



SEO Checklist

**A step-by-step plan for fixing
SEO problems with your web site.**



Dr. Andy Williams



An SEO Checklist

A step-by-step plan for fixing SEO problems with your web site



By Dr. Andy Williams

[ezSEONews](#)

Creating Fat Content

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What People are Saying about this book

"This is the most concise but complete guide to useful SEO I've seen anywhere since the Google updates." **Karl Steppens**

"Dr. Andy really is an authority on SEO and I highly recommend this book to all webmasters." **DebV**

"This book was very informative and easy to follow. Many great reminders

and new information I didn't know." **D Eastman**

"This was a good read because it breaks it down into sections and talks to you like a everyday Joe, so that even inexperienced computer users can see the sense in what is being explained to them."

Miss Winters

"The author was one of the first "gurus" that I followed, and I've found him well-informed, creative, and generous through the years."

Lane P. Lester

"Extremely useful information for anyone who has a website or is interested in building one. As always, what I particularly like about Andy's books is that he gives great information which is not padded out with loads of waffle. A good, helpful read."

Linda Plummer

"What I like is that each issue is explained, so I get to understand why I need to do something. And that legitimate practices are described, so I don't have to worry that Google is going to

penalize my website....

*... Because it is really a checklist, an actionable one and easy to understand, even you are a non techie like I am." **Francesca CH***

*"The author, Andy Williams, is one of the few SEO experts that I listen to as he has integrity, seeks to help people, and offers very useful information." **Jack Raburn***

" I've followed Andy's stuff for many years; he's concise, articulate, precise and careful to give only advice that he's

tested himself. This book is in line with all his other guides and information - it's no-fluff, no-BS and thoroughly tested to give you the best advice available right now. If you're lost in the SEO maze, do exactly what he says and you won't believe how easy SEO can be!" **Isobel DeSantis**

Disclaimer

I do not work for Google and Google in no way endorse this book. The book provides information based on my own experiences of more than 10 years working as a webmaster and SEO.

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[CSS for Beginners](#)

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Why this Book?

I've already written an SEO book called [SEO 2013 & Beyond](http://www.amazon.com/dp/B0099) (<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B0099>) which is available on Amazon Kindle format, so why this new book?

The original book is an overall strategy for SEO that works. The book is particularly useful for those looking to learn SEO or catch up on recent changes at Google and what that means to the webmaster. However, for many of my students and clients, the biggest problem is where to start on an existing site that has lost its rankings. We've all

been there. Everything is going really well, and then you wake up one day to find your Google traffic wiped out. What do you do?

This book will take you by the hand and guide you through a complete checklist of things you should objectively critique/fix on your website. Now, before I go on, I need to point out that a lot of people are not very objective about their own work. It's often hard to take criticism from other people and even harder to admit that we made a mistake somewhere along the way. However, for this process to work, you need to step outside of

yourself and try to view your website as a complete stranger would see it on arrival.

I'd also like to say that although you do need to be critical, I don't want you to be too hard on yourself. Nearly everyone I know lost a site or two in the Google updates of the last 2 years. I lost quite a few sites myself. The reason so many people were caught out was the simple fact that Google moved the goalposts somewhat.

Pre-Panda and pre-Penguin, Google tolerated certain activities. Post-Panda and post-Penguin, they

don't. As a result, they are now enforcing their Webmaster Guidelines, something that SEOs never really believed Google would do! It's this change in tolerance that got so many of us into trouble.

Let me give you an example of the moving goal posts.

We have known for some time that Google doesn't like us building backlinks to our site with automated tools. How did we know? Google told us. So why did so many people engage in link-building campaigns using automated tools that created

hundreds or thousands of low quality links in a short space of time? The answer is simple. At the time, Google tolerated this behavior and even rewarded it. When you see your competitor building all these links and jumping ahead of you in the search engine results, it's only natural that you want to do the same to get your rankings back, right? I mean Google is rewarding that behavior with better rankings, so it must be OK.

As long as Google openly tolerated this type of link-building, it would continue, and Google knew that.

Google Panda and probably more specifically Google Penguin changed all this. Google went from being a very tolerant search engine, to zero tolerance.

For as long as I can remember, Google has published Webmaster Guidelines to tell us what they consider acceptable and what is not. Before Panda and Penguin, these were simply that – **guidelines** that we could choose to ignore. With the arrival of Panda and Penguin, these guidelines became **rules**.

All of the “illicit” activities (like link

building) that were previously tolerated are now a noose around the neck of the website.

Webmasters who may have held the number one spot for years, suddenly found their site gone from page one. Many were even gone from Google altogether.

The reason so many websites lost their rankings was simply because those sites had not followed the guidelines in the past.

I wrote this book to help you more easily identify and fix the problems you may have with your website. It's the same SEO checklist that I

use on my student's websites and those of my clients.

How to Use this Book

I've divided the areas you need to look at into 10 "Checkpoint" chapters. They are:

- Checklist Point #1 – The Domain Name
- Checklist Point #2 – Web Page Real Estate
- Checklist Point #3 – Site Structure
- Checklist Point #4 – Comments
- Checklist Point #5 – Social Presence
- Checklist Point #6 – Would you Trust the site?

- Checklist Point #7 – Bounce Rates & Time on Site
- Checklist Point #8 – Legal pages
- Checklist Point #9 – Content Quality
- Checklist Point #10 – Inbound Link Profiles

These will tell you what you need to be looking out for as well as the theory behind why you need to make these checks. Each Checkpoint chapter ends with a bulleted “checklist” of things you should check in that area.

If you like, you can work your way through the book, checking off each point as you go. However, you might like to read the whole book first and then take action once you understand all of the areas that need your attention.

To make things easier for you, at the end of the book, I've compiled a master checklist that includes all of the checkpoints mentioned throughout the book.

OK, let's start off by looking at what Google actually want.

What does Google Want?

Before we start the checklist, I thought it would be a good idea to explain what it is that Google actually want. You can read their guidelines for yourself, here:

<http://support.google.com/webmasthl=en&answer=35769>

Near the top of that page, it says:

“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 impacted by an algorithmic or manual spam action."

It is really important that you take this statement seriously. Google will remove or penalize your site if they catch you carrying out any activities they don't approve of.

To make things worse for anyone trying to fly under the Google radar, they also state:

“If you believe that another site is abusing Google's quality guidelines, please let us know by filing a spam report.”

That phrase “spam report” is hyperlinked to an online form!

Google are trying to get other webmasters to report websites that ignore the guidelines and use shady techniques. That means your competitors can report your site if they see you doing something to cheat the system!

But what do Google consider

“illicit practices”?

Here is a list of some things you need to avoid.

- **Pages that are designed for the search engines, not for the visitor.** We've all seen these in the search engine results pages (SERPs). They are pages that are designed with the sole purpose of ranking well in Google, without a care to what the visitor might think when they arrive. Google want engaging, unique content (and I'm talking unique in terms of “voice”, discussion or ideas, not just the words and their order on the page).

- **Any trick or “loophole” designed to help a page rank better in the search engine.**

That pretty much covers most of SEO as we used to know it!

- **Content that is auto-created using a software tool.** Most software tools throw out gibberish so this is a fairly obvious point.

One type of tool that deserves special attention is article spinners (which gained a lot of followers in the last few years). Spinners can produce hundreds of near perfect “unique” articles in a few minutes in the hands of an expert. These spun articles have been used

extensively in backlinking campaigns by many people and Google are on the warpath.

Other examples of auto-generated content include articles translated by software (badly) without a human review, scraped content from RSS feeds and “stitching or combining content from different web pages without adding sufficient value.” This last point should be of interest to content curators who don’t add value to the content they curate.

- **Any “linking schemes” that are designed to manipulate a**

web page rank in the search engine. Wow. That's a big one. Google have told us there that they don't want us building links to our site for the sole purpose of better rankings! Backlinking is one of the most effective ways to improve your rank in Google, so obviously we all do it. Just linking two or more of your own sites together could be considered a linking scheme if the sole point is to help those sites rank better. Other things Google don't like are sites that buy (or sell) links to pass Page Rank, reciprocal link to each other and websites that have used automated tools to build

backlinks. Google don't even like links inserted into posts you write for other sites (guest posts) if those links are simply there to manipulate your web page rankings.

- **Websites that serve up one version of a page to the search engines, yet a different page to the visitors.** This is called cloaking and is commonly used by webmasters trying to trick the search engines into ranking the “sales” page higher. The page the search engines see is keyword rich (helping the page to rank), whereas the version the visitors see is completely different. Similar to

cloaking is “sneaky redirects”. This is often achieved with JavaScript or a Meta refresh so that the page the visitor sees is not the same page that the search engine spider crawled and was ultimately ranked in Google.

- **Pages that have “hidden” text.** In other words, text that is invisible to the visitor. This is commonly done using CSS to make the text the same color as the background. Visitors don’t see the text, yet the search engines do (since they read the text based document).
- **Websites that use “doorway**

pages”. These are poor quality pages that are designed to rank for a single keyword. Sites that employ doorway pages often have hundreds or thousands of them, where their sole purpose is to rank high for a single term and deliver visitors from the search engine. An example is a website that has lots of pages of similar content, with each page trying to rank for a different geographical location by changing the title and main location based phrases.

- **Affiliate websites that don't add enough value.** These include the typical Amazon affiliate website

where each page is a review of a product that links to Amazon. The problem occurs when the review content contains nothing that isn't already found on Amazon or the manufacturers own website. Affiliate sites **MUST** add significant value.

Some things Google actually recommend you do

- **Use clear, intuitive navigation on your site with text links.**

Every page on your site needs to be reachable from a link somewhere on the site. A sitemap helps here (and Google recommends you have one), but it is also a good idea to

interlink your content if it helps the visitor navigate your site.

- **Don't have too many links on any given page.** Sites like

[Wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)

(<http://www.wikipedia.org/>) seem to ignore this rule yet still rank well for a huge number of searches.

However, Wikipedia seems to have been accepted and trusted by Google, so what's good for them may not be good for you.

- **Websites that have useful, information-rich content.**

Think here in terms of content written for the visitor, not for the

search engine.

- **ALT tags that actually describe the image.** Since ALT tags are often “read” by software for blind visitors, they are very important sources of information for people that cannot actually see the image.

- **Sites should not have broken links.** There is a good free software tool called [Xenu Link Sleuth](http://home.snafu.de/tilman/xenu) (<http://home.snafu.de/tilman/xenu>) that can spider your site and check this for you. There really is no excuse.

OK, you get the idea.

We'll look at some of the other things Google like and don't like as we work our way through the checklist, so let's get on with it.

THE SEO CHECKLIST

Checklist Point #1 – The Domain Name

Exact Match Domains

In the past, keywords in your domain name helped your website rank better. The ultimate ranking boost was from something called an Exact Match Domain or EMD for short. An EMD took keyword “stuffing” to the extreme – by making the domain name the same as the main keyword phrase you are trying to target.

For example, if you wanted to rank well for “buy prescription drugs online”, then the exact match

domain would be
buyprescriptiondrugsonline.XXX
where XXX is any one of the
domain TLDs (.com, .net, .org etc).
Merely having that exact phrase in
the domain name gave you an
unfair ranking advantage. SEOs
soon spotted this and EMDs
became hot favorites for anyone
trying to make money online.

On 28th September 2012, Matt
Cutts (head of Google's webspam
team) tweeted the following:



Matt Cutts

@mattcutts

Follow

Minor weather report: small upcoming Google algo change will reduce low-quality "exact-match" domains in search results.

Reply Retweet Favorite Storify More

682

RETWEETS

53

FAVORITES

SEO
SEM



1:43 PM - Sep 28, 2012

Google had finally decided to take action on “low-quality” EMDs and

prevent them from ranking simply because of the phrase in the domain name.

Now, if you have an EMD, don't panic. Google's algorithm changes were designed to remove **low quality EMDs** from the search results, not good sites that happen to be on an EMD (though there is often some collateral damage with big changes to the algorithm, so some good sites were probably hit). You need to decide if your site is a quality EMD or a low quality one.

Some things to look for that might indicate a low quality EMD site:

- Is the site specifically targeting that EMD phrase or does your site have a lot of quality content within the overall niche?
- Do you have a lot of backlinks with anchor text that matches the EMD phrase?
- Are there very few pages on your site?
- Reading your content, does there appear to be a bias towards using that EMD phrase (to try to help it rank better)?
- Is that EMD phrase repeated a few times on the homepage? What

about other pages on the site?

- Is that phrase used in internal links back to the homepage from other pages on the site?
- Is your on-site SEO targeting that EMD phrase?
- Is the EMD phrase one that Adwords Advertisers are willing to bid on? Is it quite commercial?

As an example, here are the estimated costs per click for some contact lens related phrases (as shown in [Google's Keyword Tool](https://adwords.google.com/o/Keyv) <https://adwords.google.com/o/Keyv>

 contact lenses online order ▼	€5.96
 contacts lenses online ▼	€5.65
 buy contact lenses on line ▼	€5.60
 ordering contact lenses online ▼	€5.56
 order contacts lenses online ▼	€5.55
 order contacts online ▼	€5.52
 online contacts lenses ▼	€5.52

Any of those phrases turned into an EMD would be suspect.

Take that first phrase as an example. The EMD would be:

contactlensesonlineorder.com

Surely someone would have

registered that in the past to take advantage of EMD ranking power? If they could rank for that phrase and slap Adsense ads on the site, then they'd be making a good chunk of change every time someone clicked on an advert.

Typing that domain into my web browser, this is what I get:

Oops! Google Chrome could not find
contactlensesonlineorder.com

Suggestions:

- Search on Google:

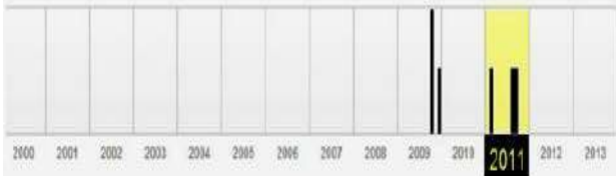
However, if I search the [Way Back Machine](http://web.archive.org) (<http://web.archive.org>), which looks for archived versions of the website, this is what I see:

<http://contactlensesonlineorder.com/>

Go Wayback!

<http://contactlensesonlineorder.com/> has been crawled 6 times going all the way back to October 2, 2009.

A crawl can be a duplicate of the last one. It happens about 25% of the time across 420,000,000 websites. [FAQ](#)



That site existed in 2009, and then again in 2011.

Using Way Back Machine, I can even take a look at that site as it appeared back in 2009 or 2011. Here it is in 2009:

INTERNET ARCHIVE
Wayback Machine
http://www.contactlensesonlineorder.com/ Go
6 captures
2 Oct 09 - 15 Sep 11
SEP OCT DEC
2
2009 2011

Contact Lenses Online Order

Save up to 70% off retail contact lens prices. Fast, Simple and Cheap.

