

SEO, Simply

Working series title

VOLUME 1

How Search Engines Think

A plain-language guide to being found, understood, and chosen

by Yukesh Chaudhary

yukesh.com.np



Start with the system, not the tricks

About the author

Yukesh Chaudhary is the CEO and Founder of Niguro, Nepal's independent search engine. He builds in public at yukesh.com.np.

Working on search has made one lesson impossible to ignore: the best decisions start with a clear mental model. If you understand what a search engine is trying to do, many SEO choices stop feeling mysterious.

What this book is for

This book is for the person who has a website but does not want to speak in technical jargon. It explains the system before the tactics.

You will learn what happens before a page appears in search, what signals help a system understand it, and why the reader's need must come first.

A note on the series title

SEO, Simply is a working title. The author may change it before publication.

How to use this book

1

Read one chapter at a time.

2

Do the short exercise.

3

Apply the idea to one real page.

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Your path through the book

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The promise of this volume

No secret formulas. No guaranteed rankings. Just a useful way to think, explained in ordinary language.

What a search engine actually does

A search engine is not a person reading the whole internet in real time. It is a system that first finds pages, then stores what it understands, then chooses an order when someone searches.



First, the page must be discovered

A new page is like a new shop in a side street. Customers cannot visit if nobody knows the shop exists. Search engines learn about pages mainly by following links from pages they already know. A sitemap can also list important URLs.

Discovery is not the same as success. It only puts your address on the map.

EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

You open a tea shop. A friend adds it to a local directory and another shop points visitors toward you. Those references help people discover the address. Links and sitemaps play a similar role for web pages.

Then comes crawling

Crawling is the visit. An automated program requests the page and collects what it can access. Think of the crawler as an explorer carrying a notebook. It follows paths, checks doors, and records what is visible.

If the server is down, the door is closed. If an important page has no links leading to it, the path is hidden. If essential content appears only after a broken script runs, the explorer may leave with an incomplete note.

The index is a catalog, not the live web

Crawling is a visit, not an approval

A crawler reaching your page does not mean the page will appear in search. It only means the system had a chance to inspect it.

A shop inspector can enter a store without adding it to a city guide. In the same way, a search engine can crawl a page and decide not to store it.

Crawler asks

- Can I reach this URL?
- What content and links are here?
- Has this page changed?

Indexer asks

- What is this page about?
- Is it useful and distinct?
- Which version should I store?

Indexing builds the catalog

An index is like a library catalog. The library does not hand you every book in the building. It records useful details so it can retrieve the right books later.

For a web page, the system may process the main text, headings, links, images, language, and other signals. It can group very similar pages and choose one main version. That preferred version is often called the canonical page.

EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

A bookstore receives two copies of the same title, one with a promotional cover. The catalog does not need two separate subjects. It keeps one main record and notes the copies. Search systems often do something similar with duplicate URLs.

Important distinction

Crawled does not mean indexed. Indexed does not mean highly ranked. Each step solves a different problem.

Diagnose the stage before changing the page

Ranking is a choice made for each search

When someone searches, the engine looks through its index and decides which results are likely to help. This is sometimes called serving results. Ranking is the order of those choices.

There is no single permanent position for a page. The useful order can change with the words in the query, the searcher's location, the device, the language, and the freshness the topic needs.

EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

Ask a shopkeeper for “shoes” and the question is too broad. Ask for “waterproof school shoes for a child” and the useful shelf becomes clearer. More context changes which products should come first.

A simple failure map

If the problem is...	What you may see	First question
Discovery	The engine does not know the URL.	Does any crawlable page link to it?
Crawling	The URL is known but not fetched well.	Can the server and page be accessed?
Indexing	The page was fetched but not stored.	Is it eligible, useful, and distinct?
Ranking	The page is stored but rarely visible.	Does it best satisfy the search?

Try this

1. Choose one page on your site. Write its URL on paper.
2. Find one page that links to it. If none does, add a useful internal link.
3. Search for the exact page title and your site name. Note whether you can find it.
4. Write which stage you would investigate first: discovery, crawling, indexing, or ranking.

