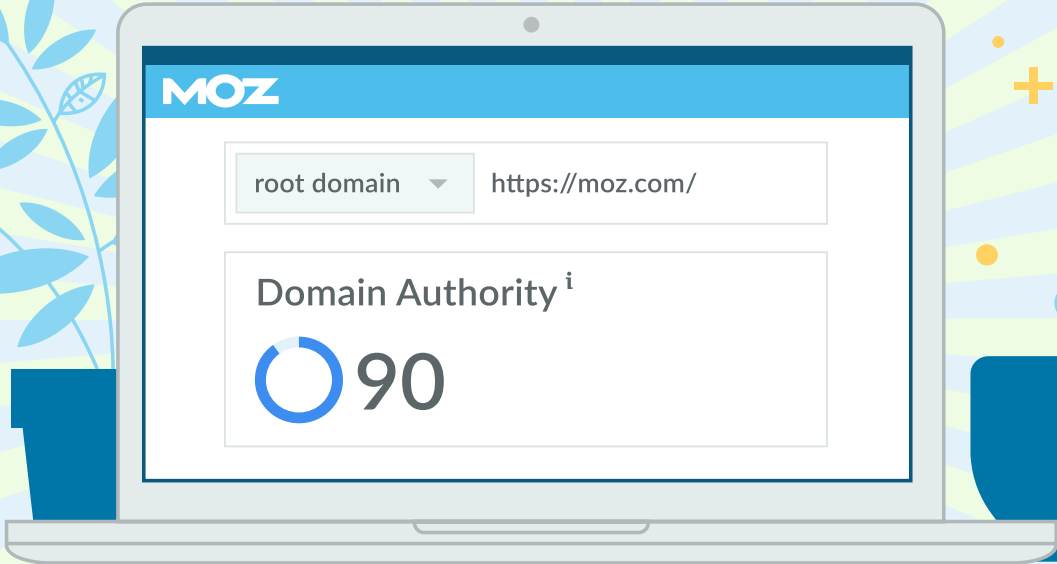




Authority Scoring

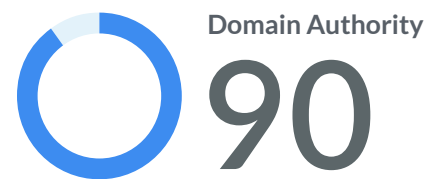
What It Is, How It's Changing, and How to Use It



For years, Domain Authority (DA) has been viewed by the SEO industry as a leading metric to predict a site's organic ranking ability. In order to make sure it stays that way, we need to make regular updates to our scoring calculations. These updates allow us to keep pace with the changes in the search engines' algorithms so that DA doesn't lose accuracy over time.

We're happy to announce that recent changes to our link index and upcoming changes to our scoring calculations will make DA more accurate than ever before, enabling search marketers to more accurately judge the value of a site and their work.

In light of these upgrades, past and present scores will be changing, which is why we've created this guide to walk you through everything you, your clients, and your stakeholders need to know.



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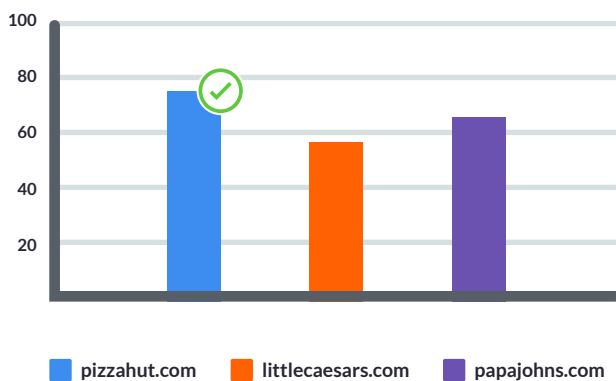
Why We Made Authority Scores

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What Is Domain Authority?

Domain Authority (DA) is a score developed by Moz to help predict how well a website will rank in search results. The score is a 0-100 scale, with higher scores indicating a higher likelihood of ranking in the top positions of the search engine results pages (SERPs).

