



Online Authority & User Interactions





In theory, you can create a website today and rank at number one tomorrow, but obviously, this is not how things work. The **ranking algorithm** is way more complex than that and it takes so many more things into account, in order to distinguish good content for not so good one.

One of these things is the [online authority](#) and I would argue that this carries the most weight in the entire **SEO process**. Online authority is mostly based on the way other websites link to you. If all of the most trusted websites in your niche link to your content as a reference, if you are in the news, if thousands of people like and share your content on social media, Google will take note and realize that you must be the most reliable source in the given topic.



Online Authority

If these things happen consistently over time, then your entire domain authority will grow, even if your page is not so well organized and you didn't really focus on any keywords, you would still probably rank high enough.

One way to measure this authority that is used by many in the SEO field is the [MOZ Domain Authority](#). You can create an account on MOZ for free and it will give you the opportunity to check the domain authority for any domain. In short, we'll call it **DA**. The DA tries to predict success in the **SERP** by looking at several things connected to the backlink profile and the history of the domain. The value goes from 1 to 100. What is a good score is relative. In some industries and topics, a DA of 20 can be quite high, while others would be considered very low.

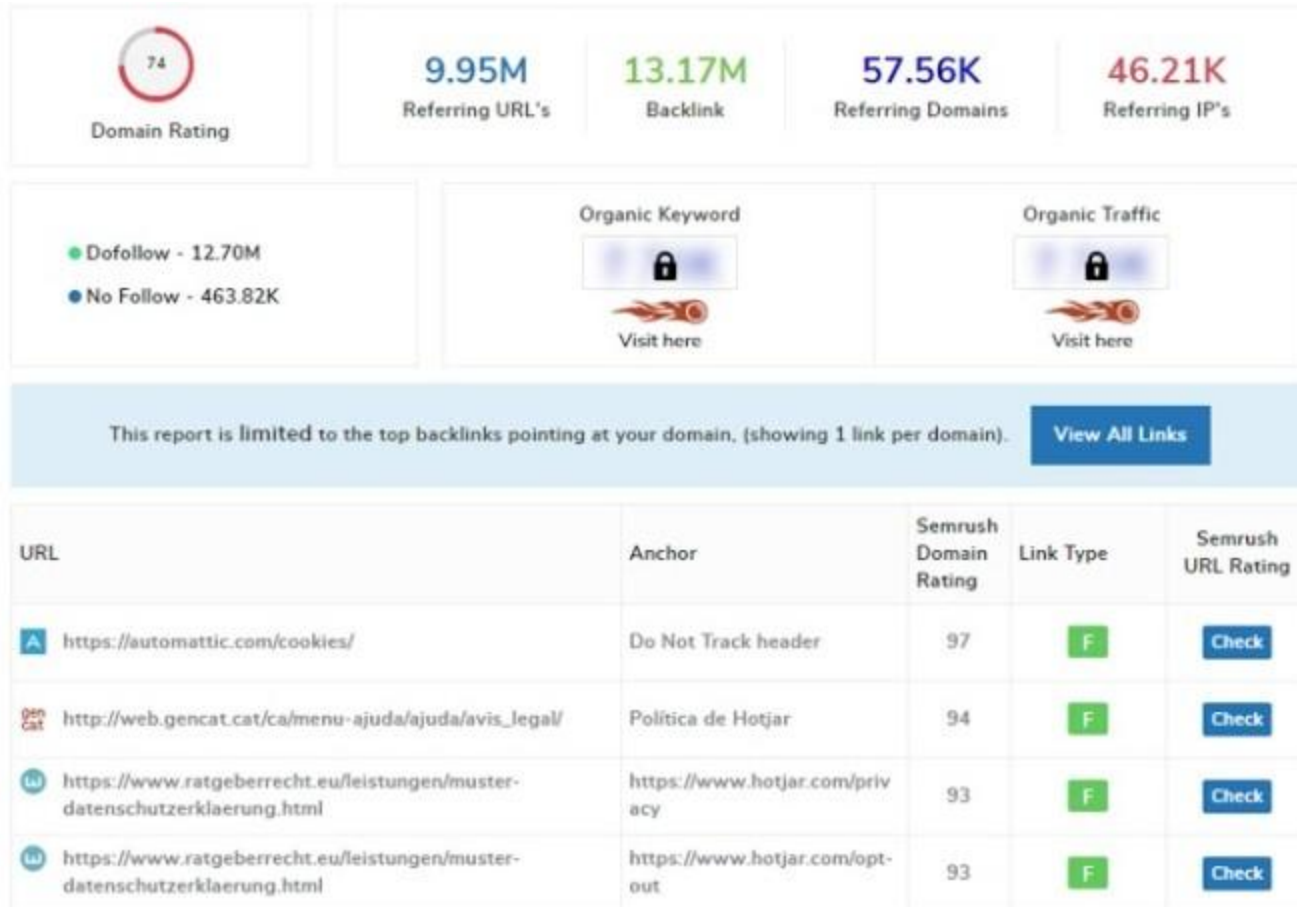


The benchmark is always competition. You can't compete with the most popular websites on the internet in general. They have a DA that is close to 100. I mean YouTube, Facebook and others that are in that category. DA is built over time and it cannot be manipulated with any shady black hat techniques. Growth can be painfully slow. It may take years to climb up in the score. That is only normal since we talked about building up trust and reputation.

