

Getting started promoting your site

These days, promotion is more important than ever. Gone are the days of submitting your URL to a few search engines and expecting people to flock to your site.



There are millions of pages available on the World Wide Web, with plenty more getting added every day...

So if you actually want to attract an audience to your site, you're going to have to get the word out, via promotion.

Just what you're going to have to do really depends on what your objectives are. And generally speaking, that's the first step you'll want to take before you get started. Ask yourself, *what am I trying to accomplish here?*

If you've got a personal site with little more than a few pictures of Sparky (*your pet beagle*) on it, perhaps promotion isn't really all that important to you, because you really just put it up there for a few friends to look at anyway.

If you've got a commercial site, or you're trying to bring in some kind of revenue with advertising, chances are promotion is going to take a big role in your Internet venture. Because traffic = money (*potentially anyway...*) you'll obviously want as many people visiting your site as possible.

Of course, there's plenty of other reasons you might want to get your site out to a sizable audience.

If you're ready to get some serious traffic, it can be done. Not by magic, not by luck, but by developing a solid game plan as to how you're going to get the word out, and working at it until your objectives have been met. (or exceeded!)

Sounds like a lot of work? It can be. But if you're really trying to develop an audience for your site, it's worth it. And we're here to help.

If you're new to the promotion game and not sure where to get started, you're at the right place. Read through our advice first to get a better understanding as to what you'll have to do to get noticed.

If you're already familiar with the process of promoting an Internet venture, perhaps you'll just want to skip to our tools section to help speed up the submission process, or check out [Hit Traffic](#) for some amazing information on getting your site noticed.

Whatever the case, we wish you the best of luck. Promotion can be tricky, but it's well worth the payoff. Don't rush the job, the promotion of your site is just as important as the site itself.

Optimizing your site

With millions of Web sites available to people on the World Wide Web, you can also expect millions of URL's to be listed on various search engines.

That can make it tough to get your listing seen, especially if you haven't created your site with promotion in mind.



Let's use a basic example for the purpose of understanding how important it is to optimize your site for maximum traffic potential.

Let's say a guy named Steve is in the marketplace to buy crafts today. Not having a particular site in mind when starting his shopping adventure, he uses [AltaVista](#) (his favorite search engine) to conduct a search for "crafts".

As there are thousands of craft sites that have submitted their URL to AltaVista for indexing, Steve's search is likely to return thousands of URL listings - each of which can be visited simply by clicking on a link. However, by default only 10 of them are displayed at a time, and to view the next 10 site listings available Steve would have to click on a link at the bottom of the page and wait for the entire page to load all over again.

Since there are ten links available immediately from the search, Steve is going to choose one based on the most appealing title presented to him. The first and second don't appeal to him, so he clicks on the third link, whose title - "Crafty's on-line Superstore" implies that he can probably shop on-line for crafts from the site. When he gets to the site, sure enough he finds just what he was looking for - and his search is over.

Meanwhile, thousands of other sites that offer similar content were ignored. Why? Because they didn't have a priority listing. Were Steve really bored or unsatisfied with the results of the first page, he may have looked at the second, and maybe even a third.

Were he still unsatisfied however, he would be more likely to conduct a new search with different keywords rather than continue sifting through pages containing search results he was not satisfied with.

Therefore, if most people act like Steve... on AltaVista, craft sites with a listing of 31 or more are extremely unlikely to receive any traffic from their listing from people searching for "crafts". The same can be said for sites dealing with any topic.

Getting listed within the top 30 sites is essential for getting steady traffic from search engines and directories. And it can usually be accomplished through designing your pages with the right things in mind. If your site or page wasn't designed with promotion in mind, you'll want to make a few changes before submitting your URL *anywhere*.

Promotion and the title

Not thinking too much about the title of your page(s) is one of the most common oversights people make when creating a Web site.

Not all search engines use your title as a criteria in determining your relevancy for any given search, but most do!



Let's go back to the crafts example for a minute. If your company "Sunshine Craftworks" sold crafts from your site, what would the best title be for your home page ?

1. <TITLE>Sunshine Craftworks - Home</TITLE>
2. <TITLE>Sunshine Craftworks - Pottery, Paintings and more</TITLE>
3. <TITLE>Pottery, Painting, Paintings, Art, Craft, Crafts, Sculptures, Artists, Games,...</TITLE>
4. <TITLE>Sex, Pictures, Naked, XXX...</TITLE>
5. <TITLE>Sunshine Craftworks - Crafts, Art, Pottery, Painting and more.</TITLE>

Well...? Ok, let's look at the first one. This is probably one of the most common ways people title their pages. And it is functional in that it tells the user where they are on your site. But what happens when a search engine is indexing your site through keywords found in your title?

What words are a user likely to type in when searching for crafts that would lead them to your site? Sunshine? Craftworks? Home? Nope. At best there may be a partial match from the *craft* in *Craftworks* from people using the word craft in their search. So while there are benefits for visitors in using this kind of title, it's a definite search engines no-no. Unless someone is looking for your name specifically, the first title isn't going to help them find your site.

The second title is a little better. In addition to providing the company name for your site, the title makes reference to two different kinds of crafts, both pottery and paintings. If a user were to search for either specific (pottery or paintings), a page with that title would likely receive a better listing.

The third title makes use of extensive keywords. While using keywords is a good idea in titles, you should limit yourself to a few important ones rather than typing in every word that has anything to do with your site. Be concise! A long title is a bad thing, which we'll explain in long vs. short.

