



Smart Links for SEO™ user manual

Miva Module for Miva Merchant 5

Contents

- Introduction
- Requirements
- Installation
- Rewrite Rules
- Template Customization
- Best Practices
- Support

Introduction

The Smart Links for SEO™ module allows you to have the shortest possible links (URLs) to your product, category, and additional screens within Miva Merchant 5.

Out of the box, Miva Merchant URLs have the following formats:

Category:

```
http://www.domain.com/mm5/merchant.mvc?Screen=CTGY&Store_Code=yourstore&Category_Code=clothing
```

Product:

```
http://www.domain.com/mm5/merchant.mvc?Screen=PROD&Store_Code=yourstore&Product_Code=shirt&Category_Code=clothing
```

Other Screens:

```
http://www.domain.com/mm5/merchant.mvc?Screen=ABOUTUS&Store_Code=yourstore
```

The use of querystrings and multiple variables makes these default URLs less than optimal when optimizing a Miva Merchant site for search engines. It's useful to instead provide shorter URLs that remove the unneeded text from the URL. An added benefit is that the URLs become more memorable to customers and the store owner as well.

The other problem with default Miva Merchant URLs is that the same product page can be reached by multiple URLs. For example, supposed you have a product with the code "shirt", that is assigned to two categories, with the codes "clothing" and "mens", respectively. In this scenario, Miva Merchant generates three separate URLs to the "shirt" product page:

```
http://www.domain.com/mm5/merchant.mvc?Screen=PROD&Store_Code=yourstore&Product_Code=shirt&Category_Code=clothing
```

```
http://www.domain.com/mm5/merchant.mvc?Screen=PROD&Store_Code=yourstore&Product_Code=shirt&Category_Code=mens
```

```
http://www.domain.com/mm5/merchant.mvc?Screen=PROD&Store_Code=yourstore&Product_Code=shirt&Category_Code=
```

Introduction continued

In the above example, the first URL is used in links to the “shirt” product from the “clothing” category. The second URL is used in links to the “shirt” product from the “mens” category. And the final URL is used in links to the “shirt” product from the search results and product list pages.

Although search engines, particularly Google, are getting smarter about determining that the same page is served by multiple URLs, it's still safer to insure that only a single URL is used to reach a given page.

Other short links modules have historically allowed store owners to shorten their URLs by using an indicator, a piece of text that tells Miva Merchant (or more accurately, the `mod_rewrite` rules that support URL rewriting) whether the URL points to a product or category page. Some examples are:

<http://www.domain.com/page/yourstore/CTGY/clothing/>

<http://www.domain.com/page/yourstore/PROD/clothing/shirt/>

<http://www.domain.com/c-clothing.html>

<http://www.domain.com/p-shirt.html>

The problem is that the extra indicator text reduces both the density of any keywords in your URL (such as “clothing” and “shirt”) by making the URL longer than necessary, as well as the relevance of the keywords, by pushing them further from the beginning of the URL. Many of these URL rewriting modules also include the category code in the URL, which still results in the problem of having multiple URLs that resolve to the same page.

Smart Links for SEO™ takes Miva Merchant URL rewriting to the ultimate conclusion, offering URLs completely void of indicators, and with only the necessary product, category, or screen codes in the URL. (The rewrite rules can be used to further customize the URLs when circumstances make it desirous to do so.) The final result is these short URLs:

<http://www.domain.com/clothing.html>

<http://www.domain.com/shirt.html>

<http://www.domain.com/ABOUTUS.html>

Requirements

1. Miva Merchant 5.0 or higher (including Miva Merchant 5.5)
2. MySQL backend - while the module may work on mivasql-based stores, it is not supported and may negatively impact page load time
3. Apache or other web-server that supports mod_rewrite via .htaccess (check with your host if you are unsure)

Installation

Installing the Module

1. Unzip the module's ZIP file to your hard drive
2. Log into your Miva admin utility
3. Expand the navigation tree next to Global Settings
4. Click the link "[Add]" next to the "Modules" link
5. Click the "Upload File" graphic
6. Click the "Browse" button
7. Browse to the location where you stored the files from extracted from the ZIP file
8. Select NBSEOLINK5.mvc
9. Click the "Upload" button
10. When the module has been uploaded, the small "Upload File" window will disappear, leaving you with the main Miva admin screen visible
11. Click the "Add" button on the main Miva admin screen

