



WHITEPAPER: UNIVERSAL RESULTS

# RISE TO THE TOP WITH FEATURED SNIPPETS

How common are featured snippets on commercial SERPs? We analyzed one million high-CPC SERPs to help you earn more snippets for your site.

The mysterious inner-workings of featured snippets make them a perplexing yet fascinating search result to navigate a tracking strategy around. By examining a mountain of commercially oriented keywords, we set out to help crack the featured snippets code and see how they affect the most competitive SERPs.

But wait! What the heck are featured snippets? Excellent question. A featured snippet is a summary of an answer to a searcher's query. It's taken from a website and includes a link to the site, the page title, and the URL.

For this study, we loaded one million high-CPC queries into STAT and gathered data on when featured snippets occur, what query types generate snippets, which sites get the most snippets, and all kinds of other pressing questions.

We share the background research and methodology behind our madness, examine all of the above factors, and give you some straightforward steps to earn more featured snippets.

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# 70% of snippets came from sites outside of the first organic position.

## WHY FEATURED SNIPPETS

When featured snippets first set sail in 2014, there was concern around whether they might sink traffic to the cited source. After all, if a searcher can get their answer right in the SERP, why would they bother clicking through to the full webpage or any other organic results?

Fast forward a few years and we see that curiosity actually trumps quick-and-easy. A number of case studies suggest that not only do featured snippets often increase traffic to the cited domain, but the majority of snippets come from websites that don't even rank number one organically. This means that lower-ranking websites can leapfrog the competition.

### MO' SNIPPETS, MO' TRAFFIC

In a 2015 case study published on Search Engine Land titled "[SEO For Featured Snippets Leads to Big Gains](#)," Ben Goodsell and Cheryl Jones reported that the CTR on a key page increased from two percent to eight percent when a featured snippet was earned, with revenue from organic traffic increasing by 677 percent.

### MILLION-DOLLAR FEATURED SNIPPETS

QUERY	CPC	ANNUAL US SEARCH VOLUME	ESTIMATED ANNUAL TRAFFIC VALUE
[ <i>crm</i> ]	US\$37.73	1,320,000	US\$49,803,600
[ <i>big data</i> ]	\$56.50	726,000	\$41,019,000
[ <i>workers compensation</i> ]	\$14.36	486,000	\$6,978,960
[ <i>home equity loan rates</i> ]	\$13.08	177,600	\$2,323,008
[ <i>cheapest insurance</i> ]	\$42.76	34,800	\$1,488,048

**Figure 1.**

Five examples of featured snippet queries with traffic valued at US\$1,000,000 or more, based on the calculation [CPC x Annual US Search Volume].

In another example published in Stone Temple Consulting's 2015 post, "[The Definitive Guide To Google's Rich Answers](#)," Eric Enge highlighted a 20–30 percent increase in traffic for ConfluentForms.com while they held the featured snippet for the query [*what is a rfp*].

### OUR FINDINGS

So what does this mean for our one million high-CPC queries? In our study, we observed snippets on 9.28 percent of the queries analyzed, and it blew our socks off to see 70 percent of those snippets citing URLs that didn't rank number one on the page organically.

Not only that, but we calculated the estimated value of traffic from each featured snippet query. Using the formula of [CPC x Annual US Search Volume], we identified 1,569 snippet queries with annual traffic valued at over US\$1,000,000 (see figure 1).

The significance is clear: for businesses that can create content specifically designed to be selected as a featured snippet, there's a big opportunity to drive valuable site traffic, even if they're not ranking number one.

## METHODOLOGY & HIGHLIGHTS

Between January 16 and January 17, 2016, we gathered the top 100 ranking URLs for one million high-CPC keywords. Before we dig into our findings, here's a quick overview of our process and methodology.

### STEP ONE: ROUND UP CORE KEYWORD & RANKING DATA IN STAT

In January 2015, Russ Jones from Moz and GrepWords released a [list of the million highest CPC keywords](#) in the GrepWords database. We used those keywords as the basis of this analysis, feeding them into STAT to gather loads of data from US desktop results over a two-day period. We also used STAT to generate HTML snapshots of the 100-result SERP for each keyword. Out of the one million queries, 92,832 produced a featured snippet result, which STAT tracks as an *answers* result type.

### STEP TWO: GATHER SUPPLEMENTAL ON-PAGE & OFF-SITE DATA

Next we created a list of the top 10 URLs for each query that returned a featured snippet, resulting in 346,643 distinct URLs. With this list, we gathered various on-page and off-site metrics for each URL – such as word count and Moz link metrics – using URL Profiler and Screaming Frog. We also ran a second crawl on the HTML SERPs to look at the exact text in each featured snippet.

### STEP THREE: ANALYZE

After gathering all that data, we conducted most of our analysis in Excel and Tableau. With almost 100 million rows of data in the complete rankings file, tools like Tableau were essential in handling files that Excel couldn't process.

#### DATA SET HIGHLIGHTS

**KEYWORDS ANALYZED:** 999,868 (132 were perfect duplicates or returned invalid results.)

**CPC RANGE:** US\$9.55-\$1,006.56

**SEARCH VOLUME RANGE:** 10-2,740,000 average searches per month

**SEARCH RESULTS:** 99,988,800 (up to 100 for each keyword)

**DEVICE:** Desktop

**MARKET:** United States, English (Google.com)

Want to dig into the details?  
We've open-sourced our data.



GET IT HERE:  
[GETSTAT.COM/DATA/FS](https://getstat.com/data/fs)

# HOW TO TELL AN ANSWER BOX FROM A FEATURED SNIPPET

First things first, let's get to the bottom of what makes an answer box different from a featured snippet.

## ANSWER BOXES

SEO folks use the term *answer box* a lot, but what does it actually mean? The definition is slippery, in large part because Google tends to name universal results well after SEOs have informally named them. As a general rule, answer box is an industry term for boxes that show up in the first organic result of SERPs with a potential answer to a user's query.

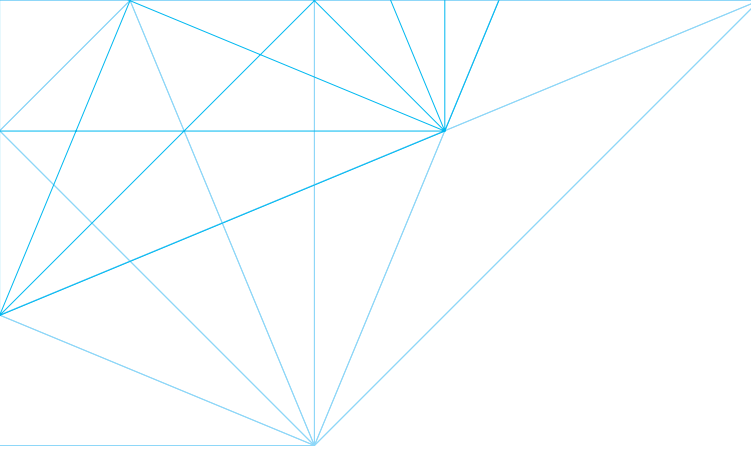
Figure 2 shows an answer box example for the query [*vancouver whitecaps schedule*] showing the upcoming matches for Vancouver's soccer (yes, sometimes referred to as football) club.

Here, Google presents a likely answer based on information from third-party data sets, so there's no need to link to their source. (STAT tracks these as *knowledge graph* results with Google.com as the ranking URL.)



Vancouver Whitecaps FC Scores & Schedule			
Mar 6	 Vancouver Whitecaps	vs	Montreal Impact  5:30 PM
Mar 12	 Sporting KC	vs	Vancouver Whitecaps  8:30 PM
Mar 19	 Seattle	vs	Vancouver Whitecaps  10:00 PM
<i>All times are in Eastern Time</i>			
 Schedule and scores			

**Figure 2.**  
Example of an answer box using the query [*vancouver whitecaps schedule*].



## FEATURED SNIPPETS

In the case of featured snippets, Google shows answers gleaned directly from a piece of web content. In these cases, the source page is provided as a link.