How can you approach this process them? How can you improve? The official answer Google will give you is that you just need to constantly provide great content and others will surely link to it naturally, but there is more to that.



They will never like to reveal too much about their algorithm because webmasters would immediately try to abuse that and rank unnaturally by manipulating those variables. What we recommend in order to grow your DA is to look at your competitors, the ones who rank above you for the same keywords. **Use SEO analysis tools** to study them and see how they reach the high DA. One thing you can learn from them easily is to check where they get backlinks from. Every other domain that links to them passes them authority. It's full of vouchers for them if you will. Would you try to get links from the same sources? If yes, you can probably reach the same DA as them in time. There are also free tools available for this task.





This one is from [Small SEO tools](#). It's just an example. It has some limitations, but it can give you some precious information. We would recommend using a more advanced tool. [Ahrefs](#) is probably the best at this. SEMRush also has this feature, as you can see in this example. There is usually a huge amount of backlinks leading to trusted websites. You need to patiently filter through them and find the most valuable ones. We don't care as much about the number of **backlinks** in total. We think it's more relevant to look at the number of referring domains and filter through them, find the best backlink sources and try to replicate them in what is called a link building process.



Performance Scores

PageSpeed Score D (63%) ▾	YSlow Score D (63%) ▾
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Page Details

Fully Loaded Time 11.2s ▾	Total Page Size 2.31MB ▲	Requests 95 ▾
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PageSpeed

YSlow

Waterfall

Timings

Video

History

RECOMMENDATION	GRADE	TYPE	PRIORITY
▾ Defer parsing of JavaScript	F (0) ▾	JS	HIGH
▾ Serve scaled images	F (0) ▾	IMAGES	HIGH
▾ Leverage browser caching	D (63) ▾	SERVER	HIGH
▾ Minify JavaScript	C (79) ▾	JS	HIGH
▾ Avoid CSS @import	B (83) ▾	CSS	MEDIUM
▾ Enable compression	A (91) ▾	SERVER	HIGH
▾ Minify CSS	A (94) ▾	CSS	HIGH
▾ Specify a cache validator	A (98) ▾	SERVER	HIGH
▾ Specify image dimensions	A (99) ▾	IMAGES	MEDIUM
▾ Optimize images	A (99) ▲	IMAGES	HIGH

What do my scores mean?

Rules are sorted in order of impact upon score
Optimizing rules at the top of the list can greatly improve your overall score.

Not every recommendation will apply to your page
The recommendations are meant to be generic, best practices; some things will be out of your control (eg. external resources) or may not apply to your page.

[Learn more about PageSpeed/YSlow scores and how they affect performance.](#)

Need optimization help?

Read our [how to guides](#) and [optimization explained articles](#) for additional direction on improving your page performance.



The things you need to consider when you are performing link buildings are the following: Is the source of the back link relevant for your business? This can mean the same niche, like in our previous example you would like travel blogs to link back to your post about family-friendly tourist destinations in Florida. Even if they have an average DA, a backlink from them can mean a lot. If there's an opportunity to link from, let's say, Lonely Planet or Culture Trip or Touropia or something along those lines, you have to take that opportunity. Some of these websites accept **guest posts**, or you can submit your story to them and they will consider writing about you themselves. That is the case for Lonely Planet, by the way. In some other cases getting a backlink from the sources you want will not be possible or it will cost you quite a bit of money.



LINK BUILDING - TO CONSIDER

- ▶ *Is the source of the backlink relevant for your business?*
 - ▶ *Industry relevance, topic relevance, geographical relevance...*
- ▶ *What type of links does the source provide?*
 - ▶ *“nofollow”, User Generated Content (forums, comments sections)*
- ▶ *What is the D.A.?*
- ▶ *Consider quality over quantity*
 - ▶ *Many links from low D.A. websites will hurt you*
- ▶ *Natural links*
- ▶ *Get links from social media*
- ▶ *Get listed in Google My Business*



But **relevance is not limited to area of activity**. There can be locally relevant backlinks. If you have a business in Seattle, backlinks from local business directories in Seattle are also relevant. Links from news sources can also be relevant sometimes. If a source can mix more types of relevance, it gets really valuable for you. For example, if you have a post about an event in London on your site, a backlink from a London 2020 events calendar is relevant in terms of topic, as well as geography.



