

This Free E-Book is brought to you by Natural-Aging.com.

100% Effective Natural Hormone Treatment
Menopause, Andropause And Other Hormone Imbalances
Impair Healthy Healing In People Over The Age Of 30!

How To Use Flash In Your Site And Still Be Search Engine Friendly

By George Peirson

Do you want to have a feature rich web site with animations, sound, and an opening splash screen?

Do you want to use Flash extensively on your site but you are afraid of hurting your search engine positioning?

Do you require an opening splash page but were told that the search engines could not index your site if you had one?

Well there are ways to have the benefits of Flash on your site and still be attractive to search engines. It is all in how the Flash is used. Some of the methods are simple while others require more programming experience. But we all can use Flash without driving away the search engines.

First let's look at the problem. Search engines index a site by looking at the content. In this case we are talking about text content, not pictures, video, sound, or animation. A basic rule of thumb on having a very search engine friendly site is to have high quality, targeted content in text form and limiting the use of anything that can get in the way of the search engines analyzing this content.

But what about Flash? Flash converts everything into a Flash file, or SWF file playable by the Flash Player plug-in. All the text in this Flash file will be converted from text to vector graphics, and since the search engines cannot read text in a graphic, they will be unable to read the text in a Flash file. Therefore they will be unable to index the information in the site.

So how to we get around this seemingly insurmountable problem? It is all in how we use Flash in our site. The trick is to either wrap the Flash inside normal html coding, or by using xhtml you can have Flash display text from an external source. I will limit this article to the easier methods for using Flash in a search engine friendly manner.

Let's look at the three main ways we may want to use Flash on a website:

1. Splash Page

How To Use Flash In Your Site And Still Be Search Engine Friendly

2. Flash navigation

3. Flash content

Starting with the Flash Splash page there are a couple of ways to handle this. If we just have the Flash Splash page as the opening page to our web site there will be no way aside from the meta tags for the search engines to index the page, let alone find any more pages in your site.

The trick here is to give the search engines something to work with. This can be easily done in two ways. You can put a text only navigation bar just below the splash screen, this way the search engines can at least find the other pages in your site. But to allow the search engines to index the actual splash screen here is a neat trick. Place the Flash file in a layer, you can then float that layer over the web

page allowing you to hide all the plain html text you want underneath the Flash layer. This has the added benefit of giving content to visitors who do not have the Flash player installed on their system.

With a Flash navigation bar things are much easier. As long as only the navigation is in Flash the rest of the page can use search engine friendly text, plus you can put a text only navigation bar across the bottom of the page so that the search engines can find the rest of your pages. This is a good idea anyway and one that I always follow. Plus when a visitor reaches the bottom of your page they have some links to follow without having to scroll back up the page to your navigation bar.

Using Flash content in your web site follows the basic principles outlined above. As long as you have some text based content for the search engines to index you will be OK. I have found that having Flash animation on the top of my page where it fills the screen, followed by additional text is a nice hybrid approach. It gives your visitors the content rich experience you want to provide plus gives the search engines all the text based content they need for proper search engine indexing.

If you really want or need a complete Flash site there is one more thing you can do. This requires more work, but it will keep your site in the search engines. Create two versions of your web site, one in Flash and one using regular HTML. Have a simple home page that allows visitors to select either the Flash or HTML version of your site. Include on this home page your main keywords and navigation links to at least your site map and main pages so that the search engines can find their way around your site. This gives you the best of both worlds, the fully feature rich Flash site, and a search engine friendly HTML web site.

One final note, Google now is able to index Flash files, pulling out the text content from the SWF files. This is a great advance and allows us to use Flash more freely on our web sites, but note that they are pulling the TEXT out of the Flash file. So in order to make your Flash files Google friendly you need to include your search engine optimized text as text inside the Flash file, just like you would in a regular html web page.

So with proper planning and a few tricks we can have a very rich Flash site and still benefit from easy search engine indexing.

George Peirson a professional software trainer and consultant. He is the author of over 30 multimedia based tutorial training titles. To see training sets and other articles by George Peirson visit

<http://www.howtogurus.com>

Article copyright 2005 George Peirson

Flash Tricks For Improved Search Engine Rankings

By George Peirson

Normal wisdom says that if you use Flash in a web site it will hurt your search engine placement. This is due primarily to search engines having a hard time to index Flash content. But with a little ingenuity we can use that very problem to our advantage.

Let's first take a look at how search engine indexing can cause you problems on your web site.

Most web sites are built up of menus and context areas. The menus are frequently text based, making them easy to update or change. The content is dependent on our writing creativity. Both of these can lead to search engine indexing trouble.

Search Engines look through the text on your pages, menus as well as content and they create their index on what they find. So far so good. But just how do the search engines do this? They can't look at your page and decide which is the main content area visually, so they simply start at the top of the code and work down.

If your site follows the standard pattern of a navigation bar on either the top or down the left side of the page and uses a table structure to achieve this, then your whole nav bar will be read and indexed before your main content area. If your site has a lot of variation then this shouldn't be a problem. But what if your site is focused on one subject and your navigation bar tends to repeat words? As an example you may have a site that sells watches and your nav bar may read like this: Men's Watches, Ladies Watches, Sport Watches, etc. You can see how easy it is to repeat that word Watches.

Search engines like to give points to sites that contain valuable content that is easily categorized and recognizable to visitors, but they also take away points for keyword spamming. In the above Watch example, the nav bar could easily cause your page to be listed as a keyword spammer.

Here is the first Flash Trick to improve your ranking. Create the navigation bar in Flash. This way all those repeating words are now hidden from the search engine spiders. As an added benefit the code taken up by the Flash will probably be less than the code used in the text based nav bar. This will help the search engine spiders to focus on the main content area of your page.

Let's now look at another common problem with search engine indexing. In this example consider a shopping site selling the same watches as in our previous example. Each watch page will have a description of the individual watch, and that is fine. But each page may also have "boiler plate" text as

How To Use Flash In Your Site And Still Be Search Engine Friendly

well. There may possibly be a standard description for a particular watch brand, or possibly warranty or shipping information included on the page.

Another red flag that goes up for the search engine spiders is text repeating from page to page. The more distinct each page is the more likely the search engines will consider the text as relevant. If there is too much repeated text, the search engines may even drop all the pages that they believe have duplicated text. Not a good situation, especially if you don't want to be forced into creating completely original text for every page on your site.

Here is Flash Trick number two. Keep all the distinct content on your pages as html text and convert

any repeating text areas into Flash files that are placed into the pages. This way, only the distinct text is visible to the search engines and your repeating text is hidden in the Flash file. Any text that you tend to repeat from page to page is a prime candidate for the Flash treatment.

So take a look through your web site. Do you have text menus that use repetitive words? Do you use boiler plate text, or have repeated text areas on several pages? If so you should let Flash's disadvantage of being search engine unfriendly become your advantage on making a search engine friendly site.

George Peirson is a successful Internet Trainer. He is the author of over 30 multimedia based tutorial training titles covering such topics as Photoshop, Flash and Dreamweaver. To read his other articles and see his training sets visit

<http://www.howtogurus.com>

Article copyright 2005 George Peirson



This Free E-Book has been brought to you by Natural-Aging.com.

[100% Effective Natural Hormone Treatment](#)
Menopause, Andropause And Other Hormone Imbalances
Impair Healthy Healing In People Over The Age Of 30!