



McCord Web Design

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How to Make a Google Sitemap

We have worked to find the best and easiest to use online tools that you can use to make a Google Sitemap. Google provides a free script to generate your own sitemap, but it requires that your web hosting server have Python 2.2 installed. Our hosting agent is only using Python 1.5, so we had to look for an alternative way to create our own sitemap and found these free tools that we want to share with you.

We will take you through sitemap creation step by step in this white paper and you will even learn a little German in the process.

First, you will need to download and install one small piece of software that you will need to compress your finished sitemap before uploading it to Google. It is called Win-GZ. Follow this link to download it free http://www.simtel.net/product.php?url_fb_product_page=63053.

This freeware utility is for Windows platforms and allows you to create a .gz file from your sitemap.xml file. This is the preferred format for Google Sitemaps and needs to be done before upload.

Second, log onto <http://sitemap.peterz.info/step1.php>. This website is in German, but this is the best tool out there right now, and we will translate the necessary German for you, so don't worry. In the box on this page, enter your domain name in this format:

<http://www.domainname.com>

Click step two on the bottom of the page. You will see a small box open up that says "bitte warten" or "please wait" in German. This tool is searching your domain and will list all of the pages in your website on the next screen. It may take several minutes if you have a large site. This particular tool from PeterZ is the most comprehensive that we have found. Other online tools don't index all of the pages, crash, or are excruciatingly slow. If you find another that you like, please let us know.

When the indexing is complete, you should have a screen that has several fields in it and checkboxes. Remove the green check in the box next to the URL of the pages that you **do not want included** in your Google Sitemap. These may be private files, login pages, or any other pages that you simply do not want in the Google index.

You will see a field that says "Letzte Änderung" or "Last Change" in German. You may enter a date in this field, but nothing is necessary.

You will also see a field that says "Aktualisierung" or "Actualization" in German. Actualization means "when does your page change" and the selections in German in order are: always, hourly, daily, weekly, monthly, yearly, or never. Choose the frequency that your page changes.

Then choose the priority of the page in the field labeled "Priorität" or "Priority" in German. The default setting is .5. Setting the priority higher will not have Google take any additional action, but allows you to determine which pages, if desired, are more important in your index for Google. You may choose to simply not enter anything in any of these fields if you desire, but the additional fields are nice to have if you would like to supply Google with some additional information. The priority tag has no relation to the

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current PR status of a page or site. It is included to help you suggest to Google what are the most important parts of your site are. You can set the priority of the index page of each directory as 1.0 if you desire.

When your selections have been made, click step three. This will generate your actual XML file in the proper syntax. Click download at the bottom of the box and select the location where you want your sitemap.xml file to be saved.

Third, open the Win-GZ utility that you previously downloaded. Select your file from within the small control panel and then click "make .gz". You will now have a sitemap.xml.gz file in the same location as your saved sitemap.xml file.

Fourth, using your FTP program, upload this new file called sitemap.xml.gz to the public section of your website. Ours is located in our www directory, yours may be in the public_html directory, and some may simply be in the / directory.

Fifth, set up an account with Google Sitemaps. Visit this page to open an account <https://www.google.com/accounts/NewAccount?service=sitemaps&followup=https://www.google.com/webmasters/sitemaps/stats%3Fhl%3Den&continue=https://www.google.com/webmasters/sitemaps/stats%3Fhl%3Den&hl=en> and set up a Google account. If you have a Gmail or Google AdWords account, you may use that same login information. Once your account is set up and you have logged into Sitemaps at this location, <http://www.google.com/webmasters/sitemaps/login>, you will be presented with a screen that at the top gives you a link to add a sitemap.

When you click the link, you will be asked to enter in your sitemap's URL. Enter it in this syntax <http://www.domainname.com/sitemap.xml.gz>. Your location may be different, so make sure to list the correct directory for the location if needed.

It may take as long as 18 hours initially for Google to spider your sitemap. Make sure to check back to the login page to see if you have any errors that will need to be corrected or if your sitemap has been accepted.

When you have additional pages, you will want to remake your site map. If you have changed content on your pages, you can simply click resubmit next to your sitemap name and Google will re-spider your newly updated pages. Or you may choose to just have Google review your sitemap on its own schedule.

Conclusion

At this point we are not sure if a Google Sitemap will help your website, but we certainly think that if Google thinks that it is important, that we should definitely use it. On their website, Google state a sitemap's benefits as being:

- Better crawl coverage to help people find more of your web pages
- Fresher search results
- A smarter crawl because you can provide specific information about all your web pages, such as when a page was last modified or how frequently a page changes.

Only time will tell if a website having a Sitemap performs better than one that doesn't, but with Google still being King of the Web, having a Sitemap certainly can't hurt!