



Search Engine Tips from Im1 Web Hosting

<http://www.im1.com/>

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This document is provided to assist our hosting and server clients in avoiding some of the pitfalls that many sites hit when starting to promote to search engines. You should build your site as if search engines do not exist, then optimize for them afterwards. Do not design your site around the search engines. They change rapidly and valid assumptions from even a few months ago may no longer be correct today. You should also keep this in mind as you follow through our list below. Visit the sites at the end for the most up-to-date information.

How not to show up in the Search Engines

1. **Using frames on your site:** This is the number one way to make your site invisible to search engines. If you don't believe this, take a look at your site in a text-based browser such as Lynx from <http://lynx.browser.org>
2. **Using pictures instead of text for your content:** Pictures are fine for people once they find your site, but lots of pictures have no relevance to search engine spiders. They have no way to quantify what the pictures mean. If you place pictures on your pages, use alt tags and give not only a text description for the search engine, but also height and width- these attributes help browsers lay out the page more quickly, resulting in better page performance.
3. **Using redirections:** If the web page you submit only contains a redirection to another web site, most search engines will skip your web site completely. Submitting redirection web pages is considered "spamming" the search engines. Pages that contain valid content visible to the audience are the only way to go. If you try to cheat the search engine by serving up garbage redirection pages, you will likely find your site missing from the search engines shortly afterward.
4. **Your host has fleas:** If being found via search engines is important to your business, be very careful about where you have your pages hosted. If the hosting service also hosts spammers and pornographers, your site may be penalized or excluded if IP address for that service is also hosting pornography or spammer sites. Choosing the right web host for your needs is really important if you care about search engine positioning. Remember: "If you lay down with dogs, you'll wake up with fleas". Avoid web hosts that do not strictly enforce a no-spam or porn policy.
5. **Promoting too frequently:** Do not submit your site more often than once a month unless there are significant changes to your site. This will also be considered by most search engines to be "spam" and will cause your sites relevancy to drop or cause it to be skipped completely.
6. **Keyword Spamming:** A cute trick is to use white text on a white background or combined with the smallest font available. Do not be tempted to do this, most search engines can detect this feeble attempt to manipulate results and will likely block your site.
7. **Dynamic Web Page creation:** Most Web pages that are created dynamically by a database will not be able to be spidered by the search engines. If the URL contains a ? symbol, everything after the ? will be ignored by all search engines that I am aware of at the time of this writing. If you must use dynamically created pages, have the pages pull your products out of a database statically. We have several examples of sites using CartIt shopping cart and a database that does create dynamic pages that the search engines can spider. If you must use those special characters in the URLs then you will need to create a set of static pages to go along with (point to) the dynamic ones. The static pages should contain full text descriptions of your products and services.

8. **Incorrect keywords:** Are you using the right keywords for your site. Don't put "Brittany Spears" on a page about auto transmissions. Not only will it frustrate people who do find your site; it may lead to your site being banned for "spamming" the search engine.
9. **Using a free web host:** Many search engines limit the number of pages they will index from a single domain or choose not to index pages from some sites hosted at Geocities, Tripod or Xoom.
10. **Your site has a robots.txt exclusion tag:** If your web server contains a robots.txt file that contains the NOINDEX command then the search engines (polite ones, at least) will ignore it. A robots.txt file is not bad; you just need to be sure it directs the search engine correctly. An Intranet site, for example, should not be indexed for a search engine unless it has public data on it. The robots.txt could tell the search engine to ignore that site and not spider it if you place a NOINDEX line in the file.
11. **Your web pages require a cookie:** Some search engines will not index web pages that require a cookie in order to view. Internet Explorer 6.0 has a default security setting to disallow cookies from third party sites by default. This support is for the Platform for Privacy (P3P) Project. You will want to visit <http://www.w3.org/P3P/> for details on making your site P3P compliant.
12. **Your site is not popular enough:** Amazingly, sometimes you sit in front of a cold stove with some search engines (as soon as they feel some heat, they'll throw in some wood). If too few web pages link to your web site, then you will be low in the relevancy list for search engine results. Trade links with sites that have complimentary products. For example, if you manufacture kit car bodies, trade a link with a company that sells the kit car chassis or suspension components (even if you too sell the components on your site). Remember *trade* a link. It works for both sites.

What Should I do?

Now that you know what not to do, I suppose we should tell you what to do. The first site we recommend to anyone wanting to promote a site is <http://www.selfpromotion.com/>. This site is one of the best places to get a free education on promoting your site. Another good place to check is <http://www.searchmechanics.com/> who have a few good white papers and articles available at no cost. Search Mechanics also have a good tool for getting your site ready to submit. I recommend you take a look at both of these sites before embarking on a search engine submission campaign.

Im1 Web Hosting wish you the best of success in your online endeavors.