How Google reads your page

A search system gathers clues. Your job is not to hide a magic phrase. Your job is to make the subject, purpose, and value of the page clear.

Words tell the system what is present

The words on a page are direct evidence. If a page explains how to renew a passport, it should naturally name the passport, renewal, required documents, fees, and the steps a reader must take.

This does not mean repeating the same keyword in every sentence. Repetition can make writing awkward without adding meaning. Use the language a real reader needs.

EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

A menu that says only “our special” gives a customer little information. “Vegetable momo with tomato achar” is clearer. Specific words reduce guessing for people and systems.

Headings reveal the shape of the answer

Headings are signposts. A good heading tells the reader what the next section will answer. It also helps a system separate the page into meaningful parts.

Weak

More information

Clear

Documents needed to renew a passport

Use one clear page title. Then use section headings for the major questions. Do not turn every sentence into a heading. A map with too many signs is hard to read.

Links are paths with labels

Links explain discovery and relationships

An internal link connects one page on your site to another. It can help a crawler discover the destination, and it tells the reader how two pages relate.

The visible words in a link are called anchor text. “See passport renewal fees” gives more context than “click here.” The useful phrase prepares the reader for what comes next.

EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

A museum sign that says “Ancient Nepal Gallery, upstairs” is more useful than a sign that says “go there.” Descriptive links work the same way.

Links from other sites add outside context

When another relevant site links to a page, it may help discovery and provide context. A genuine recommendation from a respected source can matter more than many unrelated links.

Do not treat links like tokens to collect. Buying or manufacturing large numbers of links to manipulate ranking can violate search engine spam policies. Earn attention by creating something worth referring to.

EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

If a local food guide recommends a restaurant, that reference is meaningful. A pile of random flyers left in empty buildings is not the same kind of recommendation.

Your own links should serve a reader

- Link when the next page answers a natural follow-up question.
- Use words that describe the destination.
- Keep important pages reachable through normal navigation.
- Remove broken paths and misleading labels.

Fresh does not mean constantly rewritten

Freshness matters when the subject changes

Some searches need recent information. Election results, exchange rates, football scores, and software versions can become outdated quickly. Other pages can remain useful for years.

Do not change a date just to make a page look new. Update the information when reality changes, and show the update clearly when it helps the reader.

EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

A bus timetable from last year may send someone to an empty stop. A guide to tying shoelaces does not need a monthly rewrite. The topic decides how much freshness matters.

Clarity comes from signals working together

Words	Name the subject and answer the question.
Headings	Show the order and parts of the answer.
Links	Connect the page to useful context.
Maintenance	Keep changeable facts accurate.

No single item guarantees visibility. Together, they make the page easier to understand and trust.

Try this

1. Open one page and cover its main title. Can you still tell what the page is about from the first paragraph?
2. Rewrite two vague headings as questions or clear promises.
3. Replace one “click here” link with descriptive words.
4. Circle every fact that can change. Decide when each fact should be checked again.

Google understands things, not just words

Modern search is not limited to matching exact strings of letters. It tries to connect language with real things, ideas, places, people, and relationships.

An entity is a thing the system can distinguish

“Entity” sounds technical, but the idea is ordinary. A person is a thing. A company is a thing. A city, product, song, recipe, or event can also be a thing.

The important point is identity. The word “Apple” could mean a fruit or a technology company. The surrounding words help the system decide which thing you mean.

Apple fruit orchard · nutrition · recipe	Apple company iPhone · Mac · technology
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EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

If a friend says, “I bought an Apple and updated its software,” you understand the company. If the friend says, “I sliced an apple for lunch,” you understand the fruit. Context carries the meaning.

Names alone are not enough

A page becomes clearer when it provides details that fit the subject. A profile of a person might include their role, organization, location, and work. A product page might include the maker, model, features, and intended use.

