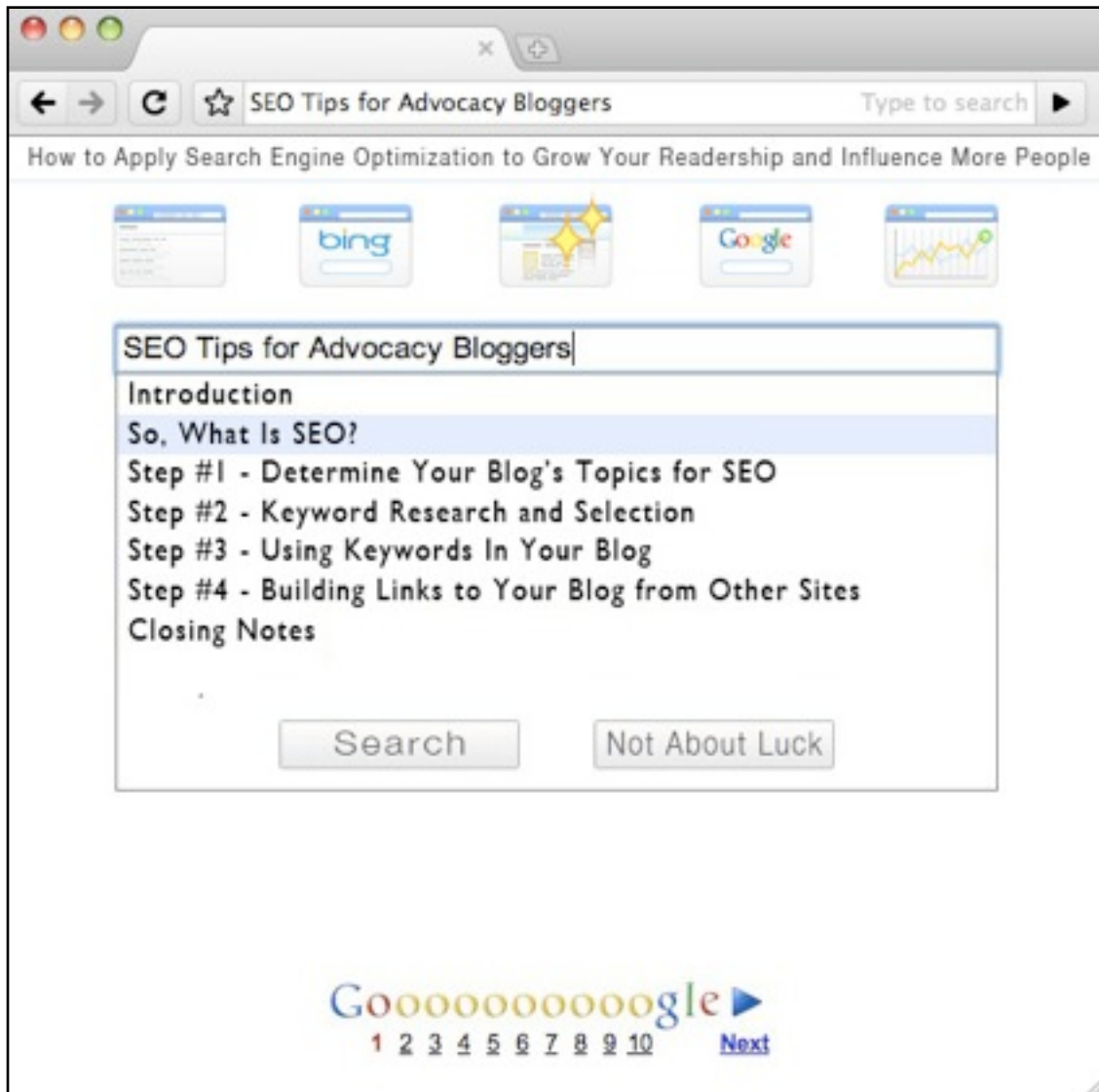


# SEO Tips for Advocacy Bloggers A guide by The Sudanese Thinker

## How to Apply Search Engine Optimization to Grow Your Readership and Influence More People



## ★ Introduction

Countless advocacy bloggers throughout the world blog their hearts out every day because they want to be heard and desire to create positive impact.