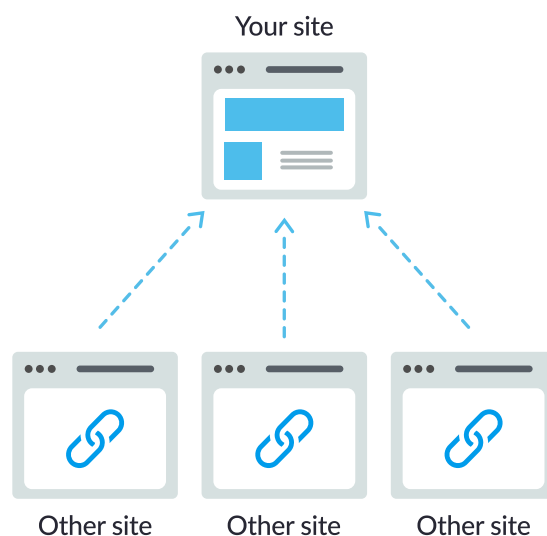


DA scores are available in the following Moz tools and features:

- Link Explorer
- MozBar
- Keyword Explorer
- Campaigns
- Moz API

How is DA calculated?

For authority calculations, we take what we know about a site, including what we know from the links pointing to it, (“backlinks” or “inbound links”) and feed that into a model that learns over time.



We’ve recently made substantial improvements to both the quality and quantity of our link index, and our ability to create relevant signals from this data has also improved. The changes to both our link index and our authority scoring calculations mean that DA scores more closely align to how the search engines order search results. These upgrades will allow search marketers to do their jobs better by making smarter decisions about the sites they work on.

Recent updates

In September 2017, Moz started tracking historical data in order to be able to show Domain Authority, Page Authority, and Linking Domain counts over time.

At the end of April 2018, Moz [announced a complete rebuild](#) of our link technology. Moz's new link index, now 35x larger and 30x fresher than its predecessor Open Site Explorer (OSE), feeds more accurate data into many of our tools and features, including DA. The breadth and depth of this new link data made MozTrust and MozRank unnecessary, so they were removed. Because this new link index is much larger than the index used by OSE, it was expected and normal to see changes in DA scores from what they were in OSE. At that time, changes in DA scores were solely due to the upgrade of our link index.

In **March 2019**, DA will fluctuate again, but this time, it's because we're upgrading our DA algorithm. We will be adding a few new factors to our authority scoring calculations in order to make DA even more trustworthy and predictive than ever before. This update will affect both present and past DA scores. This update will not affect Page Authority (PA) scores.

If your DA drops concurrent with these updates, this does not mean that Moz has determined that your site's actual authority has dropped. You can consider this a completely new number, and as such, losses or gains comparative to your old DA scores shouldn't be taken as deteriorations or improvements. It is also important to note that these changes affect all sites, so a drop in DA relative to your old DA score is of little concern if your competitors saw similar movement.

Tracking metrics over time

Moz starts tracking historical data. DA, PA, and Linking Domain counts can now be seen over time.



September 2017

April 2018

New & improved algorithm

Moz updates the way DA is calculated, adding new factors that will improve the accuracy of the scores.



March 2019

Bigger & fresher link index

Moz announces a rebuild of our link technology. This change makes our link index 35x bigger and 30x fresher than before.

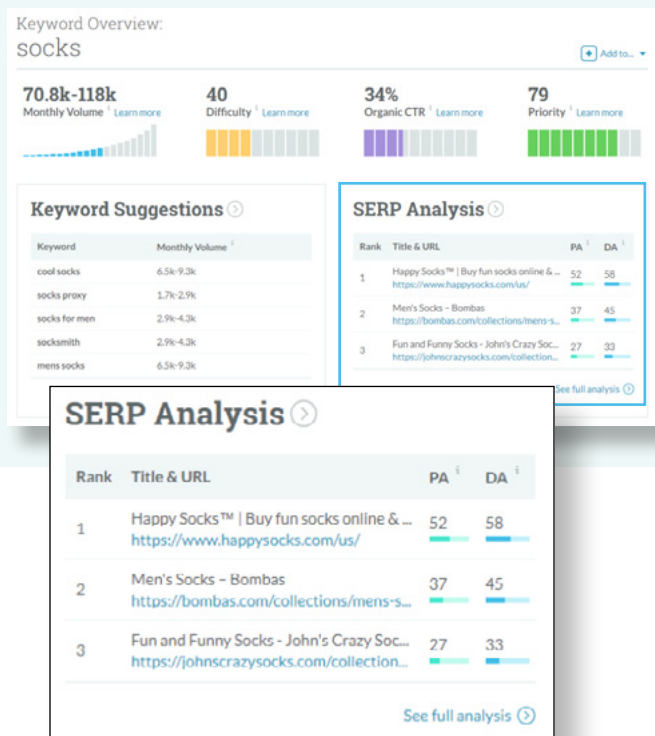


Who are my competitors?

