

# SEO and Google

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## Guidelines and Explanations

Provided by:

KBH Web Marketing

## I. General Guidelines

Following are general guidelines retrieved from [Google's Help Center](#) regarding webmaster guidelines.

Following these guidelines will help Google find, index, and rank your site. Even if you choose not to implement any of these suggestions, we strongly encourage you to pay very close attention to the "Quality Guidelines," which outline some of the illicit practices that may lead to a site being removed entirely from the Google index or otherwise penalized. If a site has been penalized, it may no longer show up in results on Google.com or on any of Google's partner sites.

### **When your site is ready:**

- Have other relevant sites link to yours.
- Submit it to Google at <http://www.google.com/addurl.html>.
- Submit a Sitemap as part of our Google Webmaster Tools. Google uses your Sitemap to learn about the structure of your site and to increase our coverage of your webpages.
- Make sure all the sites that should know about your pages are aware your site is online.
- Submit your site to relevant directories such as the Open Directory Project and Yahoo!, as well as to other industry-specific expert sites.

### **Design and content guidelines**

- Make a site with a clear hierarchy and text links. Every page should be reachable from at least one static text link.
- Offer a site map to your users with links that point to the important parts of your site. If the site map is larger than 100 or so links, you may want to break the site map into separate pages.
- Create a useful, information-rich site, and write pages that clearly and accurately describe your content.
- Think about the words users would type to find your pages, and make sure that your site actually includes those words within it.

- Try to use text instead of images to display important names, content, or links. The Google crawler doesn't recognize text contained in images.
- Make sure that your TITLE tags and ALT attributes are descriptive and accurate.
- Check for broken links and correct HTML.
- If you decide to use dynamic pages (i.e., the URL contains a "?" character), be aware that not every search engine spider crawls dynamic pages as well as static pages. It helps to keep the parameters short and the number of them few.
- Keep the links on a given page to a reasonable number (fewer than 100).

### Technical guidelines

- Use a text browser such as Lynx to examine your site, because most search engine spiders see your site much as Lynx would. If fancy features such as JavaScript, cookies, session IDs, frames, DHTML, or Flash keep you from seeing all of your site in a text browser, then search engine spiders may have trouble crawling your site.
- Allow search bots to crawl your sites without session IDs or arguments that track their path through the site. These techniques are useful for tracking individual user behavior, but the access pattern of bots is entirely different. Using these techniques may result in incomplete indexing of your site, as bots may not be able to eliminate URLs that look different but actually point to the same page.
- Make sure your web server supports the If-Modified-Since HTTP header. This feature allows your web server to tell Google whether your content has changed since we last crawled your site. Supporting this feature saves you bandwidth and overhead.
- Make use of the robots.txt file on your web server. This file tells crawlers which directories can or cannot be crawled. Make sure it's current for your site so that you don't accidentally block the Googlebot crawler. Visit <http://www.robotstxt.org/wc/faq.html> to learn how to instruct robots when they visit your site. You can test your robots.txt file to make sure you're using it correctly with the robots.txt analysis tool available in Google Webmaster Tools.
- If your company buys a content management system, make sure that the system can export your content so that search engine spiders can crawl your site.

- Use robots.txt to prevent crawling of search results pages or other auto-generated pages that don't add much value for users coming from search engines.

## Quality guidelines

These quality guidelines cover the most common forms of deceptive or manipulative behavior, but Google may respond negatively to other misleading practices not listed here (e.g. tricking users by registering misspellings of well-known websites). It's not safe to assume that just because a specific deceptive technique isn't included on this page, Google approves of it. Webmasters who spend their energies upholding the spirit of the basic principles will provide a much better user experience and subsequently enjoy better ranking than those who spend their time looking for loopholes they can exploit.

If you believe that another site is abusing Google's quality guidelines, please report that site at <https://www.google.com/webmasters/tools/spamreport>. Google prefers developing scalable and automated solutions to problems, so we attempt to minimize hand-to-hand spam fighting. The spam reports we receive are used to create scalable algorithms that recognize and block future spam attempts.