- [Acuvue](#)
- [Biomedics](#)
- [Freshlook](#)
- [Softens](#)
- [Proclear](#)

We carry all popular brands of contact lenses including Acuvue, Biomedics, Focus, Freshlook, Softens, Purevision, and more. Order your contact lenses, and save up to 70% off contact lens prices.

Best Seller Contact Lenses

Notice the main header on the page uses the exact same phrase. This is typical of low quality EMDs.

So, why is that EMD no longer an

active site?

Perhaps Google's plan to wipe out low quality EMDs worked and it no longer made money, so they let it expire? No-one wants it now because of the problems associated with this type of EMD and the fact that the domain may have picked up a penalty (which isn't always removed when a domain changes hands).

Using Way Back Machine to Find Problem Domains

If your domain has never ranked properly, then I'd recommend that you check it at the Way Back

Machine website. See if your domain was used before you got your hands on it. If it was, what was the site like that was there before? It is possible that a domain could be penalized in the past, and that domain penalty carried over to the new owner. If this is the case, you could file a reconsideration request at Google (<http://support.google.com/webmaster/hl=en&answer=35843>). While not guaranteed to work, it might if Google can see the domain changed hands.

Keyword Stuffed Domains

Another potential problem with a

domain name is keyword stuffing.

Let's suppose your website is selling cosmetic contact lenses. If your domain was **cosmetic-halloween-colored-contact-lenses.com** then it's clear that the domain has been stuffed with relevant keywords. This would get you into trouble, but even if it didn't, what would visitors think of a domain like that? This type of domain is not one that I would be anxious to hold on to.

Back in March 2011, Matt Cutts discussed the use of keywords in the domain name in a YouTube

video:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rAWFv43qubI>

He suggests that a brandable domain is probably better than a keyword rich domain (and I agree). Despite being old, that video hints about the changes to come in the way keyword rich domains are ranked.

Of course, these are just general guidelines on domain names. There isn't much you can do about your domain name once you have it. Your choice is to either stick with it or move your site to a

different domain. In this video, Matt Cutts offers some advice on moving a domain:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wATxftE8ooE>

The Domain Name Checklist

- EMD? If yes, then be aware that this will work against you and you'll need to de-optimize the site for the phrase in the domain name.
- Keyword stuffed? There isn't much you can do with this other than move the site to a better domain. Keyword stuffed domains look spammy and don't instill much confidence in visitors. Unless there is good reason to keep the domain (like it still makes good income or ranks well), I'd consider moving the site to a better, brandable domain.

- Has your domain never ranked properly? If not, then check its history at the Way Back Machine. Consider a reconsideration request at Google if it looks like the domain was used before.

Checklist Point #2 – Web Page Real Estate

Above the Fold

In January 2012, Google released a document that outlined a new “page layout algorithm improvement”. You can read it here:

<http://insidesearch.blogspot.com.es/layout-algorithm-improvement.html>

In releasing this change, Google were hoping to improve the user experience. No one likes to arrive at a website and all they see in their browser is Google ads, banners or

email subscription forms. The general idea of this update was to penalize sites that didn't have much useful content above the fold.

“Above the fold” simply means the viewable area in your browser before you scroll down the page.

In the past, a lot of people made a lot of money throwing up “Adsense sites”. These were designed to rank well, but show the visitors very little content, just money-generating adverts. Visitors could either click an advert (and make the webmaster money), click the back button on their browser, or scroll down to find the content. Because

of the poor user experience on these sites, most people probably opted for one of the first two options as they figured the content would not be up to much. If something caught their eye in the adverts, they'd click.

NOTE: If you are a member of Google Adsense yourself, you will probably have been told by the Adsense team to put MORE adverts on your pages. The Google Adsense team seems to be at odds with what Google Search Engine actually wants. Be aware that the two parts work separately and want to achieve different things.

Look at your page above the fold. I'd actually recommend resizing your browser to 1024x768 (most people use this resolution or something higher these days according to [W3Schools.com](http://www.w3schools.com/browsers/) - <http://www.w3schools.com/browsers/> and seeing what is above the fold on your site.

Once resized, is there meaningful content? If you removed the adverts from that area, would it still offer value to the visitors in terms of the other content above the fold? This is also an interesting test for your page as a whole. If you remove the adverts from a page,

would the remaining content be seen as high quality? It should!

NOTE: If you have some adverts above the fold, you may be OK. On the page layout algorithm announcement, Google say:

“This algorithmic change does not affect sites who place ads above-the-fold to a normal degree, but affects sites that go much further to load the top of the page with ads to an excessive degree or that make it hard to find the actual original content on the page.”

Sneaky links in footers, headers or elsewhere

Does your site have links in the footer?

Links *per se* are not a problem, but if they are links with keyword rich anchor text, they could be. If the links in your footer are there simply to make another webpage rank better for a keyword term, then there is a problem.

Look at your footer links. Do they use keyword rich anchor text that the linked to page wants to rank for? If so, remove them.

If you have footer links to things

like Twitter, Facebook, Contact,
Privacy etc, then these are fine.

Web Page Real Estate Checklist

- Resize your browser to 1024x768 and see what loads above the fold. Is there useful content? Are there too many adverts? If there are too many adverts, especially above the fold, consider removing (or moving) them.
- If you removed all of the adverts from the pages on your site, would those pages still offer the visitor what they are looking for? If not, then the content is not good enough.
- Does your site have sneaky links

in the footer, especially keyword rich anchor text links to your own site or an external site? If so, get rid of them.

Checklist Point #3 – Site Structure

Is your site navigation helping your visitors find what they want quickly?

If you think in terms of needing every page on your site to be just 1 and a maximum of 2 clicks away from the homepage, then you're on the right track.

Good website navigation should be intuitive to the visitor. They should immediately be able to see where they need to go for the information they require.

A good test here is to ask a friend who has never been to your website to find a particular piece of information. How long does it take them?

Include a Search Box

I'd highly recommend you have a search box on your website to help people find information. If you are using Wordpress, the default search box really is very poor. People won't be able to find what they want on a large site because Wordpress doesn't rank its results by any kind of relevance (at least not any that I can detect).

An example

On one of my websites, I had written an article on “vitamin A”. I had also referenced vitamin A in 120+ other articles on the site. The Wordpress search box placed my main “vitamin A” article around position 125. That’s not very good!

Wordpress or not, check out the search script your site is using. Do some searches. Does it return the most relevant pages in the results for search queries? If the results are not very good, you need to look for a new search box script. There is one I can recommend.

What if you could use Google's search engine to power the search box on your site?

Google are kings of search and relevance, so using a search box powered by Google would ensure people find the most relevant pages on your site, quickly and easily. The good news is you can. After installing it on the site I mentioned above, and searching for "vitamin A", my main article came up #1 as it should.

You can find out more about Google Custom Search here:

<http://www.google.com/cse/>

If you have an AdSense account, you can create the search box within that account to use on your site. It will have AdSense ads in the search results, but you do make money when the adverts are clicked. If you want to opt-out of the adverts in your custom search engine, see the link above as Google do have a paid option for that.

Site-Wide Links

Site-wide links are links that appear on all pages of your site. You do actually have to be careful and not overdo them. If you do have site-wide links, they should not use keyword phrases you are trying to

rank for.

NOTE: Site-wide links can be to pages on your own website or a different website.

In the past, swapping site-wide links with webmasters of other sites has been a common SEO practice, but I am saying don't do it.

Google's quality guidelines clearly state that IF these are an attempt to manipulate search rankings, then they should be avoided.

If you are a Wordpress site owner, typical site-wide links that comes pre-installed with Wordpress include the blogroll. I recommend

you remove this from your site, even if you have edited it with more relevant websites.

Site-wide links are typically found in the header, footer or sidebar of the site. One of the most common forms of site-wide links is the main menu of the site. This menu links to the main areas of the website and serves a useful purpose. I would recommend that your main navigation menu is not keyword-focused, and instead, is written with the visitor in mind to help them find what they are looking for.

On smaller sites (10 or so pages),

the main navigation menu usually links to all of the pages on the site. Again, avoid keyword-rich anchor text in these menus and always think what is most helpful to the visitor.

As your site grows, it becomes unnatural to link to all pages on your site from the main menu found on every page. A far better strategy is to create individual menus for each section of your site, and put these menus on the pages in those sections. Let's consider "context-sensitive navigation".

Context-Sensitive Navigation

The navigation system on your site can include menus in:

- The header
- The footer
- The sidebar
- Within the content area, usually at the end of a particular piece of content.

On larger websites, the navigation system you use should not be the same on every page of the site. The navigation should change depending on the page being visited. I'm not suggesting every page on your site has a different

navigation menu, but certainly sections of your site could use their own custom menu.

The easiest way to think about this is with an example. If you had a health site, and the visitor is on a page about osteoporosis, a menu that would help the visitor would contain links to other articles about osteoporosis. You could still include a navigation “block” linking to the main areas within the site, but you’d also include more specific options for your visitor, related to the current article they are reading.

Let’s consider another example. If

you had a travel site and a visitor was on a page talking about restaurants in Bali, it would make sense to have navigation options that show other articles on Bali, maybe hotels, attractions, surfing, etc.

What if you have an ecommerce site selling baby products? You might have a main site-wide menu that includes links to all of the main sections on your site – strollers, cots, car seats, etc, but when your visitor is browsing the section on strollers, a menu with links to 2-seat strollers, jogging strollers, etc would be very helpful. Always

think in terms of how your navigation can best serve your visitors.

This type of dynamic navigation is clearly easier and more practical to implement on larger sites.

However, if you have a small site with a site-wide menu, do look at your navigation and make sure your links are not keyword-focused and that the navigation HELPS the visitor.

A Tip for Wordpress Users

Two plugins I recommend for helping you create a dynamic navigation system are:

- **Dynamic Widgets.**

(<http://wordpress.org/extend/plugin/widgets/>). This allows you to setup different sidebar menus (created as widgets) in different areas of your site.

- **Yet Another Related Posts Plugin (YARPP).**

(<http://wordpress.org/extend/plugin/another-related-posts-plugin/>). This allows you to setup a related posts section after each piece of content. When a visitor gets to the end of an article, they'll see a list of related articles and be tempted to click through to one. This type of internal linking is also beneficial

from a search engine perspective, linking related content together.

Content Organization on your Server (non-Wordpress sites)

Organization of your content on the server and your site's navigation system go hand-in-hand. One mirrors the other. Well organized content is stored in a logical, intuitive manner, which is reflected in the navigation system.

The physical organization on your server is only important if you are building your website using something like HTML, which stores as webpage as a discrete file. It

therefore doesn't apply to Wordpress (Wordpress does not save content as individual files).

Let's use a theoretical example of a pet website. It might have content written about:

- Fish
- Birds
- Dogs
- Reptiles
- Amphibians
- Cats

There should be a folder/directory

on your server for each of these content areas, and all content should be saved into the corresponding folder. Can you see how this physical organization would mirror the navigation system of the site?

The first thing for you to check is whether or not your content is properly organized into folders on your server. Are all dog related articles physically located within a dog folder/directory on your server?

As the dog section on the site grows, we'll need to add to the

structure of the folders/directories on our server to re-organize our content, in the exact same way that we did with the navigation system earlier.

For example, if your site was an informational site, you could add the following sub-folders under your “dog” folder on the server:

- Training
- Toys
- Beds
- Food & treats

Each of these would then store the

content related to those folders. So for example, all articles on dog training would be located in the “/dogs/training/” folder on your server.

If your site sold pets, perhaps a more logical way to organize the content would be to have sub-folders like:

- Alsatians
- Terriers
- Dalmatians
- Huskies

.. and so on.

By organizing your content into logical folders on your server, the URLs of these pages would be like this:

mypetsite.com/dogs/training/clicker-training.html

mypetsite.com/dogs/training/choke-chain.html

mypetsite.com/dogs/training/walking-to-heel.html

mypetsite.com/dogs/food/mixers.html

mypetsite.com/dogs/food/tinned-dog-food.html

mypetsite.com/dogs/food/snacks.html

These URLs give the search engines

big clues about the content. For example, the search engines would know that all 6 of those web pages were about dogs. It would also know that three were related to training dogs, while three were related to dog food.

This type of physical organization helps the search engines categorize and rank your content because your pages end up in “silos” of related content (with links between related content).

This folder organization on your server should match the menu navigation on your site.

NOTE: If you are using Wordpress, you can get the same types of URLs by using categories. While categories are not physical locations like directories/folders on the server, they do serve the same purpose in categorizing your content into logical groups.

Wordpress actually takes things a stage further and includes a feature called tags. You can think of tags as an additional way to classify your content, the main way being with categories. I won't go into how to use Wordpress categories and tags in this book, other than to give you two tips:

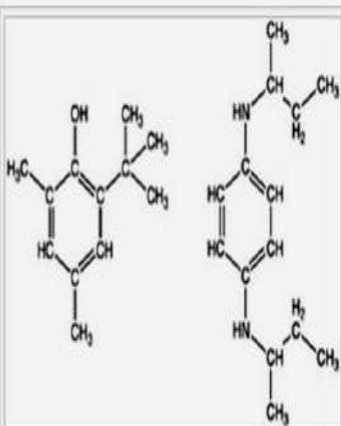
1. Never use a word or phrase as both a category and a tag. If it's a really important part of your site structure it's a category. If it's less important, use a tag.
2. Never use a tag if it will only ever be used on one post. If a tag is important, it will be used on several posts on your site. If it's not, it's not important therefore delete it.

Internal Linking of content

When one of your pieces of content references information that is found somewhere else on your site, it makes sense to link to that other

page within the body of your content. If we look at this Wikipedia page you can see a lot of links:

Although oxidation reactions are crucial for life, they can also be damaging; plants and animals maintain complex systems of multiple types of antioxidants, such as glutathione, vitamin C, vitamin A, and vitamin E as well as enzymes such as catalase, superoxide dismutase and various peroxidases. Insufficient levels of antioxidants, or inhibition of the antioxidant enzymes, cause oxidative stress and may damage or kill cells.



Substituted phenols and derivatives of phenylenediamine are common antioxidants used to inhibit gum formation in gasoline (petrol).

Each of these links goes to another web page on the Wikipedia website.

I've circled one hyperlink where the anchor text is "glutathione". This link jumps to the page on Wikipedia all about "glutathione". Not only does this help the search engine spider index the pages on your site, it also helps the visitor. Anyone reading this article that doesn't know what glutathione is could click the link and read about it before coming back to the original page to continue reading.

Internal linking helps visitors, and it also help the search engines. Links with anchor text tell the search engine what the page is about. The only recommendation

I'd make with internal linking is that you vary the anchor text in your internal links, much like you do with links pointing into your website.

I did an experiment on internal linking and published my results here on my site:

<http://ezseonews.com/backlinks/internal-linking-seo/>

The article gives you tips on using internal linking, plus results of an experiment I ran.

