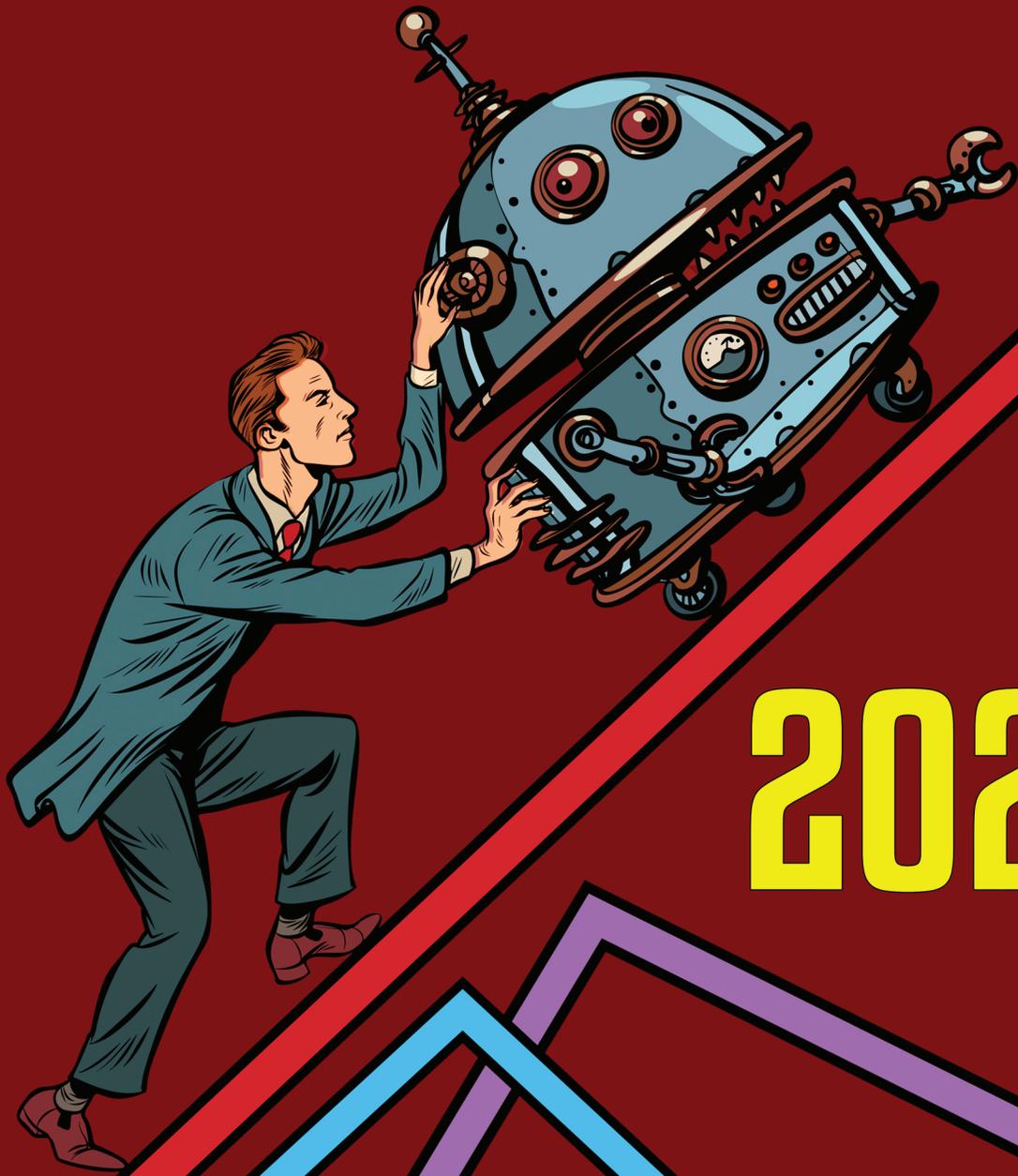


GOOGLE ADS (ADWORDS) WORKBOOK



2023

JASON MCDONALD

GOOGLE ADS (ADWORDS) WORKBOOK:

ADVERTISING ON GOOGLE ADS, YOUTUBE, & THE DISPLAY NETWORK

2023 EDITION

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“Half the money spent on advertising is wasted, but no one knows which half.”

~ John Wanamaker, 1838-1922, American Merchant

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	4
1) GOOGLE ADS BASICS.....	18
2) GOOGLE ADS GOTCHAS.....	46
3) KEYWORDS	66
4) SEARCH NETWORK: ORGANIZATION	110
5) SEARCH NETWORK: ADS & BIDDING	156
6) DISPLAY NETWORK	222
7) SHOPPING CAMPAIGNS	276
8) YOUTUBE	296
9) METRICS.....	322
10) TOOLS FOR GOOGLE ADS.....	370



INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the *Google Ads Workbook 2023*! My name is Jason McDonald, and I am going to teach you the do's and don'ts, in's and out's, secrets, tips, and lies about how to advertise on Google and make money doing so. I've been advertising on Google for over two decades, I manage tens of thousands of ad spend in any given month, and I'm Google Ads certified.

I love Google Ads! I hate Google Ads.

I am going to teach you everything that Google wants you to know and a lot of tips, tricks, secrets, do's, don'ts, and insights that Google decidedly does *not* want you to know about the world's largest advertising system – Google Ads (formerly known as AdWords).

Let's begin at the beginning.

Why advertise on Google? First and foremost, Google is where your customers are. Need pizza? Just Google “Pizza near me.” Need a hair transplant? Just Google, “Why is my hair falling out?” Need an industrial fan? A lawyer? Car insurance? A cage for your pet iguana? Just google, google, google – Google is so important that the verb “to google” has even made it into the Oxford English Dictionary. Not surprisingly, smart businesses *fish where the fish are*. They advertise on Google because that's where their customers are.

Secondarily, Google owns YouTube (the world's largest video site) and Gmail (the world's largest email system). Google shopping allows you to place clickable images of your products directly on Google and link your product e-commerce website to Google search. So by advertising on Google's network, you can reach people on YouTube and on Gmail as they watch Taylor Swift's latest video or email Aunt Martha about their upcoming Disney Cruise. You can reach people as they research and shop for products online. Third, Google runs the largest advertising network across independent sites (blogs, portals, media sites, etc.), allowing you to reach customers when they're on

blogs, reading the newspaper, or chatting with their friends on many subsites across the Internet. It's called the *Google Display Network* or *GDN*, and it's massive. Indeed, Google even allows you to *remarket* to your customers, turning a single click on your website into a multitude of opportunities to build your brand, acquire sales leads, and sell more stuff. And Google Play is the world's biggest marketplace for app downloads.

And, new for 2023 is Google "AI" or "Artificial Intelligence." Increasingly, Google Ads uses *artificial intelligence* to attempt to place the right ad, at the right time, in front of the right person so that you (and Google) can make money by getting the click and getting the conversion. AI is the "new, new" thing across Google Ads. Increasingly it's not man (or woman) against the machine, but it's man (or woman) AND the machine, working together to target, create, and deliver relevant advertising. What could possibly go wrong? As Hollywood has shown us across a range of films from *2001* to the *Terminator* Series to *Blade Runner* to *I, Robot*... a LOT can go wrong with AI. Throughout this new, 2023 version, I will highlight the opportunities and pitfalls across Google's push to make AI your "new best friend" without making it your "new best friend" that hunts you down and consumes you for lunch.

Everything in this new AI universe, according to Google, is rainbows and unicorns. For instance, according to the official Google Ads website (<https://ads.google.com/>), "Be seen where your customers are searching, browsing and watching across Google Search, YouTube, and the web. Get the most of your marketing budget with *automated solutions* from Google Ads" (emphasis added). Google has worked hard to make Google Ads an easy self-serve experience, and if that's not easy enough, it offers support by real human Googlers at 844-245-2553.

What's not to like?

Well, there's *plenty* not to like in the Google Ads platform. Confusing terminology, for one. A user interface that makes a Greek labyrinth, the plan of a nuclear power plant, or the American electoral system look easy to navigate for two. So many options that you often don't know when, where, or why your ads are showing, for three. And most importantly, a huge **conflict of interest** between you and Google.

Google Ads is a pay-per-click system. That means advertisers bid against each other in the Google Auction, and they pay if – and only if – there's a click from Google (YouTube, Gmail, Google Play, the GDN) to their website.

This sounds great, but there's a dark secret inherent in pay-per-click; it's *pay-per-click*, not *pay-per-sale*. And that creates a tension between you as the advertiser and Google as the advertising platform.

Let me explain.

1. Google gets paid by the **click**; that is, Google makes money when someone clicks (or calls) on a Google ad. (And, conversely, advertisers pay Google when someone clicks or calls on an ad).
2. You, as the business, however, get paid by the **conversion**; that is, you make money if – and only if – that click ultimately converts to a sale.

A *click* is not a *conversion*, however, yet you pay for the former and not the latter. Google gets paid whether you make a sale or not. To be cynical, Google “rigs” its platform to obfuscate this point, “obfuscate” being a fancy word to mean that Google misleads, hides, obliterates, subterfuges, and plays many linguistic tricks to encourage you to buy lots and lots of *clicks* and not realize that, ultimately, clicks don't make you money. *Conversions* do.

Worse, a big trend in 2023 is an increasing lack of data. Google's new “Performance Plus” campaign type, for example, provides sparse information on the keywords users typed in, the location where they experienced your ad (Google, YouTube, Gmail, etc.), and what is working and why (or what's not working and why). Performance Plus is a new, AI-based “trust us” model that is ready for abuse by Google to ramp up your ad spend without actually increasing your return on investment. Similarly, on the all-important keyword front, Google hides your actual search terms and provides less and less real data on what users actually searched. This new AI universe at Google Ads increasingly looks like HAL in the film, “2001: A Space Odyssey.” We'd all just like to be let back in the spaceship. HAL and Google, however, are not going backward.

We'll circle back to the contradictions and tensions between you and Google in Google Ads in the next Chapter, but for now, just keep in mind that Google is a for-profit corporation, not a charity. Google rigs Google Ads to maximize clicks and its profits, not yours.

Zig from the Negative, Back to the Positive

Let's zig back to the positives. (One of the things you'll learn in Google Ads is that it is non-linear. You can't explain it or understand it in a straight line; rather, you have to *zig* and *zag* to understand its power and its complexities.) Let's review five ways that Google Ads is a powerful advertising tool:

Google Ads can –

1. Get your company, product, or service to the **top of Google** at the precise moment for the precise keywords that your customers are searching for, just as they're ready to buy a product or service.
2. Get your company, product, or service onto **thousands of websites and blogs** that participate in the **Google Display Network**, allowing you to reach customers as they **browse** the Web for information.
3. **Follow your customers “around the Internet”** through **remarketing**, showing them your ads on Google, YouTube, and thousands upon thousands of independent websites in the Google Display Network.
4. Get your company, product, or service onto **YouTube**, the #1 video site on the Internet, and **Gmail**, the #1 free email service.
5. Market your **App** to interested consumers through in-App advertising.

If you know what you're doing, Google Ads can be an incredibly effective tool in your advertising and marketing toolbox!

Enter the Google Ads Workbook

To succeed at Google Ads without wasting money, you need an expert guide and an expert guidebook. That's what this Workbook is. It will teach you secrets, tips, tricks, and techniques to effectively use Google Ads to market your product or service in the most efficient manner possible. We will proceed together, “eyes wide open,” understanding that Google is like a bartender or a used car salesman that has good – *no*

great – products to offer us as advertisers, even if he’s incentivized to oversell and overhype.

Google Ads is powerful, and you and I are going to learn together how to unleash its power to help your business in an effective and cost-efficient manner.

Isn’t that exciting? I think it is. I love Google Ads, and I use it extensively for myself and my clients. And I am going to teach you how to use it *safely* and *effectively*.

Who is This Workbook For?

This workbook is aimed primarily at **small business owners** and **marketing managers**. **Non-profits** will also find it useful. If you have a product or service to sell, and you realize that your customers go to Google, to websites such as blogs or news sites, to YouTube, or to Gmail, this workbook will help you understand how to use Google Ads efficiently to “get the word out.”

If you are a person whose job involves **advertising**, **marketing**, and/or **branding**, this workbook is for you. (In fact, many digital ad agencies and consultants have used this Workbook to secretly hone their skills at Google Ads). If you are a small business that sees a marketing opportunity in online advertising of any type, this workbook is for you. And if your job is to market a business or organization online in today’s Internet economy, this book is for you. Anyone who wants to look behind the curtain and understand the mechanics of how to use Google Ads (including the Google Display Network, remarketing, YouTube, and/or Gmail) will benefit from this book.

Anyone who sees – however dimly or skeptically – that online advertising could help their business can (and will) benefit from this workbook.

Here’s our **game plan**, Chapter by Chapter:

1. **Google Ads Basics** – an overview of the basic logic and structure of Google Ads.
2. **Google Ads Gotchas** – an emergency checkup of the major gotchas in Google Ads, and how to stop them.

3. **Keywords** – how to brainstorm valuable keywords and build an organized Keyword Worksheet.
4. **The Search Network: Organization** – how to organize your account for the best results.
5. **The Search Network: Ads & Bidding** – tips and tricks on how to set up effective ads and bid using both manual and automatic methods.
6. **The Display Network** – a deep dive into Google’s troublesome partner network (officially called AdSense or the Google Display Network (GDN))
7. **Google Shopping** – yes, you can advertise products on Google. This Chapter explains the basics of participating in the Google Shopping ecosystem.
8. **YouTube Advertising** – explore the power of video to market your company, product, or service on Google’s YouTube service.
9. **Google Ads Metrics**. Using Google Ads and Google Analytics to measure your return on investment.
10. **Tools for Google Ads** – a cornucopia of Google Ads learning resources, tools, blogs, and other websites to help you master Google Ads and keep up with the latest and greatest.

» MEET THE AUTHOR

My name is Jason McDonald, and I have been active on the Internet since 1994 and taught SEO, Google Ads, and Social Media since 2009 – online at Stanford University Continuing Studies, at both AcademyX and the Bay Area Video Coalition in San Francisco, at workshops, and in corporate trainings across these United States. I love figuring out how things work, and I love teaching others! Google Ads advertising is an endeavor that I understand, and I want to empower you to understand it as well.

I am Google Ads Certified and manage thousands of client dollars each month on Google Ads as well as on the Microsoft / Bing advertising platform. I also manage ads on YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn, plus do SEO (Search Engine Optimization) and SMM (Social Media Marketing). This makes me uniquely qualified to be objective about Google Ads; Google Ads is only one of the tools in our toolkit,

and we want to use it when it's the best tool (but not when another tool like SEO, Facebook, or Twitter would be a better choice).

Learn more about me at <https://www.jasonmcdonald.org/> or at my corporate website <https://www.jm-seo.org/>. Or just call 800-298-4065, say something flattering, and my secretary will put you through. (*Like I have a secretary! Just call if you have something to ask or say*). Visit the websites above to follow me on Twitter, connect with me on LinkedIn, or read my blog. *Sorry, my TikTok is so crazy that it's for friends and family only.*

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If you like this workbook, please take a moment to take a short **survey**. The survey helps me find errors in the book, learn from student questions, and get feedback to improve future editions. Plus, by taking the survey, I'll be able to reach out to you, and we can even become friends. Or, if not friends, at least friends on the Internet or Facebook, which isn't quite the same thing, but it's still pretty good!

Here's how –

1. Visit <http://jmlinks.com/survey>.
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3. I will rebate you \$5 via Amazon gift eCard.

How's that for an offer you can't refuse?

This offer is limited to the first 100 participants and only for participants who have purchased a paid copy of the book. You may be required to show proof of purchase and the birth certificate of your firstborn child, cat, or goldfish. If you don't have a child, cat, or goldfish, you may be required to prove telepathically that you bought the book.

» QUESTIONS AND MORE INFORMATION

I **encourage** my students to ask questions! If you have questions, submit them via <http://jmlinks.com/contact>. There are two sorts of questions: ones that I know instantly, for which I'll zip you an email answer right away, and ones I do not know instantly, in which case I will investigate, and we'll figure out the answer together.

As a teacher, I learn the most from my students. So please don't be shy!

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I knew you just couldn't wait for the legal stuff. Calm yourself down and get ready for some truly fun reading.

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That's a *good thing*. This workbook is **independent**. My aim is to "tell it as I see it," giving you no-nonsense information on how to succeed at Google Ads and online advertising.

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» REGISTER YOUR WORKBOOK FOR ONLINE TOOLS

This workbook is meant to leverage the power of the Internet. **Register** your copy online to get a PDF copy of this book (with clickable links to make it easy to access online resources). You'll also get free access to my *Google Ads Dashboard* and *Marketing Almanac*, which identify my absolute favorite free tools all set out for you to use in an easy click-to-go format.

Here's how to **register** your copy of this workbook:

1. Go to <http://jmlinks.com/23googleads>
2. Reenter this password: **23googleads**

3. You're in. Simply click on the link for a PDF copy of the *Workbook* as well as access to the worksheets referenced herein.

Once you register, you get access to –

- **A PDF copy of this book.** Read it on your PC or tablet, and the links referenced in the book become clickable. This is a great way to extend the book into myriad resources such as example websites or social media pages, FAQs, support or help from the major vendors, and videos.
- **My Google Ads dashboard** – an easy-to-use, clickable list of the best tools for Google Ads by category (e.g., keywords tools, ad preview tools, etc.).
- **The *Marketing Almanac*** – a collection of up-to-date marketing tools not just for Google Ads but for SEO and Social Media in detail. While the *Dashboard* identifies my favorites, the *Almanac* compiles the universe of free Google Ads tools.
- **A Free Goldfish.** OK, you won't get a free goldfish. But you'll get a lot of cool, free stuff. So please register your workbook.

Jump Codes

Throughout the book, I reference the website JMLINKS.com (<http://jmlinks.com/>) plus various “jump codes.” If you're reading in PDF format, the links are clickable. If you're reading in hard copy or on the Kindle, I advise you to fire up your Web browser, bookmark <http://jmlinks.com/>, and then enter the codes.

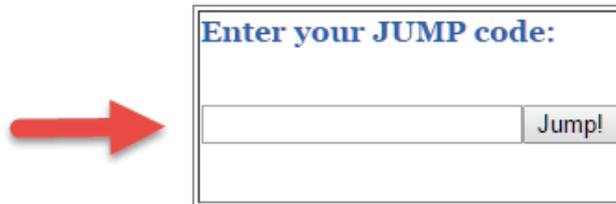
Here's a screenshot:

Search Engine Optimization, Social Media Marketing, and AdWords

Book Links

Welcome! My name is [Jason McDonald](#) and I provide consulting services in Internet marketing: SEO, AdWords, and Social Media Marketing.

BOOK JUMP CODES



Enter your JUMP code:

If you've landed here... you must be looking for links in my books on SEO, AdWords, and/or Social Media Marketing. In each of the books, there should be numeric links that will automatically forward you to important links on the Internet.

You should know the 'secret' URL. If not, send me an email by clicking on the box to the left. Be sure to mention the class or workshop which you attended and the date.

For example, <http://jmlinks.com/16s> would mean first go to <http://jmlinks.com/> and enter “16s” in the jump code box. Your browser will then “jump” you to the referenced resource.

VIDEO. Watch a video tutorial on how to use “jump” codes at <http://jmlinks.com/jump>.

» ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

No man is an island. I would like to thank my beloved wife, Noelle Decambra, for allowing me to dive deeply into online marketing and for being my personal cheerleader in the book industry. Gloria McNabb has done her usual tireless job as first assistant, including updating this 2023 edition as well as the *Marketing Almanac*. My two daughters, Hannah and Ava, have inspired me to work hard in the digital world and “catch up” to a Millennial and a Generation Z. I would also like to thank my Black Labrador retriever, Buddy, and my rescue dog, Zero, for countless walks and games of fetch, during which

I refined my ideas about online advertising and about life. I would also like to thank my students and clients who have given me the trust and privilege to manage their accounts in Google Ads. There is nothing quite like learning by doing, and I appreciate that opportunity.

And again, a huge thank you to my students – online, in San Francisco, and at Stanford Continuing Studies. You challenge me, you inspire me, and you motivate me!

Let's get started!



1

GOOGLE ADS BASICS

If you were lucky enough to plan a vacation to Brazil, you'd probably buy a guidebook to the South American country, such as Lonely Planet's *Lonely Planet Brazil* (<http://jmlinks.com/23f>). You might read the guidebook on the plane ride down, and before you plan out your itinerary for what's *fun at Carnival* or a trip to *Encontro das Aguas* (where the Amazon and the Rio Negro rivers combine at <http://jmlinks.com/23w>), you'd want a general overview to the country. Your goal would be to “not get lost” in Brazil (e.g., inside the Amazon jungle), to “not get robbed,” and, in a positive sense, to make the most out of your investment of time and money in your South American vacation. You'd marvel at the beauty, success, and history of Brazil, but you'd also realize that – like all countries – Brazil has its bad neighborhoods and weird cultural quirks, its dangers, as well as its sites to see.

Google Ads is like Brazil: enormous and complicated, with a scary jungle, key cities, different regions, wonderful, honest people, scary thieves, bad neighborhoods, etc. We begin our journey “as if” you were on a plane, flying from the home city of your business to the country of *GoogleAdsLandia*, soon to land at its capital, the *Googleplex*. When we land, we'll meet some *government-sponsored* tour guides who I guarantee will be very friendly. They'll put a super positive spin on everything! Everything is coming up rainbows in *GoogleAdsLandia* (or so they tell us). These Googlers are not bad people, as I will explain, but they do work for Google. So take everything they say with a grain of salt. I will be by your side to point out what they don't show you and don't tell you about *GoogleAdsLandia*.

Let's get started!

TO-DO LIST:

- » Search vs. Browse
- » Keyword Targeting

- » Bids and the Quality Score Contradiction
- » Why Use Google Ads?
- » Elements of Ads on Google Ads
- » Google Ads Organization
- » Getting Online Help with Google Ads
- »» Deliverable: Google Ads Strategy Worksheet

» **SEARCH VS. BROWSE**

Google Ads is more than just Google.com. In fact, Google is several interrelated platforms. Just as there isn't "one" single Brazil, there isn't "one" single Google. Brazil isn't one monolithic country. Rather, it is a complex nation with different peoples and cultures, different ecosystems, and environments. There isn't really just "one" Brazil: there are multiples, from Rio to the Amazon. If you visit Brazil, your first orientation is to figure out "which" Brazil you are in.

So it is with Google Ads. Google is -

Google Search –Google.com, the world's largest search engine. Within this –

Traditional text ads directly on Google (now, sometimes showing images).

Shopping ads showcasing products (images and text).

Local ads showcasing local businesses, including LSAs (Local Service Ads).

YouTube – the world's largest video platform, with both text and video ads.

Gmail – the world's largest free email service, with both ad and ad-free versions.

The Google App – one of the most popular phone apps in the world, with ads.

Google Play – the world’s largest app marketplace, competitive with the Apple Store, and allowing app ads and “in app” advertising.

The Google Display Network – the world’s largest network of third-party blogs and apps, all showing Google-delivered ads.

Beyond the networks, another way to look at Google Ads is to look at it from your customer’s perspective. What are they “doing” when they come to a Google platform, be it Google, YouTube, Gmail, or the App Store?

Throughout this book, I’ll use the example of “Jason’s Cat Boarding Emporium” to illuminate the in’s and out’s of Google Ads. It’s a fictitious San Francisco small business that a) boards cats (no dogs!), b) offers cat-training, and c) sells cat paraphernalia on the Internet. Customers come to us when they want a place to “stash their cat” during a vacation, they’re looking for best-in-class cat training services to improve behavior, and/or they want to pamper their beloved kitty with premium cat food, cat toys, and (of course) organic cat nip imported from the Himalayas. Cat lovers have found their premium one-stop shop for everything “cat” at Jason’s Cat Boarding Emporium.

Returning to Google Ads, there are two foundational ways that customers approach Google platforms:

Scenario #1 Search. The customer is pro-actively **searching** for “cat boarding.” He’s leaving San Francisco on a ten-week tour to Brazil, and he wants someone to take care of his prize cat, Kittles. He pro-actively searches on Google, entering in search queries such as *cat boarding San Francisco, quality cat hotels, cat sitters*, etc. This search methodology corresponds to what Google calls the “Search Network,” which is Google.com, plus what it calls “Search Partner” sites like Yelp.com or Comcast.net that have a strong search orientation. In some situations, YouTube search also functions in this way (e.g., “How to potty train a kitten” as a search on YouTube, for example).

Scenario #2 Browse. Here, the customer is not pro-actively searching for “cat boarding.” Rather, he is reading up on blogs on cat-related issues, such as CatBehaviorAssociates.com (<http://jmlinks.com/23h>) or an article on the

ChicagoTribune.com entitled “The Last Free-ranging Cat library in Illinois” (<http://jmlinks.com/23j>). Note that he is not entering keywords to search; rather, he is just reading blogs and newspaper sites that may, or may not, be about cats and cat care. This pattern of **browsing**, but not searching, corresponds to what Google calls the Google Display Network (“GDN” or just “Display Network” for short), which is not Google.com at all but partner sites like CatBehaviorAssociates.com and ChicagoTribune.com that agree to allow Google to place ads on their websites. (He may also be browsing YouTube videos that relate to cats). Indeed, **remarketing** (following users around the Web and showing them relevant ads) is part of this browsing process.

Google’s *Search Network* reflects scenario #1 (search), and Google’s *Google Display Network* (GDN) reflects scenario #2. A few Google products, such as YouTube combine both aspects, but as we shall see, a good rule of thumb is to ask yourself, “Is my customer searching? Or is he browsing?” as you manage your Google Ads advertising. Don’t trust Google to make this clear.

Technically, there are other opportunities to reach this customer, such as via Gmail, the Google App, on the Google Play store, or via Google shopping ads. We’ll explore these in detail, but the most fundamental distinction on Google Ads is “search” vs. “browse.” If it’s *search*, it’s largely on Google. If it’s *browse*, it can be on YouTube, the Display Network, or other places in the platform.

Pro-actively Choose Your Network

Google is a for-profit business. It wants you to just throw money at everything, and it purposely confuses the distinction between “search” and “browse.” For most of us, the highest ROI will be on Google itself, on those instances when a customer is pro-actively searching for our product or service. The “browse” relationship is often a much, much lower ROI. Not bad, but not the kind of ROI you will experience from search.

Google, however, will constantly admonish you to put your ads everywhere and trust its AI to place your ads. This is not a good idea. The first reason is that people who are in “search mode” are much more likely to convert to a sale than people who are in “browse mode.” Even worse, as we shall see throughout this book, Google’s Search

Network is highly focused and efficient, while its browse network (the Google Display Network or GDN) is a hot mess with lots of garbage websites, click scams and other nefarious tricks. And even worse than that, as we shall see in Chapter 2 on “Gotchas,” Google defaults you into *both* the **Search** and the **Display Network**, but – for most advertisers – the Display Network is much more difficult and has a *much, much, much, much, much, much, much, much* lower ROI (return on investment).

It’s as if the Google tour guide starts your tour of GoogleAdsLandia by showing you the brilliant, safe beaches of Rio de Janeiro and then drops you off in the worst, most dangerous neighborhood without a guidebook. *No thanks, Tom Hanks!* As we shall see, we want to a) choose the Search Network only and b) advertise on the Display Network only when we have mastered the basics and are aware of the dangers (and opportunities) that exist in the GDN.

In summary, Google Ads isn’t a single monolithic experience. It’s multiple experiences. Rio de Janeiro isn’t the Amazon, and you act quite differently in a big vibrant city than in a dense, nature-filled jungle. The same goes for the Search Network, Display Network, LSAs, Google Shopping, and YouTube. The bottom line is you want to be in control of where and how your ads appear, but you’ll have to struggle with Google to gain transparency into what’s going on.

» KEYWORD TARGETING

Keywords are the next element where things are not as simple as Google pretends that they are in *GoogleAdsLandia*. Keywords function very differently on Google’s two different networks! The reason for this has to do with user behavior and what Google “knows” about the user in the different scenarios on each network.

Scenario #1 Search on the Google Network. The user is pro-actively searching on Google by typing in search queries. Google “knows” **user intent** (he’s looking for *cat boarding*) because it “knows” the actual search term typed into Google. For this reason, keyword matching on the Search network is **tight**: you, as the advertiser, can very tightly control when your ad appears by using the attributes of quotes (“”) or brackets ([]). (*More about this in Chapter 4*).

Scenario #2 Browse on the Display Network. Here, the user may be reading the *Chicago Tribune* online, watching YouTube, or just browsing miscellaneous blogs and social media sites across the Web. He is NOT entering search terms. The most that Google knows is the content of the page he is on (plus data on user behavior), but for sites like *ChicagoTribune.com*, *ESPN.com*, *USAToday.com*, etc. (all of which run Google Display Ads), Google does NOT know the user intent and is forced to compare the “page content” vs. the “keyword triggers” you as the advertiser enter into Google Ads. Hence keyword matching is **loose** on the GDN.

It’s a lot to process, so don’t let your head explode. For now, just realize that keyword matching is **tight** on the Search Network and **loosey-goosey** on the Display Network (*despite what Google indicates in its contradictory official documentation!*). We’ll come back to this and learn how to optimize our keywords on each network.

» BIDS AND THE QUALITY SCORE CONTRADICTION

The next problem is bids. Google Ads is (generally) a cost-per-click (CPC) system, meaning that you compete against other advertisers in an online auction to “buy” a click by a user on Google. **You pay if, and only if, a user clicks on your ad.** Bids function the same on both the Search and Display networks; advertisers pay per click.

The Ad Auction: A Simple Model

Let’s take a simple scenario. *Jason’s Cat Emporium* is competing against other cat boarding establishments to get clients who have cats and need boarding in San Francisco, as well as folks who just want cat grooming.

So, imagine that Joe User goes to his computer and types into Google, *cat boarding*. At the speed of light, that query is sent to the Google algorithm in Mountain View, California, and the auctioneer (Google), says to potential advertisers:

Incoming! I have a query, *cat boarding*, coming out of San Francisco, California. Opening bid is \$1.00 for the click, do I hear \$1.00?

I pipe up and say, “*Jason’s Cat Boarding Emporium* will bid \$1.00 to get that click!”

The auctioneer says, “Do I hear \$1.25?”

Charlie of *Charlie’s Cat Boarding Inc.*, says, “Yeah! I’ll bid \$1.25.”

The auctioneer says, “Do I hear \$1.31?”

Joanie of *Joanie’s Cat Boarding Inc.*, says, “Yes! I’ll bid \$1.31. In fact, I’ll bid \$2.01!”

The auctioneer says, “Do I hear \$2.10?”

Silence...

The auctioneer says, “Sold! For \$2.01” to Joanie’s Cat Boarding.

He repeats this procedure of asking the potential advertisers for bids, having them bid against each other until he fills the top three or four slots on the Google search screen.

At the speed of light, Google then populates the Google search screen, and Joe User sees on his computer a Search Engine Results Page (or SERP), which places Joanie’s ad in position #1, and positions #2, #3, and #4 on Google are populated by those who bid just a bit lower.

Ads populate the Google results page. Advertisers pay if, and only if, that Joe User clicks on their ad.

Here’s a screenshot of the Google results page for “cat boarding San Francisco” with the ads (appearing at the top), the local pack (appearing in the middle), and organic results (appearing at the bottom). In most cases, you’ll see ads at the top marked as “Ads” and the organic or free results at the bottom. For searches with a local character, you’ll sometimes see the “local pack,” and for product searches such as for “red dresses,” you may see product ads on the top or far right.

Google

All Maps Shopping News Images More Settings Tools

About 2,010,000 results (0.55 seconds)

Ads

SF Cat Boarding - thepawington.com
www.thepawington.com/
 24/7 Pick-up & Drop-off near SFO. Feel confident with 24hr petcams!
 24/7 Pick-up and Drop-off · 24 hour petcams · Skilled & Loving Staff · Free SFO airport parking
 Highlights: Dog And Cat Boarding, Spa Services...
 Boarding Reservations
 Grooming Daycare



Local

Feline Wishes & Caviar Dreams
 5.0 ★★★★★ (4) - Kennel
 600 Bryant St · (415) 543-5365
 Open until 5:00 PM
 WEBSITE DIRECTIONS

Organic

Mission: Cats: Cat Boarding, Hotel & Sitting East Bay San Francisco ...
www.missioncats.net/
 Mission: Cats is a one-stop shop for exclusive cat care services in San Francisco, CA. We are proudly serving the whole East Bay Area. Check us out today!
 Services and Rates · Contact Us · Reservations · Wonder Cat Rescue

Pet Camp | Cat Boarding Camp and Safari | San Francisco, CA
<https://www.petcamp.com/cat-safari/cat-camp-safari/>
 Our cat boarding services at Pet Camp's Main Campground in San Francisco offer the diversions cats

Who's on Top? Ad Position

In a simple model, position #1 on Google goes to the highest bidder, position #2 to the next highest, and down to position #4. These fill the top slots. In some cases, there are additional slots at the bottom of the page, #5, #6, #7.

If or when Joe Users clicks on an ad, then that advertiser pays one penny MORE than the bid of the person just below him (mediated by what is called Quality Score, but

ignore that for now). So, if, for example, Joanie bid \$2.01, but Charlie bid just \$1.10 for position #2, then Joanie would pay not \$2.01 but \$1.11 for that click.

VIDEO. Watch a video tutorial on how the Google Ads auction works at <http://jmlinks.com/57t>.

To sum up -

1. The searcher types a **search query** into Google, such as “cat boarding San Francisco.”
2. Advertisers **bid** against each other to “get the click” for this search query by bidding higher to get a higher position on the page. Generally, there are three to four paid ads at the top of the page, followed by organic results (both the local pack and organic), with a few ads at the bottom.
3. Google assembles a search engine results page (**SERP**) based on advertising (in which advertiser bid what for the click in the auction), plus organic results such as the local snack pack and regular organic results and returns this to the searcher in the blink of an eye.
4. If a user **clicks on ads**, then whichever ad they click on pays a fee to Google called the “cost per click.” (*The amount charged is a function of the bid below you mediated by Quality Score*).
5. Users land on the advertiser’s website and either “bounce back” to Google or “convert,” and the process repeats.

Quality Score

In reality, it’s a little more complicated than this simple model because Google not only looks at advertisers’ bids per click but also at their **Quality Score** (<http://jmlinks.com/25x>), which is an estimation of the click-thru rate for their ad (how likely it is to get more clicks) plus factors such as ad format, and the landing page experience.

Quality Score is a mysterious part of the Google Ads algorithm. According to official Google propaganda, if you write a “better” ad (more tightly connected to the user search query), then Google will “reward” you with a lower CPC. So, if Joanie bids \$2.01 but her ad is poorly written (not very relevant), and Charlie bids \$1.10, his ad may outrank her (be in position #1, not position #2) even though he bid less. In fact, if Joanie’s ad is bad, Google may refuse to show her ad entirely.

The components of Quality Score will be discussed in Chapter 4 in more detail, but for now, just be aware that a) advertisers compete against each other in the “click auction” and “pay by the click,” and b) Google rewards a better quality score with a lower cost-per-click (CPC).

The Quality Score Contradiction

There is, however, a contradiction in Quality Score. Remember that Google gets paid *by the click*, while you make money *by the conversion*, which is not the same thing!

QUALITY SCORE REWARDS ADS THAT GET CLICKS (NOT CONVERSIONS)

Imagine, for example, an ad that said, “Cheap Cat Boarding – Lowest Rates Around” or even better said, “Free Cat Boarding. We Just Love Cats” or even better than that, it said, “Free Cat Boarding Plus a Free Pizza Just for Clicking,” what would happen?

You would drive up the clicks (making Google more money).

You would, however, attract many “tire kicker” customers interested in only “free” or “cheap” cat boarding, or worse, “free pizza,” thereby reducing your conversions.

Google would be happy. No, Google would be more than happy. Google would be ecstatic! Indeed, Google's Quality Score would reward your ad with a *high score* (and lower cost per click) because of its high click-thru rate

What could possibly be bad about a high quality score?

Conversions, that's what. You might get lots and lots of clicks, but people would either a) not convert, or b) convert but only at a very low price (because your ads emphasized how cheap your services were). Not to mention people who would be demanding free pizza, eat it, and never actually buy anything!

Quality score is about *clicks*, not *conversions*. Remember that. Tape it up on your wall. Say it as a mantra every time you read a blog post on Google Ads. Shout it with a megaphone at any official Google spokesperson.

In essence:

Google wants you to advertise on lots of keywords.

Google wants you to bid high.

Google wants keyword matching to be loose; you want it to be tight.

Google wants you to advertise on broad geographies.

Google wants you to write ad copy that says "free" or "free pizza" and "free beer."

Google wants clicks.

You want clicks that lead to valuable conversions.

Now, to be fair, this is somewhat of an exaggeration. If you read the instructions to Google Ads, Google does point out that you should create *relevant* ads on *relevant* keywords, but they bury this tension between "clicks" and "conversions" enough that most people, even many advanced practitioners and ad agency types, are unaware of this fundamental tension between Google and its advertisers.

To make matters worse, the trends for 2023 are 1) increased fuzziness to keyword matching with a loss of control by advertisers over when their ads show and 2) increased use of Google AI (Artificial Intelligence) to build out ads, serve ads, and manage bids. Because Google gets paid “by the click,” yet you make money “by the conversion,” these “Google upgrades” are heavily impacting ad spend.

Advertisers are not just spending more per click. Advertisers are getting more clicks on less relevant traffic. The game is rigged, and it favors Google, so “buyer beware.” Indeed, Google is increasingly pushing “automated bidding,” which uses AI to predict the ads that are likely to get clicks and conversions. In a perfect world, you have lots of data, perfect conversion tracking, and Google is honest. Google automated bidding will thus work perfectly. Most of us, however, do not live in a perfect world. We don’t have tons of data, we don’t have focused conversion tracking, and Google isn’t entirely honest about what’s going on. Be careful about AI- or “automated bidding,” as it can lead to an increase in spurious clicks and a decline in the ROI on your ad spend. Nothing in Google Ads is as simple as it seems!

Minimum Bids

Google even has “secret” minimum bids, which it officially calls the “Reserve Price.” Minimum bids mean that even if you are the ONLY advertiser bidding on a specific keyword phrase, you can’t just bid one cent for the click. There is a secret “minimum bid,” which you must find out through trial and error. It’s sort of a function of your “Quality Score,” but in reality, you’ll find that there is a minimum floor that you have to bid to get your ad to show on a keyword, even if you are the only advertiser that wants to show up on the phrase. You can read the official Google explanation on “minimum bids” at <http://jmlinks.com/47y>, but I recommend you take it with a massive grain of salt.

It’s more complicated than this. But, for now, realize that generally speaking, you bid per click against other advertisers, and you pay just .01 above the bid of the advertiser below you. All of this is mediated by Quality Score, with Google rewarding advertisers that write ads that get a lot of clicks.

» WHY USE GOOGLE ADS?

At this point, you may be wondering, “*Gosh, why use Google Ads at all? It sounds very complicated and seems to have quite a few ‘gotchas’ inserted there to take my money.*”

I understand that frustration, but (*back to our analogy of a trip to Brazil*), there are many wonderful things to see, do, and take advantage of in the country of GoogleAdsLandia, if you know where to look and know how to avoid the bad neighborhoods and cultural gotchas that can cause trouble.

Here are ten reasons why Google Ads should have a place in your online marketing strategy:

1. **Customers.** Google Ads (a.k.a., Google) is where your customers are. Everybody uses Google for everything, so as a marketer, you have to “fish where the fish are,” whether or not you like the pond or the pond owner.
2. **Time to Market.** Google Ads can get your company, product, or service to the top of Google quickly. You can literally set up an ad campaign in just a few hours and be up and running on Google. This allows you to react quickly to market events and get your message out and up in a much, much faster way than search engine optimization (SEO), which takes considerable time and effort.
3. **Geotargeting.** Google Ads is very effective at targeting consumers in just a specific area. You can target ONLY people in San Jose, California, for example, and you can target people in San Jose with one ad and people in Oklahoma City with another ad. Indeed, you can also show your ad only during certain times of the day or week through scheduling.
4. **Short Tail Queries.** You may be able to rank via SEO for a precise search, such as *quality cat boarding in the Mission District, San Francisco*, but be unable to rank for a *short tail* query such as *cat boarding*. Using Google Ads, you can strategically advertise on short-tail queries that you do not rank for via SEO. Combined with geotargeting, this can be a very powerful complement to search engine optimization.
5. **Keyword Broad Match.** While SEO works well on very focused keywords, Google Ads can get your ads to show on broader, adjacent keywords. For example, you can combine a geotarget (people in San Francisco) with an “educational search term” such as “how to groom a cat” to showcase your cat

grooming services. You can also get detailed reporting in Google Ads to identify relevant keyword targets for your SEO that you cannot get in any other way. When used with skill and caution, Google Ads can get your message to a broader audience than pure SEO.

6. **Keyword Research.** Google no longer provides detailed keyword data to organic or SEO users, but it does provide keyword data to Google Ads advertisers. By advertising, you can get invaluable research into the actual keywords used by users and their behavior “after the click,” which you can feed back into your Google Ads and/or SEO strategy.
7. **Mobile Phone Targeting.** It’s no secret that people spend more and more time on their mobile phones. The screen is tiny, and Google has “crowded out” the free listings by pushing them down with ads. Using Google Ads, you can effectively advertise on mobile phones only, again adding a powerful complement to an effective SEO strategy. You can turn “off” Google Ads on the desktop (where you rank well in the organic / SEO results), for example, and turn “on” Google Ads on the mobile phone (where you rank poorly in the organic / SEO results).
8. **Remarketing.** Using *remarketing* (explained in Chapter 6), you can “follow” your customers around the Internet as they go to sites like *YouTube*, *Gmail*, *Chicago Tribune*, *New York Times*, etc., showing and reshowing them relevant ads about your product or service. Remarketing is very powerful for products or services with long sales cycles, like *cruises to Latin America*, *choosing a tax CPA*, or even *applying to law schools*.
9. **Redundancy and Branding.** Customers often buy only after seeing your brand across many experiences, so Google Ads can get your company, product, or search “into their mind” through repetition. Google Ads can work “with” your SEO efforts, “with” your social media marketing efforts and advertising, and “with” your offline, “real-world” marketing efforts. Google Ads should be part of a multi-channel effort to get your brand in front of clients over and over again.
10. **Browsing / Interrupt.** While SEO works if, and only if, the person is pro-actively searching Google, Google Ads can show your ads through the Google Display Network and YouTube to people who are NOT pro-actively looking for your product. You can “interrupt” their experience with ads on YouTube or get your ads on relevant blogs and news sites via the Google Display Network.

I hope that this ten-point list has fired up your enthusiasm for Google Ads!

» ELEMENTS OF ADS ON GOOGLE ADS

Remember that Google Ads is two primary networks, Google Search and the Google Display Network. (We'll ignore YouTube and Gmail for now). With that in mind, let's overview the elements of ads. What do ads look like on each network?

The Search Network

Before we get into how to construct ads on Google, let's look at ads from the user's perspective. First, let's look at how ads appear on Google.com. Ads on Google have the following elements:

URL. The clickable website address for the ad.

Headline. A clickable headline made up of up to three subparts.

Description. A few lines of non-clickable text that give more information to the user.

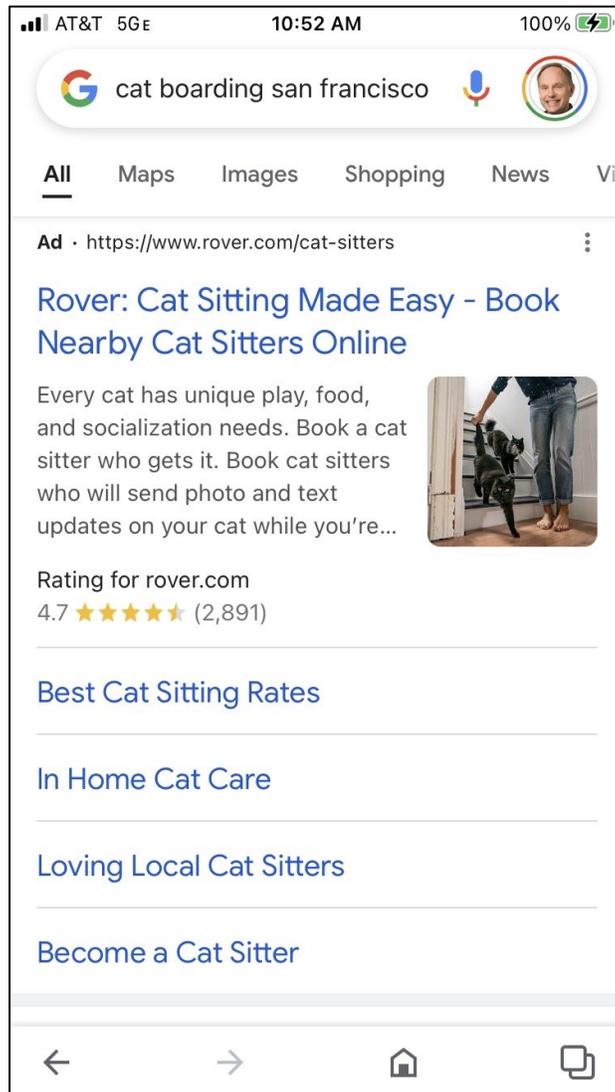
Extensions. Other components, such as clickable links to individual web pages, phone numbers, location, etc., that may (or may not) appear beneath an ad.

Here's a screenshot with the components marked:

The screenshot shows a Google Ad for 'The Dancing Cat' with the following components labeled:

- URL:** Ad · <https://www.thedancingcat.org/> (855) 991-0429 Call Extension
- Headline:** The Dancing Cat - Open Now - TheDancingCat.org
- Description:** Not your traditional cat cafe. San Jose's creative space for people & cats. Lounge-Like Environment. Unique Party Idea. Unique Kids Birthday Idea. Cat Lounge in San Jose. Hours: Fri & Sat 12-4pm. Address Pet Issues. Space is Limited. Strengthen Your Bond.
- Ad Extensions:** Make a Donation · FAQ · Contact · The Dancing Cat Partners · Cat Adoption · About Us

And here's a screenshot of what ads look like on the mobile phone:

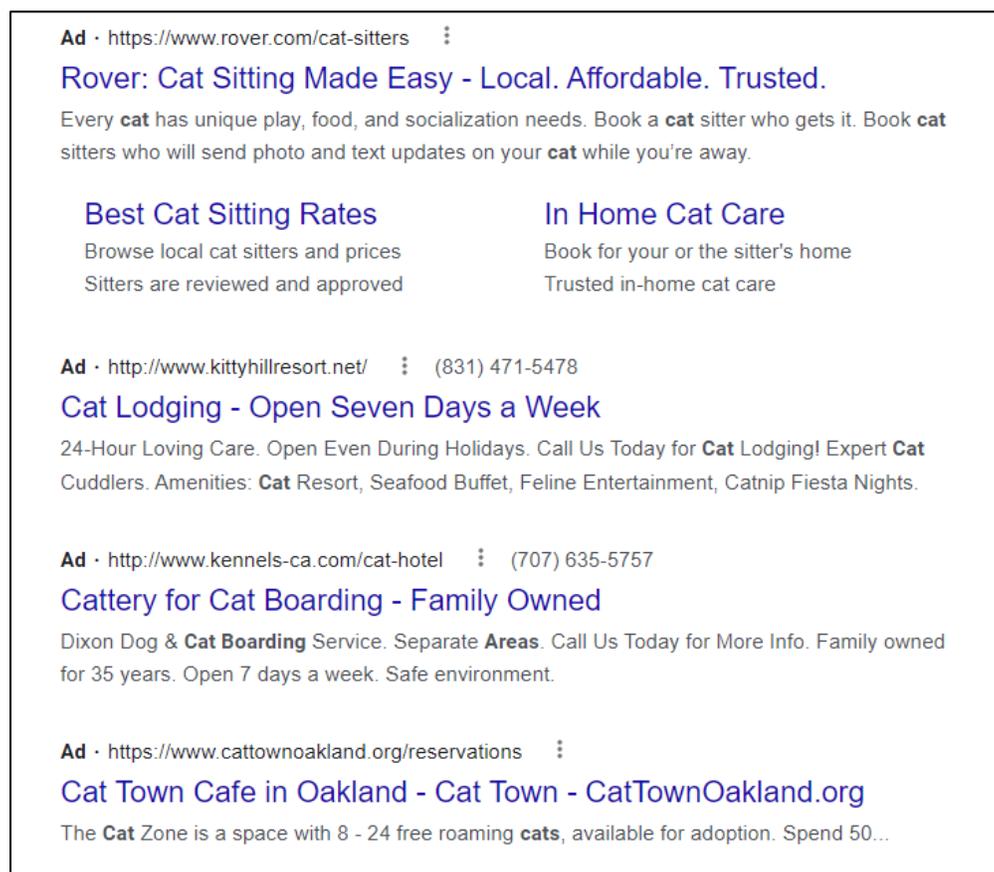


Both on the desktop and on the mobile phone, ads have URLs, headlines, descriptions, and what are called “ad extensions.” As we shall learn, you (the advertiser) input these into the system separately. Google reassembles them on the fly against a given search.

Google’s new “responsive ad” format has a final URL, a display URL, multiple thirty character headlines, and multiple descriptions of ninety characters. Sitelinks, images,

and other components are added as “assets” or “extensions.” Google then mixes and matches headlines and descriptions to create ads “on the fly.” Increasingly, you don’t create the full ad. Rather, you, as the advertiser, input headlines, descriptions, images, videos, etc., and Google assembles your ads “on the fly.”

From the user perspective, they see ads that are marked as “Ad” on Google, have a headline in blue, and some text. Here’s a screenshot of multiple ads triggered by the search query, “cat boarding Bay Area:”



The screenshot displays four search ads for cat-related services. Each ad includes a URL, a blue headline, and a short description. The first ad is for Rover, offering cat sitting services. The second is for Kitty Hill Resort, providing cat lodging. The third is for Kennels-Ca, offering a family-owned cat boarding service. The fourth is for Cat Town Cafe in Oakland, featuring a free roaming cat zone.

Ad · <https://www.rover.com/cat-sitters> ⓘ
Rover: Cat Sitting Made Easy - Local. Affordable. Trusted.
Every **cat** has unique play, food, and socialization needs. Book a **cat** sitter who gets it. Book **cat** sitters who will send photo and text updates on your **cat** while you're away.

Best Cat Sitting Rates
Browse local cat sitters and prices
Sitters are reviewed and approved

In Home Cat Care
Book for your or the sitter's home
Trusted in-home cat care

Ad · <http://www.kittyhillresort.net/> ⓘ (831) 471-5478
Cat Lodging - Open Seven Days a Week
24-Hour Loving Care. Open Even During Holidays. Call Us Today for **Cat** Lodging! Expert **Cat** Cuddlers. Amenities: **Cat** Resort, Seafood Buffet, Feline Entertainment, Catnip Fiesta Nights.

Ad · <http://www.kennels-ca.com/cat-hotel> ⓘ (707) 635-5757
Cattery for Cat Boarding - Family Owned
Dixon Dog & **Cat Boarding** Service. Separate **Areas**. Call Us Today for More Info. Family owned for 35 years. Open 7 days a week. Safe environment.

Ad · <https://www.cattownoakland.org/reservations> ⓘ
Cat Town Cafe in Oakland - Cat Town - CatTownOakland.org
The **Cat** Zone is a space with 8 - 24 free roaming **cats**, available for adoption. Spend 50...

Note that for all the fanfare about change at Google, ads on Google remain pretty straightforward. They are a URL, a headline, some text, and sometimes some more blue links below the ad. Images are beginning to show up as “image extensions” on the mobile phone and on some desktop searches.

Here's a **to-do**. Go to Google on your phone and/or computer. Type in a search term that you think a customer might enter that relates to your product or service. Stop and examine each ad that appears with a critical eye to their a) URLs, b) headlines, c) description text, and d) ad extensions. What do you like? What do you dislike? What do you find persuasive? Which ads would you (as a customer) click on? Google Ads is public. You can easily see what competitors are running as ads and “imitate” them in your own ads. Indeed, SpyFu (<https://www.spyfu.com/>) is a paid tool that will pull competitor ads and keywords for further analysis.

Ad Extensions (Assets)

In addition to the headline, description, and path, ads on Google can also have “extensions.” These are being rebranded, as of September 2022, as “assets.” Among the most important are:

Sitelinks – these are blue-highlighted bits of text that can appear below an ad and link to specific subsections of your website, such as “contact us” or “cat grooming,” etc.

Callouts – these are non-clickable text elements that can appear below an ad, usually meant to “call out” something special such as “Valentine’s Day Specials” or “ask about our kitty services.”

Images – these are a relatively new type of extension and allow you to show a small thumbnail of your business, product, or service. They appear mainly on the mobile phone and are not always universally available.

Structured Snippets – you select a predefined header like “Product” or “Service category” and then add callouts to specific subsections of your website.

Call extensions – these allow your phone number to appear in ads.

Lead form extension – allows persons to enter information and send messages from your ads.

Location – this extension type allows users to see your store’s physical address.

Affiliate location – similar to the above.

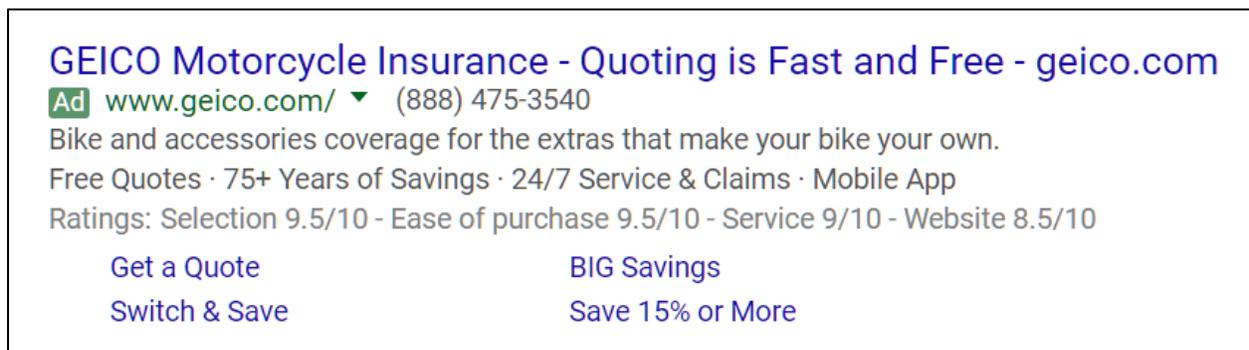
Price extensions – allow users to browse products and prices in an ad and then click directly to them on your website.

App extensions – allow you to link from your ad to your mobile app for download and installation.

Promotion Extension – use this extension like a callout extension to “shout out” a custom offer like a coupon or discount.

Google even has a new type of extension called “**Automated Extensions**,” which occurs automatically when Google decides to feature something like a specific page on your website or a phone number. To read the official Google help file on ad assets, visit <http://jmlinks.com/23q>. To read about the newer Automated Assets, visit <http://jmlinks.com/39p>.

Here’s a screenshot of an ad with clickable sitelink extensions:



The screenshot shows a GEICO advertisement with the following content:

- Headline: **GEICO Motorcycle Insurance - Quoting is Fast and Free - geico.com**
- Text: **Ad** www.geico.com/ (888) 475-3540
- Text: Bike and accessories coverage for the extras that make your bike your own.
- Text: Free Quotes · 75+ Years of Savings · 24/7 Service & Claims · Mobile App
- Text: Ratings: Selection 9.5/10 - Ease of purchase 9.5/10 - Service 9/10 - Website 8.5/10
- Two columns of sitelink extensions:
 - Left column: [Get a Quote](#), [Switch & Save](#)
 - Right column: [BIG Savings](#), [Save 15% or More](#)

And here’s a screenshot of an ad with a location extension:

DeVry.edu | DeVry University | Degree Programs For Students

(Ad) www.devry.edu/ (866) 605-2326

Year-Round Class Offerings To Earn Your Degree On Your Schedule. Apply Today. Graduate Certificates. Transfer Credits. Nationwide Locations. Flexible Classes. Grants and Scholarships. Online Options. Associate Degree Programs. Master's Degree Programs. Affordable.

📍 3005 Highland Pkwy Ste. 100, Downers Grove, IL - Closed now · Hours ▾

<p>Online Programs Degree Specializations That Fit Your Career Goals</p>	<p>Accreditation DeVry is Regionally Accredited Through the HLC, Learn More</p>
<p>Campus Options Find Locations Nationwide and Speak With an Advisor Today</p>	<p>Financial Aid Speak With an Advisor to Learn More About College Financial Aid Options</p>

Notice as well how DeVry has added their phone number of (866) 605-2326 as a call extension and how the location extension shows their address in Downers Grove, IL.

And here’s a screenshot with a Google shopping “review extension,” which gets the advertiser those nifty, eye-catching stars:

Google best office lights

Go to Google Home

All Shopping Images Videos Books More Tools

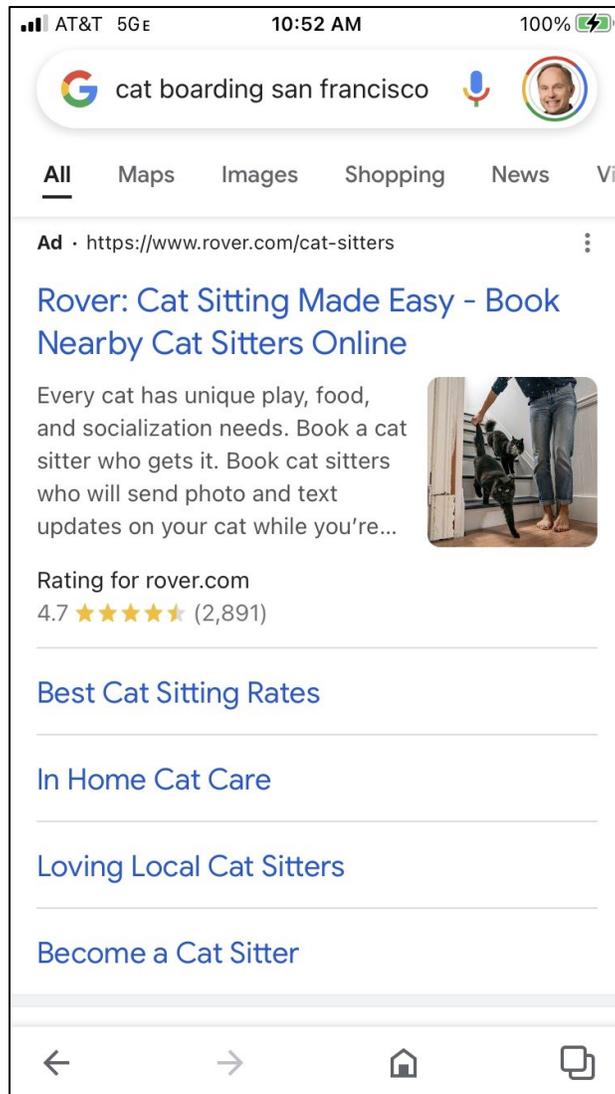
About 757,000,000 results (1.01 seconds)

Ads · Browse best office lights

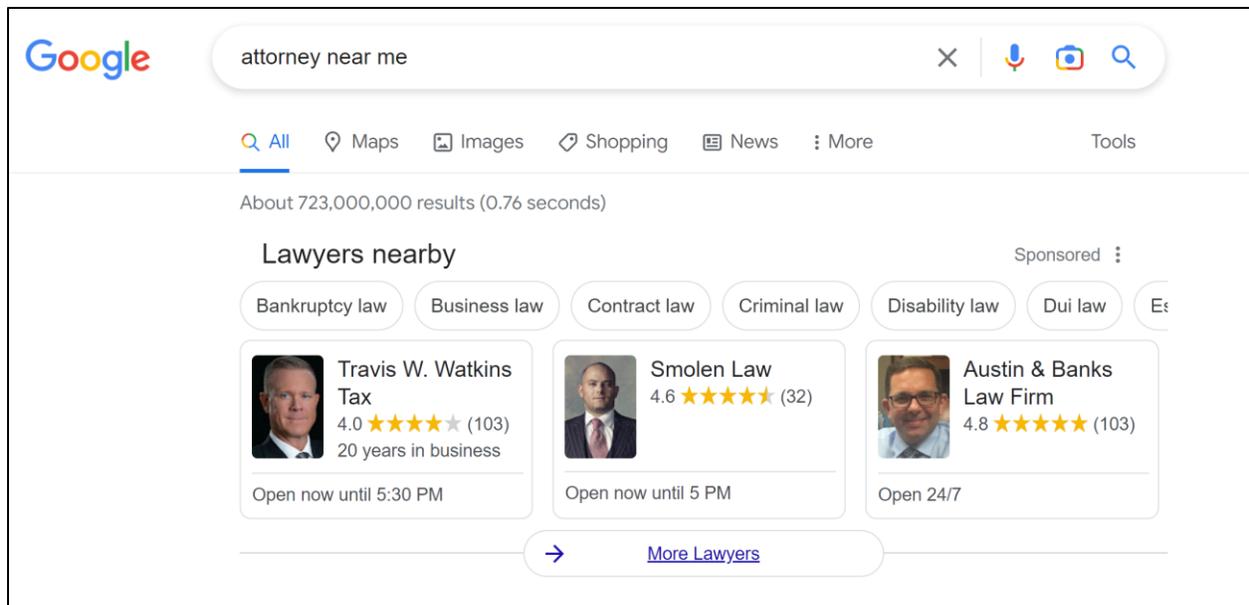
<p>CURBSIDE</p>  <p>📍 Pick up today</p> <p>Commercial Electric 48 i...</p> <p>\$42.47</p> <p>Home Depot</p> <p>★★★★★ (426)</p>	 <p>Spirelli 19" Wide...</p> <p>\$299.99</p> <p>Lamps Plus</p> <p>★★★★★ (17)</p>	 <p>Koncept Z-Bar Gen 3 Desk...</p> <p>\$332.10</p> <p>Lumens</p> <p>Special offer</p>	<p>CURBSIDE</p>  <p>📍 Pick up today</p> <p>Commercial Electric 4 ft...</p> <p>\$37.47</p> <p>Home Depot</p> <p>★★★★★ (1k+)</p>	 <p>Dyson Lightcycle...</p> <p>\$649.99</p> <p>Dyson</p> <p>★★★★★ (40)</p>
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Notice how “shopping ads” feature a picture of the product, a headline or product name, a price, and gold review stars vs. the text-focused regular ads on Google.

And here's an ad with an "image extension:"



And here's an ad showing LSAs (local service ads), available only for certain types of local businesses such as attorneys:



The Display Network

Ads on the Display Network can be text and appear similar to the above. Or they can be graphic images, what are now called “Responsive Display Ads” (See <http://jmlinks.com/47z>). You can either upload your own or use Google’s “Scan Website” tool to have it pull images from your website and create a cornucopia of possible image sizes for your ad. In addition to the text-only ads that are available on the Google Search Network, on the Google Display Network, you can run the following types:

Responsive Display Ads – ads that combine text, images, and URLs “on the fly” to match the wide varieties of websites and ad formats across the Google Display Network.

Image Ads – upload your own image ad creatives to the Google Display Network, and Google will strategically place your image ads across its network.

Video ads – ads that display a video about your company, product, or service.

New ad formats are constantly popping up on the Google Network, such as “App promotion ads” to promote your app on Google Shopping, shopping ads on Google shopping, dynamic search ads on Google Search Partners, and call-only ads on Google search. See <http://jmlinks.com/48a> for the Google help file on all available ad formats. In general, you run text-only ads on Google Search and text and image-based ads on the Google Display Network. Shopping ads are a hybrid of text and images that appear on Google.com.

To read the official Google help file on creating “responsive display ads” for the Display Network, visit <http://jmlinks.com/23r>. Note that if you are not running on the Display Network, then you can ignore these ads format as they are not available on Google Search. Also, be aware that YouTube has specific ad requirements and formats; you can read the official Google help file on YouTube ads at <http://jmlinks.com/23s>. And to read about ad formats on Google Shopping Ads, visit <http://jmlinks.com/48b>. Suffice it to say at this point that there are many more formatting options for ads on the Google Display Network, YouTube, and Google Shopping than on the Search Network.

» GOOGLE ADS ORGANIZATION

Google Ads is a hierarchy. Remember that Google is a company founded by and run by engineers. These are stereotypically the guys with the pocket protectors, the over-organized desks, and the Sheldon Cooper personality types that need to always “sit on their spot.” (To learn more about Sheldon Cooper and ponder whether this personality type is overrepresented in the Googleplex, visit <http://jmlinks.com/23t>, but I digress).

Google Ads is a hierarchy! The more organized you are, the better you will do!

Accordingly, you will get your best performance by understanding and following Google Ads strict hierarchical rules:

Account. This is the master category and contains your email login, password, and billing information. I recommend that you set up two-step verification (<http://jmlinks.com/23v>) for your Google Ads account, as thieves target Google Ads accounts because there is money to be stolen!

Campaigns. Think of a campaign as a “bucket” that holds your budget, bid strategy (but not your actual bids), network choice (Search vs. Display), geotarget, device target (mobile, desktop, tablet), and a few other odds and ends such as scheduling.

Ad Groups. Groups are the workhorses of Google Ads and should reflect your product or service categories and tightly correspond to your core keywords. Bids are also set at the group level or at the interrelated keyword level. An example of group organization would be “cat boarding” vs. “cat grooming”; different customer needs create different search queries and should be reflected in corresponding, unique Google Ads groups

Assets or Extensions. These “wild card” elements can “live” at various levels. An “image extension,” for example, can live at the campaign or ad group level, whereas a “call extension” can live at the account, campaign, or ad group level. As you add in assets, pay attention to how Google connects them to levels such as account, campaign, or ad group.

Cross-Views in Google Ads: Confusion Alert!

Google Ads is a hierarchy at a structural level. However, you can “view” across the structure in different ways. For example, you can log in to your Account, click on the “Keywords” tab, and view ALL the keywords across ALL the ad groups of your account. However, “Keywords” live at the ad group level only, so any edits that you make impact them at that level. You can also view ALL your ads at the Account level, even though both keywords and ads actually “live” at the Ad Group level.

It’s confusing.

Imagine, for example, a glass building called “Account,” which had two floors called “Campaigns” and “Ad Groups.” At any moment, you could see “through” the building in any direction, but, for example, the “budget information” would “live” on the

“Campaign floor.” While you could be on the “group” floor and “see” the budget, you couldn’t touch it (or edit it), without moving to the “Campaign floor.”

Google Ads is like a glass building. You can “see” many things in many different ways, but you can only manage or edit them at the correct level. For example:

Budget can be edited only at the Campaign level.

Ads can be edited only at the Ad Group level.

Bids can be edited only at the Group or keyword level.

Keywords can only be edited at the Ad Group level.

Geotargeting can be edited only at the Campaign level.

and so on and so forth...

This is confusing to people as you can “view” things in Google Ads in ways that do NOT reflect the structural organization. I recommend you ask yourself, “what level does this live at?” when you’re having a problem editing something, and go to that level by clicking on the appropriate tab. See the official help file on best practices for account organization at <http://jmlinks.com/23u>.

At this point, don’t freak out about the organizational issues at Google Ads. Like working in a big, fancy glass building in San Francisco, over time, the organization will make sense to you and become second nature.

» GETTING ONLINE HELP WITH GOOGLE ADS

My companion, *Marketing Almanac* has a cornucopia of resources on Google Ads, including tools and help documentation. That said, here are the official resources where you can “ask a question” about Google Ads.

Help. Help is hidden in Google Ads under the “Question Mark Icon” in the top right of the screen. Click on it and then select “Get Help.”

Live Chat and Email Help. These can be found in the “help” section, as indicated above.

Phone Support. Click on the “Question Mark Icon,” then “Get Help,” and you should see a phone number. In the United States, the number is 866-246-6453. Live technical support is available 9 am – 8 pm Eastern Time, although due to COVID-19, it is sporadic at best.

You can also access the Google Ads help files at <https://support.google.com/google-ads>. You can post questions to the Google Ads Community at <https://support.google.com/google-ads/community>. Throughout, be aware that Google has a vested interest in your spending MORE (not less) money on Google Ads, so the technical support at all levels can be a bit salesy.

»»» **DELIVERABLE: GOOGLE ADS STRATEGY WORKSHEET**

The **DELIVERABLE** for this Chapter focuses on the Big Picture. Why are you interested in advertising on Google Ads? Which network (Search or Display) makes the most sense for your products or services?

For the **worksheet**, go to <http://jmlinks.com/23googleads>, then re-enter the password, “23googleads,” to register if you have not already done so), and click on the link to the “Google Ads Strategy” worksheet.



2

GOOGLE ADS GOTCHAS

Google Ads is full of “gotchas,” misleading elements in the platform that can cause you to advertise on the wrong keywords, run on websites you don’t really like, pay more for clicks than necessary, and otherwise make your advertising inefficient and expensive. By their very nature, these gotchas are hidden from the average user. If you are currently advertising on Google Ads, I highly recommend that you read this Chapter to see if you are being impacted. If so, pause your ads until you read this book and reorganize your ads strategy. Regardless, this Chapter outlines the major mistakes I see as a teacher and consultant – the nefarious, hidden, no-good, obnoxious tricks inherent in the platform and seemingly designed to steal your money and give it to Google.

Let’s get started!

TO-DO LIST:

- » Gotcha #1: An Incoherent Website or Landing Page
- » Gotcha #2: Bad Keyword Match Types
- » Gotcha #3: Artificial Intelligence
- » Gotcha #4: The Google Display Network
- » Gotcha #5: Conversions Across Devices
- » Gotcha #6: Google Ads Alternatives
- »» Deliverable: A Google Ads Gotcha Checkup

» GOTCHA#1: AN INCOHERENT WEBSITE OR LANDING PAGE

What do you sell? Who wants it? How do you persuade a potential buyer that you have just what they want? How do you get them to take that critical step, sign on that critical line, and take that critical transformation from a *prospect* to a *customer*?

Before you start advertising on Google, you should be able to –

1. State your **Business Value Proposition** (sometimes also called a **Unique Selling Proposition**). What do you sell? What's unique about it? What makes it head-and-shoulders better than the other products or services out there?
2. Identify your **buyer personas**. Who are your (potential) customers? What are they “in the market for,” and why?
3. Convey your **sales pitch**. If a customer were in front of you right now, how would you quickly convey that you have *exactly* what they need or want?

Many marketers use the concept of a “sales funnel” that goes from *awareness* of a product or service to the *back-and-forth* of a conversation with a salesperson (or downloadable materials on a website), to an initial *relationship* (such as a sign-up to an email list), to a *final purchase*. (I explain this fully in my *The Marketing Book* (<http://jmlinks.com/twaggle>)).

For our purposes as Google Ads experts, the first **gotcha** is simply this: sending *paid* traffic to an *incoherent* website or landing page.

Remember, the basic process is:

1. Customer has a need and searches Google by keywords.
2. Customer sees ads and clicks on a compelling ad (hopefully yours).
3. Customer clicks FROM Google TO your website (landing page).
4. Customer scans, reads, or listens and finds a compelling “pitch.”
5. Customer takes the desired action such as filling out a form, calling in, or even making a purchase – that is, becomes a “sales lead” or a “sale.”

Thus, your website/landing page must –

1. **Quickly and clearly explain your Business Value Proposition.** How does “what you offer” fit “what they just searched for” and “clicked on?” Your landing must quickly convey you have EXACTLY what they want.
2. **Convey trust and authority.** Why should that user trust that you are who you say you are? That your product or service is as good as you say it is?
3. **Offer an Easy (and Non-threatening) Next Step.** To use an analogy, you don’t generally go up to people in a bar and say, “Hi! I would like to sleep with you! Let’s get started!” Instead, you buy them a drink, you go out for coffee, you date for a while... you fall in love... and you get married.. and then... It’s the same for your website: don’t lead with BUY MY PRODUCT. Lead with something free and/or non-threatening like a “no obligation consultation” or “free eBook.”
 - a. **Alternatively**, if you are an e-commerce site, what you sell needs to be inexpensive enough and standardized enough that they are willing to purchase it from you immediately. They still need to trust you as a seller and that makes strong seller reviews, free or at least clear shipping costs, and an easy-to-understand return policy absolutely imperative.

Howie Jacobson, the author of the 2011 classic *Google AdWords for Dummies*, once told me, “Customers have the attention span of guppies.” When a customer lands on your website, they must INSTANTLY see that you have EXACTLY what they want; they must INSTANTLY believe that your company is trustworthy; they must EASILY see the next step (call, feedback form, or chat); and they must be PERSUADED to take that next step.

Customer = guppy

Landing page = fish food (yummy!)

Customer brain = small, busy, overwhelmed

Landing page = easy-to-understand, trustworthy, non-threatening

Bait / fish food = your yummy, simple offer.

Bite = a phone call, a feedback form or chat, or a simple e-commerce purchase

Clicks cost money. Money is precious. *Do not pay Google to send customer guppies to an incoherent, hard-to-understand, slow-to-load, crappy landing page or website.* If you do, Google will make money. You will lose money (because it did not convert).

» **GOTCHA#2: BAD KEYWORD MATCH TYPES**

A second widespread problem is Gotcha #2, “bad match types” for your keywords. We will discuss this in detail in Chapter 4 on the Google Search Network, but for now, let’s stop this **gotcha** in its tracks.

We’ll assume that you’ve done at least a little keyword research and that you understand you want to run your ads on keyword queries that are “likely” to be your customers and “likely” to be those customers near the moment of purchase.

A San Francisco insurance agent, for example, would set his geotarget to San Francisco and run on keywords such as:

motorcycle insurance

insurance for Harley-Davidsons

And not

motorcycle clubs (too broad)

motorcycle (too broad!)

insurance (too broad!)

In addition, you need to understand **keyword match types** in Google Ads.

When you input keywords into Google Ads to tell Google when to run your ad, be sure to enter either a “quote” or a bracket “[” in front of your keywords. If, for example, you want to run on the keywords “motorcycle insurance,” these should be entered into Google Ads as follows:

“motorcycle insurance”

[motorcycle insurance]

In Google Ads lingo, that is, *phrase* match or *exact* match. NEVER EVER enter just the words without brackets or quotes, as for example:

motorcycle insurance

Despite the official Google explanation (<http://jmlinks.com/23d>), using broad match (*just the words, without quotation marks or brackets*) can produce many poor matches. In this example, Google might substitute

“scooter” for “motorcycle”

so that your ad would show for

scooter insurance

which you may, or may not offer. It can be worse. For example, a keyword target entered as just *cat insurance* (no quotes or brackets) can end up running on search queries like *pet insurance* or even *dog insurance* generating lots of clicks but few sales or sales inquiries. (Note: plus “+” signs were formerly used in what was called “broad match modified,” but this has been discontinued, leaving only quotes or brackets.)

“Phrase” and [exact] match increasingly do not mean what they seem to mean:

“car insurance” might match on “cheap auto insurance” or even “house insurance combined policies.”

[car insurance] might match on “auto insurance” or even just “insurance.”

Google’s latest initiative into AI called BERT (*Bidirectional Encoder Representations from Transformers*) has been deployed into Google Ads, thus loosening the relationship between the *keywords* you enter as an advertiser and the *search terms* entered by the user. Guess who’s favored in this transition? Google. Not you. Not your budget. Not your conversions. Google is playing games with keywords in Google Ads; advertisers beware. (We will explore how to mitigate this in Chapter 4).

Negative Keywords

Another keyword problem is a failure to identify and input “negative keywords” that indicate people are just looking for free or cheap stuff, like the words “free” or “cheap.” After all, someone looking for “free cat boarding” or “cheap cat boarding” isn’t exactly the same type of customer as someone looking for “luxury cat boarding,” yet if you enter into Google Ads just:

cat boarding

no “quote” mark or no “[]” brackets and no negative keywords like *-free*, *-cheap*, you are saying to the Google Ads bartender, “get me a whiskey, any old whiskey will do.” Run me on

cat boarding

discount cat boarding

free cat boarding

cheap cat boarding

cat boarding for cat owners who don't care about their cats

etc.

Specificity, not trust, is what you need in your communications with Google Ads. So, you want to specify the correct match type and the negative keywords.

TO-DO If you are currently running on broad match, I highly recommend you go through your keywords and immediately add quote marks or brackets in front of all your keywords! If you can easily identify obvious negative keywords, add those into your Ad Groups at once.

Find Out Your Actual Search Terms

To see the search terms entered by potential customers that are actually triggering your ads, click into an Ad Group (Left Column) and then click on the blue name of your Ad Group. Next, click *Keywords > Search Terms*.

