

# The Ultimate Retailer's Guide To SEO



# A Beginner's Guide To SEO

## RULE #1: DON'T FOCUS ON SEO

We have a love/hate relationship with Search Engine Optimization (SEO). Well, there's plenty to love about getting free traffic to your website and knowing that you have control over what it looks like to increase your "rank" (where you show up when people search for something). Most shoppers start their search in Google so why not focus on it?

But why the hate?

Well, this gets a lot more complicated. Ultimately, because it can be difficult to understand it can also be the first thing we blame when we're not getting the results that we'd hope for. It can certainly play into our ability to succeed but 99.99% of the time, it's not in the top 10 reasons a brand isn't getting the results they want.

Side note: If you haven't booked a strategy session with us yet, this is a great time to do it. We'll help uncover the pathway to actually get the results you're after. Apply for one here.

But when it comes to SEO, there is one major piece of good news.

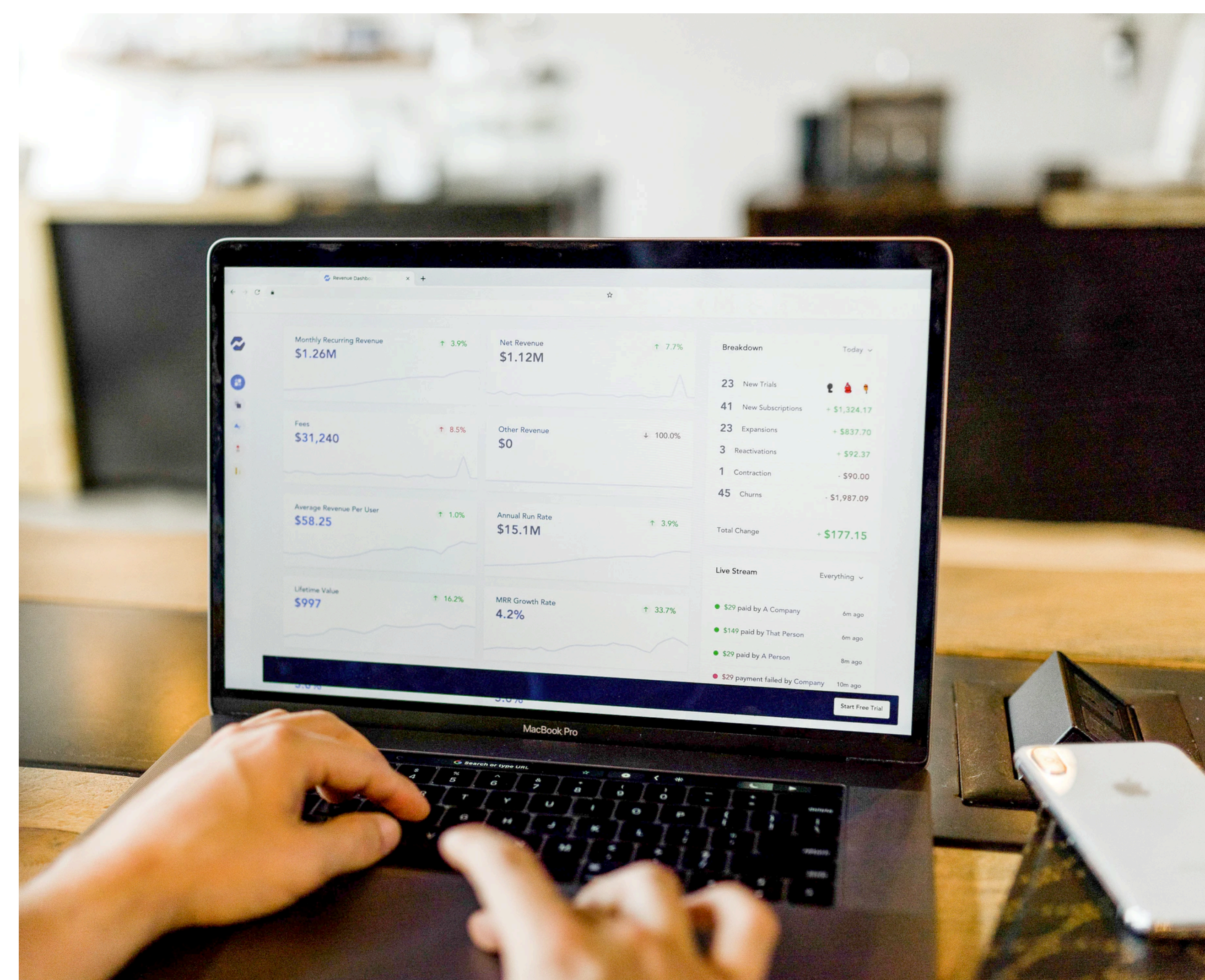
Unlike most areas in business, SEO doesn't have to take a lot of time. We would say that the difference between a zero and an 85 might be 10 minutes a week.

