

Google webspam report: Cracking down on renegade linking practices, auto- generated content

Google discovers more than 25 billion spammy pages a day, according to its annual webspam report released Tuesday. The company also published a companion post on why it's important to keep spam out of search results.

The definition of spam. "We define 'spam' as using techniques that attempt to mimic [high quality content] signals without actually delivering on the promise of high quality content, or other tactics that might prove harmful to searchers," the post reads.

A more comprehensive list of spammy behaviors can be found on Google's Webmaster Guidelines.

How Google stops spam. In the majority of cases, Google automatically identifies spammy behavior and ensures that those pages don't rank well in search results.

The company also uses human analysts to determine if content or sites are spammy. The human review process often leads to improved automated systems. "We look to understand how that spam got past our systems and then work to improve our detection, so that we catch the particular case and automatically detect many other similar cases overall," the post reads.

Spammy content is often demoted or removed completely from the search results. Google may also give site owners the opportunity to resolve issues by sending them manual actions via Google Search Console.

Highlights from the webspam report. Below are some figures that the company emphasized in its webspam report:

- Google says its efforts ensure that more than 99% of visits from its results lead to spam-free experiences.
- Paid links and link exchanges have been made less effective, with Google catching more than 90% of link spam.
- In 2018, it reduced user-generated spam (spam accounts on forums, blogs, and other platforms, as well as the posts they create) by 80%; “this type of abuse did not grow in 2019,” the company said.
- The impact of spammy sites (those that feature auto-generated or scraped content) on search users has been reduced by more than 60% compared to 2018.
- Google received nearly 230,000 search spam reports in 2019 and was able to take action on 82% of them.
- The company generated over 90 million messages to site owners about issues that may affect their site’s appearance in search results as well as potential improvements.
- Roughly 4.3 million messages were sent regarding manual actions resulting from Webmaster Guidelines violations.

Why we care. Left unchecked, spam hurts the entire search ecosystem, including searchers and legitimate sites that appear in the results. A spam-free experience also increases the likelihood that users will continue to rely on Google and keeps advertisers paying to reach those audiences.

About The Author

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