Here's a screenshot showing the actual search terms entered:

<input type="checkbox"/> Search term	Keyword	↓ Impr.	Clicks	CTR	Avg. CPC
<input type="checkbox"/> social media marketing books	[social media marketing books]	15	3	20.00%	\$4.46
<input type="checkbox"/> books on social media marketing	[books on social media marketing]	3	1	33.33%	\$4.82
<input type="checkbox"/> seo fitness workbook	[SEO Fitness Workbook]	3	2	66.67%	\$3.41

“Search term” indicates the *actual* terms people typed into Google. The columns marked “Impr” shows impressions, “clicks” shows clicks, “CTR” shows “click thru rate,” and “Avg. CPC” shows your average cost per click. If you have conversions enabled, you can also see which keywords led to conversions.

- If all these terms make sense as relevant to your business, you’re in OK shape.
- If, however, you see terms that are way off the mark, you have a problem caused by “Gotcha #2,” *bad match types*.

Regardless of your performance, **I recommend that you immediately tighten up your keyword matches by adding quotation marks and/or brackets.** You can also add **negative keywords** if there are terms that clearly designate a non-customer. *Don’t let Google think for you when it comes to keywords!*

» GOTCHA #3: ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Just let Google think for you. What could possibly go wrong? Google’s push into Artificial Intelligence has entered Google Ads in a big way, and it’s not 100% bad for advertisers. But it’s not 100% good, either. It’s problematic and should be used only with adult supervision.

Artificial intelligence is **gotcha #3**, and it shows up in Google in the following ways:

1. **Google Recommendations.** Nowadays, when you log into your Google Ads Account, you will be bombarded with “recommendations” from Google as well as an “optimization score.” (You can also access these from the left-hand menu at “Recommendations”). Take all of these with a huge grain of salt. A few are good; many are overly optimistic. The biggest problems come from keyword recommendations, but you will see others, such as changing your bid strategy from manual cost-per-click to target CPA (cost per acquisition). Do not follow Google’s recommendations until you have read this book and have the education to evaluate whether they are truly good or bad.
2. **Smart Campaigns including “Performance Max.”** Formerly called “AdWords Express,” “Smart Campaigns” are Google’s “solution” for small business owners who are too busy to manually set up and manage Google Ads. (To access Smart Campaigns, you need to use the Google Ads app for iOS or Android). You write your ads, and it “automatically” does all the targeting and optimization for you. In general, “Smart Campaigns” produce inferior results to traditional Google Ads because of poor keyword choice, inferior quality clicks, and more costs. “Performance Max” is a similar AI-based campaign type.
3. **LSAs (Local Service Ads).** These ads are available only in certain industries (e.g., plumbers, lawyers) and only in some geographics. They are not necessarily bad, but in some situations (e.g., lawyers), the matching can be horrendous and generate many spurious clicks and high costs. They lack the control of traditional Google Ads, so they should only be used if strictly monitored for results.
4. **Keyword Suggestions.** Periodically, you’ll log in to Google Ads (especially at the Overview Level) and see “recommended keywords” as Google will auto-suggest new keywords to you. 99% of the time, these are junk keywords designed to dramatically increase your ad impressions and clicks. Don’t just follow the suggestions from Google blindly, but be very cautious as to its suggestions for new keywords.
5. **Smart Bidding or Automatic Bidding.** While you can set your bids per click manually, Google has options that use artificial intelligence to adjust your bids automatically. While in some cases this works well, in many others, Google overbids and artificially raises your bids without actually improving performance. To change your bidding preferences, go to *Settings > Bidding > Change Bid Strategy*. For beginners, I recommend *Manual CPC* despite what Google will tell you.

6. **Ad Suggestions.** Google will automatically create ads for you unless you opt out. Again, because Google is motivated to “increase clicks” and you are motivated to “increase conversions,” this conflict of interest can lead Google’s AI to create ads that are overly enticing to users (e.g., offering “free pizza and beer” types of inducements). To opt out of Ad Suggestions, make sure you are at the account level (not in a Campaign or an Ad Group). Next, click on Settings on the left, then Account Settings just underneath, then the drop-down arrow next to “Ad Suggestions,” and then “Don’t automatically apply ad suggestions,” and then Save.
7. **Automated Assets.** Similar to Ad Suggestions, Google will auto-generate ad assets, which will often be oriented toward getting more clicks rather than towards more conversions. To turn these off, go into your Google Ads account, then click *Ads & Assets > Assets*. Under “Table View,” select “Associations (legacy).” On the far right, click the three dots for “More” and find “Account-level automated assets.” Again, on the far right, click the three dots for “More” and click “Advanced Settings.” Then turn OFF all automated or dynamic assets.

Google doesn’t make it easy to opt out of certain features, especially AI-based features that generally benefit them and not you. Yet none of these Google AI innovations are inherently bad. It’s just that they are *experimental* in nature and should only be used with “adult supervision.” I wouldn’t let Google drive my car (yet), nor will I let Google run my Google Ads for me either.

» **GOTCHA#4: THE GOOGLE DISPLAY NETWORK**

“**Gotcha #4**” is the Google Display Network or GDN. Many people do not realize that Google Ads runs on two very different networks, the *Search Network* (primarily Google but also search-driven sites like Yelp or Comcast plus YouTube search) and the *Display Network* (a network of sites such as YouTube videos and Gmail but also blogs, parked domains, web portals and many nefarious sites that seem to exist primarily to steal your money).

THE DISPLAY NETWORK IS PROBLEMATIC

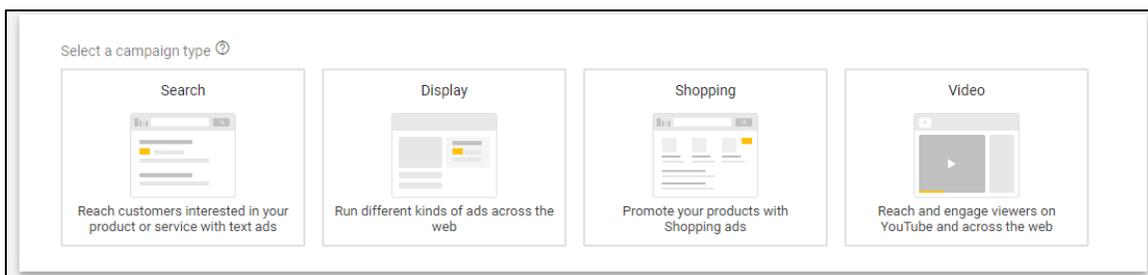
You can read an inaccurate and salesy pitch by Google on the Google Display Network at <http://jmlinks.com/23e>. This is akin to watching a movie trailer about Hollywood’s latest horror movie or an introductory video on the latest Ford Mustang by Ford. It is NOT an independent, objective explanation of how the Google Display Network works! It is a sales piece!

The problem is that the GDN contains many badly matched and even fraudulent sites that exist solely to capture clicks and take your ad dollars. If you are not experienced, DO NOT RUN on the Google Display Network!

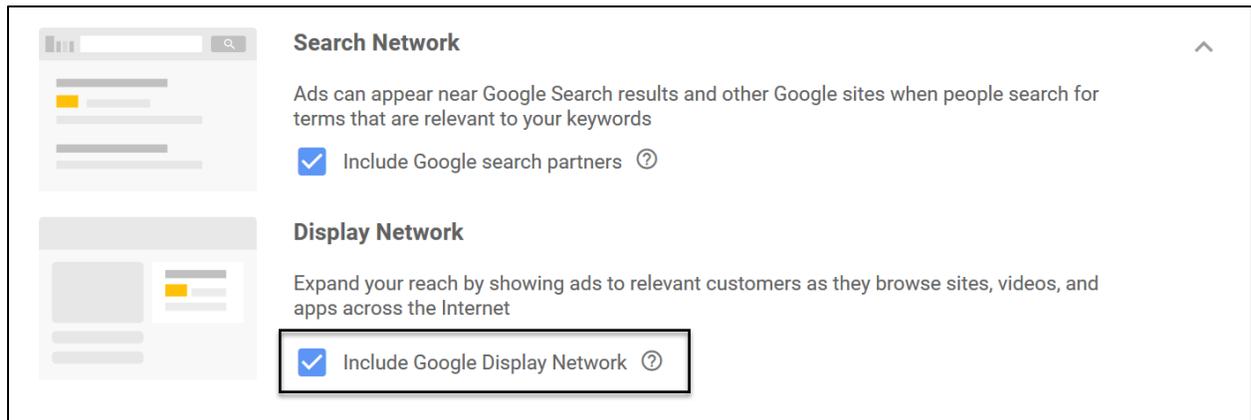
Default Setting: On

Unfortunately, the default setting on Google is to run on both search and display. Google has made it quite difficult for inexperienced advertisers to avoid the Google Display Network when they set up a new campaign.

When you click the blue “+” sign to set up a new campaign, then click on either “Website traffic” or “Leads,” you’ll see the following options:



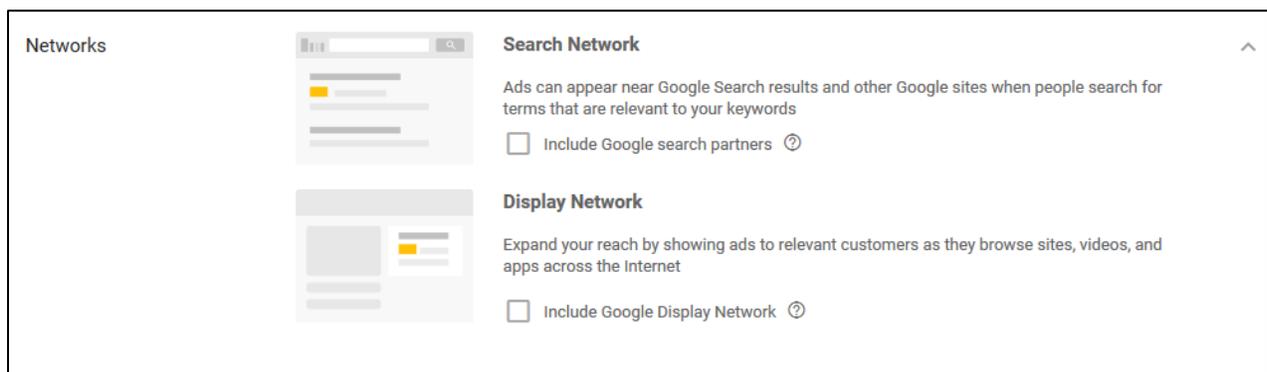
And then you’ll have to be very careful to “opt out” of the Display Network as it rears its ugly head at various points in the setup process. Here’s a screenshot showing where you have to pro-actively uncheck a box to “opt out” of the Display Network:



If you are running on the GDN without understanding it, you may be running on many terrible placements up to and including fraudulent sites that do nothing more than generate spurious clicks and cost you money.

TO-DO. Turn off the Google Display Network and run only on the Search Network.

To disable the Google Display Network, click into a Campaign, and then click *Settings* on the left column. Next, find the *Networks* tab in the middle of the page. Click the downward chevron to expand the box until you see:



Make sure that the box under Display Network is unchecked; I also recommend you uncheck *Google Search partners* as well, though this is not as unambiguously terrible as the GDN. Google has rigged Google Ads very much to default you into the Display Network, so dig in, find your settings, and run only on the Search Network until you pro-actively decide that the GDN has value for you.

In fact, you should NEVER run one campaign on both networks. Rather, clearly mark and run one campaign on the Search Network and, if desired, another parallel campaign on the Display Network.

» GOTCHA#5: CONVERSIONS ACROSS DEVICES

You may have heard that Google is now “mobile first.” Google believes that because most search activity occurs on mobile devices like phones and tablets (vs. desktop computers), all advertisers should run full blast on mobile devices. However, the fact that a lot of *click* volume occurs on mobile phones does not mean that the best *conversion* rates occur on mobile phones. (Remember: Google gets paid off of *clicks*, and you get paid off of *conversions*).

For some businesses, it is highly desirable to reach consumers on their mobile devices, getting the click from Google, and then getting a conversion on a mobile device on your website. But for many businesses, the mobile experience isn’t very good, and many customers click from Google on a mobile device to your website, only to bounce and fail to convert.

VERIFY THAT ADS ON PHONES ACTUALLY CONVERT

“**Gotcha #5**,” accordingly, occurs when you’re running on phones, tablets, and desktops when you may be converting far better on only one of these platforms. In my experience, especially for complicated products like insurance, CPA service, hair

transplants, and the like, generally, the *desktop* conversion rate far outperforms that of the *mobile phone*. Your **TO-DO** here is to verify that your mobile conversions are as strong as your desktop conversions and turn each on or off, or adjust your bids up or down, accordingly.

The default setting is to run on –

Computers – PCs and MACS on the desktop.

Tablets with full browsers – iPad and Android tablets

Mobile devices with full browsers – mobile phones like iPhones and Android phones

You can see your impressions and clicks across devices by selecting a Campaign (or drilling down one more level into an Ad Group), and then clicking on *Devices*. You can then toggle between Campaigns and Ad Groups by clicking the blue *Level* link at the top.

You may not have conversions turned “on” yet. If not, you may show zero conversions across all device types. You can also go to Google Analytics (<https://analytics.google.com/>), then click on Segments, and next turn on “Mobile Traffic” and “Tablet and Desktop Traffic.” You can then compare your mobile phone traffic to your desktop traffic and look at the relative bounce rate and conversions.

Here’s a screenshot, for example, that shows that cost per conversion is far worse on mobile phones and tablets vs. desktop computers:

The screenshot shows a Google Ads performance report with a 'Level: Campaign; Co' filter. On the left, there is a 'Device' targeting box with checkboxes for 'Mobile phones', 'Computers', and 'Tablets'. The main table displays performance metrics for each device type. The 'Cost / conv.' column is highlighted with a red box.

Device	↓ Impr.	Cost	Clicks	Conversions	Cost / conv.
Mobile phones	10,047	\$1,492.79	321	20.00	\$74.64
Computers	8,545	\$1,881.86	276	35.00	\$53.77
Tablets	1,437	\$428.90	55	5.00	\$85.78
Total: Account	96,006	\$4,368.64	834	60.00	\$72.81

In this example, we'd then want to de-emphasize our ads on mobile phones and emphasize our ads on desktop computers. Despite the Google hype about mobile, we're doing better on the desktop!

A Gut Check

If you don't have conversion tracking turned on or don't understand, don't worry. Just do a "gut check." Take out your mobile phone and browse your website. Is it likely that a customer coming FROM Google on their mobile phone and landing ON your website will convert, meaning purchase your product on an e-commerce site or fill out a registration form on a site that wants sales leads? If so, leave your mobile turned "on" in Google Ads. If not, turn it off or at least bid it down by entering a negative percentage.

To adjust your bids on mobile, click into a Campaign (as these settings are Campaign-specific). Next, click Devices in the left column, and you should see the Device targeting box appear. Having decided whether to decrease (or increase) your bids on mobile devices, select a positive or negative number in the Bid adj. (bid adjustment) column. If mobile is outperforming desktops and tablets, you can up your bid. It just depends on what's performing.

Here's a screenshot:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Device	Level	Added to	Bid adj.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Mobile phones	Campaign	JM - Bay Area	-100%
<input type="checkbox"/>	Computers	Campaign	JM - Bay Area	-
<input type="checkbox"/>	Tablets	Campaign	JM - Bay Area	-
Total: Account				

Do this if, and only if, you believe (or know for a fact) that mobile traffic isn't converting for you. In some rare situations, the reverse may occur: desktop traffic does not convert, but the mobile does. In that case, then turn off or bid down the desktop by setting a bid adjustment of -100% or some lesser percentage. The point is that you need to proactively decide which devices to run your ads on, not let Google think for you.

» GOTCHA#6: GOOGLE ADS ALTERNATIVES

If you go to a Chevy lot, the car dealer will try to sell you a Chevy. He isn't likely to explain that a Toyota might be better for your needs, nor that using Uber or Lyft might be an even more effective way to secure your transportation.

Similarly, if you reach out to Google, you'll find that Google Ads is the best alternative for any Internet marketing needs. **Gotcha #6** is the failure to look at alternatives. Is Google really better than –

SEO or Search Engine Optimization, the art and science of getting your company to the top of Google for **free**. (See my *SEO Workbook* at <http://jmlinks.com/seo>).

Email Marketing or using email services like Constant Contact, Mail Chimp, or Aweber to build a following of interested customers.

Social Media Marketing, or using free marketing and/or advertising on Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, TikTok, and other social media networks (See my *Social Media Workbook* at <http://jmlinks.com/smm>).

Influencer Marketing and PR. Influencers, superfans, and media types like journalists or bloggers may truly influence your customers to buy. Maybe so much that these techniques outperform Google Ads.

Review marketing. Working hard to get positive customer reviews on sites like Yelp, Google reviews, eBay, etc.

Optimizing on or Advertising on Amazon, eBay, or other specific websites. Some industries (e.g., books) are dominated by certain websites (e.g., Amazon), and Google advertising will do little, if anything, to influence them.

Traditional Advertising. Trade shows, radio, TV, direct mail, even billboards – they all have a place. Maybe you’re that unique business that actually gets a higher ROI from “traditional” advertising than from Google Ads.

Doing Nothing at All and relying on word of mouth.

Google Ads may not generate the highest ROI for your marketing investment. Generally speaking, SEO will usually far, far outperform Google Ads in terms of ROI, while other tactics like social media marketing or advertising on Facebook, Twitter, or YouTube can be cost-competitive in some instances. Indeed, word of mouth and eWom (electronic word of mouth) will nearly always outperform every other marketing vehicle. So, before you use Google Ads, or simultaneously to your use of Google Ads, be sure to maximize every other alternative that may generate a higher ROI.

Usually, a smart marketing effort will have some blood, sweat, tears, and budget in SEO, some in Google Ads, some in WOM / eWOM, some in free social media marketing efforts, and some in other advertising venues such as Facebook or LinkedIn and even some in “traditional” media like TV or radio.

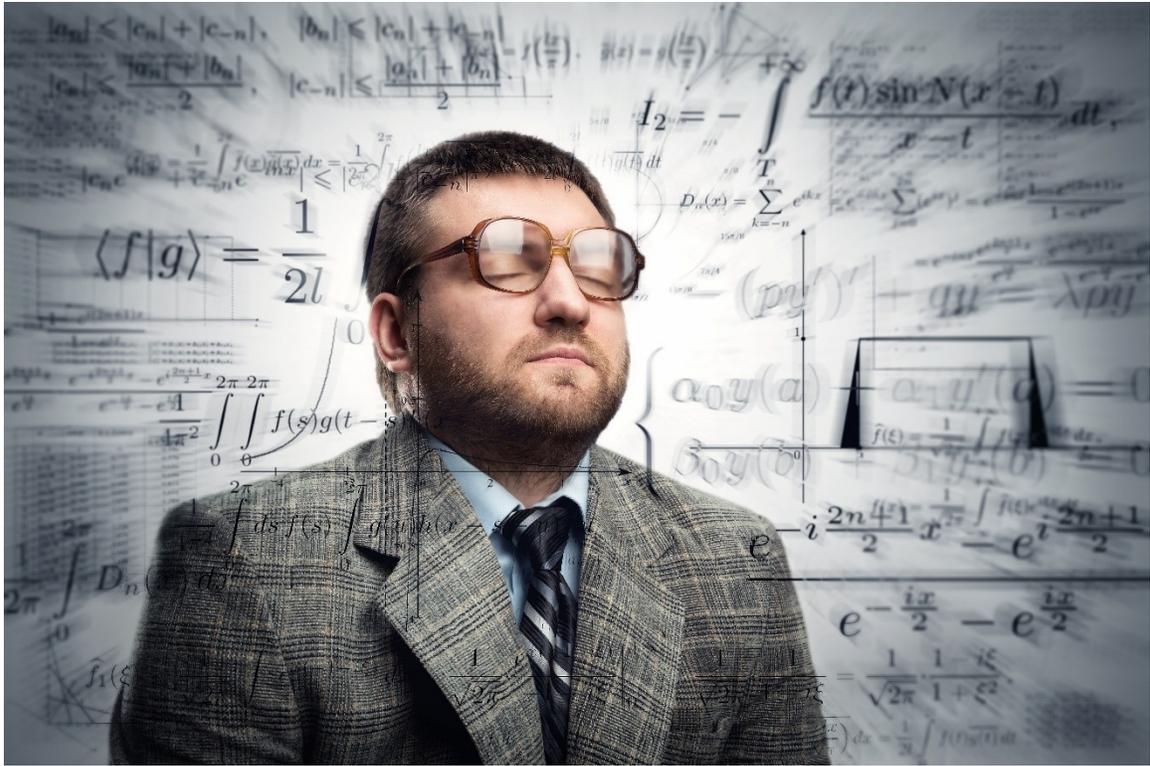
Google Ads has a very loud and very powerful propaganda machine (compared, for example, with SEO or email marketing), but that loudness does not mean it generates the highest ROI for you as a small business. It just means that it has a lot of Google dollars behind it!

TO-DO. Evaluate all your online publicity alternatives, both free and paid, and allocate your budget (both time and money) accordingly. Usually, you want a mix of more than one advertising or marketing vehicle, looking for the highest ROI across media.

»» **DELIVERABLE: AN GOOGLE ADS GOTCHA CHECKUP**

Now that we've come to the end of Chapter 1, it's time for your **DELIVERABLE**, a completed *Google Ads Gotcha* worksheet. This worksheet will query you as to the four "Gotchas" to make sure that you have pro-actively decided on your Google Ads strategy as opposed to being led by the nose by Google against your own best interests.

For the **worksheet**, go to <http://jmlinks.com/23googleads>, then re-enter the password, "23googleads," and click on the link to the "Google Ads Gotcha" worksheet.



3

KEYWORDS

When a user goes to Google, he or she inputs a keyword *search term* such as “motorcycle insurance” or “pizza near me.” You, as the advertiser, input a *keyword* through the Google Ads user interface. Google – as the broker between users and advertisers – matches *search terms* to *keywords* in a competitive auction of CPC (cost-per-click bids) among advertisers. **Keywords** are thus central to success at Google Ads. Choose the *wrong* keywords, and you’ll waste money. Choose the *right* keywords, and you’re on your way to making money. Choose the *right* keywords, block *irrelevant* queries via negative keywords and proper match types, and create *tight* Ad Groups that structurally reflect your keywords, and you’re on your way to making a *lot* of money via Google Ads. This Chapter is a deep dive into the art and science of choosing keywords.

Let’s get started!

TO-DO LIST:

- » Learn Some Keyword Theory
- » Brainstorm Your Keywords
- » Reverse Engineer Competitors’ Keywords
- » Use Google Tricks to Identify Possible Keywords
- » Use Third-Party Keyword Tools
- » Master Google’s Google Ads Keyword Planner
- »» Deliverable: A Completed Keyword Brainstorm Worksheet
- » Identify Your Main Keyword Structural Patterns
- » Create Your Keyword Worksheet

» LEARN SOME KEYWORD THEORY

Not all keywords are created equally! Let's take our hypothetical "cat grooming and cat boarding salon" here in San Francisco, "Jason's Cat Boarding Emporium, Inc." or "Jason's Cat Emporium" for short.

Cats only! No dogs allowed!

As a business, therefore, we are targeting San Francisco residents who have cats, who have money, and are interested in either our grooming services or our cat boarding services (or both). Remember that we also have an online store that sells cat toys and paraphernalia to customers across the USA.

Note: to avoid wordiness, I will use "keyword" to mean either a single-word keyword such as "cats" or a multi-word phrase such as "cat boarding."

Returning to our Business Value Proposition, Jason's Cat Emporium thus has three distinct product or service offerings:

1. **Cat boarding services** – boarding cats for San Franciscans who need a place for fluffy to stay while they vacation at Cabo or travel to New York City.
2. **Cat grooming services** – providing hair styling to cats in San Francisco so that they look their best
3. **Cat toys and paraphernalia** – an online e-Commerce offering of the very best in cat toys and products.

Common sense tells us that our customers go to Google and type in search queries such as:

cat boarding

pet boarding

cat grooming

kitty boarding

kitty grooming

feline boarding

feline grooming

cat toys

cat collars

hypoallergenic cat litter

etc.

These are called our “seed keywords.” We get them by simply sitting down at our computer, hopefully with our coworkers and sales staff or even a customer or two (plus a Martini or a cup of coffee, your choice). We brainstorm for an hour or so, asking ourselves what **keywords** relevant customers might type into Google that are close to our product or service?

We’ll dig more in-depth in a moment, but we need to take a little side journey into **keyword theory**. We want to advertise to our *best* customer segment (rich people who are geographically located in San Francisco and who have cats that need to be groomed and/or boarded as well as cat lovers across the USA who are looking for unusual and high-quality cat toys) and avoid our *worst* customer segments (poor or cheap people who can’t afford quality cat boarding or grooming services, those not in San Francisco, or (even worse) people looking for dog grooming, dog boarding, or exotic bird services). Our high-end cat toys target folks who love their cats possibly as much or more than their spouses and children and for whom money is no object.

Google Ads is a Game of Words

You want to think of Google Ads as a “keyword game” played by you, Google, and your competitors to identify the most profitable keywords and eliminate money-losing keywords. It’s all about focus and strategy. Take a moment to review the theoretical constructs below. These will help orient your mind to see that a “word” is not “just a word” when it comes to Google Ads.

Educational or Early Stage Search Query. This is a keyword query when a person is just starting out to learn something about something. Examples would be “Siamese Cats,” “Where to buy a cat,” or “How to Cut a Cat’s Claws.”

Transactional Search Query. This is a keyword query when a person isn’t really in “learn mode” but rather is in “purchase” or “buy mode.” (Google Ads experts often call these “buy keywords” or “late-stage keywords.”). Examples would be “Cat Boarding,” “Cat Boarding in San Francisco,” or even “Pet Boarding.” “Cat grooming” or “cat grooming service” would also be transactional keywords, albeit focused on the less valuable grooming service vs. the more profitable boarding service. Ditto for “cat collars” or “personalized cat collars.”

Micro Search Query. This means a unique search query, such as “Cat Microchipping,” “Luxury cat boarding,” or perhaps “Iguana Boarding.” “Diamond cat collar” would also fit as a micro. These queries are just a few words but so specific as to be a very precise search term.

Short- or Long-Tail Search Query. This is not my favorite way to conceptualize search queries, but basically, a “short tail” is just a few words, vs. a “long tail,” which is more than a few words. A short tail would thus be “cat boarding,” and a long tail would be “cheap cat boarding in the Castro District, San Francisco.” Here’s a tip: focus less on the *number of words*, and more on the *user intent*, be that *educational* or *transactional*.

Branded or Navigational Search Query. Your company name, as in “Jason’s Cat Emporium” or “JM Internet Group.” Your **competitors’ names** are also branded search terms (and can be good keywords to advertise on if you’re brave).

Reputational Search Query. This is when a user is seeking to research your “reputation” and usually appends the word “review” to your company name as in “Jason’s Cat Emporium Reviews.”

Negative Keyword. This is a keyword that is definitely NOT your customer. For example, if someone types in “cheap cat boarding,” you might consider the word “cheap” as a *negative* keyword, as it indicates the person has no money or is very budget-conscious. “Free” is a common negative keyword as it indicates a person who is not willing to pay.

Ambiguous Keyword. This is a keyword that might be your target customer but might also include some folks who are decidedly not your customer. “Pet boarding” or “Animal boarding” would be examples, as these might include both “dog people” and “cat people.”

Transactions Are Where It’s At

In general, as you build out your Keyword Worksheet, you’re looking for **transactional keywords** that are definitely your customer vs. **educational keywords** that might indicate a person with no money or no desire to spend. Be sensitive as well to **ambiguous** keywords that could be your customers AND some non-customers, and watch out for negative keywords like “cheap” or “free” that indicate poor people or people with no intention of spending money.

FOCUS ON TRANSACTIONAL KEYWORDS

Another way to think about keywords is to group them into “hot” keywords that are a) definitely your customers and b) definitely ready to buy vs. “warm” or “cold” keywords that are a) probably not your customers and/or a mix of desirable customers and non-desirable others, and/or b) persons in a frame of mind that are not quite ready to buy. Also, be on the lookout for negative keywords like “dogs,” “free,” or “cheap” that indicate people who are decidedly not your customers.

Volume vs. Value

Keyword **volume** has to do with how many search queries hit Google in a given time period, for example, a month. You can get this data from the *Keyword Planner* inside of Google Ads, under the *Tools* menu (marked with a Wrench icon, top right of the screen).

Value has to do with the estimated cost-per-click of the keyword. I like to think of volume and value using the analogy of “fish in a pond.”

Keyword = type of fish. Is it a salmon or a tilapia? A carp or a bass? Is it *cat boarding* or *cat grooming* or *cat collars*?

Volume = number of fish in the pond. There may be 1000 tilapia in the pond, but only 100 salmon. There may be thousands of (low-value) searches for *cat collars* and just a few for *luxury cat boarding San Francisco*.

Value = the price per pound in the fish market or what people are willing to pay. Even if you know nothing about fish, the fact that organic salmon is \$19.99 a pound and farmed tilapia is just \$2.00 a pound is a strong clue that the former is “yummy” and the latter “not so much.” The fact that the cost per click in Google Ads for *cat boarding* is more than for *cat collar* is a signal that the former has more money to be made behind it than the latter.

You can derive this data from the *Keyword Planner* (inside Google Ads under Tools) as well as the Twinword.com Keyword Tool at <http://jmlinks.com/48e>. Check out the complete list of keyword tools via the dashboard at <http://jmlinks.com/dashadwords>. (We’ll dig deeper into tools in a moment.)

Riches are in the Niches

Generally speaking, you are looking for “high volume” “high value” keywords that are transactional. So, if you board cats, groom cats, and sell cat stuff, you are looking to advertise on

cat boarding – YES! Definitely your customer. Plus, variations like “luxury cat boarding” or “cat boarding in San Francisco” or “Castro District cat boarding,” etc.

pet boarding – Maybe! This is an *ambiguous* keyword (it could be dog people, after all).

cheap cat boarding – probably not, as a person who enters this into Google is indicating he has little or no money.

free cat boarding – definitely not, as a person who enters this into Google is indicating he has little or no money.

animal boarding – Maybe! This is an ambiguous keyword (it could be dog people, after all).

kitty boarding – Yes!

cat grooming – Yes!

feline boarding – Yes!

kitty grooming – Yes!

overnight cat boarding – definitely!

quality cat boarding – definitely!

dog boarding – No!

personalized cat collars – Yes!

diamond cat collars online – Yes!

personalized diamond studded cat collars money is no object – Yes, Yes!

If you were to board iguanas or exotic birds, then *iguana boarding* or *exotic bird boarding* would be excellent “riches in the niches” types of keyword queries.

» BRAINSTORM YOUR KEYWORDS

With a little keyword theory under your belt, it's time to begin to brainstorm your keywords in a systematic way. Sit down in a quiet place with a good cup of coffee or tea, or if you prefer, a martini, i.e., *anything to get your ideas flowing!* Brainstorm the **keywords** that a customer might type into Google that are relevant to your company, your product, and/or your service.

Ask yourself:

When a potential customer sits down at Google, what words do they type in?

Which keywords are DEFINITELY those of your customers?

Which keywords are CLOSE to a decision to buy? Which are farther away, earlier in the sales ladder?

Which customer segments use which keywords, and how might keywords differ among your customer segments?

Which keywords match which product or service lines as produced by your company?

Which keywords or helper words are definitely NOT your customers? Free or cheap, for example, are often markers of people who have little to no money, or no inclination to spend.

Be sure to capture your synonyms – lawyer vs. attorney, boarding vs. hotel, cat vs. kitten as well as your more ambiguous umbrella terms like law firm or pet boarding.

Conduct a Keyword Brainstorming Session

I highly recommend that you organize a formal keyword brainstorming session with your marketing team (it might be just you by yourself, or it might be your CEO, your marketing manager, and a few folks from the sales staff). Devote at least ONE HOUR to brainstorming keywords; close the door, turn off the cell phone, tell your secretary to “hold all calls,” and start drinking (either coffee or martinis).

Brainstorm, brainstorm, brainstorm the keywords that customers are typing into Google. Try not to miss any possible keyword combinations!

Do this, first, individually – take out a piece of paper, and write keyword ideas down WITHOUT talking to the others in your group.

Don't be shy. Don't leave anything out. The goal is to get EVERYTHING on paper, no matter how ridiculous it might be.

Then have a group session and go over all the keywords each person has identified.

Drink some more coffee or more martinis, and keep brainstorming – write all possible keywords on a whiteboard, a piece of paper, or a Word / Google document.

Don't censor yourself because there are no wrong answers. The goal of this exercise is to get the complete “universe” of all possible keywords that customers might type into Google.

BRAINSTORM ALL POSSIBLE TARGET KEYWORDS

For your first **TO-DO**, open up the “keyword brainstorm worksheet, and begin to fill it out as completely as possible. For the **worksheet**, go to <http://jmlinks.com/23googleads>, then re-enter the password, “23googleads,” and click on the link to the “keyword brainstorm worksheet.”

Again, for right now, don't worry about the *organization* of your keywords. Don't police your thoughts. Write down every word that comes to mind - synonyms, competitor names, misspellings, alternative word orders. Let your mind wander. This is the keyword discovery phase, so don't exclude anything!

» REVERSE ENGINEER COMPETITORS

After you've completed this first wave of brainstorming, let's you and your group members do some searches on Google for target keywords. Take a few of the keywords you've already identified and type them into Google. As you search Google, identify your "Google competitors," that is, companies that are on page one of the Google results either in the organic or the paid ads positions.

Here are three methods to "reverse engineer" their keywords:

Method #1: Source Code

First, click over to their homepage or whatever page is showing up on page one of Google for a search that matters to you. Next, view the HTML source code of this page. To do this, in Firefox and Chrome, use *right click*, then **View**, **Page Source**. In Internet Explorer, use **View**, **Source** on the file menu. Finally, find the following tags in the HTML source code:

```
<Title>  
<Meta Name="Description" Content="...">  
<Meta Name="Keywords" Content="...">
```

If you have trouble finding these HTML tags, use CTRL+F (on a PC vs. Command+F on a Mac) on your keyboard, and in the dialog box, type *<title, description, or keywords*

For each, write down those keywords your competitor has identified that might also be applicable to you. Here's a screenshot of <http://www.globalindustrial.com/c/hvac/fans>, one of the top Google performers for the search "industrial fans" with the three critical tags circled -

```
26
27 <title>Industrial & Pedestal Fans | Global Industrial</title>
28
29 <meta name="category" content="Fans" />
30
31
32 <meta name="keywords" content="Fans, Industrial Fans, Pedestal Fans,
Wall Mounted Fan, Ceiling Fan" />
33
34
35 <meta name="description" content="Shop for high-quality commercial &
industrial fans including pedestal fans, at low everyday prices from
Global Industrial." />
36
37
```

(**Note:** you may not find all of these tags in competitor pages, and don't worry about what they actually do, as those are questions of search engine optimization. Just use them as ways to look into the minds of competitors for keyword ideas).

Read each tag out loud to your group members. Notice how each tag in the source reveals the “thought process” behind this page, showing the “types” of fans people might search for - pedestal, wall-mounted, ceiling, etc. The goal of viewing the source of your competitors’ pages is to “steal” their keyword ideas and write down any relevant keywords onto your “keyword brainstorm” document.

VIDEO. Watch a quick video tutorial on how to use “view source” to reverse engineer competitors at <http://jmlinks.com/5k>.

Method #2: Ads on Google Ads

Do searches that you have already brainstormed and read the ads out loud that you see on the Google screen. Here, for example, are ads returned from the search “San Francisco Cat Boarding:”

San Francisco Cat Hotel - Large suites, all day play & love

Ad www.thepawington.com/ ▼

Plus Free SFO Airport Parking 24/7!

Highlights: Luxury Experience, Friendly Resort, Grooming And Spa Services...

[Grooming](#) · [Daycare](#) · [Reservations](#) · [Boarding](#)

SF Premier Pet Boarding - Try Us, Tour Us, Love Us - 24/7/365

Ad www.waghotels.com/ ▼ (888) 924-5463

First time offers call 888-WAG-LINE

[San Francisco](#) · [Make A Reservation](#) · [Services](#) · [Faq's](#) · [Contact Us](#) · [About Us](#)

📍 [25 14th St, San Francisco, CA](#) - [Open today](#) · [Open 24 hours](#) ▼

Rover.com - Cat Boarding - Find Cat Lovers Near You

Ad www.rover.com/Cats ▼

4.9 ★★★★★ rating for rover.com

In-Home Trusted 5-Star **Pet Boarding**

[Get Stay Photos](#) · [24/7 Emergency Support](#) · [Avg. Price \\$15 - \\$40](#) · [In-Home Dog Sitting](#)

[Sleep soundly with premium insurance and photo updates – Today.com](#)

[Premium Insurance](#) · [Sit A Dog, Save A Life](#) · [Free Rover Mobile App](#) · [Search Sitters](#) · [Jobs At Rover](#)

Kitty Charm School - Private Bedrooms, Loads of Love

Ad www.kittycharmschool.com/ ▼

Rooms Start at just \$27. NO CAGES

As you read this out loud, you'll see synonyms (e.g., *cat* vs. *kitty* vs. *pet*) and helper words such as *premier*, *private*, *hotel*, *boarding*, and points of difference such as “large suites” or “private.” Write these down on your list. For example, notice how the first ad has a headline of “Cat Hotel.” Bingo! You’ve found a new word, *hotel* as in *cat hotel*. Be sure to click over to the companies who are advertising and View Source looking at their TITLE, META DESCRIPTION, and KEYWORD tags.

Method #3: Use Keyword Spying Tools

As you research your keywords, you can also use free / paid tools that “spy” on competitors. One of the best is SpyFu at <https://spyfu.com/>. Simply enter a keyword and see who’s advertising, what their ads say, and do some research on their keyword targets.

By entering *thepawington.com* into Spyfu, for example, I learn that they are advertising on:

San Francisco pet hotel

San Francisco dog hotel

Pet hotel San Francisco

Pet grooming

Cat resorts

By doing this, I get some great synonyms for “cat boarding,” such as “cat hotel” or “cat resort.” Who knew?

For your second **TO-DO**, open up your “keyword brainstorm worksheet” and jot down the top five competitors who appear at the top of Google for your target keywords. Write down all the relevant keywords you discover through each of these three methods.

Did you discover any keywords you left out in your first brainstorming session? If so, be sure to write those on your list and re-brainstorm related keywords.

» USE GOOGLE TRICKS TO IDENTIFY POSSIBLE KEYWORDS

After you have brainstormed keywords and used “reverse engineering” to view the keywords of competitors, it’s time to use free Google tools for keyword discovery. Here are my favorite strategies starting with Google’s own free tools.

First, simply go to Google and start typing your keyword. Pay attention to the pull-down menu that automatically appears. This is called **Google Suggest** or **Autocomplete** and is based on actual user queries. It’s a quick and easy way to find “helper” words for any given search phrase. You can also place a space (hit your space bar) after your target keyword and then go through the alphabet typing “a”, “b”, etc.

Here’s a screenshot of **Google Suggest** using the key phrase “motorcycle insurance”:



motorcycle insurance|

motorcycle insurance

motorcycle insurance **cost**

motorcycle insurance **california**

motorcycle insurance **quotes**

motorcycle insurance **aaa**

motorcycle insurance **companies**

motorcycle insurance **cost california**

motorcycle insurance **comparison**

motorcycle insurance **san francisco**

motorcycle insurance **ca**

Google Search

I'm Feeling Lucky

[Report inappropriate predictions](#)

Hit your space key after the last letter of the last keyword (e.g., after *motorcycle insurance*), and more keyword suggestions appear. You can also type the letters of the alphabet – a, b, c, etc., and Google will give you suggestions. Here’s a screenshot for the letter “b”:



motorcycle insurance b

- motorcycle insurance **broker**
- motorcycle insurance **brackets**
- motorcycle insurance **best**
- motorcycle insurance **blog**
- motorcycle insurance **by state**
- motorcycle insurance **by the month**
- motorcycle insurance **based on cc**
- motorcycle insurance **basics**
- motorcycle insurance **best rates**
- motorcycle insurance **before or after buying**

Google Search

I'm Feeling Lucky

Report inappropriate predictions

Second, type in one of your target keyword phrases and scroll to the bottom of the Google search page. Google will often give you **related searches** based on what people often search on after their original search. Here's a screenshot for "motorcycle insurance" -

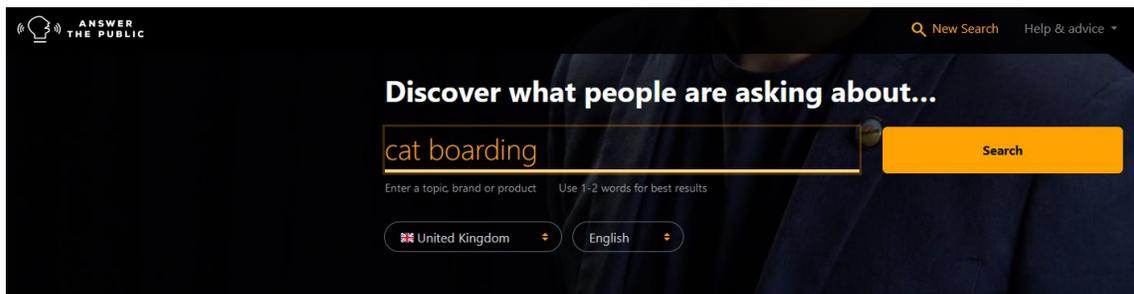
Searches related to motorcycle insurance

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| cheap motorcycle insurance | how much is motorcycle insurance |
| cheapest motorcycle insurance | motorcycle insurance comparison |
| motorcycle insurance rates | motorcycle insurance cost |
| best motorcycle insurance | average motorcycle insurance |

Note the **helper words** it tells you people use to search: cheap, rates, best, “how much,” comparison, cost, and average. As you look at Google autocomplete and related searches, add new “core” and “helper” terms to your master keyword list.

Answer the Public’s Keyword Tool

A third-party tool that pulls data from Google search queries is Answer the Public’s Keyword Tool at <http://jmlinks.com/51e>. Ignore the creepy man, and enter a “seed” keyword such as “cat boarding.” Here’s a screenshot:



After entering your “seed” keyword, scroll down, and the tool gives you the following data points:

Questions. These are questions that contain the phrase and are generally “educational” searches such as “How much does cat boarding cost?”

Prepositions. The tool takes popular prepositions like “near” or “with” and creates phrases. Review these and look for transactional phrases such as “cat boarding near Princeton, NJ.”

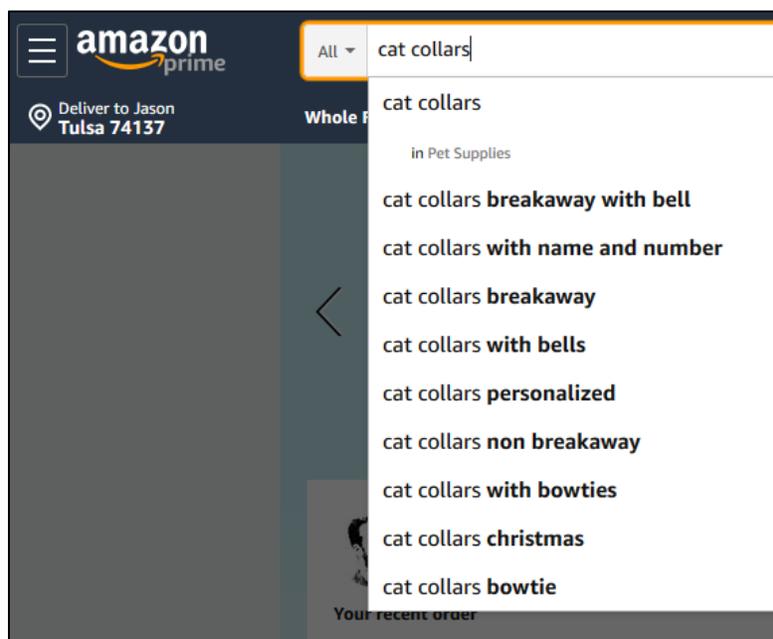
Comparisons. This next segment takes words like “versus” or “or” and presents phrases such as “cat boarding vs. pet sitting;” review with an eye to which phrases are likely to be high value.

Alphabetical. The tool pulls every letter of the alphabet, giving you the complete universe of Google auto completes.

Related. The tool attempts to provide related keywords, such as synonyms.

You can also click on “download CSV” at the top right and download the complete dataset. The tool is a fantastic, fun, and easy way to accelerate your keyword brainstorming session. Just be on the lookout for high-value keywords, as well as important synonyms or “core keywords” such as “pet boarding” or “cat hotels” vis-à-vis your target seed keyword.

Another good tool is Keywordtool.io at <http://jmlinks.com/25z>. It basically types through the alphabet for you and gives you nifty keywords. Spend some quality time with the Google tools as well as these two suggestion tools, using your “starter” keywords and looking for synonyms and helper words. It’s also a good idea to repeat this exercise on Bing as well as Amazon, as both of these search engines provide “autocomplete” suggestions. Here’s a screenshot of Amazon for “cat collars”:



The phrase “cat collars personalized,” for example, is a clue to the high-value search query for “personalized” cat paraphernalia. Thus even Amazon or Bing can give additional clues to the high-value, late-stage, and/or transactional keyword phrases that should drive your Google Ads strategy.

For your third **TO-DO**, open up your “keyword brainstorm worksheet” and write down some keyword ideas garnered from these free tools. You want a messy, broad, and complete list of the “universe” of possible customer keywords via your own brainstorming process, via reverse engineering your competitors, and now via Google and third-party keyword tools. The objective is to get everything down on paper.

» USE THIRD-PARTY KEYWORD TOOLS

With your rather messy list of keywords in hand, it’s time to start focusing on **volume** vs. **value**. Unfortunately, the best tool (which is the *Google Ads Keyword Planner*) does not provide complete keyword data to new accounts or accounts with little spend. Here are some third-party alternatives that I recommend beginners start with.

First, I recommend that you check out the **TwinWord** keyword tool at <http://jmlinks.com/48e>. Sign up for an account, and they allow you a few free searches each day.

Type your starter keyword into the tool. Here’s a screenshot for the keyword “pet boarding”:

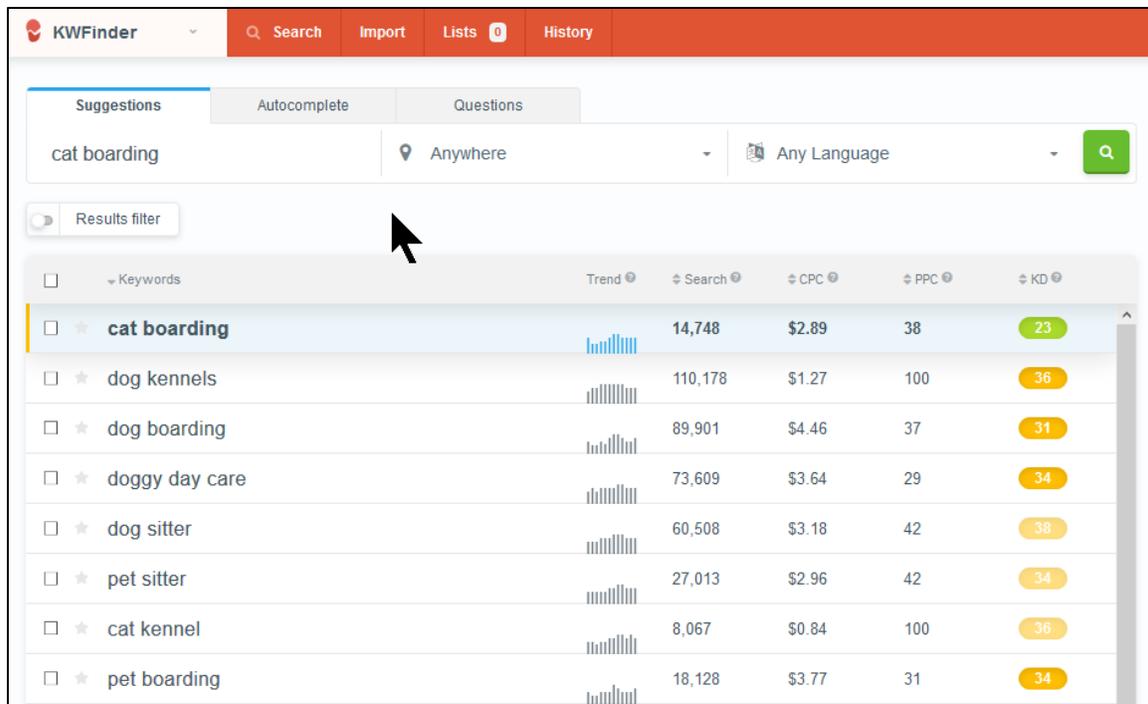
The screenshot shows the 'twinword ideas' tool interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'Home', 'Features', 'How to', 'Pricing', and 'Blog'. Below that is a search bar containing 'pet boarding' and a 'Get keyw' button. On the left, there's a 'Popular Topics' section with a list of related keywords and their counts, such as 'dog kennel (40)', 'dog boarding (29)', 'pet boarding (17)', etc. The main table displays search results with columns: Keyword, AVG. Monthly Searches, SEO Competition, Paid Competition, Keyword Score, Title Score, and Relevance. A tooltip for the 'dog pen' keyword indicates a '33,100 Monthly Search Volume'.

Keyword	AVG. Monthly Searches	SEO Competition	Paid Competition	Keyword Score	Title Score	Relevance
dog grooming	201,000	100	100	★★★★★	★★★★★	—
dog kennels	135,000	100	100	★★★★★	★★★★★	—
doggy day care	135,000	76	100	★★★★★	★★★★★	—
dog crate	110,000	100	100	★★★★★	★★★★★	—
dog boarding	90,500	100	100	★★★★★	★★★★★	—
dog boarding near me	90,500	100	100	★★★★★	★★★★★	—
dog daycare near me	74,000	100	100	★★★★★	★★★★★	—
service dog	60,500	100	100	★★★★★	★★★★★	—
dog pen	33,100	100	100	★★★★★	★★★★★	—
dog sitter	33,100	100	100	★★★★★	★★★★★	—
dog walker	33,100	100	100	★★★★★	★★★★★	—
dog kennels near me	27,100	100	100	★★★★★	★★★★★	—

The left two columns give you “keyword ideas,” such as “dog kennel” or “dog sitter.” (Because we’re cats-only, we can use these as ways to generate the ideas “cat kennel” or “cat sitter”). The AVG Monthly Searches gives you the volume, and then the remaining columns tell you something about the competitiveness of the keyword and the relevance of that phrase to your starter keyword.

Click on “Advanced Filters” on the left, and you can filter by the CPC (Cost Per Click), although unfortunately, the tool does not show the CPC data directly. Click on the top right green arrow, and you can save the keywords into a list as you brainstorm your “keyword universe.”

Second, check out **KWFinder** at <http://jmlinks.com/48f>. Type in a “seed keyword” such as “cat boarding,” and this tool also gives you an idea column, a volume column, a CPC column, and a PPC difficult column. Here’s a screenshot:



In a similar way, therefore, you can use this tool to brainstorm keyword ideas, volumes, and values (CPC amount). As you research keywords, start to pay attention to:

Keyword Groups. Begin to group your keywords around themes such as “pets” vs. “cats” or “cat sitter” vs. “cat boarding.” We’ll see that this idea of keyword groups (which become Google Ads groups) is a very important one.

Volumes. Which keywords have a lot of search volume, and which ones do not?

Values / CPCs. Which keywords are facing high bids as the community bids up the cost-per-click? Which ones do not?

Keyword Types. Which keywords are early-stage, educational keywords? Which ones are late-stage, transactional keywords?

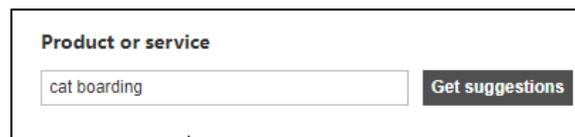
Secret Fishing Holes. Be on the lookout for “secret” keyword patterns. These might be very high-value and/or long-tail keywords that represent a very strong match between what customers want and what you offer. For Jason’s Cat Emporium, for example, patterns such as “luxury cat boarding” or “emergency

cat boarding” might be very high value, even if they are low value, and chances are that our competitors might not have “discovered” these patterns.

Third, another good alternative to the Google Keyword Planner is the **Bing Keyword Planner**. Since Bing is a very distant #2 to Google, it “tries harder to please.” Here are your steps to access the Bing tool:

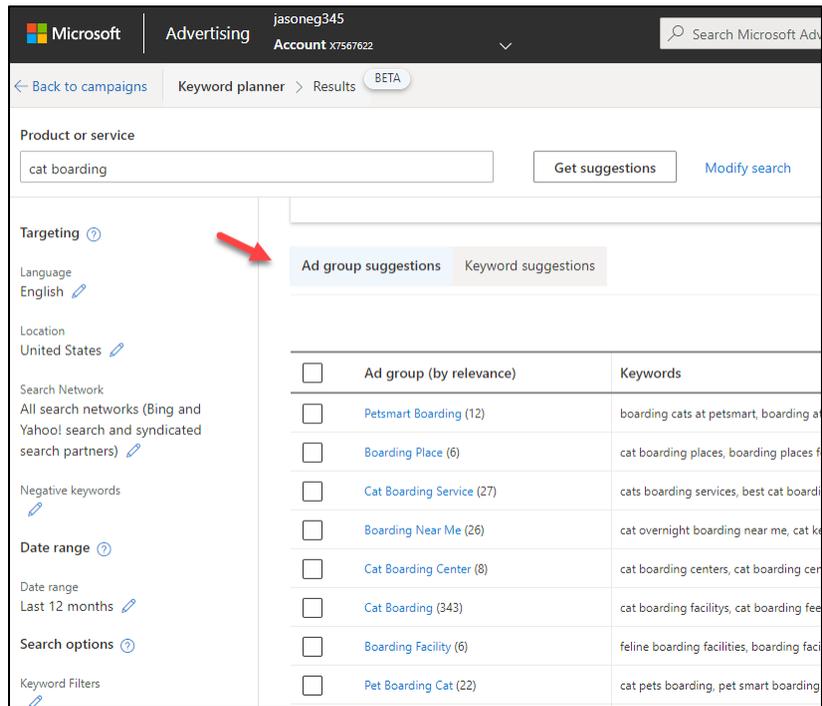
1. Sign up for Bing Ads at <http://jmlinks.com/48h>. You’ll need a Microsoft account, and the easiest way to do that is to sign up for a free Live email at <http://jmlinks.com/48j>.
2. The signup process is similar to Google Ads, so just follow the step-by-step instructions and pause any ads that it forces you to start.
3. Inside the Bing Ads interface, click on the Tools menu on the top, and then “Keyword Planner.” This gets you into the interface.
4. Type in a seed keyword such as “cat boarding,” where it says, “Search for new keywords.”

Similar to the Google Keyword Planner, the Bing tool then gives you a column of keyword suggestions or ideas, the average monthly volume, and a suggested bid, indicating what the community is willing to pay for a click. Once you’re in the interface, you can change your target keyword target by retyping a new one in the top bar and hitting “get suggestions.” Here’s a screenshot:



The screenshot shows a rectangular box representing the search interface. At the top left, the text "Product or service" is displayed. Below this, there is a text input field containing the words "cat boarding". To the right of the input field is a dark button with the text "Get suggestions" in white.

One of the best discovery features of the Bing tool is the “Ad group suggestions” feature, which groups keywords by themes. Click on the tab marked “Ad group suggestions” to access this feature. Here’s a screenshot for “cat boarding:”



In this way, the Bing tool gives you suggestions for Ad Groups based on similar keywords such as:

Cat Boarding

Cat Sitting

Cat Kennels

Pet Boarding

Pet Sitters

etc.

It's a great way to discover synonyms such as "sitting," "kennels," or "pets" as you brainstorm your keywords.

On the left-hand column, you can adjust your geo-target, network, and keyword filters. Bing runs about 10% of Google's volume, so you can generally take whatever volumes Bing is telling you and multiply by ten to get approximate Google volumes.

Paid Tools

Returning to the other tools, you can sign up for free TwinWord and/or KWFinder accounts or upgrade to a paid account for about \$30/month. If you're really pressed for money, you can sign up for just a month, do your keyword research, and then cancel your account. Other good paid tools are SEMRush (<https://www.semrush.com/>) and Ahrefs (<https://ahrefs.com/>), both of which offer robust keyword discovery tools. I recommend that you sign up for at least one paid third-party tool, as robust keyword research is essential to success at AdWords.

» **MASTER THE GOOGLE ADS KEYWORD PLANNER**

Now it's time to use the most comprehensive keyword tool of them all: Google's own official **Keyword Planner**. It's free, but you'll need a Google Ads account to use it fully.

Sign up for Google Ads

To sign up for Google Ads, go to <http://ads.google.com/>. You'll need a credit card to set up an account, and the Google Ads interface will attempt to get you to start advertising right away.

Google Ads will **FORCE** you to set up your first campaign with groups, ads, and keywords. Simply follow their instructions "as if" you were going to set up an ad and immediately set your first campaign to "pause." To pause your campaign, follow the Google Ads set-up instructions to set up your account and then click on the "campaigns" tab, select the checkbox to the left of your first campaign, click "edit" in the menu, and then "pause." (You can even call Google Ads at 866-246-6453 and ask them for help on how to set up your advertising campaigns, and then *sneakily* ask them to **pause your campaigns** – just explain that you are just setting things up, right now,

and you do not want to turn on any advertising at this time). The point of all this is to use a credit card to set up an active Google Ads account and then use this account to access the Keyword Planner.

Note: do NOT ever let the “helpful” Google Ads employees “help” you set up your Google Ads Campaigns, as they will run wild, and you’ll overspend. We want to be much more focused and selective than the Googlers would lead us to be.

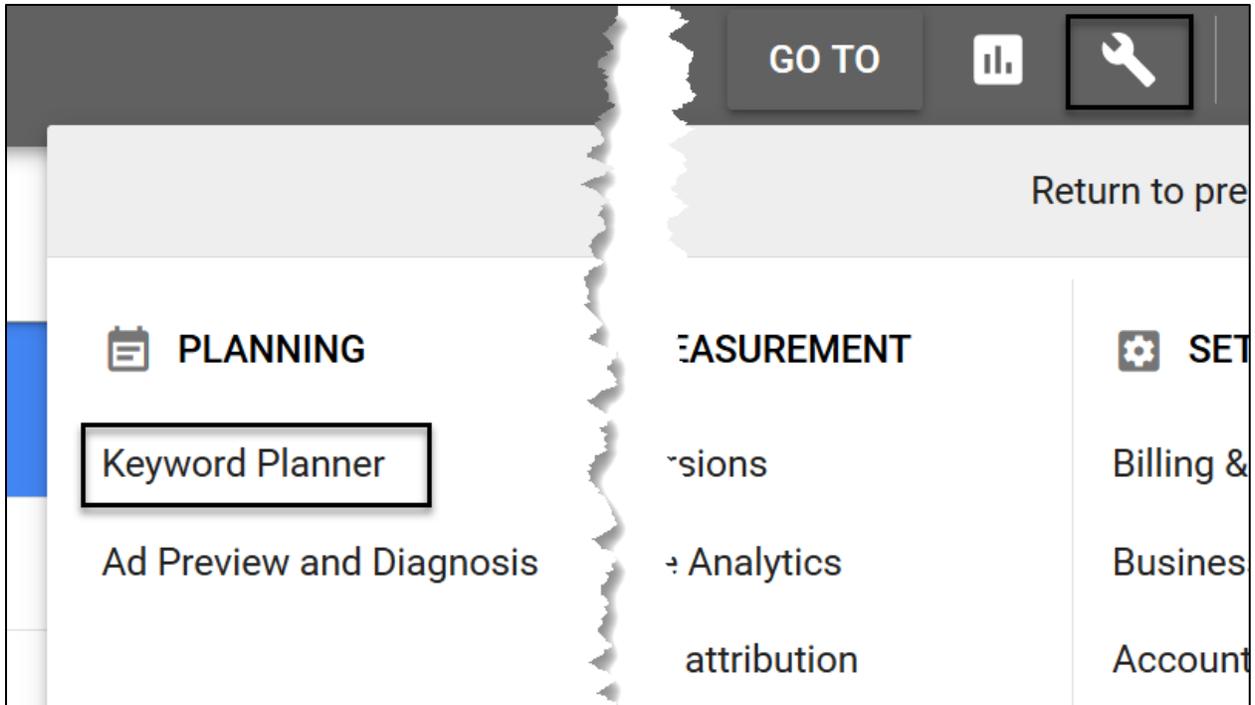
Google is Evil

Google now requires that you spend money to get accurate data out of the Keyword Planner. Accordingly, you may need to allocate a few hundred dollars and run some actual ads before you get accurate keyword information out of the tool. I know it’s a bit of a pain, but once you have an operational Google Ads account, you can use the Google Ads Keyword Planner as a wonderful way to research keywords. Alternatively, you can always use the free or paid tools referenced in my Dashboard at <http://jmlinks.com/dashadwords> > Keywords.

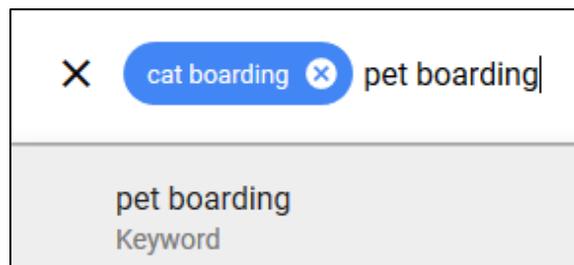
Now, let’s return to the Keyword Planner.

Access the Tool and Get Started

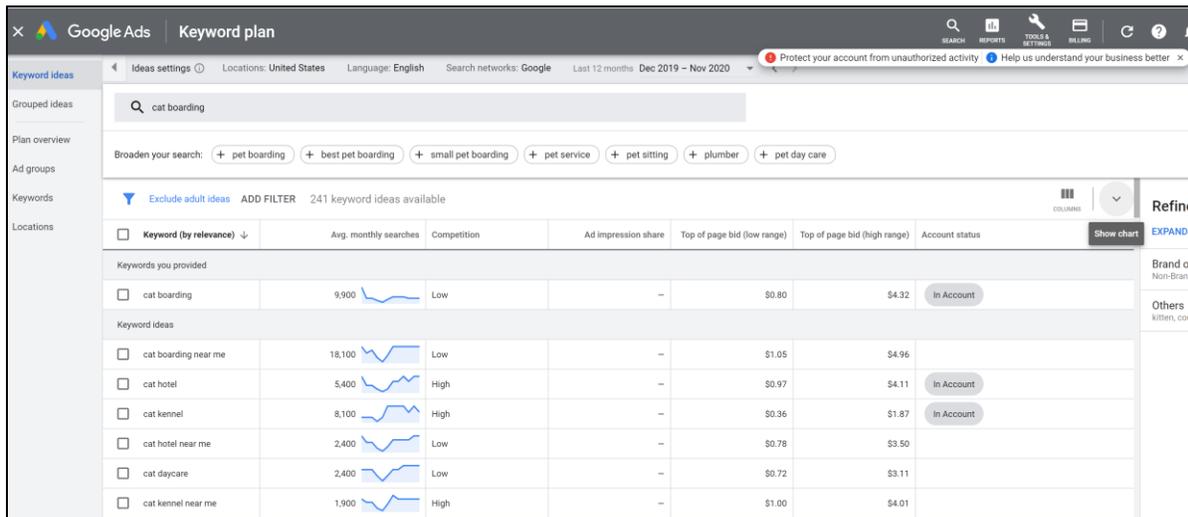
Inside of your Google Ads account, next, go to the “Tools” tab at the top underneath the “Wrench” icon at the top right, and scroll down to “Keyword Planner.” Here’s a screenshot:



You should see two boxes, so click on the one marked “Discover new keywords.” Next, enter a “seed keyword” such as “cat boarding” into the box and click the blue “Get Started” button. This gets you into the actual tool interface. At any time, you can change your “seed keyword” by clicking in the search bar and x’ing out the keyword, and entering another one. Here’s a screenshot:



To research a keyword, click the blue “Get Results” button on the far right. It’s best to research one keyword at a time. You may see a graph of data; I usually hide this graph as it’s pretty useless. You should see a screen that looks something like this:



On the right, you can click on “columns” and select the ones you need, which are: keyword, Avg. monthly searches, competition, top of page bid (low range), and top of bid (high range).

Now, let’s dive into the tool’s elements. Across the top, you can set your location to United States vs. Canada, UK, etc. You can also set it to a city such as New York City, but I recommend using a very big region such as a country as the tool is most useful at higher volumes. So, if you are in the United States, make sure it is set to United States. You can also set the language to English (French, German, etc.). And then you’ll see “Search networks.” The default is to “Google and search partners,” but you can also set this to just Google. It’s fine either way.

The default view is “keyword view,” giving you keywords that you can see by volume and value (CPC), plus click on each column to sort them. You are browsing not just for keyword ideas but also to see which keywords are popular (high volume) and which ones are predicted to make you money (high value).

On the far right, you’ll see a pull-down entitled “Keyword view.” Click on this and change to “Grouped view.” This is a great way to discover synonyms, and using “cat boarding,” Google gives us “grouped ideas” of:

Cat Daycare

Cat Hotels

Long Term Cat Boarding

Cat Only Boarding

Cat Resort

The Keyword Planner is also the best available tool for identifying synonyms – such as kitty, kennel, hotel, pet, dog, etc. These “core keywords” are foundational to how you organize your ad groups vs. “helper words” like best, top, top-rated, cheap. etc.

Looking to the future, we realize that highly focused, “niche” Ad Groups are the best way to maximize the click-thru rate and ROI of our ad spend. A focused Ad Group on “Cat Daycare,” for example,” might snatch those high-income San Franciscans who are so neurotic about their cats that they’ll pay lots of money for daytime cat care. Who knew?

Click back into Keyword View on the top right, and the tool will give you four columns:

Keyword = keyword ideas similar to your “seed” keyword

Avg. Monthly Searches = estimate of how many monthly searches for this keyword against your geography

Competition = how competitive it is to advertise

Top of page bid (high range) = the bid per click necessary to get your ad to show at the top of search

If you don’t see these columns, click on the “columns” icon and enable them. You’re researching synonyms, high-value phrases, volumes, competition, and what you have to bid to get your ad to show. Think of Google Ads as a fishing competition. You’re the fisherman or woman, and you’re competing against other fisherfolk to find the best fish

in the easiest way at the lowest price vs. value to you. Look for “niche” keyword patterns such as “cat hotel” or “cat daycare.” Click on “Download Keyword Ideas” on the top right to download your data into Excel.

To be blunt, it’s good to just click around in the interface to learn what’s hidden where and to find some functions that are very useful and ignore the ones that are not. Another weird feature of the tool is that the volumes are for “exact match” data, so if you enter “cat boarding,” the volume you get at about 9,900 for the USA is applicable ONLY to searches that are exactly “cat boarding” and not inclusive of search such as “luxury cat boarding,” or “cat boarding San Antonio,” etc. There is, unfortunately, no option in Google to look for the “phrase volume,” but third-party tools do offer this feature.

Column Data in the Keyword Planner

Now, let’s dive into the results that are returned column by column. (If you don’t see these columns, click on the “Columns” icon on the top right and expand to include them).

Keyword (by relevance). You should see a column on the left called “Keyword (by relevance).” This is what I call the **keyword ideas column**. Scan it and look for keyword ideas. For “cat boarding,” for example,” you should see not only “cat boarding” but interesting and possibly related keywords such as “dog kennels,” “pet sitter,” “cat kennel,” and so on and so forth. Open up a Word or Google Doc and copy down those keywords that you think are highly relevant. Pay special attention to synonyms such as “pet” for “cat,” or “kennel” for “boarding.” **It is absolutely critical to get your synonyms!** Also pay attention to keywords like “dog,” which in our case are not relevant and might become negative keywords, and others like “pet” which are ambiguous (as those could be either dogs or cats).

Discuss possible keyword ideas with your team. Also, don’t be afraid to take a keyword like “pet sitter” and re-enter it in the top search bar to re-research keyword possibilities. In this way, one “seed keyword” can beget other “seed keywords,” and you can quickly use the tool to brainstorm possible keyword targets. The Keyword Planner tool is probably the best tool on the market for discovering synonyms such as “pet” vs. “dog” vs. “cat” or “kennel” vs. “boarding” vs. “hotel.”

Avg. monthly searches. Google will give you the average search volumes. Remember that this is for the geographic location you set at the top (e.g., United States, Canada, or United Kingdom). Also, remember that Google gives you the monthly search volume based on “exact match” and “close variants,” so with “cat boarding” at 9,900 for the USA, this means around ten thousand searches were for “cat boarding,” but this wouldn’t include phrases like “best cat boarding” or “cheap cat boarding.” If you find a good helper phrase, such as “luxury cat boarding,” reenter it as a keyword to get its actual monthly search volume.

Competition. This is an attempt by Google to tell you how competitive a keyword is. The tool gives you “High,” “Medium,” and “Low” as metrics. Popular, high-value words like “car insurance” will get a score of “high competition,” while unpopular, non-money keywords like “cat videos” will get a score of “low competition.” I do not find this particularly useful, as I prefer to look at the CPC costs, so I often turn off or ignore this column.

Top of page bid (high range). This is a dollar estimate of what you need to bid (CPC) to get your ad to show at the top of the page. It’s a capitalist world we live in, so Google gives you a way to see which keywords are likely to end in profitable sales and which ones are not. For “cat boarding,” for example, we see a \$4.32 bid for the high range. In effect, the tool gives you a way to poll your competitors who will likely bid UP transactional keyword phrases that reflect buyers who are ready to buy at high prices and bid DOWN educational or poorly formed queries that are people who either don’t want to buy or who are cheap or poor. I often refer to this as the CPC bid or value column. It’s very important data.

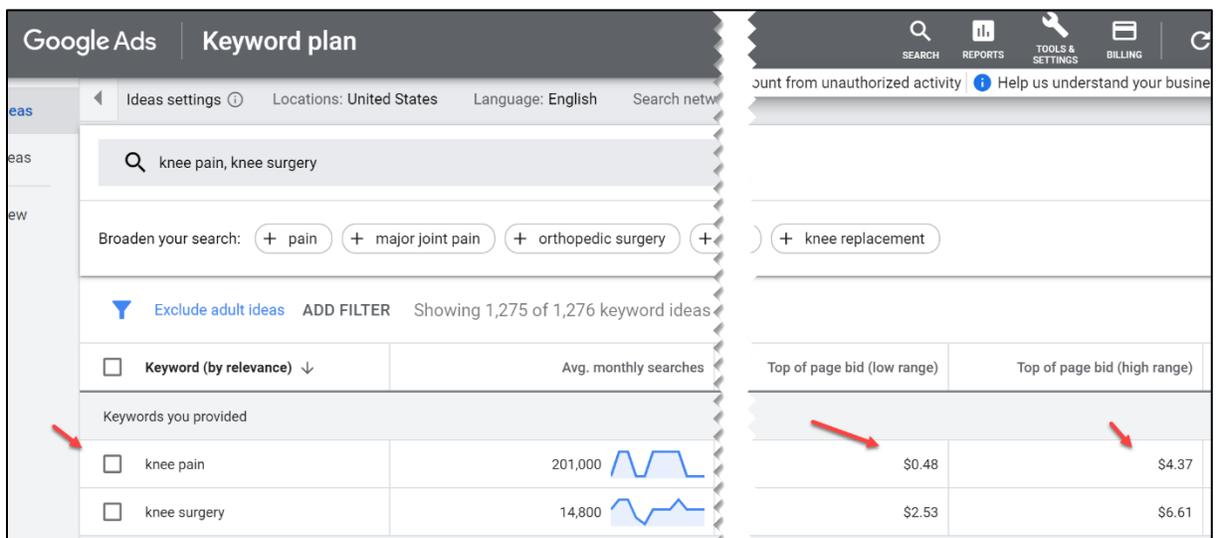
Other Stuff. You may see columns such as “Top of page bid (low range),” “Account Status,” “Organic impression share,” “Organic average position,” and “Competition (indexed value).” These are pretty useless, so I recommend you just ignore them. They are Google’s poorly formed attempt to tell you whether you are ranking organically or not for these keywords.

Refine Keywords. This is a new feature on the right. Look for “Refine Keywords” in blue and click on that. This allows you to include or exclude “branded terms,” which, of course, refer to company names such as Petsmart or Petco in our “cat boarding” example. Try unclicking branded terms to find the more generic terms.

Educational vs. Transactional Keywords

The tool can help you understand which patterns are high-value, transactional keywords and which ones are low-value, educational keywords. As you research your keywords, make an educated guess, and then re-enter the keyword patterns all at once across the top. Think of the “customer journey” from an early “educational” interest in a topic to a “buy decision.” For example, you can take “knee pain” (“my knee hurts”) to “knee surgery” (“I’m ready for a \$50K knee operation”).

Here’s a screenshot:

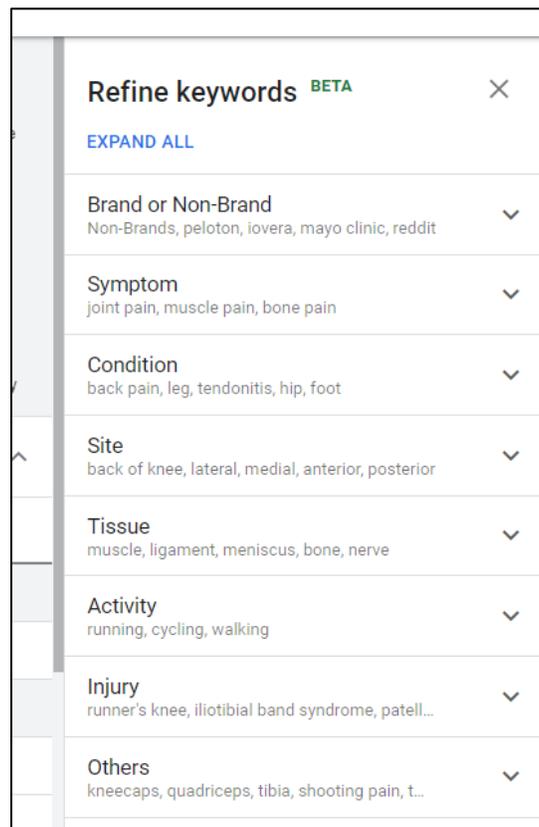


You can see that there are 201,000 searches per month for “knee pain” at a cost per click (CPC) of \$4.37, vs. 14,800 for “knee surgery” at a CPC of \$6.61. The significantly lower cost for the “low range” (.48 vs. \$2.53) is another clue. This shows the trade-off between “volume” and “value.” The early-stage keyword, “knee pain,” has lots of *volume*, but less *value* (lower bids per click in the AdWords auction) as it is less likely to end in a high-value transaction; the late-stage keyword has less *volume* but more *value* as someone searching for “knee surgery” is likely closer to a transaction. By comparing terms, you can often see which terms are “money terms,” with \$\$\$ behind them vs. “educational terms,” which lack \$\$\$ behind them. You want to “fish where the fish are” (volume) but also catch yummy fish (“value”), and the tool sheds insight on this trade-off.

Play around with your keyword patterns, as you are looking for the “sweet spot” of sufficient volume and sufficient value to justify your ad spend. Also, be aware that the tool gives data only for “exact match” and is rather unreliable at low volumes. It’s not particularly accurate vs. the data you’ll get in your actual account once you’re actually advertising, so use it as a starting point only.

Other Features

Finally, let’s also look at a few other **features**. At the top right, you should see a blue “Refine Keywords” link. Click on this to view a “Filter menu.” Here’s a screenshot:



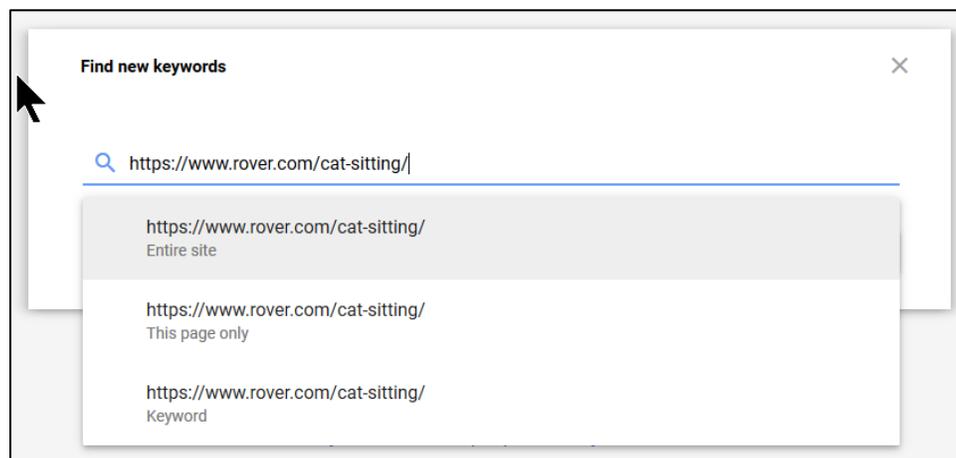
Again, this allows you to filter out or in interesting patterns. Your goal is to identify the “universe” of possible keywords (including synonyms or helper words), plus data about

volume and value (the cost-per-click). To return to our fishing analogy: Identify the fish. Identify the yummy fish. Identify the best fishing holes.

