

Forum:[Hack Forums](#)

Thread: [Set signature URLs \(or all urls\) to "nofollow"](#)

Pixie Interactive - October 19, 2016, 5:10 pm

Alright, this one doesn't need very much in-depth explanation, so I'll make it short.

There is a notable part of the community who are trying to gain some publicity for their own external websites via signature URLs here on HackForums. These are typically small, self-started websites who are fighting with SEO every day. I noticed by chance that the URLs attached here on HackForums are not set to "nofollow," in the code, and that means Google's RankBrain considers it a ["link scheme"](#).

This is a little-known rule, but it is actively hurting the members' SEO whenever they post with their signature here on HackForums. It could be easily fixed, by adding 'rel="nofollow"' to the template that parses the BBcode into HTML tags. There are even [guides](#) that give you specific instructions.

It would be a quick implementation, and benefit everyone in the long run.

M?xim - October 19, 2016, 5:22 pm

Support from me. Never seen anyone have a problem with this, but if it does not affect anything in a negative way, why not.

Pixie Interactive - October 19, 2016, 5:24 pm

(Oct 19, 2016 05:22 PM)M?xim Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) Support from me. Never seen anyone have a problem with this, but if it does not affect anything in a negative way, why not.

I don't think anyone really has a problem with it. It's not really that interesting a rule, so I'd be surprised if that many knew about it. But yeah, there are no consequences to doing it, other than saving members a little bit of headwind in their SEO-efforts.

Ideology - October 19, 2016, 5:24 pm

This is a great suggestion that could easily be implemented. I support this, and believe it would be a good addition to the forum.

ra1d - October 19, 2016, 11:52 pm

Don't see why users that care for this couldn't just use a URL shortening service.

Besides why is it bad SEO to get linked on HF, as far as I'm concerned it's a highly ranked and rated domain.

In my opinion this is a very specific suggestion, it could be useful for some, but those who care, should care enough to take their own precautions.

Elitas - October 20, 2016, 12:05 am

I too would like to see this, sounds like a good idea with no real downsides.

Pixie Interactive - October 20, 2016, 2:37 am

(Oct 19, 2016 11:52 PM)ra1d Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) Don't see why users that care for this couldn't just use a URL shortening service.

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In my opinion this is a very specific suggestion, it could be useful for some, but those who care,

should care enough to take their own precautions.

First of all, a URL shortening service won't help you, the dofollow link points the final destination, not a referrer source. If you read my link on "link schemes" before asking, they explicitly write that optimized dofollow links in signatures are a no-go, regardless of the site's PageRank. So even if HF is well-respected, having dofollow signature links is STILL bad. Lastly, there are literally no precautions you can take against this particular issue, without help from the administrating team here.

Please, do your research before you speak out. I answered your comment in the first post already, this is just reiteration.

Omniscient - October 20, 2016, 2:33 pm

Oh hell, I did this years ago with a plugin and I didn't notice that it's not working. I think I know why. I'll fix it in a few minutes. You'll notice in my source code on HF that I use rel=nofollow a lot for internal links too.

Edit: Fixed.

Pixie Interactive - October 20, 2016, 2:43 pm

That's plug-ins for ya' ;-)

I notice the internal nofollows now, looking through some other links here and there. Well, I am happy I could help out a little. It isn't exactly the kind of bug you go looking for!

Omniscient - October 20, 2016, 2:56 pm

I wonder how long I had that nofollow screwed up? I sort of got lazy with my SEO but the past few months I have been on top of it again. Basically the changes by Google over the last few years I have to catch up on. One of the most important is figuring out my mobile solution because it's hurting our ranking.

HF has a problem when it comes to newer mobile standards and compatibility. Trying to resolve it.

Pixie Interactive - October 20, 2016, 3:05 pm

The change to responsive layouts has damaged a lot of brands left and right. Google itself estimates a non-responsive site costs you just about 30% of your mobile traffic, and can hurt your rankings to the same degree as keyword stuffing; that is a horrible outlook for any marketing department, particularly for large online brands like HackForums, et. al.

It might be worth it to consider 3rd-party software for transitioning your forum to mobile. Something like ForumRunner or Tapatalk can do so to a very reliable degree, and saves you redoing the entire design. Naturally, your ROI in terms of SEO/SEM is much higher if you redo the actual design, but that also requires a lot of hours or a big down payment for an agency. Just my two cents from a marketing perspective.

