



Etsy SEO Cheat Sheet

Rank Higher, Sell More — The Complete Optimization Guide

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1. How Etsy Search Works

Etsy's search algorithm evaluates two things: **Query Matching** (does your listing match what the buyer typed?) and **Listing Quality Score** (will this buyer likely purchase?).

The Two Phases of Etsy Search

Phase 1 — Query Matching: Etsy scans titles, tags, categories, and attributes for keyword matches. If your listing doesn't match the query, it won't appear regardless of quality.

Phase 2 — Ranking: Among matched listings, Etsy ranks by relevancy score, listing quality (conversion rate, favorites, reviews), recency, customer experience score, and shipping price.

What Etsy Doesn't Tell You

- Etsy weights exact phrase matches more heavily than individual word matches
- Recency matters most in the first 24-48 hours after publishing — use this to test listings
- Click-through rate affects ranking — your thumbnail is part of SEO
- Repeat customers boost your listing quality score significantly
- Free shipping on orders \$35+ gets a ranking boost in US search results

2. Keyword Research Process

Step 1 — Etsy Search Bar (Free)

Type your product into Etsy's search bar and note every autocomplete suggestion. These are real buyer searches. Do this for 5-10 variations of your product name.

Autocomplete Mining Technique

Type: "birthday gift" → note suggestions. Type: "birthday gift for" → note suggestions. Continue through alphabet modifiers. Type: "birthday gift for w", "birthday gift for wo", etc.

Step 2 — Competitor Research

- Find your top 5 competitors (bestsellers in your category) and study their titles and tags
- Look for the orange bestseller ribbon — these have proven sales history
- Note sub-niches in bestsellers you hadn't considered
- Check "People also searched for" suggestions at the bottom of search results

Step 3 — Long-Tail vs. Short-Tail Keywords

Type	Example	Competition	Conversion	Use For
Short-tail	candle	Very High	Low	Avoid as primary
Mid-tail	soy candle gift	High	Medium	Include in title
Long-tail	soy candle gift set for mom birthday	Low	High	Primary target

Step 4 — Validate with eRank (Free Tier)

Use eRank.com (free) to check monthly search volume, competition level, and trend direction. Target keywords with Medium-High searches and Low-Medium competition.

3. Listing Title Formula

The Title Formula

[Primary Keyword] | [Secondary Keyword] — [Benefit/Occasion] [Product Type] [Modifier]

Title Rules

- Max 140 characters — Etsy shows ~60 in search; put best keywords first
- Use your most important long-tail keyword in the first 40 characters
- Separate ideas with commas, pipes (|), or dashes
- Do NOT keyword stuff or repeat the same word more than twice
- Write for humans first — if it reads like spam, buyers bounce
- Include occasion-based keywords (birthday, wedding, Christmas) when relevant
- Include recipient keywords (for her, for him, for mom, for teacher)

Title Examples

Weak Title	Optimized Title
Soy Candle	Soy Candle Gift Set for Mom Birthday Candle — Hand Poured Vanilla Coconut Wax Self Care Gift for Her
Custom Print	Custom Family Portrait Print Personalized Line Art Anniversary Gift for Couple — Minimalist Wall Art
Dog Bandana	Personalized Dog Bandana Custom Pet Name — Dog Birthday Gift Puppy Bandana Scarf for Small Dogs

4. Tags — The Complete Strategy

You have 13 tags. Each tag can be up to 20 characters including spaces. Multi-word tags are far more powerful than single words.

Tag Strategy

Tags	Type	Examples
1-3	Primary long-tail	soy candle gift set, birthday candle for her
4-6	Occasion-based	birthday gift, mothers day gift, christmas gift
7-9	Recipient-based	gift for her, gift for mom, gift for teacher
10-11	Style/aesthetic	boho, minimalist, farmhouse, cottagecore
12-13	Use case / outcome	self care gift, cozy home decor

Tag Rules

- Do NOT repeat words already in your title — Etsy already counts those
- Use all 13 tags — every empty tag is a missed opportunity
- Use the full 20 characters when possible (longer = more specific)
- Avoid brand names, trademarks, or other shop names in tags

5. Description Formula

Etsy descriptions are NOT heavily indexed for search — titles and tags handle SEO. However, descriptions convert browsers to buyers, so write for humans.

