FREE GUIDE · ADVANCED SEO · READ THE RISKS

Expired Domains for Cheap, High-Quality Backlinks: The Full Process

How SEOs find expired domains at auction, check their backlinks and history, and use them, plus Google's spam rules, the risks of each option, and a safer alternative.

4	3	1
steps	options compared by risk	safe alternative most people skip

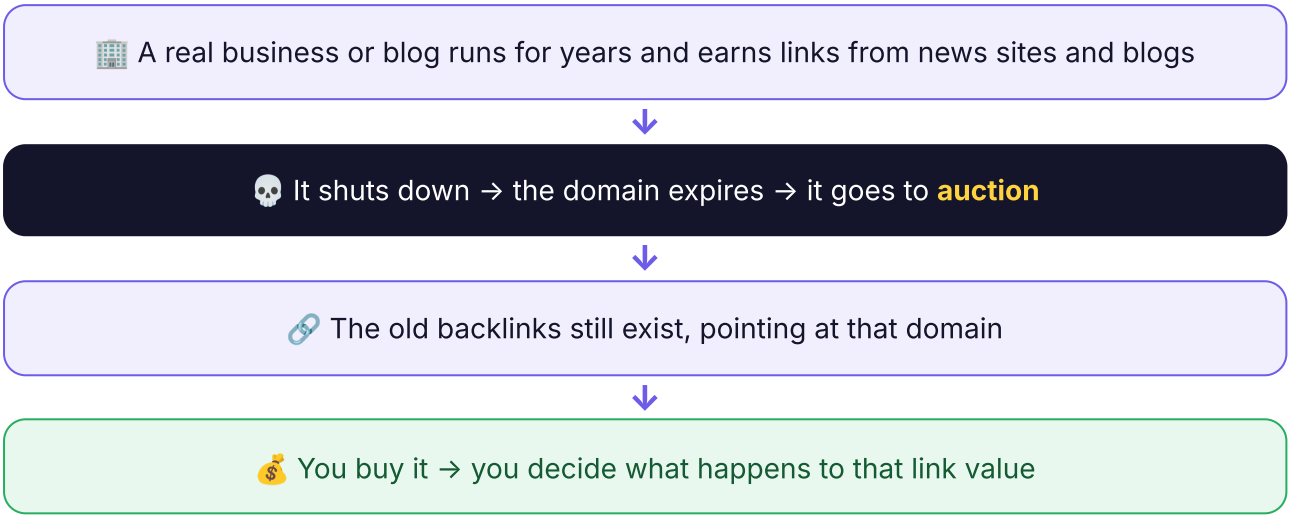
Educational guide. Some of these methods break Google's spam policies. Understand the risks before you spend money.

Growth by CC
Organic growth, explained simply

THE IDEA

Why expired domains are valuable

When a website shuts down, its domain expires. But the backlinks other sites gave it, sometimes from big publications, still point to it. Buy the domain, and you control where that link value goes.



⚠️ What Google says

> "Expired domain abuse is where an expired domain name is purchased and repurposed **primarily to manipulate search rankings**."
>
> Google Search Central, Spam policies

> "Link spam is the practice of creating links to or from a site **primarily for the purpose of manipulating search rankings**."
>
> Google Search Central, Spam policies

In plain words: buying an old domain just to pass its link power to your site is exactly what Google calls spam. It can work for a while, but if Google catches it, your **main site** can lose rankings, sometimes overnight (manual action or spam update). Read page 6 before choosing an option.

STEP 1 OF 4

1 Find expired domains at auction

GoDaddy Auctions is one of the biggest marketplaces for expiring and expired domains.

1. Go to **auctions.godaddy.com**.
2. Search a **keyword from your niche** (e.g. “fitness”, “interior”, “ayurveda”, “fintech”).
3. Filter for **Buy Now** listings, so you pay a fixed price instead of bidding.
4. Set the **price range** you’re willing to pay.
5. Sort by **Trust Flow** (a Majestic metric for how trustworthy a domain’s links are). If it isn’t shown, check shortlisted domains on majestic.com.
6. Shortlist the top 10–20 domains.

What a good candidate looks like

Look for	Avoid
Same niche as your website	Unrelated topics (a dental clinic domain for a crypto site)
Short, brandable, readable name	Keyword-stuffed names (best-cheap-loans-online-2019.com)
Was a real business, blog or organisation	Was a PBN, link farm or auto-generated site
Price that makes sense for your budget	Overpriced “high DR” domains marketed as SEO shortcuts

STEP 2 OF 4

2 Check the backlinks, not the DR

Domain Rating (DR) is easy to fake. What matters is **who** links to the domain.