The fourth title makes use of all too commonly used keywords in searches. However, they have nothing to do with crafts, and are therefore not only deceptive, but unlikely to produce positive results. Should users notice the misleading keywords they can even have you removed from search engines and directories. Misleading keywords are a **very** bad thing.

The fifth title is the best. It uses a number of relevant keywords that users are likely to use in searches, makes sense when read and keeps it short and to the point.

In conclusion: Keep your title short and accurate. Think long and hard about your keywords and don't forget to check other people's sites that have good listings to see what they've done with their titles

Long versus short

No doubt, some of you have fallen into the practice of using excessive keywords in titles, META tags and even the body of your document in an attempt to try and attain better positioning in search results. Well search engines have gotten a lot more sophisticated, and flooding your pages with keywords just doesn't do the job like it used to anymore...



Why Not?

Long titles and META tags used to be a good thing. In the old days, filling your title and

META keywords tag with the same word hundreds of times would ensure a good listing when someone searched for that word.

Unfortunately, once people started to realize the importance of good search engine listings, they started to abuse the search engines by spamming their pages full of keywords, including in their META tags and titles. Search engines didn't like this.

Try and understand where the search engines are coming from:

- ?? They make money selling advertising space on their site.
- ?? They make more money selling advertising space when they have a larger audience.
- ?? They get a larger audience by providing a better service.

Now I don't know about you, but when I go to a search engine and look for information on something and don't find what I want - I go to another search engine. So, when people using excessive and often irrelevant keywords started receiving all the good positions for every search, search engines had to improve their service by changing the way search results appeared, in order to make sure that the public stayed happy with the service being offered.

Relevancy

And they did. In a couple of ways. One thing that they did was start to remove sites that were obviously abusing keywords. Another thing they did was concentrate on the *percentage* of keywords in every page. This is often referred to as *relevancy*.

Keyword relevancy means the search engine essentially counts up the number of words in the search criteria, than divides that number by the actual keyword(s) it's looking for in the search. For example, lets look at the keyword relevancy in the following title.

<TITLE>crafts, paintings, oil paintings, modern art</TITLE>

If someone were searching for the word **crafts**, the keyword relevancy in the title would be about 17%. That's the percentage that the keyword makes up of the number of words in total.

If someone were searching for paintings on the other hand, the keyword relevancy would be about 33%, because the word appears twice in the title and there are six words in total. 2 is approximately 33% of the total, which is 6.

Keyword relevancy is a good idea. It prevents people from putting every word in the dictionary in their site 5 times to receive a good listing in all searches. Instead, their sites would receive bad listings because the percentage of relevant keywords on their pages was minute. This is why you shouldn't have very long titles, META tags or use keyword spamming in your page. It just doesn't work anymore.

Instead, to receive good listings you should concentrate on the number of times keywords appear in your site compared to how many words appear in total. Make your titles and META keywords tags reflect only one or two of the most important aspects of your page that people are likely to search for. This ensures better keyword relevancy when those search engines are picking through your site.

And remember, you can (and should) always use different combinations of keywords in META tags and titles on the various pages within your site. Diversifying your keywords

gives you a better chance of getting a good listing with different pages on various searches.

Using Meta tags



META tags are essential when it comes to effective promotion of your Web site. The majority of the big search engines out there use at least some of them when indexing your site.



While there are a variety of tags available, we'll only discuss the two that are of importance when it comes to promotion - **keywords** and **description**.

META tags are little snippets that provide information about the content of your page. Rather than the search engine having to guess what your page is about based on information found throughout your site, META tags allow you to tell the search engines what keywords and description *you* feel are relevant to the page submitted.

Not all search engines utilize META tags, but many of the most important ones (*from a promotional perspective*) do.

META tags are easy to use, you just stick them within the <HEAD> of your document like so:

```
<HTML>
<HEAD>
<META NAME="Keywords" CONTENT="keywords here, keywords here, and, here">
<META NAME="Description" CONTENT="Put your page description in here">
<TITLE>My page</TITLE>
</HEAD>
```

Using the META Keywords Tag

```
<META NAME="Keywords" CONTENT="keywords here, here, and, here">
```

The META keywords tag is the most important META tag you'll use when promoting your Web site with search engines. The content in this tag will tell search engines what keywords are relevant to your page. This is **not** the only part of your site used when search engines determine your pages relevancy for any given search, but it's definitely an **important** factor.

The keywords you should use depend on the content of your page. Your objective is to use words which people are likely to type in when searching for information that your page contains, so your site will come up with a good position in their search results.

How diverse the keywords you use really depends on the size of your site. Because it's wise to use different keywords for different pages within your site, you'll want to use *fewer* keywords per page if you have many pages within your site, and more if your site is smaller.

If you've got a large site...

You should use fewer keywords in your META keywords tag for each page. This will increase your ranking in each search because the relevancy of each word will be higher, and you can still cover a large number of keywords by using different ones for each of the various pages within your site.

If you've got a small site...

You may want to use a *few* more keywords in your META tags for each page, because you don't have as many pages to use different keywords on. This allows your page to come up in the search results for a wider variety of searches, but will have an effect on the ranking your URL receives.

Using fewer keywords will increase the keyword relevancy overall in your META keywords tag, which will increase your position in search results when people look for information using said keywords.

On the down side, there are fewer keywords that will match your page to various searches, so you're less likely to come up in as many different searches as you would if you had more variety in your META tags.

The best way to find effective keywords is to **look at what other people are doing**. Use the keywords and phrases in a number of search engines that you think other people would use to find what your site is offering.

