



Fast Guide

# Deconstructing Google's Helpful Content Update

 MarketMuse

# What is Google's Helpful Content Update?

The update introduces a site-wide signal powered by an automated continuously running machine learning classifier. The classifier aims to detect individual pieces of unhelpful content that can then accumulate and weigh down a site. Although operating at the page level, the classifier contributes to creating a temporal, weighted state for a site that can glide higher and lower.

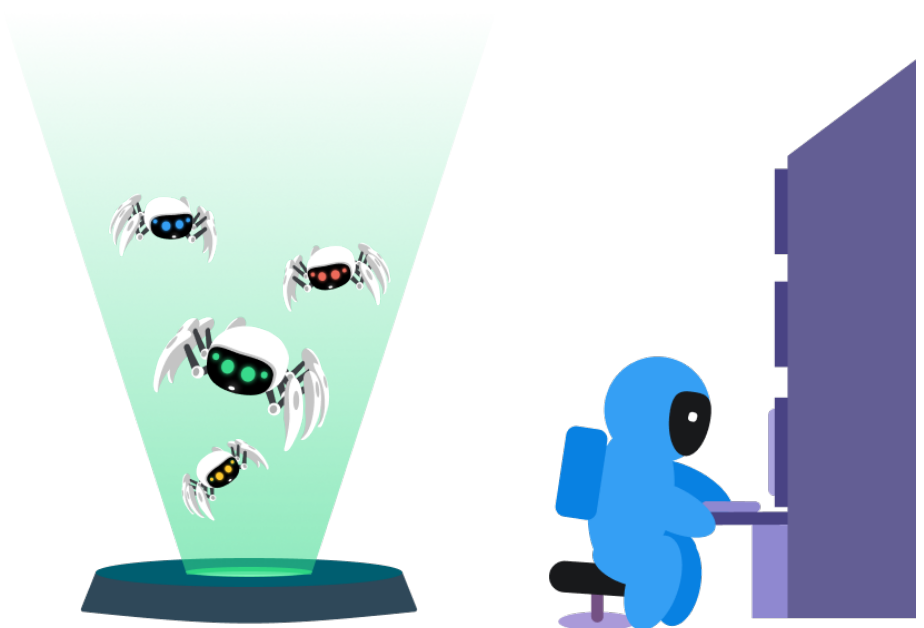
# Is Google's Helpful Content Update Significant?

The signal is generated automatically meaning that there is no manual action taken. Google has set the bar for helpful content low to initially catch the worst of the garbage, but expect that to change as they continue to test hypotheses.

# Machine Learning and Its Impact on Google's Helpful Content Update

Google already uses neural nets to understand subtopics related to a subject.

Now, multiple signals indicate whether a page is helpful or unhelpful. Some inputs may be more important than others, depending on the context.



# What It Looks Like to Google When You Aren't an Expert and You're Not Helpful

One has to think of every page as the sum of the authority it has on every topic-page combination.

When your content isn't helpful:

- You have lots of content that's low quality.
- Your collection of content is similar to that which connects to Google search volume or trending topics.
- You're potentially detected as plagiarizing, spinning or some form of automated content creation.
- You routinely use a lot of generic statements or odd terms of phrase indicating you don't have experience.
- You have similar word count across many pages.
- Your depth of content is very low (think MarketMuse Content Score).
- You have content that doesn't answer the question promised.

All of these things that get triggered contribute to a composite score at the page-level and referenced against the total number of unhelpful pages.

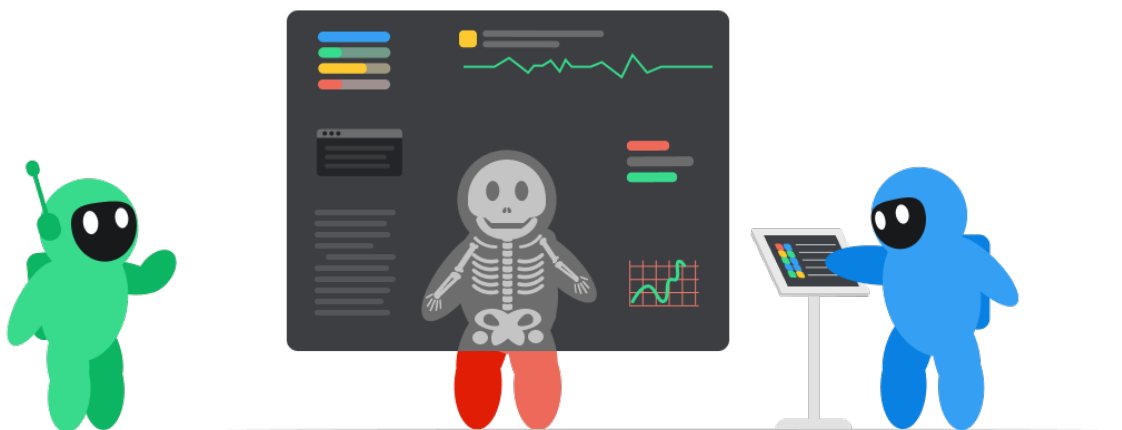
But we don't know whether it's a percentage or absolute number, or how much.

The tough part about a site level weight is you never REALLY know that it is impacting you until G tells you this is the reason you are degrading.

A smart test plan is the way back if you think you have been impacted by this or another publicly announced update.

# Diagnosing and Fixing Unhelpful Pages

1. Make sure the affected page is bulletproof for those terms driving the most traffic.
2. Look at the list of terms that it ranked for historically to identify those that have a slight intent mismatch.
3. If you have a page targeting the mismatch, link to it and improve it. Otherwise, create a supporting page.
4. Research variants you haven't covered and use MarketMuse Compete to find other related topics not covered.
5. Build out a supporting cluster of content making sure to link from the main page to the other in a mother/child relationship.
6. Publish the entire cluster simultaneously (~5 to 10 pages) and wait two to three weeks.
7. If it's a case of topic/site section authority score degradation, then you'll reclaim your rankings and see the parent page creep upward.



**Evaluate your site–topic combination at scale with MarketMuse.**

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