Essentially I took one of my websites that ranked at #190 for a

particular phrase I was targeting. Using nothing but internal links, I managed to move that page up to #14 in Google. That to me indicates that Google like internal linking when it's done to help the visitor (and it clearly helps your pages rank better).

The things I'd recommend you look at on your own site are:

1. Do you make use of internal linking in the body of the content like Wikipedia?
2. Do you vary internal link anchor texts to a specific page?

3. For any particular anchor text, make sure you only ever link to one URL using it. Using the same anchor text to point to two or more different URLs is confusing, especially for the search engines.

Site Structure Checklist

- Is your navigation intuitive?
- Are all of the pages on your site just one or two clicks away from the homepage?
- Do you have site-wide links in the sidebar?
- Do you have site-wide links in the header?
- Do you have site-wide links in the footer?

NOTE: Site-wide links with keyword-rich anchor text are the most potentially damaging.

- If you have a large site, do you use dynamic menus, which change depending on the section of the site the visitor is viewing?
- Do you have a search box? If it is a Wordpress default search box, I highly recommend you switch to a more efficient script, e.g. Google's custom search.
- Do you internally link the pages of your website from within the body of your content, not just via the navigation menus or a related posts menu?
- Is your content organized logically into "silos" where all related

content is in the same category or folder? If necessary (e.g. on a large site), do you use sub-folders to help make the navigation more intuitive?

- If you are using Wordpress, do you have tags that are only used once or twice? If so, remove them.
- If you are using Wordpress, do you have tags that are identical to some of your categories? Never use a phrase for a tag if it is being used (or will be used) as a category.

Checklist Point #4 – Comments

Visitor Contact

A visitor-friendly site is one that offers your visitors the chance to interact with you.

Something ALL websites should have is a contact form.

Something that I highly recommend you also include is a comment form where visitors can comment on your content. Obviously, this may not be applicable in all cases, but visitors do like to know there is a real

person behind the site and often like to give their opinions as well. Not only does a comment form build trust, it also builds social proof as new visitors can see that other people have left comments on your site.

There are contact form scripts and comment form scripts available for HTML websites. Content management systems like Wordpress have the comments built in, and contact forms are readily available as plugins.

I recommend you implement both on your site if it makes sense to do

SO.

If you already have a comment form on your site, check the comment settings. If you have your comments set to auto-approve, then set it to administrator approval so ALL comments need to go by you first. If you set up comments for auto-approval, you'll get a lot of spam comments that bring the quality of your site down, and could themselves cause a penalty if these comments link to "bad neighborhoods".

Bad neighborhoods?

Let me explain.

Most spammers leave comments with the sole intention of getting a backlink to their own web site.

Many of these will be low quality sites, porn sites, or other types of sites that you would not want to associate with your own. These types of sites are referred to as “bad neighborhoods” by Google. In addition, there is nothing to stop someone who has left a comment on your site (and had it approved some time ago), from redirecting their link to a bad neighborhood at a later date. To be safe, make comments on your site **nofollow**.

Once everything is set up properly,

go through **every single comment** on your site and delete any that are either fake or spam.

Fake Comments

Fake comments are those that you or someone you asked (or hired) wrote. A lot of webmasters add fake comments to their own site to make the site look a little more active. Don't do it. Fake comments are often easily spotted and don't instill trust once you've been rumbled.

Typical ways that fake comments stand out are:

1. Several comments posted

within a very short time of one another and then nothing, at least for a while.

2. Groups of fake comments rarely have author images associated with the comment (Gravatars) which makes them stand out even more.
3. Comments are “bland” and don’t really add anything to the content.
4. Comments are copied from another website, e.g. Amazon.

Spam Comments

Spam comments are not always easy to spot. They are left with the

sole intention of getting a valuable backlink, so spammers have become creative in the way they do their spamming. There are even software tools to help them carry out mass-scale spamming of comment-enabled websites.

As a general rule, don't approve any comment that is "stroking your ego", or "patting you on the back for a job well done".

One way spammers try to get their comments approved is to say things like "Great article" or "This is amazing, I've told my friends about this". Here is one I got the other

day:

Submitted on 2013/03/05 at 08:42

You blog post is just completely quality and informative. Many new facts and information which I have not heard about before. Keep sharing more blog posts.

While I have no doubt that this comment is true ;) sadly it is spam.

This flattery is supposed to stroke the ego of the webmaster so it gets through the approval process.

Don't approve it, UNLESS you know the comment is legitimate i.e. you recognize the commenter.

Comment spam can also be cleverly

disguised.

For example, a spammer might find a page they want a backlink from on the “health benefits of zinc”.

They’ll then go and find an article on the web about this topic and grab a quote from that article to use as a comment. The quote will look like a real comment about your article, but will in fact be content copied from another website. This type is often difficult to catch, except to say that most cases don’t quite look right in the context of your article. If in doubt, grab the content of the comments, put it in quotes, and search Google for it.

Another type of comment spam is where the commenter is just trying to get traffic to their own website. Here is an example of that:

Submitted on 2013/03/08 at 13:34

I would certainly not recommend 1&1. My recent experiences are detailed on my blog, here: <http://www.jimthor.com/articles-a-contradict>

I have always found Bluehost easy to use, Hostgator I find a little "clunky" but my favourite has to be Dreamhost. They had a few issues in the past but everything works like a dream for me and I find their unique control panel interface so easy to use.

You can see I've blurred out the URL linking to his web page.

His page is basically a review of his

favorite web hosting company (which does include his experiences with 1&1) with an affiliate link to that host. He left a comment that I would have otherwise approved, but not with that link to his web page. He is probably targeting any “high traffic” website that has reviewed 1&1 web host, or even Hostgator, and leaving similar reviews in the hope he can piggy-back their traffic as well as benefit from the relevant backlink.

General rule for approving comments

Only approve comments if:

1. It is clear from the comment that the person has read the article.
2. The comment adds something to the article, like another point of view.
3. If you know that the person is real because you recognize their name (but only if the comment is also not spammy).

Obviously these are just guidelines. In the field of battle, you'll have to make some tough decisions, but I recommend only keeping the best comments that you are sure are real. Delete **EVERYTHING** else.

Comments Checklist

- Does your website have a comments section where visitors can leave comments, thoughts and questions?
- Does your website have a contact us form?
- If you have comments enabled, are you manually approving all comments? You should be.
- Check through all of the comments on your site and remove any fake or spam comments. In fact, remove any comment whose sole purpose is to get a backlink to a

website.

- Make comment links nofollow.
- Going forward, only approve legitimate comments where it is clear the visitor read your content and added to the conversation with their insight.

Checklist Point #5 – Social Presence

Under the umbrella of social presence, I include two things:

- The website/website author has a social presence on social media sites.
- The website has social sharing “buttons” on the site to allow visitors to share the content to their social media followers.

Check your website. Do you have both of these?

Let's look to see exactly what I mean, as well as give you some

ideas for a “bare minimum” social approach.

The website/website author has a social presence

The three main social channels I'd recommend you look at are:

1. Facebook
2. Twitter
3. Google Plus

I would probably recommend you consider these in that order as well. If you have a Facebook account you can easily setup a Facebook Page for your website. You can then link to the Facebook page from your site.

You can see how I have this setup on one of my sites. Visitors can follow me on Twitter, Facebook or add me to a circle on Google plus.



Your Facebook page offers your visitors an additional channel for starting a “conversation” with you. From your point of view, you can post updates to that page which include things like:

- Tips and tricks for your industry/niche.
- Current news in your niche.
- Interesting articles you find around the web.
- New posts on your site (this can be automated).
- Videos, images etc.

- Current special offers from your website.
- Anything else that is relevant to your site.

Think of your Facebook page as an extension of your website. A Facebook page that has a thriving community can rank well in Google, plus give your “brand” a huge amount of social proof. It’s so easy to setup, I recommend all websites have a Facebook page.

As far as Twitter is concerned, it’s also very easy to setup an account for your website. You can even setup your website to automatically

send a tweet to your Twitter account, every time new content is published on your site. You can of course also send tweets with information related to your niche (the same kind of stuff that you can post on Facebook). Services like Hootsuite (<http://hootsuite.com>) allow you to schedule tweets (as well as Facebook and Google Plus posts) in advance.

As your Twitter following increases, you'll automatically be increasing your "authority" in the eyes of your visitors. Let's face it, if you have a Twitter account with 10,000+ followers, a lot of people will think

“Wow, this site must be good”.

Now, before you tell me that you’ve tried Twitter and only ever managed a handful of followers, there are ways to increase the number of followers. I wrote an article called [“How to get more Twitter Followers”](#)

(<http://ezseonews.com/review/how-to-get-more-twitter-followers/>) and I have used the methods described there to consistently build Twitter lists into the thousands. While it’s true that your Twitter list may not be too responsive when built that way, that’s not really the point. The main point of this to begin with is

social proof on your site. As your site grows in authority, your Twitter following will increase naturally with more targeted individuals. It then becomes more than just a social proof thing. It becomes useful for business.

When you have a Twitter account, make sure you link to it from your website so that people can follow you on Twitter (as I did in the previous screenshot). Once your Twitter following has grown to the point where you are proud of it, you may want to head on over to <http://twittercounter.com> and get a “badge” for your site. The badge

displays how many Twitter followers you've got. This all helps add authority to your site, and the more authority your site is given by visitors, the more authority it is given by the search engines which monitor visitor behavior.

The final social media platform that I recommend getting involved with is Google Plus. You can setup a Google Plus Page for your website and post to it, in much the same way you do to Facebook. Google plus works in a very different way though and it's beyond the scope of this book to teach you Google Plus.

As a bare minimum, I'd recommend you setup Google Authorship for your website, and for this, you need a Google plus account. Essentially the way this works is that you tell Google which web content you own, and they credit you as the author. Obviously they need to verify this, but that is all part of the setup procedure.

Setting Google Authorship up can help in two main ways:

1. When you publish content on your site, you are tagged as the original owner. If anyone else steals your content,

Google knows that YOU are the original owner; therefore you aren't likely to be outranked by a thief.

2. Your Avatar can show up in the search results next to your entry, which can increase your click through rate and increases your authority in the eyes of the searchers. Here is an example of how this looks in Google:

kindling course



[Web](#) [Images](#) [Maps](#) [Shopping](#) [Books](#) [More ▾](#) [Search tools](#)

About 3,180,000 results (0.51 seconds)

[KINDLING: The BEST Kindle Training EVER!](#)

[www.warriorforum.com](#) > ... > [Warrior Special Offers Forum](#)

Jan 11, 2012 – **KINDLING** Teaches You Both Fiction and Non Fiction Best Kindle Training EVER! - YouTube If you have ANY Problems whatsoever email me ...

[GSM & Associates](#)

[geoffshawmarketing.com/](#)

KINDLING - The Best Kindle Training Membership EVER!

[Kindling Course by Geoff Shaw - ezSEO Newsletter](#)

[ezseonews.com](#) > [Kindle Publishing](#)



by Andy Williams - in 76 Google+ circles - [More by Andy Williams](#)

Dec 4, 2012 – Geoff Shaw's **Kindling course** has set the standard for all other Kindle publishing courses. This is the only course you need to get started in your ...

[Geoff Shaw Kindling Course – Final Review](#)

[www.tiffanydow.com/blog/geoff-shaw-kindling-course-final-review/](#)

Jul 21, 2012 – Hi everyone! Geoff Shaw, the creator of the **Kindling course**, continues growing his membership. I honestly don't see it as something that will ...

[Publishing for Kindle: Review of Kindling Course Part 6](#)

[www.tiffanydow.com/.../publishing-for-kindle-review-of-ki...](#)



by Tiffany Dow - in 4,453 Google+ circles - [More by Tiffany Dow](#)

Jun 30, 2012 – Hi everyone! I am now on part 6 of my review of Geoff Shaw's **Kindling course** (which teaches you how to publish both fiction and non fiction ...

Do you see how my entry and that of Tiffany Dow stick out from the others? Our rankings encourage the click and add authority to our listing. It's like Google are saying, "Hey, look! These people (that we know) have an article on this".

Setting up Google Authorship is beyond the scope of this book, but Google have help pages that can guide you through the setup:

<https://plus.google.com/authorship>

OK, those are the social media channels that I suggest you get involved in.

Let's see how you can give your visitors the opportunity to share your content with their followers – using social sharing buttons.

The website has social sharing “buttons”

If I show you an example, I am sure you'll recognize what I am talking about:



141



Like

669



Tweet

120



+1

93



Buffer

Typically, social media sharing buttons appear in a “panel”, either above, below (or above AND below) the content on the page. This panel can be horizontal or even floating vertically (as in the screenshot above) over the webpage on the right or left, or in a sidebar.

In my screenshot, the top one is Facebook, the second Twitter and the third Google Plus. Again, I’d recommend concentrating on these three.

NOTE: The bottom one in the screenshot is another service called Buffer, which isn’t currently on my

essential list. It could be in the future though, so you may want to read up on that service here:

<http://bufferapp.com/>

Other social media sites you might like to have buttons for include Pinterest (if your site has a lot of images that you want shared) and StumbleUpon.

For Wordpress users, there are a stack of plugins to add this functionality to a site.

For HTML sites, you'll need to find a script that has these features, or manually go to each social media

site and grab the button code to include in your own social media “panel”.

What do these buttons do exactly?

These buttons give visitors to your site the opportunity to share your webpage with their social media followers.

For example, if I clicked on the Tweet button in the panel above, a Tweet would be constructed automatically with the URL and title of that page.



ezSEONews ▾

Share a link with your followers

Google Authorship Markup: How to get your picture in search results.
<http://blog.kissmetrics.com/google-authorship/> via @KISSmetrics

32

Tweet

You'll see at the end of the Tweet that Twitter has added "via @KISSmetrics". This sends "KISSmetrics" (the author of the content) a notification that I have tweeted their content. This is one way you can connect with the

leaders in your niche.

When you have these social share buttons on your site, your visitors become your army of promoters, as long as your content is good.

So, check your site. Do you have social sharing buttons? If not, I highly recommend you add them (at least for the main three).

NOTE: Google do index tweets and probably use them as a social signal in ranking (although probably only for a limited time). Google also knows how many Facebook likes your content gets and may use that as a social signal. And of course,

Google obviously monitor Google pluses.

Social Presence Checklist

- Does the website have a presence on Facebook?
- Does the website have a presence on Twitter?
- Does the website have a presence on Google plus?
- Does your website have social sharing buttons to allow your visitors to share your content with their social media followers? You should include Twitter, Facebook and Google plus as a bare minimum.

- Setup Google Authorship for your site, connecting your content to your Google plus profile.

Checklist Point #6 – Would you Trust the site?

This section looks at the trust levels for your site. We've already discussed some of the things that can help people trust your site, but let's look at a more comprehensive list.

People like to deal with real people. When they arrive at your site, do they know who they are dealing with?