However, the reality is that for too many of us, it can be a frustrating experience.



After all, most individual blogs receive very little traffic. You write and publish, but hardly anyone reads what you have to say.

Hardly anyone comments.

The good news is, the situation doesn't need to be this discouraging for bloggers who go through it.

This is where the guide you're reading comes in. Its purpose is to explain what search engine optimization is, its importance and how advocacy bloggers can use it to:

1. Increase their traffic and readership
2. Influence the opinions of searchers

So, if you're an advocacy blogger or wish to be one, buckle your seat belt and get ready, because you're about to learn some simplified SEO tricks.

Cool?

Alright then, let's get started. :)



## So, What is SEO?



SEO stands for search engine optimization, which encompasses tips and best practices that can boost the ranking of your blog in search engines like Google and Yahoo.



The goal is simple: to get your blog to appear high on the front page of search engines for relevant keywords searchers are looking for.

For example, if you have a blog talking about online censorship, then ideally, you want it to rank high on search engines for keywords related to that topic.

The benefits of doing this are obvious. Firstly, you get to grow your blog's readership thanks to people who will click on your blog's link on search engine results.

Also, as long as your rankings remain high, you will continue getting targeted visitors for months, if not years to come. Secondly, with more eyeballs, your advocacy will create bigger impact.

Applying simplified SEO is easy, but it takes some patience and consistency before you start seeing significant results.

Now, let's begin discussing the first step.



## Step #1 - Determine Your Blog's Topics for SEO



When it comes to SEO, it's important to set realistic goals. You simply cannot expect your blog to rank high for a zillion big keywords.

You need to be strategic, and the first step in achieving this is determining what specific topics you want to achieve good rankings for.

Secondly, you'll need to be mindful of competition out there that's already dominating the search engines for the keywords you want to go after. Popular keywords like "Africa," "tennis," or "Wall Street" are hard to grab high rankings for. It's the major websites that are well-established already like Wikipedia which usually occupy the top spots.

Thirdly, you want to focus your efforts on a small and specific niche. For example, if you plan on writing about Africa, don't pick "Africa" as your keyword for use in a blog post's title. That's too broad. Instead, you might want to pick specific topics like "Kenya elections."

Fourthly, you obviously want to be sure that there is actually a decent audience out there looking for the information you want to offer. If you optimize a blog post for the keywords "weight loss for pink hairy monkeys" you will very probably achieve the #1 spot on search rankings in Google easily.

But don't celebrate just yet, because there are like 12 people who search for that topic every year. Well, not exactly 12, but you get the idea. It's a tiny non-existent audience.

For specialist bloggers focusing on one main issue like migrant rights, finding good keywords should be rather straight forward.

If you're a generalist blogger, you can't expect to achieve high rankings for all the topics you blog about. You'll have to focus your SEO efforts on a particular clearly defined category or two you frequently blog under.

So remember, pick a niche subject. So far so good?

Lovely, next step.

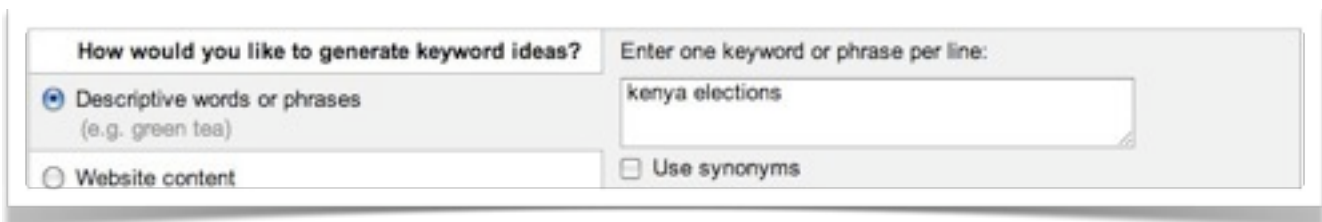
## ★ Step #2 - Keyword Research and Selection



By now, you're probably wondering "fine, I picked my topic, but how do I pick the right related keywords to use in my blog?"

Good question.

Say hello to Google's keyword research tool. It's free, fast, and easy to use. To find it, just go to Google and look for "[Google keyword tool](#)."



