, targeting the highest volume keyword and have the most information.

Then, you will create spin off posts. These can simply answer a specific question. They don't have to be as meaty as your main post, though you want to be as thorough as possible about the specific topic.

You can publish this post as you normally would. However, if it is not quite right for your daily readers, you can use a plugin to exclude it.

**Ultimate Category Excluder** - This plugin allows you to exclude posts from your home page or RSS feed. This is crucial for me when I am creating content trees that my daily readers would frankly think is strange. I created a custom category that I exclude from my home page and RSS feed, but the posts are still crawled by Google (and searchable within your site).

All of the posts within your whole content tree should link to each other.

At the end of this workbook I have included a worksheet that will help you to track your keyword research and implement it into flushing out your main blog post and brainstorming content trees.

Let's get to work!

## Google Search Console

If you want to get a good grasp on your site's SEO, then it is essential that you set up [Google Search Console](#). This is Google's tool to help you monitor your search appearance.

### Monitor Performance

On the far right go to Performance → Search Results

Here you can track your rankings over time.

It is good to look at rankings for the last 3 months. I do however check my “last 7 days” every few days just to see if anything new and exciting is appearing in my top queries.

### Queries

This shows you the top search results that you are ranking for.

### Pages

This shows your rankings by page on your site.

You want to really go in deep with the filtering and sorting. You can export some of this data, but it's not great. I work as much as possible within Search Console itself.

### Identify similar posts

I like to use the Pages tab to search for pages containing the keywords I am already working with. Let's say I'm working on a post about plywood countertops. In this example, I would search “plywood” and “countertops.” Any related posts that I have already written and are already ranking will be identified.

Note these posts. I highly suggest linking to them from your new post (hyperlink the keywords for the other posts in each of your posts; never link on just “click here” or “see this blog post”).

You will also want to go in after your new post publishes and edit the original posts you found with Search Console to link back to your new posts. This tells Google that they are related and connects the posts. This adds credibility to your site and Google begins to think that you are an expert on this topic because you have written multiple articles about it.

## Keywords Everywhere

Keywords Everywhere is a free plugin for Chrome or Firefox.

[You can download Keywords Everywhere here.](#)

Keywords Everywhere displays Google search volumes many places you are already searching. It is a great way to get a snapshot of how many people are looking for certain keywords.

### To set up Keywords Everywhere:

- You will need an API key, which they will email you instantly
- Open the settings (icon next to your search bar -> Settings)
  - I set country to United States
  - I select volume only and deselect CPC and Competition - they make it too busy and are not metrics I focus on here, but that is up to you.
  - I set to highlight volume > 1,000

### To use Keywords Everywhere:

Once you are set up, all you need to do is search something and the plugin will display. In Google, it shows volumes on suggested searches (that pop up as you type) as well as in search results.

To the right of your results, you will see two sections:

1. **Related Keywords** - these will be highly relevant to what you typed in. I use this section to identify the highest possible traffic phrasing of what I am looking to write about.
2. **People Also Search For** - this section will show you related posts but they are usually more of a branch off of your original topic. This is great for coming up with ideas for subheadings or content trees.

### People Also Ask

When you are looking on Google, be sure to scroll down and check out the People Also Ask questions. You can expand these and Google will keep giving you similar questions.

These questions are basically Google spoon-feeding you FAQs for the bottom of your blog posts. By answering more questions in your post, you will be seen as more of an expert.

In my opinion, the #1 thing you can do to improve your keyword research is download Keywords Everywhere. It is free and very easy to use. Do it today!

## **Keyword Shitter**

[Keyword Shitter](#) is a super simple tool that is completely free.

Keyword Shitter does just what it says - it shits out keywords.

To use it, type your starter keyword in the box and hit SHIT KEYWORDS.

The tool will begin to list out tons of related keywords. I hit STOP after a few seconds. The longer it runs, the less relevant the keywords get.

I use this tool to help brainstorm keywords in 2 circumstances:

1. I have a vague topic but don't know what to really write about
2. I am looking for subheadings or FAQs for a big blog post or "branch" ideas for my content trees

It's not very sophisticated, but Keyword Shitter is a great way to get your brain going when diving into a new keyword. Plus, it's totally free so you have nothing to lose by trying it out.

## **SEM Rush**

SEM Rush is a paid tool and it is honestly a bit expensive. Do you need it? No. Will it help you take your site to the next level? Yes.

I am not officially endorsing this but you can have up to 5 sites in a SEM Rush account, so who's to stop you and some friends splitting an account :)

SEM Rush has a ton of capabilities but today I am focusing on SEO Research.

### **Keyword Magic Tool**

Enter your starter keyword into the Keyword Magic Tool for SEM Rush to give you a ton of information.

**Broad Match** - This will give you keywords that match your starter keyword phrase. I sort by volume and filter for a Keyword Difficulty under 80%. If it matches my post's intent, I use whatever has the highest search volume as my SEO post title.

**Related** - these are keywords that might not exactly match your starter keyword, but they are related. They are initially sorted by Related %. This is a fantastic way to identify potential subheadings or FAQs.

### **Other SEM Rush tools I love:**

**Site Audit** - definitely if you are paying for SEM Rush, do a site audit once a month. It will draw your attention to broken links or anything that might be causing warnings in Google. Then you can fix them and have Google re-crawl the page to rank better.

**Domain Overview** - you can use this tool to spy on your competition. Enter their URL and see what they are ranking for. I like to filter to search volumes > 1,000 and Keyword Difficulty <80% to come up with blog topic ideas. If a similar site can rank for it, you can probably rank for it, too.

**Position Tracking** - track where you stand in Google. I like this better than Search Console because you can see Positive Impact and Negative Impact - which are keywords that have recently moved up or down the rankings!

# Keyword Planning Worksheet

**Starter keyword:**

**Keywords Everywhere:** *other keywords that interest me*

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**Keywords Everywhere:** *people also ask*

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**Keyword Shitter:** *potential sub-topics*

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**Google Search Console:** *currently ranking similar content*

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**SEM Rush:**

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**Now use that research to plan your post!**

**Blog post title:**

**Sub headings:** *I use H3 headings*

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**Frequently Asked Questions:** *put at end of post as H4 headings with text underneath*

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**Internal Links:** *include throughout post, linking on keywords*

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**Potential Spin Off Posts:** *long tail keywords that could stand alone*

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