

Site Maps: Let Search Engines Find Your Pages

By Mario Sanchez

Site Maps: Let Search Engines Find Your Pages

Mario Sanchez
theinternetdigest@hotmail.com

The Internet Digest <http://www.theinternetdigest.net>

With 40 million websites in existence, and more than 3 billion web pages indexed by Google at the time of this writing (July 2003), it's no wonder that more and more people are relying on search engines to find their way through the unruly world that the web has become.

Nowadays, it is crucial to get your pages indexed by the most important search engines. To maximize traffic to your site, you must make sure that all your internal pages are indexed, not just your main page (homepage).

Fortunately, you don't need to submit each of your pages manually. The most efficient way is to create a Site Map (a list of links to all the pages in your site) and link to it directly from your homepage.

How Will A Site Map Help Me?

Search engines find pages by "crawling" the web. They go through the code of all the pages in their database (also called index), following links to other pages and adding them to the database (in fact, more pages are added this way than by manual submission).

However, search engines have trouble following links from pages buried too deep within the directory structure of a site. A Site Map solves this problem by giving the engines access to the links to all your pages once they follow the Site Map link in your homepage. For more effectiveness, place your Site Map in your root directory (where your index page is).

Site Maps: Not Just for Search Engines

While some web users will find their way through your site by following navigation links or by using the search box, others will turn to your Site Map. If you design your Site Map carefully, it will not only be useful to the search engines, but to your human visitors as well.

Here are some pointers:

- The Site Map should act pretty much like the table of contents of a book.
- The Site Map must clearly show all the sections of your site, and the information contained in each of those sections.
- Every item in your Site Map must be hyperlinked to its URL.
- If it's not too long or cumbersome, use each page's TITLE as the link text, since this tends to

increase the relevance of your site. Otherwise, use the word or the short phrase that best describes the content of the page.

-Make sure that you place the link to your Site Map at a visible location in your homepage (users shouldn't need a map to find your Site Map!).

-Don't get creative: simply call the link "Site Map".

-Make your Site Map a simple text link. If you use javascript the search engines will ignore it.

How can I check if my pages have been indexed?

Once you have created and uploaded your Site Map and placed a link to it in your homepage, submit both your homepage and your Site Map page to the search engines. You will then have to wait until the search engines do a web crawl. In the case of Google, the largest search engine, this happens approximately once a month.

To check if a page on your site has been picked-up and indexed by Google's, go to www.google.com and use the "allinurl" command in the search box:

```
allinurl:yourdomain.com/yourpage.html
```

Where "yourdomain.com/yourpage.html" is the URL of the page you want to check.

To get a list of all the pages in your domain that have been indexed by Google, you'll have to use the "site" command, followed by your domain name plus a word (or group of words) that you know appear in all your pages (for example, a copyright statement or some footer text):

```
site:yourdomain.com commonword
```

If after typing this command you get a list of all your pages (or at least a significant number of pages that weren't in the index before), this will be a strong indication that your Site Map has been successful.

You can freely reprint this article. Just include the following resource box at the end:

Mario Sanchez publishes The Internet Digest (<http://www.theinternetdigest.net>), an online collection of web design and Internet marketing articles and resources. You can freely reprint his weekly articles in your website, ezine, newsletter or ebook.

[Get-Articles.com : 1000's of reprintable business and internet marketing-related articles.](#)

[Submit your article for reprint.](#)