



An Introduction to the Encyclopaedia of Links

A link audit – guidelines, trivia, recommendations

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Tools useful in a website's characteristics

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Foreword

A website's potential for achieving a high position in search results is determined by many factors, most of which are associated with the broadly understood website's quality. The Internet is a set of resources interconnected by a network of hyperlinks which take various forms and are classified according to various criteria. Hyperlinks (hypertext and other), also simply referred to as links, are divided into e.g. internal and external links, backlinks and outbound links, good and bad links, etc. In any case, however, they can be of a better or worse quality.

A study entitled “**An Introduction to the Encyclopaedia of Links**” is a primer that presents the concept of assessing the broadly understood quality of links. This concept, being of an open nature, is not complete, and is based on the use of tools made available free of charge.

I hope that novice analysts will enjoy the second part of the SEO primer, and that the issues described in it will be useful in preparing characteristics of websites and their environment.

Author



1. Definitions and abbreviations

Link rot — a “junkyard” of links; link rot means an accumulation of links referred to as “broken”, which lead to resources or web pages that, for various reasons, have ceased to exist (i.e. are not located at the indicated address anymore).

Broken link, dead link, dangling link, link decay, links to nowhere — phrases related to link rot. These are links that lead nowhere.

Link juice — link equity that specifies the strength (quality) of a referring website. This term is based on an assumption that links transfer authority from one web page to another.

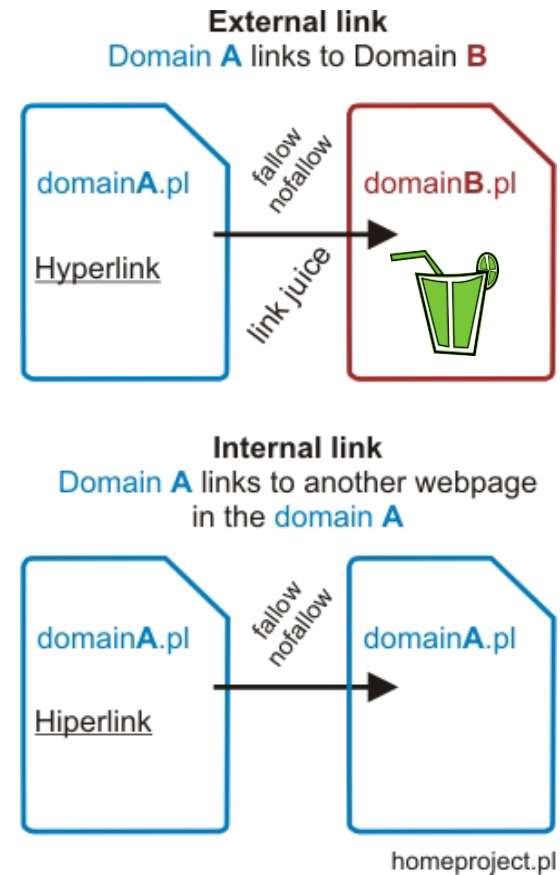
Healthy URLs — the so-called healthy i.e. operating and active hyperlinks; it can be assumed that they are “good” which means that they transfer the link juice, and are not a “deranking” (negative SEO) tool.

URL — Uniform Resource Locator (a format of addressing resources on the Internet).

2. The scope of link audit

The link audit concept includes:

- a) *backlink audit*,
- b) *outbound links audit*,
- c) *internal link audit*,
- d) verification of follow/nofollow tag, and
- e) verification of anchor text.