Your competitors, in this context, are those websites vying for the same keyword rankings that you are. For this reason, it's possible and even likely to have different competitors for each of the different keywords you are targeting.

Take the keyword "socks" for example.

In Moz's Keyword Explorer, you have the ability to view the scores of the sites ranking in the top positions for that term, under "SERP Analysis." If you're trying to rank for "socks," these are your competitors, and seeing their scores is a great benchmarking tool to help you gauge where you need to be in order to rank in those top spots.

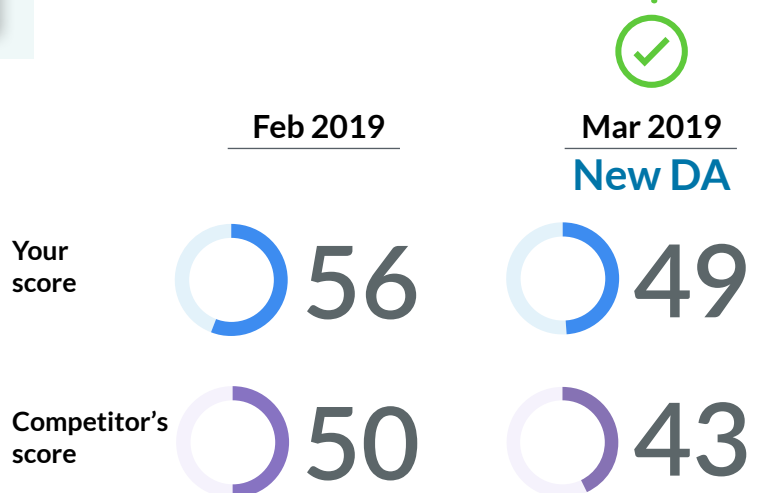


What's better about the new DA scores?

With Moz's new link index, DA scores are better because the underlying data is better. The March 2019 update to our authority scoring calculations will help DA keep pace with the search engines' algorithm updates so that these numbers remain accurate over time.