The screenshot shows the Google Keyword Planner interface. On the left, under "How would you like to generate keyword ideas?", there are two radio button options: "Descriptive words or phrases (e.g. green tea)" which is selected, and "Website content". On the right, there is a text input field labeled "Enter one keyword or phrase per line:" containing the text "kenya elections". Below the input field is a checkbox labeled "Use synonyms" which is currently unchecked.

What the tool allows you to do is see traffic estimates for the monthly search volume of a certain keyword or key phrase within Google.

The tool also generates a list of related keywords and displays how much volume they all receive within Google.

All of this data should help you get a better idea of what audiences who visit Google are looking for that is related to your topic.

Keywords	Global Monthly Search Volume
<b>Keywords related to term(s) entered - <a href="#">sort by relevance</a></b>	
kenya election	8,100
kenya elections	2,900
post election violence kenya	2,900
elections in kenya	720
kenya elections 2007	590
kenya elections violence	170
kenya elections 2008	91

From the screenshot above, we can see that the key phrase “kenya elections” receives an estimated 2,900 searches per month on Google.

That’s quite a decent audience, and when I did a search for the phrase in Google, guess what turned up on the front page. Yes, a blog post by Global Voices Online. Not bad.

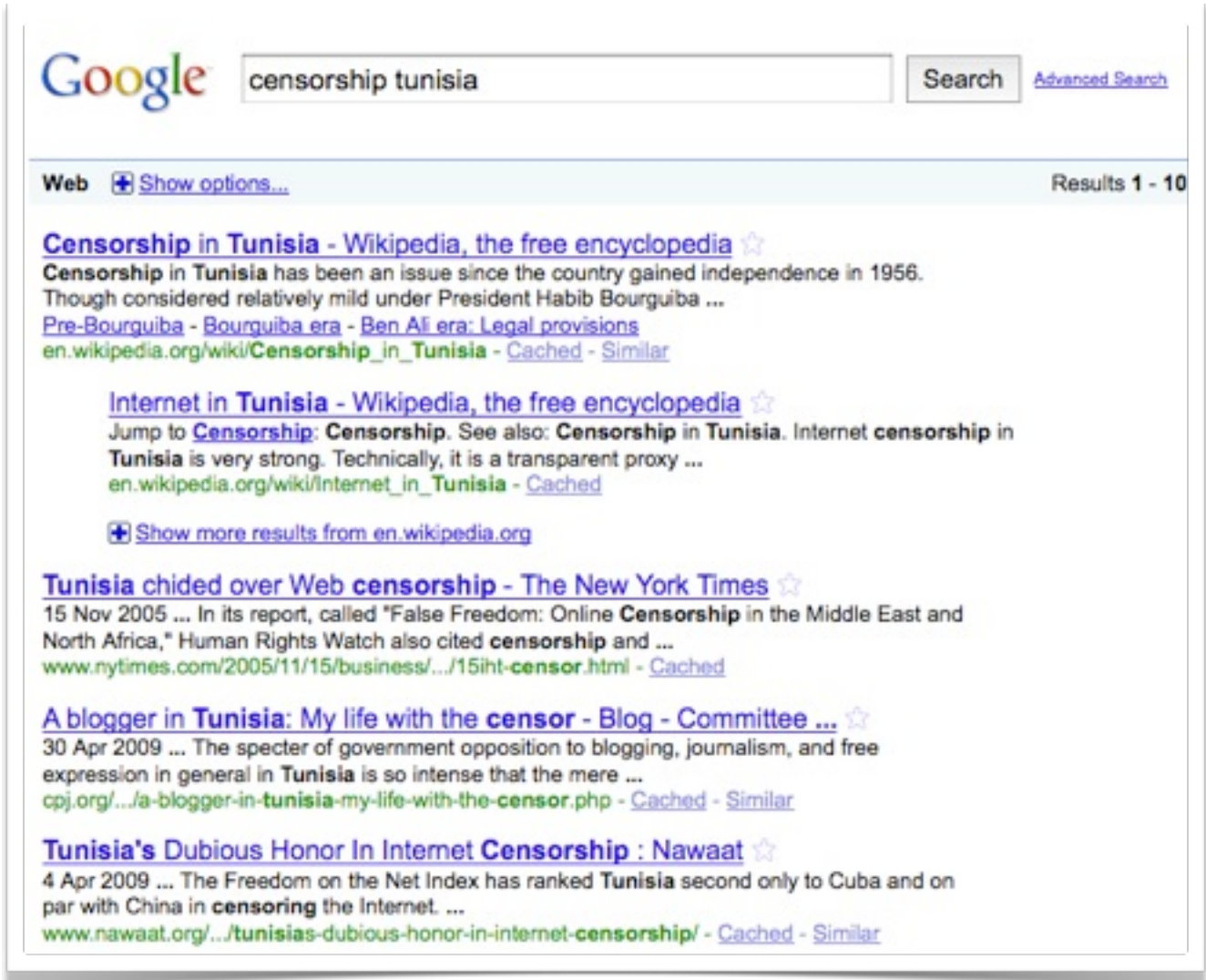
[Global Voices Online » Kenya Elections Aftermath 2008](#)  
**Kenyan election day** On Dec. 27, 2007 a surprise victory for former pres (PNU) in the **Kenyan presidential election** was followed by arson and ...  
[globalvoicesonline.org/.../kenya-elections-aftermath-2008/](#) - [Cached](#) - [S](#)

