

RewriteMissingFiles

Missing Files

Problem

The general idea here is that you want to redirect visitors if a particular file is missing; however it is considered better to simply state the requested URI is missing and issue a 404 Not Found. Some site developers may choose not to do this and this method will provide an alternative and a variety of choices.

Issue a non-404

In this example, **example.com** should, of course, be replaced with your own website address. We want to issue a **clean web page** to outsiders and those with an empty referer but sill allow internal people to get the standard 404 Not Found error message.

```
RewriteEngine on
RewriteCond %{DOCUMENT_ROOT}%{REQUEST_URI} !-f
RewriteCond %{HTTP_REFERER} !example\.com [NC]
RewriteRule ^ /UnderConstruction.html [L]
```

Replace the Missing File with Another File

If you want the missing file to be replaced with a URL from another site, you can do so by providing a full URL (<http://some.other.server/>) in that **RewriteRule**:

```
RewriteEngine on
RewriteCond %{DOCUMENT_ROOT}%{REQUEST_URI} !-f
RewriteRule ^ http://other.example.com/ [R=302,L]
```

This is the same as

```
# this issues a 302 redirect, not a 404 not found status code
ErrorDocument 404 http://other.example.com/
```

does.

Discussion

Issuing a non-404 (file found but not the one requested) is a way to cleanly fail if site content is missing. However this can confuse and pollute the web crawlers indexing your site.

Issuing a Redirect-If-Missing is another approach however this too can lead to later confusion about which resource is valid if not up-to-date.

Bottom-line: Choose a particular error reporting and handling policy and stick with it.