

# What Is Google Search Console?

You want to find the best ways to boost website performance and organic search rankings when selling your products or promoting your brand-new blog. Fortunately, investing consistent energy and time into improving the site's Search Engine Optimization (SEO) will do you good.

You need to optimize the website for Google's algorithm because it is the number one search engine. However, how the algorithm works is a tightly kept secret; but you have access to free tools that can gather insights and data to make your site easier to find. Google Search Console (GSC) is one such valuable tool.

So, what is Google Search Console?

Here we roll up our sleeves and explore everything about GSC, what it is, and what it can do to improve your website's visibility on Google.

## What Exactly Is Google Search Console?

Google Search Console (formerly Google Webmaster Tools) is a free dashboard that allows owners to improve website performance in the Google Search results. The tool offers you everything you need to boost search rankings.

You do not need Google Console to rank a site highly, but the free tool provides valuable insights into how the search engine views web pages and indexes them. The information is invaluable in streamlining and optimizing your website, especially if you are new to SEO.

The Console also has ongoing features that help those experienced in SEO to stay on top of new critical updates and rectify potential issues early. For instance, Google can send notifications when it has trouble crawling or indexing your pages. The notices allow you to fix the problem immediately without affecting your Search Engine Results Page (SERP) ranking.

# How To Access Google Search Console

Now that you understand Google Search Console, sign up to use the free tool. Accessing the console ensures you can improve your website and boost search rankings while drawing in new visitors. Here is the two-step process.

## Step 1—Add Your Site

Sign into your Google account using a business account (for an online business website) and head over to the GSC home page at <https://search.google.com/search-console> and click on Start Now button. The action allows adding your site to the Search Console.

Select a property type, either a site domain or URL prefix. You must use the right format as below:

- For Domain: `yourwebsite.com`
- For URL Prefix: `https://www.yourwebsite.com`

You must verify site ownership if you choose the domain option. The URL prefix allows using multiple verification options. Next, tap on Continue.

## Step 2—Verifying Your Domain

Website verification involves downloading the HTML file from GSC and uploading it to your site. Remember to keep the file even after verifying.

The GSC offers other methods of verifying website ownership apart from HTML file upload, including:

- An HTML meta tag that you copy and paste into the head section of the website home page
- Using a Google Analytics tracking code
- Using your Google Tag Manager container ID
- Signing into your domain name provider and pasting a given TXT record into the DNS configuration

After selecting the confirmation method, tap on the Verify button. The step allows Google to check if you own the site. The last step gives you access to your website's SEO and performance analytics.

# Notable Features Of Google Search Console

Now that you have set up and can access Google Search Console, the next step is to examine your website data to improve your SEO. However, the console presents a host of analytics that might be overwhelming.

Here is a list of the search features in GSC that can help optimize your site and make the process easier.

## URL Inspection Tool

The URL inspection tool shows you what Google sees when viewing your page. It is invaluable for troubleshooting whether your pages appear properly in Google's search results.

For each URL you submit, you can:

- Request indexing for any pages you update
- View how google discovers the page using referring internal pages and sitemaps
- View the last time Google crawled the URL
- Check if the search engine is using the declared canonical URL or another
- Inspect the page for mobile usability issues
- Confirm enhancements such as breadcrumbs
- Confirm linking sites

## Performance Reports

The "Performance" tab of GSC shows all keywords your website covers over the last 16 months. The reports offer four checkable options:

- Clicks—These are the total clicks on search queries that take visitors to your site
- Impressions—The frequency at which your site appears on Google
- Click Through Rate (CTR)—The rate at which people click through to your site
- Position—This is the average position over a selected period of a specific URL or keyword

Besides the four options, you also get these data views that are selectable for a focused analysis:

- Searches—The number of keywords for which your website is visible
- Countries—Where the organic visits come from
- Search format—How the pages compare with structured data

- Pages—The pages visible on Google
- Devices—The devices your website visitors are using
- Date—The period for which you want to view the data

You can compare or filter all these data views on the performance report. Some interesting analyses you can carry out include identifying keyword cannibalization and finding search intent.

## Sitemaps

A sitemap is an XML file listing critical pages on your website so search engines can discover them easily. You need a sitemap if your website is large or difficult to crawl because of regular new content.

You can create an XML sitemap and submit it to Google via the Search Console. Also, ensure you submit an updated sitemap when you revamp a website. However, remove the old one to prevent data from clogging your account.

## Indexing Reports

Indexing Coverage reports show the crawling and indexing status of all URLs Google discovers for your site. The information informs you of any technical issues preventing your web pages from being indexed or crawled correctly.

Aim to increase the number of validly indexed pages by solving any errors or warnings the Google index coverage report throws. However, Google will not index all URLs on your website, just the canonical pages.

## Security & Manual Actions

Search Console offers actionable insights into your website's performance and clues on areas that require improvement. Security features include automated checks to identify issues such as dodgy scripts, social engineering, malware injection, and hacking via the manual actions tab.

