

# The best of joomlablogger.net

Kristoffer Sandven





# The best of joomlablogger.net

written by

Kristoffer Sandven  
Founder and author

The blog: [www.joomlablogger.net](http://www.joomlablogger.net)

Facebook page: [www.facebook.com/joomlablogger](http://www.facebook.com/joomlablogger)

Twitter: [www.twitter.com/joomlablogger](http://www.twitter.com/joomlablogger)

YouTube channel: [www.youtube.com/joomlablogger](http://www.youtube.com/joomlablogger)

**NOTICE:** Like all content on my blog, everything in this report is copyrighted. You do NOT have the right to redistribute or sell this report in any way. This report is an exclusive benefit to subscribers of my weekly newsletter.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. No part of this report may be reproduced or transmitted in any form whatsoever, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any informational storage or retrieval system without express written, dated and signed permission from the author.

# Contents

<b>About the author</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Link to Joomla articles with no menu item</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Free yourself with Joomla template overrides</b>	<b>8</b>
<i>First, a note of caution</i> .....	8
<i>Template overrides</i> .....	9
<i>When to use template overrides</i> .....	9
<i>This will only work for one template</i> .....	9
<i>Examples of Joomla template overrides</i> .....	9
<i>How to customize the output of 'category list layouts'</i> .....	9
<i>How to customize the output of com_contact</i> .....	11
<i>How to create line breaks in Joomla article titles</i> .....	12
<i>Use your imagination</i> .....	12
<b>Exploring the Joomla meta tags (part 1)</b>	<b>13</b>
<i>What Are Meta Tags?</i> .....	13
<i>What Meta Tags should I use?</i> .....	13
<i>TITLE</i> .....	14
<i>Description</i> .....	14
<i>Keywords</i> .....	15
<i>Author</i> .....	15
<i>Robots meta tag</i> .....	15
<i>Generator</i> .....	15
<b>Joomla meta tags, part 2: Built-in functionality</b>	<b>16</b>
<i>How to use the built-in Joomla meta tag functions (and a small mod)</i> .....	16
<i>Title tag</i> .....	17
<i>The Description tag</i> .....	18
<i>Pitfalls of using the global meta description field - duplicate descriptions</i> .....	19
<i>Meta description on pages other than articles</i> .....	19
<i>RSSEO</i> .....	20
<i>SEOSimple</i> .....	20
<i>Taking your Joomla meta tags to the next level</i> .....	20

<b>Joomla meta tags (part 3): sh404SEF</b>	<b>21</b>
<i>Meta tag management in sh404SEF</i> .....	21
<i>Title tags in sh404SEF</i> .....	22
<i>Why would you want to remove the section/category from the title?</i> .....	22
<i>Meta description tags in sh404SEF</i> .....	22
<i>How to customize your meta tags in sh404SEF</i> .....	23
<i>Following pages in Joomla frontpage and blog layouts</i> .....	25
<i>Some points to remember about SEO and Joomla:</i> .....	25
<b>Joomla meta tags (part 4): Google Webmaster Tools</b>	<b>26</b>
<i>Diagnose Your Meta Tags</i> .....	27
<i>Duplicate meta descriptions</i> .....	29
<i>Missing title tags</i> .....	30
<i>Duplicate title tags</i> .....	31
<i>Meta tags will improve your site rankings - go improve them!</i> .....	31
<b>Six steps to get your Joomla site indexed in Google</b>	<b>32</b>
<i>Why it's important to get indexed by the search engines</i> .....	32
1. <i>Linking is key</i> .....	32
2. <i>Your template makes a difference</i> .....	32
3. <i>Create sitemaps for users and search engines</i> .....	33
4. <i>Submit your site to Google Webmaster Tools</i> .....	33
5. <i>Make use of Robots.txt for submission</i> .....	33
6. <i>Check which pages are indexed</i> .....	34
<i>End note about search engine visibility</i> .....	34
<b>Secure your Joomla sites before they are hacked!</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Joomla CSS for beginners</b>	<b>37</b>
<i>What is CSS?</i> .....	38
<i>Joomla CSS and templates</i> .....	38
<i>CSS Best Practices</i> .....	39
<i>Don't repeat styles if you don't need to</i> .....	39
<i>Use Firebug to Test Your CSS</i> .....	40
<i>Take some time to learn CSS</i> .....	40
<i>Easy to get started with CSS and Joomla</i> .....	40
<i>Recommended reading for learning CSS</i> .....	40

<b>10 Ways to Fail at Joomla</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>10 things you can do to improve your Joomla site</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Easy Joomla documentation with Joomanuals</b>	<b>43</b>
<i>Easy step-by-step process to create a manual.....</i>	<i>43</i>
<i>JooManuals features in detail.....</i>	<i>44</i>
<i>Benefits of Joomanuals .....</i>	<i>45</i>
<i>Pricing and value .....</i>	<i>45</i>
<b>How to add a Google +1 button to your Joomla site</b>	<b>46</b>
<i>What is Google +1?.....</i>	<i>46</i>
<i>Why use it on your Joomla site?.....</i>	<i>46</i>
<i>How to implement the Google +1 button in your Joomla site .....</i>	<i>47</i>
<i>If using K2 .....</i>	<i>48</i>
<b>Useful Joomla Resources</b>	<b>49</b>
<i>SEO Tools .....</i>	<i>49</i>
<i>Template providers .....</i>	<i>49</i>
<i>Joomla support and training .....</i>	<i>49</i>
<i>Recommended books.....</i>	<i>49</i>
<b>Joomla coupons</b>	<b>50</b>
<i>Joomla support from Open Source Support Desk .....</i>	<i>50</i>
<i>20% off a 1-year subscription for sh404SEF .....</i>	<i>50</i>
<i>10% discount on all JoomlaBamboo products .....</i>	<i>50</i>
<i>6 months extended subscription on Joomanuals .....</i>	<i>50</i>

# About the author

[joomlaBlogger.net](http://joomlaBlogger.net) is a blog about the content management system Joomla! and all things related to running a successful website based on this popular CMS.

The blog was started in May 2009 and is mainly written by myself. My name is Kristoffer Sandven and I work as a professional Search Engine Optimizer (SEO) and a Joomla consultant. I help clients get as much traffic as possible to their pages, and to convert those visitors to revenue.

In 2011, [joomlablogger.net](http://joomlablogger.net) won the award for **Best Blog Web Site** at the J and Beyond conference in Kerkrade, The Netherlands.

In my day-to-day job with Joomla, I continuously discover things that can be shared with you, fellow Joomla addict, for our common benefit: Making Joomla a better and even more widespread platform. The goal of this blog is to inspire you, to help you implement Joomla for your use and eventually assist you in making money by doing so. Please don't hesitate to contact me with ideas for topics to write about on the blog: [kris@joomlablogger.net](mailto:kris@joomlablogger.net)

I hope you will enjoy this ebook, which is a compilation of the best and most popular posts from [joomlablogger.net](http://joomlablogger.net). I hand-picked some of almost 300 posts available on the blog and have collected them together here into a document you can keep, print and study.

Best regards,

Kristoffer

The blog: [www.joomlablogger.net](http://www.joomlablogger.net)

Facebook Fan page: [www.facebook.com/joomlablogger](http://www.facebook.com/joomlablogger)

Twitter: [www.twitter.com/joomlablogger](http://www.twitter.com/joomlablogger)

YouTube channel: [www.youtube.com/joomlablogger](http://www.youtube.com/joomlablogger)



# Link to Joomla articles with no menu item

Sometimes, you might want to create a Joomla page that is not available through a menu. You only want the page to appear when the URL is entered. This might be a 'thank you' page after form submission, a log in page or some other type of 'hidden' page you would need on your Joomla site.

Many users ask about this in the Joomla forums and on Twitter. I decided to write a short tutorial on how to set up a link to an element - article or other type of Joomla asset - with no menu item visible on the site.

The thing is - you won't be able to create URLs without having a menu item. But who says you have to show the menu?

**This is how you create URLs to pages with no visible menu items:**

1. Create a new menu using the Joomla Menu Manager
2. Create menu items pointing to the article you to link to
3. Don't create a menu module - you won't need it
4. Use [JCE](#) or another extension for linking to the articles

This way you will have the URLs created, but the menu items are not visible on the site.

**Note:**

If you use SEF (search engine friendly) URLs on your site, you should not link to the SEF URLs. Use the original Joomla URLs when linking. That way, the URLs will be translated to SEF URLs when needed, but you won't have to change the links if the SEF URL changes.



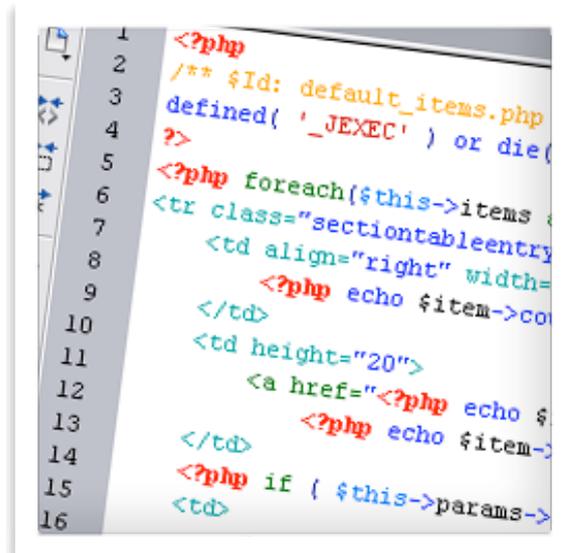
# Free yourself with Joomla template overrides

Even though Joomla is a great platform as it is, there are times when you will have to alter the core files to fit certain needs.

For instance, you can't stand how the elements in Joomla content are put together in Joomla. Or your client wants to alter the way the date is shown, where the author appears, how the list of contacts is displayed. We could go on for ever.

The point is:

You don't want to be restricted by the platform, do you? You won't have to! I will show you the basics of how to customize the output from Joomla components, modules and plugins, by applying something called template overrides. Relax, they're your friends.



I got this email from a reader of JoomlaBlogger:

*I work a lot with Joomla and while I am not a php coder myself, I do on occasion hack files to make a template or a component work the way I want it to, if I can find good instructions in a forum. I know that with Joomla 1.5 now we have the possibility to make these (or some of these changes) in a "template override", as an exterior file that will not get overwritten when you upgrade the template or the component. I have not yet found a good tutorial on how to do this. I would appreciate a clear and simple (if possible) explanation of WHEN to use a template override, HOW to do it (including code examples if you have to create your own code, where exactly do you put the new file, do you have to create a new folder, etc.), and possibly seeing a case to illustrate it.*

I had thought about writing a post about template overrides, and this email got me started.

