

BRIEFING: GOOGLE MOBILE
ALGORITHM, APRIL 2015
SEO [Thing]

BACKGROUND

Google will be introducing a significant modification to their mobile search result rankings on or around **April 21st 2015**.

This change is a response to the significant increase in mobile device usage in recent years and aims to rank sites that work on mobile devices higher in results than those that are not 'mobile-friendly'.

GOOGLE WILL LOWER
RANKINGS FOR SITES NOT
OPTIMISED FOR MOBILE ON
APRIL 21ST, 2015



OVERVIEW

- **Will affect mobile search only** (Google claims 50% of all searches are mobile)
- **Sites that are not mobile-friendly will be penalised**
- **Is likely to affect a large number of search keywords**
- **Applies per page, not to a whole site** (if your most important pages are mobile-friendly, impact will be minimised)

WHAT YOU NEED TO DO

If your site is currently regarded by Google as 'mobile-friendly' then you don't need to do anything. You are likely to see increased mobile traffic after April.

If your site is not mobile-friendly, then now is the time to plan to improve mobile optimisation as quickly as possible. If your search results are affected on April 21st, you will see rapid improvement once a page has been made mobile-friendly.

Find out how to check if your site is mobile-friendly below.



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HOW WILL THIS CHANGE WORK?

Google already assesses the 'mobile friendliness' of each page in its search results. What's changed is that Google will be making larger adjustments to the ordering of search results than has been done previously.

So, **mobile-friendly pages will rank higher** in comparison to those that have issues on mobile devices. Sites with a poor mobile user experience should expect lost search traffic following this change.

The changes are unlikely to affect brand-name searches, even if sites are not mobile-friendly. However, transactional queries (e.g. searches for products and services) and informational searches are highly likely to be affected.

HOW WILL I BE AFFECTED?

If your site is regarded as 'mobile-friendly' by Google, you are likely to **see increased clickthroughs from mobile visitors** after April 21st. This is as a result of poorly mobile optimised sites appearing lower in rankings.

If your own site is not optimised for mobile, **you are likely to see rankings and clicks from Google mobile search fall** after April 21st, until your site is made mobile-friendly.

Google assesses mobile-friendliness as it crawls the web to discover pages, so you should allow time for this process to occur if you have recently optimised your site for mobile devices.



KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

- More than **2 out of 3 adults in the UK own a smartphone** (35 million people)¹
 - This includes 54% of over 55s
- More than **1 in 4 adults own a tablet** ²
- Almost **¾ of mobile users search the internet via mobiles every day**³
- The **number of mobile web searches is anticipated to exceed desktop searches** by the end of 2015 and is currently about half of all web searches
- **67% of users are more likely to buy** if a site is mobile-friendly, and **61% will quickly move to another site** if it is perceived to be poorly optimised for mobile⁴

Friendly = More likely to buy

67%

"A mobile-friendly site makes me more likely to buy a product or use a service."



Unfriendly = More likely to leave

61%

"If I don't see what I'm looking for right away on a mobile site, I'll quickly move on to another site."