Let's look at the example query [*cataract surgery insurance coverage*] (see figure 3). If you're the SEO manager for AllAboutVision.com, this is a great result for your domain because it gives searchers just enough information to encourage them to click through and continue reading the complete article.

These prices for **cataract surgery** or refractive lens exchange (RLE) include people not **covered** by Medicare or private health **insurance**. With **insurance coverage**, you can expect to pay extra or "premium" costs out-of-pocket for presbyopia-correcting (PC-IOLs) and for astigmatism-correcting (toric) IOLs. Dec 22, 2015

[What Does Cataract Surgery Cost? - All About Vision](http://www.allaboutvision.com/conditions/cataract-surgery-cost.htm)  
[www.allaboutvision.com/conditions/cataract-surgery-cost.htm](http://www.allaboutvision.com/conditions/cataract-surgery-cost.htm)

**Figure 3.** Example of a featured snippet for the keyword [*cataract surgery insurance coverage*].

## TERMINOLOGY

### A UNIVERSAL RESULT BY ANY OTHER NAME

Given the fact that Google's often tardy to the party when it comes to naming universal results, here's a handy reference to help keep some of the names straight.

SERP FEATURE	GOOGLE TERM	COMMON TERMS	STAT REPORTS
Minimally structured answer with source link	Featured snippet	Answer box, quick answer, featured snippet	Answer
Live data about sports, weather, etc.	Live results	Knowledge graph, answer box	Knowledge graph
Structured factual data without source link	Knowledge card	Answer box, quick answer, knowledge graph	Knowledge graph
"People also ask"	No official term	"People also ask," related questions	Knowledge graph

TL;DR: In STAT, an *answer* is synonymous with what Google calls a *featured snippet*. We report every other type of answer box as a *knowledge graph*.

# Featured snippets appear with an image 27.58% of the time.

## FEATURED SNIPPET FORMATTING

Broader answer boxes without a cited URL are kind of like snowflakes – they come in a very diverse range of formats – while the featured snippets that we analyzed as part of our study fall into three distinct formats.

TYPE OF SNIPPET	% OF TOTAL SNIPPETS
Paragraph snippets	81.95%
List snippets (bulleted and numbered)	10.77%
Table snippets	7.28%

Figure 4.

### SNIPPETS AND IMAGES

Out of the total featured snippet results, we saw 27.58 percent paired with images. Figure 5 breaks down how image frequency differed by the type of featured snippet.

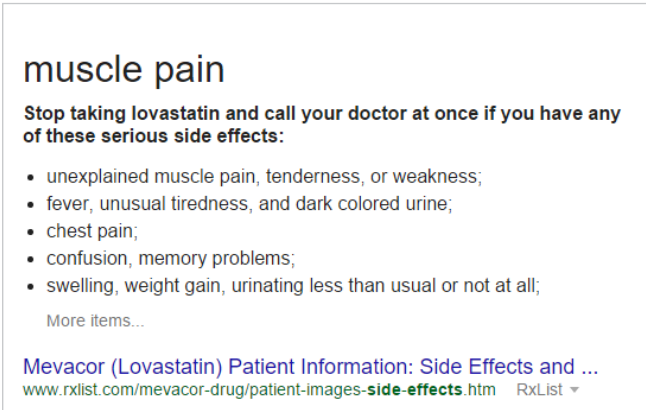
TYPE OF SNIPPET	FREQUENCY OF IMAGES
Paragraph snippets	28.4%
List snippets	26.3%
Table snippets	17.7%

Figure 5.

### SNIPPET FORMATS ALWAYS KEEP TO THEMSELVES

At no point during our research did we see any mixed formatting of the featured snippets. In other words, we didn't see things like lists mixed in with paragraphs, so the percentage breakdown in figure 4 adds up to 100 percent.

We did, however, spot *bolded answers* and *bolded titles* alongside paragraphs, tables, and lists, and occasionally these posts would include additional titles or text. This occurred in 2.1 percent of the snippets that we observed. (See figure 6.)



**muscle pain**

**Stop taking lovastatin and call your doctor at once if you have any of these serious side effects:**

- unexplained muscle pain, tenderness, or weakness;
- fever, unusual tiredness, and dark colored urine;
- chest pain;
- confusion, memory problems;
- swelling, weight gain, urinating less than usual or not at all;

More items...

[Mevacor \(Lovastatin\) Patient Information: Side Effects and ...](http://www.rxlist.com/mevacor-drug/patient-images-side-effects.htm) RxList ▾

Figure 6.

Example of a list snippet with a bolded answer from the query [lovastatin side effect].

# HOW DO SNIPPETS PLAY WITH OTHER UNIVERSAL RESULTS?

Looking at the 92,832 featured snippets that we analyzed, figure 7 shows the frequency with which we saw another type of universal result alongside the snippet in the top 20, compared to the number of times we saw that result in all one million SERPs.

RESULT TYPE	SNIPPET SERPS	ALL SERPS
Places	0.0%	13.2%
Video	24.5%	20.5%
Image	13.9%	15.6%
News	5.4%	3.4%
Shopping	4.0%	1.7%
Twitter	0.0%	0.5%

**Figure 7.** Universal result type occurrences in the top 20 results. STAT also tracks other types of universal results, but we didn't see them at a high enough frequency to impact this research.

## METHODOLOGY

### ANALYZING SUB-FEATURES AND RIGHT SIDEBAR RESULTS

In STAT, shopping and "People also ask" results are tracked as *shopping* and *knowledge graph* result types respectively. Sub-features of organic results and right sidebar results (like "See results about" and knowledge graph results) can be analyzed with the raw Google HTML, pulled from STAT's optional bulk HTML API.

Throw on your safety goggles, because it's time to put some aspects of the universal result and featured snippet relationship under the microscope. In addition to what we covered in figure 7, we made three key discoveries within snippet SERPs.

## 1. SNIPPETS & "PEOPLE ALSO ASK" ARE CONNECTED

Featured snippets and "People also ask" (PAA) appear to be connected, as they frequently produce overlapping answers for queries and use identical CSS formatting classes. We saw them together on 22 percent of featured snippet queries.

PAA boxes, tracked as knowledge graph results in STAT, include one, two, three, or more suggested questions to help the searcher find what they are looking for. In figure 8 we break down the number of questions in the PAA box, along with the relative frequency in which that box appeared. Note that we also saw instances where the answer to the first PAA question was identical to the featured snippet text – that happened in 23 percent of overlapping examples.

NUMBER OF PAA QUESTIONS	FREQUENCY
1	12.8%
2	19.1%
3	16.6%
4	51.5%

**Figure 8.** This table breaks down the number of questions we saw in PAA results.

# Local pack results and featured snippets never appear on the same SERP.

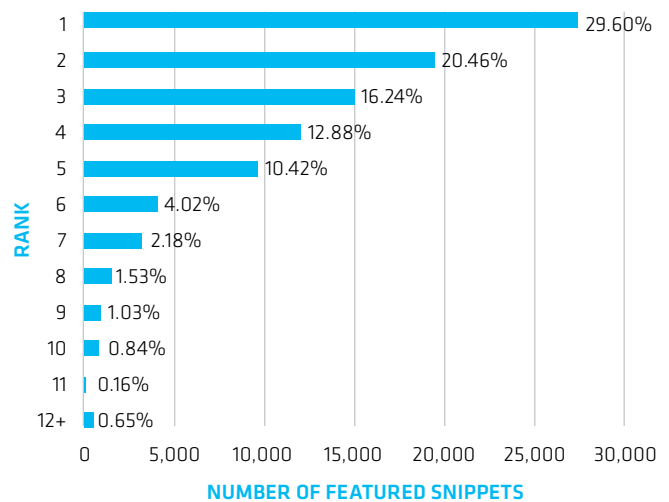
## 2. SNIPPETS NEVER APPEAR WITH PLACES RESULTS

We found it particularly fascinating that three-pack places results, the third most common type of search result in our data set, had absolutely zero overlap with snippets. Yes, that's correct. Local pack results and featured snippets never appear on the same SERP in our data set.

