How To Use Links

GeneaLabs

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How To Use Links For Better Rankings And More Traffic

More links = More traffic.
More traffic = More conversions.

Links are critical to the long-term success of a website, yet most site owners barely give links a second thought — and when they do, all they think about is building backlinks... The truth is, if you want your website to be successful, you need website traffic, and if you want a lot of website traffic you need links.

You may not realize it, but there is a direct correlation between the number of high-quality links to, from, and in your website and your search engine page rank.

Inbound links, Outbound links, Internal links, Optimized links... You Need Them All!

While search engines, especially Google, change their search algorithms often, one thing has always remained constant, and that is the importance of links. You see, search engine robots scan and index websites and web pages by following links from one web page to the next, and from one website to the next — and the more links that lead them to and through your website the better.

Think of links as roads through the internet that the search engine bots travel on to get from one page to the next and one site to the next.

Are you leveraging links to maximize website traffic and increase sales conversions?

If you're not sure...

Here's what we'll be covering in the Anatomy of a Link Quick Start Guide:

- How to Understand and Leverage Inbound, Outbound, and Internal Website Links
- 10 Simple Ways to Build High-Quality Inbound Links to Your Website
- 6 Simple Strategies to Leverage Internal Links Between Pages on Your Website for SEO
- How to Avoid The Lamest Link Mistake By Using Anchor Text The Right Way

- Why Some Links Are Better Than Others: How to Distinguish Savory Links From Unsavory Links

- The Real-World Low Down on Some So-Called Bad Links, And Why They Could Be Good Links

- Understanding Reciprocal Links and The Right Way to Use Them on Your Website

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Understanding Inbound, Outbound, and Internal Website Links

If you're new to link building and optimization, the jargon and techno-speak surrounding linking can be confusing. You might see terms like inbound link, outbound link, and internal link and wonder just what they mean—and why you should pay attention.

But worry no more! This guide will clarify what these terms mean, why understanding them is vital for your success, and how you can leverage your new link knowledge to get the search engines to rank your site for your chosen keywords.

When you are done reading this guide, you will have a clear understanding of inbound, outbound, and internal links, and how to capitalize on them for your website and business success.

Inbound Links: Quality Votes for Your Business

Inbound links are links pointing to your website from other places on the internet. In other words, inbound links send people to your website from other websites. Inbound links are critical to the success of your website or blog. Why? Because they hold great value with the search engines.

Quality inbound links — inbound links that come from relevant websites that have themselves gained authority and stature with the search engines — help drive up your website's search engine rankings. Inbound links in general are good, but inbound links to your website from authority sites are ideal.

Think of it this way: All of the websites in your niche are competing for the first page search engine listings for your industry's main keyword or key phrase. Each time another website, especially an authority website, links to your website, it is as if someone powerful has voted for your site to be listed in the search results.

With each vote, your site gets more powerful, too, and slowly moves up in the search engine chain.

Now that we understand how inbound links from quality sources work, there is something even better: inbound links that use keyword-rich anchor text instead of your basic URL.

For example: the URL link www.companyname.com is a good link to our site, but if you really want my love, a keyword-rich, anchor-text link like Small Business Web Design is even better! The second link is not only an inbound link, but it is also a link that reinforces for the search engines what keywords my website should be ranked under.

Outbound Links: Focus on Relevance

Outbound links are links on your website that point to another place on the internet. Outbound links send your website visitors away from your website to another destination, if only briefly.

You may have heard that you should minimize the amount of outbound links on your website, since they draw people away from you. But that advice isn't precise. In fact, outbound links are also important to the success of your website. It just comes down to exactly how you use your outbound links.

Here's the key: The goal of Google and other search engines is to provide internet users with the most relevant information possible, so you need to make sure that all outbound links on your website send your visitors to destinations relevant to your content and your mission.

For example: Let's say you're a professional organizer, and your website is about organizing. The search engines assume visitors go to your site for information on organizing and getting organized, and they expect the content, images, and links on your site are all related to that topic.

Outbound links to relevant, on-topic content, such as a store where users can purchase organization supplies, will make the search engines happy, and can boost your website's listing position because you're helping the user find even more useful and relevant information on a topic they are interested in.

But let's say you joined a link exchange group with ten friends, and you all agreed to link to each other's websites. (Yes, people do this.) Included in the group are a Dog Groomer, a Massage Therapist, a Life Coach, and a Divorce Attorney. Links to these websites will confuse the search engines! The search engines won't understand why a professional organizer is sending visitors to irrelevant websites that have nothing to do with the topic of your website.