Reverse Engineer a Website for Keywords

You can even return to the very beginning screen of the Keyword Planner by clicking on the *Wrench / Tools icon > Keyword Planner > Discover New Keywords*, clicking into “Start with a Website,” and then entering a URL such as your home page or a landing page, or even the URL of a competitor. This is yet another way to brainstorm keywords by “reverse engineering” a competitor.

Try it with <https://www.rover.com/cat-sitting/>, for example. Here’s a screenshot:



This tactic is especially good if you are a new advertiser vs. competitors who are well-established and have a very focused strategy of keywords. Try it for a competitor and see what results you get.

Building Your Keyword List

As you work on your keywords, you can click the checkbox to the left of any keyword to save a keyword into a plan or identify it as a negative keyword. You can create a new Ad Group called “Test Keywords” and put your keywords into that group, for example.

However, I find this feature very cumbersome and hard to use, so I just generally copy/paste my keywords into a Google Doc or Word Doc or a spreadsheet. (You can also download keywords by clicking “Download Keyword Ideas” in blue at the top). I find that copy/paste or downloading into a spreadsheet works better, as I can then use my Keyword Worksheet to organize my SEO, Google Ads, and/or Social Media keywords accordingly.

You can then click up to “Plan overview,” and Google will give you some data about your keywords. I don’t find this very accurate or useful but do what works for you.

What You’re After

As you are using the tool to research and brainstorm your keywords, here’s what you’re after.

Keyword Ideas. You want to capture the “universe” of **core keywords** plus available helpers. Don’t miss “attorney” for “lawyer” or “pet” for “cat,” etc. Pay attention to common **helpers** like best, top-rated, or top or **negatives** like “cheap” or “free.”

Keyword Volumes. Get your keyword volumes, but don’t fixate on volume. Some very high-value keywords are worth advertising on or optimizing on for SEO or social media. It’s not just about volume.

Keyword Values or CPCs. Use the tool to “poll the community” as to which keywords are the most valuable by seeing the bids. But realize that these are the “discovered” keywords. Be on the lookout for **undiscovered keywords** that are highly valuable, such as micro or long-tail keywords that represent affluent customers ready to buy. If you repair watches, for example, “watch repair” is high volume but low value, while “Rolex repair” is lower volume but much higher value. For “cat boarding,” folks who search “luxury cat boarding” are clearly the folks who have money and are willing to spend it.

»» DELIVERABLE: A COMPLETED KEYWORD BRAINSTORM WORKSHEET

Now we've come to the end of this process, and you should have the first Chapter **DELIVERABLE** ready: your completed **keyword brainstorm worksheet**. For the **worksheet**, go to <http://jmlinks.com/23googleads>, then re-enter the password, "23googleads," and click on the link to the "Keyword Brainstorm Worksheet."

Remember: your "Keyword Brainstorm" document will be messy. Its purpose is to get all relevant keywords, helper words, and keyword ideas about volume and value down on paper. In the next step, we will turn to **organizing** our keywords into a structured **keyword worksheet**. This will be our blueprint for setting up our Google Ads campaigns and groups.

» IDENTIFY YOUR MAIN KEYWORD STRUCTURAL PATTERNS

After you complete your **keyword brainstorm** worksheet, your head may be spinning (*especially if you and your team were using martinis rather than coffee as the drink of choice during the brainstorming exercise*). Now it's time to shift gears and to organize those keywords into "structural patterns" with an eye to both keyword volume and value.

Here's where we're going:

***Brainstorm** your keywords > **organize** them into a keyword worksheet > **organize** your Google Ads account into **keyword-centric Ad Groups**.*

Let's look at some example websites.

Most businesses have a few different product or service lines and often a few different customer segments. Take a look at Progressive Insurance (<https://www.progressive.com/>), for example, and you'll quickly realize that they have different types of insurance offered, such as auto insurance, motorcycle insurance, RV insurance, and even Segway insurance. Take a look at <https://www.progressive.com/insurance/> to see the organizational structure of their website, and you'll quickly realize that the "structure" of the website reflects the

“structure” of how people search for insurance. Those who are on a Harley-Davidson motorcycle are searching in one way, and those looking to insure their Segway are searching in another.

In terms of **keyword structural patterns** and **matching Ad Groups** (and website landing pages), we have:

motorcycle insurance =

a group of keywords around *motorcycle insurance* like *cheap motorcycle insurance*, *motorcycle insurance quote*, etc. =

an Ad Group in Google Ads =

a landing page on the website.

Car insurance =

a group of keywords around *car insurance* like *cheap car insurance*, *automobile insurance*, *car insurance quote*, etc. =

an Ad Group in Google Ads =

a landing page on the website.

etc.

Or, take a look at Industrial Fans Direct (<http://www.industrialfansdirect.com/>), and you’ll see that they have product categories such as blowers, man coolers, ceiling, bathroom fans, etc., and that these reflect the “needs” of consumers who “search Google” using words that reflect those needs.

blowers =

a group of keywords around *blowers* =
an Ad Group in Google Ads =
a landing page on the website.

roof exhaust =

a group of keywords around *roof exhaust* =
an Ad Group in Google Ads =
landing page on the website.

etc.

With those examples in mind, it's time to look at your own keyword patterns.

Take a look at your own **keyword brainstorm document** and circle the “core keywords” that reflect your basic product or service categories. Usually, you’ll see a one-to-one correspondence of a “product group” that matches a “core keyword,” as you see in the examples above. And you’ll also see a bunch of helper words like *cheap, best, San Francisco, quote, rate*, etc., that are often entered alongside the core keyword. People often mistakenly think that they have “hundreds” of keywords when in fact, they usually have only about five to ten **core keyword groups** or **structural patterns**, and these then form hundreds of possible keyword queries. As on *Progressive.com* and *IndustrialFans.com* as listed above, you’ll see that a core keyword should become one, and only one, landing page on the website.

In terms of Google Ads, this means:

One *core keyword* will (ultimately) become one *ad group* in Google Ads account.

To return to Jason’s Cat Emporium, we’d have:

A cat boarding Ad Group

A cat grooming Ad Group

A cat toys Ad Group

and

A pet boarding Ad Group

Looking to the future, however, if *luxury cat boarding* generates a really strong ROI, then we’d break out luxury cat boarding into its own unique Ad Group. We’d also have an Ad Group for *pet boarding*, recognizing that this is an ambiguous pattern vs. *cat boarding*. Google Ads **strongly rewards** a **tight match** between a *core keyword*, a corresponding *Ad Group*, corresponding *keyword triggers*, *corresponding ads* that contain the keyword in visible ad text, and a corresponding unique *landing page* on your website. Your keyword worksheet should group your target keywords into this structure.

In fact, Google itself strongly encourages that you organize your Ad Groups by keyword themes. Read the Google help file on Ad Group organization at <http://jmlinks.com/39n> and watch a simple but useful video on organization at <http://jmlinks.com/48g>. You’ll learn the following:

A **Campaign** is where you set the network, geotarget, budget, and other attributes.

An **Ad Group** is where you group closely related keywords around a theme and where your ads will “ultimately” live.

Each ad should also go to a **landing page** on your website that specifically relates to the keyword target. Your “cat boarding” ads, for example, should go to a page on “cat boarding,” while your “cat grooming” ads should go to a landing page on “cat grooming.”

We’ll discuss account organization more in the next Chapter, but for now, start taking your disorganized Keyword Brainstorm worksheet and organizing your keywords into thematically connected patterns that will form the basis for your Ad Groups.

For your next **TO-DO**, download the **keyword worksheet**. For the **worksheet**, go to <http://jmlinks.com/23googleads>, then re-enter the password, “23googleads,” and click on the link to the “keyword worksheet.” Note this is a Microsoft Excel document.

VIDEO. Watch a video tutorial on how to create a Keyword Worksheet at <http://jmlinks.com/17m>. Note: this video is focused on SEO, but many of the same rules apply to Google Ads.

Inside the document, list each major pattern of your keywords (which reflect a product or service grouping of your company) on a line all by itself in the first column. Return to the Keyword Planner and note both the keyword volume and keyword value (suggested bid) that correspond to each core keyword.

» CREATE YOUR KEYWORD WORKSHEET

Now it’s time to fill out your keyword worksheet in more detail. In your spreadsheet, you’ll be filling out columns for the following:

Core Keywords. These are the minimum words necessary to create a relevant search. If you are a watch repair shop servicing high-end watches, for example, your core keywords would be phrases such as “watch repair,” “Tag Heuer

Repair,” “Rolex Repair,” etc. This is the first column and reflects the core, structural keyword patterns and indicates volume and value.

Note. If to your business a phrase is important enough (e.g., *Rolex watch repair* vs. *Tag Heuer watch repair* vs. just *watch repair*), then break it out into its own core keyword group/line item on your keyword worksheet. Do this even if these words are closely related (e.g., Rolex repair vs. Hamilton repair vs. Tag Heuer repair for watches).

Helper Keywords. Common helpers are geographics like San Francisco, Berkeley, and Oakland. In the watch examples above, other helpers would be “best,” “authorized,” “SF” etc. that combine with the core keywords to make the actual search query (e.g., “Best watch repair SF”).

Sample Search Query Phrases. Take your core keywords plus your helpers and build out some “real” search queries that potential customers might use. Group these by keyword family. For example, you’d have a keyword group called “Rolex Repair,” and underneath, related keyword phrases such as “Rolex Repair SF,” “Authorized Rolex Repair Downtown San Francisco,” or “Best Rolex Repair Shop Bay Area,” etc.

Search Volumes. Indicate the volume of searches (where available) as obtained from the Google Ads Keyword Planner.

Search Value. Indicate whether a given keyword family is of high, low, or negative value to you and your business. Does it indicate a searcher who is probably a target customer? If your answer is strongly yes, then this is a “high value” search term! Does it clearly indicate a non-customer? If so, this is a “low value” or even a “negative” search term. I often mark “hot,” “warm,” or “cold” next to a keyword group.

Competitors. As you do your searches, write down the URL’s of competitors that you see come up in your Google searches. These will be useful as mentors that you can emulate as you build out your SEO strategy.

Negative Keywords. Are there any keywords that indicate someone is definitely not your customer? Common examples are *cheap* or *free*, as these are often indicative of people with little or no money or little or no intention to buy something.

Priority Order

Not all keywords are created equally. Some are **high volume** (*lots of searches*), and some are **high value** (*they are customers ready to buy something or take an important action like filling out a feedback form or calling with an inquiry*). With respect to your business, take a look at your keyword worksheet and think about which queries are a) the *most likely* to be a potential sale, b) the *most likely* to be a high-value sale, and c) the *least likely* to be ambiguous. (An ambiguous or problematic keyword is one that has several meanings, that might cross business products or services, and is, therefore, more difficult to optimize on than an unambiguous keyword. Compare *fan*, for example, which could be a *hand fan*, an enthusiast for a *sports team*, or an *electrical appliance to blow air* with *insurance* which refers to one, and only one, type of product. *Pet boarding* or *animal boarding*, for example, are ambiguous vs. *cat boarding* or *dog boarding*, which are not)

VIDEO. Watch a video tutorial on educational vs. transactional, volume vs. value keyword theory at <http://jmlinks.com/17n>.

Prioritize Your Keywords: Hot, Warm, or Cold?

Prioritize your keyword families on the spreadsheet from TOP to BOTTOM with the highest priority keywords at the top and the lowest at the bottom.

Remember the *volume* vs. *value* trade-off. “Transactional” keywords (those close to a sale) tend to have higher *value* but lower *volume*; “whereas educational” keywords (those early in the research process) tend to have lower *value* but higher *volume*.

However, here’s the rub: because of the see-saw between value and volume, there is no hard and fast rule as to what should be your top priority. It can’t be just *volume*, and it can’t just be *value*.

In fact, I recommend you use a column on the far left and call it “hot / warm / cold.” Sit down with the CEO or sales staff, and play a “hot / warm / cold” game by asking IF a customer entered such-and-such into Google, would it be hot (*definitely our customer*), warm (*probably our customer*), or cold (*not our customer*)?

Prioritize the “hot” keywords at the top of the Keyword Worksheet and the “warm” keywords towards the bottom. I often throw out the “cold” keywords entirely. This will help you see the complexity of keyword patterns as some keywords will be “easy” to see as hot / warm / cold, and others might be more challenging – perhaps they have a lot of volume, but are ambiguous, or perhaps they are high value but just so little volume, or the customers don’t know to search for them.

The art of Google Ads is targeting the keywords most likely to generate high ROI, which is a function of BOTH volume and value as well as whether a keyword is unambiguously your customer or ambiguously your customer plus others.

Ignore Low Volume Warnings

Another tip: the Google help files and tech support team tend to focus on keyword *volume* over *value*. You may even get warnings in Google Ads that threaten “low search volume.” If a keyword pattern (such as “Rolex repair” or “luxury cat boarding”) is of very high value to your company, however, I strongly recommend you build it out into a keyword-based Ad Group anyway. The algorithm and customer experience both reward very tightly organized groups, even if the volume is low. Because you pay by the click, there is no penalty for creating laser-focused Ad Groups in Google Ads! In fact, the more tightly connected the relationship among keyword target, Ad Group, Ad text, and landing page, the better you will do.

The Art of Google Ads

On the flip side, don’t stress your keyword organization too much!

Your keyword worksheet is a *living* document. As you build out your Google Ads campaigns and groups and measure your rank and results, you will “tune” your advertising to work on those keywords that are high value, high volume, and for which you can actually out-compete the competition. It’s a process, not a static result. Online advertising, like cooking great food or preparing for a marathon, is as much *art* as *science*.

Don't fall prey to *analysis paralysis*, and endlessly analyze your keywords as opposed to implementing them.

The basic concept to get is:

Keyword Group = Ad Group in Google Ads

You should identify core keywords that will be at the center of corresponding Ad Groups. For example:

Cat boarding = one Ad Group

Cat grooming = one Ad Group

Cat Toys = one Ad Group

Pet boarding = one Ad Group

»»» DELIVERABLE: YOUR KEYWORD WORKSHEET

After some brainstorming, hard work, and organization, you should have your **DELIVERABLE** ready: a completed **keyword worksheet** in an Excel or Google spreadsheet. The first “dashboard” tab should be a high-level overview to relevant keywords, reflecting the structural search patterns that generate the **keyword groups**, next the keyword volumes as measured by the Google keyword tool, and finally, the values measured by the Google cost-per-click data and your own judgment as to which search queries are most likely to lead to a sale or sales lead. Other tabs (which you will fill out over time) include a tab for reporting, a tab to measure your rank on Google vs. keywords, a tab for local search rank, and a tab for landing pages.

***Note:** I recommend one Keyword Worksheet for both your SEO project and your Google Ads project. If, for now, you are only working on Google Ads, it may be more Spartan, but – long*

term – you want to think of both SEO and Google Ads as working together for an effective Google strategy. Ditto for Bing / Yahoo.

In summary, the **keyword worksheet** for your company should reflect keyword *volume*, *value* (as measured by the “fit” between the keyword search and what your company has to offer), and the *structural search patterns* that reflect the “mindset” by which people search. This document will be your blueprint for building out your Ad Groups going forward.



4

SEARCH NETWORK: ORGANIZATION

When people say they want to “advertise on Google,” they generally mean that when a customer searches on Google for *such-and-such* product, service, or company by keyword, they want their ad to appear on Google.com **and nowhere else**. As we’ve learned so far, however, Google is actually two foundational networks (*Search* and *Display*) and many sub-networks or sub-opportunities such as YouTube, Gmail, Google Play, the Google App, the App Store, and the Google Display Network. There’s more to Google than just Google.com! But, if you’re not careful, Google can place your ads across its platforms and in many formats that might drive up your *costs* in clicks without a corresponding value in *conversions* (inquiries or sales). In the next two Chapters, we’ll focus on tips, tricks, and best practices for the **Google Search Network** so as to show your ads when (*and only when*) you want them to appear on Google.com and only on Google.com.

Let’s get started!

TO-DO LIST:

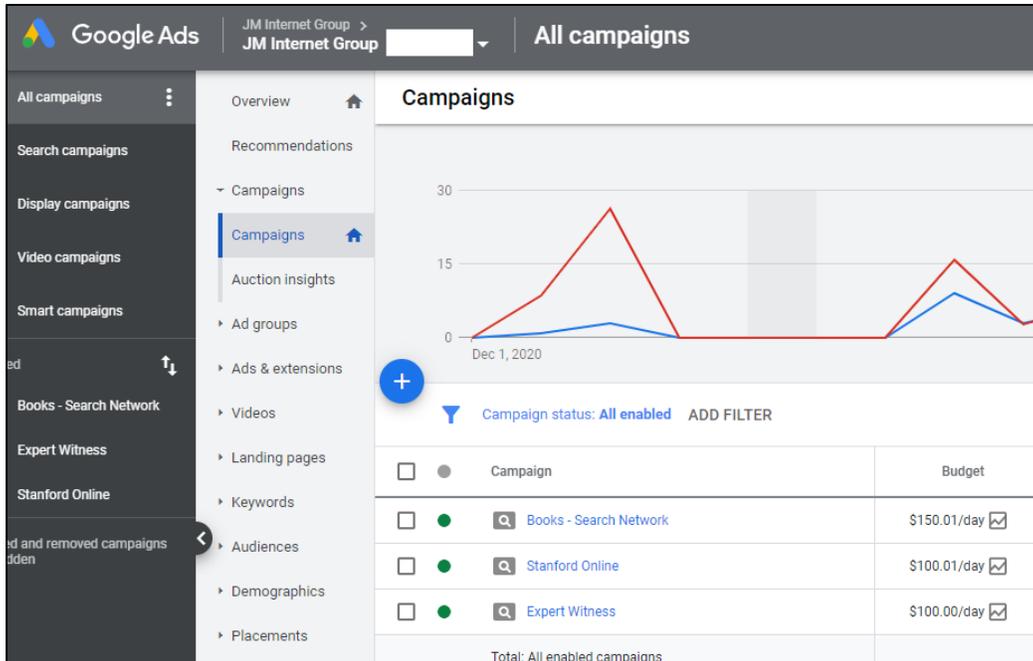
- » Review Basic Set-Up Best Practices
- » Let Keyword Themes Orient Your Organization
- » Organize Your Campaigns & Ad Groups
- » Use Correct Keyword Match Types
- » LSAs (Local Service Ads): Are They For You?
- »» Deliverable: Search Network Organization Worksheet

» REVIEW BASIC SET-UP BEST PRACTICES

We'll assume you've set (or reset) at least one Campaign to run *exclusively* on the Search Network. Here are the steps to create a new Campaign:

1. Log in to your Google Ads account.
2. Click on *Campaigns* on the left.
3. Click the White “+” sign in the blue circle, and then “New Campaign.”
4. Select “Create a campaign without a Goal’s Guidance.”
5. Select “Search.”
6. Follow the various minor instructions, and then select “Clicks” in the checkbox. Or, if you have conversion tracking, you can select another goal such as “leads.”
7. On the next screen, make sure that the “Display Network” box is NOT checked (i.e., you are running ONLY on the Search Network.)
 - a. You can include *Google search partners* if you like. These are sites like Yelp or Comcast that use Google as their search engine. I generally uncheck this option as well.
8. Follow the steps to set up at least one Ad Group that matches one of your Core Keywords, at least one ad inside that Ad Group going to a matching landing page on your website, and keywords (as indicated below) “” or “[]” around your target keywords. (*We’ll return to this, in detail, later in this Chapter*).

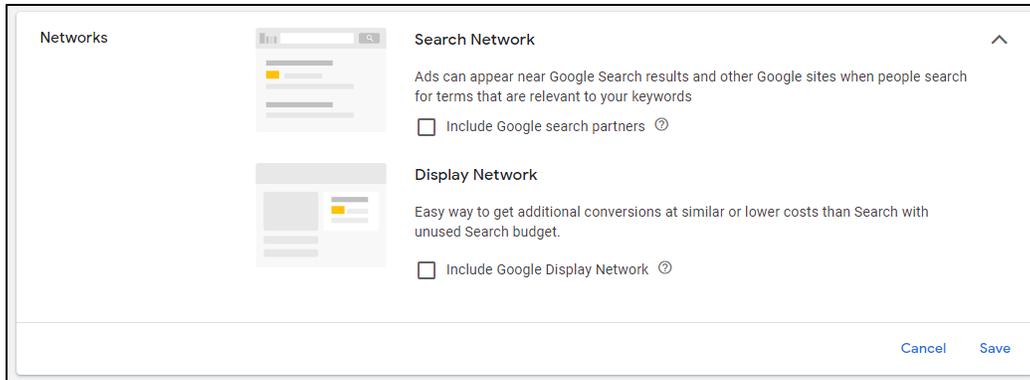
One annoying feature in Google Ads is the “guided set up.” I recommend you fight your way through “Guided Set up” for your *Campaign > Ad Group > Ad*, and then pause this. Once you’re through this, you can then use the simpler interface that lives underneath a campaign. You should see something like this:



If you're resetting an existing campaign to the Search Network, click on the Campaign, and then click "Settings" on the left. Click into "Networks" in the middle, and make sure that Search Network is selected; uncheck the box for Google Search partners, and do NOT check the box for Display Network. At the end of this process in *Campaign > Settings > Networks* you should see this:



If you see something else such as, "Display Network," your campaign is running on that network as well the "Search Network." This is not what you want. Click on the downward arrow, and open up the dialog box. Then uncheck everything and you should see this:



NEVER mix Search and Display targeting, despite how Google (mis)leads you in its guided setup! You want “Search Network” campaigns separated from your “Display Network” campaigns.

Google Ads is a Hierarchy

Google Ads is a hierarchy, that is:

Account = the master of everything, where your billing and log-in information lives.

Campaign = this sets the network (Search or Display plus YouTube or Shopping), as well as geotarget and budget.

Ad Group = the “workhorse” of Google Ads, where ads “live” as well as “keywords” or “targeting.”

Ads = the text elements you input to allow Google to create ads for users.

Ad Assets = the text elements that can be mixed or matched at any level (account, campaign, or ad group) to form the complete ad a users sees on Google.com.

The best practice is to have a unique Campaign for each network (Search vs. Display), plus tight Ad Groups focused around one keyword theme (e.g., “cat boarding” in one Ad Group and “cat toys” in another).

Importantly, realize that you can navigate from this basic Campaign level to various features and options. You can zig and zag.

Click –

Into a **Campaign** and then **Settings** on the left to modify features such as the **Network** (Search vs. Display), **Locations** (where you want your ads to appear), **Languages** (which languages to target), **Budget** (what your daily budget limit is), **Bidding** (your bid strategy), **Start and end dates** (if you want to schedule your ads).

Into a **Campaign** and then **Devices** to manage your bid adjustments (up or down) for Computers vs. Mobile phones vs. Tablets.

Into a **Campaign** and then **Ad Groups** to create or modify Ad Groups.

Then inside of **Ad Groups** to create ads, create or manage extensions, and set keyword triggers.

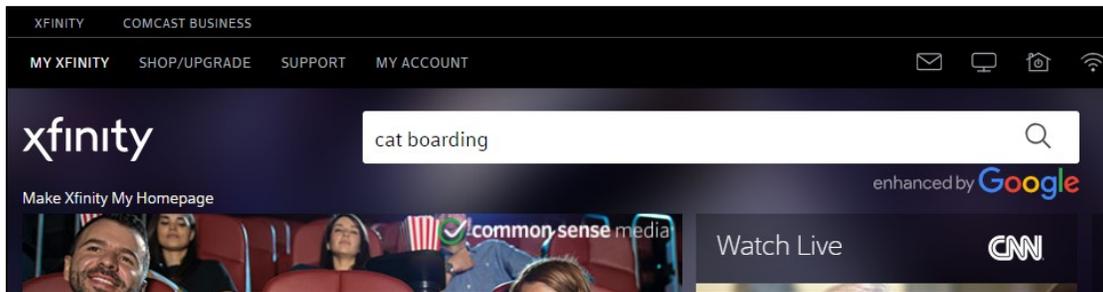
Into a Campaign or Ad Group and then *Ad Assets* (or *Extensions*) to modify extensions, which can live at the Account, Campaign, and/or Ad Group level.

As you work with Google Ads remember that different components “live” at different levels, beneath different “parents,” and accordingly, you can manage features only at specific levels. Keywords, for example, “live” at the Ad Group level while Geotargeting “lives” at the Campaign level.

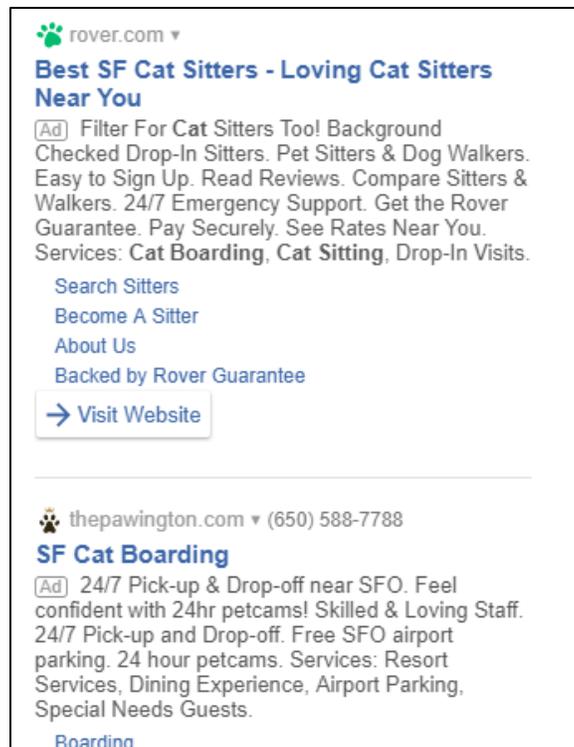
Search Partners

We’re focusing in this Chapter on the Search Network. What are “search partners?” Search partners are sites such as Yelp.com or Xfinity.com that run Google search

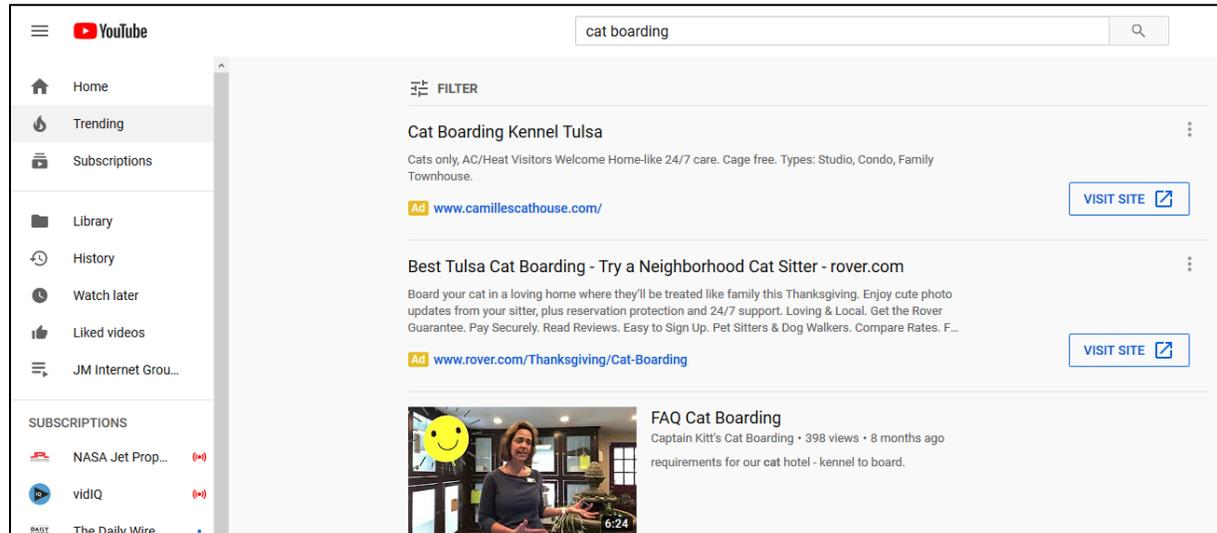
results. Most importantly, YouTube searches are now included as a search partner. These “partner sites” are considered “search” because people tend to type keywords rather than browse. For example, here’s a screenshot of the “Search box” on Xfinity.com:



You can see “enhanced by Google” on the right. And here’s the Yelp home page with Google results shown after I searched for “cat boarding” near San Francisco:



And here's a screenshot of a search for "cat boarding" on YouTube pulling ads from Google's search network function:



To sum up, if you select "Search Network" in your settings, your ads can appear on Google as well as Search Partner sites like Yelp, Xfinity, and YouTube. YouTube is by far the most important; so if you think that relevant people will search for your product or service on YouTube, it's worth enabling. The other partners are very low quality, so I generally do not check "Search Partners."

Here's a (not-so) fun fact. *Nowhere* does Google publicly identify the companies in its Search Network. We know it's Yelp, Xfinity, and YouTube, for example, but there isn't a clear list of all sites in the Search Network, nor does Google Ads identify where your ads appear if you check the box. The fact that Google is non-transparent is probably a sign that these sites are not high quality – yet another reason to not run on "Search Partners."

Say No to the Display Network (For Now)

If you see "Display Network" anywhere, you've done something wrong. Sometimes if you've set up a Campaign running on the "Display Network," Google Ads will not let you convert it to the "Search Network." In that case, you have to pause that Campaign

and create a new one in the correct fashion. At the end of this process, you want at least one Campaign that is set to run on *only* the Search Network. In fact, you **never** want to “mix networks.” You should have campaigns running only on the Search Network, and if you decide to use the Display Network, another set of campaigns running only on the Display Network. Mixing the networks in one Campaign complicates everything, so **do not mix campaigns**.

VIDEO. Watch a video from Google on the Google Search Network at <http://jmlinks.com/26d>.

» LET KEYWORD THEMES ORIENT YOUR ORGANIZATION

Let’s revisit your keywords and explain how to input them into your *Search Campaign > Ad Groups > Keywords*. Keywords drive search, and – therefore – *keywords* drive Google Ads on the Search Network. Here are the steps from the perspective of a customer

Customer need > search query on Google > click on ad > landing > sale / sales inquiry

Or, translated into our scenario of a San Francisco resident who needs cat boarding for Fluffy during his vacation to Cabo San Lucas:

I need to have my cat taken care of on vacation > keyword search on Google for “cat boarding San Francisco” > see / click on ad for Jason’s Cat Emporium > land on Jason’s website > fill out inquiry form to check out the Emporium for my cat, Fluffy > Agree to sign up Fluffy, and the deal is done.

Using this simple process model, you can see that your steps on Google Ads begin with defining the best **keywords** to advertise on.

Step #1: Identify the search keywords that you want to advertise on.

It all starts with the keyword. The customer need “becomes” the keyword, and the keyword that the customer enters into Google needs to find a match in the keyword that you enter as a **keyword trigger** into Google Ads.

Customers enter **search terms** into Google.

Advertisers enter **keyword triggers** into Google Ads.

While people often call both of these *keywords*, it’s helpful to distinguish between the *search terms* that are entered by the searcher and the *keyword triggers* (called *search keywords* in the Google Ads interface) that you, as an advertiser, enter into Google Ads. Keyword triggers, as we shall see, need to be notated in Google Ads in one or more of three distinct ways:

Quotation Marks (called Phrase Match)

“*cat boarding*” = any keyword query by the searcher that includes that phrase. Plus, closely related terms or phrases such as “*cat hotel*” or “*where to board my cat.*”

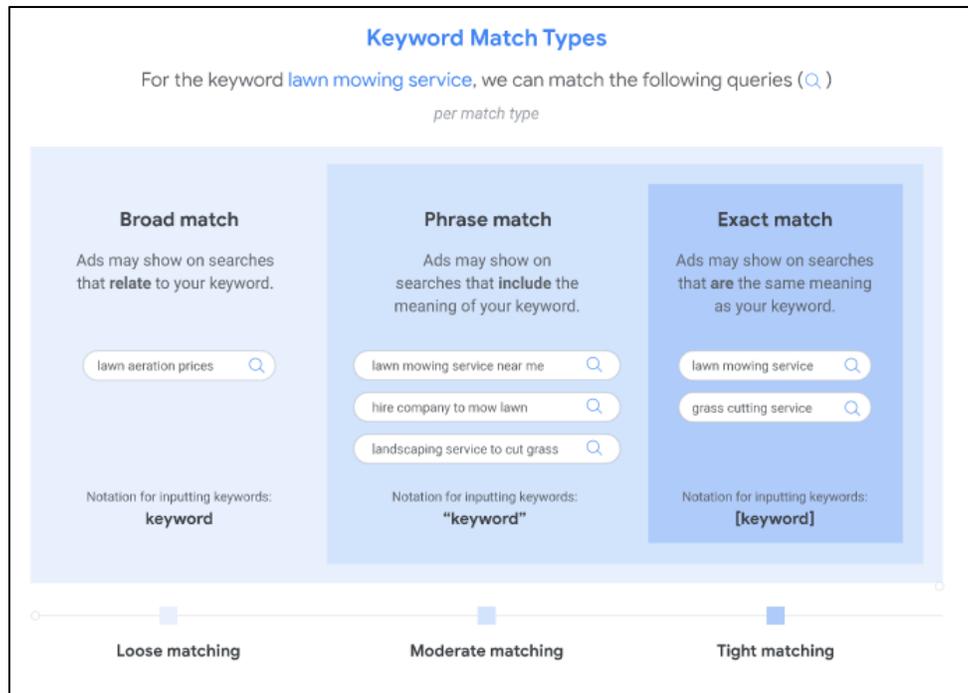
Brackets (called Exact Match)

[*cat boarding*] = the exact phrase, only, as entered into Google. Plus closely related meanings as in “cat boarding San Francisco” or “boarding house for cats.”

No Quotes No Brackets (called Broad Match)

The “sucker choice” is to enter in the words *cat boarding* into Google Ads with no “quotation” and/or no “[” bracket. This means “Google think for me” and match on broadly related terms.

Here's a screenshot from the official documentation:



<https://jmlinks.com/58f>

Pay close attention! Google isn't exactly honest about how this works in reality. It sounds like "nothing can go wrong," while in reality *broad match* can be a total trainwreck of garbage keywords, *phrase match* can contain quite a few non-relevant phrases, and even *exact match* isn't really exact match. It's one of the most dishonest things in the Google Ads interface: match types do not necessarily mean what you think that they mean!

How so?

The reason, of course, is that if you just enter

cat boarding

(That is, no quotes and no brackets). Google can substitute nearly *anything* for those words, and before you know it, you're running on

dog hotels

Because to Google, the word *cat* is like the word *dog*, and the word *boarding* is like *hotel*. Entering keywords with no quotes or brackets is a “gotcha,” so don't do it! Even phrase match can pull up non-related terms as can exact match.

As you get started with keywords, therefore, I would only enter exact match or phrase match types. You can use a tool like AdWords Wrapper (<http://jmlinks.com/58g>) to generate a list of keywords in the proper exact and phrase match formats.

We'll return in a moment to understanding actual search terms entered by users against what you as the advertiser entered as keyword triggers.

Core Keywords

Refer back to Chapter 3, and your Keyword Worksheet. You should have identified **core keywords** that reflect the major structural patterns of your products or services. Take a look at the Progressive.com website (<https://www.progressive.com/>), and you'll see a very structured organization of keywords in terms of landing pages on the website.

Auto / car insurance at <https://www.progressive.com/auto/>

Home insurance at <https://www.progressive.com/homeowners/>

RV insurance at <https://www.progressive.com/rv/>

Motorcycle insurance at <https://www.progressive.com/motorcycle/>

Boat insurance at <https://www.progressive.com/boat/>

etc.

In addition, as you look at their landing pages and read the text out loud, you'll notice helper keywords such as *quote*, *rates*, or *companies* that further make a keyword transactional. In fact, here's a screenshot of their ad running on "home insurance":

Ad · <https://www.progressive.com/> ▼ (877) 592-5663

Progressive Home Insurance - Quote Homeowners Online Today

Protect Your **Home** and Possessions at an Affordable Price. See how much you can save today!
Insurance coverage: Auto, **Home**/Renters, Motorcycle, RV/Trailer, Boat, Life, Pet.

<h4>Auto Insurance</h4> <p>Compare multiple rates side by side on the #1 rated insurance website.</p>	<h4>Bundling Home & Auto</h4> <p>Kick start a home quote with information from your car insurance</p>
---	---

And here's their ad for "ATV insurance:"

Ad · <https://www.progressive.com/atv> ▼

Progressive® ATV Insurance - Protect Yourself & Your ATV

Protect Your Four-Wheeler With Personalized Coverage. Get a Quote Today. Multi-Policy Discounts. Roadside Assistance. Online Quoting. Coverage for Gear. Full Replacement Cost. Safety Course Discount. Accident Forgiveness. 24/7 Customer Service. Mobile App.

You'll see that Progressive runs very specific ads for "ATV insurance" that go to a very specific landing page for "ATV insurance" vs. very specific ads for "home insurance" that go to a very specific landing page for "home insurance" and so on and so forth.

Check it out yourself. Do some searches relating to *car insurance*, *RV insurance*, *boat insurance*, etc., and click on the ads. Notice how many of the top advertisers send you to very defined landing pages, even if they offer other products or services.

Google Ads rewards a **very organized, hierarchical structure**, as follows:

One core keyword > one specific Ad Group > one or more specific ads > one specific landing page

Identify Transactional Keywords

On your own Keyword Worksheet, you should have identified 5-10 **core keywords** plus another 10-20 helper words that ensure that your keywords are **transactional** in nature. You also want to keep an eye on keyword **volume** and **value** because, since Google Ads is expensive, you generally want to advertise only on keywords that are likely to lead to a sale. In general, (but not always), *educational* keywords should be avoided. (Or, if you decide to bid on them, place them in their own Ad Group and bid much lower per click as they have a significantly lower value.).

A San Francisco orthopedic surgeon, for example, might have core keywords such as:

Knee surgery

Knee surgeon

Hip surgery

Hip surgeon

Shoulder surgeon

Shoulder surgery

Orthopedic Surgeon

And helper words like *San Francisco, best, top, top-rated, arthroscopic, second opinion*, etc. (He will NOT advertise on “knee pain” as that “educational keyword” will have a lot of volume, generate a lot of clicks, cost him a lot of money, but end up with many bounces as these are people who are not close to the decision to engage with a knee surgeon).

Also, let's say he only focuses on knees. Then he might run ads only on the "knee surgeon" pattern and avoid the more general "orthopedic surgeon" as this will pull in people looking for hip or shoulder surgeons.

In general, the tighter your focus among your keyword target, your Ad Group (and ads), and your landing page, the better you'll do on Google Ads.

Similarly, for Jason's Cat Emporium, we will identify transactional keywords such as:

cat boarding

cat hotels

long-term cat care

cat kennels

cat grooming

cat toys

And avoid educational /non-relevant keywords such as:

cat

cat vets

dog boarding

And realize that some relevant keywords are ambiguous (because they may signify other animals such as dogs):

pet boarding

animal boarding

And some helper keywords are negative (poor or cheap people):

cheap

free

As we learned in our Keywords Chapter, your first **TO-DO** is to build out your **keyword worksheet**, organize your keywords into core keywords, and identify transactional keywords that are also (hopefully) high volume / high value. I would also create a column and designate the core keywords as “hot” (definitely your customer), “warm” (probably your customer), “cold” (probably not your customer). It’s also a good idea to notate keywords like *pet boarding* that are **problematic** because they include both your customers and non-customers. (We’ll return to ambiguous keywords when we discuss writing ads in the “Attract / Repel” style).

» ORGANIZE YOUR CAMPAIGNS AND AD GROUPS

Generally speaking, **one** core keyword should be represented in **one** ad group in Google Ads. Where we’re going is to see that your Keyword Worksheet will map to your Google Ads as follows:

one core keyword > one Ad Group in Google Ads

for example:

cat boarding > cat boarding group in Google Ads

pet boarding > pet boarding group in Google Ads

cat hotel > cat hotel group in Google Ads

cat kennel > cat kennel group in Google Ads

cat grooming > cat grooming group in Google Ads

DON'T LET REALITY CONFUSE YOU

While you might think that *pet boarding* includes *cat boarding* (which it does in the real world), at the “word game” level of Google Ads, you want a very tight focus between the words. Don't be lazy and clutter your Ad Groups with non-related keywords. So *pet boarding* will get its own Ad Group, *cat boarding* will get its own Ad Group, and so on and so forth. Even *animal boarding* might get its own Ad Group distinct from *pet boarding*!

The tighter the linkages, the better your performance will be.

Campaigns in Google Ads

But before we dive deeper into strategy and setup, let's talk for a moment about **Campaigns** in Google Ads

Conceptually, a campaign should reflect a budgetary “bucket” of how you want to spend some money in a strategic fashion. They should reflect customer segments as well. Since campaigns are where you set the *network* (Search vs. Display), plus features such as *geotargeting* and *device targeting*, you want to think strategically about your campaigns as you get started (or revise existing campaigns).

As examples:

Networks. Since “search” is radically different from “browse,” the MOST important campaign setting is to ONLY run a campaign on ONE network, the Search Network (not *Search Network and Display Network*) (*despite what Google tells you is the “best choice!”*).

Geotarget. “Geotarget” or “location targeting” is Google Ads lingo for showing ads ONLY to people who reside in a specific area (e.g., San Francisco) and/or are searching with intent around that area (e.g., “Cat Hotels San Francisco”) vs. showing your ads just to anyone, anywhere. Location targeting is set at the campaign level; accordingly, if you want to show different ads to people in different cities, then you set this at the Campaign level, and you need separate campaigns (e.g., one for San Francisco and one for Oakland).

Budget. If you make a lot more money on one product (e.g., *cat boarding*) than on another (*cat grooming*), it makes sense to put them in separate campaigns as budgets can be set separately at the Campaign level.

Devices. Since you can determine whether you show on mobile phones vs. desktops vs. tablets by changing these settings at the campaign level, and budgets are set at the campaign level, it makes sense to split your mobile from your desktop campaigns if (for some reason) you want a different spend for people searching on different devices.

Ad Groups

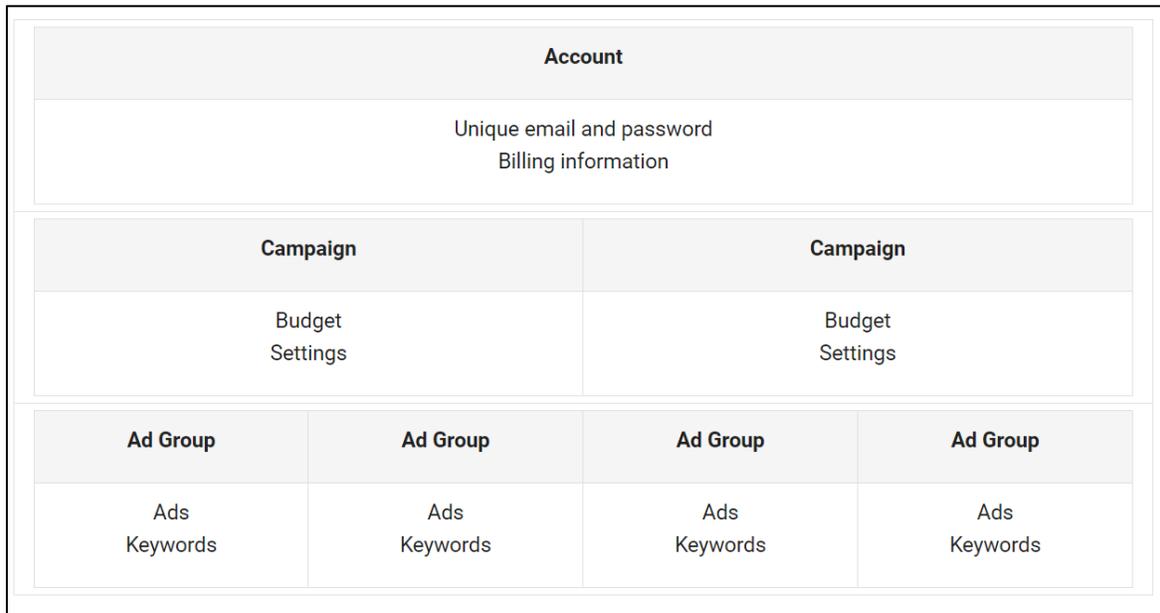
Next, once you’ve set up a campaign, drill down into your **Ad Groups**. Remember:

one core keyword = one ad group in Google Ads

Also, remember that even though you can geotarget in Google Ads, city names are also often helper keywords, so you’d have *cat boarding San Francisco* in the *cat boarding* Ad Group. Finally, although structurally in Google Ads, Ad Groups “live” inside of Campaigns, Google Ads will force you to set up a group and an ad the first time when you set up a Campaign, so you often have to toggle back and forth as you set things up.

GOOGLE ADS IS A HIERARCHY

Structurally, however, Google Ads works as a **hierarchical system**. In fact, here's a nice graphic from Google that displays the hierarchy of Google Ads:



Source: <http://jmlinks.com/39v>.

For example, I'd have a Campaign called **Cat Emporium – Search Network** that is running on the Search Network only, geotargeting residents of San Francisco. Here's a screenshot showing the hierarchy of *Campaign* > *Ad Group* from inside an account:

Overview ● Enabled Type: Search Budget: \$1.01/day [More details](#) ▾

Opportunities **AD GROUPS** AUCTION INSIGHTS

Ad groups

<input type="checkbox"/> ● Ad group ↑	Status	Default max. CPC
<input type="checkbox"/> ● Cat Boarding	Eligible	\$2.01 (enhanced) ✕
<input type="checkbox"/> ● Cat Hotels	Eligible	\$2.01 (enhanced) ✕
<input type="checkbox"/> ● Cat Kennels	Eligible	\$2.01 (enhanced) ✕
<input type="checkbox"/> ● Pet Boarding	Eligible	\$2.01 (enhanced) ✕

Your Campaigns are accessible off to the far left in the menu system but also appear at the top in the “breadcrumb” trail, as I have indicated above. Also, note how I have four ad groups, one for *cat boarding*, one for *cat hotels*, one for *cat kennels*, and one for *pet boarding*, that reflect the core keywords of *cat boarding*, *cat hotels*, *cat kennels*, and *pet boarding*. I usually name my Campaigns with their network, making it easy to see what’s what at a glance. By naming the Campaign *Cat Emporium – Search Network*, I can see in an instant that this is a Search Network campaign.

While you can zig and zag through Google Ads, up and down the levels, it is immensely helpful always to ask yourself, “what level am I at? You can “view” items like keywords across levels, like looking into a glass building that has different floors, but you can only edit / change them when you are actually “at” a specific level. With respect to keywords, for example, you can “view” them across Campaigns, but you can only edit / change them at the Ad Group level. A few things, such as bids, can be set at two levels (e.g., you can change a bid at the Ad Group level or at the Keyword sublevel).

VIDEO. Watch a video tutorial from Google on setting up Ad Groups at <http://jmlinks.com/26b>.

» USE CORRECT KEYWORD MATCH TYPES

Let's return to the problem of keyword match types. You need to properly understand and use Google Ads nomenclature to set your keyword targets. Google confuses this by misleading you into thinking you can just throw keywords into Google Ads willy-nilly. Even worse, "phrase match" and "exact match" on Google Ads do NOT mean what they mean in normal English! Let's investigate further.

Keyword Match Types

Taking our example of *cat boarding*, in your Cat Boarding Ad Group, you'd insert the following keyword into your Ad Group:

"cat boarding"

meaning, *phrase match* in Google Ads speak.

which tells Google to run your ad if, and only if, the searcher enters BOTH the word *cat* AND the word *boarding* (as well as very close variants such as the plural *cats*, or a misspelling like *baording*). This will also match on close "meaning" variants such as "cat hotels" or "where to board a cat." I also recommend you enter the exact variant:

[cat boarding]

meaning, "exact match" in Google Ads speak

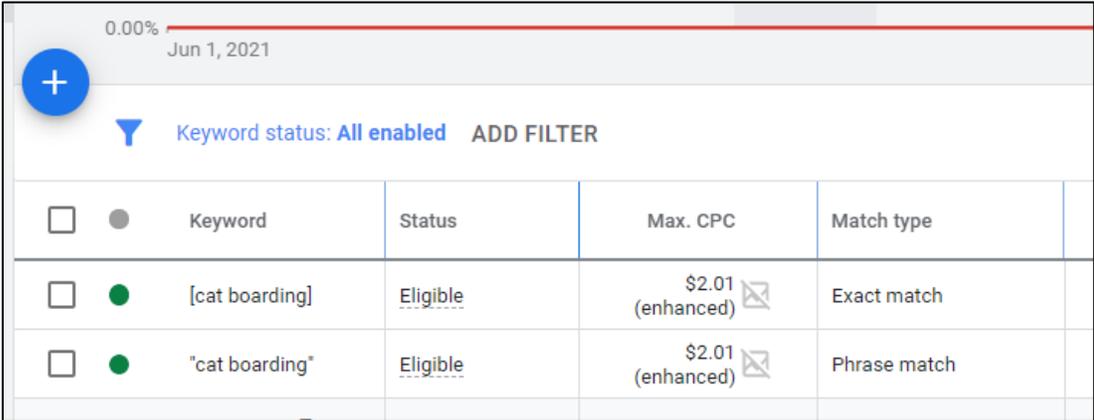
And you would **NEVER** enter just

cat boarding

meaning, “broad match” in Google Ads speak

as this is the **dangerous broad match** in Google Ads. If you enter just *cat boarding* (no “” quotation marks and/or no “[” brackets, as Google will run away with this, and run your ads on things like *pet boarding, dog boarding, iguana boarding, dog hotels*, etc.

Here’s a screenshot of keywords correctly entered into Google Ads:



<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Keyword	Status	Max. CPC	Match type
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	[cat boarding]	Eligible	\$2.01 (enhanced)	Exact match
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	"cat boarding"	Eligible	\$2.01 (enhanced)	Phrase match

Enter Each Variant

Why enter

“cat boarding”

[cat boarding]

when

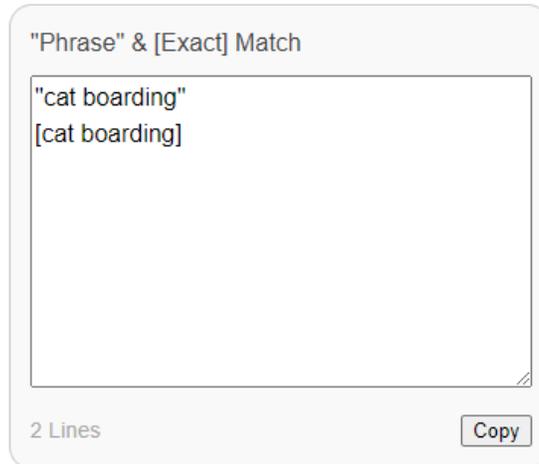
“cat boarding”

is the superset of the former keyword phrases, meaning it **includes** them by default?

Technically speaking, you do not have to enter all three variants because “*cat boarding*” captures the other two.

However, if you also enter the phrase and exact match variants, you get better reporting (you’ll know exactly how many searches occur for the *exact keyword query*, *the phrase*, and *then variations of the phrase*), plus you can **set your bids differently** for these keywords. (*I’ve also noticed that entering all variants seems to help your performance... don’t ask me why just do it*). Flipped around, you can also enter the exact match only, as in [*cat boarding*] when you want a super tight relationship between keywords and ads. Just remember that the tighter the match, the more phrases you will exclude, so [*cat boarding*] would not generally catch “where do I board my cat,” while “*cat boarding*” would.

Another wrapper tool to use is the Google Ads Wrapper tool at <https://jmlinks.com/25c> to quickly create all variants. Just be sure to enter your core keywords and select **ONLY** the “phrase and exact match” box. Here’s a screenshot:



You can then copy / paste those into the Keywords tab / Ad Group level for the corresponding Ad Group in your Google Ads Campaign.

High-Value Keyword Phrases

Similarly, for more targeted bidding, if a phrase might have higher value to you, you can enter it as a phrase. For example:

same day cat grooming

luxury cat grooming

in-home cat grooming

The reason for this is that the addition of certain helper words indicates that the customer is more likely to be affluent and/or willing to pay a premium.

SKAG: Single Keyword Ad Groups

Accordingly, you want the option to be able to raise your bid for these variations of your keyword. Indeed, if a phrase is really, really valuable (e.g., *same-day cat grooming*), you can even break it out into its own Ad Group for specialized management! Howie Jacobson (*Google Ads for Dummies*, 2007) likens this to a “special trailer” on a Hollywood movie set for a superstar. The industry term has become “SKAG,” for “Single Keyword Ad Groups.”

SKAGs are a bit of a pain to set up, but if I have a very high-value keyword phrase such as “luxury cat boarding” or “same-day cat sitting,” it’s probably worth it. I’d create SKAGs for:

Ad Group: Luxury Cat Boarding

Keyword patterns: “luxury cat boarding,” [luxury cat boarding]

Ad copy: headline would say “Luxury Cat Boarding”

Landing Page: landing page would emphasize “luxury cat boarding”

Ad Group: Same-day Cat Boarding

Keyword patterns: “same day cat boarding,” [same day cat boarding]

Ad copy: headline would say “Same Day Cat Boarding”

Landing Page: landing page would emphasize “same day cat boarding”

In this way, my very high value, very likely to convert keywords get the special treatment of SKAGs, improving my click-thru rate, quality score (thus lowering my cost per click), and conversions. SKAGs are worth it for high-value keywords! To learn more about SKAGs, visit <http://jmlinks.com/52b>.

TO-DO. Consider breaking out high-value phrases into their own keyword phrases for special bidding or reporting, or even creating a specific Ad Group for each high-value phrase.

Since SKAGs are a bit of a pain to set up, I set them up only for very high-value, focused keyword patterns. Nowadays, Google Ads experts are claiming that Google’s new match type logic (phrase, exact, broad) makes SKAGs less valuable. For high-value phrases, I still recommend SKAGs.

Throughout your entire Google Ads experience, Google rewards a tight focus. It’s extremely important a) never to mix the Search and Display Networks, b) to have a tight relationship between a core keyword and the corresponding Ad Group, c) to write Ad Copy that regurgitates the target keyword to the user, and d) to have landing pages that also tightly reflect the search pattern. The “cat boarding” Ad Group contains ads only about “cat boarding” and has a landing page focused on “cat boarding,” while the “iguana boarding” Ad Group contains ads only about “iguana boarding” and has a landing page focused on “iguana boarding” and so on and so forth. A little hard work at Ad Group organization will pay off big time in terms of cheaper cost-per-click, higher click-thru rates, and better conversions.

Google’s Official Explanation

Let’s return to keyword match types. Despite the official Google help explanation (<http://jmlinks.com/23d>), using broad match (just the words, without quotation marks, plus signs, or brackets) can produce many poor matches. If you just enter

cat boarding

as a keyword trigger into Google Ads (no quotes, no brackets), Google will substitute words: *cat* will become *pet*, *boarding* will become *vet*, and your ad will be running on *pet vets* before you know it! Google doesn’t easily explain this (*for nefarious reasons?*). Who

knows why, but just never ever enter “broad match” unless you are doing very aggressive keyword research, and you monitor the actual search queries very religiously.

See Actual Keyword Search Queries

It’s all very misleading. Google AI will “substitute” what it believes as highly related terms for both of these match types. In your reporting, you’ll see “close variant” for the search term, which means that Google “thought for you” and decided the match was “good enough” between what you entered as a keyword and what the searcher entered as a search term.

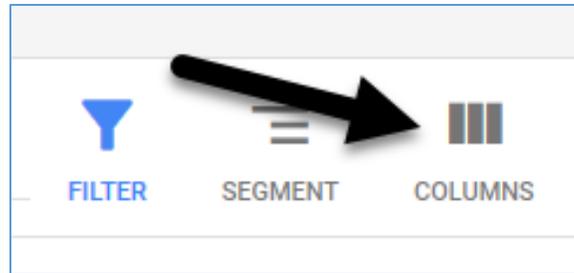
After your ads are running for a while, I highly recommend that you run a “search term report” to see the actual search terms against which Google is placing your ads. In my experience, many matches are bad, and you begin to get low-quality clicks at high prices.

VERIFY SEARCH TERMS AGAINST KEYWORDS

Here’s how you can see the actual search terms that are running against your keywords.

It’s called a “Search Terms” report, and you can access it at either the Campaign or Ad Group level; just be aware that keywords “live” at the Ad Group level, so if you want to make changes, you’ll make them in reference to an Ad Group. For this reason, I like to do this by drilling into an Ad Group, then clicking *Keywords > Search Terms* on the left menu.

At this point, you can view the actual search queries entered by users, you can set a time horizon in the top right, and you can sort by Campaign, Ad Group, etc. It’s best to be at the Ad Group level. If you don’t see the proper columns, click on the “Columns” icon on the top middle right of the page. Here’s a screenshot:



Here are the columns you want to enable:

Under “Performance:”

Impr = number of impressions the search query received that is, how many searches there were for the time horizon you select.

Clicks = number of clicks on your ad.

CTR = click-thru rate, or clicks/impressions. The higher this is, the more attractive your ad is vis-à-vis this keyword search query.

Avg CPC = the average cost per click you paid for clicks via this keyword search query.

Cost = total you spent for clicks on this search query

Impr. (Top) % = the percentage of total impressions for which your ad showed at the top of the page, above the organic results.

Under “Conversions” (if you are running conversion tracking):

Conversions = the number of people who “converted,” i.e., made an e-commerce purchase, filled out a feedback form, etc.

Conv. rate = the number of conversions / the number of total ad clicks, which tells you how compelling your ad and landing page were vis-à-vis this search query.

Cost / conv. = how much you paid per conversion.

Under “Attributes”

Keyword = this shows which keyword triggered the search term.

You may not see all these as options but save these columns after you set them up. Designate it as “Search Terms” so you can easily get back to this.

Now, you might not have all these metrics, so ignore any you don’t have. Right now, you want to pay the most attention to whether your ads are running for relevant search queries or not. Here’s a screenshot for actual search queries for my ads for my *The Marketing Book*:

<input type="checkbox"/> Search term	Match type	Added/Excluded	Keyword	↓ Impr.	Avg. cost	Cost	Clicks	CTR	Avg. CPC	Impr. (Top) %	Conversion
Total: Search terms ⓘ				2,113	\$1.95	\$330.17	169	8.00%	\$1.95	85.99%	3.00
<input type="checkbox"/> best marketing books	Exact match	✓ Added	[best marketing books]	291	\$1.95	\$48.63	25	8.59%	\$1.95	86.25%	1.00
<input type="checkbox"/> marketing books	Exact match	✓ Added	[marketing books]	260	\$1.94	\$33.06	17	6.54%	\$1.94	93.85%	0.00
<input type="checkbox"/> best marketing books 2021	Exact match	✓ Added	[best marketing books 2021]	86	\$1.95	\$19.46	10	11.63%	\$1.95	65.12%	0.00
<input type="checkbox"/> best books on marketing	Exact match	✓ Added	[best books on marketing]	61	\$1.97	\$13.82	7	11.48%	\$1.97	86.89%	1.00
<input type="checkbox"/> digital marketing books	Exact match	✓ Added	[digital marketing books]	54	\$1.96	\$7.83	4	7.41%	\$1.96	98.15%	1.00

This tells me the actual terms people entered into Google. You can see that there were 291 impressions for “best marketing books,” generating 25 clicks at \$1.95 CPC (Cost-per-click) for a total cost of \$48.63. I can quickly scan this list to verify that a) the search terms are good matches for my keywords and my strategy for attracting the right customers and b) that there are no “rogue” keywords that Google is inserting.

As you scroll down the list, look for “close variant,” as these will be the problem terms. Here’s a screenshot showing a “close variant:”

<input type="checkbox"/>	marketing strategy books	Exact match (close variant)	None	[marketing books]	8	\$1.96	\$3.91	2
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------------	------	-------------------	---	--------	--------	---

This shows that my keyword “marketing books” was matched against the term “marketing strategy books” for 8 clicks at \$1.96 per click. An easy tip is to use CTRL+F (Command+F on the Mac) for “close variant.” Then browse the keywords and look for ones that are not good matches. These can be excluded as negative keywords.

If you enable conversion-tracking, you’ll also be able to see the conversion rate and cost for each query.

At this early keyword discovery and verification state, pay most attention to the keywords listed in the far-left column. Scan it for the following:

Relevant Keywords. You want to make sure that 90% of these keywords are strongly relevant and hopefully transactional to your product or service.

Negative Keywords. Be on the lookout for helpers like “cheap,” “free,” etc., which you can set as **negative** keywords because they indicate a person who is not likely to buy your product.

Niche Keywords. Look for really strong, focused keywords that you might want to break out into their own highly targeted Ad Group. Unusually high CTRs mean that you have a very strong keyword that might deserve being broken out into its own highly targeted SKAG (Single Keyword Ad Group).

You want to go your *Search Terms* report for any and all *Ad Groups > Keywords > Search Terms* on an ongoing basis, looking for really good, high-converting keywords (which you then break out into their own special Ad Group) and really bad, low converting keywords (which you abandon or even add as negative keywords). You can download the complete list into Excel and note that the download version is usually more comprehensive than the visible version in Google Ads.

We’ll get to negative keywords in a moment. For now, just realize that your workflow is:

keyword idea > match type (phrase or exact) in Google Ads > run ads > check search terms to verify that you are getting good matches (and identify bad matches to exclude).

Google Ads is a Word Game

Also, realize that Google Ads is a word game; do not put the keyword phrase *pet grooming* in a mangled Ad Group either. To Google Ads, “pet” is a different word than “cat,” so – accordingly – it should have its own Ad Group, meaning:

cat boarding = its own Ad Group

pet boarding = its own Ad Group

animal boarding = its own Ad Group

If there is a very close synonym (such as *animal* for *pet*), it is probably OK to include both of those keyword phrases in one group. You might have:

pet / animal group = keywords that are derivations of *pet boarding* and *animal boarding*.

That said, it is **always** better to split and have highly focused Ad Groups than to combine (related) keywords into one Ad Group. I would split *pet* and *animal* into different Ad Groups.

Google Ads rewards tight, highly focused Ad Groups over unfocused keyword groups!

Also, at a conceptual level, realize that some keywords are unambiguously your customers (e.g., *cat boarding*), and others may or may not be your customers (*pet boarding*); this is a major reason NOT to mix keywords of the one into the Ad Group of the other. It's also a reason to separate them by Campaigns, so you can always bid high with a large budget on your tight Campaigns (*cat boarding* / definitely our customers) vs. bidding low with a smaller budget on your ambiguous Campaigns (*pet boarding* / maybe not our customers).

In summary, the tighter, the more organized the matching between the keyword group and the ad group, the better you will be in the long run.

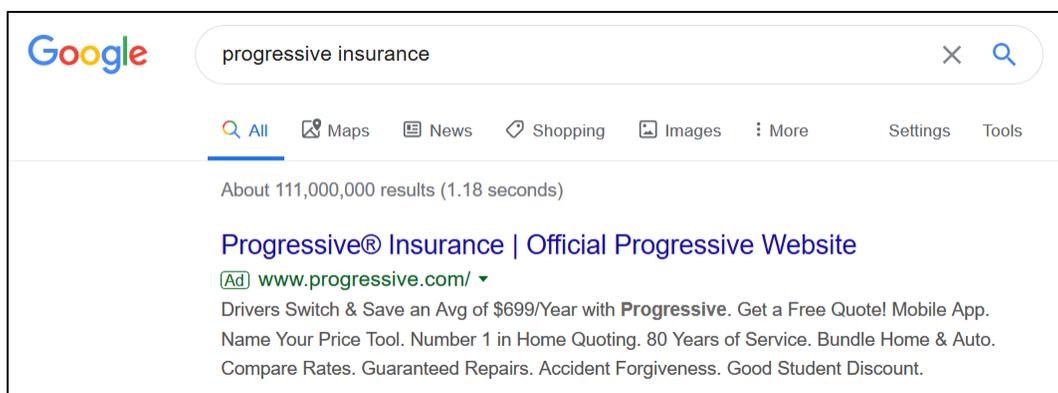
Google Ads rewards very tight, very focused Ad Groups, organized around very tight, very focused keywords!

Branded, Reputational, and Trademarked Keywords

Branded keywords are searches that contain a brand, such as your own, for example. If you're GEICO insurance, then every search that contains GEICO is a "branded" search opportunity for you. If you're ROLEX, every search that contains ROLEX is a branded search vis-à-vis your watches. And if you're Amazon or Apple, it's complicated, as some searches are truly for your brand and others are for rivers or fruits. It depends.

Searches that contain your brand plus "reviews" are what are called "reputational searches," as in the search query, "GEICO insurance reviews." Branded and reputational keywords present unique opportunities in Google Ads. Trademark issues occur when branded terms such as the names of a company, its products, or its services have been registered with the government for trademark protection.

At a minimum, consider **advertising on your own branded terms**, such as your company name, product name, or service name. This is especially important if your competitors are advertising against your branded terms. Usually, a good practice is to designate these ads as "Official Site." Here's a screenshot of the ad Progressive Insurance runs against the branded search "Progressive Insurance:"



This ad presents the brand in a positive light and attempts to make sure that any person who is looking for Progressive insurance clicks into the official site and not – God forbid – into a competitor. For this reason, I recommend you set up an Ad Group and call it “Branded Terms” and run against your own company name, phrases that include your company name, and possibly misspellings of your company name. Include product names, service names, and even the names of key employees if customers are likely to search for their names. “Jeff Bezos” would be an example for Amazon, for instance.

Secondarily, people who are close to a buying decision will often also search for “reviews” of your company. If you have bad reviews or a review issue, you might create an Ad Group specifically targeting reviews of your company. The keyword trigger would be your company name plus reviews, as in:

“Progressive Insurance Reviews:

Advertising on Competitor Names: the Pros and Cons

Now, look at the problem not from the perspective of your own company but from that of the competition. You know that people search for your competitors by name. You know that they often search for competitor names plus the term reviews, especially when they are close to a buying decision. **Thus competitor names can be some of the most lucrative, highly transactional terms in Google ads.** You want YOUR COMPANY to be in the game, YOUR COMPANY to snag clicks that might be going to your competitors, etc.

Consider advertising on your competitors' company names, product or service names, or reputational searches such as competitor name plus review.

Be advised, however, that advertising on the branded terms of other companies is an aggressive and dangerous strategy. It is likely to piss off your competitors should they become aware of it. It is likely to create a “cease and desist letter” should they be litigious. It may even provoke a lawsuit. That said, Google says it is OK to use competitor names, and competitor branded terms as keyword triggers, even for trademarked terms. For example, Progressive might advertise on branded terms such as:

Geico

AllState

USAA

eSurance

etc.

Their ad might say, “Looking for a Competitor? Consider Progressive. We’re Better” and so on and so forth. The goal would be to snag customers looking at a competitor to also include your company in their evaluation set.

While it is OK by Google to use competitor names as keyword triggers, it is not OK, and perhaps even illegal, to use competitor *trademarked* terms in your ad headline or text; to write ads that are intentionally confusing, ads that represent your company “as if” it were a competitor are not allowed. Indeed, if a company has registered a trademark with Google, the system may proactively prevent you from using those terms in your ad text. It all depends.

I am not a lawyer, and I am not advising that you advertise or not on competitors' names, branded terms, and/or trademarks. I am merely explaining that it is commonly done in the industry, and it is often highly lucrative. Proceed at your own risk with Ad Groups and Ads that focus on competitor-branded terms. Read the official Google policy on trademarks at <http://jmlinks.com/52e>, consult with your lawyer as to how aggressive you want your ads to be, and proceed accordingly vis-à-vis competitor names as keyword triggers in Google Ads.

Keyword Insertion

Google Ads has a feature called **Keyword Insertion**, formerly called *Dynamic Keyword Insertion*. In this technique, you write your ads using a snippet of code. For example, you'd write an ad headline like:

Buy {Keyword Chocolate}

and enter keyword triggers like

"Dark Chocolate Bar"

"Sugar-Free Chocolate"

"Gourmet Chocolate Truffles"

(Remember to use plus signs, quotation marks, or brackets! And note that in this methodology, capitalization does matter).

Next, if the keyword trigger / keyword query is short enough to fit into your headline, then Google Ads automatically replaces *Chocolate* with the keyword query entered by the user. If, for instance, they enter *dark chocolate bar* on Google, your ad headline would not say *Buy Chocolate* but rather *Buy Dark Chocolate Bar*

In this way, the ad appears, to the user, to be laser-focused on what he or she just entered. If you have hundreds or thousands of closely related keywords, Keyword Insertion is a time-saving option in Google Ads. (You can read the full Google help file at <http://jmlinks.com/26v>).

I would use caution when deploying Keyword Insertion, however, because, in my experience, it tends to hurt the Quality Score vs. ads that are manually written with a tight focus between the keyword trigger and the actual keyword in the ad headline / text. In addition, Keyword Insertion can allow you to be lazy and jumble up your Ad Groups to Keywords, even though a disorganized *Ad Group > Keyword* relationship will hurt your ad performance in the long run.

I'd recommend it only for large companies with thousands of keyword patterns and especially for very focused e-Commerce Campaigns. Google even has a feature called *Dynamic Search Ads*, in which Google will automatically pull your website content or an XML feed of your product data and write your ads on the fly. (Read about it at <http://jmlinks.com/26w>). Again, I would be very cautious about letting Google do all the hard thinking for me.

Negative Keywords

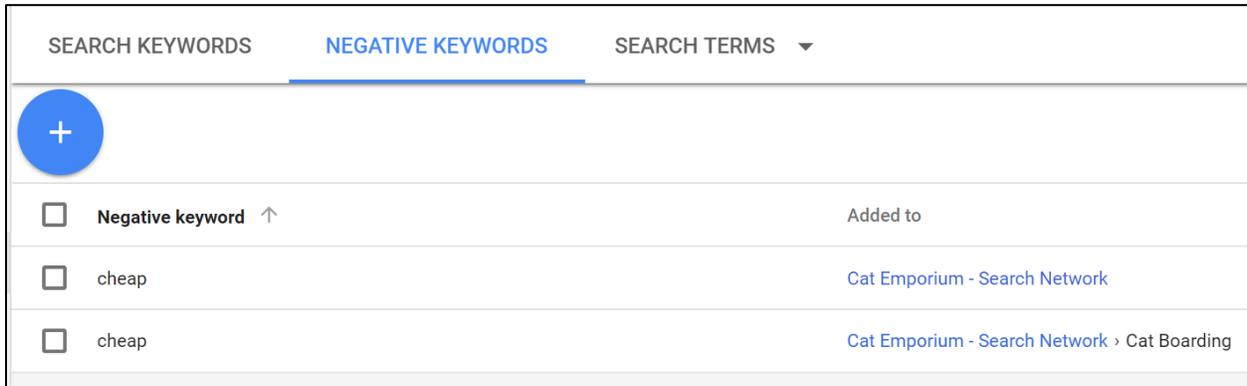
Negative keywords are “stop” words that tell Google NOT to run your ad if they are entered. *Cheap* is a common negative keyword or stop word. If you enter *cheap* as a negative word (at either the campaign or group levels), then any time someone enters *cheap*, your ad will NOT show.

VIDEO. Watch a video from Google on how to use negative keywords in Google Ads at <http://jmlinks.com/26m>.

The logic is by entering *cheap* as a negative keyword (trigger), you are telling Google:

If they enter the word cheap, they are NOT my customer, they are NOT going to convert, do NOT show my ad to them, I will NOT pay for that click!

Here's a screenshot showing where to add Negative Keywords:



To add a negative keyword, just click on the blue plus sign, and type it in.

Where to Add Negative Keywords

Negative keywords can be added at two levels, so to speak:

- **Campaign Level** – if added here, then any Ad Group that “lives” in the Campaign is affected. Using our *cheap* example, then if someone entered the word *cheap* into Google as in *cheap cat boarding* or *cheap cat hotels*, then that would block the display of our ad for any of the dependent ad groups that live in the Cat Boarding San Francisco Campaign (i.e., the Ad Groups *Cat Boarding*, *Cat Hotels*, and *Cat Kennels*).
- **Ad Group Level** – if added here, then this impacts ONLY the Ad Group itself. So, if I add the negative keyword *cheap* to the Ad Group *cat boarding*, then if someone enters *cheap cat boarding*, Google will NOT run our ad, but if they enter *cheap cat hotels*, then that Ad Group is not affected, and the ad will run.

Think of negative keywords as *stop words*. If the word is entered, then Google will NOT run your ad, even if other words match.

Here's another (not so fun) fact, however. Whereas for "positive" keywords, Google will *expand* matches to include close synonyms, for "negative" keywords, it will not. Thus:

"pet boarding" (as a positive keyword) = Google might match your ad to "animal boarding," "pet hotel," etc.

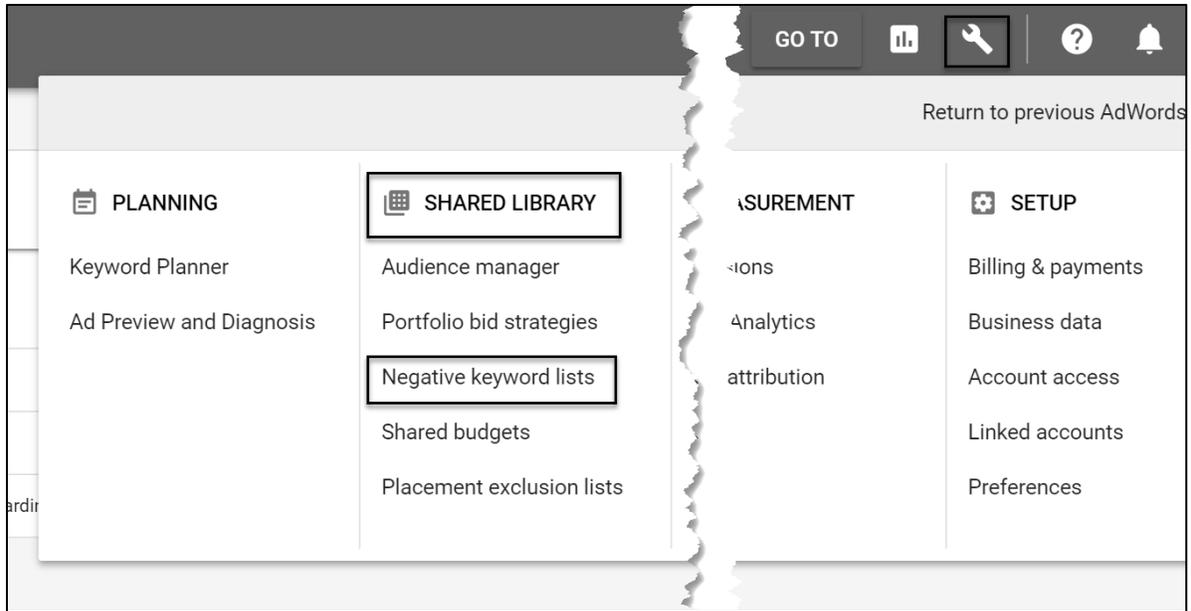
"pet" (as a negative keyword) = Google will stop your ad ONLY for "pet" but run your ad for "animal" and even "pets."

In sum, Google does whatever will generate more impressions and clicks, not what would be logically consistent! Thus for negative keywords, you must enter **all** variants of a keyword and all synonyms.

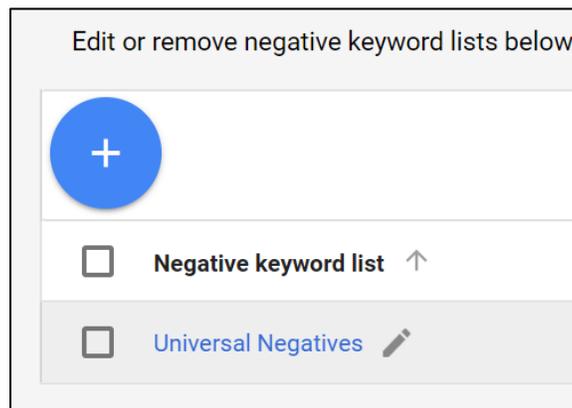
Just be sure on your Keyword Worksheet to identify any and all stop words that are 100% "not your customers." Then enter these as "negative keywords" into Google Ads. A detailed *negative keyword list* can save you a LOT of money in Google Ads spend! You can read the Google Ads help article on negative keywords at <http://jmlinks.com/25d>.

The Shared Library

If a keyword is always negative across all your campaigns, I recommend drilling into the *shared library* (available by clicking first on the wrench at the top right and then clicking to "Negative Keyword Lists"). Here's a screenshot of where to find the *Tools > Shared Library > Negative keyword lists*:



I generally create a keyword list called “Universal Negatives,” which contains the negative keywords that I am absolutely, positively, 100% sure that if the user enters, I do NOT want my ad to be shown. Here’s a screenshot:



When you click in, you simply add negative keywords using the same system of

“cheap cat insurance” = phrase match

cheap cat insurance = broad match

[cheap cat insurance] = exact match

I generally also enter the words that are themselves always negative, such as:

cheap

free

You need to enter plurals, singulars, and all variations of a negative keyword to stop your ads from running. After you're up and running, check your "search terms," sort by impression, and scan for potential negative keywords.

