A Content Marketer’s Guide to Every 2018 Google SERP Feature
# Contents

1. Introduction
2. What are Google SERP Features and Why are They Used?
3. SERP Features in 2018 and Beyond
4. A Full SERP List + Visuals
5. Organic: Direct Answer Box
6. Organic: Featured Snippets
7. Organic: Rich Snippets
9. Organic: Knowledge Graph
10. Organic: Knowledge Panel
11. Organic: Local Pack
12. Organic: People Also Ask
14. Organic: Site Links
15. Organic: Twitter
16. Organic: News Box
17. Paid: AdWords Top
18. Paid: AdWords Bottom
19. Where Does SEO Factor In?
20. Which SERP Features are Most Important in 2018?
21. Optimizing Your Content With SERP Features in Mind: What to Know
Introduction

Every second of every day, Google processes **63,000 search queries.** This year, we can expect more than 2 trillion searches.

There’s no way around it. We’re beholden to the search behemoth and its mystical computing power.

Did we mention Google also owns **75 percent** of all search engine market share?

This is all to say one thing: If you’re a marketer and you’re not capitalizing on the Google SERP features that are relevant to your website, something has gone scarily wrong.

Knowing how impactful indexability and site optimization are to organic rankings, it’s imperative that digital marketers understand the expanding list of Google SERP features. Not just the names but the functions, characteristics and opportunities inherent in each one.

That’s what we’ve done here. Take a look.
What are Google SERP Features and Why are They Used?

A Google SERP is a search engine results page. When you input a query into Google, the results are formatted to individual pages, often 10 per page. SERPs can contain a number of content variations, including paid advertisements, organic listings and Google-devised “features.” Google SERP features are any results that reveal more information or context beyond a standard results display; they are the natural evolution of the SERP interface.

In virtually every way, SERPs are cleaner, more accurate, more relevant and more helpful than ever. Here’s what traditional organic search results looked like a decade ago:

![Traditional Organic Search Results](image_url)
And here’s an example of 2018’s with updated features:
SERP Features in 2018 and Beyond

As you can see, a lot has changed. Google SERPs are trending toward greater dynamism, with rich media that provides users with more context upfront. In essence, searchers no longer need to click through every result to find info they need; often it is served directly to them following a query.

SERP features are growing in usage as marketers optimize their websites to allow Google to better crawl web pages and pull relevant information that users are searching for. And that’s what the overhauled SERP interface is all about: **better UX and greater relevance to match search intent.** In 2018, here is every Google SERP feature you can expect to come across.

**A Full SERP List + Visuals**

SEO software tool Rank Ranger crunches SERP numbers in real time and found paid ads (currently) appear on 15.65 percent of page one results. On the organic side, **0.28 percent of page one results display Direct Answer features. Side note: Direct Answers are also commonly called Answer Boxes, Quick Answers or Rich Answers.** Those Direct Answers most often appear as:

**Direct Answer Types** (0.28% of page one SERPs have Direct Answers)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sports</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Info</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flights</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disambiguation</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Converter</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Related Questions</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currency Conversion</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We’ve grouped SERP features into organic and paid categories for easier consumption. Let’s start with organic search.

**ORGANIC:**

**Direct Answer Box**

Short pieces of information that are public-domain facts and do not credit a source. (e.g., “how many feet in a yard” or “who was the 21 president”)

How to optimize:

Direct Answers aren’t really within your control. Because these features do not provide a backlink or citation, there’s no inherent value a brand could earn from them. Additionally, brands would not be eligible to be displayed, as only publicly available information is used.
ORGANIC:

Featured Snippets

Snippets of added context that typically credit a source and are deemed by Google to be the most contextually relevant result. Featured Snippets are served in many display formats based on the intent of the search query and the type of information to be featured. Those formats include:

Paragraphs
(e.g., FAQs, how tos, “who is,” “what is”)
Bulleted Lists
(e.g., rankings, “best of” lists)

According to ranker.com

- Robert F. Wagner Died at 76 (1877-1953) ...
- Hubert Humphrey Died at 67 (1911-1978)
- Robert M. La Follette, Sr. ...
- Lyndon B. Johnson Died at 65 (1908-1973)
- George W. Norris Died at 83 (1861-1944)
- Mike Mansfield Died at 98 (1903-2001)
- Arthur H. Vandenberg Died at 67 (1884-1951)
- George McGovern Died at 90 (1922-2012)

More items...

