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Google Alerts Tutorial To Help You Stay Ahead of the Curve

Google Alerts is probably one the most powerful Google service for people (especially bloggers) who want to stay ahead of their competition. With Google Alerts, you get an instant email notification whenever something happens in your niche or topics that matter to you.



But are you aware of all the wonderful features packed inside Google Alerts ? If not, here's a short guide (illustrated with examples) to help you harness the complete power of Google Alerts:

Case A: Track news about new software releases or version upgrades

Say you are eagerly waiting for news about Norton Antivirus 2008. The chances are that the manufacturer [Symantec in this case] will either publish a press release that will appear in Google News or one of the company employees will blog about the release. So we need to setup a comprehensive Google alert in this case that will track blogs, web, Google groups as well as Google News.

"Norton Antivirus 2008" [Type: Comprehensive, How Often: as it happens]

Case B: Most websites like Forbes, CNet or CNN let you setup free email alerts for tracking any topic on their websites. When a story contains your selected topic or your keyword, you will receive e-mail alerts straight to your inbox.

Unfortunately, most of these sites require you to register before sending emails plus the alerts are not customizable - so just replace them with single Google Alerts and save yourself from the frustration of managing multiple email messages.

» Send me an alert whenever there's a new story published on Forbes covering either Google or Yahoo:

google OR yahoo source:forbes

Case C: Track the activity of Googlebot with Google Web alerts.

» Google Alerts can help you track whenever Google indexes new webpages. For instance, if you like to track the mention of "Windows Vista Service Pack 1" on Microsoft website, just setup the following web alert.

"Windows Vista SP1" OR "Windows Vista Service Pack 1" site:microsoft.com [type: web]

Try all the possible permutations and combinations in quotes separated by OR boolean operator.

Case D Track news stories published in local newspapers and magazines. For example:

» Inform me whenever an Indian publication writes about blogging:

blogs OR blogger OR blogging OR weblogs location:India [type: news]

» I want to track the Rocketboom team in New York:

rocketboom OR "andrew baron" OR "joanne colan" location:ny

Google News lets you track US states by their two letter codes.

Case E: Ego Surfing: Track your influence in the blogosphere instantly

» Let me know whenever a new website links to my blog:

link:myblogname.com [type: blog, Frequency: as it happens]

» I want to track news publications in US that are quoting me:

"John Smith" OR "Smith John" location:US [type:news]

You should mention your name in both the styles for better results.

Case F: Track your favorite authors in the blogosphere.

» Say you are a big fan of "John Public" and like to be notified whenever John writes a new story on his blog(s). You can either subscribe to his blog feed but if email suits you more, here's how to track Mr John. [may fail in certain cases]

inpostauthor:"John Public" [type: blog Frequency: as-it-happens]

Tips for reducing Inbox clutter created from email alert messages - Now that you are tempted to setup Google alerts for every topic of your interest, here's some advice - always enclose alert queries inside quotes else you may get irrelevant results. Use a single alert for related topics and separate queries using OR operator. Make sure all words are spelled correctly.

You will sometimes have to experiment with Google alerts for a few days before choosing one that delivers the most meaningful results for you. Google lets you create up to 1000 alerts.

Related: Google Video Search Tips, Google News Search Tricks

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