

5 steps to SEO success 2025

SEO is still relevant. Here's how to address your audience's needs — and meet the robots' requirements

Clever content. Made by humans

Highbrook.



An interesting opportunity? With the introduction of AI Overviews, it couldn't be easier to find a summary of the key points of a query. So how can carbon-based lifeforms compete? By putting people first. Address your audience's needs, offer human perspectives and ensure it's all accessible. Leave the retreads to the robots.

Nicola Derse, Editor and SEO consultant, Highbrook Media



AIO

AI OVERVIEWS

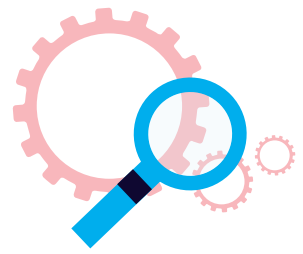
ALACRITOUSLY | OVERSCROLL

ALARM,
INSANITY,
OUTRAGE!

ANOTHER
INITIALISM ?
OH NO!

ACCURACY
INITIALLY
OVERSTATED ?

ACTUALLY, IT'S OK

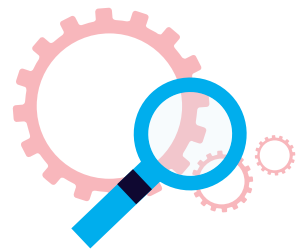


AI overviews needn't automatically induce overagonising

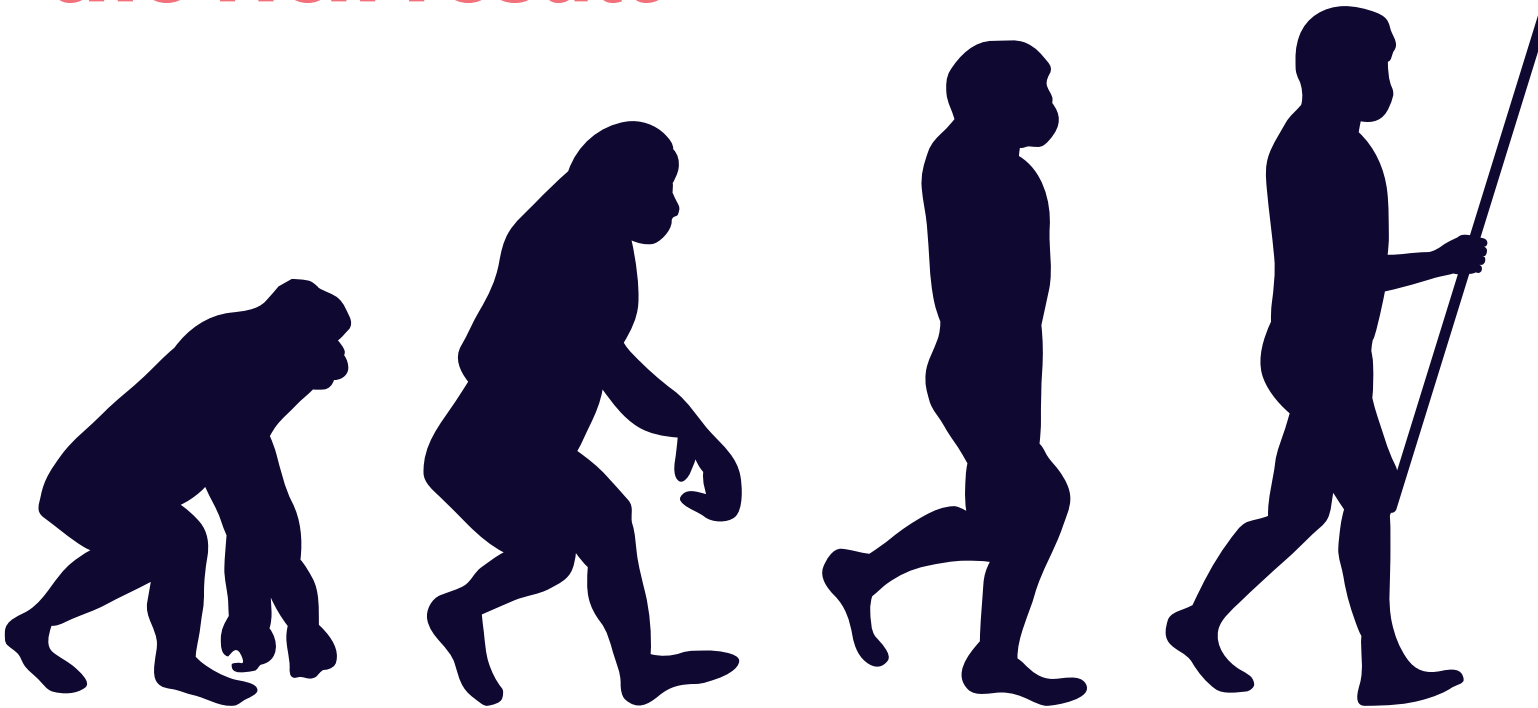


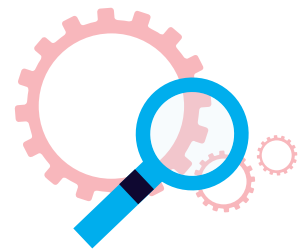
“Google’s systems automatically determine which links appear. **There is nothing special for creators to do to be considered other than to follow our regular guidance for appearing in search.**”¹

¹Google Search Central



In some ways, AI
Overviews are simply
the next **evolution** of
the rich result





A featured snippet can show one answer from a single source.