Look at the pages that are receiving good listings. Do they have META tags? What keywords are they using? How many keywords are they using? What's their title? We're not advocating stealing information from other people, but looking at their source code should help inspire your own effective META tags and titles.

Creating META Keywords Tags

- ✍ Figure out what people are likely to type in when searching for information that your page provides.
- ✍ Search for that information on some popular search engines.
- ✍ Look at the URL's returned, check out their source code to see what they did to receive good listings.

- ✂ **Don't** use too many keywords. Keep it to a few
- ✂ Repeat the keywords between **3 to 5** times in your META tag.
- ✂ **Don't** repeat the keywords directly after one another, i.e.: "cars, cars, cars, cars, automobile, automobile...". Instead, space them as evenly as possible with the most relevant keywords first: "cars, automobile, vehicles, cars, automobile..."

Using the META Description Tag

```
<META NAME="Description" CONTENT="Put your page description in here">
```

Your META description tag is another important part of your Web site. Most of the larger search engines use this tag to provide users with a brief description about your page.

Use this tag to describe your site in a way that would be appealing to users reading a brief description of your site. Keywords are not *usually* a concern in your description tag as it's rarely used for ranking purposes, though it wouldn't hurt to describe your site in a way that used keywords, just in case.

Creating META Description Tags

- ✂ Think of an easily read, brief description of what your page is about.
- ✂ Use a few relevant keywords in your description.
- ✂ Make your page sound appealing. Remember, this is what people will read before deciding which site to choose from their search results.
- ✂ Keep your description to a brief paragraph

Other page considerations

In addition to the META tags and titles on your pages, search engines often use other elements of your page to determine your search relevancy.

Using other elements of your page makes it more difficult for the Webmaster to obtain better rankings by "fixing" their page, as is often done with the title and META tags.



Here's some of the other things search engines will sometimes look for, and what you can do to increase your rankings:

Keywords throughout the page

In addition to keywords found in META tags and titles, search engines will often look through your document for keywords relevant to the search. This is sometimes referred to as *full page indexing*.

This prevents people from using irrelevant keywords throughout the hidden elements of their page to receive better listings, as the body of their document will lack the false keywords.

If you want to enhance your search engine listings, you should definitely consider using relevant keywords throughout your document.

- ?? *Don't* just throw them throughout your page for the sake of having extra keywords.
- ?? *Do* keep keywords in mind when writing your text, and use keywords when appropriate *and* when they flow with the body of your document.

How many times should keywords appear in your document to help enhance your listings? Quite a few actually. Because it's logical for a page about computers to use the word "computers" on any given page quite a few times, search engines aren't likely to consider a word repeated throughout your document "spam" unless you really overdo it.

- ?? **DON'T** repeat the keywords one after another (computer, computer, computer). This will likely be seen as spam.
- ?? **DON'T** put in keywords throughout your document as to make it confusing to readers. There's no point in getting people to your page if they'll just leave once they get there.
- ~~??~~ **DO** put relevant keywords in the first paragraph of your document. Some search engines may give the first paragraph priority over the rest of the document.
- ~~??~~ **DO** use a good number of keywords on your index or any gateway pages on your site.

To get a good indication of how many times you should have keywords throughout your page, go to [AltaVista](#) and run a search using keywords relevant to your page. Take a look at the source code of pages with good rankings, and do a count to see how many times each keyword appears.

Headers

Headers were originally intended to emphasize certain words on a page, allowing a quick way to bold and enlarge text without having to change font tags back and forth. While they're not too common these days, search engines will sometimes use the text found within these tags to determine the pages relevancy for a search.

Essentially, these tags are seen as super-keywords.

<H3>This is an H3 header</H3>

There's no hiding headers, and it's debatable as to how effective their use is for promotional purposes. However, if you can - it can't hurt to emphasize a word or two using header tags, preferably near the top of your document.

Alternate image tags

Image tags have the option of providing users with images turned off with alternate text. Newer browsers typically show this text when the mouse pointer is held over an image as well.

Because search engines can't look at pictures, the alternate text for images is one of the ways that they can identify a pages content. Most people don't bother typing in the alternative text when inserting pictures into a document, but you should.

Don't worry about describing the picture. If you think people with images turned off care to read about what they can't see, guess again. Instead, use one or two keywords relevant to your page. Don't worry if they're relevant to the actual picture, the search engine has no way to tell one way or the other, and we wont tell on you.

Submitting your site

Once you've got your site optimized for promotion, it's time to start submitting it to those all important search engines and directories.

Be sure to check out our [before you submit](#) checklist to make sure you haven't missed anything!



Submitting to search engines and directories is easy, but time consuming when done manually. That's why we created our [site submitter](#), which allows users to submit to a number of search engines and directories quickly and easily.

It's important that your listing goes through properly on the large search engines and directories, so your job isn't quite finished after submitting your URL. You should *check* to ensure your listing is available and accurate on each of the large search engines.

This can take a while. While some search engines and directories will add your URL to their database in a matter of minutes, others often get backlogged and can take up to *weeks* before your listing actually goes through. After submitting your URL to a search engine or directory, there is usually information returned with the confirmation screen telling you how long you should expect for the listing to go through.

Checking for your URL can be done in a number of ways. The least frustrating is to simply search for the URL that you submitted. This pretty much ensures that your listing will pop up first, but won't really tell you what kind of listing position you've received for the keywords people are likely to search for.