**Searches related to kenya elections**

[kenya elections 2008](#)    [kenya elections obama](#)    [africa elections](#)  
[kenya news](#)    [daily nation](#)    [raila odinga](#)

First page ranking  

Now, let us see more examples. For instance, when I Googled “censorship tunisia” these were the results on the first page:



The first two links are from Wikipedia, the third link is from the NY Times, the fourth is from the website of the Committee to Protect Journalists, and lastly the fourth is from Nawaat, a site run by Tunisian activists fighting for freedom in Tunisia.

Now, imagine if the entire first page was dominated by links promoted by the Tunisian government explaining its position.

How different would that be compared to an entire first page dominated by links promoted by Tunisian advocacy bloggers explaining their point of view?

The great opportunity SEO provides advocacy bloggers is this: when they dominate the first page of Google for a certain politicized key phrase that receives lots of searches, they can influence the opinions of searchers significantly.

Here's another example that's relevant. This is what I got when I Googled the key phrase "torture egypt."



The first result is from a website run by an Egyptian activist and advocacy blogger. The site specializes in exposing torture cases in Egypt, and has achieved great success in covering injustices.

There are many more examples out there of advocacy bloggers who are advancing their cause and doing quite well in the search engines.

However, as I said, before getting into the implementation phase, one of the first things you should focus on is keywords research and selection.



Before you pick your keywords though, it's sometimes useful to check the results on Google's first page to check the competition.

If you see links from Wikipedia and online news sites like the BBC or the NY Times occupying the top results, that's an indication that you can't expect easy rankings.

If you don't encounter many such links from major websites, your chances of achieving first page rankings are probably better.



## Step #3 - Using Keywords In Your Blog



Now that you've generated a list of some keywords with some decent monthly search volume, the next step is to use them in your blog.

Generally, you want to include them in:

1. Your blog post's title
2. Your blog post's sub-title
3. Your blog post's first paragraph

However, if you run a specialist blog, you may even include the keywords in:

