

Search Optimization for Blogs

Video 4

Hi, welcome back. Now we're going to cover search engine optimization for blogs. This is an especially important topic because most blogs derive a fairly significant chunk of their traffic from search engines, in particular Google. We're going to focus on Google in this presentation because with the 80/20 rule, you go wherever the most traffic is and where you're more likely to get the most traffic.

The thing with what we're going to talk about is this: a lot of this will happen regardless of anything I tell you now, if you simply put out good content on a consistent basis. We're not talking about content production in this series of videos. You should be doing that already. You have that covered. You know how to do that. Make that your daily ritual and get content flowing. If you do that, more than half the battle is already won for the search engine optimization of your blog.

Now reporting back statistics from my own blog, almost throughout the entire existence, Google traffic has accounted for 30-50% of its traffic. That's been a figure that's continued to grow over time. It obviously goes to show that Google is a huge source of traffic for blogs and is something you need to tap into.

The great thing about search engine traffic is that it's almost always fresh, so you're not tapping into repeat visitors in the sense that they've come to your blog before. They're new visitors. Why is that important? Because new visitors are likely to do a few certain things that you really want them to do – for example, join your email list.

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Once a person's on your email list, they're on your email list, so you need to find new sources of audience in order to build your email list. The same goes with just subscribing to your RSS feed or even clicking an advertisement on your blog. Your repeat visitors see the advertisements on a daily basis or whenever they read your blog, so they get less and less likely to click ads over time.

New visitors, the first time they see the ad, they're more likely to click an ad and it's more likely that you will make some money as a result. You need to focus on getting these search visitors, because they're fresh and they're new.

What we're going to do is look at two aspects of optimizing your blog for search engines. One is the internal aspect, the parts of your blog you can control, and the other is the external aspect of your blog, which are really sections you can't control. I should say it's not really of your blog – it's everything outside your blog – that's why I say it's the external aspects of SEO. These are all the other websites and all the other components of the Internet that could influence your blog's ranking in search engines.

Before I dial into this, though, I want to give you a tip in terms of how you can find what sites are ranking well for whatever terms and assess what you need to do, so you can get a nice benchmark figure for where you are now versus where you want to get to.

This is actually quite easy and obvious. All you have to do is head into Google. Do a search for a particular keyword phrase that you are personally trying to rank for (or anything you're trying to find a top site for), and find the #1 ranked webpage for that term.

Google will deliver what it thinks is the best content for that search phrase and then you can take a look at that content and see what makes it the best. You can do all kinds of things, like check the number of incoming links to that website. You

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can check what headline they're using, what content they're using, how many words are in that content, or what the overall design of the site is.

There are little things like that where you can get insights into what is already working for other people, so as always there's no need to reinvent the wheel here. There are already people ranking for the terms that you want to rank for, or at least possible industries and phrases that you might be targeting, so you can get the insider information, even though it's not really insider information because it's available any time you want to do a Google search.

If you're a little bit lost and confused with what you're doing now, go to Google. Just see what's ranking well and that will give you the first benchmark to run with.

Now we're going to dive into the internal optimization of your blog. This is actually going to be very brief, because you've already done this. I say that you've already done this, because we've already talked about structuring a blog for searches and rankings when we covered all kinds of things like certain plugins you can install in your blog.

I'm just going to go over the key elements that you need to control for the internal optimization in terms of the most important elements when it comes to ranking. But bear in mind, if you've already installed the SEO title or the All In One SEO Pack for WordPress, two different plugins there, they both control some of the key elements I'm about to describe to you.

And of course, if you're using WordPress then you already have a fairly good framework of a nice website structure for ranking well internally, including things like nice archives and so forth. Of course, if you're following the instructions within Become A Blogger, the premium program or even just the free videos, you'll be told about things like setting up a site map and using a site map plugin

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and plugging that into the Webmaster Tools at Google, which will give you a site map structure.

