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# USING GOOGLE SEARCH CONSOLE FOR TECHNICAL SEO

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# Using Google Search Console For Technical SEO

Google Search Console is a great tool provided free to webmasters, marketers, and SEOs. It's a collection of resources to help monitor website performance in the Google search index. In this whitepaper, you'll learn how to set up a new search console property and review sections that help you understand how Google indexes and views your website.

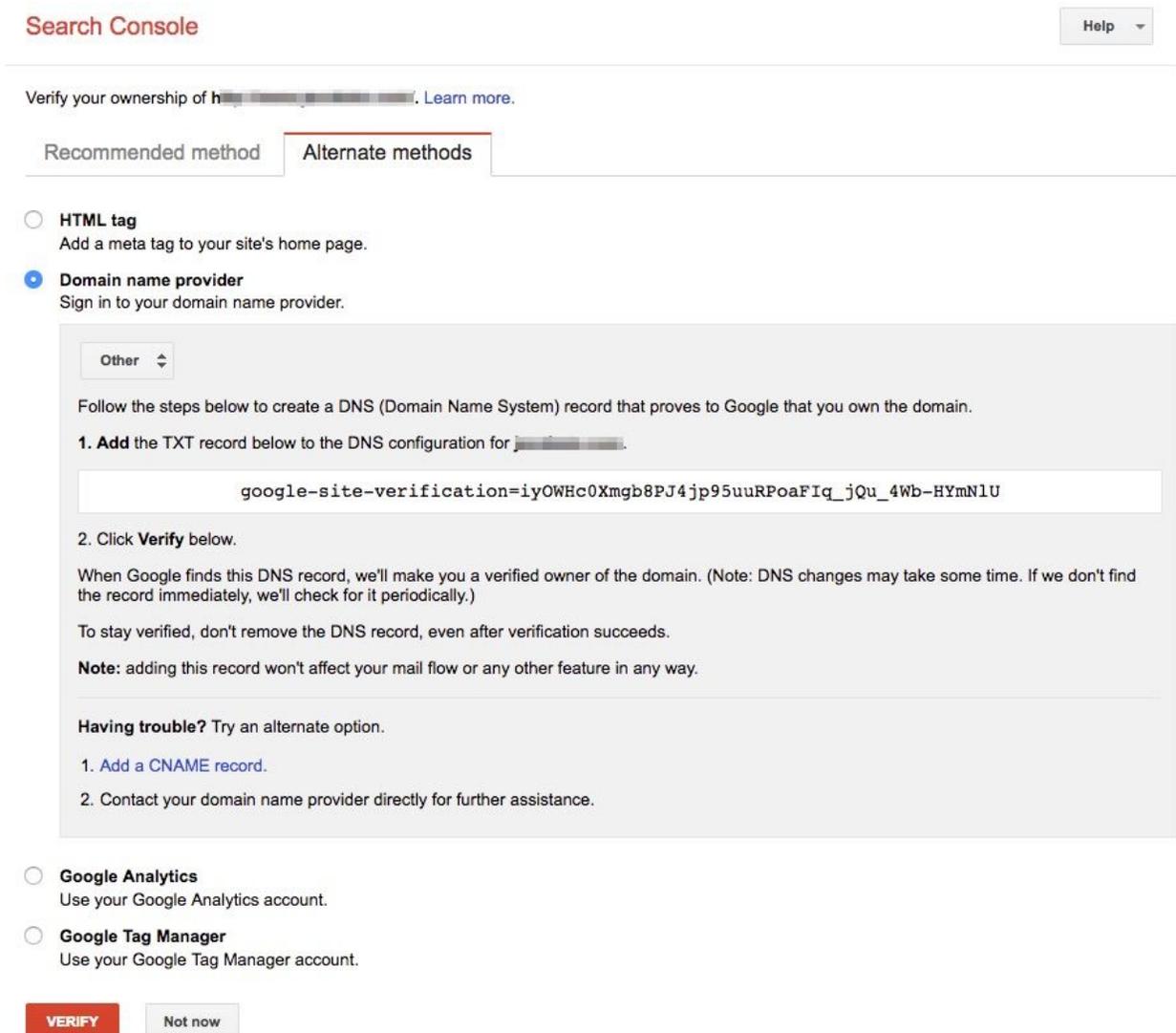
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## Setting Up Search Console

This can be done a number of ways, and Google provides [documentation](#) on this. We recommend using the DNS method detailed below.



