



About the Double-Underlined Links

INTRODUCTION

- home
- about
- non-technical introduction
- newsletter archive

PRIMERS

- html
- MySpace html
- ad banners
- perl & cgi
- asp
- javascript
- database - sql

HTML & GRAPHICS TUTORIALS

- getting started
- backgrounds
- buttons
- browser specific
- colors
- forms
- frames
- html 4.01 tags
- html 4.01 ref
- image maps
- tables
- web graphics

BEYOND HTML

- asp
- cascading style sheets
- css keyword ref
- cgi scripting
- dhtml/layers
- dot net
- java applets
- javascript
- javascript keyword ref
- javascript script tips
- php
- security
- SEO
- vb script keyword ref
- webmaster tips
- webmaster projects
- webmaster toolbox
- video
- xml
- general reference pieces
- the master list

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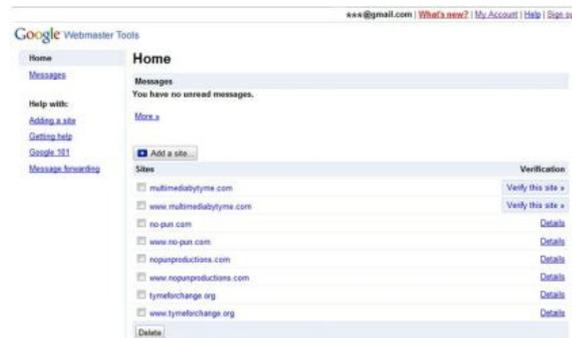
Google Webmaster Tools: What Have You Done for Me Lately

By [Tyme](#)

Introduction

Yep, I know what you are thinking. "Thanks to [HTML Goodies](#), I've got [Internet Explorer Web Developer Toolbar](#), [Firefox Web Developer Extension](#), and [Firebug](#), what more do I need."

Okay, so you have a hammer, a screwdriver, and an adjustable wrench. Even your basic tool belt has room for a few more tools. Google Webmaster Tools is a handy diagnostics toolbox and a tricked out tool shed, if you factor in all the add-on gadgets for helping you improve the "findability" of your site. Let's open the lid and peek inside.



[Click here for larger image](#)

Once logged into your Google Webmaster Tools account, you will be presented with the option to add a site ([domain name](#)) for inclusion or view an existing site. A verification method is used to synchronize your site with the Google [application](#). This verification is created by either adding a meta tag to your [Web page](#) or by uploading to your Web space an [HTML file](#) uniquely named by the application.

Google's new Webmaster Tools interface (shown herein) is reminiscent of some of their other products with a portal feel.

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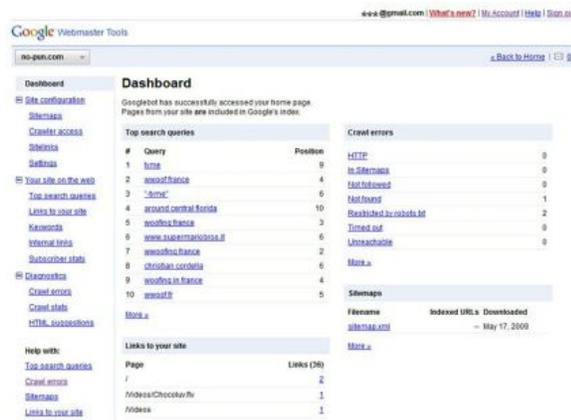
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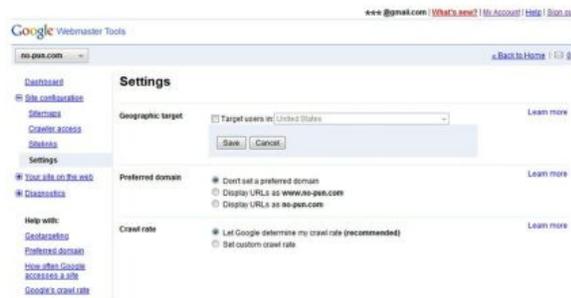
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The [home page](#) provides a quick glance at some of your key information: "Top search queries", "Crawl errors", "Links to your site". Using the right-hand navigation, you can explore these and other features in greater depth. A [drop-down menu](#) button in the top left allows you to switch between sites.

The Webmaster Tools are organized into three sections: "Site configuration", "Your site on the web", and "Diagnostics". As you might expect, the Site Configuration section is one that you typically do just once for each site, while the other sections are ones that you will want to monitor on a regular basis of your choosing. Be sure to use Settings to note your preference for using the www or non-www version of the domain name for URLs. Google makes a distinction.