What type of links does the source provide? Many websites don't like to pass on authority through links, so they add a parameter to these links called "[nofollow](#)". This sends a message that they don't endorse the website they are linking to. A "nofollow" link has always been less valuable than a normal one. Quite naturally, websites with user-generated content like Wikipedia, or most of the comments sections on other websites are all nofollow. That's in order to stop spammers. However, recent changes from Google suggest that a "nofollow" backlink is far from useless, although you would still prefer a link without this parameter.

Consider quality over quantity. A high number of links from shady domains, with low D.A. and low relevance will most likely hurt your authority, instead of increasing it. Of course, you can't stop people from linking to your site, but try not to actively link build from cheap websites. You will find plenty of offers from so-called SEO specialists that can provide hundreds or thousands of backlinks in exchange for a few dollars. I always see these kind of offers on Fiverr. Stay away from them. They are toxic.



In everything you do, try to get so-called natural links. Best case scenario, other quality websites would be really interested in your content and you would just need to let them know about it. They would link because they are genuinely interested, not because they expect something from you in return. By the way, **link exchange is also strictly discouraged by search engines.**



A good way to get attention to your content is **social media**. Although officially, again, Google has claimed that they do not consider links from social media in their algo, that is probably not true. People talking about your brand on social media will surely have a **positive effect on SEO**.

Another important link to get is the one from a [Google My Business](#) account. Having your business listed here will drastically increase your rankings for local oriented searches. Your business will be shown on a map, and people doing relevant searches in your vicinity are likely to find you more easily. Local search is a vast domain itself.



User Interaction

In the grand scheme of **SEO algorithm**, there is one thing we can't forget: **the user**. All of the things we talked about have the end goal of providing relevant answers to users. If Google would not properly answer the needs of the user, it wouldn't be what it is today. This is why we talk about user interactions in this section, but this will be shorter than others, as there are fewer things you can do to actually control it.



Google has many ways of understanding if users find relevant content on your site or not. Especially if searches are performed using Google Chrome and if the target websites are using Google Analytics to track users. This sort of usage of data from one surface to another is not exactly compliant with all privacy principles and it's not really okay, but it does give extra insights to Google that it needs to provide a constantly better search engine. What will Google look for in order to determine user interactions with your site and with your search results?



USER SEARCH PATTERNS - WHAT WILL GOOGLE LOOK FOR?

- ▶ ***The relative CTR of your page in the results page***
 - ▶ ***If your page gets more clicks than the results above it, it will, in time, be ranked higher***
- ▶ ***Search patterns after the click (if possible to get data)***
 - ▶ ***Pattern example: click - press "back" - click another result etc.***
- ▶ ***Custom results (depending on location, previous searches etc.)***
- ▶ ***More advanced behaviors and related searches***



First thing, it will look for the relative CTR, which means [click-through rate](#). So basic basically this means how many people click your result after a search. If you are, saying, the sixth position on a search and you get a 12 percent click-through rate, this means in 100 searches for a particular search term 12 users click your result. Whereas the websites in fourth and fifth position get only like five-six percent, it is an indication that your result should be ranked higher and it probably will be, but please don't try to manipulate the CTR. They have methods of finding unnatural search and click behaviors. Focus on having an **attractive title and a relevant meta description** to increase this and the CTR will grow on its own. Another thing Google might look into is the search behavior after the click, if it can determine that. Google knows how to interpret several patterns very well.



Let's assume that a user performs a search and then precedes the **click on the first result**, then he clicks back to the search, clicks on the second result and then does the same. Maybe he continue like that for the first three- four results, then reaches the result in fifth place and does not click back to the search.

In some cases, Google can determine that the user spends more time on this page and takes action on it even. This sends the message that the user did not find anything relevant in the first four results, but he or she found that thing that he or she was looking for on the fifth page. If this situation repeats itself, it is likely that the page in fifth position will get a strong boost up the rankings because it shows relevance practically.



Then, there are more advanced behaviors and associated searches that can play a role, also depending on the IP and the search history and the language and the location of the search results may be very different in the Google server.

It is next to impossible to cheat when it comes to these user interactions and it is risky, please don't try it by clicking your own results or hiring others to do it. Instead, focus on good titles, meta descriptions and **provide a good user experience** on the landing page. Make it easy to navigate and have a design that helps people find the info they look for fast. This is the proper way to do it so that this will be reflected in proper user interactions on the [SERP](#).



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