HARPER MEDIA GROUP

TECHNICAL SEO · STRUCTURED DATA · AI OPTIMIZATION

THE DEFINITIVE

HTTP STATUS CODE SEO CHEAT SHEET

What Every Code Means — And When It Kills Your Rankings

15+	4	5
Status Codes	Code Groups	Pro Tips

2XX	3XX	4XX	5XX
Success	Redirects	Client Errors	Server Errors

Every time Google crawls your site, your server responds with an HTTP status code. These codes tell search engines whether a page is healthy, moved, broken, or blocked.

Understanding them is essential for protecting your SEO equity — and your rankings.

ABOUT THIS CHEAT SHEET

Every time Google crawls your website, your server responds with an HTTP status code. These three-digit codes are the silent language between search engines and your site. Get them right and Google indexes everything it should. Get them wrong and you lose rankings, waste crawl budget, and bleed link equity — often without knowing it.

This cheat sheet covers every status code with real SEO impact, explains exactly why each one matters, and gives you concrete fix instructions you can act on today.

2XX	3XX	4XX	5XX
Success	Redirects	Client Errors	Server Errors

QUICK REFERENCE — SEO IMPACT AT A GLANCE

CODE	NAME	SEO RISK	ACTION REQUIRED
200	OK	None — Ideal	No action needed
204	No Content	Medium	Fix if on indexable pages
301	Moved Permanently	Low if correct	Use for all permanent moves
302	Temporary Redirect	Medium if misused	Replace with 301 for permanent moves
307	Temporary Redirect	Medium	Replace with 301 for permanent changes
308	Permanent Redirect	Low	Modern 301 — confirm server support
400	Bad Request	Medium	Fix malformed URLs in sitemap/links
401	Unauthorized	High	Remove auth from indexable pages
403	Forbidden	Critical	Check robots.txt and server config
404	Not Found	High	Redirect with 301 or fix broken links
410	Gone	Low — intentional	Use to signal permanent deletion
429	Too Many Requests	Medium	Adjust crawl rate in Search Console
500	Internal Server Error	Critical	Immediate fix required — check server logs
502	Bad Gateway	High	Check proxy and load balancer settings
503	Service Unavailable	High if persistent	Add Retry-After header during maintenance

504	Gateway Timeout	High	Fix server response times and DB queries
507	Insufficient Storage	Critical	Free disk space or upgrade hosting

2XX — SUCCESS CODES

Server successfully processed the request. These are the codes you want to see on every crawlable, indexable page.

200 OK

RISK: NONE

WHAT IT IS	SEO IMPACT	FIX
The page loaded successfully. The server returned the requested content without issues.	Positive. This is exactly what Google wants to see on every crawlable page.	No fix needed. Ensure all important pages return 200.

201 Created

RISK: NONE

WHAT IT IS	SEO IMPACT	FIX
A new resource was successfully created. Common in APIs and form submissions.	Neutral. Rarely seen by Googlebot but not harmful.	No action needed for SEO purposes.

204 No Content

RISK: MEDIUM

WHAT IT IS	SEO IMPACT	FIX
The server processed the request but returned no content — an empty response.	Problematic if returned on pages meant to be indexed. Google cannot index an empty response.	Ensure indexable pages always return 200 with full content.

3XX — REDIRECT CODES

The requested resource has moved. Redirects pass (or risk losing) link equity. Using the wrong redirect type is one of the most common technical SEO mistakes.

301 Moved Permanently

RISK: LOW

WHAT IT IS	SEO IMPACT	FIX
The page has permanently moved to a new URL. Intended as a permanent change.	High impact — positive when used correctly. Passes full link equity. Google updates its index to the new URL.	Use 301 for all permanent URL changes. Avoid chains of 3+ redirects.

302 Found (Temporary Redirect)

RISK: MEDIUM

WHAT IT IS	SEO IMPACT	FIX
The page has temporarily moved. The original URL should be kept in the index.	Risky if misused. Google may not transfer link equity. If used where a 301 is needed, SEO value is lost.	Only use 302 for genuinely temporary redirects. Use 301 for all permanent changes.

307 Temporary Redirect

RISK: MEDIUM

WHAT IT IS	SEO IMPACT	FIX
Similar to 302 but strictly preserves the original HTTP method (GET stays GET, POST stays POST).	Same risk as 302 for SEO. Google treats it as temporary and may not pass equity.	Use 301 instead unless you specifically need to preserve HTTP method temporarily.

308 Permanent Redirect

RISK: LOW

WHAT IT IS	SEO IMPACT	FIX
Like 301 but preserves the HTTP method. The modern equivalent of 301.	Passes full link equity like 301. Google recognises it as permanent.	Acceptable modern alternative to 301. Confirm your CMS and server support it.

4XX — CLIENT ERROR CODES

The request could not be completed due to a client-side problem — bad URLs, missing pages, or access restrictions. These directly harm crawl budget and indexation.

400 Bad Request

RISK: MEDIUM

WHAT IT IS	SEO IMPACT	FIX
The server could not understand the request due to invalid syntax or a malformed URL.	Moderate risk. If Googlebot hits these, affected pages drop from the index over time.	Audit for malformed URLs in your sitemap and internal links.

401 Unauthorized

RISK: HIGH

WHAT IT IS	SEO IMPACT	FIX
The page requires authentication. The user or bot has not provided valid credentials.	High risk if on indexable pages. Google cannot crawl pages behind a login wall.	Ensure no pages intended for indexing are protected by authentication.

