

What is an SSL and how will it benefit my site?

SSL stands for "secure sockets layer" and is a form of security and identity verification for websites. Not only to handle sensitive information such as customer names, phone numbers, addresses and credit card numbers, but it creates a secure connection between a customer's web browser and the server of the company they're interacting with. An SSL is essential for all websites as it ensures that all information handled stays secure.

What Are the Benefits of SSL?

- **Google Ranking:** Back in 2014, Google rolled out updated algorithms across the board in favor of HTTPS websites. Then, it was a lightweight component within the overall ranking algorithm and HTTPS sites experienced only minor ranking increases. But Google indicated that they may strengthen the signal in the future. **In 2015, Google stated that their HTTPS ranking boost may serve as a tie breaker if the quality signals for two different search results are equal in everything else. Meaning, if your website is equal to your competitor's website in terms of speed, title tags, content freshness, etc. but your competitor's website is HTTPS and yours isn't, Google will most likely rank theirs ahead of yours.**
- **Encrypts Information:** The major purpose of an SSL certificate is to encrypt information so that it can only be read and understood by the intended parties. Information submitted on Internet forms often passes through more than one computer before reaching its final destination, and the more "stops" it has to make, the higher the chance that a third party could obtain access. An SSL certificate inserts random characters into the original information, rendering it incomprehensible to anyone without the proper encryption key. If the information does somehow wind up in the wrong hands, it will be unreadable and therefore useless. Customers visiting your site will know that you have encryption in place in several ways. The most recognizable is the replacement of the "http" protocol with "https". This shows that a page is secure and is backed up by another visual cue: a lock image somewhere in the browser's status or location bar. Today's savvy online shoppers know to look for these things before making any online purchases, and trust me, the stats show you that not having it can be dire.
- **Provides Authentication:** You want to be sure that the information on your website, including customer information, goes to the correct server without being intercepted. When obtaining an SSL certificate, another type of protection called a server certificate is also issued. This certificate acts as a mediator between browsers and SSL servers to show that the SSL certificate provider can be trusted. Customers can view these documents to validate that the SSL certificate of your site is up to date and that the page they're about to enter information on is really yours and not an imitation.
- **Necessary for Accepting Payments:** In order to meet Payment Card Industry compliance, an online business needs an SSL certificate with the proper encryption of at least 128-bit. PCI standards verify that the SSL certificate is from a trusted source, uses the right strength of encryption and provides a private connection on any page that requires customers to enter personal information. Without a certificate that meets these standards, a site won't be able to take credit card payments.
- **Guards Against Phishing:** Phishing emails often contain links that lead unsuspecting customers to a convincing replica of an otherwise reputable site. Often disguised as advertisements or shipping confirmations, these emails attempt to gather credit card information for malicious use. However, the people who build these fake sites will have a hard time obtaining an authentic SSL certificate. When customers don't see the signs of security on a site, they're more likely to navigate away without entering any information.
- **Offers Added Brand Power:** Companies that provide SSL certificates often offer site seals and other images that indicate well-trusted encryption is in use. Displaying these branded icons gives customers an added level of assurance that their information is safe as it travels.
- **Improves Customer Trust:** All of these elements work together to create trust between a customer and a business. Providing your customers with security for all of their information and giving them ways to verify that security improves confidence and helps to ensure a positive browsing and buying experience.