The Greatest Senators Post-1900 - Ranker
https://www.ranker.com/list/greatest-senators-post-1900/marka-lempke
**Numbered Lists**
(e.g., recipes, how tos, DIY tasks)

1. vegan burger recipe
   - What You’ll Need
     1. 1 tablespoon canola oil (or vegetable oil)
     2. 1 small onion (white or yellow, diced)
     3. 1 clove garlic (minced)
     4. 3 green onions (diced)
     5. 1/2 teaspoon cumin.
     6. 3/4 cup mushrooms (fresh, diced small)
     7. 1 15 oz. can pinto beans.
     8. 1 teaspoon parsley


**Tables**
(e.g., prices, rates, data)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3-month trend</th>
<th>30-year fixed rate</th>
<th>30-year jumbo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/3/2018</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>4.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/27/2017</td>
<td>4.15%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/20/2017</td>
<td>4.14%</td>
<td>4.19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/13/2017</td>
<td>4.09%</td>
<td>4.15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[9 more rows]

**Today’s Mortgage Interest Rates - Current Mortgage Rates**
**YouTube Videos**
(e.g., a standalone video, a short clip of video or a combination of video and text)

**Seals & Crofts | Greatest Hits (1975) [FULL ALBUM] - YouTube**
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LRI4MB7U8N8
Sep 24, 2015 - Uploaded by Sounds for Everyone
Seals & Crofts | Greatest Hits (1975) [FULL ALBUM] 0:00 When I Meet Them 3:38 Diamond Girl 7:54 ...

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**How to optimize:**
Although Google has the ability to pull information from your web pages and reformat it for SERPs, you make it much easier on the search engine if you pre-format your content with the intention of it qualifying for a Featured Snippet opportunity. If you want to win a Bulleted Featured Snippet, for example, you would ideally format a chunk of text into bullets and include the target keyword in a subheading. The same process follows for Tables, Numbered Lists and other forms of Featured Snippets. In general, the higher up on the page your keyword-centric copy appears, the better.

**ORGANIC:**

**Rich Snippets**

Additional lines of context beyond traditional SERP displays. (e.g., ratings, prices, availability)

**How to optimize:**
Rich Snippets require the use of schema markup, a coding language that Google uses to parse through web pages and best serve users results. Tagging your product pages with schema alerts Google that it should display your result with the additional rich context.
ORGANIC:

Rich Card (For Mobile Devices)

A cleaner, condensed mobile variation of Rich Snippets in card format.

How to optimize:

Similar to Rich Snippets, you’ll need to employ structured data markup via schema. Google provides free tagging help, HTML coding plugins and testing tools to ensure accuracy and implementation of schema.
ORGANIC: Knowledge Graph

Shows up on the right or above organic results, displaying images, factual information and more.

Google scrapes information from both Google data and external sources (in this case, Wikipedia) to feature in Knowledge Graphs, which differ from Knowledge Panels. (e.g., searches for people or organizations)

How to optimize:

Updated Google My Business accounts, websites and online directories are great ways to make information easily available to search engines and searchers. Google may pull data from a brand’s About Us page, Wikipedia page or various business listings, among others. Structuring the data on a few organization-specific pages of your website can also cue Google to properly categorize your information as eligible for Knowledge Graph results.
ORGANIC:

Knowledge Panel

Nearly identical to Knowledge Graphs, except that Google pulls information only from Google My Business listings or Google Maps.