These are things that get your blog set up as a nice framework for all that content to be put into and then start building up your ranking. The elements that you want to look out for, and these are the most important things you should have in your awareness – what I want you to do is to become consciously aware of these things as you're writing blog posts because that will give you the ability to make smart choices when it comes to how you put content into your blog.

So the first thing to consider is the headline or the title. These are two different things and you want to be careful here, because often they're the same, and that's the reason why we use a plugin so we can control the headline and the title.

The headline is just the section of the blog, of your article, that explains what it's about: how to do something. That's the bit that goes in the blog post. The title is actually the section called the blue bar at the top of the browser, and that's often the same as the headline, unless of course you have a certain plugin set out where you can change that manually.

Generally you don't need to manually change it, and the title will be the same as the headline, so whatever you name your article will be the title and headline for your blog. That is the most important element in terms of internal SEO that you can control, so you want to be very careful and selective when you're writing these headlines for your blog posts, because it will have a significant impact on how that article ranks in Google.

There's not much I can tell you here besides the obvious. Use keyword phrases that are relevant to the subject of that blog post and you'll rank well for them. You have to be careful here, though, because you don't want to make your

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headline too incomprehensible for a human being. You should always think of your reader first, not the search engine.

If you can hit both birds with one stone and get a great headline for human beings that includes a fantastic keyword phrase or a couple of important keywords that will rank well and deliver traffic, then that is the outcome we're going for here.

Consider that first, and I know from my own personal experience of writing my blog posts, I'll write a whole article and then I'll go and spend a whole ten minutes trying to get a headline that I think actually fits the article for my readers and also gets the right keywords in there. That's the section where you might need to play with and get better in terms of producing good headlines, which in turn produce good titles.

The other things I'm about to tell you are tagging. Tagging is effective and it's worth doing. Once again, if you've got the latest version of WordPress or the right plugins if you have an older version of WordPress, then you will have the function to put in keyword tags, and I recommend to people in the content videos – I've already talked about this – is putting in 6-10 keywords that are not necessarily in the article but relate to the article, complementary words, and you put them into the tag section for that article. That just helps to get more search results for those tags.

What you'll find is that those tags will start turning up in Google search results, delivering more traffic to you. It's definitely worth adding tags to every article that you publish.

I've already mentioned the importance of headings. There are multiple levels to headings, so obviously what I was talking about before was the first heading, often called H1 heading.

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If you're looking at HTML code, it's the H1 tag, but you also have subheadings within an article, and it pays to actually make your subheadings use the HTML code of H2.

Obviously I'm not showing you a webpage now and I'm not trying to teach you how to do code, but this is a very simple lesson. If you can put subheadings within an H2 tag and a close H2 tag, then I'll just give you a little bit of a boost for those headline phrases, so it's worth learning that, at least for the purposes of your subheadings. I'll leave it at that.

It may be too confusing for you, but if you know what I'm talking about, do it. Of course, internal linking is really something that should happen organically and by that I mean you should be linking to your own posts when you write an article.

The reason why that's important for search engines, and you may not realize this, but Google doesn't look at your website as a whole website. It actually looks at each individual page as an individual page, each one independent. That page gets a ranking, some sort of status in the search engine. By writing a blog post that then links back to your previous blog post, you're actually helping your own site and each of those individual pages are helping each other to rank better.

Because that's easy and there's no barrier to you doing that, Google's not going to give you magic powerful rankings, just because you link to your own pages, but it does help.

When I'm writing an article and there's a definition I cover – for example, talking about something you'd do with this subject right now – search engine optimization – there's a phrase that often comes up when you're talking about search engine optimization, called "page rank". I'm not going to explain to you what page rank is, but I have written an article about page rank.

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So if I'm talking about search engine optimization in the future, I will internally link the words "page rank" in that article to my previous article that I wrote about page rank.

You should become aware of the definitions of content that you've written in the past or any relevant articles you've written in the past that are important to what you're currently writing, and refer back to them. That will just help with your overall internal linking structure and it's just smart SEO practice and it's easy, so do it.

Finally, on this point of internal optimization, the whole point of all of this – and this is becoming more and more important and I've had lots of discussions recently with people who are interested in search engine optimization and studying this area – is the concept of natural writing.