Meaning lives in relationships

Relationships add meaning

Facts do not live alone. Kathmandu is a city in Nepal. A book has an author. A company has a founder. A recipe uses ingredients. These relationships form a web of meaning.

Your writing should make important relationships explicit. Do not force the reader to infer every connection.

EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

A contact card that says only “Maya” is hard to use. “Maya Shrestha, dentist at Sunrise Dental Clinic in Pokhara” makes the relationships clear. A page benefits from the same clarity.

Context resolves ambiguity

Words around a term help define it. A page about “jaguar speed” could discuss an animal or a car. Mentions of habitat, prey, and running point one way. Mentions of engine, acceleration, and model point another.



Write enough to remove the wrong interpretation

This is not an excuse to stuff every related word into a page. Add the facts a person genuinely needs. Clear explanation naturally introduces useful context.

A narrow page can still be excellent. It simply needs to be complete for its chosen job.

Use context, not keyword piles

Think in questions, not keyword variations

A weak plan makes separate pages for tiny wording changes: “cheap trekking shoes,” “affordable trekking shoes,” and “low-cost trekking shoes.” Those phrases may express the same need.

A stronger plan asks what the person must know: fit, grip, waterproofing, terrain, price, and care. One useful page can cover the real decision.

EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

A shop assistant does not answer “cheap shoes” and “affordable shoes” with two separate speeches. The assistant understands that both customers care about price and suitability.

Make identity clear on important pages

- Name the main person, place, product, or idea clearly.
- Add the attributes that distinguish it from similar things.
- Explain relationships that a newcomer may not know.
- Use consistent names across the site.
- Link to supporting pages when they add context.

Try this

1. Pick a word on your site that could mean more than one thing.
2. Write the two possible meanings.
3. List three details that prove which meaning your page intends.
4. Add only the missing detail that helps a real reader.
5. Check whether your page uses one consistent name for the main thing.

Keep the goal human

Entity thinking is useful when it makes writing clearer. If it turns your page into a list of robotic terms, stop and return to the reader's question.

What the searcher really wants

A query is a few words. Behind it is a person trying to finish a task. Search intent is the task behind the words.

A practical four-part model

Real searches can overlap, but four simple groups help you think.

Learn

Understand a subject
“how solar panels work”

Buy

Choose or purchase
“best 20L backpack”

Go

Reach a place or site
“passport office near me”

Do

Complete an action
“convert PNG to PDF”

The same topic can hide different wants

Someone searching “coffee grinder” might want a definition, a comparison, a shop, or instructions. A page cannot serve every want equally well.

EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

If a person asks where the bus station is, a history of buses is not helpful. The topic matches, but the task does not. Good SEO notices the difference.

Intent is not a label you paste on a keyword

Use the categories as a starting point, not a prison. A person comparing products may also need education. A person learning a process may soon need a tool.

The page shape should match the job

Look at the shape of the request

Words often hint at the job. “What is” suggests a simple explanation. “Versus” suggests comparison. “Near me” suggests a location. “Price” suggests a decision with cost in mind. “Template” suggests something ready to use.

Hints are useful, but do not rely on a single word. Read the whole query and consider what would leave the person satisfied.

Match the page format to the task

Reader wants to...	Useful page shape	What must be easy to find
Learn	Guide or explanation	Definition, examples, clear sections
Compare	Comparison	Criteria, differences, recommendation logic
Buy	Product or service page	Price, fit, proof, next step
Go	Location page	Address, hours, directions, contact
Do	Tool, checklist, or tutorial	Action, steps, result

EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

A recipe should reveal ingredients and steps quickly. A restaurant page should reveal the menu, location, and opening hours. Both may be about food, but they serve different jobs.

Lead with the answer shape

If the task is urgent, place the key action early. If the task needs judgment, explain the criteria. If the task is complex, give the reader a map before the detail.

A useful visit beats an empty click

Satisfaction is the real test

A technically optimized page can still fail if it wastes time, hides the answer, or promises something it does not deliver.

Ask a simple question: after reading this page, can the person make progress?

