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What a good page URL looks like, and how to change a bad one safely

SEO & Marketing

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What a good page URL looks like, and how to change a bad one safely

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A good page address is **short, in lower case, with hyphens between words, and says what the page is**: `asuaempresa.co.mz/colour-guide` rather than `asuaempresa.co.mz/?p=1873`. It helps readers, helps sharing and gives Google a clue. But note: **changing the address of a page that already exists is a risk**, and only pays off if you redirect the old one.

The rules of a good address

Do	Avoid
Words that describe the page: `/pricing`, `/colour-guide`	Meaningless numbers or the system's code: `/?p=1873`, `/page-37`
Hyphens between words	Spaces (they become `%20`) and underscores
Lower case always	Mixing upper and lower case: two different addresses for the same content
Short and stable	Too many dates and folders, which go stale and make long addresses
Parameters only when needed (filters, search)	Session identifiers and campaign tags in the address you keep for yourself

On WordPress: the permalink structure

Under Settings, Permalinks, the usual choice is "Post name". On a new site, set it in the first week, before there are pages. **On a site that already has visitors, do not change it without a plan:** every old address returns a 404 until it is redirected. If anything goes wrong after the change, see **WordPress permalinks and the 404 that follows**.

Changing an address without losing anything

1. **Make a list** of old and new addresses, page by page. Do not trust memory.

2. **Change the page address** (on WordPress, the “Permalink” field when editing). WordPress usually deals with the old one when you only rename a post; do not count on it when you change the whole structure.

3. **Create a 301 redirect** from the old to the new, direct and in one hop. The three ways to do it are in **301 redirects**.

4. **Update your internal links** to point straight to the new one instead of going through the redirect. See **internal links**.

5. **Check.** Open the old address in a private window: it must end up at the new one. Then, in Search Console, hand over the sitemap again.

Do not send all old addresses to the home page.
The visitor does not find what they wanted, and for Google it is as if the page had vanished. Each old page goes to its equivalent. And leave no chains (A to B, B to C): link A straight to C.

Think about the address before you publish.
It is the only time getting it right is free. An address you can say out loud without confusion (and that fits in a chat message) is usually a good one.

NEED A HAND?

Changed the addresses and now you see 404s or “redirected too many times”? Send us an old address and what appears.

Open a support ticket →

SEE ALSO

- 301 redirects →
- WordPress permalinks and the 404 that follows →

Internal links

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