Purpose

Google's SEO Report Card aims to identify potential areas for improvement in Google's product pages. If implemented, these improvements could:

- help users find our pages more easily in search engines
- fix bugs that annoy visitors and hurt our pages’ performance in search engines
- serve as a good model for outside webmasters and companies

We reviewed the main pages of 100 different Google products across a number of common SEO topics. The results are below, followed by a discussion of each topic.

Report card

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects and topics</th>
<th>Products passing</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subject I: Search result presentation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title tag format and length</td>
<td>10% (10 / 100)</td>
<td>Needs improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description meta tag use</td>
<td>33% (33 / 100)</td>
<td>Needs improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Google sitelink triggering for [google product]</td>
<td>44% (44 / 100)</td>
<td>Not for grading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appealing Google sitelinks</td>
<td>32% (14 / 44)</td>
<td>Needs improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear main page result on Google for [google product]</td>
<td>89% (89 / 100)</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Subject II: URLs and redirects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>URL Transformation</th>
<th>Score (%)</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.google.com/product">www.google.com/product</a></td>
<td>46% (19/41)</td>
<td>Not for grading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.google.com/product">www.google.com/product</a>, add &quot;/&quot;, 301s</td>
<td>26% (5/19)</td>
<td>Needs improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.google.com/product/">www.google.com/product/</a></td>
<td>54% (22/41)</td>
<td>Not for grading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.google.com/product/">www.google.com/product/</a>, remove &quot;/&quot;, 301s</td>
<td>68% (15/22)</td>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convert to subdomain form, product.google.com/, 301s</td>
<td>54% (22/41)</td>
<td>Not for grading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subdomain form, product.google.com/</td>
<td>41% (29/70)</td>
<td>Not for grading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convert to directory form, <a href="http://www.google.com/product(/)">www.google.com/product(/)</a>, 301s</td>
<td>36% (10/29)</td>
<td>Needs improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>https:// in canonical</td>
<td>7% (7/100)</td>
<td>Not for grading</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Subject III: On-page optimizations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Optimization</th>
<th>Score (%)</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heading tag use</td>
<td>68% (61/90)</td>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;h1&gt; tag use</td>
<td>43% (26/61)</td>
<td>Needs improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logo image link destination</td>
<td>39% (38/97)</td>
<td>Needs improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logo image alt text</td>
<td>58% (57/99)</td>
<td>Needs improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Descriptive internal anchor text</td>
<td>67% (67/100)</td>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Subject I: Search result presentation

We have a lot of control over how our pages appear in search results. Optimizing a page's title tag, description meta tag, and the look and structure of the URL can go a long way towards improving its presentation in the search results. This helps users make more informed decisions about the results they click on. Also, a more descriptive title tag and URL naming structure can help the search engine understand the content of the page better.

A descriptive title and description meta tag can help a result pop out better to search users

Title tag format and length

Using descriptive words and phrases in your page's title tag helps both users and search engines better understand the focus of the page.
Use the space provided - Most major search engines display approximately 60 characters from a page's title tag in the title of a search result. These 60 characters are an opportunity to tell both users and search engines what the focus of the page is. There's no need to go past this many characters, as most search engines will display ellipses ( ... ) after this limit. Also, search engines may give less weight to words after a certain point.

Give the search engine important clues about the page - Imagine that the text in the title tag is the only signal that a search engine has to figure out what a page is about (in reality, Google uses over 200 signals, but let's just imagine). Would your title tag do a good job if this were the case? The product name is great to have in the title tag; however, it's good to include other important information like what the product does, who it targets, or what its main features are.

Know about the "NOODP" meta tag - If your site is listed in the Open Directory Project, Google may choose to use information listed there in the title and snippet of your main page's result. When
this occurs, it may be a signal that your page is missing its title or description meta tag, or both. We can confirm from the Open Directory Project's Pay-Per-Click Advertising category that Google is using this information in the AdWords result shown above. To prevent this behavior, webmasters can make use of the "NOODP" meta tag.

Short title with only the product's name; google.com result for [google fast flip], Sept. 2009

Google Fast Flip
fastflip.googlelabs.com/ - Cached - Similar

Give the search user important clues about the page - Many users may not be familiar with all of Google's products. For users discovering our products through search results, it's important that each product puts its best foot forward with descriptive title tags (shown in the title of the result) and description meta tags (sometimes shown in the snippet). In the result above, if a user is unfamiliar with Google Fast Flip, he or she still has no clue what the product does after reading the result's title and snippet.