Google manual actions are a way for the search engine to demote or remove websites or web pages from indexing. The feature is not related to algorithm changes but is a way of punishing sites for spammy behavior.

Types of manual actions include:

- Unnatural links to your website
- Thin content
- Hidden text and keyword stuffing
- Spammy free hosts

## Page Experience

The Google Page Experience report feature indicates the mobile URL percentage on your site. The report includes pages with a “good” experience, “failing” URLs, and organic search impressions from your “good” URLs.

This report tracks the quality of your website page experience based on:

- Mobile-friendliness
- Security and HTTPS
- Advertising experience
- Core Web Vitals metrics

Use the report to track the impact of metrics on your organic search channel and identify URL-level opportunities for improving page experience and search performance.

## Core Web Vitals

The Core Web Vitals report contains a set of factors Google considers critical for improving a user’s experience. It includes three specific user interactions and site speed measurements:

- First input delay
- Largest contentful paint
- Cumulative layout shift

## Mobile Usability

The Mobile Usability report helps you identify any issues website visitors experience when using their handheld devices. You get chart labels for each page on your website, identifying whether it is mobile-friendly or not.

Some errors the Mobile Usability tab report can identify include:

- The text is too small
- Clickable elements are too close together

- Problems with CLS and LCP

## Enhancements—Structured Data

The Enhancements section of the GSC dashboard helps you track and manage optional elements of your website. There is an AMP test, a mobile usability test, and breadcrumbs. All the tabs in the section show the number of valid enhancements, errors, or warnings you have.

Use Google Search Console Enhancements reports to find and fix issues likely affecting site performance in search and page speed. Resolving the problems, reading the attached support documentation, and validating the fixes will increase the chances of earning reach search results.

## Link Reports

Link Reports help you understand the internal and external links in and to your website.

The Links report offers several sections, including:

- Text with the most links to a page
- The page with more internal links than others
- The page with the most external links
- Websites with the most links to your website

## How To Take Your GSC Data To The Next Level

The Google Search Console is a fascinating tool that can help improve your website for better ranking. However, do not focus on working with the Search Console data in the native user interface.

To get the most out of the Search Console data, you need to:

- Extract parts of the rich data source
- Visualize the data in interesting dashboards for quick overviews that can help when discussing the website design

One way of taking the GSC data to the next level is using SEOTesting.

## SEOTesting.com

SEOTesting is an SEO tool that uses data from Google Search Console and presents it meaningfully. The tool makes it easy to run SEO tests to find out what changes bring the best results and advice on what to scale up.

SEOTesting.com's reporting module automatically sends you reports that help monitor progress from GSC data. Overall, the platform is highly effective for search engine optimization experts and website owners.

## Frequently Asked Questions

Here are some common questions we come across about Google Search Console.

### Is Google Search Console good for SEO?

The Search Console is an excellent free and powerful SEO tool. It is the best mechanism for communicating relevant data from Google to SEO managers. You gain access to information and features that can help improve SEO performance.

Some ways to use the Search Console to improve SEO include:

- Monitoring keyword ranking, average position, organic traffic, CTR, and other metrics
- Identifying sitemaps, disavowing files, and removals
- Troubleshooting and identifying mobile usability problems
- Analyzing crucial internal and external links, the top sites link, top linked pages, and anchor text allocation
- Tracking index coverage and checking if Google crawlers can index your web pages properly
- Improving search appearance instances

### Is Google Search Console the same as Google Analytics?

Both are free tools that help you understand how well your website ranks for particular key phrases and how much traffic they bring in. However, use the programs in tandem to get the most out of each.

Search Console is a site monitoring tool that shows where problems are. However, the Console will not offer insight into search trends or user intent likely affecting your traffic.

Instead, Google Analytics (GA) offers you data on the users and how search results adapt to new trends. The tool is critical for creating a proactive approach to the type of content you produce to ensure consistent traffic growth and maintenance for the long haul.

## Why Is Google Search Console not matching Google Analytics?

Google Search Console and Google Analytics numbers will never match for your website. This is because they use different measurement parameters.

Some reasons they never match include:

- GA measures at the website level, while GSC is a measure of the search result
- GSC always runs on Pacific Daylight Time
- GSC clicks depend on Google Search clicks, while GA measures Google Search and Google Ads clicks
- GSC tracks only one domain per account, while GA can track multiple sub-domains in a single account
- GSC can measure data from web pages that block JavaScript, while GA will not
- There is a 1,000-page limit for GSC when recording landing pages, and GA does not have such limitations
- Ad-blocking software affects data in GA

Remember, someone clicking on a search result does not mean they visit your site. They can close the browser, tap or hit the back button before a page loads, which GSC tracks as a click but GA will not record it.

## How far back does Google Search Console data go?

The Google Search Console keeps your website data for up to 16 months after crawling the pages. You can view how updates to your website content affect the overall site performance within 48 hours.

However, the Console only crawls a subset of your website pages, and Analytics might monitor another set. This means comparing the two datasets is hard because they track different things.