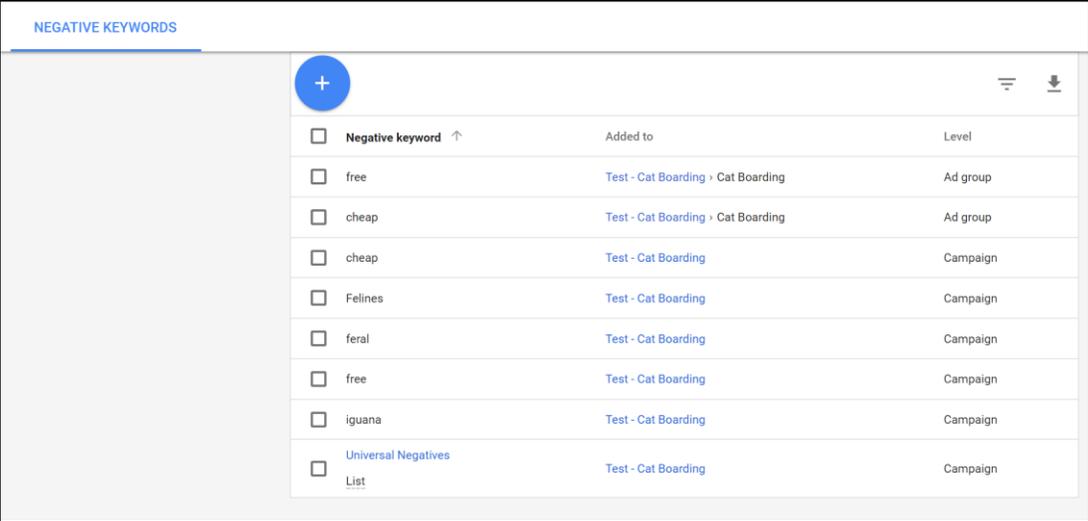
Once you build out a universal negative keyword list, you want to add it to individual campaigns. To do this, here are the steps:

1. Click Campaigns on the left menu (to show all your Campaigns)
2. Select the Campaign to which you want to apply your "Universal Negatives" keyword list to.
3. Click Keywords on the left menu.
4. Click Negative Keywords on the top menu
5. Click the white plus sign in the blue circle.
6. Select "Use negative keyword list" and select your "Universal Negatives" list.
7. Click the blue SAVE on the bottom.

The easiest way to do this is to apply your "Universal Negative" list to each and every Campaign one by one. Inside a negative keyword list, you can also select "Apply to Campaigns" and then apply the list to all of them at once. To learn how to do it, see the help file at <http://jmlinks.com/39s>. Once you've linked a Campaign to a negative

keyword list, however, all you have to do is update the list, and it automatically updates every Campaign that is connected to it.

If, however, there are words that are negative with respect to *only* one Campaign or one Ad Group, then you can add them at that level by clicking on the Keywords tab at either the Campaign or Ad Group level. Here’s a screenshot of keywords at the Ad Group level, clearly showing how keywords can be added via a keyword list or at the Ad Group or Campaign level:



The screenshot shows a table titled "NEGATIVE KEYWORDS" with a blue header and a plus sign icon. The table has three columns: "Negative keyword", "Added to", and "Level". The rows list various keywords and their associated levels.

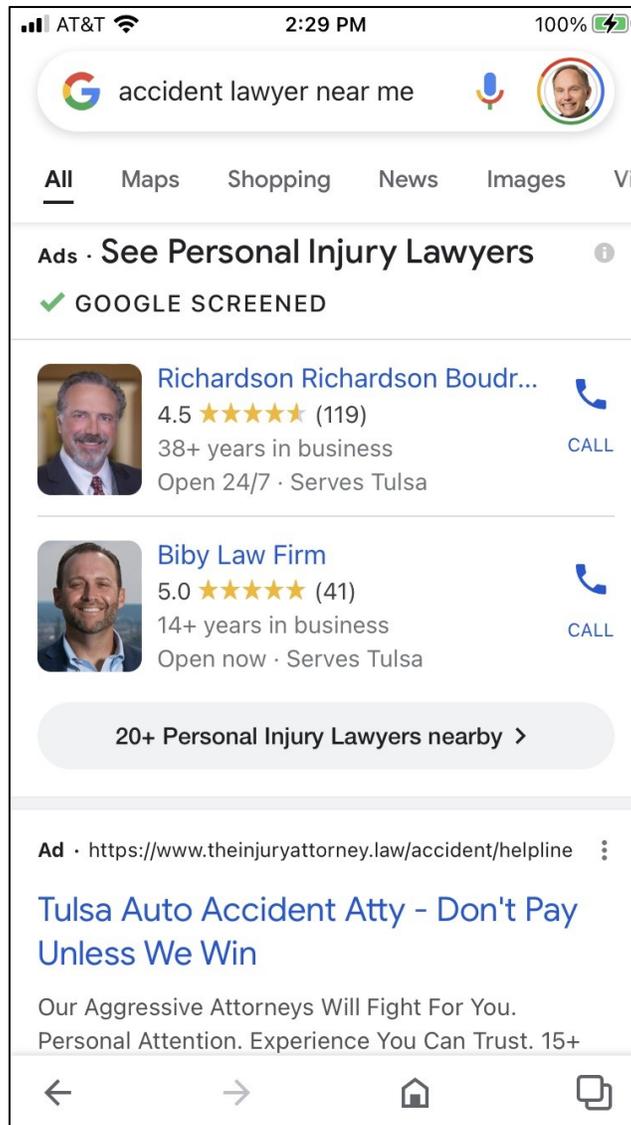
<input type="checkbox"/> Negative keyword ↑	Added to	Level
<input type="checkbox"/> free	Test - Cat Boarding > Cat Boarding	Ad group
<input type="checkbox"/> cheap	Test - Cat Boarding > Cat Boarding	Ad group
<input type="checkbox"/> cheap	Test - Cat Boarding	Campaign
<input type="checkbox"/> Felines	Test - Cat Boarding	Campaign
<input type="checkbox"/> feral	Test - Cat Boarding	Campaign
<input type="checkbox"/> free	Test - Cat Boarding	Campaign
<input type="checkbox"/> iguana	Test - Cat Boarding	Campaign
<input type="checkbox"/> Universal Negatives List	Test - Cat Boarding	Campaign

In sum, you can (and should) add **negative keywords** to the Campaign or Ad Group as you discover them. Just think of negative keywords as “stop words.” If word such-and-such is entered (e.g., “free”), then do not run my ad. And this can occur at either the Campaign or Ad Group level.

» LSAs (LOCAL SEARCH ADS): ARE THEY FOR YOU?

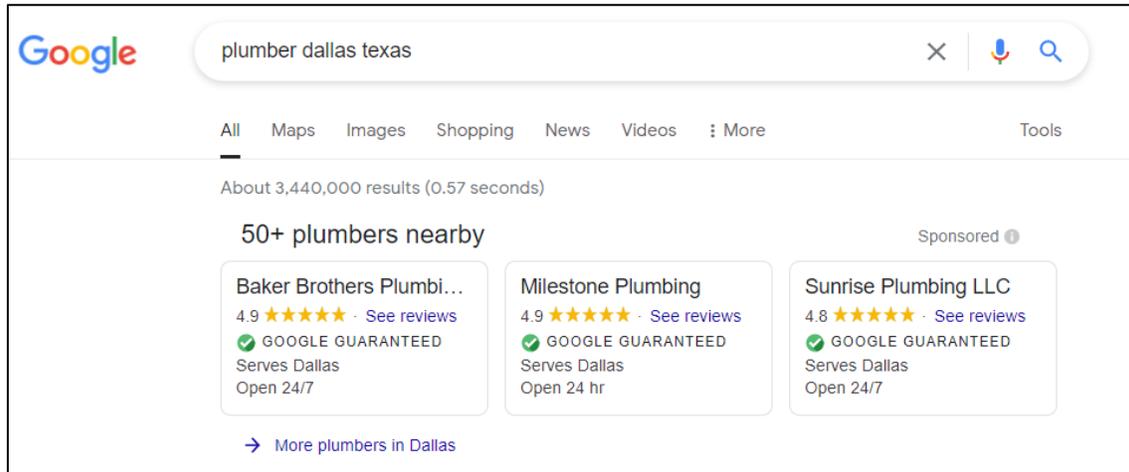
Ironically, though Google is run by engineers, its product offerings can be very disorganized. LSAs (Local Search Ads) are a case in point. LSAs are a special type of ad on the Search Network. Try a search for “plumber” or “personal injury lawyer,” and you may see them, especially on your mobile phone.

Here's a screenshot:



As you can see, LSAs are very prominent on the mobile phone and include a photo, the business name, the review stars from Google My Business, the number of years in business, the geographic area served, and a call button. There are two variants: “Google Guaranteed” for services such as plumbers, and “Google Screened” for services such as lawyers. The former means an actual Google monetary guarantee to the consumer, and both require a verification process for you to run ads.

Businesses manage LSAs not via Google Ads but rather via Google My Business and pay not by click but by lead. You may also see them on the desktop as for example:



Here, again, they are more prominent than “traditional” ads, not just in position at the top of the page but also because of the review stars and green “Google Guaranteed” checks. Unlike traditional ads, LSAs focus not on clicks but on phone calls, making them ideal for local businesses like lawyers or plumbers that heavily rely on inbound customer calls.

That’s the good news. What’s the bad news? Control is the bad news. You have very little control over your LSAs as they focus on “categories” and not “keywords.”

Let’s review how to set them up and manage them.

First, to set up LSAs you must set up a Google My Business Account (<https://business.google.com/>) for your business. Refer to my *SEO Workbook* (<https://jmlinks.com/seo>) if you do not have one, as the GMB listing is a critical digital asset for your organic SEO performance. Once it is set up, and once you have a few customer reviews, you are ready to set up LSAs. Log in to your GMB listing and then at the far left, click on “Get a local ad.” Use this ONLY for the very first time and follow the steps as indicated; you may be prompted to verify your business license.

After that first initial setup, you can click on “Get a Local Ad,” but the system will stupidly try to get you to start all over again. Instead, click on the menu (top left) and

look for “Profile and budget.” If that doesn’t get you back into your LSAs, go to this URL: <https://ads.google.com/localservices/>. It’s confusing! I find that it’s just as easy to bookmark that URL and copy/paste it into the browser AFTER signing into the Google My Business account than to follow the Google instructions. (Once inside, you can also designate employees or ad agency personnel by email under “Account Access,” and then they can manage your LSAs directly. I find this to be useful, and using a GMAIL to manage Google Ads makes it easy to forward all leads (which are recorded phone calls) to any person or persons who need to be notified of inbound telephone leads).

Third, once inside your LSA account, you can manage your ads. At the top, click on “Profile and Budget.” Here, you can input your business name, postal code, phone number, and website. Click on “Budget” to manage your bidding mode as well as categories. You bid “per lead” and not “per click,” so realize that you will have a much more expensive cost. Leads come in via the telephone and are recorded. Importantly, under “job types,” click the pencil and select ONLY the most relevant job types for your business. You can also upload a headshot, and set your service areas and business hours. I recommend you COMPLETELY fill out all this information, including the photo.

Fourth, once your ads are up and running, you will see them via *Menu > Leads*. You can click into a lead to listen in to the call recording. Note that “Billing” will add both your Google Ads and your LSAs together, so you have to subtract out your regular Google Ads to know what your LSAs are costing.

LSAs are a new product from Google Ads. Google clearly has a lot of work to do on the user interface! That said, I have had great success with them for clients. You can learn more at <https://support.google.com/localservices> and at <https://ads.google.com/local-services-ads/> or even call 1-833-272-1444 for help from Google with set up.

The bottom line is that if your business is local and LSAs are available, I would definitely experiment with them. They are not a substitute for traditional Google Ads, but rather an addition. Just remember that LSAs are managed via Google My Business and not Google Ads (at least for now).

»» DELIVERABLE: SEARCH NETWORK ORGANIZATION WORKSHEET

The **DELIVERABLE** for this Chapter is a completed worksheet on Search Network organization. This is a deep dive into your Campaigns, Ad Groups, Ads, and Keywords, so that you end up with a well-organized Google Ads account.

For the **worksheet**, go to <http://jmlinks.com/23googleads>, then re-enter the password, “23googleads,” and click on the link to the “Search Network Organization Worksheet.”



5

SEARCH NETWORK: ADS & BIDDING

With our excursion into LSAs behind us, let's return to the Search Network generally. At this point, you should have a (relatively empty) shell in Google Ads for your *Account > Campaigns > Ad Groups* organized around keyword themes. "Cat boarding" will be in the "Cat Boarding" Ad Group, "iguana boarding" in the "Iguana Boarding" ad group, and so on and so forth. You should only be using "phrase" or [exact] match in your keywords. Your Campaigns should set the network (Search) and the geotarget. You may have to zig and zag a bit to set this up, but just pause any ad spend until you've completed these two Chapters. Finally, if you are a local business, you should have investigated LSAs and set those up as a "parallel" system to traditional Google Ads. (If LSAs do not apply to you, ignore them). Now, we turn to how to write compelling ads, manage your bids, and spot-check your performance on the Search Network.

Let's get started!

TO-DO LIST:

- » Write "Attract / Repel" Ad Copy
- » Use Ad Assets
- » Follow CEA on Landing Pages
- » Set Your Bids
- » Set Logical Campaign Settings
- » Choose Your Geotarget Settings Wisely
- » Monitor Your Keywords, Bids, Conversions, and Performance

» Shoot Your Dogs, and Let Your Winners Run

»» Deliverable: Search Network Worksheet

» WRITE ATTRACT / REPEL AD COPY

Now that you have your Campaigns and Ad Groups set up, plus you've added relevant keywords using quote marks and/or brackets as well as negative keywords at the Campaign, Ad Group, or Shared Library level, you're ready to write some ads. Ads "live" at the Ad Group level, and so by having tightly focused Ad Groups, we can now match *highly focused ads* to *highly focused Ad Groups* and *highly focused keywords*, and *highly focused landing pages*.

The Purpose of an Ad

What's the purpose of an ad? If you answer "to get clicks," you must work for Google, or you haven't been paying attention. If you answer, "to get clicks that lead to conversions," you're on the right track, and if you answer that the purpose of an ad is to:

Attract clicks from **relevant customers** that end in conversions and also **repel** clicks from **non-customers**.

You get a gold star. We want to *attract* our customers yet *repel* non-customers, sometimes derisively referred to as "tire kickers" on the old car lots.

SEEK TO ATTRACT CUSTOMERS AND REPEL NON-CUSTOMERS

Let's investigate best practices for writing strong ad copy on Google Ads. First, remember that the Google Ads Quality Score rewards a tight match between keywords and ads, so a major first principle is to:

include your **core keyword phrase** in your ad, preferably your ad headline.

To create an ad, click into a *Campaign > Ad Groups > Ads & extensions*. Click the white plus in the blue circle. All ads are now written in the “responsive search ads” format, which means that you submit a bunch of headlines and descriptions (as well as ad assets) and rely on Google AI to mix and match these into the final ad visible to users. This is a really important point:

You no longer write finished ads for Google. Rather you submit ad “elements” that are combined by Google Ai into the finished ads.

If you have the older “expanded text ads” in your account, these ads are grandfathered in. They can still run, but you can no longer edit them. New ads and new accounts must create the new “responsive ad format” only.

Responsive Search Ads (RSAs)

With the new “Responsive Search Ad” (RSA) format, you don't have very good control over which headlines and ad text appear. As you write your ad headlines and text, be aware that Google will pick and choose what it thinks is the “most relevant” and may truncate some of your text. Populate each headline and description in such a way that they will make sense as Google mixes and matches them

Let's go through the process of writing a strong “attract / repel” responsive search ad.

First, inside of an Ad Group click “Ads and extensions” on the left. Next, click the white cross in the blue circle and select “Responsive search ad.” Then –

1. Enter the final URL, which is where the user will go if they click on your ad.
2. Enter a keyword-heavy display path; this is just a cosmetic, fake “visible URL” that shows on your ad.
3. Headlines. Write up to fifteen 30-character “headlines.” The best practice is to a) contain the target keyword and b) have some pizzazz as in “Cat Boarding: San Francisco’s Premium Hotel.”
4. Descriptions. Write up to four 90-character “descriptions.” These will appear beneath your headline(s), so again contain the keyword, plus some pizzazz.
5. Images. Add images if allowed, and/or do this at the “Ad Asset” level.
6. Sitelinks. Add sitelinks if allowed, and/or do this at the “Ad Asset” level.

Hit save. On the right of the screen, Google will show you a preview of what your ad will look like. Just be aware that this is not an actual ad, and that Google can (and will) mix and match headlines, descriptions, images, and sitelinks to form the visible ad.

As you write ads, I suggest you open a separate browser window. Enter your keywords into Google and “check out the competition.” Just remember that their headlines, descriptions, images, and sitelinks are being assembled on the fly by Google. Here’s a sample ad for “Cat Hotel San Francisco:”

Ad · <https://www.trustedhousesitters.com/> ⋮

Best Cat Sitters - Better Than Cat Hotels

Join our pet-loving community and find verified house sitters your pets are sure to love. Connect with like-minded pet lovers who care for pets in exchange for a...

[Cat Sitters](#) · [How It Works](#) · [Pet Sitters Nearby](#) · [Pet Sitters in California](#) · [Join Today](#)



Thus, from top to bottom, we have first the “visible URL” or “display path.” Next we have two combined headlines. Then we have two combined descriptions. Beneath that we have five visible sitelinks (each clickable to specific URLs on the website) and on the far right we have an “image asset.”

And here's an ad triggered by "best car insurance:"

Ad · <https://www.thecarinsuranceguide.com/best-options> ⋮

10 Best Car Insurance - 2022 Rankings [New Oct 19]

The Highest Rated & Reviewed Auto **Insurance** Companies in Your State. Compare in Seconds. Answer 9 Easy Questions to Calculate Your #1 Choice. Shop Rates...

[Best Auto & Home Bundle](#) · [10 Best for Young Drivers](#) · [Best for Claims & Service](#)



Create a list in WORD or GOOGLE DOC of "display paths," headlines, descriptions, sitelinks, and image assets that you like (from competitors or others). Look at Google suggestions as you create ads inside of Google Ads. Remember that a good ad (headline, description, sitelink):

1. Contains the **target keyword**.
2. Has some **pizzazz** – some style, some "Je ne sais quoi" that makes your ad stand out from the crowd and communicates your value proposition.
3. **Attracts** your customers but **repels** your non-customers.

Don't plagiarize the headlines of others, but don't hesitate to check out what the competition is doing. Try relevant searches in your industry. Read the ads out loud. Ponder the headlines, descriptions, and call-outs. Would you click on any of these ads? Why or why not? Avoid writing ads from scratch. Avoid the blank screen. Look at the world as a customer, and see your ad as "in competition" with ads from competitors.

For extra credit, try searches in very competitive industries like "car insurance," "personal injury lawyer," or even "home refinancing." The "pros" in those industries write great ads. Google Ads is a living, breathing ecosystem, so go out and see what others are doing.

For example, here are excerpts from "home refinancing" ads on Google:

HEADLINES:

10 Best Mortgage Refinance - View The Top Lenders Of 2023

5 Best Home Refinance Lenders - 2022 Special Rates - 2.44% APR

No Cost Refinance - See Your Rate Quote for Free

Refinance Home Mortgage - Calculate Your Payment

10 Best Home Refinance Lenders - Fixed Rates As Low As 3.63%

5 Best Home Refinance Lenders - Just Released Dec 2021 Rates

10 Best Refinance Lenders - Best 10 Refinance Rates

DESCRIPTIONS:

Compare 2023's 10 Best Mortgage Refinance Rates. Compare From A Trusted Source Since 1972. The Best Personal Finance News & Information. Trusted Since 1972. Official Site.

Find the Best Mortgage Refinance for You. Quick Approval. Top Refinancing Plans!

Compare top lenders in 1 place with LendingTree. Comparing lenders has never been easier!

Best Mortgage Refinance Compared & Reviewed. Apply & Get Pre Approved In 24hrs! Compare Current Rates. Lower your payments. Compare & Save. Updated FED Rates.

Compare the Best Home Refinance Rates. Find the One for You. Choose Wisely & Apply Easily! Special Offers Just a Click Away! Side By Side Comparison. No Hidden Charges or Fees. Lenders That Suit You. Expert-Picked List. Top Refinancing Options. Reliable Lenders.

The first principle is thus to regurgitate the keyword phrase into the ad itself, preferably the headline as each of these ads do. The second is to have some pizzazz as in “Top Lenders of 2023” and “Fixed Rates as Low as 3.63%.” Related to all this is to attract customers (preferably rich ones) with words like “special” and “calculate” and implicitly repel certain types of undesirables (a.k.a., poor people) who can’t afford to refinance their homes (e.g., “bad credit” is nowhere to be found). You can see how each of these

ads is a true work of art: attracting the right kind of customers, repelling the others, and clearly stating its unique selling proposition.

Ah, Google Ads poetry in action.

Note as well that these ads are not shy. Each is a bit brash, and each toots its own horn. If you don't toot your own horn, my High School English teacher once told me, no one will. Write your ad text on Google to say that you're #1, the best, on top, top-rated, luxury experience – whatever sells you as 'THE best match for what they are searching for (within reason).

Another “pro” element is to write keyword-heavy and attractive “display URLs,” which do NOT have to be real. They are just displayed – only the domain has to match the landing page. Here are three Display URLs from these ads:

DISPLAY URLS:

<https://www.money.com/mortgagerefi/rates>

<https://www.lendstart.com/home/refinance>

<https://www.bestonlinemortgageloan.com/home/refinance>

And, just to be clear, here's a screenshot of some top-ranked ads for “home refinance:”

Ad · <https://www.lowermybills.com/mortgage/refinance> ⋮

Free Refinance Calculator - Should You Refinance?

It Costs \$0 To Run The Numbers & Recalculate Your New Payment. Don't Wait, **Refinance** & Save. If You Owe Less Than \$356,362, Take Advantage of A...



Ad · <https://www.bestonlinemortgage.com/home/refinance> ⋮ (866) 814-0321

5 Best Home Refinance Lenders - Just Released Dec 2021 Rates

Compare the Best **Home Refinance** Rates. Find the One for You. Choose Wisely & Apply Easily!

Your job is to write keyword-relevant and compelling headlines, descriptions, ad extensions, and even possibly use the new image extensions, so that your ads - as created by Google “on the fly” - will get clicks from *relevant* customers and, to the extent possible, repel clicks from *non-customers*.

This, in combination with tight Ad Groups focused on tight keywords, is the key to success on Google Ads ad copywriting.

All within the very tight character limits of Google Ads. Good luck! (I know; It’s like your worst High School English Poetry writing assignment has come true. But as you get into Google Ads, you’ll start to see that good ads are like Haiku’s.) In fact, PPCHero had a contest in 2012 for Google Ads Haiku’s, and here is the winner and a few runners-up:

New client, new goals

An empty canvas to fill

Words and ads, not paint

Click through rates are high

And conversion rates are low

Oh, CPA woes!

Fitting your message

Into just three lines. Is that

An ad or haiku?

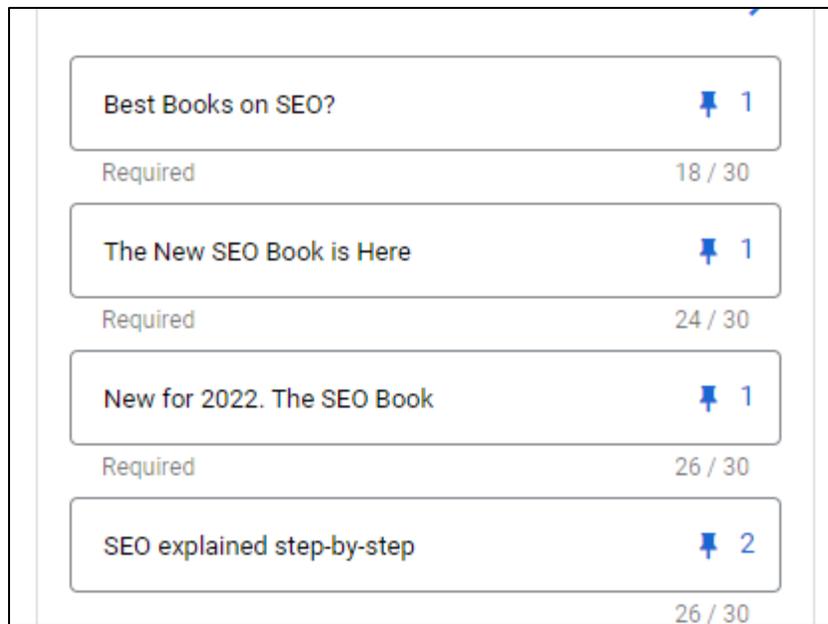
Source: <http://jmlinks.com/39w>.

At the end of this process, for each Ad Group, you should create *at least three ads* in the traditional text format and *at least three ads* in the new “responsive” ad format. Over time, you will monitor the performance of each ad and nurture your winning ads, and terminate your losing ads.

Want More Control? Tips to Better RSAs

You don’t have to fill out every headline or description for your RSAs. Here’s a pro tip if you want more control. Don’t follow the instructions or Google recommendations. Just fill out the bare minimum of three headlines and two descriptions. Include the target keyword in each headline, and write with some pizzazz (“attract”) but some negatives (“repel”).

Another idea: “pin” your headlines. One work flow is to create three “first headlines” (*that regurgitate the keyword and have some pizzazz*), three “second headlines” (*that explain the value proposition*), and three “third headlines” (*that have a call to action*). To pin a headline, click the “pin” icon on the far right. Here’s a screenshot:



If Google has auto-populated a headline or description, just backspace it out and clear it. Thus your steps are:

1. Input your Final URL.
2. Input your Display Path (include keywords and some pizzazz)
3. Write at least three headlines (include keywords, pizzazz, and a negative message to repel non-customers)
4. Pin the headline you want to appear in Position #1.
5. Blank out any auto-populated headlines.
6. Write at least two descriptions (include keywords, pizzazz, and a negative message to repel non-customers)
7. Blank out any auto-populated descriptions.

Another strategy is to include very similar headlines and descriptions with just slight variations yet populate all available fifteen headlines and four descriptions. And mix this in with a strategy of filling in ALL available headlines and descriptions following Google's recommendations. In other words: **experiment**.

At the end of this process, you should have a “tight” ad that matches your Ad Group target. Thus the “cat boarding” group has a “cat boarding” RSA, the “cat collar” group has a “cat collar” RSA, and the “iguana boarding” group has an “iguana boarding” RSA, and so on and so forth. Each Ad Group has at least three RSAs that tightly match the keyword theme.

Experiment with some RSAs that have many headlines vs. some that have just the minimum of three as well as some RSAs with multiple descriptions vs. some with just two. Experiment, measure clicks, and conversions and keep what works and terminate what does not. If possible, include legacy expanded text ads in the mix and – again – measure what works, keep it, and terminate what does not.

Quality Score: Don’t Trust Google

Remember that Google gets paid *by the click* while you make money *by the conversion*. Google will encourage you to write ads that say things like *free cat boarding*, or *one night free* or something like that to encourage more clicks. In fact, if you watch Google videos or talk to Google Ads technical support, they will nearly ALWAYS tell you to write your ads in such a way as to maximize clicks.

VIDEO. Watch a video from Google on how to write effective RSAs for Google Ads at <http://jmlinks.com/58h>.

Good advice from Google on how to write ads? Yes, definitely, with the caveat that you want to make sure you’ve identified *negative keywords* and thought about ways to *repel* non-customers. Don’t believe everything you read or hear about ad copy, as many people think good ads get clicks when that’s only half the story.

Attract & Repel: Striking a Balance

While it is true that higher click-thru rates will generate a higher Quality Score, you have to strike a balance between ads that *get a lot of clicks* and ads that *generate a lot of conversions*.

STRIKE A BALANCE BETWEEN ADS THAT GET CLICKS AND ADS THAT GET CONVERSIONS

I tend to emphasize ads that focus on conversions and not clicks. And I tend to use very focused *Ad Groups > Ads > Keywords* as “riches are in the niches” to improve my Quality Score. That’s my style. I want every ad to match the search query tightly, so I’d write individual ads for:

Cat boarding

Luxury cat boarding

Cat hotel

etc.

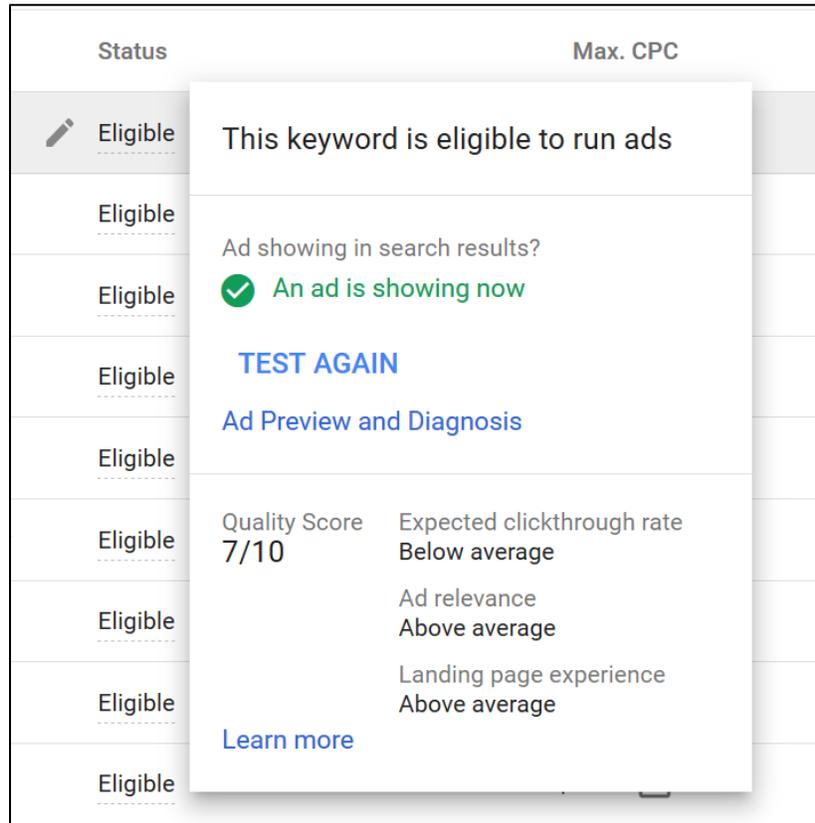
The tighter the match among *Keyword > Ad Copy > Landing page*, the better you will do.

You’ll need to find your own style and workflow. Just be aware, however, that Google wants you to write ads that “get clicks,” and I want you to write ads that “get conversions.” You will be penalized a bit by Google on Quality Score by using this strategy, but it’s worth it, in my opinion.

Quality Score

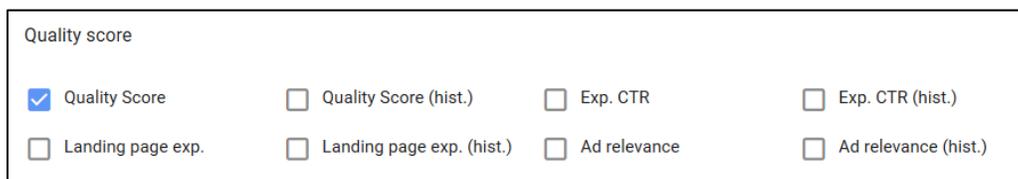
Once your Ad Groups are up and running, Google will give you some feedback on your Quality Score. Just drill into *Campaign > Ad Group > Keywords > Search Keywords*. Next,

hover your mouse over the dialogue box under Status, where it usually says *Eligible*. Here's a screenshot:



Don't worry if it shows "not running," as this tool is extremely buggy. Other ways to verify that ads are running are discussed below.

You can also enable the Quality Score column by clicking on *Columns (the three BAR icon)* > *Modify Columns* > *Attributes* > *Quality Score*. Here's a screenshot:



A quality score of 5 or higher is very good, and remember that in some cases, you may choose to accept a low-quality score for a high-value keyword for which you have written a powerful attract / repel ad.

VIDEO. Watch an official video from Google on Quality Score in Google Ads at <http://jmlinks.com/26u>.

Note: you sometimes may get a notification that your ad is / is not running for this keyword. We will discuss this in a few moments. Also, when your Ad Groups / Keywords are new, there may not be enough data to get a Quality Score reading.

Ambiguous Yet Important Keywords

Some keywords are unambiguous and definitely your customer, as for example, *cat boarding*. Others are ambiguous – they contain both your customers and your non-customers. An example would be *pet boarding*. Some of those folks are *cat people*, some are *dog people*, and some are *exotic bird people*, but you only want the cat people.

What do you do?

You can either choose NOT to run on *pet boarding* entirely or run only on *cat boarding*. This makes sense if you have a very tight budget or you want to be very conservative in terms of your Google Ads strategy. (This is one of the most important reasons to have highly organized Campaigns and Ad Groups, so you can turn “on” and “off” keyword groups, leaving “on” your highest performing keywords at all times and turning “on” or “off” your lower performing keywords depending on your budget and other factors like seasonality).

But if you want to be more aggressive, you would want to run our ads on *pet boarding*, too. But we want to repel *dog people* and attract *cat people*. We can’t use a negative keyword strategy as there is NOT a negative keyword; it’s just *pet boarding*.

What, then, is to be done? Write attract / repel ad copy that both includes the target keyword of *pet boarding* but clearly is all about *cats*:

New text ad 

Final URL 
<https://www.jasonmcdonald.org/>

Headline 1 
Cat Boarding Hotel. **No Dogs.**

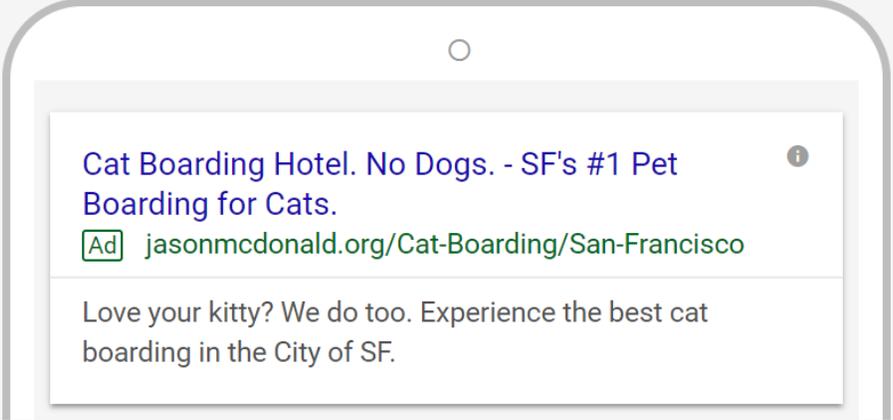
Headline 2 28 / 30 
SF's #1 **Pet Boarding** for Cats. 30 / 30

Display path 
jasonmcdonald.org / Cat-Boarding / San-Francisco

Description 12 / 15 13 / 15 
Love your kitty? We do too. Experience the best cat boarding in the City of SF. 79 / 80

Which shows on Google as:

Mobile



Cat Boarding Hotel. No Dogs. - SF's #1 Pet Boarding for Cats. 

Ad [jasonmcdonald.org/Cat-Boarding/San-Francisco](https://www.jasonmcdonald.org/Cat-Boarding/San-Francisco)

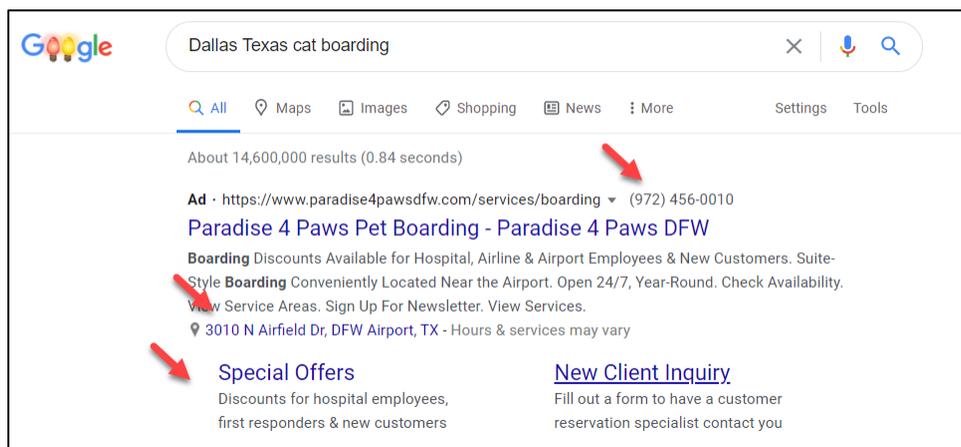
Love your kitty? We do too. Experience the best cat boarding in the City of SF.

The idea (and hope) is that dog people will be repelled by the phrase *No Dogs*, and NOT click on the ad. Now, relative to ads that say *pet boarding* and don't use *repel*, or establishments that board both cats and dogs, our ad will get fewer clicks and have a lower Quality Score, compelling us to bid somewhat higher. But what's the point in getting a click from a dog person, anyway, when he'll never convert because as soon as he lands on our website, he'll learn that we do NOT board dogs?

Attract /repel, in summary, is an important strategy for writing ads, especially when you confront **ambiguous keywords** that cannot be dealt with using negative keywords. I recommend you ignore the hit to your Quality Score and pay closer attention to whether your ads are actually running, getting clicks, and getting conversions.

» USE AD ASSETS

In addition to the headline, description, and path, ads on Google can also have “assets” (formerly called “extensions”). Assets, as we shall see, are elements such as the phone number, address, and sitelinks into your website. Here's a screenshot of an ad for “Dallas Texas cat boarding” showing assets:



Google will often prompt you to write assets as you write your ads, but I do not like that workflow. I ignore that prompt, and instead, I write my assets / extensions all at once.

I especially like the “Call extension” type because if someone just calls right off the ad, you do not pay for that click! Ad extensions can be viewed or added by clicking into Campaign and then clicking *Ads and extensions > Extensions* on the left.

Note: as of this writing, Google is transitioning its nomenclature. Thus, in some accounts, you’ll see them referred to as “extensions” and in others as “assets.” And in some accounts, you’ll see them referred to as “extensions” on some screens and “assets” on others. The roadmap is for them all to be referred to as “assets” going forward, as clearly some twentysomething at Google got a nice promotion by advocating that they rename everything into a new nomenclature that means the same thing as the name that used to be used ... *can I have my Google raise please, says the twentysomething who’s never had a real job in her life.* Even worse, in some accounts you’ll see them referred to as “associations,” “assets,” and “Associations (legacy). It’s totally stupid and frustrating, but whatever they are called they are additional “ad fragments” that can be added to your ads on the output side.

Back to *assets*, I mean *extensions*... Next, click “Table” at the top right to show them in list format.



At the top left, you can click into where it says “Extensions type: All” to filter by extension type, or you can just scroll down the list if you are in “Associations view.”

To add a new Ad Extension, just click the white plus sign in the blue circle, and you’ll get to choose what type to add:

Sitelink extension

Callout extension

Structured snippet extension

Image extension

Call extension

Lead form extension

Location extension

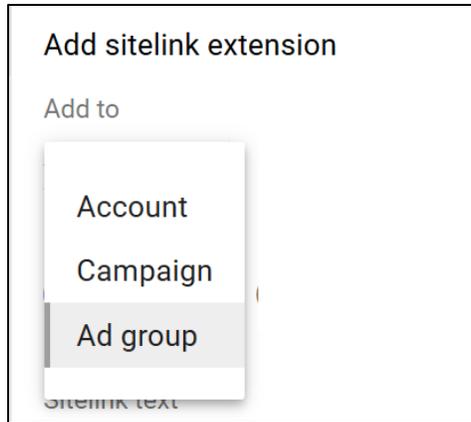
Affiliate location extension

Price extension

App extension

Promotion extension

We'll overview what each means in a moment, but for now, just click on Sitelink Extension, which is the most common type. You can select which level – Account, Campaign, or Ad Group to add the extension to. Here's a screenshot:



Next, create your Sitelink extension (or other extension) by filling out the required field. Here's a screenshot:

Add sitelink extension

Add to

Account ▼

Extension

Create new Use existing

Sitelink text

0 / 25

Description line 1 (optional)

0 / 35

Description line 2 (optional)

0 / 35

Final URL ?

▼ Sitelink URL options

▼ Advanced options

Just to be clear, remember that Ad Extensions do not always show, but if you do some highly competitive searches like *auto insurance* or *car insurance*, you can usually see them in action. Here's a sample ad for "hair transplant" that has sitelink extensions in blue at the bottom:

\$6/Graft ARTAS Hair Transplant - Special Valid This Month Only

Ad www.precisionmdca.com/Hair-Transplant ▼ (916) 340-8914

No Scarring & Natural Results. Free Consultation. Call Now to Claim This Rate!

New ARTAS Hair Transplant · Doctor Owned & Operated · State-of-the-art Lasers

Services: Acne Scar Removal, Botox, Juvederm, Hair Transplants, Liposuction, Brazilian Butt Lift, Tattoo...

[Meet Dr. Khattab](#) · [Why Precision MD?](#)

The ad extensions are things like the phone number (916) 340-8914, the non-clickable text underneath the ad such as *State-of-the-art Lasers*, and the sitelinks (clickable) extensions such as *Meet Dr. Khattab*.

Here are the available extensions with my thoughts on pros and cons:

Sitelink extension – these are blue-highlighted bits of text that can appear below an ad and link to specific subsections of your website, such as “contact us” or “cat grooming,” etc. **Pros and Cons:** I highly recommend you use these, fully fill them out, and be sure to populate against your strongest keyword patterns.

Callout extension – these are non-clickable text elements that can appear below an ad, usually meant to “call out” something special such as “Valentine’s Day Specials” or “ask about our kitty services”. **Pros and Cons:** I highly recommend these, but use them for “evergreen” offers such as “free consultation” or “woman-owned business.”

Structured snippet extension – you select a predefined header like “Product” or “Service category” and then add callouts to specific subsections of your website. See <http://jmlinks.com/49f>. **Pros and Cons:** Not clear how they differ from sitelinks.

Image extension – these are small “thumbnail” images that you can upload. They show largely on mobile, but occasionally on desktop. They are available only in some geos and only in some verticals (such as plumbers or lawyers), so you may or may not see them as an option in your account. **Pros and Cons:** highly recommended as they tend to dramatically increase click thrus and ad visibility.

Call extension – these allow your phone number to appear in ads. **Pros and Cons:** highly recommended if you want people to call from ads. Google offers call tracking so you can see results.

Lead form extension – allows you to gather data right on Google via a form. **Pros and Cons:** do not seem to have any positive impact.

Location extension – this extension type allows users to see your store’s physical address. **Pros and Cons:** to use these, you must link your “Google My Business” account to your Google Ads account and enable “location” extensions. Very good for local businesses.

Affiliate location extension – similar to the above.

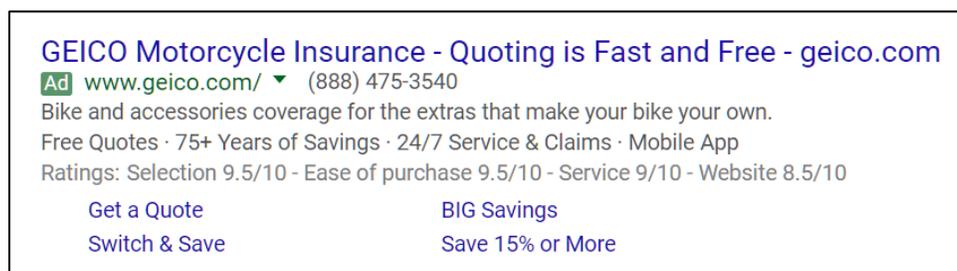
Price extension – allow users to browse products and prices in an ad and then click directly to them on your website. **Pros and Cons:** useful if you are e-commerce.

App extension – allow you to link from your ad to your mobile app for download and installation. **Pros and Cons:** not really relevant.

Promotion extension – this extension allows you to enter a “sale” or “promotion” such as a \$ off an item. **Pros and Cons:** useful to stand out in a crowded market with an “offer.”

To read the official Google help file on ad assets, visit <http://jmlinks.com/23q>.

Here’s another screenshot of an ad with clickable sitelink assets / extensions:



GEICO Motorcycle Insurance - Quoting is Fast and Free - geico.com
Ad www.geico.com/ ▼ (888) 475-3540
Bike and accessories coverage for the extras that make your bike your own.
Free Quotes · 75+ Years of Savings · 24/7 Service & Claims · Mobile App
Ratings: Selection 9.5/10 - Ease of purchase 9.5/10 - Service 9/10 - Website 8.5/10

Get a Quote	BIG Savings
Switch & Save	Save 15% or More

The phrases, *Get a Quote* and *BIG Savings*, go to unique URLs on Geico.com, plus they have their 888 number in the ad, too. And here’s a screenshot of an ad with a location extension:

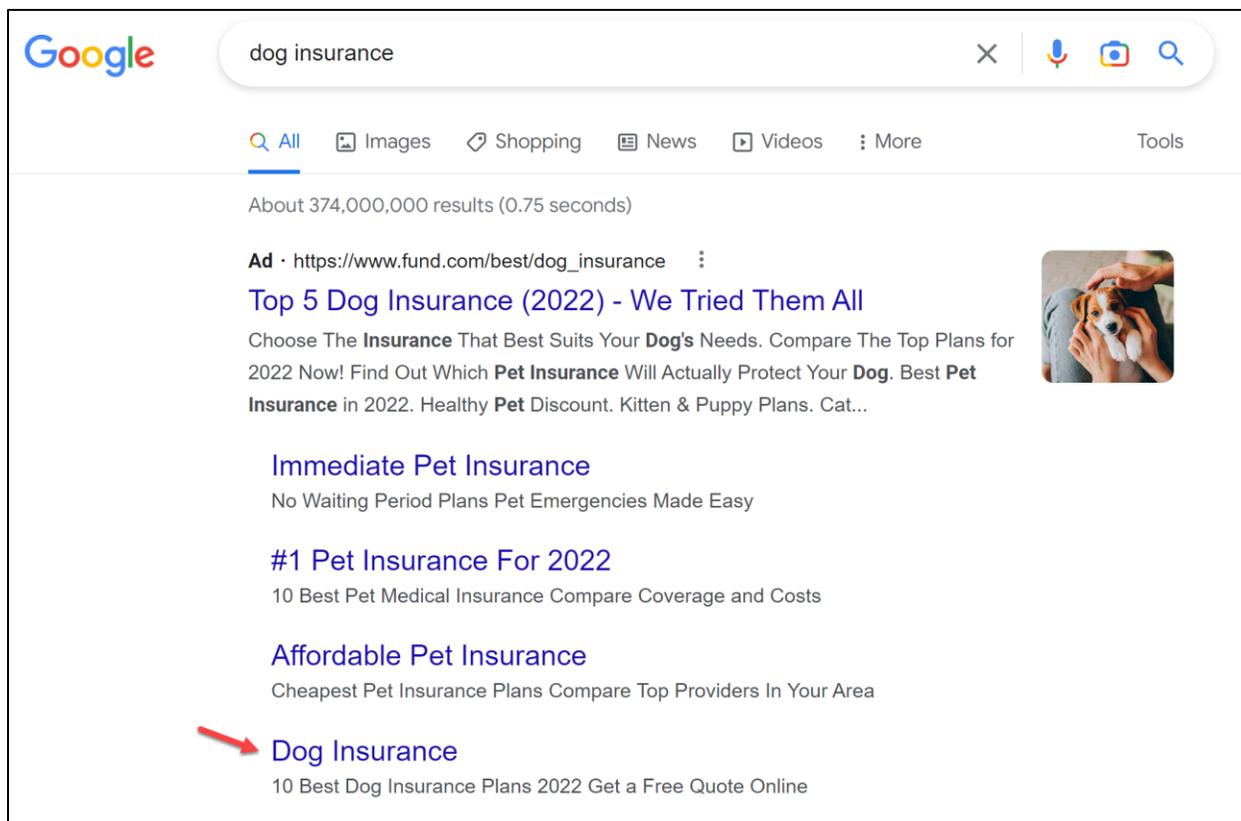
PetSmart® PetsHotel | Overnight Boarding For Cats
(Ad) services.petsmart.com/PetsHotel ▼
Your Pet Can Stay & Play At Our Place While You're On Vacation. Book Online Now!
📍 315 Gellert Blvd, Daly City, CA - Open today · 9:00 AM – 9:00 PM ▼

Notice how this ad has a display URL that contains a keyword (*PetsHotel*). As always, try various keyword queries relevant to your business and see what the competition is doing. Also, try very competitive search queries like “car insurance,” “personal injury lawyer,” or “home mortgage” to see what the Big Boys and Big Girls are doing as ads. Imitation is the highest form of flattery and a great way to learn. I highly recommend you use extensions, especially the sitelink, call, call out, image (if available), and location formats.

Keyword-focused Sitelinks Help Your Ads Perform

Indeed, I have found that ads that contain **sitelinks that contain the target keyword** dramatically outperform ads that do not. Thus, if you want to rank for “dog insurance” be sure to not only write headlines and descriptions that contain the term “dog insurance.” Also create specific landing pages on your website for “dog insurance” and create specific sitelinks in Google Ads that are headlined “dog insurance.”

For example, here’s a screenshot of an ad that has a sitelink specific to “dog insurance:”



Automated Assets

Finally, Google has rolled out a new type of asset called *Automated Assets* which are automatically generated by Google. You can read about them at <http://jmlinks.com/39t>. Automated Assets are part of Google's push into AI, and I am not a fan. The problem is that Google is motivated to "get the click" and not "get the conversion," so its AI tends to optimize these extensions with "free pizza and beer" type of content... leading into frivolous clicks. If you're neurotic and a control-freak like I am, I strongly recommend you **turn them off**.

Google does not make this easy.

Here's how:

1. Click up to the "Account level" so you are looking down at your campaigns. You **MUST** be at the "Account level."

2. Click *Ads & assets > Assets* on the left and then drill down to *Assets*.
3. Click on the three dots at the top right / more.
4. Select “Account-level Automated Assets.”
5. Click the three dots at the top right / more.
6. Click “Advanced settings.”
7. Turn them all “off.”

If your account hasn't transitioned to “assets,” from the Account Level, click on *Ads & extensions > Extensions*. Then scroll to the bottom and find “Automated Extensions.” Then click on the three dots / more at the top right, then Advanced Settings, and turn them all off.

If your account is half-transitioned, try both methods.

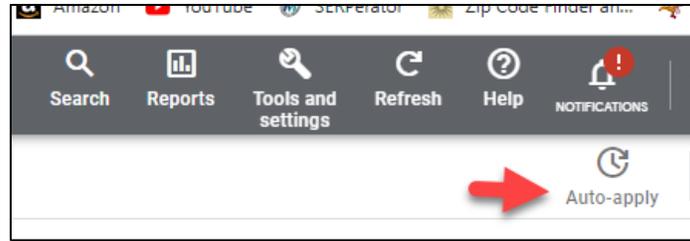
Wasn't that easy? Just say, “Google needs more money” three times fast.

So far, they have done more damage than good to my clients and me because (as you will recall), Google gets paid by the *click* so it throws all sorts of garbage up on your automated extensions to get clicks.

Recommendations Auto Apply: Turn These Off, Too

Google Ads also has a feature called “recommendations.” These are AI-generated recommendations from Google. They are generally garbage, or at least largely garbage. At a minimum, you should pro-actively review them before allowing Google to clutter your ads with non-relevant content. However, your account may be set to automatically accept these recommendations.

To turn off these “recommendations,” at the Account level, click on “Recommendations” on the left and then Auto-apply at the far right. Here's a screenshot:



Next, under “Save time with auto apply” > “Maintain your ads,” click on “Select all” and then “Deselect All.” They are now disabled.

Google will ask for some feedback as to why you are opting out. I often type in something snarky like, “It’s my money, and I’d like to control how I spend it; thank you very much.” I doubt anyone reads the suggestions at Google, so you might type in “Bing rules!” or “One troll to rule them all!” as it really doesn’t matter. Don’t you find it annoying when big companies pretend that they want your feedback when we all know that they really couldn’t care less? I do, but what’s more annoying is a reduction in my ad effectiveness because Google AI has run amuck throughout my account. Turn off ALL AI-based features – you’ll be glad you did.

You can read the help file on Ad Suggestions at <http://jmlinks.com/49g>.

Attract / Repel on Ads and Extensions

In summary, I do recommend that you set up relevant ad assets to your ads but also have an attract / repel frame of mind. You might not want to emphasize a *free consult* if a *free consult* is likely to attract poor people or those who are not likely to convert! You might not want an ad extension that emphasizes your *cat grooming* services if those services are likely to generate clicks but are not strong revenue-generators for your company. And so on and so forth. Manually writing “attract / repel” copy will help you performance as measured by conversions and ROI.

» FOLLOW C/E/A ON LANDING PAGES

What happens after the click? Well, they “land” on your website. There are some best practices when it comes to landing pages for Google Ads, starting with a tight match between the keyword query and the landing page.

Accordingly,

keyword group = Ad Group on Google Ads = specific landing page

So, we’d have:

cat boarding = Ad Group on cat boarding = specific landing page on cat boarding

vs.

cat grooming = Ad Group on cat grooming = specific landing page on cat grooming

vs.

pet boarding = Ad Group on pet boarding = specific landing page on pet boarding

Note how we aren’t lazy, and we don’t let reality confuse us! We have a tight match between keywords and landing pages. The more specific you make the relationship among keyword, Ad Group, and landing pages, the better you’ll do.

Don’t Make Customers (or Google) Think!

We have a page specific to **cat boarding** even though, technically speaking, we could send the *cat boarding* people to our *pet boarding* page or our home page since “in reality,”

that's the same thing. But we don't want to "make our customers think" – we want the *cat boarding* people to see immediately that we board cats, and the *pet boarding* people to see, first, yes, we board pets, and secondly, we focus on cats. We also want the reward to our Quality Score by having a tight focus at the keyword level between the keyword query and the landing page. Don't make Google think, either!

It's not generally a good idea to send everyone to your homepage, and certainly not a good idea to make users hunt for information. They'll click and bounce rather than click and convert. In fact, Google strongly emphasizes that one element of Quality Score is a keyword-matching landing page.

Generally speaking, therefore, your **TO-DO** is to map out your Keywords to your Ad Groups and your Ad Groups to your landing pages and build a one-to-one correlation between *Core Keywords* to *Ad Groups* to *landing pages*.

C/E/A Methodology for Landing Pages

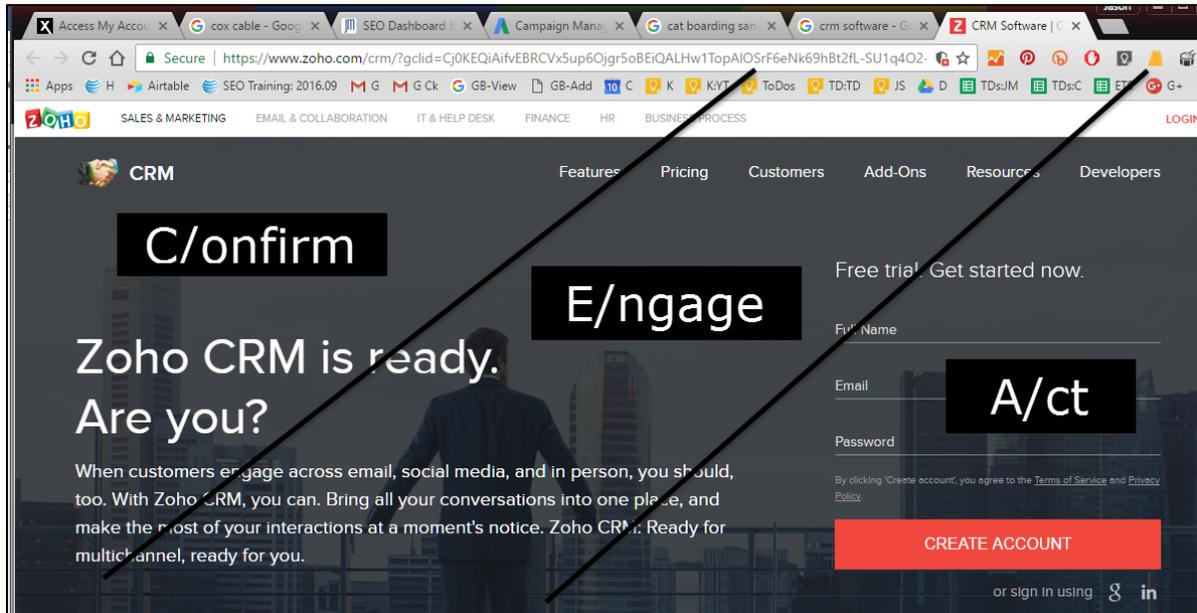
In terms of landing page design, you want to use the C/E/A methodology, which stands for Confirm / Engage / Act. Basically, if the search query is *cat boarding*, then when the user lands on your landing page in the top left corner, she should see an image of a happy cat being boarded and the phrase she just entered ("cat boarding). That's your "**C**" for Confirmation Zone.

Next, moving from left to right, top to bottom, she should read some content that explains why your establishment is the best place to board a cat in San Francisco. Awards, user reviews, statistics, etc., are great here. This is your "**E**" for "Engagement" zone.

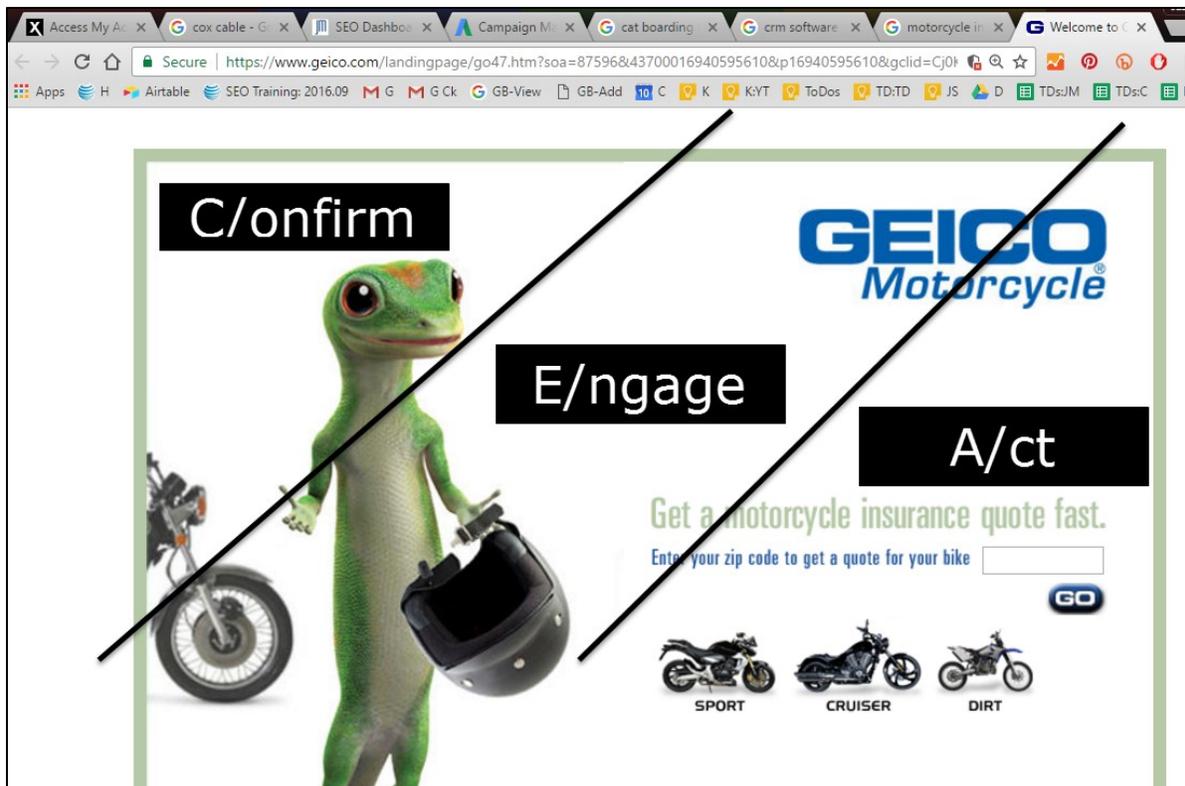
Finally, to the right, but above the fold, the desired action should be apparent. This is your "**A**" for Action zone. A common action is "free consult" or "request a quote" or something like that. Note that in contrast to writing the ad, here you want to convert EVERYONE who lands on your website into an email inquiry (or e-Commerce transaction), as you have already paid for the click, so you want to grab each and every lead.

Attract / repel refers ONLY to ad copy, not to the landing page experience.

Here's a screenshot with the three zones for C/confirm, E/engage, and A/act outlined on the landing page for ZOHO for the search query *CRM Software* into Google:



And here's the Geico landing page for the search query, *motorcycle insurance*, again with the C/, E/, and A/ zones clearly marked for you.



Your **TO-DOS** here are to a) do relevant search queries in your industry and evaluate competitor landing pages using this C/E/A methodology, and b) look at your own landing pages with an eye to C/E/A.

1. Does the **top left** corner **confirm** that the customer who just clicked from Google has landed on a relevant website that offers what he wants?
2. Does the **middle** **engage** the customer by explaining the offer and validating that you are a company that can be trusted?
3. Does the **right side** have a defined **action** such as request a free consultation, download a software demo, or buy something on an e-commerce site?

And, is all the human-critical information “above the fold?” Don’t make them think. Don’t make them hunt. Don’t make them nervous. Confirm you have what they want, you’re a fantastic choice, and make it easy for them to see the next step.

To Lock In or Not?

As for allowing navigation to your homepage and other web pages, some people advocate “locking in” the customer, and others say you should at least allow navigation to the home page. My advice is to allow navigation to your home page and website. Many customers will want to “check you out” and will want to browse your site, even if they land on a clear landing page.

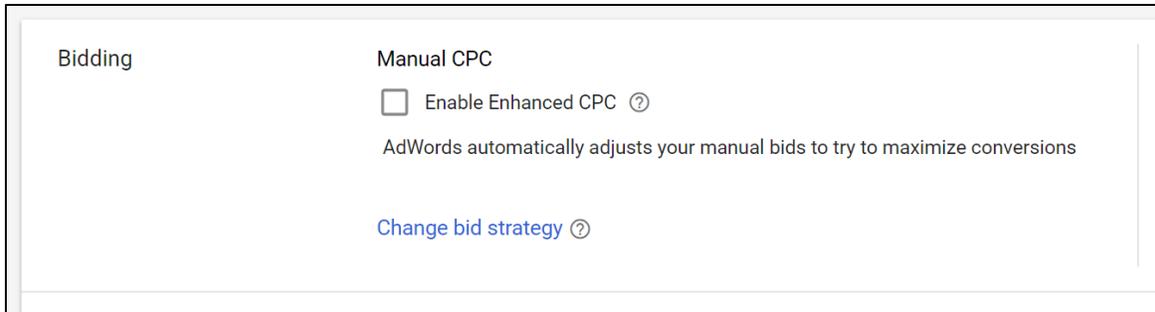
Thus, while I recommend using the C/E/A methodology for your Google Ads landing pages, I realize that many customers will nonetheless browse your website. We can use Google Analytics to track user behavior and view the conversion rates of any customers who come from Google Ads. The bottom line is that each landing page, and your website as a whole, should clearly

- **CONFIRM** that users have landed on a website the offers what they just searched for
- **ENGAGE** them with information, facts, reviews, and other trust indicators that validate your company, products, and services as trustworthy and high quality, and
- have an **ACTION** such as an e-Commerce purchase or free consult / free download that makes the next step easy to see and find.

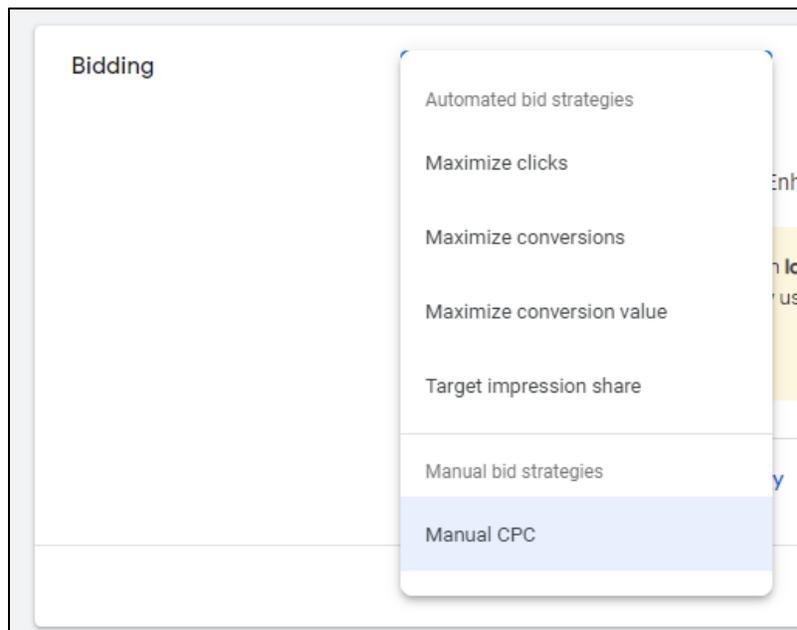
» SET YOUR BIDS

Advertisers pay by click on Google Ads. In Google Ads, you set your bid strategy at the Campaign Level. Click on your *Campaign* and then the *Settings* tab on the left. Find Bidding in the center of the screen and click the down chevron to view it.

Here’s a screenshot:



Click on Change bid strategy, and Google Ads will show you your options:



Your options may look different because not all options are visible to all advertisers. Let's go through the available options, looking first at those that focus on "clicks" and then on those that focus on "conversions":

Bidding Options:

Maximize clicks. Here you provide Google your budget, and Google attempts to maximize your bids within that budget. You can also set a “bid max” to set a maximum CPC you are willing to run. *Not recommended, as I find better results with Manual CPC, but OK if you set a “bid max.”*

Maximize Conversions. Here, if you’ve set up conversion tracking, Google will try to “maximize conversions” against your ad spend. *Recommended only if you are running e-commerce and have robust conversion tracking.*

Maximize Conversion Value. Here, if you’ve set up conversion tracking with a monetary value, Google will try to maximize your “Return on Ad Spend,” that is maximize the dollars earned for dollars spent. *Recommended only if you are running e-commerce and have robust conversion tracking.*

Target Impression Share. Here, Google will try to maximize how frequently your ad is being showed. *Not recommended.*

Manual CPC. Here, you manually set your bids as the maximum you are willing to pay for a click. *Recommended strategy, especially when you are starting and/or have no conversion data.*

Enhanced CPC (ECPC). ECPC blends manual CPC bidding with Google AI to “boost” your bids on those that Google believes will lead to a conversion. *Recommended once or if you have good conversion tracking.*

Should You Use “Smart Bidding?”

“Smart Bidding” options (<http://jmlinks.com/52c>) are those listed above that focus on conversions; manual options focus on clicks. Google propaganda constantly touts the benefits of Google AI and “smart bidding.” But there are two issues here. First, do you have reliable conversion data? Either through your e-commerce provider (e.g., WooCommerce, Shopify) or through Google Analytics, you must define “conversions” such as chats, email feedback forms, downloads, and/or phone calls (CallRail Tracking). Phone calls, in particular, are difficult to track, and in all cases, the value of a conversion can be difficult to quantify. Some “leads” are just wrong; some are nibbles; a few are

very serious and valuable inquiries. If you don't have conversion data feeding into Google Ads from either Google Analytics or your e-commerce platform, "smart bidding" can't possibly work.

Second, do you trust Google Artificial Intelligence? On the one hand, Google is very smart. It stands to reason that it can predict whether or not a search term will convert. On the other hand, Google is motivated to "maximize clicks" and not "maximize conversions" (despite what its propaganda might say). The more you give power to Google, the more you trust them to act in your interests (and not theirs). This may be a good idea. Or it may be a bad idea. It depends.

Generally, I see the best success with "smart bidding" on e-commerce sites where a) what constitutes a conversion and b) the value of each conversion is easy to define. I see the least success with "lead generation" sites like lawyers, doctors, insurance sales, etc., where it is difficult to establish what a conversion is and what it is worth. Phone tracking via a service like CallRail is essential if inquiries come in over the phone.

The problem is that Google propaganda acts as if everyone is running huge e-commerce stores with tons of data, tons of sales, and efficient tracking. But that's not always true. Not everyone is Walmart, Amazon, or Target. Many of us are doctors, plumbers, lawyers, and other small businesses that really rely on inbound phone calls. Others like Silicon Valley technology firms are focused on "lead generation" for very high-value but very low-volume inquiries. Google acts as if everything is about quantity and everything can be measured. As is always true, experiment with different strategies and use the one(s) that work for you.

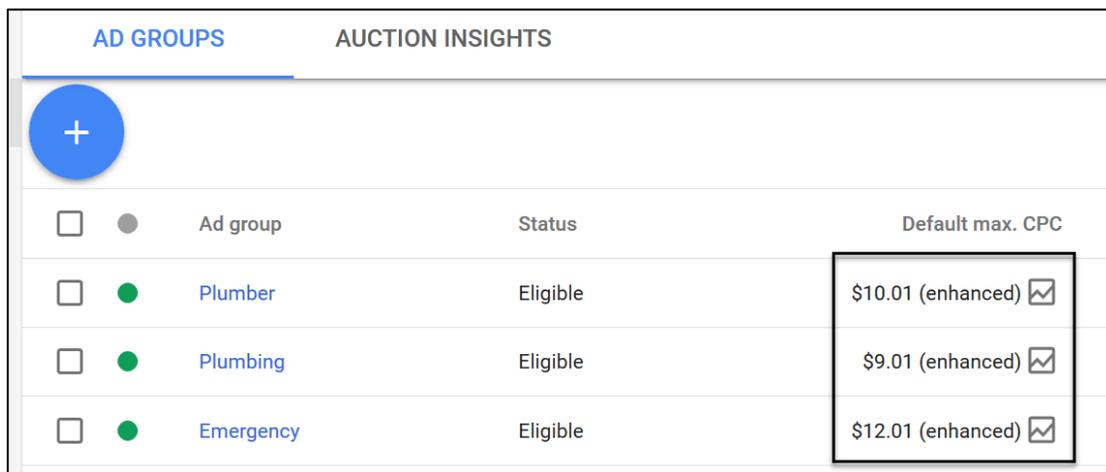
I generally use "manual CPC," therefore, and actively manage my ad accounts. I find that my own human brain – generated through millions of years of evolution – will do a better job optimizing my account than some AI-based program created just a few years ago, that lacks relevant data and is set to optimize Google's profits. Google will warn you about "Manual CPC," but I recommend you start with that.

Bidding at the Ad Group Level

While the bid *strategy* is set at the Campaign level, the actual *bid per click* is set at the Ad Group level or at the Keyword level. We'll assume you've built out your Campaign and

have at least one Group in it and have written ads in that group. Google Ads will have forced you to enter a bid at the beginning, but now go back and edit this bid.

The easiest way to set your bids is to click into the bid on the Default Max CPC column at the Group level. Here's a screenshot:



AD GROUPS		AUCTION INSIGHTS	
<input type="checkbox"/>	● Ad group	Status	Default max. CPC
<input type="checkbox"/>	● Plumber	Eligible	\$10.01 (enhanced) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	● Plumbing	Eligible	\$9.01 (enhanced) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	● Emergency	Eligible	\$12.01 (enhanced) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Whatever you set as the maximum CPC bid here controls the dependent bid at the keyword level. Therefore, all keywords in the “Plumber” Ad Group will be set at \$10.01 CPC maximum bid. The theory is that if you bid \$10.00 and someone bids \$9.00, then you don’t pay \$10, but rather just \$9.01 to get the click (with Quality Score, of course intervening).

That’s the theory, but not necessarily the reality. Google isn’t very forthcoming with data on the actual auction, so it’s a “trust us” model, and we’ve all seen how “trust us” has been working with Silicon Valley’s tech companies. Not very well.

What to Bid at First?

When starting a new *Campaign > Ad Group*, I recommend you bid on the high side, higher than you’d expect or be willing to pay in the long run. To estimate a good starting bid, go to the **Keyword Planner** under the **Tools** menu in Google Ads, enter your

keyword, and bid at least as high as the suggested “top of page (high range)” bid. Here’s a screenshot

<input type="checkbox"/> Keyword (by relevance) ↓	Avg. monthly searches	Competition	Top of page bid (high range)
<input type="checkbox"/> cat boarding	12,100	Medium	\$5.02
<input type="checkbox"/> cat hotel	5,400	Medium	\$3.66
<input type="checkbox"/> pet boarding	27,100	Medium	\$7.67

So you’d need to bid at least \$5.02 for cat boarding, \$3.66 for cat hotel, and \$7.67 for pet boarding to start.

When you’re starting a brand-new Ad Group, **bid high** as you must get the ads actually to run. Next, **monitor closely** and notch down your bids slowly until you get the ads to show at least 85% of the time (as expressed by the Search Impression Share), and you have Search Top IS of > 70%. (More on **ratcheting down** your bids in a moment).

If you’re new to Google Ads, you probably should use a paid tool such as AHREFS in addition to Google Ads, as the data given to you isn’t very good. Here’s a screenshot of AHREFS showing “cat boarding” and the CPC at \$2.50:

The screenshot shows the Ahrefs Keywords Explorer interface for the keyword "cat boarding" in the United States. The main table displays the following data:

Keyword	KD	Volume	Global	Clicks	CPC
cat boarding near me	10	14K	16K	21K	\$2.50
cat boarding	2	6.7K	9.1K	8.6K	\$2.50
cat boarding price	6	300	300	N/A	\$2.50

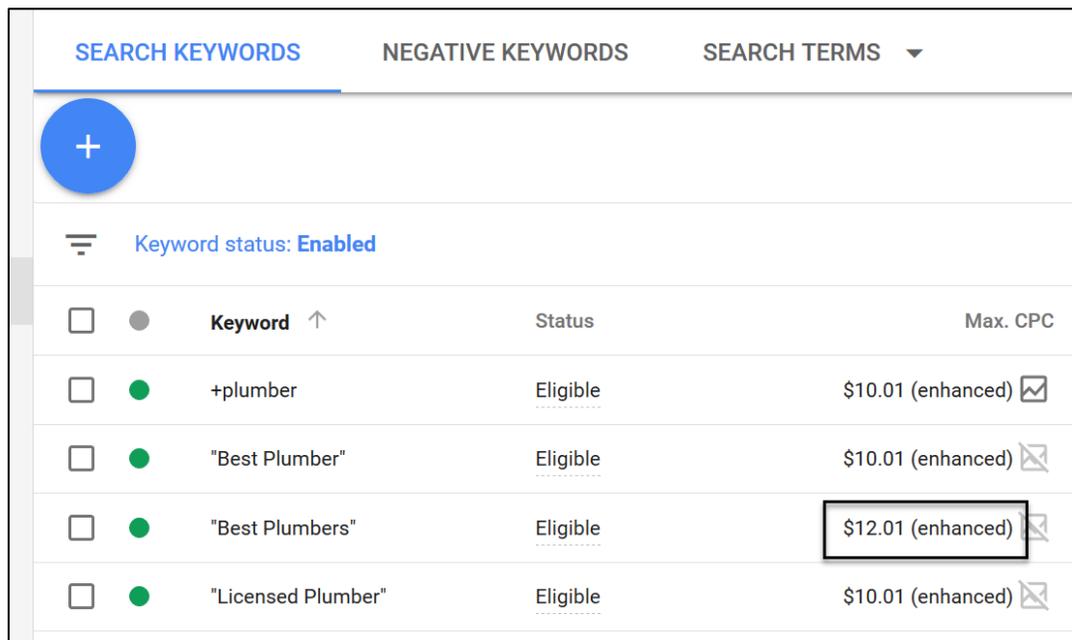
Additional context from the screenshot includes a total volume of 42K for 5,745 keywords, and a list of related terms like "boarding", "cat", "near", "san", and "dog" with their respective volumes.

At \$2.50, this third-party tool seems to give a better estimate at the actual bid required than the official Google Ads Keyword Planner. Go figure. At any rate, set your bid on the high side at first and make sure your ads are showing. You have to get your ads running to get data before you can ratchet your bids downwards to save money.

Set Bids at the Keyword Level

You can also set your bids at the keyword level if there are certain phrases that you want to bid higher than for the Ad Group as a whole. To do this, click on the keywords tab, scroll down to a keyword, and then enter a bid.

Here's a screenshot showing how I have bid up my bid on "best plumber" at \$12.01:



The screenshot shows the Google Ads Keyword Planner interface with the 'SEARCH KEYWORDS' tab selected. A blue plus sign in a circle is visible in the top left. Below it, there is a filter for 'Keyword status: Enabled'. The main table lists several keywords with their status and maximum cost per click (CPC). The keyword '"Best Plumbers"' has a bid of \$12.01 (enhanced), which is highlighted with a black box.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Keyword ↑	Status	Max. CPC
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	+plumber	Eligible	\$10.01 (enhanced) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	"Best Plumber"	Eligible	\$10.01 (enhanced) <input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	"Best Plumbers"	Eligible	\$12.01 (enhanced) <input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	"Licensed Plumber"	Eligible	\$10.01 (enhanced) <input type="checkbox"/>

If you set a bid at the keyword level, remember that this overrides the Ad Group level. If you increase your Ad Group bid, then the bid at the keyword group stays in charge, even if it's a lower amount.

