

## **SEO Answers #14: "Does Article Syndication Amount to a Duplicate Content Penalty?"**

By [Ross Dunn](#), CEO, [StepForth Search Engine Placement Inc](#)

To be as clear as possible with my answer I am going to break it down into two sections: one for those who syndicate their own content and the other for those who publish syndicated content.

Please keep in mind, however, duplicate content is not an exact science or anything close to that. As I wrote this article, I often imagined exceptions where a penalty would or would not take place. That said the following answers are based on what my experience dictates to be the most common scenarios.

### **Answer 1: Syndicating Your Own Content**

If you are sending out your own content for syndication (on other websites) you need not worry yourself with duplicate content penalties because you are the original source of the article. However here is some winning strategies you should use to ensure you get the maximum benefit from your article.

First-off it is often beneficial *not* to syndicate your content right away but to wait a day or so after writing your article so that the search engines can index the content first on your own website. Why? Because if you syndicate your article before or at the same time you publish it on your own website a 3rd party site may post the article before you do. If that 3rd party happens to be highly credible your article might get spidered there before it does on your website which may reduce your website's exposure.

This next factor is the most important: all articles must have a link back to a copy of the article on your own website to establish ownership. This will show the search engines that you are the original content creator, which will provide some backlink benefits and increase the chances your article will be found in searches. In some cases, like StepForth's, we have chosen to point the article to our flagship home page to build backlinks; another reasonable choice.

The downside to such a technique is the original article on our news website is not often credited with the first publication because a source backlink does not exist.

### **Answer 2: Syndicating Other People's Content**

Publishing content that has recently been released for syndication will not result in a duplicate content penalty. Why? Because the content is fresh and the major search engines do not penalize fresh content. It is paramount to note however that publishing older content under the guise of new content is a bad idea and not recommended. For example, if you were to post an old article you found online you would be wasting your time as the search engines would compare this to their database and immediately notice the content is outdated and previously syndicated; they simply would ignore it.

### **So What Happens to the Majority of Duplicate Content?**

Over time, duplicate content is weeded out of the search engine databases for the sake of search efficiency. Generally, the version of the article that is hosted on the most credible website or has the most backlinks (source credits from republishing) is considered the authority source and gets the bulk of the top rankings for that article. This is why sometimes, when looking through search results I occasionally find my own articles sourced from the more popular [Search Engine Guide](#) instead of my own site where they were originally posted.



## When Does a Duplicate Content “Penalty” Occur?

For the most part, older duplicated content is simply ignored by search engines so the ‘penalty’ per se is really quite benign; meaning the page is not worth the bytes of space it uses. A major search engine such as Google would consider a SPAM penalty for a website that only consisted of content that had previously been syndicated or had repeatedly tried to pass off old content as new. A penalty might be as small as a drop in rankings or as significant as an outright blacklisting. How the ultimate decision is made is buried deep within Google’s SPAM protection algorithms.

## In Conclusion

If you syndicate your own content, you have nothing to be concerned about but ensure that anyone who syndicates your content gives you proper link credit.

If you republish syndicated content, you need to be sure the content is fresh, topical to your website and that you have the rights to post it. Ultimately, I suggest following the lead of the best marketing sites on the Internet and intersperse your own freshly written content within your website. After all, over time syndicated content loses its lustre in rankings due to its nature of duplicity so if you have your own unique content your site will fare better in the end.