The problem is that the search engines assume that users who visit your site are interested in organizing topics and when you provide them with off-topic, irrelevant links, the search engines don't like it!

When including outbound links on your website, include only those links that are relevant to your site's purpose, topic, and content.

Additional settings to help you leverage your outbound links include:

- Set your outbound links to open in a new window or tab, so visitors aren't completely disconnected with your website when they click outbound links.
- When including website URLs with testimonials, consider just displaying the URL and not making them "live" links.

What you need to know about setting Links to nofollow:

Many marketers will advise you to use the "nofollow" attribute for links that you want to include on your website, but that you do not want the search engines to follow. Sometimes this setting works. Sometimes it doesn't. In our opinion, if you are adding a link to your site that needs the "nofollow" setting applied, carefully examine the reason behind the link existing on your website.

Internal Links: Improve User Experience & Get Google Sitelinks!

Internal links are links from one page on your website to another. Internal links direct users from blog posts to website pages, pages to posts, new posts to old posts, etc.

Internal links are important to the success and integrity of your website or blog because they give your visitors and the search engines more ways to click through your website and access the content they are looking for. But the value of internal links goes beyond ease of website navigation.

Internal links are the secret to achieving Google Sitelinks — those additional indented sub-links that appear below your main page link in the search engine listings.

Check out the example in this screen shot:

Inspired Imperfection: Recipes, Adventures, Work-Life Balance
https://inspiredimperfection.com/ ▾
Inspired Imperfection is a lifestyle blog featuring easy recipes, family adventures, and candid commentary on work-life balance from a business owner mom.

About
About Inspired Imperfection. Two things happen when you post ...

Giveaway
Enter to win the latest giveaway from Inspired Imperfection, a ...

More results from inspiredimperfection.com »

The Inspired Imperfection listing didn't always include sitelinks. It was only by adding strategic internal links to specific pages that it gained the coveted indented sitelinks. Even better, these sitelinks genuinely beefed up the site's search engine results page listing — not only giving it the stamp of an authoritative website, but also sending new visitors directly to the giveaway page.

Quick tips to increase your chances of getting Google Sitelinks:

- Add relevant, internal links to your website. For example: Wherever we mention our services or our design work, we include the link to our design portfolio. Or wherever we're talking about how people can work with us, we include a link to our contact information.
- Include the sub-links you want to see listed in Google Sitelinks throughout your site content. A simple way to do this is to put the links in the footer of your website. Your footer shows up on every page, so if your website has 50 pages and 100 blog posts, and you include one link, you added 150 internal links to your website.

Remember: You have no control over the sitelinks that a search engine generates. Site links are automatically generated. However, if Google creates a sitelink for a page on your site that you do not want to appear, you can delete the sitelink in Google Search Console.

Leverage Links and Make Your Business More Lucrative

The overall success of your website or blog can be significantly enhanced by strategic leveraging of inbound, outbound, and internal links.

But don't get too carried away!

A web page or blog post peppered with too many links will weaken the readability of your content and turn off your readers. As always, think about what you add to your website and ask yourself, "How exactly can this add value to my business?"

10 Simple Ways to Build High-Quality Inbound Links to Your Website

Search engines look for two criteria when evaluating your website links and determining your website ranking: quantity and quality. That means that both the number and the relevance of your links are crucial for getting your website found faster by search engines, and by potential clients.

The number of links to, from, and within your website come from three areas:

- Inbound links: links to your website from external sources
- Outbound links: links to other sites from your website
- Internal links: links between individual pages on your website

But just having a lot of links isn't all you need to consider. The quality of your links is also important. While your goal is to build a good mix of inbound, outbound, and internal links, those links have to be relevant to your content, business, industry, and audience.

The Indispensable Inbound Link

The most valuable and most difficult link to get is the inbound link, especially an inbound link that comes from an in-industry authority website and that uses anchor text (the clickable text in a hyperlink).

An inbound link is valuable because it means someone else in the web universe is giving your web presence a stamp of approval — and has clicked on your link to check out your website. And that clicking, repeated over and over by people all over the web, means achieving what we all want for our websites — thriving traffic. But how do you get those links, those clicks, that traffic?

Here are 10 secrets for better inbound link building. And they're easier than you may think:

1. **Grab And Groom Your Profiles**
   Grab a profile on popular social networks and complete the full profile. Once you have your profile set up, groom it — take advantage of all of the automation features offered, especially linking to your website and blog. This not only increases your visibility and builds inbound links/backlinks to your site, but it also prevents others from using your name or business name on those networks.

The same goes for your member profiles on the websites of the trade organizations, networking groups, and business associations you belong to. Update member profiles, ensure they are complete, and always include the link to your website.