A screenshot of a Google search interface. The search bar contains the text "what is the smallest cat in the world?". Below the search bar, navigation tabs for "All", "Images", "Videos", "Forums", "Web", "News", "Maps", and "More" are visible, with "All" selected. The search results display a featured snippet for "rusty-spotted cat". The snippet text reads: "On average, the smallest cat species in the world is the rusty-spotted cat. They weigh only 1-2 kg (2-4 lbs). Found across much of the Indian subcontinent in a variety of habitats, rusty-spotted cats, like guiñas and black-footed cats, often prey on small rodents and birds." To the right of the text is a small image of a rusty-spotted cat kitten. Below the snippet, the source is identified as "Panthera" with a URL and a date of "11 Sept 2023". A link to the source is provided: "Not Your Domestic Kitten: The Top Four Smallest Wild Cats in ...".


Google

what is the smallest cat in the world?

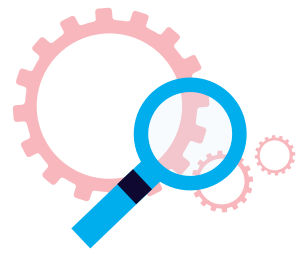
All Images Videos Forums Web News Maps : More Tools

rusty-spotted cat

On average, the smallest cat species in the world is the **rusty-spotted cat**. They weigh only 1-2 kg (2-4 lbs). Found across much of the Indian subcontinent in a variety of habitats, rusty-spotted cats, like guiñas and black-footed cats, often prey on small rodents and birds. 11 Sept 2023

 Panthera
<https://panthera.org> · blog-post · not-your-domestic-kit... ⋮

[Not Your Domestic Kitten: The Top Four Smallest Wild Cats in ...](#)



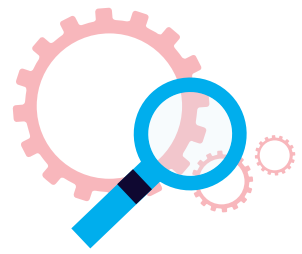
AI Overviews can summarise information from multiple sources.