Can you spend 10 minutes a week to improve free traffic to your site?

We thought so.

You'll notice we said, "85" and not "95". This is where the "hate" relationship comes in. From my experience, while it takes ten minutes to get to an \*85", it takes hours and hours and hours (that neither of us has) to get from that "85" to the "95".

So as much as there is to do, we want to focus on the small things you can do that will have the largest impact possible. Does that sound good to you?





## THE BASICS OF GOOGLE

We could go into a huge history lesson about why Google was made and where that brings us today but we'll let you keep that 10 minute read and instead tell you the pieces you actually need to know. Cool?

The purpose of Google is to help people find what they want on the internet. They don't actually care about your design, your keywords, or even the quantity of pages linking to you. They care that if someone google's a specific keyword, that the results are actually helpful.

To make sure this works, they obsess seeing how people respond to whatever traffic you get. They care that the keywords around your site actually reflect what people want because when they deliver what people want, Google wins... and so do you.

To help facilitate that, we want to focus on some core areas that should only take you a few minutes a week:

1. Accurate keywords (meta descriptions is the nerdy word for that)
2. User Experience
3. Giving some basic details to Google (one-time thing, YAY!)

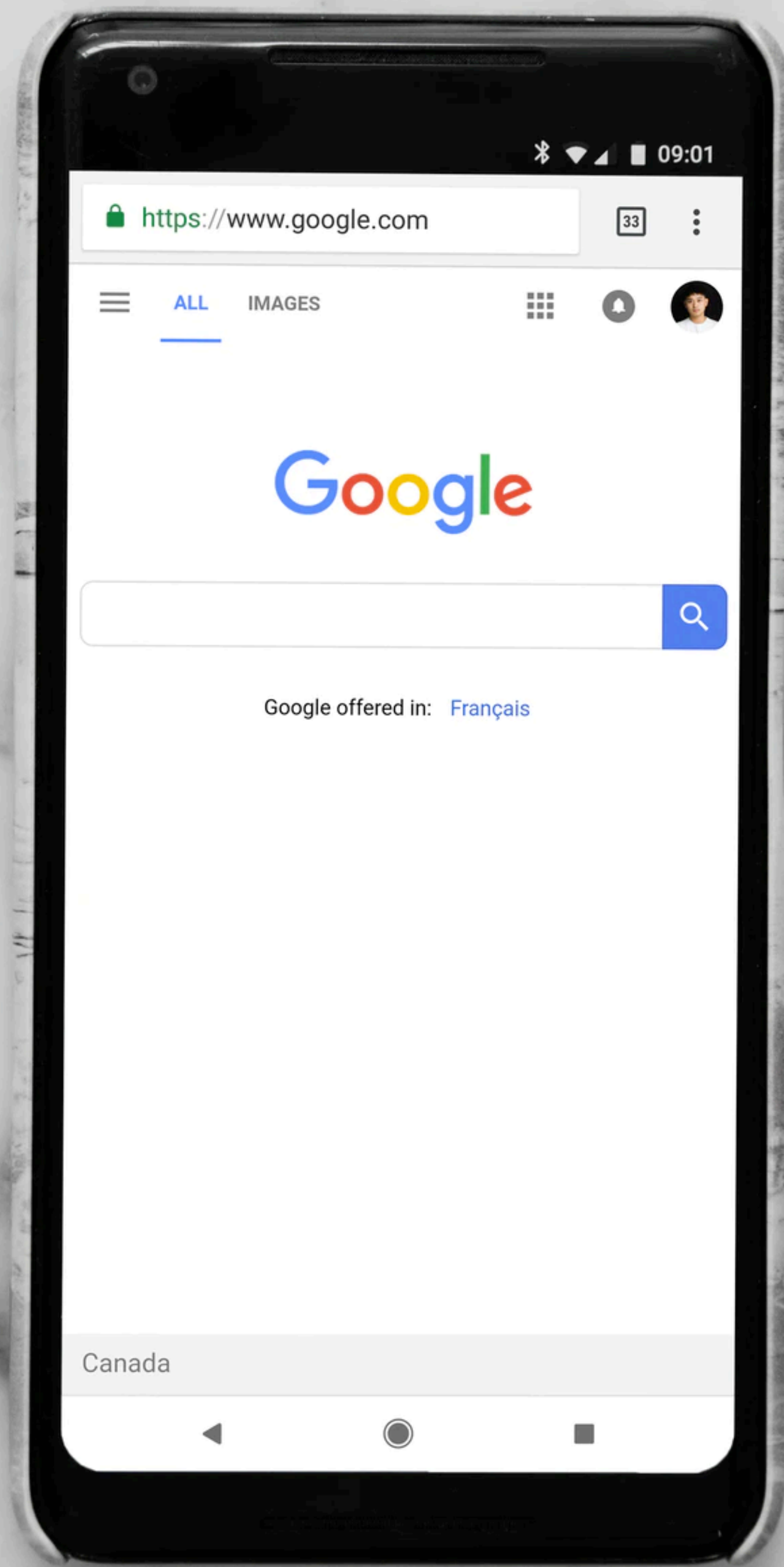
Just to be clear, there are way more things you can do to improve your SEO ranking and this is not meant to be an exhaustive list of all the areas you can focus on. Our hope is to give you the core pieces that will let you get the best results with minimal effort.

## ACCURATE KEYWORDS

When people search for something, Google is typically pulling from what they call "meta-descriptions" to facilitate a match. For example, if I search "Boutique Houston texas", it is going to search for boutiques that may have their location in the meta description field.

As you might guess, this piece being accurate is going to be important for Google to provide the right data. If the business with "Boutique Houston Texas" was actually a home decor store that is an hour away, users will quickly leave the page because it's not what they're looking for.

In getting these keywords right, we look to focus on a few key areas:





## SITE TITLE

This is the title of your entire site. Most of the time, it's going to be the name of your business and a description of who you are. Here's are some examples:

