Partial match domains in 2020: How to optimize and use effectively

30-second summary:

- Partial match domains refer to when your domain name has partially included the main keyword that you are trying to rank for.
- There are many aspects that make it different from how the exact match domain works.
- Tudor Lodge Consultants share a quick guide to help you succeed at partial match domains, understand the caveats, and optimize effectively.

Partial match domains refer to when your domain name has partially included the main keyword that you are trying to rank for.

Commonly used by SEO professionals to gain an advantage when it comes to ranking in the search engines or from business owners who have a company name that is closely linked to the services they offer or area they work in.

Examples of partial matches include having vital keywords like “insurance”, “loans”, or “casino” in the domain name or adding words like “hub”, “network”, or “quick” to the beginning or end of the domain, such as casinohub.com, everydayinsurance.com or quickmoney.com

This is different from an exact match domain (EMD) which stipulates the exact keywords you are trying to rank for in

your domain name e.g carinsurance.com, plumbing.com, bestcasinos.com

Content created in partnership with Tudor Lodge Consultants.

Why can partial match domains be an issue?

Historically, having an exact match or partial match domain was a sure-fire way to rank top for your target keywords – only for Google to weigh this down considerably in recent years as a way to make SEO positions more 'earned' rather than 'gained.'

Partial match and exact match domain have been shown to have a higher click-through-rate (CTR) in search results – largely because they mention the exact words that the customer is looking for. Unsurprisingly, these domains can be worth thousands and are put on sale through the likes of GoDaddy and 123 Reg.

Whilst having a partial match domain can be an advantage for SEO, there is always the risk of exposing your business to a Google penalty, especially as Google's guidelines become more strict and give preference to brands that demonstrate good use of the content, link-building, varied traffic sources, and user experience.

Although you may demonstrate very good SEO results initially, you may find yourself compromised during the next algorithm update, which could have a massive impact on your website and its rankings – and make it very challenging to recover from the penalty. Not to mention, the financial implications to you and your client.

Therefore, being conscious of partial matches and how they work for SEO is of vital importance.

When partial match domains are high risk

Partial matches are high risk when optimizing in an industry that is very highly competitive and prone to algorithm updates – such as casino or gamblings, loans and credit, finance and insurance, web hosting, FX, and more.

Reason 1: There is a risk that you may use too many keywords in your URL, meta-data, and content and this is deemed as keyword stuffing by Google and is therefore penalized in the next update.

Reason 2: You may be generating links back to the site, but getting your brand name linked back to the site might be considered overkill if it mentions high-risk words like “casino”, “loans”, or “insurance” too often.

When partial match domains are low risk

Partial match domains are low risk when targeting local SEO searches (that is, a location) or the keywords are not competitive.

After all, if you have the domain name malibu-hairdressers.com, there are only going to be a handful of hairdressers in the Malibu area to compete against and this is a viable name for a company in that area. Also, local SEO searches are not often included in algorithm updates, which makes them a safer bet and you can always gain good and free exposure through the three results that feature on Google Local Listings.

If your keywords are not competitive and you are more or less the only person in your industry, you should be low risk, since you may not need many optimizations to get to position

one of Google and the role of keyword stuffing does not come into play as much.

In addition, if your website is an information resource, you are trying to capture lots of search phrases and not heavily relying on just a few that might be struck by an algorithm. A website that is full of guides or news, should generate content and links more naturally, even though it has a partial match domain. Successful examples of sites like this include searchenginewatch.com, moneyadviceservice.co.uk, and smcrcompliance.com.

How to optimize partial match domains

1. Be as natural as possible

If you have a partial match domain and are already optimizing it, try to make the SEO as natural as possible. Create good quality content guides or blog posts and when getting links, drive them towards these pages, not your money pages.

If you are linking back money pages, use anchor like ‘read more’ or ‘find out more’ to hyperlink back to them. Try to stay clear or exact match or partial match anchor text as this could be seen as too spammy. It’s not too late to message all the links you have generated so far and get them redirected to safer pages or blog posts on your website. This approach may take longer but will be much more safer and effective long-term.

2. Manage your keyword stuffing

Try and avoid using the main keyword like “casino” or “insurance” too often. One of the simplest ways is to mention it one only in the meta-title, meta-description, and URL too.

Rather than: quickcarinsurance.com/car-insurance

Use: quickcarinsurance.com/car

3. Try to avoid using one from the start

If you can avoid using a partial match domain from the start, this would be ideal. As SEOs, we never know what is round the corner with Google's guidelines, but we can certainly see the trend of brands taking center stage on page one. So with this in mind, try using a brand name if you can.

Be clever with your domain name: You do not necessarily have to include the money word to get the value of a high-click-rate. You can be smart with your domain choices, such as the company Fetch.com which is a pick-up delivery app, or Paw.com for dog accessories, or GetIndemnity.co.uk, the large business insurance broker. Think of good synonyms or words connected to the brand, without compromising your Google ranking.

4. Manage the expectations of your client

The majority of SEO clients want quick results, even though we really need six to 12 months (or longer) to show the full impact of our work. When pitching to a client with a partial match or exact match domain, you need to manage expectations that there might be a fall in rankings during the course of a year due to an algorithm change – and you may need to make changes for this to recover. Someone with a long-term view on their SEO will appreciate this, but someone who wants quick results will not and will likely demand their money back before you know it.

More about:

> *Partial match domains in 2020: How to optimize and use effectively*