Alternatively, you can search for your site by using the same keywords you emphasized when optimizing your site for promotion, but it may be more difficult to find your site unless you've done a hell of a job getting a priority listing. Don't assume that your listing hasn't gone through just because it's not returned on the first or second page of results, it may be on the 18th!

But it's still not there!

For one reason or another, a submission may never find its way into the database. If it's been much longer than expected for your URL to be listed, there's a good chance your submission fell through the cracks.

If you're positive that your URL is not in the directory and enough time has passed since your submission, your best bet is to resubmit your URL. If you've received poor listings with the other search engines that have listed your page, you should consider tweaking your page for promotion again *before* resubmitting.

Multiple Submissions

If your site is comprised of a number of pages, you'll want to have them all listed on the big search engines and directories as it will increase the likelihood of at least one coming up for any given search relevant to your site.

The big search engines have programs which will "Spider" your site, looking for any additional pages linked from the page you submitted. If the various pages are linked from one another on your site, they will eventually find their way into the database.

However, spidering can sometimes take a while after your initial submission, so if you're in a hurry to bring in that traffic, you may want to manually submit all of the pages on your site you'd like indexed. You may want to keep it to no more than 5 or so per day to avoid being flagged as a "spammer", though we assure you you're not breaking any rules by manually adding your pages.

Note that many of the smaller, less significant search engines only allow for one submission per site. This will usually be mentioned on the confirmation screen after your initial submission, and should be respected as to avoid being removed altogether

Exchanging reciprocal links

The concept of exchanging reciprocal links is a simple one. You give someone a link from your page in exchange for a link from theirs.

Exchanging links with the right kind of page can bring in just as much traffic as good listings on search engines, if not more.



Finding pages to swap links with:

What kind of sites you should be looking for to trade links with really depends on the kind of site you have.

If you've got a commercial site...

Generally speaking, you'll want to find sites that have some kind of relationship with what you have to offer, but not the same thing. If you're selling books for example, another commercial site offering books for sale isn't likely to link to your site, because that may result in loss of sales for them. Likewise, offering a link to them on your site would be like sending customers somewhere else to shop.

However, there may be other sites that aren't in direct competition with you, but offer something that may be of interest to your visitors, and vice-versa. Let's say you ran a site for your pretzel company. Why not trade links with a beer site? Trying to sell used cars? Swap with an insurance company. These are the best kinds of links for commercial sites, and can significantly increase your traffic if done properly.

If you've got a personal site...

It's still a good idea to trade links with sites offering different content that would be of interest to your visitors, but because there are no customers to lose, site owners are more likely to trade links with sites offering the same kind of content.

This can be an excellent way to generate traffic to your Web site. Lets say you had a site about "Star Wars". Because there is a lot of information available about the series, chances are that another Star Wars site wont offer exactly the same content as yours, but visitors to either are likely to be interested in both sites.

These links usually generate the highest click-through ratio, though you should be cautious about linking to any site that is likely to draw traffic away from your site. Don't link to sites that offer *identical* information, or sites that are more comprehensive and likely to take your repeat visitors away from you.

Asking to trade links:

Initiating a link swap is fairly simple. Find the appropriate contact at the site you'd like to

trade links with, and tell them why you feel an exchange would be *mutually* beneficial. **Don't** just say "You wanna trade links?" and expect people to jump at the opportunity. Nobody wants to get involved in a one-sided trade, so you should make a compelling case as to what you can do for them, and why you'd like a link from their site. A little flattery can't hurt either.

Fair trades...

Be careful! Try to avoid getting involved in one-sided trades. Ask how much traffic the site is receiving before agreeing to anything, and monitor traffic received from the link if possible. Check occasionally to ensure that the link is available on the site, as some people will remove links after the exchange has been agreed upon, thinking that you wont notice.

What kind of links to trade:

Links can be in any form. Banner ads, buttons, text links, etc. A properly used text link can be just as effective as a banner ad, if not more. Discuss the available options, and remember that some links work better than others depending on the forum.

If you'd like to swap links with a site receiving much more traffic than you, you might want to try offsetting the difference by offering a more prominent link, i.e. a banner ad for a text link.

Offline promotion

The majority of people promoting their on-line presence don't have the financial resources to promote their Web site off-line.

For those that do, there are a number of ways that commercial sites are able to bring attention to their Internet venture outside of the World Wide Web.



Have you ever seen a television commercial for a radio station? An advertisement in the newspaper for a television show? Promoting your Internet venture through alternative mediums can often be a wise alternative to advertising exclusively via the World Wide Web.

The number of ways through which this "off-line" promotion can be accomplished is endless. Rather than attempting to list all of the available methods here, we'll go over some of the most common and effective advertising alternatives available. Bear in mind that most off-line promotion requires some kind of advertising budget.

Business Cards

It's surprising how often businesses neglect to advertise their on-line presence on business cards, considering what an effective method this can be for attracting visitors to a company's Web site.

People are often less hesitant to look up information on a company's products and/or services through the Internet than they would be if forced to call or meet with a representative from your business.

Company Literature

Business cards are a great place to start, but you shouldn't stop there if your organization distributes any additional literature to potential or existing customers. Don't forget about:

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| ✂ Brochures/Pamphlets | ✂ Address Labels |
| ✂ Videos | ✂ Calendars/Mugs/Etc. |
| ✂ Invoices/Estimates | ✂ Letterhead |

Basically, anywhere that you'd place an address or telephone number for your organization, it would be advantageous to list your URL as well. It's a very cost-effective, common-sense place to advertise.