## 3. SNIPPETS ARE RARELY SOURCED FROM THE FIRST ORGANIC RESULT

Not surprisingly, we saw that the vast majority of featured snippets came from the top five organic results. On the flip side, and quite surprisingly, we found that slightly more than 70 percent of the featured snippets didn't come from the very first organic result (see figure 9). So businesses struggling to rise above positions 3-6 on a query with a featured snippet – or a query that is a good candidate for a featured snippet – have a strong opportunity to rise to the top of the SERP.

## FEATURED SNIPPET SOURCE POSITION



**Figure 9.**  
*This graph displays the ranking position of the URL from which Google pulls information to populate a featured snippet.*



# QUERY TYPES THAT GENERATE FEATURED SNIPPETS

Time to turn the spotlight onto the types of queries that generate featured snippets.

## DO SPECIFIC TYPES OF WORDS GENERATE MORE SNIPPETS?

To answer this, we calculated a frequency for every single word in our full data set. For example, in figure 10 we calculate the number of occurrences for the three queries [*age for lasik*], [*seattle lasik surgery*], and [*lasik surgery cost*]. *Lasik* has three total occurrences in the set of three queries, *surgery* has two, *age* has one, and so on.

### EXAMPLE OCCURRENCE COUNT

WORD	TOTAL OCCURRENCE
lasik	3
surgery	2
age	1
for	1
seattle	1
cost	1

Figure 10.

### HIGHLIGHTS

#### WHAT ARE THE MOST COMMON QUERY THEMES?

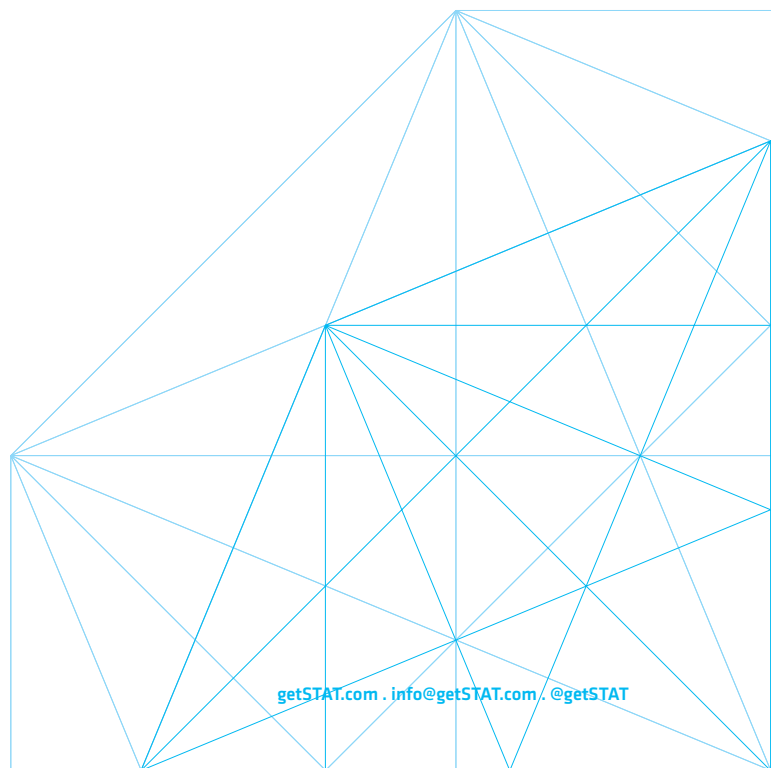
Here are the most common query types we saw generating featured snippets.

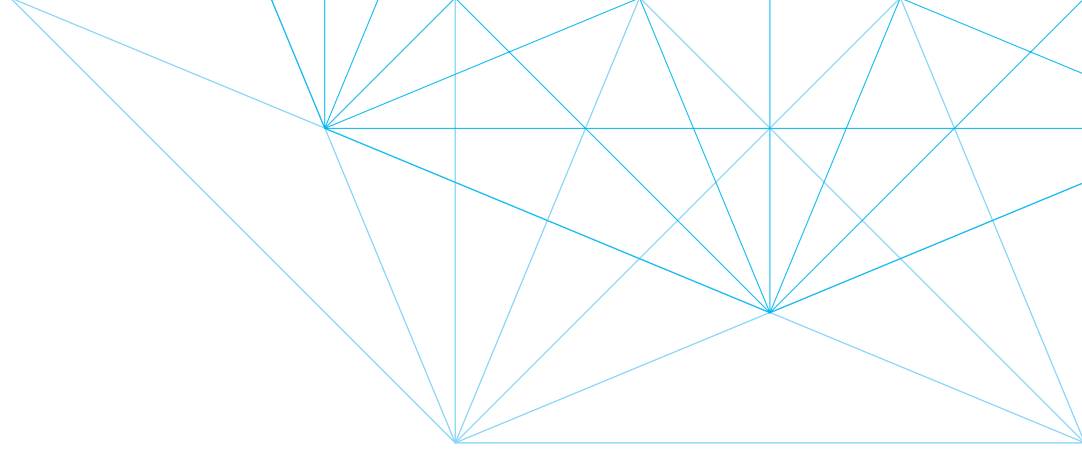
##### Often

- financial
- mathematic
- time
- transitional
- status
- requirements
- health
- DIY processes

##### Rarely

- local
- subjective
- info/help
- factual
- shopping
- images and videos





We then grouped the individual words into overarching themes and looked at featured snippet frequency by query theme.

We then conducted the same process on our smaller list of 92,832 featured snippet queries, filtering out words that appeared less than 25 times to focus only on the most commonly used words.

With those two sets of occurrence rates (full data set and featured snippet set), we calculated a featured snippet frequency percentage for every single word on our list.

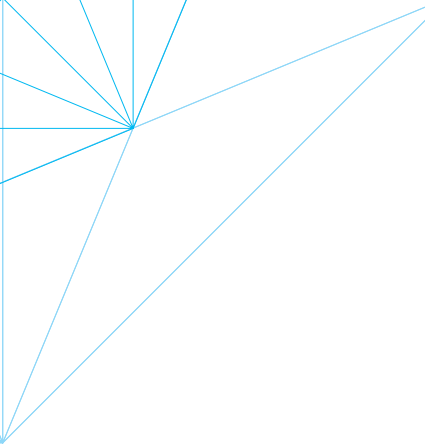
Let's use our previous example one more time to see what this calculation looks like in a table. Figure 11 shows how we'd calculate a featured snippet frequency if [age for lasik] and [lasik surgery cost] produced featured snippets but [seattle lasik surgery] did not.

#### EXAMPLE FEATURED SNIPPET FREQUENCY CALCULATION

WORD	SNIPPET OCCURRENCE	TOTAL OCCURRENCE	SNIPPET FREQUENCY
lasik	2	3	66%
surgery	1	2	50%
age	1	1	100%
for	1	1	100%
seattle	0	1	0%
cost	1	1	100%

**Figure 11.**

*A featured snippet frequency was calculated for each word in the data set by dividing the number of times it occurred in featured snippet queries into the total number of times that word was encountered in the full data set.*



After calculating the featured snippet frequency for every single word in our data set, we started to spot some very interesting trends.

### FINANCIAL & MATH QUERIES

The most prevalent theme that produced featured snippets was financial terms. And math terms returned snippets at least 35 percent of the time.

FINANCIAL	FREQUENCY	MATHEMATIC	FREQUENCY
salary	76.84%	average	77.71%
deductible	60.32%	many	72.06%
tuition	58.24%	much	69.95%
cost	56.65%	difference	65.71%
owe	50.49%	reduce	48.07%
salaries	44.74%	calculate	42.49%
refinancing	42.79%	increase	39.63%
garnishment	42.31%	rate	37.17%
roth	42.31%	lowest	36.47%
donating	42.15%	largest	35.56%
contribution	39.86%		
fees	39.66%		
costs	39.55%		
wage	39.33%		
deduction	38.83%		
taxes	36.36%		
expensive	35.61%		
ira	35.55%		

Figure 12.

Figure 13.

### TIME QUERIES

Time themes generated featured snippets at least 44 percent of the time when we encountered them in a query. (See figure 14.)