A Photo

A lot of split testing has shown that

a photo of a real person increases conversions. From my own experience, the photos that work the best are not the ones that look like “stock photos”, but those that look like a real person, the person next door. There’s a reason for that. Websites that show real people help to build trust. When someone trusts your site, they are more likely to follow through with your call to action.

So where are the best places to put a photo on your site? Well it really depends on the type of site you have, but a photo in the header or the sidebar can work. Here is one

found in a sidebar:

Entrepreneur Only

success?

I'm Shane Melaugh, a half-Irish entrepreneur from Switzerland.



role

gment. And

gging world.

e:

ne that

My entrepreneurial

journey started in 2006, when I dropped out of university. I went from offline business in the hardware market to ecommerce to affiliate niche sites and from hungry and

Do you see how Shane looks like a real person in that photo?

Incidentally, Shane is a friend of mine who created a social media plugin for Wordpress sites called [Social Essentials](http://wordpress.org/extend/plugins/social-essentials/) (<http://wordpress.org/extend/plugins/social-essentials/>). You might like to check it out to help you with that last section on social media presence.

The style of Shane's photo is very different from many of the photo's you'd get from a stock photo site:



More items by ollyi



Whichever photo you use, make sure you look like a real person and not a photographic model. People want to trust the photo and anything that looks too glitzy could be seen as fake.

My favorite place to include a photo

is in a resource box at the end of each piece of content. Here is an example:

There's a separate case in progress that may lead to the Microsoft patent being ruled invalid, but that doesn't appear to have any bearing on this case at the moment.

A final decision is expected in May.

Related Entries

- [Google In Privacy Flap With Germans Over New iOS Maps](#)
- [Google, Microsoft Cooperate To Invalidate Broad Online Mapping Patent](#)

Related Topics: [Google: Legal](#) | [Google: Maps & Local](#) | [Google: Outside US](#) | [Legal: Patents](#) | [Top News](#)



About The Author: [Matt McGee](#) is Editor-in-Chief of Search Engine Land. His news career includes time spent in TV, radio, and print journalism. His web career continues to include a small number of SEO and social media consulting clients, as well as regular speaking engagements at marketing events around the U.S. He blogs at [Small Business Search Marketing](#) and can be found on Twitter at [@MattMcGee](#) and/or on [Google Plus](#). You can [read Matt's disclosures](#) on his personal blog. [See more articles by Matt McGee](#)

Connect with the author via: [Email](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Google+](#) | [LinkedIn](#)



This author box is at the end of the article. Notice also how there are links to his social channels underneath.

If you don't have a photograph of the author or owner on your site, I'd recommend you add one.

About Us Page

Every website should have an About Us page and those that do, often find it's one of the most visited pages on the site. The About Us page is something that many of us skip over and ignore, but really, it does help build trust when people can find out more about you and

your site. It also gives you an opportunity to let your visitors understand you on a more human level. What drives you and the site? That can be very important on dry, technical sites. If you want more advice on how to create an “About Us” page, I recommend you read this webpage:

<http://socialmediatoday.com/bryan-eisenberg/1006526/about-us-page-social-world>

Bryan Eisenberg offers some great advice and even gets you started by answering some simple questions.

Comments enabled

We've already talked about comments earlier in this book. Make sure you have a comment system installed on your site so that visitors can leave feedback. Good feedback can only help build trust and social proof for you and your brand.

Does the site pretend to be a merchant?

This specifically refers to affiliate sites who send traffic to a merchant site in return for making commissions on any sale.

Some affiliate marketers don't make it clear that they are an

intermediary in the sales process, rather than the actual merchant.

e.g. the marketers may use links that say “Buy here” or “Buy now” without letting customers know they’ll be visiting a different site to complete the transaction. Think about it from a visitor point of view. Don’t you think it’s a bit of a shock to be on one site, click the buy button and end up on Amazon? Sure it is.

Is the Site/Webmaster a Recognized authority?

Being an authority basically means you are recognized as someone to

trust in your niche. It's something you can achieve relatively easily if you do one thing:

BE EVERYWHERE!

Part of the reason I look for a social presence from the websites I critique is that these help to build your authority. If someone finds your Facebook page (where they see your photo) in Google and likes it, then when they go to your website (and see your photo) they think, "hmmm, I've since this person before and they know what they're talking about." The same goes for any social media channel (as long

as you only share quality information to those channels).

One method I use to extend my reach into a niche is to use the same photograph (either me, or the persona for that site) on my site, my Facebook, Twitter & Google plus pages, PLUS, and this is a big one, as a [Gravatar](http://en.gravatar.com/) (<http://en.gravatar.com/>) setup on the main email address for the site. A Gravatar is just an image associated with an email address. Whenever you post on forums, or comment on blogs that are Gravatar-enabled, your photo is shown next to your post. People

will start to recognize you everywhere they go within that niche, because you are “Everywhere”. If the information you share through these channels is good, you can quickly build a reputation as someone to trust, an authority figure in your niche.

NOTE: Being a recognized authority is particularly important on medical sites. You need to know what you are talking about first and foremost, but secondly, people need to trust you. If you are a doctor, or have specific training related to your site, let your visitors know.

If your site is related to health or medicine, are you a recognized authority? If not, then that is something you might like to work on.

Other reasons people don't trust your website?

There are a few other reasons why people won't trust a website. I won't go into details on each of these reasons, I'll just list them. If they are applicable to your own website, then maybe you'll consider adding them.

- No Contact page.
- No privacy page.

- No business address or phone number clearly displayed.
- Doesn't seem to have been updated in years.
- No testimonials.
- Copyright notice on the website is out of date.
- Lack of “trust symbols”, e.g. Better Business Bureau, VeriSign, McAfee, TRUSTe, etc.
- Web pages with typos, spelling mistakes or grammatical errors.
- Lack of response from YOU when comments/questions that are

posted.

- Bad reviews.
- Poorly targeted emails, and difficulty unsubscribing from your newsletter.

Trust Checklist

- Does the site have a photo of the webmaster/author of the content?
- Does your site have an About Us page?
- Are Comments enabled?
- Does your site pretend to be a merchant?
- Is the author of your site a recognized authority in the niche/industry?
- Are you using a Gravatar setup on the email address you use for your site?

- Is your business address displayed on the site, preferably with a phone number?
- When was the last time your site was updated?
- If appropriate, are there testimonials and are they up to date?
- Is the copyright notice on your website the correct year?
- Do you display any trust symbols (if appropriate)
- Check all content for spellings and grammatical errors. Check your navigation systems for these errors

as well.

- Are there unanswered comments on your site?

Checklist Point #7 – Bounce Rates & Time on Site

There are two metrics that Google most certainly monitor as a way of determining visitor satisfaction levels. The first is the bounce rate and the second is the time they spend on your site.

According to Google:

“Bounce rate is the percentage of visits that go only one page before exiting a site.”

In other words, someone only views

one page on your site before exiting. Typically, high bounce rates are seen as bad. It may mean that people are not finding what they want on your site.

Time on site is the length of time a visitor stays on your site. A low time on site may indicate a problem with your content since people aren't sticking around to read it.

The problem is, Google Analytics does not accurately report bounce rates or time on site. Rather than explain, you can read this article on the topic which also contains a fix:

<http://briancray.com/posts/time->

[on-site-bounce-rate-get-the-real-numbers-in-google-analytics/](#)

I recommend you implement the change suggested in that article. You'll then have a better idea of your true bounce rates and visitor time on site.

Once the change is set up, leave your site to collect new data for a month or so before trying to analyze these metrics. Then, go through your analytics to find pages that have high bounce rates AND low time on the page.

A page with a high bounce rate but high time on the page is not a

problem. Look at these examples:

Avg. Time on Page	Entrances	Bounce Rate ↓
00:52:18	3	66.67%
00:00:00	2	50.00%
00:17:41	2	50.00%
00:00:00	4	50.00%

The top page in the list has a bounce rate of 66.67% (the site average is around 10% so 66.67% is high). Despite the high bounce

rate, I am happy with this page because there were three visitors, with an average time on that page of 52 minutes 18 seconds. This tells me that the visitor must have found the information useful and engaging.

Similarly, the other page I highlighted above has a bounce rate of 50% with two visits. However, the average time on that page was 17 minutes 41 seconds, so again, those two visitors must have found what they wanted (or at least found it interesting) before they hit their back button to go back to Google.

The two pages that would worry me are the examples that I haven't circled. Both pages had an average time on site of 0 minutes. I would go and look at these pages in more depth, and over a longer period of time, to see whether there may have been a glitch in the reporting during the above screenshot, or whether these pages historically have high bounce rates and a low time on the page.

What you need to do is identify pages with high bounce rate AND low time on the page and see if you can work out why visitors are not satisfied with what they see. If the

content is good, maybe it's just not a good match for the search phrase they used to find you in Google. Maybe something else is pushing them away from your site? You need to look for ways to increase the visitor time on these pages (and hopefully decrease bounce rate).

Bounce Rate & Time on Site Checklist

I recommend you install the updated code here (which will give you a more accurate measurement of these parameters):

<http://briancray.com/posts/time-on-site-bounce-rate-get-the-real-numbers-in-google-analytics/>

Once installed and allowed to run for a few weeks, check your bounce rate and time on site at Google Analytics.

- Are your average bounce rates high?

- Are visitors spending a long or short time on your site?
- Look for specific pages where bounce rate is high AND time on site is low. Try to work out why these pages are suffering and fix them.

Checklist Point #8 – Legal pages

There are certain pages on a website that I call “legal” pages. These are things like:

- Privacy
- Disclaimers (including any medical or earnings disclaimers).
- Contact Us
- Terms
- About Us (we talked about this earlier in terms of visitor trust).
- Any other documents that should be displayed on your site. These

might include things like cookie policy, anti-spam policy, outbound link disclaimer and so on.

Does your website include all of the necessary documents?

This article will help you decide which legal documents you need:

<http://www.seqlegal.com/blog/what-legal-documents-do-i-need-my-new-website>

They also offer webmasters free “legal” documents here:

<http://www.seqlegal.com/free-legal-documents>

There are “credits” written into these documents that need to be left in place, but for a small fee (currently £3.50), you can get that credit removed.

Legal Pages Checklist

Not all of these pages are necessary for all types of website, so check which pages your site needs and add them if they are missing.

- Do you have a privacy page?
- Do you have a disclaimer page?
- Do you have a terms page?
- Do you have a contact page?
- Do you have an about us page?
- Do you have a medical disclaimer page?
- Do you have an email policy page?

- Do you have an outbound link policy page?

Checklist Point #9 – Content Quality

This is a huge component of modern SEO.

If your content is bad, then getting everything else right won't fix the site.

You need to have a website that you are proud of. More than that, you need to have a website that you would be proud to show anyone at Google. Content is what separates an average site from a great site and the best way to understand what Google is looking for is to ask yourself:

“Could the content appear in a magazine?”

This question was actually taken from the Google blog when discussing quality content and it's what you should be aiming for.

Obviously ecommerce sites have a lot of pages that wouldn't satisfy this question, but it's a great question to ask on any article-based content.

Here is another question that can apply to most types of content:

“Is your content the type of

content that people will want to bookmark, or share socially?”

NOTE: Google can certainly detect bookmarks and social shares, so are able to use them as indicators if it wants to.

The biggest problem that I have found concerning content quality is that webmasters are not very impartial when judging their own. If you can, it's always better to get someone else to evaluate your content.

Besides the quality of your content,

there are a number of things to look out for as you assess the content on your website. Here is a checklist (in no particular order):

- **Has the content been copied and published by other websites?**

This is a common problem, though setting up Google Authorship for your site should keep your content safer moving forward. To check whether your content has been stolen, you could use a site like [Copyscape](http://www.copyscape.com) (<http://www.copyscape.com>). Alternatively, grab a sentence or

two from your web page and search for it at Google inside quotes. Google will then tell you whether that text is found on any other website(s). Here is an example of what it looks like when you do this type of search and other sites have copied your content:

"The PR1000 is the cost effective Bowflex gym that gets the job done. It folds up



Web Images Maps Shopping More ▾ Search tools

9 results (0.43 seconds)

210 (and any subsequent words) was ignored because we limit queries to 32 words.

Flaman Fitness Bowflex PR1000 - Top Sellers

www.flamanfitness.com > Top Sellers > Bowflex PR1000

The PR1000 is the cost effective Bowflex gym that gets the job done. It folds up nicely for compact storage and cuts the frills and fluffs to save you money.

3 - Cranbrook - Kijiji

cranbrook.kijiji.ca > ... > buy and sell > sporting goods, exercise

The PR1000 is the cost effective Bowflex gym that gets the job done. It folds up nicely for compact storage and cuts the frills and fluffs to save you money.

2 - Kijiji British Columbia

bc.kijiji.ca/f-gym-bench-Classifieds-...

The PR1000 is the cost effective Bowflex gym that gets the job done. It folds up nicely for compact storage and cuts the frills and fluffs to save you money.

See how there are 9 results in Google, each with the identical text.

If other sites have stolen your content and used it on their own sites, I'd recommend setting up Google authorship immediately, if you haven't already. Next, contact those other sites and ask them to take the content down as it's breaching your copyright. Usually the threat of getting their hosting company involved is enough for most people to remove your stuff. Here is an article written by Jim Edwards that addresses the problem of copyright infringement:

<http://ezseonews.com/general/intel-copyright-infringement-and-how-to-handle-it/>

The article is a little old, but it still has great advice.

If you prefer, you can hire services to deal with content thieves.

<http://www.dmca.com> is one, although I've never used them so cannot vouch for their service.

• **Product reviews unbiased?**

If you have product reviews on your site, are they unbiased, or positive, positive and more hyped up positives? You need to share both

sides of the story and ALL products have some things that are not perfect.

- **More than just a rehash of the merchant site content?**

On the topic of reviews, is the content just a rehash of what you can find on the merchant site or perhaps Amazon? Your reviews need to be PERSONAL. Readers must know that you have personally tried the product and therefore your review must contain insights not seen on ANY other website. Write your review from personal experience.

• **Affiliate link disclaimer?**

If your site is an affiliate site, do you have an affiliate link disclaimer? Do people on your site know you are not the merchant?

This all comes back to the issue of trust. I realize that an affiliate link disclaimer can hurt conversion rates, so try to find a way to tell your visitors in such a way that they don't mind you being an affiliate. After all, you are helping them with their buying decision, aren't you?

In my experience, if someone reads an impartial review that was obviously written by someone that

had used the product, they don't mind clicking a link that they know is an affiliate link. If they read a hyped up sales pitch and then find out your link is an affiliate link, good luck with that.

- **Keyword Stuffing**

Keyword stuffing is a really bad SEO crime. In the past, webmaster knew that adding keywords to their content would make it rank better for those keywords, and articles often became stuffed with keyword phrases. Today, that kind of thing will get your site penalized or even booted out of Google.

As you read your content, ask yourself if it was written for a human or a search engine. If the latter, then re-write it or scrap it altogether.

