Site structure

In this lesson, we'll discuss site structure. We'll start by explaining why having a defined structure is hugely important for your site. Then, we'll explain how to construct a solid site structure. Moreover, we'll tell you all about cornerstone content. We'll conclude with an explanation of how the Yoast SEO plugin can help you with setting up a successful cornerstone content approach.

The importance of site structure

Your site needs to have a clearly defined structure, because without it, it'll just be a random collection of pages and blog posts. Structuring your website is crucial for both usability and findability. Many sites lack a sound structure to guide visitors to the product they're looking for. Having a clear site structure also helps Google understand your site, so it's incredibly important for your SEO. Let's take a closer look at why structure is so important for your website.

Importance for usability

The structure of your website significantly impacts its user experience (UX). If visitors can find the products and information they're looking for, they're more likely to become customers. In other words, you should help them navigate your site and a good site structure will help with this.

Navigating should be easy. You need to categorize your posts and products so they are easy to find and new visitors can instantly grasp what you're writing about or selling.

The structure of yoast.com

For example, let's take a look at the structure yoast.com. Our navigation menu is made up of seven items: Home, Yoast SEO, Other plugins, SEO training, SEO blog, Help, and Shop. Everything we have to offer falls

under one of these seven categories. This keeps our menu clear and easy
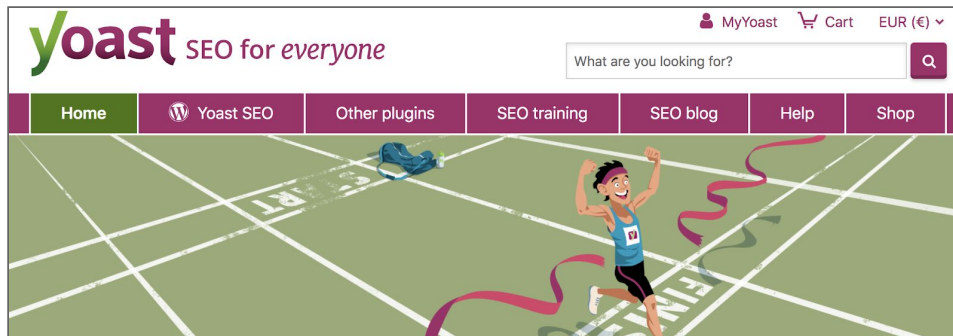to grasp.

Image 1: Navigation menu of yoast.com

Furthermore, below our navigation menu, you can see our most recent
posts on our blog, followed by our most important products, so visitors
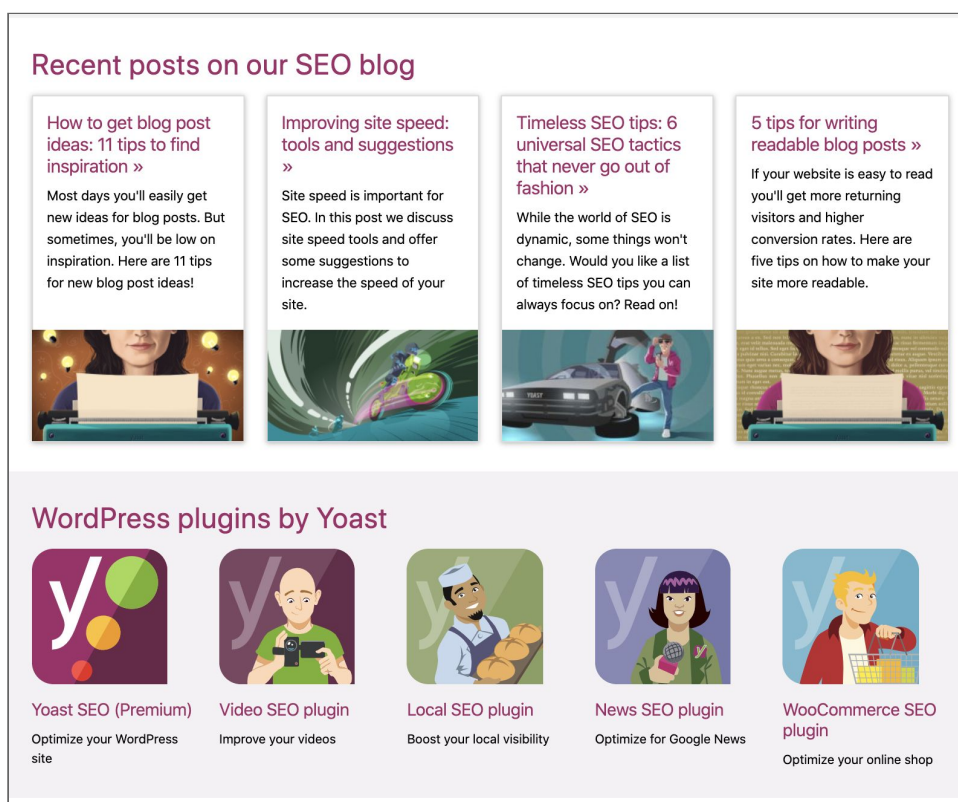can easily find them (Image 2).