Direct Reference

Don't be reluctant to mention your organization's Web site when speaking with clientele. Your Web site provides 24 hour instant access to a wealth of information that customers should have access to. And unless you tell them where to find it, how else will they know?

Targeted Advertising

If you conduct business directly through your Web site, or if you feel your organizations on-line presence is a good way to promote your business, why not refer good prospects via mail, telephone or fax to your Web site?

Obviously it's not feasible to contact everyone with an Internet connection available, but many people are often less reluctant to look into your offerings if it can be done in the privacy of their own office or home.

What you can do off-line to promote your on-line venture really depends on the size of your organization, what it is you offer, your budget, and a number of other factors. Ease into it at first, compare the costs of the promotion with the benefits received, and stick with what works for you.

Checklist before you submit




Before submitting your URL to any search engines, directories, awards sites, etc., it's a good idea to double check your site to make sure everything is up to snuff.

Remember, it's a lot easier to get things right the first time than it is to go back and correct your mistakes, so take the time *before you submit*.



So what do you check for before you submit?

- I have researched keyword combinations of sites with good listings on various search engines.
- I have used META keywords tags on EACH page within my site, using different combinations to get better listings for various searches.
- I have used META description tags on each page.
- I have used META robots tags to protect any pages I do not wish indexed from being spidered, and to ensure other are listed.
- I have utilized keywords in my pages content to ensure better listings in various search engines that spider my content.

-  I have made sure my site is **finished** before submitting anywhere, or pretty darn close anyway.
-  I have tested the compatibility of my site on various platforms with various browsers.
-  I have validated my code to make sure there are no errors.

Am I supposed to pay for this?

Something is happening with some of the big search engines and directories out there. For those of you that haven't noticed, a few indices (I won't name any names) have taken to the concept of charging people money to list their URL's.

There are a few different ways they're going about this:

- ?? Charging *all* sites wishing to have their URL listed.
- ?? Charging sites for premium listings (on or near the top).
- ?? Charging a premium to *look* at your submission for possible inclusion.

Now, I don't blame the search engines for trying to generate revenue. Search engines are a business just like any other, and as such they need to finance their activities and generate profit somehow. But what was wrong with good old banner ads?

Allowing people to "buy" listings seems to take away from the effectiveness of search engines. When people search for something, they want URL's for the most *relevant* documents returned, not the URL's of whoever ponied up the most cash.

But alas, search engines are now big business, and big business is always trying to increase profits while cutting costs. And so long as no-one is getting hurt, what's the problem?

The problem is if such trends continue, people *will* get hurt. What were supposed to be databases of all sites that listed with them are now favoring commercial enterprises. And as many of you know, commercial sites don't necessarily offer the best content - but they *do* have the budgets to take away listings from non-commercial sites.

If this keeps up, soon all the immediate listings returned for the majority of searches will bring back only sites that paid for their listings. Sure, URL's of non-paying sites might come up, but if the best ranking they'll be able to pull off is on the fourth or fifth page somewhere behind those that contributed a few bucks, traffic generated from search engines and directories will be minimal, which will discourage amateur publishers from offering fresh content as their audience dwindles.

For those of you that fear the total commercialization of the 'Net, this could quite possibly be the beginning of just that. The best resource for small Internet publishers to advertise their offerings on a level playing field is being taken away from them in the name of profits, or at least - the good listings are.

Personally, I'll be doing my best to avoid using the search engines that participate in this kind of activity, and I'd recommend those that may be reading this do the same. Search engines were doing just fine before paid listings, and they'll do just fine without. Stick with the banner ads fellas.

Award Site Directory

So, while there are literally thousands of sites offering awards based on various criteria, here we'll list only sites we feel offer the chance for a significant boost in visitors.

Before you submit...

- ?? Is everything done? "Under construction" = no awards.
- ?? Has everything been checked for spelling and continuity?
- ?? Are you sure it looks ok on both Netscape *and* I.E.?
- ?? Is now the best time to submit? If you're planning on adding anything of great value relatively soon, perhaps you'd be better waiting? A lot of judges won't look a second time.



Cool Site of the Day

<http://cool.infi.net/>

One of (if not the..) original "cool site of the day" pages around. If you think your site has what it takes be sure to give it a shot, a listing here will definitely do something for your traffic.

Dr. Websters SOTD

<http://www.123go.com/drw/emaill.htm>

Unfortunately the interface is a little dated, but Dr. Webster's been giving away awards every day for as long as we can remember, and has a steady following.

Jayde Awards

<http://www.jayde.com/goldlnks.html>

Jayde offers the Gold Diamond award and the Webrider Corporate Best, for both personal and commercial sites respectively.

Project Cool Sightings

<http://www.projectcool.com/sightings/submit.html>

Project Cool Sightings chooses a cool site each day, and does a pretty darn good job of it.

PC Magazine

<http://www8.zdnet.com/pcmag/insites/wgabouth.htm>

PC Magazine does a write up on a site of the day, and a site of the week. Great place to get noticed, if you can.

Ravi's Pick

<http://www.netutopia.com/award/>

Just what makes Ravi qualified to pick "elite" sites from the norm? Beats us. But people seem to agree with his picks, so go ahead and see if you've got what it takes.

Too Cool

http://www.toocool.com/guest/cool_add.htm

Another popular cool site of the day page.

WebbieWorld

<http://www.webbieworld.com/ww/webnom.asp>

Previously behind the *Webbie Awards*, WebbieWorld now maintains a hand picked directory of the best sites on the Web. Not an award site, but a great place to get listed if your site is up to snuff.