2. **Review Industry Books, Products, And Media On Amazon**
Amazon offers users a robust way to review books and products, build a reputation as a credible reviewer, and display a profile with a link to your website. You can use your Amazon reviews as a sort of satellite blog, a place to offer helpful input for consumers trying to find the right book, DVD, or other product. Most importantly, it's a great way to get those invaluable inbound links — and even if the links are set to nofollow, the citation and mention is still valuable.

3. **Publish Articles Online**
The world of online publishing has made it possible for anyone with gumption to post an article for the world to read. Sites like www.ezinearticles.com, www.articlesbase.com, and www.self-growth.com offer free membership and the opportunity to publish your articles online.

While these sites provide a great opportunity to showcase your expertise in front of a larger audience, the biggest benefit is the author resource/bio box that gets published with each article because you control the content and the links in your author resource/bio box. This means readers who like your article can find out a little more about you and access a link back to your website.

4. **Comment On Other Blogs And Post In Public Forums**
When you post a comment on someone else's blog, you have the opportunity to include your website address. When someone is interested in what you say, they can click on your name — and be taken directly to your website. The same is true when you post comments on public forums.

Commenting on other blogs and forums will not only help build your network and online community, it can also help build more inbound links/backlinks to your website. Now sometimes these links are set to "nofollow," which encourages the search engines to NOT follow the links — that's okay — the links still have value as citations for your site, and the more citations you have on the web the better.

5. **Link-Trade With Colleagues**
The "10 Friends" link exchange example I shared earlier in this guide was the perfect example of what not to do. You don't want to arbitrarily link with other sites just because you like the site owners.

When done right, a link exchange can be a powerful tool.

They key is to connect with other experts who serve the same target market you do but offer a different and complementary service. If their product or service would help your audience and is relevant to what you do, approach the expert and ask to trade links (This works best when you have a good relationship with the other expert). A perfect example of this would be a link trade between a web designer and a copywriter, an image consultant and a photographer, or a public relations firm and an advertising company.

6. **Contribute To Collaborative Blog Posts**
   The collaborative blog post is a quickly growing trend among bloggers. A collaborative blog post is created by one blogger who sends out a specific request to their community for input on a specific topic. One of the most popular topics I have seen is "Share your best tip on _____." Other experts, bloggers, and community members then submit their contributions to be included in the post along with their website URL. Then, when the final post is published, contributors earn a mention in the post and link back to their website.

7. **Become A Guest Blogger**
   Guest blogging is a fantastic way to not only share your expertise and build quality links back to your website, but to gain access to an audience filled with your ideal clients who don't yet know you. The key is doing your homework and choosing the best blogs to submit a guest post to. Ideally you want to identify blogs that serve the same target market you do and create a high-value, high-content, high-quality post that will impress readers enough to earn a click on your website link.

8. **Get Listed In Relevant, Quality Directories**
   Identify both free and paid directories in your industry or niche that are high quality, trusted, authority directories and get listed. These may be portfolio sites, yellow pages-style sites, trade directories and consumer resource lists, association member lists, or even recommended vendor/experts lists from trusted centers of influence.

9. **Share Links On Social Media Sites**
   Be sure to set up automatic syndication for your blog on each of the social networking platforms you are active on. Connect your blog's RSS Feed with Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter at minimum so each time you publish new content to your blog, your posts are automatically shared with your social networks. Also, don't forget to bookmark your posts on popular social bookmarking sites to create additional site mentions and backlinks.

10. **Produce Valuable Content On A Regular Basis**
Publishing valuable, useful, relevant content on a regular basis is the easiest tactic there is to earn links to your website. This strategy doesn't cost money, it doesn't have a huge learning curve, and there is relatively no barrier to entry. By focusing on consistently creating new, fresh, amazing content for your blog, you will gain loyal readers and followers who appreciate your work, click those share links at the end of your posts, and share your posts with their networks on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest. and LinkedIn.

Remember: None of the strategies I shared with you to build quality inbound links to your website are difficult, but they all require time, energy, and focus.

6 Simple Strategies To Leverage Internal Links

Internal links are links from one page on your website to another. Internal links direct users from one page to another, from blog posts to website pages, pages to posts, from new posts to old posts, etc.

They are important to the success and integrity of your website or blog because they give your visitors and search engines more ways to click through your website and access the content they are looking for. But the value of internal links goes beyond ease of website navigation. Internal links can help search engines and users attribute specific keywords with specific pages, increasing the chances of it being ranked well in the search engines results page (SERP) listings.