Here's a tip to track who set which bids. If you're working as a team or with a client, have one person bid as a .01, another as a .02, and a third as a .03, or even / odd. This way, you can see who bid what. So, I always bid .01, so I can tell that the bid of \$5.01 was set by me, vs. the client bid, which might be \$5.00, and a bid by Gloria, who works for me, that would be \$5.02. These pennies don't do anything to the bids in any serious sense; they just tell us who set the bids on a team project.

We'll return to bids after we jump over to Campaigns, as after a few days or a week, you want to go back and monitor your bids, bidding them up or reducing them down until you find the best bid per click for return on investment.

» SET LOGICAL CAMPAIGN SETTINGS

Because Google Ads is an interrelated "whole" and yet composed of hierarchical "parts," it's useful to zig and zag between the parts. So, return to your Campaign Settings, and review them by clicking on the *Settings* tab, with an eye to whether your Campaign settings reflect aspects of the real world such as geotargets, budget, etc.

Here are the basic settings for each Campaign in your Google Ads account that are relevant on the Search Network:

- **Goal.** If you select a Goal, Google Ads will give you suggestions based on the Goal as you work through the process. I never enable this, as I find the suggestions useless, misleading, or just annoying, but it doesn't hurt to enable a goal.
- **Marketing Objective.** Again, pretty much useless.
- **Networks.** Here you select Search Network (pre-selected by the above choice). If you want to run on sites like Yelp, Xfinity, Earthlink, etc., then choose Google search partners. If you want to run only on Google, then uncheck the Search Partners box. Again, never mix a Display Network and a Search Network campaign!
- **Locations.** Here is where you set the geotarget or location target for your Campaign. We'll discuss this in a moment, but just realize that you can Geotarget

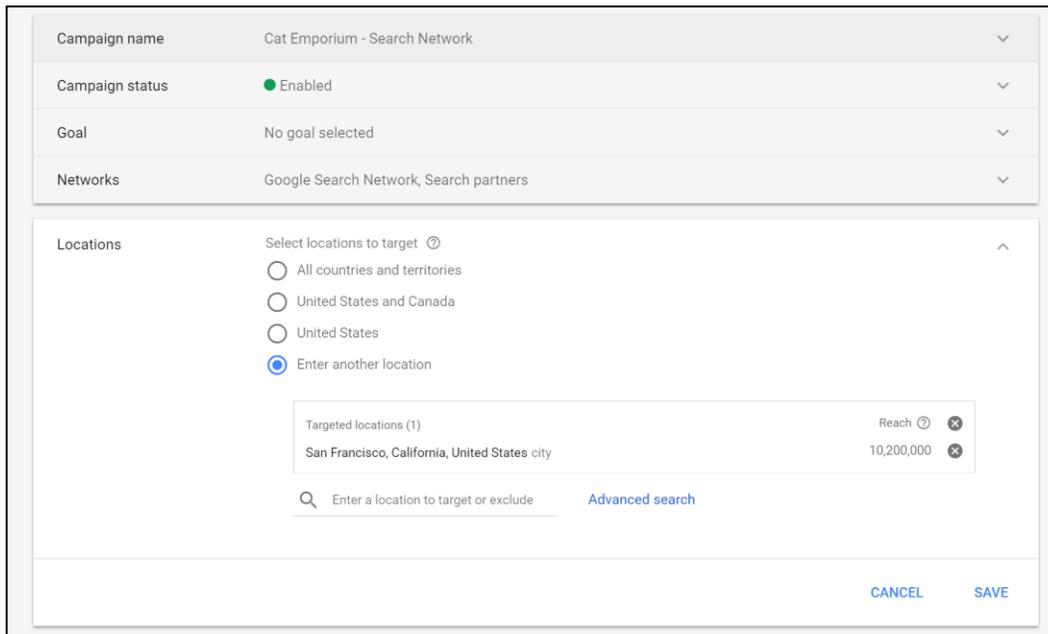
everyone who lives, for example, within a 10-mile radius of Tulsa, Oklahoma, or in Zipcode 94111.

- **Location Options.** Generally, the default is fine. I'll explain in a moment what these mean in special circumstances.
- **Languages.** You can select the desired language (e.g., English).
- **Budget.** Set your daily maximum budget here. Again, this is controlled at the Campaign level and controls the budget for all dependent Ad Groups.
- **Bidding.** As explained above, you can set a bid strategy ranging from a fully automated strategy to manual CPC. For most advertisers, I recommend *Manual CPC* or *Enhanced CPC* as the best bid strategies.
- **Start and End Dates.** Use this feature if you want to start and stop your advertising around specific dates.
- **Additional Settings**
 - **Ad Rotation.** Optimize for the best performing ads is best.
 - **Lead Form Settings.** Use this, only, if you are using a lead form.
 - **Campaign URL options.** Use this if you have special parameters in your URLs (as may occur in e-Commerce).
 - **Dynamic Search Ads Setting.** This is an AI-based feature where Google *automatically* creates your ads for you, based on your website. Turn this off unless you are a Zillionaire who wants to waste money frivolously on Google Ads.
 - **IP Exclusions.** Use this if you know certain IP's are bad (e.g., those of competitors). Rarely used as it is too difficult to maintain manually.

» CHOOSE YOUR GEOTARGET SETTINGS WISELY

You can show your ads only to people searching in or about a specific location (e.g., Tulsa, Bixby, Oklahoma City, or Zip 68716 in Nebraska). This is called *location targeting* or *geotargeting*. It's one of the most powerful advantages of Google Ads over SEO (Search Engine Optimization).

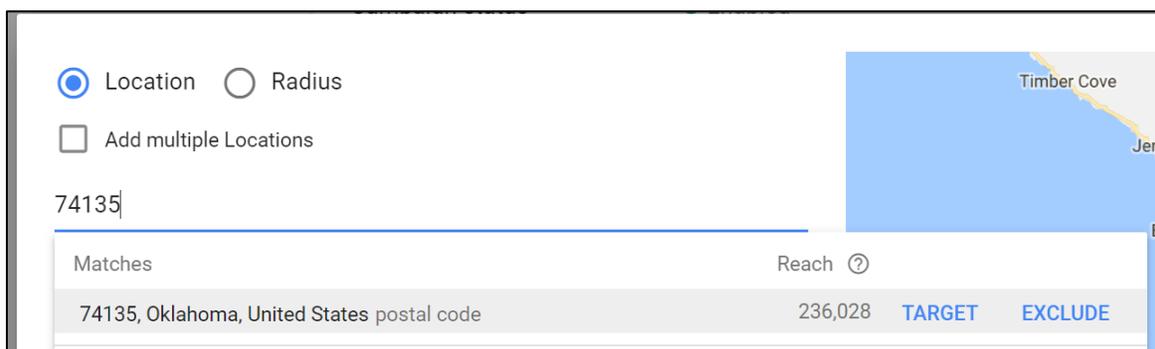
To set up or adjust your location targeting, go to *Campaigns* and click on *Settings* and then open up the *Locations* tab in the center. (It's confusing. Do not click on Locations on the left menu as that is only a report as to where your clicks are coming from. Be sure to select the Locations tab in the Center.). Here's a screenshot:



This means that the Campaign “Cat Emporium – Search Network” will show ads only to people physically in San Francisco or who append the phrase “San Francisco” to their search.

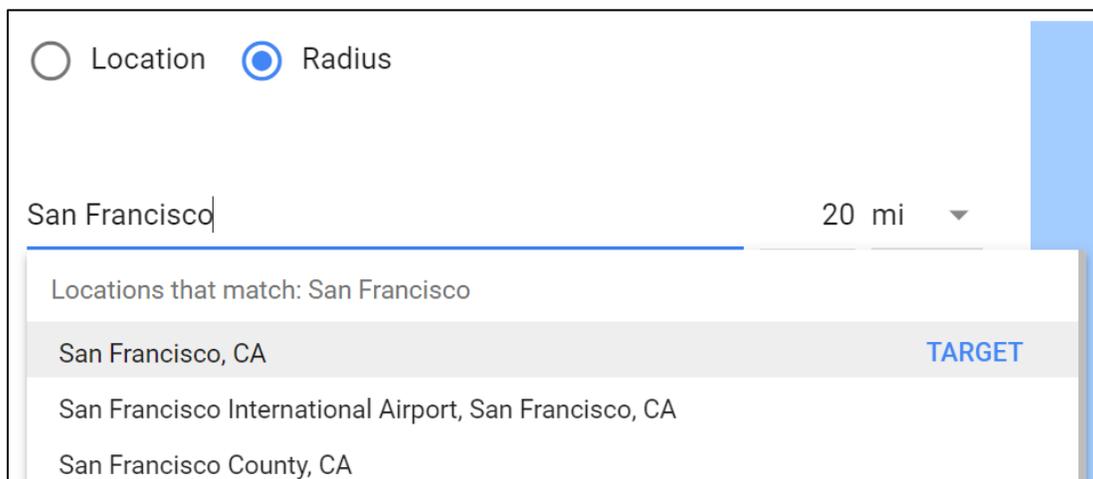
Let’s review geotargeting in detail.

The best way to set or revisit your geotargeting settings is to click on **Advanced Search**, as indicated in blue above. This pops up a map. Next, you have two ways to go about setting location targeting. If you select the circle “Location,” then you can just enter states, cities, or even zip codes to target. Here’s a screenshot showing zip code 74135:

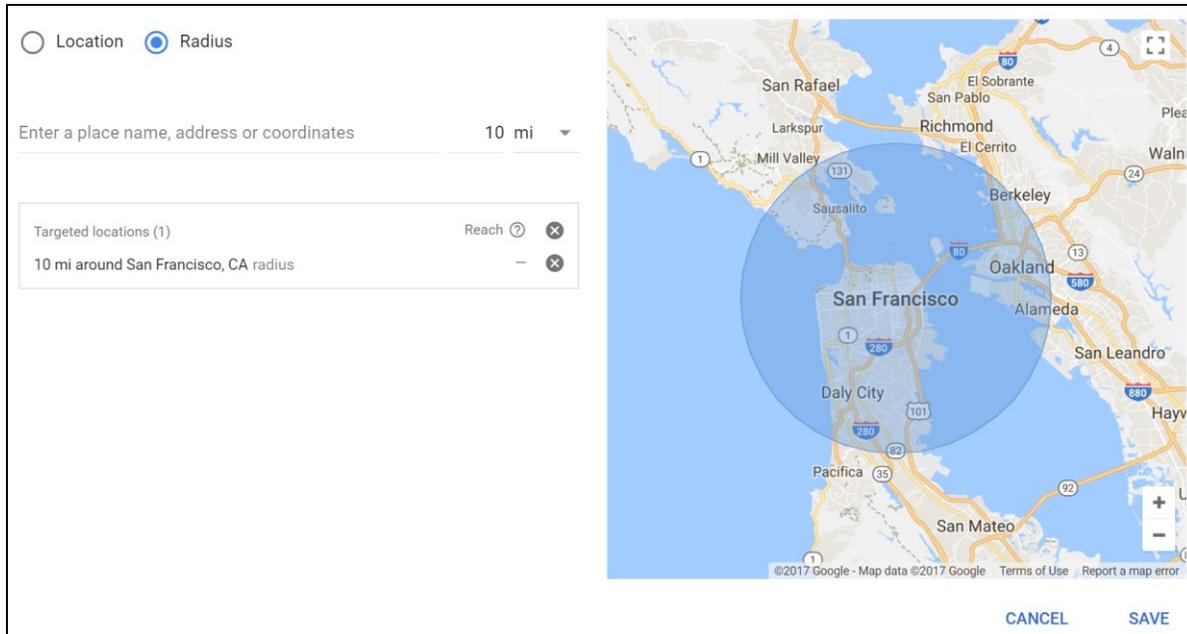


If you select **TARGET**, that means show your ad to people in that zip code. If you select **EXCLUDE**, that means do not show your ad to people in that zip code. In this method, you can manually enter cities, states, and zip codes to target or exclude for a given Campaign.

The second method is to select “Radius” in the circle. This is useful if you want to target people who are within, say, a 20-mile radius of San Francisco, California. Here’s a screenshot:



And here’s a screenshot of what the map looks like with a 10-mile radius around San Francisco:



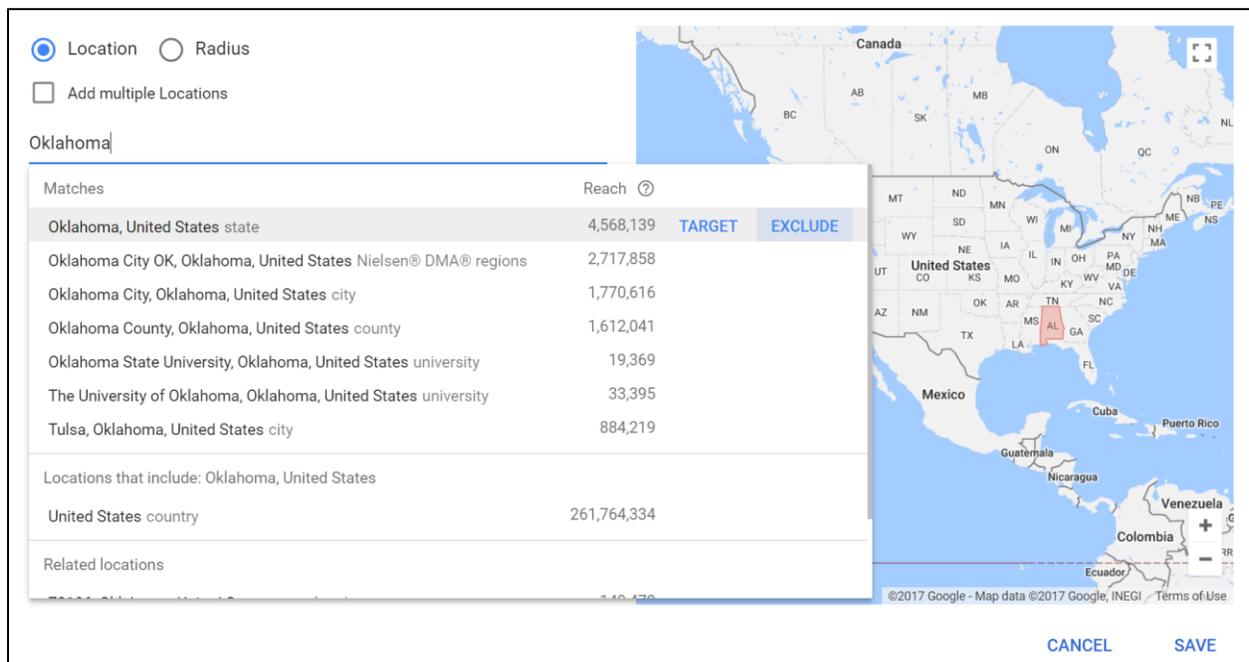
You can see that we'd reach some people across the Bay in Oakland and Alameda, as well as north into Marin County. You can click into a city you've set, like San Francisco, and then adjust up or down the geographic radius. The default is 20 miles, but you can set it to 1 mile or 100 miles, etc.

Excluding Geographic Areas like Cities, States, or ZIP Codes

Let's discuss *exclusions*. You can use the geotarget feature to include "in" cities, states, zip codes, etc., but you can also use them to exclude "out" cities, states, ZIP codes, etc. These function like *negative keywords* and block your ads from showing at all.

Why might you do this? For example, consider a scenario where you are a Napa Valley, California, vineyard that sells wine over the Internet across the entire United States. You want to use Google Ads to reach people searching for "buy wine online," or "best cabernets from Napa Valley," etc. Google Ads is a fantastic choice to reach these wine connoisseurs who want to buy California Napa Valley wines over the Internet. However, it is illegal to buy wine online in Utah, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Mississippi, Delaware, Rhode Island, and Alabama.

By using the geotarget / exclude feature, you can exclude showing ads to people in these states. Simply go to *Advanced Search > Search*, and enter the state names, then select *exclude*. Here’s a screenshot showing a search for Oklahoma. If you look closely, you’ll see Alabama has been grayed out, as I already excluded it:



In this way, you’d set your Geotarget to United States, and then exclude states like Oklahoma and Alabama, which do not allow wine shipments. There’s no point in paying for someone in these states to click on your ad only to find out that they can’t use your service.

Poor vs. Rich People by Geography

You can think “out of the box” when it comes to geotargeting. So, if, for example, your target customers tend to live in one ZIP code, and your non-customers live in another, you can include “in” your target customers and exclude “out” your non-target customers. It may be politically incorrect to point this out, but (unfortunately) in our great capitalist nation, it is often true that poor people tend to live in certain zip codes

and rich people in others. By using geo-targeting in Google Ads, you can include “in” rich people and exclude “out” poor people based on geotargets.

GEOTARGET “IN” OR “OUT”

(You can check USA incomes by zip codes out at <http://jmlinks.com/23z>). By using geotargeting, we could exclude the poor zip codes and target only people in rich zip codes. Other ways to use geotargeting can be including “in” people in a commute zone (e.g., from Oakland to San Francisco), and including “out” people outside of a commute zone (e.g., the more difficult commute from Marin County into San Francisco). Note: Google is beginning to restrict this feature due to legal concerns about discrimination. Again, don’t blame me. I am not telling you to do this or not to do this. I am only explaining that it can be, and is, often done. We live in a capitalist society, and let’s be honest, rich people tend to live in certain zip codes and poor people in others. It’s sad. It’s wrong. But it’s a fact, and smart marketers know that rich people buy BMWs and poor people buy KIAs, and they target their advertising accordingly.

Your **To-DO** here is to identify communities you want to geotarget “in” and any you want to geotarget “out,” and then map those to your individual Campaigns.

Advanced Location Options

Finally, click back up to your Campaign settings, find Additional Settings, and just below that, click on *Location options*. Here’s a screenshot:

^ Location options

Target ?

Presence or interest: People in, regularly in, or who've shown interest in your targeted locations (recommended)

Presence: People in or regularly in your targeted locations

Search interest: People searching for your targeted locations

Exclude ?

Presence: People in your excluded locations (recommended)

Presence or interest: People in, regularly in, or who've shown interest in your excluded locations

What do these options mean? The default is people who are “in” or show “interest in” your target location. For Jason’s Cat Boarding Emporium, this means either a person who is “in” San Francisco or a person who adds in the term “San Francisco.” Thus, for example, our ad for “cat boarding” with geo target set to San Francisco would show:

If the person is physically in San Francisco, and types in “Cat Boarding”

- OR -

If the person is physically in Anchorage, Alaska, but types in “San Francisco Cat Boarding.”

The *default* is for Google to interpret and run your ads on both scenarios if you geotarget San Francisco. You’d only override these settings if, for some reason, you want to physically constrict it to people physically in the target but exclude those who include it by typing in the city name. A scenario might be a San Francisco bike rental company that only wants to target people who are truly in San Francisco and ready to bike vs. people in Milwaukee who might be planning a trip and are just looking around (but not yet physically in the City). They would thus select “People in your targeted location,” and the ads would show if, and only if, the person is physically in the City of San Francisco.

For most of us, the default setting is fine, however. To be on the safe side, you could also enter the keyword “*cat boarding San Francisco*” into Google Ads to be sure to capture search queries that are clearly looking for cat boarding in the city of San Francisco. If cities are important to your search patterns, I recommend entering them as phrases or exact match. It seems to achieve better results; a little redundancy in Google Ads is a good thing. If you have a tight budget, I also recommend restricting your ads to only the non-default option: people truly in your search targets.

As for negatives, the same logic applies. You can exclude people who are “actually in” a negative location, or you can exclude by intent.

VIDEO. Watch a video from Google on how to set location targeting in Google Ads at <http://jmlinks.com/26k>.

» MONITOR YOUR KEYWORDS, BIDS, CONVERSIONS, AND PERFORMANCE

Chapter 9 goes into more detail on how to monitor Google Ads for return on investment, but for now, let’s overview the basics of monitoring your performance. We’ll leave aside *conversion tracking*, but if you can, you should connect Google Analytics to Google Ads and make sure that it is tracking conversions (e.g., purchases at an e-Commerce website or completed website feedback forms) as soon as possible.

When you’re just getting started, I’d recommend keeping a very close eye on Google Ads, on at least a daily basis at first. Then, after a week or ten days of data, it’s time to analyze your performance.

Account Level

Select the Campaigns Tab to compare Campaigns to each other. Note: essentially, here you are at the Account “level” and looking “down” to your Campaigns. Here’s a screenshot:

Campaign status: Enabled			Impr.	Interactions	Interaction rate	Avg. cost	Cost
<input type="checkbox"/>	Campaign ↑	Budget					
<input type="checkbox"/>	Books - Search Network	\$100.01/day	121,172	6,446 clicks	5.32%	\$2.13	\$13,733.62
<input type="checkbox"/>	Cat Emporium - Search Network	\$1.01/day	619	7 clicks	1.13%	\$3.95	\$27.64
<input type="checkbox"/>	Jason McDonald	\$100.00/day	30,787	451 clicks	1.46%	\$11.11	\$5,008.99
<input type="checkbox"/>	Stanford in CA	\$50.01/day	1,042	81 clicks	7.77%	\$5.78	\$468.45
Total: Filtered campaigns			153,620	6,985 clicks	4.55%	\$2.75	\$19,238.70
Total: Account			38,950,729	33,422 clicks, views	0.09%	\$2.34	\$78,203.50
Total: Search			2,828,588	19,328 clicks	0.68%	\$3.02	\$58,395.53
Total: Display			36,005,190	13,459 clicks, views	0.04%	\$1.45	\$19,555.05
Total: Video			116,951	635 views	0.54%	\$0.40	\$252.92

On the top right, select the time period (e.g., last month, last week, etc.). Google Ads will then give you an organized look at your Campaigns. You can select “All enabled Campaigns” to see just the Campaigns that are running by clicking the filter icon on the right (it looks like an upside-down triangle).

Here’s what the **default** columns mean:

Campaign. This is the name of your campaign.

Budget. This is your budget maximum per day.

Impressions. These are the number of times your ads were shown.

Interactions. For most of us, this is just clicks.

Interaction Rate (Click thru rate). This is the number of clicks divided by the number of impressions expressed as a percentage. Generally speaking, anything 1% or higher is good.

Avg Cost. This is your average cost-per-click (CPC). Lower is better, of course.

Cost. This is your total cost spent during the time period.

Unfortunately, Google has goofed this all up in the New Interface, so I recommend you drill into columns and disable some of the goofy ones and enable ones that make more sense. Click on the columns icon on the middle right. It is three black bars, like this:



That then opens up a “Modify columns for campaigns” box. Open up each of these, and I recommend you enable the following columns:

Campaign = your campaign name.

Budget = your daily budget.

Status = whether your campaign is running or not.

Impr. = impressions, or how many times your ad displayed on Google.

Search impr. share = a measurement of how many times your ad showed / how many total times it was eligible to show as a percentage. If this is 80% for example, then it means your ad showed 80% of the time vs. relevant searches.

Search top IS = how many times your ad showed in the top position (above organic results). If this is 75% for example, it means your ad was on the top 75% of the time in positions 1, 2, 3, or 4.

Clicks = how many clicks your ads received.

CTR = your click-thru rate, or how many clicks you received over impressions. Thus a 10% CTR means your ad got clicked 10% of the time.

Avg. CPC = the average cost per click; how much you spent for a click.

Cost = how much you spent.

Bid Strategy Type = what type of bid strategy you used, such as “manual” or “CPA.”

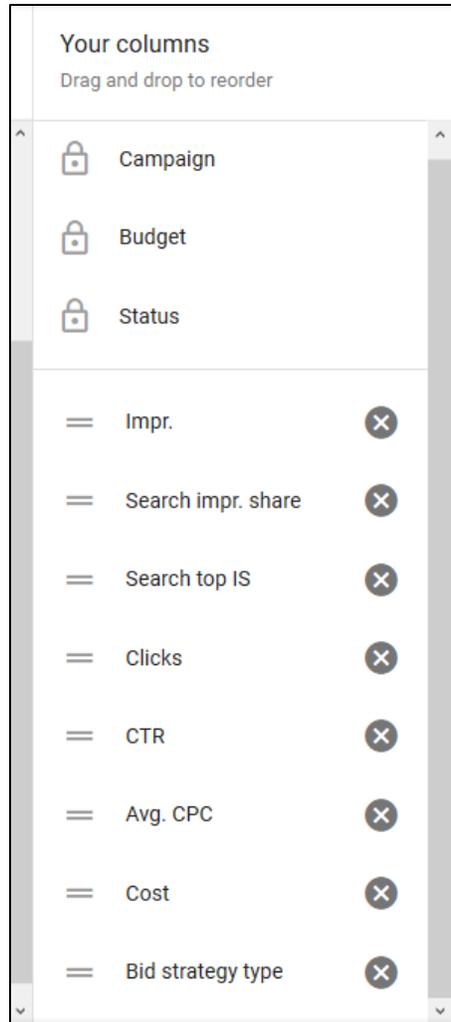
On the far right, you can drag up or down each column and order them in any way you like. I usually think of it as a process from showing on Google to getting the conversion, so I order them:

Campaign, Budget, Status, Impressions, Search Impression Share, Search Top Impression Share, Clicks, CTR, Average CPC, Cost, and Bid Strategy.

Once you’ve checked all the ones you want, click “Save your column set,” and give it a name such as “SIS” for “Search Impression Share.” Hit SAVE & APPLY, and Google will apply this column set. Note: you have to do this at both the Campaign and Ad Group level, but once you save a column set, you can turn it on / off by clicking on the Column icon.

Bids and SIS Scores

Return to the Campaign Level, where you’re looking down at your Ad Groups, by clicking on the top breadcrumb trail navigation. You want to get back “up” to the Campaign level, so you can see your multiple Ad Groups. Enable the same columns as indicated above and save them as “My Columns.” Here’s a screenshot:



This then outputs at the Campaign level as:

Budget	Status	Impr.	Search impr. share	Search top IS	Clicks	CTR	Avg. CPC	↓ Cost	Bid strategy type
\$150.01/d... <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Eligible	17,654	26.59%	21.36%	920	5.21%	\$1.57	\$1,443.49	Manual CPC
\$100.00/d... <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Eligible	132	72.16%	39.66%	6	4.55%	\$16.24	\$97.45	Manual CPC

I recommend you set up similar columns at both the Campaign and Ad Group level. Here's a screenshot looking "down" at the Ad Group level:

<input type="checkbox"/>	● Ad group	Status	Default max. CPC	Impr.	Clicks	Search impr. share	Search top IS	CTR	Avg. CPC	↓ Cost	Conversions
<input type="checkbox"/>	● Social Media - Marketing	Eligible	\$2.01 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7,473	598	54.29%	49.15%	8.00%	\$1.26	\$754.26	4.00

Let's go over what this all means. Again, remember, we are in a Campaign and looking "down" at the Ad Groups that "live" inside a Campaign. Google Ads is a hierarchy.

Ad Group. This is the name you give to each Ad Group. I usually give it a name to reflect the core keyword such as *plumber*, or *emergency* for *emergency plumbing* in the above example.

Status. This tells you whether or not the Ad Group is running.

Default Max CPC. This tells you your bid per click.

Impr. These are the impressions for the time period, i.e., how many times your ad was shown. 7,473 means that that Ad Group's ads were shown 7,473 times during the time period.

Clicks. This tells you how many clicks your ad group received.

Search impr. share (SIS). This is a very useful metric. This shows the percent time your ad was shown vs. the eligible impressions. If, for instance, it was 100%, your ad showed all the time; if it was 69%, it showed 69% of the time and was not showing 31% of the time. You want this to be > 85% to be running "full blast."

Search top IS. This shows you how frequently your ad ran at the top vs. all eligible impressions. A 49.15% Search Top IS mean that your ad showed at the top 49.15% of the time, and did not show 51.85% of the time in the top positions. (*More on this in a moment*).

CTR. This is your click-thru rate, calculated by impressions/clicks. Higher is better, and you want this to be > 2% in general. Anything > 2% is good, >5% is very good. It speaks to how exciting and "on target" your ad headline and copy was vs. the search query.

Avg. CPC. This is the average price you paid per click. Lower is obviously better.

Cost. This is the total cost for the time period that you spent.

Conversions. If you have conversion tracking on, you can see the number of conversions and the conversion rate. This tells you that they not only clicked through but actually “converted,” meaning they did what you identified as a goal such as an e-Commerce purchase or a registration or a sales lead.

Threading the Needle

Google Ads is full of trade-offs. So, assuming you did a good job of identifying high-value, transactional keywords and you matched those keywords to Ad Groups, let's discuss threading the needle. You want to maximize your return on ad investment by getting the most qualified clicks to your website to generate the most conversions at the lowest cost per conversion.

A perfect Ad Group would hit approximately:

An **SIS** or **Search Impression Share** of > 85%, meaning your ads were showing nearly all the time.

A **Search Top SIS** of > 70%, meaning your ad showed in the top three or four positions, preferably three or four more than 70% of the time.

A **CTR** of > 2%, meaning people liked your ads and clicked through on them.

A **good conversion rate** and **cost per conversion**. This varies greatly based on what you are selling, but you want not only clicks but ads that convert. You can't make a blanket statement as what percent is a good one, as a conversion rate for a cheap purse may be very different from an expensive purse and even more different from a cruise to Italy.

It's nearly impossible to hit these targets, but I find them useful goals. I constantly tweak my variables to get my ads to show on valuable searches at the best price with the highest ROI as measured in clicks, CTR, and – if possible – conversions.

Adjusting if Your Ads Are Not Showing

What do you do if your ads aren't showing? For example, you have an SIS that's 25%, or a Search top IS that's 10%? What are your mechanisms to improve things?

Focus. If you haven't tightly focused your Ad Groups to a specific core keyword, that will show up as poor performance. Tighten your focus.

Bids. You can bid up your bid per click until you get the SIS to be > 85%, as nothing works if your ads don't show.

Ad Copy. If your ads are not showing (i.e., they have a poor quality score), rewrite them to include the keywords in the ad headline and text. Give them some pizzazz and promise something like a "free consult" or "free download." (This will improve the CTR and improve the ad being shown).

Geotarget. If you are running out of budget, it's better to narrow your geotarget and get the SIS > 85% than to spread yourself too thin and be SIS < 85%. Google penalizes ads that run haphazardly, so I always strive to get the SIS > 85% by tuning things up.

Poor Conversions. Here your problem isn't with Google, but rather with your landing page. You're getting clicks, but they're not converting. Assuming your keyword patterns are tight (i.e., transactional, relevant searches), then work on your landing page experience. What will get users to convert to your desired goal once they land on your website? What's fouling it up?

Returning to Bid Strategy: Google's Official Explanation

Now that we have all the pieces in place, let's return to bid strategy. To learn Google's historical explanation of how bidding works, check out this **video** by Chief Economist Hal Varian at <http://jmlinks.com/39u> as well as this newer video at <http://jmlinks.com/56c>.

Google essentially argues that you should set your bid to the maximum amount you'd be willing to pay and "trust Google" not to screw you. You'll "only" pay the minimum

necessary to preserve your position. Google will also provide free puppies, rainbows, and unicorns to homeless children across the world on each December 25th from now until the Second Coming.

With all due respect to Google, I would like to argue that this is just so much rubbish. If you think about it, if every advertiser were to set his or her bid to the max, this would maximize *Google's revenue* in the auction and maximize the *spend* by all advertisers. No thanks, Tom Hanks.

If you bid too high, Google just takes your extra money despite what you read in the official help files.

In fact, in my experience, it seems that you can often get *more* clicks and certainly *more* clicks at *cheaper* cost by gradually reducing your bid and keeping an eye on your SIS to be greater than 85% and Search top IS at > 70%. It's sort of like throttling an airplane, as you're trying to reduce your bid to discover the "real" cost per click yet maintaining an 85% SIS and a Search top IS > 70%. You have to keep an eye on your bids, actual CPCs, and impression shares.

Let's dive into this strategy, which I call "Bid Ratcheting."

Bid Ratcheting if Your Ads are Showing

If your ads are performing well, meaning your SIS is greater than 85%, your CTR is greater than 2%, and your Search Top IS is <70%, then I recommend **bid ratcheting**, which is to gradually decrease your manual bid until your SIS falls below 85%, and/or your Search Top IS falls below 70% (meaning you are showing at the bottom of the page).

I have had very good success with manual bidding and bid ratcheting. Here's my theory, substantiated by experience but not at all proven:

1. Google is somewhat **dishonest** (?) in how the auction works. Despite what the official propaganda says, if you bid too high (e.g., you bid \$10 and the next guy or gal bids \$9), you do not actually pay just one cent more. *You pay a lot more.*
2. As you **ratchet your bids down**, you force Google to reveal the true threshold of the lowest bid you can submit to get your ads to show at SIS > 85% and a Search Top IS of >70%. *Lower bids can result in more impressions, more clicks, and even more conversions.*
3. If you bid too low, Google refuses to show your ads, indicating that there is a “**minimum bid**” threshold for all keywords. *Google puts a hidden floor into bids in Google Ads, which it cryptically calls the “reserve price.”*

Let’s look at the big picture of Tech and Silicon Valley. What have we learned as a society since the dawn of the Internet? From Facebook to Twitter, Patreon to PayPal, Google to Apple, we’ve learned that the tech companies are quite literally *foxes guarding the henhouses*. Privacy scandal has followed privacy scandal, Russian bot has followed Russian bot, class action lawsuit has followed class action. To be blunt, the relationship between Big Tech and the Chinese Communist Party disgusts me. I think I’m not alone in being increasingly skeptical about Tech Companies and whether they have any morals other than profit.

Now, I’m not a socialist. I support capitalism, and I love Google. Nothing the world has ever seen has outdone capitalism for creating innovation and broad prosperity. I lived in the Soviet Union in 1983 as an exchange student, and let me tell you, it was not a pretty society nor a moral society. Don’t think I’m a groovy Bay Area socialist. I’m not.

I am a hard-nosed, practical businessperson who respects Google yet realizes that their interests are not fully in alignment with mine. Go in, eyes wide open. Don’t blindly trust Google (or any corporation). Trust AND verify that you are getting the lowest and most effective bid by ratcheting down your bids until your ads stop and then ratcheting them back up.

All of this goes double for “smart bidding.” If you’re using anything other than “manual CPC” as a bid strategy, you are quite literally trusting Google to act in your best interest. It might work great for you. It might not. I am not saying “trust” Google or “mistrust” Google. I am saying experiment, measure, and do what works for you.

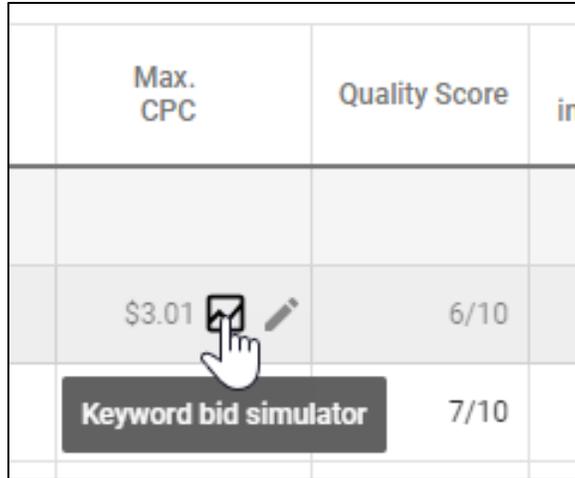
Minimum Bids

Let's talk for a moment about minimum bids. As an advertiser, you should always be on the lookout for lucrative, high-value, niche keywords. You may bid for something really nichey like "waterproof iPhone headphones" or "grease-resistant batteries," etc., a keyword or phrase for which you are the ONLY bidder. Guess what? You don't get to just bid one penny. There is a hidden, secret "minimum bid" inside of Google Ads, and you should start your bids high so that your ads show, then ratchet down your bids until the SIS falls below 85% (your position will be #1 as you are all alone on this pattern). Presto! You've found the minimum bid on Google Ads for that keyword.

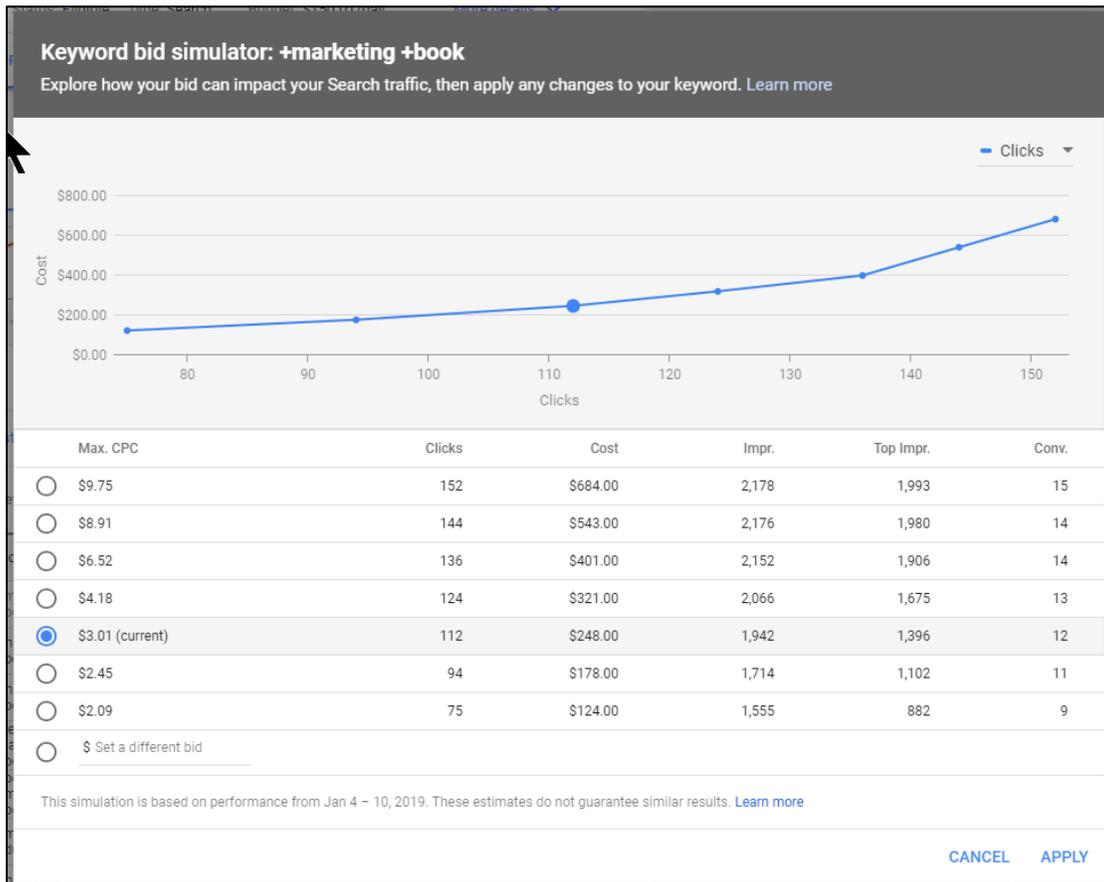
Nowhere in the official documentation does Google talk about or explain minimum bids, but I have had many clients, students, and readers of this book who have discovered that – like the Loch Ness Monster or Big Foot – minimum bids exist. Google cryptically mentions the "reserve price," but that's as far as it goes.

Force Google Ads to Work

Here's one final weird phenomenon in Google Ads. The official help files claim that if you INCREASE your bids, you'll get MORE clicks and MORE impressions. There's even a tool called "Bid Simulator" inside of Google Ads. To find it, click into an Ad Group and then onto Keywords. Find a keyword that has sufficient data and click the squiggly arrow. Here's a screenshot:



After you click, you'll see a graph that indicates if you increase your bid, you'll get more clicks. Here's a screenshot of that:



This graph is saying that if we increase our bid to \$9.75, we'll get 152 clicks vs. the 112 we're getting at the current \$3.01 bid. But, to be fair, look closely at the far right "Conv" or "Conversions" column, and you'll see that we only get three more conversions for a cost per additional conversion of $(684-248)/3$ or \$162. Not a good deal! As I have said repeatedly, you get paid by the conversion, and Google gets paid by the click, so this type of "tool" attempts to mislead you into focusing on clicks and not conversions.

Furthermore, I have experienced the following many times. Keep your Campaign Budget the same yet *decrease* your bid. Your clicks actually increase (not decrease)! Why might this be so? My theory is that the Google Ads algorithm has to work harder to get you to spend 100% of your budget, and so it places your ads on more impressions and on better auctions. Behind the scenes, my guess is that the Google Ads engineers optimize the system to maximize the budget spend of everyone. If you bid too high, they can easily suck out all your budget. If you bid too low, they refuse to run your ads. But if you ratchet your bids down to the sweet spot, they have to work hard to maximize your budget spend while giving you the most clicks for your money. Oh, and to be completely cynical, the AI-based bidding and ad- or extension-generating work more to Google's favor than to yours.

MANUAL OPTIONS MAY OUTPERFORM AI

Experiment with budgets and bids to find what gives you the most clicks for your money, the most conversion for your money, and the best return-on-investment or ROI. It won't necessarily be what the official Google Ads help files will tell you. "Trust but verify," as President Reagan said of the old Soviet Union.

TO-DO. Gradually reduce your bid per click until you fall below SIS > 85%, a Search Top IS of >70% and a decent click-through rate. If your SIS goes below 85%, you're bidding too low, so raise your bid. If Search Top IS goes below 70%,

you're probably bidding too high. Raise and lower your bid until you find the "sweet spot" where you run at the cheapest cost but show all the time.

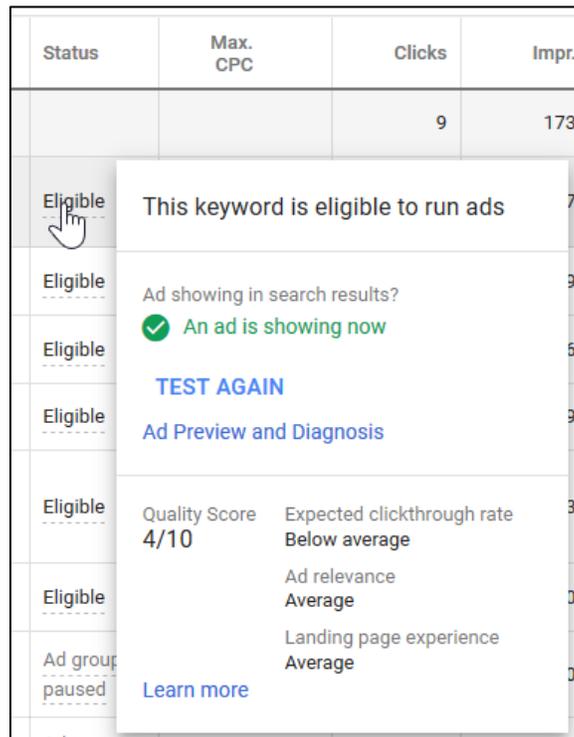
It's hard to hit the perfect "sweet spot" here, but it's very important to realize that – despite what Google tells you – you want to bid *down* over time.

Spot Checking Your Ads

Another check I recommend is spot-checking your ads periodically to verify that they're running and to see what they actually look like.

Here's **method #1**. Click into a *Campaign > Ad Group > Keywords*. Hover your mouse over where it says a Keyword is "Eligible," and you should see a pop-up box with a green "An ad is showing now" sentence that tells you whether your ad is currently showing or not for that keyword. If you're not running, you get a red warning.

Here's a screenshot:



Status	Max. CPC	Clicks	Impr.
		9	173
Eligible			7
Eligible			9
Eligible			5
Eligible			9
Eligible			3
Eligible			0
Ad group paused			0

This keyword is eligible to run ads

Ad showing in search results?
✔ An ad is showing now

[TEST AGAIN](#)

[Ad Preview and Diagnosis](#)

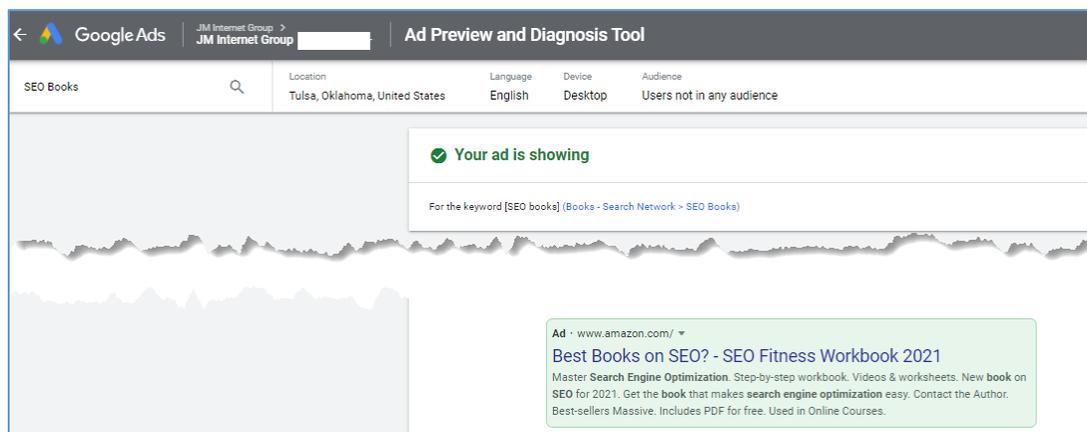
Quality Score: 4/10
Expected clickthrough rate: Below average

Ad relevance: Average
Landing page experience: Average

[Learn more](#)

Now, ironically, on all of these three methods, Google may tell you that your ad is NOT running when it actually IS running. The tools are very buggy.

Here's method #2. Click up to the *Tools* menu (under the wrench icon) and select *Ad Preview and Diagnosis*. Enter relevant search queries, set your location to a city in your target area, and “spot check” to verify that your ads are actually running. Here's a screenshot:



This means that my ad for my *SEO Workbook* ad is showing for the search query *SEO books* with the location set to Tulsa, Oklahoma. If you click on “Device” on the top menu, you can also toggle to mobile device and tablet to see if your ad is showing on the mobile phone and/or tablet.

Here's **method #3**. I recommend opening up a Chrome browser in incognito mode and going to the BrightLocal location tool at <http://jmlinks.com/56d>. This tool is nice because it allows you to vary your city / location, and often it is more accurate than the Google tool. (You can use it both on your desktop and on your phone). An alternative tool is the paid “MobileMoxie” SERPerator at <http://jmlinks.com/56e>. This one focuses on the mobile phone and allows you to adjust your location by zip code.

Just do NOT click on your ad in the results, of course, as you'll get charged. If location doesn't matter to you, you can just check in the Chrome incognito browser directly.

TRUST BUT VERIFY

Between checking using these tools, monitoring your impressions, and verifying that your SIS is > 85%, and spot-checking, you can reassure yourself that your ads are running on Google.

Also, be aware that if you just pop out your phone or check on your browser, and obviously do not click on your own ads (for fear that Google will charge you), Google will stop showing you your ads. You'll mistakenly think that you are not running. This is because Google doesn't keep showing users ads that they don't click on. The only reliable way to verify ads are running is to use one of the three methods I have explained, or at a macro level to verify you have an SIS score > 85%.

What to Do If Your Ads Are Not Showing

If your ads are not showing, you have these options:

1. **Raise your bids.** It's an auction, and your ads are not showing because you're bidding too low.
2. **Tighten the ads** by rewriting them to include keywords, or refocus your Ad Groups into very tight, nichey keyword clusters.
3. **Reduce your geotarget.**
4. **Improve your Quality Score** by offering "free stuff" in your ad copy and/or improving your landing page. Rewrite your ad headlines and text to be more enticing!

Do your spot checking *before* making any changes, as it takes about 3-5 hours for Google to adjust to new bids. In fact, if you change your bids or your ad copy and then attempt to preview your ads, they'll often go offline. Your process is first to log in to Google

Ads, check your SIS, spot check your ads using the Preview Tool, and then adjust your bids upwards or downwards.

Between spot-checking your ads and using the SIS score of > 85% and Search Top IS of >70%, you can verify that your ads are running on desktop, on mobile phones, and on tablets as well as city-by-city if you are geotargeting. In this way, you are sure your ads are running, and you can work in a more focused way on raising your click-thru rate, lowering your bids as much as possible, and increasing your conversion rates once people land on your website.

What you're trying to do is to **tune your ads** by tightening the relationship between the Ad Group, the target keywords (and negative keywords), the ad copy, and the bid per click to get an SIS > 85%, a Search Top IS of >70%, and the lowest possible CPC you can get away with, always with an eye to your conversions.

» SHOOT YOUR DOGS AND LET YOUR WINNERS RUN

Once you're up and running, you want to check your ad copy as well. You're looking to write ads that get strong Click Thru Rates (CTRs) and good conversion rates by applying the "attract / repel" ad strategy.

To monitor your ads, click into a Campaign. Next, click up or over to the Ads tab from within an Ad Group. This will show you the ads that are running in each Ad Group. I recommend running at least three ads simultaneously. Compare the ads, especially their CTR or Click Thru Rate, and conversion rates if you're tracking conversions.

Run at least three ads per Ad Group. Then "kill" (or at least pause) the lower performing ad as measured by CTR, and replace it with a new ad. Over time, you can thus optimize your ad performance by constantly "killing" the bad ads and "running" the better ads. In fact, I find the best performance when I run multiple ads in an Ad Group and make sure that the different variations contain various permutations of the keyword targets.

Run the new "Responsive Search Ad" format. If you're lucky enough to have the legacy "expanded text" ad format, keep those running. In addition, run the

new “responsive” format and compare the clicks, cost-per-click, click thru rate and conversions of the new format against the old “Expanded Text Ads.” Don’t trust Google that the new is better. Maybe it is. Maybe it isn’t. Run (and keep running) whatever ads and formats yield you the best performance.

I recommend that you “kill” your lower-performing ads on at least a monthly basis and rewrite them. Then, over time, compare your ads against each other, and run / select ads with the higher click-thru rate, and ultimately higher conversion rate. Google does this to some extent automatically, but by writing and re-writing your ads, you can improve your CTR.

Remember, however, to use the **Attract / Repel** strategy in writing your ads so as to not fall into the trap of writing ads with words like “free” or “cheap” that will get you a lot of clicks but few valuable conversions. If at all possible, look for ads that have both a good click-thru rate and a good conversion rate.

Similarly, at the Ad Group level and Keyword level, look for high-performing keywords and Ad Groups. “Kill” your lower-performing Ad Groups and/or Keywords, but first write / re-write your ads to make sure that the ad content isn’t the problem.

Over time, you are looking to “shoot your dogs” and “let your winners run” by deleting low-performing keywords, Ad Groups, and even Campaigns and running / enhancing those that are performing. In the long term, performance is measured not by *clicks* or even *click-thru rates*, but by *conversions* and money made!

»» DELIVERABLE: SEARCH NETWORK WORKSHEET

The **DELIVERABLE** for this Chapter is a completed worksheet on the Search Network. This is a deep dive into your Keyword Patterns, Campaigns, Ad Groups, Ads, and Keywords, so that you end up with a well-organized Google Ads account, and -over time – are able to identify winning keywords and terminate non-winning keywords.

For the **worksheet**, go to <http://jmlinks.com/23googleads>, then re-enter the password, “23googleads,” and click on the link to the “Search Network Worksheet.”



6

DISPLAY NETWORK

Ads on Google's **Display Network** or **GDN** don't appear on Google but rather on blogs, news sites, videos, apps, Gmail, user forums, and other websites that participate in Google's network of content websites. For example, if your customers are reading *People Magazine*, *Chicago Tribune*, some esoteric blog on cats, or watching *Saturday Night Live*'s latest political spoof on *YouTube*, they can see your Google Ads populated via the GDN. If they're checking email via Gmail or interacting with Apps on their phone, they can see ads as well, and so on and so forth. Through remarketing, you can "follow them around" as they browse the Internet. The GDN can be a goldmine or a disaster; it all depends on how well you manage your advertising efforts.

Let's get started!

TO-DO LIST:

- » Review the Basics of the GDN
- » Set Up a Basic GDN Campaign
- » Ad Group Organization on the Display Network
- » Create Winning Ads on the Display Network
- » Target Your Ad Group: Keywords
- » Target Your Ad Group: Audiences
- » Target Your Ad Group: Placements
- » Target Your Ad Group: Other Targeting Methods
- » Target Your Ad Group: Combining Methods
- » Monitor Your Placements to Exclude the Naughty

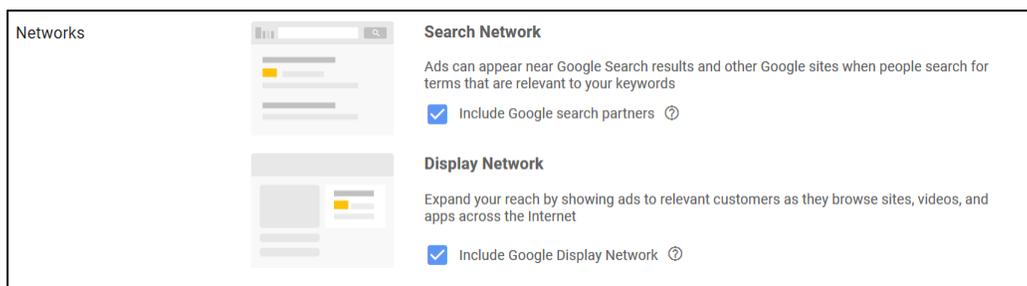
- » Understand Bidding & Quality Score on the GDN
- » Monitoring Your GDN Campaigns
- » Advertise Your App
- » Discovery Ads
- » Performance Plus
- »» Deliverable: Display Network Worksheet

» REVIEW THE BASICS OF THE GDN

Remember that Google advertising is really two distinct networks:

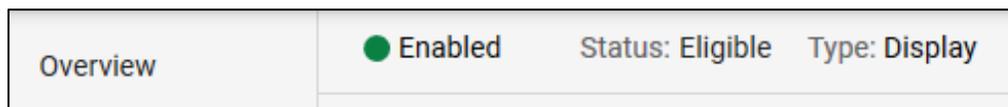
1. the **Search Network** (primarily Google but also search-driven sites like Yelp, YouTube search, or Comcast), and
2. the **Display Network** (a network of sites such as YouTube and Gmail but also blogs, parked domains, apps, web portals, and many low quality and even fraudulent sites).

Remember that – rather nefariously – Google’s “default” setting on Search Network campaigns is to **INCLUDE** the Display Network. Here’s a screenshot:



Do not fall for this Google gotcha! Turn OFF the Display Network for your search campaigns by unchecking the box “Include Google Display Network.”

To verify which networks you are on, click into any Campaign, then click on Settings on the left, and then you should see a tab in the center that says “Networks.” It should say “Google Search Network” and nothing else if it’s a Search Campaign; if it’s a Display Network only, you’ll see it in the “Type” bar at the top. Here’s a screenshot:



If the center line says “Google Search Network” and “Display Network,” you’ve mixed the networks. Play with these settings until you get all your Campaigns to run on either the Search Network or the Display Network, but never both. You want your Search Campaigns only on the Search Network and your Display Campaigns only on the Display Network. With that in hand, you can proceed in this Chapter to learn how to manage the Display Network.

VIDEO. Watch an (overly cheerful) video from Google on the Display Network at <http://jmlinks.com/57u>.

Search vs. Browse

Conceptually, the easiest way to grasp the difference between the two networks is to understand *browse* vs. *search*. Whereas in *search*, the target customer goes to Google and *pro-actively searches* for your product or service by keyword, in *browse*, he doesn’t go to Google at all nor does he pro-actively enter in search keywords. Rather he’s reading a blog or newspaper site, checking his email on Gmail or watching a YouTube video, and as he’s browsing, he just *happens to see your ad* somewhere on the web page. *Search* is all about pro-active searching, and *browse* is about getting your ad “adjacent” to what the customer is actually paying attention to.

Three big points to remember about the Display Network are:

1. Ads on the GDN are competing in a “**browse**” environment, so they have a much harder time getting the user’s attention (i.e., lower click-thru rate) and then making the sale (i.e., lower conversion rate). This is because you are hijacking the user from something he *is* doing (i.e., reading a blog on cats) to something he *is not* doing (i.e., reviewing his cat boarding options).
2. The GDN has **many poor quality sites** up to and including fraudulent sites, so ads on the GDN often generate many clicks but few conversions because the websites on the network itself are often very low quality.
3. Official Google information on the GDN tends to be **overly optimistic**. Google propaganda misleads you into thinking the GDN is a great opportunity when it is very much the poor stepchild of the Search Network.

In general, the click-thru rate (CTR) and the conversion rate on ads on the Display Network are many factors of ten lower than on the Search Network. This is because a) people are in “browse mode” on the GDN, so less likely to be primed to click or convert into a purchase and b) there is a lot of noise and even fraud on the GDN, so many clicks are purely frivolous and hence do not convert. For example, a common problem is game apps used by children; ads are placed on them, and kids wildly click here and there on the games as they play, mistakenly clicking on your ads (costing you money and making Google money), but there is little to no chance they’ll actually buy your product. **The GDN has its uses, but deploy it with extreme caution!**

Google’s Contradictions on the GDN

Remember, again, the incentive structure among Google, the user, and you as the advertiser;

Google gets *paid by the click* and is incentivized to maximize ad clicks on the GDN.

AdSense partners (i.e., websites and apps that participate in the Display Network) also get *paid by the click* (they share revenue with Google for each ad click) and are also incentivized to maximize ad clicks on the network.

You, as the advertiser, however, get *paid by the conversion* and are incentivized to minimize low-quality clicks (those that do not convert, or that yield low-value revenue).

Most problematically, Google has a conflict of interest in that it simultaneously *profits* from clicks on the network but is also supposed to *police* fraudulent clicks. We, as advertisers, are required to “trust Google” and its “partners” that they are not engaging in click fraud at the worst or poor policing at best. To read a shocking account of the problem, visit <http://jmlinks.com/25f>. To read up-to-date information on “click fraud,” visit <http://jmlinks.com/49m>. It’s a huge problem and not just for Google; Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn all have issues as to how “real” clicks are on their networks.

Why Advertise on the Display Network?

If the GDN is so problematic, why advertise on it? Here are a few important reasons:

- **Browse over search.** While the Search Network is fantastic if, and only if, people are pro-actively searching for keywords that relate to your product or service, the GDN can get you in front of potential customers across a plethora of websites (adjacent to their interests), thereby getting you in front of customers who might not be pro-actively searching for a product or service like yours.
- **Niche Targeting.** The GDN can identify blogs and other websites in an industry niche and place your ad precisely on these niche venues. In this way, a company that sells high-end biking supplies can “build its brand” by advertising specifically on high-value cyclist websites on a recurring basis.
- **Remarketing.** For items with long sales cycles and high values, like Caribbean cruises or life insurance, remarketing on the GDN allows an advertiser to reach potential customers not just at the moment of search but to “follow them”

around the Internet over the days, weeks, or even months that they toy with a big purchase decision. This is called “remarketing;” Google also refers to it as using “your data” to target ads.

- **Brand and Awareness Building.** By combining the GDN with the Search Network, you can constantly remind your target audience of your company and brand. Brand-building – the constant repetition of a company’s message – is now available to even small, nichey companies via the GDN.

The GDN is a tool that has its uses. But if you choose to advertise on the GDN, just be aware of its contradictions and commit to regularly monitoring your placements and performance for fraud and low-value placements.

How the Display Network Works

At its simplest level, the Display Network works as follows:

- **Publishers** with websites or apps join AdSense (<http://jmlinks.com/24a>) and become part of Google’s **Display Network**. They agree to allow Google to place ads on their websites and/or apps.
- **Advertisers** set up Display Network campaigns in Google Ads and tell Google where to place their ads via targeting methods such as *keywords*, *placements*, or *remarketing* (discussed in detail, below).
- As **users** browse websites and apps, Google places ads on the websites or apps (called “placements” in GDN lingo). Users see these ads as they browse websites, apps, YouTube, and Gmail.
- Advertisers *compete* to get their ads on placements (websites and/or apps) in the Google Display Network by bidding per click and/or by impression.
- When a **user clicks on an ad**, Google makes money off the click and splits this with the publisher of the website and/or app.
- The **user** then leaves the website, and **lands** on the **advertiser landing page**, where he either converts or does not.

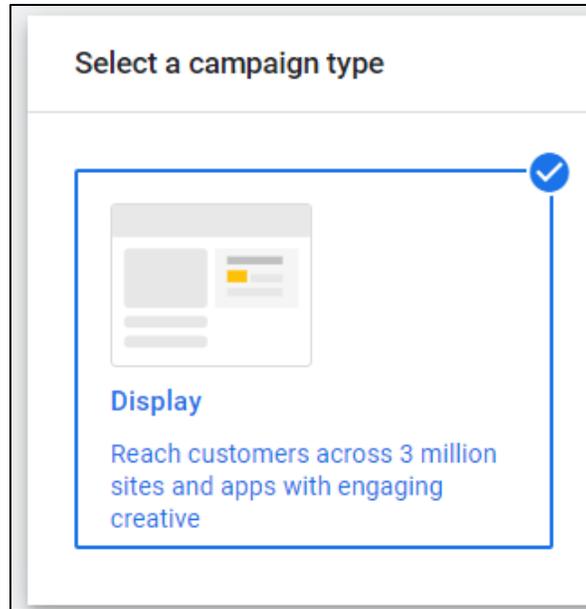
Publishers get paid by the click. Advertisers compete in the auction by the click. Google makes money, the publishers make money, and you, as the advertiser, *spend* money to get traffic to your website. If you've done your homework, you can get high-quality traffic to your website that actually converts and makes you money. If you haven't done your homework, you'll just spend money on frivolous placements and even fake / bot clicks.

VIDEO. Watch a video from Google on the basics of the Display Network at <http://jmlinks.com/52f>.

» SET UP A BASIC GDN CAMPAIGN

In order to understand how the GDN works, you'll need a basic GDN campaign if you don't have one running already. Here's how. If you already have a GDN Campaign, you can skip this section.

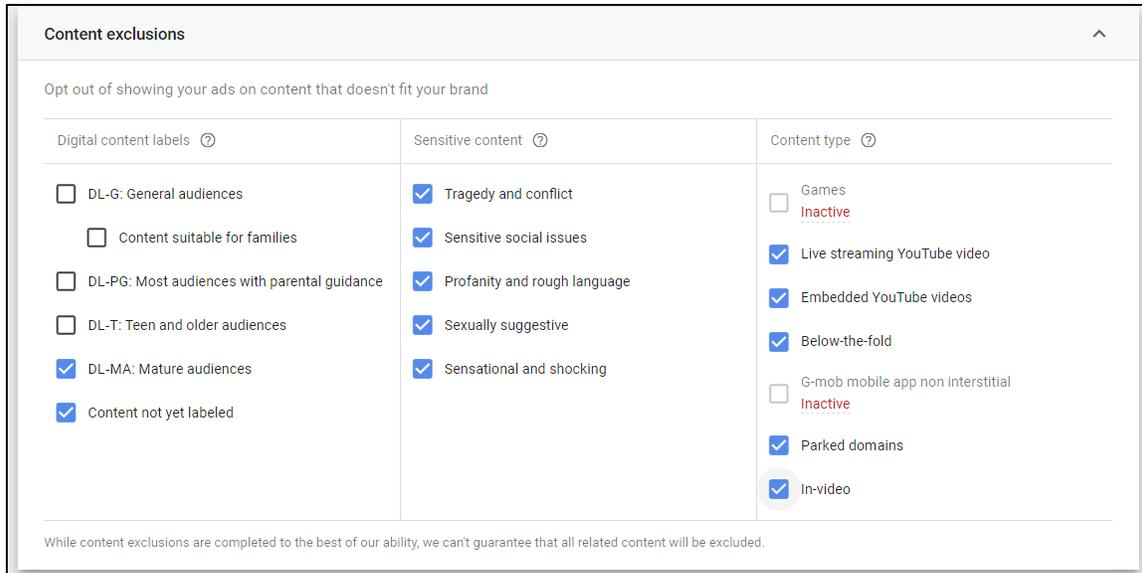
First, log in to your Google Ads account, and click into Campaigns, and then click the blue circle to start creating a new Campaign. Choose a goal such as "Website traffic," and then Select "Display." Here's a screenshot:



Select either “Standard Display Campaign” (meaning you are going to set all the parameters), or “Smart Display Campaign (meaning you are going to trust Google AI to do it for you). As I am sure you can guess, I am not a fan o the “Smart Display Campaign Option.”

Select your location target (e.g., San Francisco, California), plus open the dialog box for “More settings” and adjust according to your parameters. Set a budget, and choose a bidding type (such as maximize conversions). You can also choose to manually set your bids.

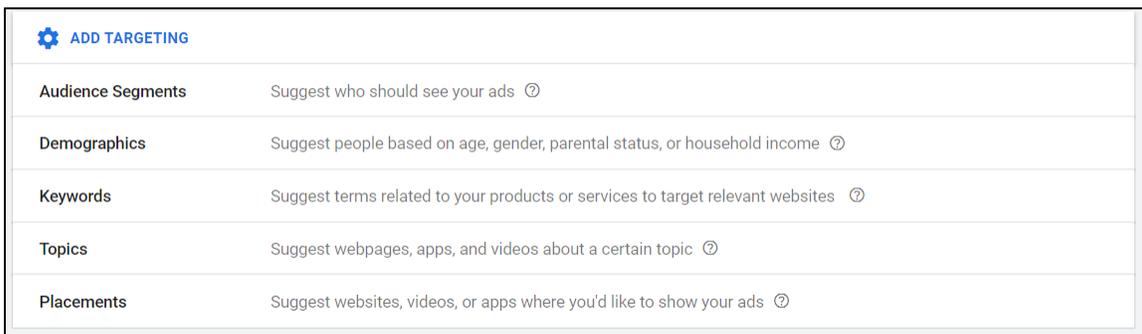
Make sure that “content exclusions” is set to exclude “Adult Content.” Here’s a screenshot of those options expanded:



The most nefarious are below-the-fold and parked domains. If you have a tight budget, I would select everything except the DL-G, DL-PG, DL-T options as indicated above. Not surprisingly, this setting is hidden, and it defaults to run you on a lot of low-quality sites in the network.

Set a daily budget, and then select your bidding options. These are similar to those on the search network such as “clicks,” “maximize clicks,” or “conversions” but you can also maximize “viewable impressions.”

Google will then tell you that “optimized targeting is set up for you,” meaning that AI-based targeting is in use. If you like, choose “Add Targeting” and then you will see these options:



We will discuss targeting options below. For now, I would recommend using “Keywords,” but just be aware that keyword targeting on the GDN is loosey-goosey and not at all tight as on the Search Network. When you input keywords, you will see a dialog box called “optimized targeting.” Uncheck this; this is Google AI saying it will extend your keywords into other areas.

Create Your Ads

Follow the prompts and create at least one “Responsive Display Ad.” The big difference from the Search Network is that on the GDN, Google will spider your website and pull images, or you can use images from the image library. Many ads on the GDN allow images.

Unfortunately, the first setup is a supremely annoying set of steps. But once you’ve created one Campaign and one Ad Group, you can then click into your Campaign and create other Ad Groups. The key principle here is that “targeting” lives at the Ad Group level, so you should create clean and organized Ad Groups based on one and only one targeting method per Ad Group as discussed below.

It’s very important to pause your Campaign until you are 100% ready, as Google has a new “feature” that will run your ads with no targeting at all, just to make Google money. The whole setup process from scratch is extremely annoying and difficult as they throw too many questions at you too quickly. Just set up a Campaign with an Ad Group that is set to run on the GDN, and pause it. Now, you’re ready to dig into your first Campaign.

Two Key Settings: just as on the Search Network you can geotarget your ads, and opt in or opt out of desktop, mobile, and/or tablet traffic by adjusting your settings on the Campaign Settings tab. Therefore:

1. Select a **geotarget** for your campaign. For example, if you are a hair salon in Stamford, CT, then choose a radius of 10 miles from your salon. This

means, for example, that someone browsing a website in the GDN or watching a YouTube video who is also within 10 miles of your shop is eligible to see your ad, while someone outside of 10 miles is not.

2. Select your **device targeting** of phones, tablets, and/or desktop. Make at least an educated guess as to which platform(s) will convert best for you, and set the device targeting accordingly.

» AD GROUP ORGANIZATION ON THE DISPLAY NETWORK

We will get to targeting settings in a moment, but first, let's review the basics of how to organize your Ad Groups on the GDN. First and foremost, your Ad Groups should reflect your product / service lines or your core keywords from your search campaigns. For example, for Jason's Cat Emporium, we might have the following three Ad Groups:

Cat Boarding, targeting people who need to board their cat for vacation;

Cat Grooming, targeting people who want to get their cat professionally groomed; and

Cat Toys, targeting people who want to buy luxury toys for their cat.

Keywords are very loose on the Display Network, so think of these as thematically connected one to each Ad Group. Each group is more a way to help you organize your ads thematically than a tight match between keyword and ad as on the Search Network.

Targeting Lives at the Ad Group Level for Display Campaigns

Secondarily, targeting (as we shall discuss in a moment) "lives" at the Ad Group level on a Display Campaign, so if you want to target in different ways, you will do best not to mix and match targeting methods in one single group. For example, you might have an Ad Group that uses *remarketing* (re-showing your ads to people who have visited your website), another one that uses *keyword targeting*, and still another that targets persons who are "in the market" for cat-related stuff. Even if each were promoting only your

“cat boarding” service line, each “buyer persona” or “buyer situation” should have its own unique Ad Group in your GDN campaign.

Your **TO-DO** here is to outline your Ad Groups, starting with your product / service lines (or core keywords) and splitting them, if necessary, if you will be using different targeting methods. (You might want to read this whole Chapter first, so you understand targeting options if you’re not sure.)

» CREATE WINNING ADS ON THE GDN

Now let’s dive into how to create ads for the GDN. While ads on the Search Network (e.g., Google) are limited to text, ads on the Display Network can be images as well as text. Indeed, they can even be interactive and engaging to the mouse!

Inside one of your Ad Groups, click on the blue button to create an ad, and you’ll see two options:

Responsive Display Ad (recommended option) – this is a combination of both graphic and text ads and is the most common and most useful option. When you click on this, Google will guide you through scanning your target website, uploading images or choosing from stock images, writing up to five headlines, one or two long headlines, five descriptions, your Business name, and a Partridge in a Pear tree. OK, I’m kidding about the Partridge in a Pear Tree, but the point is that you input the graphical and text elements, and Google will use AI to combine them into attractive text and image ads across the Display Network.

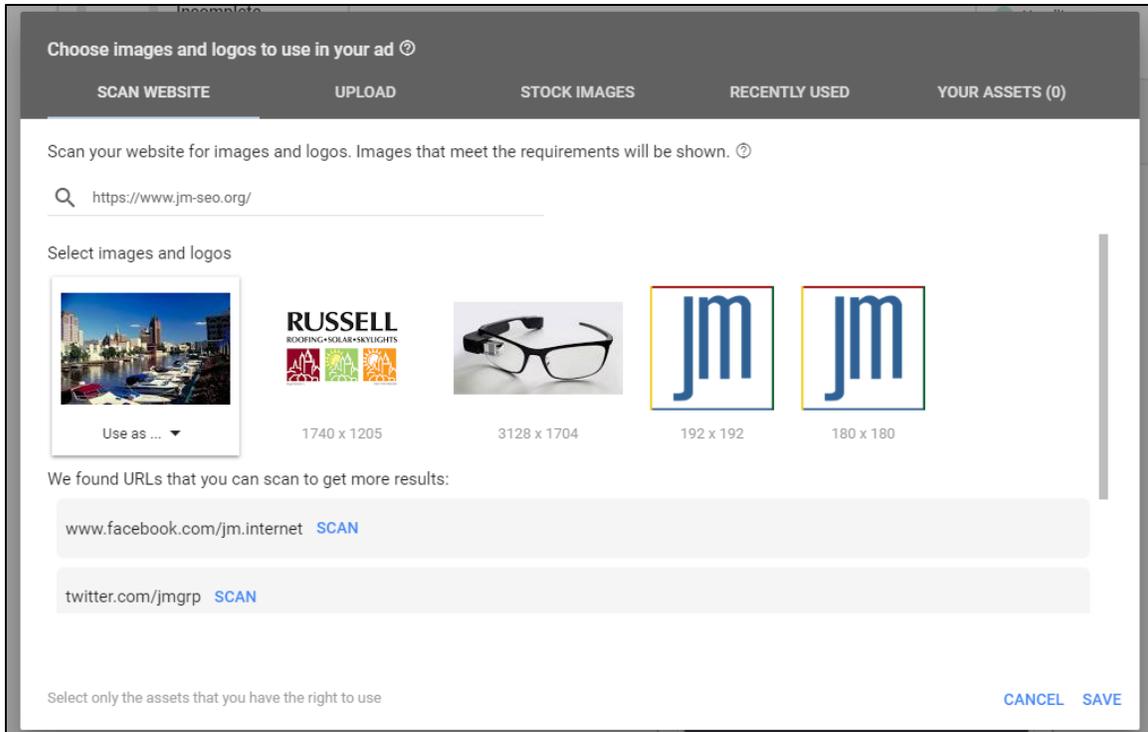
Upload assets. This option allows you to upload your own graphics. It’s useful if you are a larger company and want to control the “brand identity” of your ads tightly. Click through and then click on the blue “Supported sizes and formats” to learn the specifications. You should **upload all available formats**, as you do not know which format will match which placement on the network. In addition, you should also create the first option as it allows text-only ads, which appear on some unique sites on the network.

Think Billboard Advertising.

While ads on the Search Network (i.e., Google itself) are more like ads in the old-fashioned yellow pages, where a user is pro-actively searching for a service (like a plumber or a roofer), very likely to look at ads, and primed to buy after the click, ads on the Display Network are more like billboards on the side of a highway. Users are zipping along on their way to other destinations, and your job is to attract the attention of relevant customers and get them to shift from “what they’re doing” to “hey, I want to visit that website.”

- For fun, browse funny billboards and ponder how they make you take notice at <http://jmlinks.com/27c>. Now, return to your own ads and brainstorm how to make them visually “pop” as users are browsing sites on the Internet.

In terms of the technical ad production, Google Ads’ “scan website” feature makes it very easy to quickly create ads for all available formats on the Display Network. Just enter your “Final URL” and follow the step-by-step instructions. Google does a great job of pulling graphics from your website and giving you options to configure your ads. Here’s a screenshot:



Once your ad is created, you can preview it and even email the preview to other people on your team.

Attract / Repel Ad Copy

Similar to the Search Network, remember that your best ad strategy is **attract / repel**. You don't want zillions of clicks but rather clicks from highly qualified buyers who ultimately convert to sales. Accordingly, think of ads that will "attract" your best customers but "repel" those who are not likely to buy or likely to spend just a little money. Don't be afraid to scare off cheap people or persons who are unlikely actually to buy your product or service. A good ad on the Display Network –

- is *available in all image sizes*, including the text-only option;
- clearly conveys your *business value proposition*, including what is unique and attractive about your product or service;
- contains a *call to action* such as "free download" or "call for consultation"; and

- *attracts* your target customers while *repelling* those who might click but not convert.

Populate at least one Ad Group with all relevant ad formats with clever “attract / repel” ads, and you’re ready to dive into how to **target** or **trigger** your ads, which is where the complexity and power of the Display Network truly lies.

Targeting Options

Inside of an Ad Group, you can access the targeting options by clicking on the left column under Content > Topics. Then select the white pencil / blue circle, and select “edit ad group targeting.” Here you’ll see a pull-down of your targeting options:

Audiences. Target by audience demographics, interests, and how they have interacted with your website (i.e., “remarketing” to people who have already visited your website.

Demographics. Target people by gender, age, parental status, and income.

Keywords. Enter keywords that are relevant to the pages / websites that they are visiting. Note this is site-specific, not user-specific – keywords reflect content on the Google Display Network, not user search queries!

Topics. Select topics of interest to your customers such as arts & entertainment, finance, food, and drink, etc.

Placements. Select specific blogs, YouTube channels, or videos where you want your ad to appear.

A Google Display Network Gotcha

Let's return to targeting on the GDN. The Google Ads interface will tempt you into mixing several targeting methods into one Ad Group. Do not fall for this "gotcha," as you will waste a lot of money and get poor results. Instead:

Set **ONE** and **ONLY ONE** *targeting* option per Ad Group.

If you mix targeting options, Google may combine them as "or" statements and not "and" statements. For example, if you put in keywords like "cat boarding," "pet boarding," and "cats," and also target remarketing (people who've hit your website), and also target people by demographics, i.e., those who are aged 25-30, it will tend to use the broadest match possible (i.e., people aged 25-30) and ignore your more focused targeting.