**100** GOOD: Streamline Retail | eCommerce Design and Strategy for Brick and Mortar Retail  
BAD: Streamline Retail

**100** GOOD: Main St Boutique | Women's Clothing, Accessories, and Gifts | Austin, TX  
BAD: Main St Boutique

## COLLECTION PAGE TITLE

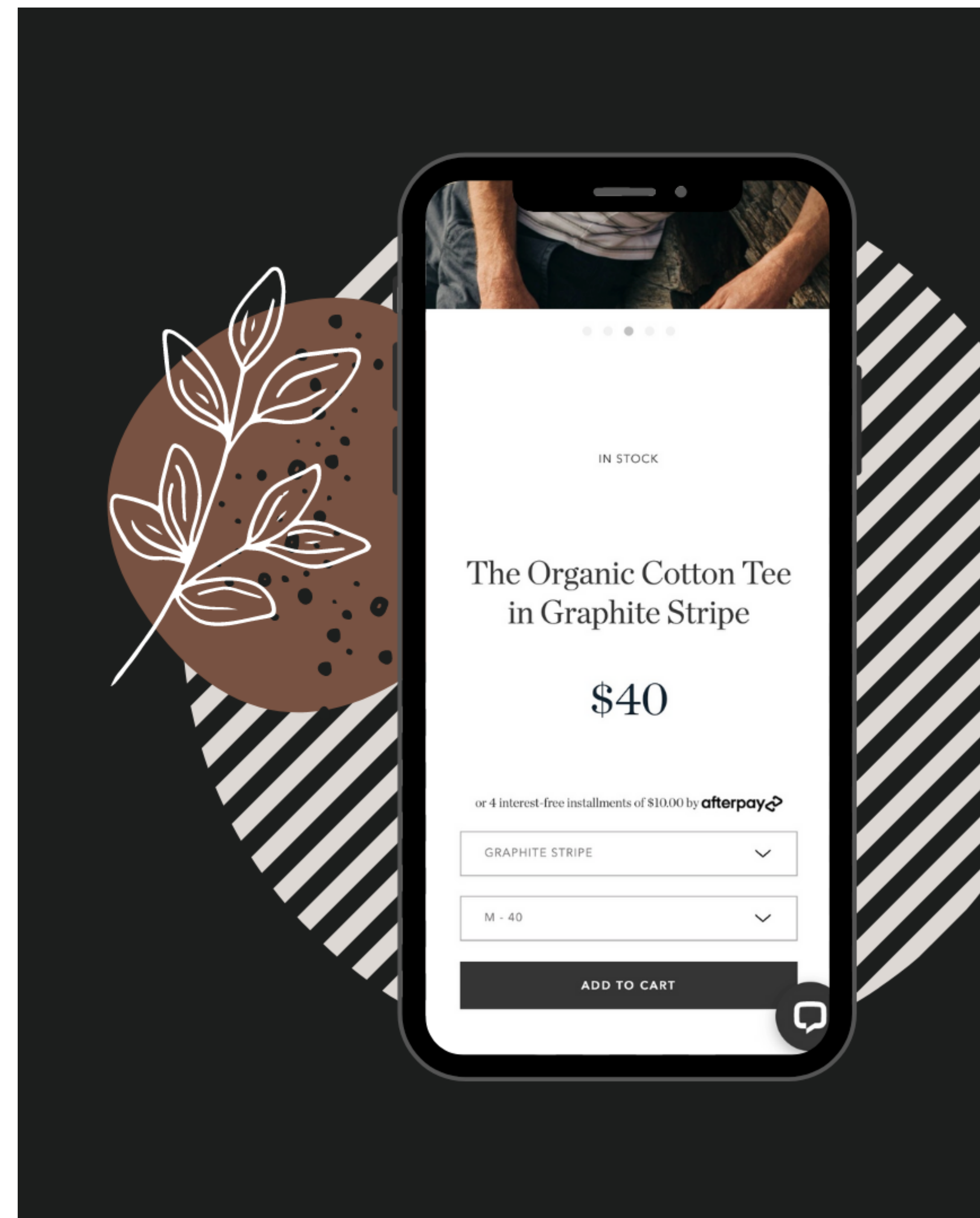
The collection page can be one of the best and most under-utilized sources of SEO. This gives each of your collections a chance to draw in visitors looking for specific brands, product types, or occasions.

If you're shopping for "Easter dresses", then making sure that is in the "Meta Description" for your easter dresses collection is important. Since you have a decent amount of space to write, you could add "Easter Dresses - Top dress styles for Easter and spring family photos". This will be much more effective than a generic "Dresses" collection.

## PRODUCT PAGE META DATA

This one may seem obvious and is likely already being done for you. This is where each product provides info to Google based on the name of the items.