## First, a note of caution

However tempting it might be to change the core files themselves, it's not a good idea. Simply put: If you change any of the core files and they are updated in a new Joomla version, your changes will be overwritten by the update.

I will offer an example. It's very easy to change the appearance of one of the core modules by editing the files found in /modules/com\_modulename/. Don't do it this way! As [Wilco Jansen](#) said during the JoomlaDay Norway 2008: - You should **never** need to hack the core files of Joomla!

Fortunately, there is a better way: Template overrides.

## Template overrides

The solution is called **template overrides**, **output overrides** or **layout overrides**. These are files that reside in the `/templates/YOURTEMPLATE/html/` folder. The files located here will override the core files or other files which create some form of output on the finished HTML page.

## When to use template overrides

The most widespread use of template overrides is to change the output from `com_content`. Most professional Joomla templates use this type of overrides. Mainly they use it to create table-less HTML output from the content component and to make custom layout modifications. For instance, you could change the order of the elements, or include hard-coded text and elements, or add custom classes or IDs to facilitate CSS changes.

To create output (or template) overrides, you need to **create an HTML folder in your template folder**. For instance, you can see that there is an HTML folder already present for the Beez template in `/templates/beez/html/`. This is where you need to place the files that override the output of the components you want to modify.

## This will only work for one template

Remember that this HTML folder resides inside the specific template folder. It will not work for other templates. If you switch to another template, you need to copy the content of your HTML folder to your new template folder. In that case, make sure you don't accidentally overwrite any override files that come as a part of the new template.

## Examples of Joomla template overrides

There are lots of uses for template overrides. I will show you a few examples. The examples are there to spark your imagination. Come up with your own ways of leveraging this powerful feature of Joomla.

The examples I provide here only details using template overrides for core components. You can do this for any module, plugin or component. I've used template overrides to change the output from YooGallery for instance.

## How to customize the output of 'category list layouts'

If you're like me, you have trouble understanding the point of having numbers before each line when displaying articles in the Category List layout. Worse even, is the fact that these numbers are not possible to remove. At least not by using the menu item parameters or other settings in the Joomla admin. The numbers column is actually hard-coded into the layout of the `com_content` category list layout files.

To change this, and other parts of the category list layout, you need to create a new directory in the `/templates/YOURTEMPLATE/html/com_content/` directory. If it's not already there, it should be named `/category/`.

Now, you can copy the file **default\_items.php** from **/components/com\_content/views/category/tmpl/** and into the folder you just created.

Thus, you will end up with a file located in this folder:

```
/templates/YOURTEMPLATE/html/com_content/category/default_items.php
```

At this point you're ready to customize your template override. The file you copied will override the standard output, leaving the original file intact.

To remove the numbering from the contact category list layout table, follow these steps:

### 1. Remove the header column

Delete or comment out the following code (around line 42):

```
<td class="sectiontableheaderescape($this->params->get('pageclass_sfx')); ?>"
align="right" width="5%"
<?php echo JText::_('Num'); ?>
</td>
```

### 2. Remove the actual number

Delete this code further down in the code:

```
<td align="right">
    <?php echo $this->pagination->getRowOffset( $item->count ); ?>
</td>
```

Refresh your category list layout in the front-end to decide if you're happy with the result. You could do other changes as well.

For instance, you could change the percentage width (`width="20%"` etc) for the columns with class names. That way, you can style the individual column widths (and other parameters) using CSS. I think this is a more flexible way of working.

Example:

```
<?php if ($this->params->get('show_title')) : ?>
    <td class="headertitle sectiontableheaderescape($this->params->get('pageclass_sfx')); ?>" width="45%">
        <?php echo JHTML::_('grid.sort', 'Item Title', 'a.title', $this->lists['order_Dir'], $this->lists['order'] ); ?>
    </td>
<?php endif; ?>
```

## How to customize the output of com\_contact

The same goes for the Contact category output. If you create a menu item showing a contact category, Joomla 1.5 will present a table with numbers as the first column. This might be OK for some, but most of my customers find it strange. Template overrides to the rescue!

We follow the same procedure as in the previous example. However, this time we will have to edit two files. Follow these steps:

1. Create a folder here (see screenshot to the right):

```
/templates/YOURTEMPLATE/html/com_contact/  
category/
```

2. Copy these two files from /components/com\_contact/  
views/category/tmpl/:

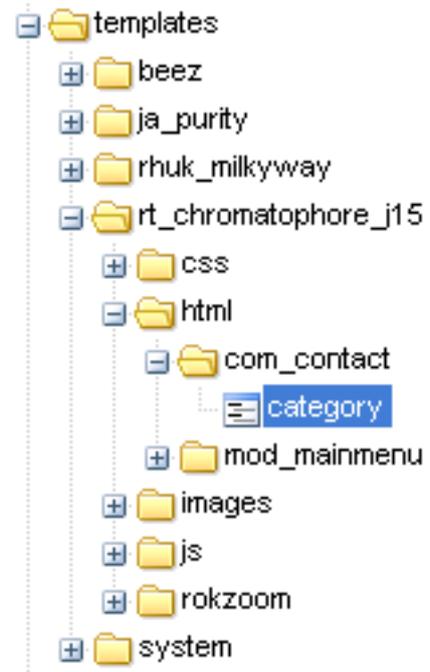
```
default.php  
default_items.php
```

3. In default.php, delete or comment out this code (around line 62):

```
<td width="5" align="right"  
class="sectiontableheaderescape($this-  
>params->get('pageclass_sfx')); ?>">  
<?php echo JText::_('Num'); ?>  
</td>
```

4. In default\_items.php, delete or comment out this code (around line 7):

```
<td align="right" width="5">  
<?php echo $item->count +1; ?>  
</td>
```



This will remove the numbers column. Both in the header and what ever rows there are in the table.

You can see the modified contact category layout [here](#).

You can experiment with changing the different columns around. For instance, one of my clients wanted the cell phone column to appear before the email column. Just remember to move both the header column and the actual data column (as they are in two separate files).

## **How to create line breaks in Joomla article titles**

If you've ever tried putting in a `<br />` tag in the Joomla article title to create a line break, you've discovered that this won't work. The HTML is not parsed and thus Joomla will show the tag in clear text.

I've written a tutorial on [how to create line breaks in Joomla article titles](#) by using template overrides. This is a powerful technique which can be applied in other situations as well.

## **Use your imagination**

I hope you now have a better understanding of how Joomla template overrides work. They are fun to work with. Start simple and build from that.

Thanks to Alice for sending me the email which got this post started.

**And remember: Never hack the core!**

# Exploring the Joomla meta tags (part 1)

This is the first part of a series of blog posts exploring Joomla meta tags.

In this first post I'll look at what meta tags are and what they should be used for.

Later posts in the series examine how to set up the meta tags by using the Joomla core, and with third-party SEF extensions.

## What Are Meta Tags?

Meta tags are tags, or meta elements, that (mostly) contain information about the website or page which is not shown directly to the user.

This is what Wikipedia tells us about Meta Elements:

*Meta elements are [HTML](#) or [XHTML](#) elements used to provide structured [metadata](#) about a [Web page](#). Such elements must be placed as tags in the head section of an [HTML](#) or [XHTML](#) document. Meta elements can be used to specify page description, keywords and any other [metadata](#) not provided through the other head elements and attributes.*

The meta element has four valid attributes: content, http-equiv, name and scheme. Of these, only content is a required attribute.

## What Meta Tags should I use?

There are a lot of meta tags available, but I will focus on those I know will give you something back in search engine visibility. Or that provide an enhanced user experience.

Recent discoveries by myself and my colleagues indicate that less is more when it comes to meta tags and other elements of your web pages. Removing unnecessary code from your HTML will increase the amount of unique content in each of your pages. This is beneficial for SEO, as Google and the other search engines look for unique, relevant content. Thus, removing unnecessary meta elements from your pages is a good thing.

Removing whitespace from your HTML can also increase your chances of ranking higher in the search engines. Just take a look at the source code of the Google.com front page..

This means you should remove anything not 100% related to improving your site search engine visibility.



## TITLE

The most important meta element is the TITLE tag. Not a META tag per se, it's often regarded as one. For the purpose of this post, I will include the title tag when talking about meta tags in general.

The <TITLE> tag is used as the title of the page in the browser. You can find it in the top bar of your browser window. It will also become the name of a bookmark to the page. Most importantly, it becomes the clickable link to the page in the search engines.

Personally, I think the TITLE tag should contain text which is as unique as possible. For my own site, I've decided not to include the name of the site, focusing on the actual article title, blog title etc. This makes the TITLE more unique.

The TITLE tag is used like this in the HTML:

```
<title>The article title with Keyword included</title>
```

Google regards the TITLE tag as very important. I guess this is partly because of the prominent position the TITLE gets in the Search Engine Result Pages (SERPs). A good title will contain the targeted keyword(s) or phrase(s). It will also be selling your page to the reader. This, in turn, makes the user click the link to read the rest of the article.

### TITLE Tip:

If you're selling products, include the price in the TITLE tag. This way, you pre-qualify the customer before they arrive at your site, increasing the change that they buy from you.

## Description

The Description tag is also very important. A well formed description tag will more often than not be used as the descriptive text in the SERPs. Thus, it should contain your targeted keyword(s) or phrase(s) and sell your page effectively.

### The tag may look like this:

```
<meta name="Description" content="JoomlaBlogger is a blog with tips, tutorials and news about Joomla CMS. 100% free content!" />
```

The Description should not be more than 150 characters long. By keeping it this short, the full text will show in the SERPs. If you're really into it, you can craft the length of your words and sentences in such a way as to control where the line breaks when showing in the Google Search Engine Result page. That's actually quite neat.

Remember that the description tag is the actual sales copy the user will read before deciding to click your link or not. Make sure the copy is correct, contains your keywords and is enthusiastically selling your product or service. At least, it should be a clear and concise excerpt on what to find on the page.

It's very important to include your keywords in the description. The keywords will be bolded in the search results, making the actual keyword stand out to the user. Preferably the keyword has been used at least two times in the description.

## Keywords

Meta keywords are no longer important. Where they ever?

Matt Cutts, the Google guru, recently did a [definite post](#) on the subject. He concluded the keywords tag is not used by Google, and will most likely not be used in the future. Not exactly breaking news, but it's nevertheless good to get the information directly from the source.