A quick test for stuffing is to read your content carefully (or get a friend to read it). Can you pick out phrases you think the article was designed to rank for because of the way it repeats a phrase, or slight grammatical errors that were left in just so a particular phrase could be inserted?

All keyword stuffed content **MUST** be removed. Whether that means

re-writing it or deleting it, that's your choice.

My advice when you are writing content is **WRITE NATURALLY!**

If you hear anyone talking about keyword densities, ignore them. The correct density for any word or phrase on a page is the density that it ends up as when written naturally. It might be 2%, it might be 1%, and it might even be 0.1% or 0%. Bear that in mind. As you read your content, try to see if any word or phrase seems to be used more than might be natural.

• **Fluff Rating**

Fluff rating is a term I use with my students.

Looking at the

<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/f>

fluff is defined as:

Something of little substance or consequence, especially:

a. Light or superficial entertainment: The movie was just another bit of fluff from Hollywood.

b. Inflated or padded material: The report was mostly fluff, with little

new information.

Part (b) is exactly what I am referring to - an article that goes on and on but doesn't really say anything.

Webmasters have typically tried to increase the length of their content because they think that longer content ranks better. This means that an article that could be covered in just 400 words in a quality article is stretched out to 600 words - 200 of which are fluff, and only there to raise the word count.

Fluffy content is often found on

websites that outsource their content. The webmaster asks the writer for a certain word count (since articles are bought on a per word basis), so may say they want a 600 word article, irrespective of whether the topic NEEDS 600 words. The writer then struggles to find 600 words worth of content, so pads it out with fluff.

An article that says very little despite the word count, has a high fluff rating and should be deleted or re-written to provide quality information on that topic.

- **Information duplicated on**

multiple articles

Does information on one page of your site appear on other pages as well? In other words, is there overlap between the content on the various pages of your site? If so, you need to remove it. If two or more articles are closely related enough to talk about the same information, consider merging those articles into one big article.

The pages on a website should all contain different information and there should be a bare minimum of content overlap.

• Check the Sitemap

A sitemap is a great way to check your content. As you look through the sitemap, are there instances where two pages have very similar filenames, or titles? If so, are those two pages covering the same information and could therefore be combined into a single quality article?

A common strategy for building a website is to carry out keyword research and then write content around the keywords that had high demand, low competition. One problem with this approach is that two or more phrases that basically mean the same thing often became

the basis for separate articles.

A site might have separate articles based on each of these phrases:

- Best vacuum
- Best vacuum cleaner
- Which is the best vacuum

Can you see how those three phrases are saying the same thing? So how can there be three separate articles for these phrases?

Here is an example I found on one website:

<http://www.example.com/room-addition/>

<http://www.example.com/room-additions/>

This website has an article on “room addition” and another on “room additions”. Really?

Here is another example:

Baby Shower Invitation Idea

Here is a fun baby shower invitation idea to help on occasion.

Baby Shower Invitation

A great baby shower invitation for the internet age.

Baby Shower Invite

Since the baby shower invite is the grand introduction with it.

Do those three articles on baby shower invitations really have useful, unique content without fluff? If I was critiquing this site, this would be the kind of thing I would be looking for on the sitemap as clues of content problems.

What about these two pages found on the same site:

many companies now offer individual custom baby shower invitations.

Baby Shower Invitations For Twins

Double the blessing and a baby shower invitations for twins should convey the excitement.

Twin Baby Shower Invitation

A twin baby shower invitation has the added feat of acknowledging more than one gender.

The reason webmasters do this is not for the benefit of the visitor. It's for the benefit of the search engine. They hope that each page will rank well for its variation of the phrase, and therefore bring a lot more traffic to the site than just one article optimized for one of the

phrases.

Today, this type of keyword focused content will get your site into trouble, so check through your sitemap to identify possible problems. You can combine similar articles into one, but make sure you cut the fluff and make these articles the best they can be.

• **Titles & Headlines**

The <title> tag is an important part of a webpage as it tells the visitor what the page is about (the title is often used in Google as the anchor text to the page). The headline on the page is also important for

similar reasons. Google has traditionally used keywords in the title and headlines to help rank a page, so yes, you guessed it, webmasters have abused these areas.

1. Your titles should be written for HUMANS, not search engines.
2. Your headlines should be written for HUMANS, not search engines (are you seeing a pattern here?).
3. Your title and headline should not be the same on any particular page.
4. No two pages should share

the same title.

In the past, one of the best ways to rank a page for a particular phrase was to use the exact phrase for the title and the opening headline. Of course, the phrase would be sprinkled down the page as well, but the title and headline were strong ranking factors. Today, this won't work (at least for the long-term), so don't use a single keyword phrase as either the title or headline, or both. Titles and headlines should be crafted to draw the reader in. They can include topic-related phrases, but don't stuff and above all, **write them for**

humans.

While we are on the topic of page titles, make sure that no two pages on your site share the same title. This also goes for Meta descriptions if you use them. No two pages should contain the same Meta description, and that includes a “template” description that just substitutes a word or phrase each time it’s used (as is typical on doorway pages).

• Written for the Search Engine or the visitor?

We’ve touched on this several times already, but it is so important that I

am including it as a separate bullet point. Was the content written for a human or for the search engines? If the latter, or you are not sure, then that piece of content needs some work.

- **Hidden Text on the page?**

One way that webmasters have tried to fool the search engines is with hidden text that contains keyword phrases. Hidden text can be achieved a few different ways, but perhaps the simplest is white text on a white background.

To check for hidden text, open the webpage in a browser and click on it

somewhere. Now press CTRL+A (command + A on a Mac computer) to select all. Everything on the page will become selected, including anything that may be hidden.

Check to make sure that all of text on the page is visible. Any hidden text that is found should be removed immediately.

- **Visible blocks of text that are only there for the search engines.**

An example of this is when a web page lists “incoming search terms”, like this one:

Incoming search terms:

- food presentation ideas
- food presentation
- fruit decoration images
- funny food presentation
- fruit art with kids
- fruits foods pictures
- garnishing with vegetables
- picture of joke flower
- food wallpaper
- funny food garnish

What is the point of that list?

Does it in any way help the visitor?

Lists like this serve one purpose only – to add keywords to the page to try to make it rank better in

Google. Therefore, according to Google, it is spam.

Incoming search term lists are not the only type of block you'll find on web pages. On travel sites, I've often seen long lists of towns or cities. They are often not hyperlinked to relevant sections of the site, so only serve to add keywords to a page.

Any block of text on your page that is only there to increase keywords on the page needs to be removed.

• Over-optimization of the page as a whole.

Google has gone out of its way to stop webmasters over-optimizing their sites because SEO is spoiling their otherwise great search results by showing pages that don't deserve to be at the top on merit.

While a lot of the over-optimization relates to backlinks to a website (and we'll cover that later), it also applies to what is on the website itself.

Take a look at the pages on your site and see whether a single phrase is used more than you might expect, making it clear that this phrase was an intended target. If so, also check

to see whether:

- Links to that page are using that phrase as anchor text?
- Is that phrase also in key areas of your web page, like title, H1 header, opening paragraph, ALT tag, image title tags, bolded, italic etc.

As a general rule, SEO should be “invisible”.

I don't mean that there is none. Just that what there is should be discrete and not obvious and in-your-face.

There are Wordpress plugins available that are designed to help

check your on-page SEO. These are keyword driven checks and I think they are a bad idea. Content should not be keyword driven, it should be visitor driven.

If you have been using an SEO plugin that checks for placement of keywords in an article, I'd recommend using it to de-optimize your articles (removing phrases from places they really don't need to be) and once done, delete the plugin.

- **Is your content driven by keywords, or by what the visitors want?**

This is always a good check to make. Ask yourself whether the content you write on your site is driven by keyword research, or driven by what your visitors want.

I'm not saying you cannot use keywords in your content, of course you can. My point is, instead of thinking you have to write an article about the phrase "tablet vs laptop":

Keyword	Approximate CPC (Search)
 tablet vs laptop ▼	€4.84

.. just because it commands a high cost per click, consider writing an

article on “Advantages and disadvantages of using a tablet instead of a laptop”.

OK, it could be the same article right? However, thinking about your content in terms of the visitor instead of your keyword research tool should ensure your content has a fighting chance of pleasing Google. Of course, you could include the phrase “tablet vs. laptop” in your article if you wanted (and it made sense to do so). I’m just suggesting a different approach to choosing the topics you write about. Think what article the visitor wants to see first, then go

and see which keywords are relevant to the article.

- **Does your content reflect search/visitor intent?**

Does your web page offer a good match for the search terms it's found for?

In other words, if you rank #1 in Google for “natural pain killers”, but your web page only mention one in passing while discussing an array of pharmaceutical pain killers, is the visitor going to be happy with your page? I doubt it. For starters, they wanted pain killers plural and secondly they wanted natural pain

killers and your page is mostly about pharmaceutical pain killers.

As we've seen, Google have ways of measuring how happy visitors are with your page, like bounce rate, time on site, social signals, visitor interaction etc.

Therefore it's important you don't try to rank for phrases that are a poor match for your content.

• Does your page provide something not already in the top 10?

Does your content provide something that is not already

available in the top 10 of Google? If not, why should it replace one of those pages in the top 10?

So what type of things can you add to your web page to make it stand out from the rest? What can you include that the other top 10 pages don't have?

Things like:

- Personal stories
- Your own opinion
- Your own unique thoughts, ideas etc.
- Images or photographs that work

with the topic of your page.

- Visitor interaction – maybe a poll asking for visitor opinion. A poll coupled with an active comments section would create a great resource, especially if the topic of your page was a little controversial.

Content Quality Checklist

Look at every page on your website. The following checklist should be applied to your content.

- If the page is essentially an article, could it appear in a magazine?
- Is this the type of content that people would want to bookmark?
- Would people like to share this content with their friends and followers?
- Check a sentence or two in Google to see if your content has been used (illegally or otherwise) on other

websites. If it has, you need to implement Google authorship immediately and hope Google gives you authorship of your content. Also, contact any webmaster that is illegally displaying your content and ask them to remove it (see the article I linked to in this section of the book on copyright infringement).

- If it's a product review, is it unbiased? Does it tell the good, the bad and the ugly? Does your review add information, opinion and views that are not found on the manufacturer's website, or any other website for that matter?

- If you use affiliate links, do your visitors know they are affiliate links? They should!
- Read each piece of content and look for keyword stuffing. Does it read naturally for a human, or was it written for a search engine? If any word or phrase appears more often than might be expected in a naturally written piece of content, then re-write it.
- How much fluff is in your article? Try to make sure your content does not contain fluff and filler. Get rid of any sentences that are only there to increase word count. If you have

to remove a lot of fluff, perhaps the article could benefit from a total rewrite.

- Do any two (or more) articles overlap in terms of what they talk about? Is the same information mentioned on more than one page of the site? If so, get rid of this duplication.
- Check your sitemap for possible problems. Are there any entries with similar filenames or titles that may indicate the articles cover the same/similar material? Are there any entries that suggest content was written around keywords rather

than around the interests of the visitor? If so, get rid (or re-write) all content that was not written specifically for the visitors.

- Check all of your page titles and headlines to make sure that you don't use the same title and headline on any given piece of content. Headlines and titles should work together to entice the visitor. They should be written for the visitor and not for the search engines.
- Make sure you don't use the same title on more than one page.
- Check Meta descriptions if you

use them. These should not be keyword stuffed, and again, should be written for the visitor to tell them what the content is about.

- Make sure you don't use the same Meta description (or "templated" description) on more than one page.
- Check each page for hidden text and remove any that you find.
- Are there any visible blocks of text on your pages that are only there for the search engines? If so, get rid of them.
- SEO should be "invisible". Is it on your pages/site?

- Is your content driven by keywords or by what the visitor wants? Check... If it's the former, you need to clean up the content.
- Check to see what keywords your pages are being found for. Does your page reflect the searchers intent for these keywords?
- Does your page provide something not found on any other web page?

Checklist Point #10 – Inbound Link Profiles

Getting links back to your website has always been one of the main jobs for any webmaster. Although Google didn't like it, they did tolerate the behavior, at least until they rolled out their Penguin.

Overnight, established websites dropped from the rankings. Pages that had been holding the top slot for years suddenly disappeared.

Google had done something that no-one believed they ever would. They started to enforce their guidelines relating to “link

schemes”.

“Any links intended to manipulate a site's ranking in Google search results may be **considered part of a link scheme**. This includes any behavior that manipulates links to your site, or outgoing links from your site. Manipulating these links may affect the quality of our search results, and as such **is a violation of Google's Webmaster Guidelines**.”

<http://support.google.com/webmasthl=en&answer=66356>

Any site that is seen to be participating in link schemes is in danger of ranking loss. However, even worse than that, any site that HAD participated in link schemes is also in danger. That means if you have a site that you are now running “by the book”, but you had been involved in some dodgy link schemes in the past, your rankings could be seriously affected.

Google are looking for unnatural links. That is, links that have clearly been built by the webmaster, usually though not always on a large scale, and often of low quality.

To put it bluntly, **Google don't want you to build links to your own website**, at least not links whose sole purpose is to improve your rankings. As you look through your own backlink profile, it's important to be able to identify links that may be causing your site a problem and deal with them. These include any links that Google consider part of a "link scheme".

Now, before I go through the kinds of links that will hurt your site, let me be clear about one thing. If your site received a penalty because of its backlinks, cleaning up those backlinks **WILL NOT** return your

site to the same “pre-penalty” rankings. The reason is that your pre-penalty rankings were achieved WITH these spammy links, while they were still being counted by Google. These spammy links were helping your pages rank. Removing them means your pages don’t have the same inbound links, therefore won’t rank as high. Therefore, while cleaning up your links is vital to your long term success, don’t expect that cleaning them up will put your old rankings back. For that, you’ll need to build new, stronger, authority links to your site to replace the ones you’ve

deleted/removed.

OK, it's important to know what constitutes a bad link. Before we look at that though, it's probably better if I tell you how to find the links that point to your site.

Finding Backlinks to your Website

There are several tools you can use, some free, some paid. However, the one you should all be using as part of your backlink search is Google Webmaster Tools (which is free).

Google Webmaster Tools

[Google webmaster tools](#)

(<https://www.google.com/webmaster>

[hl=en](#))

If you don't have an account with Google Webmaster Tools, you should get one. If Google wants to notify you of problems with your site (spiderability, spyware detected, links warnings, etc), they'll do it through Google Webmaster Tools (GWT).

GWT will show you the links that Google know about.

Just go to the **Traffic** section of the sidebar, and then select **Links to your site**:

[Dashboard](#)[Messages \(6\)](#)[Configuration](#)[Health](#)[Traffic](#)[Search Queries](#)[Links to Your Site](#)[Internal Links](#)[Optimization](#)[Labs](#)[Overview](#) > [All domains](#)

Top 618 domains that have links to pages on your site

[Download this table](#)[Download more sample links](#)[Download latest links](#)Show **25 rows** 1-25 of 618 < >

Domains	Links +	Linked pages
affiliate-minder.com	2,217	29
limesurvey.org	1,160	1
neilshearing.com	687	9
blogspot.com	391	76
jayde.com	165	1
youtube.com	144	3

There is a link at the top of the table allowing you to download all of the links in the table. You'll get data on how many times a domain links to

your site, and how many pages on your site it links to.