As for how long you had it screwed up, don't sweat it. It hasn't been a Google standard to flag forum signatures until the RankBrain update in Oct. 2015, so at most it has had some negative consequences for a year - which is negligible.

Omniscient - October 20, 2016, 4:02 pm

Quote: The change to responsive layouts has damaged a lot of brands left and right. Google itself estimates a non-responsive site costs you just about 30% of your mobile traffic, and can hurt your rankings to the same degree as keyword stuffing; that is a horrible outlook for any marketing department, particularly for large online brands like HackForums, et. al.

Yes, it's a serious problem. HF is a forum with a lot of content. It's not meant to be a responsive design. It will require me to remove content for a mobile version which for all I know will hurt my rankings for providing different content.

I tried Forumrunner and Tapatalk. I don't like either solution. They have security flaws and I really dislike having to run multiple themes in that way. I'd rather just do a single design and do my best to make it mobile friendly.

Quote: Naturally, your ROI in terms of SEO/SEM is much higher if you redo the actual design, but that also requires a lot of hours or a big down payment for an agency.

I'll do the work myself. I don't need to pay any agency.

Truly sucks that Google penalizes websites for not having mobile versions. Not all websites function well on a small screen and while they may argue that mobile is the future there is also something being lost when it comes to great functional websites. Mobile means simpler and that's going to take away from complex features and interfaces. We literally have to dumb-down a website just to be Google SEO friendly. I think that sucks big time. The days of "content is king" seem to be dwindling.

Pixie Interactive - October 20, 2016, 4:24 pm

(Oct 20, 2016 04:02 PM)Omniscient Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) Yes, it's a serious problem. HF is a forum with a lot of content. It's not meant to be a responsive design. It will require me to remove content for a mobile version which for all I know will hurt my rankings for providing different content.

That is a good point. Fortunately, [Google reported some time last year](#), that as long as you do not alter the content from the desktop version, hiding it is okay. I am quoting the important part of the article I just linked verbatim here:

Code "As long as the content you are hiding on the mobile-friendly version of the site is the same content on the desktop site – and that content is visible on desktop – it won't hurt SEO for the page." And the quote directly from Google:

Code "Hidden content can be discounted in ranking, but if the content is visible on the desktop version of your site, we can crawl it and use the information for ranking your mobile site as well since we can share indexing signals between the desktop and mobile versions."

Hiding for example parts of the left sidebar on threads, or parts of the forum overview should be alright, as long as you don't change the actual content, but just hide it via a @media selector, or a 'display:hidden' attribute.

Quote:I tried Forumrunner and Tapatalk. I don't like either solution. They have security flaws and I really dislike having to run multiple themes in that way. I'd rather just do a single design and do my best to make it mobile friendly.

Oh, I wasn't aware of the security issues. It has been some four years since I last moderated any forums to speak of, and mobile wasn't a big thing then, so I never really made it for that transition.

Quote:Truly sucks that Google penalizes websites for not having mobile versions. Not all websites function well on a small screen and while they may argue that mobile is the future there is also something being lost when it comes to great functional websites. Mobile means simpler and that's going to take away from complex features and interfaces.

Google has made a lot of strange decisions over the past few years. First with the Penguin update

that literally killed link directories (even the reputable ones!) and later the Mobile-Friendly 2.0 update that caused God knows how many SMBs to drop out of the Google Race™. I understand why you would rank sites lower on a mobile search if they were not mobile-friendly, but it beats me why you should rank lower if the search is coming from a desktop computer.

Quote: We literally have to dumb-down a website just to be Google SEO friendly. I think that sucks big time. The days of "content is king" seem to be dwindling.

Hey, Big Google™ is watching. It is strange, though, how SEO has come full circle. Back in the early 00s it was "build links, build links, doesn't matter where they come from, build links," and we finally got over that with the first Panda update in 04. Then there was this whole -- as you said -- decade of "content is king," where everybody was striving for quality content, and constant outreach, and now it seems like backlinks are taking on a new life. Now it's all about guest blogging and shares, because the content market has become so competitive, and the Google Machine™ is pushing us to effectively hide and simplify content; so we're back to backlinks, backlinks, backlinks. Or -- you know -- paid advertising, which is a whole new host of stupid issues and bad regulation. Thanks, President Google™.