### HEALTH QUERIES

Healthcare-related terms also generated featured snippets at high rates, occasionally including terms that are local, such as *pharmacist* and *veterinarian*. (See figure 15.)

TIME	FREQUENCY	HEALTH	FREQUENCY
often	73.83%	psychologist	55.85%
years	69.42%	eat	50.00%
deadline	60.11%	symptoms	47.10%
last	48.06%	burn	45.61%
when	47.89%	hurt	45.53%
age	44.44%	calories	45.21%

Figure 14.

hep	41.73%
blood	40.88%
pharmacist	40.00%
pregnant	38.66%
veterinarian	37.50%

Figure 15.

## GENERAL QUESTIONS, TRANSITION, STATUS, & REQUIREMENTS

We dug a little deeper into this theme and uncovered some curious words that often returned a featured snippet. It's not very surprising to see typical question modifiers such as *what*, *how*, *do*, and *is* trigger a feature snippet. But what about those less obvious words?

GENERAL QUESTIONS	FREQUENCY	TRANSITION	FREQUENCY
does	69.94%	forming	75.00%
cause	61.57%	become	63.46%
definition	60.41%	becoming	62.89%
what	56.48%	removing	54.00%
mean	55.38%	closing	53.61%
causes	50.23%	improve	45.13%
do	50.05%	develop	42.58%
how	49.71%	getting	41.03%
define	46.25%	made	39.07%
meaning	44.21%	creating	38.96%

Figure 16.

TRANSITION	FREQUENCY
forming	75.00%
become	63.46%
becoming	62.89%
removing	54.00%
closing	53.61%
improve	45.13%
develop	42.58%
getting	41.03%
made	39.07%
creating	38.96%

Figure 17.

*Define* and *definition* frequently generated featured snippets instead of a usual knowledge graph result. These were typically for jargon and phrases that aren't defined in a traditional dictionary, such as in the query [*cyber security defined*].

There were a significant number of terms related to a transition, such as *become*, *forming*, *removing*, and *closing*. These included requirement queries like [*years to become a dentist*], business questions like [*forming an s corp*], and life status changes like [*getting car loans*] and [*getting a divorce*].

STATUS	FREQUENCY	REQUIREMENTS	FREQUENCY
is	55.60%	qualify	60.93%
be	54.17%	statute	60.80%
was	51.80%	needed	57.89%
another	47.83%	limits	53.62%
an	47.20%	limit	54.17%
are	46.72%	required	51.30%

Figure 18.

Figure 19.

## DIY PROCESS QUERIES

Queries around DIY tasks frequently generated featured snippets. This is notable because other types of how-to queries almost never showed snippets.

DIY PROCESS	FREQUENCY
faucet	62.50%
fixing	59.26%
replacing	58.78%
clogged	58.55%
recover	56.05%
remove	55.99%
installing	52.59%
install	51.84%
replace	51.15%
restore	45.95%
sink	45.83%
fix	43.86%
leaking	43.69%
obtain	42.14%
rid	40.54%
make	40.27%

Figure 22.

## LOCAL QUERIES

There's a noteworthy gap between local searches and featured snippets. The vast majority of queries that are geo-modified by a user to include a location term (e.g. [*restaurants chicago*] or [*art college in colorado*]) did not return a featured snippet.

As mentioned earlier, we also saw zero co-occurrence between featured snippets and three-pack places results. Local business terms such as *movers*, *locksmith*, *attorney*, and *plumbing* all resulted in snippets less than two percent of the time.

LOCATION	FREQUENCY	LOCAL BUSINESSES	FREQUENCY
san	0.56%	pest	1.25%
vegas	0.55%	roofing	1.22%
diego	0.50%	attorneys	1.00%
denver	0.43%	movers	0.88%
austin	0.38%	dentists	0.84%
las	0.34%	academy	0.77%
orlando	0.32%	enters	0.72%
dallas	0.32%	plumbing	0.69%
antonio	0.32%	dr	0.57%
county	0.31%	plumbers	0.52%
tx	0.29%	locksmith	0.39%
tampa	0.19%	clinic	0.31%
fort	0.00%	dealers	0.06%

Figure 20.

Figure 21.

The word [best] appeared 20,688 times in our keyword set, but never triggered a snippet.

### SUBJECTIVE QUERIES

A big group of queries with very low snippet occurrence rates are summed up as subjective queries. It makes sense that these results would not generate a featured snippet with a definitive answer because of their subjective nature. But we were surprised to see words like *best*, which showed up 20,688 times in our keyword set, never trigger a snippet – instead they produced shopping results at a significantly higher rate than other keywords. (See figure 23.)

### INFO/HELP QUERIES

People looking for in-depth resources or insights with terms like *tutorial*, *guide*, and *templates* won't encounter featured snippets very often. (See figure 24.)

SUBJECTIVE	FREQUENCY	INFO/ HELP	FREQUENCY
free	1.58%	storage	1.89%
rankings	0.92%	template	1.83%
comparison	0.19%	source	1.53%
review	0.14%	diagram	1.53%
good	0.05%	course	1.47%
reviews	0.02%	programs	1.42%
best	0.00%	courses	1.32%
		forms	1.06%
		templates	1.00%
		sample	0.72%
		guide	0.54%
		tutorial	0.48%

Figure 23.

Figure 24.

### FACTUAL QUERIES

While terms like *news* and *wikipedia* flag explicit requests for content that wouldn't require a featured snippet, *articles* and *questions* are broader informational queries that you might expect to generate a snippet; however, they returned a low frequency.

FACTUAL	FREQUENCY
articles	1.73%
questions	1.49%
wikipedia	1.32%
facts	0.92%
wiki	0.38%
news	0.10%

Figure 25.

## SHOPPING QUERIES

While we encountered a number of shopping results paired with featured snippets, shopping-oriented queries did not tend to display featured snippets. (See figure 26.)

## IMAGES & VIDEO QUERIES

As expected, image- and video-related queries tended to produce image and video result types, and rarely generated featured snippets. (See figure 27.)

SHOPPING	FREQUENCY	IMAGES / VIDEO	FREQUENCY
tools	1.81%	videos	1.78%
shop	1.79%	photo	1.77%
providers	1.75%	picture	1.50%
consultation	1.56%	pictures	1.20%
coupon	1.51%	photos	1.10%
solutions	0.94%	logo	0.88%
promotional	0.93%	images	0.37%
packages	0.68%		
sale	0.54%		

Figure 26.

Figure 27.

Keywords with high search volume show featured snippets twice as often.

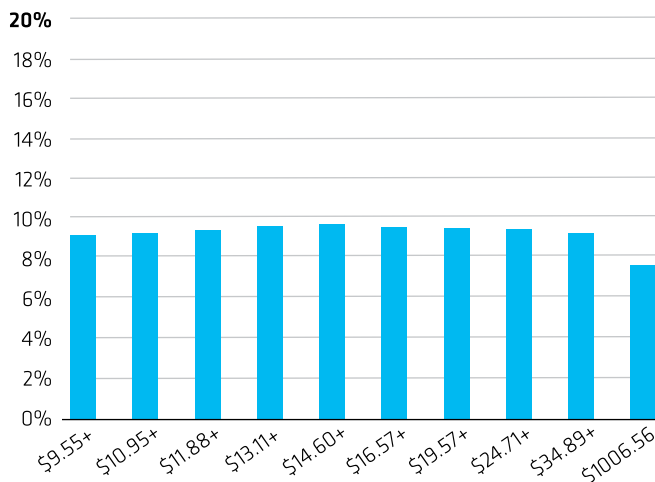
## INFLUENCE OF CPC & SEARCH VOLUME

### DOES CPC AFFECT SNIPPET FREQUENCY?

Since it's basically impossible to make sense of one million points on a small graph, we broke down the data set into 10 percentile groups, each representing approximately 10 percent of the data set. Because all of our results were binary instead of linear (queries generated a featured snippet or they didn't), we also didn't calculate correlation for various factors.

Dividing our data set into 10 equal groups by CPC, figure 28 shows the percentage of SERPs that generate a featured snippet as CPC increases. As you can see, there's no significant trend related to the cost per click of the query.