One thing that this can be incredibly useful for is including brand names and style numbers for products where that may not be visible to the customer on your site. It allows you to acquire traffic via people on the hunt for a specific product while not providing that data to your customers for them to look elsewhere.





## IMAGE ALT TEXT

Lastly, the images on your sites have their own names, which is typically pulled from the file name. Google image search is one of the primary ways people shop so we want to make sure we're incorporating accurate names into our images.

 GOOD: Johnnie O Summer Polo

 BAD: drss101.jpg

Shopify makes this really easy to change as you load images. Another function of these is ADA compliance as you are giving more details about each image, which can be used by various accessibility tools. If you aren't familiar with ADA compliance, we recommend Accessibe.

## USER EXPERIENCE

One thing a lot of people don't know is that your site experience has a very real impact on your SEO.

When people visit your site and immediately click "back", google registers this as "this information must not have been right for them". If that happens enough, Google will flag your content as "literally nobody finds this relevant" (maybe take that down a few notches, but you get the idea).

There are the obvious things that help improve site experiences like photography and easy-to-use navigation. Additionally, having great content like videos and blogs keeps people on your site longer, telling google that your site is relevant to your traffic.

Additionally, and slightly less obvious, making the experience good on mobile is so important. Designers and owners tend to work on desk-top devices but most of your traffic will be mobile. By making sure the mobile experience is great, we remove any obstacles to our SEO being strong.



