Search Engine Features For Webmasters

The search engine features chart below is designed primarily for webmasters who care about how search engines index their sites. It provides a summary of important factors and features that can affect how sites are indexed and ranked. Full explanations of items can be found immediately below the comparison chart. You may also find information on the Search Engine Features For Searchers page to be of interest. Also see the Search Engine Display Chart for a summary of how search engines display their results.

More detailed information about the search engines listed on the chart is available to site subscribers. Visit the subscription page to learn more about how you can support the site and also gain access to this expanded information.

Note: This chart covers AltaVista, Excite, Inktomi, Infoseek, Lycos and Northern Light. Excite also covers the Excite-powered services of AOL NetFind, Netscape Search and WebCrawler, unless these services are named individually. The same is true for Inktomi, which includes HotBot and MSN Search. Some data for Google is also listed. This chart is as of April 5, 1999.

Crawling	Yes	No	Notes
Deep Crawl	AltaVista, Inktomi, NLight	Excite, Infoseek, Lycos, WebCrawler	WebCrawler only lists home pages
Instant Indexing	AltaVista, Infoseek, MSN Search	Excite, Inktomi, Lycos, NLight, Google	Pages will appear within a day or two after submission
Frames Support	AltaVista, NLight	Excite, Inktomi, Infoseek, Lycos	Lycos provides limited support
Image Maps	AltaVista, Infoseek, NLight	Excite, Inktomi, Lycos	
Password Protected Sites	AltaVista, Inktomi	Excite, Infoseek, Lycos, NLight	
robots.txt	All	n/a	
Meta Robots Tag	All	n/a	
Link Popularity Helps Deep Crawl	Excite, Inktomi, Lycos	AltaVista, Infoseek, NLight	
Learns Frequency	AltaVista, Infoseek	Excite, Inktomi, Lycos, NLight	
URL Status Check	-- See Checking Your URL & Search Features Chart --		
Indexing	**Yes**	**No**	**Notes**
Full Body Text	All	n/a	Some stop words may not be indexed
Stop Words	AltaVista, Excite, Inktomi, Lycos, Google	Infoseek, NLight	
Meta Description	All but...	Lycos, NLight	

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Meta Keywords	All but...	Excite, Lycos, NLight	
ALT text	AltaVista, Infoseek, Lycos	Excite, Inktomi, NLight	
Comments	Inktomi	Others	
Stemming	-- See [Search Features Chart](#) --		
Ranking	**Yes**	**No**	**Notes**
Meta Tags Boost Ranking	Infoseek, Inktomi	AltaVista, Excite, Lycos, NLight	
Reviewed Status Boosts Ranking	Excite, Infoseek	AltaVista, Inktomi, Lycos, NLight	Very important with Infoseek
Link Popularity Boosts Ranking	AltaVista, Excite, Google, Infoseek	Inktomi, Lycos, NLight	Most important at Google
Direct Hit Boost Ranking	HotBot	Others	
Spam	**Yes**	**No**	**Notes**
Meta Refresh	AltaVista, Infoseek	Excite, Inktomi, Lycos, NLight	
Invisible Text	Others	Excite	
Tiny Text	AltaVista, Inktomi, Lycos	Excite, Infoseek, NLight	

Crawling

This section covers factors related to how well search engines crawl web sites.

Deep Crawl

The search engines shown doing deep crawls will list many pages from a web site, even if the pages are not explicitly submitted to them. The others will usually list far fewer pages from a site. In general, the larger a search engine's index is, the more likely it will many pages per site. See the [Search Engine Sizes](#) page for the latest index sizes at the major search engines.

Instant Indexing

At an instant indexing search engine, usually any page you submit will appear

within a day or two after submission.

[Frames Support](#)

This shows which search engines can follow frame links. Those that can't will probably miss listing much of your site. Be sure to read the [Search Engines And Frames](#) page for tips on overcoming the problems with frames and search engines.

Image Maps

This shows which search engines can follow client-side image maps. As with frames, those search engines that can't follow image maps will probably missing listing much of your site.

Some search engines can enter a password protected site, if you arrange for them to have a user name and password. Why do this? You may want people to discover you have content that matches their query. They'll still need to fill out the appropriate registration information at your site to access it, but at least they'll know it exists.

robots.txt

The robots.txt file is a means for webmasters to keep search engines out of their sites. Site subscribers have access to a page that explains this in more detail. More information about robots.txt can also be found on the Robots Exclusion Standard page, located at:

http://info.webcrawler.com/mak/projects/robots/exclusion.html

Meta Robots Tag

This is a special meta tag that allows site owners to specify that a page shouldn't be indexed. It is ideal for those who cannot create a robots.txt file.

To keep spiders out, simply add this text between your header tags on each page you don't want indexed:

<META NAME="ROBOTS" CONTENT="NOINDEX">

You do not need to use variations of this tag to help your page get indexed. They are unnecessary. Nor do you need to use this tag if you already use a robots.txt file.

Site subscribers have access to a page that explains the meta robots tag in more depth.

