

Headings do more than break up a page. They help readers decide whether to keep reading, show how information is organized, and give search systems clues about what each section explains. In a search experience that may include AI-generated answers, clear headings can also make useful passages easier to identify and interpret.

That does not mean headings should be written for a machine instead of a person. The strongest approach is to make the subject and purpose of each section obvious to a human reader. Good **descriptive headings** support accessible **content structure** and sound **on-page SEO** at the same time.

This guide explains how to plan, write, and review headings—and how to avoid a small but revealing example of unclear communication: the form error message, “There must be an @ at the beginning.”

Why headings matter in search and on the page

Most people do not read a web page from top to bottom in a single, uninterrupted pass. They scan for the part that answers their question, check whether the page seems relevant, and then decide what to do next. Headings make that scan easier by giving each section a useful label.

Headings also create a visible outline of the page. A reader should be able to skim them and understand the main argument, the supporting points, and how the sections relate to one another. If the headings are vague or out of order, readers have to work harder to understand the page.

Search engines and AI-powered search tools also analyze page content, including its headings. A clear heading can help establish what a section is about, but it is not a guarantee that the section will appear in a search result or AI-generated answer. Headings are one signal within a much larger picture that includes the content itself, the source’s credibility, and how well the page meets a searcher’s needs.

Answer visibility is not the same as ranking

Traditional SEO often focuses on where a page appears in a list of search results. That remains important, but it is not the only way people find information. Search interfaces increasingly provide summaries, direct answers, citations, and follow-up questions. Users may get an answer without clicking through to a website—or may click only when they need more detail or want to check the source.

This means it is useful to distinguish **ranking** from **answer visibility**. Ranking describes a page’s position in a set of search results. Answer visibility describes whether a page, source, or passage is surfaced or cited in an answer experience. The two can overlap, but they are not interchangeable. A page’s heading alone cannot ensure either outcome.

AI tools are changing search behavior, not removing the need for good content. People may ask longer questions, compare answers from several sources, or use conversational prompts to explore a topic. To serve those readers, a page needs to explain ideas in a direct, well-organized way. A heading that accurately previews its section makes that information easier to navigate and interpret, whether a person arrives through a traditional result or an AI-assisted search.

Start with the reader’s question, not the keyword

Before drafting headings, write down what the reader is trying to understand or do. A useful starting point is to list the questions the page must answer, then group related questions into sections.

For a guide to email form validation, for example, readers may want to know what a valid email address looks like, why an address is being rejected, and how to fix the form's error message. Those needs suggest a more useful outline than a list of repeated variations of "email form validation."

Use search queries, support tickets, sales conversations, and customer interviews as sources of language and questions. They can help you understand how people describe the problem. They should inform the outline, not dictate awkward wording or encourage you to repeat a keyword in every heading.

Write descriptive headings that make a promise

A good heading tells readers what they will find in the section that follows. It is specific enough to be useful, but not so detailed that it becomes a paragraph. It should also match the section's actual content. If the heading promises a fix, the section should provide one—not just describe the problem.

Vague heading	More descriptive heading
Why it works better	Common issues
Why a form rejects a valid email address	Names the problem instead of asking readers to guess what the section covers.
Tips	Use an error message that tells people how to fix the address
Sets a practical expectation for the information that follows.	SEO benefits
How clear headings support page navigation and search understanding	Explains which benefits the section will actually discuss.

Descriptive does not mean long. "How to choose a heading for each section" is clearer than "Headings," without making the reader work through a full sentence before reaching the point.

Use the form error as a test of clarity

Consider the message: **"There must be an @ at the beginning."** An email address usually contains an "@" between the local part and the domain—for example, `name@example.com`—not at the beginning. The message is therefore confusing, and may even direct the user to make the wrong change.

This is a small example of a larger content problem: wording can be grammatically clear while still failing to explain what someone needs to know. The user needs to understand what is wrong and how to fix it. A better message might be:

- "Enter a valid email address, such as `name@example.com`."
- "Add an email address in the format `name@example.com`."

The same test applies to headings. Ask: if a reader sees only this heading, will they have a reasonable idea of what the seobotai.com section explains? Then check that the section delivers on that expectation. A heading such as "Email errors" may be technically relevant, but "How to fix an email address validation error" gives the reader a much clearer idea of what is inside.

When using examples like this in published content, verify the details and explain the context. A short example can make a principle memorable, but an incorrect example can undermine the point you are trying to make.

Build a logical heading hierarchy

Headings communicate relationships as well as topics. Use one main heading for the page's central subject, then organize the rest of the content into sections and subsections. In HTML, that generally means an

followed by appropriate

and

headings.

Choose heading levels based on structure, not on how large or bold you want text to appear. A heading level should reflect its place in the outline. For instance, an

should introduce a subsection within the preceding

, not a new, unrelated top-level topic. Use CSS for visual styling rather than skipping heading levels to get a particular font size.

A simple outline might look like this:

- **H1: How to validate email addresses in a signup form**
 - **H2: What counts as a valid email address?**
 - **H3: Where the “@” symbol belongs**
 - **H2: How to write helpful validation messages**
 - **H2: How to test an email signup form**

Semantic headings improve the page’s structure for assistive technologies as well as for search systems. Do not use bold text or a larger font as a substitute for a heading when the text introduces a new section.

Keep SEO fundamentals in place

Clear headings contribute to on-page SEO, but they are only one part of it. A page also needs to cover the topic accurately, answer the reader’s question, use relevant language naturally, and make its purpose clear. It should be easy to navigate and accessible on different devices.