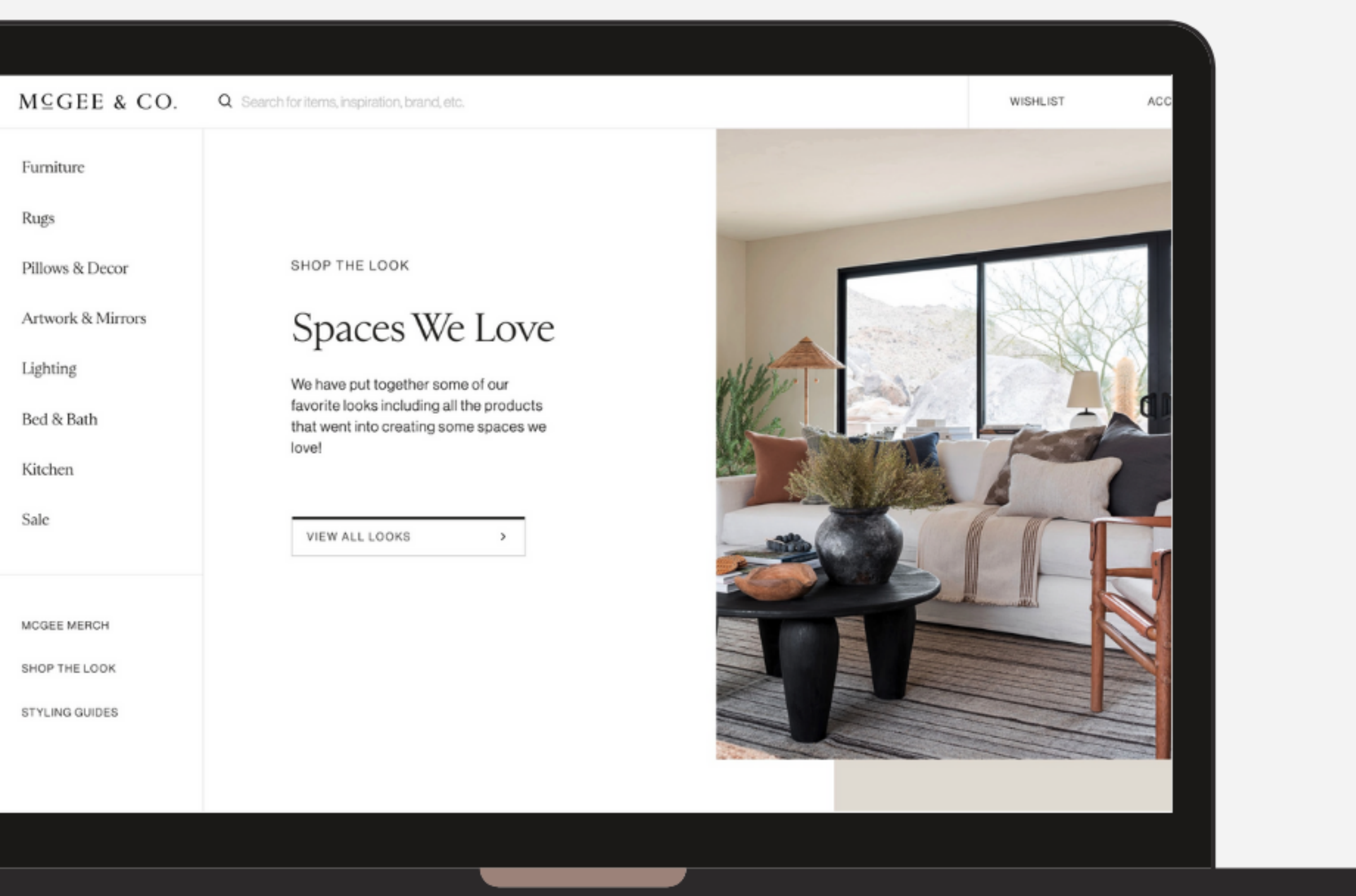
## THE 5 SECOND TEST

One of the best ways to easily judge your user-experience is through what we call the 5-second test. What's the 5-second test?

As we make our way through the internet, our brain has this little voice in the back of our head asking "Is this right for me? Is this right for me? Is this right for...."



# You've got 5 seconds



It's not intentional, it's just something we do. Think about when you've landed on a site and clicked "back" almost immediately. Was it because you thought the site was terrible? No, it was probably just because you didn't resonate with it immediately.

This is where the 5-second test comes in.

Get a friend who doesn't know a ton about your brand. Open your computer to your website (or pull up your phone) and turn the screen towards them. Without scrolling (or letting them scroll), count to 5 and then shut the screen (or take back the phone).

In just 5 seconds they should be able to answer some key questions about your brand:

1. What do we sell?
2. Who do we sell to?
3. What is our brand focused on right now?

If these questions can't be answered, then we didn't pass.

This is where effective copy, photography, and site experience comes in. If you need more help here, we would reference our design training or consider booking a free strategy session with our team.

## **GIVING DETAILS TO GOOGLE**

This one may be my favorite because it's a one-and-done thing. Though Google has little robots that roam the internet, giving Google some site details is important.