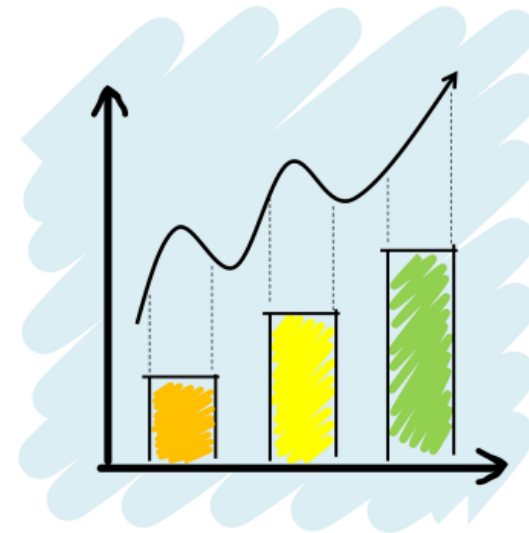


2a. Backlink audit

Each backlink (incoming link, inbound link) obtained naturally is a sort of recommendation. Verification of the number and an assessment of the quality of backlinks enables the determination of a website's popularity on the Internet.

Backlinks:

- ✓ are Internet recommendations which are a specific “vote of confidence” of one web page in relation to another,
- ✓ are a measure of a website's usefulness or popularity on the Internet,
- ✓ their value is determined by the quality of the website from which they originate,
- ✓ may have either a positive or a negative effect on a website's position in search results,
- ✓ it is the quality and not the number of links that matters,
- ✓ are a source of traffic coming from the referral source.



Backlink audit (tools)

1) Backlink Tool / Links checker

Web application Backlink Tool enables an audit of links incoming to either the main website or to all pages on this domain. The results are presented in the form of general statistics and a detailed list which contains, *inter alia*, the URL address of the referring website (URL from), anchor text, status (nofollow, follow), and the destination address (URL to, landing page). The application is made available in the freemium version.

2) Monitor Backlinks

The results of tests on the web application Monitor Backlinks (Free Backlink Checker SEO Tool) are available after the user's account has been created. The application is made available in a trial version. The result presentation takes the form of general statistics followed by the presentation of a detailed list. It contains *inter alia* information on a link's strength and status as well as the anchor text.

3) SEO SpyGlass — component SEO PowerSuite

The application is installed locally on the hard drive, and made available in the freemium version. A well-developed tool enabling the performance of a SEO audit, including a link audit (Fig. 1).

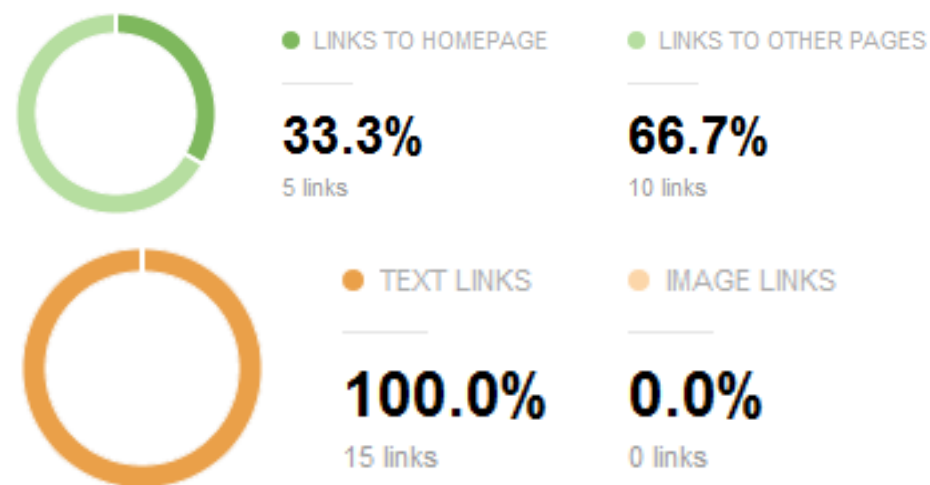


Figure 1. Link statistics by SEO SpyGlass

2b. Outbound link audit

Outbound links that are “broken” or “dead” lead nowhere... This has an adverse effect on a website’s usefulness. An accumulation of broken links is a negative phenomenon referred to as link rot. The sources to which outbound links lead should be monitored, and the links leading nowhere should be removed.

