

**Content Marketing**  
 UNLOCKED

NEILPATEL

# Site Structure

How To **Grow Your Traffic With**  
Content Marketing

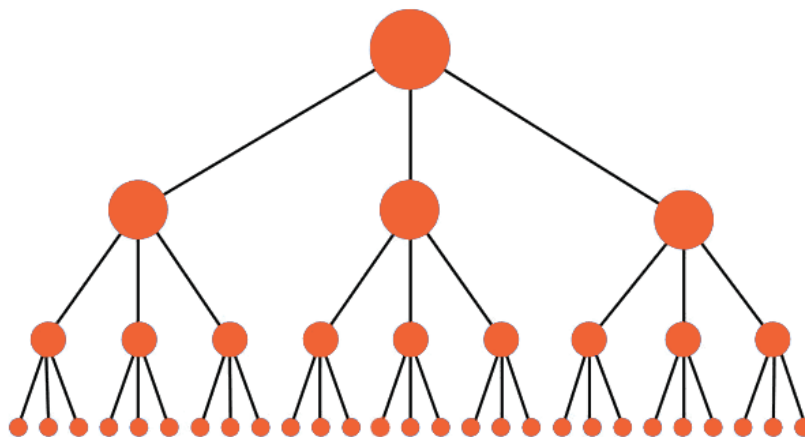
## Site Structure

### 1. Plan out a hierarchy before you develop your website.

If you're starting a website from scratch, you're in a great position to plan out site structure for the best SEO possible. Even before you start creating pages in a CMS, plan out your structure. You can do it on a whiteboard, a spreadsheet program [Excel, Google Sheets], most word processors, or something like Visio or OmniGraffle.

A "hierarchy" is nothing more than a way to organize your information — something that is simple and makes sense. Your hierarchy will also become your navigation and your URL structure, so everything important begins here.

Generally, a site hierarchy looks like this:



There are a few features of hierarchy that you should keep in mind.

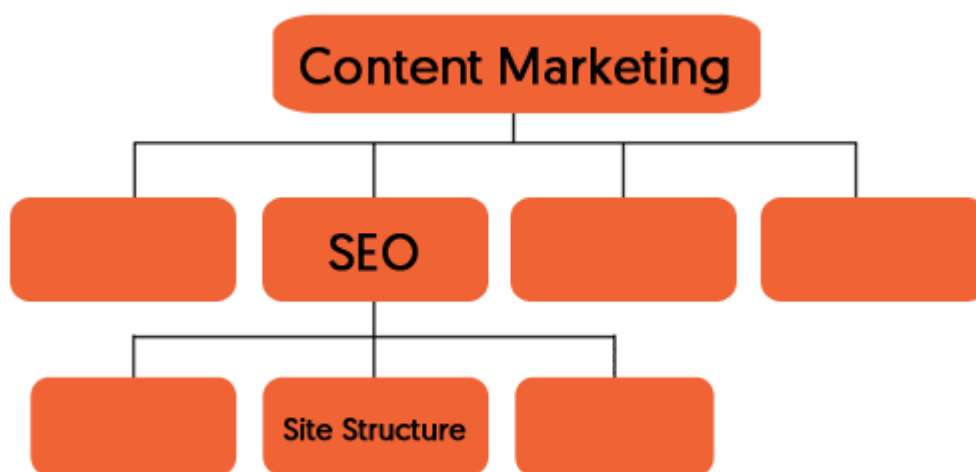
- **Make your hierarchy logical. Don't overthink or overcomplicate this process.** You want simplicity, both for your own sake and for the ease of crawlers and users. Each main category should be unique and distinct. Each subcategory should somehow relate to the main category under which it is located.
- **Keep the number of main categories between two and seven.** Unless you're Amazon.com, you don't want to have too many main categories. There should be only a few main things. If you have more than seven, you may want to rethink the organization and pare it down a bit.
- **Try to balance the number of subcategories within each category.** Basically, try to keep it approximately even. If one main category has fourteen subcategories while another main category has only three subcategories, this could become a little unbalanced.

A site hierarchy is the beginning point for a great site structure.

## 2. Create a URL structure that follows your navigation hierarchy.

The second main element in developing strong site structure is your URL structure. If you've logically thought through your hierarchy, this shouldn't be too difficult. Your URL structure follows your hierarchy.

So, let's say your hierarchy looks like this:



The URL structure for the Chinatown location would look like this:

***“ContentMarketing/SEO/SiteStructure”***

Your URL structure will be organized according to your site hierarchy. This means, obviously, that your URLs will have real words [not symbols] and appropriate keyword coverage.

### 3. Create your site navigation in HTML or CSS.

When you create your navigation, keep the coding simple. HTML and CSS are your safest approach. Coding in JavaScript, Flash, and AJAX will limit the crawler's ability to cover your site's well-thought-out navigation and hierarchy.

### 4. Use a shallow depth navigation structure.

Your navigation structure will obviously follow your site hierarchy. Make sure the pages, especially important ones, aren't buried too deep within the site. Shallow sites work better, both from a usability and crawler perspective.

### 5. Create a header that lists your main navigation pages.

Your top header should list out your main pages. That's it. My website blog at Neilpatel.com uses a very simple top navigational footer with minimal subcategories. This accomplishes everything I need.

Adding any other menu elements apart from your main categories can become distracting and unnecessary. If you've designed a parallax site, be sure to provide a persistent header menu that displays through each scrolling phase.

While dropdown menus using CSS effects or disappearing menus may provide a unique or intriguing user experience, they do not enhance SEO. I advise against them. I also advise against using an image-based navigational structure. Text links with appropriate anchors provide the strongest form of SEO.

If you have a footer with menu links, be sure to duplicate the main links of your top navigational menu in your footer navigation menu. Changing the order of links or adding additional category listings will complicate the user experience.

## 6. Develop a comprehensive internal linking structure.

Internal linking puts meat on the bones of a logical site hierarchy. They are important because:

- It establishes the information hierarchy for a site.
- It allows users to navigate throughout a website easily.
- It helps spreading link juice or in other words: Ranking power for websites.

Each of these is directly tied to creating a tight-knit and well-integrated site structure.

There's no need to get complicated with internal linking. The basic idea is that every page on your website should have some link to and some link from another page on the website. Your navigation should accomplish internal linking to the main categories and subcategory pages, but you should also make sure that leaf-level pages have internal linking as well.

Internal linking tells the search engines what pages are important and how to get there. The more internal linking you have across all pages, the better.