You can inspect the backlinks from any of these domains by clicking the hyperlink in the **Domains** column.

For example, in the list of domains pointing at my site, I didn't recognize a domain called **greenscapemedia.com**. I clicked the hyperlink to see where on my site it is linking to:

Pages linked from greenscapemedia.com	Total links 58	Total linked pages 11
---	--------------------------	---------------------------------

Download this table

Download more sample links

Download latest links

Show 25 rows 1-11 of 11 < >

Your pages

Links ▲

/review/looking-at-squidoo-for-the-christmas-shopping-season/	11
/internet-marketing-tips/ezseo-newsletter-341/	10
/review/how-to-get-more-twitter-followers/	9
/google-updates/are-you-ready-for-google-panda-2-0/	5
/technical-stuff/how-to-upload-images-on-your-pc-to-instagram/	4

This page tells me that greenscapemedia.com has a total of 58 links to my site.

The table lists my pages that the domain links to, and how many links point to each of these pages.

I can see that greenscapemedia.com links to 11 of my pages in total (the table tells me it's showing 1-11 of 11 pages).

I can also see that this domain has 11 links pointing at the top URL, 10 pointing to the next, 9 to the next and so on (the links column on the right).

I can view the URLs on greenscapemedia.com that link to any of my pages by clicking the URL hyperlink (arrow in the screenshot) for my page. If I check the links pointing to my “Squidoo for Christmas Shopping” post, I can see:

Download this table

Download more sample links












Download latest links

Show 25 rows ▾

1-11 of 11



Links

-  <http://greenscapemedia.com/looking-at-squidoo-for-the-christmas-shopping-season/>
-  <http://greenscapemedia.com/tag/excellent-course/>
-  <http://greenscapemedia.com/tag/forthcoming/>
-  <http://greenscapemedia.com/tag/leverage-the-power/>
-  <http://greenscapemedia.com/tag/leverage-the/>
-  <http://greenscapemedia.com/tag/power/>
-  <http://greenscapemedia.com/tag/search-for/>
-  <http://greenscapemedia.com/tag/squidoo/>
-  <http://greenscapemedia.com/tag/tumbled-upon/>
-  <http://greenscapemedia.com/tag/the-forthcoming/>
-  <http://greenscapemedia.com/tag/you-how/>

In this case, it looks like one “article” on greenscapemedia.com is linking to my page and the other 10 links are on tag pages. I’d guess that those tag pages are the various tags this webmaster used when tagging his main article. I can also see that this webmaster stole my title (and therefore probably part of my article).

I can click these hyperlinks to open these pages in my web browser. This allows me to view the links to my site.

The URL at the top of this list is basically a spam page and one that I

would try to get removed if my site had been penalized for dodgy backlinks.

I should now go back and check the links this site is pointing at the 10 other pages on my site.

What I love about GWT is that you get to see the link data that Google has for your website. I'm sure they probably don't show you everything, but it really is a great start to see their backlink data. GWT is always my first stop to find problem backlinks.

SEO Spyglass

SEO Spyglass is a commercial tool,

though there is a free version to get you started. The free version won't let you save your data and there may be other limitations, but it can find links that aren't reported in GWT.

[SEO Spyglass \(http://www.link-assistant.com/seo-spyglass/\)](http://www.link-assistant.com/seo-spyglass/)

Essentially, with SEO Spyglass, you type in the URL of your site and the software does the rest. It goes off to numerous sources to find backlinks to your website.

SEO Spyglass gives you masses of information about the links to your site. Things like:

- The URL that links to your site,
- Which page it links to,
- The anchor text,
- Whether the link it dofollow or nofollow,
- IP address,
- Domain age,
- How many links per page
- Lots, lots more.

SEO Spyglass is a great tool for finding links to your site.

Ahrefs

This site is a popular one, for good reason. It does an excellent job of finding links to your website. The free version is very limited, so to get the best out of this site, you need a paid subscription.

[Ahrefs](http://ahrefs.com/) (<http://ahrefs.com/>)

Majestic SEO

Majestic SEO has a really useful free option and more comprehensive paid plans.

[Majestic SEO](http://www.majesticseo.com/)
(<http://www.majesticseo.com/>)

To see what is included for free, see this page:

<http://blog.majesticseo.com/general/majesticseo-gives-you-for-free/>

I'd recommend you sign up for a free account. Once you have done that, you can create a free Report for your domain. This involves uploading a text file to your server to prove the domain is yours. Once confirmed, Majestic SEO starts to analyze links to your domain. You'll then find the report in your reports screen. See the post above for a good introduction to using Majestic SEO. It includes an excellent video "webinar".

OK, you know how to find the links,

how do you evaluate them?

Link Schemes

Remember this quote from earlier?

“Any links intended to manipulate a site's ranking in Google search results may be considered part of a link scheme. This includes any behavior that manipulates links to your site, or outgoing links from your site.

Manipulating these links may affect the quality of our search results, and as such is a violation of Google's Webmaster Guidelines.”

Link schemes include “any links intended to manipulate a site’s ranking in Google search results”.

Here are the schemes that can get you into trouble. You should check your site to make sure you are not engaging in these activities:

- **Buying or selling links that pass Page Rank.** If your site has bought links, or sells links, then Google will probably come after you. Please note that when I say “buying”, I don’t necessarily mean that money changes hands. You

could pay for a backlink in any number of ways – goods, services, free products, etc. If a webmaster has taken any kind of “reward” to host your links, then they are considered part of a link scheme. This even includes links found in product reviews, where you have given the webmaster a free copy of your product in exchange for the review and backlink.

- **Partner Pages.** These were all the rage 10 years ago. You put up a partner page on your site and link to other websites in return for a link back. These were also commonly called a resource page.

Get rid of any links on a resource/partner page that are reciprocated (i.e., those sites link back to yours).

• **Linking to undesirable neighborhoods.** If you link to any other site on the web, you are responsible for that link. Google sees links as votes for another website, so if you link to spammy websites, or even websites unrelated to your content, you could be penalized for it.

One of the places that webmasters unknowingly link to these bad neighborhoods is in the comments

section of their website. When people leave comments, they often leave their URL, which could end up as an active link in the comments section on your website. Even if the link looks good now, there is nothing to stop the author of that comment redirecting it later to a porn site, or other undesirable website that you would not want to be associated with. Because of this, I'd recommend you make comment links to nofollow. At least that way you are telling Google that you don't necessarily endorse that link.

- **Automated backlinks.**

Backlinks built in an automated

fashion using software and/or spun content will cause you problems. Not only are the backlinks generated by these tools low quality, they are also fairly easy for search engines to identify. If you have backlinks built this way, try your best to remove them.

- **Links in articles that you publish on other websites, where the anchor text is clearly trying to manipulate the rank of your web page.**

Here is an example that Google uses within their guidelines:

Links that are inserted into articles with little coherence, for example:
most people sleep at night. you can buy [cheap blankets](#) at shops. a blanket keeps you warm at night. you can also buy a wholesale heater. It produces more warmth and you can just turn it off in summer when you are going on [france vacation](#).

See how the anchor texts within the body of this article are keyword phrases? These are clearly an attempt to manipulate rankings and Google will get you for it.

If you write articles for other sites (e.g. guest blogs), I'd recommend that you use a resource box at the end of the article, and link to your homepage using either the site name, or site URL as the anchor

text. If you want to include a link within the body of the article, I'd suggest using either the URL of the page you are linking to, or its title/headline as the anchor text. These are far more natural than keyword-focused anchor text.

- **Low quality links in general, but Google specifically mentions low-quality directory and bookmark sites.**

I know there are a lot of tempting backlinking gigs on fivver.com, but don't use them. Once you have been submitted to hundreds of low quality directories or bookmark

services, you won't be able to get those links taken down, so the damage is permanent.

Other types of low quality links include any type of “profile link” that is clearly only being used for the backlink.

Forum signature links are also bad for your rankings. If you are a member of a forum and you want to include a link to your site in your signature, use your site name or URL as the anchor text. Using a keyword phrase is clearly only trying to get your page to rank better for that keyword phrase.

- **Theme & Widget backlinks.**

In recent years, another link-building “loophole” was to create a template, or maybe a Wordpress widget/plugin, that would be given away for free. Anyone using the theme or plugin would have a link inserted into their homepage (usually in the footer), back to the author’s website. Google clamped down on this during 2012 and penalized a lot of websites.

- **Site-wide links.** We’ve talked about this earlier in the book. Any links that appears on all pages of your site are called site-wide links. An example would be a blogroll on a

Wordpress site that usually lists “favorite blogs” in the sidebar. However, site-wide links have been abused by people buying them on other sites, so Google have hit them hard.

I know we all have navigation on our sites and some items do get placed on every page of the site. However, pay particular attention to any site-wide links that use a keyword phrase as the anchor text. These are the ones that are more likely to get you into trouble. You know the ones – a “make money online” or “buy cheap contact lenses” link in the footer of all

pages on your site. All site-wide links with keyword rich anchor text need to be looked at, and changed.

As you can see, link building has just become a lot more difficult. If you listen to Google, they'll just tell you to write great content and the links will come naturally. It's really not that simple because webmasters are not so generous about linking out to other websites. We therefore do need to find ways to get backlinks that at least appear to be more natural. My companion book "SEO 2013 & Beyond" has ideas for these (see appendix at the back for details of my other books).

In terms of critiquing/cleaning up your backlink profile, your job is to try to identify and then clean up, ALL poor quality links pointing to your site. Build new, better quality links to replace them.

Make a list of all Bad Links to your site

You really do need to make a list of all bad links pointing to your site and then contact each webmaster in turn to ask them to remove the link. Successful or not (and in most cases it won't be), document every attempt you make. When you have the data to show you have tried to

clean up your backlinks, you can then approach Google using their [Disavow tool](https://www.google.com/webmaster/tools/disavow-links-main?pli=1) (<https://www.google.com/webmaster/tools/disavow-links-main?pli=1>).

The disavow tool tells Google that you want these links ignored AND that you have tried to clean them up. There are no guarantees with the disavow tool, but it is worth a go when you consider your final option - moving your site to a new domain and beginning the backlink process from scratch.

There is a good article here that describes one person's positive

results using the disavow tool:

<http://www.seomoz.org/ugc/google-disavow-tool-works-penalty-removal>

Other Specific thing to look out for in your backlink profile

1. **Diverse IPs** – Is there a good spread of IP addresses for the pages that link to your website? A lot of links from very similar IP addresses may indicate a blog network, or links from self-owned domains.
2. **Lots of links from the same domain** could indicate

site-wide links that may need to be removed. If the site is authority and you get traffic from that site, then you might want to leave those links intact. If they are site-wide on low quality domains, then get them removed.

3. **Too many keyword phrase anchor texts.**


Google Penguin is looking at the anchor text of inbound links. If you have a lot of links with the exact same anchor text, then is that natural? If it is the name of your site, then yes. If it is commercial


keyword phrases that you want your site to rank for, then no. In 2012, anchor text links became a lot less important. My advice is to water these down significantly and aim for links designed to increase your authority, i.e., using your domain name, brand name or domain URL as the anchor text.


4. **Too many backlinks on low quality directories.** We mentioned this earlier.
5. **Backlinks from spun content.** This is a huge problem if you ever used

automated backlink software to create backlinks using spun content. Spun content is one of the deadly sins of SEO and Google are on the warpath. They are getting better and better at detecting it, so if you find backlinks in spun content, do your best to get them taken down. Sometimes this type of backlink is easy to spot by looking at the titles of the pages containing the backlinks. Here is an example of backlinks I found in GWT for one site that clearly used spun content for backlinks:

Links

 <http://goarticles.com/article/Is-Serrapeptase-The-solution-to-Dupuytren-s-Disease/>

 <http://goarticles.com/article/Serrapeptase-A-Feasible-Therapy-For-Numerous-Sclerosis/>

 <http://goarticles.com/article/Serrapeptase-A-potential-Strategy-to-Multiple-Sclerosis/>

 <http://goarticles.com/article/Utilizing-Serrapeptase-to-alleviate-Bodily-Discomfort/>

This type of backlink is VERY bad for your site. Fortunately, these links were on the GoArticles website. I contacted them about the spammy nature of these articles and they took them down.

Inbound Link Profile Checklist

Check the links pointing to your site using the tools mentioned in this book. If you only use one, I'd recommend GWT.

Have you participated in link schemes? This includes:

- Buying or selling links to pass Page Rank? Get rid of paid links.
- Do you have a partner / resources page on your site containing reciprocal links? Remove all links that are reciprocated.
- Are you linking (knowingly or

unknowingly perhaps via the comments system) to bad neighborhoods? Get these links removed

- Do you have backlinks created by automated tools? Try to get these taken down.
- Are backlinks coming in from content that was spun? Try to get these taken down.
- Are the backlinks found in the body of articles linking to your site using keyword rich anchor text? If so, I'd recommend you change these keyword links and use your domain name, brand name, domain

URL or title/headline of the article as the link text.

- Are there low quality directory or bookmarking links? These will cause you trouble and if you cannot remove them, they should be added to your list of links to disavow if you eventually have to do that.
- Are there any backlinks to your site from themes or widgets that you have created? If so, you need to deactivate those links.
- Are there any links on your website that link out to other websites from themes or widgets you may be using? If so, remove

them.

- Are there site-wide links pointing to your site from low quality websites? If so, they need to be removed. Site-wide links from high quality websites are probably OK, and I wouldn't remove those except as a last resort.
- Are your links from a diverse set of IP addresses? If not, get more links on different IP addresses.
- Do you have links from other websites you own? Are those links purely to help your pages rank better or is there a good reason to cross-link. If there is no good

reason to cross-link the sites, remove those links.

- Are there lots of link from the same domain? If the domain is low quality, get them removed.
- Is there a high percentage of inbound links using keywords phrases you are targeting as anchor text? If so, I'd advise you to water these down. Include more links that use the domain/brand name, URL or title/headline of the content you are linking to.

Real-World Examples of Bad SEO

Modern SEO is not just about keeping the search engines happy, it's first and foremost about keeping your visitors happy, as their time on site, bounce rate and social interaction with your site are increasingly important signals that the search engines use to help decide how good your content is.

In this section, I want to highlight some examples of bad SEO that I found while critiquing a number of websites.

