Google Search shaves seconds with snippet-to-source feature

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The columnist George Will once said of baseball that it is a game "measured in inches and seconds."

The same can be said of search engines. Whether you're a student seeking a hip quote about climate change, a researcher who quickly needs to know what the most expensive car in the world is, or a music fan seeking the name of the British invasion rock band who sang "She's Not There," the need and desire for speed is always foremost when it comes to the Internet. You want to retrieve pages with the answers fast, and if the details are embedded lower down in a story, you want to scroll to it instantly.

Google Search already does an impressive job when it comes to speed. But a new search function will now help you retrieve data even faster.

Google's public search liaison Danny Sullivan tweeted this week that a clickable portion of a Google search results page will not only instantly transfer users to a targeted page, but it will also highlight text on that page most closely related to the search text, automatically scrolling down the page if required.

The feature works with "featured snippets," that portion of a Google search results page that highlights the most relevant retrieved data on a given search. Often, the snippets will provide sufficient information for a question. But if further information is required, the new highlighted snippets feature will shave seconds and clicks from search times. It is especially helpful for searches done on mobile devices with limited screen real estate. Users who frequently would retype a phrase and then type Control-F to execute a search to locate the targeted data can now find what they're looking for with simply a click or two. The highlighted text will appear with a yellow background.

Google experimented with the feature beginning a little over a year ago, beginning with accelerated mobile pages (AMP). Such AMP designs feature stripped down HTML code and allow for faster page load. The new snippets feature went live last week. Since it is search-engine based,

and not browser specific, it should function on most popular web browsers.

As Sullivan explained, "Clicking a featured snippet takes the user directly to the featured snippet text on the source web page. This happens automatically. There's no markup needed by web masters to enable a featured snippet. If a browser doesn't support the underlying technology needed, or if our systems can't confidently determine exactly where within a page to direct a click, clicking a featured snippet will take a user to the top of the source web page."

One possible drawback of the new feature is the disruption of web site SEO strategies concerning ad placement. The instant scroll to targeted text will in some instances bypass coveted top-of-the-page ad slots. The change could force some web sites to reevaluate ad positioning. It may also force reevaluation and redesign of "call to action" pop-up directives assisting users with page and site navigation.

Google introduced other browser upgrades last month, including the ability to group browser tabs by name, color or emoji. It also announced that it will remove memory-hog ads that use excessive battery, CPU and bandwidth.

The answers to questions raised above, incidentally, are: a) "This is the biggest crisis humanity has ever faced. This is not something you can 'like' on Facebook." Greta Thunberg b) the Bugatti La Voiture Noire, $19 million c) the Zombies.