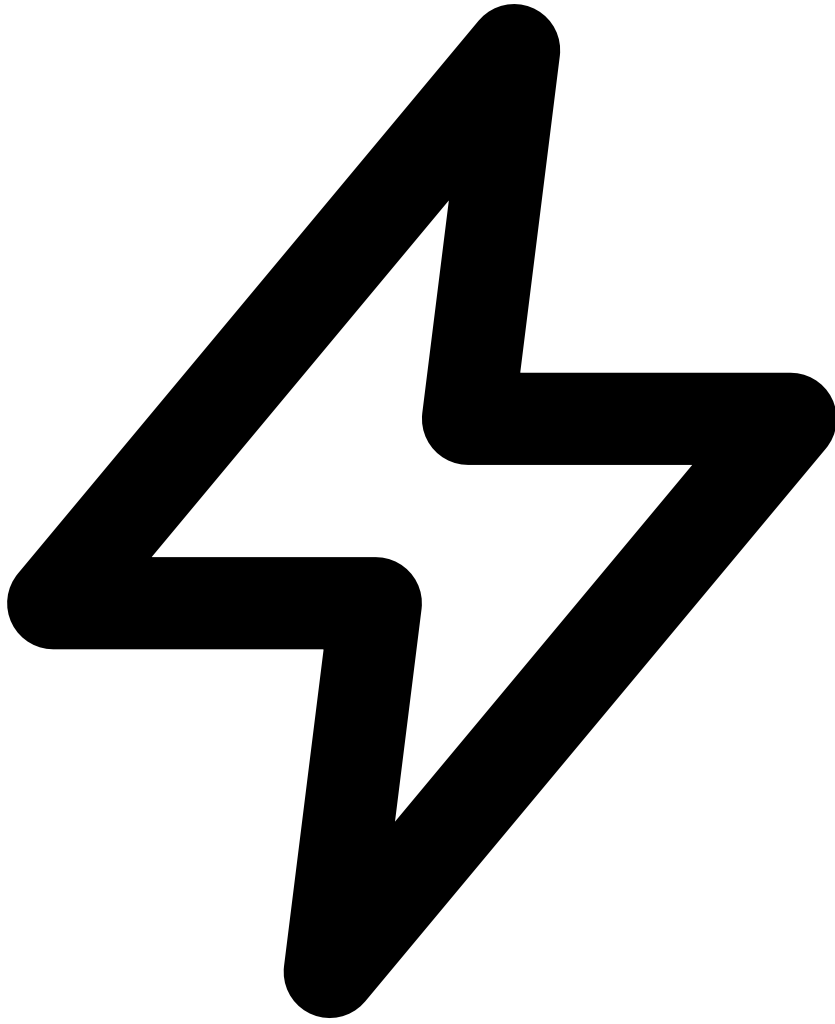
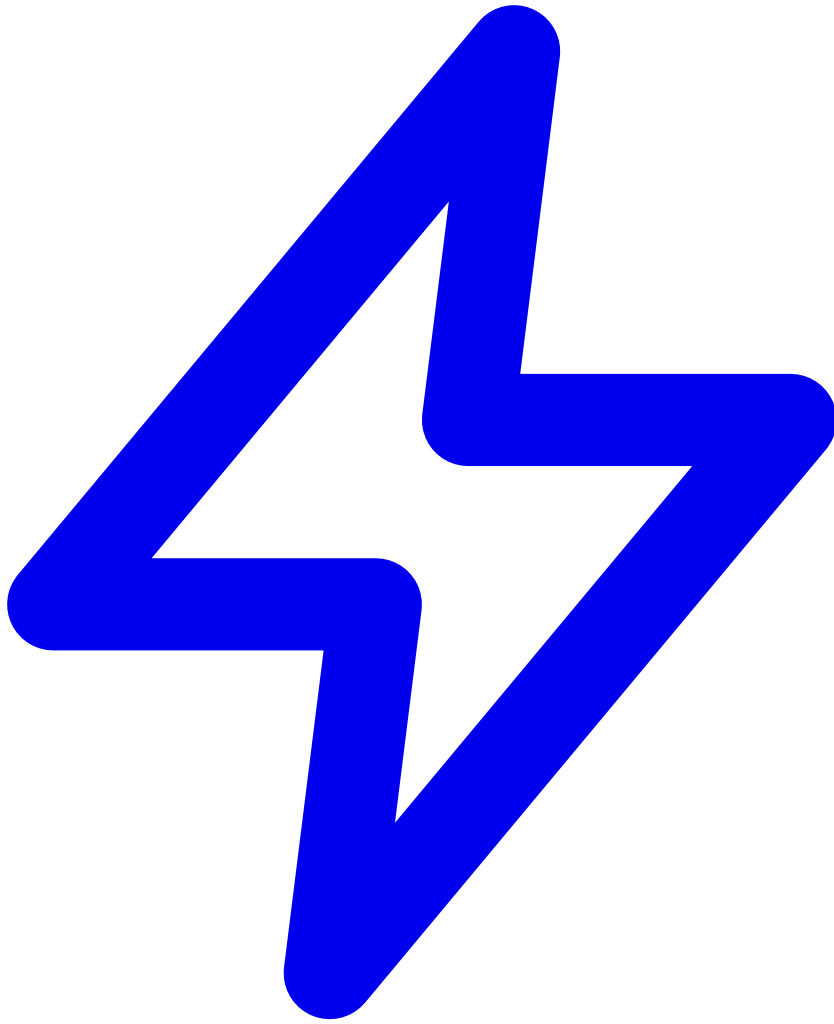