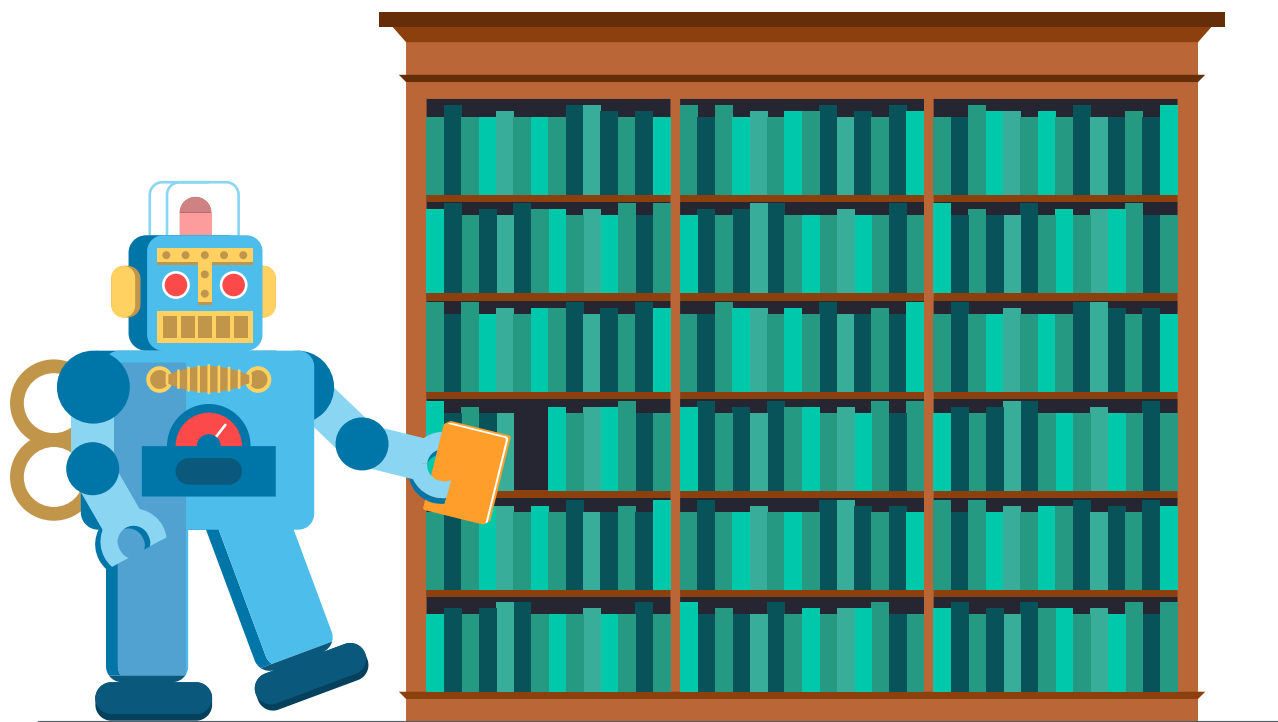
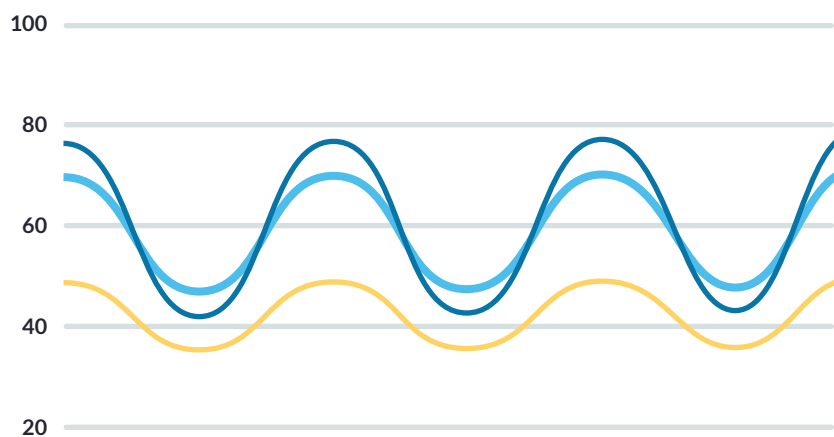
With proprietary metrics like Spam Score and link quality patterns factored into an advanced machine-learned model, you can keep pace with search engine algorithm updates and make smarter search marketing decisions.

Moz's new link index and new authority scoring model will now more closely resemble the search engines' view of the web, so updated DA scores will be a more accurate representation of your site's ability to rank in search. In other words, **the new DA scores correlate better with the SERPs.** Just keep in mind that if your newer, "better" scores are now lower than they were previously, look at them in relation to your competitors. If your scores are lower than they were previously, but still better than your competitors, you're still in a good place.



How much should I expect my scores to fluctuate?

Moz's link index is not static. It's moving and changing all the time. Authority scores are also based on machine learning calculations, so your site's score will fluctuate as more, fewer, or different data points are used in the calculation. For these reasons, it's expected and normal for DA scores to fluctuate. However, because our link index is larger than it was with OSE, and now updates daily rather than monthly, you can expect these standard fluctuations in our index to be far less noticeable than they were previously.





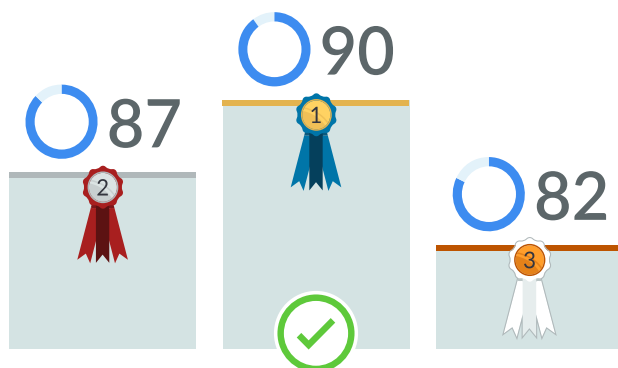
Domain Authority



Dos and Don'ts

Using DA for comparison

DA is a comparative metric, rather than an absolute metric, meaning that the best way to use DA is by way of comparison. For example: Is my site's DA higher or lower than my competitors?