Web 100

<http://www.web100.com/other/submit.html>

The Web 100 is different. Visitors get to vote on sites in the directory, and what people like moves up the ladder. Great idea, great site.

Advertising programmes

We've been asked by many of our users to provide some information on advertising networks for those wishing to host banner ads on their site.

Below are links to advertisers with various advertising programs. While we try to provide listings to only reputable networks, we cannot endorse the use of any service listed below.

Are you currently using an advertising network not listed here that you're happy with and feel should be listed? Please, [let us know](#).



[Adauction.com](http://www.adauction.com)

<http://www.adauction.com>

Adauction is a great place to sell off unsold advertising. Though it's not really geared towards smaller sites (asks for 1,000,000 visits per month), they *will* accept sites with smaller audiences if they cater towards a desired demographic.

[BURST! Media](http://www.burstmedia.com)

<http://www.burstmedia.com>

BURST! Media has been recommended to us by many of their users, and is known as a fair and reliable network. For those of you with smaller sites, Burst! only requires 5000 page views per month for membership, though your site will still have to be approved.

[Flycast Network](http://www.flycast.com)

<http://www.flycast.com>

Flycast is another reputable advertising network with a good track record for payments. Unfortunately, they also require a minimum of 100,000 impressions per month, which will filter out many smaller sites without the needed traffic.

[Safe-Audit](http://www.safe-audit.com)

<http://www.safe-audit.com>

While the process for placing ads on your site is somewhat inconvenient and the staff can be hard to reach, smaller sites having difficulty joining other networks may want to look into Safe-Audit as an alternative. There's typically a good selection of advertisers to choose from, and payments are relatively prompt.

[TeknoSurf](http://209.85.10.163/corporate/index.html)

<http://209.85.10.163/corporate/index.html>

We haven't heard much about TeknoSurf, but independent reviewers seem to rank it as a reliable advertising network.

Things to look for in an advertising network...

Not all advertising networks are created equal. When looking into sponsorship programs, you may want to take the following things into consideration:

Is it reliable?

Whether you're trying to pay the bills or just offset your hosting costs, reliability is a must when dealing with an ad network.

- ?? Do you know anyone else that has used this network? Were they satisfied with the service?
- ?? Is there any information about this host on the Internet? Is it positive?
- ?? Do they offer the necessary contact information in the event there are problems? Toll-free numbers, e-mail addresses, etc.?

How does payment work?

- ?? Will you be paid for impressions (the number of banners you show), click-throughs, or based on some kind of sales or results?
- ?? How much will you be paid for advertising?
- ?? How often will cheques be mailed out? Monthly? Quarterly?

Banner Exchanges

Banner exchange programs allow Webmasters to capitalize off their existing traffic by earning credits that are used to advertise their site using banners.

There are a number of programs available, each with its own set of rules, credit ratios, etc. Read banner exchange information carefully before signing up! Here are some exchange programs we recommend:



[Exchange-It](http://www.exchange-it.com)

<http://www.exchange-it.com>

Exchange-It offers a good banner exchange program with a 2:1 ratio, good detailed statistics and targeted advertising. One of their better features is the option to remove any reference to the exchange itself, as you can see from the banner below. From our experience this should result in slightly higher click through ratios, as banners are more likely to be perceived as paid advertising. *468x60 banners - Highly Recommended*



[LinkExchange](http://www.linkexchange.com)

<http://www.linkexchange.com>

Now owned by Microsoft, LinkExchange is the Internet's most popular and oldest banner exchange program. LinkExchange is reliable, offers a 2:1 ratio and a number of features. Unfortunately, they also require more personal information than most competitors.

468x60 banners - Excellent targeting features available.

LinkExchange

[SmartClicks](http://www.smartage.com/smartclicks/index.html)

<http://www.smartage.com/smartclicks/index.html>

SmartClicks has made quite a few changes recently, including a switchover to the commercial standard 468x60 banner size and a new network. There are some interesting features with this exchange, including the ability to have the exchange "learn" which categories are best for your site. Conventional targeting is also available.

468x60 banners - Revenue opportunities available

Other promotional links

Below are some great promotion related links that you might want to check out. If you know of a **promotion related** resource you feel should be listed here, please, [let us know](#).



- ~~///~~ [More Information On Search Engines](#)
- ~~///~~ [Common Search Terms](#)
- ~~///~~ [Miscellaneous Promotional Links](#)

More Information On Search Engines...

Looking for some additional information on how the search engines work? Below are some terrific sites that'll give you just that.

[Hit Traffic](http://www.hittraffic.com/)

<http://www.hittraffic.com/>

For all the latest information on how the search engines are ranking sites, and what you can do to improve your ranking, you have to check out [Hit Traffic!](#) **Highly recommended!**

[Search Engine Watch](http://www.searchenginewatch.com/)

<http://www.searchenginewatch.com/>

If you're really interested in how the big search engines work, this is the place to go. Search Engine Watch

has a variety of information from what they look for to how they're doing financially.

[Search Engine Talk](http://www.searchenginetaalk.com/)

<http://www.searchenginetaalk.com/>

A wad of discussions on all the big search engines.

What are people looking for anyway?

Ever wonder just what is *other* people are searching for? You're not alone.

[Ask Jeeves](http://www.askjeeves.com/)

<http://www.askjeeves.com/>

Ask Jeeves is a relatively new and wildly popular META searcher that allows users to ask questions in plain English instead of entering keywords. It also allows visitors to see what people are asking right on their front page.