**Search Console** Help ▾

Verify your ownership of [h\[redacted\]](#). [Learn more.](#)

**Recommended method** **Alternate methods**

- HTML tag**  
Add a meta tag to your site's home page.
- Domain name provider**  
Sign in to your domain name provider.

Other ▾

Follow the steps below to create a DNS (Domain Name System) record that proves to Google that you own the domain.

1. Add the TXT record below to the DNS configuration for [\[redacted\]](#).

```
google-site-verification=iyOWHc0Xmgb8PJ4jp95uuRPoaFIq_jQu_4Wb-HYmN1U
```

2. Click **Verify** below.

When Google finds this DNS record, we'll make you a verified owner of the domain. (Note: DNS changes may take some time. If we don't find the record immediately, we'll check for it periodically.)

To stay verified, don't remove the DNS record, even after verification succeeds.

**Note:** adding this record won't affect your mail flow or any other feature in any way.

**Having trouble?** Try an alternate option.

1. [Add a CNAME record.](#)
2. Contact your domain name provider directly for further assistance.

- Google Analytics**  
Use your Google Analytics account.
- Google Tag Manager**  
Use your Google Tag Manager account.

**VERIFY** Not now

Fig. 1

As you can see, Google gives you plenty of options for validating. The DNS method ensures no matter how many web developers or revisions of your website you make, it will always be validated. This also helps prevent losing validation when moving servers or CMS (unless you change your nameservers).

If this is a new validation and Search Console Property, you must give Google time to crawl and review your site. It can take from a few days to weeks to start seeing data show up in Search Console. This would be a good time to work on your [SEO outreach](#) or do some [Keyword Research](#) (you can use Search Console for this once your data has populated).

Once you have given Search Console sometime to populate, you may dive into the data. Using the right margin navigation, it is important to go through Search Console from bottom to top. We'll explain why below.

## Crawl Section

Start here first because you need to know if Google is not able to crawl or index your site due to your robots.txt file. Starting with the robots.txt tester section you will know if you are blocking or allowing Google to crawl your website. If you see **Disallow: /** then you have an issue. In this case, you must update your robots.txt file to allow and/or block the appropriate folders for your CMS and server.

A critical area of technical SEO is ensuring you have minimal or, ideally, no crawl errors (Fig. 2). Crawl errors are an indicator of good website maintenance. Having a large number of errors can hurt your SEO performance and cause lost search engine rank position for your most meaningful keyword terms and phrases as well as indexation issues. Google will report on the majority of the “not found” errors along with server and unknown errors. You have a few ways to pull the errors, but the final task of adding a 301 redirect to your server is always implemented using the same method.

Google only reports on the first 1,000 errors they find. If you have more than that you'll need to fix the first batch, clear the crawl errors, and check back in a few days or weeks to get a new list. Google sometimes lags behind and reports fixed errors as still being errors. To prevent adding duplicate redirects, it is recommended you keep a master redirect list detailing the updates you've made in Search Console.

## Site Errors

✔ No errors detected in the last 90 days. Nice!