Remember that some users only look at titles - Each user reads a search results page in a slightly different way. Some look at all parts of the result, others look more at the snippet, and some only look at titles. If you skimp on your title tag, you're missing out on clicks from users who only scan result titles on a search results page.

20/100 with form: <title>Google Product - Non-descriptive tagline</title>

Title with product's name and non-descriptive tagline; google.com result for [google knol], Sept. 2009

Knol: a unit of knowledge
Knol makes it free and easy to create, collaborate on, and publish credible web content. Put your name behind your content; write a knol.
knol.google.com/ - Cached - Similar
Be selective with your words - Not many words fit into 60 characters, therefore words in a title tag are precious real estate. Above, "a unit of knowledge" and "It's Open. It's Social. It's up to you." are clever phrases; however, they don't do a good job of informing users or search engines what the product is about. If a word doesn't further this goal, think about replacing it with something more meaningful.

Think about what users will search for - Users are unlikely to include general words from the phrases "a unit of" or "It's up to you" in their search queries for your products, meaning that these words will rarely get bolded. Remember that bold words in a result—whether they're in the title, snippet, or URL—are a positive sign to the user that the page is relevant.

10/100 with form: <title>Google Product - Product keywords</title>

Descriptive title with product name and related keywords; google.com result for [google grants], Sept. 2009

Descriptive title with product name and relevant keywords; google.com result for [google talk], Sept. 2009
Great! These titles:

- take advantage of the title space given
- accurately describe the page and product to search engines and users
- include words that users would likely search for to find the product

1/100 with form: `<title>Non-descriptive text</title>`

Short and non-descriptive title; google.com result for [google profiles], Sept. 2009

Take advantage of your brand name - Some users may not look at the URL of the result and realize that “Create your profile” is for Google Profiles. If you have a popular brand, be sure to use this to your advantage in your title and snippet.

1/100 with form: `<title>Unrelated Google Product</title>`

Incorrect product listed in title; google.com result for [google appengine], Sept. 2009

Oops! - While this example is a rare oversight on our part, a title tag that doesn't accurately describe the focus of the page makes it harder for the search engine to evaluate the page's relevancy. Also, some users may see the inaccurate title and say, "This isn't what I searched for!" and move on to the next result.

Description meta tag use

Including an informative description meta tag on your pages can influence the quality of the snippets shown in search results.

67/100 with: no description meta tag

Snippet containing page's footer text; google.com result for [google sky], Sept. 2009

Google Sky
Sky | Moon | Mars - See sky in Google Earth | Help | About Google Sky. e.g.: Galaxy, M31, NGC3628, Mars ... Link to this page, Print. Loading Sky Maps...
www.google.com/sky/ - Cached - Similar
Take control of your snippet - The snippets above are great examples of why to use description meta tags. Although description meta tags don't count in Google's ranking (nor do keyword meta tags), the text contained in them is sometimes used in the snippet of search results. In the examples above, Google may have chosen to display a description meta tag, but as it didn't exist, the alternative option for the snippet was the page's content. Since the main page of Google Sky doesn't have much text on it, the only text Google could find was the page's navigational and boilerplate text. The Google Gadgets main page is light on text as well, so the legal disclaimer at the bottom of the page was chosen. Neither of these snippets are attractive to search users. Since you have the chance to take control of your snippet with a description meta tag, do it!

Interest the user - A search result may be a user's first acquaintance with your product. An interesting, catchy, and relevant description meta tag can lead to a high quality snippet that entices users to click and find out more. Google.org has a lot of exciting initiatives. Why not express this to search users?

Fill your two lines - Similar to the title tag, you want to use all of the space given to you in the snippet. You'll describe your product better to users, have the opportunity for more bolded words, and take up more real estate on the search results page. By not having a description meta tag that fills both lines of the snippet, you're giving the results underneath you a slight advantage because they're now higher in the user's line of sight.
Diagnose empty snippets - The vast majority of search results have snippets. When users see a result without one, they're suspicious of it. They may think that the page is down, is spam, or isn't the official one they're looking for, which means fewer clicks for that result. A result with no snippet usually means that the search engine was told not to crawl that URL because of a robots.txt file or a "nosnippet" meta tag. The former was the case with Picasa Web Albums' robots.txt file, which includes the line "Disallow: /".

