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Sitemaps and Hypertext Links: "Food" for Search Engine Robots

By Daria Goetsch

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Sitemaps and hypertext links are "food" for search engine robots. We will look at the value of text links for optimal spidering, and the importance of using a sitemap in order to help search engine robots reach your website's deeper pages.

Hypertext Links

Search engine robots are not terribly sophisticated. They cannot click a button, submit a form, pull down a menu, or perform any other type of online "user interaction" that might be used by a human visitor. Robots are able to index the text on a page and click through hypertext links. For this reason, adding navigational text links to your web pages (often located at the bottom of the page) provides the search engine robots with another means to click through the links of your web pages when it cannot access these other types of navigation.

No matter how great your JavaScript menu system is, the search engine robots cannot use it. They can follow "plain old" hyperlinks, and that's about it. Since the ability to move around on your site is vital to the robots' successful indexing of your content, you want to make it as easy as possible for them to visit all of your pages. Use of text links at the bottom of your pages, while hardly cutting-edge, is one of the best ways to make sure that the search engine robots can move around on your site. Be sure to include links to your site's principal pages on all the pages in your site. Always remember to put a link to your sitemap page here too.

Sitemaps

A sitemap page is a supercharged version of the bottom-of-the-page hypertext links. The sitemap provides "food" for a hungry search engine robot. A sitemap page will at very least have links to all of the major pages on your site. Depending on the size of your site, it may actually link to all of your pages. This means that once the robot gets to the sitemap page, it can visit every page on your entire site. Having all of the content of your site included in the search engine database is a good thing: you are much more likely to come-up in the search engine results when somebody is performing a search related to your topic.

A good sitemap will:

Provide text links to at least the most important pages on your site; depending on the size of the site, it may have links to every page

Give a short explanation of each page on your site, to inform your visitors about your website

Give your visitors the information they need when lost in your website, and show them how to reach the page they are looking for

Provide a pathway for the search engine robots to follow in order to reach your most important pages

Provide important keyword phrases in the sitemap text and hypertext links that help the automated search engine robot "understand" what the page is about

Help search engine robots find static landing pages that then link to dynamically generated pages they may not otherwise find

Even if your website is small, add a sitemap for your visitors and for the search engine robots.

To make your sitemap most attractive to the search engine robots and your human visitors, be sure to include descriptive text along with the page URLs and links. Use your keywords in that text, including appropriate content for each of the pages to which you link. Be careful not to overuse your keyword phrases, though, or you may be penalized in the rankings. Remember that this is a map that will be used by both search engine robots and your human visitors. If the content of the page makes sense to the people who visit your site, chances are it will make sense to the visiting robots as well.

When you make it easy for your visitors to navigate your site, they will find what they are looking for. When you make it easy to search engine robots to move around on your site, you increase your chances of being favorably listed in their search results.

Daria Goetsch is the founder and Search Engine Marketing Consultant for Search Innovation (www.searchinnovation.com), a Search Engine Promotion company serving small businesses. Besides running her own company, Daria is an associate of WebMama.com, an Internet web marketing strategies company. She has specialized in search engine optimization since 1998, including three years as the Search Engine Specialist for O'Reilly & Associates, a technical book publishing company.

How Search Engines Work

By Matt Colyer

Before anyone can start optimizing a web site, you must understand how search engines work.

Search engine optimization is the hardest thing to do for a webmaster because there are so many

rules to it and you have to stay up to date with all the new search engine optimization techniques.

Search engines send out what is know as a robot or some people call them spiders to index your web page. They find web pages by links, When a robot finds a link on a web page it will follow it to that page (you can join www.linkexchangeit.com to trade links with other members). Each search engine has it's own robot and each robot acts different, then other robots. Some robots will index all of your web site in day and others will take weeks before they get all of your web pages. A spider is a computer software that moves from web page to web page by links gathering information.

After a robot has indexed your web page it is sent to a database which holds large amount of other web sites. After in the database your web page will be part of the search engine results. The way it indexes your web page and where it places it on its search engine results depends on a number of factors that are on your site.

Search engines will rank your web page based on the information robots receive from indexing. The better you have SEO your site, the higher the ranking.

Matt Colyer is the owner of the

Network and is a part-time SEO. He also is a php, CGI

and ASP developer.

How Search Engines Work

How To Get All Of Your Web Pages Indexed In The Major Search Engines

Search Engine Robots – How They Work, What They Do (Part II)

Using "Robots" Meta Tags

The role of the robots.txt file to improve site ranking!

Hitting the Search Engines

AX Gold's Download Page Protector

Clickbank Search Engine

AX Gold's Website Guardian

7 Ways to get Great Links to your Website



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