

## Section Five: Addendum

### What is Search Engine Optimization (SEO)?

SEO is the method used to boost the ranking or frequency of a website in results returned by a search engine in an effort to maximize user traffic to the site.

#### So what does that mean exactly?

The Internet is the primary method of locating information for the vast majority of people. If they need answers, then they go straight to a search engine such as Google or Bing. With so many websites currently on the planet, it is ill-advised to take on the “if you build it, they will come” mentality when creating or revamping your website. In order to “boost” your site, it needs to accommodate those search engines by providing them information on who, what and where you are.

#### How do search engines work?

For the purposes of this guide, we’ll keep it simple and leave the highly technical aspects out. Search engines basically have four roles:

- Crawling
- Building an index
- Calculating relevancy and rankings
- Serving results based upon those calculations

Through automated robots called “crawlers” or “spiders,” search engines can reach the billions of web pages that exist. Once robots find these pages, they then parse the code and store what they need to be recalled when a search query is conducted.

#### How do I make my content SEO-friendly?

There are many things to consider, most of which will happen behind the scenes in the CMS and the templates that are already prepared for you. Your top priority is to make sure your content includes the keywords or phrases your audience is searching for.

To ensure that your site is SEO-friendly, follow these steps:

- First, list the most important words and / or phrases currently featured on each page of your website. The keywords will likely be different for each page.
- Next, put yourself in the mindset of your audience. What would they be searching for to find the content that you are providing? List those words and/or phrases.
- Next, compare the two lists. Do they align? If not, you will need to modify your content so that it includes more of the keywords your audience is searching for.

## Are there other ways to make my website SEO-friendly?

Yes. You can use the CMS to enter title tags and meta descriptions for each page you create, making it easier for search engines—and your audience—to find your content.

## What are page titles?

A page title, also known as a title tag, is the word or phrase that appears in the tab in an Internet browser, at the top of an Internet browser window, and on an Internet search result page.

You can use the USF CMS to enter a page title for each web page you create. Here are a few tips for creating meaningful page titles:

1. Page titles should be concise. Avoid long titles, which are likely to get truncated when they show up in the search results. Limit your page titles to no more than 70 characters.
2. Brand your titles, but concisely. Consider including just your site name at the beginning of each page title, separated from the rest of the title with a delimiter such as a hyphen (-), colon (:), or pipe (|). Try to use “University of South Florida” or “USF” in your titles when possible.
3. Page titles should be distinct and descriptive. Avoid vague descriptors, such as “Home” for your homepage. Instead, select a distinct, descriptive title for each page on your site without duplication.

### Examples of homepage page titles:

- Career Services | University of South Florida
- Partner With USF | University of South Florida
- University Communications and Marketing | University of South Florida
- Welcome to the University of South Florida | Tampa, FL

Try to match your secondary pages to the content title that you have chosen.

### Examples of secondary page titles:

- Cost to Attend | University of South Florida
- Job Search | USF Career Services
- Social Media | University Communications and Marketing | USF
- Schools and Departments | USF College of Business

Do NOT have the same words or phrases appear multiple times.

**Example: College of Engineering | engineering | ENGINEERING**

## What are meta descriptions?

A meta description is the text that can appear below the page title in the search result page. Meta descriptions are a good way to provide a concise, human-readable summary of each page's content. It's important to create a meta description for every page on your website.

You can use the USF CMS to enter a meta description for each page. Here are a few tips for creating meaningful meta descriptions:

Meta descriptions should be distinct and descriptive. Create descriptions that accurately describe the specific content featured on that page. Do not duplicate meta descriptions across multiple pages.

Meta descriptions should be concise. Limit them to 160 characters and do not include quotation marks.

The meta description doesn't need to be in sentence format. You can also include structured data featured on the page.

### Example:



Welcome to the University of South Florida | Tampa, FL  
[www.usf.edu/](http://www.usf.edu/)  
The University of South Florida is a high-impact, global research university dedicated to student success serving Tampa, St. Petersburg and Sarasota-Manatee.

## How do I add all of this information?

You have the ability to add page titles, meta descriptions and keywords as you build each individual page within the USF CMS. To learn more, review the Technical Manual.