Associating the Module with a Store

1. Under your store on the left side of the admin, click "System Extension Configuration"
2. In the module list, you should see an entry for "NetBlazon's Smart Links for SEO™"
3. Check the checkbox next to this module and click the Update button

Entering your License Key

1. After as signing the module to the store, you should see a tab across the top of the right-hand screen in admin labelled "Smart Links for SEO™"
2. Click the tab, and the module will present you with a form for entering your license key
3. Copy-and-paste your license key into the box and click the Update button

Rewrite Rules

Once the module is installed, the next step is to configure the `mod_rewrite` rules and test your settings. To do this, locate a file in your root directory (such as `/html/` or `/httpdocs/` - the same directory as your `index.html` file, if you have one) named `“.htaccess”`. Note the period in front of the name. On Unix operating systems, which run many web servers, the period at the start of a file makes it a hidden file. Your FTP program may require special settings to show “dot files” (refer to your FTP program’s documentation for more information). Or, if you have the ability to log into your server via telnet or SSH, you can list hidden files with the `ls -a` command.

If the file doesn’t exist, create a new one with that name.

The following code should be added to your `.htaccess` file. If the file already existed on your server, be careful that your additions don’t duplicate any other code (such as turning the rewrite engine on twice), or come before other rewrite rules and interfere with them. The code to be added is:

```
RewriteEngine On
RewriteCond %{REQUEST_FILENAME} !-f
RewriteRule ^([^.]+)\.html$ /mm5/merchant.
mvc?Screen=NBSEOLINK&thecode=$1 [L]
```

The first line of code enables the Apache module called “`mod_rewrite`”. This is the module that allows you to rewrite URLs using regular expressions. The second line is a condition that checks to see if the requested file does not physically exist on the server. (This prevents URLs to real files being rewritten and delivered to Miva Merchant.) The third line takes any URL that didn’t meet the previous condition, and rewrites it to be passed along to Miva Merchant, and then by Miva Merchant to the Smart Links for SEO™ module.

At this point, you should test that the URLs are working properly. Replace the domain name and category/product codes in the following URL with codes valid for your site, and type them into a web browser. You should see a category page, a product page, and the login screen from the following URLs:

```
http://www.domain.com/CATEGORYCODE.html
http://www.domain.com/PRODUCTCODE.html
http://www.domain.com/LOGN.html
```

Rewrite Rules continued

A note: You can modify these rewrite rules if you want to use a different format. For example, if you want your pages to end in .htm instead of .html, just change the last line to:

```
RewriteRule ^([^.]+)\.htm$ /mm5/merchant.  
mvc?Screen=NBSEOLINK&thecode=$1 [L]
```

Or if you want your URLs to have a directory, such as /store/, in them (http://www.domain.com/store/CATEGORYCODE.html) then change it to:

```
RewriteRule ^store\/([^.]+)\.html$ /mm5/merchant.  
mvc?Screen=NBSEOLINK&thecode=$1 [L=301]
```

Template Customization

Category Tree Template

Once your `mod_rewrite` rules are working, the final step is to rewrite the URLs throughout your store. This step involves going to each of the page templates in your store, and changing any URLs to product or category pages (or additional screens) to the new versions. The first place to start is with your category tree template. To get to this template, click the name of your store in the left side of the Miva Merchant administration screen. Then on the right side, click “Category Tree Template”. (If you do not see this template, you may need to upgrade to the latest version of Miva Merchant.)

At the top of this screen there are two radio buttons, labelled “Default” and “Template”. If “Default” is selected, change it to “Template”. The page will refresh and there will be a large textarea containing the code for your category tree template. If the “Template” radio button was already selected, this box will already be visible.

In this template, look for the following code:

```
<a href="&mvt:global:sessionurl;Screen=CTGY&Store_
Code=&mvta:store:code;&Category_Code=&mvta:cattree_
category:code;">
```

This is the link to a category page on your store, via the standard Miva Merchant URLs. You need to shorten this to the new URL format. To do so, change the code above to the following (replacing “www.domain.com” with your store’s domain):

```
<a href="http://www.domain.com/&mvta:cattree_category:code;.
html">
```

The default template has this URL in two locations, so make sure you change both of them. After you are done, click the “Update” button. Then, go to your storefront and refresh the page. Then place your mouse over the links in your category tree, and make sure they have the new format. Click on one to make sure it properly delivers you to the specified category page.