This will not blow you away. Natural writing is like it sounds. You're basically sitting down and writing in a natural format, like humans should do. The thing is, the people who work in the search engine optimization world often get caught up with keywords and trying to manipulate searches and results.

As a result of that, the writing can become less than natural. It looks more as if it had been written by a technical person trying to optimize for a search engine than it does like it was written by a human being who is writing to entertain or educate other human beings.

Google wants to deliver traffic where value is, and it values natural writing and people writing about valuable content in a natural style. It doesn't value people trying to manipulate its search engine rankings by trying to stuff keywords in there or repeat certain phrases or use a certain HTML code in a certain fashion. All of these manipulation tactics are having less of an effect and Google is looking for signs of natural writing.

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The great thing about this is that you don't have to work to do natural writing. Just do it. Just write natural content and naturally you'll get the right type of keywords in there. I don't want to make this into a highly technical presentation, because search engine optimization can be very technical.

There's a term called LSI – Latent Semantic Indexing – and that's an aspect of the way that Google ranks pages that can sound very confusing. All it really means is that Google looks for words that are similar in nature and complementary. So you might have a blog about the subject of tennis, and you'd have certain phrases and keywords that are related to tennis but not exactly the same.

“Roger Federer”-would be what people would call an LSI keyword for the phrase “tennis” or any article written about tennis. So what you do when you're writing naturally is use these LSI keywords, just because that's the way you write. If you're writing an article about tennis, you're probably going to mention tennis players.

The good thing about organic or natural writing is you'll start to feed Google all these LSI keywords, these complementary keywords that it looks for to use when it comes to ranking your content and valuing it, not just for the key phrases that article is focused on, but similar key phrases.

In a nutshell, focus on natural writing when you're writing your blog posts.

Think about your headline. Include tags. Make sure you link to your other internal posts on your blog. Just do that – and do it every time you write content or publish anything on your blog, and you will be handling your internal optimization as well as you need to.

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I know that's the truth because that's all I do. I don't do anything more than that. I'm not crunching keywords. I'm not doing massive searches to find where the traffic is. I'm writing naturally. I'm making sure my headlines are good. I'm including tags. I'm linking to my other blog posts.

Do a Google search for any of the terms that relate to my blog and you will see it ranks usually on the first page for most of the relevant terms, so this definitely works.

We'll move on now to external optimization of your blog. The second half of the search engine optimization process is looking at your external optimization of your blog. This is actually a lot harder than the internal aspect, because you're trying to manipulate what other people do, and that's always difficult.

The word 'manipulate' might have a negative connotation. You're not really trying to convince people to do something they don't want to do; you're just trying to encourage them to link to your blog. Really, I can make this very simple for you. All external optimization is just getting incoming links from other websites to your blog.

You can break this down into multiple layers, and I'll cover some of the basics here, but I want you to understand that at the heart of it is all external searches and optimization is about and that's why it's difficult, because unless you do something to warrant a link, you don't get any.

That makes it difficult to rank well, because Google will look to what sites link to your site as a way to determine the value of your content and also what phrases it should rank well for.

Let's take a look at that now. There are two concepts you want to consider when it comes to external links or links coming into your website. They are the concepts

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of authority and trust. Authority and trust just refer to some sort of valuation of a website. Every website out there has a level of authority and it might have a level of trust as well.

There are two subtly different terms there. 'Authority' simply means your website or blog has gained some sense of reputation, and that usually comes about because of all kinds of different characteristics. Your blog needs to have existed for a significant amount of time. During that time, how often was content published – daily, weekly?

Was it consistently adding new content? How was your link growth? Were you getting one link a day, one a month? Where were these links coming from? All of these things combine to give your site a sense of authority.

There are some other things as well. How long does a person come and read your website? Is your blog read for ten seconds and then they leave, or is it read for 2-10 minutes? The longer a person stays indicates a more authoritative website.