## URL Errors

Status: 3/7/17

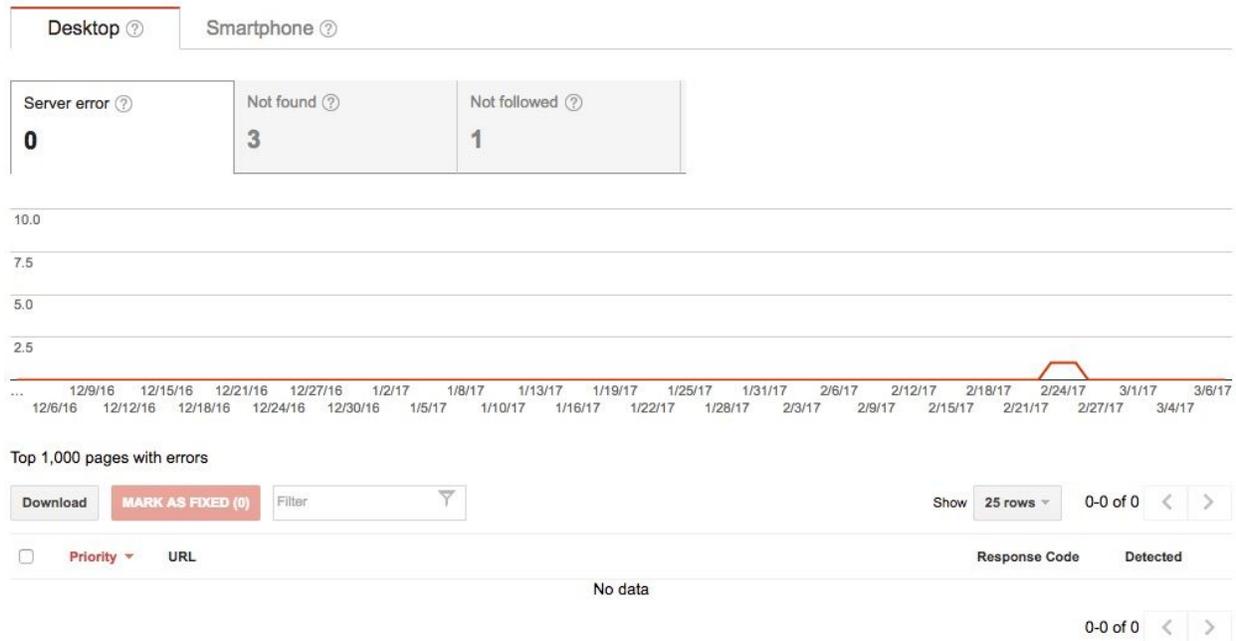


Fig. 2

## Redirects

It's best to create one-to-one redirects instead of redirecting all errors to the homepage. Google wants to see you redirect an error page to an appropriate alternative, not just a random page. This is vital to your SEO. When you create a 301 redirect, you're telling Google that this new page is the same or similar to the error page, and that "SEO Juice" can be transferred to the new page.

Still, adding one-to-one redirects isn't always possible due to the large number of errors. Here you can use a many-to-one redirect which sends a group of URLs to a parent or top section URL. An example would be removing a tag from a blog along with a few posts that do not have replacements or similar articles. This is where you would redirect all the URLs to the blog or another category/tag.

Now that redirects have been implemented, you will clear the errors by marking them as fixed. This is done in bulk or individually depending on how many errors you have. The final, and very important part of the Crawl section is Sitemaps.

## Sitemaps

In the sitemaps section you may check if your sitemap was found by Google. If not, then you need to submit it to Google and allow Google time to review and index the URLs from the sitemap. This can take anywhere from a few hours to a few days. If you see “Pending” in the submitted or index section you should check back later.