There's only one reason to use the keywords meta tag field in Joomla. If you use the related articles tag or a cloud tag, these tags use the keywords meta tag field.

## Author

I don't see a reason to use this tag at all. It has no positive effect on SEO.

```
<meta name="author" content="The JoomlaBlogger" />
```

## Robots meta tag

```
<meta name="robots" content="index, follow" />
```

## Generator

The default Joomla generator tag is, in my opinion, not important at all. Also, it is one more thing giving away the fact that your site is made in Joomla. Removing the generator tag alone is not enough to hide that the site is built with Joomla, but it's a good start.

# Joomla meta tags, part 2: Built-in functionality

In this post, I will delve into the how-to of setting up meta tags with Joomla.

As I've shown in part 1, the most important meta elements are **TITLE** and **DESCRIPTION**. In this part, I will show you how to use these meta tags effectively in Joomla.

There are two main ways of configuring meta elements in Joomla:

1. Use the built-in Joomla meta tag functionality
2. Use a SEF (Search Engine Friendly) extension like [sh404SEF](#) or [Artio JoomSef](#)



The second method is shown using the SEF (Search Engine Friendly) component sh404SEF (will be discussed in part 3).

## How to use the built-in Joomla meta tag functions (and a small mod)

Joomla has built-in meta tag support, with some limitations. They are easy to use, so let's get started.

First, you should go to your Administrator -> Global Configuration -> Site and deselect the 'Show Author tag' and 'Show title tag' options.

Show Title Meta Tag	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Yes
Show Author Meta Tag	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Yes

I must admit: I don't know what that first setting does! I've tried setting it to both 'Yes' and 'No', but I really can't see any difference in my site code.

The second one is unnecessary. I'm following the principle of 'less is more' when it comes to meta tags. If you don't have specific use for it, remove it.

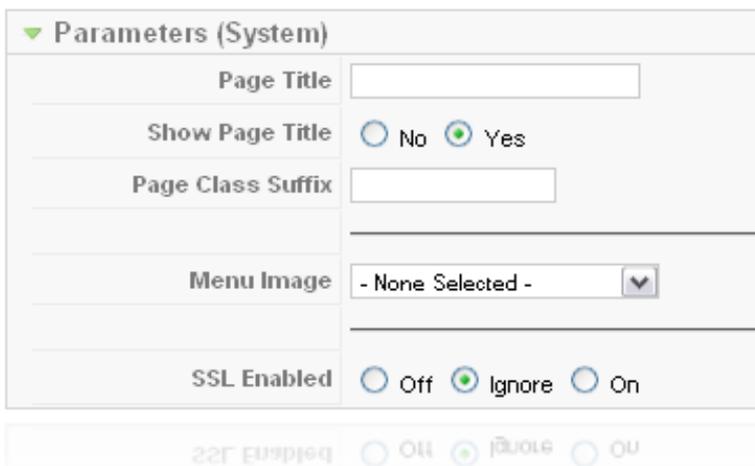
## Title tag

By default, Joomla will use the article title as the TITLE tag for the page.

Oftentimes, you will want to change this title to something else. The title of the article may be too long or not suitable for use in a title. Or you want to adjust the message of the title element to the receiving audience - i.e. people using Google or other search engines to find your article.

To enter a new title for the page, you need to edit the menu item linking to the article:

1. Go to the 'Menu Manager' and choose your menu item.
2. Go to Parameters (System).
3. Enter your new title in the 'Page Title' field.
4. Make sure the 'Show title' is set to 'No'. Otherwise it will show the title in the content area of the page.



The image shows a screenshot of the Joomla System Parameters form. The form is titled 'Parameters (System)' and contains several fields and options. The 'Page Title' field is empty. The 'Show Page Title' option is set to 'Yes' (radio button selected). The 'Page Class Suffix' field is empty. The 'Menu Image' dropdown menu is set to '- None Selected -'. The 'SSL Enabled' option is set to 'Ignore' (radio button selected).

Parameters (System)	
Page Title	<input type="text"/>
Show Page Title	<input type="radio"/> No <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes
Page Class Suffix	<input type="text"/>
Menu Image	- None Selected - <input type="button" value="v"/>
SSL Enabled	<input type="radio"/> Off <input checked="" type="radio"/> Ignore <input type="radio"/> On

To enter your company name or other text string before or after the default title, I recommend the [Website Name](#) plug-in. This free extension is very easy to set up and let you choose what and how to display in your title.

## The Description tag

You can enter global meta tags in the global configuration screen of the Joomla Administrator. There are fields for description and keywords. Don't worry about finding keywords (but you got that point in [part 1](#), didn't you). Just make sure you delete the default keywords in the keyword field.

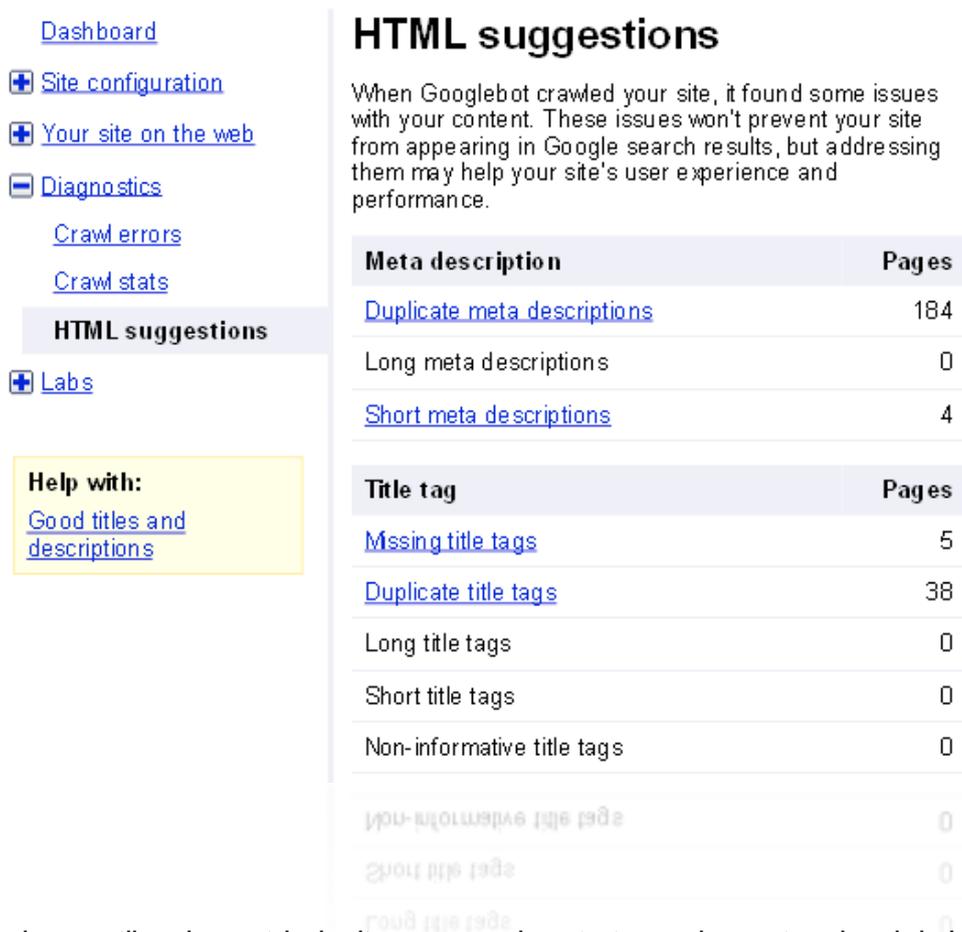
**Metadata Settings**

Global Site Meta Description	JoomlaBlogger writes about Joomla! CMS and gives you tips, tricks, tutorials and news about your favorite content management system.
Global Site Meta Keywords	joomla, cms, tips, tricks, tutorials, how-to, seo, search engine optimization, content management system, joomla
	joomla

The Description field should contain a 150 character description of your site. Your main keywords for the page must be included, but make sure not to overdo it by repeating the keywords. Two repetitions of your main keyword is OK. Use your common sense.

## Pitfalls of using the global meta description field - duplicate descriptions

Using the global meta description field has some pitfalls. If you don't enter any specific meta descriptions for your articles and other items, you will end up with a lot of duplicate descriptions. This is not good for SEO, and Google specifically alert you to this in [Google Webmaster Tools](#) (more on that in a later post).



The screenshot shows the Google Webmaster Tools interface. On the left is a navigation menu with links for Dashboard, Site configuration, Your site on the web, Diagnostics, HTML suggestions (highlighted), and Labs. A yellow box highlights the 'Help with:' section, which includes a link for 'Good titles and descriptions'. The main content area is titled 'HTML suggestions' and contains a text block explaining that Googlebot found issues with content. Below this are two tables. The first table, 'Meta description', lists 'Duplicate meta descriptions' with 184 pages, 'Long meta descriptions' with 0, and 'Short meta descriptions' with 4. The second table, 'Title tag', lists 'Missing title tags' with 5, 'Duplicate title tags' with 38, and several other categories with 0 pages.

Meta description	Pages
<a href="#">Duplicate meta descriptions</a>	184
Long meta descriptions	0
<a href="#">Short meta descriptions</a>	4

Title tag	Pages
<a href="#">Missing title tags</a>	5
<a href="#">Duplicate title tags</a>	38
Long title tags	0
Short title tags	0
Non-informative title tags	0
Non-informative title tags	0
Short title tags	0
Long title tags	0

As mentioned, you *will* end up with duplicate meta descriptions when using the global description field. However, I think this is better than having no description at all. As long as the global description is generic enough, it can work quite well.

You should, however, try to create unique meta descriptions for every page on your site. This is not possible using Joomla core functionality. For that, you need third-party extensions:

### Meta description on pages other than articles

Joomla will show meta tag fields for all pages. However, there are some limitations on which meta tags you can edit specifically. You can enter meta tags for articles. Those meta tags will be used when showing an article. For other items the case is different. For instance, there's no way to enter meta elements for menu items pointing to section or category views. This means your blog views will use the global meta description.

## RSSEO

To accomplish this, you need to install the free extension [RSSEO!](#) from [RS Joomla!](#). This free component will give you meta tag fields when creating or editing menu items. That way, you can enter specific descriptions for every menu item you create.