[GoTo's Top 100](http://www.goto.com/d/top100/)

<http://www.goto.com/d/top100/>

A monthly synopsis of the top 100 searches conducted on [GoTo.com](http://www.goto.com/), a quite popular search engine.

[MetaCrawler's \(Go2net\) Metaspys](http://www.metaspys.com/)

<http://www.metaspys.com/>

Another see what people are searching for site, Metaspys gives you the option of viewing filtered or non-filtered searches. Guess which is more fun to look at.

[Searchterms](http://www.searchterms.com)

<http://www.searchterms.com>

What exactly are people searching for on the Internet today? If you guessed sex and mp3's, chances are you're right. Searchterms provides the top 100 search terms on various search engines and displays the results to you. An interesting look.

Other cool promotional links...

Here's some other interesting places you might want to check out.

[Keywordcount.com](http://www.keywordcount.com/)

<http://www.keywordcount.com/>

This is a really cool site. Compare your (or someone else's) keyword frequency against another site. A great way to see how the competition gets to the top of the listings.

Design tools and software

Some of our favorite design tools and software is listed below. If you think there's something missing that belongs here, why not [let us know?](#)

- ~~///~~ [Design/Building Tools](#)
- ~~///~~ [Graphics Programs & Reduction](#)
- ~~///~~ [Log Analyzers](#)



Site Building Tools & Validators

Still using notepad for your HTML and your Mom as a code checker? Maybe it's time to look into some new software...

[Arachnophilia](http://www.arachnoid.com)

<http://www.arachnoid.com>

For those of you that prefer to do your HTML coding a'la text editor, Arachnophilia may be a welcome alternative. A handy HTML editor with plenty of functions, and best of all, it's *free!*

[CoffeeCup HTML Editor](http://www.coffeecup.com/)

<http://www.coffeecup.com/>

CoffeeCup editor is another HTML editor with a bunch of neat features. With a number of functions and extras included, a good buy for those of you that like to keep things simple while maintaining control of your code.

[CSE HTML Validator](http://www.htmlvalidator.com/htmldownload2.html)

<http://www.htmlvalidator.com/htmldownload2.html>

CSE HTML Validator is a handy little tool that will check your HTML code for errors.

Graphics Programs & Reduction

Using Microsoft Paint for designing graphics? Maybe it's time for something little more sophisticated... (*No offense Bill!*)

[Adobe PhotoShop](http://www.adobe.com/prodindex/photoshop/)

<http://www.adobe.com/prodindex/photoshop/>

Adobe's Photoshop is undoubtedly the professional standard for imaging solutions. A myriad of plug-ins, precision tools and options makes Photoshop an incredibly powerful and useful tool if you can afford the

price tag.

[JASC's Paintshop Pro](http://www.jasc.com/psp5dl.html)

<http://www.jasc.com/psp5dl.html>

A versatile imaging program that's *actually easy* to use, JASC's Paintshop Pro has been a favorite among Webmasters for years. Download a trial version today.

[Ulead Systems Programs](http://www.ulead.com/)

<http://www.ulead.com/>

Ulead has been making some incredible tools for the Web designer for some time now including imaging software, animators, and reduction software. We'd list all the terrific programs here, but it'd probably be easier for you to check it out yourself...

Log Analyzers

Many servers don't provide a pre-installed solution for monitoring traffic. If you haven't got any kind of log analyzer, get one. How else are you supposed to know how many visitors you're getting?

FastStats

<http://www.mach5.com/fast/>

As the name implies, FastStats is a quick little tool for analyzing your servers log files. Easy to use, pretty darn quick, reasonably priced. Highly recommended.

WebTrends

<http://webtrends.frontiers.net/>

WebTrends is another terrific log analyzer that supports output in a variety of formats. Unfortunately it's not quite as user friendly as some of the alternatives out there, and the price tag is a little higher than most. Regardless, if you're really serious about monitoring traffic, WebTrends provides a few software packages definitely worth looking into.

Understanding search engines

While they are commonly all referred to as "Search Engines", there are actually three different kinds of search sites out there, search **engines**, search **directories**, and **meta** searchers.



Many of our users have asked us about the differences between the three, so here we go.

Search Engines

Search engines are typically completely automated. They include sites like [AltaVista](#) , [HotBot](#), and [Lycos](#) to name a few.

Search Engines are comprised of a large database that is queried through their Web page. Web site owners can add their site to this database by filling in a form or two, which instructs a "spider" to visit the submitted URL.

This spider will then scan the document(s) for relevant information such as keywords, META tags, etc, and pass the appropriate information back to the database for the listing.

When someone uses the engine to search for information, the database is then queried using various criteria to determine what listings are returned, and in what order.

Search Directories

Search directories work a lot like search engines, but rather than a "spider" or "robot" adding your URL to a database, a *person* does it. This includes the always popular [Yahoo!](#) and the promising newcomer the [Open Directory Project](#).

Like search engines, Web site owners can submit their URL to search directories to be added to their directory.

Because sites are reviewed by people, these indices typically take much longer than their spidered counterparts before submissions actually get listed. Directories will usually only index one (your main) page, as opposed to all the various pages throughout your site.

And because someone actually *looks* at your site, many directories take this opportunity to filter out sites they don't feel offer the type of content they'd like to provide to users. Submitting a link to Yahoo! doesn't mean it'll get listed.

Meta Searchers

META searchers don't actually have their own database, instead they use a program to query numerous databases from other search engines and directories to provide users with relevant URLs. META searchers include [Ask Jeeves](#) and [Dogpile](#).

