

EXPLAINER

# What Is Hreflang? Definition, Examples & Why It Matters [2026]

Key insights and actionable frameworks

#### CORE DEFINITION

## What is hreflang?

The hreflang attribute (formally `rel="alternate" hreflang="x"`) is a signal you place in your HTML, HTTP headers, or XML sitemap to tell Google and other search engines: "This page has an equivalent version in another language or for another region." Google introduced hreflang in 2011 to solve a spe



## How does hreflang work?

Googlebot crawls your page and finds hreflang annotations. It discovers alternate versions by following the hreflang links. It validates reciprocal tags: Page A must point to Page B, AND Page B must point back to Page A.



## What are the three ways to implement hreflang?

HTML head tag (most common) Place <link> tags in the <head> section of each page: <head> <link rel="alternate" hreflang="en-us" href="https://example.com/us/" /> <link rel="alternate" hreflang="en-in" href="https://example.com/in/" /> &nb



## What are hreflang implementation examples?

Example 1: E-commerce site targeting India and US  
An online store selling in both countries with different pricing: <!-- On the US product page --> <link rel="alternate" hreflang="en-us" href="https://store.com/us/shoes" /> <link rel="alternate" hreflang="en-in" href="https://store.



## What are the benefits of using hreflang?

Prevents duplicate content penalties: Without hreflang, Google might see your US and UK English pages as duplicates and filter one out. Improves user experience: Users land on the version most relevant to their language and location. Increases organic traffic: The right page ranks in the right marke



## What are hreflang best practices?

Always include x-default: This catches users who do not match any of your specified languages/regions. Ensure reciprocal tags: Every page must point to every other alternate version, including itself. If Page A links to Page B, Page B must link back to Page A.



## Conclusion

Hreflang is an HTML attribute that connects language and regional versions of web pages, using format hreflang="en-in" to tell search engines which version to serve to which users. Proper implementation increases search visibility by 25-40% for regional variants by preventing duplicate content issue

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