#### FEATURED SNIPPETS BY CPC RANGE PERCENTILE

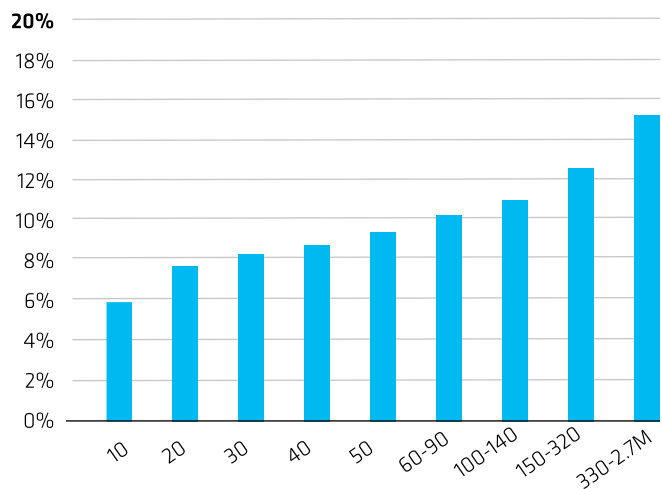


**Figure 28.**  
CPC doesn't appear to affect the number of featured snippets.

### DOES SEARCH VOLUME AFFECT SNIPPET FREQUENCY?

Unlike CPC, there seems to be a distinct trend when it comes to search volume, with featured snippets appearing more than twice as often on higher-volume keywords. As you can see in figure 29, for the bottom 60 percent of queries with 10-50 searches per month, featured snippets occur in 7.5 percent of results. For the top 10 percent of queries, with more than 320 searches per month, we observed featured snippets in 15.2 percent of results.

#### FEATURED SNIPPETS BY SEARCH VOLUME PERCENTILE



**Figure 29.**  
There is a distinct trend of featured snippets appearing on higher search volume keywords.



Higher query word counts result in featured snippets more often.

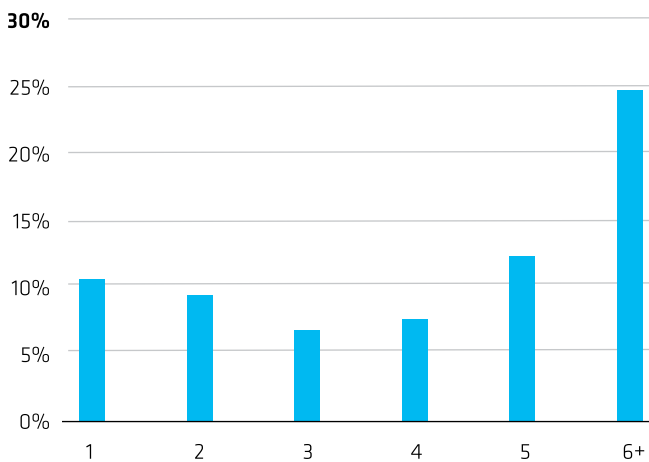
## INFLUENCE OF WORD COUNT & CHARACTER LENGTH

### DOES WORD COUNT AFFECT SNIPPET FREQUENCY?

Our data set consisted of search queries containing 1-10 words. In general, queries with a higher word count were more likely to have featured snippets.

While there is a definite trend here for queries with more words, it's also worth noting that the majority of our data set included queries with 2-4 words, so queries with 6-10 words only made up 6.7 percent of our data set.

### FEATURED SNIPPET FREQUENCY BY QUERY WORD COUNT

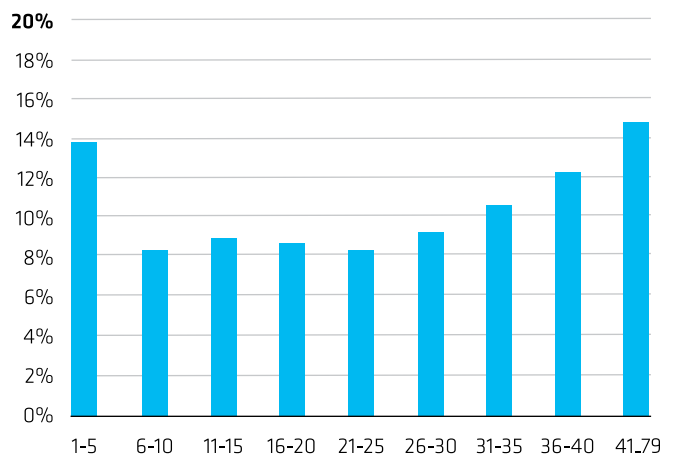


**Figure 30.**  
Featured snippets appear more often on higher word count queries.

### DOES CHARACTER LENGTH AFFECT SNIPPET FREQUENCY?

With the exception of queries containing 1-5 characters, similar to word count, featured snippets also showed an upward trend. The higher frequency in the first category is most likely a result of many short acronyms in our keyword set. An example is [3p/s], which generates a featured snippet describing third-party logistics providers.

### FEATURED SNIPPETS BY QUERY CHARACTER LENGTH



**Figure 31.**  
Higher character counts returned the most featured snippets.



## ON-PAGE & OFF-SITE FACTORS

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Sure, search ranking factor studies aren't a perfect indicator of everything that contributes to rankings, but for the purpose of this study, it was worth examining how they influence search results. It also made sense for us to check out the content factors connected to these featured snippets. So we reviewed the average values for URLs that were returning featured snippets and compared them to regular, non-snippet search results from the same SERPS for the following factors.

### ON-PAGE CONTENT FACTORS

- Flesch-Kincaid readability
- Word count
- Presence of `<ol>` or `<ul>` lists
- Presence of `<table>`
- Presence of search query in `<title>` tag
- Presence of search query in `<h1>`

### TECHNICAL SEO

- Presence of Schema.org code snippets
- Response time and page speed

### LINK & SOCIAL FACTORS

- Moz Page Authority
- Moz root domains linking to URL
- Moz Domain Authority
- Moz root domains linking to domain
- Social shares

### HIGHLIGHTS

---

#### SNIPPET URLS TYPICALLY HAVE:

- `<table>` tags 22% more often than non-snippet URLs
- `<ol>` tags 42% more often
- Exact match keywords in `<title>` 10% more often
- Exact match keyword in `<h1>` and `<h2>` 21% more often
- 19% faster response times
- Slightly higher word counts
- Slightly easier readability scores
- Slightly higher link metrics
- Slightly higher social media share counts
- Slightly fewer images
- Slightly fewer videos
- Schema.org markup 20% less often.

# Featured snippet URLs use <table> 22% more often.

## CONTENT & TECHNICAL SEO FACTORS

What on-site factors help you gain more featured snippets? We rolled up our sleeves and pulled back the curtain.

### AVERAGE WORD COUNT

Word counts are fairly similar between featured snippet and regular results. Featured snippet URLs only have a 2.2% higher word count.

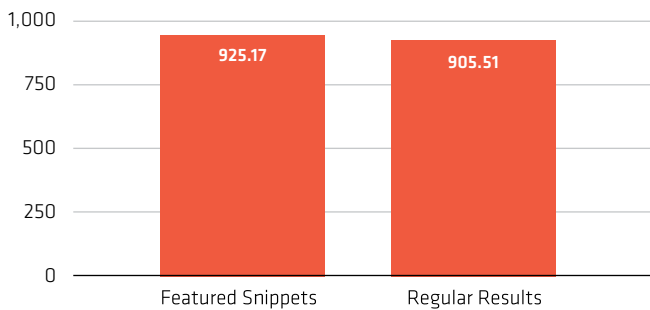


Figure 32.

### <TABLE> PRESENCE

In our data set, we found that featured snippet URLs use <table> 21.7% more often than non-snippet URLs.

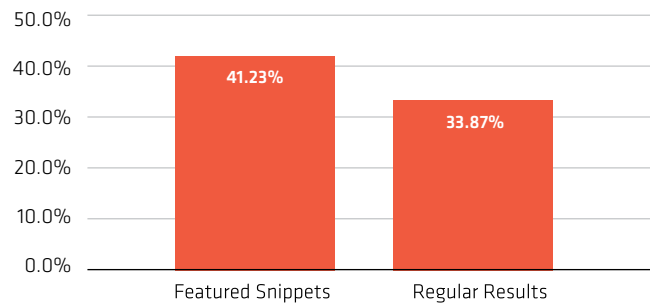


Figure 34.