An example of Bad Navigation

This was the sidebar on the website:

Search

Pages

- [Depression Treatment Centers](#)
- [How to Deal With Depression](#)
- [Help for Depression](#)
- [How to Treat Depression](#)
- [Treatments for Depression](#)
- [Privacy Policy](#)
- [Contact](#)
- [Medical Disclaimer](#)

Archives

- [September 2011](#)
- [August 2011](#)
- [July 2011](#)
- [June 2011](#)
- [May 2011](#)
- [April 2011](#)
- [March 2011](#)
- [February 2011](#)
- [January 2011](#)
- [December 2010](#)
- [April 2010](#)

Categories

- [Help for Depression Tips and Strategies](#) (12)
- [Steps for How to Deal With Depression](#) (8)
- [Strategies for How To Treat Depression](#) (1)
- [Suffering From Depression Info](#) (8)
- [Treatments for Depression Discussion](#) (9)
- [Uncategorized](#) (2)

There are 4 sections to this navigation bar and I should also mention that this was a Wordpress site.

The first is the search box, which is a good thing, though this was the default Wordpress search box which isn't much use.

Under that is a section labeled “**Pages**”. Pages in Wordpress are one of two forms of content, the other being “Posts”. This site seems to be mixing pages and posts in a way that makes me think the webmaster had no clear plan for the structure of the site. Either that, or

the site was built initially with pages, but the webmaster wanted to add more content at a later date and decided upon posts.

My own advice is to restrict the use of Pages in Wordpress to the “legal pages” and use posts for all content written for the visitor. There are of course some exceptions, but this is a good general rule that allows you to make use of the excellent structural organization built into Wordpress itself.

The next section of the navigation bar is an “**Archives**” section.

What is the purpose of this?

Does it help the visitor?

If this site was news based, where someone might like to check a news story from last month, then the archives section would be worth considering. However, this site isn't and is in fact fairly static with little or no new content being added. Therefore the archive section just clutters an already cluttered navigation system.

The final section of the navigation menu is the “**Categories**” section. This is actually a useful section for visitors because they'll be able to find relevant POSTS. Note I put

“posts” in capital letters, because PAGES won’t be included in the category system (which only shows posts). Therefore the PAGES listed in the top section of the navigation menu won’t be found through this category menu at the bottom.

You can see how the navigation system on this site is not very well organized and would only serve to confuse a visitor.

Things actually get worse. This website has a sitemap, which you can see [here](#):

URL	Priority	Change Frequency	LastChange (GMT)
http://	100%	Daily	2011-11-18 23:36
http:// /medical-disclaimer/	30%	Weekly	2011-11-18 23:36
http:// /contact/	30%	Weekly	2011-11-18 23:36
http:// /how-to-treat-depression/	30%	Weekly	2011-11-10 23:57
http:// /help-for-depression/	30%	Weekly	2011-07-01 23:44
http:// /how-to-deal-with-depression/	30%	Weekly	2010-12-18 17:49
http:// /depression-treatment-centers/	30%	Weekly	2010-12-18 17:45
http:// /treatments-for-depression/	30%	Weekly	2010-12-18 17:32
http:// /privacy-policy/	30%	Weekly	2010-12-15 20:50

Generated with [Google Sitemap Generator Plugin for WordPress](#) by [Arne Brachhold](#). This XSLT template is released under GPL.

The sitemap only has 9 entries, and that included the homepage and three “legal pages”. Only 5 content pages were included, yet we can see from the sidebar navigation that this site did have 40+ posts and a

few content pages.

A sitemap should list all important URLs on the site, most notably the posts. Disclaimers and other “legal” pages can be left off the sitemap. The main role of the sitemap is to make sure the search engines can find the important pages on your site.

Overall then, the navigation system on this site (which I believe has now been taken down since I originally critiqued it for the owner) is a good example of what not to do.

If you would like to test out your SEO sleuthing skills, have a look at

the pages in the sidebar menu (Pages section) and see another major mistake that this site made. Hint: Look at the page titles.

An example of Over-Optimization

Have a look at this web page:

How to Build a Solar Panel

Solar Panel Information and Reviews

How To Build a Solar Panel For Less Than \$100

Building a 100 Watt solar panel can be done in one day and will have paid for itself within two weeks – says Michael Harvey

How to Build a Solar Panel Instruction Book

+ How to calculate how many solar panels you need to power your home.



Only \$49.97

Click here to learn how to build a solar panel Now!

The problem for many people who want to reduce their carbon footprint and reduce their energy bills by using solar power, is the cost of installing a system in their home

The webmaster was clearly trying to rank this page for “How to build a solar panel”.

The Header section of this page used the text “How to build a solar panel” in an H1 header. Then there is an opening H1 header that has the same phrase (that’s two H1 headers on the same page which is never good). The exact same phrase then appears twice more and this is all ABOVE THE FOLD. This phrase is also in the title tag of the page, plus the Meta description of the page. It is also found in the ALT text of an image on the page.

This is an extreme example of over-optimization.

Example of Fake Comments

Here are the comments on a
website I was critiquing:

1. R. Vest on Thu, 4th Nov

2010 10:08 am



Materials used to construct this product are very good.

I use it to keep a 12 Volt battery charged.

It is being used with a Brunton 12 volt solar controller.

Rating: 4 / 5

2. M. Sant on Thu, 4th Nov

2010 12:07 pm



This is an excellent panel at a great price. I use it with a HGRP solar controller and a Walmart 115ah deepcycle marine battery and couldn't be more pleased.

Rating: 5 / 5

3. Gayla Hieber on Thu, 4th

Nov 2010 1:37 pm



It keeps my batteries charged up in my camper so I can keep cell phone charged up and reading lights on at night.

Rating: 5 / 5

4. J Galt II on Thu, 4th Nov

2010 2:23 pm



Well-made solar panel, well-packed for shipping. I am very satisfied with this purchase and spent some time looking into and finding what I wanted. It is placed on dash of my RV and used to maintain my batteries away from AC power source.

Quite reassuring to have Amazon as a partner in transactions... excellent value. It works great.

Rating: 5 / 5

Notice that all of the comments were on the same day within 4 hours of each other? That in itself is not unheard of, but the comments themselves made me suspicious because they each included a rating out of 5 (and none of them had Gravatar images).

To check the comments, I took a sentence from one of them and searched Google for that sentence (in quotes):

"It keeps my batteries charged up in my camper so I can keep cell phone c

Web

Images

Maps

Shopping

More ▾

Search tools

15 results (0.36 seconds)

Ad related to "It keeps my batteries charged up in my camper so I ..." ⓘ

[Ask an RV Tech Online - Technicians Will Answer in Minutes](#)

[rv.justanswer.com/Camper-RV](#)

Questions Answered Every 9 Seconds.

Lawyer - Doctor - Nurse - Veterinarian

[Amazon.com: Customer Reviews: HQRP 20W Mono-crystalline ...](#)

[www.amazon.com/HQRP-Mono-crystalline.../B002HT09TO](#)

It keeps my batteries charged up in my camper so I can keep cell phone charged up and reading lights on at night. Help other customers find the most helpful ...

[Amazon.com: HQRP 20W Mono-crystalline Solar Panel 20 Watt 12 ...](#)

[www.amazon.com > ... > Solar & Wind Power > Solar Panels](#)

It keeps my batteries charged up in my camper so I can keep cell phone charged up and reading lights on at night. Published on March 19, 2010 by Gayla ...

[Amazon.com: Gayla Hieber's review of HQRP 20W Mono-crystalline ...](#)

[www.amazon.com/review/RW67BDW88G8WU](#)

It keeps my batteries charged up in my camper so I can keep cell phone charged up and reading lights on at night. Gayla Hieber March 19, 2010. Overall: 5.0 out ...

[Looking for customer reviews for HQRP 20W Mono-crystalline Solar ...](#)

[askville.amazon.com > ... > Shopping > Lawn Garden](#)

2 answers - 8 Jun 2011

It keeps my batteries charged up in my camper so I can keep cell phone charged up and reading lights on at night. 4 of 4 found the following ...

Google found that exact same sentence /comment on 15 web pages, including Amazon.

Could the webmaster have found these comments on Amazon and added them to his website? Or maybe he paid someone to add comments and they copied them from Amazon?

Whatever the answer, this is bad.

I checked the other “fake” comments on the webpage and every one of them was found on numerous other websites including Amazon.

Example of Sneaky Affiliate Links

There is nothing wrong with having affiliate links on your website.

However, visitors should know that they are affiliate links, and “hidden” affiliate links designed to set a cookie are not a good idea.

One site I critiqued a while ago used the whole of the background of his site (i.e. all the space to the left and right of the main content) as one big affiliate link. Click on the background ANYWHERE and you were directed via an affiliate link to the merchant site. This

clearly is not a good idea. As I was critiquing the site I cannot remember how many times I ended up on the merchant site. I can only guess at how annoyed visitors got with this. That was an extreme case.

Here is another case of hidden affiliate links:



Divine Baby Shower Cakes

The centerpiece of any party is a cake. The choice of whether to make one or how much, can be difficult. Don't worry, with the options available, you'll have a d



Beautiful Baby Shower Decor

Decorations are a vital part of an event. They are important because they set the tone for a party from the start. When choosing a color set that works



Baby Shower Theme Ideas

It can be hard to decide on a theme. You can pamper the new mom with a trip to the spa, a set of baby diapers, onesies, and baby accessories. Some of the ideas below may ma

On this page, the webmaster had hyperlinked all of the images to Amazon with an affiliate link. The landing page was an Amazon search results page for the phrase **baby shower invitations**.

Why do this?

Does it in some way help the visitor?

Or is it an attempt to set a cookie on Amazon?

Of course, it could have been a genuine mistake, but this type of thing is not adding to the visitor experience.

An example of how NOT to create a contact us page

On the contact page of one affiliate site I critiqued, I found this:

Contact Information



If you have any questions about satellite TV systems or service, please call DISH Network or DIRECTV's toll-free telephone number, or click on the link listed below.

DISH Network

For questions about DISH Network satellite tv systems or service, contact U.S. Dish:

By phone: 1-888-228-0942

Online: Click here for [U.S. Dish online support](#)



DIRECTV

For questions about DIRECTV satellite TV systems or service, contact U.S. Direct:

By phone: 1-866-529-6828

Online: Click here for [U.S. Direct online support](#)

Instead of contact details for the site, it provided contact details of two merchants instead. That means visitors have no way to contact the webmaster of this website.







It also makes it look like this webmaster is pretending to be the merchant (or a website owned by the merchant).

Your contact page should give your visitors YOUR contact details so they can contact YOU! This not only builds trust, but is also a basic requirement of doing business online.

Incidentally, the same website also had a link in their menu labeled “Affiliate Information”. This is typically only something found on a merchant site. On the Affiliate Information page, this website linked to the affiliate programs of the two merchants!

Example of a bad Inbound Link Profile

Deciding what is a good or bad inbound link profile is quite a challenge, I mean what does a natural profile look like. How about this one:

Webpage PageRank	%
PR: — 	96.3% (1134)
PR: 1 	1.6% (19)
PR: 0 	0.8% (10)
PR: 3 	0.8% (10)
PR: 2 	0.3% (4)
PR: 4 	0.0% (0)
PR: 5	0.0% (0)

There are links from PR1, PR2 and PR3 pages, which is good.

However, these amount to just 2.7% of all inbound links. A whopping 96.3% of inbound links (that's 1134 links) came from web pages where the Page Rank was N/A (the lowest possible rank, often found on very new pages, pages that have been penalized or pages of very poor quality).

This profile indicates to me that the webmaster went for quantity, not quality, and from some very poor sources. I'd expect to see this type of profile on a site that used automated backlinking software.

This is exactly the type of thing that Google Penguin will bite you for.

Example of bad internal linking

Internal linking of pages on a website is done to help the visitor. Done correctly, it can help guide visitors to more information about certain topics.

On one website I critiqued, something strange was going on with the internal linking. Here are two examples of the type of internal linking I found:

ccount while others will only apply
res actual dollars for the consumer.

Finding the best credit card deal for your spe
credit cards can often be a complicated, confi
have little or no experience managing cards.

The anchor text in the first example was “consumer”, and the anchor text in the second example was “no experience”.

When you internally link pages on

your site using contextual links, the anchor texts MUST be related to the page you are linking to. The anchor text must also be fairly self-serving, not leaving anything to the imagination as to what the destination is about. I mean, what would a visitor think the destination URL is about if the link text is “consumer”? What about “no experience”?

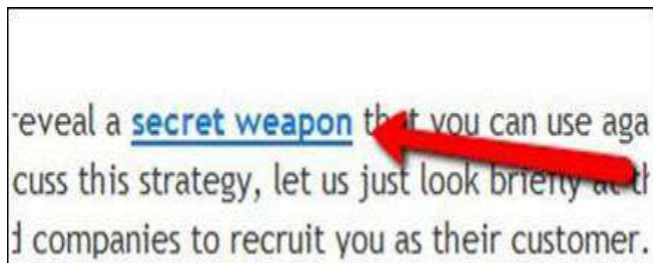
The “consumer” link went to an article on “mileage credit cards”.

The “no experience” link went to a page on “credit card debt relief”.

Do these help the visitor? Nope!

The only point I can think of is that the webmaster was trying to make sure their pages were crawled and indexed (and Page Rank passed around), so added more links to them in this way.

Here is another one:




What has “secret weapon” got to do with any article on credit cards?

Do you see the problem with these?

One final example on this site is this internal link:

6. Borrow against your 401k

When you [take a loan against your 401k](#) you are paying
your goal is a one time payoff of credit card debt it can
than to throw away 29% interest to a credit lending insti



The anchor text “take a loan against your 401k” linked to a page that did not include the word 401K!

Where to go from here

“Make sure that your site adds value. Provide unique and relevant content that gives users a reason to visit your site first”.

In the 2012, SEO changed forever. Google became far less tolerant of activities that they see as rank manipulation. Google want to serve web pages that offer their visitors the best possible experience and that means your primary focus should be on your Visitor. Not Google, not a keyword research tool

and not automated tools to do your SEO for you.

As webmasters, we have been given a choice. Stick to Google's rules, or lose out on free traffic from the world's biggest search engine.

Sure, there will always be someone advertising the next greatest "loophole" to beat the system, and they'll even have examples to prove their loophole works. These examples may even go against everything that Google wants and break all the rules, which make them tempting to some. However, these loopholes are short-lived. My

advice to you is to ignore anyone that tries to sell you a loophole, a trick, or anything else that is “under Google’s radar”. If you want long-lasting results, stick to the rules - Google’s rules.

The SEO in this book (and in my [SEO 2013 & Beyond](#) Kindle book) is the SEO I use on a daily basis. It’s the SEO I teach my students, and it’s the SEO that I know works. For those that embrace the recent changes, SEO has actually become easier as we no longer have to battle against other sites whose SEO was done 24/7 by an automated tool or army of cheap labor. Those sites

have largely been removed, and that levels the playing field.

I assume you bought this book to help you clean up a site of your own. Just go through the checklist included at the end of this book, working your way through the points.

Oh, and good luck!

