

Google Search Quality Raters Guidelines: Recent Updates and What They Mean to Your Dental Practice

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We saw some significant Google algorithm changes in 2022, but those were not the only noteworthy updates. The search giant also made notable changes in the Search Quality Raters Guidelines. So let's peek at how it may impact your dental SEO ([search engine optimization](#)) strategy.

What is the Search Quality Raters Guideline?

As you know, Google's search results are automated and determined by a complex algorithm. However, there are people behind that algorithm who are continually updating and optimizing it. Guided by feedback from third-party contractors, called quality raters, they manually review sample search results and assess how well the algorithm performs.

The quality rater guideline is a lengthy, frequently updated document describing the criteria raters should use when determining which results are of high quality. Unfortunately, the document does

not represent the algorithm or its ranking factors; therefore, some people quickly dismiss its importance.

What human quality raters evaluate may differ from what the algorithm analyzes. For example, instructions such as considering the purpose and effectiveness are somewhat subjective; they rely on the judgement of human raters. Therefore, the quality rater guidelines do not mirror the criteria used by Google's algorithm.

Why are the guidelines so important to SEO? Because they describe Google's goals. They tell us what, by Google's definition, a high-quality website looks like. Of course, the algorithm could be better. It doesn't consistently deliver the highest quality, which is why updates are so frequent. If you keep your dental website well within the parameters of Google's quality standards, you are well-prepared for new algorithm updates.

Overall website quality – rating considerations

The updated search guidelines introduced a chart (section 3.2) explaining specific considerations for evaluating page quality. Some of the highlights include:

- **Purpose of the content** – This is the first item on the list. Any page intended to deceive or cause harm is automatically low quality.
- **Potential to cause harm** – Next is determining whether the page has the potential to cause damage. If yes, higher standards apply, and these pages receive a low-quality score if deemed untrustworthy, spammy, or otherwise harmful.
- The third item is evaluating the page topic and determining the extent to which it is YMYL (Your Money, Your Life). According to the Guideline, higher standards also apply to pages within this classification. As healthcare providers, dentists fall squarely in the YMYL category.
- **Content** – One of the primary considerations continues to be the quality of the main content and how well it achieves its purpose.
- **Website elements** – The page title, information about the content creator, and the extent to which advertisements impact the user experience are all quality considerations.
- **E-E-A-T** – The final item in the chart of quality considerations is also one of the most important, especially for YMYL websites. Google considers experience, expertise, and authority to determine the trustworthiness of a webpage.

Understanding the new E-E-A-T

If you are familiar with the basics of dental SEO (search engine optimization), you probably spotted the most standout element right away. E-E-A-T was formerly known as E-A-T or Expertise, Authority, and Trustworthiness, and it has long been one of the foundations of SEO. The second “E,” which denotes experience, was added in December 2022.

What does experience mean?

The new addition targets reviews, discussion forums, personal blogs, and similar content where the focus is sharing real, first-hand stories. The content creator in these scenarios does not need to be an expert; the scope of first-hand experience is more relevant to quality.

Essentially, this means that Google wants to be sure the content creator is qualified on the topic. So, for example, if they are evaluating a testimonial on your website, they want to know that it came from an actual patient. Likewise, when assessing an article about oral health, they want to see if it was written (or reviewed) by a dental professional.

The significance of E-E-A-T

Google wants to provide search results that users can trust. This is an essential foundation of quality evaluation across the board, and its significance amplifies for websites in the YMYL classification.

The theory here is that the content creator should be an expert on the subject or have first-hand experience, and the website must be identified as an authoritative resource on the topic. When combined, these elements add up to a trustworthy page.

Tips for increasing your dental website quality rating

You know your website is of good quality, as is your dental practice. So how can you make sure Google recognizes that fact? Here are a few simple, actionable tips:

- **Build a good backlink profile** – Inbound links are like votes of confidence from the referring sites. Abundant links from reputable, popular, relevant websites help establish you as an authority in your niche.
- **Unique content** – Google does not like duplication and has long favoured original content. It seems they are increasing the emphasis on that point. A recent update (section 3.2 of Search Quality Rater Guidelines) added the word originality in describing quality content.

- **About us section** – This is one of your dental website’s most important pages or sections. Include comprehensive bios for your providers. Both Google and human viewers want to know about the people behind the website and the dental practice.
- **Reviews** – One of the best ways to establish your online reputation is with abundant, positive reviews. Are you wondering how to get those stars? Don’t be shy about asking your happy patients to rate your practice on Google. Asking for reviews is a simple tactic far more effective than you might expect.

You would never cut corners and accept shoddy workmanship or subpar materials in your dental practice – because you understand that quality matters. If you want to stay a step ahead of the SEO game, simply apply the same high standards to your website and dental marketing. Produce top-notch content and create an online presence that showcases your sterling reputation.

About the Author



Naren Arulrajah, President and CEO of Ekwa Marketing, has been a leader in medical marketing for over a decade. Ekwa provides comprehensive marketing solutions for busy dentists, with a team of more than 180 full time professionals, providing web design, hosting, content creation, social media, reputation management, SEO, and more. If you’re looking for ways to boost your marketing results, call 855-598-3320 for a free strategy session with Naren. You may also schedule a session at your convenience with the Senior Director of Marketing – Lila, by clicking

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