¹ Deloitte Consumer Review, November 2014

² IAB / PwC Digital Adspend Study, 2013

³ Salesforce 2014 Mobile Behavior Report, 2014

⁴ Google: What Users Want Most From Mobile Sites Today, 2012



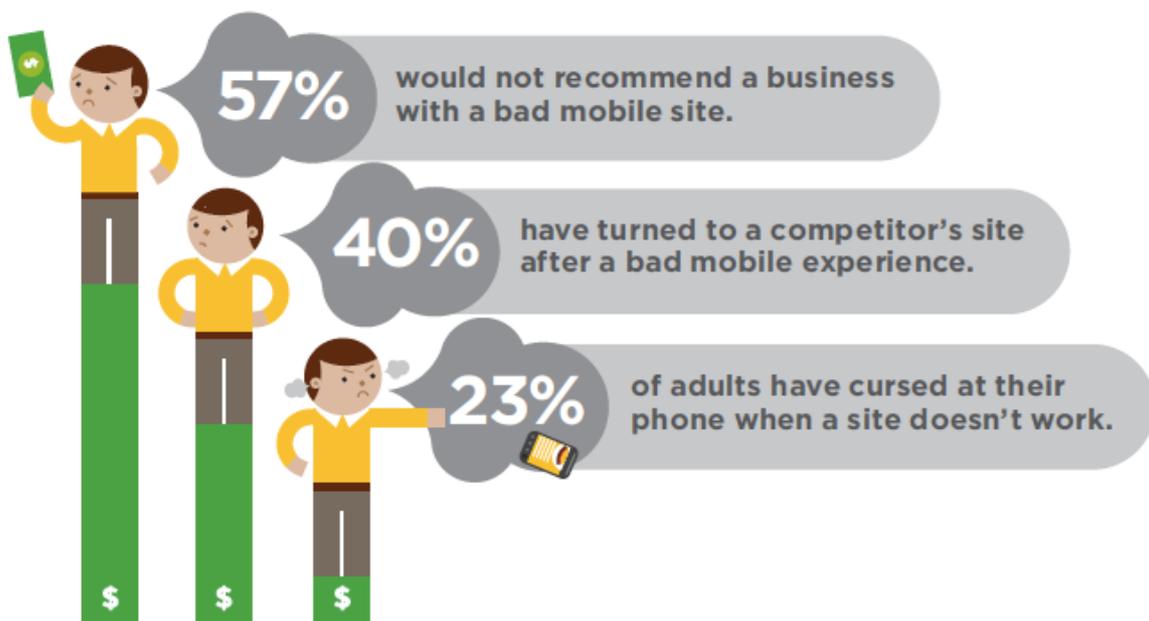
WHY DOES GOOGLE CARE?

90% of Google's revenue is from advertising, with the bulk of those revenues from search-based advertising. This revenue depends on Google offering a good user experience in search. Users are likely to 'blame' Google if they click on a result they consider to be irrelevant or offering a poor user experience.

Thus, improved user experience protects Google's bottom line.

Google have conducted extensive research into the mobile market, including finding that users have a strongly negative perception of sites that are poorly optimised for mobile devices.

23% OF ADULTS HAVE CURSED AT THEIR PHONE WHEN A MOBILE SITE DOESN'T WORK



HOW DO I CHECK IF MY SITE IS MOBILE-FRIENDLY?

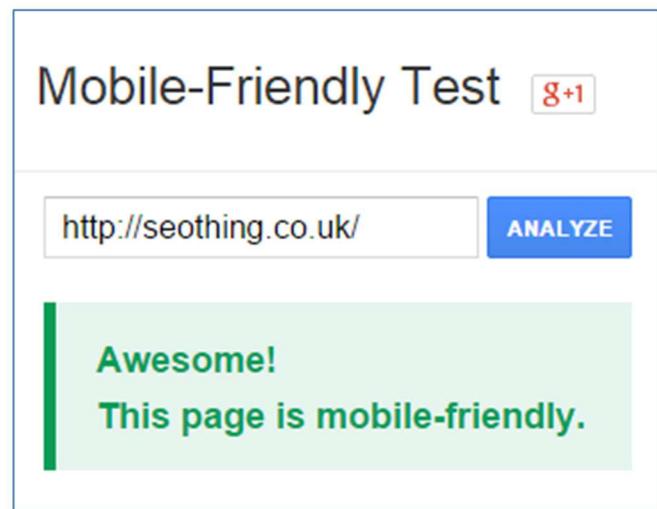
Remember that the algorithm Google is using is applied **per page**, and so strictly speaking you can only check individual content for mobile friendliness. However, there are three easy ways to assess your site:

GOOGLE'S MOBILE-FRIENDLY TESTING TOOL

<https://www.google.com/webmasters/tools/mobile-friendly/>

Google's tool provides detailed feedback on mobile usability issues for any page. This assessment is currently **the best way to obtain Google's current friendliness evaluation** as it will affect search results.

Note that if you have a separate mobile site (e.g. m.example.com) you should test your desktop URL. If your mobile setup is correct it will be reported as mobile-friendly.