Snippet taken from page's text, no description meta tag: google.com result for [google insights], Sept. 2009

Take other search engines into account - Let's assume that you don't have a description meta tag, but that you're happy with the text your favorite search engine is choosing for your page's snippet. There’s no need to create a description meta tag, right? Not necessarily. Each search engine has its own way of deciding what text is shown in snippets. Providing a rich description meta tag can help search engines create better snippets for your pages.
One major search engine displays an almost empty snippet while another is showing navigational/boilerplate text. Neither of these is attractive to users, meaning less clicks.

Oops! - The description meta tag on Google Patent Search was copied from Google Books. This result might confuse users who rely heavily on snippets to decide which result to click on.

33/100 with: description meta tag

Rich description meta tag used in snippet; google.com result for [google blogger], Sept. 2009
Good description meta tag used in snippet; google.com result for [google finance], Sept. 2009

Google Finance

Google Finance offers a broad range of information about stocks, mutual funds, public and private companies. In addition, Google Finance offers interactive ...
www.google.com/finance - Cached - Similar

Great! These snippets:

- come from text specified in the description meta tag
- take advantage of the space given in the snippet
- accurately describe the page and product to search users
- include words that users would likely search for to find the product

Catchy description meta tag used in snippet; google.com result for [google map maker], Sept. 2009

Google Map Maker

Edit the map in more than a hundred countries and watch your edits go into Google Maps. Become a citizen cartographer and help map your world!
www.google.com/mapmaker - Cached - Similar

Nice! This snippet also comes from a description meta tag and does a good job of empowering and exciting users.

Back to top
Google sitelink triggering

Sitelinks are often a signal to users that they've found the result they're looking for and can help in finding information faster.

56/100 with: no sitelinks

Webmasters can't choose when sitelinks are shown; however, they can optimize their site's organization and internal linking to improve their chances. The following can help:

- use a hierarchical site structure
- use descriptive anchor text for links pointing to internal pages
- avoid deep nesting of content behind many subdirectories

These optimizations assist both search engines and visitors as they navigate your site.
Nice! For the main page top results above, Google has chosen to display sitelinks. These links:

- are relevant to the product
- help users find the content they want faster
- take up more real estate on the search results page

Appealing Google sitelinks

Sitelinks that lead to the most relevant and important content on your site help your users find the content they want faster.
with: unappealing sitelinks

* includes only products with sitelinks

International sitelinks shown on google.com results for [google adsense], Sept. 2009

**Welcome to AdSense**
AdSense gives you access to Google's vast network of advertisers, so you can show ads that are suited to your audience's interests. ...
https://www.google.com/adsense/ - Cached - Similar

- Overview
- Submit a new application
- Preview tool
- AdSense 简页
- AdSense dla wyszukiwania
- Добро пожаловать в программу...
- Report a Policy Violation
- How do I add more sites to my
- More results from google.com »

**Block unappealing sitelinks** - Google Webmaster Tools allows webmasters to block unwanted sitelinks. In the example above, links to deeper international AdSense pages are shown on google.com results. While these pages are relevant to search users in those languages, many more users searching for AdSense on google.com may find other content more relevant.
Block unwanted sitelinks - Occasionally, Google might choose some sitelinks that lead to popular and relevant content on your site, but they're not the pages that you prefer. In the example above, the highlighted sitelinks might interest some users, but probably not as many as more generic sitelinks like "News", "NASDAQ", or "Google Domestic Trends" would. An amusing incidence of this occurred a few months ago when Google Video's first sitelink was "Girl caught by boyfriend," which led to a popular video on the service. Yes, it's popular content; however, there's probably another sitelink that the Google Video team prefers to be shown over this one.

Destination of Google Video's first listed sitelink; from google.com result for [google video], Sept. 2009
14/44 with: appealing sitelinks

Good! The sitelinks for these products' main pages are relevant and appealing to users. Users can click them to easily navigate to the specific content they want.

Clear main page result for [google product]

Having content accessible through one URL (a preferred/canonical URL) helps it rank better and is easier on search users trying to reach your product.

