

# Backlinks: Google Search Console and the Disavow tool

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Backlinks are links from one website to another and are crucial for SEO, as they signal valuable content to search engines, improving rankings. However, toxic backlinks from spammy sites can harm your reputation and rankings. Good backlinks boost search rankings, traffic, and authority, while toxic ones can lead to penalties. This guide will show you how to use Google Search Console to identify and monitor backlinks, and how to use the Disavow Tool to remove harmful links, protecting your site's SEO.

## Step 1: Setting Up Google Search Console

- **Sign in to Google Search Console:**
  - Visit [Google Search Console](#).
  - Sign in with your Google account.
- **Add Your Website Property:**
  - If you're new, click the "Start now" button or select "Add property" from the dropdown menu if you already have an account.
  - You'll see two options:
    - Domain: Covers all subdomains (e.g., blog.example.com) and protocols (http, https).
    - URL Prefix: Only covers URLs with a specific prefix.
  - Choose the appropriate option and enter your website URL. Click "Continue."
- **Verify Your Website:**
  - Google will provide several verification methods:
    - DNS Verification (Recommended for Domain Property): Add a DNS TXT record to your domain's configuration.
    - HTML File Upload: Upload an HTML file to your website's root directory.
    - HTML Tag: Add a meta tag to your site's <head> section.
    - Google Analytics: Google Analytics tracking code, which you can find in your Google Analytics account.
    - Google Tag Manager: Use your Google Tag Manager account.
  - Follow the instructions provided for your chosen method and click "Verify."
- **Set Up Your Search Console Account:**

- Once your site is verified, you can start using Google Search Console.
- Add additional users or adjust settings as needed.

## Step 2: Finding Backlinks

- **Access the Backlinks Report:**
  - Navigate to the "Links" section in the left-hand menu.
  - Under "External links," click "More" to view detailed information.
  - Here, you'll see a list of your top linking sites, top linked pages, and more.
- **Download Your Backlink Data:**
  - You can download the report by clicking the "Export External Links" button to analyze it further.

## Step 3: Identifying Toxic Backlinks

- **Look for Spammy or Irrelevant Links:**
  - **Low-Quality Sites:**
    - Links from sites with low domain authority, poor content, or a high spam score are likely toxic.
  - **Irrelevant Niches:**
    - Google may see links from sites unrelated to your industry or niche as unnatural.
  - **Over-Optimized Anchor Text:**
    - If the anchor text used in the backlinks is excessively optimized (e.g., too many exact-match keywords), it could be a red flag.
- **Identify Links from Link Farms or PBNs (Private Blog Networks):**
  - **Unnatural Patterns:**
    - Sites that exist solely to link to other sites, often with no real content, are considered link farms or part of PBNs.
  - **Sudden Increase in Backlinks:**
    - A sudden spike in backlinks from similar-looking sites can indicate manipulative linking practices.
- **Check for Links from Penalized or Blacklisted Domains:**
  - **De-indexed Sites:**
    - If Google has de-indexed the linking site, its links are likely toxic.
  - **Malware or Adult Content Sites:**

- Links from websites involved in distributing malware, adult content, or illegal activities can harm your site's reputation
- **Use a Toxic Link Checker:**
  - **Google's Manual Review:**
    - If you receive a manual action notification in Google Search Console, it often includes examples of problematic links.