Google search for "what is the smallest cat in the world". The AI Overview section provides a summary: "The smallest cat in the world can be a wild cat or a domestic cat breed, depending on how you look at it:". It lists three categories: **Rusty-spotted cat** (wild cat, 2-4 lbs, found in Asia), **Black-footed cat** (wild cat, 1-2 kg, found in southern Africa), and **Singapura** (domestic cat, 4-8 lbs, found in Singapore). A fourth category, **Tinker Toy**, is partially visible. To the right, a list of sources is shown, including "What's the world's smallest cat? Meet the tiny felines barely bigger than a ruler - Discover Wildlife World's...", "Not Your Domestic Kitten: The Top Four Smallest Wild Cats in the World", and "8 Small Cat Breeds That Stay Little - Four Paws". A "Show all" button is at the bottom of the source list.

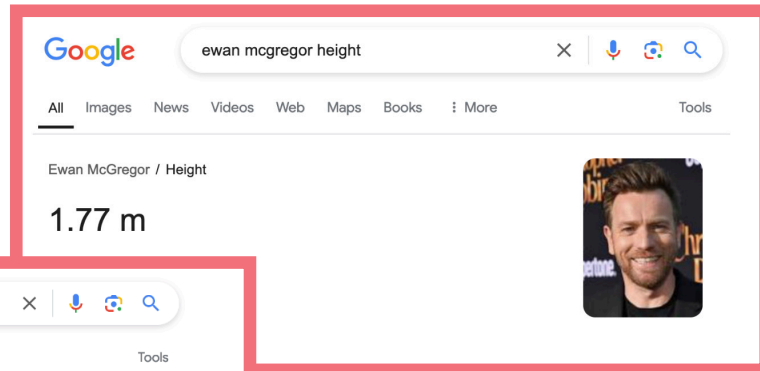


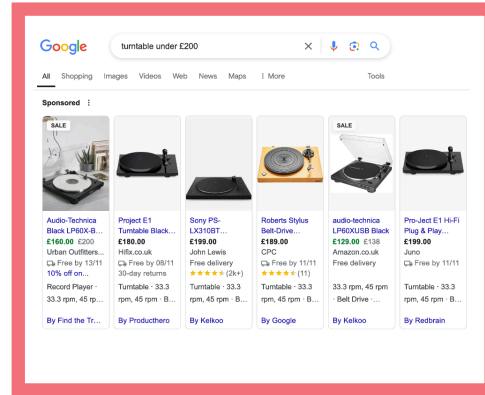
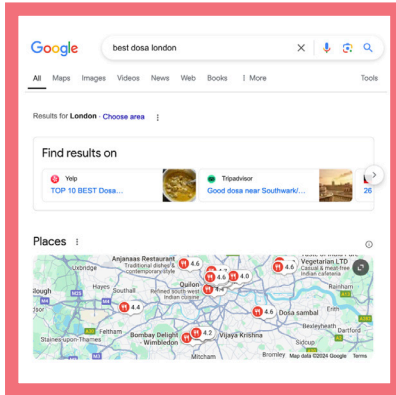
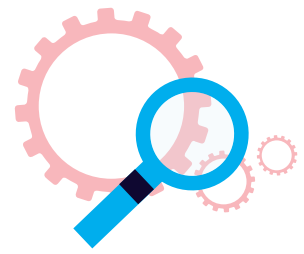
Generative search raises the same concerns answer boxes once did. You may appear above position one and have a link back to your site – but will anyone click through?



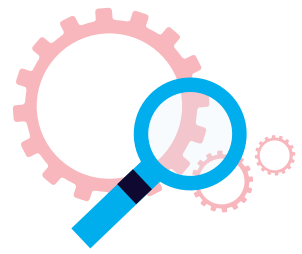


Simple queries, such as
celebrity heights or birthdays,
may have lost some click-
through traffic.





Yet searches that mark the start of a customer journey will still necessitate further research – and perspectives from real humans. It's this experience that's now essential to search quality ratings.



**Putting people first
is the key to search
success in the age of
AI Overviews.**

Actually it always was.