### <UL> PRESENCE

Because <ul> is commonly used in formatting navigation menus, it wasn't surprising to see it in 89-90% of URLs in our data set. This resulted in no significant difference between sites that return featured snippets and sites that do not.

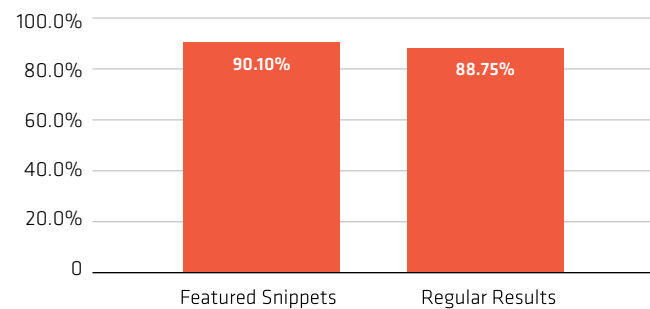


Figure 33.

### <OL> PRESENCE

<ol> tags are almost exclusively used for numbered lists. We observed a 41.6% higher rate of <ol> numbered lists on featured snippet URLs than on URLs from regular search results.

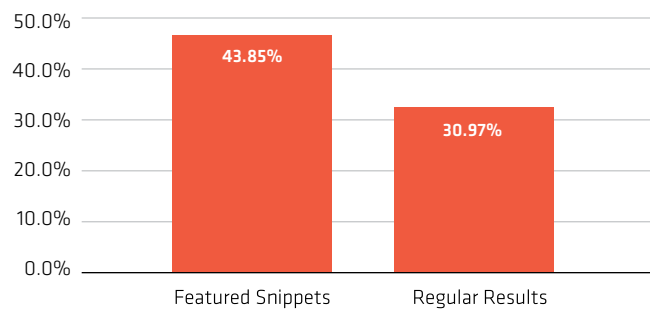


Figure 35.

# Featured snippet URLs have 21.2% more partial or exact match keywords in <h1> or <h2>.

## EXACT MATCH QUERY IN <TITLE>

Featured snippet URLs had an exact or partial match keyword in the <title> tag 10.6% more frequently than regular results.

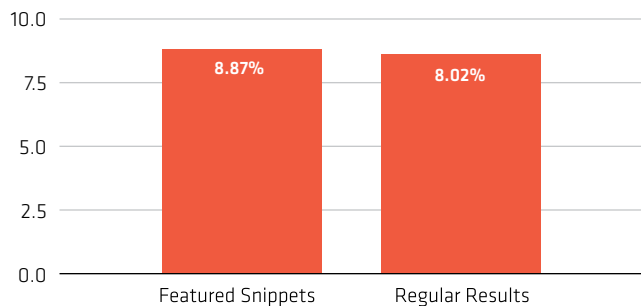


Figure 36.

## EXACT MATCH QUERY IN <H1> OR <H2>

Featured snippet URLs had an exact or partial match keyword in an <h1> or <h2> tag 21.2% more frequently than regular results.

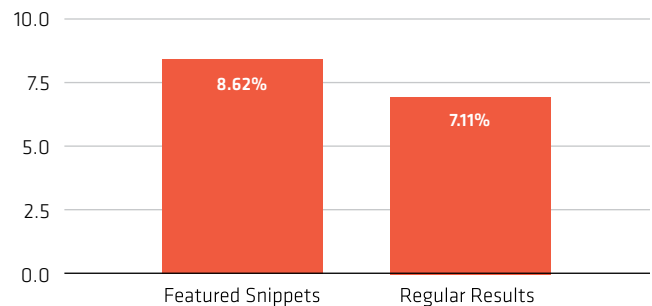


Figure 38.

## AVERAGE NUMBER OF IMAGES

Images were slightly less frequent on featured snippet URLs, with an average of 18.6 images on the page, 7.6% lower than other SERPs.

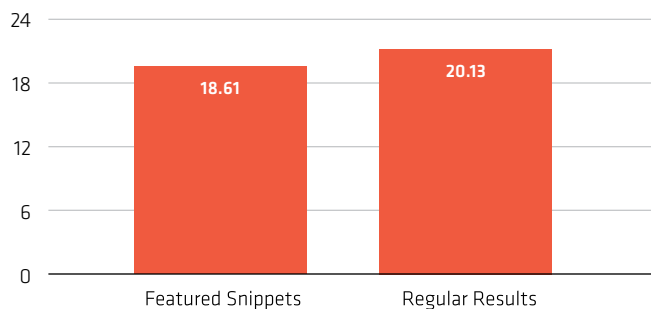


Figure 37.

## AVERAGE NUMBER OF VIDEOS

Videos occurred 4.8% less frequently on featured snippet URLs.

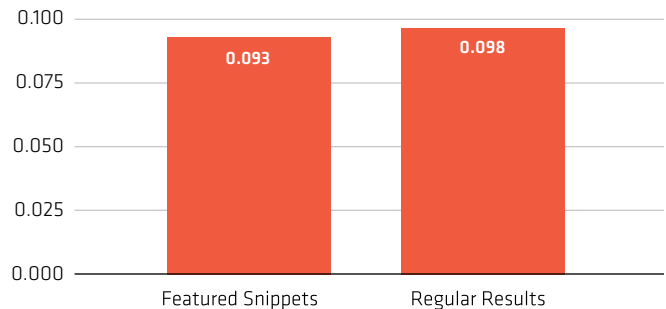


Figure 39.

# Featured snippet URLs score slightly better on readability tests.

## AVERAGE FLESCH-KINCAID GRADE LEVEL

Featured snippet URLs have slightly easier copy than their non-snippet counterparts. For grade level scoring, text intended to be read by a general audience should aim for around a grade-eight level.

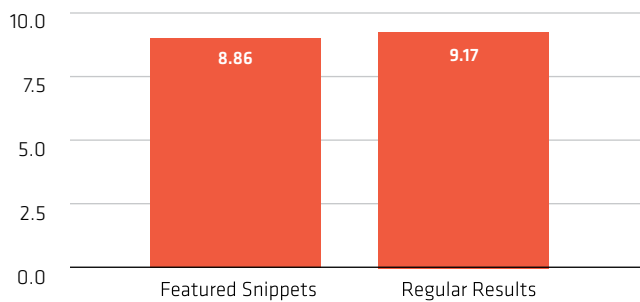


Figure 40.

## PRESENCE OF SCHEMA.ORG MARKUP

Interestingly, featured snippet URLs were 19.8% less likely to have `<itemtype="http://schema.org/">` on the page. We attribute this in large part to Wikipedia, which dominates snippet SERPS yet doesn't use Schema.org markup. (They use an alternative structured markup method.)

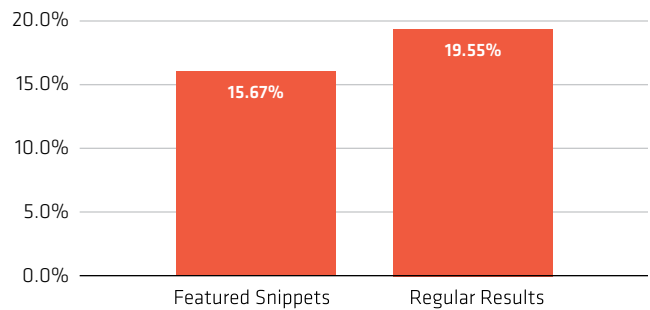


Figure 42.

## AVERAGE FLESCH READING EASE SCORE

For the reading ease test, higher scores mean the copy is easier to read. A score of 50-60 is considered fairly difficult (grade level of 10-12) and 30-50 is considered difficult (post-secondary level).

