GOOGLE'S 200 RANKING FACTORS

The Complete List

Google has confirmed that they use approximately 200 ranking signals in their algorithm. However, they've never publicly listed them all. While this infographic is by no means official, it aggregates the best information we have about how Google ranks pages and websites.

DOMAIN FACTORS

DOMAIN AGE

In this video, Matt Cutts states that:

> "The difference between a domain that's six months old verses one year old is really not that big at all.".

In other words, they do use domain age...but it's not very important.

KEYWORD APPEARS IN TOP LEVEL DOMAIN

Doesn't give the boost that it used to, but having your keyword in the domain still acts as a relevancy signal. After all, they still bold keywords that appear in a domain name.

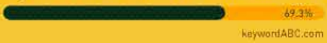
KEYWORD AS FIRST

DOMAIN

WORD IN DOMAIN

SEOMoz's 2011 Search Engine Ranking Factors panelists agreed that a domain that starts with their target keyword has an edge over sites that either don't have the keyword in their domain or have the keyword in the middle or end of their domain :

Keyword is the first word in the root domain name



REGISTRATION LENGTH

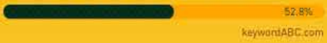
A Google patent states:

> "Valuable [legitimate] domains are often paid for several years in advance, while doorway [illegitimate] domains rarely are used for more than a year. Therefore, the date when a domain expires in the future can be used as a factor in predicting the legitimacy of a domain".

KEYWORD IN SUBDOMAIN NAME

SEOMoz's panel also agreed that a keyword appearing in the subdomain boosts rank :

Keyword is the subdomain name



DOMAIN HISTORY

A site with volatile ownership [via whois] or several drops may tell Google to "reset" the site's history, negating links pointing to the domain.

EXACT MATCH DOMAIN

EMDs may still give you an edge...if it's a quality site. But if the EMD happens to be a low-quality site, it's vulnerable to the EMD update: Matt Cutts states that

> "Minor weather report: small upcoming Google algo change will will reduce low-quality "exact-match" domains in search results."

PUBLIC VS. PRIVATE WHOIS

Private WhoIs information may be a sign of "something to hide". Matt Cutts is quoted as stating at Pubcon 2006:

> "...When I checked the whois on them, they all had "whois privacy protection service" on them. That's relatively unusual. ...Having whois privacy turned on isn't automatically bad, but once you get several of these factors all together, you're often talking about a very different type of webmaster than the fellow who just has a single site or so."

PENALIZED WHOIS OWNER

If Google identifies a particular person as a spammer it makes sense that they would scrutinize other sites owned by that person.

COUNTRY TLD EXTENSION

Having a Country Code Top Level Domain [.cn, .pt, .ca] helps the site rank for that particular country...but limits the site's ability to rank globally.

PAGE-LEVEL FACTORS

KEYWORD IN TITLE TAG

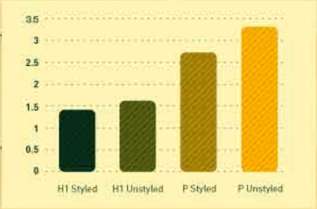
The title tag is a webpage's second most important piece of content (besides the content of the page) and therefore sends a strong relevancy signal.

KEYWORD IN DESCRIPTION TAG

Another important relevancy signal.

KEYWORD APPEARS IN H1 TAG

H1 tags are a "second title tag" that sends another relevancy signal to Google, according to results from this correlation study:

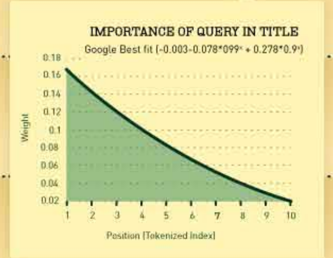


KEYWORD DENSITY

Although not as important as it once was, keyword density is still something Google uses to determine the topic of a webpage. But going overboard can hurt you.

TITLE TAG STARTS WITH KEYWORD

According to SEOMoz data, title tags that starts with a keyword tend to perform better than title tags with the keyword towards the end of the tag:

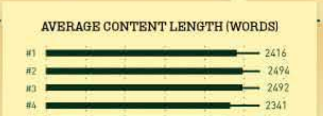


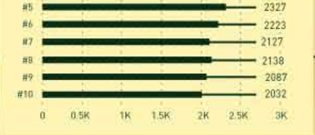
KEYWORD IS MOST FREQUENTLY USED PHRASE IN DOCUMENT

Having a keyword appear more than any other likely acts as a relevancy signal.