5 steps to
SEO
success



HERE'S HOW TO GET STARTED

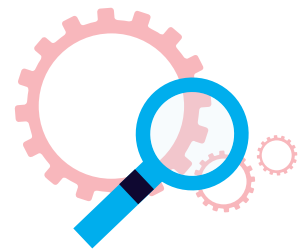


1. Define your unique offering

Forget copying the top 10. What sets you apart from your competitors? What are you singularly placed to discuss?

Your path to page one starts with well-written content that speaks to your audience and relates directly to your offerings.





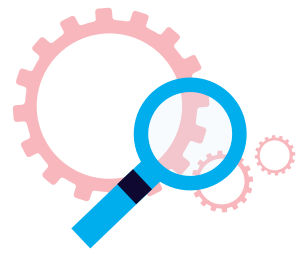
1. Define your unique offering cnt'd

Relevance, not repetition, is your key to claiming essential terms.

Use keyword research to:

- Understand the search landscape
- See how people search for your offering
- Identify content opportunities

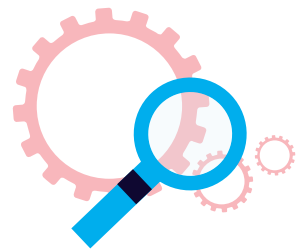




2. Consider your customers

Experience encompasses the knowledge you have to share and how visitors access it.

A clear site structure makes important content immediately apparent to visitors and facilitates a seamless journey.



2. Consider your customers cnt'd

Call out **primary categories** in the **top navigation bar** to signal their relevance to your offering.

Use **internal links** to category pages or related content to reinforce their importance and keep visitors clicking through the site.

Vary **page layouts** to maintain interest while scrolling.