Image 2: Site structure of yoast.com

Importance for SEO

Site structure is also of great importance for SEO. A solid site structure vastly improves your chances of ranking in search engines. There are three main reasons for this:

1. **A good site structure helps Google 'understand' your site.**
   The way you structure your site will give Google vital clues about where to find the most valuable content. Your site's structure determines whether a search engine can understand what your site is about and what you're selling. It also determines how quickly a search engine will find and index products. A good structure should, therefore, lead to a higher ranking in Google.

2. **A good site structure prevents you from competing with yourself.**
   On your site, you might have blog posts that are quite similar. If, for example, you write a lot about SEO, you could have multiple blog posts about site structure, each covering a different aspect. Consequently, Google won't be able to tell which of these pages is the most important, so you'll be competing with your own content for a high ranking in Google. You should let Google know which page you think is most important. To accomplish this, you need a good internal linking and taxonomy structure, so all those pages can work for you, instead of against you.

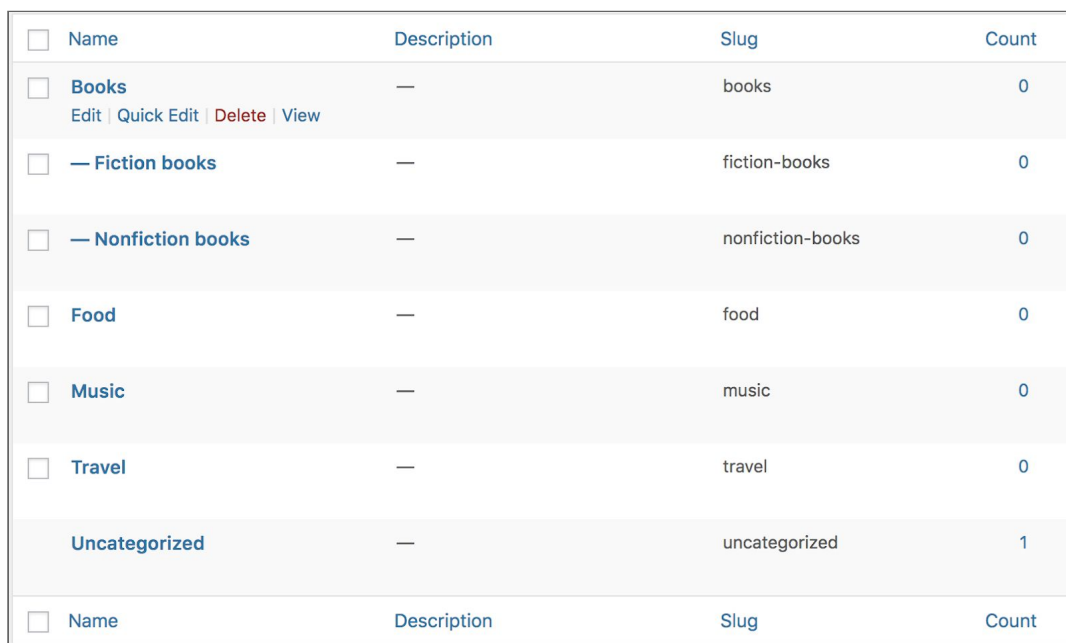3. **A good site structure deals with changes on your website.**
   The products you sell in your shop will likely evolve over time. So could the content you're writing. You'll probably add new product lines as old stocks sell out. Or perhaps you think the information in old blog posts shouldn't be on your site anymore. You don't want Google to show outdated products or deleted blog posts, so you'll need to deal with these kinds of changes in the structure of your site.

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How to set up the structure of your site

We've seen why site structure is of great importance, both for your users and for search engines. So, how do you construct a solid site structure? Let's take a look at what elements a good site structure consists of.

Categories

The first thing you should do in order to get a great site structure is divide the blog posts or product pages on your site into categories. Each post must be attached to at least one category. For example, categories for a blog can be 'Books', 'Food', 'Music', and 'Travel'. In this example, the category 'Books' could be subdivided into the subcategories 'Fiction books' and 'Nonfiction books'. Each category should be about the same size.