Promise	The title states a useful outcome.
Answer	The opening confirms the page is relevant.
Evidence	Examples and facts support the answer.
Action	The reader knows what to do next.

Do not confuse traffic with success

A page can attract many visitors who leave disappointed. Another page can attract fewer people but solve the right problem. The second page may be more valuable to the reader and the business.

EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

A shop window saying “free phones” may attract a crowd. If the offer is only a paid phone case, people leave angry. A truthful window brings fewer wrong visitors and more useful conversations.

Try this

1. Choose one search query you want a page to serve.
2. Finish this sentence: “The person searching this wants to...”
3. Name the best page shape: explanation, comparison, product page, location page, tool, or tutorial.
4. Check whether the answer or action appears early enough.
5. Remove one section that does not help the person finish the task.

What this means for your website

The sustainable mindset is simple: help the search engine reach a clear understanding, then give the reader a satisfying result.

Stop asking, “How do I trick Google?”

Tricks begin with the ranking system and treat the reader as a side effect. Useful SEO begins with the reader, then removes the obstacles that stop a search system from finding and understanding the work.

OLD QUESTION

How many times should I repeat the keyword?

BETTER QUESTION

What must be clear for a newcomer to understand this page?

OLD QUESTION

How can I get any link?

BETTER QUESTION

What can I make that a relevant source would genuinely cite?

Think in two audiences at once

The first audience is human. They need a clear promise, an honest answer, and an easy next step. When I built Niguro, I learned that even a powerful search system is only useful when it brings a person closer to what they need.

The second audience is the machine. It needs accessible pages, descriptive structure, crawlable links, and enough context to interpret the content.

EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

A good road sign works for a driver and for the map system. It uses a clear place name, points in the right direction, and appears where it can be seen. A good page does the digital version of that job.

Make every page earn its place

Build a chain of understanding

Findable	Important pages have paths leading to them.
Accessible	The server and page allow useful content to be fetched.
Understandable	Words, headings, and context reveal the subject.
Useful	The page completes the reader's real task.
Credible	Claims have evidence, ownership, and honest sourcing.

If one link in this chain breaks, adding more keywords will not repair it.

Improve one page as a complete system

Start with a single page, not a giant checklist. Confirm that another page links to it. State what it is about. Organize the answer. Match the format to the searcher's need. Support important claims. Make the next step obvious.

Then observe. Search improvements can take time, and not every change produces a visible result. Keep notes so you know what changed and why.

EVERYDAY EXAMPLE

A gardener does not pull a plant out each morning to see whether the roots grew. The gardener improves the soil, gives the plant light and water, and watches over time. SEO also rewards patient, measured improvement.

The rule I return to

If a change helps a reader and makes the page easier to understand, it is usually a stronger bet than a change made only to imitate an algorithm.

Put the model to work

Try this: the one-page clarity review

1. **Name the page.** In one sentence, say what the page is and who it helps.
 2. **Name the task.** Finish: “The visitor wants to...”
 3. **Check the path.** Find at least one useful internal link leading to the page.
 4. **Check the opening.** Does the first screen confirm the promise?
 5. **Check the structure.** Read only the headings. Do they tell a sensible story?
 6. **Check the meaning.** Are the main people, places, products, or ideas clearly identified?
 7. **Check changeable facts.** Mark prices, dates, rules, versions, and availability for future review.
 8. **Check the next step.** Can the reader act without guessing?
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In the next volume

Volume 2 turns this mental model into a website plan. You will learn how to choose a focused subject, map the questions around it, group pages, create helpful paths, and decide what to publish first.

Search is not a puzzle to beat. It is a meeting between a question and the best available answer.

Further reading

Google Search Central, [SEO Starter Guide](#)

Google Search Central, [Search Essentials](#)

Google Search Central, [Creating helpful, reliable, people-first content](#)

Google Search Central, [Guide to Google Search ranking systems](#)

These primary sources explain the public principles that informed this original beginner's guide. Search systems change, so check current documentation before making technical decisions.