89/100 with: a clear main page result

Excellent! The top ten results for the navigational query [google product] on Google don't contain multiple results that may confuse search users over which one leads to the product's main page.
11/100 with: an unclear main page result

Three similar results for users to choose from: google.com result for [feedburner], Sept. 2009

→ **FeedBurner**
  www.feedburner.com/ - Similar
→ **FeedBurner**
  feedburner.google.com/ - Similar
**FeedBurner - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia**
FeedBurner is a web feed management provider launched in 2004. FeedBurner provides custom RSS feeds and management tools to bloggers, podcasters, ...
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/FeedBurner - Cached - Similar
→ **Google FeedBurner**
  Allows weblog owners and podcasters the ability to manage their RSS feeds and track usage of their subscribers.
  https://www.google.com/accounts/ServiceLogin?...feedburner - Cached - Similar

Three similar results for users to choose from: google.com result for [google picasa web], Sept. 2009

→ **Sign into Picasa Web Albums**
  picasaweb.google.com/ - Similar
→ **Picasa Web Albums**
  Picasa Web Albums. Fast and easy photo sharing from Google. Just added! ... Sign in to Picasa Web Albums with your Google, Account. Email: Password: ...
  https://www.google.com/accounts/ServiceLogin?service=lh2 - Cached - Similar
**Picasa 3: Free download from Google**
  Learn more about Picasa and Picasa Web Albums - Watch a video introduction .......and go to Picasa Web Albums to share and explore photos. ...
  picasa.google.com/ - Cached - Similar
→ **Picasa Web Albums: free photo sharing from Google**
  Fast and easy photo sharing from Google. Share with friends and family, or explore public photos.
  lh2.google.com/ - Cached - Similar
Consolidate URLs - Although the highlighted results above all go to the main page of the service, users should never have to ask, "Which one do I click and how are these different?" Choosing one version of a URL and consolidating the others with 301 redirects or the canonical element makes everything easier for the search engine and for users.

Prevent dilution of reputation - If the same content is accessible through multiple URLs, this could cause duplicate content. This content may rank worse because its reputation is spread over multiple URLs. Consolidation of the URLs, as mentioned above, resolves this.

Allow crawling for 301 redirects - A URL must allow crawling before the search engine will recognize that it redirects. www.feedburner.com's robot.txt file currently disallows search engines from crawling pages on the domain, so its 301 is never seen. In some cases, a site might choose to allow crawling for just its main page and block crawling on the rest of the site.

Similar results for the US and UK Google Store sites; google.com result for [google store], Sept. 2009

- Google Online Store
  Google Online Store. ... GoogleStore Home. Select your ship to location below. All information is in English. Select your ship to location ...  
  www.googlestore.com/ - Cached - Similar -

  Google Online Store
  Google Online Store. ... Copyright Google Inc. All Rights Reserved. Use of this service constitutes your acceptance of the Google Store’s privacy policy.  
  www.googlestore.com/shop.axd/Home - Cached - Similar -

  Show more results from www.googlestore.com

- Google Store
  The official company's shop. Includes sections of wearables, fun stuff, accessories, kids shop, and for office goers.  
  google-store.com/ - Cached - Similar -

Geotarget international content - Google Webmaster Tools allows webmasters to geotarget domains, subdomains, and directories. In the example above, a user might have a hard time choosing between www.googlestore.com/ and google-store.com/. Each have very similar URLs, titles, and snippets. Assuming that a user in the US does choose the google-store.com/ result (the UK version of the Google Store), he or she might be surprised upon checkout when the price is listed in British pounds. To better geotarget users with the appropriate domain/subdomain/directory, login to Webmaster Tools and check if the "Geographic Target" feature is available for your content.
**Subject II: URLs and redirects**

Google products' URLs take many different forms. Most larger products use a subdomain, while smaller ones usually use a directory form, with or without a slash (note that www.google.com/product is considered a different URL than www.google.com/product/ by search engines). With so many products and different forms of URLs, users face a daunting task knowing which URL format to use for which product. Such varied URL behavior can lead to 404 pages (users following broken links or directly typing the URL in) and split reputation between multiple URLs, hurting the ranking of content. The following recommendations can help with this:

- choose the easiest to remember form of the URL as the canonical (likely product.google.com/)
- be consistent with this canonical form across all products
- think of the most common URL forms visitors may try and 301 redirect these to the preferred/canonical URL or use the rel="canonical" link element if you cannot redirect

*Reputation is diluted when the same content is accessible at multiple URLs*

*Consolidating non-canonical versions with 301 redirects recaptures reputation and prevents duplicate content*
URL format

Whichever URL format your product uses, the other common forms should properly route both users and search engines to the preferred/canonical form.

