SEO Error Workbook Guide

Duplicate Content - www. vs. non-www.

Why it should be addressed

Northern.edu is showing **duplicate content** errors due to two versions of the same page existing because of a URL difference.

Example:
With www - https://www.northern.edu/academics/school-business
Without www - https://northern.edu/academics/school-business

These URLs are essentially the same page, with the exact same content. However, the content exists on two unique URLs, which may cause search engines to index the same page several times, potentially leading to it being considered duplicate content or spam. Search engines may consider duplicate pages as an attempt to manipulate search engine rankings and, as a result, your website may be downgraded or even banned from search results.

How to Fix It

Here are a few ways to fix duplicate content issues:

- Add a rel="canonical" link in the <head> of your duplicate pages (the page you do not want to show in search) to inform search engines which page to show in search results.

    - Ex. On the https://www.northern.edu/academcis/school-business you would add the following html to the <head> of the page.

      ```
      <link rel="canonical"
      href="https://northern.edu/academics/school-business" />
      ```

- Use a 301 redirect from a duplicate page to the original one

Our recommendation is to make all canonical links the non-www version. This seems to be the current strategy on pages that are working properly. The goal is to be consistent across the site. Since most pages currently redirect to non-www versions, all other pages should do as well.

Duplicate Page Titles

Why it should be addressed

Our crawler reports pages that have duplicate title tags only if they are exact matches. Duplicate <title> tags make it difficult for search engines to determine which of a website's pages is relevant for a specific search query, and which one should be prioritized in search results. Pages with duplicate titles have a lower chance of ranking well and are at risk of being banned. Moreover, identical <title> tags confuse users as to which webpage they should follow.

How to Fix It

Provide a unique and concise title for each of your pages that contains your most important keywords.

Broken Internal Links

Why it should be addressed

Broken internal links lead users from one website to another and bring them to non-existent webpages. Multiple broken links negatively affect user experience and may worsen your search engine rankings because crawlers may think that your website is poorly maintained or coded.

How to Fix It

Please follow all links reported as broken. If a target webpage returns an error, remove the link leading to the error page or replace it with another resource.

Missing Meta-Descriptions

Though meta descriptions do not have a direct influence on rankings, they are used by search engines to display your page's description in search results. A good description helps users know what your page is about and encourages them to click on it. If your page's meta description tag is missing, search engines will usually display its first sentence, which may be irrelevant and unappealing to users.

How to fix it

In order to gain a higher click-through rate, you should ensure that all of your webpages have meta descriptions that contain relevant keywords.

Redirect Chains and Loops

Why it should be addressed

Redirecting one URL to another is appropriate in many situations. However, if redirects are done incorrectly, it can lead to disastrous results. Two common examples of improper redirect usage are redirect chains and loops.

Long redirect chains and infinite loops lead to a number of problems that can damage your SEO efforts. They make it difficult for search engines to crawl your site, which affects your crawl budget usage and how well your webpages are indexed, slows down your site's load speed, and, as a result, may have a negative impact on your rankings and user experience.

How to Fix It

The best way to avoid any issues is to follow one general rule: do not use more than three redirects in a chain.

If you are already experiencing issues with long redirect chains or loops, we recommend that you redirect each URL in the chain to your final destination page.

We do not recommend that you simply remove redirects for intermediate pages as there can be other links pointing to your removed URLs, and, as a result, you may end up with 404 errors.