GOOGLE LOOKS FOR THE BROADEST TARGETING METHOD

You'll end up with lots of spurious clicks because the targeting is too broad. Instead, have a focused Ad Group around a specific targeting method such as keywords like "cat boarding," another one on "remarketing," and still another targeting "young people," and you'll be able to see what's happening more clearly and focus your efforts on those targeting methods that yield the best ROI.

Alternatively, when you first create an Ad Group, Google will remind you that "Optimized Targeting" (AI) has been pre-set up for you. I recommend that, instead, you select your own targeting and opt out of "Optimized Targeting."

*Let's go through each option in more detail, one-by-one, starting with **keywords**.*

» TARGET YOUR AD GROUP: KEYWORDS

Keywords as a trigger mechanism exist in both the Search Network and the Display Network but function in very different ways.

Keyword matching is **tight** on the Search Network. (*Exact, phrase, modified broad, and broad*).

Keyword matching is **loosey-goosey** on the Display Network!

Google doesn't explain this clearly, but here's what I mean. On the Search Network, the user pro-actively types keywords into Google, such as *cat boarding*, *cat kennel*, or *cat grooming* (or keywords such as *dog boarding*, *iguana boarding*, or *exotic bird grooming*). Google knows user intent because, after all, a person who types in *dog boarding* isn't looking for *iguana boarding* and a person who types in *cat grooming* isn't looking for an *exotic bird hotel*. Some keywords are problematic (e.g., *cheap cat boarding*, *pet boarding*), but we as advertisers manage those through negative keywords and through writing attract / repel ad copy.

KEYWORD MATCHING IS LOOSEY-GOOSEY ON THE GDN

Not so on the Display Network. A user doesn't type anything in when he visits the Chicago Tribune's article on *Cats at the Westminster Kennel club dog show? Sort of, in a first* (<http://jmlinks.com/24c>), or when he's reading a Gmail from his Aunt Nancy on best recipes for Chicken Pot Pies for their weekend family reunion in Nebraska, or when he's on an App for how to de-stress. Google can spider the content and take a guess at what's important, but is the *Chicago Tribune* article more about cats or about dogs? Is the user a cat lover or a dog lover, or just a Chicago resident? As for the Gmail

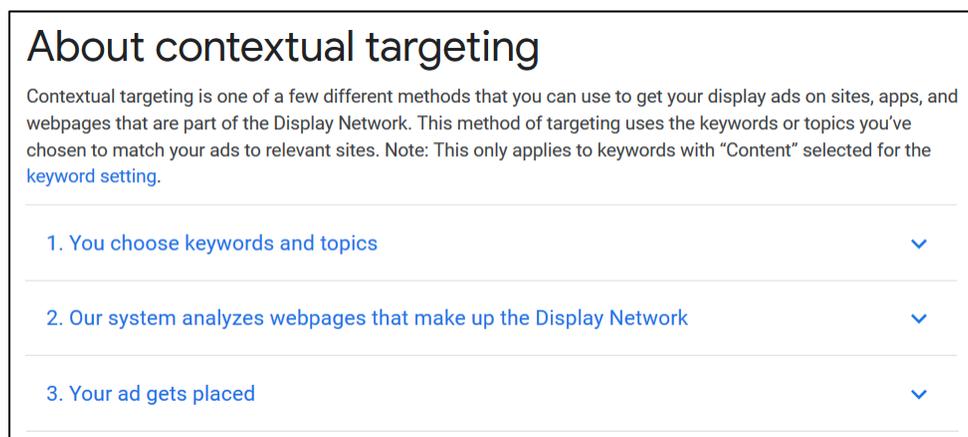
on Aunt Nancy and Chicken pot pies, is it about chicken, about Nebraska, about a family reunion, or about pot? As for apps, they're also all over the place.

Accordingly, keyword matching between the desires of the advertiser and the intent / interests of the user is loosey-goosey on the GDN!

Google also looks at the recent search history by the user; if Aunt Nancy has Googled “Chicken pot pie recipes,” that’s a clue to show recipe articles. But if she’s now browsing a blog on things to do in Omaha, perhaps “Omaha museums” is a more relevant search?

Despite Google’s façade as an “all-knowing” tech company, on the Google Display Network, it simply makes its best guess at what it calls “contextual targeting” (<http://jmlinks.com/24d>), meaning it attempts to match the content of the article on the Web, video on YouTube, email on Gmail, or app (plus recent search history or remarketing tags), with the keywords entered by advertisers.

Here’s a screenshot of how Google views keywords and targeting on the GDN:



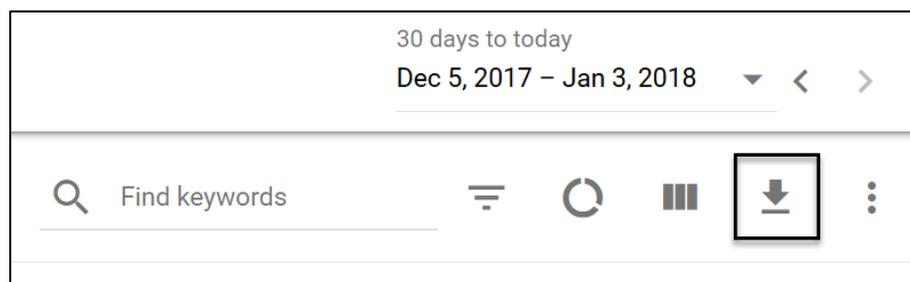
They make it sound as easy as one, two, three. But it isn't. In short, the keywords you enter as triggers for a Display Network Campaign only match the keywords of the article in what I call a “loosey-goosey” fashion, meaning not very much and certainly

not with the laser precision available on the Search Network. Accordingly, you want to think of a GDN Campaign as attempting to reach people who are *browsing* on themes and topics related to your products in a very broad way.

While on the Search Network, I recommend you think in a very **focused** and detailed way about your keywords, on the Display Network in contrast, I recommend you relax and think more **broadly** about keywords, including ones adjacent to your product or service area.

Input Your Keywords

An easy way to get started on the GDN is to copy the structure of your search campaigns. Take a Campaign that is running on the Search Network, and then duplicate its Ad Groups on the GDN. If you don't have your keyword list handy, you can export your keywords from a Search Network Ad Group. Just click into an Ad Group, click on Keywords on the left, and then find the downward arrow on the top right. Here's a screenshot:

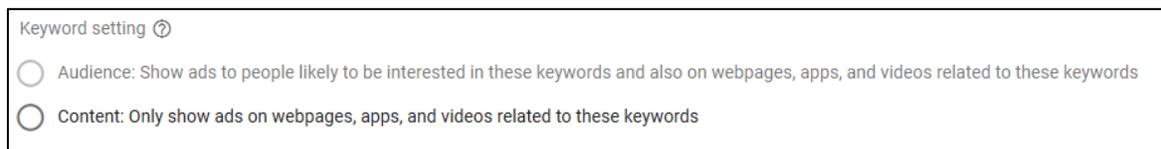


Export them into a CSV or Excel file, and remove all the “+” signs, “quote” marks or brackets as well as any duplicates. You just want the keywords with no markers for the Display Network.

With your keyword list in hand, click over to your Display Network Campaign, and then the matching Ad Group.

Next, at the Ad Group level, click into an Ad Group (or create a new one) for keyword-targeting. Click into that Ad Group and click on *Content > Display / Video Keywords* on

the left. Click on the white cross in the blue circle, click “Add display keywords,” and copy/paste over your keywords. As you input keywords, step back and consider what Google means by “Keyword setting,” which is visible at the bottom as you input keywords. Here’s a screenshot:



New ads only allow content targeting. This means that Google looks at the content of a web page and compares that to your keyword targets. You can read the Google help file at <http://jmlinks.com/57v>.

Remember: do not mix targeting methods! Once you’ve set your keywords for this Ad Group, you’re done. Don’t be tempted by the left column to go into Audiences, Demographics, etc., and choose those options as these would be “or” statements and destroy the focus of your keywords. If you want to try different targeting methods, I recommend that you fill out the first Ad Group with ads and then use the Copy / Paste feature to duplicate the Ad Group. Then, remove the Keywords from the duplicate Ad Group and create a different targeting method.

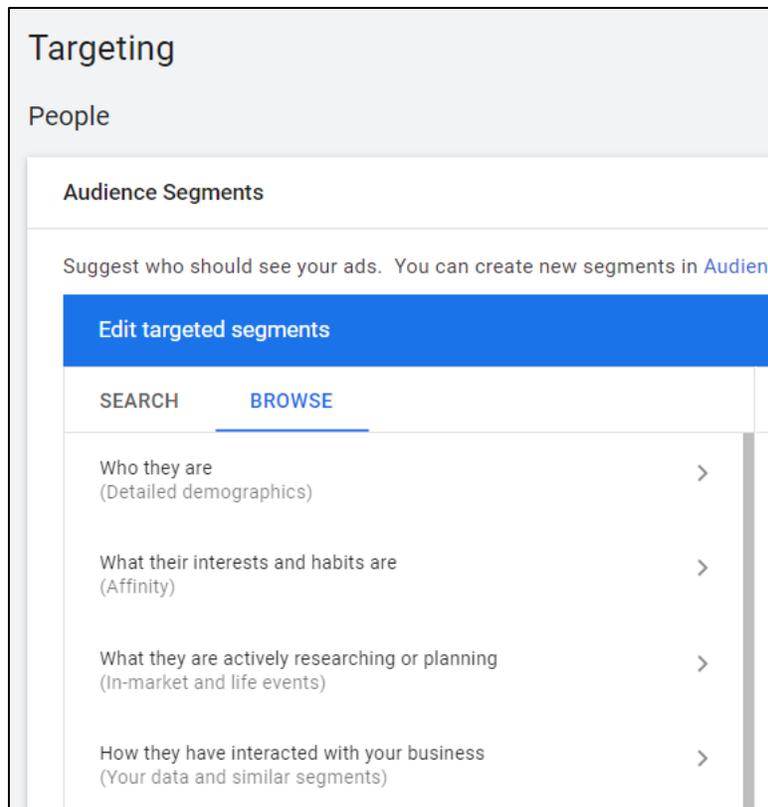
Name each Ad Group in your GDN campaign to clearly indicate the target method. Here’s a screenshot of Ad Groups promoting my SEO Book on the Display Network, with each name clearly indicating the target method. The Ad Group, “SEO Book – Keywords,” for instance, is using the keyword targeting method while the Ad Group, “SEO Book – Remarketing,” is using the remarketing targeting method.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Ad group ↑	Status	Default max. CPC
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	SEO Book - Audiences	Paused	\$4.01
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	SEO Book - Keywords	Eligible	\$4.01
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	SEO Book - Placements	Eligible	\$4.01
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	SEO Book - Remarketing	Eligible	\$4.01

» TARGET YOUR AD GROUP: AUDIENCES

Let's examine the next type of targeting on the Display Network: Audiences. You've probably had the experience of visiting a website, such as Progressive.com or Zappos.com, clicking around, perhaps even adding a product or two to your shopping cart, and then, the next thing you know, you start seeing **recurring ads** for that vendor over and over and over and over and over again as you browse other sites on the Internet such as YouTube, Chicago Tribune, People Magazine, etc. What's going on?

It's called **remarketing**, and it's the next type of trigger available on the GDN. You can read the full Google help file at <http://jmlinks.com/57w>. When you first set up an Ad Group, you select this option by choosing *Add Targeting > Audience Segments > Browse > How they have interacted with your business*. Here's a screenshot:



Or, when you already have an Ad Group select *Content > Topics* and then “*Edit Ad Group Targeting*” and then “*Audiences*.” The big issue is you MUST tag your website via the Google remarketing tag BEFORE this option becomes available. If you are running Google Analytics and have linked Google Analytics to Google Ads, it should appear as an “audience” under your “audience tab.” To verify that it exists, go to *Tools > Audience Manager* and look for segments called “All visitors (Google Ads),” “Website Visitors,” or “Google Analytics Tag.” To be available, you must have at least 1000 monthly visitors.

Remarketing is far and away the *best* and *most important* targeting method on the GDN. Let me repeat that:

REMARKETING IS THE BEST OPPORTUNITY IN THE GDN

Remarketing cuts through the clutter of the GDN because ads can be shown if, and only if, a person visits your website. This gets rid of many of the nefarious scam and spam sites that clutter the GDN. Here's how remarketing works -

As a user first visits sites on the Internet, such as Progressive.com or ChicagoTribune.com or your website (once the code is installed), for example, each website places a cookie or "tag" on the user's browser, and then through the magic of Google Ads remarketing, that user can be shown "relevant" ads by that vendor as he or she browses other sites that participate in Google's Display Network.

Remarketing allows you a "second chance" to convert a customer by allowing you to show / reshown ads to him as he surfs other websites on the Internet after first visiting your website. That's why it's called **RE**marketing.

Remarketing vs. Retargeting: Conceptually Different

Remarketing is a little different than *retargeting*, and Google participates in the former as well as the latter. *Retargeting* is when you reach people who have not first visited your website but who are matched as "similar" to your target customers by a third-party service, whether that be Google or true third-party retargeting vendors such as AdRoll (<https://adroll.com>). Indeed, you can use remarketing and retargeting on Facebook as well (Facebook's system is #2 to Google's for remarketing / retargeting). On Facebook, it's called the "Facebook Pixel." You can learn more in my book on Social Media Marketing at <http://jmlinks.com/smm>. Note that over time and due to changes in Apple's iOS, this type of remarketing / retargeting is getting increasingly difficult!

Let's return to Google Ads, and think of it this way:

Remarketing is reaching people who have touched your website at least once.

Retargeting is reaching “similar audiences” who have not yet touched your website for the first time.

Unfortunately, the blogosphere uses the two terms interchangeably, but they are conceptually distinct. Just ask yourself whether you want to reach people who have already visited your website (*remarketing*) or new people who might be similar but have not yet visited your website (*retargeting*).

Remarket High-Value Products or Services

Remarketing works best for a high-value product or service that has a long sales cycle. An example would be a Caribbean cruise. It’s expensive and a big commitment to take your family on a Caribbean cruise, so you’ll probably do some research, check out a few of the big vendors such as Disney Cruise Lines, Carnival Cruise Lines, and Norwegian Cruise Lines and discuss the options and expenses with your spouse and family. It’s expensive, and it has a long cycle from interest to purchase.

REMARKETING WORKS BEST FOR HIGH-VALUE PRODUCTS

Cruise line marketing is an excellent choice for remarketing because you might first search “Caribbean cruises” on Google (Search Network), visit a few sites like Disney Cruises or Carnival Cruises, and then go watch videos on YouTube about Jamaica, Cuba, Barbados, and other destinations (Display Network). You might research snorkeling, things to do in Kingston, Jamaica, etc., and only then return to vendor sites to select your cruise line. There’s a lot of back and forth, many websites that get visited, a long time between interest and purchase, and a high-value purchase.

This makes it ideal for remarketing.

By using remarketing, Carnival Cruise Line can transform that *first* visit you make to their website into a *continuous remarketing effort* as you visit site after site after site after site in the Google Display Network. Remarketing extends that opportunity for Carnival Cruise Lines to sell to you from the short-time interaction on their website to the long-time interaction as you browse many sites as you research every aspect of planning your perfect family vacation to the Caribbean.

Note: remarketing is not available in sensitive categories such as healthcare, pharmaceuticals, gun purchases, etc. If your website category is not eligible, you're remarketing code will be invalidated after installation. And **note:** remarketing is generally not effective for *low-value products* as the cost per click can be quite expensive.

Setting up Remarketing

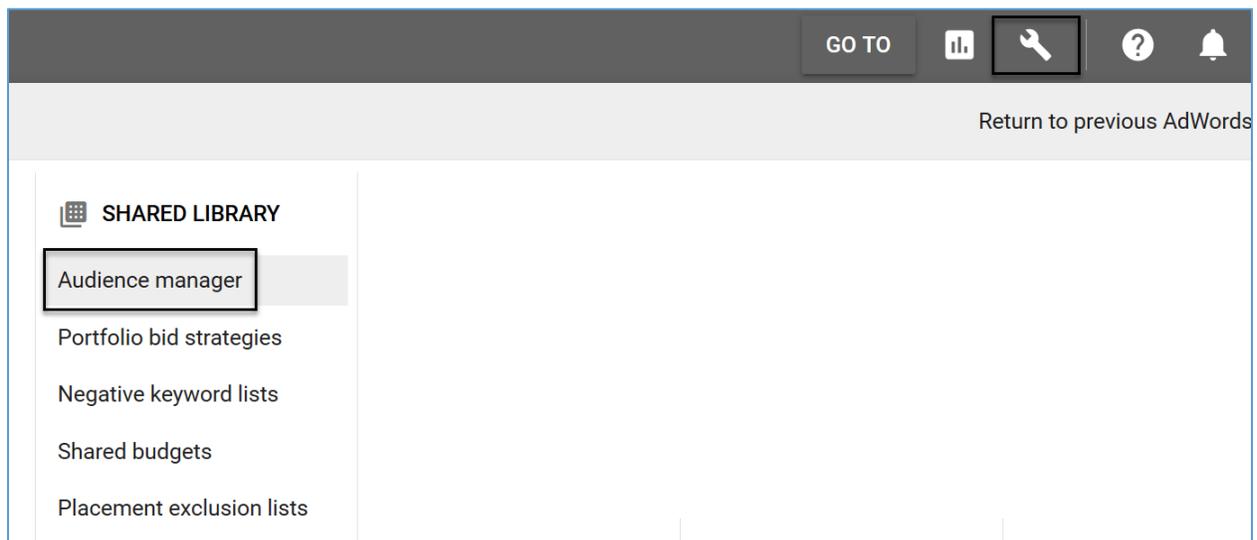
To enable remarketing, you have to install a little Google Javascript tracking code on your website. *Yes, you, too, can participate in Google's massive invasion of our privacy across the Internet by participating in remarketing and installing the tracking code!* (If you'd like to see what Google thinks your personal preferences are, make sure you're signed in to your Gmail or Google account, and visit <http://jmlinks.com/24q>; if you'd like to see what Google knows about the websites you've visited, go to <http://jmlinks.com/24r>). The point is that *remarketing* is how Google, in cooperation with sites on the Display Network and advertisers, uses what it knows about you (and others) to show you relevant ads as you visit sites in the GDN). Fortunately, if you are running Google Analytics and you connect Google Analytics to Google Ads, PRESTO!, you've enabled a remarketing list to be built.

New for 2023 is the so-called “death” of the third-party cookie and changes to iOS for tracking on Apple devices. Both of these mean a degradation in remarketing and retargeting across all platforms, including the Google Display Network. Outside of apps, it's not yet clear how dramatically these changes will degrade remarketing, so stay tuned.

Create a Remarketing List

To use remarketing, you have to create a remarketing list. The most common way to do this is to “tag” everyone who visits your website. Your first step is to set up and enable the Google Ads remarketing tag on your website. Here’s how.

First, log in to Google Ads and click on the tools menu at the top. Select Audience manager. Here’s a screenshot:



Next, click *Audience sources* and follow the steps there. The easiest way to do it is to enable Google Analytics via Google Tag Manager and cross-link Google Ads to Google Tag Manager / Analytics. You can read the step-by-step instructions on Google at <http://jmlinks.com/39y> as well as how to link Google Analytics and Google Ads at <http://jmlinks.com/39z>. I recommend you use the new Google Tag Manager (<http://jmlinks.com/41b>) and follow the instructions at <http://jmlinks.com/41a>. It’s a little complicated, so you may need to bring in your resident computer nerd. Or go to Fiverr.com and search for “Google remarketing.” Or click the *Question Mark* icon on the top right and reach out to Google Ads technical support by phone. They’ll lead you through it.

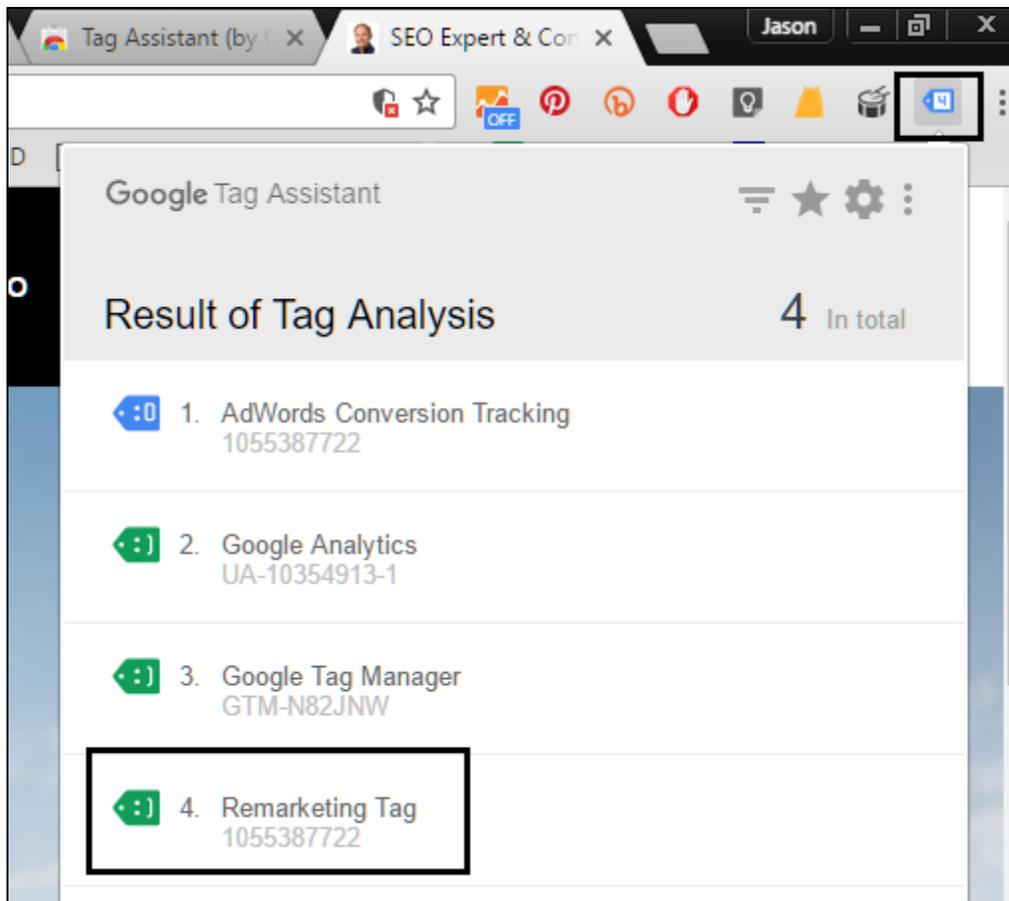
Note that you can have a list of everyone who has hit your website as well as smaller lists such as people who did not convert or people who hit the *cat boarding* landing page

vs. the *cat toys* landing page. Remarketing can be very focused – from everyone who hit your website, to just folks who did not convert, to people who clicked into the *cat boarding* page and made a purchase, etc. This is called “dynamic remarketing,” which means that you tightly focus your ads based not only on a user hitting your website but whether that user made a purchase or not, looked at women’s dresses or men’s shoes, etc. Learn more at <http://jmlinks.com/58a>. It’s pretty complicated to set up and is really only relevant to robust e-commerce sites; so meet with your resident computer nerd and have him or her enable it for you if applicable.

Using Tag Assistant to Verify Your Installation

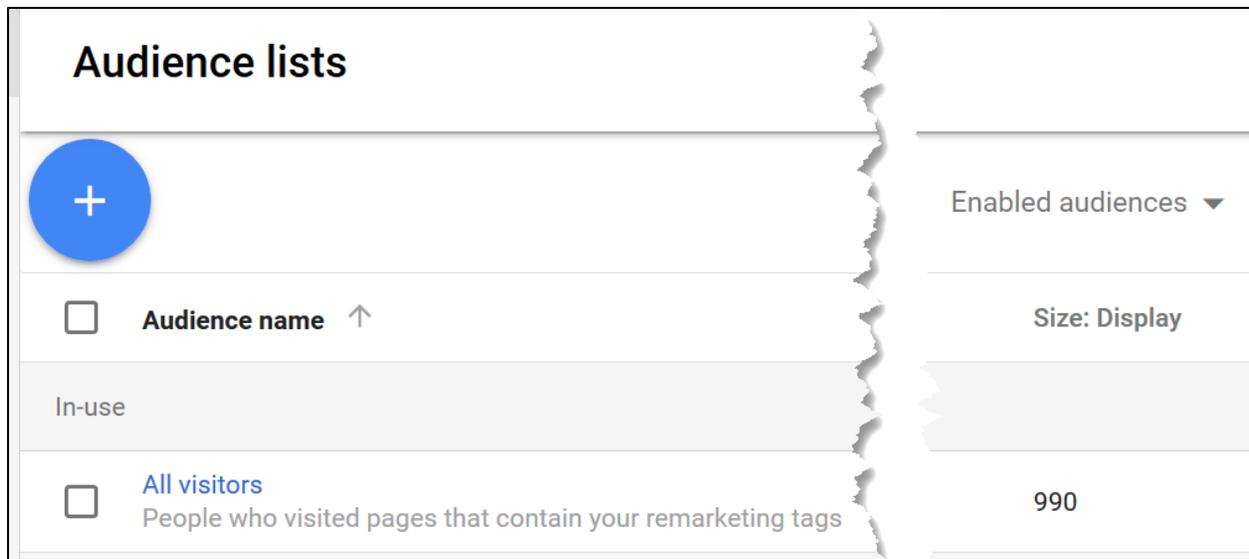
Google has, unfortunately, done a very bad job of explaining how to set up and install the remarketing tag. It can be pretty confusing! Like Google Analytics, the remarketing tag is a little Javascript code that you **MUST** get installed on each and every page of your website.

Fortunately, as you play around with the required code in Google Ads, Google Analytics, and Google Tag Manager, there is a Chrome plugin that will test your remarketing code installation. It’s called **Tag Assistant** by Google (<http://jmlinks.com/24h>). Install it, visit your website, and then at the top right of your browser, you can test your installation. Here’s a screenshot of Tag Assistant confirming that the remarketing tag is activated on JasonMcDonald.org:



You can also use Tag Assistant on other websites (e.g., competitors) to see if they are using remarketing.

Once you've set up an audience, give it a few weeks and then check the audience in Google Ads to verify that there are "people" in it. Login to Google Ads, click on the *Tools Menu > Audience Manager*. You should then see your list, and it should have numeric values for the *Size:Display* column. Here's a screenshot:

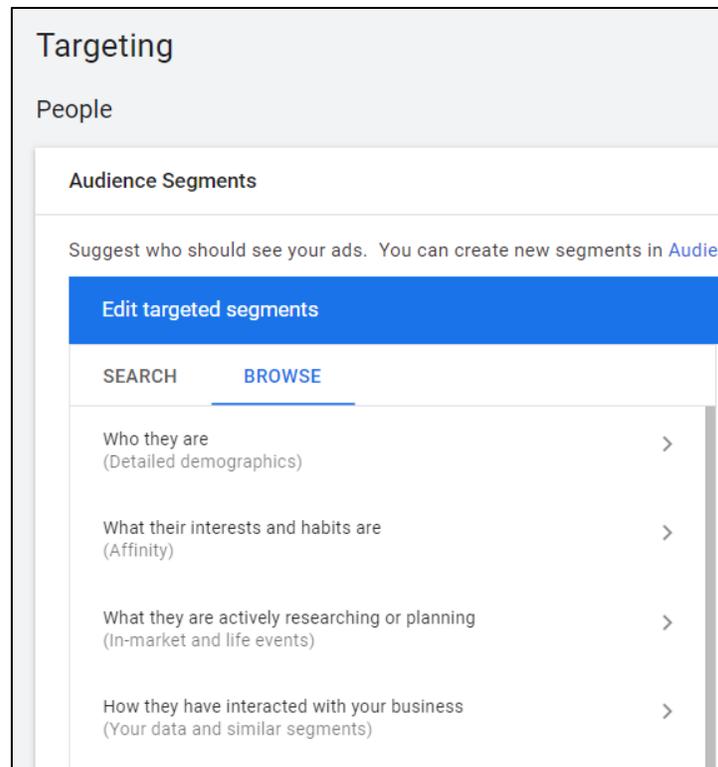


If you show a positive, growing number to your list, then it's working. You are now “tagging” people as they visit your website, and you can remarket (i.e., show your ads to them) wherever they are on the Display Network.

Attach Your Remarketing Audience to an Ad Group

With your list in hand, return to the Ad Group that you want to target using remarketing. Click into the Ad Group, and then click *Audiences*. It gets a little confusing, so bear with me. First, you'll see three options – *Targeting (recommended)*, *Setting (optimized targeting)*, set this to off, and *Additional Observation* (you can ignore). *Targeting* essentially means that you want to use these parameters to target ads at a group; *optimized* turns on or off Google AI; *observation* just means that you want Google to supply information on that aspect. Start with *Targeting*.

When you first create an Ad Group, you'll see “Add Targeting.” Click into that and then “Audience Segments.” Then click into “Browse,” and then into “How they have interacted with your business.” Here's a screenshot:



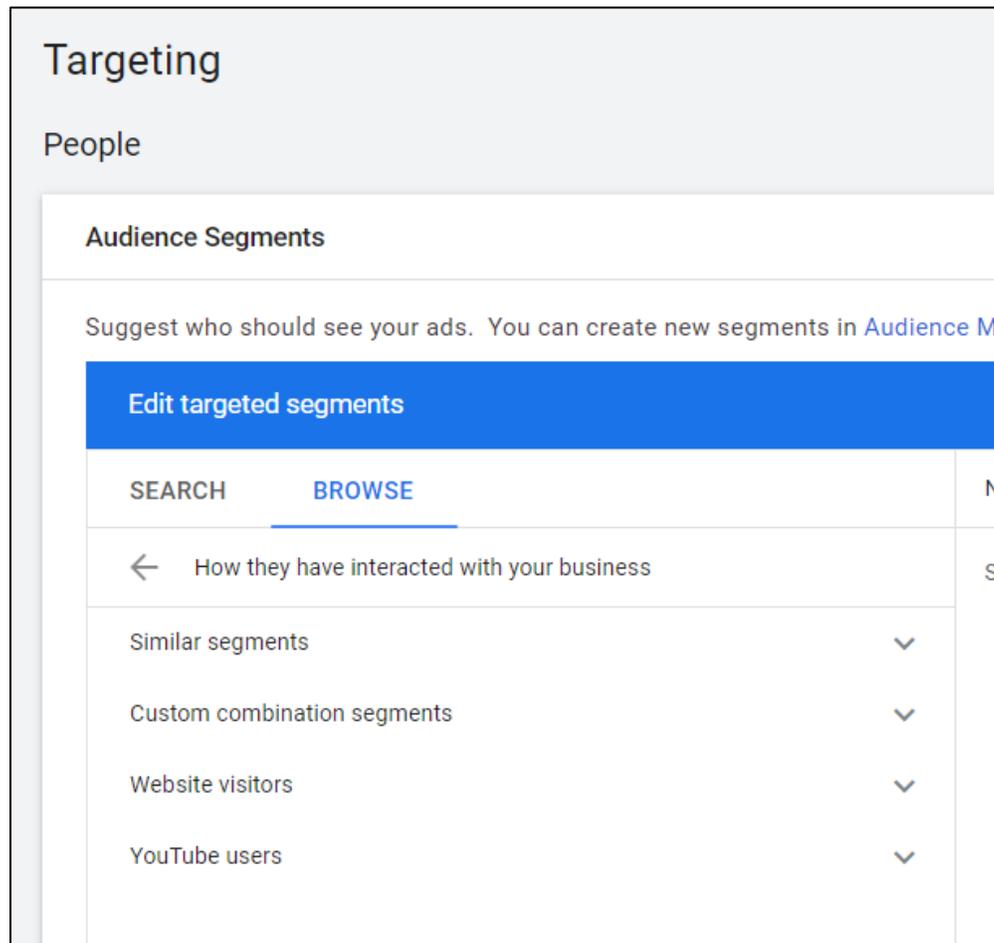
Next, you should see three options across the top, “Search,” “Browse,” and “Ideas.” Click into *Browse > How they have interacted with your business > Website visitors*. You should see one or more of your remarketing lists there. For example, click on “Website visitors.” This, and only this option, gets you people who have interacted with your business by hitting your website. Generally speaking, the easiest is to select “All visitors,” which means anyone who has hit your website.

Voila! Your ads will now show to someone who is “on” the list anywhere that they are on the GDN. Be aware that they don’t necessarily realize that they’ve been “remarketed to.” Many people are mystified at how ads “follow them” around the Internet, and this is how.

Once you’ve set up a remarketing list, you can attach it to any Ad Group you set up. For example, you can attach it to one Ad Group focused on the Display Network, and still another focused on YouTube. Remarketing, after all, is a “targeting method,” not an Ad Group nor an Ad.

Expanding Your Audience

If you want to be more aggressive, you can use *retargeting*, by selecting *Similar segments*, for example. Look just above “Website visitors,” and you should see “Similar segments.” Here’s a screenshot:



Google Ads will attempt to match “your list” to “their lists.” If your customers are cat people, Google will attempt to go out and find cat people; if your customers are dog people, Google will attempt to go out and find dog people, and so on and so forth. That’s what “similar” means. Just be clear in your own head that *remarketing* (people who have ALREADY hit your website) tends to be much higher ROI than *retargeting* (similar audiences who have NOT hit your website).

For this reason, I recommend keeping the two targeting methods separate. Create a NEW Ad Group using “similar audiences” vs. your other Ad Group using your own remarketing list. Then, you could compare two Ad Groups:

1. One that targets people who have hit your website, that is, “remarketing” vs.
2. One that targets similar people as identified by Google AI, that is “retargeting.”

Verify Your Targeting Method

Once you’ve set up an Ad Group, or if you want to verify that you have the correct targeting method, here’s how you can drill into what Google calls the “Automated targeting” settings. First, click on your Ad Group. Next, click *Content > Topic* on the left. Click the pencil, and then “Edit Ad Group Targeting.” You should then see a screen showing ALL the targeting options that are in play vis-à-vis this Ad Group. We’ll return to these in a moment.

In this way, you’ll be able to measure which performs better as well as to bid higher or lower accordingly. To read the official Google help file on remarketing, visit <http://jmlinks.com/41c>. Note that Google is changing its terminology and now uses “data segments” and “your data” vs. “audience types” and “remarketing.”

RLSA Ads

In a special twist, there are even what are called “Remarketing Lists for Search” or RLSA ads. In this way, you “remarket” to people who are searching Google. That is, someone who is “on” your list can be “remarketed to” when he or she returns to Google and does a search. An example of this would be when someone searches for a vacation, hits the Disney.com website (and gets “tagged” for remarketing), and then returns to Google to search for things such as airline tickets, hotels, travel information about Anaheim or Orlando, etc. The ads on Google Search are thus triggered not directly by the search keywords but rather by the remarketing list. It’s a hybrid! Read more about RLSA ads at <http://jmlinks.com/57x>.

Ad Groups and Remarketing Lists

Remember this is a targeting method, only, and that the targeting method or trigger “lives” at the Ad Group level in Google Ads. Accordingly, the best practice is to match a targeting method to an Ad Group. For example, you might set up:

Persons who clicked the Jamaica cruise page > Jamaica targeting group > Ads on Jamaica cruises.

Persons who clicked the Cabo San Lucas cruise page > Cabo San Lucas targeting group > Ads on Cabo San Lucas cruises.

And remember, at the end of the day, they’ll see the ads NOT on your website but on other sites such as People.com, ChicagoTribune.com, YouTube, Gmail, and other participating sites in the Display Network (except for RLSA ads, if you set those up, as those appear on Google).

As you create your ads, upload highly relevant text and image ads, or use the “Scan Your Website” tools in Google Ads to create a series of ads. As the person browses sites on the Internet, then she’ll see your ads again and again (until she clicks and converts).

The process is:

Remarketing List (e.g., *all website visitors, visitors to the cat boarding page who did not convert, visitors to the cat grooming page who did not convert, etc.*) > **targeting method** in Google Ads > **show ads** to these people as they browse various sites on the Internet that participate in the Google Display Network.

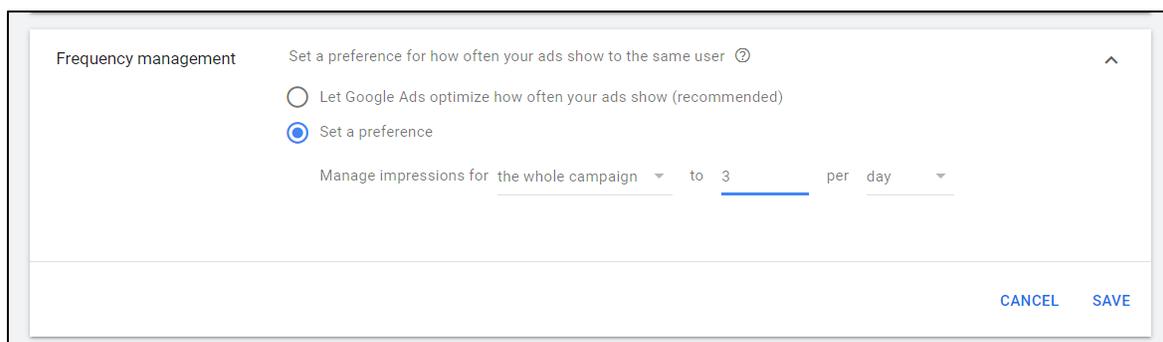
The beauty of remarketing is that you know these people are highly qualified (*why else would they have visited your website?*), and you don’t have to worry about placements on the GDN – Google will automatically follow them around the Internet! Remarketing, as a targeting method, is less vulnerable to nefarious or fraudulent sites, which is another

plus. Indeed, the sky's the limit, and you can even create *dynamic remarketing ads*, showing people very specific ads relating to the very specific products or services that they have visited (but not purchased) on your website. To watch a Google video on dynamic remarketing ads, visit <http://jmlinks.com/24m>.

A much less common type of remarketing is called “customer match.” Here, you upload a list of your customer email addresses and/or phone numbers to Google, and then Google uses its “Snoop Dog” technology to match these email addresses to users across the Internet. You can read about “customer match” at <http://jmlinks.com/58b>. Some might consider it an obnoxious and invasive abuse of your customers’ privacy, so I would recommend you consult with a lawyer and a priest before deploying this method. On the other hand, anecdotal reports say it is highly effective.

Setting a Frequency Cap

Because people get annoyed at seeing an ad over and over and over again, one tip is to set a “frequency cap” so that they might see your ad, just two or three times. To do this, go to the Campaign level, click on *Settings* on the left, and then *Additional Settings* in the middle. Then click “Frequency management.” Set a limit such as three per day. This means that no individual will see your ads more than three times in one day, which helps reduce the annoyance factor. Here’s a screenshot:



In fact, setting a frequency cap is a good idea across all your Display Network campaigns as it also helps fight click fraud, so I recommend you do this for every GDN campaign.

Note, of course, that you pay by click, so, at some level, you don't need to be too concerned about showing your remarketing ads pretty frequently. For this reason, I recommend pretty high-frequency caps like three times a day or ten times a week.

Bids on Remarketing

Finally, whatever type of remarketing / retargeting you may decide to do, be aware that you will generally have to bid pretty high to get your ads to run because many, many advertisers are using remarketing, and you are competing against a very large universe to get your remarketing ads to run. Just as on the Search Network, bids on the Display Network are set at the Ad Group level. Oftentimes, however, focused ads on the Google Search Network are, ironically, often cheaper than remarketing ads because of the intense competition for remarketing by big brands.

» TARGET YOUR AD GROUP: PLACEMENTS

While most of us will use keyword or remarketing targeting methods, there are other targeting methods to consider. Next up is the "Placement" methodology. Let's say that you really like specific websites in your industry, or you'd like to pre-select the websites onto which Google will put your ads. You can be much more in control by choosing *placements*.

At the Ad Group level, click *Content > Placements* on the left. Click the blue circle and then click Edit Placements. Here's where it gets a little tricky. If you know the placements you want to run on and you are sure that they are in the Google Display Network, then you can add them as URLs (domains). For example, both CNN.com and Entrepreneur.com run Google ads, so you can click *Enter multiple placements* at the bottom and then add them.

If you're not sure whether a placement is (or is not) in the Google Display Network, you can do some research. (**Note:** even though you can enter any website domain into *Placements*, that doesn't mean your ads will show on that website. *JM-SEO.org* or *Facebook.com*, for example, can be entered, but because neither site participates in AdSense, these are moot entries).

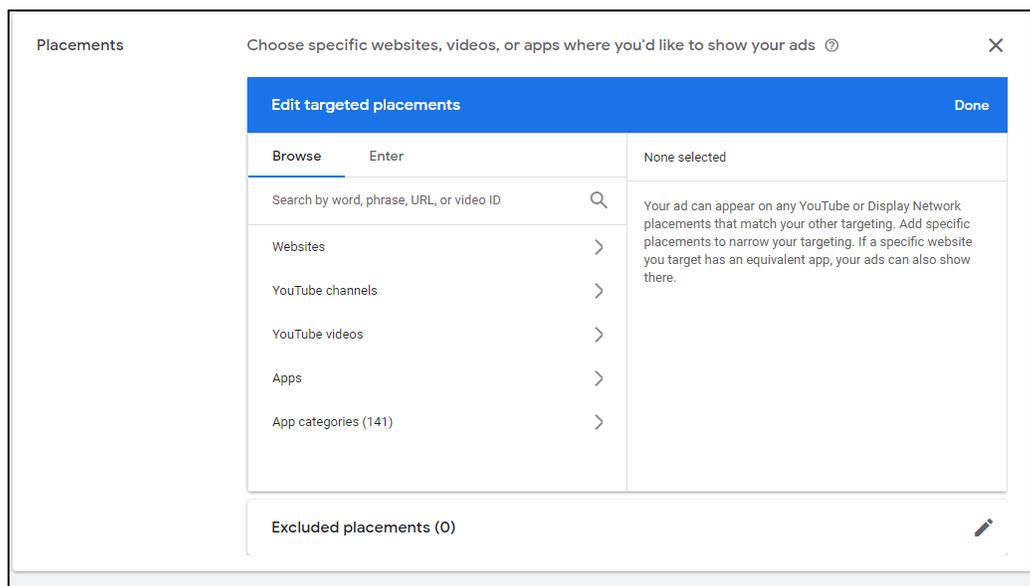
There are two possible scenarios here:

1. **You know the placement already.** You already know that *thecatsite.com*, for example, is awesome to reach cat-oriented people, so you enter each domain manually to build out your targeting list.
2. **You do not know individual websites.** Here you enter a keyword such as “cats” or “cat boarding,” click “Websites,” and browse individual websites.

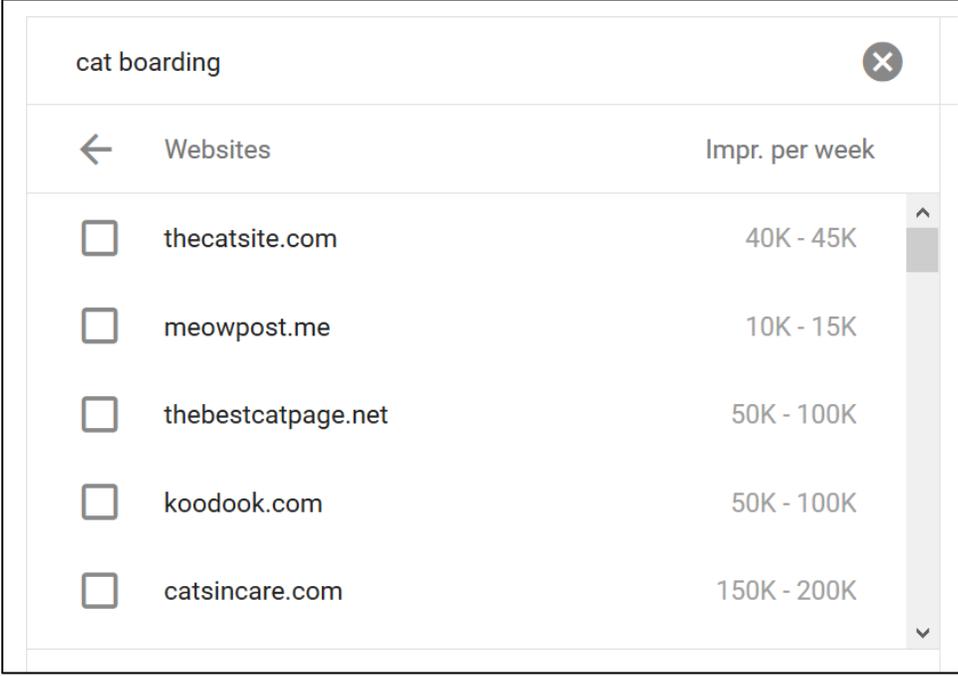
Returning to your process of identifying possible placements, you want to build a placement list. A good method is NOT to add website domains one by one as you find them, but rather use the built-in tool to discover them and build a list on a Notepad or Excel spreadsheet outside of Google Ads first. Then copy / paste your list of desired placements into targeting. In this way, you can also re-use this list if you want to use the same placements for a different Ad Group later.

Here are the steps.

First, at the Ad Group level, click on *Content > Placements* on the left. Click the blue circle and then *Edit placements*. Second, where it says in gray *Search by word, phrase, URL, or video ID*, enter a relevant keyword such as *cat boarding*. Here’s a screenshot:



Third, click on Websites and Google Ads will open up a list of “relevant” websites. Here’s a screenshot:



cat boarding	
← Websites	Impr. per week
<input type="checkbox"/> thecatsite.com	40K - 45K
<input type="checkbox"/> meowpost.me	10K - 15K
<input type="checkbox"/> thebestcatpage.net	50K - 100K
<input type="checkbox"/> koodook.com	50K - 100K
<input type="checkbox"/> catsincare.com	150K - 200K

Fourth, do not add them at this time! Rather, copy / paste the URL / domain of each one, such as *thecatsite.com*, or *meowpost.me*, into a new tab on your website. Check out the website and decide if you think it is relevant to your target customer. If so, add it to your list of desired sites on Notepad or Excel. If not, do not add it. In this way, you can build up a list of high volume, relevant websites on which to run your ads and avoid the problem of nefarious sites or poor matches.

Once you have a list of your domains (e.g., *thecatsite.com*, *catsincare.com*), then copy / paste this list from your Notepad or Excel by clicking *Enter multiple placements*. Finally, note (as I will explain below) that you can **combine** placements and keywords as a targeting method. For example, you could then run on *thecatsite.com* PLUS keyword = *boarding* to show **ONLY** on articles on the site that talked about *boarding*, or you could run on *CNN.com* and **ONLY** on articles on the site that talked about *marketing* if you were

selling marketing services, for example. In this way, you can vastly tighten the focus of a Display Network Ad Group.

» TARGET YOUR AD GROUP: OTHER TARGETING METHODS

There are a few other targeting methods that are worth mentioning. We've looked at the big three – keywords, remarketing (which is a type of Audience Segment), and placements. Most advertisers need not go beyond these big three. However, there are other targeting methods.

Here are some thoughts on the other targeting methods:

Audiences. We've discussed remarketing, which is the most important Audience targeting option. However, there are other options within Audiences that bear mentioning. Go into an Ad Group, and click on Audiences on the left. You should see SEARCH | BROWSE. Click on **Search**, and you can input a keyword and find matching or similar “audiences” that Google AI will create or find for you.

Click on **Browse**, and you can drill down into –

1. *Who they are* – this option gives you attributes such as “Parental status” or “Education.”
2. *What their interests and habits are* – this option gives you “affinity audiences” such as people who are interested in Home & Garden, or Media & Entertainment.
3. *What they are actively researching or planning* – this is probably the best option as it gives you so-called “In-market Audiences,” as in people who are “in the market” for a new car or those who have just had a baby. To see available “in-market audiences,” set up a new Ad Group, click *Add Targeting > Audience Segments > Browse > In-market and Life Events*.
4. *How they have interacted with your business* – this gives you remarketing and similar audiences as discussed above.

5. *Combined Audiences* – these are combinations you make of these attributes.
6. *Your custom audiences*. Here you follow Google’s instructions, and it will try to build out a custom audience for a defined set of potential customers.

Demographics. Click into this option, and you can not only see who has clicked on your ads, but you can increase or decrease your bids accordingly.

Topics. Click into this option, and Google gives you very generic content topics such as “Arts & Entertainment” or “Food & Drink.”

In my experience, none of the audience options are very good except for **in-market audiences** (available under “browse”). An “in-market” audience means that the target customer is “in the market,” such as a person who is “in the market” to buy a car or a house. If there is an in-market audience that specifically matches your target customer (e.g., business loans, credit cards or employment, accounting & finance jobs, or dating services), it can be a pretty good choice. (This makes sense because Google knows the most about us based on what we search for (a.k.a., “intent”), which tracks pretty closely with being “in the market” for such-and-such product or service). Regardless, experiment, track your conversions, and you may find something that works for you. What works for one advertiser / product / service will not work for another and vice-versa, so deploy and test, deploy and test, rinse and repeat, etc.!

» TARGET YOUR AD GROUP: COMBINING METHODS

Remember that you can mix and match features in Google Ads. So, for example, you could have an Ad Group using remarketing for people who are interested in Caribbean cruises who live in Chicago, by having a Campaign that is geotargeted at people who live in Chicago and have an in-market audience of cruises, or people who are using their mobile phones to target consumers who skew young.

It’s a good idea to sit down with a spreadsheet and draft out your parameters, as for example:

Search. People who are searching for Caribbean cruises using keywords like “Caribbean cruises” or “Cruises to Jamaica.”

Remarketing. People who landed on your website, but did not convert, so you show / reshow them your ads for a Jamaica Cruise as they visit sites like Chicago Tribune, YouTube, People Magazine, etc.

Customer Match. Upload your customer list of emails and/or phone numbers, and use this as a type of remarketing.

Retargeting. Let Google think for you, and find people similar to your remarketing list, and show them ads on the Display Network.

Mobile. Show specific ads to people using their phones vs. their desktop computers.

Geotarget. Show ads to people in specific areas (e.g., Chicago vs. Miami).

Schedule. Show ads during specific days or times of the day.

Etc.

You can, in summary, mix and match features in Google Ads – the sky’s the limit!

As for **targeting methods**, you can also mix and match targeting methods on the GDN, but I would generally advise against it. I recommend you think of scenarios, first, and targeting methods, second. For example, for a cruise line, moving down from the “most likely” to convert to the “least likely,” you’d have:

Best choices -

Search. People pro-actively searching for Caribbean cruises. (Best choice: Google Search Network, targeting method: **keywords**).

Search: People pro-actively searching adjacent searches (e.g., “Things to do in Jamaica) who have hit your website but did not convert. (Best choice: Google Search Network, targeting method: **RLSA**).

Then second-best choice -

Browse. People who have landed on your website but did not convert. (Best choice: Google Display Network, targeting method: **remarketing** or “**your data**” or “**customer match**.”

Then third-level choices -

Browse. People who are browsing sites on the Caribbean, on cruises, even on Jamaica. (Best choice: Google Display Network, targeting method: **placements**).

Browse. People who are browsing sites on the Caribbean, on cruises, even on Jamaica. (Best choice: Google Display Network, targeting method: **keywords**).

Browse. People who are browsing sites on the Caribbean, on cruises, even on Jamaica. (Best choice: Google Display Network, targeting method: **in-market audiences**).

Browse. People who are browsing sites on the Caribbean, on cruises, even on Jamaica. (Best choice: Google Display Network, targeting method: **similar to remarketing lists**)

Browse. People who are browsing sites on the Caribbean, on cruises, even on Jamaica. (Best choice: Google Display Network, targeting method: **affinity**).

Remember, you can see your choice options by going to a **Display Network Campaign > Ad Group**, scrolling along the left column. It’s confusing because Google Ads mixes two very different concepts:

1. The *targeting method* you are using such as “keywords” or “Audiences”
2. *Data* from what actually happened, that is whether a particular keyword generated a click or impression, or whether a particular audience led to an impression or click.

For this reason, it’s best to be very organized when you first set up a campaign and use one, and ONLY one, targeting method. Do not mix targeting methods because a) Google is likely to interpret this as an “or” statement, and you’ll get a very broad result, and b) mixing targeting method makes it hard to figure out which one is working better than the other.

Google Ads doesn’t make it easy to see which ones are “on” and which ones are “off,” so I recommend naming your Ad Groups to clearly mark their targeting method such as naming your GDN Ad Groups something like:

GDN: Cat boarding: keywords

GDN: Cat boarding: remarketing

GDN: Cat boarding: in-market audience

etc.

Targeting vs. Observation

With the exclusion of the Search Network, you can combine targeting settings. Generally, I would NOT recommend that you do this. It’s easier to manage if you have ONE Ad Group have ONE targeting setting, as in ONE Ad Group that uses keywords and ONE Ad Group that uses remarketing. Technically speaking, however, you can combine them into “and” statements, as in “OK Google, show my ad to a remarketing customer who you also think is relevant because the keyword is ‘Jamaica vacation,’” but because targeting is loosey-goosey on the GDN, I wouldn’t recommend overthinking this.

Confusingly, Google uses rather strange terminology to discuss targeting settings:

Targeting. This means Google is actually using this data to decide whether or not to show your ad.

Observation. This means that Google isn't using this data to decide whether or not to show your ad. You can, however, see data for this targeting setting AND increase or decrease your bid accordingly.

In certain situations, however, you can use targeting settings to be MORE restrictive, that is, to be an “AND” statement rather than an “OR” statement. One example where you might want to combine methods is PLACEMENTS and KEYWORDS. So, you might want people who are on CNN.com AND using keywords “Caribbean cruise,” because CNN.com is a huge site with many irrelevant areas. You can read a detailed explanation on combining targeting methods at <http://jmlinks.com/24n>. Again, for most of us, I would do, at most, the Search Network and then perhaps remarketing and/or placement targeting and leave it at that.

Don't overthink it. The GDN is loosey-goosey, so be prepared to cast a wide net!

» UNDERSTAND BIDDING & QUALITY SCORE ON THE GDN

In general, you bid per click (and pay per click) on the GDN just as you do on the Search Network. Bids are set at the Ad Group level. If you like, however, you can mix and match targeting methods and raise or lower your bids. Similar to the Search Network, you have these bidding options:

Focus. You can focus on clicks or on conversions. Focusing on conversions is better but you must enable conversion tracking and, ideally, have a dollar value for the value of a conversion.

Get Clicks. You can set this to “Automatically maximize clicks” or “Manually set bids.”

If you click at the bottom on “Select a bid strategy directly,” you’ll see your full bid options, which are:

Target CPA. Target a “Cost per acquisition,” which works best if you are e-commerce and know the true value of a sale. You’re telling Google to attempt to find impressions and clicks that will result in a cost of acquisition of less than your target.

Maximize Clicks. Let Google use AI to attempt to maximize your clicks at the cheapest CPC. You’re telling Google to get the most clicks at the cheapest total cost.

Maximize Conversions. If you are e-commerce and have conversion tracking on, and if you have sufficient data, let Google AI attempt to maximize conversions. It might even work.

Maximize Conversion Value. If you are e-commerce and have conversion tracking on, and if you have sufficient data, let Google AI attempt to maximize conversion value. Like “maximize conversions,” this might even work.

Viewable CPM. This is a bid strategy unique to the GDN, meaning you pay only for impressions (not clicks). This is good if you want to target branding or stay top of mind with customers and are not as interested in clicks and results. It’s called “viewable” because you only pay when 50% of your ad shows on screen for 1 second or longer.

Manual CPC. Here you manually set your bid maximum. You can also let Google use “Enhanced CPC” to raise your bids when it thinks a conversion is more likely. This is the option I most frequently use.

You can review bidding options on the Display Network at <http://jmlinks.com/49n>.

Quality Score on the Display Network suffers from the same contradiction as it does on the Search Network. Google and the AdSense sites on the GDN get paid by the click, and you get paid by the conversion. Accordingly, Google will try to push you to run on lots of sites and write ads that promise “free, free, free” to generate lots of clicks.

You want to be very choosy as to which sites you run on, however, and you want to write ads that attract your best customers and repel tire-kickers and others who are not likely to convert nor likely to buy high-profit items.

You also have to worry about **click fraud** on the Display Network. On Google itself, Google alone is making money by clicks, but on the Display Network, there are third parties who create apps or websites, then create “bot armies” to generate clicks on ads on them and make money off of this scam. I do not believe Google does a very good job of policing this problem on the Display Network, so you can have a fake Quality Score that means nothing other than spurious clicks!

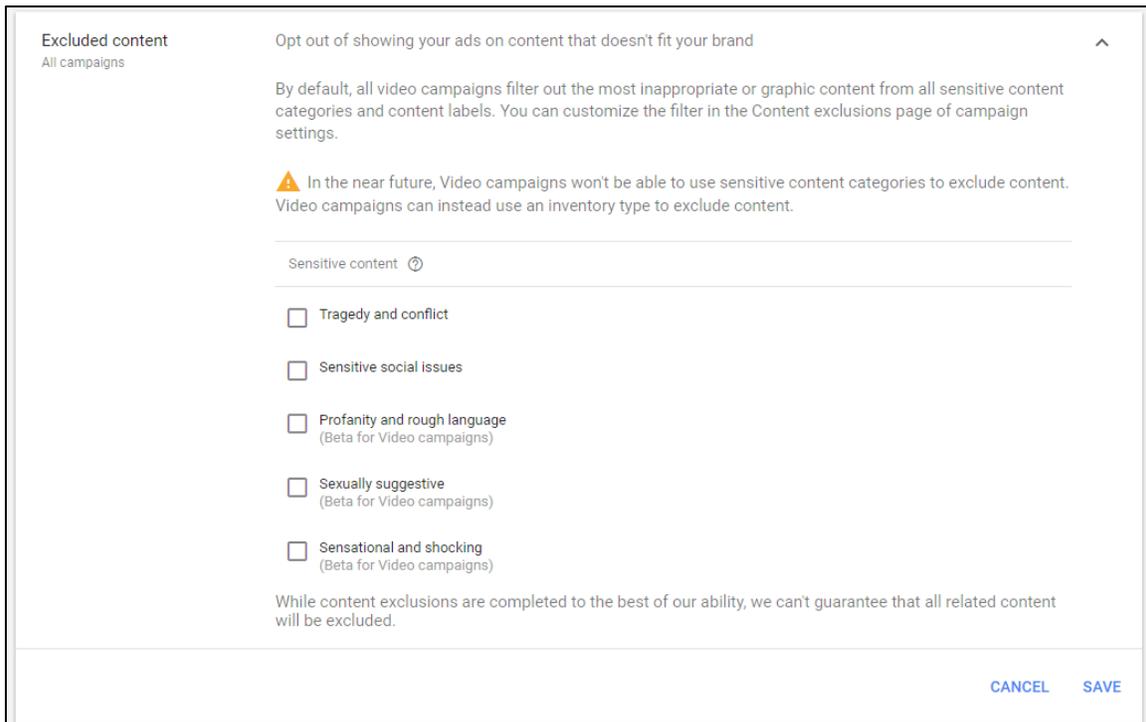
Thus, while there is a lot of discussion on the blogosphere about Quality Score on the GDN, I recommend you focus on impressions, CPC, conversions, cost per conversion and ROI, that is whether your spend is ultimately less than the profit you make from advertising on the Display Network. Be very careful to monitor your placements and look for nefarious websites or apps that are generating lots and lots of impressions and clicks but few conversions. These are likely scams. Quality Score is nice “in theory,” but the only metric that matters for you is whether a click becomes a sale or not.

» MONITOR YOUR PLACEMENTS AND EXCLUDE THE NAUGHTY

Even before you activate a Display Network campaign, you should exclude various “naughty” websites and apps. I recommend that at the account level, therefore, you disable many of the most problematic websites at the very beginning. Once you’re running, you also want to check your placements on a regular basis and identify “naughty” websites and apps to exclude them.

Excluding Content Types

Here’s how to set universal settings to (hopefully) exclude your ads from being shown next to nefarious and inappropriate content. First, click up to your account level at the “Overview” level. Next, on the left column, click *Settings*. Then click *Account Settings*. Find *Excluded Content* in the middle and click the down arrow to open the dialogue box. Here’s a screenshot:



Check the most problematic boxes, which are **everything** under “Sensitive content.”

Next, return to the previous screen, and open up “Excluded types and labels.” Here the really bad one is “Parked domains,” which are empty domains that run Google ads. You can also filter your ad against general vs. PG vs. teen audiences (similar to the ratings at the movies), and block ads from appearing on games, YouTube live, embedded videos, and below-the-fold. The safest thing to do is to exclude against all content types listed, but you need to at least allow “general audiences” as unchecked on the left-hand side.

You can also do this at the Campaign level by clicking into a Campaign, and then clicking *Settings > Additional settings > Content exclusions*. Again, find Content exclusions in the middle and check the boxes for types you don’t like. Just remember if you set it at the Campaign level that you have to reset it for each and every Campaign you create. That’s why I generally do this at the Account level.

Identify Naughty Placements

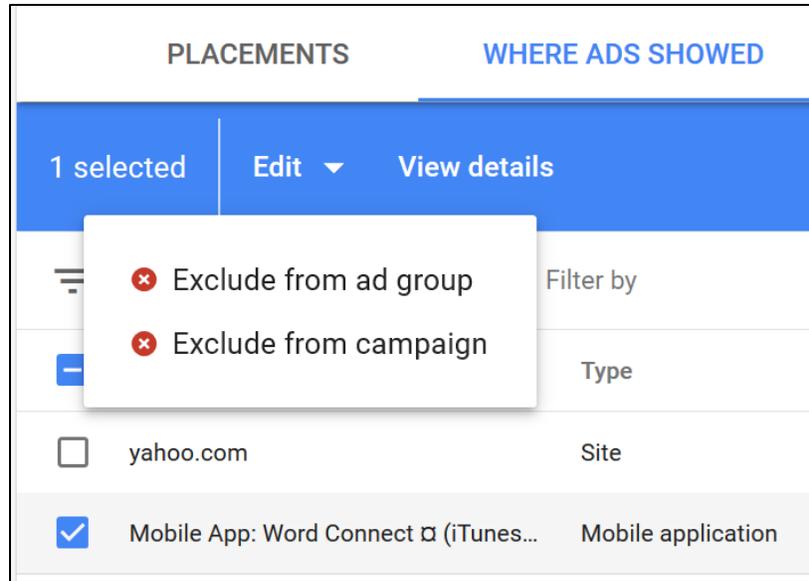
On an ongoing basis – and at least monthly – you want to identify and exclude “naughty” placements. Some of these appear to be fraudulent websites that live in the Display Network for no purpose other than generating fake clicks, and others are just junk. No one knows for certain, and Google certainly isn’t talking. After you’ve run your Campaign(s) for at least a week, or perhaps a month, you can explore where your ads were placed (called “placements”) and block ones that are either inappropriate, have expensive costs per click, or poor or expensive conversion rates or any of these problems. Here’s how.

Click into a Display Network Campaign that has sufficient data. Click *Content > Placements* on the left column. Click *Where Ads Showed* in the middle. You should then see a running table of where your ads are being shown vis-à-vis the time horizon you indicate at the top right (e.g., last month, last thirty days, all time, etc.). *All time* is probably the best choice as a time horizon. Next, click and sort by column; I recommend sorting by Cost first. Here’s a screenshot:

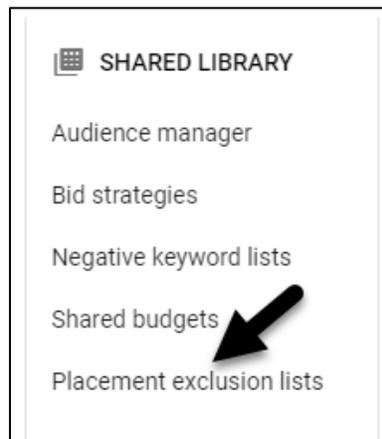


<input type="checkbox"/> Placement	Type	Ad group	Clicks	Impr.	CTR	Avg. CPC	↓ Cost
Total: Where ads showed			11	2,069	0.53%	\$6.71	\$73.76
<input type="checkbox"/> cbc.com	Site	Remarketing	1	2	50.00%	\$23.88	\$23.88
<input type="checkbox"/> populareverything.c...	Site	Remarketing	1	2	50.00%	\$18.36	\$18.36
<input type="checkbox"/> Mobile App: Step Tra...	Mobile application	Remarketing	1	5	20.00%	\$15.43	\$15.43
<input type="checkbox"/> nytimes.com	Site	Remarketing	1	48	2.08%	\$7.64	\$7.64

You can also enable columns, including a column for conversions and cost per conversion. Identify websites or apps that are a) costing a lot of money and/or b) have a high cost per click and/or cost per conversion. To block a website or app, just click the checkbox and then *Edit > Exclude* from Campaign. Here’s a screenshot:



You can also download your placements into Excel, identify the bad / nefarious placements, and then upload a master list into the Shared library. This is located under *Tools > Shared Library > Placement Exclusion lists*. Here's a screenshot:



If I am working with a client that is heavily using the Display Network, I build up a “Naughty list” of apps and placements in this way and then link the “Naughty list” to all my Display Network campaigns. In this way, you can “inherit” the intelligence from

the “Naughty list” from an old campaign to a new one and avoid the painful and expensive learning curve of finding out the naughty placements.

Apps are particularly nefarious. They show up as “Mobile App” in the list, and you can manually exclude them one by one. Ads that show on Apps are complicated, so to learn more about this problem visit <http://jmlinks.com/52g>. Another way to exclude Apps is to go into *Devices* and put a bid adjustment of negative 100%, but this will exclude your advertising from all mobile phones, not just apps.

Once you are running ads, I recommend checking your Placements at least monthly and then aggregating them into your “Naughty list.” This is very important because you will be refining the Display Network to weed out the bad / nefarious websites, and over time, you can be much more effective with your Display Network campaigns. As to why Google doesn’t do a better job policing its own network, well, I suppose we can wait for a World Communist Revolution against greedy corporations or just do it ourselves in the meantime.

» MONITORING YOUR GDN CAMPAIGNS

The most important monitoring you’ll do is to weed out nefarious placements. In addition, you want to have conversion tracking enabled between Google Ads and Google Analytics. In this way, you can see what placements are not just getting clicks but also getting conversions. “Kill your dogs, and let your winners run” is as relevant to the Display Network as to the Search Network. You are constantly looking to identify strong performers (to keep) and weak performers (to terminate). To learn more about conversion tracking in Google Ads, see this official Google Ads video at <http://jmlinks.com/41q>.

Other Metrics

While conversions are the Holy Grail of all advertising on Google Ads, you want to be aware that in many cases you won’t get immediate conversions. In fact, Display Network campaigns are often run for branding or awareness issues. To that end you want to measure on at least a monthly basis:

Placements by Impressions. Which placements are generating the most impressions? Are they relevant?

Placements by Clicks. Which placements are generating the most clicks? Are they relevant?

Placements by Cost. Which placements are the most expensive? In total, by CPC, and by cost per conversion? Why? Are they worth it?

Placements by Click Thru Rates. Which placements are generating the highest CTRs? Why? Can you increase the impressions on these placements? How?

Placements by Conversions / Conversion Rates. Which placements are generating the highest conversions and conversion rates? Why? Can you increase the impressions on these placements? How?

Consider evaluating your Campaigns by **targeting method** according to the metrics above as well. For example, which targeting method (e.g., Keywords vs. In-market audiences) is generating the highest impressions, clicks, CTR, conversion rate, etc.? As you experiment with your GDN Campaigns, look for placements and/or targeting methods that seem to be “working” and expand them and look for placements and/or targeting methods that do not seem to be “working” and kill them. Another metric that’s valuable is the bounce rate on your website. Since a lot of Display Network advertising is about brand-building, look not only at the conversions generated but at the bounce rate and time on site as shown in Google Analytics. If people are clicking through on your GDN ads and checking out your website, then this is indicative of brand-building.

“Let your winners run and kill your dogs” is as valid on the Display Network as it is on the Search Network. Nurture your winners in terms of targeting methods, placements, and ads. Kill your dogs. Be merciless.

In addition, remember to consider alternatives to the Display Network, such as advertising on Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, or YouTube and compare results on those “browse” systems against those on the GDN. Identify the best performers and put your

money there, and abandon those that do not perform – the GDN may (or may not) be your best venue. If you're interested in learning more about social media marketing, check out my *Social Media Marketing Workbook* at <http://jmlinks.com/smm>.

For each network, you can also browse their “advertising” site such as:

Facebook Advertising at <https://www.facebook.com/business/>

LinkedIn Advertising at <https://business.linkedin.com/>

Twitter Advertising at <https://ads.twitter.com/>

Pinterest Advertising at <https://ads.pinterest.com/>

YouTube Advertising at <https://www.youtube.com/yt/advertise/>

TikTok Advertising at <https://www.tiktok.com/business/en-US>

We'll consider YouTube Advertising in Chapter 8, but be aware that really any one of these networks is far larger than any single website or app in the Google Display Network, and all of them (except for YouTube) exclude Google placements. For this reason, if you think that “browse” is a good way to reach potential customers, be sure to consider advertising on one or all of the competitive social media platforms. There's more out there than just the Google Display Network, as massive as it is.

» ADVERTISE YOUR APP

One novel feature of the Display Network is **app advertising**. You can advertise to people who are using apps that participate in the GDN to promote your own app. To show ads to people using apps, create a new Campaign, and select “App.” Next, you find your App in either the Android (Google Play) or iOS (Apple) app stores and follow the steps. You then follow the steps and can advertise your app to other app users to encourage installs. This setting is now heavily AI-based, so you have few options other than “trust in Google” to make the ads run. If you are an App-based company, it can be a good option to quick-start your App installs. But most of us are not App-based

companies, so I would ignore it. If you're marketing an App, you can learn more about App ads on the GDN at <http://jmlinks.com/52h>.

» DISCOVERY ADS

Gmail is Google's free email service and is used by millions of people. Gmail ads are now integrated with "Discovery ads." These combine ads on Gmail with ads on YouTube and ads on "Discover" in the Google App, which shows on mobile phones. To create them, select "Discovery Ads" as a Campaign Type. Learn more about Discovery Ads at <http://jmlinks.com/57y>.

» PERFORMANCE MAX

"Performance Max" is Google's latest attempt at a purely AI-based system. This Campaign Type combines search and display and uses Google AI to focus on conversions. To try it out, select "sales," "leads," or "local store visits," and then select "Performance Max." Learn more about this new type at <http://jmlinks.com/57z>. I am skeptical about its performance because it combines search and display together, which has – in my experience – never been a best practice. But if you believe in Google AI as well as the tooth fairy, give it a try. It might work (especially for a big brand).

Another similar ad format is the "Smart" format. It is not clear how "Smart" is different from "Performance Max." In both cases, you provide "ad assets" to Google, such as headlines, descriptions, and text. Google then assembles your ad on the fly; you also provide minimal targeting information.

In my experience, these ad types generate lots of clicks at a low cost, but many of them are useless clicks. The reporting and information is minimal. This is a "trust us" model of advertising with Google that works best if you are trying to build brand awareness cheaply in a geographic region such as a zip code or small city.

»» DELIVERABLE: DISPLAY NETWORK WORKSHEET

The **DELIVERABLE** for this Chapter is a completed worksheet on the Google Display Network. You'll investigate whether you want to run on the GDN, at all, and if so, in which ways (especially which targeting method(s) and placements make the most sense).

For the **worksheet**, go to <http://jmlinks.com/23googleads>, then re-enter the password, "23googleads," and click on the link to the "Google Display Network Worksheet."



7

SHOPPING CAMPAIGNS

Customers buy stuff online, a lot of stuff online. Fewer and fewer people go to brick-and-mortar stores, especially for standardized products. When Joe or Jane Consumer wants to buy a new dog toy, yoga pants for that upcoming workout, or even retinol cream to take care of their crow's feet, they go online. In this Chapter, we'll review the two big networks for selling products online: Google Shopping Campaigns and Amazon. The reality is that Google is the #2 player for products, so I would not ignore Amazon as part of your strategy! You can also set up a shopping campaign on Bing (which runs essentially like Google), though Bing is a very distant #3.

Let's get started!

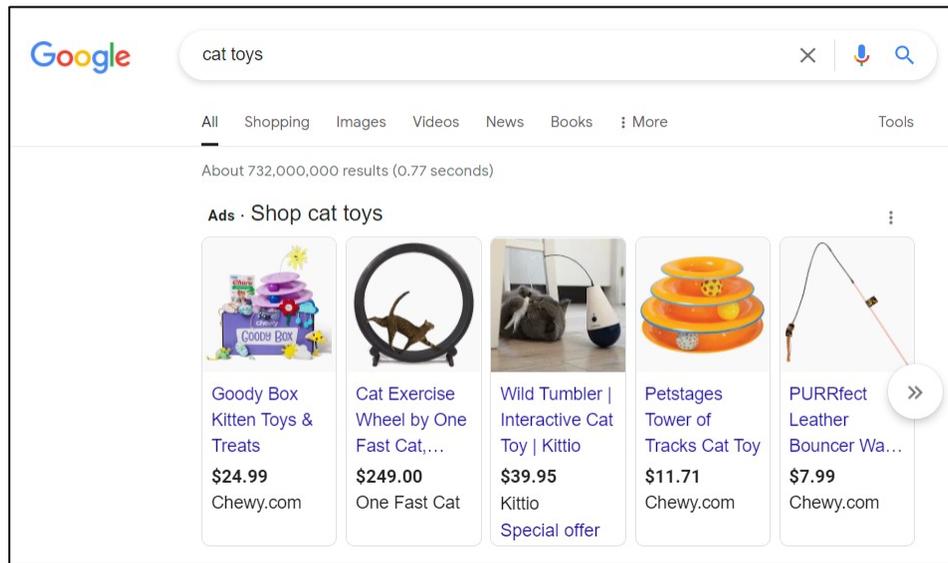
TO-DO LIST:

- » Understand Shopping Campaigns
- » Set up Shopping Campaigns
- » Bid Effectively for Shopping Campaigns
- » Consider "Performance Max" (Carefully)
- » Weigh Alternatives to Google Shopping: SEO & Amazon
- »» Deliverable: A Shopping Campaigns Worksheet

» UNDERSTAND SHOPPING CAMPAIGNS

Shopping ads, or shopping "campaigns" as they are officially called, refer to product ads that appear on Google. These ads refer only to physical products, so if you do not sell a physical product, you can ignore this Chapter. But if you do sell physical products, especially online but also in a brick-and-mortar store, shopping campaigns are yet

another way to get your product in front of people as they search Google. Take an example. Search Google for “cat toys.” You should see pictures of products on the right or top of the screen. Here’s a screenshot:



If you click on an ad, you then click from Google to the vendor website, which is usually an e-commerce website where you can buy the product online. It can also be an ad for a local store that has this item in inventory.

For example, if you click on the “Goody Box,” you end up on Chewy.com and see the full product plus how to purchase it. Here’s a screenshot:



Shopping Ads are a great strategy to get traffic from Google to your e-commerce store. And who's to say that a person who lands on Chewy.com will only buy the "Goody Box?" He might buy not just this toy but several others, sign up for email alerts, and become a long-term customer. One simple click from Google on a Shopping Ad can be worth far more than just the individual product sale; it can be worth the "lifetime value" of a loyal customer.

SHOPPING ADS ARE ABOUT PRODUCT SEARCH

Shopping Ads are different than other ads on the Google Search Network. They have these elements:

Product Image. They show a thumbnail of the product itself (hence, high-quality product images are a must to succeed on Google Shopping Campaigns).

Product Title / Name. Shopping Campaigns do not use keywords but rather product names and descriptions as triggers, so you ideally have product titles / names that contain relevant keywords.

A Price. Especially for products that are standardized, Shopping Ads allow consumers to quickly look for the lowest price.

A Domain. Chewy.com is the domain in the example above, but all Shopping Ads must show the domain of your e-commerce website.

Product Reviews. A one to five-star system by which customers can review products; these live on your e-commerce store and are transmitted to Google. These show if, and only if, the merchant has enabled reviews and has a sufficient number of reviews.

Keywords. Shopping Ads do NOT use keywords like regular Google Ads, so as you build out your Shopping Campaigns, you'll need to work with a Data Feed that comes from Merchant Center. It's a more automated process; more about this in a moment.

Note also that a consumer can click up to “shopping,” to browse Google’s database of product ads. Here’s a screenshot:

Google
cat stuff

All Images Maps Shopping More

Home Deals Orders About Google Shopping

Tulsa, OK

Ads · See cat stuff

Show only

- Buy on Google
- Available nearby
- On sale
- Smaller stores

Price

- Up to \$7
- \$7 – \$15
- \$15 – \$35
- \$35 – \$80
- Over \$80

\$ Min – \$ Max

Catit Flower Plastic Cat Fountain, 100-oz
\$27.98
Chewy.com
★★★★★ (3,502)

PRICE DROP
Pet Shop LPS Clothes Skirt Accessories Phon...
\$5.98
Amazon.com - Sell...
Was \$10.66

Frisco Cactus Cat Scratching Post, 22-in
\$16.99
Chewy.com
★★★★★ (1,781)

In this way, Google is going head-to-head against Amazon (the market leader) by consolidating products from participating vendors into an easy shopping system on Google.com. (We'll return to Amazon in a moment). Notice as well that a consumer can click on "Available nearby" on the left to locate products in nearby brick-and-mortar stores. Shopping Ads are not only for online websites but are also for local merchants who want to use Google to drive traffic to real-world stores,

There are three types of Shopping Ads:

1. **Product Shopping Ads.** These ads highlight individual products in your inventory as submitted via an XML feed and Google Merchant Center. Read the official Google help file at <http://jmlinks.com/58c>.