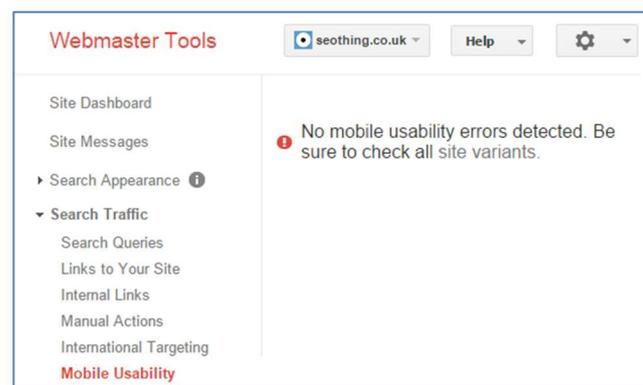


GOOGLE'S WEBMASTER TOOLS MOBILE USABILITY REPORT

<https://www.google.com/webmasters/tools/mobile-usability>

If you have verified your site with Google's Webmaster Tools system, you can obtain **site-wide evaluation of all pages currently in search results**.

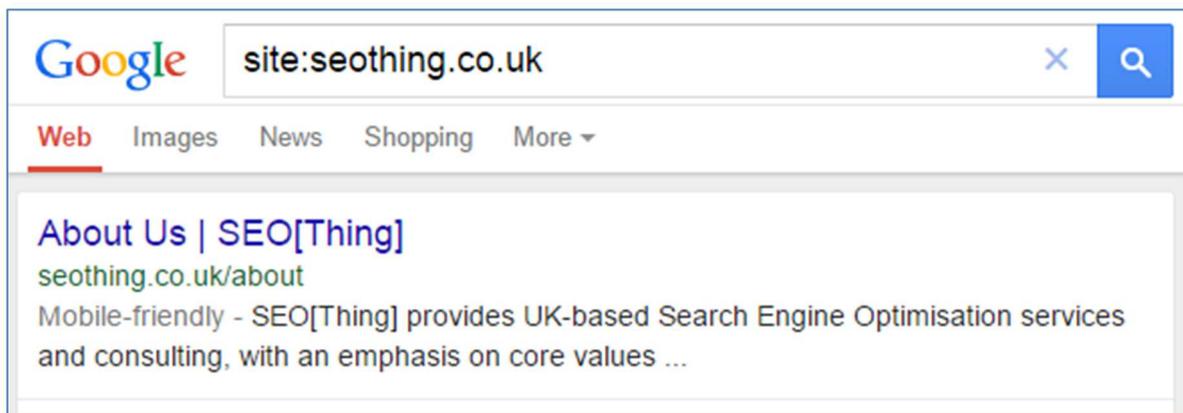
Many sites will have some pages listed as mobile 'unfriendly'. The key consideration is the relative importance of such pages – primarily whether they currently rank in mobile search results.



SITE SEARCH ON MOBILE

<https://www.google.co.uk/mobile/>

Google currently 'tags' sites as being mobile-friendly when searching with a mobile device. This is a good way to check a number of pages from a site if you don't have access to Google Webmaster Tools. Using a 'site' search will show listings from your website with the text 'Mobile-friendly' displayed next to results without mobile usability issues:



The search syntax to use is *site:example.com* (without any spaces).

LINKS TO TOOLS & MORE INFORMATION

For a summary of ways to test your site, and direct links to useful tools and information, visit the URL below:

<https://app.seothing.co.uk/mobile-help>



ABOUT SEO[THING]

SEO[Thing] provides **UK-based Search Engine Optimisation services and consulting**, with an emphasis on core values of **quality, transparency and ethics**. Our aim is to provide expert-level consultancy that delivers the results you need, while being open in our approach and in a way that complements your business goals – **without risking your reputation**.

The company is the brainchild of **Andy Langton**, an industry veteran with more than a decade's experience of search engine optimisation, who has achieved enviable – and measurable – results for sites both large and small. Having worked in the industry for so many years, Andy realised that there was a clear need for a company providing **no-nonsense SEO**, with a **friendly, transparent approach**, but still delivering **great results**.

Andy has worked on websites both large and small, including national newspapers like The Telegraph and Daily Mail and large e-commerce sites like Cafepress and Confetti. He's also achieved results in highly competitive industries like gambling, with the likes of Paddy Power and Quicksilver and the financial sector, for high profile organisations like Investec and Moneycorp.

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