CONTENT LENGTH

Content with more words can cover a wider breadth and are likely preferred to shorter superficial articles. Microsite Masters found that content length correlated with SERP position:





LATENT SEMANTIC INDEXING KEYWORDS IN CONTENT (LSI)

LSI keywords help search engines extract meaning from words with more than one meaning (Apple the computer company vs. the fruit). The presence/absence of LSI probably also acts as a content quality signal.

LSI KEYWORDS IN TITLE AND DESCRIPTION TAGS

As with webpage content, LSI keywords in page meta tags probably help Google discern between synonyms. May also act as a relevancy signal.

PAGE LOADING SPEED VIA HTML

Both Google and Bing use page loading speed as a ranking factor. Search engine spiders can estimate your site speed fairy accurately based on a page's code and filesize.

DUPLICATE CONTENT

Identical content on the same site (even slightly modified) can negatively influence a site's search engine visibility.

REL=CANONICAL

When used properly, use of this tag may prevent Google from considering pages duplicate content.

PAGE LOADING SPEED VIA CHROME

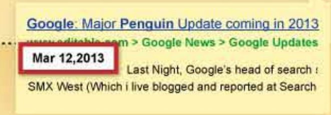
Google may also use Chrome user data to get a better handle on a page's loading time as this takes into account server speed, CDN usage and other non HTML-related site speed signals.

IMAGE OPTIMIZATION

Images on-page send search engines important relevancy signals through their file name, alt text, title, description and caption.

RECENCY OF CONTENT UPDATES

Google Caffeine update favors recently updated content, especially for time-sensitive searches. Highlighting this factor's importance, Google shows the date of a page's last update for certain pages:



Google: Major **Penguin** Update coming in 2013

m > Google News > Google Updates

Mar 12,2013

Last Night, Google's head of search

SMX West (Which i live blogged and reported at Search

MAGNITUDE OF CONTENT UPDATES

The significance of edits and changes is also a freshness factor. Adding or removing entire sections is a more significant update than switching around the order of a few words.

HISTORICAL UPDATES PAGE UPDATES

How often has the page been updated over time? Daily, weekly? Frequency of page updates also play a role in freshness.

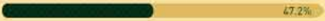
KEYWORD PROMINENCE

Having a keyword appear in the first 100-words of a page's content appears to be a significant relevancy signal.

KEYWORD IN H2, H3 TAGS

Having your keyword appear as a subheading in H2 or H3 format may be another weak relevancy signal. SEOMoz's panel agrees:

Keyword present in the page's H2 tag



KEYWORD WORD ORDER

An exact match of a searcher's keyword in a page's content will generally rank better than the same keyword phrase in a different order.

For example: consider a search for: "cat shaving techniques". A page optimized for the phrase "cat shaving techniques" will rank better than a page optimized for "techniques for shaving a cat".

GRAMMAR AND SPELLING

Proper grammar and spelling is a quality signal, although Cutts gave mixed messages in 2011 on whether or not this was important.

HELPFUL SUPPLEMENTARY CONTENT

According to a leaked Google Rater Guidelines Document, helpful supplementary content is an indicator of a page's quality. Examples include currency converters, loan interest calculators and interactive recipes.

NUMBER OF INTERNAL LINKS POINTING TO PAGE

The number of internal links to a page indicates its importance relative to other pages on the site.

BROKEN LINKS

Having too many broken links on a page may be a sign of a neglected or abandoned site. The Google Rater Guidelines Document uses broken links as one was to assess a homepage's quality.

AFFILIATE LINKS

Affiliate links themselves probably won't hurt your rankings. But if you have too many, Google's algorithm may pay closer attention to other quality signals to make sure you're not a "thin affiliate site".

HTML ERRORS/ WC3 VALIDATION

OUTBOUND LINK QUALITY

Many SEOs think that linking out to authority sites helps send trust signals to Google.

OUTBOUND LINK THEME

According to SEOMoz, search engines may use the content of the pages you link to as a relevancy signal. For example, if you have a page about cars that links to movie-related pages, this may tell Google that your page is about the movie Cars, not the automobile.

SYNDICATED CONTENT

Is the content on the page original? If it's scraped or copied from an indexed page it won't rank as well as the original or end up in their Supplemental Index.

NUMBER OF OUTBOUND LINKS

Too many dofollow OBLs may "leak" PageRank, which can hurt search visibility.

MULTIMEDIA

Images, videos and other multimedia elements may act as a content quality signal.