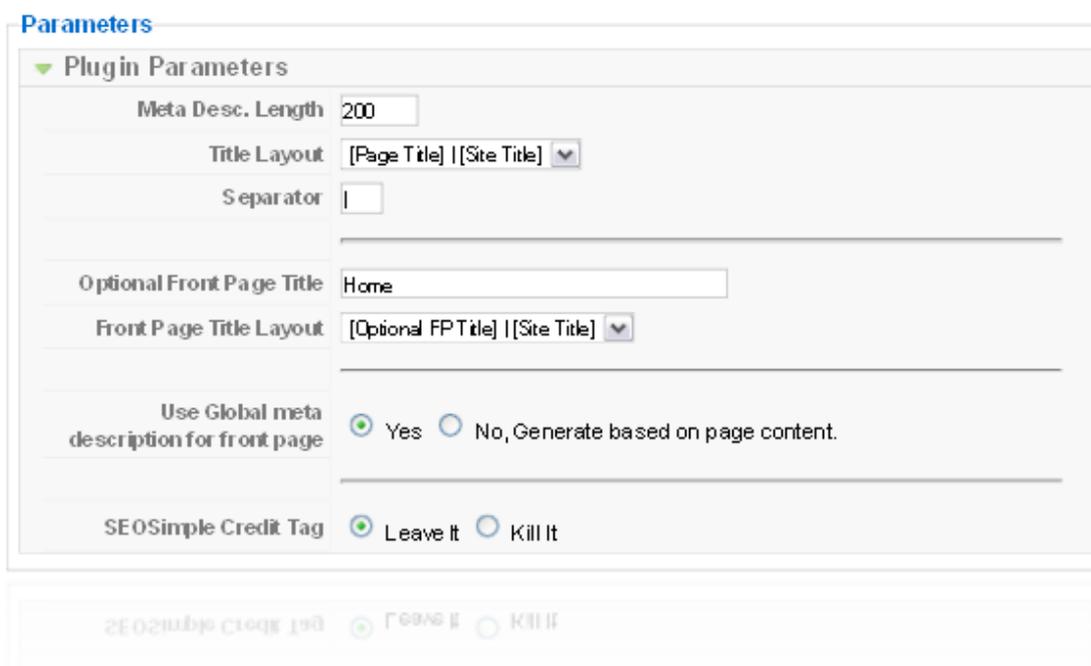
### Some of the functions of RSSEO!:

- Monitor your competition
- Monitor the important keywords
- Set unique Meta description and title for each page
- Generate a Google and Yahoo! Sitemap for your website

## SEOSimple

You can also take a look at the [SEOSimple](#) plug-in. It has fewer options than RSSEO!, but it does a decent job with both the title and meta descriptions. You can set it up to create the meta description automatically from text found in the article. It builds the title automatically as well, depending on your settings. Worth checking out!

### SEO Simple settings:



The screenshot shows the 'Parameters' section for the SEOSimple plugin. It includes a 'Plugin Parameters' section with the following settings:

- Meta Desc. Length: 200
- Title Layout: [Page Title] |[Site Title]
- Separator: |
- Optional Front Page Title: Home
- Front Page Title Layout: [Optional FPTitle] |[Site Title]
- Use Global meta description for front page:  Yes  No, Generate based on page content.
- SEOSimple Credit Tag:  Leave it  Kill it

## Taking your Joomla meta tags to the next level

This is all well, but you might need even more control over your meta tags. If so, you should use [sh404SEF](#). The component was developed to create search engine friendly (SEF) URLs in Joomla. In addition, it has functions for managing the meta tags. Including title, description and keywords of every single page in Joomla. Setting up sh404SEF will be the topic of the next part in this series.

# Joomla meta tags (part 3): sh404SEF

**Meta tags are tags, or meta elements, that (mostly) contain information about the website or page which is not shown directly to the user. In this part I will show you how to use the meta tag functionality in [sh404SEF](#) to improve your site SEO.**



If you have the SEF (Search Engine Friendly) component sh404SEF installed, the meta tag management is more flexible than with the built-in Joomla solution. You will be able to enter meta tags for any page on your site. This involves for instance that you may enter meta elements for blog and section views, as well as for following pages automatically generated from these views (i.e. page-2, page-3 etc).

Note: This tutorial was written for sh404SEF version 1.5. Some views may have changed in the current 2+ version.

## Meta tag management in sh404SEF

I believe you should activate 'active meta management' in the sh404SEF advanced configuration. If set to **Yes**, Title, Description, Keywords, Robots and Language META tags will be managed by sh404SEF. Otherwise, original values produced by Joomla and/or other components will be left untouched. This does not mean that sh404SEF will create the meta tags automatically, as some people have assumed from the previous.

The 'Active meta management' option gives you a minimum of meta tag optimization on your site. There are, however, things you can do to improve the optimization.

This is useful for getting started. However, if you want to compete for positions on highly competitive keywords, I recommend writing the title tag and meta description tag for each page specifically. This will ensure you have more control over which keywords are used on what pages.

The screenshot shows the Joomla! administration interface for the 'Meta tags management' section. At the top, there are navigation tabs: Main, Plugins, Languages, Advanced, By component, Meta/SEO, Security, 404 Page, and Very adv. The 'Meta/SEO' tab is selected. Below the tabs, the title 'Meta tags management' is displayed. A red-bordered box contains the text: 'sh404SEF has several plugins to automatically create META tags for some components. Don't create them manually unless the automatically created ones don't suit you!!'. Below this, there are two configuration options, each with radio buttons for 'No' and 'Yes', and a blue information icon to the right. The first option is 'Activate Meta management', with 'Yes' selected. The second option is 'Remove Joomla Generator tag', with 'Yes' selected.

Main			Plugins			Languages			Advanced			By component			Meta/SEO			Security			404 Page			Very adv.		
Meta tags management																										
sh404SEF has several plugins to automatically create META tags for some components. Don't create them manually unless the automatically created ones don't suit you!!																										
Activate Meta management												<input type="radio"/> No			<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes			i								
Remove Joomla Generator tag												<input type="radio"/> No			<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes			i								

## Title tags in sh404SEF

Title tags are automatically handled by sh404SEF when the 'active meta management' setting is turned on.

One challenge I've had previously with sh404SEF is how title tags are built. If you decided to include the category and/or section in the URL of your page, sh404SEF would include them in the TITLE tag as well. This problem was fixed in version 1.5.5 of sh404SEF (Thank you, Yannick!). You can now enjoy separate settings for the TITLE tag and the URLs.

This means you can have a URL like this:

<http://www.joomlablogger.net/tutorials/extensions/setup-sh404sef>

and a title tag like this:

How to set up sh404SEF

These settings can be found in the Meta/SEO tab of sh404SEF:

Joomla content page title configuration	
Use article title alias	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Yes
Insert section	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Yes
Use section alias	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Yes
Insert category	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Yes
Use category alias	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Yes
Use category alias	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Yes
Use category alias	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Yes

## Why would you want to remove the section/category from the title?

Well, it makes the title tag more unique. And, according to my own experience with [SEO](#) for Google and the experience of the [SEOMOZ' readers](#), the TITLE tag is among the top 5 factors in search engine visibility. The main keyword(s) should be included in the TITLE tag. And, if possible, near the beginning of the tag (don't force it - it must read well).

## Meta description tags in sh404SEF

With the 'active meta management' setting on the meta description tags of articles and other pages on your site will be automatically generated.

If you have entered a meta description in an article sh404SEF will use that text.

## How to customize your meta tags in sh404SEF

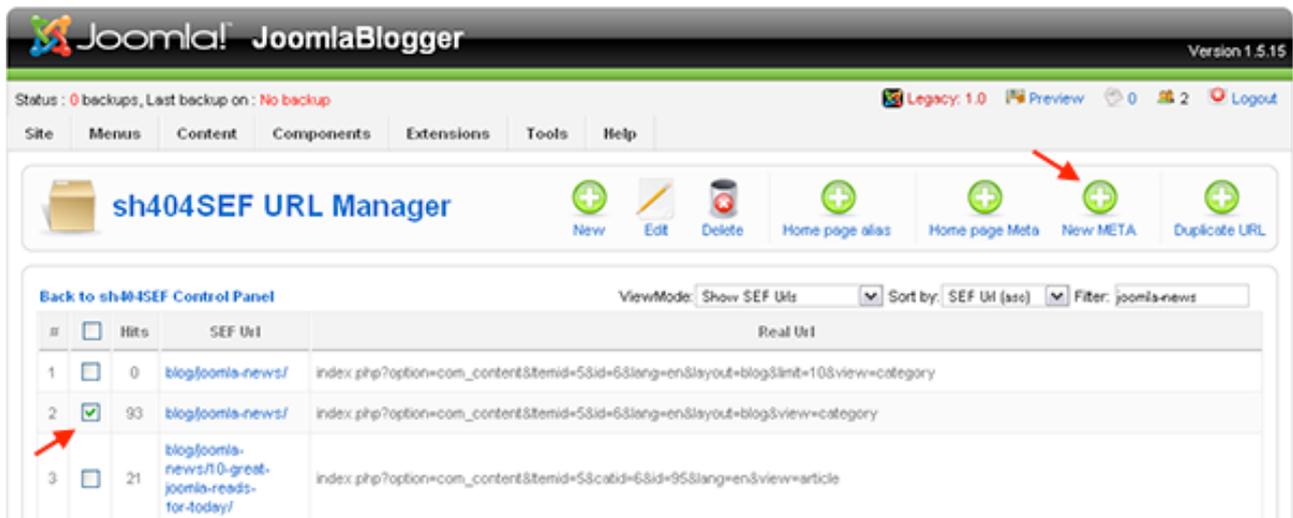
Even though sh404SEF does a decent job of creating meta tags for your site, you might want to create new ones. For instance, you might want to alter the article title so it says one thing in the title tag and another in the title in the content area of your site.

You do this by entering custom meta tags in sh404SEF.

Please read my tutorial on [how to set up sh404SEF](#) if you are unfamiliar with the component.

1. Go to the sh404SEF control panel (make sure you have the advanced settings activated).
2. Click "View/Edit SEF URLs"
3. Locate the URL you want to create a meta tag for. I normally do this by entering part of the URL into the 'Filter' box and hit 'Enter'.
4. Check the box next to the URL
5. Click the 'New meta' button in the top right corner.
6. Enter your preferred meta tags.
  1. TITLE: Should be no more than 80 characters
  2. Meta description: Should be no more than 155-160 characters.
  3. Keywords: I usually ignore the keywords tag, but feel free to enter some (comma separated) if you feel like it (they have no impact on SEO).
  4. Robots tag: I normally leave these untouched.
7. Click 'Save'

These settings will now override the default meta tags created by sh404SEF.