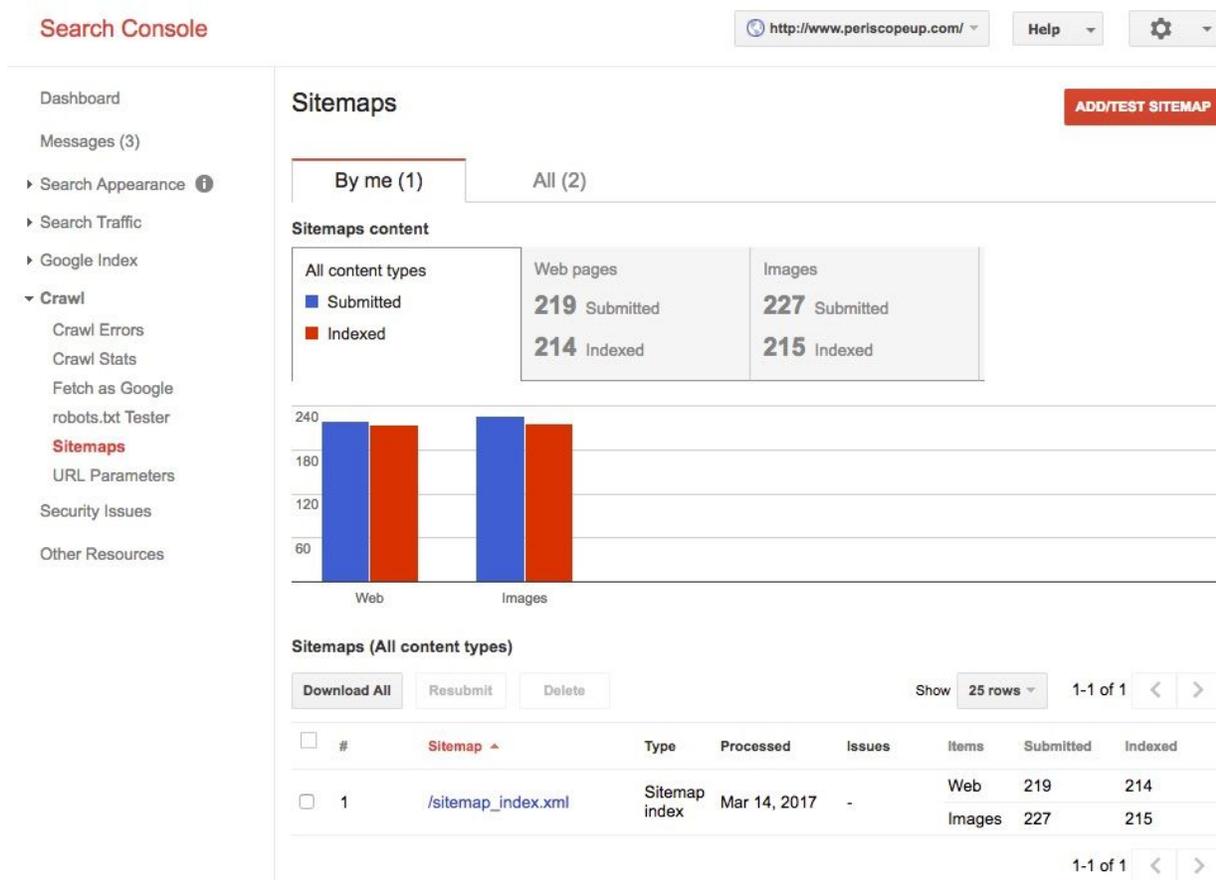


Fig. 3

Once you have your sitemap submitted and reviewed, you’ll be shown how many URLs were submitted and - of those URLs - how many Google Indexed. If the sitemap has images listed, those URLs will be listed separately on their own line.

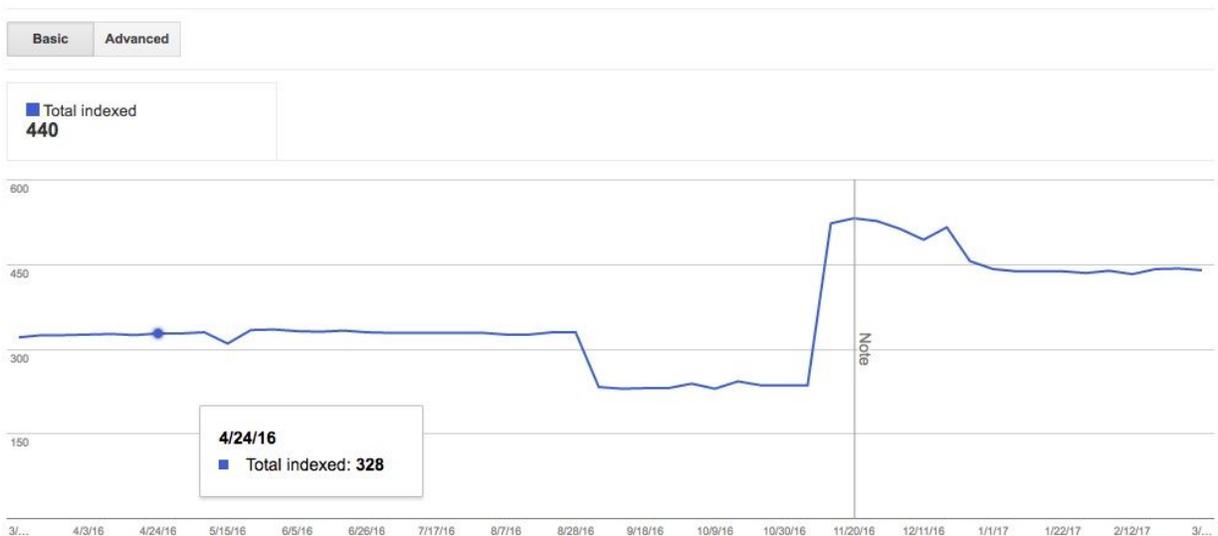
At this point, things can be a little deceiving. Search Console may show, for instance, 100 submitted and only 75 indexed. This is not necessarily accurate, if your website was already in Google index prior to adding the website to Search Console, it may have had URLs already indexed.