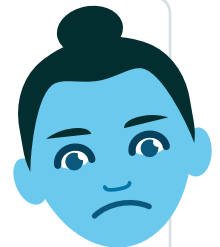
Being a comparative metric, we caution against categorizing any DA score as “good” or “bad” on its own.

For example, if you notice that your DA score increased, don't stop and celebrate there! Look to see if your competitors' DAs also increased. Since DA is a measure of the likelihood of ranking, you'll want scores that are higher than your competitors.

Viewing DA as a grade



Although the 0-100 scale might resemble a test grade, where you'd want to score as close to perfect as possible to get an A, this is not the intended use for DA. Since your DA number is a “rankability” score, you're just looking for a number that is higher than your competitors. For example, if you are targeting the term “SEO courses” with a site that has a DA of 35, and all the currently-ranked sites for that term have a DA of 20-30, you're probably in good shape.



- 30
- 27
- 23
- 21



“Getting more Domain Authority will help me rank better”



“Increasing my Domain Authority is an indication that my site will perform better in search results”

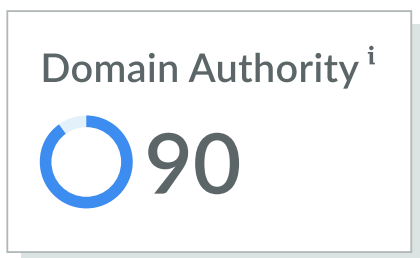
Viewing DA as an objective quality

DA isn't a quality that your domain can collect and possess, but rather, it is a reflection of the link qualities your site already possesses. For example, it would be incorrect to say, “Getting more Domain Authority will help me rank better.” Instead, you could say, “Increasing my Domain Authority is an indication that my site will perform better in search results.”

It's like feeding someone a huge dinner (link metrics) and the result is that they're full (DA). You can't give someone “full.” What you can give them is food, and the quality of fullness is an indicator of the food that was eaten.

DA as a PageRank replacement

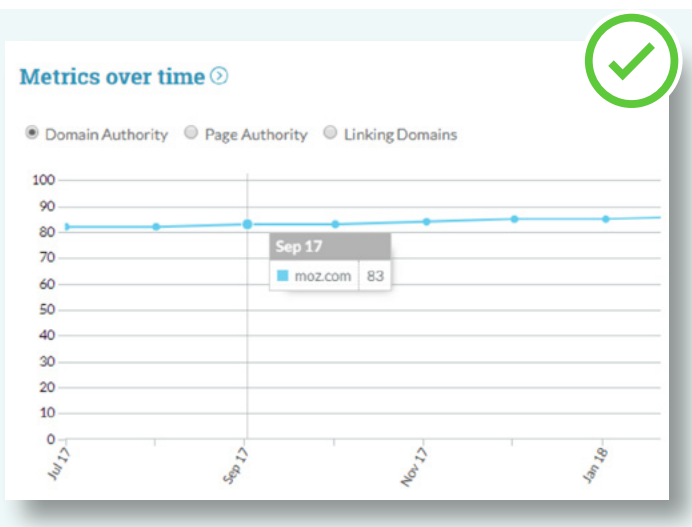
PageRank is a numerical score Google's algorithm assigned to websites, based on the quality and quantity of its inbound links. PageRank numbers used to be publicly available, but Google later stopped updating them, and ultimately stopped showing them altogether. The PageRank number was a signal Google used to rank websites. In fact, they still use it in their internal calculations even though it isn't publicly available. PageRank is just one among many ranking signals, but numbers are tangible and objective, unlike many other ranking signals like “high quality content.” This is why many people craved a replacement after PageRank became unavailable. While DA is a helpful guess at how a site will perform in search, it is not a direct replacement for PageRank, as it is not a ranking signal and is **not** used by Google in their ranking calculations.