*Google product URLs are split between a few main forms. Can you name which products use what form?*

- **www.google.com/product**
- **product.google.com/**
- **www.google.com/product/**


*41/70* using: directory form

* excludes product main pages using a deep URL or separate domain name

Nearly two-thirds of our products use a directory form for their URL, with or without a trailing slash. The products not using a slash (technically we'd refer to this URL as a filename instead of a directory) sometime serve parameters off this URL (e.g. www.google.com/finance?q=) and many make use of a slash (turning it into a directory) to serve deeper pages out of (e.g. www.google.com/finance/stock screener). To simplify our terminology in this section, "directory form" will refer to www.google.com/product and www.google.com/product/.
www.google.com/product

19/41* using: directory form, no trailing slash

* includes product main pages in directory form

A little under half of these products using a directory form don't use a trailing slash for the canonical URL. Examples of these products include www.google.com/chrome, www.google.com/finance, www.google.com/products, and www.google.com/profiles.


14/19* with: suboptimal behavior when trailing slash added

* includes product main pages in directory form without a trailing slash

200 status code given when slash added to Google Products' canonical URL, Sept. 2009

canonical: www.google.com/products

status code:
HTTP Headers
HTTP/1.1 200 OK

try version: http://www.google.com/products/

status code:
HTTP Headers
HTTP/1.1 200 OK

Avoid multiple URLs that serve the same content - From the example above, the good news is that visitors will reach the content no matter which version of the URL they choose. This is because
a "200 OK" status code is given for both URLs. The bad news is that each of these URLs will get crawled and indexed by search engines, creating duplicate content. Search engines will have a tougher time deciding which URL is the canonical. Also, each URL will have its own reputation. Using a 301 on www.google.com/products/ will consolidate this valuable reputation so that the canonical can rank to its fullest.

404 status code given when slash added to Google Finance's canonical URL, Sept. 2009

| canonical: | www.google.com/finance |
| status code: | HTTP Headers | HTTP/1.1 200 OK |

404 page shown when slash added to Google Finance's canonical URL, Sept. 2009

Not Found

The requested URL /finance/ was not found on this server.

Prevent 404s - A lot of visitors will try to reach Google Finance with the URL finance.google.com/. Many others will try www.google.com/finance, but a large number will also try www.google.com/finance/, which leads them to an unhelpful 404 page. Some visitors will assume that the service is down ("Why wouldn't www.google.com/finance/ work?"). Others might try another form of the URL, but say, "I never know which URL to choose for Google's products!" Think of the most common URLs that visitors might try in order to reach your product, then 301 redirect these to the canonical
URL. This will prevent a lot of frustration for users who access your product by typing the URL in their browser's address bar.

5/19 using: 301 redirect when trailing slash added

301 redirect occurs when slash added to Google Trends' canonical URL, Sept. 2009

**canonical:** www.google.com/trends

**status code:** HTTP/1.1 200 OK

**try version:** http://www.google.com/trends/

**status code:** HTTP/1.1 301 Moved Permanently
Location: /trends

Nice! - These URLs route both visitors and search engines to the canonical URL, preventing 404s and consolidating reputation.

www.google.com/product/

22/41* using: directory form, trailing slash

* includes product main pages in directory form

Half of our products using a directory form use a trailing slash. Products with this format include www.google.com/analytics/, www.google.com/apps/, and www.google.com/mobile/.

15/22* using: 301 redirects when trailing slash removed

* includes product main pages in directory form with a trailing slash

301 redirect occurs when slash removed from Google Custom Search Engine's canonical URL, Sept. 2009

canonical: www.google.com/cse/

status code: HTTP Headers
HTTP/1.x 200 OK

try version: http://www.google.com/cse

status code: HTTP Headers
HTTP/1.x 301 Moved Permanently
Location: http://www.google.com/cse/

Excellent! - Most products with a trailing slash correctly handle the removal of the slash. Numerous visitors likely try this version every day.
301 redirect to non-canonical URL when slash removed from Google 411's canonical URL, Sept. 2009

**canonical:**
www.google.com/goog411/

**status code:**
HTTP Headers
HTTP/1.1 200 OK

**try version:**
http://www.google.com/goog411

**status code:**
HTTP Headers
HTTP/1.1 301 Moved Permanently
Location: http://www.google.com/goog411/index.html

**301 to the canonical URL** - The URL www.google.com/goog411 does a 301, which is great; however, its destination isn't the canonical URL (www.google.com/goog411/). This means that any reputation that www.google.com/goog411 has from links gets sent to www.google.com/goog411/index.html, bypassing the canonical. Choose one version of a URL as the canonical and use that across your entire site for links and redirects.

