

A LITTLE GUIDE OF USING SHORTURL

By Xoops Tips

Reynaldo Alvarez's ShortURL hack DOES work, but there are a few of glitches using it with Xoops. The problem is related to how the hack treats relative links and how the developers had coded their Xoops modules.

To make the hack fully operationable, you must be willing to make some changes to various module files. This little guide is intended to serve as "pointers", so you can follow and make the required change easily.

Requirement

In addition to the basic ReWrite requirement, your host company **MUST** have set **session.trans_sid** off in PHP.

PHP with `session.use_trans_sid` set will always add a unique PHPSESSID query pair to URLs if cookies are rejected (search engines do not accept cookies). While `session.use_trans_sid` helps users who do not accept cookies, but search engines will likely rank your sites low.

Why? Your site may be considered as mirroring itself when search engines crawled your sites with the same URL appended with different session IDs. They may see that you are attempting to assign several URLs to the exactly same pages/contents, as a result, search engines may lower your rank or even ban your site altogether. And this will totally defeat the purpose of using the hack at the first place. So please make sure you don't have the **session.trans_sid** option set in your php.

A simple `phpinfo()` will provide you the information. You can disable that feature via a `.htaccess` file or directly from PHP code.

In the `.htaccess` file, you can add the following line:
`php_flag session.use_trans_sid off`

And in PHP code:

```
File: include/common.php  
locate  
session_start();  
add  
ini_set("url_rewriter.tags","");  
before session_start();
```

If your PHP is compiled as Apache module, .htaccess will not work as the PHP master value will overwrite your local value. Only the second method will work, as it is a runtime modifier.

Make sure it works even you have made the necessary changes. Remove the hack if your URLs are still being appended with PHPSESSIDs.

Why ShortURL May Work for You?

Search engines are not crawling terribly well with Xoops powered sites and other dynamically generated web sites. This is shown in the ranking of those sites.

Xoops sites' top directory and subdirectories tend to have different PageRank (PR) in case of Google. A site with a PR5 at the top directory level might have a PR1 for the subdirectories. This may be the reason that Google is not crawling your subdirectories and only picking up 2 to 3 hits every time it crawls your site.

For your information, Xoops.org has a PR8 at the top level and PR6s for all of its subdirectories.

The reason that the ShortURL hack may work is that it is making all of your URLs appeared to be from the top level and thus may help the search engine to index your sites. Although it has never been quantified as in the terms of the effectiveness, it will definitely give your site a boost.

Make ShortURL Work with Xoops

Most of the time, ShortURL and Xoops work fine together with human operated browsers. But search engines occasionally would have problems with the combination. There are several areas that need to be addressed in order to make the hack fully operationable and reduce the number of 404s by the search engine.

1. Module Template Files

With the hack enabled, occasionally you would find that search engines went directly to URLs like yoursite/+visit+... or yoursite/+print+ without the usual module prefix m-mylinks+... or m-news+... The results are 404s page not

search engines directly to yoursite/+visit... as the hack will not properly transform the relative links.

To rectify this, replace the relative link with a full link. The updated mylinks template files (at the download of this site) should provide you further clues as how to change them.

Virtually, all the modules are having the problem. Don't underestimate the number of 404s, a large number of accumulated 404s may reduce your sites' ranking. If you are using the hack, make sure it works 100% of the time.

2. System Admin

On some systems, if you were to go to various system admin via the javascript, the hack would not transform the links properly. If that is case, go to admin by clicking the system admin icon.

I have one system having no problem but another one is giving me trouble on this. Clicking on the icon is the only option.

3. Module Admin

Xoopsheadling module is a perfect example. Once the hack has been enabled, it is impossible to edit any RSS feeds under the admin (at least on one of my systems).