Outbound links (recommended sources) can be monitored in many ways. There are available components extending the functionality of browsers, and web applications e.g. W3C Link Checker or Free Broken Link Checker — Online Dead Link Checking Tool.

Web application Free Broken Link Checker searches for broken links and presents them in a table (Fig. 2).

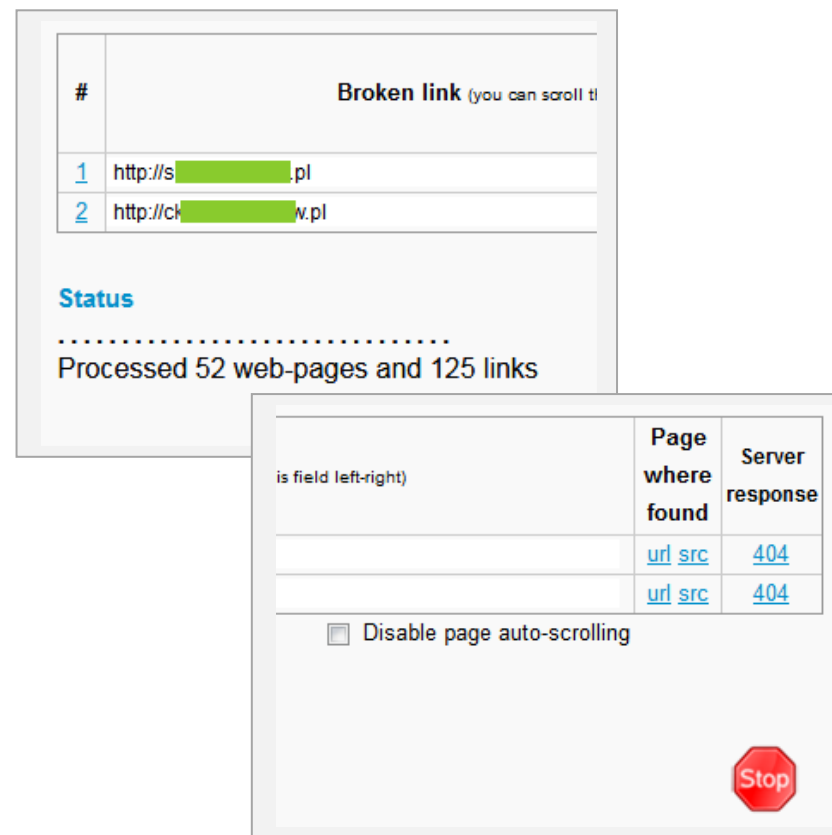


Figure 2. The brokenlinkcheck.com during work

2c. Internal link audit

Internal links:

- ✓ hyperlinks within a particular domain which allow the users and search engine robots to reach all pages of a website,
- ✓ facilitate (enable) navigation, and affect a website's usefulness (link optimisation),
- ✓ enable the development of a user's path to purchase,
- ✓ may affect the number of web pages browsed, which translates into the time spent by the users on a website's pages,
- ✓ improve the process of website indexing by search engine robots.

Internal in-text links:

- ✓ enable the so-called pagination i.e. dividing a text into several pages interconnected by links,
- ✓ should be surrounded by a text thematically linked to the link text (anchor text),
- ✓ their large (unnatural) accumulation can be regarded as spam,
- ✓ it is advisable to link from new contents to the previous ones, and vice versa. The content on the linking page should be thematically similar to the content on the linked page,
- ✓ internal links in mid-titles are unnatural.

3. Follow/nofollow links

Dofollow (rel="dofollow") and nofollow (rel="nofollow") are attributes of links. Dofollow links (outbound or referral links) transfer a part of the value of the page (link juice) from which the link is sent. Not only the so-called SEO strength but also the “anchor text strength” is transferred. SEO strength contributes to a website’s position in search results.



The more dofollow links from high quality referrer websites, the higher the referral website’s position in search results can be achieved.

Linking should not be done “by force”. Too many links with an identical anchor text are unnatural.