The screenshot displays the Joomla! sh404SEF URL Manager interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'Site', 'Menus', 'Content', 'Components', 'Extensions', 'Tools', and 'Help'. Below this, the 'sh404SEF URL Manager' section is visible, featuring a toolbar with buttons for 'New', 'Edit', 'Delete', 'Home page alias', 'Home page Meta', 'New META', and 'Duplicate URL'. A red arrow points to the 'New META' button. Below the toolbar is a table with columns for '#', 'Hits', 'SEF Url', and 'Real Url'. The table contains three rows of data. A red arrow points to the checkbox in the first column of the second row, which is checked. The table also includes a 'ViewMode' dropdown set to 'Show SEF Urls', a 'Sort by' dropdown set to 'SEF Url (asc)', and a 'Filter' box containing 'joomla-news'.

#	Hits	SEF Url	Real Url
1	0	blog/joomla-news/	index.php?option=com_content&Itemid=53&lang=en&layout=blog&limit=10&view=category
2	93	blog/joomla-news/	index.php?option=com_content&Itemid=53&lang=en&layout=blog&view=category
3	21	blog/joomla-news/10-great-joomla-reads-for-today/	index.php?option=com_content&Itemid=53&catid=6&id=95&lang=en&view=article

You'll find the 'New meta' button on the URL manager screen



## Add tags : blog/joomla-news/

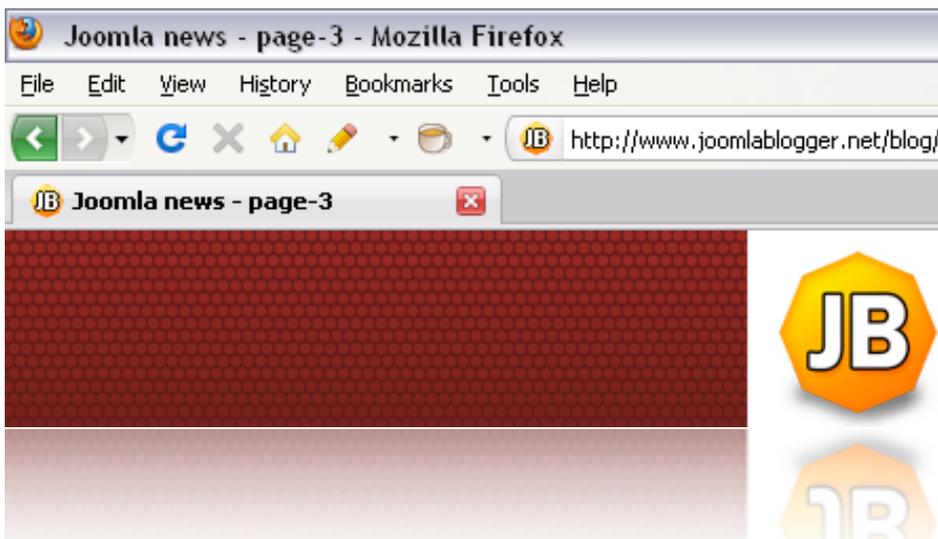
Title tag	<input type="text" value="The Title Tag goes here. Remember keywords and keep it under 80 characters."/>	
Description tag	<input type="text" value="A description - include your keywords and keep it under 150 characters."/>	
Keywords tag	<input type="text" value="Don't bother ;)"/>	
Robots tag	<input type="text"/>	
Language tag	<input type="text"/>	

*The meta tag entry form in sh404SEF.*

## Following pages in Joomla frontpage and blog layouts

One major shortcoming of the front page and blog layouts in Joomla is how meta tags are handled. Let's say you have decided to have pagination on your front page. You have decided to have 5 front page articles show, and the rest will be pushed to page 2, page 3 and so on. This is all well, and a nice feature. The same goes for blog layouts (section or category).

However, the following pages will have the same meta tags as the first page of the frontpage or blog layout. This is not good, because it results in a lot of duplicate title tags and meta description tags in Google. Google Webmaster Tools actually reports on this, so I consider this to be a factor Google takes into consideration. It's also better for your users if the meta tags are actually telling them something useful, rather than a generic text from another page.



You should now have the knowledge to start customizing your meta tags into something useful. It can bring you loads of traffic if done correctly.

## Some points to remember about SEO and Joomla:

- The TITLE tag and the meta description are the first impressions your business gives to a potential customer or reader searching in Google!
- Create the meta tags so they sell your page and make the user want to click.
- Use your main keywords for the site in both the TITLE tag and meta description
- Don't stuff your tags with keyword. Spamming is not good for the user, and it will get you banned from Google.

# Joomla meta tags (part 4): Google Webmaster Tools

**Meta tags are tags, or meta elements, that (mostly) contain information about the website or page which is not shown directly to the user. In this part I will show you how to use the Google Webmaster Tools to monitor and improve your Joomla meta tags.**

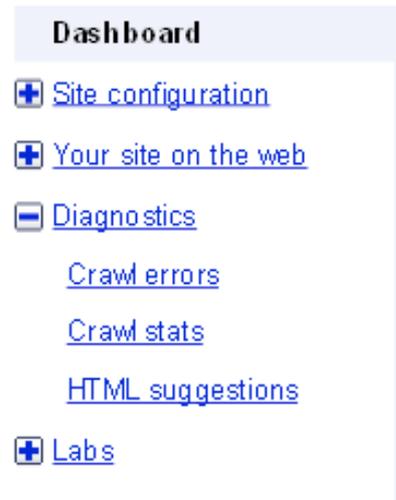
When you have your meta tags set up, I recommend using Google Webmaster Tools to check your work. If you don't have a Google Webmaster Tools account, set one up for free [here](#).

You need to verify your site to be able to access information about how the site is indexed in Google. Additionally, the pages you have worked on need to be indexed in Google. I've previously written a post on [how to get your Joomla site indexed in Google](#).



## Diagnose Your Meta Tags

To see how the meta tags are rated by Google, choose your site and then 'Diagnostics'. Under this menu, you'll find 'HTML Suggestions' (see screenshot to the right).



The tool will give you a list of pages which have no meta description, duplicate descriptions, no title, duplicate titles or meaningless titles.

The screenshot shows the 'HTML suggestions' report. It includes an introductory paragraph and three tables of data.

When Googlebot crawled your site, it found some issues with your content. These issues won't prevent your site from appearing in Google search results, but addressing them may help your site's user experience and performance.

Meta description	Pages
<a href="#">Duplicate meta descriptions</a>	154
Long meta descriptions	0
Short meta descriptions	0

Title tag	Pages
<a href="#">Missing title tags</a>	2
<a href="#">Duplicate title tags</a>	109
Long title tags	0
Short title tags	0
Non-informative title tags	0

Non-indexable content	Pages
We didn't detect any issues with non-indexable content on your site.	

Using Google Webmaster Tools, it's very easy to spot any place in your site where you might have missed the title and/or description.

For instance, I spotted something I didn't think about earlier: When you have a section or category blog view, you might have enabled automatic pagination. The pages following the first one, will have titles like 'Page 2', 'Page 3' etc. That's not very helpful. I haven't found any way of changing these titles using the Joomla core. With [sh404SEF](#) or another SEF extension, this is easily done.



## Duplicate meta descriptions

As you can see from this example, the default meta description from the Joomla Global Configuration is used on 30 pages.

### HTML suggestions

#### Duplicate meta descriptions

Meta description information can give users a clear idea of your site's content and encourage users to click on your site in the search results pages.

[« Back to all issues](#)

Pages with duplicate meta descriptions	Pages
<a href="#">⊕ JoomlaBlogger writes about Joomla! CMS and gives you tips, tricks, tutorials and news about your fav</a>	30
<a href="#">⊕ Sometimes, you would like to create a Joomla page that is not available through a menu. You only wan</a>	2
<a href="#">⊕ At JoomlaBlogger.net you will find a lot of Joomla tips. All of the tips for Joomla are free at my s</a>	2

## Missing title tags

Some components are quite lacking in the meta tags department. And sometimes they create a lot of pages automatically, so it's hard to tell if all title tags are OK. The 'Missing title tags' page presents the culprits:

### HTML suggestions

#### Missing title tags

Your title provides users and search engines with useful information about your site. Text contained in title tags can appear in search results pages, and relevant, descriptive text is more likely to be clicked on. We recommend reviewing the list and updating the title tags wherever possible.

[« Back to all issues](#)

#### Pages with missing title tags

</connect/receiver/?tmpl=component>

</search/?ordering=&searchphrase=all&tmpl=raw&type=json>

## Duplicate title tags

As the title tag of the page is among the most important optimization factors of a page, you should make sure that they are all unique. As you can see - the search page on my site has 30 instances in the Google index. All with the same meta description. This is due to the fact that I use SuperBlogger from JoomlaWorks to create tag search. Thus, there are permalinks from each tag to the search page, which gives Google a link to follow and a page to index.

However, there are no automatic way of creating unique meta description for the search page (that I know of, anyway). You need to enter these manually into sh404SEF.

### HTML suggestions

#### Duplicate title tags

Your title provides users and search engines with useful information about your site. Text contained in title tags can appear in search results pages, and relevant, descriptive text is more likely to be clicked on. We recommend reviewing the list and updating the title tags wherever possible.

[« Back to all issues](#)

Pages with duplicate title tags	Pages
<a href="#">+ Joomla SEO</a>	2
<a href="#">+ JoomlaBlogger - JoomlaBlogger</a>	2
<a href="#">+ Joomla tips, tutorials and news</a>	2
<a href="#">+ JoomlaBlogger - Search</a>	30
<a href="#">+ Video: The Joomla 1.6 Admin Menu</a>	2
<a href="#">+ Joomla news   page-2</a>	2

## Meta tags will improve your site rankings - go improve them!

Good luck working with meta tags in Joomla. If you have a large site, this task can be a large one. However, it's great fun seeing your site improve in the search engines after doing this work correctly.

# Six steps to get your Joomla site indexed in Google

**OK, so you have a brand new site going on - and it's all made in Joomla. But how to get traffic from the search engines?**

**There are several things you can do to ensure that Google and other search engines are picking up your pages. This will, over time, give you search engine positions for your keywords.**

Without indexation, no positions, and no traffic from search engines. It's not rocket science, but you need to make sure that your pages are reachable by search engine spiders to get indexed. I'll show you six steps to get your site indexed by Google and other search engines.