## Quality guidelines - basic principles

- Make pages primarily for users, not for search engines. Don't deceive your users or present different content to search engines than you display to users, which is commonly referred to as "cloaking."
- Avoid tricks intended to improve search engine rankings. A good rule of thumb is whether you'd feel comfortable explaining what you've done to a website that competes with you. Another useful test is to ask, "Does this help my users? Would I do this if search engines didn't exist?"
- Don't participate in link schemes designed to increase your site's ranking or PageRank. In particular, avoid links to web spammers or "bad neighborhoods" on the web, as your own ranking may be affected adversely by those links.
- Don't use unauthorized computer programs to submit pages, check rankings, etc. Such programs consume computing resources and violate our Terms of Service. Google does not recommend the use of products such as WebPosition Gold™ that send automatic or programmatic queries to Google.

### Quality guidelines - specific guidelines

- Avoid hidden text or hidden links.
- Don't use cloaking or sneaky redirects.
- Don't send automated queries to Google.
- Don't load pages with irrelevant keywords.
- Don't create multiple pages, subdomains, or domains with substantially duplicate content.
- Don't create pages with malicious behavior, such as phishing or installing viruses, trojans, or other badware.
- Avoid "doorway" pages created just for search engines, or other "cookie cutter" approaches such as affiliate programs with little or no original content.
- If your site participates in an affiliate program, make sure that your site adds value. Provide unique and relevant content that gives users a reason to visit your site first.
- If you determine that your site doesn't meet these guidelines, you can modify your site so that it does and then submit your site for reconsideration.

## II. Google-friendly site

Following are general guidelines retrieved from [Google's Help Center](#) regarding Google-friendly websites.

### **Give visitors the information they're looking for:**

Provide high-quality content on your pages, especially your homepage. This is the single most important thing to do. If your pages contain useful information, their content will attract many visitors and entice webmasters to link to your site. In creating a helpful, information-rich site, write pages that clearly and accurately describe your topic. Think about the words users would type to find your pages and include those words on your site.

### **Make sure that other sites link to yours:**

Links help our crawlers find your site and can give your site greater visibility in our search results. When returning results for a search, Google combines PageRank (our view of a page's importance) with sophisticated text-matching techniques to display pages that are both important and relevant to each search. Google counts the

number of votes a page receives as part of its PageRank assessment, interpreting a link from page A to page B as a vote by page A for page B. Votes cast by pages that are themselves "important" weigh more heavily and help to make other pages "important."

Keep in mind that our algorithms can distinguish natural links from unnatural links. Natural links to your site develop as part of the dynamic nature of the web when other sites find your content valuable and think it would be helpful for their visitors. Unnatural links to your site are placed there specifically to make your site look more popular to search engines. Some of these types of links (such as link schemes and doorway pages) are covered in our webmaster guidelines.

Only natural links are useful for the indexing and ranking of your site.

**Make your site easily accessible:**

Build your site with a logical link structure. Every page should be reachable from at least one static text link.

Use a text browser, such as Lynx, to examine your site. Most spiders see your site much as Lynx would. If features such as JavaScript, cookies, session IDs, frames, DHTML, or Macromedia Flash keep you from seeing your entire site in a text browser, then spiders may have trouble crawling it.

Consider creating static copies of dynamic pages. Although the Google index includes dynamic pages, they comprise a small portion of our index. If you suspect that your dynamically generated pages (such as URLs containing question marks) are causing problems for our crawler, you might create static copies of these pages. If you create static copies, don't forget to add your dynamic pages to your robots.txt file to prevent us from treating them as duplicates.

**Things to avoid:**

Don't fill your page with lists of keywords, attempt to "cloak" pages, or put up "crawler only" pages. If your site contains pages, links, or text that you don't intend visitors to see, Google considers those links and pages deceptive and may ignore your site.

Don't feel obligated to purchase a search engine optimization service. Some companies claim to "guarantee" high ranking for your site in Google's search results. While legitimate consulting firms can improve your site's flow and content, others employ deceptive tactics in an attempt to fool search engines. Be careful; if your domain is affiliated with one of these deceptive services, it could be banned from our index.

Don't use images to display important names, content, or links. Our crawler doesn't recognize text contained in graphics. Use ALT attributes if the main content and keywords on your page can't be formatted in regular HTML.

Don't create multiple copies of a page under different URLs. Many sites offer text-only or printer-friendly versions of pages that contain the same content as the corresponding graphic-rich pages. To ensure that your preferred page is included in our search results, you'll need to block duplicates from our spiders using a robots.txt file. For information about using a robots.txt file, please visit our information on blocking Googlebot.

### III. PageRank™

Following are general guidelines retrieved from [Google's Help Center](#) regarding PageRank™.