(e.g., queries for brands)

How to optimize:

Because websites, social media channels and other directories do not impact Knowledge Panels, the only way to optimize for this SERP feature is to update your Google My Business and Google Maps — both properties of the search engine itself. In this way, if you want Google to feature you, you have to play its game and appropriately fill out all relevant info on these web applications.
ORGANIC:

Local Pack

A formatted list of local businesses as Rich Snippets below a Google Map with location points. Searchers have a high commercial intent, with location and reviews playing key roles in users’ ultimate decision-making.

Local Packs originally featured seven businesses but now show only three, meaning it’s more difficult for businesses whose web properties aren’t optimized to earn a Featured Snippet. (e.g., restaurants, hospitals, community establishments)

How to optimize:

Local Packs are based on locations, so you can show up in SERPs only if your business is geographically relevant to the search query. Filling out a Google + profile, updating your social media channels and generating positive user reviews through Google My Business and Yelp will provide enough information for Google to quickly serve your business to users in a Local 3-Pack format.
ORGANIC:

People Also Ask

Additional questions natively displayed in results that are closely related to the original query. (e.g., related questions to search queries)

How to optimize:

People also ask (PAA) operates based on relational topics and machine learning. Adding semantic search terms and similarly related keywords to your content provides more depth and context to your web pages, which Google will use to populate its manifold PAA dropdowns. What are the follow-up questions one could logically ask in reference to your target keyword phrases? Include those questions and answers in your content to stand a better chance of being featured in SERPs.
ORGANIC:

**Image Pack**

Queries that specifically refer to photos or ones that strongly necessitate relevant imagery (such as storefronts or homes) often return an Image Pack, a horizontal carousel of images. (e.g., queries best answered in photo format)

How to optimize:

Use descriptive file names, alt tags, image captions and associated copy to make your images as rich and search-friendly as possible. The pages your images live on should also have relevant page titles, URLs and unique metadata.

**Site Links**

An expanded pack of links related to a specific domain. This typically occurs when someone searches for an organization, signifying intent to glean more information or perhaps make a purchase. (e.g., Careers or About Us pages below the core domain)

How to optimize:

Site links are auto-generated by Google based on website optimization best practices and how relevant additional links may be to a search query. That means a coherent, navigable site structure and unique page-level metadata help Google understand which site links should be featured.
**ORGANIC:**

**Twitter**

A carousel of three Twitter posts with clickable images and links. Scrolling to the right reveals additional tweets. (e.g., a brand’s most recent Twitter posts)

**How to optimize:**

A regularly updated Twitter feed allows Google to cycle through trending tweets from your brand and feature them in search results. You do not need to have a verified blue checkmark on Twitter or even have a huge social following — all you have to do to be featured in SERPs is post often and encourage engagement. Tweets that have a lot of comments and retweets send strong signals to Google that your Twitter profile is relevant.

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**ORGANIC:**

**News Box**

Trending or breaking news related to a search query. Google recently retitled this feature from “In the news” to “Top stories.” (e.g., stock movements or time-sensitive topics)

**How to optimize:**

Typically, only larger news-based publishers appear in Top Stories because the intent behind this feature is to report breaking news and ideas in relation to a search query. You can still set yourself up for a chance of appearing at the top of SERPs by posting timely content on a hot topic or current event, in addition to following SEO best practices. Organizations that don’t generally publish news may find little value in Top Stories.
PAID:

AdWords Top

Through Google AdWords and based on Quality Scores, several paid ads are featured at the top of SERPs, above organic results. The green “Ad” label informs searchers they’re clicking on a paid advertisement. (e.g., shopping results, commercial sales, promotional keyword branding)

About 82,500,000 results (0.68 seconds)