302 redirect occurs when slash removed from Google Friend Connect's canonical URL, Sept. 2009

**canonical:**
www.google.com/friendconnect/

**status code:**
HTTP Headers
HTTP/1.1 200 OK

**try version:**
http://www.google.com/friendconnect

**status code:**
HTTP Headers
HTTP/1.1 302 Moved Temporarily
Location: /friendconnect/
Don’t use 302s when 301s would be more appropriate - When a 302 (temporary redirect) is used on a URL, the search engine is told that the destination URL is a temporary one and that the search engine should keep track of both URLs (the one with the redirect on it and the destination). In the example above, users will properly reach the canonical version through the 302, which is good; however, search engines won’t transfer the reputation from www.google.com/friendconnect to the canonical version through a 302, only through a 301. With a 302, the search engine says, "This destination is just temporary, so I’ll hold the reputation at www.google.com/friendconnect in case it’s used again in the future." Avoid this situation by using a 301 to consolidate reputation.

www.google.com/product(/) (canonical), try version: product.google.com/

22/42* that: handle subdomain form

* includes product main pages with a directory form, with or without a trailing slash

301 redirect occurs when subdomain form attempted for Google Trends, Sept. 2009

| canonical: | www.google.com/trends |
| status code: | HTTP/1.1 200 OK |

try version: http://trends.google.com/

| status code: | HTTP/1.1 301 Moved Permanently |
| Location: | http://www.google.com/trends |
Great! - For visitors who ask, "Is it www.google.com/product or product.google.com/?", these products correctly redirect visitors and search engines to the canonical URL with a 301 redirect.

20/42 that: don't handle subdomain form

302 redirect occurs when subdomain form attempted for Google AdSense, Sept. 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>canonical:</th>
<th><a href="https://www.google.com/adsense/">https://www.google.com/adsense/</a></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>status code:</td>
<td>HTTP/1.x 302 Moved Temporarily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Location: <a href="https://www.google.com/adsense/login">https://www.google.com/adsense/login</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

try version:  http://adsense.google.com/

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>status code:</th>
<th>HTTP/1.x 302 Found</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Location: <a href="https://www.google.com/adsense/">https://www.google.com/adsense/</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reference to the non-canonical subdomain version of Google AdSense's URL, Sept. 2009

http://code.google.com/apis/maps/faq.html

Consolidate reputation - The reputation from adsense.google.com/, a commonly linked to URL (even by us!), isn't consolidated to https://www.google.com/adsense/ because a 302 is used. To resolve this, a 301 should be used instead. Note that the canonical also does a 302 redirect (to a login URL), but this is expected and standard across Google properties that require login credentials.
Reduce server not found errors - Only the largest products at Google have subdomains, so some of these "not found" errors are intentional for smaller products. Subdomains require an extra DNS lookup, slightly affecting latency, which is very important at Google. Nonetheless, not knowing whether to use the subdomain or the directory form of a URL for our products confuses users, who may not be clear on what's considered a "large Google product." Given that there are pros and cons to each side, you may want to discuss your individual product's situation with your team and others at Google.

Subdomain form

29 / 70* using: subdomain form

* excludes product main pages using a deep URL or separate domain name

About one-third of Google's product main product pages use a subdomain. Many of these include some of Google's largest products like adwords.google.com/, earth.google.com/, images.google.com/, mail.google.com/, and news.google.com.
product.google.com/ (canonical), try version: www.google.com/product(/

19/29* that: suboptimally handle directory form

* includes product main pages with a subdomain form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>301 redirect to a non-canonical URL when directory form attempted for Google Blog Search, Sept. 2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>canonical:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>status code:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>try version:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>status code:</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

301 to the canonical or use the rel="canonical" link element - blogsearch.google.com/
blogsearch is a duplicate of blogsearch.google.com/ (the canonical) and benefits from the reputation sent from www.google.com/blogsearch.
Avoid 302s when 301s would be better - Not only does www.google.com/images do a 302 redirect when a 301 would be more appropriate, but it goes to www.google.com/imghp, an odd duplicate version of the canonical, images.google.com/. There's likely a lot of reputation held up at these non-canonical versions.