## **Why it's important to get indexed by the search engines**

Getting your pages indexed in Google and the other search engines is among the first steps towards getting valuable traffic to your site. The search engine spiders crawl the web continuously in search of new and updated pages. The time it takes the spiders to find you depends on a number of factors, of which I will outline the ones I consider most important. These steps will ensure that the search engines find all of your pages, and it will increase the speed with which they are indexed.

Indexation is crucial to get your pages positioned in the search engines for relevant keywords. This will turn into relevant traffic to your site - by people seeking what you are writing about.

### **1. Linking is key**

Before doing anything else, you need to understand that the only way a search engine will pick up your pages is if there's a link to each one. Spiders follow links. Thus, the site will not be possible to index if your pages are available through search only. A blog or section layout will do, as long as there's a link to each article somewhere, the spider will find it. You don't need to create a separate link directly to each article with the menu manager.

Getting links from other, relevant sites is of course the best, but for the purpose of this post I will focus on what you can do on your own site to improve the indexation rate.

### **2. Your template makes a difference**

If you need good search engine visibility you need a template that is search engine friendly. So what does this mean? In short, it means that the template should:

- Be created without tables for layout, using DIVs and CSS

- Contain table-less template overrides for content layouts
- Be created with semantics in mind - ie the content comes before the menus, and sidebars in the source code (this ensures that the content appears as early in the code as possible).
- Return valid HTML and CSS

If you buy templates from [RocketTheme](#), [JoomlaBamboo](#), [JoomlaShack](#) or other commercial template providers, most of the templates are search engine friendly. This can make a huge impact on getting your site indexed. The better the template, the easier it is for the search engine to pick up your content.

I haven't used too many free templates, but please check the above points if you decide to use a free template for a business critical site. Chances are it's worth the money to invest in a commercial template if you need search engine friendliness.

### 3. Create sitemaps for users and search engines

An XML sitemap is, ideally, an XML file that contains links to every page on your site. I use the extension [Xmap](#) for creating Joomla sitemaps, both HTML (for the users) and XML (for the search engines).

#### **Note:**

XMap uses your menus to create the sitemap, so your pages needs to be reachable from a menu (directly or through a section or blog view).

### 4. Submit your site to Google Webmaster Tools

[Google Webmaster Tools](#) is a place for Webmasters to manage their websites in relation to Google. If you have a Google account, Google Webmaster Tools is completely free. You can check your indexation, submit XML sitemaps, test robots.txt and much more. The most important thing, however, is to submit your XML sitemap to Google.

Your sitemap URL when using Xmap will typically be something like:

[http://www.joomlablogger.net/component/option,com\\_xmap/lang,en/no\\_html,1/sitemap,1/view.xml/](http://www.joomlablogger.net/component/option,com_xmap/lang,en/no_html,1/sitemap,1/view.xml/)

Submitting the XML sitemap is very easy to do. It will take a couple of hours for Google to pick up your sitemap after submission.

### 5. Make use of Robots.txt for submission

I borrowed this from [sitemaps.org](#):

*You can specify the location of the Sitemap using a robots.txt file. To do this, simply add the following line including the full URL to the sitemap:*

Sitemap: <http://www.example.com/sitemap.xml>

*This directive is independent of the user-agent line, so it doesn't matter where you place it in your file. If you have a Sitemap index file, you can include the location of just that file. You don't need to list each individual Sitemap listed in the index file.*

*You can specify more than one Sitemap file per robots.txt file.*

So, in addition to submitting your XML sitemap, you can enter something like the following into your robots.txt file (found in your Joomla installation root folder):

```
sitemap: http://www.joomlablogger.net/component/option,com\_xmap/lang,en/  
no\_html,1/sitemap,1/view.xml/
```

You will find the links to your own sitemaps (HTML and XML) under 'Options -> Preferences' in Xmap.

## **6. Check which pages are indexed**

To check which pages are indexed for your site in Google, search for the following:  
site:[www.YOURDOMAIN.COM](http://www.YOURDOMAIN.COM) (replacing YOURDOMAIN.COM with your actual domain - hehe)

To check in Yahoo, go to <http://siteexplorer.search.yahoo.com/> and search for your URL. This will also give you a list of inlinks for your site (pages linking to your pages).

## **End note about search engine visibility**

I hope this gives you something to start with and wish you luck on getting your page indexed fully in the search engines. Just remember one thing: You now have the tools to get your pages indexed. That does not mean that your content is considered relevant enough by the search engines. This is crucial to achieve good positions for important keywords.

A later post will explore how to make sure your actual content is search engine friendly and relevant, and how that will give you positions and, ultimately, more traffic to your site.

# Secure your Joomla sites before they are hacked!

Phil Taylor published this Tweet some time ago:

*A lot of people getting old versions of #joomla 1.5 hacked today - been fixing sites all day for customers...  
UPGRADE NOW to #joomla 1.5.10*



I couldn't say it better myself. It's crucial that you ALWAYS upgrade to the [latest version of Joomla](#).

When you've done that, there are several other actions you can and should take to avoid being hacked:

## 1. Follow the Joomla Administrator's Security Checklist

The guys at joomla.org have put together a [Joomla Administrator's Security Checklist](#) - use it and secure your Joomla site as much as possible using the guidelines.

## 2. Install the jSecure Authentication plugin

Every Joomla administrator has the same URL. If you install a security plugin, you can add a suffix to your back-end URL to make it look like this: <http://www.yoursite.com/administrator?helloworld>

If the URL is not entered with a correct suffix, the site will redirect to a 404 (not found) page.

Change the suffix regularly. The plug-in is \$4.99 and it's worth it!

[Buy and download the jSecure Authentication plugin here](#)

## 3. Don't use the jos\_ prefix

The standard prefix for Joomla tables are jos\_. However, many security exploits rely on your database tables being called jos\_XXXXXX.

By simply using your own prefix you would have been protected from these exploits.

It should also be unique for every site.

Read more about this over at the blog of [Brian Teeman](#).

## 4. Change your admin user

The default ID for the admin user in Joomla is always 62, and this may be used by a hacker. To avoid this, do the following:

1. Create a new super-administrator with another user name and a strong password
2. Log out and in again as this new user
3. Change the original admin user to a manager and save (you are not allowed to delete a super-administrator).
4. Now, delete the original admin user (user ID 62).

Thanks to [Brian Teeman](#) for this tip!

### **5. Use a unique and strong password**

Create a unique passwords from a combination of upper- and lowercase letters, numbers and symbols. For instance WsHc3\_#7

Use an [Online Password Generator](#) to make the process easier.

### **6. Change your username and password often**

At least every 3 months.

### **7. Don't use the root user in MySQL as the user of your database**

You should always create a new database user when installing a new site, and give rights to the new database only. This way, the user will only have access to the specific site. If not, you can have one site hacked and the rest are wide open as well...

### **8. Always update to the latest Joomla version**

Can not be said too often ;) Get the [latest version of Joomla](#).

# Joomla CSS for beginners

I regularly scan the unanswered questions in the Joomla forums. Many times, the questions posted have to do with how the output of Joomla is presented. This may have to do with the template, but oftentimes it has to do with the CSS (stylesheet) of the Joomla template.

New users are often unaware of how CSS and Joomla works. There is confusion regarding if the problem relates to the Joomla core, or the template installed. In this post I will try and give you an overview on how to use CSS in Joomla.



I got this email a while ago, which underscores my point:

*Kris, the type of things I struggle with now in Joomla are design issues. I have clients who love a template – in fact they choose the template – BUT they want the background to change, they want more tabs in a horizontal menu than it will hold, or they want a user area where there is none. "Oh, just move that over to the left and insert our address, add a blue bar between this place and that.*

*I know just enough CSS and PHP to be dangerous. It would be helpful if I could just understand all the steps to creating a new user area, and that includes where to put the CSS and PHP code.*

In this post I will write about how I work with CSS in Joomla.

## What is CSS?

Before we start, you need to know what CSS is. I strongly believe that the most important skills for a Joomla user to have is HTML and CSS. And friendliness, of course ;)

If you know HTML and CSS, you have a huge advantage when trying to customize your website. Most extensions are fine the way they look when you install them. However, if you want the look of your website to be consistent, you often need to do some CSS tweaking. So if you don't know any CSS, you'd better start learning now. This post is not about learning you the specific techniques of CSS. Rather it is written to give you an overview on how CSS is used in Joomla.

### This is what Wikipedia has to say about Cascading Style Sheets:

*Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) is a style sheet language used to describe the presentation semantics (that is, the look and formatting) of a document written in a markup language. Its most common application is to style web pages written in HTML and XHTML, but the language can be applied to any kind of XML document, including SVG and XUL.*

*CSS is designed primarily to enable the **separation of document content (written in HTML or a similar markup language) from document presentation**, including elements such as the layout, colors, and fonts.*

The bold part of this excerpt from Wikipedia is the most important thing to know about CSS, in my opinion: **Separation of content (HTML) and visual presentation (CSS)**.

By using CSS, we can use one, centrally located file with all the styles. Keeping the styling separate from our Joomla articles. That way, site-wide style changes are easy to do. Just imagine if you did article specific styling in each and every article on your site. It would be a nightmare to do style changes - in the case of a redesign or template change.

## Joomla CSS and templates

I'm always amused when I read a tweet saying something like: 'Joomla doesn't support IE!'. Or: 'Joomla is not search engine optimized'. Of course it is! But the template might not be. It all comes down to how the template HTML is built and how the [CSS](#) (Cascading Style Sheet) codes are implemented.

Most of the time, the template CSS files are found in the /templates/TEMPLATENAME/css/ folder.

Some templates use only one CSS file (called template.css, mostly), others have several. For optimal page performance, you should keep the number of CSS files to a minimum. This reduces the number of server requests necessary to show the page. You may sometimes see that the template uses a main CSS file which imports all of the other files by the following syntax (example):

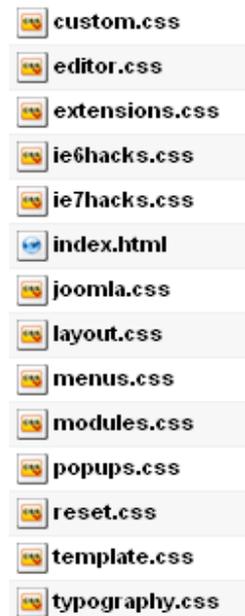
```
@import url('reset.css');
@import url('joomla.css');
@import url('typography.css');
@import url('modules.css');
@import url('custom.css');
```

## CSS Best Practices

Let's say you have installed a template from [YooTheme](#). You could go bananas and change all of the CSS files wildly. Probably won't be a terrible thing to do either, as you can download the original files again if you screw something up.

