

Avoid These Common SEO Tricks

The field of search engine optimization (SEO) is filled with SEO techniques that look attractive to new webmasters and can get them temporary gains, but will ultimately cause their pages to be penalized heavily in the search results or dropped from search engines entirely. These "black hat" SEO techniques, named after old Western movies in which the bad guys wore black hats, are considered unethical because they mislead search engines about a page's true content, and often create a bad user experience.

Illegible text is a classic black hat SEO trick. Setting a font size too small for humans to read, coloring text to match or blend with the page background, or hiding it behind a div block or floating image are all considered attempts to trick search engines, and pages that use these methods excessively are penalized. (Search engines do not penalize legitimate uses of unreadable text, such as CSS techniques in which text is hidden until the user rolls over a button or link.) To avoid penalties for hidden text, set all the text on your site to be large enough to read and colored to provide a strong contrast with the background, and make sure page elements do not accidentally cover text.

Keyword stuffing is another black hat SEO technique, even more annoying to the user because unlike unreadable text, the keywords are usually visible on the page. The webmaster packs the page title and page body with keywords, sometimes relevant to the page and sometimes completely off the wall. Some webmasters stuff the keyword meta tag as well, although this is one of the oldest black hat SEO techniques and has caused most search engines to ignore the keyword meta tag. To avoid being penalized for this common SEO mistake, give your pages natural sounding titles and do not put any text on the page that does not pertain to the page's topic.

More sophisticated webmasters spread out the keywords within the body of the text instead of piling them in a single paragraph. Search engines filter out pages that use this [Seo](#) trick by giving preference to pages with a certain keyword density, and penalizing pages whose keyword density is higher. The target range has been falling lower and lower for the past several years. To avoid penalties for having a poor keyword density, keep track of the currently desirable density via webmaster forums, and rewrite pages if their keyword density is too high.

Webmasters with a little more technical skill use "doorway pages" to show specially optimized pages to search engines, instead of showing them the less optimized pages that human viewers see. Doorway pages are strongly penalized. Avoiding a penalty for having a doorway page is simple: Do not redirect search engine spiders to special pages designed just for them.

If you find that you have accidentally used one of these black hat SEO techniques, use good SEO to remedy the mistake, and watch for any inadvertent misuse of SEO techniques in the future. White hat SEO is easy and, in the long run, less trouble than flashy black hat SEO techniques.

About the Author

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