Appendix - The Checklist

Checkpoint 1 - The domain name

- EMD? If yes, then be aware that this will work against you and you'll need to de-optimize the site for the phrase in the domain name.
- Keyword stuffed? There isn't much you can do with this other than move the site to a better domain. Keyword stuffed domains look spammy and don't instill much confidence in visitors. Unless there is good reason to keep the domain

(like it still makes good income or ranks well), I'd consider moving the site to a better, brandable domain.

- Has your domain never ranked properly? If not, then check its history at the Way Back Machine. Consider a reconsideration request at Google if it looks like the domain was used before.

Checkpoint 2 - Web page real estate

- Resize your browser to 1024x768 and see what loads above the fold. Is there useful content? Are there too many adverts? If there are too many adverts, especially above the fold, consider removing (or moving) them.
- If you removed all of the adverts from the pages on your site, would those pages still offer the visitor what they are looking for? If not, then the content is not good enough.
- Does your site have sneaky links

in the footer, especially keyword rich anchor text links to your own site or an external site? If so, get rid of them.

Checkpoint 3 - Site Structure

- Is your navigation intuitive?
- Are all of the pages on your site just one or two clicks away from the homepage?
- Do you have site-wide links in the sidebar?
- Do you have site-wide links in the header?
- Do you have site-wide links in the footer?

NOTE: Site-wide links with keyword-rich anchor text are the

most potentially damaging.

- If you have a large site, do you use dynamic menus, which change depending on the section of the site the visitor is viewing?
- Do you have a search box? If it is a Wordpress default search box, I highly recommend you switch to a more efficient script, e.g. Google's custom search.
- Do you internally link the pages of your website from within the body of your content, not just via the navigation menus or a related posts menu?

- Is your content organized logically into "silos" where all related content is in the same category or folder? If necessary (e.g. on a large site), do you use sub-folders to help make the navigation more intuitive?
- If you are using Wordpress, do you have tags that are only used once or twice? If so, remove them.
- If you are using Wordpress, do you have tags that are identical to some of your categories? Never use a phrase for a tag if it is being used (or will be used) as a category.

Checkpoint 4 – Comments

- Does your website have a comments section where visitors can leave comments, thoughts and questions?
- Does your website have a contact us form?
- If you have comments enabled, are you manually approving all comments? You should be.
- Check through all of the comments on your site and remove any fake or spam comments. In fact, remove any comment whose

sole purpose is to get a backlink to a website.

- Make comment links nofollow.
- Going forward, only approve legitimate comments where it is clear the visitor read your content and added to the conversation with their insight.

Checkpoint 5 - Social presence

- Does the website have a presence on Facebook?
- Does the website have a presence on Twitter?
- Does the website have a presence on Google plus?
- Does your website have social sharing buttons to allow your visitors to share your content with their social media followers? You should include Twitter, Facebook and Google plus as a bare minimum.

- Setup Google Authorship for your site, connecting your content to your Google plus profile.

Checkpoint 6 - Would you Trust this site?

- Does the site have a photo of the webmaster/author of the content?
- Does your site have an About Us page?
- Are Comments enabled?
- Does your site pretend to be a merchant?
- Is the author of your site a recognized authority in the niche/industry?
- Are you using a Gravatar setup on the email address you use for your

site?

- Is your business address displayed on the site, preferably with a phone number?
- When was the last time your site was updated?
- If appropriate, are there testimonials and are they up to date?
- Is the copyright notice on your website the correct year?
- Do you display any trust symbols (if appropriate)
- Check all content for spellings and

grammatical errors. Check your navigation systems for these errors as well.

- Are there unanswered comments on your site?

Checkpoint 7 - Bounce Rates & Time on site

I recommend you install the updated code here (which will give you a more accurate measurement of these parameters):

<http://briancray.com/posts/time-on-site-bounce-rate-get-the-real-numbers-in-google-analytics/>

Once installed and allowed to run for a few weeks, check your bounce rate and time on site at Google Analytics.

- Are your average bounce rates high?

- Are visitors spending a long or short time on your site?
- Look for specific pages where bounce rate is high AND time on site is low. Try to work out why these pages are suffering and fix them.

Checkpoint 8 - Legal pages

Not all of these pages are necessary for all types of website, so check which pages your site needs and add them if they are missing.

- Do you have a privacy page?
- Do you have a disclaimer page?
- Do you have a terms page?
- Do you have a contact page?
- Do you have an about us page?
- Do you have a medical disclaimer page?

- Do you have an email policy page?
- Do you have an outbound link policy page?

Checkpoint 9 - Content Quality

Look at every page on your website. The following checklist should be applied to your content.

- If the page is essentially an article, could it appear in a magazine?
- Is this the type of content that people would want to bookmark?
- Would people like to share this content with their friends and followers?
- Check a sentence or two in Google to see if your content has been used (illegally or otherwise) on other

websites. If it has, you need to implement Google authorship immediately and hope Google gives you authorship of your content. Also, contact any webmaster that is illegally displaying your content and ask them to remove it (see the article I linked to in this section of the book on copyright infringement).

- If it's a product review, is it unbiased? Does it tell the good, the bad and the ugly? Does your review add information, opinion and views that are not found on the manufacturer's website, or any other website for that matter?

- If you use affiliate links, do your visitors know they are affiliate links? They should!
- Read each piece of content and look for keyword stuffing. Does it read naturally for a human, or was it written for a search engine? If any word or phrase appears more often than might be expected in a naturally written piece of content, then re-write it.
- How much fluff is in your article? Try to make sure your content does not contain fluff and filler. Get rid of any sentences that are only there to increase word count. If you have

to remove a lot of fluff, perhaps the article could benefit from a total rewrite.

- Do any two (or more) articles overlap in terms of what they talk about? Is the same information mentioned on more than one page of the site? If so, get rid of this duplication.
- Check your sitemap for possible problems. Are there any entries with similar filenames or titles that may indicate the articles cover the same/similar material? Are there any entries that suggest content was written around keywords rather

than around the interests of the visitor? If so, get rid (or re-write) all content that was not written specifically for the visitors.

- Check all of your page titles and headlines to make sure that you don't use the same title and headline on any given piece of content. Headlines and titles should work together to entice the visitor. They should be written for the visitor and not for the search engines.
- Make sure you don't use the same title on more than one page.
- Check Meta descriptions if you

use them. These should not be keyword stuffed, and again, should be written for the visitor to tell them what the content is about.

- Make sure you don't use the same Meta description (or "templated" description) on more than one page.
- Check each page for hidden text and remove any that you find.
- Are there any visible blocks of text on your pages that are only there for the search engines? If so, get rid of them.
- SEO should be "invisible". Is it on your pages/site?

- Is your content driven by keywords or by what the visitor wants? Check... If it's the former, you need to clean up the content.
- Check to see what keywords your pages are being found for. Does your page reflect the searchers intent for these keywords?
- Does your page provide something not found on any other web page?

Checkpoint 10 - Inbound link profiles

Check the links pointing to your site using the tools mentioned in this book. If you only use one, I'd recommend GWT.

Have you participated in link schemes? This includes:

- Buying or selling links to pass Page Rank? Get rid of paid links.
- Do you have a partner / resources page on your site containing reciprocal links? Remove all links that are reciprocated.
- Are you linking (knowingly or

unknowingly perhaps via the comments system) to bad neighborhoods? Get these links removed

- Do you have backlinks created by automated tools? Try to get these taken down.
- Are backlinks coming in from content that was spun? Try to get these taken down.
- Are the backlinks found in the body of articles linking to your site using keyword rich anchor text? If so, I'd recommend you change these keyword links and use your domain name, brand name, domain

URL or title/headline of the article as the link text.

- Are there low quality directory or bookmarking links? These will cause you trouble and if you cannot remove them, they should be added to your list of links to disavow if you eventually have to do that.
- Are there any backlinks to your site from themes or widgets that you have created? If so, you need to deactivate those links.
- Are there any links on your website that link out to other websites from themes or widgets you may be using? If so, remove

them.

- Are there site-wide links pointing to your site from low quality websites? If so, they need to be removed. Site-wide links from high quality websites are probably OK, and I wouldn't remove those except as a last resort.
- Are your links from a diverse set of IP addresses? If not, get more links on different IP addresses.
- Do you have links from other websites you own? Are those links purely to help your pages rank better or is there a good reason to cross-link. If there is no good

reason to cross-link the sites, remove those links.

- Are there lots of link from the same domain? If the domain is low quality, get them removed.
- Is there a high percentage of inbound links using keywords phrases you are targeting as anchor text? If so, I'd advise you to water these down. Include more links that use the domain/brand name, URL or title/headline of the content you are linking to.

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All the best



Andy Williams

My Other Kindle Books

SEO 2012 & Beyond – Search Engine Optimization will Never be the Same Again”!



On February 11th, 2011, Google dropped a bombshell on the SEO community when they released

the Panda update. Panda was designed to remove low quality content from the search engine results pages. The surprise to many were some of the big name casualties that were taken out by the update.

On 24th April 2012, Google went in for the kill when they released the Penguin update. Few SEOs that had been in the business for any length of time could believe the carnage that this update caused. If Google's Panda was a 1 on the Richter scale of updates, Penguin was surely a 10. It completely changed the way we need to think about SEO.

On September 28th 2012, Google released a new algorithm update targeting exact match domains (EMDs). I have updated this book to let you know the consequences of owning EMDs and added my own advice on choosing domain names. While I have never been a huge fan of exact match domains anyway, many other SEO books and courses teach you to use them. I'll tell you why I think those other courses and books are wrong.

The EMD update was sandwiched in between another Panda update (on the 27th September) and another Penguin update (5th

October).

Whereas Panda seems to penalize low quality content, Penguin is more concerned about overly aggressive SEO tactics. Stuff that SEOs had been doing for years, not only didn't work anymore, but now can actually cause your site to be penalized and drop out of the rankings. That's right, just about everything you have been taught about Search Engine Optimization in the last 10 years can be thrown out the Window. Google have moved the goal posts.

I have been working in SEO for

around 10 years and have always tried to stay within the guidelines laid down by Google. This has not always been easy because to compete with other sites, it often meant using techniques that Google frowned upon. Now, if you use those techniques, Google is likely to catch up with you and demote your rankings.

In this book, I want to share with you the new SEO. The SEO for 2013 and Beyond.

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**Why
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Kindle publishing has captured the imagination of aspiring writers.

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in our history, an opportunity is knocking. Getting your books published no longer means sending out hundreds of letters to publishers and agents. It no longer means getting hundreds of rejection letters back. Today, you can write and publish your own books on Amazon Kindle without an agent or publisher.

Is it Really Possible to Make a Good Income as an Indie Author?

The fact that you are reading this book description tells me you are interested in publishing your own

material on Kindle. You may have been lured here by promises of quick riches. Well, I have good news and bad. The bad news is that publishing and profiting from Kindle takes work and dedication. Don't just expect to throw up sub-par material and make a killing in sales. You need to produce good stuff to be successful at this. The good news is that you can make a very decent living from writing and publishing on Kindle.

My own success with Kindle Publishing

As I explain at the beginning of this

book, I published my first Kindle book in August 2012, yet by December 2012, just 5 months later, I was making what many people consider to be a full time income. As part of my own learning experience, I setup a Facebook page in July 2012 to share my Kindle publishing journey (there is a link to the Facebook page inside this book). On that Facebook page, I shared the details of what I did, problems I needed to overcome, I shared my growing income reports and most of all, I offered help to those who asked for it. What I found was a huge and growing

audience for this type of education, and ultimately, that's why I wrote this book.

What's in this Book?

This book covers what I have learned on my journey and what has worked for me. I have included sections to answer the questions I myself asked, as well as those questions people asked me. This book is a complete reference manual for successfully formatting, publishing & promoting your books on Amazon Kindle. There is even a section for non-US publishers because there is stuff you

specifically need to know.

I see enormous potential in Kindle Publishing and in 2013, I intend to grow this side of my own business. Kindle publishing has been liberating for me and I am sure it will be for you too.

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Wordpress For Beginners

A **Visual** Step-By-Step Guide to
Creating Your Own Wordpress Site
in Record Time, Starting from Zero!



Dr. Andy Willlams

Wordpress For Beginners

**Do you want to build a website
but scared it's too difficult?**

Building a website was once the domain of computer geeks. Not anymore. Wordpress makes it possible for anyone to create and run a professional looking website

While Wordpress is an amazing tool, the truth is it does have a steep learning curve, even if you have built websites before. Therefore, the goal of this book is to take anyone, even a complete beginner and get them building a professional looking website. I'll hold your hand, step-by-step, all the way.

As I was planning this book, I made one decision early on. I wanted to

use screenshots of everything, so the reader wasn't left looking for something on their screen that I was describing in text. This book has screenshots. I haven't counted them all, but it must be close to 300. These screenshots will help you find the things I am talking about. They'll help you check your settings and options against the screenshot of mine. You look, compare and move on to the next section.

With so many screenshots, you may be worried that the text might be a little on the skimpy side. No need to worry there. I have described every

step of your journey in great detail. In all, this book has over 35,000 words.

This book will cut your learning curve associated with Wordpress

Every chapter of the book ends with a "Tasks to Complete" section. By completing these tasks, you'll not only become proficient at using Wordpress, you'll become confident & enjoy using Wordpress.

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CSS for Beginners



*Learn CSS
with
detailed*

*instructions, step-by-step
screenshots and video tutorials
showing CSS in action on real sites.*

Most websites you visit use
cascading style sheets (CSS) for
everything from font selection &
formatting to layout & design.

Whether you are building Wordpress sites or traditional HTML websites, this book aims to take the complete beginner to a level where they are comfortable digging into the CSS code and making changes to their own site. This book will show you how to make formatting & layout changes to your own website.

The book covers the following topics:

- * Why CSS is important
- * Classes, Pseudo Classes, Pseudo Elements & IDs

- * The Float property
- * Units of Length
- * Using DIVs
- * Tableless Layouts, including how to create 2-column and 3-column layouts
- * The Box Model
- * Creating Menus with CSS
- * Images & background images

The hands on approach of this book will get YOU building your own Style Sheets. Also included in this book:

- * Over 160 screenshots and 20,000 words detailing every step you need to take

- * Full source code for all examples shown.

- * Video Tutorials

The video tutorials accompanying this book show you:

- * How to investigate the HTML & CSS behind any website.

- * How to experiment with your own design in real time, and only make the changes permanent on your site when you are ready.

A basic knowledge of HTML is recommended, although all source code from the book can be downloaded and used as you work through the book

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More Information from Dr. Andy Williams

If you would like more information, tips, tutorials or advice, there are two resources you might like to consider.

The first is my free weekly newsletter over at ezSEONews.com offering tips, tutorials and advice to online marketers and webmasters. Just sign up and my newsletter plus SEO articles will be delivered to your inbox. I cannot always promise a weekly schedule, but I try ;)

I also run a course over at

CreatingFatContent.com, where I build real websites in front of members in “real-time” using my system of SEO.