Using DA to compare your site's authority over time

DA scores are **relative**, and may **fluctuate slightly with any change to our link index**. For that reason, it's best to use DA to compare your site with others.

However, you do have the option of viewing your site's DA over time. To do this, use Link Explorer's "Metrics over time" feature.



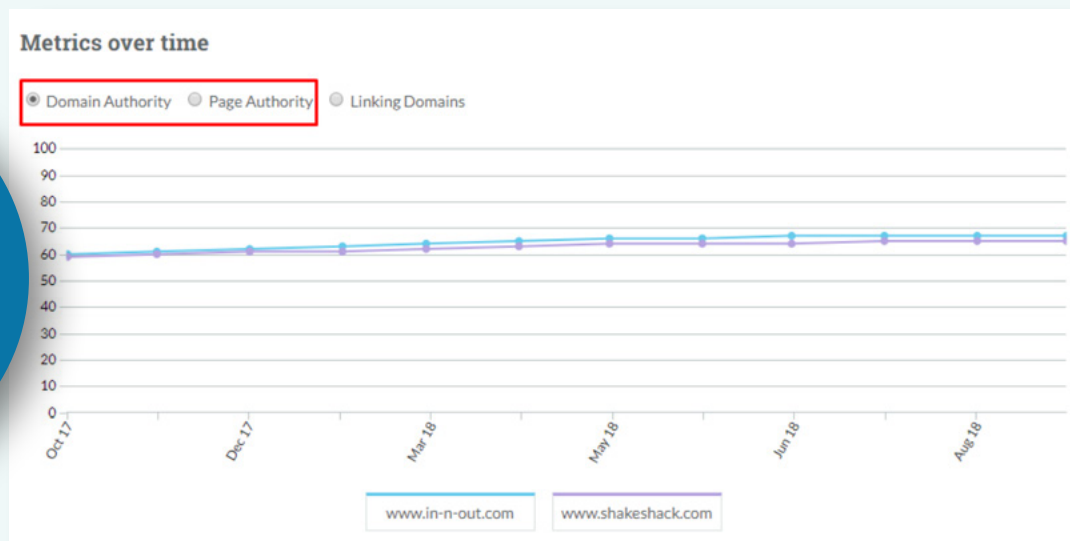
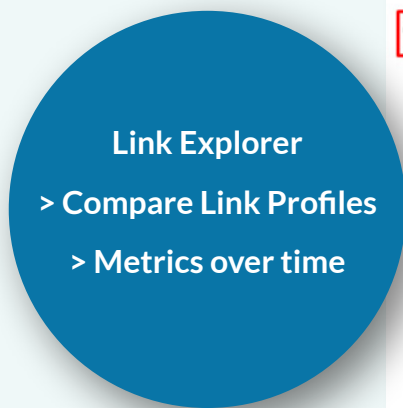
If you have been keeping track of your DA outside of our tools, such as in a spreadsheet, we encourage you to stop using those old

scores, even for historical metrics. This is because the old scores and today's scores use completely different scales. Comparing the DA you had previously to your DA today would be like comparing apples to oranges. Any changes we make to our index or our authority scoring calculations will apply to historical data as well, so there's no need to compare to old metrics you may still have saved.

What you could do is take the difference between you and your competitors' DA scores previously and compare it to the difference now. For example, if your DA was 5 points behind your top competitor prior to our updates and now it is 10 points behind that same competitor, this may indicate that our new model has picked up on nuances affecting a site's ranking ability that our old model wasn't able to spot.

The primary value of our "Metrics over time" graph is to show a site's growth over time. By updating both past and present scores when we make a change, we ensure that these graphs are still an accurate representation of historical changes to your site's ranking ability.