Google is not going to index the URLs a second time, so they only show URLs they just indexed or reindexed from your sitemap. There are a number of reasons why URLs from sitemaps don't get indexed. It could be page content is lacking, pages are blocked by robots.txt, duplicate content, and the list goes on. So before diving into why the numbers don't match up, take note of the total number indexed for Web and Images separately and then move onto the next section - Google Index. This section will help us decide if we need to dive deeper into the sitemap and URLs.

## Google Index

Now that you have made notes from the Crawl section, you can now start to investigate how well Google is indexing the website. Going into the Index status section, you'll see a total indexed number along with a graph of how your site has been indexed over time. There might also be an added note explaining something Google did that may have caused a drop or increase in indexing. Clicking on the note will take you to their change log for that particular date.

### Index Status Showing data from the last year



The numbers shown in the graph may not reflect some filters that can prevent indexed URLs from appearing in our search results. [Learn more.](#)

[Download chart data](#)

Fig. 4

Now that you see how many indexed URLs Search Console is reporting, you can compare that number to your sitemap numbers from the previous section. Normally, you'll see more indexed in the status section than in your sitemap. This is due to image and PDF files that you may not have listed in your sitemap. If you have a perfect sitemap with every page, file, and image listed, then these numbers should match up.

In Fig. 3, there are 214 pages and 215 images being indexed from the sitemap, and 440 in the index. Since this number is nearly identical, this means our website is being indexed nearly perfectly. These numbers are not 100% on the index or sitemap side. Still, if you build your sitemap with the exact pages and content you want indexed, then these numbers should match up. If your numbers do not align, it could be due to sitemap issues, individual page issues, or a general website problem. If this occurs, you may need more technical SEO help.

## Search Traffic

This section has a few tools that can be useful when it comes to SERPs and SEO. Search Analytics gives you a nice graph showing Clicks, Impressions, CTR, and Position. Impressions and CTR are two factors many companies focus on. Keep a weekly and monthly tally on these numbers to make sure you're trending upwards.

