

Google™ Tips

Creating Useful 404 Pages

A 404 page is what a user sees when they try to reach a non-existent page on your site (because they've clicked on a broken link, the page has been deleted, or they've mistyped a URL). A 404 page is called that because in response to a request for a missing page, web servers send back a HTTP status code of 404 to indicate that a page is not found. While the standard 404 page can vary depending on your ISP, it usually doesn't provide the user with any useful information, and most users may just surf away from your site.

If you have access to your server, we recommend that you create a custom 404 page. A good custom 404 page will help people find the information they're looking for, as well as providing other helpful content and encouraging them to explore your site further.

(Note: This article covers guidelines for creating the content of your custom 404 page. For information on configuring your server to display your new 404 page, check your server or web host documentation. You should still make sure that your web server returns a 404 status code to users and spiders, so that search engines don't accidentally index your custom 404 page.)

Because a 404 page can also be a standard HTML page, you can customize it any way you want. Here are some suggestions for creating an effective 404 page that can help keep visitors on your site and help them find the information they're looking for:

Tell visitors clearly that the page they're looking for can't be found. Use language that is friendly and inviting.

Make sure your 404 page uses the same look and feel (including navigation) as the rest of your site.

Consider adding links to your most popular articles or posts, as well as a link to your site's home page.