

META TAGS ARE NOT A MAGIC SOLUTION

By Windsong

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Meta tags are useful in getting better listings in the search engines. However, not all search engines support meta tags. This means that some search engines ignore them. But include meta tags in your document for the engines that do use them. It will significantly increase your rating.

There are many, many different meta tags. The only ones you need to be concerned with are the "description" and "keyword" tags. (And "title" tag, of course.) The description tag provides a summary which appears when your page comes up on a search. Without this "description" the search engine will create one. It will generally use the first few lines of text at the top of your page. Meta tags are to be placed inside the head tags. Here is what your meta tags should look like:

```
HEAD
TITLEWeb Site Utilities for Webmasters/TITLE
META NAME="Description" CONTENT="Utilities for every webmaster
who wants to optimize their web site pages."
META NAME="Keywords" CONTENT="web site utilities, webmaster
utilities, web site optimization"
/HEAD
```

Search engines that read everything on your page will include alt tags and links to a banner that is at the very top of your page. This is why it is not a good idea to have a banner at the top. The beginning of your page should be a title (use keywords

here) and text. The first paragraph should be heavy with keywords, but not so heavy as to make it difficult to read or understand. You want to work the keywords in so it sounds natural for them to be there.

If your site is heavy on graphics and short on text, then you need to use meta tags. Otherwise, you have very little chance to come up on the search engines. Consider the meta tags as tools that make up for a lack of text on your site. Your best option, however, is to have a site that is heavy in content and text. You will not only get a better ranking in the search engines, but you will please the people who visit your site. After all, isn't this the name of the game?

"Keywords" tags provide keywords for the search engine to associate with your page. It gives your page a chance to come up if someone is searching for one or more of your keywords. Choose your keywords carefully. Try to imagine what the searcher will enter for their search. Do NOT use keywords that are not relevant to your site. Many people think that because "sex" is one of the most common keywords used for a search, that it is good to include it in their keyword list. This is just another form of spam. Don't do it. You could get a lot of hate mail.

Key words should always be two or more words, in other words, key phrases. If you only use single keywords you are likely to get lost in the crowd. For example, if you have a site that specializes in 'free business opportunities', list that as a keyword phrase instead of listing each word ie: free, business, opportunities. It is not likely that someone looking for 'free business opportunities' is going to type in just 'business' into their search. Can you imagine all the sites that would come up if that were the case? You would be lost in the crowd. Be specific with your keyword phrases. Put yourself in the place of the person doing the search. What are they likely to type in as their search?

It is not enough to have a list of keywords in your meta tags. These keywords must also appear in the title tag as well as in the text on your page. If you fail to do this, then your ranking with the search engines will be low, no matter how many keywords you have. It is most important that your keywords appear in the first paragraph on your page. They should also be in the title and headers. Some search engines also read 'alt tags'. Be sure to use relevant keywords there also.

Some of the search engines don't like line breaks in meta tags. It is best to have your meta tags as one long line rather than having it wrap. I have been told that if your tags wrap, the search engine only reads the first line.