Link Popularity Helps Deep Crawl

All search engines can determine the popularity of a page by analyzing how many links there are to it from other pages. Some engines use this as a means to determine which pages they will include in the index. This is NOT the same as *ranking* a page better for having good link popularity. That is explained further below. Also see the Measuring Link Popularity page for tips on measuring your site's popularity according to different engines.

Learns Frequency

A number of search engines can learn how often pages change. Pages that change often may be visited more frequently.

URL Status Check

There are various ways to find whether an exact page is listed at the different search engines. The Checking Your URL page explains this in great detail, while the Search Assistance Features page also provides some coverage.

Indexing

Full Body Text

All of the major search engines say they index the full visible body text of a page, though some will not index stop words or exclude copy deemed to be spam (explained further below).

Stop Words

Some search engines either leave out words when they index a page or may not search for these words during a query. These "stop words" are excluded as a way to save storage space or to speed searches.

Meta Description & Meta Keywords

Shows which search engines support the meta description and meta keywords tags, as explained on the How Meta Tags Work page. This does NOT mean that using these tags gives pages a ranking boost. That is covered in a separate section, below.

ALT Text / Comments

This shows which search engines index ALT text associated with images or text in comment tags.

Stemming

Some search engines will search for variations of a word based on its stem. For example, entering "swim" might also find "swims" and maybe "swimming," depending on the search engine. This is explained in more detail on the while the Search Assistance Features page.

Ranking

Most search engines use the location and frequency of keywords on a web page as the basis of ranking it in response to a query. The exact mechanism is slightly different for each engine.

In addition to location and frequency, some engines may give a page a relevancy boost based on other factors. These usually can help a little, but they don't guarantee a boost to the top. Some major factors are listed below.

Also see the How Search Engines Rank Web Pages article for a more in-depth look at how relevancy is determined, and the Search Engine Design Tips page for helpful advice about optimizing your pages for search engines.

Meta Tags Boost Ranking

Some search engines that support the meta description and keywords tag will also give pages an extra boost if search terms appear in these areas. Not all search engines that support the tags also give a ranking boost.

Reviewed Status Boosts Rankings

Link Popularity Boosts Rankings

As described above, all search engines can determine the popularity of a page by analyzing how many links there are to it from other pages. Some engines give pages with lots of links, or links from important web sites, a relevancy boost.

Direct Hit Boosts Rankings

Direct Hit is a system that measures what users click on from search results in order to refine relevancy rankings. This shows which search engines use this as a factor. For more information, see the article below:

- **HotBot Integrates Popularity Into Top Results**
  The Search Engine Report, March 3, 1999

Spam

All major search engines penalize sites that attempt to "spam" the engines in order to improve their position. One common technique is "stacking" or "stuffing" words on a page. This is where a word is repeated many times in a row. If the search engines spot a spamming technique, they may downgrade a page's ranking or exclude it from listings altogether. The items below cover design elements that could cause a spam penalty. More in depth information specific to each search engine is available to site subscribers.

Meta Refresh

Some site owners create target pages that automatically take visitors to different pages within a web site. See the What Is A Bridge Page article for more information about this.

The meta refresh tag is one typical way of doing this. Some search engines will refuse to index a page with a high meta refresh rate. Infoseek will not index pages with any redirection, whatsoever.

Invisible Text

This is the technique of placing text on a page in the same color as the background, making it invisible to human viewers. Many search engines either refuse to index this text or will not index any page containing invisible text.

Tiny Text

This is the technique of placing text on a page in a small font size. Pages that are predominantly heavy in tiny text may be dismissed as spam. Or, the tiny text may not be indexed. As a general guideline, try to avoid pages where the font size is predominantly smaller than normal.

Choose Another Page ▼   Go
or use the site map if you can't run JavaScript.
You may also search the site.

DOCKET ALARM

Explore Litigation Insights

Docket Alarm provides insights to develop a more informed litigation strategy and the peace of mind of knowing you're on top of things.

Real-Time Litigation Alerts

Keep your litigation team up-to-date with **real-time alerts** and advanced team management tools built for the enterprise, all while greatly reducing PACER spend.

Our comprehensive service means we can handle Federal, State, and Administrative courts across the country.

Advanced Docket Research

With over 230 million records, Docket Alarm's cloud-native docket research platform finds what other services can't. Coverage includes Federal, State, plus PTAB, TTAB, ITC and NLRB decisions, all in one place.

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Analytics At Your Fingertips

Learn what happened the last time a particular judge, opposing counsel or company faced cases similar to yours.

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API

Docket Alarm offers a powerful API (application programming interface) to developers that want to integrate case filings into their apps.

LAW FIRMS
Build custom dashboards for your attorneys and clients with live data direct from the court.

Automate many repetitive legal tasks like conflict checks, document management, and marketing.

FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS
Litigation and bankruptcy checks for companies and debtors.

E-DISCOVERY AND LEGAL VENDORS
Sync your system to PACER to automate legal marketing.

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