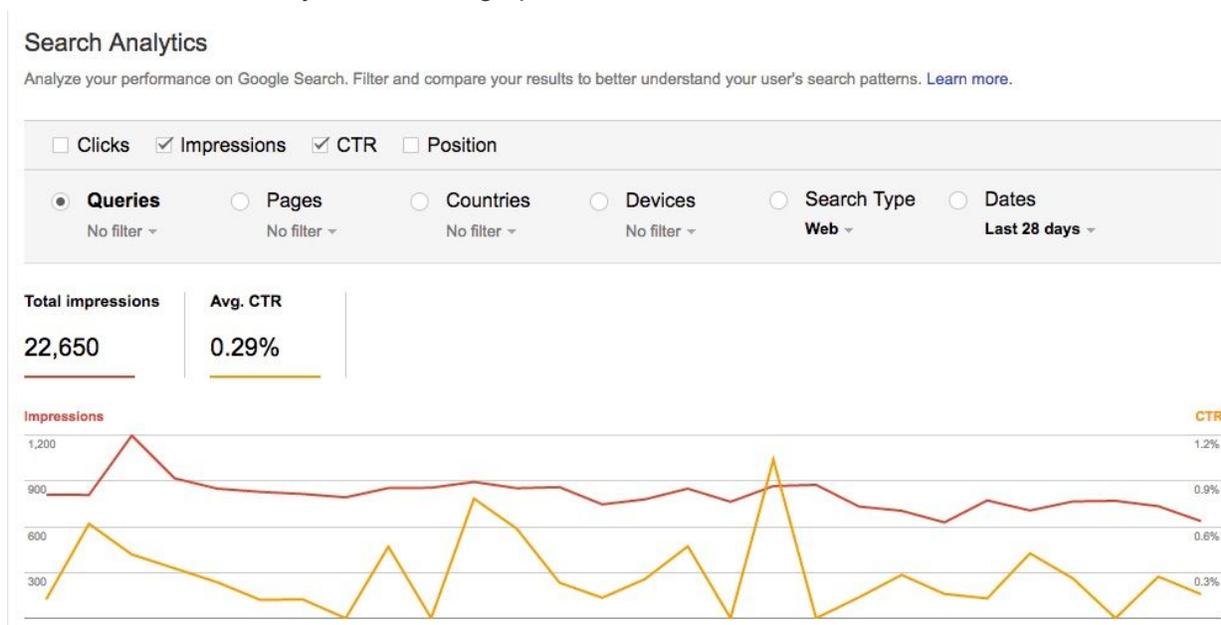


Fig. 5

Under the graph and options there are a list of query terms or search terms that Google reports on. Use these terms in blog posts, content and pages, and discover new terms you may not have realized you ranked for. All this will help your SEO efforts.

The Links To Your Site tool can be used to see what you link to the most and who’s linking to your website. The links to your website can also be used for doing a link audit and determining which links are bad or spammy. If you did some link building in the past through another company, you may find bad links. Disavow these links so they don’t hurt your SEO.

## International Targeting

International targeting is especially important for multilingual and multi regional websites. This section shows “hreflang” tags and reports on any errors with tagging. Figure 6 (below) shows that when more tags were added, the errors increased as well. This example is from a Wordpress site using a multilingual plugin designed to mark everything up correctly, but obviously it’s not perfect. Dig through the tags and errors offline to determine what’s needed to fix these mistakes. This lets you benefit from Google’s multilingual search results based on user browser settings.

### International Targeting

Target your audience based on location and language settings. [Learn more.](#)

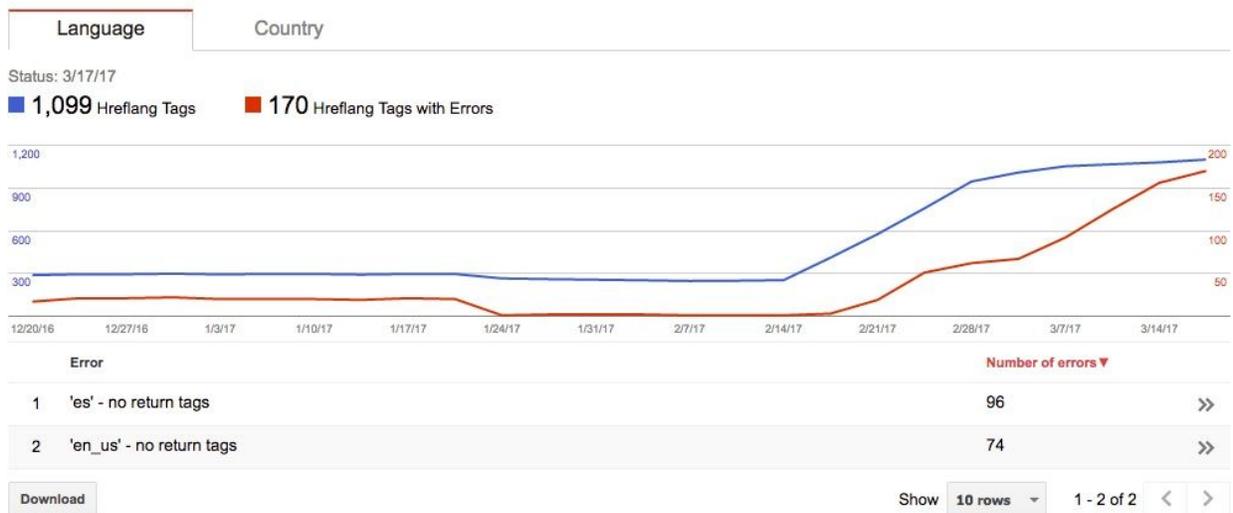


Fig. 6

## Mobile Usability

It can be difficult to determine what you should worry about when it comes to Mobile Usability. The example below (Fig. 7) shows 21 pages with issues, yet this particular example has over 3K pages on the website. How do you decide if these deserve an entire development team to go in and fix/adjust the design for mobile? The answer depends on budget, time, and your threshold for error acceptance.