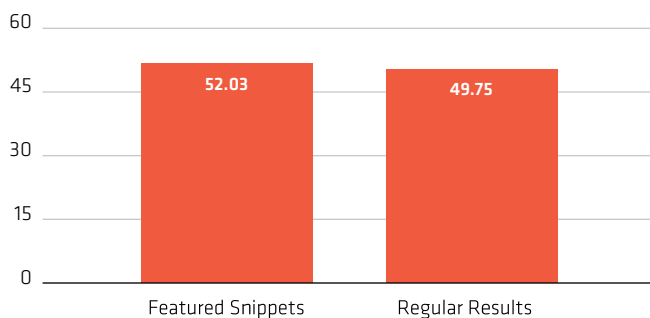


Figure 41.

## AVERAGE RESPONSE TIME

Google Developer PageSpeed Insights API showed featured snippet sites having a 0.5% faster load time, while Screaming Frog reported response times 19.3% faster for snippet URLs.

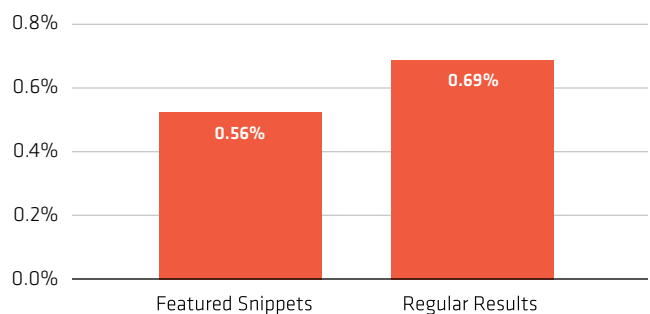


Figure 43.

## LINK FACTORS

Since featured snippets are normally drawn from the top 10 ranking sites for that query, we should expect that those sites will show better authority and linking metrics than non-snippet URLs.

### AVERAGE PAGE AUTHORITY

We saw a modest 3.7% increase in average Page Authority for featured snippet URLs.

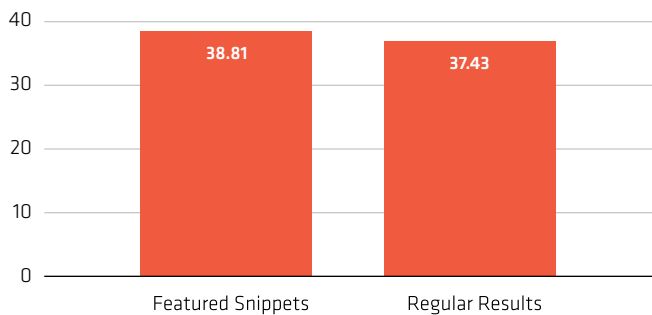


Figure 44.

### AVERAGE DOMAIN AUTHORITY

Domain Authority on featured snippet URLs was 2.2% higher than non-snippet URLs.

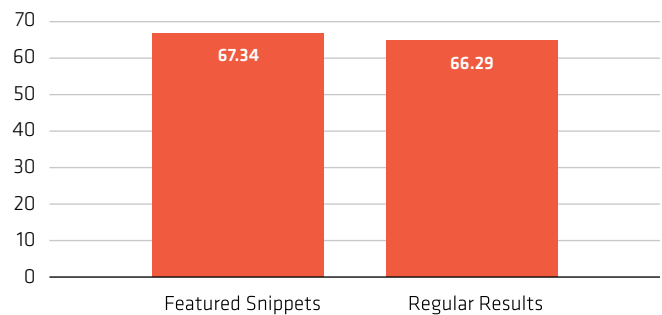


Figure 46.

### AVERAGE ROOT DOMAINS LINKING TO PAGE

Featured snippet URLs had a decent increase of 9.9% in the average number of unique domains that point a link at the page.

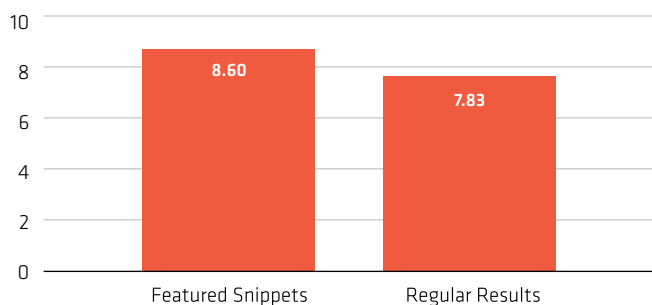


Figure 45.

### AVERAGE ROOT DOMAINS LINKING TO DOMAIN

Featured snippet URLs saw 1.5% fewer unique domains pointing to any page on the site when compared to our non-snippet friends.

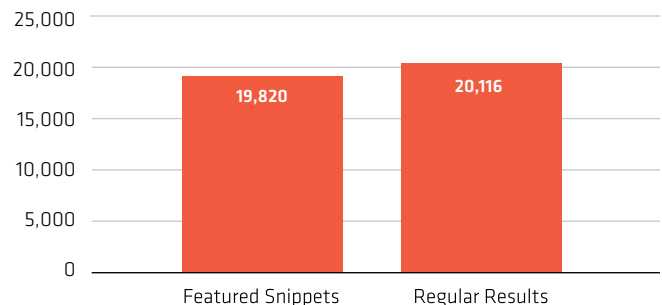


Figure 47.

## SOCIAL MEDIA FACTORS

We excluded the top five percent of outliers from the data set to ensure that highly successful projects didn't skew our results.

### TOTAL SOCIAL MEDIA SHARES

Combining shares on Facebook, LinkedIn, and Pinterest, we observed that featured snippets had a 12.5% higher than average social share count, largely driven by 15.1% higher than average Facebook metrics.

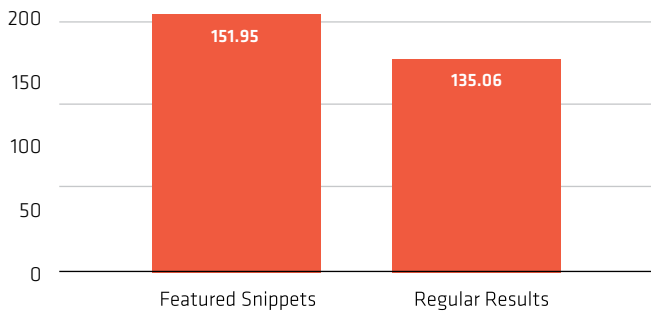


Figure 48.

### FACEBOOK SHARES

Facebook shares (including likes, shares, and comments) were 15.1% higher for featured snippet URLs.

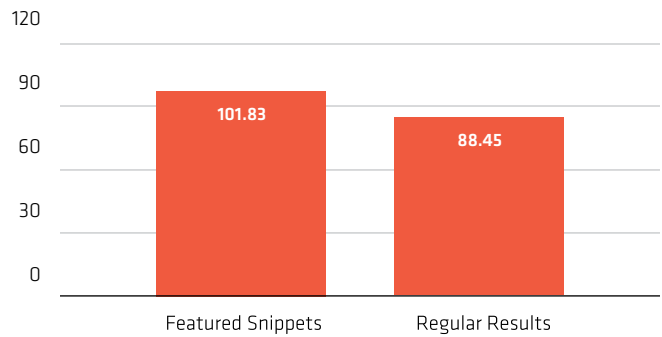


Figure 50.

### LINKEDIN SHARES

Featured snippet URLs are shared on LinkedIn on average 6.4% more often than non-snippet links.

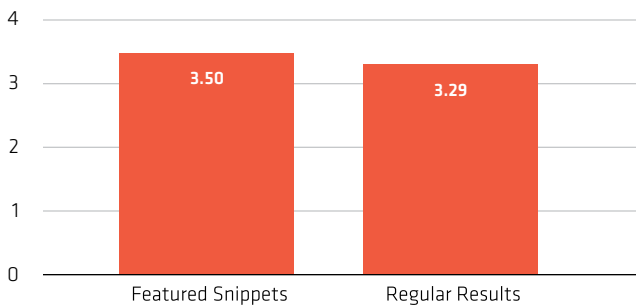


Figure 49.

### PINTEREST PINS

The average number of Pinterest Pins for featured snippets was about 9.2% higher than sites that didn't return snippets.