Include the main topic in a heading when it fits naturally and helps readers understand the section. You do not need to force an exact-match keyword into every heading. Repetition can make a page feel mechanical and obscure the distinctions between sections.

For example, a guide about writing product documentation might reasonably include headings such as “Plan documentation around user tasks,” “Explain technical terms in context,” and “Review instructions with subject-matter experts.” Those headings are relevant to the topic without repeating the same phrase.

Search systems are designed to interpret meaning across a page, not simply count matching words in headings. Useful headings, relevant body copy, descriptive page titles, internal links, and accessible markup work together to

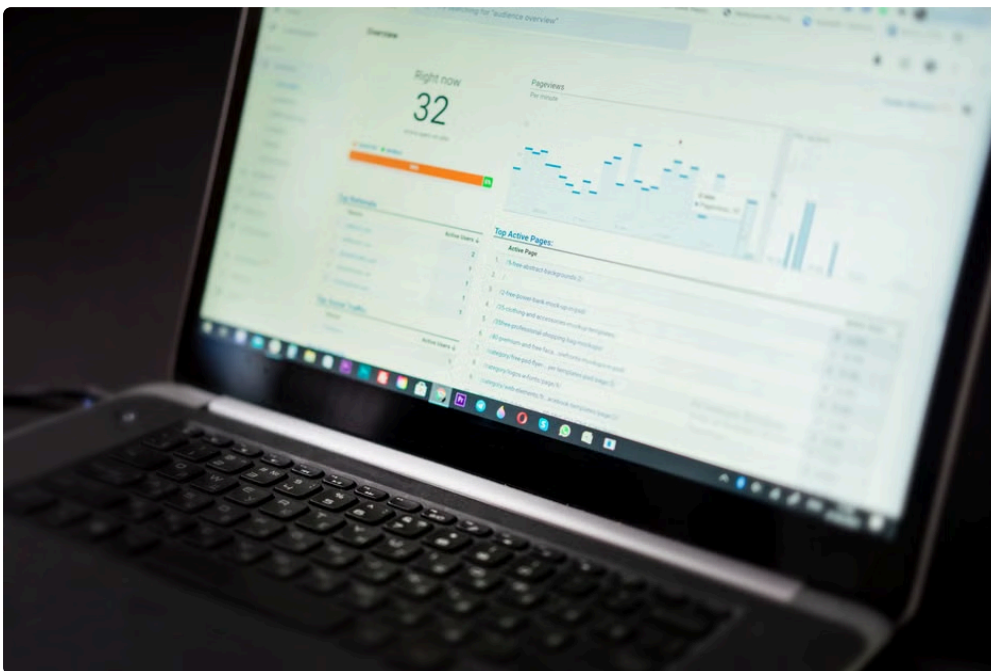
make a page easier to understand. None of these elements can compensate for thin, inaccurate, or unhelpful content.

Show subject-matter authority with evidence

AI systems can make information easier to discover, but they also make it more important to ask whether a source has something reliable to say. A confident heading does not prove that a claim is true. Content should reflect informed expertise and make important claims easy to verify.

When a section includes a specific claim, support it with appropriate evidence. Depending on the topic, that could mean citing a relevant study, linking to official documentation, explaining the method behind an analysis, or identifying the limits of the advice. If a conclusion is based on company experience, say so rather than presenting it as a universal rule.

Subject-matter experts can help catch imprecise language and incorrect assumptions before publication. Ask them to review not only the body copy but also the headings: does each one describe the section accurately, and is the framing appropriate for the evidence provided?



Clear attribution and useful sourcing help readers judge the information for themselves. They also strengthen the page's overall credibility—something no heading format or AI-specific writing trick can replace.

A practical process for writing headings

1. **Define the page's purpose.** Write down who the page is for and what they should understand or be able to do after reading.
2. **Gather the real questions.** Use customer conversations, search queries, support data, and subject-matter input to identify what the page needs to address.
3. **Group related questions.** Turn the groups into sections and arrange them in the order a reader needs them.
4. **Draft headings in plain language.** State what each section explains. Avoid empty labels such as "Overview," "More information," or "Key points" unless context makes their purpose unmistakable.
5. **Check every promise.** Read each heading with its section. Revise any heading that overstates, mislabels, or fails to preview the content.

6. **Review the outline on its own.** Hide the body copy and scan the headings in sequence. They should tell a coherent story and reveal whether a question or step is missing.
7. **Verify the evidence and markup.** Confirm factual claims with an appropriate expert or source, then check that heading levels reflect the document’s structure.

Use AI as an editor, not the authority

AI writing tools can help generate outline options, identify vague headings, or suggest simpler wording. They can also produce generic sections, repeat keywords, or invent details. Treat suggestions as drafts to review, not as proof that a heading is accurate or a section is complete.

A human editor still needs to check whether the structure reflects the reader’s priorities, whether the subject-matter claims are supported, and whether each heading matches the content below it. Automation can speed up parts of the work; it cannot take responsibility for the final judgment.

Make every heading earn its place

Headings that work for humans and AI do not depend on a secret formula. They make the page’s logic visible, describe sections accurately, and use language readers recognize. In turn, that clear structure supports accessibility, navigation, and on-page SEO—and gives search tools better-organized information to interpret.

Before publishing, return to the simple test behind the form error message: does the wording tell someone what is actually true and what to do next? If your headings answer that question for readers, and the content supports them with relevant expertise and evidence, your page is on much firmer ground.