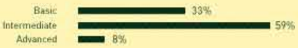
QUALITY OF INTERNAL LINKS POINTING TO PAGE

Internal links from authoritative pages on domain have a stronger effect than pages with no or low PR.

READING LEVEL

There's no doubt that Google estimates the reading level of webpages:

RESULT BY READING LEVEL FOR READING LEVEL :



But what they do with that information is up for debate. Some say that a basic reading level will help your page rank because it will appeal to the masses. However, Linchpin SEO discovered that reading level was one factor that separated quality sites from content mills.

PAGE HOST'S DOMAIN AUTHORITY

Lots of HTML errors or sloppy coding may be a sign of a poor quality site. While controversial, many in SEO think that WC3 validation is a weak quality signal.

PAGE'S PAGERANK

Not perfectly correlated. But in general higher PR pages tend to rank better than low PR pages.

URL PATH

A page closer to the homepage may get a slight authority boost.

PAGE CATEGORY

The category the page appears on is a relevancy signal. A page that's part of a closely related category should get a relevancy boost compared to a page that's filed under an unrelated or less related category.

KEYWORD IN URL

Another important relevancy signal.

REFERENCES AND SOURCES

Citing references and sources, like research papers do, may be a sign of quality. The Google Quality Guidelines states that reviewers should keep an eye out for sources when looking at certain pages:

> "This is a topic where expertise and/or authoritative sources are important...".

PRIORITY OF PAGE IN SITEMAP

The priority a page is given via the sitemap.xml file may influence ranking.

QUANTITY OF OTHER

All things being equal a page on an authoritative domain will higher than a page on a domain with less authority.

URL LENGTH

Search Engine Journal notes that excessively long URLs may hurt search visibility.

HUMAN EDITORS

Although never confirmed, Google has filed a patent for a system that allows human editors to influence the SERPs.

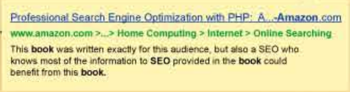
WORDPRESS TAGS

Tags are WordPress-specific relevancy signal. According to Yoast.com:

> "The only way it improves your SEO is by relating one piece of content to another, and more specifically a group of posts to each other"

URL STRING

The categories in the URL string are read by Google and may provide a thematic signal to what a page is about:



Professional Search Engine Optimization with PHP: A...-**Amazon**.com

www.amazon.com >...> Home Computing > Internet > Online Searching

This **book** was written exactly for this audience, but also a SEO who knows most of the information to **SEO** provided in the **book** could benefit from this **book.**

BULLETS AND NUMBERED LISTS

Bullets and numbered lists help break up your content for readers, making them more user friendly. Google likely agrees and may prefer content with bullets and numbers.

TOO MANY OUTBOUND LINKS

Straight from the aforementioned leaked document:

> "Some pages have way, way too many links, obscuring the page and distracting from the Main Content"

KEYWORDS PAGE RANKS FOR

If the page ranks for several other keywords it may give Google an internal sign of quality.

PAGE AGE

Although Google prefers fresh content, an older page that's regularly updated may outperform a newer page.

USER FRIENDLY LAYOUT

Citing the Google Quality Guidelines Document yet again:

> "The page layout on highest quality pages makes the Main Content immediately visible"

PARKED DOMAINS

A Google update in December of 2011 decreased search visibility of parked domains.

SITE-LEVEL FACTORS

CONTENT PROVIDES VALUE & UNIQUE INSIGHTS

Google has stated that they're on the hunt for sites that don't bring anything new or useful to the table, especially thin affiliate sites.

CONTACT US PAGE

The aforementioned Google Quality Document states that they prefer sites with an "appropriate amount of contact information". Supposed bonus if your contact information matches your whois info.

DOMAIN TRUST/ TRUSTRANK

Site trust — measured by how many links away your site is from highly-trusted seed sites — is a massively important ranking factor.

SITE ARCHITECTURE

A well put-together site architecture (especially a silo structure) helps Google thematically organize your content.

SITE UPDATES

How often a site is updated — and especially when new content is added to the site — is a site-wide freshness factor.

NUMBER OF PAGES

The number of pages a site is a weak sign of authority. At the very least a large site helps distinguish it from thin affiliate sites.

PRESENCE OF SITEMAP

A sitemap helps search engines index your pages

SITE UPTIME

Lots of downtime from site maintenance or server easier and more thoroughly, improving visibility.

SERVER LOCATION

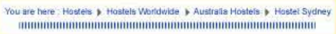
Server location may influence where your site ranks in different geographical regions. Especially important for geo-specific searches.

