

8.6: What not to do

Black hat SEO refers to practices that attempt to game the search engines. If a search engine uncovers a website using unethical practices to achieve search engine rankings, it is likely to remove that website from its index.

Google publishes guidelines for webmasters, available through Google's Webmaster Central (www.google.com/webmasters). As well as outlining best practice principles, Google has supplied the following list of don'ts:

- Avoid hidden text or hidden links.
- Don't use cloaking or sneaky redirects.
- Don't send automated queries to Google.
- Don't load pages with irrelevant keywords.
- Don't create multiple pages, subdomains, or domains with substantially duplicated content.
- Don't create pages that include malicious behaviours such as phishing or installing viruses, trojans, or other malware.
- Avoid 'doorway' pages created just for search engines or other 'cookie cutter' approaches, such as affiliate programmes with little or no original content. If your site participates in an affiliate programme, make sure that your site adds value. Provide unique and relevant content that gives users a reason to visit your site first.
- Avoid link farms and focus on attracting quality, valuable links.

The bottom line: design websites for users first and foremost, and don't try to trick the search engines. It will only be a matter of time before they uncover the black hat techniques.

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