1. Paste each shortlisted domain into the free **Ahrefs Backlink Checker** (or Semrush / Majestic).
2. **Ignore the DR number.**
3. Read the list of linking sites. Look for **real, legitimate publications**: news sites, universities, government bodies, well-known blogs in your niche.
4. Open 3–5 of those links and check they actually exist and talk about the old site naturally.

✅ Green flags

- Links from news, edu, gov or respected niche sites
- Links placed naturally inside articles
- Varied anchor text (brand name, URLs, natural phrases)
- Links built steadily over years

❌ Red flags

- Hundreds of links from unknown or foreign-language spam sites
- Anchors like casino, pharma, adult, loans
- Sitewide footer or blogroll links
- High DR but almost no real referring sites

💡 Tip: a domain with **10 links from real publications** beats one with 5,000 links from spam sites, whatever the DR says.

STEP 3 OF 4

3 Check its history in the Wayback Machine

A domain's past follows it. If it was used for spam, Google may already have flagged it, and that trust is hard to win back.

1. Go to **web.archive.org** and enter the domain.
2. Look at snapshots across different years, not just the latest one.
3. Check what the site was: a real business or blog? Or did it switch to casino, pharma, adult, or gibberish pages later?
4. Search Google for **site:domain.com**. If nothing at all shows, it may have been de-indexed.

Was it always a real, clean site in your niche?

YES ↓

✅ Candidate. Move to step 4

NO / unsure ↓

❌ Skip it. Cheap domain, expensive problem

🔎 **After buying:** add the domain to Google Search Console and check **Security & Manual Actions → Manual actions**. “No issues detected” is a good sign.

STEP 4 OF 4

4 Decide how to use it

Three options. The first two are the classic “hack”. The third is the one we recommend.

HIGH RISK

A · 301 redirect the whole domain

Redirect the expired domain to your website so your site inherits its backlinks.

- Only one domain, same niche, no spam history
- Upside: fast boost
- Downside: textbook “expired domain abuse”. Google can ignore the links or penalise your main site

MEDIUM-HIGH RISK

B · Rebuild the old site

Recreate the old site (an AI coding tool makes this quick), add it to Search Console, wait for it to rank, then add a couple of dofollow links to your site.

- Don't spam: just a few links
- Downside: still repurposing to pass links, and it can look like a PBN

LOW RISK

C · Reclaim the links (recommended)

Don't buy at all. Use the backlink list from step 2: email the sites still linking to the dead domain and suggest your genuinely similar page as a replacement.

- Known as broken link building
- Fully within Google's rules
- Slower, but the links are yours for good

Risk at a glance



Legit exception: if you're genuinely continuing the old business, e.g. you acquired the company, or it's your own old brand, redirecting with real content continuity is a normal site move, not abuse. Intent and relevance are what Google looks at.

OPTION C IN DETAIL

Reclaim the links: the safe way to use this research

You've already done the hard part in steps 1–3: finding a dead site with great links in your niche. Now ask those sites to link to you instead.

1. Export the list of pages linking to the expired domain from Ahrefs / Semrush.
2. For each, see what they linked to (use Wayback Machine to view the old page).
3. Make sure you have a **genuinely equal or better page** on the same topic. Create one if needed.
4. Email the site owner or editor with a short, friendly note.

Email template

> Hi [Name], I was reading your article “[title]” and noticed the link to [old domain] no longer works. The site has shut down. We've published an up-to-date guide on the same topic here: [your URL]. If it's useful, it could replace the broken link for your readers. Thanks either way!
> – [Your name], [Business]

📊 Expect a low reply rate, often a few percent. But every link you win is a real editorial link that no algorithm update can take away.

KEEP THIS HANDY

Checklist

- ☐ Searched GoDaddy Auctions by niche keyword
- ☐ Filtered Buy Now + my price range
- ☐ Sorted by Trust Flow; shortlisted 10–20
- ☐ Checked backlinks; ignored DR
- ☐ Found links from real publications
- ☐ No casino / pharma / adult / spam anchors
- ☐ Wayback Machine: always a clean, same-niche site
- ☐ site:domain.com shows indexed pages
- ☐ After purchase: no manual action in Search Console
- ☐ Understood Google's “expired domain abuse” policy
- ☐ Chose an option knowing its risk
- ☐ Tried Option C (reclaim links) first

Never: redirect several expired domains to one site · build a network of rebuilt sites linking to each other · put unrelated content on an old government, school or charity domain. These are the patterns Google's spam systems and reviewers look for.

Growth by CC · Organic growth tactics, explained simply. Follow on Instagram for more.

Educational content only. Quotes from Google Search Central, “Spam policies for Google web search”. Using expired domains primarily to manipulate rankings breaks Google's policies and can lead to ranking loss or manual actions. You are responsible for how you use these methods.