	Name	Description	Slug	Count
☐	**Books** Edit | Quick Edit | Delete | View	—	books	0
☐	**— Fiction books**	—	fiction-books	0
☐	**— Nonfiction books**	—	nonfiction-books	0
☐	**Food**	—	food	0
☐	**Music**	—	music	0
☐	**Travel**	—	travel	0
	Uncategorized	—	uncategorized	1
☐	Name	Description	Slug	Count

Image 2: Categories in WordPress

Tags

Adding tags will also help your site structure. Tags are similar to categories, but they are generally used to describe your post in more detail. Tags exist in their own right and have no set relationship to anything else, so they can't be arranged in a hierarchy. The use of tags is entirely optional. For the blog used in the example above, you could have

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tags for the recipes described in the category 'Food'. These tags could be 'desserts', 'pasta', 'pizza', and 'salads'. It's possible to use both categories and tags. Assigning categories and tags to your post increases the chance that people will find the content they're looking for.

☐ Name	Description	Slug	Count
☐ **desserts**	—	desserts	0
☐ **pasta**	—	pasta	0
☐ **pizza**	—	pizza	0
☐ **salads**	—	salads	0
☐ Name	Description	Slug	Count

Image 3: Tags in WordPress

Internal linking

In addition, your linking structure has a direct impact on your site. You should identify critical content on your site – so-called cornerstone content, which we'll discuss later in this text. These should be the articles you link to from all your blog posts.

Because you're linking from pages that are closely related to each other content-wise, you're increasing your site's chance of ranking. Linking this way will help search engines figure out what's important by showing them what's related and what isn't.

Cornerstone content

As we've seen before, cornerstone content is a very important aspect of an SEO strategy. But what exactly are cornerstone articles? Cornerstone articles are the most important articles on your website. These articles directly reflect the mission of your company, and you definitely want to rank for them.

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Which articles are my cornerstones?

You should choose your cornerstones carefully. Think of four or five pages you would like someone to read when they first visit your website. These articles should be the cornerstones of your site. In other words, they should form the basis of the topics you discuss on your site. For example: at Yoast, we write ultimate guides for every important SEO-related topic. We have ultimate guides for site structure, SEO copywriting, mobile SEO, blogging, keyword research, et cetera. These are our cornerstone content articles. You should write cornerstone articles about the keywords you definitely want to rank for.

In general, cornerstone articles should be lengthy articles which are timeless, and very regularly updated. Cornerstone articles should definitely be informative articles, in which you explain something to your audience. You want them to understand more about a topic or you want them to use the information by putting theory to practice. Even on a webshop, cornerstone content should be informative, rather than focused on convincing people to buy your products. For example, you could give your readers information about the uniqueness of your products, or about the use of the products.

The importance of cornerstone content

Now that we know what cornerstone content is, let's dive into the importance of cornerstone content. Cornerstone content should play a significant role in any SEO strategy. It can be rather hard to rank for search terms that are very popular. A cornerstone approach helps you tackle those competitive search terms. If you write a lot of articles about similar topics, you need to tell Google which one is the most important. This article can be one of your cornerstone articles.

Where should cornerstone content be?

Where should cornerstone content be on your site? Ideally, someone would be able to click from your homepage to your cornerstone articles instantly. You should link all your other posts about similar topics to that particular article. Such an internal linking structure will increase your chances of ranking in Google with your cornerstone content article.

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Cornerstone content in Yoast SEO

We've seen that there are two important factors for a successful cornerstone content approach. Firstly, cornerstone content should be lengthy, well-written and well-optimized. Secondly, cornerstone content should have a prominent place in your site's structure.

Yoast SEO offers effective tools that help you take care of both of these things. We offer a text link counter, a specific cornerstone content analysis, and – in Yoast SEO Premium – even internal linking suggestions and internal linking blocks. Let's take a look at these tools in detail.

Text link counter

With the text link counter in the Yoast SEO plugin, you can filter your cornerstone articles in the Posts overview, and see how many internal links a post receives and how many posts it links to. With the text link counter, you can see at a glance if your cornerstone content gets enough links from related posts.
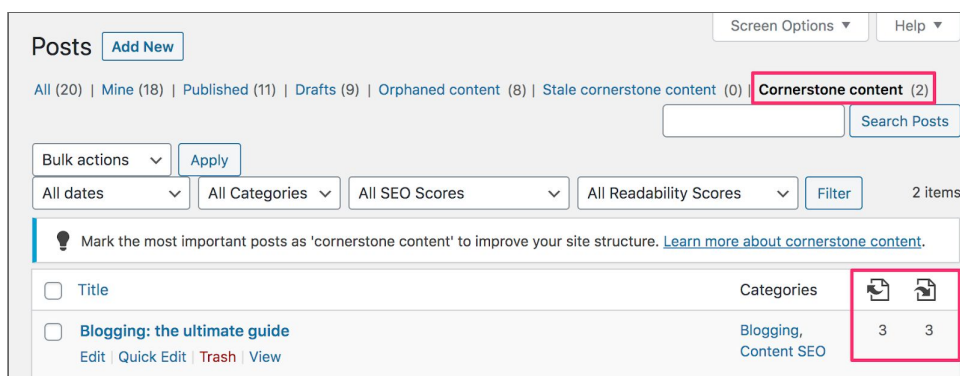

