



Happy Anniversary to Papers & Pixels!

Welcome to this month's blogging how-to article from Blogs By Heather. We are doing to be discussing Google

WebMaster Tools! In learning about your site, such as what your most popular keywords are, who refers to your site or detecting any problems with your site can help you optimize your site and improve your search results. In this month's article we review a lot and I hope it helps you better understand your site and build your web presence.

Google Webmaster Tools

Google Webmaster Tools is another great tool provided by Google and it's free! Its purpose is to help you improve your site's ranking in search results, and offers detailed reports on your blog page's visibility on Google. An explanation of the various types of reports are detailed in this article; such as the number of search queries that returned your site in search results over the last 30 days (for example) and how many clicks it received, or a list of external sites linking to yours, or a list of the most significant keywords found on your site.

1. Go to www.google.com/webmasters/tools.
2. Next, you need to login to Google if you are not currently signed in.
 - If you have a Blogger Blog, then this would be your Blogger login (as Blogger is owned by Google).
 - If you do not have a Google account, simply click on Create An Account Now. Then enter your email address, set a password, choose a location (country), enter your birthday, enter the Word Verification and click the "I accept, create my account" button.

Don't have a Google Account?
[Create an account now](#)

Figure. Google Account Sign In

3. After entering your Google Account login information and clicking Sign In, you then enter Google Webmaster Central, where Google would like you to verify sites associated with your Google Account.
 - In my example, you will notice that when I logged into the Google Account, my sample Blogger blog appears verified (under Verification). This is due to the fact I previously setup a custom domain to use with my Blogger blog and in doing so verified that I was the owner of the blog. Do not worry about that as we will next walk through how to verify your site.

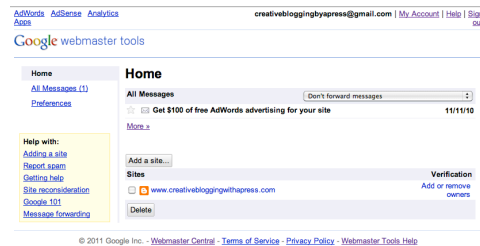


Figure. Google WebMaster Tools

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- You, however, may instead see the Verify This Site button shown below, and we will now walk through the steps of verifying your site; that is to verify you are the owner of your blog.

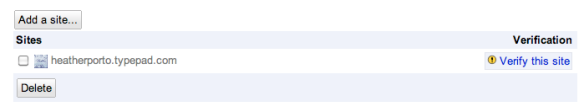


Figure. Unverified Site

- Click on Verify This Site and the Verification screen appears. You have a few different ways of verifying ownership of you blog. We discuss two different methods (one for Blogger and WordPress, and then a different method for TypePad).

If using Blogger:

Select the second option. In Blogger, click on Design from the Dashboard, and then Edit HTML. Then copy and paste the HTML code provided, as shown in the example below. Find the <head> tag and paste the code beneath it. Click Save Changes.

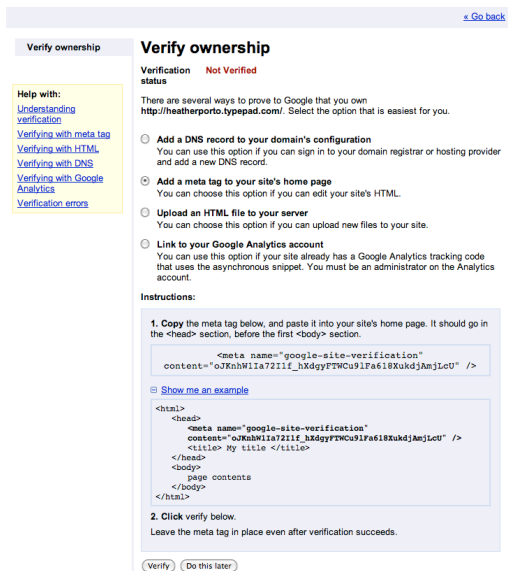


Figure. Verify Ownership in Blogger, Meta Tag

modification.

If using WordPress (WordPress.com):

Using the same method (#2 in adding a Meta Tag), from the Dashboard, click on Tools. Then under Webmaster Tools Verification, in the textbox for Google Webmaster Tools enter only the large key (bunch of characters following the content= and surrounded by single quotes). Click Save Changes.

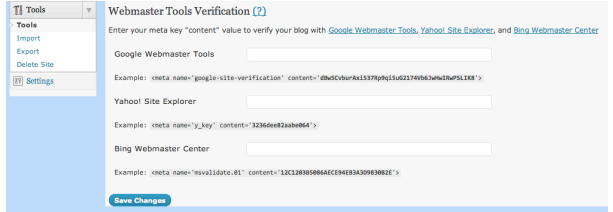
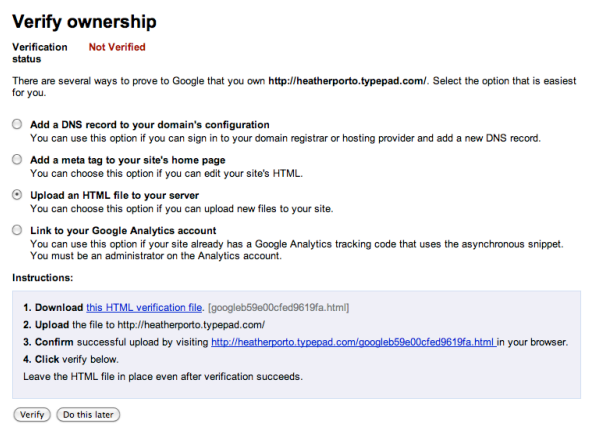


Figure. Verify Ownership in WordPress, Webmaster Tools Verification.

