Nine types of meta descriptions that win more clicks



Are you putting enough thought into your meta description tags? If not, you're missing out. Yes, your meta description tag should describe your post but many companies and websites will go well beyond that to carefully craft descriptions that can massively increase their click-through rate from search engines.

You can do the same. We're going to take a look at nine types of meta descriptions that can help you get more clicks.

For each, I'll walk you through an example, showing you what's working well with that meta description tag and what it could potentially be doing better.

You don't have to pick just one of these methods to use. You might want to focus on a particular angle, like writing a meta description tag that's "call-to-action" focused but add in something else too like power words or a USP.

Here are nine different ways you can approach meta description tags:

1. Clarity focused

Meta description tags should be clear, letting the searcher know what they're going to get. After all, if you confuse people, they're not going to click through.



What works well

This description takes a "what it says on the tin" approach in describing the website. It's very clear about who the target audience is – "nerds and average Joes" rather than, for instance, hardcore bodybuilders. It also clearly and succinctly explains the benefits the site can provide for the searcher with the description line, "lose weight, get stronger, live better".

Room for improvement

The title tag and meta description are repetitive. The second part of the title tag (after the colon) is the same as the second sentence in the meta description. It would read better if these were both different, this would also provide room to give more information or benefits.

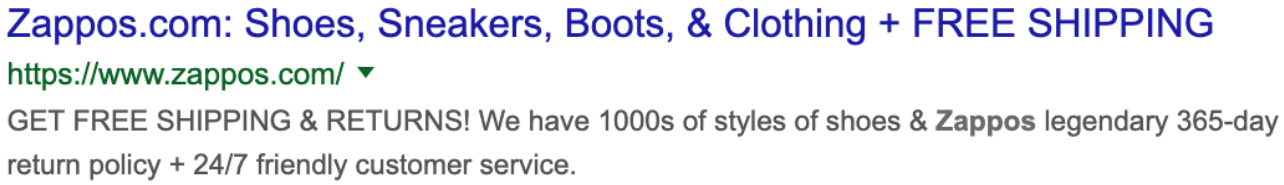
The title tag also appears to be targeting generic keywords like "lose weight", so it might be better to focus on more specific keywords here.

2. USP focused

A "USP" is a company's "unique selling point". It's something

that distinguishes their product from all the other similar products out there. The USP could be based on added value, quality, service, speed, advanced features, or almost anything else that acts as a differentiator.

Leading with a USP can work particularly work well for site homepages, where the meta description might otherwise seem rather generic.



What works well

Zappos is well known for its outstanding customer support and in the United States, it's often considered the gold standard for online businesses. Here, Zappos communicates this through several strong USPs like "free shipping and returns", "1000s of styles", "365-day return policy", and "24/7 customer service".

The word "legendary" helps emphasize how Zappos is famed for its customer service and makes them sound a bit more epic. (See point six for more on using power words in your meta description tag.)

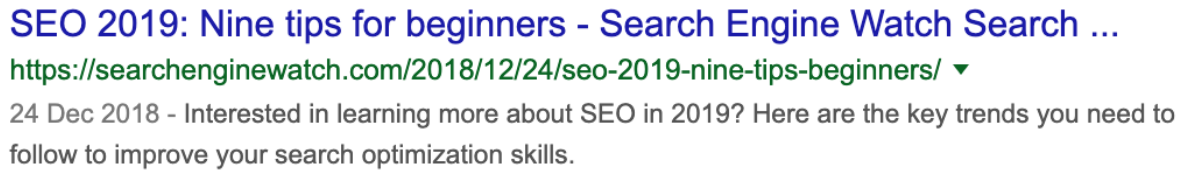
Room for improvement

This is a little picky, but all caps plus an exclamation point for "GET FREE SHIPPING & RETURNS!" comes across as a little shouty. It makes it seem like Zappos is trying a bit too hard, and doesn't really convey quite the right feel for a large, professional company.

3. Question focused

People tend to turn to search engines because they've got a question so why not ask them one to help show that you know what they're looking for?

This is my go-to type of meta description when I'm struggling with ideas and it works in almost all contexts.



What works well

If someone's searching for SEO tips, asking if they're interested in learning more about SEO will almost certainly get a positive response – they're hardly going to say "nope"! The inclusion of "in 2019" helps suggest that the advice provided will be up-to-date, and "key trends" also ties in with this, indicating that this article will focus on tips that follow the latest thinking in the SEO industry.