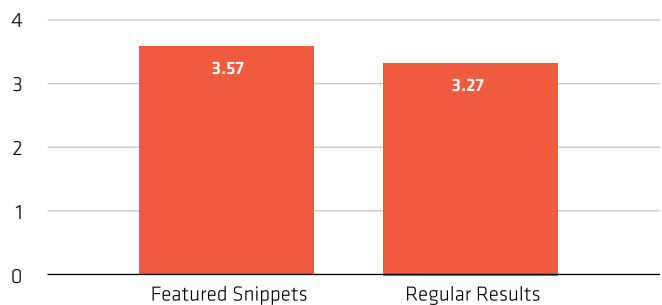


Figure 51.

## HOW TO EARN MORE FEATURED SNIPPETS

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All of those charts and graphs and percentages and calculations have brought us to this moment. The real reason that we're all here: practical methods for earning more featured snippets for your sites.



### 1. ANALYZE YOUR KEYWORD UNIVERSE FOR OPPORTUNITIES

In STAT, you can see which of your tracked keywords are producing answers result types. Filter those keywords for everything that is ranking in the top 10. Tag those as “featured snippet keywords” because they’re the first batch of keywords that you’ll want to focus on.

Now analyze your broader keyword universe for queries that have a good chance of generating featured snippets. The best way to do this is to download lists of all the keywords your site is visible for in Google Search Console as well as third party visibility tools like SEMRush.

From there, you’ll want to scan the lists for some of the most common search query modifiers – terms like *what*, *do*, *does*, and so on. If you’ve got mad skills with Excel or can write your own scripts, you can process your entire list and filter down to words that show up in our top featured snippet query modifiers list – part of our open-source data release.





## 2. CONJURE UP SOME STRATEGIC NEW CONTENT FOR SNIPPETS

We discovered in our research that *[cost]* as a keyword modifier generates featured snippets 56.6 percent of the time. (See example in figure 52.) If you're a publisher or content manager in healthcare, for example, it's pretty clear that you should consider creating a series of pages with the title format "How much does [procedure type] cost?"

Now get busy creating fantastic content all about average medical procedure costs, including details that might affect the cost, like location or scope of procedure.

Not in the business of healthcare? No problem. Go thumb through the rest of our major keyword themes on page 9 of this whitepaper, or snag them in our open-source data. See which ones make the most sense for the large content sections of your sites.

Expect braces installed behind teeth to cost **\$5,000** to \$13,000, but note that many dentists don't offer them. Invisalign braces. Align Technology, the medical device company that makes Invisalign braces, estimates treatment costs range from **\$3,500** to **\$8,000**, or an average of **\$5,600** nationally without insurance.

[How Much do Adult Braces Cost? | Angies List](#)  
[www.angieslist.com/articles/how-much-do-adult-braces-cost.htm](http://www.angieslist.com/articles/how-much-do-adult-braces-cost.htm) Angies List ▾

Figure 52.

Example of a featured snippet for *[how much do braces cost]*.

1. In a Dutch oven, cook sausage, ground beef, onion, and garlic over medium heat until well browned. ...
2. Bring a large pot of lightly salted water to a boil. ...
3. Preheat oven to 375 degrees F (190 degrees C).
4. To assemble, spread 1 1/2 cups of meat sauce in the bottom of a 9x13 inch baking dish.

[More items...](#)

[World's Best Lasagna Recipe - Allrecipes.com](#)  
[allrecipes.com/recipe/23600/worlds-best-lasagna/](http://allrecipes.com/recipe/23600/worlds-best-lasagna/) Allrecipes.com ▾

Figure 53.

An example of a featured snippet citing an ordered list for the query *[how to make lasagna]*. This particular example also features Schema.org markup for `<itemprop="recipeInstructions">`.



### 3. BRING IN QUESTION & ANSWER FORMATTING

Many of the snippet-earning URLs we saw were specifically dedicated to answering a single query. For example, a page titled “How to install an electric water heater” earned the featured snippet for the exact same query. That said, it’s still very possible to earn featured snippets for subsections of a page.

A great way to add this to your site is to review your most popular content for organic search traffic and incorporate short Q&A sections to these pages.

Let’s say you have a popular blog post driving good amounts of traffic for multiple keywords where you rank in the top five. This post might be an excellent candidate for an appendix or FAQ section at the end of the article.

You’d mark up each question as an `<h2>` or `<h3>` tag, then proceed to give a clear and concise answer to the questions. Also introduce Schema.org markup for questions and answers as an added signal to Google.



### 4. SLICE UP YOUR COPY WITH SUBHEADS, LISTS, & TABLES

We’ve seen a large number of featured snippet examples pulling information from subheads, lists, and tables. The easiest way to earn more featured snippets over time will be to build these formatting types into both your content and the page templates that you generate for your website.

For example, if you’re building a recipe website, you should hardcode recipe steps as an `<ol>` ordered list on your page template, then fill in that section dynamically on each page. This consistent use of markup, especially when combined with semantic markup, signals to Google the process for recipes – and makes it easier for them to harvest snippets at scale from large websites. (See example in figure 53.)



## 5. POLISH YOUR EXISTING SNIPPETS FOR HIGHER CLICK-THROUGHS

Once you've earned a featured snippet for your site, you may be able to optimize it further by editing the text that Google is citing.

Let's go back to our recipe example (figure 53). If you have a featured snippet for a four-step recipe and Google is showing all four steps in the snippet, increasing the number of steps in your page copy will encourage more users to click through for the full recipe, instead of giving them the complete answer within the featured snippet.

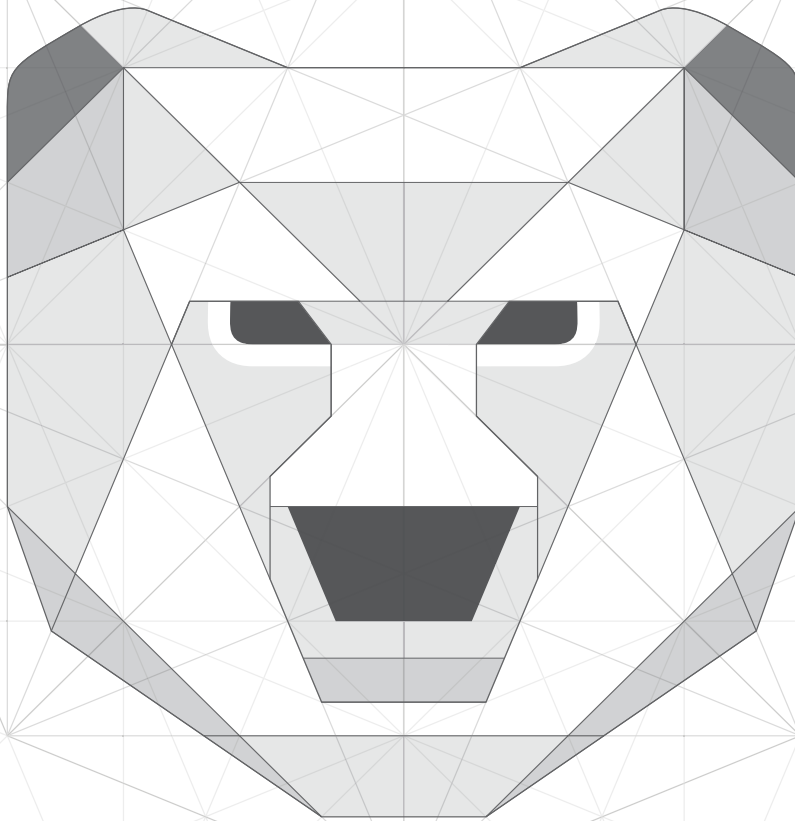
Naturally, you'll want to test CTR before and after a change like this before deploying it across an entire website.

Hooray, you made it! Thanks for sticking with us all the way to the end. Now you're equipped with the tools to start collecting – or growing your collection of – featured snippets. And don't forget that we open-sourced our data for our fellow data nerds out there. Just head over to [getSTAT.com/data/fs](https://getSTAT.com/data/fs).

STAT is SERP tracking without limits. Every location. Every result. Every language. Fresh every day.



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**GETSTAT.COM/DEMO**



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