

The Automatic System Online Getting-Traffic System-4-

The Ultimate Craigslist SEO secrets



Join my [Seo&affiliate Marketing Lens](#)

This lens is n.1 in the Google search results for the query "Craigslist SEO" and gets a lot of [natural traffic](#) from the search engines.



This lens also gets spidered very frequently - virtually every day - because 1) it is frequently updated, and 2) it belongs to Squidoo groups that get spidered very frequently. **Any website that receives a link from this lens immediately receives a boost in its search engine performance and [more Google traffic](#).**

This lens is a gem! Check out the comments left by other Squidoo members below.

This lens describes how to [increase your traffic](#) by using [Craigslist](#) in [search engine optimization](#) to boost your website's search engine performance. Posting well-written ads on Craigslist is free and will get you extra traffic, in addition to boosting the search engine performance of the pages you link to. [Inbound links](#) are vital in [SEO](#), and you can make your own search-engine destiny by creating Craigslist ads that contain links to your website. This lens also describes a viable **Craigslist alternative** that is gaining considerable traction. Thanks for looking - I wish you a [long and healthy life!](#)

How to use Craigslist to promote your website

A comprehensive and field-tested guide to using Craigslist and other HTML-enabled classified websites

in search engine optimization



Have you noticed how well [Craigslist](#) posts do in the [Google](#) search results?

Well-written, substantial Craigslist ads tend to rank very highly in the SERPs (Search Engine Results Pages). There are two reasons for this, both directly related to search engine optimization:

* Craigslist uses very simple HTML code, which means that if your post has at least 100 words, it will have a high content-to-code ratio. Producing web pages with a high content-to-code ratio is one of the fundamental principles of [SEO copywriting](#);

* Craigslist has a very high PageRank, which means that its ads are indexed quickly and taken seriously by Google and other search engines.

Additionally, virtually all ads on Craigslist are two or three clicks away from the home page, which is another important requirement of search engine optimization.

All of this amounts to the fact that a well-written, search-engine-optimized post of between 100 and 700 words on Craigslist is likely to appear on the first page of Google's search results. This is amazing news, because it means that if your website is very young you can use Craigslist's PageRank to start getting some traffic. You will not get any [PageRank](#) from your Craigslist ad, but you will get a huge boost in the search engine results, which is what really matters. I have successfully used this technique to make pages with PR0 (PageRank 0) appear at the top of the Google search results. The pages were useful, well-written and search-engine-optimized.

•™ The even better news is that when you include [links pointing to your website](#) in your Craigslist posts, Google takes those links extremely seriously, substantially boosting the ranking of the link's target page. This happens despite the fact that Craigslist automatically adds the rel=nofollow tag to any links you include in your post. I have written about this in the past (see [Google PageRank is overrated](#)). For all these reasons, Craigslist is an incredibly powerful tool in search engine optimization. [Making money with Craigslist](#) is realistic.

--> So how exactly do we write a Craigslist ad that will rank highly on Google and also boost the ranking of the page it links to? The answer is [effective search engine optimization](#). Craigslist allows the use of HTML in its ads and for this reason you can think of Craigslist as your source of free, high-ranking pages.

Another Craigslist SEO secret: make the ad substantial and well-written, but shorter and less useful than its target page. In this way the target page will rank higher than the Craigslist ad.

One more tip (added April 25th 2008): Results tend to be better if you put your link at the beginning of the ad rather than at the end. It is also [absolutely vital](#) that the link is part of a proper sentence or paragraph - **links that are isolated tend to be discounted by Google**. Links that are not part of a sentence have very little SEO value - it's worth repeating!

The topic of the Craigslist ad should be the same as that of the page you are linking to. In other words,

the Craigslist ad should be a lighter, slightly watered-down version of the page you want to promote.

Of course you should follow the terms of use of Craigslist, and should not do anything spammy, antisocial or unethical. Posting high-quality, search-engine-optimized ads every once in a while will work wonders for your website. The key is to post in the small business ads section, as people will tend to leave your ads alone and it will be unlikely that malicious users will flag you out of spite or envy.

