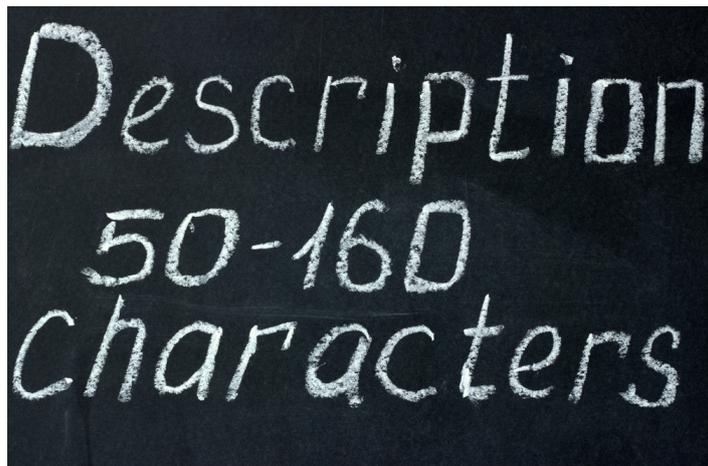


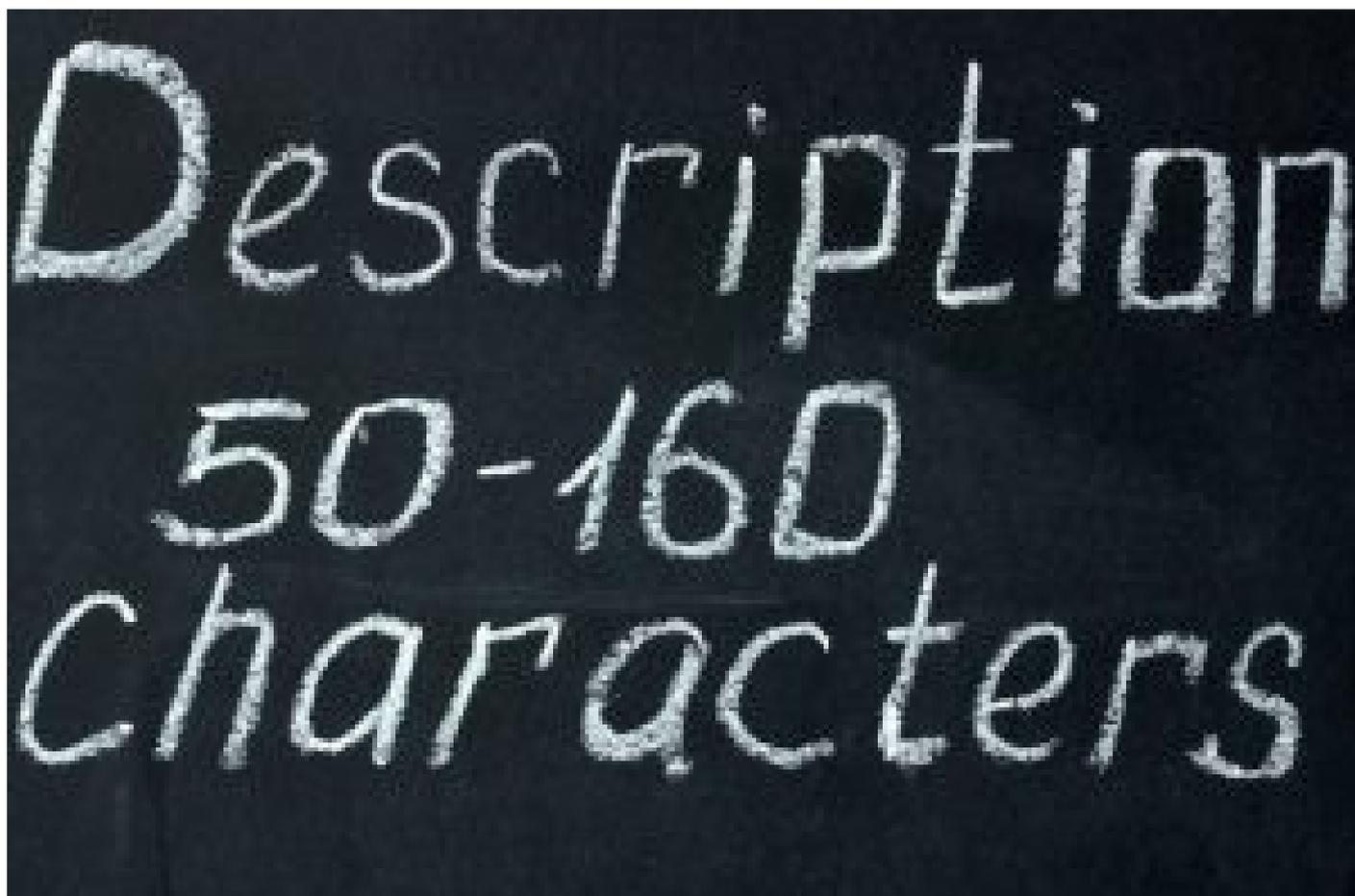
HOW LONG SHOULD TITLES AND DESCRIPTIONS REALLY BE?



