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What is a Search Algorithm?

A search algorithm is not a formula, it is a combination and series of multiple processes and sets of rules used to solve [search] for specific information. These processes and rules are based on step-by-step procedures used to find the desired data among the plethora of the internet data collections.

When diving into the seemingly bottomless pools of internet data the rate at which the requested information is processed and ultimately received depends upon the depth and complexity of the algorithm parameters. Multiple algorithms can co-exist and affect each other.

How Do They Do It?

With so many ways to search the web for information, we will discuss how Google uses search algorithms to find what you’re looking for!

First, as a search engine Google provides users with relevant information based on their search. The search engine ranking or SERP is made up of a combination of algorithms. These algorithms analyze what the searcher’s intent was and to return results to fulfill that objective. Google is constantly refining and adjusting their algorithms to assess searches and the results in finer detail. The goal is to make the SERP more accurate so it works better for you.

How it works has no quick, easy answer. To better understand how search algorithms work we have broken in down into 5 parts.

Part 1: Analysis

Analyzing what you want, through the use of words, a search engine deciphers what you want, including misspellings, and this is done through indexing. Factors that contribute to faster or slower return may include domain and page authority (relevance to your search), content schedule (frequency of content publishing), and the popularity of the website.

Part 2: Search Matching

Next is webpage matching. Similar to Part 1: Analysis, search matching analyzes how often your search criteria appears on the web page, in content, or in other relevant places like images..

Part 3: Page Ranking

When you begin a search, have you ever thought about quantity of web pages with the potential relevant information you want? Thousands? Millions? No? Me either – you want the right information, quick, and now, right?

Google uses Googlebot with the support of crawling and indexing for a more robust search. Googlebot, a search software, collects and adds information to its seemingly endless index through the crawlers that continually move from website to website to feed it’s appetite for information.

Part 4: Context

Your information matters. Search algorithms count on your personal information such as previous search history, settings, and even location. This information is used to deliver relevant content to you for your specific area or location.

Think about the search term “football.” If your location is in London, you are more likely to retrieve soccer related content. As compared to the same search performed in Atlanta, which would most surely show NFL related content in general and Atlanta Falcons related content specifically..

Part 5: Results

This is where the rubber meets the road. Before you see your results, the information is calculated and sorted by relevance. Now is when a website’s SEO comes into play. Simply put, when the keywords entered your search engine match the keywords on a website, it’s a hit!

Algorithms work with a specific purpose in mind. In the case of a search engine, it is to produce the results the user wants. For example, the Panda algorithm was designed to examine content. While the Penguin algorithm evaluates links. While each algorithm is separate, they work together to influence rankings.

Remember, algorithms count on content, URLs, external and internal links, and images just to name a few factors. Take time to review your online presence and reach more users by optimizing your website through your content with keywords, meta tags, etc.