However, there is a better way. When you want to override CSS in a template, use a separate stylesheet. YooTheme has actually implemented this structure in their templates already. They have included a blank CSS file called `custom.css` which is loaded after all other CSS files. This is where I keep all of my style changes.

If I want to upgrade my template, I can just copy this `custom.css` file, upgrade my template to the latest version and upload the `custom.css` file again. All set!



## Don't repeat styles if you don't need to

When styling elements with CSS it's important to be specific. And to keep your stylesheet lean. What I mean is you don't need to repeat styling just because you want to restyle an element. Let's say, for instance, that you have the following style for the H1 tag in your main CSS file (`template.css` or similar):

```
h1 {
  font-size:24px;
  color:#d7d7d7;
  margin-bottom:1em;
  text-transform:uppercase;
}
```

The normal styling for H tags are bold. Maybe you want to add the styling to make the header tag use the normal and not the bold style of the font. And, at the same time you don't want to have uppercase letters in the H1. Of course, you could do it like this, adding the following code to your `custom.css`:

```
h1 {
  font-size:24px;
  color:#d7d7d7;
  margin-bottom:1em;
  text-transform:none;
  font-weight:normal;
}
```

This works, but it's not good code. You repeat all of the styling even though you just want to alter one style and add another. This is a better way:

```
h1 {
  text-transform:none;
  font-weight:normal;
}
```

In this case, you only add the styles that are different from the original. The other styles are left untouched.

## Use Firebug to Test Your CSS

One of the tools I use to test my CSS is called [Firebug](#). It's an add-on to Firefox which gives you a lot of information about the CSS and HTML structure of a web page. When you have Firebug installed, you can right-click on an element and choose 'Inspect element'. The Firebug window will open at the bottom of the screen. Now, you can see the HTML structure (left) and the CSS (right).

Now the fun begins! You can start experimenting with the CSS directly in Firebug. Want to change the margin of an element? The background color? Remove the border? Every tweak you would like is available to play with, and the result is instantly shown in the browser. Of course, if you refresh the page the changes are lost. When you're happy with your changes, copy the CSS into your custom CSS file and upload to your server.

Take a look at my previous post about [8 Free Firefox extensions every Joomla user should have](#).

## Take some time to learn CSS

I believe every Joomla user / web site developer should learn some CSS and know HTML by heart. It makes it so much easier to modify your templates and to achieve what you (and your client?) wants.

It's not like learning PHP. I hardly know more than a handful things about PHP. HTML and CSS, however, are like second nature to me. That's because I've invested time into learning and practicing the use of these skills. This is especially true for CSS.

## Easy to get started with CSS and Joomla

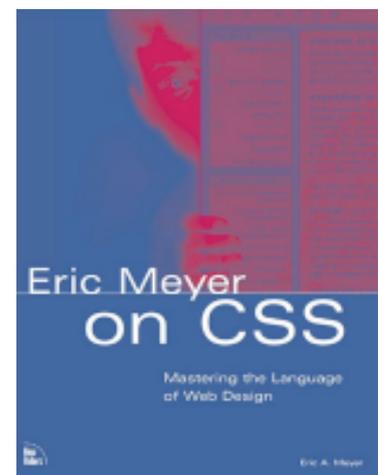
The easiest way of starting to learn CSS is to look at your existing template.css. Look at the structure of it and try changing some of the styles. Do a backup of the file first.

You could try and change the header tags first. Want the H2 tag to be smaller? You got it :) And now it's a site-wide change, valid for all instances of the H2 tag. Other tags to change are the a (link) tag, the p (for instance adjusting the line spacing) and the UL and LI tags (bullet list).

## Recommended reading for learning CSS

To learn CSS, I always recommend the books by CSS guru [Eric Meyer](#). He has some great insights and a huge knowledge about CSS. He describes the use of CSS in an understandable way, and gives a lot of practical examples in his books. My first CSS book was [Eric Meyer on CSS](#), and it taught me a lot. For instance, he goes through the whole process of turning a table-based layout into a CSS layout. Explaining every step along the way.

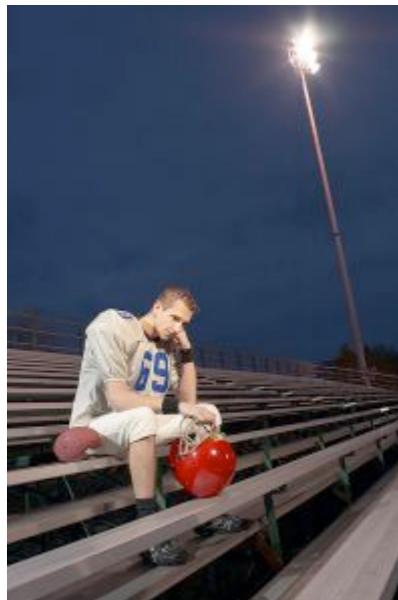
Another great resource is [A List Apart](#). This is a site about web development and has a lot of CSS techniques. "A List Apart Magazine explores the design, development, and meaning of web content, with a special focus on web standards and best practices." Really great!



# 10 Ways to Fail at Joomla

I was surfing [Twitter](#) and the [Joomla Forums](#) today and noticed people complaining about a lot of issues. Many of them were 'victims' of one or more of the following reasons people fail at using Joomla:

1. Not **taking the time** to learn the basics
2. Using a **bad template**
3. Not having a **backup plan**
4. Installing a **new version** without doing a backup
5. Not bothering to **read and understand** the [security checklist](#)
6. Not learning even a tiny bit of **CSS or HTML**
7. Installing new extensions on a production site **without testing** them
8. **Ranting and shouting** in the forums, thereby losing out on the help you would get if you were thinking before shouting
9. Oops, I guess I couldn't think of anything more - how about you?
10. ?



# 10 things you can do to improve your Joomla site

**Sometimes, we all need to get a reminder on what to do to improve our Joomla sites. I know I do. The site has been sitting there for a long time and you know it needs to be updated and improved. You just don't know where to start. Maybe what you need is a kick you know where to get started.**

In this post, I've listed 10 things you could do to improve your own or a client's Joomla site.

Of course they are linked to previous posts on this blog - you might not have seen them:

1. [Set up reliable backup for all your Joomla sites](#)
2. [Write useful documentation for your sites](#)
3. [Optimize your Joomla meta tags for better SEO](#)
4. [Learn how to do Joomla Template Overrides](#)
5. [Improve your HTML and Joomla CSS skills](#)
6. [Integrate a newsletter service with Joomla](#)
7. [Update your Joomla sites and keep them updated](#)
8. [Find a free, quality template and customize it](#)
9. [Show off your Facebook following in Joomla](#)
10. [Learn how to set up Joomla for blog editors like ScribeFire](#)

So don't wait - go learn something new to improve your Joomla site today :)



# Easy Joomla documentation with Joomanuals

**If you are a Joomla website developer or consultant like me, you often need to create documentation for the websites you create. This can be a tedious task, and sometimes a repetitive one.**

The fact is that many (most?) web development companies don't bother to give their clients any documentation at all. By providing well thought-out documentation to your clients you will cement the relationship and attract new clients. The only thing is... It takes a lot of time to do documentation for each site.

Now there's a service available which makes the documentation process much easier. It's actually quite fun!

Joomanuals is an online service which generates custom user manuals to help you save time and impress your clients.

**Take a look in the Coupons section at the end of this book for a special offer from the developer of JooManuals :)**

The developer's product description:

*Joomanuals is an innovative automatic 'custom user manual creator' that will create user manuals which you can give your clients along with the Joomla!™ website. Compare it with the manual you get when buying a TV or a washing machine. What this means is no more annoying calls from clients asking you silly questions like how to add an image in an article.*

Joomanuals is a simple, but brilliant idea which will save you tons of time.

## Easy step-by-step process to create a manual

Joomanuals has been designed for busy web developers, designers and site builders who don't have time to write detailed administration manuals for training their clients.

Using Joomanuals, this is the steps you would use to create a custom manual:

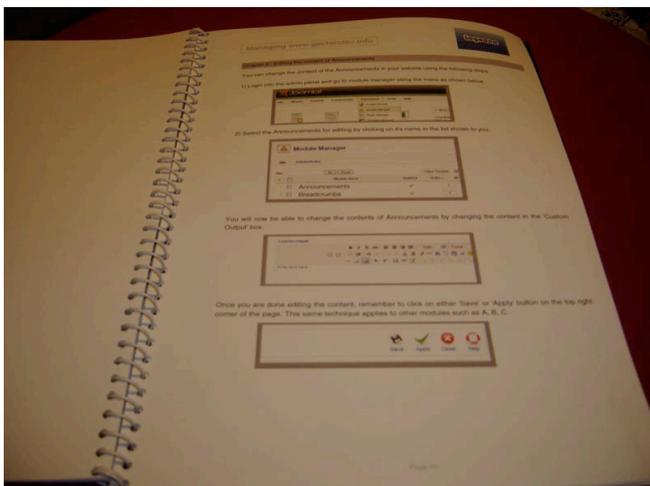
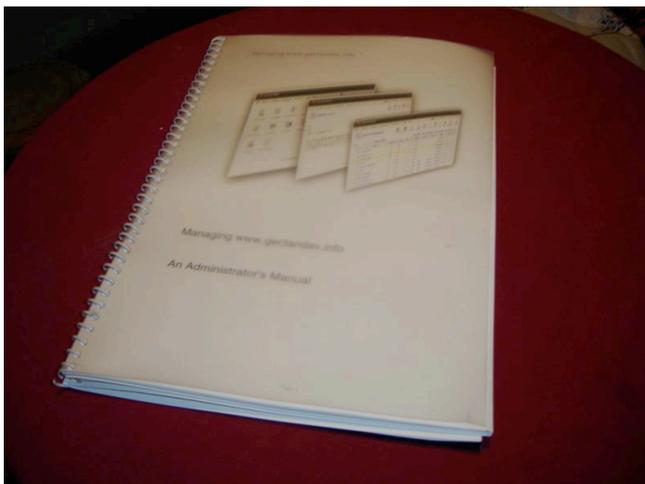
- Log in using your user name and password (provided once you subscribe)
- Fill in a simple form with basic information about your client's website
- Download the custom manual generated by Joomanuals in PDF format. You can print and mail it to your clients if required.