Now that you understand the importance links have, you need to understand the different ways you can leverage internal links to enhance your visitors' browsing experience and potentially boost your site search engine page rank.

The following are 6 simple strategies for successful and effective internal link building.

Duplicate Your Navigation Menu On Your Home Page

Both users and search engines use links to travel through websites and across the internet, so help them out and make it easier for them to access the valuable content you have on your website. Give them more than one way to reach a page.

Don't just rely on the links in your navigation menu. Instead, be sure an include a keyword-rich, anchor text link to each top-level page of your website's navigation menu somewhere else on your home page too. This could be in the content, in a widget, in a slider, in the footer, in the sidebar, etc.

Then, if it makes sense and there is room to add a few more links without overcrowding the page with them, add some deep links to useful pages within your site that don't necessarily appear in the top-level navigation.

Put Your Footer To Work

Your website footer is a very useful and important piece of website real estate that can have a big effect on the organic search engine ranking of your website,

yet it is also one of the most undervalued things on a website. Why? Because most website owners simply don't know any better.

Your website footer is a universal space throughout your entire website that can be used to enhance your visitors' experience and help them find information quickly, as well as to help the search engines attribute specific keywords with specific pages.

If you have 20 pages on your website and 150 blog posts, and you add a keyword-rich, anchor text link to an optimized sales page in your footer, you just added 200 internal links to that sales page — and each of those links are using the same keywords or key phrases to point to that page. If that sales page is optimized for the same keyword, you're seriously increasing the chance that your page will be indexed with the search engines for that keyword.

Put Your Sidebar To Work

Your website sidebar is also an important component of creating a successful website. Think about what you choose to include in that space. Do you have display social media icons, the Facebook widget and the Twitter widget — all of which send people away from your website?

Give your sidebar strategy some thought, and instead consider adding text links to other valuable pages on your website. While your navigation menu contains links to the most important top-level pages on your website, your sidebar is the perfect place to include links to important pages and posts that have killer content, but don't appear in your primary navigation menu.

For example, you can:

- Display the logo of a product, program, service, or event and link to that specific sales page
- Display a list of resources and include a list of keyword-rich, anchor text links to other valuable pages on your website
- Display a call to action and a link to visit a time-sensitive page, like a webinar registration page

Remember to think about your sidebar not as an afterthought to fill with widgets and social media filler, but as an important conversion tool to guide visitors through your website to the information that they need and that you want them to find.

Leverage New Blog Posts To Boost Older Posts

One big problem all bloggers face is how to handle old but awesome blog posts. Blogs are typically ordered newest to oldest, so as you post new content to your blog, old content gets pushed deep into your website, only accessible by multiple clicks through category, tag, and archive pages.

But what happens to the awesome, high-value, high-content posts that are still useful and still just as relevant today as they were when you first wrote them?

Don't let your old posts fade into blogger oblivion! Instead keep your old posts visible, top of mind, and in the game by making sure you link to at least one old blog post in each new post you publish. This will keep your best old posts easily accessible with just one click and continue to drive traffic to those posts. For the best results, make sure the link is optimized to match up with the HTML title and keywords you set for the original blog post.

Elevate Your Status With The Author Bio Box

If you're the spokesperson or expert for your brand, often people who know your name will search for you by name. Enable and use the author bio box at the end of each of your articles or bog posts to not only give some SEO "Juice" to your name, but to also take advantage of the opportunity to add a short, descriptive bio with a keyword-rich, optimized, anchor text link to your about page or any other page that needs its status elevated with the search engines.

Give Readers More Of What They Like

If a visitor has clicked-through a link to check out one of your blog posts — from Facebook, Twitter, a search engine results page, LinkedIn, or another referring site — your headline grabbed their attention and that shows they are interested in your content. Your job at this point is to give them more of what they like.

At the end of each blog post, always provide additional key-word rich, anchor text links to similar posts or related posts to give your visitors more content on the same topic they are interested in and encourage them to stay on your site longer — because the longer they stay, the more likely it is that they will sign up, click, contact, register, subscribe, or buy.

Remember: There is no guarantee that just adding optimized internal links will get your web page ranked on page one or in one of the top three spots of the

search engine results pages. To achieve that, you may also need to implement other organic search engine optimization strategies like link building inbound links to that page, etc. on an ongoing, consistent basis.

Avoid A BIG Link Mistake By Using Anchor Text The Right Way

Search engines help searchers find the highest quality information for based on their queries. The job of a search engine robot is to search and index the Web for the latest websites and information and deliver the findings on a search engine results page (SERP). Search engine robots crawl the internet by following links from one page to another, to another, to another, to another, etc.