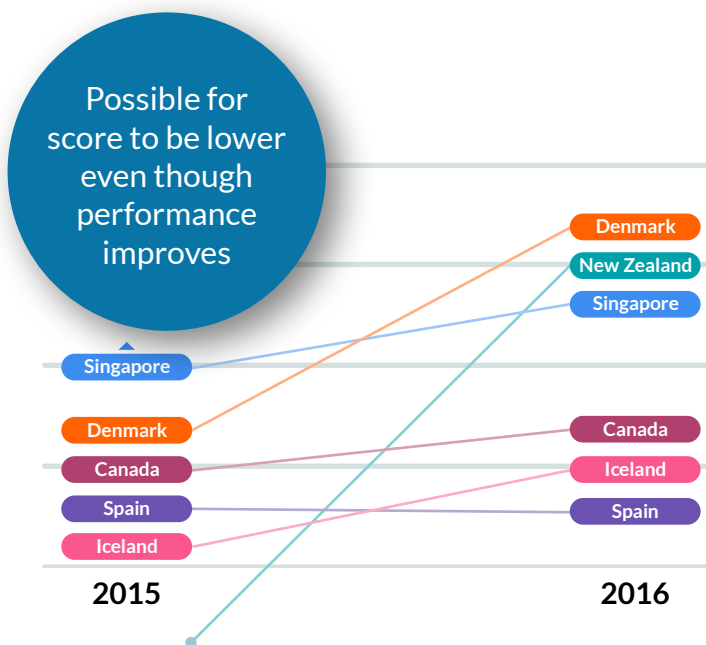
You can also see how your DA change history stacks up against your competitor's growth over time. Just go to Link Explorer > Compare Link Profiles > Metrics over time.



What does it mean that my scores are relative?

When we say that DA scores are relative, we mean that they are relative to the Internet as a whole. For example, if moz.com acquired a billion new links, every other website's DA scores would drop relative to Moz. This is why it's best to use DA as a comparative metric to judge a website's performance against its competitors.

Think of it like an annual "best of" list, like "Cities with the best air quality in 2015." If Singapore has the best air quality in 2015, and improves it even further in 2016, are they guaranteed to remain at #1? What if Denmark also improves its air quality, or New Zealand (which, say, had been left out of the rankings in 2015) joins the rating system? Maybe countries 2-10 all improved dramatically and Singapore has now fallen to #11, even though they technically got better, not worse. Because there are many other factors at play, Singapore's ranking could change in spite of any action (or inaction) whatsoever on their part. In the same way, your site's DA can change in tandem with changes to other sites' link profiles.



Using Authority Scores as KPIs

Many people use Moz's DA score as a key performance indicator (KPI) in their reporting. Some of the most common uses include:

Measuring links built over time

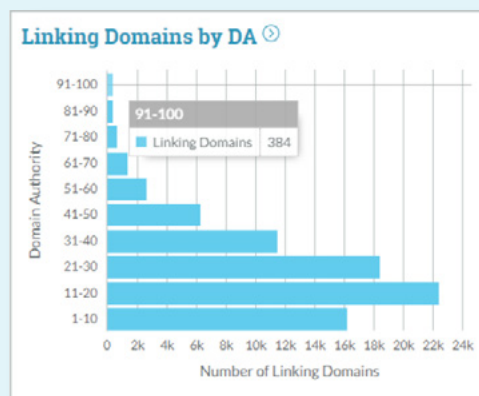
If you're looking to report on your link building efforts, we actually recommend using the total count of Linking Root Domains as your primary metric instead of DA. Although quantity of links to your domain will influence DA, the total number of linking domains is a more accurate way to measure your link building efforts over time.

Determining the value of links built

If you want to report on the quality of the links you've built over time, and not just the quantity, we recommend using the "Linking Domains by DA" feature in Link Explorer. Another great way to report on the quality of the links you've built is by reporting on the real traffic those links are referring to your website.

Prioritizing link outreach targets

You could also use DA to prioritize which sites you want to earn links from. For example, if you've identified three backlink opportunities from sites with DAs of 54, 62, and 47 and you need to prioritize which one you spend the most resources on, you could choose the DA 62 site since it has the highest authority score, then report back that you earned a link from the highest authority domain that you targeted.



Why We Made Authority Scores

We crafted Authority scores to help site owners better gauge their ability to rank in search results. So much about search engines is shrouded in mystery. These scores are an attempt to pull back the curtain and uncover how search engines view your website (with as much accuracy as we can). As with all our tools, we hope these insights enable you to do smarter marketing.



Still have questions about authority scoring?
Visit the [Link Explorer help center](#) or [ask us a question!](#)