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What happens to your Google ranking when your site goes down?

SEO & Marketing

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What happens to your Google ranking when your site goes down?

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A **short, rare** outage usually leaves no mark: Google tries again later. What weighs is the **long or repeated** one: if the crawler finds the site down several times, it visits less and may stop showing the pages it cannot read, until they return. There is no magic duration, and nobody can promise one. Two things are in your hands: shortening the outage and, when it is planned, telling Google it is temporary.

What Google sees, in each case

Situation	What Google receives	Likely effect
Short, rare outage	A server error (5xx) or no answer.	It tries again later. No lasting consequences.
Outages of hours, repeating	The same errors, several times.	It starts visiting less. Some pages may drop out of results until the site settles.
Outage of days	Errors for a long time.	Pages start to be removed from results, and coming back takes time.
Maintenance with a “Back soon” page and a 200 code	Google sees a page that looks normal, but without your content.	It may index the maintenance page and forget the content. The worst case.
Maintenance with a 503 code	The “temporarily unavailable” signal.	Google understands it is temporary and comes back later. This is the right way.
Expired domain or wrong DNS	The address stops existing on the internet.	Total failure for everyone. See **what counts as being down**.

If the site is already down

1. **Find the cause** in the right order: **your site is down: what to check first**. It is nearly always the domain, the certificate, an update or an account limit.

2. **Do not touch anything else.** Do not change addresses, delete pages or block the site in `robots.txt` "just for now": a `robots.txt` that returns a server error can make Google pause crawling the whole site until it can read it again.

3. **Fix it and confirm** the pages answer well, in a browser and with `curl -I` (the first line should say 200).

4. **Watch Search Console** over the following days. The crawl stats report, under Settings, shows whether Google had trouble connecting, and the pages report says whether any were dropped (**crawl errors, one by one**).

5. **Ask for a new read** of the important pages that do not return by themselves, using Search Console's URL inspection (**Google Search Console, step by step**).

When the stop is planned

If you are putting the site into maintenance (a migration, a big update), the maintenance page should answer with a **503** code and, ideally, the *Retry-After* header, which says when to come back. The simplest way on WordPress is a maintenance plugin that does it. Always confirm, with `curl -I https://yourdomain.tld/`, that the first line of the response says 503 and not 200. The shorter the maintenance, the better (**migrating without downtime**).

Do not confuse it with what the hosting measures.
What Google feels is what the crawler saw, at the moment it passed. An outage the provider does not count as unavailability (an error in the application itself, an expired domain) counts the same to Google. See **what counts as being down**.

Get told when the site falls
, instead of finding out from customers: **an alert when your site goes down**.

NEED A HAND?

The site went down and you cannot tell why? Tell us the domain and the time you noticed.

Open a support ticket →

SEE ALSO

- **Your site is down: what to check first**
- **Uptime: what counts as being down, and what we do about it**
- **Crawl errors in Search Console: 404, soft 404 and server errors, one by one**
- **Getting an alert when your site goes down: a simple uptime check**

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