MAIN MENU

ANIMATION

OUR PEOPLE

ABOUT US

WHAT WE DO

CASE STUDIES

WHAT WE THINK

ANTHOLOGY

AN ABC OF CONTENT

LEGAL INFORMATION

CONTACT

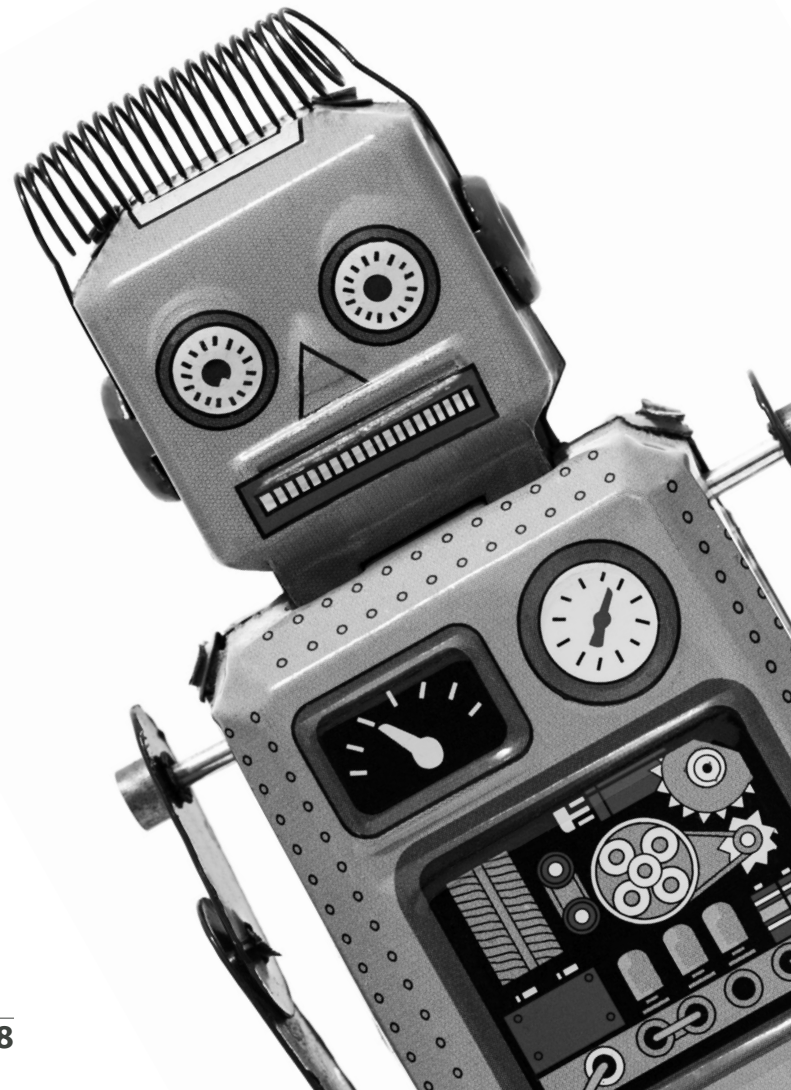


3. But don't forget the robots

Before your page can appear in search results, it needs to be indexed.

Search engines add pages to their indices by sending out bots called crawlers to follow links and collect data on pages.

Ensuring crawlers can access your site is an essential first step to ranking well for the right terms.



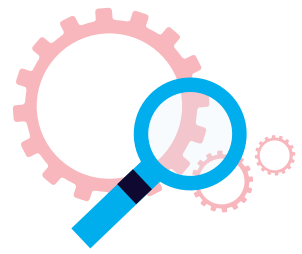


3. But don't forget the robots cnt'd

Crawlers can't click on buttons, fill in forms or read text within images so ensure important content is **visible at page load (or in the source)**.

Outline **each page's structure** with one **H1 heading** for the primary topic, **H2 headings** for subsections and **H3 headings** for any sub-subsections.

And **keep content succinct**.



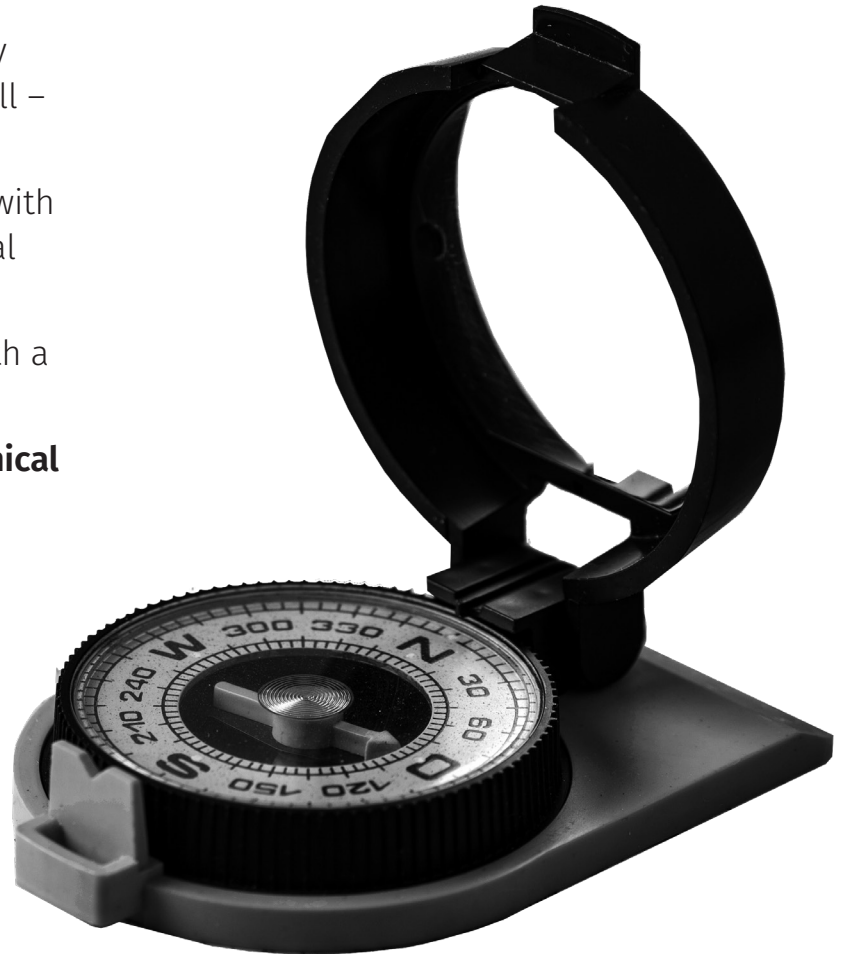
4. Use all of the resources available to you

