

The Fair Ranking conduct requirement (CR) was imposed under the UK's digital markets competition regime, which allows the CMA to place rules on the largest digital platforms which have been designated with Strategic Market Status. The CR requires transparency and fairness over how Google's search results are ranked and presented in the UK.

Applies to:

- organic search results (including AI features)
- how organic search results are shown relative to search or AI features

Does not apply to:

- paid-for search results, features, content (adverts, for example)

The CR has 3 parts:

1. Non-discriminatory and objective

Google must rank organic search results using objective, non-discriminatory criteria.

Google must also not take into account whether a publisher:

- advertises on, or otherwise has a commercial relationship, with Google
- has opted out of their content being used for Google's AI
- has exercised contractual or legal rights against Google

It must also treat its own services the same as competitors' services in rankings.

The CR includes a limited exemption for up to 6 months where necessary to allow Google to live-test new organic features.

2. Transparency

Google must provide clear information on how it ranks organic search results and provide sufficient information on material changes to its ranking criteria, policy or procedures:

- no less than 30 business days before introducing changes where publishers could take action to avoid or reduce the impact of the change on their ranking
- no less than 15 business days before introducing changes which may result in significant shifts in ranking and for which Google can explain both what is changing and why

3. Non-distortion and complaints

Google must establish clear and accessible processes for publishers to:

- provide feedback on material changes to ranking criteria, policies and procedures that may have a material adverse distortive or other adverse impact on UK markets
- request reconsideration of manual actions in relation to organic search ranking

Google must also:

- report to the CMA if it receives feedback on a material change from 50 different publishers within the first 30 business days after that change becomes effective in the UK
- provide an alternative dispute settlement mechanism for publishers that have been manually excluded from Google's general search index

When will this take effect?

Google has until 17 December 2026 to comply with the Conduct Requirement.

More information

Find out more on the [Google search fair ranking conduct requirement page](#).

We also welcome comments on your experience with Google's changes:

- searchsms@cma.gov.uk
- via your trade association