Content Marketing | Understand the challenges | adobe.com
www.adobe.com/ExperienceCloud/Marketing_Cloud
★★★★☆ Rating for adobe.com: 4.7 - 1,447 reviews
Attract, engage & convert throughout the customer journey. Learn More!
Campaign Measurement · Better Content Governance · Higher Engagement · Faster Time to Market

The #1 Content Marketing Firm | Engaging Content For Influence
www.pumped.com/ (855) 473-2946
Engaging Content Created From Your Expertise To Drive Awareness & Customers.
Increase leads and sales · Op-Ed / Byline articles · Groundbreaking exposure
Highlights: Pump Up Your Content, Pump Up Authority And Credibility...
Our Difference · Why Pumped · Our Methodology · Case Studies

Better Content Marketing - percolate.com
www.percolate.com/
See the world’s leading content marketing software.
Grow your revenue faster · Increase productivity · Elevate your brand
Services: Campaign Planning, Marketing ROI Analytics, Content Marketing, Social Content Marketing

Content Marketing Planning | Fast, Beautiful And Intuitive | airtable.com
www.airtable.com/
Plan your content powerfully with the platform used by 30,000+ companies.
Gallery and Card Views · Drag & Drop File Uploads · Free to Sign Up · 350+ App Integrations

How to optimize:

Ad position is dictated by a number of factors, including expected click-through rate, relevance to the search query, quality of the ad landing page and the amount of money you’ve bid within Google AdWords, to name a few. You can influence Google to rank your ads at the top by bidding more, improving UX of the ad and targeting keywords that match the intent of your ad.
PAID:

AdWords Bottom

Paid ads featured below organic results are often cheaper, as the four most coveted ad positions (the very top) are more expensive and more competitive. They serve the same purpose as above-the-fold ads but don’t contribute to SERP crowding. (e.g., same as above)

How to optimize:

Ads at the bottom of SERPs are not ideal, as the overarching goal is to be the first visible listing for a keyword. However, Google may determine that organic search results actually serve the user more value than paid ads, despite your bidding on a keyword within an AdWords auction. On the other hand, ranking above other bottom-SERP ads is still preferable, whereby you’d want to follow the same optimization tips presented in the “AdWords Top” section.
Where Does SEO Factor in?

If Google is publishing great info directly in SERPs, then doesn’t that reduce the likelihood of a user actually clicking on a full-length result? **Yes and no.**

If your web pages do not earn a featured spot in SERPs, it means someone else has provided information that is more relevant to searchers. It also means that Featured Snippets and the like will appear above all other results, pushing your content further down the page. This is bad for your SEO, as the former glory of being on Page 1 holds less significance if you don’t actually own Position 0 (aka Featured Snippet).

Conversely, you can drive higher click-through rates, site traffic and search visibility by winning SERP features, thus improving your SEO. And as your click-through rates rise, Google’s RankBrain algorithm will begin to recalculate the value of your listings and may subsequently adjust your rankings upward.

Which SERP Features are Most Important in 2018?

Not all Google SERP features are created equally, but that’s only because they’re all respective to searcher intent. A Knowledge Panel, for instance, is not inherently more valuable than a Local 3-Pack if a user is actually Googling “cat videos” — in fact, in both cases, the SERP feature would be entirely irrelevant.

However, it may be safe to assume that since mobile, voice search and video search continue to expand their grip on internet traffic, SERP features will be likelier to return Featured Snippets containing YouTube videos and Direct Answers for simple queries.
By design, web developers should update all relevant web pages with schema markup, as this will help structure page data so search engines can more easily crawl and scrape information to serve to users in SERPs.

In the past year, however, there have been instances of brands winning Featured Snippets without utilizing schema, which can be taken as a sign that Google’s algorithms are evolving quickly. So quickly, in fact, that they’re able to scan, compile and serve information that’s unstructured, as long as those respective web pages most closely match search intent and topical relevance.

Site optimization is preferable either way.

This has been a lot to absorb, we know.

Now get out there and win the internet.