Posted on December 20, 2020 by Fabian Pott



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How long is a title actually allowed to be? And how long a description? No matter how superficially someone deals with SEO: These questions are on everyone's mind. The answers are varied and unfortunately often contradictory. How can this be? And how do tools measure?

Why is there not the one value?

There is no tool from Google itself that tells you how the search result will be displayed. And every other tool measures slightly differently. Some measure by character length, some by pixels. It is more correct to calculate by pixel length. But even then, many other factors influence the maximum length: Especially in mobile search, snippets are displayed quite differently than on the desktop.

There is therefore no one correct value. For hands-on purposes, it makes sense to use a reference value as a guide. You'll find out what we use for orientation. Then you will learn how the various tools measure and where the differences are.

How long should a title be?

A title should be a maximum of 524 pixels long. This corresponds to about 58 characters. If you use the maximum length of characters, you should also measure the length in pixels. The character length is only a rough value, the pixel length is relatively exact.

Mobile there are line breaks in Titles - and two lines mean more space and attention. So it makes sense if you use more than about 40 characters and about 330 (mobile) pixels. On desktop, that's around 370 pixels.

What influences the maximum length of the title?

The display of the title is influenced by the following:

The width of the letters makes a difference. Google uses the font Arial in 18-pixel size for titles. There, a capital "W" is 17 pixels wide, a small "l" only four. A title with many wide letters such as "Warhammer" (9 characters, 97 pixels) may therefore contain significantly fewer characters than one with many narrow letters such as "Lillifee" (8 characters, 51 pixels). Different values apply on mobile than on desktop. Here Google uses the font "Roboto-Regular" in 14-pixel size.

This gives us "only" about 475 pixels of space, but the characters are also significantly narrower. Thus, mobile tends to have even more space in the title. Due to the line breaks, however, there is not one mobile value. If you also want to optimize for Bing, you should formulate shorter titles. Here, the maximum is already reached at around 60 characters.

How long should a description be?

A description should be at least about 100 characters and at most about 145 characters long. If a description is shorter than 100 characters, it will probably be displayed as a single line. You will lose space and attention.

If you use more than approx. 110 characters, your last sentence should not contain any elementary information. This is because only around 110 characters are displayed in mobile search. We, therefore, like to use the last sentence for a call-to-action. This is helpful in terms of click-through rate, but not necessary.

What influences the maximum length of the description?

The description is influenced by much more than the title: Line breaks: Depending on the word length, a line break occurs earlier and the displayed description becomes shorter as a result. This

makes it impossible to specify an exact value for the length.

Pixels vs. characters: It is more likely that Google measures with pixels instead of a specific number of characters. In a test, we used words with many short characters to exhaust the possible maximum. That was 1896 pixels on the desktop (403 characters in this case).

However, we have more leeway with the description than with the title, and descriptions are not directly relevant for ranking. Therefore, rough, generous character guidelines are sufficient for us in our daily work.

Bolding: Each search term is highlighted in bold in the description. This means that the searched word takes up about 10% more space. The longer the search query, the more relevant this factor is.

Date of publication: For blogposts and news where Google finds the date in the source code, the date of the content is displayed before the description. By doing this, you lose about 12 characters.

Jump Marks: If you display jump labels to certain paragraphs, they will also take up space in the description. If you are not working with one-pagers, this should rarely be a relevant danger.

How do I measure the length of a title or description?

The easiest way to measure the character length of your snippet in Excel is to use the function =LENGTH(A2). "A2" stands for the cell containing your title or description.

However, the character length is not really the criterion by which Google measures. You should therefore also consider the pixel length. This is measured for example by the "SERP Snippet" tool in Screaming Frog. However, for this, you need to have a URL in your crawl so that you have data at the bottom of the "SERP Snippet" tab.

Otherwise, you can also measure the pixel length conveniently in the browser with this tool from the colleagues from adtraffic. In the respective tools, you can switch whether you want to measure for mobile or for desktop.

How do other tools measure?

There are several tools to calculate the correct length for snippets. Unfortunately, they all show something different. As explained above, this is not surprising. To give you an idea of which tools are suitable for you, we have made a kind of "meta-study" and compared the recommendations of the tool providers.

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Title measurement values of selected tools

The tools have different measured values. For comparison, we have also included the measured pixel length of the sample title: "Snippet optimization: making Title & Description optimal for SEO".

Almost all, but not all tools, measure by pixel length. The values also differ greatly for desktop, because some still calculate with the old value of 512 pixels.

Only three tools explicitly take into account the special features of mobile search. Here, the estimates also differ the most. However, as already mentioned, the limiting factor for the title is rather the desktop search. In my opinion, Screaming Frog performs best for the title.

So who can be trusted?

Google has recently made a lot of changes to the display. Not every tool can keep up with the adjustments - it is also rarely the most important feature of these tools. All of this shows us one thing above all: there urgently needs to be a tool from Google itself.

In the meantime, what do you use as your guide? Feel free to write it in the comments and sign up for our newsletter now!

