Google Clarifies Structured Data Rules For Returns & Loyalty Programs via @sejournal, @MattGSouthern

Google has updated its structured data documentation to clarify how merchants should implement markup for return policies and loyalty programs.

The updates aim to reduce confusion and ensure compatibility with Google Search features.

Key Changes In Return Policy Markup

The updated documentation clarifies that only a limited subset of return policy data is supported at the product level.

Google now explicitly states that comprehensive return policies must be defined using the MerchantReturnPolicy type under the Organization markup. This ensures a consistent policy across the full catalog.

In contrast, product-level return policies, defined underOffer, should be used only for exceptions and support fewer properties.

Google explains in its return policy documentation:

> *"Product-level return policies support only a subset of the properties available for merchant-level return policies."*

Loyalty Program Markup Must Be Separate

For loyalty programs, Google now emphasizes that the MemberProgram structured data must be defined under the Organization markup, either on a separate page or in Merchant Center.

While loyalty benefits like member pricing and points can still be referenced at the product level via UnitPriceSpecification, the program structure itself must be maintained separately.

Google notes in the loyalty program documentation:

> *"To specify the loyalty benefits… separately add UnitPriceSpecification markup under your Offer structured data markup."*

What's Not Supported

Google's documentation now states that shipping discounts and extended return windows offered as loyalty perks aren't supported in structured data.

While merchants may still offer these benefits, they won't be eligible for enhanced display in Google Search results.

This is particularly relevant for businesses that advertise such benefits prominently within loyalty programs.

Why It Matters

The changes don't introduce new capabilities, but they clarify implementation rules that have been inconsistently followed or interpreted.

Merchants relying on offer-level markup for return policies or embedding loyalty programs directly in product offers may need to restructure their data.

Here are some next steps to consider:

- Audit existing markup to ensure return policies and loyalty programs are defined at the correct levels.
- Use product-level return policies only when needed, such as for exceptions.
- Separate loyalty program structure from loyalty benefits, using MemberProgram under Organization, and validForMemberTier under Offer.

Staying compliant with these updated guidelines ensures eligibility for structured data features in Google Search and Shopping.

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https://www.searchenginejournal.com/google-clarifies-structured-data-rules-for-returns-loyalty-programs/550952/