If using TypePad:

Select option #3 about uploading a file to the file manager and follow the instructions they provide (as shown in this snapshot below).



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Figure. Verify Ownership by uploading HTML file (for TypePad example)

- Whether using Blogger, TypePad, or WordPress.com, when finished using the recommended method (previously reviewed), click the Verify button in Google Webmaster Tools. You will then be brought to the Dashboard shown below.

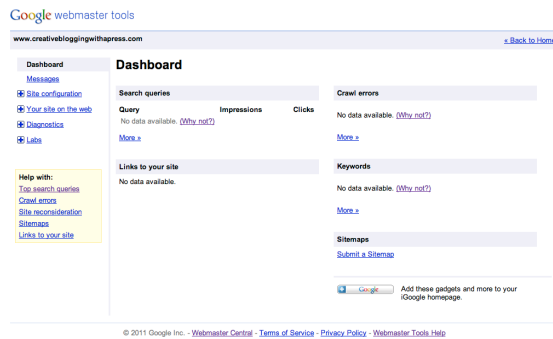


Figure. Webmaster Tools Dashboard

Yes, it is normal that there are no results! Don't worry. We just setup Google Webmaster tools and verified your site. Therefore there hasn't been any time to accumulate and tally statistics. I would encourage you to check back next week to view new statistics as you begin blogging, writing posts using keywords, and more. Again, go to www.google.com/webmasters/tools and login with your Google Account. Then click on your verified site and the Dashboard will appear.

Now that you have setup Google Webmaster Tools, let's review the areas it tracks, queries, and reports. The main areas of the Dashboard are: Search queries, Crawl errors, Links to your site, Keywords, and Sitemaps. In addition, we'll briefly discuss Internal Links and Subscriber Status; HTML suggestions under Diagnostics, and Site Performance under Labs.

Search Queries

This reports the number of search queries that returned pages from your site over the specified period (default is 30 days), as well as how many impressions (the number of times pages from your site were viewed from the search results), and clicks (the number of times your blog's listing(s) were clicked in search results for a specific query) your site received. Additionally, this section provides your click-through rate (CTR) and average position. The CTR is a percentage – the number of impressions that resulted in a click to your site. The average position is where your site appears in the search results for a given query.

Crawl Errors

This area reports which URLs could not be reached. The most popular are the HTTP Status Code 404 (page not found/doesn't exist) and a URL or page timeout (where the page takes too long to load and the server times out). On this Crawl Errors page they list all the different type of errors and codes.

Links to Your Site

This lists the top external sites that link to yours! It reports which sites link to which pages on your blog.

Keywords

Google lists the most significant terms it finds on your site. If you are expecting different terms, this provides insight on what keywords are currently determined, and in knowing that you can now work on modifying your content in the future to try and bring new terms to this list.

Sitemaps

This area allows you to submit sitemaps of your site. Then Google analyzes it to see if there are any errors or potential errors in the pages listed on your sitemap. In short, a Sitemap is an index of pages on your site. You may create your own Sitemap to inform Google of pages it may not know of.

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Internal Links

Shows a list of pages that have links to other links (pages) on your site. Interlinking is a term used when you create links to other pages or posts on your own blog. For example, at the bottom of a post you may create a list of related posts/topics.

Subscriber Stats

Subscriber stats show those subscribed to your site. This may differ from the number you have in FeedBurner (feedburner.google.com, a popular subscription service) because Google Webmaster Tools is based on a specific domain/site (for example, it reads www.BlogsByHeather.com separately from heatherporto.typepad.com). Therefore if you use both, you need to add another site to your Google Webmaster Tools account. If you use the <http://BlogsByHeather.com> (without the "www") as well as www.BlogsByHeather.com, then you need to add both sites.

HTML Suggestions

Google detects any problems with your pages such as duplicate, missing, or problematic title or meta tags. These will not prevent your site from being listed, but correcting any problems may instead improve your results.

Site Performance

Site Performance is an experimental feature of Google Webmaster Tools labs. It shows you the average page load time for pages in your site, and then some suggestions on how to make the pages load faster. It is determined from the time the user clicks on a link on your site until the entire page is loaded. It is collected from users who have installed the Google Toolbar and have enabled the optional PageRank feature. You can click on Install PageSpeed (on Mozilla FireFox only) to gain more insight on the speed of your pages and how to improve it.

Additional Notes

We have just touched the surface of using Webmaster tools, however it's a great tool to assist in analyzing your site and by viewing its statistics and records you may then use that information to make improvements on your blog! As stated in the Subscriber Stats area, it is very important that you add all the necessary sites to your Google Webmaster Tools account. Whether you use the "www" prefix or not when using a domain, makes a difference! You should also list the original non-domain site address as well (such as your BlogSpot, TypePad, or WordPress URL address).

Additionally, you may find more information here:

- Understanding This Data (what we have reviewed in this Google Webmaster Tools section of this book):
www.google.com/support/webmasters/bin/answer.py?answer=96568&hl=en. You may also see this link on the left sidebar when clicking on Search Queries.
- Webmaster Tools Help:
www.google.com/support/webmasters/
- Webmaster Help Forum:
www.google.com/support/forum/p/Webmasters
- Webmaster Blog:
googlewebmastercentral.blogspot.com

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