Improve overall site health and help crawlers understand your site accurately – increasing your chances of ranking well – with the right tags.

Specify a page's language and location with **hreflang tags** to direct your international visitors to the right site.

Instruct crawlers not to index a page with a **noindex tag**.

Indicate which page to index with **canonical tags** to mitigate the risk of duplicate content.





4. Use all of the resources available to you cont'd



Highbrook Media
<https://highbrook.media>

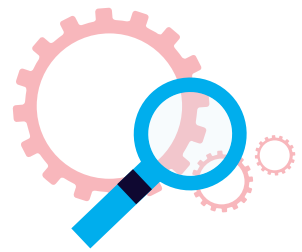
Highbrook Media – content marketing experts

London, UK financial services content agency. Top brands trust us for SEO, strategy, writing, editing, video, infographics and design.

Meta titles indicate the main topic of a page and play a role in ranking. **Meta descriptions** do not – but can influence click-through rates.

Improve your chances of appearing in featured snippets by using **schema markup** to signpost answers to questions, recipes and other types of content.

Finally, **backlinks** from reputable sources, such as trusted news outlets, will help build your own **domain authority** – and improve sitewide rankings.



5. Centre real experience

In 2018, Google established the initialism E-A-T to sum up the qualities content must demonstrate to perform well: **Expertise, Authoritativeness and Trust.**

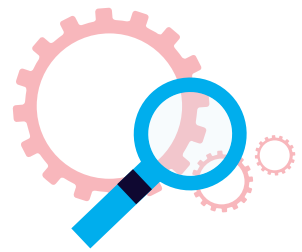
Google want to see that:

You're qualified to speak on the topics you cover
(Expertise)

Industry leaders are happy to contribute to your platform (Authoritativeness)

Through both your own work and relationships with important figures, you've built a reputation for trustworthiness (Trust)



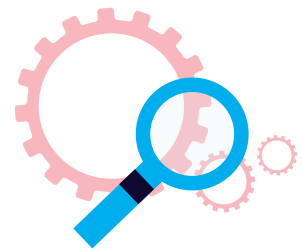


5. Centre real experience cont'd

And in late 2022, the Search Quality Rater Guidelines were updated with a new E: **Experience**.

With an increased emphasis on real human experience, sharing unique perspectives is now essential to search success.

Create the content that people will want to read (and the robots will parse easily) – and positive performance is likely to follow.



Highbrook's full SEO capabilities and services

Content SEO

- Competitor analysis
- Content gap analysis
- Site structure audit
- Keyword research and mapping
- Content planning and calendar
- Creation of new content and refreshing of existing content
- Meta titles and descriptions
- Title tags
- Ongoing performance monitoring and recommendations

Reporting

- Ranking performance tracking
- Traffic and keyword performance monitoring
- Dashboard creation and presentation
- Recommendations for further optimisations

Technical SEO

- Site crawling and indexation audit
- Sitemaps and robots.txt
- Hreflang implementation
- Canonical tagging
- Schema markup
- Internal linking
- Page load times
- Mobile-friendliness

Backlinks

- Backlink audit
- Reclamation campaign
- Ongoing outreach campaigns around relevant pieces

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