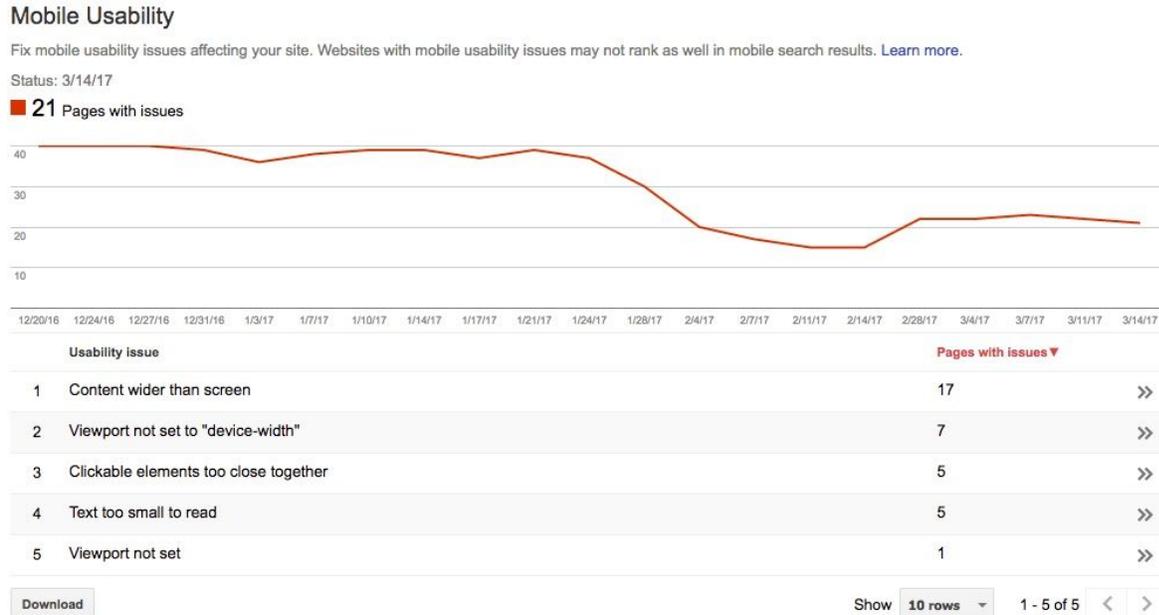


Fig. 7

Consider investigating each error to determine when each was last detected. If over three months old, perhaps they're not important issues on the live site. Each page should be run through the [Mobile-Friendly Test](#) by Google to confirm which issues are relevant. Google gives you a nice popup with options on how to proceed with each URL under each error. This requires coding and technical support.

## Search Appearance

This section is very unique to your website and SEO needs area. Each Search Console property and website will have different structured data and some will have multiple types. In the example below (Fig. 8) we see Articles, Services, breadcrumbs, and more. Each have a specific way of sending data to Google to help understand your website and company.

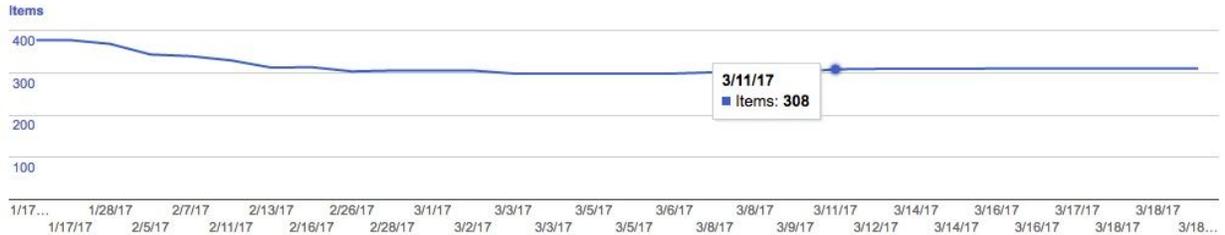
It's highly recommended to implement [Schema](#) or some other Rich Text markup language that can give your website a uniquely styled search result in Google. Not all structured data has a

unique result, but with Google’s push to markup websites it’s good practice to provide as much detailed markup as possible. So if Google does add a unique view, you’re already done.