The h1 tag is vital to the SEO success of your Craigslist ad



It is not enough to just write a good ad - you need to use a little HTML too.

You should put the title of the posting in the main ad too - not just in the title field - and you must put it between h1 tags. This will give your ad a huge edge in the search engines.

Craigslist automatically puts the title in the TITLE field between h2 tags, but that is not enough if you want to get ahead in a competitive industry: you need to put your own h1 title in the main body IN ADDITION to the one in the title field.

With Backpage you should do the opposite: put an h2 title in the main body, because Backpage puts the title in the TITLE field in h1 tags (surely a more logical approach than that of Craigslist.)

More generally, you should use classical SEO principles when producing your ad copy, and take full advantage of the HTML that Craigslist allows: bold, italics, underline, etc. You should employ all the tricks in tried-and-true [SEO copywriting](#).

This will ensure that your ad's appearance on Google's first page will be by design rather than by accident.

How to include a website link in a Craigslist ad

The HTML code to be used to embed a website link in a Craigslist ad



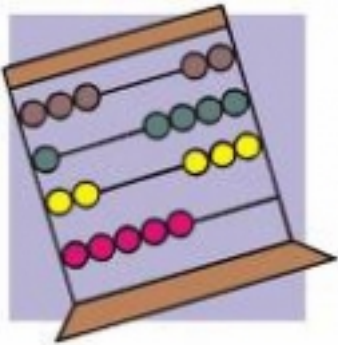
Of course the whole point of this exercise is to post a Craigslist ad that has a link to your website. It is absolutely vital that you do not use "click here" as the anchor text.

Here is the code you need to produce a link that says "MY WEBSITE":

`MY WEBSITE`

1. Type the code exactly as shown above, but use the URL of your destination page in between the quotation marks - I used Squidoo's URL as an example.
2. Also, remember to substitute the words MY WEBSITE for whatever key words you are targeting. For example, if the link points to a page that is about search engine optimization, use "search engine optimization" as the anchor text.

How to track the number of visitors who visit your Craigslist ad



Here is a golden tip that will allow you to see how many users view your ads: use HTML code to embed a small [JPEG](#) picture that is hosted on your website. In this way, by seeing how many times that particular JPEG file is requested, you will know how many times your ad was viewed. There is no other way to know how many people are clicking on your Craigslist ad.

Here is how you embed a JPEG file in a web page - in this case it is a hypothetical JPEG that measures 10x20 pixels and that is hosted at `http://www.****.com/jpegs/craigslist-picture.jpg`:

```

```

If your field is not too competitive, your search-engine-optimized Craigslist ad is virtually guaranteed to appear on the first page of the Google search results. If your field is extremely competitive it probably will not, but your pages will still get some benefit from the ad's links.

The ad will do very well on Google for at least a few days, after which they sometimes start to decline. For this reason, you may want to delete and repost it before it expires.

Using Craigslist ads to get your website crawled by search engine spiders



I will finish off by saying that this is an excellent way to get a new page of content indexed quickly by Google. When you upload a new article on your website you should link to it from your homepage and you should also produce a search-engine-optimized Craigslist ad for it. Since Craigslist is crawled so frequently by the [Google bot](#) and other [search engine spiders](#), your article will also be spidered and indexed quickly.

You will also benefit from the synergistic effect of the Craigslist ad: in addition to boosting the search engine performance of your page, the ad itself can get you a lot of business and traffic through direct click-throughs. In other words, you are catching two birds with one stone.

I would love to know if these tips have helped you - try them out on your own website and leave a comment in my [guestbook](#). Also, please [rate this lens](#). I would appreciate that very much. I will also answer any questions posted in the guestbook.

Post not showing up on Craigslist?



If your **ad is not showing up on Craigslist** and you did not receive an e-mail from Craigslist to notify you, it's because you've been posting too frequently. The ad was automatically deleted by the system - this phenomenon is known as **ghosting**. Craigslist does this to fight spam, but the fact is that you might have a valid reason for posting two or three ads every day: you might have several websites or services that you want to promote.

