



404

Description





A 404 error is a status code that indicates to a user of a website that the requested page is not available. This error code, along with other response status codes, is a part of the Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP) response codes of the web. When a server cannot locate a webpage requested by a client, it generates a 404 error code. Variations of the error message may include “404 Error,” “404 Page Not Found,” or “The Requested URL Was Not Found.”

When a user encounters a 404 error, the error page will display the error code and its meaning along with potential options to navigate around it. This error code is commonly generated when a user tries to access a webpage that does not exist, has been moved, or has a broken or dead link. The 404 error code is one of the most frequently encountered errors that a web user may experience.

It is a requirement for servers to respond to client requests, such as when a user attempts to visit a webpage. For instance, if a user tries to access a page that has been moved, but the original link has not been redirected, the server will respond with a 404 error code. The user may also receive a human-readable message such as “Not Found” with the error code. 404 error codes can occur in any web browser.

In the event that a user receives a 404 error, there are several actions they should take. First, they should double-check the URL for typos, as a single mistyped character can result in a 404 error. Refreshing the webpage may also resolve the issue if the error is a momentary glitch. Alternatively, users can attempt to find the page through a web search or try accessing the page on another device. If the page works on another device, clearing the cache and cookies on the first device may fix the issue. Users can also go to the Internet Archive’s Wayback Machine to see what the specific URL looked like in the past. Finally, contacting the website’s webmaster to inform them of the issue will enable them to fix the broken link.

From the website owner’s perspective, 404 errors should always be fixed whenever possible. Accumulating a large number of broken, unredirected, or nonexistent links over time can lead to a poor user experience and drive users away from the website. Furthermore, 404 errors make a site less intuitive to navigate, reducing user engagement.



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An abundance of unresponsive URLs can also harm a website's search engine optimization (SEO) efforts, decreasing the frequency with which the website appears in search results. Google also takes note of a site's bounce rate, which represents the percentage of users who visit a site but leave quickly.

To identify and fix 404 errors on a website, there are several approaches to take. Using website analysis tools such as Google Search Console or Screaming Frog SEO Spider can help identify links that generate 404 errors. Retaining old URLs as redirect files is the easiest way to fix a 404 error if the URL for a page has changed. If there is no business reason to retain deleted webpages, they should be restored, or the link should be redirected. Alternatively, creating the page contents for a 404 status code and substituting it for the browser's usual 404 page is another viable solution. Custom error



responses contain a message that can encourage the user to send a note to the webmaster so that the issue can be resolved.

Some organizations customize their 404 pages by including site maps or search boxes to assist users in navigating to a helpful page. These customized pages often feature the site's branding and a link to the homepage.

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In conclusion, a 404 error occurs when a server cannot find a requested webpage. This error can happen for various reasons, such as the webpage being moved, the URL being mistyped, or a dead link. While a 404 error can be frustrating for web users, there are several actions that they can take, including checking for typos, refreshing the webpage, or searching for the page on the web.



Website owners should also be proactive in fixing 404 errors, as having broken, unredirected, or nonexistent links can negatively impact user experience and hurt their website's search engine optimization efforts. There are several ways to identify and fix 404 errors, such as using website analysis tools or creating custom error responses.

Overall, understanding and addressing 404 errors can help improve website functionality and user experience, leading to a more positive online presence.

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