

## What Is Duplicate Content and Why It Should Be Avoided

### Part of the Starting at Square One Series

Content on a website is an essential component of search engine optimization. If you don't have content, the search engines won't know what your website is about and therefore won't know what search terms your website should appear for in the search results. The content on your site is the foundation for telling and confirming with the search engines where your website should be found.



### What exactly is included in content?

[Content](#) is anything that lives on your website including the text, images, video, etc. it is basically the compilation of every piece of information that tells the story of your business. In addition, content generated outside of your website including content from social media, blogging, industry articles, etc. are also part of the mix that makes up your content.

### Not all content is created equal.

Not only do you need content on your website, but it needs to be “quality” content. What does that mean exactly? That you need original, descriptive, and compelling text and images to communicate who you are, what you do, and why someone should consider doing business with you. This means having more than simple text that only outlines the basics. Without quality content, [you won't get very far with the search engines](#) and even more importantly, [you won't get very far with your visitors](#).

### What is considered duplicate content?

[Duplicate content](#) is the same, or very similar text appearing on multiple websites or other locations on the Internet. It often comes about from using manufacturer's descriptions, by having the same text on multiple pages of your website, or text being copied from one website to another.

### Why is duplicate content a problem?

When the practice of search engine optimization became increasingly popular, people began to realize that good content could get a website good rankings and therefore duplicate content started to become a problem. What easier way to get website ranking easily than by stealing other people's content and posting it on your own site.

Very quickly the web started to fill up with [multiple URLs featuring the exact same content](#) – many of those sites trying to sell something that had nothing to do with the content posted. Search engines don't (yet) have a good way of determining the original author of content, and therefore can't accurately choose which website should rank for the content.

Of course not all duplicate content is intentionally malicious – for example, using manufacturer's descriptions or reposting an article that you liked. But, if you post the same content as 100 other sites, what is going to make someone want to do business with you versus them. It's important to make this content your own.

Given all of these issues, search engines are actively penalizing websites that have duplicate content, especially if that content is spammy or stuffed with keywords. Most notorious is the [Google's Panda update](#) which is on-going and is specifically geared towards penalizing websites with low quality content. Basically, penalization = no ranking.

### **How do I avoid duplicate content?**

Simple – write your own unique content. Of course, this will require work on your end. If you don't have much content on your website, start slowly by further developing the content page by page. Think of questions that customers ask you about your products and/or services and include the answers to those questions in your content.

If you like someone else's content – an article, blog post, etc. – and want to include the information on your website, write your own brief introduction or opinion on the subject and then link to the content. Brainstorm on topics relevant to your industry and then create a content development strategy.

There are a lot of ways to create unique quality content, it just takes some time and a little effort. Start with some of the ideas listed above, or [learn how we can help](#) with creating and promoting unique content – and more importantly, avoiding duplicate content.

Find the author on social media:

[+Elissa Mitchell](#)

[@ezmitchell](#)

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