What happens is that all of these variables are combined and you get some kind of authority perception in the eyes of Google. The better the authority is, the more traffic they will send you and they will rank you higher in search results. That's authority.

Now trust is a little bit different and still a little bit of a gray area. I can't really verify this because it's an assumption that search engine optimization people are making based on some testing they've done, but ultimately this is what Google is doing. We don't know what Google is doing because we're not Google employees, so everything I'm saying here is kind of like a little bit of guesswork backed up by quite a lot of test work.

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You can get some real metrics from what the search engines tell you, but ultimately we don't know how the algorithms work behind Google. Trust is one of those things that we are a bit ambiguous about. When I say 'we,' I mean people who optimize websites for search engines.

Trust is essentially a bunch of websites that have been whitelisted. They've been given the stamp of approval as a trusted website. The way we get that trust is pretty arbitrary. It's often now just applied to you because your website is a brand name company's website or you've got some sort of governing body that controls your website that Google knows about and that gives it trust.

Wikipedia is a good example of that. You probably know the website Wikipedia. It ranks in Google always as the first, second, or third result for most keyword phrases, particularly if it's a name of something. The reason that happens is that Wikipedia has very high trust. It's very much trusted by Google, so Google gives it lots of traffic.

The reason why Google trusts that website is because Wikipedia has a very strong structure of how content is created and moderated. And because Wikipedia has a history of demonstrable proof of content, it's considered trusted. The same would apply to any website that's run by the company for whom that website is a brand name.

The Coca Cola website would be considered the trusted website for any search phrases related to Coca Cola. That's why Coke.com or CocaCola.com will rank higher than any other website related to Coke. Now that's not the only reason, but that is definitely a factor. It has trust for that phrase.

You could almost say that my own website has trust for the phrase 'Yaro'; however, it's more a case of having authority for that phrase in that situation and not trust, because I'm not a big, well known brand name company and I'm not the

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size of Wikipedia. This trust label is really only put on the top level websites, the really well known, worldwide, famous websites that are on some kind of whitelist.

Google applies this at its discretion. Why this matters to you is if you get a link from one of these trusted websites, that carries a lot of value and helps you get high authority. It's important to understand that what you're trying to do is get links that point to your blog from the high authority and the trusted websites.

So if you just want to ignore everything I've said, any website out there that already has a lot of content, a lot of readership, a lot of incoming links, and gets a lot of great search results already within Google is considered an authoritative and trusted website to a degree. If you get a link from them, that's helping you become authoritative as well. That is ultimately your goal with external optimization.

Everything I've talked about in the previous presentation about using your content and seeding it around the Internet as a way to deliver traffic back to your site actually helps with your SEO as well. When I was talking about that, I was really referring to bringing real human beings to come and read your content.

When that happens, you're actually generating links. A person has to follow a link to get to your blog, so as a side effect – and a very good one – of your marketing techniques and doing everything I talked about in the previous videos, you're actually helping your external optimization for your blog as well.

That's a really important point to make. I don't have to teach you anything else regarding external optimization because you know how to do it already. You have the techniques. You have guest writing. You have commenting, forum marketing. You have Ezine Article marketing, publicity, writing free reports, videos, doing podcasting – all of this will generate links back to your website. It can't not happen if you're marketing your blog.

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That will cover the external optimization of your blog. A very important point though, and I want to stress this, just like natural writing style is what Google is looking for in your internal optimization of your blog, it's looking for a natural or organic growth of the number of incoming links to your blog as well.

By this I mean that you can't within the space of 24 hours suddenly have 1,000 new links pointing into your blog. That would indicate that you probably paid money for them, so it wasn't a case where you were given those links because you actually produced something of value.

So what Google is looking for is seeing you naturally get more links that build up over time. Maybe in the first month you only get five new links because it's a difficult time during the early period, but then as you become more well known, you start building ten new links, 20 new links a month, even one a day, two a day. Maybe you'll get something really significant happening like a really important blog will link to your blog, and that might grow you 20 new links in 24 hours.