The information in the links — like the titles, the URL, and the anchor text — along with the quality and quantity of links, play a part in how the search engines rank web pages and for what keywords web pages should rank for.

As a website owner, your job is to provide your website visitors and the search robots with useful, valuable links to follow.

Unfortunately, most website owners simply don't understand this principle and as a result, they create the WORST LINKS EVER. These are links that tell both the search engines and website visitors absolutely nothing of value except that it is a link.

What is the lamest link?

That's easy, it's ... "Click Here"

Other worthless links that are commonly used include: read more, click, visit my website, services page, download, website, blog, go here, and look at this.

These boring links are not only bad for your users' experience, they are bad for your page rank too, especially when you're linking between pages on your own website.

Why? With no keywords or descriptive text, links like "click here" tell users and search engines nothing about the page the link points to. It could be about any topic in the world from cats or snow skiing, to cooking or frisbee golf, to knitting or camping, or even to trains or rocks. There is no way for the search engines or the users to know what the destination page is about or what they will find if they click the link.

While there is no SEO strategy that is guaranteed to produce page one listings every time, strategic links can definitely help. To secure the best chance of ap-

pearing in the search results for your keyword or key phrase, the content on the page must also be relevant.

But what do links have to do with relevance? A Lot!

Anchor text links, when used correctly, can have a big impact on a page's relevance to a specific keyword.

Here are some examples:

- If enough people link to a web page using the same keyword or key phrase in their anchor text, Google and other search engines will associate that keyword or key phrase with the web page. So, if your page is about Beagles, a link that says learn more about Beagles is better than a generic Click Here link.

- If you are selling organic mandarin oranges, you should link to your page using a sentence like, "Click to buy seedless organic mandarins" instead of, "Click Here." In the first example, the anchor text in the link reinforces your keywords with the search engines and web searchers, unlike the second example which could be used on any website for any call to action.

In the examples above, the preferred links use keywords in the anchor text (one of the two main ways to optimize a link). This strategy gives both the users and the search engines clues about what the destination page is about, and hints about what they will find if they click the link.

So remember, never ever use the words Click Here as an internal link on your website or as an inbound link back to your website if you have a choice, and do someone else a favor and never use the words Click Here as outbound link to another website either.

How to Distinguish Savory Links From Unsavory Links

While inbound links, outbound links, and internal links can all be used to improve your website usability and organic search engine ranking, it is important to know that some links are better and more valuable than others — and that some links are even bad (worse than "click here").

Here are 3 reasons some links are better than others:

- **Not all links are good links.**
  A website with misleading, irrelevant, broken, or factory-farmed links will just make you look bad to the search bots and to your prospects and customers.

- **Links from high-ranking websites are better than links from low-ranking websites.**
  A link from www.cnbc.com will hold much more weight than one from www.ObscureCatBlog.com. Hint: Pages may pass some of their "page rank" to the site's they link to, so be choosy about which sites you link to.

- **In industry links will help you more than random links from friends' websites.**
  If you're in the cupcake industry, links from cupcake, frosting, baking, and cake decorating websites will hold more value for you than links from your babysitter, accountant, esthetician, or golf buddy.

Still not quite sure what I mean?

Let's look at this high school…

Each link to your website is like a vote for your popularity. So the more votes you get, the more popular you are, and the more popular you are, the more you'll be in the spotlight, seen by everyone and attracting a lot of attention.

Search engines work just like the high school popularity chain. The more websites that vote for (link to) your website, the more popular your site will be with Google and the other search engines. That means it will get more attention and more clicks, which means more traffic to your website.

Before you drop everything and focus your efforts on building tons of inbound links from every place you can online, you must understand that some links are more savory and more valuable than others.

Let's go back to our high school example…

The star of the football team inviting you to a party is a huge vote for your popularity and will increase your status among your peers very quickly. But, on the other hand, an invitation from a relatively unknown creep to their party won't help raise your social status at all — in fact, it may do the exact opposite!

Again, search engines work the same way. A link from a popular, high-authority, high-ranking site is much more valuable and can have a much bigger impact on your website's search engine status, than a link from www.randomblog.blogger.com.