Prevent 404s - Thousands of visitors a day likely try to reach Google AdWords and Images with these URLs. These versions probably have many external links pointing to them as well. 301 redirecting these URLs to their canonical would recapture lost visits and consolidate valuable reputation.
200 status codes given for four different Google Books URLs, Sept. 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Try Version</th>
<th>Status Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.google.com/books">http://www.google.com/books</a></td>
<td>HTTP/1.x 200 OK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.google.com/books/">http://www.google.com/books/</a></td>
<td>HTTP/1.x 200 OK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://books.google.com/">http://books.google.com/</a></td>
<td>HTTP/1.x 200 OK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://books.google.com/books">http://books.google.com/books</a></td>
<td>HTTP/1.x 200 OK</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Eliminate duplicate versions - Above are four different URLs for Google Books that give "200 OK" status codes. Each one has its own reputation, so choosing one and using a 301 or the rel="canonical" link element on the others could give this product a nice boost in the reputation department.
**handle directory form**

* includes product main pages with a subdomain form

* 301 redirect when directory form attempted for Google Earth, Sept. 2009

- **canonical:** earth.google.com/
- **status code:** HTTP/1.x 200 OK

- **try version:** http://www.google.com/earth/
- **status code:** HTTP/1.x 301 Moved Permanently
  Location: http://earth.google.com/

**Good!** - Each product with a subdomain should handle the directory form, with or without a trailing slash. The example above 301s to the canonical, earth.google.com/.

**https:// in canonical**

* 7/100 with: https in canonical

A small percentage of our products' canonical URLs contain https instead of http. Some of these include Google Accounts, AdSense, Health, and Voice. This isn't a problem, but note that https://www.google.com/adsense/ is a different URL than http://www.google.com/adsense/. If the https version is preferred, we should use https in all internal links to that product and either 301 redirect the http version or use the rel="canonical" link element to properly consolidate reputation.
Subject III: On-page optimizations

Optimizing on-page elements of Google’s pages, such as keywords, heading tags, and internal links can help search engines better understand the content of these pages and how they’re structured. Also, many of these optimizations aid users’ navigation and usability of the site.

There are plenty of optimization opportunities on every page

Heading tag use

Using semantic markup like heading tags can provide search engines with useful information about how your document is structured that wouldn't be possible with plain text.
61/90* using: heading tags

* excludes product main pages with little text like Google Images, Maps, and Web Search

Proper heading tag use by Google AdSense for Games, Sept. 2009
Great! - Nearly two-thirds of product main pages utilize heading tags, which help provide structure to the pages’ content for both search engines and visitors.

29/90 using: no heading tags

Text styling used instead of heading tags for Google Insights, Sept. 2009
Tell the search engine how the page's content is structured - Heading tags on a page are similar to the points on an outline for a large paper. They help convey where portions of content begin and end and which ones may be more general or specific in nature. The lines of text highlighted in the above examples are candidates for placement in heading tags.

Give visual cues to visitors - Text in heading tags is often larger than normal text, which should catch visitors' eyes and say, "Different content is below and here's what it's about."

Be selective with your words - Similar to the advice on title tags, you don't have many words to work with using heading tags, so make them count. Use concise phrases that accurately describe the content below the heading tag.

<h1> tag use

<h1> is the most important of the heading tags and helps search engines understand the main focus of the page. Also, text in an <h1> tag is usually larger than normal text and helps users learn what the page is about.

Make use of `<h1>` tags - Most product main pages have an opportunity to use one `<h1>` tag, like the example above, but they're currently only using other heading tags (<h3> in this case) or larger font styling. While styling your text so it appears larger might achieve the same visual presentation, it does not provide the same semantic meaning to the search engine that an `<h1>` tag does. The product's name and/or a few words about its features are great to have in an `<h1>` tag for the product main page.
Nice! - These pages use <h1> tags, with most using at least the product's name in the tag.