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What Is a URL Slug? Best Practices for Clean, Readable URLs

By the [AutonomiqTech Editorial Team](#) · Reviewed against our [editorial standards](#) · 7 min read ·
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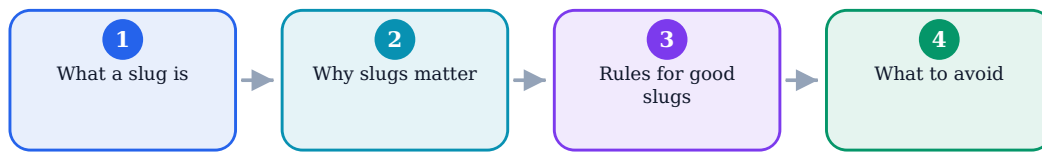


Figure: What Is a URL Slug? Best Practices for Clean, Readable URLs

Look at the address bar of a well-built website and you'll often see something readable like `/what-is-a-url-slug` rather than `/page?id=8842`. That readable part is the **slug**, and while it seems like a small detail, getting slugs right improves usability, sharing and search visibility.

This guide explains what a URL slug is, why it matters, and the practical rules for creating good ones.

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What a slug is

A **slug** is the part of a URL that names a specific page in a human-readable way. In `example.com/blog/what-is-a-slug`, the slug is `what-is-a-slug`. It usually comes from the page title, cleaned up into a URL-safe form.

Slugs replace opaque identifiers like database IDs or query strings with words people can read, which makes the whole URL more meaningful.

Why slugs matter

Slugs matter for three reasons. For **users**, a readable URL signals what a page is about before they click and is easier to remember and share. For **search engines**, a descriptive slug is a small but genuine signal about the page's topic. And for **trust**,

clean URLs look more professional and less like spam.

Rules for good slugs

A few consistent conventions produce good slugs: use **lowercase** letters to avoid case-sensitivity issues; separate words with **hyphens** rather than underscores or spaces; keep them **short** but descriptive; and include the key words that describe the page. For example, `how-to-sharpen-a-knife` beats `page2` Or `How_To_Sharpen_A_Knife_Complete_Guide_2019`.

What to avoid

Avoid special characters, spaces and uppercase letters, which can break or duplicate URLs. Skip unnecessary 'stop words' (a, the, and) when they add nothing. Be cautious about putting **dates** or years in slugs for content you'll update, since the URL then looks stale. And resist stuffing keywords — a natural, concise slug reads better and works better.

Keeping slugs stable

Once a page is published and links point to it, its slug is effectively part of a contract with the web. Changing it breaks every existing link and any search ranking tied to that URL. If you genuinely must change a slug, set up a **redirect** from the old URL to the new one so visitors and search engines land in the right place.

Putting it into practice

When you create a page, take a moment to craft the slug rather than accepting an auto-generated one blindly. Strip out clutter, confirm it's lowercase and hyphenated, and make sure it clearly describes the content. It's a small habit that pays off in cleaner, more shareable, more findable pages.