Store Pages

Next, click the link “Pages” on the left side of the administration screen. This will display a list of all the pages in your Miva Merchant store. You can edit

Template Customization continued

them to change the URLs to your category and product pages. For example, the CTGY - Category Display screen links to each of the products assigned to the category, so you will want to change the URLs in that template. To do so, click the “Edit” button. Then click the “Category Product List Layout” screen. Scroll to the bottom and click the “Advanced Mode” link. This will cause the screen to refresh with a textarea containing a template for the products. Locate the following code:

```
<a href="&mvt:global:sessionurl;Screen=PROD&Store_  
Code=&mvta:store:code;&Product_Code=&mvta:product:code;&Cate  
gory_Code=&mvta:category:code;">
```

And change it to:

```
<a href="http://www.domain.com/&mvta:product:code;.html">
```

Make sure to do it in all locations within the template, and then click the Update button. You will also want to make similar changes in the PLST - Product List template (click the “Product List Template” tab, and then click the “Advanced Mode” link), and in the SRCH - Search template (click the “Search Results Layout” tab, and then click the Advanced Mode link). Finally, you’ll want to make similar changes in the BASK - Basket Contents template, where you’ll click the “Basket Contents” tab to reach the template code.

Best Practices

Avoiding Unreachable URLs

Because the module doesn't use any identifier text to distinguish between a category, a product, and an additional screen, you need to take care not to re-use codes. For example, if you have a category called "clothing" and a product called "clothing". the module has no way to determine which one is intended. So the URL will resolve first to a category, then to a product, and finally to a screen code. Using this example, the "clothing" category would always be returned by <http://www.domain.com/category.html> and the "clothing" product would not be reachable.

Consistency

First of all, you want to do everything you can to make sure there's only one URL format in use on your store. So when you start rewriting links, make sure you rewrite them in all of your templates. This includes the category tree template, all relevant Page templates, within third-party modules, and any hard-coded areas, like the storefront welcome message, page headers and footers, category headers and footers, and product headers and footers. Also change any links from non-Miva Merchant pages on your site (such as hard-coded pages, a weblog, etc).

301 Redirects

If your store is brand new, you may not have any external sites linking into your product and category pages. But if you do, particularly if you have links within the search engines results pages, you'll want those to redirect to the new URL format using a 301 permanent redirect. This may temporarily effect your current search engine ranks, but that should be a temporary effect if the best practices are put into place. To accomplish the 301 redirect, add the following lines of code to your .htaccess file:

```
RewriteCond %{REQUEST_URI} merchant.mvc [NC]
RewriteCond %{QUERY_STRING} Screen=CTGY [NC]
RewriteCond %{QUERY_STRING} Category_Code=(.*)& [NC]
RewriteRule ^(.*) http://www.domain.com/$1.html? [R=301,L]
```

```
RewriteCond %{REQUEST_URI} merchant.mvc [NC]
RewriteCond %{QUERY_STRING} Screen=PROD [NC]
RewriteCond %{QUERY_STRING} Product_Code=(.*)& [NC]
RewriteRule ^(.*) http://www.domain.com/$1.html? [R=301,L]
```

Best Practices continued

Robots.txt

You may also wish to block robots from your /mm5/ directory (which may have a different name on some stores, such as /cart/ or /Merchant2/). This keeps search engines from finding pages using the default Miva Merchant URLs, even if you miss some links somewhere. To do this, place a plain-text file called robots.txt in your main web server directory, so that it is accessible from the URL <http://www.domain.com/robots.txt>. Add the following code to block all spiders from the directory:

```
User-agent: *  
Disallow: /mm5/
```

If you do this, make sure you don't have any special pages that need to be spidered by search engines, that still have to use the default URLs. This method blocks spiders from ALL URLs in the /mm5/ directory.

Testing

Anytime you make significant changes to your .htaccess file and/or page templates, you should thoroughly test your site. Make sure all of the pages can be browsed, that the search function works, and that products can be added to the cart and checkout complete.

Support

For questions or problems with your
Smart Links for SEO™ module
please send email to support@netblazon.com or visit our helpdesk.