TERMS OF SERVICE AND PRIVACY PAGES

These two pages help tell Google that a site is a trustworthy member of the internet.

BREADCRUMB NAVIGATION

This is a style of user-friendly site-architecture that helps users (and search engines) know where they are on a site:



You are here : Hostels ▸ Hostels Worldwide ▸ Australia Hostels ▸ Hostel Sydney

Both SearchEngineJournal.com and Ethical SEO Consulting claim that this set-up may be a ranking factor.

SITE USABILITY

A site that's difficult to use or to navigate can hurt ranking by reducing time on site, pages viewed and bounce rate. This may be an independent algorithmic factor gleaned from massive amounts of user data.

USE OF GOOGLE ANALYTICS AND GOOGLE WEBMASTER TOOLS

Some think that having these two programs installed on your site can improve your page's indexing. They may also directly influence rank by giving Google more data to work with (ie. more accurate bounce rate, whether or not you get referall traffic from your backlinks etc.).

issues may hurt your ranking (and can even result in deindexing if not corrected).

SSL CERTIFICATE (ECOMMERCE SITES)

Google has confirmed that they index SSL certificates. It stands to reason that they'll preferentially rank ecommerce sites with SSL certificates.

DUPLICATE CONTENT ON-SITE

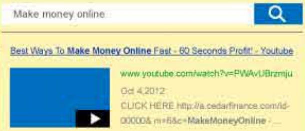
Google has confirmed that they index SSL certificates. It stands to reason that they'll preferentially rank ecommerce sites with SSL certificates.

MOBILE OPTIMIZED

Google's official stance on mobile is to create a responsive site. It's likely that responsive sites get an edge in searches from a mobile device.

YOUTUBE

There's no doubt that YouTube videos are given preferential treatment in the SERPs (probably because Google owns it) :



Make money online

Best Ways To **Make Money Online** Fast - 60 Seconds Profit' - Youtube

www.youtube.com/watch?v=PWAvUBrzmju

Oct 4,2012

CLICK HERE http://a.cedarfinance.com/id-00000& m=5&c=**MakeMoneyOnline** - ...

In fact, Search Engine Land found that YouTube.com traffic increased significantly after Google Panda.

USER REVIEWS/ SITE REPUTATION

A site's on review sites like Yelp.com and RipOffReport.com likely play an important role in the algorithm. Google even posted a rarely candid outline of their approach to user reviews after an eyeglass site was caught ripping off customers in an effort to get backlinks.

BACKLINK FACTORS

LINKING DOMAIN AGE

Links from aged domains may be more powerful than new domains.

OF LINKS FROM SEPARATE C-CLASS IPS

Links from seperate class-c IP addresses suggest a wider breadth of sites linking to you.

OF LINKING PAGES

The total number of linking pages — even if some are on the same domain — is a ranking factor.

ALT TAG (FOR IMAGE LINKS)

Alt text is an image's version of anchor text.

PR OF LINKING PAGE

The PageRank of the referring page is an extremely important ranking factor.

AUTHORITY OF LINKING DOMAIN

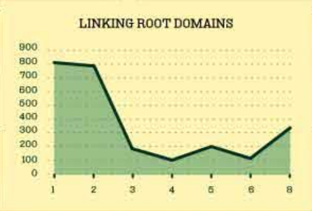
The referring domain's authority may play an independent role in a link's importance (ie. a PR2 page link from a site with a homepage PR3 may be worth less than a PR2 page link from PR8 Yale.edu).

SOCIAL SHARES OF REFERRING PAGE

The amount of page-level social shares may influence the link's value.

OF LINKING ROOT DOMAINS

The number of referring domains is one of the most important ranking factors in Google's algorithm, as you can see from this chart from SEOMoz (bottom axis is SERP position):



LINKS FROM .EDU OR .GOV DOMAINS

Matt Cutts has stated that TLD doesn't factor into a site's importance. However, that doesn't stop SEOs from thinking that there's a special place in the algo for .gov and .edu TLDs.

LINKS FROM COMPETITORS

Links from other pages ranking in the same SERP may be more valuable for a page's rank for that particular keyword.

LINKS FROM BAD NEIGHBORHOODS

Links from "bad neighborhoods" may hurt your site.

GUEST POSTS

Links coming from guest posts — especially in an author bio area — may not be as valuable as a contextual link on the same page.

NOFOLLOW LINKS

One of the most controversial topics in SEO. Google's official word on the matter is:

> "In general, we don't follow them."

