Google enters URL shortening business with goo.gl

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Google has announced that it can now shorten URLs with the goo.gl (https://goo.gl/)service. The new URL shortening service, unlike other services, is not directly accessible, but requires the use of Google Toolbar or FeedBurner to get a short version of a URL. Google say the new service offers stability, speed and security. The security claim comes from the automatic filtering of shortened URLs by using the same technology that Google uses in web search to warn of malicious sites.

Due to the rise of micro-blogging sites such as Twitter, URL shorteners have become very popular . With these services, there is a limit on the number of characters in a message, for example, 140 characters for Twitter, which means that long URLs can easily consume the entire message. A URL shortener takes a long URL and stores it, issuing the user a short URL which points to the URL shortening service. When a user goes to this URL, the user is redirected to the recorded long URL.

 The convenience hides a danger though, as spammers and phishers have found they can use shortened URLs to disguise links to malware or other malicious sites. While a number of URL shortening services have adopted request filtering for shortened URLs, Google`s shortening service has arrived with the filtering functionality available at launch. The use of Toolbar and FeedBurner as the only way to create Google shortened URLs may also help as currently it means there is limited access to third party applications, which could potentially lock out malicious bots from creating and posting shortened malware links through the Google service. Google does say that it may make the service ˝available for a wider audience˝ in the future.