Logo image link destination

Logo images on our products' pages play an important role in both users and search engines' navigation of our sites (most logos link to the main page). Making sure these link to the main page's canonical URL can improve the flow of internal reputation and prevent 404s for users.

That:
don't link to the main page canonical URL

* excludes iGoogle and Google Sky, which don't leave the main page. Deeper pages looked at if the logo isn't a link on the main page
Link to the canonical to prevent 404s - The worst case scenario is that a visitor clicks on your logo, intending to return to the main page, and instead receives a 404 (which happens in the examples above). 404s easily irritate visitors and may dissuade them from visiting the site again. Using a simple URL as the main page canonical URL and then referencing that version everywhere on the site is best.

Consolidate reputation - If all of the "home" or "main page" links on a site point to product.google.com/index.html, but the intended main page canonical URL is product.google.com/, a lot of internal reputation is being sent to the wrong URL. Making sure that linked logo images point to the intended main page canonical URL ensures that internal reputation isn't split between multiple URLs. Also, proactively consolidating non-canonical versions of URLs with 301 redirects can help as well, especially since external links are probably pointing to these versions.
Oops! - This is an oversight, but a confusing one for both users and search engines. Users are sent to a product that they didn't intend to go to and the search engine gets a fuzzier road-map of how this product's site is laid out.

38/97 that: link to the main page canonical URL

Great! - Making sure that the logo's link destination matches up with the canonical URL of the main page helps with the passing of internal reputation and creates a better experience for visitors.
Logo image alt text

Using brief and descriptive alt text for our linked logo images helps search engines know more about our products’ homepages. Also, the search engine learns more about the image itself, as do users who don't load images due to accessibility or device reasons.

57 / 99* with form: alt="Google Product"

* excludes iGoogle, which displays the logo as a background image

Logo image alt text with the product's name for Google Friend Connect, Sept. 2009

Awaken and strengthen your community

Google Friend Connect instantly awakens and strengthens the community that visits your site by enriching it with social features.
**Good!** - These product main pages have logo images with alt text that includes the product's name. Since many of our logos are used as home/main page links, the alt text of these images is basically treated as anchor text by search engines.

**24/99 with form: alt="Google" or other non-descriptive text**

**Be descriptive** - Like many optimizations in this document, using brief, descriptive text in the alt attribute—which is treated like anchor text for linked images—is best. Above, it's good that "Google" is present, but this doesn't tell the search engine which Google product is being linked to.
Oops! - This doesn't tell the search engine much about the destination page.

**18 / 99** with: missing alt text

Remember that alt text on an image link is essentially anchor text - You wouldn't create a text link to Google Analytics with no anchor text (e.g. `<a href="http://www.google.com/analytics/"></a>`), so the same applies to image links.
Oops! - This might make understanding the destination page harder for the search engine as well as users who don't load images.

**Descriptive internal anchor text**

Writing anchor text that accurately describes the content found at the destination of a link gives search engines and users more clues on what the page is about.
Great! - The anchor text of the links within the content of these product main pages accurately describe the destination pages. Rich anchor text like "Build a social app," "Create a social app platform," "On-Demand indexing," and "Product Ideas for Custom Search" give the search engine more information to go on than generic text like "Click here" or "Learn more."
Be descriptive - As we did with title tags, let's imagine that anchor text is the only signal that a search engine has at its disposal (although again, this isn't true in reality). Does your anchor text do a good job of informing the search engine what's at the destination page? Anchor text like "Learn more" or "Click here" gives search engines no clues at all about what's at the destination. "Video" is a little better, but there are millions of videos on the Internet, so this anchor text could be much more specific. Anchor text shouldn't be a full sentence, but a concise, descriptive phrase works great.
Help visitors know what's at the destination page - Specific anchor text helps visitors know what they're getting before they click on a link. In the example above, visitors don't know what type of content is at the destination of the "learn more" link. The word "features" is mentioned earlier in the sentence, but it's not included in the anchor text. Save visitors time by telling them exactly what's at the destination page by using descriptive anchor text.

Back to top
Additional resources

Google's SEO Starter Guide - How to get started with search engine optimization
Google Webmaster Central Blog - Frequent posts on how to improve your site with optimizations and tools
Google Webmaster Help Center - Our technical recommendations and guidelines for webmasters
Google Webmaster Help Forum - Discussion of webmaster issues on crawling, indexing, ranking, and more

Except as otherwise noted, the content of this document is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 License.