Which suggests that they do...at least in certain cases. Having a certain % of nofollow links may also indicate a natural vs. unnatural link profile.

"SPONSORED LINKS" OR OTHER WORDS AROUND LINK

Words like "sponsors", "link partners" and "sponsored links" may decrease a link's value.

EXCESSIVE 301 REDIRECTS TO PAGE

Links coming from 301 redirects dilute some (or even all) PR, according to a Webmaster Help Video.

INTERNAL LINK ANCHOR TEXT

Internal link anchor text is another relevancy signal, although probably weighed differently than backlink anchor text.

LINK TITLE ATTRIBUTION

The link title (the text that appears when you hover over a link) is also used as a weak relevancy signals.

LINKS TO HOMEPAGE DOMAIN THAT PAGE SITS ON

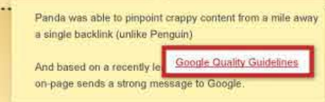
Links to a referring page's homepage may play special importance in evaluating a site's — and therefore a link's — weight.

DIVERSITY OF LINK TYPES

Having an unnaturally large percentage of your links come from a single source (ie. forum profiles, blog comments) may be a sign of webspam. On the other hand, links from diverse sources is a sign of a natural link profile.

CONTEXTUAL LINKS

Links imbedded inside a page's content is considered more powerful than links on an empty page or found elsewhere on the page:



Panda was able to pinpoint crappy content from a mile away a single backlink (unlike Penguin)

And based on a recently le Google Quality Guidelines on-page sends a strong message to Google.

BACKLINK ANCHOR TEXT

As noted in this description of Google's original algorithm:

> "First, anchors often provide more accurate descriptions of web pages than the pages themselves."

Obviously, anchor text is less important than before (and likely a webspam signal). But it still sends a strong relevancy signal in small doses.

COUNTRY TLD OF REFERRING DOMAIN

Getting links from country-specific top level domain extensions (.de, .cn, .co.uk) may help you rank better in that country.

LINK LOCATION IN CONTENT

Links the beginning of a piece of content carry slight more weight than links placed at the end of the content.

LINK LOCATION ON PAGE

Where a link appears on a page is important. Generally, links embedded in a page's content are more powerful than links in the footer or sidebar area.

LINKING DOMAIN RELEVANCY

A link from site in a similar niche is significantly more powerful than a link from a completely unrelated site.

PAGE LEVEL RELEVANCY

A link from a page that's closely tied to your niche is more powerful than a link from a page with content that has nothing to do with your site.

TEXT AROUND LINK SENTIMENT

Google has probably figured out whether or not a link to your site is a recommendation or part of a negative review. Links with positive sentiments around them likely carry more weight.

KEYWORD IN TITLE

Google gives extra love to links on pages that contain your page's keyword in the title ("Experts linking to experts".)

POSITIVE LINK VELOCITY

A site with positive link velocity usually gets a SERP boost.

NEGATIVE LINK VELOCITY

Negative link velocity can significantly reduce rankings as it's a signal of decreasing popularity.

LINKS FROM "HUB" PAGES

Aaron Wall claims that getting links from pages that are considered top resources (or hubs) on a certain topic are given special treatment.

LINK FROM AUTHORITY SITES

A link from a site considered an "authority site" likely pass more juice than a link from a small, microniche site.

LINKED TO AS WIKIPEDIA SOURCE

Although the links are nofollow, many think that getting a link from Wikipedia gives you a little added trust and authority in the eyes of search engines.

CO-OCCURRENCES

The words that tend to appear around your backlinks helps tell Google what that page is about.

BACKLINK AGE

According to a Google patent, older links have more ranking power than newly minted backlinks.

LINKS FROM REAL SITES VS. SPLOGS

Due to the proliferation of blog networks, Google probably gives more weight to links coming from "real sites" than from fake blogs. They likely use brand and user-interaction signals to distinguish between the two.

NATURAL LINK PROFILE

A site with a "natural" link profile is going to rank

RECIPROCAL LINKS

Google's Link Schemes page lists "Excessive link highly and be more durable to updates.

exchanging" as a link scheme to avoid.

USER GENERATED CONTENT LINKS

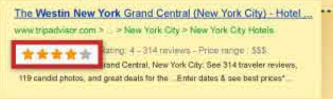
Google is able to identify links generated from UGC vs. the actual site owner. For example, they know that a link from the official WordPress.com blog at en.blog.wordpress.com is very different than a link from besttoasterreviews.wordpress.com.