--> The way around this is to use three or four different e-mail accounts and three or four different computers, as Craigslist can silently delete your post when the e-mail address or IP address matches one that has been used too frequently.

Whatever you do, remember that you cannot trust the green confirmation screen you get when you publish your Craigslist ad - you have to actually go to Craigslist after 20 minutes and see if the ad is there (do a search of a word that appears in your ad). If it's not there, Craigslist quietly disabled it without telling you.

It may sound like a pain in the neck, but Craigslist is too useful in **website promotion** to pass up the opportunity.

Good luck!

Update - Craigslist wants to limit the use of HTML in its ads



Craigslist is considering limiting the use of HTML code in all ads. They are not banning HTML, but simply restricting certain tags. The use of color and tags like the h1 tag will NOT be banned, which is very good news for us. The [HTML debate](#) rages on Craigslist. Make your voice heard if you have something to say on regard!

Update - An account is now required to post in the "services" section of Craigslist



As from 7th May 2008, users will need an account if they want to post in any of the "service" sections of Craigslist.

Accounts are free, but this will mean that it will not be possible to post as many ads as we used to.

This will have a beneficial effect, as it will get rid of many repeat and re-worded ads, but it does mean that you will now have to carefully choose which ads you're going to post.

Craigslist phone verification - Craigslist fails to call you back as promised



When you register for a Craigslist account, you have to provide a phone number - Craigslist says that you will receive an automated telephone call that will give you a verification code. You are then supposed to use that verification code to verify your account, after which you can start posting.

The problem is that many people - myself included - have not received the telephone call, despite making several attempts with a variety of numbers.

The reason for this is probably that you have more than one ad on Craigslist. Delete them all, wait 48 hours and try the phone verification again - it should work.

This is all part of a huge effort Craigslist is making to reduce spam, repeated ad posts and other annoying practices.

The Craigslist flagging nightmare (9/25/2008)

Craigslist has a rampant flagging problem - malicious flagging makes it almost impossible to keep a post online



[Craigslist flagging](#) has become nothing less than a nightmare. Originally designed to give users an opportunity to flag spam or blatantly illegal posts, it is now used as a weapon of mass destruction by malicious competitors. It is almost impossible to keep even the most innocent and non-commercial post online for more than a few hours before it is mercilessly flagged off Craigslist.

The sheer speed with which posts get flagged strongly suggests that some people are using **automated flagging software**. It is very disappointing that Craigslist allows this to happen. In my opinion Craigslist's flagging problem, along with the recent requirement for telephone-number-verified accounts, may ultimately bring Craigslist down for good. It has become simply too difficult to keep even one very innocent post online.

What does Craigslist think about all this? I have browsed the user forums and the view taken by Craigslist admins is very simple: if a post was flagged then by definition it deserves to get deleted, because the community didn't want it. So now it is no longer enough to comply with Craigslist's terms of use: if two or more people in the Craigslist community feel like flagging an ad, then that in itself means that it deserves to get flagged, regardless of how honest the post is.

In other words, on Craigslist the very act of being charged makes you guilty by default, and your post is summarily deleted. This sort of thinking is absurd and disappointing, and has already dented Craigslist's traffic.

It is very irritating when a website as useful as Craigslist suddenly becomes hostile and useless. Nothing less than a full-scale boycott will do here.

Is there an alternative to Craigslist? There is indeed. I found it with Google - which is always a good sign - and it is gaining traction very quickly.

Craigslist alternative



The perfect **Craigslist alternative** is [Backpage](#). Like Craigslist, it uses good

clean [HTML](#) and is highly search-engine-optimized. It even automatically inserts the h1 tag on the posting title, which Craigslist does not do (it uses the h2 tag instead). What is even better about it is that, unlike Craigslist, it does not automatically add the rel=nofollow tag to links, which means that the links are even more beneficial than those in Craigslist ads.

