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Search

Bing Webmaster Guidelines

These guidelines cover a broad range of topics and are intended to help your content be found and indexed within Bing. These guidelines will not cover every instance, nor provide prescriptive actions specific to every website. For more information, you should read our self-help documents (/webmaster/help) and follow the Bing Webmaster Blog (http://www.bing.com/community/site_blogs/b/webmaster/default.aspx). In your Bing Webmaster Tools account, you will find SEO Reports (/webmaster/help/?topicid=ab700d09) and the SEO Analyzer (/webmaster/help/?topicid=97615e21) tool for on-demand scanning of individual pages. Both resources will offer basic guidance and recommendations in regards to site optimizations that you can apply to your site.

Content

Content is what Bing seeks. By providing clear, deep, easy to find content on your website, we are more likely to index and show your content in search results. Websites that are thin on content, showing mostly ads or affiliate links, or that otherwise redirect visitors away to other sites quickly tend not to rank well. Your content should be easy to navigate, rich and engaging to the visitor, and provide them the information they seek. In many cases, content produced today will still be relevant years from now. In some cases, however, content produced today will go out of date quickly.

Links

Links pointing to your site help Bing discover new pages on your site. It also, traditionally, is regarded as a signal of popularity. The site linking to your content is essentially telling Bing they trust your content. As a result, Bing rewards links that have grown organically, that is, that have been added over time by content creators on other trusted, relevant websites made to drive real users from their site to your site. Abusive tactics that aim to inflate the number and nature of inbound links such as links buying, participating in link schemes (link farms, link spamming and excessive link manipulation) can lead to your site being delisted from the Bing index.

Social

Social media plays a role in today's effort to rank well in search results. The most obvious part it plays is via influence. If you are influential socially, this leads to your followers sharing your information widely, which in turn results in Bing seeing these positive signals. These positive signals can have an impact on how you rank organically in the long run.

Indexation

Being indexed is the first step to developing traffic from Bing. The main pathways to being indexed are:

- Links to your content help Bing find it, which can lead us to index your content
- Use of features within Bing Webmaster Tools such as Submit URL and Sitemap Upload are also ways to ensure we are aware of your content

Managing how Bingbot crawls your content can be done using the Crawl Control feature inside Bing Webmaster Tools. This feature allows you to control when, and at what pace, Bingbot crawls your website. Webmasters are encouraged to allow Bingbot to crawl quickly and deeply to ensure we find and index as much content as possible.

Technical

Page Load Time (PLT)

This element has a direct impact on the satisfaction a user has when they visit your website. Slow load times can lead to a visitor simply leaving your website, seeking their information elsewhere. If they came from our search results that may appear to us to be an unsatisfactory result that we showed. Faster is better, but take care to balance absolute page load speed with a positive, useful user experience.

Robots.txt

This file is a touch point for Bingbot to understand how to interact with your website and its content. You can tell Bingbot where to go, where not to go and by doing so guide its efforts to crawl your content. The best practice is

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to have this file placed at the root of your domain (www.yourwebsite.com/robots.txt (/webmaster/help/?topicid=cb7c31ec)) and maintain it to ensure it remains accurate.

This file is very powerful and has the capacity to block Bingbot from crawling your content. Should you block Bingbot, we will not crawl your content and your site or content from your site may not appear in our search results.

Sitemap

This file often resides at the root of your host, say, www.yourdomain.com/sitemap.xml, and contains a list of all of the URLs from your website. Large sites may wish to create an index file containing links to multiple sitemap.xml documents, each containing URLs from the website. Care should be taken to keep these files as clean as possible, so remove old URLs if you take that content off your website.

Most websites have their sitemap files crawled daily to locate any fresh content. It's important to keep your sitemap files clean and current to help us find your latest content.

Site technology

The technology used on your website can sometimes prevent Bingbot from being able to find your content. Rich media (Flash, JavaScript, etc.) can lead to Bing not being able to crawl through navigation, or not see content embedded in a webpage. To avoid any issue, you should consider implementing a down-level experience which includes the same content elements and links as your rich version does. This will allow anyone (Bingbot) without rich media enabled to see and interact with your website.

