



# Site Tuning

Help Documentation

# Site Tuning

## Site Tuning Overview

Users and site administrators can use SmarterStats' site tuning functionality to scan their site for problems known to affect a site's search engine ranking, such as broken links, excessive linking, META and title tags, and multiple redirects. By correcting the issues site tuning uncovers, you can improve both the visitor experience and your search engine ranking. To access site tuning, click the Site Tuning icon.

## Site Tuning Details Report

The site tuning details report provides general information about the site scan, including the site URL, number of pages and links scanned and the number of issues identified.

## Site Tuning Results

Users and administrators can view site tuning results by the severity of the issue(s) or by the type(s) of issue. When a site tuning scan is performed, potential issues may fall under one of the following types:

### **Blank Page**

It's important that every page of your website includes quality content. Empty website pages may indicate that your website is under construction and can lower the credibility of your website to both visitors and search engines. Possible fixes include creating unique content for the page or deleting the page. Note: If you choose to remove the page from your site, there may be unintended consequences, such as newly broken links if other pages linked to this page.

### **Broken Link**

Broken links are a serious problem and can adversely affect your website's search engine ranking. Poor usability from broken links can drive visitors away and can prevent search engines from properly indexing your website. Possible fixes include updating/correcting the URL, using a redirect or removing the link. Note: SmarterTools recommends double-checking any broken links to make sure the website wasn't temporarily offline or overloaded when the scan was performed.

### **Cache Expiration**

Website visitors and search engines like sites that load quickly. Well-coded pages send freshness indicators with each request to the server so the Web browser can pull files directly from the browser's cache on subsequent visits. This negates the need for server validation until the expiration time is reached and greatly improves the responsiveness of the website.

## **Duplicate Page**

Best practices dictate that you should eliminate, to the best of your ability, the occurrence of duplicate pages in search engines. While the site tuning scan does not identify duplicate content issues with another website, it does notify you if pages within your website have duplicate content. Possible fixes include rewriting the content on one page or deleting one of the duplicate pages. Note: If you choose to remove the page from your site, there may be unintended consequences, such as newly broken links if other pages linked to this page.

## **Images Missing Alt Tags**

An alt tag denotes an alternate text for an image if the image cannot be displayed. They are also useful for visually impaired users and improving accessibility of your website. Alt tags should be detailed in nature and used to describe what the images are displaying. In addition, alt tags should contain SEO rich content as they can help increase SEO results.

## **Long Description**

The meta description is used in the search engine results pages (SERPs) to describe the purpose or content of a webpage. Meta description tags can be short or long, but long descriptions won't display in full on SERPs. Most SEO experts recommend that the description be 100-200 characters.

## **Long Title**

The title is the main text that describes a webpage. It is the single most important on-page SEO element (behind overall content) and typically appears in three places: at the top of the browser and/or tabs, in the SERPs and as anchor link text on external websites. Most SEO experts recommend that the title be under 65 characters to ensure the full title displays in the SERPs.

## **Long View State**

Search engines generally ignore ViewState code, but large quantities of ViewState code will force the actual content of the page further down in the HTML. Since search engines may analyze only the first 100 KB of a page, it is possible that the ViewState block may prevent search engines from indexing page content. Possible fixes include disabling ViewState on pages that don't need it or moving the ViewState code to the bottom of the page.

## **Missing Canonical**

If your webpages load with both `www.example.com` and `example.com`, you have not specified the preferred link structure. Failing to properly define the canonical URL results in duplicate content penalties, as search engines will view all URL versions of a webpage as different websites. Adding a canonical URL tag to the HTML header or robots.txt file will tell search engines to treat the page as a

copy (rather than a separate and distinct page) and that the link and content metrics should technically flow back to the preferred URL.

### **Missing Description**

The meta description provides the search engine a brief description of the page content. While this description is not visible to website visitors, a search engine usually displays the descriptions in the SERPs. A good description might encourage search engine users to visit your website instead of others. If your page doesn't have a meta description, the search engine may arbitrarily choose text to display in the SERPs, which may result in less search engine traffic. Most SEO experts recommend that the description be 100-200 characters.

### **Missing Sitemap**

A sitemap is an XML file that lists URLs for a site along with additional metadata about each URL so that search engines can more intelligently crawl the site. Creating a sitemap is not difficult and there are services available that can help you create a sitemap quickly.

