

Day 13: Google Site Map

EZSitemap is a tool included with all EZ-NetTools accounts that helps the major search engines index your web site more efficiently and accurately. It does this by creating a site map.

There are two common definitions of site maps. The older and more familiar definition is a web page that is similar to a table of contents of all of the pages on your web site. Such a page is intended for your visitors to use to look up the information they are looking for.

The other definition of a site map is a file that search engine “bots”, “spiders”, or “crawlers” can read. “Bots”, “spiders”, and “crawlers” are automated programs, sent by search engines, to scan web sites looking for information to index. They read the words on your page, read the meta tags, and alt text tags. With a site map, you can tell the bots directly what pages you want them to search. You can also tell them information about those pages, such as which pages you think are more important.

How EZ-NetTools Implements the Site Maps

EZ-SiteMap is designed to automatically update your site map to reflect changes to your web pages. In fact, you do not have to do anything to create your site map. If you want to see your site map just type your domain name followed by “/ezsitemap.xml” into your web browser.

However, it is very likely that you will want to make some revisions to your site map file. As you scan your site map you are likely to find web pages that you do not want included or information to be changed. EZ-NetTools has several programs that will help you create and customize your site map. They are:

EZSiteMap, a program that creates the site map, Options in EZ-Pagebuilder, Page Options, that give instructions to the EZSiteMap program.

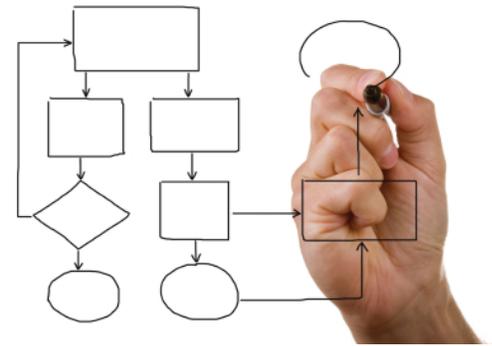
EZSitemapOverrides.txt, a file that the EZSiteMap programs uses to know which pages to add or to exclude from the site map.

Robots.txt, an internet standard file used to tell the search engines where to find your site map.

EZTextEditor, a tool that allows you to create and edit text files such as EZSitemapOverrides.txt and robots.txt

The EZSiteMap Program

The EZ-SiteMap program creates an XML file in the standard format the major search engines require. The file that our program creates is called ezsitemap.xml. The program uses the data entered in the EZ-PageBuilder Page Options and the EZSitemapOverrides.txt file to generate this file. This program will also read and include HTML files not created by EZ-Pagebuilder. In order to make sure that the information about your web pages is always current, the ezsitemap.



Displaying 1 - 10 of 35 Web Pages	
Page: home/about.html Priority: ●●●●●●●●●●	Edit Meta Tags
✖ Title:	Edit Page Options
✖ Description:	
✖ Keywords:	
✔ Sitemap: Included, Priority 0.4, Updated monthly	
✔ Robot Instructions: Don't Use	
Page: home/footer.html Priority: ●●●●●●●●●●	Edit Meta Tags
✖ Title:	Edit Page Options
✖ Description:	
✖ Keywords:	
✔ Sitemap: Included, Priority 0.4, Updated monthly	
✔ Robot Instructions: Don't Use	
Page: home/home.html Priority: ●●●●●●●●●●	Edit Meta Tags
✖ Title:	Edit Page Options
✖ Description:	
✖ Keywords:	
✔ Sitemap: Included, Priority 0.4, Updated monthly	
✔ Robot Instructions: Don't Use	

xml file is created every time the search engines try to read it. After the file is used by the search engine, it is deleted. For this reason, you cannot edit the file directly. If you want to modify the data in the site map file you must use either the Page Options or the EZSitemapOverrides.txt file.

Page Options in EZ-Pagebuilder

There are several choices in the Page Options section of EZ-PageBuilder that allows you to change the default values for priority and change frequency. You can also specify whether you want the page to be excluded from the site map. The default option is for the page to be included in the site map. The graphic below shows this section of the page options.

You can edit the following options in EZ-Pagebuilder that will affect the ez-sitemap for your web site.

Include. You indicate with a check mark whether to include this page in your site map. The default is checked. By unchecking this option, the site map will not include this page. Note: you can also use the EZSitemapOverrides.txt file described below to exclude a page or a group of pages.