While almost every link to your website is could be considered good, some links are better than others — and some links are definitely unsavory and may negatively affect your website. So how do you know which is which? Here are examples to help learn to distinguish between savory and unsavory links:

Examples Of Savory, High-Value Links

- Links from websites with a Page Rank of at least 2 or higher
- Links from websites with a good Alexa ranking (at least in the 6 figures)
- Links from websites who already rank in the top 10 search results for your targeted keywords and/or key phrases
- Links from other websites in your industry or complimentary industries (web designers linking to copywriters)
- Anchor text links to your website that use the keywords and/or key phrases you are targeting

Examples Of Unsavory, Not-So-Valuable Links

- Links to or from link farms and link directories with no useful content
- Links to or from sites with explicit content of any kind or sites associated with spam of any kind
- Links from your website to completely unrelated websites (a designer linking to a dog groomer)
- Using too many links — Resist the urge to turn every keyword on the page into a link
- Broken links
- No follow or encrypted links

The Real Low Down on Bad Links And Why They May Be Good Links

If you do any amount of research on links, eventually you will come across a blog post or article by an SEO company or consultant, or even an online marketer warning you of the dangers of bad links. These articles usually have big warnings, fearful messages, and even threats of what may happen if you use any of the bad link types they mention. And most all of them warm of the potential "Google Slap" or punishment in you have too many of the so-called bad links.

But there are always two sides to every story and this scenario is no different. Yes, there are links that have been deemed bad — directory links, reciprocal links, repetitive links, etc. — and unfortunately, these links have received a such a horrible reputation, that business owners are scared to death to use them today.

Here's what you need to understand:

Most of the people writing these posts and publishing this information are simply regurgitating other people's content. They read it somewhere or heard it at a conference and now they're blogging about it. The problem is that because they don't have expertise in this field, they don't know the whole story and mislead readers into believing that these so-called bad links are ALWAYS bad.

And that's simply just not true. The so-called bad link strategies, can sometimes be good.

Yep you heard me right. Some of the strategies that have been deemed bad can sometimes be good for your business. Using them the right way, for the right reasons can actually be a smart decision.

Let's first look at directory listings:

Getting directory listings is a well-known bad link building strategy. Most are link farms posing as directories that are then considered low quality and spammy. And if you're just trying to get listed in any and every directory you can find across the internet to purely to build links, this is true. It's a bad idea. But that isn't always the case. There are some directories that can be considered high-quality. In fact, in some cases, listing your business and website link in a directory is a really smart idea.

Here are some examples on when this would be the case:

- As a restaurant, you would want to be listed in local directories of eateries and restaurants. But submitting your website to general directories all over the world would be a bad idea.

- A wedding planner would want to be listed in a directory of local bridal vendors, or a directory on a bridal show website.

- If your national or local industry trade organizations have directories that list businesses, freelancers, and consultants, you would want to be included on that list.

- Another common strategy you'll be warned about is having "too many links" — This could mean too many links on one web page, or too many links on your site that use the exact same anchor text (words).

Too Many Links On A Page

If you've heard or read warnings against using too many links on a page, you should pay attention.

First, you need to know that there is no maximum number of links that you need to stay under. In fact, there are no exact guidelines on this topic whatsoever. It is up to you to use your best judgement.

A web page stuffed with links, where it seems like every third word is a link can be viewed negatively by search engines because it looks spammy and it seems unnatural. The same goes for a web page that is nothing more than a long list of links.

You want to avoid having too many links in your content not just because of how it may look to search engines, but because of the type of experience it will create for your visitors. It is distracting and difficult to read content that is flooded with links — and it just makes your look lame.

Too Many Links With The Same Anchor Text

If you have too many links on your website that are exactly the same, meaning they use the exact same words in the link anchor text, it could be viewed negatively by the search engines. Why? Because it is unnatural and will look spammy — like you're trying to "game the system" for that keyword or phrase.

When you speak or write naturally, not specifically for the search engines, you don't use the exact same words and sentences over and over, you use different variations of words and phrases, and you use them in many different contexts.

So when you're working on building your internal website links, don't use the exact same keyword or key phrase as a link over and over. Instead use variations of the keyword or key phrase you are targeting. Use it in different ways, use it in singular and plural forms when appropriate, etc.

Is there a maximum number of links you should have on your site using a keyword? Not that anyone knows of! Google keeps these things secret, and they change their rules all the time.

You'll have nothing to worry about as long as you are:

- Writing and creating content naturally, and not purposefully stuffing your text full of unnatural keywords and links
- Linking to other websites when it is natural and relevant, and doing so in a way that makes sense
- Creating a positive user experience and providing great content

Understanding Reciprocal Links and The Right Way to Use Them

Reciprocal linking happens when two sites link back and forth to each other. Often this happens when friends who both have websites or own business link to each other. Or even more common, when several business owners are in a mastermind group together, one reads that you need lots of inbound links to get good search engine rankings, and without knowing any of the details or facts, gets everyone in the group to link to each others' websites.