#### **Introduction:**

Google runs on a unique combination of advanced hardware and software. The speed you experience can be attributed in part to the efficiency of our search algorithm and partly to the thousands of low cost PC's we've networked together to create a superfast search engine.

The heart of our software is PageRank™, a system for ranking web pages developed by our founders Larry Page and Sergey Brin at Stanford University. And while we have dozens of engineers working to improve every aspect of Google on a daily basis, PageRank continues to play a central role in many of our web search tools.

#### **PageRank Explained:**

PageRank relies on the uniquely democratic nature of the web by using its vast link structure as an indicator of an individual page's value. In essence, Google interprets a link from page A to page B as a vote, by page A, for page B. But, Google looks at considerably more than the sheer volume of votes, or links a page receives; for example, it also analyzes the page that casts the vote. Votes cast by pages that are themselves "important" weigh more heavily and help to make other pages "important." Using these and other factors, Google provides its views on pages' relative importance.

Of course, important pages mean nothing to you if they don't match your query. So, Google combines PageRank with sophisticated text-matching techniques to find pages that are both important and relevant to your search. Google goes far beyond the number of times a term appears on a page and examines dozens of aspects of the page's content (and the content of the pages linking to it) to determine if it's a good match for your query.

#### **Integrity:**

Google's complex automated methods make human tampering with our search results extremely difficult. And though we may run relevant ads above and next to our results, Google does not sell placement within the results themselves (i.e., no one can buy a particular or higher placement). A Google search provides an easy and effective way to find high-quality websites that contain information relevant to your search.

## **IV. Buying and Selling Links to Achieve PageRank™**

[Information about buying and selling links that pass PageRank](#)

Saturday, December 01, 2007 at 12:02 PM

Written by Matt Cutts and Maile Ohye

Our goal is to provide users the best search experience by presenting equitable and accurate results. We enjoy working with webmasters, and an added benefit of our working together is that when you make better and more accessible content, the internet, as well as our index, improves. This in turn allows us to deliver more relevant search results to users.

If, however, a webmaster chooses to buy or sell links for the purpose of manipulating search engine rankings, we reserve the right to protect the quality of our index. Buying or selling links that pass PageRank violates our webmaster guidelines. Such links can hurt relevance by causing:

- Inaccuracies: False popularity and links that are not fundamentally based on merit, relevance, or authority
- Inequities: Unfair advantage in our organic search results to websites with the biggest pocketbooks

## V. Link Popularity

### [Building link-based popularity](#)

Friday, December 15, 2006 at 12:41 PM

Late in November we were at SES in Paris, where we had the opportunity to meet some of the most prominent figures in the French SEO and SEM market. One of the issues that came up in sessions and in conversations was a certain confusion about how to most effectively increase the link-based popularity of a website. As a result we thought it might be helpful to clarify how search engines treat link spamming to increase a site's popularity.

This confusion lies in the common belief that there are two ways for optimizing the link-based popularity of your website: Either the meritocratic and long-term option of developing natural links or the risky and short-term option of non-earned backlinks via link spamming tactics such as buying links. We've always taken a clear stance with respect to manipulating the PageRank algorithm in our Quality Guidelines. Despite these policies, the strategy of participating in link schemes might have previously paid off. But more recently, Google has tremendously refined its link-weighting algorithms. We have more people working on Google's link-weighting for quality control and to correct issues we find. So nowadays, undermining the PageRank algorithm is likely to result in the loss of the ability of link-selling sites to pass on reputation via links to other sites.

Discounting non-earned links by search engines opened a new and wide field of tactics to build link-based popularity: Classically this involves optimizing your content so that thematically-related or trusted websites link to you by choice. A more recent method is link baiting, which typically takes advantage of Web 2.0 social content

websites. One example of this new way of generating links is to submit a handcrafted article to a service such as <http://digg.com>. Another example is to earn a reputation in a certain field by building an authority through services such as <http://answers.yahoo.com>. Our general advice is: Always focus on the users and not on search engines when developing your optimization strategy. Ask yourself what creates value for your users. Investing in the quality of your content and thereby earning natural backlinks benefits both the users and drives more qualified traffic to your site.

To sum up, even though improved algorithms have promoted a transition away from paid or exchanged links towards earned organic links, there still seems to be some confusion within the market about what the most effective link strategy is. So when taking advice from your SEO consultant, keep in mind that nowadays search engines reward sweat-of-the-brow work on content that bait natural links given by choice.