

# Black Hat SEO

Search Engine Optimisation tends to be split in to 2 separate categories commonly referred to as White Hat and Black Hat.

White Hat is the practice of optimising a site that conforms to the terms of service set in place by Search Engines, primarily Google.

Black Hat SEO generally is a free for all style where anything goes. Quite frequently a Black Hatter will use the argument for Black Hat techniques are that any alteration to a website to improve its position within the Search Engines is cheating and therefore every type of SEO is Black Hat. While this arguably is a valid point Google accepts SEO and even documents SEO at this url :

<http://www.google.com/support/webmasters/bin/answer.py?answer=35291>

Typical practices that a Black Hat will use, and WILL get your site banned from Google eventually are:

1. Hidden Text – One of the main ways Google ranks your site is based on the content of the site itself, therefore large amounts of keyword rich content should get you ranked quite well. A black Hat will add large amounts of text to a webpage but make it invisible to the user, this is because the text will often not make much sense and make a well designed website look terrible. Text can be hidden by using white text on a white background, using javascript to hide the text and also using cascading style sheets to hide the text.
2. Keyword Stuffing – This is normally used with the above technique. Google ranks a site depending on how relevant to a keyword it thinks it is, therefore if a keyword appears a lot of times it is likely to be relevant. However keyword stuffing normally consists of gibberish made up of the keywords to fool the Search engine into ranking it higher.
3. Cloaking / Doorway Pages – This technique will also be used with keyword stuffing, and is similar to hidden text but more advanced. Pages are created that are only visible to a search engine, these will often be filled with keyword rich content and therefore get a page ranked highly. Regular surfers will be redirected away from these pages to the original page the webmaster wants you to see. This is done using either IP redirecting or based on the HTTP referrer request. As with all computer networks Google has an IP address, or in Google's case a lot of IP addresses, a Black Hat can deliver content to the user based on an IP address so if they see it as one of Google's spiders it will deliver the keyword rich content. The other technique is to only deliver the original content if you have come from a major search engine using the HTTP referrer request. This will mean you lose small amounts of traffic from traffic from directories but it is made up by the increased traffic from the search engines.
4. Unnatural Link Building – Another popular Black hat technique where the Black Hatter will build thousands of back links to your site using various techniques, quite often this can be seen using Yahoos Link too to view the links, if a site is

relatively new but has thousands of back links then there is a chance it will be a from Black Hat techniques. The link building techniques used typically are:

- Comment Spamming – The Black Hatter will spam thousands of Blogs with your link.
- Forum Spamming – As above but with forums.
- Link Farms / Link Exchange Programs – Though exchanging links is not really Black Hat some companies will install code onto websites that exchanges links with thousands of other websites, they will also generate thousands of “micro sites” which have thousands of links within them. Micro sites tend to be keyword stuffed sites used primarily for link massive link building.

While Black Hat techniques tend to be very profitable for Black Hatters if you run a business with an internet presence it can cause large loss of profits. Most if not all sites that use these techniques will be caught out eventually and getting your site back up in the search engine results pages will be very hard if not impossible.

One infamous example was the February 2006 Google removal of both **BMW** Germany and **Ricoh** Germany for use of Cloaking Techniques. Controversially these sites removed the cloaked pages and were reindexed by Google within weeks. Most smaller websites will not be treated so well.

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