**COVID-19 metadata creation primer**

Your accurate completion of metadata fields will contribute to the:

* improved performance of your pages in search results, and
* creation of a robust inventory of all Government of Canada web pages related to COVID-19.

The presence of quality metadata for web pages in the GC COVID-19 inventory will assist Theme Managers to better understand the content in the inventory, and will allow the inventory to be used in a variety of ways to enhance GC COVID-19 content and presence on the web.

This document gives basic instruction on completion of the following metadata fields:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Property** | **Where it will benefit** |
| Title / Metatitle     (H1) | Search results  Social media  Web browser tab  COVID-19 content inventory  Web performance measurement and analysis (Displays on the web page as the largest text (i.e. ‘title’ of page) |
| Description | Search results  Social media |
| Keywords | Canada.ca search results |
| Audience | COVID-19 content inventory |
| Content type | COVID-19 content inventory |
| Primary and Additional topic | COVID-19 content inventory |

**METATITLE (called *Page title* in AEM properties template; the <title> tag in code)**

**Basic principles**

This is the most important piece of metadata for your page.

In search results, the **metatitle** is your page’s elevator pitch amongst all other search results both within the Canada.ca and external search engines. The metatitle is also used and displayed in social media tools. The metatitle must be unique, accurately summarize, and distinguish the page content. Think outside the silo of your department’s content when creating it.

Follow the principles found in the Canada.ca Content Style Guide in creating metatitles.

**In search results**

Metatitle is an important page-ranking feature in Google. In the Canada.ca search engine, the title field is boosted, meaning it is given extra weight in the ranking of pages in search results.

Google search display is limited to 600 pixels (about 70 characters). Titles longer than this length are truncated in search display results. When relevant to the page content, or directly relevant to the page context, include “COVID-19” or “Coronavirus” (or both) close to the beginning of the title -- if not at the front. This will ensure the virus context of your content will display in visible search results. At this time it is not known if significantly different results are displayed in external search engines due to the use of only one of the two commonly used terms. Test how your metatitle will appear in Google search results at: <https://moz.com/learn/seo/title-tag>. Longer titles of up to 250 characters including spaces are displayed in Canada.ca search results, but no title should be this long. Optimize metatitles for both search and search results display purposes.

**In social media**

The metatitle is pulled by social media sites when the public shares a page.

**In performance measurement**

The metatitle field is used regularly in the generation and presentation of performance measurement results and analysis.

**On your page**

Usually metatitles and H1s can be the same. Modify the metatitle if it is not unique, is too long or is not descriptive. In AEM, the metatitle (field label is *Page title*) will by default be used as the H1. If the H1 will be different from the metatitle, you will need to edit the H1. (The H1 is the ‘title’ or largest text that appears on a web page. It is an additional ranking factor for Google, separate from metatitle.)

**DESCRIPTION**

**Basic principles**

Think of the metatitle and the description as a pair of complementary fields. Use the description field to elaborate on the metatitle.

In writing the description:

* do not repeat or rephrase the title;
* provide a clear, short and precise summary of the page beyond what is found in the metatitle, giving additional information about what users will find on the page, or what task they can complete;
* look to introductory sentences, phrases on the page and H2s to help create a description;
* create readable sentences or clauses (i.e. not lists of words) that make sense in conjunction with the title;
* in order to optimize descriptions for potential Google search results display, attempt to keep descriptions under 130 characters including spaces to allow for longer French language translation

If the metatitle of your page does not include the terms “coronavirus” or “COVID-19,” include at least one of the terms in your description when relevant to the content of the page or directly relevant to the page’s context.

**In search engines**

The **description** field may be displayed in Google as the search result description for a page. It is used to help build rich snippets. In the Canada.ca search engine, the description field is boosted, and the description can be displayed in search results if the content owner decides so.

**In social media**

The description is pulled by social media sites when the public shares a page.

**KEYWORDS**

The **keyword** metadata field allows you to add terms not present in the page content, but likely to be searched for by users, heightening the probability that pages relevant to the user will be returned in Canada.ca search results.

For all pages touching on any element of the coronavirus illness, or created as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic (i.e. but not *about* COVID-19), enter the following keywords together -- and place first -- in the keyword field:

English pages: **coronavirus, COVID-19, Canada, pandemic,**

French pages: **coronavirus, COVID-19, Canada, pandémie,**

Next, identify the most relevant key words and phrases on the page by scanning the title, any introductory text, table of contents and headings. In the keyword field enter any acronyms or commonly used synonyms for these words and phrases. Importantly, include words that users may use to search for the page. Use Google Trends and Adobe Analytics to see what words are being used within the Canadian context. There is no additional search benefit to including in the keyword field words found on the page. Do not deliberately repeat keywords (i.e. no 'keyword stuffing') except in instances where words are repeated due to inclusion in unique phrases. A delimiter (e.g. comma) must separate keywords and phrases.

It is not necessary to add variations of words in the keyword field as stemming is used by the Canada.ca search engine. The AEM space limit is 400 characters including spaces.

**For completion if you manage your web content in AEM:**

**CONTENT TYPE**

The **content type** value describes the nature or genre of the content. It is *not* about the *content* of the page.

Select a value from the controlled vocabulary. See brief descriptions of the Content types at <https://www.canada.ca/en/government/about/design-system/topic-tree-content-types.html>. Select multiple values as needed. The value will be automatically added to the opposite language template.

**AUDIENCE**

The **audience** value represents for whom the page is intended or for whom it may be particularly useful.

Select a value from the controlled vocabulary. Select multiple values as needed. The value will be automatically added to the opposite language template.

Pay close attention to assigning values for pages of interest to -- or for which the intended audience is -- Indigenous people, veterans and/or youth. If there is no appropriate value, do not select one.

**PRIMARY TOPIC and ADDITIONAL TOPIC**

For content related to COVID-19, populate the **Primary topic** field with the value **Coronavirus (COVID-19)** from the controlled vocabulary by selecting *Health*, then *Diseases and conditions*, then *Diseases* and finally *Coronavirus (COVID-19)* from the pick list. The value will be automatically added to the opposite language template.

Populate the **Additional topic** field with another topic tree value relevant to the subject matter of the page (as applicable). Note that in AEM, more than one Additional topic value can be added. The value will be automatically added to the opposite language template.