

What creators should know about Google's helpful content update

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Thursday, August 18, 2022

Google Search is always working to better connect people to helpful information. To this end, we're launching what we're calling the "helpful content update" that's part of a broader [effort](#) to ensure people see more original, helpful content written by people, for people, in search results. Below is more about the update and things creators should consider.

Focus on people-first content

The helpful content update aims to better reward content where visitors feel they've had a satisfying experience, while content that doesn't meet a visitor's expectations won't perform as well.

How can you ensure you're creating content that will be successful with our new update? By following our [long-standing advice](#) and [guidelines](#) to create content for people, not for search engines. People-first content creators focus first on creating satisfying content, while also utilizing SEO best practices to bring searchers additional value. Answering yes to the questions below means you're probably on the right track with a people-first approach:

- Do you have an existing or intended audience for your business or site that would find the content useful if they came directly to you?
- Does your content clearly demonstrate first-hand expertise and a depth of knowledge (for example, expertise that comes from having actually used a product or service, or visiting a place)?
- Does your site have a primary purpose or focus?
- After reading your content, will someone leave feeling they've learned enough about a topic to help achieve their goal?
- Will someone reading your content leave feeling like they've had a satisfying experience?
- Are you keeping in mind our guidance for [core updates](#) and for [product reviews](#)?

Avoid creating content for search engines first

Our advice about having a people-first approach does not invalidate following SEO best practices, such as those covered in [Google's own SEO guide](#). SEO is a helpful activity when it's applied to people-first content. However, content created primarily for search engine traffic is strongly correlated with content that searchers find unsatisfying.

How do you avoid taking a search engine-first approach? Answering yes to some or all of the questions is a warning sign that you should reevaluate how you're creating content across your site:

- Is the content primarily to attract people from search engines, rather than made for humans?
- Are you producing lots of content on different topics in hopes that some of it might perform well in search results?
- Are you using extensive automation to produce content on many topics?

- Are you mainly summarizing what others have to say without adding much value?
- Are you writing about things simply because they seem trending and not because you'd write about them otherwise for your existing audience?
- Does your content leave readers feeling like they need to search again to get better information from other sources?
- Are you writing to a particular word count because you've heard or read that Google has a preferred word count? (No, we don't).
- Did you decide to enter some niche topic area without any real expertise, but instead mainly because you thought you'd get search traffic?
- Does your content promise to answer a question that actually has no answer, such as suggesting there's a release date for a product, movie, or TV show when one isn't confirmed?

How the update works

The update will start rolling out next week. We will post on our [Google ranking updates page](#) when it begins and when it is fully rolled out, which could take up to two weeks. This update introduces a new site-wide signal that we consider among many other signals for ranking web pages. Our systems automatically identify content that seems to have little value, low-added value or is otherwise not particularly helpful to those doing searches.

Any content — not just unhelpful content — on sites determined to have relatively high amounts of unhelpful content overall is less likely to perform well in Search, assuming there is other content elsewhere from the web that's better to display. For this reason, removing unhelpful content could help the rankings of your other content.

A natural question some will have is how long will it take for a site to do better, if it removes unhelpful content? Sites identified by this update may find the signal applied to them over a period of months. Our classifier for this update runs continuously, allowing it to monitor newly-launched sites and existing ones. As it determines that the unhelpful content has not returned in the long-term, the classification will no longer apply.

This classifier process is entirely automated, using a machine-learning model. It is not a [manual action](#) nor a spam action. Instead, it's just a new signal and one of [many signals Google evaluates](#) to rank content.

This means that some people-first content on sites classified as having unhelpful content could still rank well, if there are other signals identifying that people-first content as helpful and relevant to a query. The signal is also weighted; sites with lots of unhelpful content may notice a stronger effect. In any case, for the best success, be sure you've removed unhelpful content and also are following all our [guidelines](#).

This update impacts English searches globally to begin with and we plan to expand to other languages in the future. Over the coming months, we will also continue refining how the classifier detects unhelpful content and launch further efforts to better reward people-first content.

If you have questions or comments, feel free to contact us on [Twitter](#) or start a discussion with experts in the [Search Central forums](#).

Posted by Chris Nelson, Search Quality