For example, xoopsheadline module - admin/index.php file:

Original code

```
-----  
echo '<td><input type="text" maxlength="3" size="4"  
name="headline_weight[]" value="'. $headlines[$i]-  
>getVar('headline_weight')."' /><td><a  
href="index.php?op=edit&headline_id='". $headlines[$i]-  
>getVar('headline_id')."'>'. _EDIT.'</a>&nbsp;<a  
href="index.php?op=delete&headline_id='". $headlines[$i]-  
>getVar('headline_id')."'>'. _DELETE.'</a><input type="hidden"  
name="headline_id[]" value="'. $headlines[$i]->getVar('headline_id')."  
</td></tr>';
```

Replace the relative links with full links

```
-----  
echo '<td><input type="text" maxlength="3" size="4"  
name="headline_weight[]" value="'. $headlines[$i]-  
>getVar('headline_weight').'" /><td><a  
href="/modules/xoopsheadline/admin/index.php?op=edit&headlin  
e_id="'. $headlines[$i]-  
>getVar('headline_id').'">'. _EDIT.'</a>&nbsp; <a  
href="/modules/xoopsheadline/admin/index.php?op=delete&headl  
ine_id="'. $headlines[$i]-  
>getVar('headline_id').'">'. _DELETE.'</a><input type="hidden"  
name="headline_id[]" value="'. $headlines[$i]->getVar('headline_id')."  
</td></tr>';
```

You can follow the same logic if you are having problems with the admin of other modules.

4. RSS Backend Feed

Your RSS feed is set to the usual Xoops URLs. Without modifying it, you could have the mirroring problems again, as search engines would crawl your sites one time with shortURLs and one time with regular URLs.

```
-----  
$tpl->append('items', array('title' =>  
xoops_utf8_encode(htmlspecialchars($story->title(), ENT_QUOTES)), 'link'  
=> XOOPS_URL.'/modules/news/article.php?storyid="'. $story->storyid(),  
'guid' => XOOPS_URL.'/modules/news/article.php?storyid="'. $story->  
>storyid(), 'pubdate' => formatTimestamp($story->published(), 'rss'),  
'description' => xoops_utf8_encode(htmlspecialchars($story->hometext(),  
ENT_QUOTES))));
```

Change link, guid to

```
'link' => XOOPS_URL.'/m-news+article+storyid-'. $story->  
>storyid().'html',
```

5. Search

You may have noticed search results will not be transformed into shortURLs. This will not have any effect to search engines. But if you really want to make your site consistent, you can make changes to two places in search.php file.

Locate (two places)

```
-----  
echo "<img src='modules/" . $module-  
>getVar('dirname')." /" . $results[$i]['image']. "' alt="" . $module-  
>getVar('name')." ' />&nbsp;";  
    } else {  
echo "<img src='images/icons/posticon2.gif' alt="" . $module-  
>getVar('name')." width='26' height='26' />&nbsp;";  
    }  
echo "<b><a href='modules/" . $module-  
>getVar('dirname')." /" . $results[$i]['link']. "'>" . $mys-  
>makeTboxData4Show($results[$i]['title']). "</a></b><br />\n";
```

Change to

```
-----  
echo "<img src="" . XOOPS_URL . "/modules/" . $module-  
>getVar('dirname')." /" . $results[$i]['image']. "' alt="" . $module-  
>getVar('name')." ' />&nbsp;";  
    } else {  
echo "<img src='images/icons/posticon2.gif' alt="" . $module-  
>getVar('name')." width='26' height='26' />&nbsp;";  
    }  
echo "<b><a href="" . XOOPS_URL . "/modules/" . $module-  
>getVar('dirname')." /" . $results[$i]['link']. "'>" . $mys-  
>makeTboxData4Show($results[$i]['title']). "</a></b><br />\n";
```

This will help the hack transform your search results.

Conclusion

The ShortURL will work with full Xoops links/URLs and will have problems with relative links/URLs. You will have to convert all relative links to full links if you want to totally eliminate the problems.

Hopefully, this little guide has given enough clues/pointers to look. Be sure to check your log and spot the problems and make changes accordingly.

Happy hacking. If you have any suggestions and problems, please post them at the site. Hopefully we can find better ways of doing it or solutions to your problems.