

## Are All Inbound Links Equal?

Google and the other search engines use very complex mathematical formulas (algorithms) to determine how high up a site should come in the search results when a phrase is typed in. The search results vary over time, by search engine and by whereabouts in the world you are searching. Some experiments are also going on in the search engine world to use your previous searches as a clue to what you are likely to be looking for.

Inbound links to your site will generally help you in the search results but all inbound links are certainly not equal.

If you are lucky enough to get a link from, say, the front page of CNN's site then this will count for a lot more weight in the search engine's view than a link from your grandmother's blog, for instance. You can get a very rough approximation of Google's view of the importance, or otherwise, of a site by installing the Google toolbar and looking at a site's page rank. Don't get too hung up about page rank - the publicly displayed page ranks are very, very, very approximate and are only updated every few months. The ones that Google uses are updated pretty much all the time. Plus Google are the only search engine to even give you a clue as to how important they think a site is. Yahoo and Microsoft play their cards even closer to their chests.

As a general rule, the more important a site is, the more "weight" a link from them will carry. And the more difficult it will be to get a link from them in the first place.

Keeping our earlier example, it's not too likely that you'd get a link from CNN's home page but it's highly likely that you could get one from your grandmother's blog.

To keep inbound links looking natural, you should aim for:

- A mix of different anchor texts
- A mix of different page ranked sites
- A mix of different pages that the links are pointing to
- An increase in the number of links over time
- A mix of different types of sites pointing to you (not just all blogs or all directories, for instance)
- A mix of one way and reciprocal links

All these factors and more will be taken into account when a search engine decides how high up in the results you should come for your desired search terms.