That's not going to flag it; Google's looking for any really unusual link growth rates. That's viewed as suspicious. So what you're trying to do here is organically grow your links over time. I know that's going to work for you because it's worked for me in all the websites I've grown.

Of course, that's why it can be frustrating at the beginning, because you're not going to get top Google search rankings immediately. You need to grow your links over time and then what you'll see, if you do some keyword searches, your blog or blog articles anyway will just start to rise slowly in the search engine results, and the higher you get in those results, the more traffic you get. It's as simple as that.

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Really, if you want to put this into two very simple concepts, you're looking for natural content writing and natural link growth. Those are the two things – internal and external optimization – that will help you get lots of traffic from Google and also from other search engines.

That's all I want to cover in terms of internal and external optimization. Not too challenging bit of work there that needs to be done.

There is one concept I want to cover though that is really important, especially nowadays with the increasingly competitive blogosphere and Internet space we all play in. There are a lot of websites competing for phrases, trying to get search traffic from Google, because Google really does deliver the lion's share of traffic online, especially free traffic.

The concept I'm referring to is the long tail. You may or may not have heard this. I'm going to give you a brief introduction because it does play a heavy part on optimizing your blog for search engines, at least on a conceptual level.

The long tail was a phrase coined by Chris Anderson, who first used it in an article he wrote in *Wired* magazine, which then eventually led to him publishing a book of the same name, *The Long Tail*.

I read this book and the article. I've written my own article on the long tail. It's been a very influential concept on the Internet, in particular as it relates to online commerce and making money on the Internet, because it allows people to use a new business model.

How the long tail works is like this. I'm going to refer to it in two different ways. There's the e-commerce model and then there's the model as it relates to our search engine rankings. Amazon.com, the bookstore, is the best e-commerce model available for the long tail.

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What the long tail actually refers to is a graph, to show the distribution of sales of lots of products. I can't show it to you in this presentation, but we'll definitely get it up in the practical presentations to go along with this once I ask Gideon to do so.

With Amazon, the comparison to make here is to take Amazon as an online bookshop and then to compare it to Barnes & Noble or Borders or any kind of physical, real-world bookshop. The physical, real-world bookshop can only sell a certain number of books and it doesn't carry every single book. It just carries usually the most popular, and this is often called the short tail.

It carries the most popular books and sells a lot of copies of those popular books. It relies on the best sellers – *The Da Vinci Code*, *Harry Potter* and so forth – to make its money, and it doesn't try to carry everything about everything.

Amazon, on the other hand, does. It has a virtual inventory; therefore, it can stock many more books and in fact can potentially stock every single book in publication. Because of that, it can make sales of lots of different small niche topic areas, and in fact, it may only sell one copy of a certain book, or 2-200. What happens is that it will sell a small amount of lots of different books. This is called the long tail.

The reason why Amazon can be successful is that it doesn't need to depend on selling millions of copies of *Harry Potter*. It can sell millions of copies of millions of different books and make more money than a traditional bookstore which has limited inventory.

That's the e-commerce definition of the long tail. Because of the economies of scale we get online, we don't have the limitations of physical inventory and we can provide a whole range of categories across millions of niches and make a lot

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of money in the long tail. Amazon is one example. iTunes is another example within the music industry and video and movie industry.

There are a lot of examples of that, where because of the lack of limitations of storage, you can provide basically anything you want and make lots of money selling to the long tail.

Now that applies to us as bloggers as well, because we're actually looking to tap into somewhat of a long tail – certainly not millions and millions, but we can do thousands and hundreds of thousands of search phrases with our blogs.

Why is this important? When you write a blog article, there is very little chance that you can hit the very most popular Google search phrase. So in my industry that would probably be the phrase “make money online.” My blog is in the internet marketing industry and the most popular phrase people type about my industry into Google is “make money online” or “how to make money online” or something like that.

That gets a lot of traffic when people search for that phrase, but there are a lot of people competing to get that phrase and get the top ranking for it. There's no point going for that phrase unless you're an organization of significant size, in my opinion anyway.