Because META searches only query *other* databases, you can't add your URL. However, if your URL is listed in the databases it checks, your site will come up in relevant searches.

Understanding server logs

The majority of Web servers provide site owners with some kind of access to something called a *log file*.

This file is useful in determining the number of visitors and requests made to your site, and is indispensable in determining how well your promotional efforts are going.



What is it?

A log file is really just a text file with a different file extension. This extension will vary from server to server, but commonly ends with **.log**. Your host should provide information somewhere on how to find and access this file, if you cannot find it snooping around via FTP.

How does it work?

Every time someone visits your page, your server makes note of what file(s) the user received, when they received it, and where they came from.

It notes this information line by line on your log file, like so:

```
cache1.uwn.unsw.edu.au - - [01/Jun/1999:01:49:46 -0400] "GET /badadvin.gif HTTP/1.0" 200 1350
```

- ?? The first part of the above line tells us where the request came from, in this case an educational facility in Australia.
- ?? The second part of the line tells us the date and time the request was made, June 1st, 1999 at 1:49.
- ?? The third part of the line tells us that the server sent (GET) a graphic file (badadvin.gif) to the user.

There is a line for *each* piece of information requested, including *each* graphic, *each* HTML file, etc. For example, were someone to visit a page with 3 pictures and some text on it, there would be 4 lines recorded in the log file. One for each graphic, and one for the HTML document itself.

Lines in *your* server logs may not look exactly the same, as not all servers log requests in the same manner.

Put the abacus away...

Sure, you *could* manually count all the requests to your page to get information on visitation patterns, if you don't mind sifting through thousands and thousands of boring lines of text. But chances are you've got better things to do (we hope!).

Analyzing your log files

Thankfully, there are a number of options available for generating reports from your log files. There are some wonderful on-line report generators like [Wusage](#) and [http-analyze](#) that let you check out your stats on-line through an HTML interface, but because they're sometimes difficult to install, we don't recommend using them if they're not pre-installed on your server.

Alternatively, there are programs that you can run locally off your computer to analyze the log files. [WebTrends](#) is likely the most popular, and is well received by professionals. However, because of its hefty price tag, many users may find [FastStats](#) a suitable alternative (easier to use too!)

What's the point?

The point of all this is to monitor the success of your site, see what works and what doesn't. Sure, you could get a vague idea as to how many visitors you're getting with a counter or two, but by using your servers log files you can pinpoint what's hot, what's not, and how well your promotion efforts are paying off.

Getting listed on Yahoo!

Yahoo! has been serving up millions of URL's for a long time, and thanks to various advertising campaigns and peoples familiarity with the franchise, it continues to grow.



Getting listed on Yahoo! is a great way to generate some exposure for your site as a good listing *will* bring in visitors, but as some of you may already know, simply submitting a URL doesn't guarantee you'll get a listing in.

While ultimately whether your site receives a listing or not is up to the reviewers over at Yahoo!, there are a few things you can do to increase the odds.

Make sure your site is done first.

For some reason, people feel the need to promote their page even though it isn't remotely close to being done. *Nobody* likes visiting a site just to see "Under Construction" signs splashed across the index page, and this especially goes for Yahoo! reviewers.

We won't preach to you about the importance of a quality site with fast loading pages, good content and design, because hey, we're just about promotion, right?

Read Yahoo's [Submission Rules](#).

Yeah we know, but we're *all* busy. It's a fairly quick read, and ensures that you don't have pissed off reviewers trashing your submission regardless of the quality of your page.

Yahoo! knows that you want to get listed more than they need your listing, so don't think that they'll bend the rules for you, they won't. They've got plenty of listings already.

Find the appropriate category for your site.

As you'll see from reading they're [submission rules](#), Yahoo! works a little different than a regular search engine submission, because you'll have to choose a category for your listing to be placed in.

Choosing the right category is very important. The reviewer will essentially be looking at your site to determine whether it adheres to a certain quality standard, and to see whether it's appropriate for a listing in the *category you submitted to*.

If your site doesn't fit in the category you submitted to, they won't find a more appropriate one, they'll just throw it out.

Write your submission up carefully!

You won't get a lot of chances to make this right, so take your time and review your submission carefully before hitting that final submit button. Under comments tell the reviewer what makes your page worth a listing, and things they should check out.

Getting the most out of your listing

Yahoo! lists sites in each category alphabetically based on their title, so if you can create a title that applies to your site beginning with something low on the alphabet chain (a,b,c...) you'll get a higher listing.

Do not try to attain a higher listing using titles like "AAA My Site", etc. Remember, humans read this stuff, and are clever enough to figure out what you're trying to do.

While Yahoo! is category based, the majority of users will still use the search feature when trying to find something in particular. This search will be based on keywords found in your title and description. So be sure to use appropriate keywords when describing your site, just in a readable, sensible way.

Things to do to NOT get listed

- ?? Tell their staff to "hurry up already".
- ?? Submit your URL repeatedly. Because a listing can take up to 2 months before it goes in, wait *at least 6 weeks* before requesting a listing a second time.
- ?? Submit your URL to regional indexes and categories that have nothing to do with your site.
- ?? Spam keywords in your titles and description when submitting.

One more time...

- ?? Wait until your site is done before submitting.
- ?? Read their submission rules at least twice.
- ?? Find the appropriate category for your site (or *categories*, you can have 2 listings)
- ?? Review your submission carefully before sending it off.

Good Luck! Remember, be patient in waiting for a listing. You *can* re-submit your URL if your submission was overlooked, but wait at least 6 weeks!

information available at www.freepromote.com