



DOES A PAGE WITH A NO-FOLLOW LINK AFFECT RANK?

HYPOTHESIS

No-follow links will affect rank.

BACKGROUND

What effect, if any, do no-follow links have on rank is an age old question in SEO.

If you do some research on the matter, the answers you will find usually say: 'probably no direct effect on ranking but no-follow links make for a natural looking link portfolio.' A lot of people also mention a MOZ article 'The Hidden Power of No-follow Links' that talks about getting traffic by building 'awareness' and 'engagement.'

As with nearly everything, there is never the answer no-follow links do this or that because we tested it. Let's put this question to bed with a test.

TEST SETUP

Five identical test pages were created. The pages were submitted with Google URL Submit.

5 results (0.18 seconds)

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Five no-follow links were placed on five different sites. The links were all pointed at the number 3 ranked URL.

The screenshot shows a browser window with the URL `sun-city.us/reruseyers-ylronn-jporhb/`. The page title is "Reruseyers Ylronn Jporhb" and it includes social media icons for Facebook, Google+, Twitter, and a plus sign. The main content area contains several paragraphs of placeholder text. A red box highlights a link in the text: `glaretrampzxo/a -- $0 ---comprehensam no. Id mei dicunt ceteros, te mel consul impedit suscipiantur, mei at prima solum civibus. Nulla qualisque vis ei, rebum epicuri ex est. Usu et affert definitiones, per ad zril senserit, his minimum argumentum et. An reruseyers--movet laoreet reformidans, ad tale sale lobortis ius.`. The browser's developer tools are open on the right, showing the HTML structure of the page, with the highlighted link visible in the DOM tree.

RESULTS

Two days after running the test, target (test) page is missing from Google results.

11 results (0.38 seconds)

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5 days after running the test, rank of the testing page increased to the second position.

15 results (0.37 seconds)

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ANALYSIS

Boom! No-follow links moved the needle. An important thing to remember is that no-follow is really to protect the site that is posting the link. The no-follow tag tells search engines that the posting site doesn't want to take credit for the outbound link.

From that point, search engines are free to do whatever they want with the links after they crawl them. As far as Google is concerned, they will count no-follow links as part of the algorithm.