The Yoast SEO feedback

Table of contents

Learning objectives
1. The traffic light system
2. Feedback structure
    Problems
    Improvements
    Good results
3. How are the scores calculated?
4. Feedback misconceptions
    I have some red and orange traffic lights, so I will never rank!
    All my traffic lights are green, but I still don't rank!
    Every post should be optimized!
    If I paste Hemingway into the readability analysis, all I see is red and orange, so you can't trust the Yoast SEO feedback!
    Yoast SEO hates my writing style!
    Yoast SEO wants me to dumb down my text!
Key takeaways

Learning objectives

After this lesson, you will be able to:

- Understand the Yoast SEO traffic light feedback system
- Understand the structure of Yoast SEO's feedback;
- Explain how Yoast SEO's feedback scores are calculated;
- Understand common misconceptions about Yoast SEO's feedback and explain why they are incorrect

1. The traffic light system

The Yoast SEO plugin gives you feedback through a traffic light system: green traffic lights, orange traffic lights, and red traffic lights. Next to the textual feedback, you'll find a colored dot, representing the traffic light.

Green traffic lights are what you want to have; they show you which aspects of your content are good. Orange traffic lights indicate where you can improve your SEO strategy. Red traffic lights are the ones you don't want to have because they tell you there's a problem you need to fix right away. Of course, we're not going to punish you if you ignore the red traffic lights. But for SEO purposes, you should aim for the green traffic lights as much as you can.

2. Feedback structure

The feedback in the plugin consists of a colored traffic light and some textual feedback. It is structured by three headers, which each contain a specific type of feedback:

Problems

The red traffic lights indicate problems. The textual feedback states the facts first. In the example below, this is: "The text contains 3 consecutive sentences starting with the same word." Then, Yoast SEO provides you with actionable advice. In this case: "Try to mix things up!". With the feedback that is provided this way, you'll know what you should do differently.

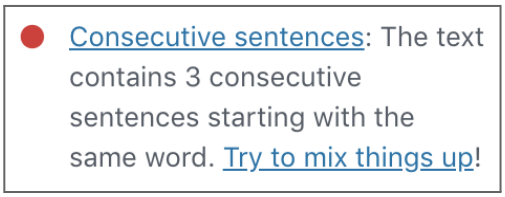


Image 1: Problems

Improvements

Orange traffic lights show you the improvements you could make. These are structured more or less the same as problems: first facts, then advice.

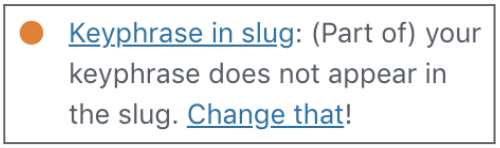


Image 2: Improvements

Good results

As you probably already guessed, the good results are indicated by green traffic lights. They tell you what you did well, and sometimes you'll receive a compliment. Make sure to pay attention to the green traffic lights as well.

You don't just learn from your mistakes, knowing what you did well and doing it again is important, too!

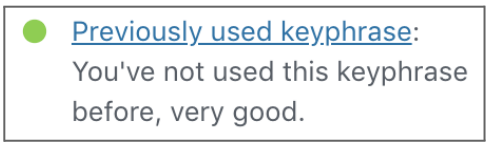


Image 3: Good results

3. How are the scores calculated?

Yoast SEO uses a complex formula to calculate the SEO and readability scores. For each individual item, you can score between 1 and 10 points. Let's take a look at the passive voice, for example. When you use the passive voice in more than 15 percent of your sentences, you score 3 points and a red traffic light. Using the passive voice between 10 and 15 percent, scores you 6 points and an orange traffic light. Finally, when you use it less than 10 percent, you score 9 points and a green traffic light.

However, when you do something completely wrong, you can also get penalties. Some factors weigh more heavily than others. For example, when your text is only 50 words, you will receive a big penalty. This is because it's very important to have a sufficient amount of content so that Google can assess what your text is about. You will also be penalized heavily for stuffing your keyphrase because that's not in line with holistic SEO.

4. Feedback misconceptions

There are a few common misconceptions about the feedback Yoast SEO provides. For example, a lot of people believe that you have to have all green traffic lights in order to rank. However, this isn't necessarily the best way of creating good copy. We'll discuss the most common misconceptions about our feedback system and try to set them straight for you.

I have some red and orange traffic lights, so I will never rank!

Generally, the more green traffic lights, the more SEO fit your text is, as we've told you in this and the previous lessons. However, try to keep in mind that the traffic lights are tools, not commandments.

Not every traffic light has to be green. The feedback traffic lights can help you easily identify some elements you could improve on, but you should not

take them as gospel. Use the content analysis feedback to your advantage, and use common sense to determine whether you can make improvements to your text.

All my traffic lights are green, but I still don't rank!

It goes the other way around as well: if all your traffic lights are green, that doesn't mean you'll rank. First of all, green traffic lights don't equal a great text. If your text has great readability but doesn't have good information, you won't be the best result. Moreover, if you base your text too much on the traffic lights feedback, your text may actually even be worse than it may have been otherwise. It could also be that your competition is stiff and all of them have also written great texts, or you may have SEO issues in other areas.

Every post should be optimized!

Not all posts have to be optimized. You have to consider whether your post will be part of your SEO strategy. Some posts will suffer if you optimize them. Others, like announcements, don't make sense to optimize for. Consider whether your post fits your SEO strategy and make a conscious decision of whether to optimize it.

If I paste Hemingway into the readability analysis, all I see is red and orange, so you can't trust the Yoast SEO feedback!

The Yoast SEO readability analysis is aimed at optimizing for online content. Hemingway wasn't looking to sell pens, or maintain a mom blog, or anything like that. Most online authors are not trying to write the Great American Novel, and they shouldn't. They should write readable online content. That's the goal, so that's what the plugin measures.

Yoast SEO hates my writing style!

We don't necessarily hate your writing style. The Yoast SEO plugin merely provides you with readability feedback. Your writing style may not fit the guidelines for good SEO copy that is easy to understand. Research has shown that overusing the passive voice and using many long sentences lead to worse readability. We don't think that's a question of style. You can decide for yourself whether you agree.

Yoast SEO wants me to dumb down my text!

We want your text to be as clear as possible. And you should aim to write as clearly as possible. Most of you are trying to reach a broad audience. Many

of you are trying to reach non-native speakers. Using simple vocab and short sentences does not equal dumbing down your text. It's the other way around: it opens your copy up to a broader audience. This is especially important when writing online copy. The longer it takes for your audience to grasp what you are trying to say, the bigger the chances of them bouncing.

Key takeaways

- The Yoast SEO plugin gives you feedback in a structured way. It uses a traffic light system with red, orange, and green traffic lights, and the feedback is subdivided into three headers: problems, improvements and good results
- Keep in mind that the traffic lights are tools, not commandments
- Use the content analysis feedback to your advantage and use common sense to determine whether you can make improvements to your text.