Room for improvement

This is very picky, but the URL and the date stamp that appear immediately before this meta description tag both include "2018". It's obvious if you think about why this is the case. This post was published at the end of 2018, looking toward trends in 2019 but it could create a brief moment of confusion for a searcher who's scanning through results quickly.

4. Purpose-focused

In some cases, it might be appropriate to emphasize a greater purpose behind your website, whether that's a particular corporate value or a very practical way in which you make a difference. This can provide searchers with an additional incentive to check out your site rather than the others.



What works well

TOMS' purpose is very clear from this short, easy-to-read description. They're not driven by profit, but instead by helping others. Even if the searcher hasn't heard of them and their "One for One" policy, it's clear what it means from the context and the ® icon helps indicate that it's a recognized and registered policy.

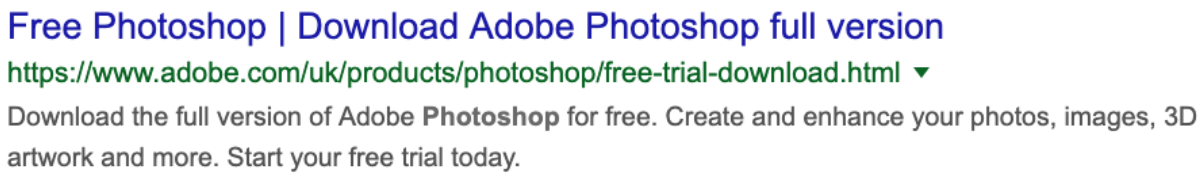
Room for improvement

It isn't actually clear what TOMS sells. They started as a company selling shoes and matching each pair sold with a new pair given to a child in need. They now sell shoes and sunglasses, but you wouldn't know that from the meta description tag above.

Note: Since the initial research for this post, TOMS has indeed updated their title tag to include shoes and sunglasses, but their meta description tag still uses the rather generic word "product".

5. Call-to-action focused

Providing a call-to-action in your meta description tag might sound unusual, but for many products, it makes great sense. A clear call-to-action can prompt searchers not only to click but to also do something once they arrive on your site.



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What works well

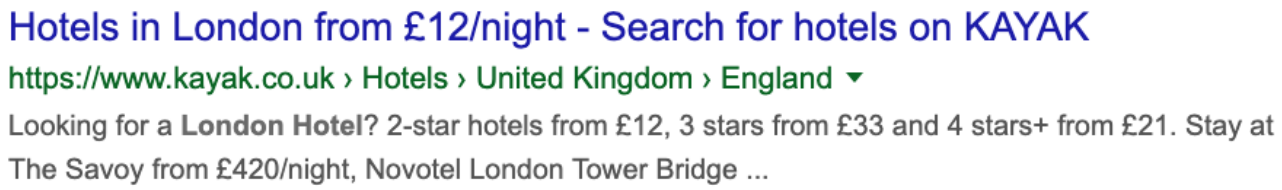
The call to action is both clear and repeated with statements like “Download the full version” and “Start your free trial today”. Having it at both the start and end of the meta description emphasizes it, especially with the word “free” being used in both places.

Room for improvement

The second sentence of the meta description tag is fairly generic, “photos, images, 3D artwork and more”. Given that Adobe is a huge brand, it might be worth it for them to try a little harder here to add more appeal to creative types, perhaps by using some stronger power words. (See point seven.)

6. Offer focused

This type of description combines a question or a point of curiosity with specific offers to entice readers to click through.



What works well

Starting with a question, as we've seen already, can help get an easy "yes". The offers here sound impressively good, a four-star London hotel for £21 definitely sounds attractive. Including details of "The Savoy" makes it clear that KAYAK isn't just for bargain hunters, though, and includes prestigious hotels too.

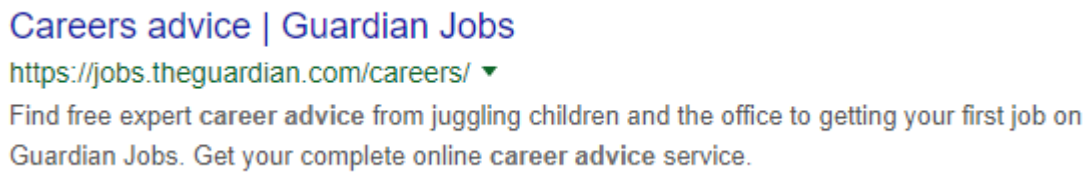
Room for improvement

I'm a bit of a stickler for making sure meta descriptions are within the limits and not truncated with the "…" at the end, but some SEOs feel this approach entices the user to click through. You might want to try using an SEO tool that helps check the meta content preview for length and strength, and see how it works for you.