## JooManuals features in detail

- Include your company's logo on header of every page
- Explanation of how to edit Custom HTML modules
- Explanation on making the most of Joomla' Rich Text Editor
- Explanation on how to keep a backup of the site using [phpMyAdmin](#)
- Explanation on how to keep a backup of the site using [Joomlapack](#) and downloading it using [Filezilla](#)
- Explanation of Meta tags, description, and how to use them for [SEO](#)
- Add extra notes after every chapter in the manual in case there is something you want to include that is not a part of the standard explanations
- NEW: Rich text editor chapters for the WYSIWYG editor [JCE](#)
- NEW: 7 [VirtueMart](#) chapters for teaching routine tasks
- NEW: Generate manuals with low-res images unsuitable for printing but suitable for emailing.

Here are some pictures of a finished manual:



## Benefits of Joomanuals

- The chapters, text and screenshots in the manual is generated to look as if you have written the entire manual especially for your client's website.
- All pages have your company logo in the header
- The content is presented in a simple way so that even those clients who think Joomla! is too difficult will be able to learn it by following simple instructions.
- Screenshots are provided explaining each process.
- Will make your company stand out compared to your competition
- Option to make the manual in English or German.

The developer tells me that the chapters in the manuals generated by Joomanuals are designed by the author of a very successful book about Joomla, which is now a part of Joomla's official documentation and has been translated into 2 foreign languages.

## Room for improvement

Joomanuals does not create huge manuals - just useful ones ;)

In a service like this there's always room for improvement. I would like to see support for more extensions and additional translations.

In addition to this, I would like to be able to put the company logo on the front page of the manual. An option to choose to have the logo on the front page or not would be nice.

These are minor things for me, though. Most users in Norway read English very well, so presenting a manual in English isn't a problem. If I want a manual in Norwegian I'd better get around and translating it myself, don't you think? ;)

## Pricing and value

**The price for Joomanuals is \$25 for 1 year**, which I think is a fair price. The developer has already added a lot of features at the request of his users. And as the subscriber base grows, I think we will see more languages and support for more extensions as well.

With a subscription you can generate an unlimited number of manuals for an unlimited number of clients for one year. Considering the fact that it would take a lot of money to get such a manual written especially for your client from a professional it's a very good investment. Using Joomanuals saves time and will definitely impress your clients.

I recommend you go ahead and buy a subscription, and start impressing your clients and co-workers! I use it myself and love it already! If you are not satisfied with the service, the company will return your money immediately.

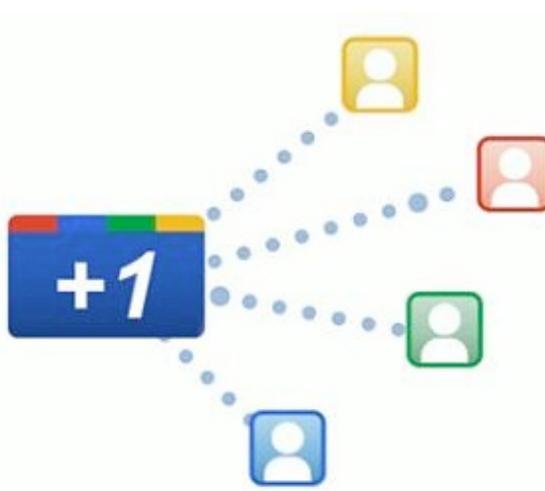
**Take a look in the Coupons section at the end of this book for a special offer from the developer of JooManuals :)**

# How to add a Google +1 button to your Joomla site

In June 2011, Google launched their +1 button. This button allows Google users to "+1", or recommend, a site or web page. The recommendation from your friends will show up in your Google search results and your Google profile.

In this tutorial, I will show you how to implement the Google +1 button in your Joomla web site (and explain why you should).

I've added the +1 button to my site, so make sure you use it ;)



## What is Google +1?

Google describes the +1 button like this:

*The +1 button is shorthand for "this is pretty cool" or "you should check this out."*

*Click +1 to publicly give something your stamp of approval. Your +1's can help friends, contacts, and others on the web find the best stuff when they search.*

You can also take a look at the following video from Google:

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OAYUNI3\\_V2c](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OAYUNI3_V2c)

## Why use it on your Joomla site?

Even though Google is the no. 1 search engine, there has been something missing, and that's the direct user-interaction.

The Facebook Like and Share buttons have become a standard for sharing content with your friends. Now, I see no reason why the Google +1 button won't be of equal, albeit different, importance.

Google tried to launch Google Buzz a while ago, but this didn't take off as they expected. Thus, they turned around and created the +1 button. In my opinion, it seems like a much better idea.

Major sites like [Mashable](#) have already implemented the button and Google is actively marketing the functionality.

The +I button can appear in a variety of places, both on Google and on sites across the web. For example, you might see a +I button for a Google search result, Google ad, or next to an article you're reading on your favorite news site. Your +I's and your [social connections](#) also help improve the [content you see in Google Search](#).

The +I button is currently only available for English searches on Google.com, but I guess they will implement the feature on other language searches as well pretty soon.

So if you want to have users recommend your pages on Google - you need to implement the Google +I button as soon as possible.

## How to implement the Google +I button in your Joomla site

To use Google +I button on your site, you need to add two pieces of code:

1. A Javascript snippet fetching the code from Google
2. A tag for rendering the button where you want it to appear

### The Javascript snippet

This is the Javascript snippet that needs to go on every page where the +I button should appear (place this tag in your head or just before your close body tag):

```
<script src="http://apis.google.com/js/plusone.js" type="text/javascript"></script>
```

To add this code to your site, you have two options:

1. Add it manually to your template index.php file (found in /templates/YOURTEMPLATE/)
2. Add a module containing the snippet using [this method](#) (recommended)

### The +I button tag

The actual button code (place this tag where you want the +I button to render):

```
<g:plusone size="medium"></g:plusone>
```

This actual code renders the standard +I button code. There are several types of buttons to choose from, and you can visit the Google +I button configuration tool to choose what kind of button you want.

To add the tag to your Joomla articles, you need to put it into a Joomla template override for the com\_content article view. If this is Greek to you, please read my article about [Joomla template overrides](#) first.

You need to add the above tag to the /templates/YOURTEMPLATE/html/com\_content/article/default.php file.

You might also consider adding some [CSS](#) to the tag to have it display the way you want to. For instance, place the tag in a DIV with the class name 'gplusone': <div class="gplusone">The tag</div>. In this example your button will be placed to the right side of the text it precedes:

```
div.gplusone {
float:right;
margin-left:20px;
margin-bottom:20px;
}
```

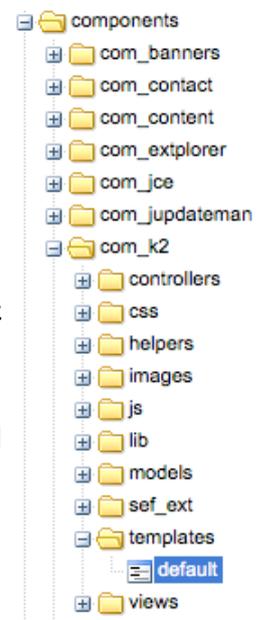
As you can see, it's quite easy to add the button to your Joomla articles. A good place to add the button could be just after the article text.

## If using K2

In case you're using [K2](#), you need to add the button tag to your K2 template.

I recommend you use a template override for that as well if you don't already:

1. Create a folder in your /templates/YOURTEMPLATE/html/ folder called "com\_k2".
2. Place a copy of the files found in /components/com\_k2/templates/default/ into the folder you just created. This will create an override of your default template.
3. Do your modification on these files and not on the ones in /components/com\_k2/templates/default/. Now, if you upgrade K2, your modifications will not be overwritten by the installer but stay nicely in your template HTML folder.



Now, you can add the button code to the K2 **item.php** file and it will show up in your K2 items.

On one of my sites, [www.whatcoffee.com](http://www.whatcoffee.com), I added it just below the article text and before the ratings function. That way, the reader can easily recommend the article if they liked it:



Enjoy your +1's ;)

# Useful Joomla Resources

## SEO Tools

There are several SEO tools available online. These tools will make your life easier when doing keyword research, optimizing your sites and building links. These are two of the tools I use and recommend for SEO:

- [SEOMoz](#)
- [Market Samurai](#)

## Template providers

I tend to use templates from different providers when designing Joomla sites. Here are some of the template providers I use and recommend. They create templates that are customizable, fast loading and SEO friendly:

- [RocketTheme](#)
- [JoomlaBamboo](#)
- [JoomlaShack](#)

## Joomla support and training

If you need support or training, I recommend these excellent companies:

- [OS Training](#)
- [Open Source Support Desk](#)

## Recommended books

- [Eric Meyer on CSS](#)

# Joomla coupons

I've collected a few coupons for you to enjoy. Use these to save money on Joomla templates, extensions and services:

## Joomla support from Open Source Support Desk

Code: joomlablogger25

Savings: USD 25 additional discount on any Prepaid Support Bundle for Joomla

Link: <http://www.opensourcesupportdesk.com/home/prepaid-support>

## 20% off a 1-year subscription for sh404SEF

Use the coupon code sh808 when buying a 1-year license for sh404SEF and get a 20% discount. That means you get it for \$28 as opposed to \$35. [Click here to save 20% on sh404SEF](#)

## 10% discount on all JoomlaBamboo products

[JoomlaBamboo](#) creates nice and clean Joomla templates and extensions with beautiful design. Use the code **joomlablogger2010** when shopping at: <http://www.joomlabamboo.com/>

## 6 months extended subscription on Joomanuals

Joomanuals lets you create custom PDF manuals for your Joomla site in just a few clicks - a real time-saver! [Read my review of Joomanuals here.](#)

I've been testing the product Joomanuals for a while, and Saurabh, the developer, has been generous enough to make a special discount offer available for Joomlablogger readers:

The first 1000 subscribers using the promotion code **joomlablogger** will get an **extended subscription (1.5 years) for \$25** (normally this gives you a 1 year subscription).

[Visit the Joomanuals page to read more and take advantage of this extended subscription offer](#) (remember to use the coupon code **joomlablogger**)



The blog: [www.joomlablogger.net](http://www.joomlablogger.net)

Facebook Fan page: [www.facebook.com/joomlablogger](http://www.facebook.com/joomlablogger)

Twitter: [www.twitter.com/joomlablogger](http://www.twitter.com/joomlablogger)

YouTube channel: [www.youtube.com/joomlablogger](http://www.youtube.com/joomlablogger)