Our approach to information quality and content moderation

Our mission at Google is to organize the world’s information and make it universally accessible and useful. Information quality and content moderation are integral to this mission. These issues are uniquely challenging: reasonable people can disagree on desirable outcomes, and it is impossible to make nuanced decisions for every piece of content at the scale of the web. But this is a critical part of our responsibility to our users and partners. So we continue to invest in developing and improving the tools, processes, and teams that help us elevate trustworthy information and moderate content across our services. We know our work will never be over, and we continuously seek feedback from our users, civil society, and governments on how best to meet people’s information needs while protecting them from malicious actors and ensuring that our services benefit society.

Our mission requires us to strike a careful balance between the free flow of information and social responsibility. The product, policy, and enforcement decisions we make are guided by an inclination toward openness and accessibility, respecting user choice, and building products and services for everyone. We rely on four complementary levers to support information quality and moderate content across all our products and services:

**Remove**

We set reasonable and responsible rules for each of our products and services and take action against content and behaviour that violates them.

We take tens of millions of actions every day against content that does not abide by the ‘rules of the road’ for one or more of our products.

- In 2019 alone, we removed over 30 million videos from YouTube for violating our community guidelines and removed more than 75 million policy-violating reviews from Google Maps.

**Raise**

We elevate high-quality content and authoritative sources where it matters most.

- To determine whether a piece of content is useful, we must first try to understand a user’s intent. Our systems then look for signals that can help determine the expertise, authoritativeness and trustworthiness of relevant web pages on that topic, so that we can prioritize the most appropriate sources available.

- We are constantly improving these ranking systems. In 2019 we ran over 464,065 experiments with trained external Search Raters and live tests, resulting in more than 3,620 improvements to Search.
Reduce
We work to reduce the spread of potentially harmful information wherever we feature our recommended content.

- In 2019, we launched over 30 different changes to our recommendations systems on YouTube in order to reduce recommendations of borderline content and harmful misinformation. The changes caused a 70% decrease in watch time from non-subscribed recommendations in the United States.

Reward
We set a high standard of quality and reliability for publishers and content creators who would like to monetize or advertise their content. We have no desire to derive revenue for ourselves, or for any other business, from harmful content or behaviour. For example over the course of 2019:

- We removed more than 2.7 billion bad ads from our systems.
- We took action against almost 1 million bad advertiser accounts.
- We terminated over 1.2 million publisher accounts for violations of our policies.
- We removed ads from over 21 million pages that are part of our publisher network for violations of our policies.

Of course, while we use these levers across our services, we apply them differently on different services, which have different purposes and provide content in different contexts. For example, YouTube does not have the same removal policies as Search, which serves as an index of all pages available on the open web.

We work with many talented experts and organisations across the technology industry, government, and civil society to ensure that we are doing everything we can to set the right policies, establish industry best practices, and get ahead of emerging challenges. We do this in part by relying on a community of partners to help us identify content that violates our policies, seeking the advice of subject-matter experts as we craft and update policies, and working with industry partners to share best practices and cutting-edge technology – for instance, within the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism (GIFCT). While this remains a significant challenge, we are optimistic about the progress we have made on our own services, and working together with other companies and governments. It’s important that additional frameworks governing online speech be carefully balanced, clear, and fit for purpose. We look forward to continuing to work with governments to that end.

Conclusion
The work of connecting users with high-quality, useful, and relevant content is never done. There will always be room for improvement in our efforts to support information quality on our services. We will continue exercising the four levers across our products and services while collaborating with industry partners, civil society, and governments. Together, we will chart a future that preserves users’ rights to create and access content and upholds the values of a free society while providing a better and higher-quality experience for everyone. We welcome feedback on this approach and our progress.