LINKS FROM 301

Links from 301 redirects may lose a little bit of juice compared to a direct link. However, Matt Cutts says that a 301 is the similar to a direct link.

SCHEMA.ORG MICROFORMATS

Pages that support microformats may rank above pages without it. This may be a direct boost or the fact that pages with microformatting have a higher SERP CTR:



The Westin New York Grand Central (New York City) - Hotel ...

www.tripadvisor.com > ... > New York City > New York City Hotels

★★★★☆ ating: 4 - 314 reviews - Price range : $$$

rand Central, New York City: See 314 traveler reviews, 119 candid photos, and great deals for the ... Enter dates & see best prices"...

DMOZ LISTED

Many believe that Google gives DMOZ listed sites a little extra trust.

YAHOO! DIRECTORY LISTED

The algorithm might also have a special place for the Yahoo! Directory, considering how long it's been cataloging sites.

NUMBER OF OUTBOUND LINKS ON PAGE

PageRank is finite. A link on a page with hundreds of OBLs passes less PR than a page with only a few OBLs.

FORUM PROFILE LINKS

Because of industrial-level spamming, Google may significantly devalue links from forum profiles.

WORD COUNT OF LINKING CONTENT

A link from a 1000-word post is more valuable than a link inside of a 25-word snippet.

QUALITY OF LINKING CONTENT:

Links from poorly written or spun content don't pass as much value as links from well-written, multimedia-enhanced content.

SITEWIDE LINKS

Matt Cutts has confirmed that sitewide links are "compressed" to count as a single link.

USER INTERACTION

ORGANIC CLICK THROUGH RATE FOR A KEYWORD

Pages that get clicked more in CTR may get a SERP boost for that particular keyword.

ORGANIC CTR FOR ALL KEYWORDS

A page's (or site's) organic CTR for all keywords is ranks for may be a human-based, user interaction signal.

BOUNCE RATE

Not everyone in SEO agrees bounce rate matters, but it may be a way of Google to use their users as quality testers (pages where people quickly bounce is probably not very good).

DIRECT TRAFFIC

It's confirmed that Google uses data from Google Chrome to determine whether or not people visit a site (and how often). Sites with lots of direct traffic are likely higher quality than sites that get very little direct traffic.

REPEAT TRAFFIC

They may also look at whether or not users go back to a page or site after visiting. Sites with repeat visitors may get a SERP boost.

BLOCKED SITES

The number of pages a site is a weak sign of authority. At the very least a large site helps distinguish it from thin affiliate sites.

CHROME BOOKMARKS

We know that Google collects Chrome browser usage data. Pages that get bookmarked in Chrome might get a boost.

GOOGLE TOOLBAR DATA

Search Engine Watch's Danny Goodwin reports that Google uses toolbar data as a ranking signal. However, besides page loading speed and malware, it's now know what kind of data they glean from the toolbar.

NUMBER OF COMMENTS

Pages with lots of comments may be a signal of user-interaction and quality.

TIME ON SITE

Google has confirmed that they index SSL certificates. It stands to reason that they'll preferentially rank ecommerce sites with SSL certificates.

SPECIAL ALGORITHM RULES

QUERY DESERVES FRESHNESS

Google gives newer pages a boost for certain searches.

QUERY DESERVES DIVERSITY

Google may add diversity to a SERP for ambiguous keywords, such as "ted", "WWF" or "ruby".

USER BROWSING HISTORY

Sites that you frequently visit while signed into Google get a SERP bump for your searches.

USER SEARCH HISTORY

Search chain influence search results for later searches. For example, if you search for "reviews" then search for "toasters", Google is more likely to show toaster review sites higher in the SERPs.

GEO TARGETING

Google gives preference to sites with a local server IP and country-specific domain name extension.

SAFE SEARCH

Search results with curse words or adult content won't appear for people with Safe Search turned on.

GOOGLE+ CIRCLES

Google shows higher results for authors and sites that you've added to your Google Plus Circles

DMCA COMPLAINTS

Google "downranks" pages with DMCA complaints.

DOMAIN DIVERSITY

The so-called "Bigfoot Update" supposedly added more domains to each SERP page.

TRANSACTIONAL SEARCHES

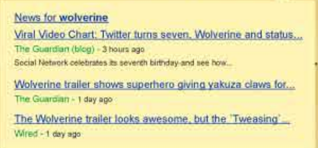
Google sometimes displays different results for shopping-related keywords, like flight searches.

LOCAL SEARCHES

Google often places Google+ Local results above the "normal" organic SERPs.