403 Forbidden

RISK: CRITICAL

WHAT IT IS	SEO IMPACT	FIX
The server understood the request but refuses to authorise it. Access is permanently denied.	Critical. Google will drop these pages from the index. Often caused by robots.txt errors, server misconfigs, or WAF/CDN rules.	Check robots.txt, server permissions, and Cloudflare/CDN settings for blocked Googlebot.

404 Not Found

RISK: HIGH

WHAT IT IS	SEO IMPACT	FIX
The requested page does not exist on the server. The URL returned no content.	High impact. Breaks internal links, wastes crawl budget, and destroys link equity if inbound links point here.	Redirect all 404s with backlinks to relevant live pages with 301. Fix all internal links pointing to 404s.

410 Gone

RISK: LOW

WHAT IT IS	SEO IMPACT	FIX
The page has been permanently deleted and will not return. A stronger signal than 404.	Positive when used correctly. Tells Google to remove the page from its index faster than a 404.	Use 410 for intentionally deleted pages you never want indexed again.

429 Too Many Requests

RISK: MEDIUM

WHAT IT IS	SEO IMPACT	FIX
The server is rate-limiting the client. Too many requests have been sent in a given time.	Moderate to high. If Googlebot is throttled, crawl frequency drops and indexation slows.	Review server capacity and crawl rate settings in Google Search Console.

5XX — SERVER ERROR CODES

The server failed to fulfil a valid request. These are the most damaging codes for SEO — persistent server errors lead directly to deindexation and lost rankings.

500 Internal Server Error

RISK: CRITICAL

WHAT IT IS	SEO IMPACT	FIX
The server encountered an unexpected condition and could not fulfil the request.	Critical. If persistent, Google will drop affected pages from the index and signal an unreliable site.	Immediate priority fix. Check server logs for root cause. Monitor in Google Search Console.

502 Bad Gateway

RISK: HIGH

WHAT IT IS	SEO IMPACT	FIX
The server acting as a gateway received an invalid response from an upstream server.	High risk if recurring. Googlebot cannot crawl affected pages and will reduce crawl frequency.	Check hosting provider, proxy configuration, and load balancer settings.

503 Service Unavailable

RISK: HIGH

WHAT IT IS	SEO IMPACT	FIX
The server is temporarily unable to handle the request — often due to overload or maintenance.	Temporary 503 with Retry-After header is safe for planned maintenance. Persistent 503 causes deindexation.	Always include a Retry-After header during maintenance windows to signal Google the outage is temporary.

504 Gateway Timeout

RISK: HIGH

WHAT IT IS	SEO IMPACT	FIX
The server acting as a gateway did not receive a timely response from an upstream server.	High risk. Signals slow or unreliable infrastructure. Reduces crawl budget allocation over time.	Investigate server response times, database queries, and hosting infrastructure performance.

507 Insufficient Storage

RISK: CRITICAL

WHAT IT IS	SEO IMPACT	FIX
The server cannot store the representation needed to complete the request.	Rare but critical. Pages cannot be served or indexed if server storage is exhausted.	Immediate server-side fix required. Free up disk space or upgrade hosting resources.

5 PRO TIPS FOR MANAGING STATUS CODES

1 **Monitor monthly**
Check Google Search Console → Index → Pages and Crawl Stats every month. Status code issues compound silently — catching them early costs minutes; catching them late costs rankings.

2 **Flatten redirect chains**
Never let redirect chains exceed 2 hops. Every extra hop bleeds link equity and slows crawl speed. After any migration or URL change, audit with Screaming Frog and update all chains to go A → Z directly.

3 **Post-migration crawl**
Run a full crawl with Screaming Frog after every site migration to catch 404s and redirect errors before Google does. The first post-launch crawl should happen within 24 hours of going live.

4 **Use 410 not 404**
Use 410 (Gone) instead of 404 for pages you have intentionally removed. Google clears 410 pages from its index significantly faster than 404s — which can linger for weeks.

5 **503 + Retry-After**
If Googlebot hits a 503 during scheduled maintenance, always include a Retry-After HTTP header. Without it, Google treats the outage as permanent and begins deindexation. With it, Google queues a re-crawl.

WHEN TO USE WHICH REDIRECT

SITUATION	USE THIS CODE	WHY
Page permanently moved to new URL	**301 Moved Permanently**	Passes full link equity; Google updates index
URL temporarily unavailable (A/B test, seasonal)	**302 Found**	Tells Google to keep original URL in index
Site moving from HTTP to HTTPS	**301 Moved Permanently**	Permanent — use 301 to consolidate authority
www to non-www consolidation	**301 Moved Permanently**	Pick one canonical domain and redirect permanently
Trailing slash standardisation (/page → /page/)	**301 Moved Permanently**	Permanent convention — 301 prevents duplication
Maintaining API POST method during temp redirect	**307 Temporary Redirect**	Preserves HTTP method — 302 does not guarantee this

Modern permanent redirect preserving method	**308 Permanent Redirect**	Like 301 but strict method preservation — check CMS support
Page deleted permanently	**410 Gone**	Faster index removal than 404

Need a Full Technical SEO Audit for Your Site?

Harper Media Group identifies and fixes every status code issue, crawl error, and indexation problem — with step-by-step reporting and transparent fixes delivered under your timeline.

→ **Book a Free Strategy Call**

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