Redirects

If you move content on your website from one location to another, using a redirect makes sense. It can help preserve value the search engine has assigned to the older URL, helps ensure any bookmarks people have remain useful and keeps visitors to your website engaged with your content. Bing prefers you use a 301 permanent redirect when moving content, should the move be permanent. If the move is temporary, then a 302 temporary redirect will work fine. Do not use the rel=canonical tag in place of a proper redirect.

Canonical Tags

The rel=canonical element helps us determine which version of a URL is the original, when multiple version of a URL return the same content. This can happen when, for example, you append a tracking notation to a URL. Two discrete URLs then exist, yet both have identical content. By implementing a rel=canonical, you can tell us the original one, giving us a hint as to where we should place our trust. Do not use this element in place of a proper redirect when moving content.

Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

Search Engine Optimization is a valid practice which seeks to improve technical and content aspects of a website, making the content easier to find, relevant, and more accessible to the search engine crawlers. Taken to extremes, some practices can be abused. The vast majority of instances render a website more appealing to Bing, though performing SEO-related work is no guarantee of improving rankings or receive more traffic from Bing. The main area of focus when optimizing a website should include:

- **<title>** tags – keep these clear and relevant
- **<meta description>** tags – keep these clear and relevant, though use the added space to expand on the <title> tag in a meaningful way
- **alt** attributes – use this attribute on tags to describe the image, so that we can understand the content of the image
- **<h1>** tag – helps users understand the content of a page more clearly when properly used
- **Internal links** – helps create a view of how content inside your website is related. Also helps users navigate easily to related content.
- **Links to external sources** – be careful who you link to as it's a signal you trust them. The number of links pointing from your page to external locations should be reasonable.
- **Social sharing** – enabling social sharing encourages visitors to share your content with their networks
- **Crawlability**
 - **XML Sitemaps** (<http://sitemaps.org/protocol.php>) – make sure you have these set up and that you keep them fresh and current
 - **Navigational structure** – keep it clean, simple and easy to crawl
 - **Rich media cautions** – don't bury links to content inside JavaScript
 - **Graceful degradation** – enable a clean down-level experience so crawlers can see your content

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- URL structure – avoid using session IDs, &, # and other characters when possible
- Robots.txt (</webmaster/help/?topicid=cb7c31ec>) – often placed at root of domain, be careful as its powerful; reference [sitemap.xml](#) (or your [sitemap-index](#) file) in this document
 - Verify that Bingbot is not disallowed or throttled in robots.txt: reference (http://www.bing.com/community/site_blogs/b/webmaster/archive/2012/05/03/to-crawl-or-not-to-crawl-that-is-bingbot-s-question.aspx)
- Define high crawl rate hours in the Bing Webmaster Tools via the *Crawl Control* feature.
- Verify that Bingbot is not blocked accidentally at the server level by doing a “Fetch as Bingbot”: reference (http://www.bing.com/community/site_blogs/b/webmaster/archive/2012/06/27/reviewing-link-explorer-and-fetch-as-bingbot.aspx)
- Webmasters are encouraged to use the **Ignore URL Parameters (found under Configure My Site)** tool inside Bing Webmaster Tools to help Bingbot understand which URLs are to be indexed and which URLs from a site may be ignored

• Site Structure

- **Links** – cross link liberally inside your site between relevant, related content; link to external sites as well
- **URL structure and keyword usage** - keep it clean and keyword rich when possible
- **Clean URLs** – no extraneous parameters (sessions, tracking, etc.)
- **HTML & XML sitemaps** – enable both so users and crawlers can both find what they need – one does not replace the other
- **Content hierarchy** – structure your content to keep valuable content close to the home page
- **Global navigation** – springs from hierarchy planning + style of nav (breadcrumb, link lists, etc.) – helps ensure users can find all your content

• Rich media warnings – don't bury links in Javascript/flash/Silverlight; keep content out of these as well