This is where loading your site map is important. It's basically giving Google the structure of your site to make their job easier.

Here's how you do that:

1. Get your sitemap by going to (fill in "yoursite" with your actual site) [yoursite.com/sitemap.xml](https://yoursite.com/sitemap.xml).
2. In your Google Search Console account (google it if you don't have one), click on "Sitemaps" then "Add a new sitemap"
3. From there, you'll paste the URL from step 1.

That's it.



## WHAT'S NEXT?

Like we said in the beginning, the goal of these things isn't to become an SEO ninja, the goal is to make sure that your SEO serves its purpose and that we aren't doing the things that hurt your SEO.

SEO is great but it's not everything. Plenty of businesses spend so much time and money on SEO and don't see results. This comes down to making sure we're asking the right questions before landing on the "what".

For most retailers, it's a matter of asking "How can I get more of my perfect customer on my site" and not "How can I improve SEO".

To help get to the right questions, we would like to invite you to a strategy session with me (Josh) or a member of my team to uncover your goals, what it will take to get there, and what's standing in the way. In this free call, you'll leave with a real strategy for getting closer to your online sales goals.

They're on an application basis and spots are very limited so if that might be beneficial for you, you can apply for one here.

In the meantime, we hope these simple strategies will get you moving in the right direction to see real traction in your online sales.