GOOGLE NEWS BOX

Certain keywords trigger a Google News box:



News for **wolverine**

Viral Video Chart: Twitter turns seven, Wolverine and status...
The Guardian (blog) - 3 hours ago
Social Network celebrates its seventh birthday and see how...

Wolverine trailer shows superhero giving yakuza claws for...
The Guardian - 1 day ago

The Wolverine trailer looks awesome, but the 'Tweasing'...
Wired - 1 day ago

BIG BRAND PREFERENCE

After the Vince Update, Google began giving big brands a boost for certain short-tail searches.

SHOPPING RESULTS

Google sometimes displays Google Shopping results in organic SERPs.

IMAGE RESULTS

Google elbows our organic listings for image results for searches commonly used on Google Image Search.

SINGLE SITE RESULTS FOR BRANDS

Domain or brand-oriented keywords bring up several results from the same site.

SOCIAL SIGNALS

NUMBER OF TWEETS

Like links, the tweets a page has may influence its rank in Google.

AUTHORITY OF TWITTER USERS ACCOUNTS

It's likely that Tweets coming from aged, authority Twitter profiles with a ton of followers (like Justin Bieber) have more of an effect than tweets from new, low-influence accounts.

NUMBER OF FACEBOOK LIKES

Although Google can't see most Facebook accounts, it's likely they consider the number of Facebook likes a page receives as a weak ranking signal.

FACEBOOK SHARES

Facebook shares — because they're more similar to a backlink — may have a stronger influence than Facebook likes.

AUTHORITY OF FACEBOOK USER ACCOUNTS:

As with Twitter, Facebook shares and likes coming from popular Facebook pages may pass more weight.

PINTEREST PINS

Pinterest is an insanely popular social media account with lots of public data. It's probably that Google considers Pinterest Pins a social signal.

VOTES ON SOCIAL SHARING SITES

It's possible that Google uses shares at sites like Reddit, Stumbleupon and Digg as another type of social signal.

NUMBER OF GOOGLE+1'S

Although Matt Cutts gone on the record as saying Google+ has "no direct effect" on rankings, it's hard to believe that they'd ignore their own social network.

AUTHORITY OF GOOGLE+ USER ACCOUNTS

VERIFIED GOOGLE+ AUTHORSHIP

It's logical that Google would weigh +1's coming from authoritative accounts more than from accounts without many followers.

SOCIAL SIGNAL RELEVANCY

Google probably uses relevancy information from the account sharing the content and the text surrounding the link.

In February 2013, Google CEO Eric Schmidt famously claimed:

> "Within search results, information tied to verified online profiles will be ranked higher than content without such verification, which will result in most users naturally clicking on the top (verified) results."

Verified authorship may already be a trust signal.

SITE LEVEL SOCIAL SIGNALS

Site-wide social signals may increase a site's overall authority, which will increase search visibility for all of its pages..

BRAND SIGNALS

BRAND NAME ANCHOR TEXT

Branded anchor text is a simple — but strong — brand signal.

BRANDED SEARCHES

It's simple: people search for brands. If people search for your site in Google (ie. "Backlinko twitter", Backlinko + "ranking factors"), Google likely takes this into consideration when determining a brand.

SITE HAS FACEBOOK PAGE AND LIKES

Brands tend to have Facebook pages with lots of likes.

SITE HAS TWITTER PROFILE WITH FOLLOWERS

Twitter profiles with a lot of followers signals a popular brand.

OFFICIAL LINKEDIN COMPANY PAGE

Most real businesses have company Linkedin pages.

EMPLOYEES LISTED AT LINKEDIN

Rand Fishkin thinks that having Linkedin profiles that say they work for your company is a brand signal.

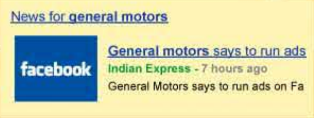
LEGITIMACY OF SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS

A social media account with 10,000 followers and 2 posts is probably interpreted a lot differently than another 10,000-follower strong account with lots of interaction.

BRAND MENTIONS

ON NEWS SITES

Really big brands get mentioned on Google News sites all the time. In fact, some brands even have their own Google News feed on the first page:



News for **general motors**

General motors says to run ads

Indian Express - 7 hours ago

General Motors says to run ads on Fa

CO-CITATIONS

Brands get mentioned without getting linked to. Google likely looks at non-hyperlinked brand mentions as a brand signal.

NUMBER OF RSS SUBSCRIBERS

Brands get mentioned without getting linked to. Google likely looks at non-hyperlinked brand mentions as a brand signal.