The 5-Part Description Structure

1. Hook (1-2 sentences): Lead with emotion or outcome, not specs. 'This candle is why people walk into your home and immediately feel calm.'

2. Product Details (bullet list): Size, materials, scents/variants, how it's made, what's included. Be specific — vague listings lose trust.

3. Who It's Perfect For: Call out recipient and occasion. 'Perfect for birthdays, self-care Sundays, housewarming gifts, or treating yourself.'

4. Logistics: Processing time, shipping estimate, personalization instructions if applicable.

5. Trust Statement: Brief mention of return policy and a genuine thank-you line.

Pro tip: Repeat your primary keyword naturally 2-3 times in the description. It doesn't move rankings much but reinforces relevance.

6. Photos & Alt Text

Photo Slot	What to Show
1 (Thumbnail)	Clean product on white or lifestyle background — must pop in search
2	Lifestyle shot — product in use or styled in a room
3	Multiple variants or sizes together
4	Close-up of quality detail (texture, stitching, label)
5	Scale reference (product next to hand or common object)
6	Packaging / unboxing shot
7-8	Gift-giving context, occasion styling
9	Infographic: key features or 'what's included'
10	Customer photo or 'as seen' style shot

Alt Text

Write descriptive alt text for every photo using natural language with your keywords. Example:
'Hand-poured vanilla soy candle in amber jar with cotton wick — birthday gift for women.'

7. Algorithm Ranking Factors

Factor	Weight	What You Can Do
Keyword Relevancy	High	Optimize title, tags, attributes
Listing Quality Score	High	Improve photos, price, description
Conversion Rate	High	Better thumbnails, pricing, reviews
Customer Experience Score	High	Fast shipping, no disputes, 5-star reviews
Recency	Medium	Renew stale listings, add new products
Free Shipping	Medium (US)	Offer free shipping on orders \$35+
Etsy Ads	Paid boost	\$1-3/day after organic is working
Shop Score	Medium	Complete all shop sections and policies

8. Common SEO Mistakes

X Repeating title keywords in tags — Etsy already indexes title keywords. Tags should add new phrases.

X Using single-word tags — 'Candle' has millions of results. 'Soy candle gift set' is specific and converts.

X Keyword stuffing in titles — If a human can't read it naturally, it converts poorly and buyers bounce.

X Skipping attributes — Fill in every attribute Etsy offers — they affect search filtering results.

X Never updating listings — Stale listings lose ranking. Refresh SEO every 60-90 days.

X Ignoring first 160 chars of description — Etsy shows this in some search previews — make it count.

X Same tags across all listings — Each listing should be uniquely optimized for its specific product.

X Poor thumbnail photos — Even perfect SEO can't save a bad thumbnail — CTR drives ranking.

9. Quick-Action Checklist

Use this checklist every time you create or update a listing:

- Primary long-tail keyword in first 40 characters of title
- Title uses 120-140 of 140 available characters
- Title is readable by a human (not keyword stuffed)
- All 13 tag slots used
- Tags are multi-word phrases (not single words)
- Tags do NOT repeat title keywords
- Tags include: occasion, recipient, style, and use-case keywords
- All category attributes filled in
- Description opens with emotional hook
- Description includes bullet-point product details
- Processing and shipping times stated clearly
- At least 5 photos uploaded
- Thumbnail tested (looks good at small size in search)
- Alt text written for all photos
- Free shipping enabled (if viable for margin)
- Return policy visible in description or shop policies
- Listing reviewed as a buyer before publishing
- Schedule review at 30 days to assess performance