Years ago, this was a popular and widely used search engine optimization (SEO) strategy because sites could quickly build inbound links and raise their search engine page rank. Friends would link to each other's sites just for the link, not because the content was relevant.

Google of course didn't like this — they don't like anything that allows website owners to "game the system" and they put out a warning against this practice.

So SEO companies stopped using the strategy, website owners got scared, the strategy slowly disappeared as an SEO method, and business stopped using reciprocal links. In fact, there are several sites that will tell you never to participate in reciprocal linking and a lot of business owners don't even want to discuss it out of fear perpetuated by rumor and myth.

But here's the thing: reciprocal links are still valuable when done right.

You see, there are still instances where it makes sense for your business to use reciprocal links. There are still cases where it would be smart for two sites to link to each other.

For example, if you have a strategic partner that you work with and you often refer clients back and forth, it makes sense for both of your businesses to link to each other. The key is to keep your reciprocal links relevant and on topic.

Not sure what I mean?

Here are some examples of when reciprocal linking may be a smart idea:

- A hair stylist and an esthetician who often refer clients back and forth should link to each other

- A financial planner and a CPA who share clients and work together should link to each other.

- A car wash and a windshield repair company in the same city may want to link to each other

- A designer and a copywriter who partner often may want to link to each other.

You see, these links are natural, they make sense, it's easy to see why they would be linking to each other. It's pretty obvious when the links are forced, paid, or unnatural… Just so it's crystal clear, here are some examples of bad reciprocal links:

- An IT consultant linking and a professional copywriter linking to each other

- A publishing company and a professional organizer linking to each other

- A yoga instructor and an executive business coach linking to each other

- A florist and a tire repair shop linking to each other

So, when it comes to reciprocal links, here's what you need to know:

This isn't a strategy to employ for as an SEO tactic and quickly build lots of inbound links from your friends and contacts. If the links seem irrelevant and unnatural, it is probably not a good idea to include them. As long as the link is smart for your business, on topic, and relevant, you're good to go.

How To Optimize A Link For Search Engines And Humans

Now that you know what inbound, outbound, and internal links are, how to use and build inbound links to your website, and how to leverage internal links, and you know the link you should never use, and you can use anchor text effectively, let's wrap up with how you can optimize your links for the best results.

Optimizing your links is probably one of the simplest strategies you can implement because, there aren't a lot of different options!

Example 1:

Basic HTML for an un-optimized link:

```
<a href="https://inspiredimperfection.com">https://inspiredimperfection.-com</a>
```

What the user sees:

https://inspiredimperfection.com

What the search engines see:

https://inspiredimperfection.com

Example 2:

Basic HTML for an optimized link:

```
<a href="https://inspiredimperfection.com">Family Travel And Recipe Blog</a>
```

What the user sees:

Family Travel And Recipe Blog

What the search engines see:

Family Travel And Recipe Blog + https://inspiredimperfection.com

I'll bet you didn't realize that when it comes to optimizing links on your website for search engines, you're actually doing your website visitors a favor too! You see by optimizing your links, you're creating links that are more descriptive and helpful to your visitors, and more descriptive and helpful for the search engines.

Let me explain further using the two link examples above for reference.

From The Search Engines' Perspective:

In Example 1, the only thing search engines will read/scan is the website URL https://inspiredimperfection.com. This doesn't tell search engines anything about what the website is about or what keywords the site should be ranked for. All the search engines know is that it is a link to another site.

In Example 2, the search engines will not only read/scan the website URL, but they will also scan the title and the anchor text (the text "Family Travel And Recipe Blog"). Adding a keyword-rich title and keyword-rich anchor text to your link creates two additional opportunities to optimize your page. (The title and the anchor text do not have to be the same.)

From The Visitors' Perspectives

In Example 1, the only thing visitors will see is the website URL www.bourncreative.com. This doesn't tell visitors anything about what the website is about. All visitors know is that it is a link to another site.

In Example 2, visitors will see the link Bourn Creative Web Design instead of www.bourncreative.com. This link is much more descriptive, telling the visitor that the link will take them to a web design company's website. Also, when a visitor hovers over the link, a "tool tip" box will appear with the link title inside.

Here's the low-down on exactly what you need to know about optimizing your links:

The link anchor text (link text) should describe the page you are linking to and include the main/focus keyword for the page AND the main/focus keyword for the page you're linking to (ideally these are similar).

Tracking Links With Google Analytics' Urchin Tracking Module (UTM) Code

Tracking is the key to fully understanding your visitors, what they are interested in, what they want, and even what motivates them to take action. Most reputable email marketing providers offer different levels and types of tracking. I am also a big fan of Google Analytics, which is used to track what happens on your website. By tracking readers' actions and looking at the numbers, you can see exactly what readers want most — what compels them to take action — and you can tailor your content to increase conversions!