BRICK AND MORTAR LOCATION WITH GOOGLE+ LOCAL LISTING

Real businesses have offices. It's possible that Google fishes for location-data to determine whether or not a site is a big brand.

WEBSITE IS TAX PAYING BUSINESS

SEOMoz reports that Google may look at whether or not a site is associated with a tax-paying business.

ON-SITE WEBSPAM FACTORS

PANDA PENALTY

Sites with low-quality content (particularly content farms) are less visible in search after getting hit by a Panda penalty.

LINKS TO BAD NEIGHBORHOODS

Linking out to "bad neighborhoods" — like pharmacy or payday loan sites — may hurt your search visibility.

REDIRECTS

Sneaky redirects is a big no-no. If caught, it can get a site not just penalized, but de-indexed.

POPUPS OR DISTRACTING ADS

The official Google Rater Guidelines Document says that popups and distracting ads is a sign of a low-quality site.

SITE OVER-OPTIMIZATION

Includes on-page factors like keyword stuffing, header tag stuffing, excessive keyword decoration.

PAGE OVER-OPTIMIZATON

Many people report that — unlike Panda — Penguin targets individual page (and even then just for certain keywords).

ADS

HIDING

ABOVE THE FOLD

The "Page Layout Algorithm" penalizes sites with lots of ads (and not much content) above the fold.

AFFILIATE LINKS

Going too far when trying to hide affiliate links (especially with cloaking) can bring on a penalty.

AFFILIATE SITES

It's no secret that Google isn't the biggest fan of affiliates. And many think that sites that monetize with affiliate links are put under extra scrutiny.

AUTOGENERATED CONTENT

Google isn't a big fan of autogenerated content. If they suspect that your site's pumping out computer-generated content, it could result in a penalty or de-indexing.

EXCESS PAGERANK SCULPTING

Going too far with PageRank sculpting — by nofollowing all outbound links or most internal links — may be a sign of gaming the system.

IP ADDRESS FLAGGED AS SPAM

If your server's IP address is flagged for spam, it may hurt all of the sites on that server.

META TAG SPAMMING

Keyword stuffing can also happen in meta tags. If Google thinks you're adding keywords to your meta tags to game the algo, they may hit your site.

OFF PAGE WEBSPAM FACTORS

UNNATURAL INFLUX OF LINKS

A sudden (and unnatural) influx of links is a sure-fire sign of phony links.

PENGUIN PENALTY

Sites that were hit by Google Penguin are significantly less visible in search.

LINK PROFILE WITH HIGH % OF LOW QUALITY LINKS

Lots of links from sources commonly used by black hat SEOs (like blog comments and forum profiles) may be a sign of gaming the system.

LINKING DOMAIN RELEVANCY

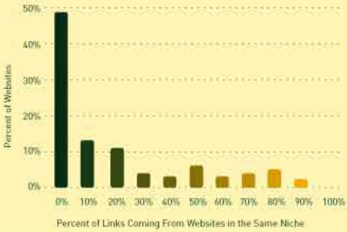
The famous analysis by MicroSiteMasters.com found that sites with an unnaturally high amount of links from unrelated sites were more susceptible to Penguin.

UNNATURAL LINKS WARNING

Google sent out thousands of "Google Webmaster Tools notice of detected unnatural links" messages. This usually precedes a ranking drop, although not 100% of the time.

PERCENT OF LINKS COMING FROM WEBSITE IN SAME NICHE

Sites That Were Penalized



LINKS FROM THE SAME CLASS C IP

Getting an unnatural amount of links from sites on the same server IP may be a sign of blog network link building.

"POISON" ANCHOR TEXT

Having "poison" anchor text (especially pharmacy keywords) pointed to your site may be a sign of spam or a hacked site. Either way, it can hurt your site's ranking.

MANUAL PENALTY

Google has been known to hand out manual penalties, like in the well-publicized Interflora fiasco.

SELLING LINKS

Selling links can definitely impact toolbar PageRank and may hurt your search visibility.

GOOGLE SANDBOX

Lots of links from sources commonly used by black hat SEOs (like blog comments and forum profiles) may be a sign of gaming the system.

GOOGLE DANCE

The Google Dance can temporarily shake up rankings. According to a Google Patent, this may be a way for them to determine whether or not a site is trying to game the algorithm.

DISAVOW TOOL

Use of the Disavow Tool may remove a manual or algorithmic penalty for sites that were the victims of negative SEO.

RECONSIDERATION REQUEST

A successful reconsideration request can lift a penalty.

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