Priority. You indicate your priority for this page. The default is varies depending on the page name as specified above.

Change Frequency: you indicate how often the data on this page is changed.

The EZSitemap Overrides File

The EZSitemapOverride.txt file allows you to specify web pages that should be excluded or added in the site map. For example you may have a template page, pages with blocks that are mirrored, or older versions of web pages that you want to archive but do not want indexed. The entries in the override file give you this flexibility. You can specify individual files or groups of files.

Each line must start with either a "+" for adding a page or a "-" for removing a page from the site map.

Next is the URL (address) to the page, relative to the home folder. Always begin the address with a "/". A wild card parameter (*) is available for specifying multiple pages at a time or an entire folder of pages.

If you are adding pages, you can also specify additional parameters in the following order, separated by commas. These parameters are optional. If none are specified, the defaults will be used.

The page priority can be a value between 0.0 and 1.0, with 1.0 indicating a higher priority.

Change frequency. Valid values are always, hourly, daily, weekly, monthly, yearly, never.

The date the page was last modified in the following format, YYYY-

MM-DD.

Below are several sample entries

-/index.old.html

Do not list this old file

-/test/temp*

Do not list any page in the test folder that begins with "temp"

+/guarantee.html,1.0,always,2006-12-25

add the file guarantee.html

+/alumni/*

add all of the pages in the alumni folder

this is a comment

This line is ignored

To create an EZSitemapOverrides.txt into your home directory. You will create the file using EZTextEditor as explained below. Remember that the EZSitemapOverrides.txt file must be in your home directory and capitalization is important.

Note: The EZSiteMap program will not index pages in password protected folders. Therefore, you do not need to put an entry in your EZSitemapOverrides file to exclude them.

Communicating with the Search Engines with The Robots.txt File

In the Spring of 2007, Google, MSN, Yahoo, and Ask announced that their "bots" would read the robots.txt file to determine if a web site has a site map. All of the participating search engines use the same site map file and will discover it by themselves. To learn more about the robots.txt file visit www.wikipedia.com.

Below is a sample of the line you would put in your robots.txt file.

Sitemap: <http://www.mydomainname.com/ezsitemap.xml>

To get a robots.txt file into your home directory. You will create the file using EZTextEditor.

While you do not have to use the robots.txt file to use a sitemap file, it is a simple and easy way to inform the search engines about your site map without you having to contact each search engine separately.

Using EZTextEditor to create and modify text files.

EZTextEditor is a tool you can use to create and edit you EZSitemapOverrides.txt and robots.txt files that are described above. In fact, you can use this tool to edit any text file in your web site such CSS files, etc. [Click here to learn more about this tool.](#)

Creating a Google Webmaster Tools Account to submit your Sitemap.

Once you've created a Sitemap in an accepted format, you can submit it to Google using Google Webmaster Tools. This enables Google to provide you with useful status and statistical information. You can also specify the location of your Sitemap in your robots.txt file.

To submit your sitemap to the search engines go to <http://www.google.com/webmasters/> and create your own Google Webmasters Tools Account.

Before you begin, make sure you have the following sites added and verified in your Webmaster Tools account:

The site on which the Sitemap is located

The site(s) whose URLs are referenced in the Sitemap.

1. On the Webmaster Tools home page, click the site you want.
2. Under Site configuration, click Sitemaps.
3. Click Submit a Sitemap.
4. In the text box, complete the path to your Sitemap (for example, if your Sitemap is at <http://www.example.com/sitemap.xml>, type `sitemap.xml`).
5. Click Submit Sitemap.

Submitting Sitemaps using your robots.txt file

You can tell Google and other search engines about your Sitemap by adding the following line to your robots.txt file (updating the sample URL with the complete path to your own Sitemap):

Sitemap: http://example.com/sitemap_location.xml

This directive is independent of the user-agent line, so it does not matter where you place it in your file. If you have a Sitemap index file, you can include the location of just that file. You do not need to list each individual Sitemap listed in the index file.

For more instruction or information about submitting your sitemap visit the help center in your Google Webmasters Tools Account.

Making your web site "search engine friendly" is one of the most important web site promotion tasks you can do, regardless of the other promotion and marketing approaches you should be using. Using site maps should be part of this strategy because it is easy to implement, and easy to maintain. As important as site maps are, the content and structure of your pages are still the most important aspect of making your web site "search engine friendly."