A much smarter practice is going for lots of more specific niche phrases, such as “how to make money online using blogs to sell products in the dog industry.” That's a very specific niche and it's a derivative of “how to make money online” but it takes it a step or two further down.

Each article you publish on your blog is actually tapping into a different long tail phrase. Case in point, my blog now has over 1,000 articles. I've been writing it for over four years, as we record this. That's about 250 articles per year and with

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1,000 articles out there now, each one of those articles has lots of different keywords in it and ranks for lots of different long tail keyword phrases.

So those 1,000 articles might be showing up in search engines for 100,000 to millions of different keyword phrases within Google. Because of the breadth of that, I'm able to tap into lots of different traffic. Even if one keyword phrase only brings in five visitors a day, I've got thousands of keyword phrases that could potentially do that.

So what you're aiming to do with your search engine optimization here is actually be prolific with your content production, because that actually helps you tap into long tail phrases.

If you study John Reese, he'll call this the "owning of the Internet" or "own more of the Internet." All he's saying there is get more content out there! Get more pages that could show up in search results, because that will get you more traffic. That's a really key point as bloggers. We need to own more of the Internet!

I've already told you the importance of writing content on a regular basis, simply for building audience, and this ties right back into that. You're building audience through attracting traffic from search engines because you're owning more of the Internet by publishing more content.

Right now if you're not writing at least one article every other day, or two to three a week – and I think it should be daily if you're just getting started in this world – then you're not going to scale up quickly. This is going to be a long slow process for you.

But if you can stay consistent at one article per day, then at the end of a year you have 300+ articles in your blog archives, which are going to show up for lots of different keyword search phrases, and you can't help but get traffic from Google.

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That covers the concept of long tail. What I want to jump into, just to end this presentation now, is the idea of tracking this. I've just given you some ideas of how to get traffic from search engines. I've told you that Google will send you traffic; now I need you to prove that to me or prove it to yourself, and I want you to check your statistics.

There are a couple of ways you can do this. The first way is obvious. Get yourself set up with a statistics package like Google Analytics. If you type in Google Analytics, you'll be able to get that service. It's free, you install it onto your blog, and you can immediately get all kinds of fantastic statistics about what kind of traffic you're getting.

Most importantly, you can get statistics on the keyword phrases that people type into search engines, which then result in you getting traffic. That will prove to you what traffic is coming to your blog and you'll see it grow over time.

You can also do something like use the Yahoo! Site Explorer service. Type that into a search engine and find that. It's also free and will let you look up the backlinks or the new links you've generated externally, pointing to your blog. This is kind of cool, because you can check all the different websites that actually mention your blog and you may not realize how many do so.

It could be someone in an obscure forum who's linked to one of your articles at some point that you don't know about. It's worth using these kinds of tools – a backlink checker, Google Analytics, and you can also use the webmaster tools from Google to enhance that, and just watch your trends. That's the point here.

Nearly every student who has gone through my programs and actually consistently produced content will get back to me after a month or three and will say, "Wow, Google finally started sending me ten visitors a day, 100 visitors a day,

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500 visitors a day, and it just happened overnight!” What will often happen is Google will start ranking you well because you’ve been consistently putting out content.

So you need to use the statistics services to monitor this and see the trend growth. I want you to see just the slow growth, just enough to encourage you to keep doing what you’re doing. That really is the motivation behind checking your statistics. It’s very practical and it’s also motivation to keep you moving forward.

It was very important to me during my first year of blogging because that first six months I didn’t have much traffic. It took me a good six months to reach a couple of hundred visitors a day, but I kept doing it and as long as I kept seeing a slight improvement, week after week, I knew given a year or maybe even more, I would get to a place where I was trying to get to. It’s important to use this as a tool to motivate you.

That wraps up the presentation on search engine optimization. I hope you have a grasp now of internal and external optimization, that you understand the importance of natural content writing and organic link growth, and of course that you have a picture of how the long tail works and how this integrates with what you’re trying to achieve with your blog and getting search engine results there. That’s it for this one. I’ll see you in the next video.