Image 4: Cornerstone article has 3 outgoing internal links and gets 3 internal links

Cornerstone analysis

In the Yoast SEO meta box or in the Yoast SEO sidebar, you can mark your content as cornerstone content. As a result, both the SEO analysis and the readability analysis will be stricter than usual. Why? Because your

cornerstone content should be longer and even better than your other articles. The demands on your writing should be higher.
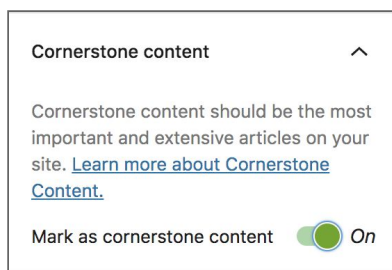

Image 5: Marking your content as cornerstone content

Internal linking suggestions (Premium only)

In Yoast SEO Premium we offer an internal linking functionality. You'll find five suggestions for links, including posts, pages, tags, or categories. The suggestions all carry a label to distinguish them from each other easily. For example, image 6 shows four links to posts and one link to a category archive page. Cornerstone articles are displayed above the other suggestions, so you won't forget to link to them!
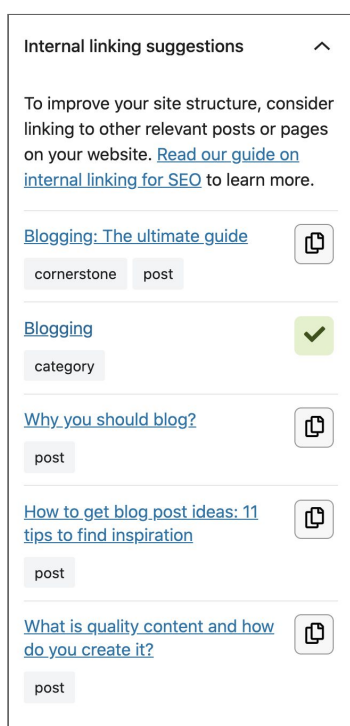

Image 6: Internal linking suggestions in Yoast SEO

Yoast internal linking blocks (Premium only)

Yoast SEO Premium also features four internal linking blocks. They make internal linking even easier for you!
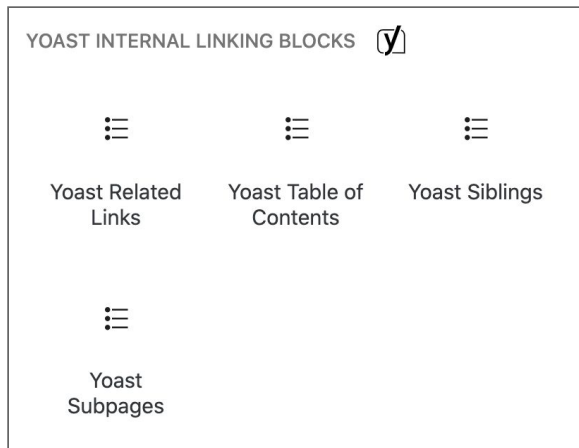

Image 7: The Yoast internal linking blocks

What can you do with these blocks?

- **Related links block:** When you add the block, it comes pre-filled with the links that you also see in the internal linking suggestions tool in the sidebar.
- **Table of contents block:** This block automatically generates a table of contents based on the headings in your post or page. It also automatically updates whenever you edit a heading.
- **Siblings block:** This block automatically adds a list of all the pages with the same parent page as the page you're adding the block to (sibling pages).
- **Subpages block:** This block automatically adds a list of all the underlying pages related to the parent page (subpages).

Conclusion

In this lesson, we've seen that structuring your website is crucial for both usability and findability. In addition, we've discussed how to construct a solid site structure, using categories, subcategories, and tags. Then, we've explained the concept of cornerstone content, the most important articles on your website. We've seen that there are two important factors for a successful cornerstone content approach. Firstly, cornerstone

content should be lengthy, well-written and well-optimized. Secondly, cornerstone content should have a prominent place in your site's structure. Finally, we've discussed how the Yoast SEO plugin can help you with setting up a successful cornerstone content approach.

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