I'm giving you fair warning here ... this is some pretty technical, nerdy stuff.

Google Analytics allows you to track actions visitors take on your website and where your website traffic is coming from, and see how much traffic, sales, or opt-ins your website generates... and it's not that difficult to implement!

All You Need Is One Small Piece Of Code!

You can track traffic to your website from your email marketing (and social media, direct mail, etc.) easily with one small piece of code! This code — Google UTM (Urchin Tracking Module) Code — is actually a combination of tags and extra information you can add to a link that you create. This extra information appears in the Google Analytics reports under Traffic Sources.

Here's How Link Tracking With The Google UTM Code Works:

Basic Google UTM Code

```
?utm_source=X&utm_medium=X&utm_campaign=X
```

Sample Code For A Standard Link

```
<a href="https://inspiredimperfection.com">https://inspiredimperfection.-
com</a>
```

Sample Code for A Link Using The Google UTM Code

```
<a href="https://inspiredimperfection.com?
utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=pagepost
&utm_campaign=marvelgiveaway">https://inspiredimperfection.com</a>
```

Let's break down the Basic Google UTM code example shown above.

In the example, there are three sections of code, each connected with the "&" symbol. Here's an explanation of what each section of code means:

- **utm_source=X (Campaign Source)**
  In this section of the code, X is the source of the link. (i.e. ezine, blog, advertisement, mailer, search engine, another domain, or name of email list, etc.).

- **utm_medium=X (Campaign Medium)**
  In this section of the code, X is the medium or method of delivery. (i.e. email, postcard, follow up sequence, snail mail, web banner ad, pay-per-click ad, etc.).

- **utm_campaign=X (Campaign Name)**
  In this section of the code, X is a name that helps you keep track of your different marketing efforts. (i.e. Christmas_Sale, Bootcamp_Postcards, ABC_JVPromos, or ezine04052012, etc.).

Let's look at the final link using the Google UTM code.

The UTM code is simply pasted/added to the end of the regular URL with no spaces.

- The source variable is labeled facebook — the source of the link
- The medium variable is labeled pagepost — the medium or type of marketing
- The campaign variable is labeled marvelgiveaway — the specific marketing campaign

Does the thought of creating the code for these trackable links freak you out?

Don't worry! Google Analytics has a free URL Builder you can use to create links tagged with the UTM code at http://support.google.com/analytics/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=1033867. It's a simple tool to help you create trackable links — and all you have to do is copy and paste the final link into your site.

Quick Bonus Tips

Here are two additional parameters you can add to your UTM code string (just remember to use the "&" symbol to connect them):

- **utm_term=X (Campaign Term)**
Add this section of code to identify keywords you are using in paid advertisements. (i.e. utm_term=skin+care+cream, utm_term=marketing+conference, etc.)

- **utm_content=X (Campaign Content)**
Add this section of code when split testing or using two pieces of marketing materials that go to the same URL (i.e. utm_content=bannerlink, utm_content=textlink, utm_content=logolink, etc.)

Once you start using your new trackable links, you can view the results in Google Analytics.

Remember, as with all Google Analytics Reporting it can take several hours for the data to appear in you reports. Tagging your links with UTM values is a powerful and valuable tool that allows you to create unique links for different marketing campaigns. By simply adding the "UTM" code to the end of your links, you can track the links in your email newsletter with Google Analytics.

How to Search Google Only For Anchor Text And Get a Jumpstart on Your Competition

Now that you know what anchor text is and how important it is in terms of search engine optimization, I want to share a little-known (VERY little-known), but totally awesome way you can use anchor text to do targeted research online.

Google lets you restrict your queries and searches to anchor text—only the text used to link to other web pages. That means you can get super-focused and targeted with your searches and find out who else is talking about, writing about, promoting, and linking to the same keywords and key phrases you are targeting. This can help you with market research, identifying your market positioning, evaluating your competition, and even finding possible strategic partners and joint venture partners.

Here's how to search Google only for anchor text.

Search for anchor text

Google Syntax For Anchor Text = **inanchor:**
To search for pages that other web pages have linked to using the word "WordPress" type: inanchor:WordPress

Google will only search for the first word after the colon, unless it is combined with other Google syntax. For example, use quotes to include exact phrases, use the plus sign for additional words to include, or use the syntax allinanchor: to include all words following the colon.

A search for "software development" could be done as:

- inanchor:"software development"

- inanchor:software+development

- Allinanchor:software development