Anchor text strength translates into a website’s position in search results after entering specific key words. It is recommended that the nofollow attribute should be used in links referring to e.g. forms, pages containing duplicate contents, or pages to which we do not intend to transfer the SEO strength. Nofollow links make up the natural link profile (diverse links: with various anchors, and coming from various sources).

4. Anchor text

An anchor text is a hyperlink's text (the link is equated with an anchor). It should contain phrases that inform the users and search engine robots on what is provided on the destination website. Anchor text allows robots to classify websites based on key words.

Exact match anchor is a type of anchor text containing a precise match of key words used for the search engine optimisation of the destination page (e.g. building blocks for children). A large number of links with the content “building blocks for children” from referring websites confirms that the referral website provides contents thematically linked to the phrase “building blocks for children”.

Partial match anchor — it contains an extended key phrase, or phrases take a different form in them (from a long tail), based on which the destination website is optimised for search engines (e.g. how much do building blocks for children cost?).

Too frequent use of exact match anchors may be regarded as an attempt to tamper with the search index.

Zero match anchor or generic anchor — anchor text containing no key words. An anchor is a phrase aimed at encouraging a customer to take a specific action (e.g. call-to-action, CTA).

Naked link anchors — a hyperlink in the form of the so-called “naked web address”, e.g. homeproject.pl or <http://homeproject.pl>

No anchor trick — the so-called “noText” anchor – links with no text which are not another object (`<a>`), or e.g. a graphic file which is a link without the ALT attribute.

Image anchors — it is advisable to differentiate the link profile by means of linking with the use of graphic files, however with the use of ALT alternative text.



Branded anchors within the link’s content contain the company’s or brand name or e.g. name and surname. A brand is important in terms of the image, as it helps develop a website’s recognisability among the users.

Brand + Keyword Anchor — a text link containing a company’s or brand name in combination with other words (which make up the text of an anchor).

LSI anchors — Latent Semantic Indexing anchors — means the use of various variants of key words (e.g. where do I buy building blocks? how much are building blocks? what are building blocks?).

5. Trivia

Deranking — unethical and dishonest (illegal?) actions aimed at reducing a website’s visibility in search results, usually taken in order to harm one’s competition by means of e.g. the use of a link exchange system (LES).

Deranking involves actions taken in external websites, resulting in a lowered position of another website in search results.

Deranking (negative SEO) is most frequently achieved by generating a large number of links from poor quality websites within a short period of time. Search engine robots may interpret this as an attempt to tamper with the search index, and “impose a penalty” on the destination (linked) website.

Bad links take various forms. Links which refer to websites or resources which no longer exist make up the so-called link rot. Broken links are a type of “bad links”; however, they do not do as much harm as the links coming from “bad sources”. Bad links which can actually do harm come (origin) from websites of a questionable quality, and from e.g. link exchange systems.



Link indexing prioritisation — due to the marking of a link with the `nofollow` attribute (e.g. a website with a registration or login form: “register” or “log in”), a search engine robot will not index these pages but, instead, will start indexing pages whose presence in the index is more desirable.

Deep linking — a practice involving the placing of links on a page “inside” another website while omitting its main page, e.g. a deep link with the main website omitted:
`http://www.homeproject.pl/kurs2/index.html`

Deep linking is widely used, and it allows the time of access to specific information to be shortened.

Disavow of links — applies to backlinks. An action taken under Google Search Console, involving the creation of a file with bad links and sending it to Google. It is recommended when there are indications that many backlinks (the so-called spammer links, artificial or of poor quality) which are likely to cause problems have appeared within a website’s environment.



In the contemporary SEO world, this is the quality that matters. When it comes to links, it means that a single, high-authority link is worth more than a hundred of links from the comments section or web forums. A valuable hyperlink should meet the following criteria:

- ✓ it is difficult to acquire,
- ✓ it cannot be purchased,
- ✓ it generates numerous visits of interested (converting) users,
- ✓ is a classic HTML link without the rel="nofollow" attribute,
- ✓ it appears in the content of e.g. an article.