### Structured Data

Status: 3/18/17

■ **310** Items ? on 116 pages
0 Items with Errors ? on 0 pages



Download Show 25 rows 1-7 of 7 < >

Data Type	Source	Pages	Items	Items with Errors
hentry	Markup: microformats.org	109	160	–
Breadcrumb	Markup: data-vocabulary.org	46	78	–
hcard	Markup: microformats.org	13	57	–
Service	Markup: schema.org	10	10	–
WebSite	Markup: schema.org	2	3	–
VideoObject	Markup: schema.org	1	1	–
Article	Markup: schema.org	1	1	–

Fig. 8

Rich cards are similar to the Structured Data but only focus on the structured data that produces a rich result in search. Recipes, Events, Products, Reviews, and Courses are the main ones, and unless you’ve marked up your website for these, it’s unlikely you’ll use or see anything here. The example screenshot in Figure 9 (below) shows Recipe cards with missing or invalid fields along with Enchanted cards. This section tells you which missing/invalid fields are critical or non-critical. Invalid cards should be fixed first. The Fig. 9 example is missing image fields which is a required field for marked up Recipe pages.

## Rich Cards

Fix errors in your rich cards or enhance your cards with additional data. Errors or omissions in rich card data can reduce the feature set available to your card, or prevent the card from being processed entirely. [Learn more.](#)

Status: 3/18/17

206 Invalid cards     453 Enhanceable cards     0 Fully enhanced cards

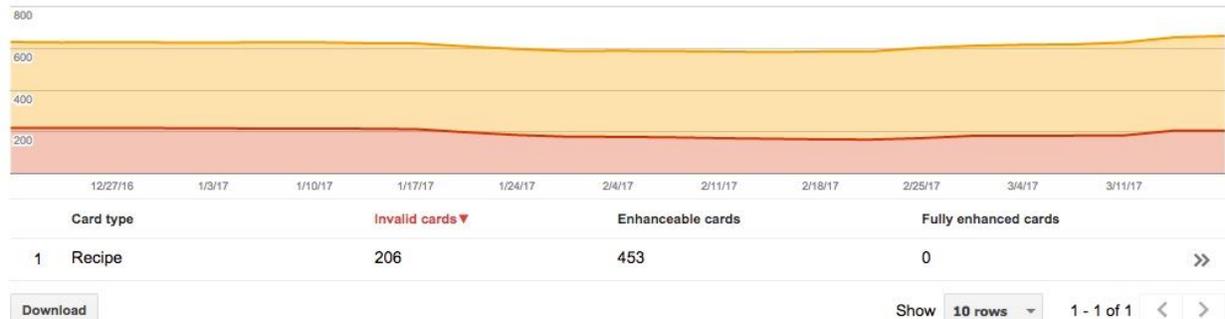


Fig. 9

Fixing the above cards will increase the enhanceable cards, but until all non-critical items are fixed or implemented, the fully enhanced cards will stay at zero. That's why it's good to implement all required and recommended fields when using markup languages such as Schema. Otherwise, Google is only partially happy.

The Data Highlighter tool is used to help better explain your marked up content to Google. If you have a page with markup language, but Google isn't reading it as well as you hoped, or you're serving it up on screen in a unique way, you should use this tool. Each situation differs, but highlighting your data with this tool helps Google read your pages. This tool can be very complex and robust. Only use it if other tools have been unsuccessful at reading your structured data.

Google covers HTML improvements, however these can get outdated. It's better to use tools such as [Deepcrawl](#) or [ScreamingFrog](#) to get a more up-to-date picture of duplicate, short, long, or even missing tags.

## Accelerated Mobile Pages (AMP)

Not everyone has adopted AMP. It's still very new and continues to be adjusted by Google to this day. There are also limitations when using AMP that have not been addressed, such as forms and popups. Due to these limitations, some might choose to move off of AMP completely until workarounds or solutions appear.



## Conclusion

This whitepaper has guided you through the Google Search Console review process for Technical SEO. As there are a number of scenarios for each section of Search Console, we highly recommend you work with your technical/SEO team to better identify your website's unique needs.

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