• On-Page

◦ Head copy

- Titles – unique, relevant, 65 characters or so long
- Descriptions – unique, relevant, grammatically correct, roughly 160 or fewer characters

◦ Body Copy

- H1, H2 and other H* tag usage to show content structure on page
- Only one <H1> tag per page
- ALT tag usage – helps crawlers understand what is in an image
- Keyword usage within the content/text – use the keyword/phrase you are targeting a few times; use variations as well

◦ Anchor text – using targeted keywords as the linked text (anchor text) to support other internal pages

◦ Content

- Build based on keyword research – shows you what users are actually looking for
- Down-level experience enhances discoverability – avoid housing content inside Flash or JavaScript – these block crawlers from finding the content
- Keep out of rich media and images – don't use images to house your content either
- Create enough content to fully meet the visitor's expectations. There are no hard and fast rules on the number of words per page, but providing more relevant content is usually safe.
- Produce new content frequently – crawlers respond to you posting fresh content by visiting more frequently
- Make it unique – don't reuse content from other sources – critical – content must be unique in its final form on your page
- Content management – using 301s to reclaim value from retiring content/pages – a 301 redirect can pass some value from the old URL to the new URL
- <rel canonical> to help engines understand which page should be indexed and have value attributed to it

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- 404 error page management can help cleanse old pages from search engine indexes; 404 page should return a 404 code, not a 200 OK code. Reference (/webmaster/help/?topicid=1c9f53b3).

◦ Links

- Plan for incoming & outgoing link generation – create a plan around how to build links internally and externally
- Internal & external link management – execute by building internal links between related content; consider social media to help build external links, or simply ask websites for them; [paying for links is risky](#)
- Content selection – planning where to link to – be thoughtful and link to only directly related/relevant items of content internally and externally
- Link promotion via social spaces – these can drive direct traffic to you, and help users discover content to link to for you
- Managing anchor text properly – carefully plan which actual words will be linked – use targeted keywords wherever possible

Things to Avoid

Cloaking

Cloaking is the practice of showing one version of a webpage to a search crawler like Bingbot, and another to normal visitors. Showing users different content than to the crawlers can be seen as a spam tactic and be detrimental to your website's rankings and can lead to your site being de-listed from our index. It is therefore recommended to be extremely cautious about responding differently to crawlers as opposed to "regular" visitors and to not cloak as a principle.

Link Schemes, Link Buying, Link Spamming

While link schemes may succeed in increasing the number of links pointing to your website, they will fail to bring quality links to your site, netting no positive gains. In fact, manipulating inbound links to artificially inflate the number of links pointed at a website can even lead to your site being delisted from our index.

Social media schemes

Like farms are similar to link farms in that they seek to artificially exploit a network effect to game the algorithm. The reality is these are easy to see in action and their value is deprecated. Auto follows encourage follower growth on social sites such as Twitter. They work by automatically following anyone who follows you. Over time this creates a scenario where the number of followers you have is more or less the same as the number of people following you. This does not indicate you have a strong influence. Following relatively few people while having a high follower count would tend to indicate a stronger influential voice.

Meta refresh redirects

These redirects reside in the code of a website and are programmed for a preset time interval. They automatically redirect a visitor when the time expires, redirecting them to other content. Rather than using meta refresh redirects, we suggest you use a normal 301 redirect.

Duplicate content

Duplicating content across multiple URLs can lead to Bing losing trust in some of those URLs over time. This issue should be managed by fixing the root cause of the problem. The rel=canonical element can also be used but should be seen as a secondary solution to that of fixing the core problem. If excessive parameterization is causing duplicate content issue, we encourage you to use the Ignore URL Parameters tool (/webmaster/help/?topicid=d7496c65).

Keyword Stuffing

When creating content, make sure to create your content for real users and readers, not to entice search engines to rank your content better. Stuffing your content with specific keywords with the sole intent of artificially inflating the probability of ranking for specific search terms is in violation of our guidelines and can lead to demotion or even the delisting of your website from our search results.

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