Describe Contents

In addition to specifying the document's character-set and expiry date, **<meta>** tags can be used to provide information that may be used by search engines. This offers no guarantee of high ranking, however, as search engines also use other page information for that purpose – especially the document title. Typically, a Search Engine Results Page (SERP) will show the meta description in search results below the page title.

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is highly prized to ensure a web page will appear at the top of a SERP to increase traffic to a website. Unfortunately, there is no sure-fire technique to achieve this as the search engines constantly change the algorithm by which pages are ranked. It is, however, useful to provide metadata that describes the page content.

Descriptive **<meta>** tags have a **name** attribute that is assigned a "description" value, and a **content** attribute that is assigned a description of the page contents.

The description should be between 50-160 characters long, as lengthy descriptions may be truncated. The description should include keywords relative to the text content. For example, a search for "italian ceramics" could return all web pages with "italian" and "ceramics" in their description.

The description serves as advertising copy so a readable, compelling description using important keywords will encourage visits to the page from a SERP. You should not repeat keywords in the description, but do try to use the plural form for keywords – to match searches made with both the single and plural form of that word. Additionally, you should not include double quotation marks in the description as Google may truncate the description at a double quotation mark.

If a website contains pages of identical or very similar content, you can specify which page is to be indexed by including a "canonical link" in your HTML code to indicate the preferred source. This uses a **<link>** tag containing a **rel** (relationship) attribute to specify a "canonical" value, and an **href** (hypertext reference) attribute to specify the URL address of the preferred page.

Don't forget

All search engines find pages to add to their index – even if the page has never been submitted to them.

Hot tip

Always include the three most important keywords in the description.

1 Create a barebones HTML document

```
<!DOCTYPE HTML>
<html lang="en">
<head>
<meta charset="UTF-8">
<!-- More metadata to be inserted here. -->
<title>Tuscan Home Decor</title>
</head>
<body> <h1>Beautiful Tuscan Ceramics</h1> </body>
</html>
```

HTML

keywords.html

2 Insert a metadata description of the web page

```
<meta name="description" content="Explore our
extensive range of high quality italian ceramics including
tuscan majolica, dinnerwares, vases, plates, and bowls">
```

3 Next, in the head section, add an element to specify that this page is the preferred page for indexing purposes

```
<link rel="canonical"
      href="https://www.example.com/keywords.html" >
```

4 Save the document then visit the Chrome Web Store at **chrome.google.com/webstore/category/extensions** and search for "seo" to add a search engine analysis extension

5 Open the HTML document in the Google Chrome web browser then use the analysis tool to see the meta data

On-page data report ✕

Title	✅ Tuscan Home Decor	HTML	17 chars
Description	✅ Explore our extensive range of high quality italian ceramics, tuscan majolica, dinnerwares, vases, plates, and bowls.	HTML	117 chars
Canonical URL	https://www.example.com/keywords.html		Self-canonical
Robots Meta Tag	index		
X-Robots-Tag HTTP	——		
H1	Beautiful Tuscan Ceramics		

Hot tip

There are a number of free meta tag generators available online – enter "free meta tag generator" into a search engine.