

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE · WW-004

Set up Google Search Console and submit an XML sitemap

Verify a Domain property in Google Search Console, submit the site's XML sitemap, and confirm Google can read it and index the key pages.

TECHNICAL SEO

VERSION 1.0	EFFECTIVE 5 October 2026
NEXT REVIEW 5 April 2027	TIME 30 minutes
DIFFICULTY Beginner	RELATED WW-007 · WW-008
AUDIENCE Marketers or developers with access to the domain's DNS settings	
TOOLS Google Search Console · Domain registrar or DNS provider · Website CMS	

Purpose

Google Search Console (GSC) is the only first-party source of how Google crawls, indexes and ranks a website. This procedure verifies a Domain property, which covers every subdomain and protocol in one place, and submits the XML sitemap so Google discovers new and updated pages quickly. It is finished when the property is verified, the sitemap shows **Success**, and the home page is confirmed as indexed.

Scope

In scope

- Creating and verifying a Domain property using a DNS TXT record
- Finding and checking the website's XML sitemap
- Submitting the sitemap and reading the result
- Granting access to the team

Out of scope

- Fixing indexing errors (see WW-007 for performance analysis)
- Site migrations and redirects (see WW-008)
- Bing Webmaster Tools

Roles and responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Implementer	Creates the property, adds the DNS record, submits the sitemap.
Domain owner	Provides DNS access or adds the TXT record on request.
SEO lead	Reviews the sitemap contents and the first coverage results.

Prerequisites

- A business-owned Google account.
- Access to the domain's DNS settings, or a contact who can add a TXT record within the day.
- Confirmation of the site's preferred address (for example `https://www.example.co.uk`).

Procedure

Create the Domain property

Use a Domain property so every version of the site is covered.

1. Open search.google.com/search-console with the business account and click **Add property**.

2. Choose **Domain**, enter the bare domain without `https://` or `www` (for example `example.co.uk`), and click **Continue**.
3. Copy the TXT record value Google shows. It starts with `google-site-verification=`.

Verify ownership with DNS

Prove ownership in a way that survives website rebuilds.

1. Sign in to the DNS provider (often the domain registrar or a service such as Cloudflare) and add a new **TXT** record on the root of the domain (host `@` or blank) with the value you copied.
2. Save the record, return to Search Console and click **Verify**.

[!NOTE] DNS changes can take from a few minutes to 48 hours to propagate. If verification fails, wait an hour and try again rather than adding a second record.

3. Leave the TXT record in place permanently. Removing it un verifies the property.

Check the sitemap

Make sure the sitemap only lists pages you want indexed.

1. Find the sitemap. Try `/sitemap.xml` and `/sitemap_index.xml`, or look for a **Sitemap:** line in `/robots.txt`.
2. Open it in a browser and confirm it lists real, live page URLs on the preferred address (`https` and the right `www` choice).
3. Spot-check five URLs: each should load with a 200 status, not redirect, and not be marked `noindex`.

[!WARNING] If the sitemap lists redirected, deleted or `noindex` pages, fix the sitemap settings in the CMS or SEO plugin before submitting. Submitting a dirty sitemap wastes crawl budget and muddies reports.

Submit the sitemap

Tell Google where to find the site's pages.

1. In Search Console, open **Sitemaps**, enter the sitemap path (for example `sitemap.xml`) and click **Submit**.
2. Refresh after a few minutes and confirm the status shows **Success** and a discovered page count close to the number you expect.
3. Open **URL inspection**, enter the home page URL, and confirm it says **URL is on Google**. If not, click **Request indexing**.

Grant access

Give the team access without sharing the owner account.

1. Open **Settings**, then **Users and permissions**, and click **Add user**.
2. Add each person with **Full** or **Restricted** permission as their role requires. Keep **Owner** for the business account and one named backup.

Quality checks

- ☐ A Domain property is verified and the TXT record remains in DNS.
- ☐ The sitemap lists only live, indexable URLs on the preferred address.
- ☐ The sitemap status is **Success** with a sensible discovered count.
- ☐ The home page is confirmed as indexed.
- ☐ At least two owners exist, both belonging to the business.

Troubleshooting

Symptom	Likely cause	Fix
Verification fails	DNS not yet propagated, or the record is on a subdomain	Check the record is on the root (@) and retry after an hour.
Sitemap status Couldn't fetch	Sitemap URL wrong, blocked by robots.txt, or behind a firewall	Open the URL in a private window and check robots.txt rules.
Discovered count far lower than expected	Plugin excluding post types or pages	Review the SEO plugin's sitemap settings and resubmit.
Home page not indexed	Site is new, or a <code>noindex</code> tag is present	Check the page source for <code>noindex</code> , then request indexing.

Records

- Record the property type, verification method, sitemap URL and owners in the client record.
- Save a screenshot of the sitemap **Success** status with the date.

References

- [Add a website property \(Search Console Help\)](#)
- [Verify your site ownership \(Search Console Help\)](#)
- [Manage sitemaps with the Sitemaps report \(Search Console Help\)](#)
- [Build and submit a sitemap \(Google Search Central\)](#)

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