

How To Avoid Getting Banned or Penalized

I get many people contacting me asking, "Why is my site not listed in Google?" or "Why am I ranked 387th in Google for my most popular search term when I've been optimizing my site relentlessly?". More often than not the reason is because the website in question is suffering a penalty of some sort.

Search Engines Don't Like SEO

It's no secret that search engine operators don't like people manipulating the results through optimization, but this is exactly what search engine optimizers (SEO's) do. So if you make it blatantly obvious that you are performing SEO on your website then the search engines are going to penalize your website. Therefore when performing SEO for your website you must always make sure what you're doing is not frowned upon by the search engines.

If your website gets banned by the search engines then it means you've probably done something drastically bad to the extent where they don't want to list your website at all.

So how do you know if your website is banned?

So how can you check whether your website is banned by a search engine?

Check the search results

If you go to Google and simply type the URL of your website you should be presented with something similar to below: -



Web

[WebLink SEO Software](#)

WebLink SEO is an seo software package used to improve your website's search engine results to get more traffic to your website.

www.weblinkseo.com/

Google can show you the following information for this URL:

- Show [Google's cache](#) of www.weblinkseo.com
- Find web pages that are [similar to](#) www.weblinkseo.com
- Find web pages that [link to](#) www.weblinkseo.com
- Find web pages [from the site](#) www.weblinkseo.com
- Find web pages that [contain the term](#) "www.weblinkseo.com"

If you enter your domain and you get a message saying "Sorry, no information is available for the URL: xyz" then chances are your site is banned.



Web

Sorry, no information is available for the URL **www.some-random-domain.com**

- If the URL is valid, try visiting that web page by clicking on the following link: www.some-random-domain.com
- Find web pages [from the site](#) www.some-random-domain.com
- Find web pages that [contain the term](#) "www.some-random-domain.com"

The only other time you may receive this message is if your website is brand new and hasn't been crawled by the search engines yet.

Check the PageRank Bar



If you download the Google toolbar (<http://toolbar.google.com>) then you can view the PageRank of every website you visit. If you navigate to your website and you see a gray bar where your PageRank would normally be displayed (as the graph above displays), then this is a very strong indication that your website has been banned.

So what are the tell-tail signs of optimization, and how I avoid them?

When you optimize your website you should always think about how your website will appear from the point of view of the search engines. There are six common pitfalls that people fall into when optimizing their websites, and will usually account for 99% of all problems:

No diversity in Anchor Text

Search Engines like natural linking, that is where a website links to another out of choice, so if a website has 100 inbound links that all have exactly the same anchor text, is that natural? No, quite the opposite, it's highly unnatural. In order to avoid this pitfall, you should vary your link anchor text for each link partnership you set-up, or each time you submit to a web directory. If you're smart about your link anchor text then there is no way your linking strategy will look unnatural

Getting Backlinks Too Quickly

If you operate a new website and you get backlinks too quickly then this is often a clear sign of optimization tactics. Even worse, is the situation where all of these backlinks contain exactly the same anchor text (as previously mentioned). If you operate a new

website you should build links slowly. As I've mentioned already, the search engines like to see natural linking, if your website is only a week old and already has 200 backlinks, is that natural? Link building should be a gradual process, and you should resist the urge to try to get thousands of links as soon as you launch your site. Although your intentions may be well intended, you may actually be doing more harm than good.

Keyword Stuffing

Another important step to prevent being your website being penalized is to ensure you don't over-optimize your website. That is to say don't 'keyword stuff'. Keyword stuffing is a form of spamming where you use your keyword or keyphrase over-and-over again in your web page in order to increase the keyword's weighting in the body text. The search engines can spot deliberate spamming quite easily, and as a result, should be avoided.

Usually if you write a well written, informative web page then there is no need to 'optimize' a web page, as you will have naturally mentioned your keyword/phrase in the text. The only thing you should consider optimizing is the Title tag, this should always contain your primary keyword or phrase.

Title Tag, Meta Tag , Image Alt Tag Spamming

In addition to over-optimization of your body text, you can also be penalized for spamming your tag attributes. For example if you create a title tag that looks like

```
<title>Doughnuts, DOUGHTNUTS, Doughnut, Doughnut flavours, doughnuts doughnuts  
doughnuts, Doughnuts, DOUGHTNUTS, Doughnut, Doughnut flavours, doughnuts  
doughnuts doughnuts</title>
```

Then the search engines are likely to take a dislike to this and may penalize your website.

Duplicating Content

Search engines like unique content; they don't like seeing the same information being duplicated across multiple domains. I have seen instances where websites have been dropped from the search engines for doing exactly this. If you must insist on duplicating content from other web pages then you should disallow access to it using your robots.txt file to avoid any potential problems. To do this create a file in the root of your website so that it can be access by going to <http://www.mydomain.com/robots.txt>

In the robots.txt file your can disallow access to particular files on your website

```
Disallow: myduplicatedpage.html
```

Or you may also specify directories:

```
Disallow: /mycontent/
```

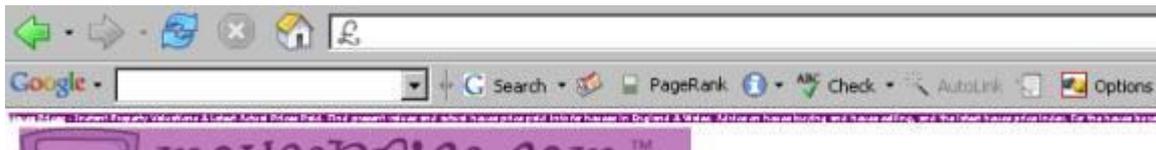
Hidden Text

Hidden text is where you create text on your web page that is the same colour as the background colour, so it is in effect hidden. This allows you to enter your target keywords and phrases without the viewer of the website aware that the text is there.

In this example I've gone to a website that has hidden text (I'll keep their identity secret)



If I then select all of the text on the website by pressing ctrl-a I can see that the website has a lot of hidden text at the top of the page



Drastically Changing Your File Structure

By drastically changing the file structure or filenames of your website, you run the risk of damaging your search engine rankings. Although there's no actual reason why search engines would penalize for this. However, I have seen occasions where websites have changed their file structure and filenames and have seen their search engine rankings take a big hit because of it. One way around this is to redirect your old pages to your new pages, in time the search engines will update their listings and you will not suffer any adverse affects

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