

# The Magic of META Tags

## The Fine Points

- **What is a META Tag**
- **The Pros and Cons of META Tags**
- **Code Samples for Selected Tags**

One of the best writings we have seen on META tags started out repeating the key points of the article as being, "META tags are not a magic solution." How right this statement is. So, what is a META tag, and what is all of the fuss over them? Well, a META tags contain information such as site descriptions, site keywords, language, and author information that helps search engines index the site properly. Some developers have taken to using META tags to overcome a lack of text-based content on the site (a key part of most search engine rankings) or to try to boost their ranking through "spamdexing" (AKA spamming the bot) which is where one uses the META tags to dump (even repeat) keywords, phrases or ideas into the engines.

META tags do provide a benefit to sites by helping search engines index the site properly, but they aren't the end all for marketing a site. The benefits from META tags tend to have the most benefit for those that have a targeted audience, and solid text-based content, and they can help your sites ranking climb in the search engines, but they aren't likely to get you to the top -- particularly by themselves. The cons of using META tags typically come to light in the form of misuse (through ignorance) or abuse by trying to spamdex the search engine. In cases like these, many of the major search engines will lower a sites ranking, or ban them from the listing entirely.

The following code samples describes some of the key marketing-type tags, and their purposes:

To tell a search engine to list the page and to follow the links it finds use:

```
<meta name="robots" content="index, follow">
```

To tell a search engine NOT to list the page use:

```
<meta name="robots" content="noindex">
```

To provide a search engine with a description of the page use:

```
<meta name="description" content="INSERT YOUR DESCRIPTION HERE">
```

To provide a search engine with keywords associated with the page use:

```
<meta name="keywords" content="INSERT YOUR KEYWORDS HERE SEPARATED BY A COMMA">
```

As the paper begins, META tags aren't the magic solution you may be looking for, but they can help. Getting them on the site without exceeding the requirements for each particular engine is one of the major challenges. Once there, you need to ensure that you submit your site to each of the major engines (see [www.searchenginewatch.com](http://www.searchenginewatch.com) for a list) to make sure that they find your site to be properly indexed.