Good vs poor slugs, compared

Seeing good and poor slugs side by side makes the best practices concrete:

Poor slug	Better slug	Why
<code>/page?id=48213</code>	<code>/blue-running-shoes</code>	Readable and descriptive
<code>/Blog/My_Post!</code>	<code>/how-to-tie-shoes</code>	Lowercase, hyphens, no odd characters
<code>/final-final-v2-post</code>	<code>/beginner-guitar-guide</code>	Meaningful, not internal notes
<code>/the-ultimate-and-complete-guide-to-everything</code>	<code>/seo-basics</code>	Concise, focused

The pattern is clear: a good slug is short, lowercase, hyphenated, descriptive, and free of noise.

Slugs and SEO: what actually helps

Slugs play a modest but real role in search and usability:

- They give users and search engines a clue about the page's topic before clicking.
- Readable slugs are easier to share, remember and link to.
- Keyword-relevant (not stuffed) slugs can offer a small relevance signal.
- Stable slugs preserve links and rankings; changing them can break both.

Changing a slug without breaking things

Because a slug is part of a page's address, changing it after publication isn't a cosmetic tweak — it changes the URL, which can break existing links, bookmarks and any search ranking the old address had accumulated. That's why the best practice is to choose a good, stable slug from the start and avoid changing it unless there's a strong reason. When a change is genuinely necessary — for example after a major content overhaul or a site restructure — the safe approach is to set up a redirect from the old URL to the new one, so that anyone following an old link, and search engines that indexed the old address, are sent smoothly to the new location rather than hitting an error page. A permanent redirect (commonly a 301) tells search engines the move is deliberate and helps transfer the value of the old URL to the new one. It's also wise to update internal links to point directly at the new slug rather than relying on redirects indefinitely, since long redirect chains add overhead and can be fragile. Keeping slugs meaningful yet timeless from the outset — avoiding dates, version numbers or anything likely to change — reduces how often you'll ever need to rename them. Handled this way, the occasional necessary slug change becomes a controlled operation rather than a source of broken links and lost traffic, and most of the time the simplest strategy is still the best: get the slug right once, then leave it alone.

A simple slug checklist

Before publishing any page, running through a short checklist catches the most common slug mistakes while they are still cheap to fix. Ask whether the slug is all lowercase, whether words are separated by hyphens rather than underscores or spaces, and whether it contains only letters, numbers and hyphens with no punctuation or special characters that could be mangled in links. Check that it is short and focused — ideally a few meaningful words rather than a full sentence — and that a stranger reading only the slug could reasonably guess what the page is about. Confirm it avoids anything likely to change over time, such as a year, a version number or a passing campaign name, since those force a rename later. Finally, verify the slug is unique on your site so it does not collide with an existing page, and that it reflects the primary topic rather than a secondary detail. A slug that passes this quick review will almost always be readable, shareable, stable and search-friendly, which is exactly what a good slug should be, and building the habit of this final glance before publishing prevents the small errors that are otherwise easy to overlook in the rush to hit publish.

Printable checklist

Print this page or save the PDF to keep these steps handy.

- ☐ What a slug is
- ☐ Why slugs matter
- ☐ Rules for good slugs
- ☐ What to avoid
- ☐ Keeping slugs stable
- ☐ Putting it into practice
- ☐ Good vs poor slugs, compared
- ☐ Slugs and SEO: what actually helps

Summary

A URL slug is the human-readable part of a web address that identifies a specific page. Good slugs are short, descriptive, lowercase, hyphen-separated and stable over time. They help users and search engines understand a page at a glance, improve click-through from search and social, and make links easier to share and remember.

Key Takeaways

- A slug is the readable identifier in a URL, usually after the domain and any path.
- Good slugs are lowercase, hyphen-separated, short and descriptive of the page.
- Avoid stop words, special characters, dates that will age, and unnecessary length.
- Keep slugs stable; if you must change one, set up a redirect to avoid broken links.
- Clear slugs help both users and search engines understand a page instantly.

Frequently Asked Questions

Should I use hyphens or underscores in slugs?

Hyphens. Search engines treat hyphens as word separators, while underscores can join words together. Hyphens are the widely recommended convention for readable, well-indexed URLs.

Can I change a slug after publishing?

You can, but every existing link to the old URL will break unless you add a redirect from the old slug to the new one. Whenever possible, get the slug right the first time.

Should slugs include the date?

Usually not for evergreen content you'll update, because the date makes the URL look stale. Dates in slugs can make sense for news or time-specific pages, but avoid them for content meant to last.

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