



## 3 Resources to Evaluate Your Backlinks

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### 3 Resources To Evaluate Your Backlinks

Q: How do people keep up with the integrity of their incoming links? In other words, how do they track when their link is added/dropped to make sure that people are reciprocating? Checking Google's backward links only shows me a few of the many references to us on the web.  
Michael

Michael,  
Reciprocal link building or link exchange campaigns are popular. It's a real chore to evaluate link requests, hoping for one good link request among all the spammy, worthless ones – but that's a topic for another time.

As you have discovered, Google doesn't show you all it knows about backlinks to your website, at least when you enter link:mydomain.com. Perhaps Google wants to be sure only legitimate users are able to see this kind of info rather than automated data mining programs. MSN/Live Search has recently disabled their link operators for this reason.

Yahoo Site Explorer has an excellent backlink checking tool that can be accessed from [www.yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com). Here's how:

1. Enter link: <http://www.mydomain.com> -- and you must enter "<http://>".
2. In the results area, click "show inlinks except from this domain" to check all your backlinks.

Keep in mind that, from a search engine's perspective, <http://www.mydomain.com> is a different domain than <http://mydomain.com>, so you might want to check both. Of these two different domains, make sure the search engines know which domain name is the master.

Google Sitemaps (<http://www.google.com/webmasters/sitemaps/>) is another great way to check your backlinks plus see lots of useful info Google has about your site. Once logged in to Google Sitemaps, you can see the last time Googlebot accessed your home page, web crawl errors, top search queries and clicks, external links to your site (backlinks), internal links, page analysis and other items. To gain access to the information about your site within Google Sitemaps, you or your webmaster need to verify that you are the owner of the site by following Google's instructions.

It's not necessary to register a sitemap with Google to get access to this information. But, if you do want to set up a Google sitemap, here's Google's sitemap generator tutorial (<https://www.google.com/webmasters/tools/docs/en/sitemap-generator.html>) and a sitemap tool (<http://www.xml-sitemaps.com/>).

[www.backlinkwatch.com](http://www.backlinkwatch.com) is another online tool for checking backlinks. Along with the location of your backlinks, it provides anchor text, number of outbound links, pagerank, and whether the Rel=nofollow attribute is associated with the link. It can take some time to generate the data depending on the number of links it must evaluate.

Beware of software that claims to check your backlinks and/or get links for you automatically. There are no shortcuts to quality link exchange relationships; it's best to think of it as establishing a long-term relationship. Link exchange software can easily get your site linked with a "bad neighborhood" or link farms. By the way, link farms and online directories I see referenced in e-mails are exactly the same. Good quality online directories are hard to find these days. Link exchange software can help by identifying good quality, topically relevant sites for link exchange, but search engines can identify those as well – if you know what to look for.

If you have hundreds or thousands of backlinks to track, I recommend hiring someone to monitor them every 3-6 months.

Link exchange relationships should be checked periodically because:

- Webmasters make mistakes with the domain name and/or anchor text in the link
- Link pages are often overlooked during website upgrades, and can be removed accidentally or not included in the new site's navigation
- Link pages accumulate too many links and dilute the value of your link
- Links are moved to pages that are not listed in the search engines because:
  - Noindex, nofollow attributes are in the links page header
  - Rel=nofollow attribute tells spiders "this link is not from a credible source"
  - Robots.txt disallows spiders from the links page
  - Links are on pages that have old cache in the search engines or the links are buried on pages that search engines almost never spider or re-index

In the end, you want to exchange quality links for quality links and keep them forever! Use Yahoo Site Explorer and Google Sitemaps to make sure your link exchange relationships are still intact. Avoid using automated link exchange software and be aware of webmaster quality control for both your site and for your link exchangers' sites.