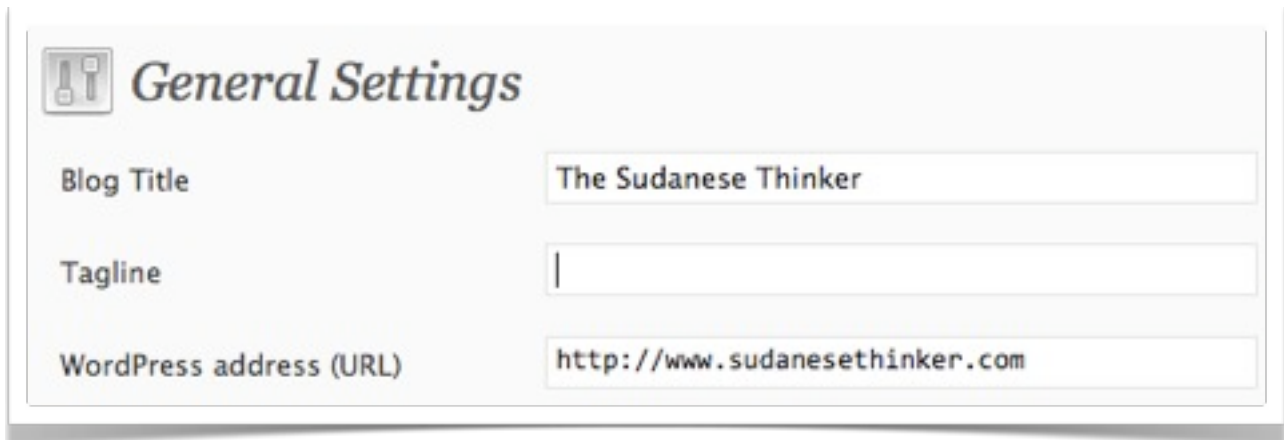
1. Your blog's title
2. Your blog's tagline
3. One of your blog's categories

Doing the above helps your blog rank higher.

This is because, when Google crawls the web looking for content to index, it examines the content on pages.

One of the many things it looks at is the title of a page or blog. So, do try to optimize those titles for better SEO performance.

To do this for a WordPress blog, simply go to Settings > General.



You may then enter a tagline that contains your selected key phrase.

On the other hand, here, we see Global Voices Online doing that for a single blog post. Obviously, it is very probably not intentionally done for SEO, but it's still good practice.





## Step #4 - Building Links to Your Blog from Other Sites



Having the right keywords in your blog is only half the battle. The second part is building links to your blog.

The number and quality of links your blog receives from other places will have a massive impact on how well you do.

One of the main reasons Global Voices Online tends to do well in search engines is simply because it receives a HUGE number of links from other sites every single month.

Link love is awesome. So, go out there, and get some.

There are a few methods to genuinely build links to your blog. For the sake of keeping things simple and easy however, we will only discuss three basic ones in this guide.



### **Method A: Submitting your blog posts to social media websites - without being spammy!**

There are many social media websites today that you can join and participate in. Some of the famous ones include Digg, StumbleUpon, Reddit, Twitter and Delicious.

Register at those sites, or at least some of them, and begin submitting content you like around the web - including yours.

You must never submit links from your blog alone all the time. This will get you rightly banned because it's spammy.

So, remember contribute in a genuine way. Every time you submit a page to those sites, they will link back to the submitted page.

When that page is yours, you'll receive a link. :)



### **Method B - Asking your readers to submit your blog posts to social media websites**

One very easy and quick trick that can help you gradually build many incoming links to your blog is to ask your readers to submit your content to social media sites using their accounts.

You can do this by writing a call-to-action at the end of your SEO optimized blog posts. For example, you can simply say, “If you liked this post, please submit it to Delicious or share it on Twitter. Thanks.”



### **Method C: Requesting links from fellow relevant bloggers - without looking desperate!**

Another simple way you can begin building links to your blog is by looking for other bloggers who write about similar issues, and requesting that they link to you.

Don't immediately ask for the link. Approach first and get to know them by commenting on their content, then ask. Many will happily help you.



## Closing Notes



If you've read this far, then congratulations. You now know some basic SEO tips that will help you boost your blog's rankings on search engines, and will help you grow your traffic.

Please remember though, this guide **should not** be taken as a comprehensive approach to SEO. It is written in a very simplified way so that even non-techies can find it easy to follow and benefit from.

I hope you've found it useful!



## Acknowledgments

I'd like to thank [Sami Ben Gharbia](#) for encouraging me to write this guide and share my knowledge with the world. I'd also like to thank the entire GVO team and everyone at Harvard's Berkman Center for their work and ongoing support in the battle for free speech online. It's been a pleasure knowing you all guys. May our friendships blossom, and may free speech become a reality one day for all people on this planet.



## About the Author

Drima has been a contributor to Global Voices Online since December 2006. In his professional life, he's worked as an internet marketing and online business consultant, with an initial focus on SEO, and later on managed 7-figure online properties. He blogs at [The Sudanese Thinker](#).

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