It's a small detail, but it seems a little odd that KAYAK has "3 stars from £33" and "4 stars+ from £21" – which is significantly cheaper. Obviously, there are lots of reasons this could be the case (e.g. location, special details) but it might cause a brief moment of confusion or even skepticism for the reader.

7. Power words focused

Focusing on power words like “incredible”, “powerful”, “secret”, “little-known”, and so on can help make your meta description tag stand out. Smart Blogger has an enormous list of power words here if you need some more suggestions. Be careful to not overdo it, though. If you stuff your keyword description with power words, it’ll look over-hyped.



What works well

The words “free” and “expert” both work well to grab attention. “Free” is always a good promise and “expert” implies that this advice will be well worth following and ensures that it will go beyond the basics. In the final sentence, “complete” is also a good power word as it suggests the searcher won’t need to turn to any other resource if they use this one.

Room for improvement

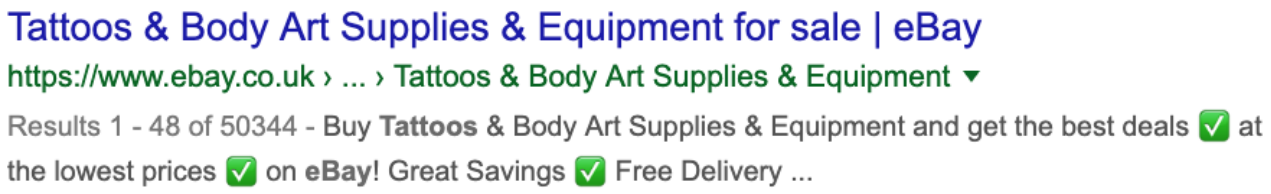
The sentence “Get your complete online career advice service” reads rather oddly. It reads more like it’s been optimized for search engines rather than for the people reading it. I’d suggest something like “We’re your complete online career advice service” or “Use our complete online career advice service” (and even those might sound a little over-optimized).

8. Special characters focused

Including symbols and emojis in your meta description tag can help it visually stand out in a sea of words. Depending on

your brand, it could tie in well with your values. For example, if you want to come across as playful, or if you're a brand aimed at teens you could focus on conveying the "fun" element.

Keep in mind that some searchers may react negatively to symbols and emojis, considering them unprofessional or even spammy.



What works well

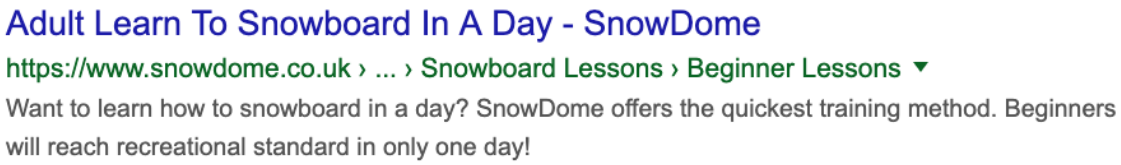
The green boxes with check marks catch the searcher's eye, drawing them to the listing. They help to highlight key points in the listing with "the best deals", "the lowest prices", and "great savings".

Room for improvement

This meta description tag is written in a rather generic way probably because eBay has automatically created it according to a set of rules. The exact same description could be used for many other pages with just the words "Temporary Tattoos" changed, so it lacks relevance.

9. Solution-focused

One final approach to meta description tags is to focus on the solution or win that you're providing for searchers. This type of meta description will promise something that the searcher will achieve through buying from the website or in some cases, simply from reading the content on a site.



What works well

This meta description tag starts with a question that searchers are very likely to say “yes” to. The question “Want to learn how to snowboard in a day?” offers a clear outcome for the reader and also brings in a USP with “the quickest training method” implying that it’s quicker than other similar companies.

Room for improvement

“Recreational standard” lacks clarity, and sounds rather like in-house lingo. Total beginners may not know what this really means, so it would be better to use language that their target audience will understand.

Meta descriptions can make or break how much SEO traffic you get. A great meta description tag will allow any page (including your homepage) to punch above its weight on Google, getting you more clicks through an increased-click through rate, potentially even a higher ranking.

Joe Williams is founder of Tribe SEO. He can be found on Twitter at @joetheseo.

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