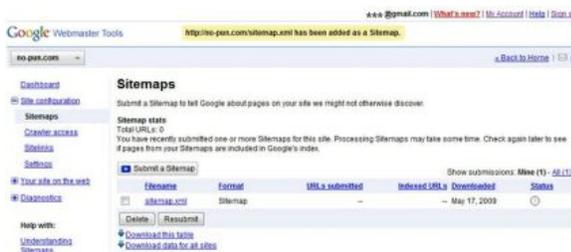


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For the sake of brevity, I will highlight a few of the features that prove particularly useful.

Sitemaps

Perhaps you are aware that there are two types of sitemaps: an HTML sitemap that is a collection of links to pages on your site - a navigational aid used by your Web visitors, and the search engine sitemap referenced here. The search engine sitemap is a document (XML file) that lists key URLs from your site, which helps the [search engines](#) identify key pages for indexing and how often those individual pages change. (Learn more about sitemaps by clicking the "Sitemaps" help link on the Webmaster Tools sidebar.)



[Click here for larger image](#)

Through Webmaster Tools, you provide Google a URL to the location (in your Web space) of the sitemap that you created by following the Sitemap Protocol. Once Google has digested your sitemap, Webmaster Tools will report back about any errors.

The screenshot shows the 'Sitemap details' section of Google Webmaster Tools. It includes a 'Sitemap summary' table and a 'Sitemap errors and warnings' section. The error message is as follows:

Line	Status	Details
3	Paths don't match	URL: http://www.no-pun.com/

Problem detected on: May 14, 2008

[Click here for larger image](#)

In the example shown above, Google is reporting that a URL of www.no-pun.com was found in the sitemap for domain no-pun.com. Google makes a distinction between the www and non-www versions of the domain. The oversights are easy to correct with the convenient error listing that Webmaster Tools provides.

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- getting started
- backgrounds
- buttons
- browser specific
- colors
- forms
- frames
- html 4.01 tags
- html 4.01 ref
- image maps
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BEYOND HTML

- asp
- cascading style sheets
- css keyword ref
- cgi scripting
- dhtml/layers
- dot net
- java applets
- javascript
- javascript keyword ref
- javascript script tips
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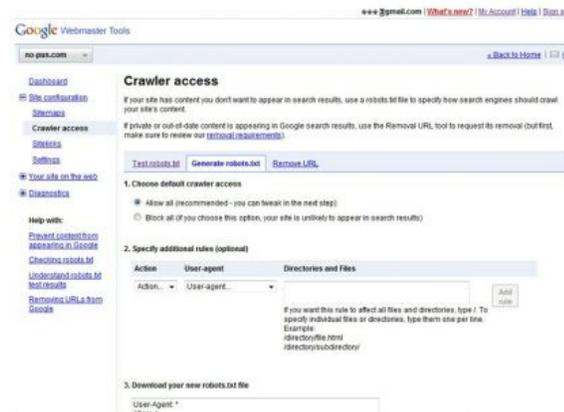
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Crawler Access

On the Crawler Access page, you can generate a robots.txt file or test an existing one. The Remove URL feature allows you to easily submit a request to Google to remove specific pages of your site that have already been indexed and appear in search results. You might wish to do this if you forgot to 'disallow' a folder or files of your site through the robots.txt file.



Click here for larger image

Your Site on the Web

This section is the area you will most often monitor. While Webmaster Tools is no substitute for Google Analytics (the mother of all site statistics), it does provide a nice quick glance at site usage information. The best feature is "Top search queries" that shows search strings that listed your site and the position of your site in those search results. It also shows the click-through rate (number of users who visited your site) for each of those search strings. And, you can show that information by last 7 days, past 2 weeks, or one of the last 6 months.



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Information about user search queries that have returned pages from your site					
Show: All searches All Google domains April					
Impressions: Your site appeared in these searches			Clickthrough: Users clicked on your site in these searches		
#	%	Query	Position	#	%
1	39%	tyme	5	1	28%
2	20%	woodof.france	6	2	20%
3	3%	woodof.france	4	3	16%
4	3%	woodof.france	4	4	12%
5	2%	pen.com	5	5	8%
6	1%	woodof.in.france	4	6	8%
7	1%	christian.cordella	7	7	8%
8	1%	woodof.in.france	4	8	8%
9	1%	www.supermanobos.it	8	9	8%

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Other go-to features of this section are review of your keywords, as Google identifies them, and the links to your site.

There is much more to Webmaster Tools than has been covered in this brief overview. Suffice it to say, if you ask "Google Webmaster Tools, what have you done for me lately", clearly you have not explored this toolbox.

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Tyme is a freelance writer and multimedia specialist of many years. She likes walks in the park, cotton candy, and baby ducks. To learn more: <http://www.multimediabytyme.com/>.

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