### **Missing Sitemap Page**

A sitemap is an XML file that lists URLs for a site along with additional metadata about each URL so that search engines can more intelligently crawl the site. It is important to ensure that all the URLs in the sitemap are up-to-date and direct to an existing webpage. Possible fixes include correcting the URL, adding the missing page or removing the URL from the sitemap.

### **Missing Title**

The title is the main text that describes a webpage. It is the single most important on-page SEO element (behind overall content) and typically appears in three places: at the top of the browser and/or tabs, in the SERPs and as anchor link text on external websites. If your page does not have a title, the search engines may arbitrarily choose text to display in the SERPs, which may result in less search engine traffic. Most SEO experts recommend that the title be under 65 characters to ensure the full title displays in the SERPs.

### **Multiple Descriptions**

The meta description is used in the search engine results pages (SERPs) to describe the purpose or content of a webpage. While this description is not visible to website visitors, the search engine usually displays the descriptions in the SERPs. There is no benefit to having multiple meta descriptions as the search engine will only use one of them or display arbitrary text from the site. Keep the most descriptive and keyword-rich description and delete the rest from the page.

### **Multiple Redirect**

Redirection is the process of forwarding one URL to a different URL. A 301 redirect is a permanent redirect which passes between 90-99% of link juice (ranking power) to the redirected page and is the preferred method for implementing redirects on a website. However, multiple 301 redirects (i.e, when a link on page A redirects to page B and page C before going to the intended page) will affect the ranking of that page. For this reason, it is best to do a one-to-one 301 redirect from the old page to the new page.

### **Multiple Titles**

The title is the main text that describes a webpage. It is the single most important on-page SEO element (behind overall content) and typically appears in three places: at the top of the browser and/or tabs, in the SERPs and as anchor link text on external websites. There is no benefit to having multiple titles, as the search engine will only use one of them or display arbitrary text from the site. Keep the most descriptive title and delete the rest from the page.

### **Robot File Missing**

The robots.txt file has become a standard way of giving instructions to the search engines concerning your website, such as the location of the XML sitemap or which pages to exclude from indexing. For this reason, all sites should have a robots.txt file in the root directory.

### **Same Title and Description**

Because the title and meta description summarize the content of a specific webpage, it is important that each page of your site have a unique title and description. These tags help the search engines determine the relevancy of a page and can play an important role in determining how a page ranks in the SERPs. Rewrite the title and descriptions to ensure they are unique and relevant to the content on each page.

### **Short Description**

The meta description is used in the search engine results pages (SERPs) to describe the purpose or content of a webpage. Meta description tags can be short or long, but short descriptions may not provide enough information to entice search engine users to click. Most SEO experts recommend that the description be 100-200 characters.

### **Short Title**

The title is the main text that describes a webpage. It is the single most important on-page SEO element (behind overall content) and typically appears in three places: at the top of the browser and/or

tabs, in the SERPs and as anchor link text on external websites. Most SEO experts recommend that the title be at least 20 characters.

### **Too Many Links**

Linking to internal and external webpages is a good practice, provided the links are relevant to the content on the page. However, search engines may penalize a site if there are too many links on a page as this can indicate the site is spammy or is lower quality. Keep the links on a given page to a reasonable number. To help determine the correct number of links on a given page, think about the visitor experience: When they run across a link, they either click the link to get to the information they are searching for or they ignore the link and continue reading the current page. If you have 100 links on a single page, you are asking the visitor to choose 100 times whether they think the link provides the information they seek.

### **Too Many Scripts**

Although scripts like JavaScript can be great for adding interesting elements to your website that will make it more user-friendly, too many scripts they can also slow a site to a crawl. Because both website visitors and search engines like sites that load quickly, it is recommended to remove unnecessary script and/or combine multiple scripts when possible.

## **Performing a Site Tuning Scan**

Users and site administrators can use SmarterStats' site tuning functionality to scan their site for more than 20 problems known to affect a site's search engine ranking, such as broken links, excessive linking, META and title tags, and multiple redirects.

To perform a site scan, click the Site Tuning icon. Then click Site Tuning Details in the navigation pane. The site tuning details will load in the content pane and the following options will be available in the content pane toolbar:

- Scan Site - Scans/re-scans the site for errors or potential issues affecting the visitor experience and search engine ranking.

Depending on the size of your website, the site tuning may take a few seconds or a few minutes. For more information on site tuning and the possible issues it identifies, see Site Tuning Overview .