

# How to use keywords to help your search engine rankings

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If you're looking at keywords as a way of improving your search engine rankings, it helps to remember that the main issue is not about the keywords but about the content they refer to. Search engines are interested in your content; your keywords help them decide what it's about and if it's useful enough to give to searchers.

Your keywords need to reflect the main message conveyed in the content on a specific page. It doesn't help to list a long string of keywords that aren't used anywhere on that specific page.

So, if your page is about Merlot made in the Cape, your keywords would include Merlot, Cape, South Africa, red wine.

To be effective, you need to actually use your keywords a couple of times on that page. The search engines compare your keyword to how many times you use it in your actual copy (called keyword density). If you only use a word once but list it as a keyword, it's not going to do you much good as obviously the page has got very little to do with that specific word.

The thing is, your copy needs to read well for humans as well as search engines.

If you were talking to someone about a specific topic, you wouldn't keep repeating a big bunch of keywords. You'd focus on one or two main ideas - say Merlot and red wine - and mention them quite a few times. (These would be your main keywords.) And you might mention the Cape and the fact that other red wines, like Pinotage, are also grown there, once or twice as well. (These would be your "secondary" keywords.)

So when writing, that's what you need to do as well. Pick a "theme" for your page, pick 2 or maximum 3 main keywords for that page and write around those. To avoid sounding like a robot, you'll use other related words as well (secondary keywords) but your focus words will be, for example, Merlot and red wine.

The search engines are pretty smart - they're looking for relevant content to serve to searchers. And searchers are generally looking for pretty specific info.

So focus each page of content on a specific topic. If it's a topic that covers a lot of info - wine in general for example - split the topic into specific sections dealing with a specific aspect - Merlot, Shiraz etc for example.

That will allow you to focus your keywords more tightly per page and will result in you naturally using those specific keywords more often and more meaningfully on that page. So you make searchers happy and that makes search engines happy.

As for keywords and key phrases: again, what are searchers looking for? Both! So you can use "wine" and "red wine" as keywords. Just avoid using a single word - like wine - more than 3 times in total in one page's keyword/keyphrase list or else the search engines might see it as excessive and spammy and it can then count against you.

A general rule of thumb is to keep your keyword list around 8 keywords/phrases maximum - your 2 or 3 main ones and a few less important but still often used ones.

And a final tip  
specifically for Joomla users

The keywords you type in the keyword area provided for each content page are combined with the keywords you've set for the site as a whole (set in your Global Config). So if you've used "wine" and "South Africa" in your global settings you need to remember 2 things:

- You should be using each of those global keywords on each page, otherwise they're unnecessarily adding to your list for each page without having a reason for being there. (Tip: keep your keywords in your global config to an absolute minimum - possibly just the name of your company if it appears on all of your pages. Rather add specific keywords to specific pages.)

- You shouldn't add the keywords set in the global config to the keyword area on a specific page or they'll actually appear twice when the page loads - which could lead to the keyword spam issue I mentioned.

For more info on Search Engines - what they do and what they want, take a look [here](#).