## Step 4: Making the Decision to Disavow

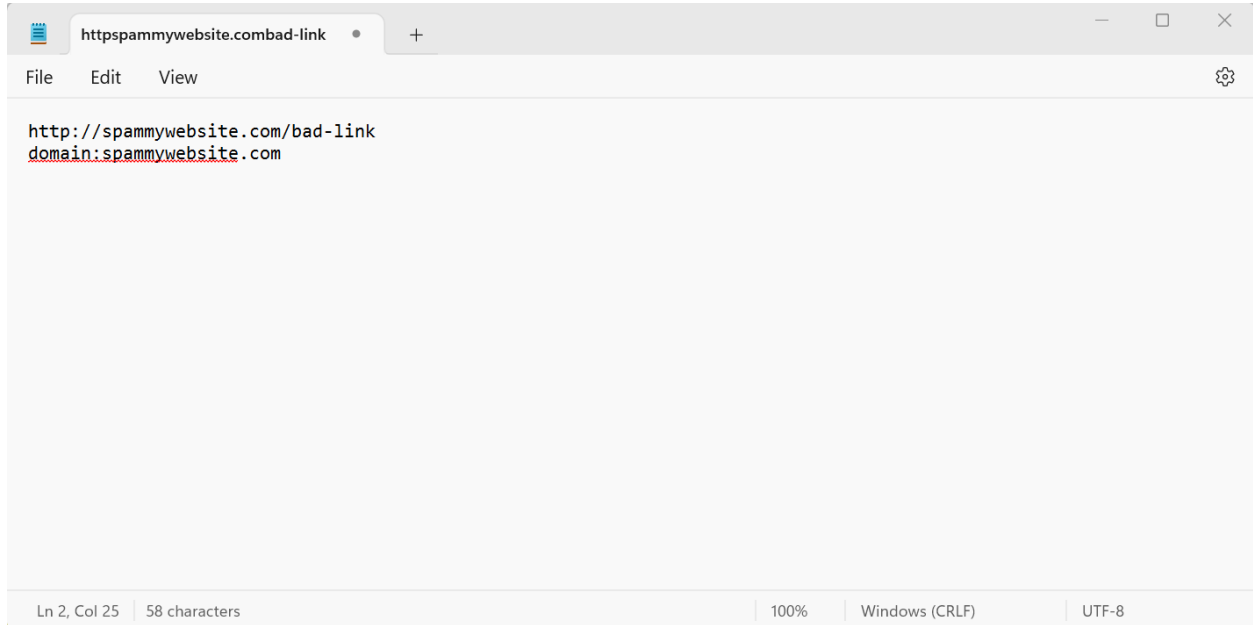
- **Evaluate the Impact of the Links:**
  - **Assess Traffic:**
    - Determine if the backlink brings any valuable traffic. Toxic links usually do not.
  - **Check Your Rankings:**
    - If you notice a drop in rankings correlating with certain backlinks, those might be the culprits.
- **Prioritize High-Risk Links:**
  - **High Spam Scores:**
    - Links with high spam scores should be prioritized for disavowal.
  - **Manipulative Tactics:**
    - Links aimed at manipulating your site's ranking should be disavowed.
- **Document Your Findings:**
  - **Create a List:**
    - Make a list of all the links you've identified as toxic.
  - **Prepare for Disavowal:**
    - Ensure you've thoroughly reviewed each link before adding it to your disavow file.

## Step 5: Accessing the Disavow Tool

- **Navigate to the Disavow Tool:**
  - Visit the [Google Disavow Tool](#).
  - Ensure you're signed in to the same Google account used for Search Console.
- **Select the Website Property:**
  - Choose the property (website) you want to disavow links from the dropdown menu. Check out this video on how to do it: [Google Disavow Tool Tutorial: How to Disavow Backlinks](#)

- **Create a Disavow File:**
  - Prepare a text file (.txt) listing the links or domains you want to disavow. *You'll need to open an app called 'Notepad' on your desktop and write this in there:*
    - To disavow a specific URL: `http://spammywebsite.com/bad-link`
    - To disavow an entire domain: `domain:spammywebsite.com`

It should look like this:



The screenshot shows a Notepad window with a single tab titled "httpspammywebsite.combad-link". The menu bar includes "File", "Edit", and "View". The text area contains two lines of text: "http://spammywebsite.com/bad-link" and "domain:spammywebsite.com". The status bar at the bottom indicates "Ln 2, Col 25 | 58 characters", "100%", "Windows (CRLF)", and "UTF-8".

*When ready to save, go to File>Save As and save with a name and a location you can access to upload to the disavow tool.*

- **Ensure that each link or domain is on a new line.**
- **Upload the Disavow File:**
  - Click the "Disavow Links" button.
  - Upload your .txt file and confirm.
- **Confirm Submission:**
  - After uploading, Google will process your disavow file.
  - You can view or update your disavow file anytime by revisiting the Disavow Tool.

## Step 6: Monitor Your Disavow File

- Regularly check the status of your disavowed links within Google Search Console.
- You can download, modify, and re-upload the disavow file if needed.