2. **Local Inventory Ads.** These ads use feed data from a local brick-and-mortar store to drive traffic in the real world to your real store. Read the official Google help file at <http://jmlinks.com/58d>.
3. **Performance Max.** This “new” campaign type replaced “Smart Shopping” ads in 2022.

Most of us will focus on #1, product shopping ads. This is the most common and most effective type, as it drives traffic from Google to your e-commerce store online. #2 is the unique scenario when you are targeting local customers and highlighting that you have such-and-such product for sale, right now, in a nearby local store. #3 is if you fully trust Google AI.

Are Shopping Campaigns Relevant for You?

To find out if Google Shopping Ads are relevant to your business, try searches for your keywords, and pay attention to whether you see product ads appearing on the right of Google. They’re easy to spot because they have images (unlike regular Google ads, which are almost always text only). Shopping Ads generally appear on Google, Search Partners, YouTube, Image Search and on the Google Display Network in limited ways for what are called “local catalog ads.” They also, of course, appear on the desktop, tablet, and mobile phone.

Google has quite a few help files on “shopping ads.” To access the master help file, visit <http://jmlinks.com/56g>. For quick videos on how Shopping Ads work, visit <http://jmlinks.com/48m> and <http://jmlinks.com/48n>. To test your knowledge, check out their official tutorial at <http://jmlinks.com/58j>.

Microsoft (Bing) Shopping Campaigns are essentially modeled after Google Shopping; to learn about Bing options, visit <http://jmlinks.com/49b>.

» SET UP SHOPPING CAMPAIGNS

Setting up Shopping Campaigns is a four-step process:

1. You need an e-commerce-enabled website, that is a website that can sell products in an automated way. The big e-commerce platforms such as Shopify or BigCommerce make it easy to run an e-commerce store; both also work well with Google Merchant Center.
2. You need to set up a Google Merchant Center Account at <http://jmlinks.com/52k>.
3. You need to connect your Merchant Center Account to your Google Ads account at <http://jmlinks.com/58k>.
4. Finally, you need to set up Campaigns and Ad Groups in Google Ads.

Once you have a “data feed” coming in from Merchant Center to Google Ads, you then return to pretty familiar territory as Shopping Ads are then managed directly in Google Ads. The one strange thing is that you do not manage keywords or bids directly.

Let’s review your steps. First, we’ll assume you’ve set up an **e-commerce website** and populated it with products. All your products need keyword-focused titles, nice-looking thumbnail images, price information, availability, shipping, and review capability. It’s a bit of a catch-22 with respect to reviews, as you can’t get reviews without sales, and you often won’t get sales until you get reviews. Try to pro-actively ask existing customers to review products after each purchase. Slowly but steadily, you should start to get reviews on your products as they sell.

*Be sure to populate your product titles with **keywords** as this is the primary way Google “knows” how to match your product with relevant searches.*

Next, you need a **Google Merchant Center** account. You can learn about Merchant Center at <http://jmlinks.com/48p>. They have a robust help center at <http://jmlinks.com/48q>, and you can even “talk to a human” by calling 855-290-0348. Google is very keen on getting products into its system, as they recognize that they are far behind Amazon on product search and e-commerce! They even have a robust YouTube Channel at <http://jmlinks.com/48r> with good introductory videos.

You may need to consult with your webmaster or other resident “computer nerd” to make sure that data flows from your e-commerce site to Google Merchant Center. However, the big vendors like Shopify and BigCommerce have help files on integrating their systems with Google Merchant Center. For Shopify, see <http://jmlinks.com/48s> and for BigCommerce see <http://jmlinks.com/48t>. If you’re using another vendor, ask their tech support or just Google, “{your e-commerce platform} Merchant Center” and you can often go right to the help file. (Note: you can also create a Google Spreadsheet if you want to manually enter product information for Shopping Ads; this is explained in the Google Ads / Merchant Center help files and YouTube videos).

Third, you need to connect your Merchant Center to your Google Ads account. Check out the Google help file on this at <http://jmlinks.com/48u>. You can also search YouTube to find a cornucopia of video tutorials on how to use Merchant Center and Google Ads for Shopping Campaigns.

Set up a Google Shopping Campaign

Finally, now that you’ve linked your Merchant Center to your Google Ads campaigns, you’re ready to set up Campaigns and Groups in Google Ads. Log in to your Google Ads account and click on the blue *Campaign button > New Campaign*.

Next, select *Sales* and then *Shopping* to get you into the Shopping Campaigns. Follow the steps to create your first Campaign. As with regular Google Ads, you can focus on a specific country, state, or even city. The trick is to organize your Merchant Center by lists or feeds and match these to Ad Groups in Google Ads. This will be necessary for bid management.

VIDEO. Watch a quick video tutorial on how to set up Google Shopping Campaigns at <http://jmlinks.com/58m>.

You can also access a written step-by-step tutorial from Google at <http://jmlinks.com/48w>. You’ll generally start with an “all products” group, but it’s

recommended that you filter and reorganize your Ad Groups so that you have a more focused approach. To learn more about this, visit <http://jmlinks.com/48x>.

You might focus, for example, an Ad Group around “dogs” vs. one around “cats,” or one around “cat collars” vs. one around “cat food,” so that you can bid more aggressively on higher profit items. You can also “tag” items in your spreadsheet or data feed and then use those “tags” to create Ad Groups so that you can bid more aggressively where there is more money to be made.

Negative Keywords

Even though you do not use keywords for Shopping Campaigns, you can (and should) use **negative keywords** such as “free,” “cheap,” or “Amazon” so that you are showing your ads to persons most likely to click through to your e-commerce site and actually make a purchase. You can access step-by-step instructions on negative keywords and Shopping Campaigns at <http://jmlinks.com/49d>.

» BID EFFECTIVELY FOR SHOPPING CAMPAIGNS

First and foremost, if you’re running an e-commerce or Shopping Campaign, there’s no excuse for not tracking all activity from the click to the sale. You should be able to estimate your ROAS (*Return on Ad Spend*) from this data. Just be aware that one person might click through from Google for just one item and then buy more, and that a “new customer” brought from Google might become a “long term customer,” so you have to look at the lifetime value of a customer when measuring your return on investment.

FOCUS ON LIFETIME CUSTOMER VALUE

Bid options in Shopping include:

Target CPA. Google focuses on a target cost per acquisition, that is, how much you are willing to pay to acquire a conversion event such as a “sale” or “customer signup.”

Target Return on Ad Spend (ROAS). Google automatically sets your bids to maximize your conversion value while reaching an average return on ad spend that you choose. This requires conversion data, but, if possible, this is one of the best bidding strategies.

Maximize Clicks. Google automatically attempts to maximize your clicks.

eCPC / enhanced Cost-per-click. Google looks at your conversions and attempts to bid up / bid down when you are most likely to get a conversion.

Maximize Conversions. Google automatically attempts to maximize your conversions.

Maximize Conversion Value. Google automatically attempts to maximize the monetary value of your conversions.

Target Impression Share. Google focuses on your ads showing whatever percent of the time you want to set.

Manual CPC. You manually set your bids.

Many vendors find the best success with a few tightly focused Ad Groups for their most profitable products (with high or aggressive bids) and a “catch-all” Ad Group for everything else. You can also prioritize your Ad Groups as high / medium / low. This is called “campaign priority” and helps Google understand which Ad Group should get first crack at a click. See <http://jmlinks.com/48y> for more information.

And, new for 2023, there are increasing complaints that if you set up a “Performance Max” campaign it will cannibalize your shopping campaigns so that they no longer run at all. Be careful, therefore, in combining shopping campaigns with “Performance Max.”

Throughout in your e-commerce analytics or Google Analytics, you want to monitor what Google Ads is doing and make sure that you’re spending less per click than you’re

making per click, taking into account multiple purchases by the same customer and the lifetime value of a customer. An important concept is to motivate your customers not only to buy a single product immediately but to sign up for your email list, follow you on social media, and bookmark your e-commerce store so that your Google Ads are not only bringing in “one-time sales” but also “long term customer relationships.”

» CONSIDER “PERFORMANCE MAX” (CAREFULLY)

Setting up a manual shopping campaign is not easy. The most difficult problem is first connecting Google Merchant Center to Google Ads and getting data to “flow” from your Merchant Center account into Google Ads. The second problem is making sure that dollar-based conversion data flows from your e-commerce platform into Google Ads, so that you not only track conversions but also correctly track conversion value. The third problem is focusing your ad spend towards those products that a) have sufficient search volume, b) generate the most profit, and/or c) generate the highest long-term customer value. It’s a lot, even for a human being with a fully functional frontal cortex!

“Performance Max” is a new fully AI-based campaign type. It’s Google’s solution to the complexities of setting up a “Smart Shopping” campaign. This new type isn’t terrible but it’s not perfect, either. It’s a bit of a mash-up between things that are good for you (“Conversions”) and things that are good for Google (“spurious clicks”).

To create a “Performance Max” campaign, you –

1. Select “Campaigns,” click the “Plus Button,” and Select “New Campaign.”
2. Select the advertising goal for your campaign.
3. Confirm the “conversion goal” for your campaign. This is the most important step as if you are running an e-commerce website you want your conversion goal to be a sale, and you must select your Google Merchant Center feed to connect that feed to your “Performance Max” campaign.
4. For your “Bidding” strategy select either “Maximize Conversions” or “Maximize Conversion Value,” with the former telling Google AI to try to get as many conversions as possible vs. your budget, and the latter telling Google AI to maximize ROAS (Return on Ad Spend), that is to maximize profitability.

Next, you'll build out your **ad groups** and **assets**. Here, you can select all the products in your feed (including product names and images). Or, you can mix and match this by uploading text, images, and even videos. Thus, in some situations, "Performance Max" will be like the "Shopping Campaigns" showing a headline, a domain name, an image and reviews. In others, it will be like "Display Campaigns" showing text, images, and videos.

The basics of "Performance Max" are –

Bidding Strategy. Choose either "maximize conversions" or "maximize conversion value." Note that for "Performance Max" to work, you **MUST** have conversions enabled and these must be conversions that actually matter to your business!

Ad Assets. These are your headlines, descriptions, sitelinks, telephone numbers, images, and videos. By adding all of these around a "theme" such as "cat boarding" vs. "cat toys," within an Ad Group you can better control how your ad assets reflect relevant ad themes. Thus, as we have seen with Search campaigns, have an Ad Group for each keyword group (that is, a group for "cat boarding" and another group for "cat toys.>").

Listing Groups. If you are using "Performance Max" as an alternative to shopping campaigns, you can dig into your "listing groups" and again have them reflect a them, so the "cat collars" would be in a "cat collars" group and the "cat toys" would be in a "cat toys" group. My recommendation is to be as tight as possible with "ad assets and "listing groups" inside them that match a keyword theme.

Audience Signals. Here is how you tell Google how to find people who are relevant. You can use demographic signals, topic signals, or keyword signals. I would not mix or match signals – it's better to have **ONE** theme **ONE** type of Ad Asset **ONE** Listing Group and **ONE** Audience signal all together than to mix and match.

You can read the Google help file on “Performance Max” at <http://jmlinks.com/58p>.

Be Careful

You have no control over which option is selected in terms of ad output unless you do NOT enter all the relevant assets. For example, if you don’t want to run video ads, don’t enter video assets. If you don’t want to run traditional ads, don’t enter the traditional ad assets such as headlines, descriptions, and images. Just enter only your product feed.

Be careful with “Branded Terms” and “Branded Campaigns” as reports are that “Performance Max” will surreptitiously populate your ads with branded information which will look “as if” they are converting better than they really are. People searching for your brand are obviously not the same as totally new customers. “Audience signals” can be used in addition to your product feed from Google Merchant Center such as remarketing signals, keyword signals, demographic signals, etc. **URL expansion** allows Google to expand the target URLs to all URLs in your website; Google AI will spider your website and attempt to match searcher intent with the best pages on your website.

Performance Max campaigns do not have very good reporting inside of Google Ads. However, if you have correctly connected Google Ads to Google Analytics you can look inside of Google Analytics and see much more detailed information on landings, bounce rates, conversions, and conversion costs. In that way, you can make an educated guess as to whether the ROI on your Performance Max campaigns is as good (or better) than your traditional shopping ads.

Indeed, due to cannibalization, I would recommend that you manually alternative your “traditional” Shopping Campaign(s) with your “Performance Max” Campaign(s) over several weeks. In that way, you will get a better sense of which performs better.

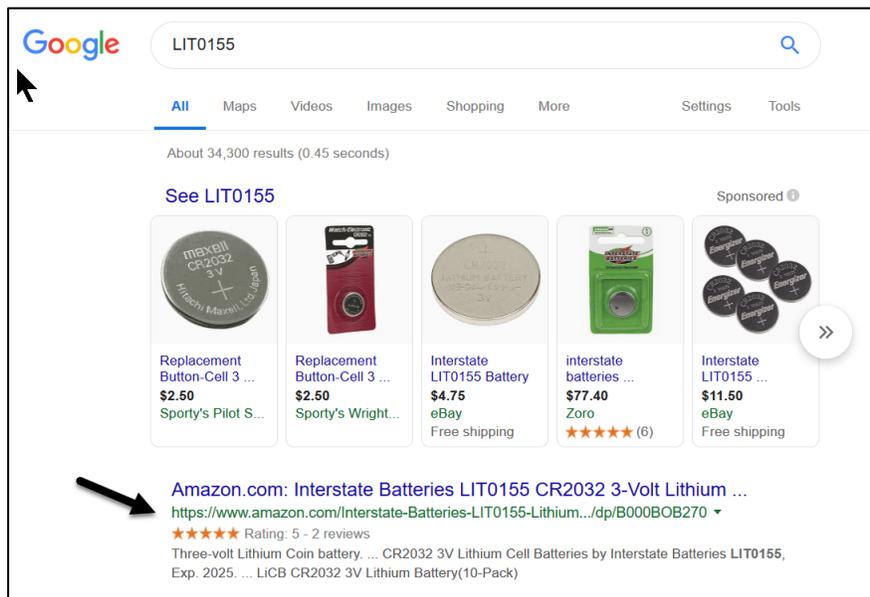
» WEIGH ALTERNATIVES TO GOOGLE SHOPPING: SEO & AMAZON

There are a couple of things that Google won’t tell you about Shopping Ads.

The SEO Alternative

First, if you can bring customers to your website via SEO (Search Engine Optimization), you can get traffic for free from Google. This is especially true for very niche searches. For example, many consumer electronics have very specific batteries. When these batteries die, consumers will often pop the battery out of the device and then Google by battery type or model number to find an easy replacement to buy.

For example, *LIT0155* is a specific type of battery. If you Google *LIT0155*, you'll see product listings across the top and then Amazon prominently in the first organic or free spot (achieved via SEO). Here's a screenshot:



Oftentimes, you can get your own e-commerce site to rank for these very specific, niche keyword searches and capture the click – for free – from Google. The number three organic result on this search, for instance, is Zoro.com. Here's a screenshot:



So, while you might not rank on Google for the generic search for “lithium batteries,” you might be able to rank via SEO for the very specific search “LIT0155” or piggyback on Amazon’s very strong SEO. It’s easier to rank for free for these very niche searches if you properly optimize your e-commerce website for search engine optimization.

The Amazon Alternative

Secondarily, more and more consumers go directly to Amazon for product searches. If you sell your products via Amazon, you want to be sure to give equal attention to your Amazon strategy through SEO for Amazon and/or advertising on Amazon. Amazon is the #1 product search site, after all, and way ahead of Google for many product categories.

To sell on Amazon and/or advertise your products on Amazon, here are your steps:

1. Sign up for an **Amazon Seller Account** at <https://sellercentral.amazon.com/>.
2. **List your products** on Amazon, optimizing their product name, description, photo, and reviews.
 - a. Amazon also has a new option of an Amazon Storefront, allowing you to essentially set up an e-commerce website for your business or brand directly on Amazon. Learn more at <http://jmlinks.com/58n>.
3. If desired use, use *FBA* (fulfillment by Amazon) to have Amazon manage the shipping of your products directly. To learn more about FBA, visit <http://jmlinks.com/48z>.

Once you’ve registered for an Amazon Seller Account and/or set up your storefront, Amazon has many advertising opportunities. Amazon is keen to sell ads (just like Google), and with its position as #1 in product search, Amazon is the fastest-growing ad platform on the Internet today. There is no doubt that it will soon rival Google, YouTube, and Facebook as one of the big boys in digital ads.

You can learn about Amazon advertising at <https://advertising.amazon.com/>. At the top left, browse “Sponsored Products,” “Sponsored Brands,” and “Stores” to explore opportunities. It’s very similar to Google Shopping Campaigns, except that there is no need for a data feed since that’s already “inside” Amazon by design. The big issues are:

Keywords. You can advertise by keywords, similar to on regular Google Ads. Select “cat toys,” “cat collars,” or “cat food,” for example and link that to your ads. Like Google Ads, Amazon offers broad match, phrase match, and exact match options.

Artificial Intelligence. Alternatively, you can let Amazon AI think for you, and just let it place your ads where it thinks they’ll do the best. This is similar to Google’s “Smart Campaigns” option.

You can run both types of ads and then compare the results to determine the best return on investment. Similar to Google, however, be aware that there are both “free” and “paid” results on Amazon, so in some instances, you may already rank “for free” and be poorly served by advertising on a specific keyword or category. If you do, you might “cannibalize” your revenue, with users clicking on ads instead of the free listings.

Here’s a screenshot of ads on Amazon for “cat collars:”

amazon prime

All cat collars

See delivery speeds to Fremont 94536

Buy Again Your Pickup Location Browsing History Zach's Amazon.com Today's Deals Gift Cards Whole Foods Regi

1-24 of over 10,000 results for Pet Supplies : "cat collars"

prime | FREE One-Day
Get FREE One-Day Shipping on qualifying orders over \$35

Show results for

AmazonFresh
 fresh

< Any Category
Pet Supplies
Cat Collars
Basic Dog Collars
Cat Collar Accessories
Cat Collar Bells

SPONSORED BY BEMIX PETS
Try our reflective cat collars, 100% breakaway
Shop now >

Reflective Cat Collar with Bell, Set of 3 OR 6, Solid & Safe Collars for Cats, Nylon, Mixed C...
★★★★☆ 1,220
prime

Showing results in Pet Supplies. Show instead results in All Departments.

Notice how ads are designated as “sponsored.” Also, note how Amazon is now placing ads underneath products, as for example:

Sponsored products related to this item

Custom Catch Personalized Dog Collar - Engraved Soft Leather in XS, Small, Medium o...
★★★★☆ 3426
\$14.95

Vcalabashor Custom Cat Collars with Jingle Bell/Stainless Steel No Noise Slide-On T...
★★★★☆ 34
\$9.99

I recommend you run on both Amazon as well as on Google and compare the ROI of each. You may find that Amazon has more volume than Google and a higher ROI (or not). But don't fail to consider Amazon.

»»» **DELIVERABLE: A SHOPPING CAMPAIGNS WORKSHEET**

It's time for your **DELIVERABLE**: a completed **Shopping Campaigns Worksheet**. If your company sells products online either via e-commerce or possibly via Amazon, you need to consider Google Shopping Campaigns. Use the worksheet to outline your strategy. For the **worksheet**, go to **<http://jmlinks.com/23googleads>**, then re-enter the password, "23googleads," and click on the link to the "Shopping Campaigns Worksheet."



8

YOUTUBE

YouTube, owned by Google, is the #1 video site on the Internet and is often touted as the #2 search engine, larger than Bing or Yahoo. Everyone – including your customers – uses YouTube in some capacity, which can make it an incredible advertising opportunity. While you can use text ads and placement targeting via Search or Display to get your text ad on YouTube, you'll do far better if you produce a short video on your product or service and then advertise that video on YouTube. This Chapter focuses on video advertising opportunities on YouTube. (Refer to my *Social Media Marketing Workbook* at <http://jmlinks.com/smm> for a full discussion of free opportunities on YouTube).

Let's get started!

TO-DO LIST:

- » Research Your Customers on YouTube
- » Set up a Channel on YouTube
- » Upload a Video to Your Channel
- » Enable Clickable Links in Your Video
- » Set Up a YouTube Campaign in Google Ads
- » Target Your Ad: Video Targeting
- » Evaluate Your YouTube Advertising Performance
- »» Deliverable: YouTube Advertising Worksheet

» RESEARCH YOUR CUSTOMERS ON YOUTUBE

To see if YouTube could be good for you, first, do some **research** to decide whether your target customers are “on” YouTube, and, if so, what they are doing. Everyone is “on YouTube” sooner or later, but in general, you’ll get the best advertising performance if one of the following criteria apply:

- **Search.** People are likely to search YouTube pro-actively. “How to” searches such as “How to get a puppy to stop biting” or “How to truss a turkey” are very popular on YouTube, so if your company produces something that explains “how to do something,” or if your market is adjacent to “how to” searches, then YouTube can be good. An example would be a cooking gadget company that could advertise on “how to” cooking videos, a dog training company that can advertise on “how to” training videos for dogs, or a physical fitness supplement company that can advertise on “how to” videos for crunches or pushups

ARE YOUR CUSTOMERS ON YOUTUBE?

- **Browse.** People are going onto YouTube to watch videos on thousands of topics, and you can demographically target them. For example, let’s say you marketed Joe Biden paraphernalia, you’d know that many Biden supporters and political junkies go on YouTube to keep up with politics and watch certain kinds of videos or certain kinds of channels. (The same would go for political junkies of the Right). Or, suppose you’re targeting young adults, and you know that they are big consumers of music videos. It can also be very specific such as targeting fishermen / women who watch YouTube for fishing videos (as there are TONS of fishing / outdoors videos on YouTube).

Before you decide to set up a YouTube Channel or advertise, you thus should **research** whether your target customers are on YouTube, and if so, whether they are *searching* and/or *browsing* video content.

- If they're **searching**, what types of keyword searches are they doing?
- If they're **browsing**, what type of videos are they watching? Which channels on YouTube are the most relevant and popular?

There's an interesting third way to use YouTube: **remarketing**. Just as on the Google Display Network, you can "remarket" to people via YouTube. It works like this:

1. People visit your website, attracted by your marketing efforts which could be SEO, advertising on social media platforms like Facebook or Twitter, or ads on regular Google.
2. When they hit your website, Google places a "cookie" on their browser via its tracking code.
3. You enable Google remarketing as an "audience" in Google Ads.
4. You create a video ad explaining how awesome your company, product, and/or service is.
5. When your target customers visit Google, Google "remarkets" to them by showing them your video ad based on their previous visit to your website.

In this way, it doesn't really matter what they are doing on YouTube, whether it's watching "how to" videos on "how to truss a turkey" or just browsing crazy cat videos or the latest over-the-top "Cardi B" video. Google simply matches their previous visit to your website and shows them your ad either before, during, after, or alongside the video they are watching. (I will discuss the details of "remarketing" on YouTube in a moment).

In sum, there are **three reasons** to advertise on YouTube: 1) your customers are searching for topics close to your product or service, 2) they are watching videos or channels close to your product or service, or 3) you have enough web traffic to remarket to them on YouTube, regardless of what they are doing on YouTube.

As you investigate YouTube, I recommend you also browse their help file at <http://jmlinks.com/49x> and their splashy, "Why Advertise on YouTube?" site at <http://jmlinks.com/49y>.

Finding Relevant Content on YouTube

Unfortunately, there isn't a YouTube-only keyword discovery tool (like the Google Ads Keyword Planner) that focuses only on search volumes on YouTube. You have to use the generic Google Ads Keyword Planner.

Return to Google Ads, and go to *Tools > Keyword Planner*. Generally, if a search has a “how to” flavor to it and it's visual, you can bet it will be searched on YouTube. Secondly, go to YouTube, and just start typing. Also, pay attention to YouTube's own autocomplete by going to YouTube and typing in relevant keywords and search queries. Here's a screenshot for “bass fishing” autocomplete on YouTube:



Revisit your Keyword Worksheet and add a tab for YouTube. Brainstorm core keywords and ad groups that reflect how people search YouTube. As you browse videos that pop up on YouTube for searches relevant to your product or service, pay attention

to the **view count** of videos. For example, if you search on YouTube for *bass fishing*, you'll see videos like this one at or near the top:



You'll notice that it has 6.1 million views, which means a lot of people are searching for and watching videos on **bass fishing**. If you see many videos relevant to your product or service with (relatively) high view counts, you know that YouTube may be a great marketing tool for you. If not, not. "Bass fishing" is an example of the type of content in which a focused audience goes to YouTube to watch engaging content and can thus be effectively targeted via video advertising. Thus, you have two basic scenarios on YouTube:

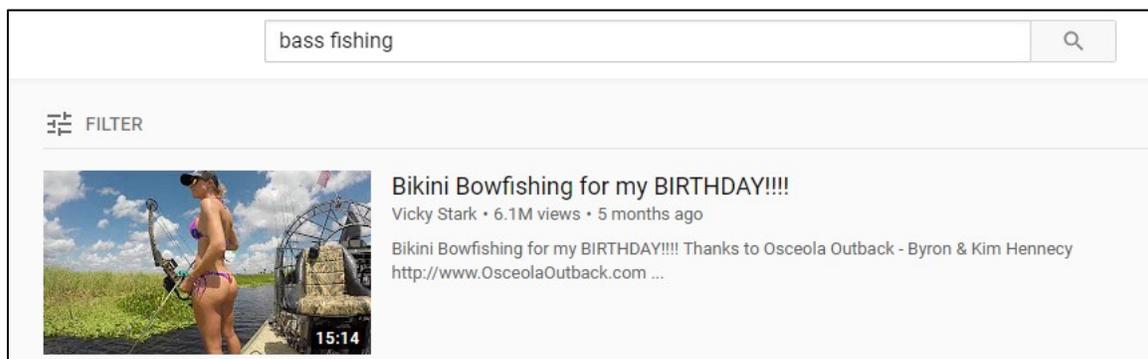
1. Customers pro-actively go to YouTube and **search directly**, usually for "how to" videos such as "how to bass fish at night" or "how to bass fish with frogs."
2. Customers have a passion, and they go to YouTube to watch "helpful experts" and their "**community**" via video. "Bass fishing" is an example of this type of "YouTube community."

Filter YouTube Search Results

As you research whether or not your customers are on video, enter keywords and click the search icon. You can also filter YouTube search results as follows:

1. Type in a keyword and click the search icon (magnifying glass)
2. Click “Filters” on the left.
3. Select “View count” on the right to see videos with the highest views.
4. Click “Filter” on the left, again.
5. Click “This year” on the left.

In this way, you can find the highest viewed, most recent videos on YouTube for a topic. Using our “bass fishing” example, I filtered by “view count” and “this year,” and came up with the following video at 6.1 million views:



Evidently, videos of hot-looking women in bikinis fishing for bass are VERY popular on YouTube! Be that as it may, you can easily see that lots of folks are watching fishing videos on YouTube, and if you sell fishing tours, fishing lessons, fishing gear, etc., YouTube would be a very powerful venue to place your ads.

Finding Video Volume for Browsing

You may decide that **search** isn't that important on YouTube, but you do suspect that people are **browsing** and watching videos on YouTube. If, per my example above, you see a lot of videos that are keyword-relevant that have high view counts, then you know that there's a lot of *searching* and probably *browsing* of video content going on.

BROWSE AND VIEW VIDEOS TO DETERMINE VIDEO VOLUME

Another way to research whether YouTube might be for you is to scroll down on the left column, to *Browse Channels*. (If you can't find it, visit <http://jmlinks.com/52n>, as YouTube in the infinite wisdom of Google AI hides it when you're already logged in). Via *Browse Channels*, you'll see broad categories of videos such as *Beauty & Fashion* or *Sports*. You can click into individual channels to browse popular videos and get a sense of the channel subscribers. These are much broader categories than searching by keywords, but they can give you a sense of whether or not your target customers are active on YouTube. Inside of *Browse Channels*, you can also click on "Popular on YouTube" to see the currently most popular videos. And, you can also click on *Trending* on the left column to see what's trending.

However, as you browse YouTube, don't fall into the trap of assuming that you have to be in a "mega" industry like pop music to make it work for you. Many people watch videos in very nichey ways on YouTube, such as quilters who want to learn how to quilt, teenagers who want to put on eye makeup, and fishermen (and women) who want to learn how to be better anglers, so "riches are in the niches" on YouTube just as on Google.

Your research process is:

Are my customers watching YouTube videos in a targeted way?

If so, what is the target? What keywords, channels, and video topics?

Make a list of channels, videos, and keywords that identify "where your customers" hang out on YouTube. This will become your targeting strategy. In addition, remember that you can always "remarket" to persons watching YouTube regardless of what content they are consuming. Pretty much everyone uses YouTube, so remarketing is a good "catch all" way to advertise on the platform.

» SET UP A CHANNEL ON YOUTUBE

Assuming you've decided that, yes, your customers are on YouTube and, yes, you'd like to give YouTube advertising a go, the next required step is to set up a Channel for your company if you haven't already. The easiest way to do this is to sign up for a Google Account via Gmail. I'd recommend that you use the **same** email that you use to login to Google Ads, if at all possible. (You can and should link your YouTube and Google Ads account (see <http://jmlinks.com/41k>)). Using the same email address for both is the easiest and best, however. Alternatively, you can also create a brand-new YouTube account.

Here are your steps:

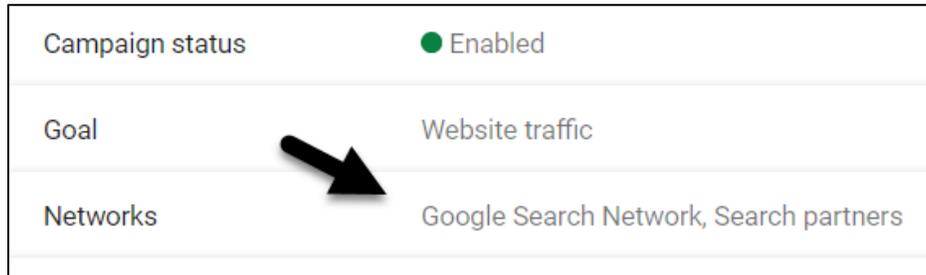
1. Go to <https://www.gmail.com/> and sign up for a Gmail account, if you don't have a Gmail you already use for corporate stuff on Google.
2. Alternatively, you can set up a Google account and link this to any email such as **yourname@company.com**. To do this, read the help file at <http://jmlinks.com/25j>.
3. Next, visit <http://jmlinks.com/25k> and follow the instructions to "Create a channel with a business or other name."

Populate your Channel with a nice-looking cover photo, icon, and fill out the contact information on the "About" tab. You now have a YouTube channel!

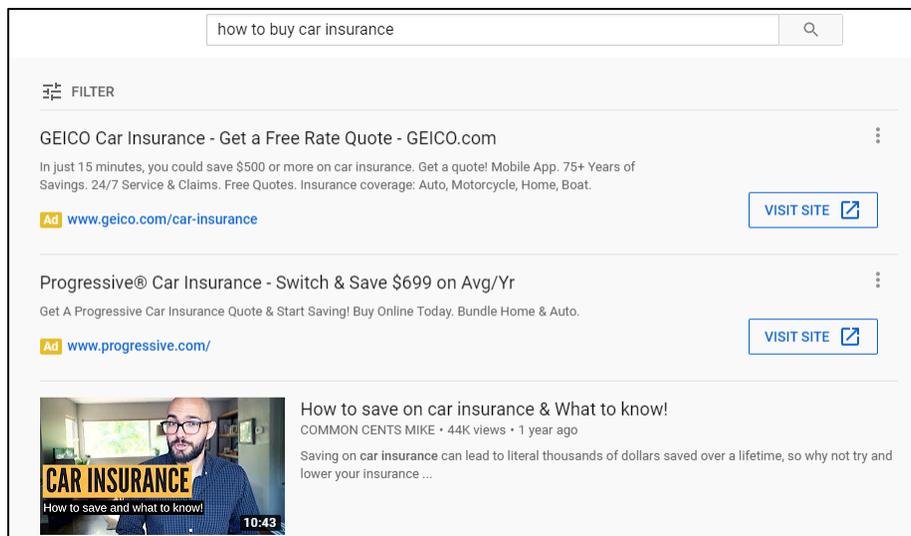
» UPLOAD A VIDEO TO YOUR CHANNEL

Before we dive into direct video advertising, allow me to point out two "lazy man" ways of advertising on YouTube without actually creating a video. The first way is to enable "Search Partners" in a Google search campaign. This is an effective way to reach people who may be searching directly on YouTube, especially for "how to" searches such as "how to Bass fish for beginners" or "how to train your cat to do such-and-such." Inside of a Search Campaign, click on Settings on the left, and then look at Networks in the

middle. If you want to run on YouTube, you should see “Google Search Network, Search Partners.” Here’s a screenshot:



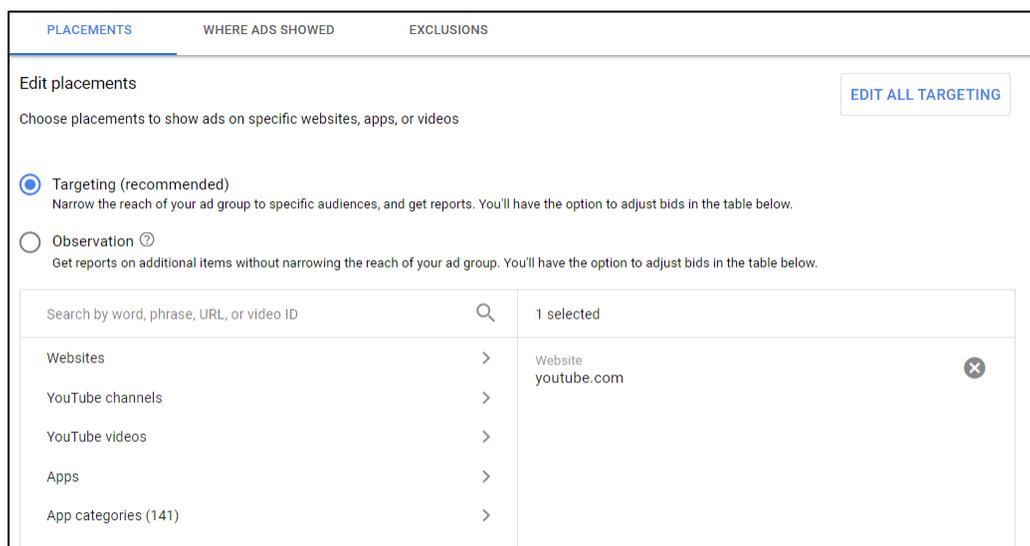
Unfortunately, Google does not break out where your ads appear for Search Campaigns, but you can create a very focused group with key phrases such as “how to buy car insurance.” Here’s an example showing Google Search (Partner) ads showing on a YouTube search for “how to buy car insurance:”



The upside is your search ads can show on YouTube if you enable “Search Partners.” The downside is they will also show, by default, on second-rate search sites such as Comcast.net, Yelp.com, etc., and often generate low-quality clicks. You also get zero

break-out reporting. Another upside is that Google will monitor user search behavior and sometimes show these ads on YouTube based on past search behavior on Google.

The second “lazy man” way to get your ads on YouTube is to use the Google Display Network and use “Placement targeting.” Here, essentially you define YouTube as a “placement” for a Display Network Campaign. Create a specific Ad Group in a Display Network Campaign, then click into Placements, and set “youtube.com” as a target placement. Here’s a screenshot:



You can then add on additional placement criteria such as keywords, audiences, etc., to get text ads to show on YouTube. Read the Google Ads help file at <http://jmlinks.com/27e>). The best ads are short and to the point, quickly explaining who you are, what you have to offer, and why a person on YouTube should care.

Creating a Video Ad for YouTube

Leaving aside these two “lazy man” ways of getting your ads on YouTube, the best way to get your advertising message on YouTube is to create a video ad. You need at least one video (posted to your Channel) to be able to take full advantage of YouTube’s

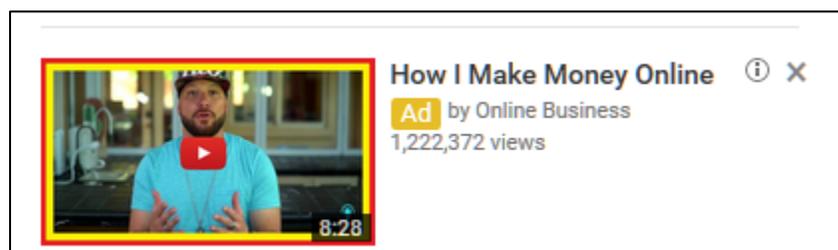
features. You need to shoot a short video about your company, product, or service. The best ones are less than 30 seconds, short and to the point, and lead to a desired action.

The sky's the limit on video production. You can Google "videographers" in your local area to find people to help you shoot a short video. You can use tools such as Camtasia, iMovie, and Windows Movie Maker. You can use services such as Fiverr to find video editors, and you can literally just Google "make a video ad for YouTube" and read the ads and organic results.

Once you've created your video ad, log in to your YouTube channel, and in the top right, click on the upwards arrow to upload the video. Be ready with:

- A short video title.
- A short video description, including an *http://* link to your website for more information.
- Keywords to "tag" your video.

Create a "Custom Thumbnail" by clicking "Custom Thumbnail" (this may not show on a brand-new Channel). I recommend a simple, easy-to-read Video Thumbnail as this will show up as your ad on YouTube search and as a recommended video. Here's a screenshot of how a video ad looks on YouTube search:



You can read the official YouTube help on how to create custom thumbnails at <http://jmlinks.com/27f>.

Once the video is uploaded and approved by YouTube, find your video, you'll need to copy / paste the URL at the top of the page. It should look something like <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CRB6w4Dmjdw>.

What Makes a Good YouTube Ad?

What makes a good video ad on YouTube? They say that imitation is the highest form of flattery, so here are three video ads I recommend you add to your research. As you watch them, try to “reverse engineer” them in terms of their story arc:

1. Your Soap is Sh*t? at <http://jmlinks.com/52q>.
2. Create Photo Books from Your Phone at <http://jmlinks.com/52r>.
3. This Unicorn Changed the Way I Poop at <http://jmlinks.com/52s>.

In each case, notice:

- The first few seconds of the video aggressively catch your attention.
- The video then “tells a story” that connects a “problem” or “desire” that the viewer has with the “solution” the vendor has.
- The videos have an obvious “call to action” embedded in the video narrative, plus use YouTube features such as “video cards” (top right), and clickable links (in the video description) to make it easy for the user to take action.
- The videos use emotion, especially humor, to engage the viewer and even encourage them to like, comment, or share the video to friends and family.

The most important aspect of video creation is the aggressive “hook” at the beginning to get the viewer to agree to watch the video, the clear call to action, and the narrative story that both entertains and educates the viewer. For a more sober explanation of what makes great video ads, you can watch a short video on the “ABCD” method of planning a great video ad at <http://jmlinks.com/52p>. Only Google could make

something as fun as video ads boring, but they succeeded. Toggle between Claire Kelly's dreadfully boring but useful synopsis and the three video ads listed above to get your ideas flowing.

To succeed on YouTube, you must create short, compelling videos.

A wise YouTuber once told me to think “street performance art” and not “movie” when making a good video for YouTube. Here's what he meant:

1. **Make the video short.** People are “in a hurry” to something else, and they aren't signing up for a long movie format. Short is better than long. I'd recommend one minute or less.
2. **Make it simple.** Use 6th grade English, not Ph.D. level English. Be very succinct and to the point. Don't beat around the bush.
3. **Make it (visually) provocative.** You have to get them to STOP and take a look. They're not signing up for the latest Meryl Streep movie in which they pay their money, get their popcorn, and are willing to sit through twenty minutes of previews and some long and pompous introduction before getting to the action. You have to get them to STOP by nearly shouting: HEY LOOK AT ME! THIS IS WEIRD, CRAZY, INCREDIBLE (without destroying your brand image).
4. **Have a defined next step or action.** What do you want them to do after they watch your video? A probate attorney, for example, wants to explain a little about probate and then get them to click FROM the video TO her website, where she wants them to register for a FREE CONSULT. She'd literally say something in the video like, “Probate is crazy complicated, so click the link in the video description to request a FREE CONSULT with my office!”

And, of course, a good video is **good-looking**. But here, you don't really need a slick, professionally produced video as much as a video that is **authentic**. People want to know that you really “know your stuff” about probate law, for example, and that trust

that you create gets them to take the next action. They really don't care about your hairstyle or the lighting, though, good sound is a must.

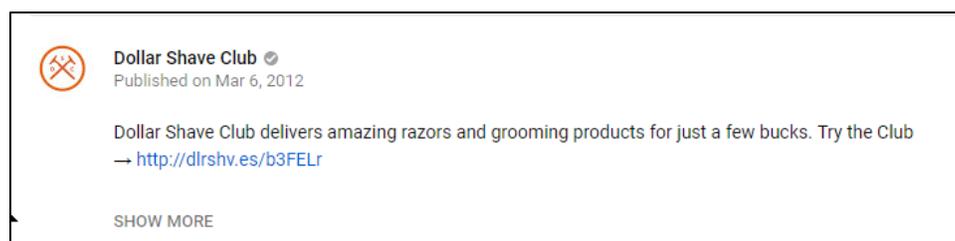
Go search and browse YouTube by keywords relevant to your business and watch some ads that are close to what you and your company would like to promote. Pay attention to how the ads a) grab your attention quickly, b) communicate their value proposition, and c) lead to a "next step" or "desired action."

Once you have your video ad produced, you can upload your video to your Channel. Give your video a short, to-the-point headline and write a short, to-the-point description. Be sure to have a good-looking and catchy thumbnail image.

» ENABLE CLICKABLE LINKS IN YOUR VIDEO

Be sure to include a clickable link in your video description, preferably right after the first sentence, and in the format of **<http://www.yourwebsite.com/>**. It MUST be in the *http://* format to be clickable! You can then reference the link for "more information" in your short video ad, such as telling the viewer, "Click on the link in the video description to learn more!"

Here's a screenshot from the famous Dollar Shave Club video's description, showing the clickable link from the video description to their website:



That link - **<http://dlrshv.es/b3FELr>** - gets the user to the Dollar Shave website with just one easy click, so you gotta have one in your video!

Create Cards in Your Video

“Cards” on YouTube are yet another way to drive traffic from your video to your website. Cards are clickable links in the video itself. In order to create YouTube cards that link to your website, however, you must link your YouTube account to your website, and you must join the YouTube Partners Program. (See <http://jmlinks.com/49u>). This requires more than 1,000 subscribers, so it will not be available if you have a brand-new account.

To add a “card” to your video:

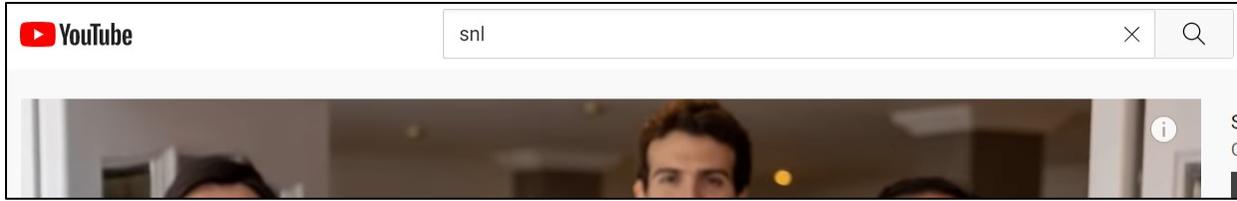
- Click on your logo on the top right of YouTube, when you are logged into your Channel.
- Click on YouTube Studio, and then click on Videos on the left-hand menu.
- Find your video and click edit.

“CARDS” ARE CLICKABLE LINKS IN A VIDEO

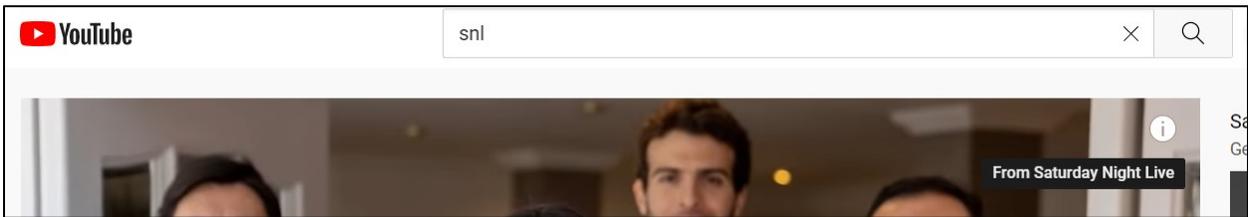
Click on “Cards” on the right bottom to enable YouTube’s “Cards” feature, and insert text, an image, and a link to your website URL.

VIDEO. You can read the official Google help file on YouTube cards at <http://jmlinks.com/27h>.

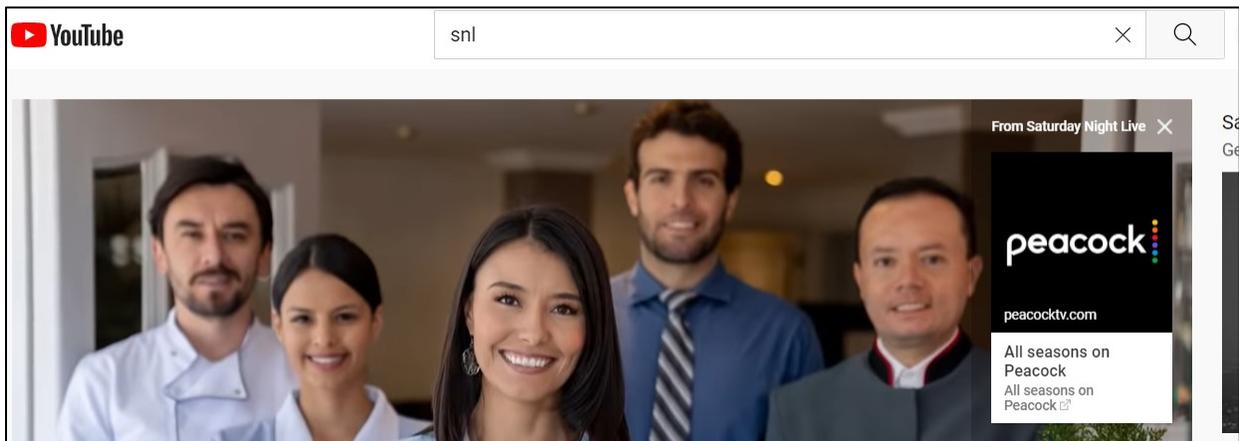
When in use, cards appear in the top right of a YouTube video and “pop out” when they appear. Users can click on them to learn more and then click from the card to your website. Here are three screenshots showing the card in the top right corner (the little “i”) (see: <http://jmlinks.com/58e>):



And here's what viewers see if they click on the "i," (as well as when it first pops out):



And then:



At this point, you've created a Channel, uploaded a video advertising your company or product, and inserted *http://* links in the video description and at least one card for more information.

Just remember as you set up videos and/or video ads on YouTube to be on the lookout for where it will allow you to put clickable links: in the video description, in cards, and in end screens. All options are not always available, so just be aware that you may or may not see them. In some cases, you have to qualify as a “YouTube Partner” and/or be verified to enable a feature.

» SET UP A YOUTUBE CAMPAIGN IN GOOGLE ADS

Now that you have a Channel and a video ad, it’s time to set up YouTube advertising. You do this inside of Google Ads. To create a video campaign, click the blue circle to create a Campaign. Select *Create a campaign without a goal’s guidance*, and then select *Video* as the campaign type. Select *Custom video campaign* to enable all features. Before you dive into campaign setup, however, understand the basic ad types on YouTube:

Custom Video Campaign. This type allows you all the available formats, so it is generally recommended. The formats are skippable in-stream ads, bumper ads, or video discovery ads. Let’s go over what each means.

Skippable Instream Ads. This is the most common type. These are video ads that appear before the desired video. The user is forced to watch the ad for five seconds and then can click into the ad or click “skip.” These are generally created in what YouTube calls “**TrueView** ad format,” meaning you pay, if and only if a person clicks thru on your ad, watches more than 30 seconds, or half of the video ad (whichever is lesser).

There is also a TrueView for action or TrueView for Shopping, which are subtypes of this format that allow a prominent Call to Action (CTA). To learn more about TrueView for action, visit <http://jmlinks.com/49v>.

In-feed Video Ads. These appear only on YouTube and only start when a user pro-actively clicks. These appear vis-à-vis searches on YouTube and/or as related videos.

Non-skippable In-stream Ads and **Bumper Ads** are similar to the above but non-skippable by the user. They must be fifteen seconds or less. These are mainly used by big, annoying brands that still believe the best way to advertise is to force people to watch our messages as on old-style television.

Other Formats. YouTube also offers other formats such as Outstream Ads (on partner sites) and Bumper ads (short six-second ads that are non-skippable), but these are generally used only by very large advertisers who want to use YouTube like television for branding purposes. See <http://jmlinks.com/49w> to learn about all available formats.

Most of us will use the *skippable instream ads* or *in-feed video ads*. For the former, be sure to create a short video that has a very catchy “hook” in the first five seconds. Even better, use “attract / repel” strategy in those first few seconds, trying to attract relevant customers and repel non-customers. After all, if they skip your ad, you do not pay for them – so you want non-customers to skip and customers to watch (and then click to your desired action, such as a click to your website). See <http://jmlinks.com/41g> for a full explanation.

For the video discovery ad format, you want a catchy video thumbnail and engaging video that leads towards your call-to-action. These are driven by search, so create videos that respond to YouTube search queries.

Return to Campaigns, as you set up your campaign, follow these steps:

Campaign Name. Give it an easy-to-remember name such as *Cat Boarding: YouTube*. I recommend you put YouTube at the end so you can see at an instant that this is a YouTube Campaign and not a Search or Display Campaign.

Bidding Strategy. Select a strategy. Note that you generally pay per view (CPV) on YouTube. In some types of campaigns, you can use target CPM (Cost Per Thousand), Viewable CPM, Target CPA (if it is a TrueView for action), and Maximize Conversion (again, if it is a TrueView for Action).

Budget and Dates. Set up a daily budget. Just as on regular Google Ads, you specify a maximum spend per day.

Networks. Here, you need to uncheck a YouTube “gotcha,” the Display Network –

YouTube search results. Use this option to show your video when someone pro-actively searches on YouTube. (*Must be used in combination with the next option*).

YouTube videos. Use this option to show your video ad to people who are in “browse” mode, that is, before, after, or alongside videos as people browse. (*Must be used in combination with the first option*).

Video Partners in the Display Network. I do not recommend this option, so uncheck it. Here you have the same problem with click fraud and nefarious sites as on the Google Display Network.

Location. One of the best features of YouTube is location targeting. If you are a Boston-based business, for example, you can target people watching videos in and around Boston. If you are national, choose USA.

Ad Group. Create an Ad Group, again reflecting your product or service (keyword) organization such as *Cat Boarding*, *Cat Grooming*, or *Cat Toys* and name it appropriately as, for example, *Cat Boarding: YouTube Discovery – Keywords*, or *Cat Boarding: YouTube Instream – Remarketing*.

Bid. Set a bid per view. Note that on YouTube, you generally pay by the *video view*, not by the click. YouTube uses what they call “TrueView” pricing, meaning you pay if, and only if, the user watches your video for at least thirty seconds or to the end of the video, or if it’s a search ad if they click on the video and/or an action.

Content. These are marked as *Topics*, *Placements*, and *Display/Video keywords*. Generally, use the keywords option. As on the Display Networks, keywords are loosey-goosey on YouTube, not tight as on Google search. (More on this below).

Create your video ad. Enter the exact URL of the video you want to promote here. Select a format such as *In-stream ad* or *bumper ad* (“browse mode”) or *video*

discovery (“search mode”) ad. Write a headline and description. Select a landing page; I recommend that you use *Your YouTube channel page*.

Again, similarly to regular Google Ads, Google stupidly makes you go through every step, even if you are not ready. Once a *Campaign > Ad Group* is created, however, you can then insert new Ad Groups and Ads much more easily, adjust targeting, etc. Just go through the steps to create your first *Campaign > Ad Group > Ad*, and then it will be much easier to manage. What’s stupid about this is you only have to do this the very first time, and then from then on, it’s much easier to manage.

At the end of this process, you should have your first *Campaign > Ad Group > Ad*. Pause it so that it doesn’t start running until you are completely ready. You can then simply add a new Ad Group to a Campaign to create a new ad. Group your campaigns by themes, geotargets, and budgets.

Location Targeting on YouTube

Geotargeting on YouTube is one of its most valuable features. For example, Jason’s Cat Boarding Emporium could target people watching “cat videos” who also live in San Francisco. Or a pet store could target people watching videos on dog and puppy training who live in Oakland, Berkeley, or El Cerrito, California.

LOCATION TARGETING WORKS IN YOUTUBE

Geotargeting makes it easy to get your ads right to people near your local business and is one of the most exciting features in YouTube advertising. Accordingly, select your Geotarget (e.g., United States, or drill down to a specific city or state). You do this by being at the Campaign level and selecting *Locations* on the left. For example, since I am only interested in people who live in San Francisco and have cats, I could target cat videos on YouTube, but by setting the geotarget to San Francisco, only people who are physically in San Francisco would see my ads. This is a fantastic feature of YouTube

advertising as you can have your cake and eat it too – meaning target very broad video types (e.g., “cat videos”) but to very narrow locations (e.g., “San Francisco”).

Mobile Bid Adjustment

You can also control your mobile bid adjustment on YouTube, if you do / do not want to run on phones and/or tablets. Once you’ve created a Campaign, click on *Devices* on the left and configure your device targeting by setting bid adjustments up or down. An example here might be a probate attorney who would figure that the most serious people would be watching her videos on their computers, and so she would set a bid adjustment of negative 100% for mobile. If you think there is a strong pattern between mobile vs. desktop vs. tablet, this is yet another useful YouTube targeting refinement.

» TARGET YOUR AD: VIDEO TARGETING

Now that you’ve inputted your ad to YouTube, it’s time to dive into targeting options. Targeting “lives” at the Ad Group level, just as in regular Google Ads. Click into your Ad Group on YouTube, and you’ll see targeting options on the left under *Content*. As with the Display Network, it’s a best practice not to mix and match targeting options (though you can, in some situations).

Targeting options are a bit messy. When you first create a new Ad Group, you’ll see one group called “People: who you want to reach” and a second group called “Content: where you want your ads to show.” Here’s a screenshot:

People: who you want to reach		
Define your Audience segments, Demographic, or both		
Demographics	Any age, Any gender, Any parental status, Any household income	▼
Audience segments	Any audience segment	▼
Content: where you want your ads to show		
Narrow your reach with Keywords, Topics, or Placements		
Keywords	Any keyword	▼
Topics	Any topic	▼
Placements	Any placement	▼

Once you have defined targeting, you can only get back to it via being “in” your Ad Group and then clicking *Audience > Edit Audience Segments* or *Content > Topics, Placements, Display/ Video keywords* on the left menu.

Let’s review targeting options.

People who you want to reach:

Demographics. These are relatively “permanent” attributes of your target audience such as age, gender, parenting status, or household income.

Audience Segments. Click here and then “Search” or “Browse.” This is the same as targeting on the Google Display Network, and you can target people based on affinities, what they are “in the market” for, use remarketing, etc. Here is where you would set up a “remarketing” target or a group of people who are “in the market” for a car.

Content:

Keywords. Here, similar to the Display Network, enter **keywords** that you think someone might be searching on YouTube and/or that might describe similar or adjacent videos. **This is the most common and most powerful way to target your videos.** In our *Cat Boarding* example, we’d enter keywords like *cats, cat boarding, cat care, kittens*, etc. Google has taken away a lot of YouTube targeting

features, so I wouldn't worry about plus signs, quote marks, etc., just enter keywords and remember that, as on the Display Network, the targeting is pretty loose on YouTube. Note that Google uses how they search not only on YouTube but on Google for keyword-based targeting.

Topics. These are broad content topic areas such as “autos and vehicles,” “finance,” or “beauty and fitness.”

Placements. Here you can search by keyword and identify channels and videos that are relevant to your customer. As on the GDN, you can create a custom list of placements and then place your ads only on these venues.

Do not mix and match targeting! The best practice is to have one, and only one, targeting method per Ad Group. Otherwise, Google will choose to be as broad as possible and often place your videos on very poorly-matched content. In fact, Google has a strong preference for high-volume videos; if you are not careful, your ads will appear on high video count but low-quality content.

» EVALUATE YOUR YOUTUBE ADVERTISING PERFORMANCE

Once your ads are up and running on YouTube, evaluating the performance is similar to the rest of the Display Network. Click into an Ad Group. Then, along the left column, click:

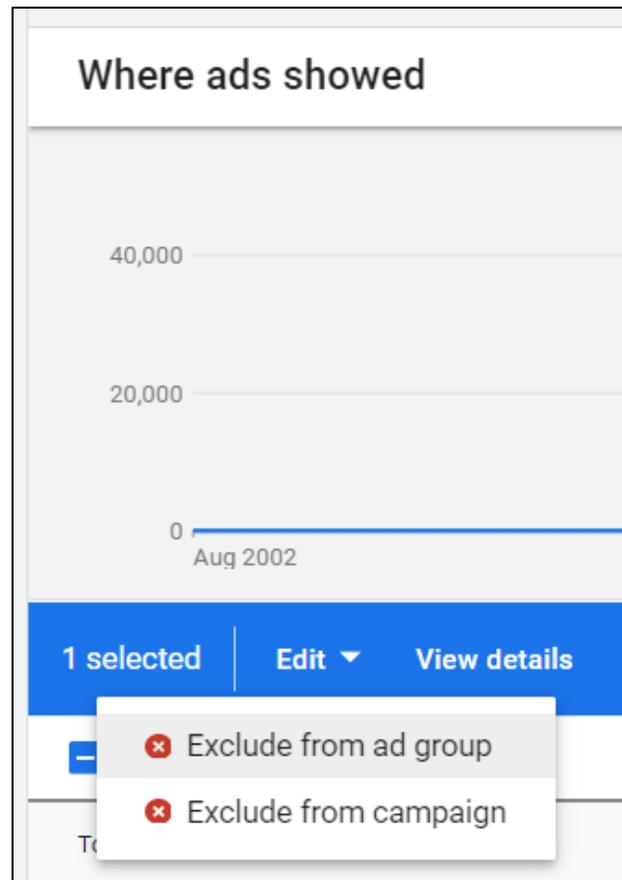
Content > Display/Video Keywords to browse the keywords that triggered your video ads. As elsewhere on Google Ads, you can create “negative keywords” to block your ad.

Content > Topics to browse which topics triggered your video ads.

Content > Placements and then **Where ads Showed** to see placements.

Audiences to learn characteristics about the audiences reached. Drill down into “Audience segments,” “demographics,” and “exclusions” for more details.

Placements and then *Where ads showed* is very important. You want to monitor where Google is placing your ads and then exclude videos and/or channels that are not good quality. For any placement, you can click the box to the left and then exclude it if it is nefarious. Here's a screenshot:



As on the Display Network, you can block your ad from placements. I **strongly** recommend you monitor “where ads showed” and look for nefarious channels and videos! Sometimes **one single placement** will consume 80% of your clicks and budget yet be low quality!

You can also go into Google Analytics to view clicks coming from YouTube to evaluate what happens “after the click.” To do this, create a Segment by clicking on the *Segments* tab in Google Analytics, and then *Custom*, and source as *YouTube.com*.

And within your YouTube Channel, you can click into *Creator Studio > Analytics* to browse information about your videos.

VIDEO. Watch a video on how to set up Segments in Google Analytics at <http://jmlinks.com/58q>.

Returning back to your YouTube Channel (not Google Ads, and not Google Analytics), you can go to *Creator Studio > Analytics* and then drill down into an individual video to see key performance indicators such as watch time, view duration, views, geographies, genders, traffic sources, and playback locations. In summary, there is really a wealth of information in Google Ads, Analytics, and YouTube about what happens with your videos!

»»» **DELIVERABLE: YOUTUBE ADVERTISING WORKSHEET**

The **DELIVERABLE** for this Chapter is a completed worksheet on YouTube advertising. You'll investigate whether you want to run on YouTube, at all, and if so, in which ways (especially which targeting method(s) and placements make the most sense).

For the **worksheet**, go to <http://jmlinks.com/23googleads>, then re-enter the password, "23googleads," and click on the link to the "YouTube Advertising Worksheet."



9

METRICS

Making money on Google Ads is easy! *Just make \$1.01 for every \$1.00 you spend, and you'll make money each and every day!* It's not quite that simple, of course, as the line between “what you're spending on Google Ads” and “what you're getting in sales” can be pretty fuzzy. Even worse, Google Ads “recommendations” are always there – *like a good bartender* – egging you on to keep spending on *clicks* and *branding*, when really you should focus on *conversions* (defined as either *sales* on an e-Commerce website or completed *sales inquiry* forms for more complicated products or services). In this Chapter, we'll dive into how to measure your performance on Google Ads and how to use Google Ads metrics to improve your return on investment (ROI) continually and/or your *return on ad spend* or **ROAS**. Be forewarned: *you may know what you want to know but not actually be able ever to know it*, so to speak. Or *not know it fully*; you'll need to combine some hard metrics with some soft gut instinct. “Half of my advertising dollars are wasted,” so the saying goes, “I just don't know which half.”

Let's get started!

TO-DO LIST:

- » ROI: Make \$1.01 for Every \$1.00 You Spend
- » ROI: It Gets Complicated
- » Spot Check Your Ads
- » Check Your Spending Metrics
- » Monitor the Display Network and/or YouTube
- » Reports in Google Ads
- » Recommendations from Google Ads

- » Set up Goals in Google Analytics
- » Set up Conversion Tracking in Google Ads or Google Analytics
- » Review Your Conversion Data in Google Ads
- » Identify Problems and Opportunities
- »» Deliverable: A Google Ads Metrics Worksheet

» ROI: MAKE \$1.01 FOR EVERY \$1.00 YOU SPEND

Conceptually and in a perfect world, your **Return on Investment (ROI)** from Google Ads is deceptively simple:

For every \$1.00 in ad spend, make at least \$1.01 in profit.

But in reality, this equation is very complicated. On the **spend** side, you can certainly see how much you are paying for impressions and for clicks, and you can correlate both impressions and clicks to keyword search queries (*on the Search Network*) and placements (*on the Google Display Network*). You can very easily see what you're spending on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis for clicks and impressions and correlate that with keywords or placements. These are what I call your **Spending Metrics**. (Note: in a perfect world, you'd also calculate and include the cost of you and your employees' labor spent setting up and managing your Google Ads account, but we'll ignore those costs).

Conversion Metrics

Your profit from Google Ads, however, depends not on your *Spending Metrics* but on your **Conversion Metrics**. Here we have to move from the *what's-easy-to-measure* (your spend) to *what's-hard-to-measure* (your costs and/or sales).

Let's take a simple scenario of a customer who comes back from vacation in Mexico, had a great time, picks up his cat at Jason's Cat Emporium, and wants to reward his

Kitty with a brand-new cat collar. He goes to Google, searches for *cat collars*, finds our e-Commerce store, and makes a purchase.

We have:

Google search query: *Cat Collars*

He sees our ad for “Amazing Cat Collars” and clicks. (Behind the scenes, we have pre-identified the search query “cat collars” and bid \$2.00 for the click. We “win” the auction and pay Google \$1.75 for that click, one penny more than the next highest bid for the click on Google).

He purchases the cat collar for \$10.00. (Our cost is \$4.00, which we pay to our Chinese cat collar partner. Our profit per collar is thus \$4.25 (that is the revenue minus production costs – advertising costs). *We’ll ignore shipping and other costs for this simple example.*

So, on the vendor side, we have this equation to calculate our ROI:

Revenue from the sale of the collar from the customer: **\$10.00.**

Cost of collar (paid to our Mexican supplier) **\$4.00**

Cost of click (paid to Google): **\$1.75**

Profit = \$10.00 - \$4.00 - \$1.75 = \$4.25.

ROI is calculated as $(\$10.00 - \$4.00 - \$1.75) / (\$4 + \$1.75) = 4.25/5.75 = 74\%$

ROI as a formula is *Revenue - Production Cost - Advertising Cost / Production Cost + Advertising Cost* expressed as a percentage. You want a positive, big number! (See <http://jmlinks.com/58r> for the full Google explanation)

Now, this formula assumes that, first, you can actually determine the data inputs (costs, in particular, can be hard to determine), and, second, that this is a sale you got from Google Ads and Google Ads alone (meaning, you wouldn't have gotten it if you didn't advertise). Those are assumptions that are not always easy to meet or determine in the real world.

That said, a focus on ROI tells you to keep your eye on making at least \$1.01 for every \$1.00 in incremental spend on Google Ads. It's a good goal, but just be aware that in the "real world" it's hard to calculate to perfection.

Lifetime Customer Value

There's another important but hard-to-measure variable: the *lifetime value of a customer*. Suppose this is a brand-new customer who has never heard of Jason's Cat Boarding Emporium. He discovered us through Google Ads, made a single purchase, but now that he knows we exist, he keeps coming back to us in the real world and in the virtual world by directly visiting our website. He's signed up for our email alerts and now follows us on social media. We no longer have to keep paying Google Ads to get his attention or purchases. This "one-time" visit originating via Google Ads is thus worth far, far more than that single sale. This is called "lifetime customer value." Indeed, even if we lose money on that first transaction, we make money because of the lifetime customer value. Hard to measure? You betcha. Real? You betcha.

Calculating Your Maximum Bid

Let's return to our simple example. How much can we pay Google for a click on Google Ads and still make money?

Assuming a 100% conversion rate (that is, that EVERY click to our website leads to a purchase), then we can safely bid up to \$5.99 and make a profit. For example, if the click cost \$5.99 and the collar costs us \$4.00, then we would make \$.01 from each sale of the \$10.00 Kitty collar.

Our **ROI** is $(Profit - Advertising Cost) / Advertising Cost$ expressed as a percentage or $\$6.00$ (our profit per collar) - $\$5.99$ (cost of the click) / $\$5.99$ (cost of the click) = .16% (return on our money). We're positive, or (barely) in the black.

Once we spend MORE than $\$6.00$ on the click, our ROI goes negative. If, for example, we spend $\$7.00$ on the click, then our ROI is $\$6.00 - \$7.00 / \$7.00 = -14\%$. We're negative or in the red.

Not All Clicks Convert

But here's where it gets complicated, even with a simple e-Commerce website. First and foremost, not every click ends in a sale!

If our conversion rate is 50%, then we can only pay half as much for a click ($\$5.99 / 2 = \2.95) because half our clicks fail to end up in sales, and so on and so forth. The lower our conversion rate, the less we can bid per click. And, of course, the lower our profit, the less we can bid for clicks, too. *(If our Chinese supplier raises the price of the collar to $\$7.00$ from $\$4.00$ then, accordingly, we have to pay less per click to break even.)*

The *Cost Per Click* must be less than the *Profit Per Click* for you to make money on Google Ads, or turning that around your *Profit Per Click* must be greater than your *Cost Per Click*:

$$Cost\ Per\ Click < Profit\ Per\ Click$$

Or

$$Profit\ Per\ Click > Cost\ Per\ Click$$

And the Profit Per Click is the *profit per sale times the conversion rate*.

$$Profit\ Per\ Click = Profit\ Per\ Sale \times Conversion\ Rate$$

If, for example, we make \$6.00 per sale of a collar, and we have a 100% conversion rate, then our profit per click is \$6.00. But if we have a 50% conversion rate, then our profit per click is cut in half, becoming $\$6.00 \times .50 = \3.00 . With a 100% conversion rate, we can bid up to \$5.99 to “get the click,” but with a 50% conversion rate we can only bid \$2.99 per click, and so on. In most cases, your conversion rate will be much, much lower than 50%, more like 2% or 3%, so with a 2% conversion rate, our profit per click is

$$\$6.00 \text{ (the profit of each collar)} \times .02 \text{ (the conversion rate)} = .12 \text{ or } 12\text{¢ per click!}$$

Turning this around, if we “bought” 100 clicks on Google that would cost us $100 \times .12 = \$12.00$, and with a 2% conversion rate those 100 clicks would have generated two sales at \$6.00 each, so we would break even at any $\text{CPC} < .02$.

If you want to dive more deeply into these equations, I recommend that you check out Google’s Chief Economist, Hal Varian, and his video that explains how your bidding strategy should intersect with your profits.

VIDEO. Watch a video on ROI on Google Ads by Google’s Chief Economist, Hal Varian at <http://jmlinks.com/25q>.

Mr. Varian goes way into the details on ROI and bidding strategy, but let’s keep it simple and summarize what you, as an advertiser, can actually attempt to measure and then attempt to improve on in the real world:

Measure:

- Your **impressions**, **clicks**, and **click-through rate** vs. target **keywords**.

- Your **Google Ads costs** measured as cost per click vis-à-vis target keywords, landing pages, and products or services.
- The **conversion rate** as measured by how many people click through to your landing page vs. how many of them actually buy something (or complete an inquiry form).
- The **revenue** and **profit** (*revenue minus expenses*) of the related product or service; or, if you measure a sales lead, the imputed value of that sales lead to your ultimate product or service.

Note how this is all keyword-centric. You bid on keywords, so keywords are the foundation of success to Google Ads.

Improve on Google Ads:

- **Decrease** your cost per click via **better bidding**.
- Identify **keywords that convert** (“winners”) vs. keywords that do not convert (“dogs”), and *let your winners run and shoot your dogs*. Ditto for ads; identify high performing vs. low performing ads.
 - Pay attention not only to the **conversion rate** (i.e., *which clicks end in sales or sales leads*), but also which products or services generate **more profit** vis-à-vis your Google Ads spend, that is higher *quality* keyword patterns.
- **Write Better Ads**. Write better ads that “attract” high-value, converting customers and “repel” low-value, non-converting customers, as well as ads that have a sufficiently high CTR (Click Thru Rate) to get you a better Quality Score.
- **Improve your landing page experience** and **conversion rate** so that you not only get clicks to your landing page, but a higher percentage of those clicks convert to a sale and/or sales lead.

This last point is important. You won’t always get an immediate sale or sales lead, so brainstorm not only what sale / sales lead you want but also **intermediate steps** that can help you “capture” the name / email / phone of a prospect so that your sales staff can work on turning a mere *prospect* into a paying *customer*. Free downloads, free eBooks,

free software, and even “sign up for our incredibly interesting email newsletter” can also be considered conversions. After all, if you nab the potential customer's name, email, and phone, you don't have to keep paying Google to talk to her!

ONCE YOU GET THE CLICK, GET SOMETHING FOR IT

Let me repeat this as it's incredibly foundational to your strategy:

Once you've received the click from Google, do everything possible to capture your customers' contact information, start a relationship or conversation with them, etc.

For example, if you capture a customer's email address, you can then email marketing to them *at no additional cost*. Throughout, don't focus so much on clicks, and the click-thru rate as much as on cost-per-click, conversion rate, and the value of each conversion.

» ROI: IT GETS COMPLICATED

Just make more money per click than you're spending per click! That's in the hypothetical *Hal-Varian-Google-economist make-believe world* that Google lives in. But you and I live in the real world, and we often do not have the required data at our fingertips. If we're running an e-commerce store, we may have a good idea of the profit per sale, and we can get the conversion rate from Google Analytics or our e-Commerce platform. We're in the strongest position to really know how much we can pay per click.

Some Clicks Convert (Just Not Immediately)

However, even at the best e-Commerce store, not every click will immediately end in a sale; some visitors may leave the website, and come back days or even weeks later, and then purchase. What looks like a failure (no conversion) may actually be a conversion. Google Analytics and Google Ads do attempt to track customers for 30 days giving you some conversion data in a 30-day window, but it is far from perfect.

Lifetime Customer Value (LCV) and Gut Instinct

In addition, a customer may “find you” one time through Google Ads and then become a “customer for life.” The lifetime customer value (LCV) may be far, far more than the simple value from that immediate click to sale conversion on Google Ads. You need to pay attention to this metric, and you can’t expect an immediate click to sale behavior, especially for complicated or expensive products like Disney Cruises or Toyota Camrys. On the negative side, it may be that the customer already found you via SEO / organic reach on Google or perhaps word of mouth (first), and then clicked on your ad. In this case, Google is falsely attributing to Google Ads a sale that you “would have gotten anyway” from this customer.

Some factors (e.g., some clicks convert not at first but after a period of back-and-forth) indicate that your *revenue from Google Ads is higher* than actually reported in the data.

And some factors (e.g., Google Ads falsely takes credit for sales you would have gotten anyway through SEO or word of mouth) indicate that your *revenue from Google Ads is lower* than actually reported in the data.

My feeling, therefore, is to *take the data seriously* but to *take it also with a grain of salt* (yes, I know that’s a contradiction!). Your “gut instinct” as to whether Google Ads is working is as important as any “hard” data that your data wonks and Hal Varian can come up with.

ROAS: Return on Ad Spend

Another metric that people like to use is called *ROAS* or *Return on Ad Spend*. This is a simpler, “back of the napkin” way to measure your Google Ads performance. The formula to calculate ROAS is:

$$\text{ROAS} = \text{revenue from ad campaign} / \text{cost of ad campaign}$$

If, for example, your ad campaign generates \$10,000 in revenue and costs you \$1,000 you have:

$$\text{ROAS} = \$10,000 / \$1,000 = 10 \text{ or } 1000\%.$$

For a quick, online ROAS calculator, visit <http://jmlinks.com/41m>. The problem with ROAS, however, is that it ignores cost. You can generate revenue with Google Ads yet still lose money if you don’t calculate the costs that go into getting those clicks (i.e., Google Ads costs) as well as your own costs of production. So, while the industry often focuses on ROAS, I recommend you focus on ROI instead (at least conceptually).

And, throughout, realize that you often can do no better than “back of the napkin” calculations as to whether you are making money or not, with your Google Ads investment. Those that run very tight and easy e-commerce stores are in the best position to calculate their ROI, but most of us (even in e-commerce) will have some “variables” that we do not know for certain. Do your best.

Beyond e-Commerce: Feedback Forms and Sales Leads

Many of us will not be running e-Commerce sites. We will measure the performance of our websites in terms of completed feedback forms or sales inquiries. A law firm, for example, will want to use Google Ads to generate clicks for the search query “Personal Injury Lawyer Dallas” and measure the performance by incoming sales leads off of a

web form. Ditto for a Kansas City plumber, who would want his ads on Google to generate inbound web forms or telephone calls.

How much is a completed web form worth? Well, in an ideal world, you'd know the value of the potential lawsuit (or potential plumbing project) plus the probability that your firm is going to win, and you'd deflate all that by your conversion rate (as the client could potentially take his or her lawsuit or plumbing project somewhere else). There's little to no probability in the "real world" that you'll be able to do anything much better than guesstimate these numbers. So, sorry, Hal Varian, the equations don't work because we don't have the necessary data, and we never will!

You may never have all the required data. Get over it, and use gut instinct

The best you can do is decide how much you're willing to pay for a completed feedback form via Google Ads and calculate your conversion rate based on the clicks that come from Google Ads to your website.

Sales Leads Are Valuable: Do Not Undervalue Them!

For businesses that depend on feedback forms, I'd recommend setting a ballpark figure as to the value of each completed feedback form and judging Google Ads vs. this figure. However, in my experience, most companies VASTLY devalue the cost that they should pay for a lead.

DON'T UNDERESTIMATE THE VALUE OF A "SALES LEAD"

Companies will say (with no data to back them up), "we're willing to pay \$10.00 for a feedback form," when the value of that "lead" can be \$1,000 or \$10,000, so please try to get your team to be reasonable about the true value of a completed feedback form.

In fact, I'd recommend multiplying that value by 2x or even 12x as, in my experience, most companies vastly underestimate the true value of leads!

Compare Google Ads, for example, with other forms of advertising like participation at industry trade shows. To go to a trade show, you have the cost of the booth space, the cost of the booth set up, employees' time and travel, etc., and you might get just a few hundred (if that) inquiries from your trade show expense. Each "lead" at the trade show might be costing you literally hundreds or thousands of dollars, compared with a "lead" from Google Ads that might just cost you \$25.00 or \$75.00 or something like that. So, be fair to Google Ads, and recognize just how expensive (and how valuable) sales inquiries can be to your business across different advertising and marketing venues.

