

SEO or SEM: What's the Difference?

In this activity, we are going to identify the key differences between SEO and SEM. As you most likely know, SEO stands for “search engine optimization” and SEM stands for “search engine marketing”.

Globally, Google is the most widely used search engine accounting for around 90% of all online searches. But there are other search engines such as Bing, Yahoo, Baidu, and Yandex.

Both SEO and SEM tactics are designed for a website to rank (appear) at the top of a search engine results page (SERP). Obviously, the nearer the top of a search, the more likely that the user will click on the result and go through to the website.

For companies reliant upon website traffic for all or part of their commercial success SEO and SEM are very important marketing tools.

SEO success is built around relevant and quality content. Say a website has a good post on “*best cameras for travel vlogging*”, then it is likely to appear high in a search if the user types in similar keywords to the post.

Whereas SEM is paid placement (advertising) on a search engine, where the firm (website) is willing to advertise if a user types in a set keyword combination (such as “*best cameras for vlogging*”).

No doubt on your online searches, you have noticed that ads appear at the top (or sometimes the side) of a search, followed by non-ad listings.

Your Task: For each of the following terms, phrases, and definitions, is it referring to SEO or SEM or both?

1. It is referred to as an organic method of generating website traffic
2. It is a paid method of gaining traffic
3. You can be at the top of a SERP when users search for a name of a competitor
4. It is earned media
5. Your website can get to the top of a SERP faster (even the same day)
6. You can reach new customers
7. You can reach consumers at their *ready-to-buy* stage
8. You can turn it on/off quickly
9. A marketing ROI can be easily calculated
10. There are no advertising or promotional costs
11. It will increase website traffic
12. It is reliant upon the search engine's algorithm
13. It is a long-term process
14. It may become a “rich snippet” on Google, with good click-through rates
15. It provides a sign of credibility of the business = a form of physical evidence
16. The listing is almost guaranteed to be at the top of a SERP
17. It is easy to test the content, timing, and design
18. You can precisely target the audience
19. There is no cost if a user clicks on the link shown
20. There is no cost if a user does NOT click on the link shown