

Go mobile or go home

 By [Christopher Smith](#)

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Google, via the [Webmaster Central blog](#), announced that it will be prioritising mobile-friendly websites. This is likely to have as much of an impact on organic search results as any of the major algorithm updates over the past five years, including the Penguin and Panda updates.

Here is a quote from Google:

"Starting 21 April, we will be expanding our use of mobile-friendliness as a ranking signal. This change will affect mobile searches in all languages worldwide and will have a significant impact on our search results."

South African mobile internet has rapidly grown over the past few years and is currently the most used device to access the internet. According to AMPS 2013, 32% of the South African internet users access using mobile vs 17% of the population using fixed internet connectivity.

Some of the [basic best practices that Google recommends](#) are:

- Eliminating Flash from your website
- Making fonts big enough to read
- Ensuring clickable/touchable elements are not too close to each other

There is a possibility that this algorithm will affect desktop rankings but it is not clear yet.

We predict Google will take roughly a week to roll out the algorithm, but once the algorithm has been fully rolled out it will operate in real time.

Responsive design

Responsive design is a type of website design that adjusts the website to fit the mobile screen size. This is a preferred option as opposed to having a .mobi domain.



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To test whether your website is responsive, simply move the corner of your browser window to adjust the size and see what happens to the website. If it responds and moves items on the reduced-size website to fit the page then your website is

responsive.

Some examples of websites that use responsive design:

- Techcrunch.com
- Eskom.co.za
- Moneyweb.co.za

.mobi sites vs responsive sites

Some websites use a .mobi site. We recommend staying away from this as it means another website and domain will needed to be optimised. It is better to focus all your optimisation techniques on a single domain and drive all traffic to one.

What can you do in the mean time

It is recommended that you redevelop your website using a responsive design. If your website is powered by WordPress you can use various mobile plugins like WPTouch or Jetpack.

Test your website

Google has various [tools](#) to test whether a website is ready for the new algorithm. For more information on making a mobile-friendly site, check out Google's guide to mobile-friendly sites. If you're a webmaster, you can get ready for this change by using the following tools to see how Googlebot views your pages.

If you have a site, you can use your Webmaster Tools account to get a full list of mobile usability issues across your site using the [Mobile Usability Report](#).

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