Another issue here is do not compare "apples" to "oranges." Customers who already know you, or customers who are primed via word-of-mouth, are far, far more likely to convert vs. customers who have never heard of you before. For example, if I love Jason's Cat Emporium already because I have used it before, or because my friend Erin told me it's a great place to stash my cat... I am far, far more likely to convert and make a purchase. This is to be compared with a totally random person, let's call her Tracy, who has never heard of Jason's Cat Emporium nor has any friends who use the service. The costs to "get" Tracy to use us will be higher, but Tracy is worth more because a) she is a totally new customer, and b) once she uses us, and is happy she will be likely to return again and again, plus c) she will likely tell her own friends and family. In short, "new" customers are harder to get and more valuable than existing customers, or customers already primed to use you. Don't compare the costs of getting totally new customers to the costs of getting existing customers to return. BOTH are valuable but they are different animals altogether.

Visits, Bounces, and Telephone Calls

Another big problem is **call tracking**. In many industries such as plumbers, lawyers, and roofing companies, the person is most likely to do a Google search, land on your website, check your reviews, and then call you on the phone. That phone call "originated" from Google Ads, but it isn't easy to track. Google has call-tracking inside of Google Ads (if you enable call extensions or click to call on mobile), but realistically, very few people will call right off of an ad. They want first to visit your website.

Companies like CallRail (<http://www.callrail.com>) and CallTrackingMetrics (<http://www.calltrackingmetrics.com>) can enable call tracking on your website and feed that data into Google Ads. Even so, you have the problem that many people will do a Google search, click, visit your site, leave, come back days or weeks later, and then engage. The visits, bounces, and call tracking problems can make it “seem” like you have fewer conversions from Google Ads than you really have had.

Time on Site, Branding, and Other Metrics

After e-Commerce sales and completed feedback forms, other valuable goals for your website can be signups to your email lists, engagements on social media (e.g., “liking” your company Facebook page), or even time on site. Some companies, especially big ones, look at advertising as a branding experience and aren’t that interested in clicks. You might measure impressions (especially on the Google Display Network) as a KPI (Key Performance Indicator) of brand awareness. Just be careful as only the very biggest companies can afford to throw their money away on “brand awareness” advertising; most medium to small businesses need to show some ROI more significant than impressions.

*Google Ads is expensive, so I would be very skeptical of these “soft” metrics, with the possible exception of **email sign-ups**.*

In summary, be aware that, conceptually, you want a positive ROAS / ROI but, in the real world, you will probably have to follow your gut instinct in combination with some very loosey-goosey data from both Google Ads and Google Analytics.

» SPOT CHECK YOUR ADS

One of the easiest yet most important metrics to measure is whether your ads are running at all and how frequently. I recommend you “spot check” your ads manually once a week at first, and then at least twice a month once you’re up and running. Sometimes Google will say they’re running (*and they’re not*) or will say that they’re not

running (*and they are*). For these weekly or monthly checkups, also pay attention to other variables such as whether you are running on good keywords, actual search queries, clicks, costs, click-thru rates, cost per click, conversions, etc.

DON'T JUST SET IT AND FORGET IT!

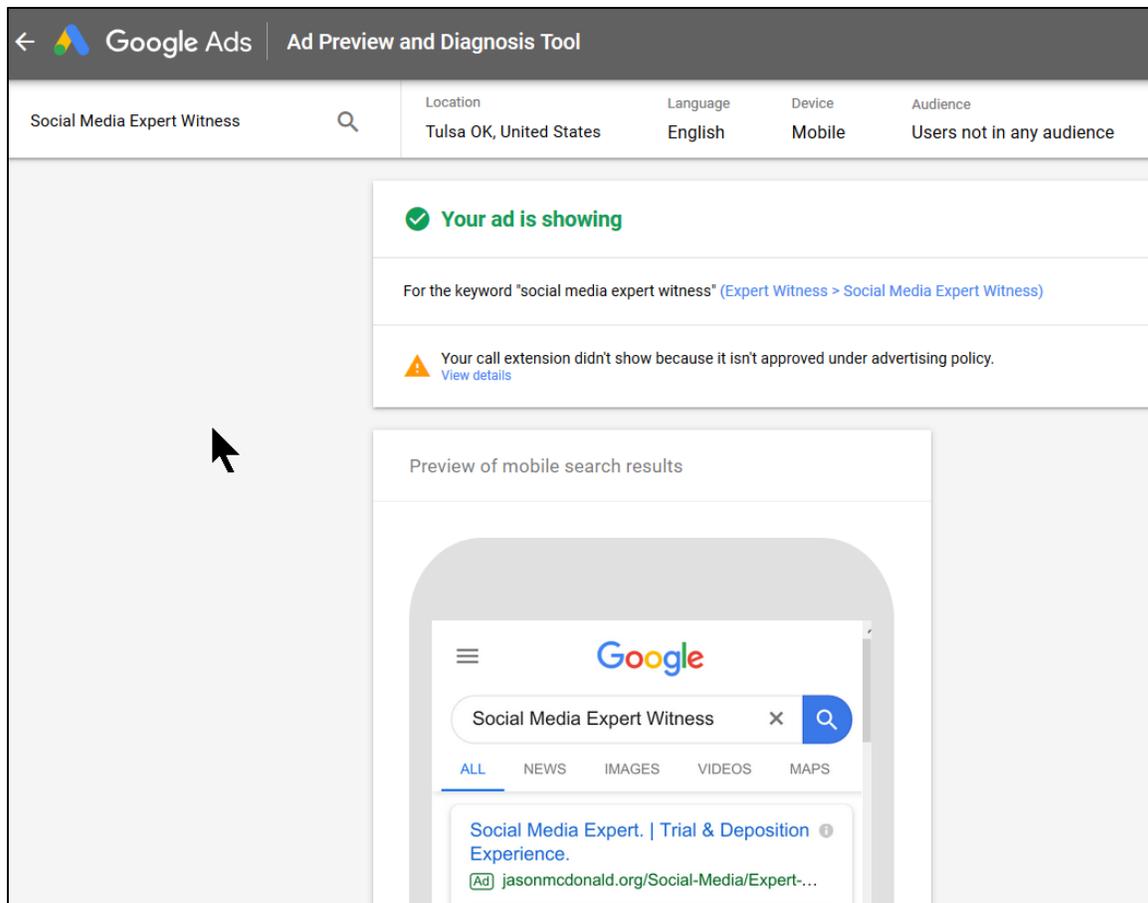
Here are two easy ways to verify your ads are running, especially by changing your location if you are using geotargeting. Have your keywords handy, as you want to spot-check your ads against your most valuable keywords.

Method #1. Enable an “incognito session” on your browser. Then, use the Bright Local location tool at <http://jmlinks.com/54h>. Input your keyword, set a location by city or zip code, and hit search. **DO NOT CLICK ON YOUR AD** as it will cost you. Just check as indicated below. Unfortunately, sometimes Google won't show any ads in an incognito session. If so, try in a regular session.

Method #2. Use the Google Ads Ad Preview and Diagnosis Tool. Log in to Google Ads, and click on *Tools > Ad Preview and Diagnosis*. On the right-hand side, enter a city, select Desktop or Mobile, and make sure it's Google.com (Google.ca for Canada).

In both methods, you should see your ad displayed most of the time. Note: vary your city location if you are using geotargeting to confirm that your ad is showing in various cities.

Here's a screenshot showing my ad for *Social Media Expert Witness* with the city set to Tulsa, Oklahoma, and device site to Mobile:



Google will highlight your ad in green to make it easy to find. Generally, you want your ads to be showing in the top positions, which are #1, #2, #3, and #4. If your ad is at the bottom, your bid and/or quality score is too low; if your ad is not showing at all, your bid and/or quality score is even worse. Either up your bid or rewrite your ad / keyword / landing page to improve your quality score until your ad shows consistently.

Method #3. Finally, inside of Google Ads, you can see if an ad is showing by doing an analysis at the **keyword** level. Drill into an *Ad Group > Keyword*. Hover your mouse over “Eligible” in the “Status” column, and you should see a pop up indicating whether your ad is currently running for that keyword. Here’s a screenshot:

The screenshot shows a Google Ads interface with a table of keywords. The table has columns for Keyword, Status, and a numerical value. A tooltip is visible over the 'Status' column for the keyword '[SEO books]', showing 'This keyword is eligible to run ads' and 'Ad showing in search results? An ad is showing now'. Another tooltip is visible over the 'Status' column for the keyword '+book +search +engine +optimization', showing 'Below 1 page bid (\$5.06)', 'TEST AGAIN', and 'Ad Preview and Diagnosis'. The table also shows a bid of \$5.01 and a value of 6 for the keyword '+best SEO'.

Keyword	Status	pr.
"SEO Books"	Eligible	27
[SEO books]	Eligible	81
+book +search +engine +optimization	Below 1 page bid (\$5.06)	48
+best SEO	Eligible	65

This method may falsely indicate you are (or are not) running, so take these metrics with a grain of salt.

You must use a combination of manual searches, the Bright Local tool, the Google Ads Preview Tool, and keyword eligibility to spot check – just be aware that none of these tools is 100% reliable. Another good tool is MobileMoxie’s SERPerator at <https://mobilemoxie.com/>, but it costs about \$29 a month.

Search Impression Share or SIS

Beyond spot-checking, how can you measure whether your ads are running on a day in, day out basis? Fortunately, inside of Google Ads, there is a valuable metric called “**SIS**” for “**Search Impression Share.**” Your SIS score measured as a percentage shows how frequently your ad was shown vs. how frequently it was eligible to run. For example, let’s say that there are 1,000 searches per month for *cat collars* in the USA, and you want to know what percentage of time your ad was actually showing, that is:

Available Impressions Per Month: **1000**

Your ad appears on **800** of these impressions (for example).

Your SIS is **80%**, meaning your ad ran 80% of the time it was eligible to run.

SIS tells you the percentage of the time your ad was actually showing. It exists at the Campaign, Ad Group, and Keyword levels.

I recommend you shoot for an SIS score of 85% or more, meaning your ad shows at least 85% of the time. If your ad is running less than about 85% of the time, something is wrong – either your bid is too low, you’re hitting your budget constraint, or your quality score is too low. If you’re hitting the budget constraint, you’ll get a notice “Limited by Budget” in Google Ads. It’s not a good idea to be limited by budget; if our ROAS /ROI is positive, we want to run “full blast,” so either reconfigure to tighter keywords (or placements if you’re on the GDN) or increase your budget. (You can also get a notice that says, “Below first-page bid,” and again either increase your bid or improve your quality score. Spot check your ads in both cases to verify that they are / are not / running).

AIM FOR AN SIS > 85%

To figure out the universe of available impressions, divide your impressions by your SIS. So, if your Google Ads Campaign shows 800 impressions with an SIS of .80 (or 80%), then the total universe of available impressions was $800 / .80 = 1000$. Once you’re running ads, in other words, you can do a little math to determine the available universe of ad inventory and then multiply that by your click-thru rate to get your clicks, and then multiply those clicks by the average CPC to get your budget spend if you were to run “full blast” at 100%, or at least close to it.

To blow your mind further, this data is *more accurate* than the data reported in the Google Ads Keyword Planner!

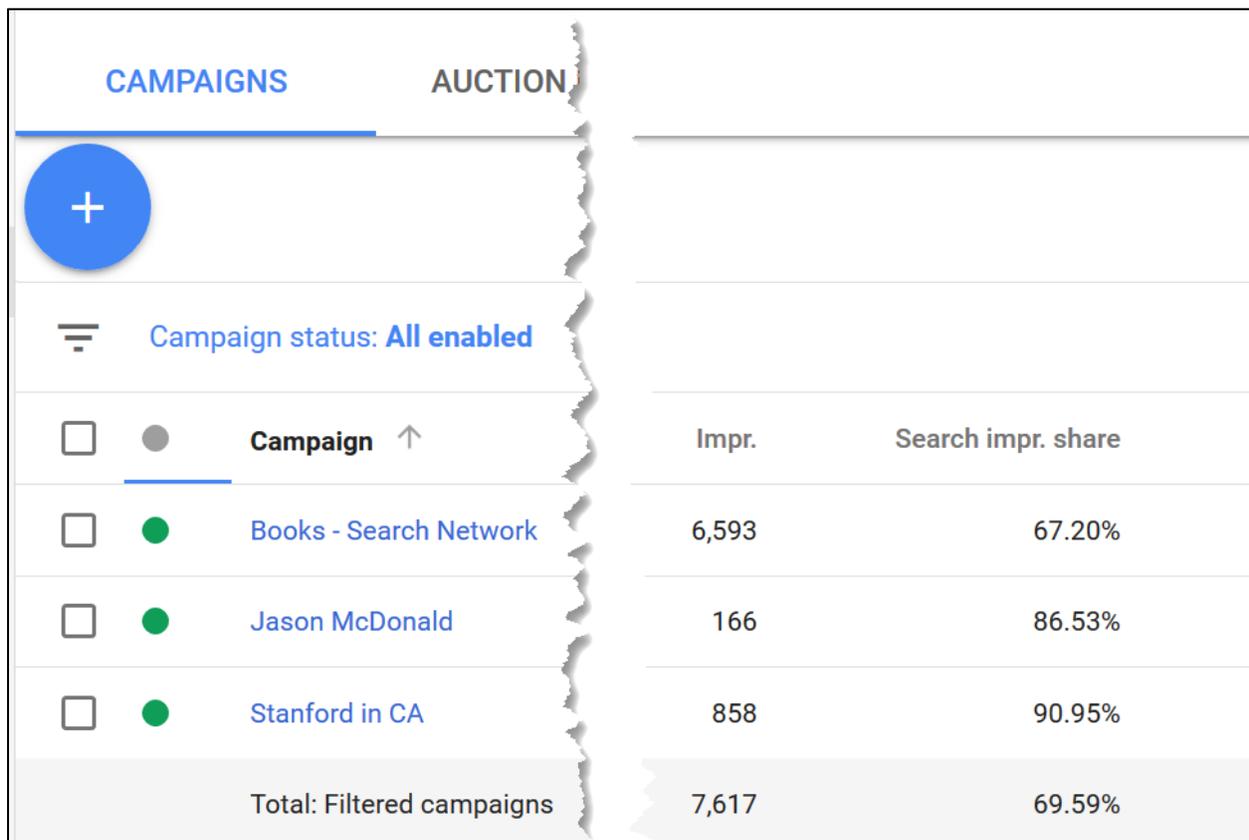
Enable SIS

The SIS score is available for Campaigns, Ad Groups, and Keywords, but you must “enable” it as a column. To enable SIS, at the Campaign level, go to Campaigns, and

then click on Columns, then Modify Columns. Next, find “Competitive Metrics” and select “Search Impr. Share.” I usually then save this set of columns by giving it a name like “SIS,” so I can re-enable it each time I log in.

You have to go through the same procedure at the Ad Group and Keyword levels to be able to view SIS there.

Here’s a screenshot of SIS at the Campaign level:



CAMPAIGNS		AUCTION	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Campaign ↑	Impr.	Search impr. share
<input type="checkbox"/>	Books - Search Network	6,593	67.20%
<input type="checkbox"/>	Jason McDonald	166	86.53%
<input type="checkbox"/>	Stanford in CA	858	90.95%
Total: Filtered campaigns		7,617	69.59%

This means that for my “Jason McDonald” campaign (which focuses on high-value expert witness work), I am running at 86.53%. The goal is to run > 85%, which means “full blast.” Thus, for my books, you can see I am at 67.20%, meaning they are not running full blast. I thus need to increase my budget or bids, improve my quality score, or otherwise configure this Campaign better. The trick is to do this in such a way that you still generate a positive ROI.

You can check your SIS at every level: Campaign, Ad Group, and Keyword. Thus, for a high-value keyword, you can and should check that your SIS is > 85%. If not, you can work on budget, bids, and/or quality score issues.

Search Top IS Metric: Who's on Top?

We all know that users tend to see and click on the ads shown at the top of a Google search. Google places up to four ads on the *top* of any search query, and then another three or four ads at the *bottom*. Those ads on the bottom **suck**; “suck” is a technical term meaning a) few people (if any) see them, and b) much of the traffic from ads at the bottom is bots and fraudulent clicks. I have no real evidence of this, other than common sense. *I mean, Google, C'mon – who sees or clicks ads at the bottom of a search?* No one.

For these reasons, I strongly recommend that you measure whether your ads are generally showing in the top four positions.

The metric to do this is called “Search top IS” or “Search Top Impression Share.” Like SIS, this metric measures how frequently you showed in a top position vs. the total available impressions. Shoot for 70% or more. To enable it, click into *Columns > Modify Columns* at the Campaign, Ad Group, or Keyword Level. Find *Competitive Metrics* and then click *Search Top IS*. Save this column set. I generally enable both SIS and Search Top IS and save the column set as “SIS.” Here's a screenshot:

Ad group status: All enabled				Impr.	Clicks	Search impr. share	Search top IS
<input type="checkbox"/>	●	Ad group	St				
<input type="checkbox"/>	●	SEO Books	Eli	1,351	96	76.97%	71.27%
<input type="checkbox"/>	●	Social Media - Amazon	Eli	1,668	144	60.94%	54.17%
<input type="checkbox"/>	●	Social Media - Amazon - Dummies	Eli	1,009	63	77.68%	71.71%
<input type="checkbox"/>	●	SEO for Dummies	Eli	457	30	47.73%	37.03%

This tells me, for example, that my “SEO Books” Ad Group had 1,351 impressions, 96 clicks, and SIS of 76.97% and a Search Top IS of 71.27%. This means my ad showed about 75% of the time, and at the top about 70% of the time. I generally shoot for an SIS of > 85% and a Search Top IS of > 70% by raising (or lowering) my bids and spot-checking the ads each week. You can learn more about SIS and Search Top IS at <http://jmlinks.com/52t>.

While in the example above, conversion tracking is not enabled (because the ads go directly to Amazon), in a perfect world, I’d also measure my raw conversions, my CPA (Cost Per Action, or Conversion), and the revenue or profit generated by those conversions.

Auction Insights: Who Else is Running Against Your Keywords?

Another useful data point is called “auction insights.” This is available at the “account,” “campaign,” and “ad group” levels. For example, select a “campaign” and click into it (so you are seeing the ad groups that live inside of it). Then on the left menu, click “Auction insights.” This will show you the domains of competitors who are running in the same keywords as your campaign.

Here’s a screenshot:

Auction insights							This month	Oct 1 – 29, 2022	<	>	Show last 30 days
Display URL domain	↓ Impression share	Overlap rate	Position above rate	Top of page rate	Abs. Top of page rate	Outranking share					
You	65.95%	–	–	93.05%	61.08%	–					
semrush.com	13.02%	17.98%	44.85%	89.20%	34.27%	60.64%					
linkedin.com	10.64%	12.23%	56.82%	81.03%	39.08%	61.37%					
cornell.edu	10.57%	14.74%	21.38%	70.52%	10.40%	63.88%					
wordstream.com	10.21%	10.75%	68.97%	86.83%	48.50%	61.06%					
malichimp.com	< 10%	6.58%	38.03%	80.39%	15.69%	64.30%					

Here –

First Column. This shows “you” vs. competitor domains.

Impression share. This shows how frequently your ads (and those of each competitor) were shown.

Overlap Rate. This shows the percentage overlap when your ad showed and the competitor ad showed as well.

Position above rate. This shows how frequently your ad showed above the competitor’s.

Top of page rate. This shows how frequently your ad (or the competitor’s) showed at the top of the page.

Abs. Top of page rate. This shows how frequently your ad (or the competitor’s) was in position #1.

The “Auction insights” report is a good way to discover who is competing against you. Then, take newly discovered domains and pop them into Spyfu (<https://www.spyfu.com>) and you can “reverse engineer” all the keywords and ads that your competition is running. If you have ad groups tightly focused on specific keyword families, the “Auction insights” reports can really shed light on who your actual competition is.

Your Goals

Ideally, you want an SIS score of > 85% and a Search Top IS of > 70% as that is the “best value” position in my experience on Google Ads. You should increase your bid (or work on your Quality Score) to get these two metrics in the optimum range. However, often you may need to increase your bid to get your SIS > 85%, which will also propel your Search Top IS too high (> 90%), which means you are overpaying. Or, you bid too low, and then your SIS goes < 85%, meaning your ad isn’t showing.

The **art** of Google Ads is to optimize for an SIS > 85% and a Search Top IS of > 70%, which is not easy.

If you can’t get a good top score, I would prefer an SIS > 85% as you need your ad to show to get results. In summary, using these metrics in combination with conversion tracking will tell you a) your ads are generally showing, b) your ads are generally showing at the top of the page, c) your ads are getting clicks as measured by a good click-thru rate (CTR), and d) your ads are getting conversions at a reasonable cost as measured by conversion tracking.

» CHECK YOUR SPENDING METRICS

It goes without saying that you should pay attention to your CPC (Cost Per Click), as you want to minimize your CPC. Check the columns:

Clicks = how many clicks your Campaign / Ad Group / Keyword / Ad received.

Impressions = how many impressions (how much it was seen) vs. SIS. If your SIS is > 85%, then essentially, you are showing “all the time.” If your SIS is < 85%, then there is more ad inventory, and you can show your ad more.

CTR = click-thru rate. Higher is better. Shoot for at least 1%, but I like to see 3, 4, or even 7% or higher CTRs for tightly focused *Keywords > Ad Groups > Ads*.

Cost = how much you've spent, total, for the time period you've selected in the Top Right.

Cost / conversions / cost per conversion. We'll discuss this in a moment, but this is your conversion data (meaning e-Commerce sales or completed feedback forms).

As you spot-check your ads, you're seeking to REDUCE your bid per click YET get your ad to show (SIS > 85%) and maintain Search Top IS > 70%, and maintain a decent CTR. It's a see-saw and takes weekly or monthly maintenance at first. Once you have a good setup (Campaign > Keyword Focus > Ad Group > Keywords > Ads), then LET YOUR WINNERS RUN but KILL YOUR DOGS. Meaning, once you get an SIS > 85%, a Search Top IS > 70%, and a CTR of > 1% or more, LEAVE IT ALONE, whether this is a Campaign, an Ad Group, a Keyword, or an Ad.

If something is a dog, you either *fix it* (re-write the ads, reconfigure the Ad Group / bid / landing page) or you *kill it*. You don't just let it run and run, losing you money.

In summary, you're using these metrics to verify:

- Your ads are running vis-à-vis your target keywords by spot-checking with the preview tool.
- Your SIS is > 85% meaning your ads are running most of the time.
- Your Search Top IS > 70%, meaning you're in the #1, #2, #3, or #4 positions, at the top of the Google page.
- Your CTR is > 1% or better.

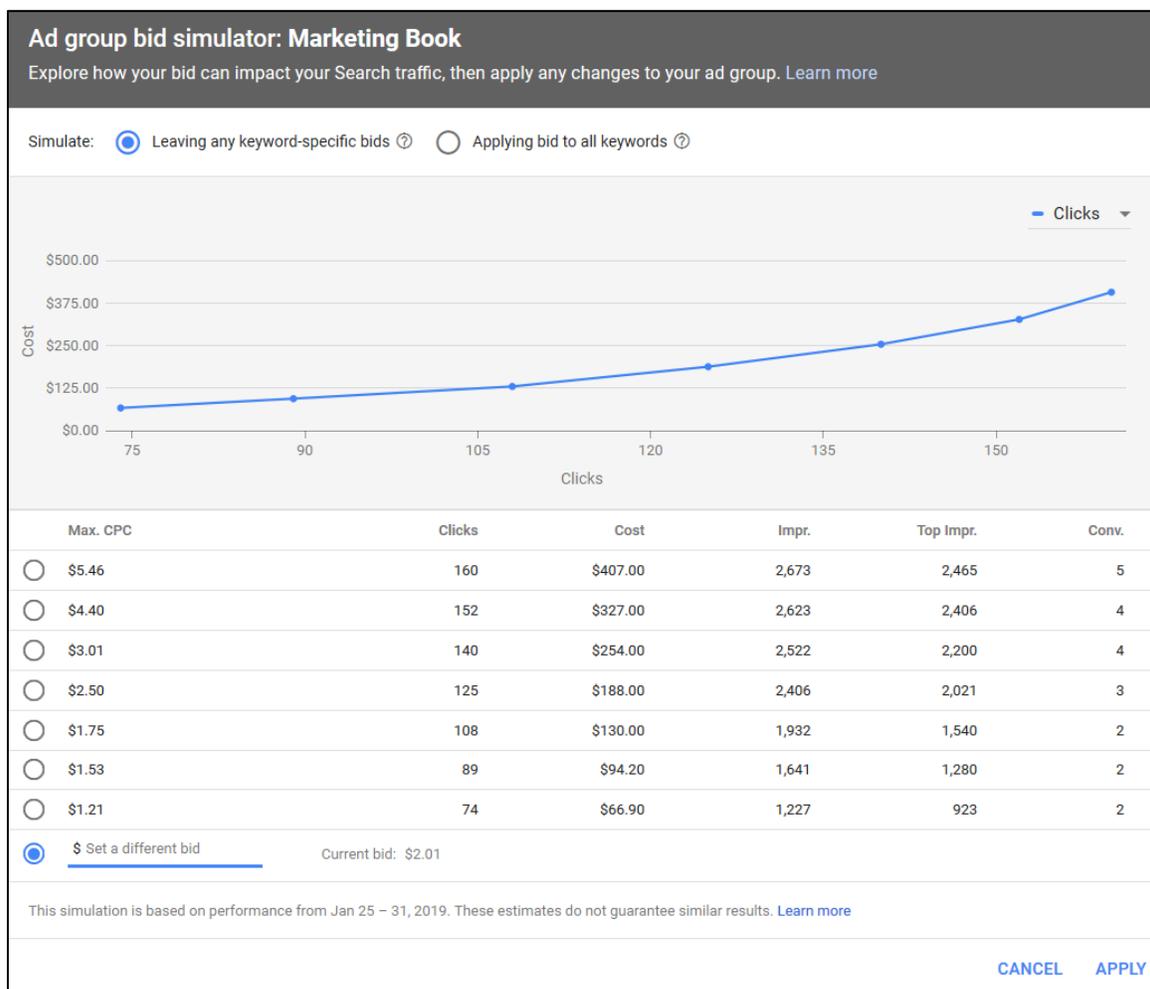
AND

- Your CPC is as low as possible by reducing your bid yet retaining the metrics above.

- You are getting inquiries or sales; that is, “back of the napkin” conversions.

The Bid Simulator: A Useless and Misleading Tool

Note: at the Ad Group level in the Default Max CPC column (indicating your bid), you can click on the little zig-zag arrow to enable Google’s **Bid Simulator**. Here’s a screenshot:



The tool attempts to tell you if you increase your bid, what will happen to your clicks, cost, impressions, and conversions. Generally, the tool implies that the more you spend, the more clicks you’ll get.

This might be the case, but I have had many instances that are just the opposite. I have found that often if you *reduce* your bid, your clicks stay the same or even increase as Google seems to “work harder” to spend “all your money” at the lower click bid (despite what bid simulator will tell you). I find more success systematically lowering my bids over time yet paying attention to my SIS score and spot-checking my ads until I find the hidden “minimum bid” that Google wants to keep my ad running full blast.

Don't believe everything Google tells you. Sometimes lower bids yield more clicks.

Remember as well that you care about *conversions*, not *clicks*, and even the tool shows that a substantial increase in CPC from \$2.50 a click to \$5.46 a click results in a huge increase in cost (\$407-\$188=\$219), but just two more conversions, meaning a cost per conversion of \$219/2 or \$109.

Spending more isn't necessarily more efficient.

Another useless and much-hyped tool is Google's **Performance Planner**, available via the Tools menu. In my experience, Performance Planner will generally advise you to increase your bids / spend, add in useless keywords or otherwise expand your reach, etc. Unless you are running a very high-volume e-commerce campaign with robust conversion tracking, Google's AI-based tools simply do not have enough data to be useful. Add in Google's nefarious motive to increase your spend, and I am deeply skeptical of Google's AI-based tools. But, hey, check them out, and if they work for you, use them. If not, ignore them. You can learn more about Performance Planner at <http://jmlinks.com/52u>.

Bid Tuning Your Ads to Hit the Trifecta

Instead, I recommend you use the **manual bid strategy** and engage in what I call “bid tuning,” which is ratcheting down your bids slowly until your SIS drops below 85%. In

this way, you find the true “minimum bid” you need to bid in order to get your ad to show at minimum cost.

Once you are running, *lower* the bids in any given Ad Group until your SIS falls below 85%, and then *raise* them back up until the SIS recovers. Pay attention to your ad position as well, as measured by Search Top IS.

You want to tweak your bids down, paying attention to your SIS, and you may find that by lowering your bids, you actually get more impressions and more clicks – the *complete reverse* of what the official Google help files tell you!

On a weekly or monthly basis, you should:

1. Log in to Google Ads, and drill into your Ad Groups.
2. If an Ad Group has a good CTR (> 1 or 2%) and a good SIS (> 85%), then lower your bid just a tad (perhaps by fifty cents or so – it depends).

If an Ad Group has a poor CTR, then you need to re-write or improve the ads. If an Ad Group has a good CTR but a poor SIS, then you need to increase your bids. What you are doing is “tuning” your bids and ads to try to hit the *trifecta* of a good CTR, a good position, and a good SIS score at the lowest bid possible (plus a good conversion rate). Despite Google propaganda about “Smart Campaigns” and “Automated Bidding,” I find better results with manual “bid tuning,” but experiment yourself and do what works best for you. I also find that sometimes *lower* bids can generate *more* impressions, clicks, and conversions, which is really mind-blowing if you think about it vs. Google’s propaganda.

Quality Score: Another Misleading Metric

Similarly, while there is a **Quality Score** metric available in Google Ads, it is also not reliable. To find it, you have to go to *Ad Groups > Keywords*, next click on *Columns > Modify Columns*. Find and enable Quality Score under *Quality Score*. Here’s a screenshot:

Quality score			
<input type="checkbox"/> Quality Score	<input type="checkbox"/> Quality Score (hist.)	<input type="checkbox"/> Exp. CTR	<input type="checkbox"/> Exp. CTR (hist.)
<input type="checkbox"/> Landing page exp.	<input type="checkbox"/> Landing page exp. (hist.)	<input type="checkbox"/> Ad relevance	<input type="checkbox"/> Ad relevance (hist.)

That will enable it, so you can see it in your Google Ads Reporting. Once you enable it, you'll see a column called *Qual. Score*. Generally speaking, you want a Quality Score of 4 or higher, except remember that Google gets paid “by the click” and you make money “by the conversion,” so you can have a high Quality Score for a keyword that is a dog (*doesn't convert and/or doesn't make you money*). Conversely, you can have a low Quality Score for a star (*converts well, makes you a lot of money*) for a high-value keyword and/or a keyword for which you have written a strong attract / repel ad.

You may even get a (misleading) message from Google that says “Rarely shown to low quality score,” but your ad will actually still be running per SIS and/or spot-checking!

Take Quality Score with a huge grain of salt! I am more interested in a) is my ad running (SIS), b) is it in a good position (top of the page), and c) is it converting on my website?

Who cares about Quality Score if a, b, and c are all working?

» MONITOR THE DISPLAY NETWORK AND/OR YOUTUBE

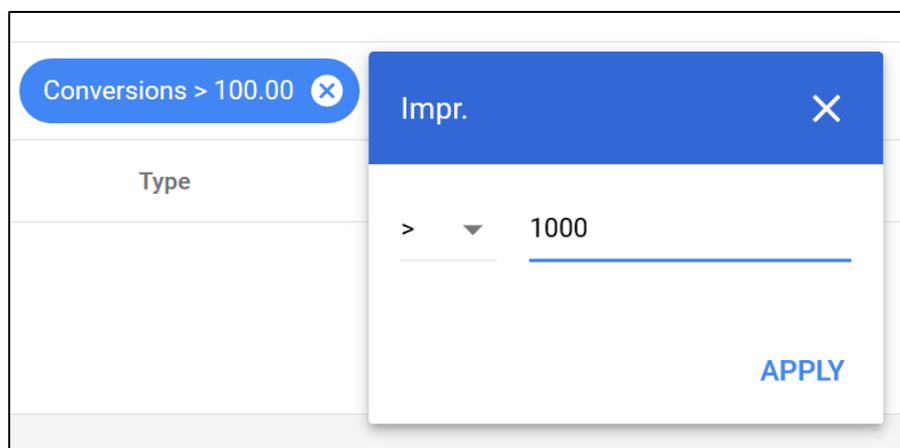
If you're running on the Display Network or YouTube, many of the above-mentioned metrics don't apply. SIS (Search Impression Share), for example, isn't really available (though there is a fishy metric called “Display impression share”), and there's no easy way to spot-check to verify your ads are actually running. You have to rely on impressions and click data as reported by Google Ads directly. Position is also a bit misleading as on many sites in the GDN, there is only one position, or perhaps two, and they don't easily line up as they do on Google. Most importantly, on the GDN, you want to check (at least monthly if not more often), your **placements**.

Spot Check Your Placements

To do so, click into a *Display Network Campaign > Ad Group* because placements “live” at the Ad Group level. Then click on *Placements* on the left. Then *Where ads showed* in the dropdown. Sort by cost, and look for Placements that have lots of clicks, high costs, and/or few conversions. You’re looking for “winners” or “dogs,” meaning either placements that are performing well (high ROI as measured by a low CPC, high CTR, and good conversion rate) or performing poorly. If a placement is a “dog,” then you probably want to block that placement by adding it to a negative placement list. I often look for outliers – placements that have a high spend and/or a high CPC, and few conversions.

Your very important **TO-DO** on the Display Network is to look for “dog” or “nefarious” placements and block them immediately.

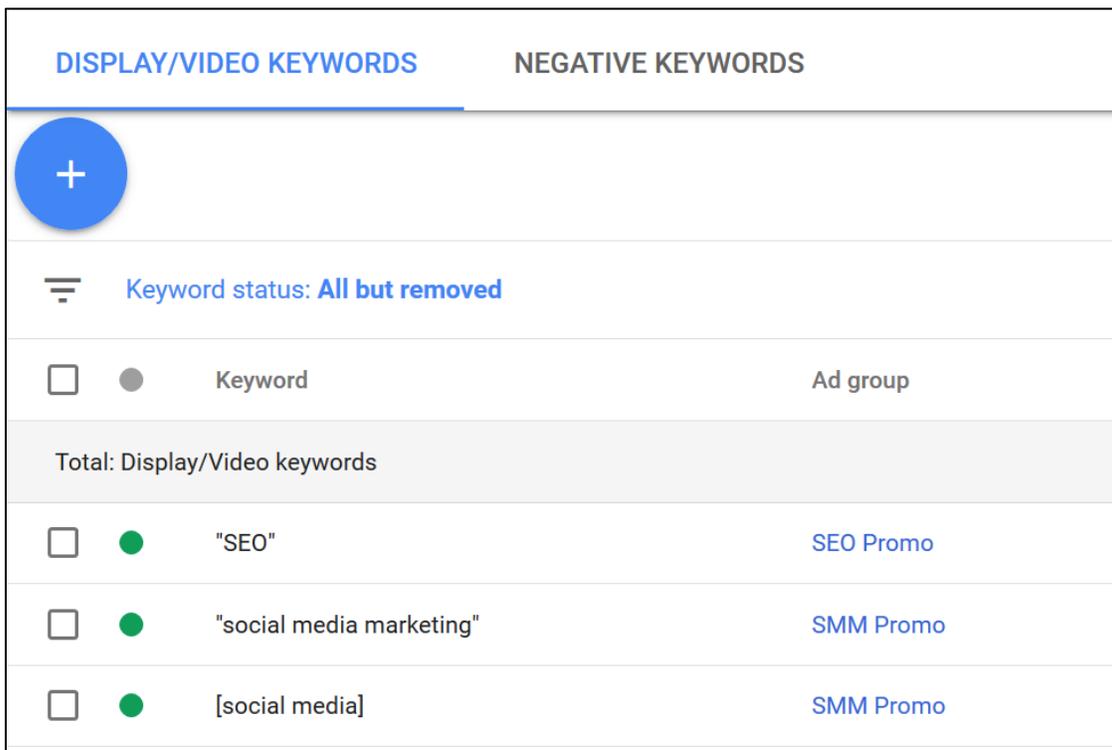
You can use the Filter tab to create a filter to check for “stars” and “dogs.” For example, here’s a screenshot for a Display Network filter called “Conversion Stars” meaning high ROI:



You can also create a filter for high impressions or cost, and low conversions to identify your “dogs.” In this way, you can identify “winners” and “dogs,” and continually improve your Google Display Network performance via placements.

YouTube

Remember that YouTube, parallel to the Google Search and Google Display Networks, has both a *Search* and a *Browse* functionality. Accordingly, if you are running YouTube ads using keyword targeting, click into an Ad Group, and then click *Keywords* on the left to view the keyword search queries on YouTube that generated impressions and views of your video. Here’s a screenshot:



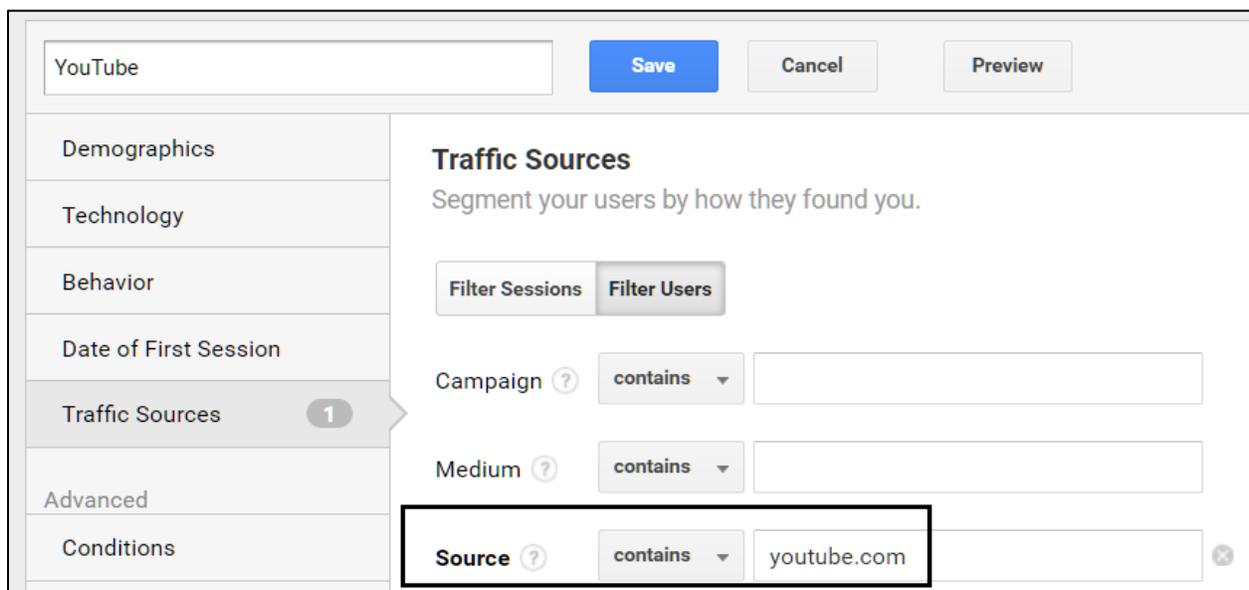
DISPLAY/VIDEO KEYWORDS		NEGATIVE KEYWORDS	
			
Keyword status: All but removed			
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Keyword	Ad group
Total: Display/Video keywords			
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	"SEO"	SEO Promo
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	"social media marketing"	SMM Promo
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	[social media]	SMM Promo

YouTube will also report clicks from the video to your call-to-action overlay if enabled. If you’re running on YouTube for browse (meaning “In-stream ads” or “Bumper ads”), you can click to the Placements tab and then see where your ads were run, either on YouTube or on the broader Google Display Network. To get even more detail, log in

to your YouTube account and drill down to videos in Video Manager. To learn more about YouTube analytics, visit <http://jmlinks.com/51b>.

Using a Segment in Google Analytics for YouTube

Finally, inside of Google Analytics, you can set up a **Segment** to see, in more detail, how traffic from video ads on YouTube ended up on your website and whether it converted, as that data isn't easily available in Google Ads or in YouTube itself. To set up this Segment, log in to Google Analytics, click on the Grayed Out *+Add Segment* tab, then the red *+New Segment* button, then *Traffic Sources*, and enter *youtube.com*. Here's a screenshot:



The screenshot shows the Google Analytics 'Traffic Sources' configuration interface. At the top, there is a text input field containing 'YouTube', followed by 'Save', 'Cancel', and 'Preview' buttons. Below this is a sidebar with navigation options: Demographics, Technology, Behavior, Date of First Session, Traffic Sources (highlighted with a '1' in a circle), Advanced, and Conditions. The main area is titled 'Traffic Sources' and includes the instruction 'Segment your users by how they found you.' There are two filter buttons: 'Filter Sessions' and 'Filter Users'. Below these are three filter rows: 'Campaign' with a 'contains' dropdown and an empty input field; 'Medium' with a 'contains' dropdown and an empty input field; and 'Source' with a 'contains' dropdown and an input field containing 'youtube.com'. The 'Source' row is highlighted with a red rectangular box.

For the Google help file on how to create a Segment in Google Analytics, visit <http://jmlinks.com/25s>.

In summary, on both YouTube and the Google Display Network, you're looking to minimize your Cost Per Click (Cost Per View on YouTube), place your ads on the most relevant placements, secure the highest conversion rates and minimize total costs over time. I also strongly recommend that you continually monitor both the GDN and

YouTube for “bad” or “nefarious” placements that just suck money out of your account.

» REPORTS IN GOOGLE ADS

Reports in Google Ads will allow you to semi-automate some of your reporting tasks. I’m not a big fan of formal reports, however, as I find it more useful to access the data directly at the Campaign, Ad Group, or Keyword level. Inside or regular Google Ads, you can “export” your data by clicking the “download” button at any level. For example, if I want a report for my ad groups for the previous month, here are the steps:

1. Click on a **Campaign** so that you are seeing the Ad Groups that live inside it.
2. Make sure that your **time horizon** is the “previous month,” by clicking on the time horizon top right and select “last month.”
3. Adjust the **columns** you want by clicking “Columns” at the top and check / uncheck the columns you want. (You can save your column set for future use).
4. **Verify** that you are seeing the data you want to see.
5. Click “**Download**” at the top right and select the format you want.

The Reports Tab

If you want to be fancy, click on the “Reports” Tab at the very top. Here you will see both pre-defined and custom options. Plus you can create “dashboards” of data you want to see instantly. For instance, on the “Predefined” option, you can easily see data by -

Basic > Campaign, Ad Group, Ad, Keyword, etc.

Time > data by day, week, month, etc.

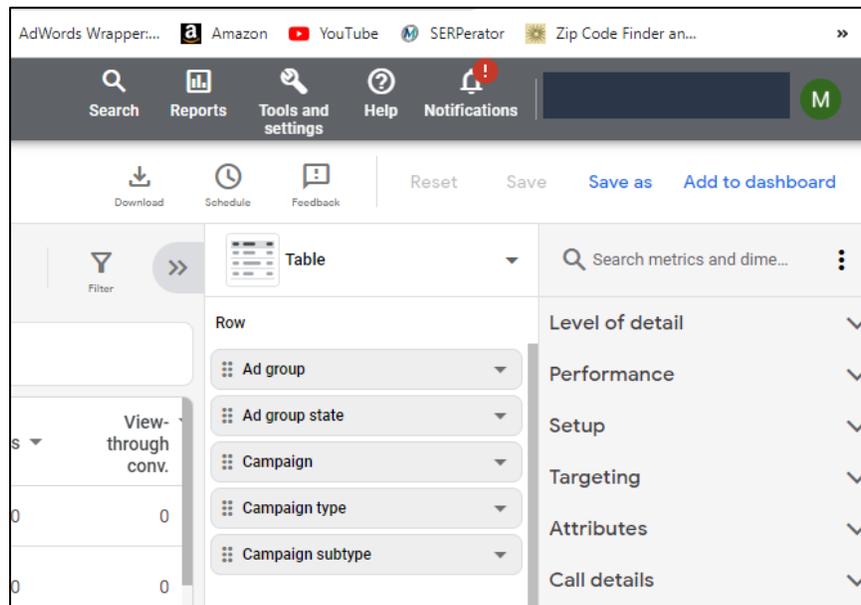
Conversions > Conversion category (such as phone call, contact form, sale, etc).

Locations > Distance by mail from “location assets”

Assets > sitelinks, images, callouts, etc.

A good trick is to use a pre-defined report (for example, “Ad Group”) and then modify it to better select the data you want to see. To do this, click on *Reports > Predefined Reports > Basic > Ad Group*.

Next, on the right hand side, you can drag, drop, add, or delete any attributes you want. Here’s a screenshot:

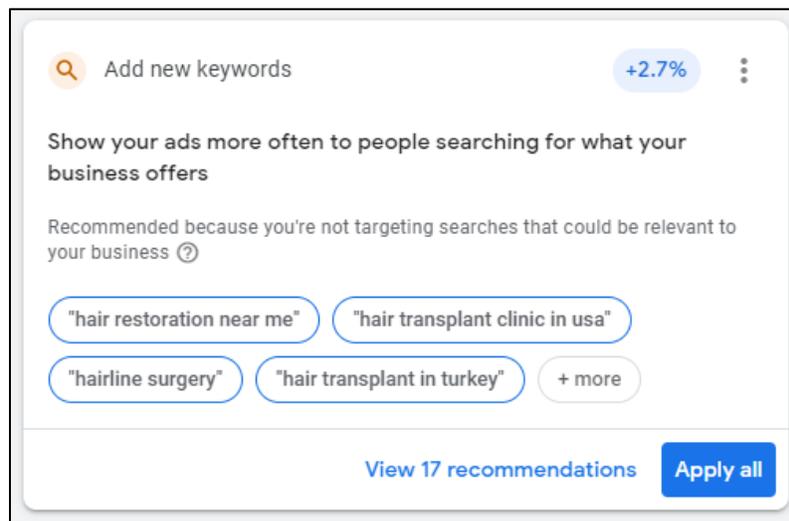


You can sort or filter by any column. Just click on a column and select the desired option. With a few modifications, you can create a “report” for the data you want. Give it a name and then click “save.” You can download your report into Excel format or PDF. You can also schedule or share reports.

» RECOMMENDATIONS FROM GOOGLE ADS

Google AI will try to assist you via “Recommendations.” Some times these appear as “pop ups” as soon as you enter your account. Or, you can access them by clicking “Recommendations” on the left menu at the Account or Campaign levels.

For any “Recommendation,” I strongly recommend that you “view” it before “applying” it. For example, here’s a recommendation to add new keywords:



Click “view” and you can then see, approve, or dismiss each recommendation. Google is keen to recommend that you switch to “automated bidding” best on conversions. This is the most common “recommendation” I see. Another common one is to use “Display expansion,” meaning run your ads also on the Google Display Network. Both are pretty dangerous. In all cases with recommendations, look at them, but I strongly advise you not to just accept them without researching their pros and cons. You can read Google’s help file on recommendations at <http://jmlinks.com/58s>.

» SET UP GOALS IN GOOGLE ANALYTICS

The Holy Grail for an advertiser on Google Ads is a conversion. When you first conceptualize your Google Ads strategy, you should identify what will constitute a conversion for you, such as:

These are “hard” goals –

A purchase on your e-Commerce store.

A completed inquiry form such as a sales inquiry.

These are “intermediate” goals –

A completed signup form such as an eLetter sign-up, free ebook or software download, etc.

A social media action such as “liking” your company’s Facebook or LinkedIn page.

And these are “soft” goals –

Pageviews or time on site.

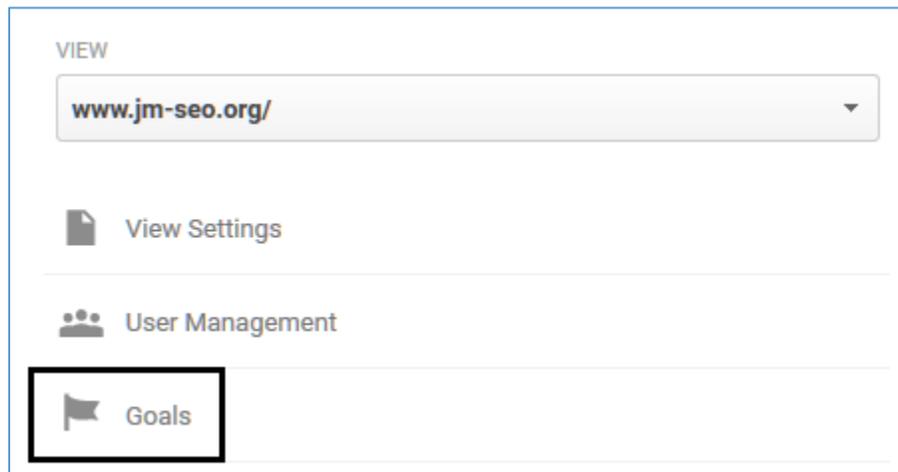
A video view

Google Analytics (<https://analytics.google.com/>) is Google’s free analytics program. I strongly recommend you install it on your website and that you connect your Google Ads account to your Google Analytics account. Do this by clicking *Tools* > *Linked Accounts* inside of Google Analytics. Note that at the time of this writing Google is forcing a transition from “UA” Google Analytics to “GA4.” I recommend that you thus enable both a “UA” and a “GA4” property for your website.

At the time of this writing, most of the Google Adcommunity is pretty unhappy about GA4, but afraid to say so publicly. It's buggy, difficult to use, and seems to lack key features in UA. Thus most of my examples will refer to UA.

In most cases, the goal in Google Analytics can be measured as the *Thank You* page that the user hits AFTER they have completed the desired action. For example, after they fill out your inquiry form and hit send, they get to a *Thank You* page. Or, after they've made a purchase on your e-commerce store, they get a *Thank You* for your order page.

Once you've defined these goals, I highly recommend that you log into Google Analytics, and define them as a "goal" in Google Analytics. To do this, go to the view page for your Website in Google Analytics, and find the ADMIN tab on the far-left column. Click here, and then on the far right under "View," you should see Goals. Here's a screenshot:



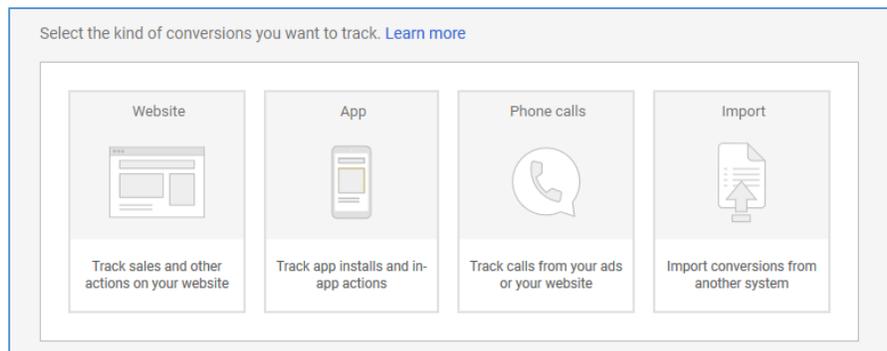
Once a goal is set up, you can go back to the main page in Google Analytics, and use **Segments** to slice and dice your data and thereby see what traffic is converting (i.e., completing your goal) vs. what is not. (For help with goals, visit the official explanation at <http://jmlinks.com/19a>).

» SET UP CONVERSION TRACKING IN GOOGLE ADS OR GOOGLE ANALYTICS

Google Ads provides two ways to track conversions. Remember that a “conversion” is simply the successful completion of your “goal” such as a completed purchase on your e-Commerce store or a completed feedback form on your website. Once you’ve defined these as goals on your website, you have two methods to track them.

Method #1: Google Ads Conversion Tracking

In Google Ads, click on *Tools > Measurement > Conversions*. Then click the blue circle. Next, select the conversion type. Here’s a screenshot:



For most of us, it will be “Website.” Fill out the elements as indicated:

Name. Give it a name such as “Contact Form”

Category. Assign it a category as indicated.

Value. Estimate its monetary value to your business.

Count. Count every conversion.

Conversion Window. Set it at the default of thirty days.

The default settings are generally fine. If you want to learn more, click on the “pencil icon” and then the “Learn more” link in blue. After you complete this, Google will give you some code to place on your website’s *Thank You* page. Either copy/paste this yourself onto the “Thank You” page or have your developer install it. You can also use Google Tag Manager (<http://jmlinks.com/25u>) to manage this Google Ads tag. You can verify your installation is correct using Google Tag Assistant (<http://jmlinks.com/25v>).

VIDEO. Watch two good videos from Google on how to set up conversion tracking in Google Ads at <http://jmlinks.com/41p> and <http://jmlinks.com/41q>.

Once you’ve successfully installed the Google Ads Conversion tracking code, you should start to see conversions populating in your Google Ads reports.

Method #2: Google Analytics

The second method is to use Google Analytics, both UA and GA4. I’ll assume you’ve signed up for a Google Analytics account and implemented the tracking code across your website for both versions. I’ll also assume that you’ve set up goals in Google Analytics, as indicated above. In general, it’s better to use Google Analytics for your tracking system rather than just the Google Ads code as it is more robust. You can get a lot more data in Google Analytics than in Google Ads!

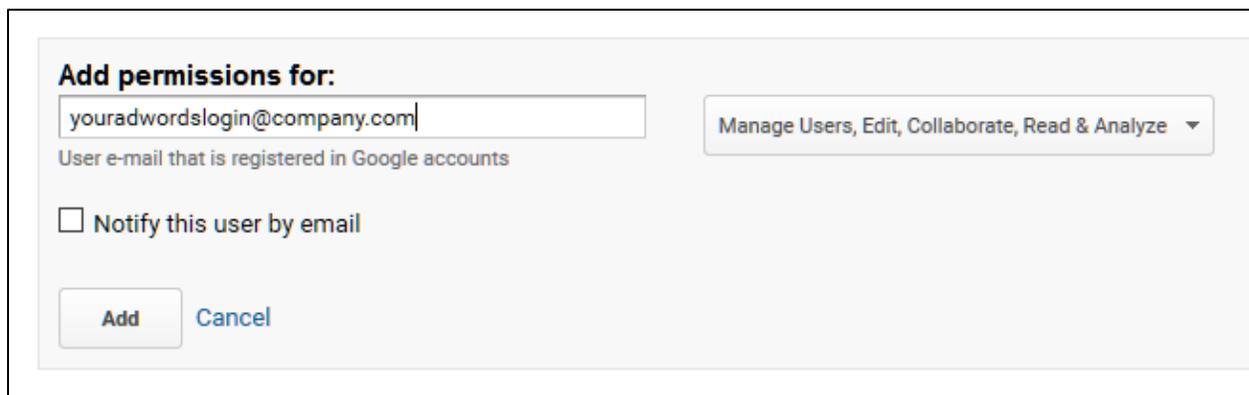
Next, you’ll need to link your Google Analytics to your Google Ads account.

Add Your Google Ads Login Email

If you use the same login for both accounts, this is pretty easy. I’d recommend, at a minimum, that you make sure that the Google Ads login you use is also listed as an Admin on Google Analytics. To do this (necessary only if your Google Ads login is not the same as your Google Analytics login email):

1. Log in to Google Analytics.
2. Click on the Admin tab / far lower left column.
3. Click on “User Management” at either the account, property, and/or view level.
4. Add your Google Ads login email to the list of users, and make sure it’s added as a “Manage users, Edit, Collaborate, Read & Analyze” level account.

Here’s a screenshot:



Add permissions for:

youradwordlogin@company.com

User e-mail that is registered in Google accounts

Manage Users, Edit, Collaborate, Read & Analyze ▾

Notify this user by email

Add Cancel

Link Google Ads to Google Analytics

Next, you’ll need to link your Google Ads account to your Google Analytics account. Login to Google Ads, and then click the Gear icon on the top right of the page. Then click *Setup* > *Linked Accounts* and then click Google Analytics on the left column. You should see your Google Analytics account and then click the “Set up link” icon.

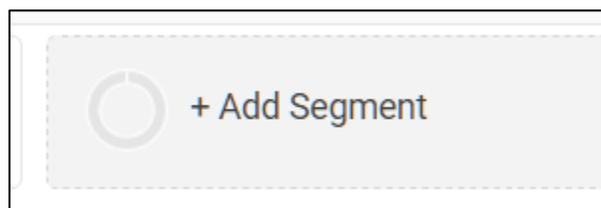
This can be a little tricky, so don’t hesitate to call Google Ads technical support by clicking on the Gear icon and then finding the phone number. It’s 866-246-6453 in the United States. The Google Ads tech support team can walk you through how to link your Google Ads to your Google Analytics account.

VIDEO. Watch a video from Google on how to link Google Analytics to your Google Ads account at <http://jmlinks.com/26s>.

Finally, once you've linked the two accounts, you should start to see conversions populating into your Google Ads report. You should also **verify** that your account is linked by looking inside Google Analytics as follows:

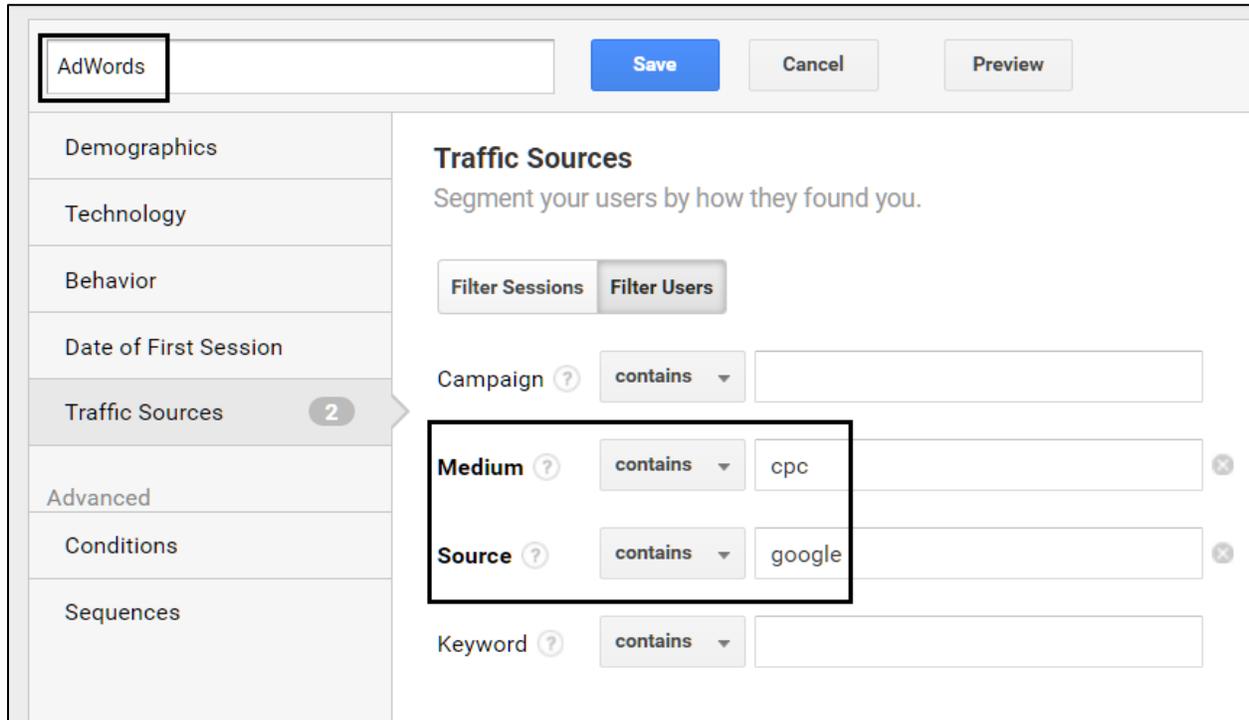
1. Log in to Google Analytics.
2. Click on *Acquisition* on the left column.
3. Click on *Google Ads*.
4. Click on *Campaigns*. You should see your Google Ads Campaigns here.
5. Click on *Keywords* and *Search Queries*, and you should see those here.
6. **Important:** you should see Sessions data and Pages / Session data. This means that you can track behavior after the first page to see where people go on your website.

Finally, it's a good idea to create a Segment that is for just your Google Ads traffic. To do this, click on the grayed out *+Add Segment* link at the top of the page in Google Analytics. (It's a little hard to see, so you may have to hunt for it). Here's a screenshot:



Next, click on *System* in the left column, and then find the Segment called *Paid Traffic* (if you are only advertising on Google Ads). If you are advertising on other venues like Bing, Yahoo, or Facebook, click the red *+New Segment* button, give it a name like Google

Ads, then click *Traffic Sources* on the left, then *Medium* contains **CPC**, and *Source* contains **google**. Here's a screenshot:



At this point, you've set up goals in Google Analytics, correctly linked Google Analytics to Google Ads, and set up a segment that allows you to examine the behavior of your Google Ads-originating traffic exclusively. Be proud!

» REVIEW YOUR CONVERSION DATA IN GOOGLE ADS

Now, let's return to Google Ads and view the data inside of Google Ads. Once you've activated goals and conversions in Google Ads and/or Google Analytics, you should start to see conversions show up in your Google Ads Reporting. If you remember that Google Ads is a hierarchy, you'll be able to keep oriented as you view the following:

Conversions vs. Campaigns. *Which Campaigns are performing the best?*

Conversions vs. Ad Groups. *Which Ad Groups are performing the best?*

Conversions vs. Keywords. *Which Keywords are your best performers?*

Conversions vs. Ads. *Which ads are your top performers?*

You may not see Conversions showing up in the Google Ads columns, so I recommend that at each level, you enable conversion data. At the Campaign level, for example, click on the *Columns icon*, then *Modify Columns*, and then click into *Conversions*. I recommend you enable:

Conversions. This will tell you the quantity of conversions. *More is better.*

Cost / conv. This will tell you how much you are paying to get a conversion. *Lower is better.*

Conv. rate. This will tell you the number of conversions / clicks. So, if you have 10 conversions out of 100 clicks, you have a $10/100 = 10\%$ conversion rate. *Higher is better.*

If you've assigned a value to a conversion or enabled e-Commerce tracking in Google Analytics, you can also enable value metrics in Google Ads. These tell you not only the raw quantity of conversions but the value to you of a conversion as well. You can browse this data at the Campaign, Ad Group, Keyword, and Ad levels. You can also use the *Filter* tab to create a filter. For example, you can create a Filter to find Keywords for which you've spent more than \$50, and the Cost per Conversion is $> \$10$.

In this way, at any level (Campaign, Ad Group, Keyword, Ad) you can use a Filter in combination with Conversion data to identify "dogs" or "winners" and act accordingly.

If you've enabled the value metrics, you can use your conversion data to find out:

Quantity. Which Campaigns / Ad Groups / Keywords / Ads are generating the highest volume of conversions?

ROAS / ROI / Quality. Which Campaigns / Ad Groups / Keywords / Ads are generating the best *return on ad spend*, namely –

- **Highest gross value.** Greatest dollar value as measured in sales volume.
- **Most attractive performance.** Highest conversion rate, and highest revenue per conversion.
- **Highest ROI.** Highest revenue per click as measured by highest value per conversion vs. click.

Time Horizons for Conversions

A Conversion in Google Ads / Google Analytics defaults to a thirty-day window, so remember that if you are looking at very fresh data (e.g., *yesterday*, *last week*), you will tend to underestimate your conversions and overestimate your cost per conversion. In addition, the tracking isn't perfect, so Google Ads / Google Analytics may significantly undercount conversions, not to mention, fail to take into account lifetime customer value (LCV).

Use your gut instinct in combination with conversion data to verify that your Google Ads advertising is working.

Conversions in Google Analytics

Google Analytics will give you even more robust data on conversions than Google Ads. If you're using e-Commerce, for example, and you've linked your e-Commerce account to Google Analytics, Analytics will automatically populate e-Commerce sales as conversions and track the sales value. And, if Google Analytics is correctly linked to Google Ads, then this **conversion value** will be populated in Google Ads as well, automatically.

In this way, you can see the revenue per conversion data in Google Analytics as well as the raw conversion numbers.

You can also drill down into a Campaign, Ad Group, and/or Keyword to see which ones are generating the most clicks into your website and if the user fails to convert, you can follow the path from landing to bounce or exit. In this way, you can attempt to “debug” problems, wherein you are getting clicks from Google Ads but not conversions. You can even use Analytics’ Funnel Visualization tool to graphically represent the path from landing to conversion (or bounce / exit). Inside of Google Analytics, therefore, you have an even more detailed window into not only who clicks on your ads on Google Ads, but what happens after the click, including those who convert easily at a high value and those who fail to convert or convert only at a low value.

» IDENTIFY PROBLEMS AND OPPORTUNITIES

I recommend that, at first, you check your Google Ads performance at least once a week. When you first start a new Campaign, I would even check it daily to make sure that it’s actually running and that your spend and results are commensurate with your goals. Once you’re up and running, then I find that – for most small business advertisers – checking twice a month is sufficient. (Obviously, if you are a large company or spending a significant amount, you’ll want to check it more frequently).

Here’s a list of things to check and opportunities to build out from; for each, at the *Campaign > Ad Group > Keywords > Ad level*. For our hypothetical Jason’s Cat Emporium business, for example, we’d have at least two Campaigns (one selling cat accessories and one selling cat boarding & grooming). We’d then check each Campaign, as well as the Ad Groups inside them (both on the Search and on the Display Networks), especially with an eye towards keywords and conversions.

A Twice Monthly Checklist

At least once a week (at the beginning) and then twice-monthly, here are things to check at every level (Campaign / Ad Group / Keyword / Ad):

1. **Are your ads running?** Do a spot check using the Google Ads *Ad Preview and Diagnosis* tool (on the Tools tab) to verify that your ads are actually running vis-à-vis your target keywords. If you're geotargeting, be sure to spot-check various target cities. Check your recent performance to make sure you see impressions and clicks and check your **SIS score**.
2. **Double-check your Keywords.** What keywords are you running on as indicated by the "Search Terms" on the Keyword tab? Look for strong, valuable keywords vs. bad matches or low-converting keywords. If keywords are erroneous or poor performers, block them as "negative keywords."
3. **What are your Impressions, Clicks, Average CPC, CTR, and Costs?** Do they look to be in the ballpark of what you want?
4. **What's Your Budget / Spend Month-to-date?** Check your budget at the Account, Campaign, Ad Group, and Keyword level to make sure it's within your budget. If it's too high, pause or bid lower on less lucrative keywords. If it's still too high, consider re-optimizing. It's better to run "full blast" on your high ROI keywords and not at all on low performers than to spread yourself too thin.
5. Do you see any **messages from Google** such as "Limited by Budget," "Below first page bid," or "Rarely shown due to low quality score?" If so, investigate and fix.
6. **Is your SIS > 85%?** How does that compare with your **Search Top IS (> 70%)**? And what about your **CTR** (ideally, > 1%)? Adjust bids and/or re-write ads to attempt to hit the "happy medium" of SIS > 85% and CTR > 1%.
7. **How are your conversions?** Which Campaigns and Ad Groups have decent conversion quantities, conversion rates, and conversion values? Which ones are high ROAS, and which ones are low?
 - a. Look at the Keyword level at your conversions. Which keywords have decent or better conversions, and which are below average? Investigate and fix as needed.
8. As for the **Google Display Network**, be sure to check your placements (looking for nefarious or "dog" placements) as well as check your CTR's and conversion rates and values.

In addition to the above, be on the lookout for "dogs" and for "winners." As for "dogs" – Campaigns, Ad Groups, Keywords, and/or Ads that are low performers – try to fix

them as needed, and if necessary, “kill” them. There’s no shame in giving up on either non-winnable keyword patterns at an affordable price, or in realizing that some keywords are just “dogs.” I will say it again:

KILL YOUR DOGS & LET YOUR WINNERS RUN

Pull Winners Out into their Own Special “Single Keyword Ad Group” or SKAG

As for “winners” or “opportunities,” identify your best-performing Campaigns, Ad Groups, Keywords, and/or Ads and let them run. In particular, if you find keywords at the keyword level that are strong-performers, think of breaking them out into a special ad group called a “SKAG” or “Single Keyword Ad Group.”

Remember that Google rewards a tight linkage between your Ad Groups and Keywords, so if there’s a high performing keyword, breaking it out into a specialized Ad Group will generally boost its SIS, position, click-thru rate and even conversion rate.

If, for example, we learn that the phrase “luxury cat boarding” generated a high return on ad spend, then we’d break it out into a special SKAG with special, unique ads just for it as well as a uniquely optimized landing page. Learn more about “Single Keyword Ad Groups” at <http://jmlinks.com/51c>.

Situate Google Ads ROI within Other Online Opportunities

Finally, don’t forget to compare your return on investment through Google Ads with your ROI from other Internet marketing methods, such as SEO and/or Social Media. In particular, use a tool like FatRank for Chrome (<http://jmlinks.com/25w>) and/or the Google Ads Preview tool by city to see if you’re ranking for “free” on Google with organic results. If you are ranking in the top three positions organically, then consider either cutting back on your Google Ads spend for that keyword, redeploy those funds

to other more needy keywords, or just be happy that you're crushing it with visibility via Google Ads *and* via Organic for high-value keyword patterns.

If you're running on the Display Network or YouTube, consider trying out **social media advertising** on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or LinkedIn, as often performance on those social media networks will outperform that of the Google Display Network with its plethora of nefarious site partners. The ROI on **email marketing**, in particular, is one people often miss. Another emerging options is ads on Amazon.com (if you sell on Amazon). Don't overspend on Google Ads yet starve other profitable opportunities for promotion online.

»» DELIVERABLE: AN GOOGLE ADS METRIC WORKSHEET

The **DELIVERABLE** for this Chapter is a completed worksheet on Google Ads Metrics.

For the **worksheet**, go to <http://jmlinks.com/23googleads>, then re-enter the password, "23googleads," and click on the link to the "Google Ads Metric Worksheet."



10

TOOLS FOR GOOGLE ADS

Google Ads is easier with free tools! To that end, I publish a massive list of SEO, Social Media Marketing, and Google Ads tools called the *Marketing Almanac*. **Register** your copy of the *Google Ads Workbook*, and you'll get full access to a PDF of all my favorite Google Ads tools plus my handy "dashboard" with easy, clickable links. In addition, here are the *best of the best* – my favorite Google Ads tools, ranked with the best ones first.

GOOGLE ADWORDS HELP CENTER - <https://support.google.com/google-ads/>

Your gateway to easy-to-use lessons about the Google AdWords advertising program. Whether you're just getting started with AdWords, seeking to improve your ad performance, or studying for the Google Advertising Professionals exam, you'll find lessons designed to help you learn at your own pace. You can also read the complete version (with all available lessons).

Rating: 5 Stars | **Category:** resource

UBERSUGGEST - <https://neilpatel.com/ubersuggest/>

This tool pulls the "autocomplete" data from Bing, and provides you an easy way to "shop" for keywords.

Rating: 5 Stars | **Category:** tool

SKILLSHOP (FORMERLY GOOGLE ACADEMY OF ADS) - <https://skillshop.withgoogle.com/>

Google has 'outsourced' their learning to a third-party, but this is the official learning resource for AdWords as well as YouTube and Google Analytics.

Rating: 5 Stars | **Category:** resource

ADWORDS YOUTUBE CHANNEL - <https://www.youtube.com/user/learnwithgoogle>

Official Google AdWords channel. Learn from the horse's mouth how to advertise on AdWords, why advertise, etc. Of course, be a bit skeptical as it is by Google, about Google, and ultimately for Google!

Rating: 5 Stars | **Category:** resource

TWINWORD KEYWORD TOOL - <https://www.twinword.com/ideas/>

Billed as the first "LSI" (Latent Semantic Indexing) tool and the first semantic keyword research tool that can sort by relevance. Useful for keyword discovery and finding related words, especially when writing a blog post.

Rating: 5 Stars | **Category:** tool

GOOGLE SUGGEST AND GOOGLE RELATED SEARCHES - <https://www.google.com/>

From the Google home page, enter a target keyword phrase such as 'flower shop'. First, notice the keywords 'suggested' in the drop-down list - this is called Google Suggest, and can be very useful. Second, do an actual search, then scroll down to the VERY bottom, and look for 'Searches related to flower shop' to see searches related to your search term. Fantastic ways to identify potential target keywords and key phrases!

Rating: 4 Stars | **Category:** tool

LOCAL KEYWORD LIST GENERATOR - http://5minutesite.com/local_keywords.php

Don't know your local geography? What about all those pesky zip codes and small suburban towns? Enter a zip code or city into this tool, and it generates a nifty list of possible nearby locales and zips for your SEO efforts. A time saver if local search is important to your SEO or AdWords.

Rating: 4 Stars | **Category:** tool

YOUTUBE ADVERTISING RESOURCES - <https://www.youtube.com/ads/>

YouTube wants you to advertise! But, it also hides some good free SEO-oriented resources here for how to use YouTube effectively. Worth a look, and a bookmark.

Rating: 4 Stars | **Category:** resource

MATCHPEG ADWORDS GENERATOR - <http://matchpeg.com/misc/adwordsgenerator.asp>

Got a list of keywords? Want to create a list of them in phrase match? This nifty tool will do that for you. However, be CAREFUL as it does NOT add the required plus signs for modified broad match!

Rating: 4 Stars | **Category:** tool

GOOGLE ADWORDS COMMUNITY –

<https://support.google.com/google-ads/community>

This is the official Google AdWords community group, wherein users post questions and get answers from Googlers or other AdWords gurus on AdWords. It's a bit of a free-for-all but useful if you have a burning question about AdWords! Just remember that these are Google forums, so things can be on the salesy side.

Rating: 4 Stars | **Category:** resource

GOOGLE ADS & COMMERCE BLOG - <https://blog.google/products/ads-commerce/>

The official blog for Google Ads and Commerce solutions.. It's more for sophisticated users than for newbies, but - that said - you should pay attention to it if you are spending money with Google.

Rating: 4 Stars | **Category:** blog

GOOGLE ADS KEYWORD PLANNER - <https://ads.google.com/>

Who got the data? Google got the data. Use the Keyword Planner for keyword discovery for both SEO and AdWords, but be sure to know how to use it. Not the easiest user interface, and remember it ONLY gives data for EXACT match types. NOTE: you MUST have a paid account to use, and be LOGGED IN.

Rating: 4 Stars | **Category:** tool

ADWORDS EDITOR - <https://ads.google.com/home/tools/ads-editor/>

AdWords Editor is a free, downloadable (Windows or Mac) application for managing large Google AdWords accounts efficiently. Download campaigns, make changes with powerful editing tools, then upload the changes to AdWords.

Rating: 4 Stars | **Category:** tool

TAG ASSISTANT FOR CHROME - <http://tinyurl.com/tagasst>

If you're using AdWords and Google Analytics to track conversions, you need to verify you have the right 'tags' running as Javascript on your website. Ask your developer to get the conversion tracking code from AdWords and install on ALL pages of your website. Then use this Chrome extension to double check / verify it actually is there.

Rating: 4 Stars | **Category:** tool

SEED KEYWORDS - <http://www.seedkeywords.com/>

This is a wonderful human / machine tool. Gather your team together (or they can be in diverse cities). Create a prompt, such as 'your hungry and you love Italian food, what would you search for?' This then creates a 'workspace' and as people type in their ideas it consolidates them into a master list. Excellent and fun tool for keyword brainstorming!

Rating: 4 Stars | **Category:** tool

GOOGLE PARTNERS HELP CENTER - <https://www.google.com/partners/about/>

Google partners is Google's platform for agencies and consultants, particularly for AdWords. However, you can 'join' as an individual and thereby get access to many wonderful FREE Google AdWords learning resources. If you are a serious learner with respect to AdWords, this is a great way to go behind the scenes and learn even more about AdWords.

Rating: 4 Stars | **Category:** resource

ANONYMOUS AD PREVIEWER - <https://ads.google.com/anon/AdPreview>

Use this tool to preview ads (and organic results) on Google, even if you do not have a Google Ads account. It's a little tricky to use, so - if possible - I recommend setting up a paid Google Ads account and using the tool 'inside' of Google Ads.

Rating: 4 Stars | **Category:** tool

CLICK GUARD - <https://www.clickguard.com/>

Another tool that works to combat spurious clicks on both the search and the Google Display Network (GDN).

Rating: 4 Stars | **Category:** tool

CLICKCEASE - <https://www.clickcease.com/>

This is a PAID tool, but an important one. It focuses on reducing click fraud, which is a pretty big problem in the search network and a huge problem in the Google Display Network.

Rating: 4 Stars | **Category:** tool

PPC CHAT - <https://officialppcchat.com/>

The Twitter based community is active all the time on the #ppcchat hashtag and Julie hosts weekly Twitter chats on Tuesdays at 12:00 PM EST. In the spring of 2021 audio versions of the chat were added. Initially taking place on Clubhouse, the chats have shifted back to Twitter, using its audio capabilities in Twitter Spaces. Audio PPC Chats take place on Fridays at 12:00 PM EST.

Rating: 4 Stars | **Category:** resource

WORDSTREAM GOOGLE ADS BLOG - <https://www.wordstream.com/blog/>

If you want to keep up-to-date on Google Ads, you can do no better than the WordStream blog. Their team has frequent updates, a few free tools, and other 'advanced' tips on Google Ads.

Rating: 4 Stars | **Category:** blog

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