Google Updates JavaScript SEO Docs With Canonical Advice via @sejournal, @MattGSouthern

Google updated its JavaScript SEO documentation with new guidance on handling canonical URLs for JavaScript-rendered sites.

The documentation update also adds corresponding guidance to Google's best practices for consolidating duplicate URLs.

What's New

The updated documentation focuses on a timing issue specific to JavaScript sites: canonicalization can happen twice during Google's processing.

Google evaluates canonical signals once when it first crawls the raw HTML, then again after rendering the JavaScript. If your raw HTML contains one canonical URL and your JavaScript sets a different one, Google may receive conflicting signals.

The documentation notes that injecting canonical tags via JavaScript is supported but not recommended. When JavaScript sets a canonical URL, Google can pick it up during rendering, but incorrect implementations can cause issues.

Multiple canonical tags, or changes to an existing canonical tag during rendering, can lead to unexpected indexing results.

Related: What Happens When Google Picks The Wrong Canonical

URL?

Best Practices

Google recommends two best practices depending on your site's architecture.

The preferred method is setting the canonical URL in the raw HTML response to match the URL your JavaScript will ultimately render. This gives Google consistent signals before and after rendering.

If JavaScript must set a different canonical URL, Google recommends leaving the canonical tag out of the initial HTML. This can help avoid conflicting signals between the crawl and render phases.

The documentation also reminds developers to ensure only one canonical tag exists on any given page after rendering.

See also: Google Issues Statement About Support for Cross-Domain Canonicals

Why This Matters

This guidance addresses a subtle detail that can be easy to miss when managing JavaScript-rendered sites.

The gap between when Google crawls your raw HTML and when it renders your JavaScript creates an opportunity for canonical signals to diverge.

If you use frameworks like React, Vue, or Angular that handle routing and page structure client-side, it's worth checking how your canonical tags are implemented. Look at whether your server response includes a canonical tag and whether your JavaScript modifies or duplicates it.

In many cases, the fix is to coordinate your server-side and

client-side canonical implementations so they send the same signal at both stages of Google's processing.

See also: Google Shows How To Confirm Indexing Issues Due To JavaScript

Looking Ahead

This documentation update clarifies behavior that may not have been obvious before. It doesn't change how Google processes canonical tags.

If you're seeing unexpected canonical selection in Search Console's Page indexing reporting, check for mismatches between your raw HTML and rendered canonical tags. The URL Inspection tool shows both the raw and rendered HTML, which makes it possible to compare canonical implementations across both phases.

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