

SEO Slug Best *Practices*

A quick-reference cheat sheet for creating clean, search-friendly URL slugs. Keep this by your desk when writing blog posts, creating tool pages, or building any content that needs a permanent URL.

What is a URL slug?

A URL slug is the human-readable part of a URL that identifies a specific page. In <https://wordinstant.com/word-counter>, the slug is `word-counter`. A good slug is short, descriptive, and built for both humans and search engines.

The 10 golden rules

1. Use lowercase only

Search engines treat `/About-Us` and `/about-us` as different URLs. Stick to lowercase to avoid duplicate content issues and broken links.

2. Use hyphens, not underscores

Google treats hyphens as word separators but underscores as joiners. `seo-slug-guide` reads as three words; `seo_slug_guide` reads as one. Always use hyphens.

3. Keep it short (3–5 words)

Shorter slugs are easier to read, share, and remember. Aim for 3–5 words that capture the core topic. Cut filler words ruthlessly.

4. Remove stop words

Words like "the", "a", "an", "of", "and", "in", "to", "for" add length without SEO value. `guide-to-the-best-seo-practices` becomes `seo-best-practices`.

5. Include the target keyword

Put your primary keyword in the slug. If you're targeting "word counter tool", use `word-counter-tool`, not `our-amazing-text-utility`.

6. No special characters

Remove accents, ampersands, question marks, and any non-ASCII characters. Use only `a-z`, `0-9`, and `-` (hyphens).

7. No trailing slashes or file extensions

Use `/about`, not `/about/` or `/about.html`. Pick one convention and enforce it with redirects.

8. No consecutive hyphens

Multiple hyphens (`my--slug`) look broken and confuse parsers. Collapse them into a single hyphen.

9. Make it evergreen

Avoid dates, version numbers, or references that will expire. `seo-slug-guide` ages better than `seo-slug-guide-2026`. If you must include a year, be prepared to update the slug (and set up a redirect).

10. Never change a live slug without a redirect

If a page is already indexed, changing its slug without a 301 redirect destroys its accumulated link equity and causes 404 errors. Always set up redirects.

Quick reference

✓ DO

```
seo-slug-guide  
word-counter  
case-converter-tool  
blog-post-length  
remove-extra-spaces
```

✗ DON'T

```
SEO_Slug_Guide  
the-best-word-counter-tool-online-free  
page?id=42&ref=home  
blog-post-length-2026-updated  
remove--extra--spaces.html
```

Slug transformation examples

Here's how common page titles translate into clean slugs:

BEFORE	AFTER (SLUG)	RULE APPLIED
How to Count Words in Any Document (Fast!)	count-words-document	Remove stop words, parens, punctuation

Title Case vs. Sentence Case: When to Use Each	title-case-vs-sentence-case	Keep meaningful structure words
The Ultimate Guide to Lorem Ipsum Alternatives	lorem-ipsum-alternatives	Remove "the", "ultimate", "guide to"
10 Best Free Online Text Tools for Writers	free-text-tools-writers	Remove number, "best", "online", "for"
What Is a URL Slug? (And Why It Matters)	what-is-url-slug	Remove parens, "and why it matters"
Our New Feature: Bulk Case Conversion!	bulk-case-conversion	Remove "our new feature", punctuation

The slug formula

Follow this step-by-step process every time you create a slug:

1. **Start with the page title or target keyword**
2. **Lowercase everything**
3. **Remove stop words** (a, an, the, of, to, for, and, in, on, with, is, are, how)
4. **Remove special characters** (punctuation, accents, symbols, emojis)
5. **Replace spaces with hyphens**
6. **Collapse consecutive hyphens** into a single hyphen
7. **Trim leading/trailing hyphens**
8. **Review:** Is it 3–5 words? Does it include the keyword? Would a human understand it?

PRO TIP

Use WordInstant's free [Slug Generator](#) tool to automate this process. Paste any title and get a clean, SEO-friendly slug instantly. Try it at wordinstant.com/slug-generator.

Common mistakes to avoid

- **Keyword stuffing.** `best-free-word-counter-tool-online-2026-count-words` looks spammy to both users and Google. Stick to one keyword phrase.
- **Auto-generated slugs from CMS.** WordPress and other CMSs auto-generate slugs from the full title, including stop words. Always manually review and shorten them.

- **Using IDs or hashes.** `/post/8f3a2b` tells nobody anything. Use descriptive words.
- **Changing slugs after indexing.** Once Google has indexed a URL, changing the slug without a 301 redirect causes a 404 and loses all accumulated ranking power.
- **Transliterating inconsistently.** If you serve multiple languages, pick a consistent approach for accented characters (e.g., always strip accents for English slugs).

Pre-publish checklist

Run through this checklist before publishing any new page:

- All lowercase?
- Hyphens only (no underscores, spaces, or special characters)?
- 3–5 words long?
- Contains the primary target keyword?
- Stop words removed?
- No consecutive hyphens?
- No trailing slash or file extension?
- Unique (not duplicating an existing URL)?
- Evergreen (no dates or version numbers unless necessary)?
- If replacing an existing slug: 301 redirect in place?

Generate perfect slugs automatically with WordInstant's free Slug Generator tool.

wordinstant.com/slug-generator

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