As importantly, Backpage does not have the hateful **flagging problem** that has totally ruined Craigslist. There is no doubt in my mind that, when Backpage becomes very popular, its owners will make a mess of it, just like the Craigslist folks did. I think we should be ok for a couple of years, but make hay while the sun shines!

Response to kenclicker's question re: inserting links in Craigslist posts



This is a response to kenclicker's question (in the blurb section): Craigslist only allows links to be inserted in certain posts - mostly in the "services offered" categories. If you post an ad with a link in any other category - like the personals, for example - the ad will be ghosted (it will not appear on the site), and if it is not ghosted, malicious users will flag it and it will be deleted, even if it is a perfectly genuine and non-spam ad.

Give it a shot, but if the Craigslist flagging problem frustrates your efforts, I strongly recommend you use Backpage instead - for the time being, it is 100% tolerant of all posts, because it wants to compete with Craigslist and conquer its own slice of traffic. Also, it does not add the rel=nofollow tag to the links, so the links should be even more beneficial, especially once Backpage's PageRank attains a high value.

If Backpage ever becomes mainstream, it will almost certainly adopt Craigslist's appalling policies, at which point we can abandon it and find the next alternative.

I hope this helps! Thanks for reading my lens.

P.S. If you know of other Craigslist alternatives, please leave a comment and tell us about them!
Thanks!

NEWSFLASH! Craigslist no longer applies the rel=nofollow tag to links in posts (08/20/2008)



It would appear that Craigslist no longer inserts the rel=nofollow tag in links. Many thanks to Sharke for posting about this in my guestbook.

Does this mean that the links will now be more valuable? It remains to be seen, but in any case the links (when you manage to keep the post online for more than an hour) were very valuable to begin with, so it's all good.

Craigslist may have decided to remove the rel=nofollow tag to compensate for the fact that it's so much

harder to post these days. It might also be using a script that instructs search engines not to follow the links, but we know that Google follows the links anyway, so it does not really matter.

UPDATE (11/17/2008) - It appears that Craigslist does use the rel=nofollow tag after all. Thanks to RuralRoute2 for pointing it out.

NEWSFLASH - Backpage outperforms Craigslist in the search engines (Sept. 6th 2008)



I have seen evidence that Backpage posts rank higher in the search engines than Craigslist posts. This might be because Backpage uses the h1 tag, whereas Craigslist uses the h2 tag (for reasons I will probably never understand).

Craigslist and code for re-directing URLs

A response to the question by johnf85k



Craigslist disallows HTML code that redirects URLs - I'm sure this was banned even before the latest reduction in HTML capabilities.

Besides, [re-directing URLs](#) nullifies the SEO benefit, and is unfair to the users. Don't do it.

5 Reasons to post on Backpage

five

1. Other things being equal, ads posted on Backpage do just as well in the [search engines](#) as those posted on Craigslist, if not better.

2. Backpage does not have Craigslist's appalling flagging problem. If you post on Backpage, no one will flag you. No one will bother you. No one will sabotage you. And there is no ghosting, either.

3. Backpage does not require an account with telephone verification.

4. Backpage does not have the sanctimonious attitude of Craigslist.

5. Your ad will remain active on Backpage for 30 or 40 days - much longer than Craigslist.

The only shortcoming of Backpage is that it has less traffic than Craigslist, but guess what? WE can change that :)

How to not get flagged on Craigslist

5 tips to avoid getting flagged on Craigslist



1. Never post more than one ad at a time in a given category.
2. Do not delete and repost your ads too frequently.
3. Don't make your ad annoying or spammy.
4. Don't draw too much attention to yourself. Make your ad good and effective, but don't make it *too* good. Excellence attracts envy, and on Craigslist that means getting flagged by malicious competitors.
5. Do not violate the Craigslist Terms of Service. It is perfectly possible to use Craigslist for [SEO purposes](#) without violating its TOS.

[Boost natural Google traffic to your website](#)

[How to make money with Craigslist](#)

Thanks & Enjoy!
Samy&Hassan Roumieh



The Ultimate Automatic System Online
<http://www.automaticsystemonline.com/>
<http://www.mythreebillionsads.com>