Introduction to Google Analytics

Training Course Notes

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To log in to Google Analytics:

URL: https://www.google.com/analytics/

Username:

Password:

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Please note: Some of the information within this document is taken from and refers back to the incredibly useful **Google Analytics Help Centre:** https://support.google.com/analytics?hl=en#topic=3544906

Throughout these training notes, you will see this magnifying glass badge symbol. This identifies activities, or important points to note.

About Scout Digital Training

Scout Digital Training is dedicated to providing practical and effective digital training to small groups and individuals for a variety of industries.

Whether you're seeking to advance your career, become a leader in your field, increase your online reach or meet your marketing objectives, these in person, half day courses will leave you feeling confident and filled with extra knowledge and skills.

Our educational sessions work with your existing knowledge to boost efficiency and ensure you get the absolute most out of the training and workshops.

With years of expertise in the digital marketing arena, our approach is friendly, professional, trustworthy and knowledgeable.

Scout Digital Training is the specialist training division of <u>Scout Digital Marketing.</u>

About Scout's Google Analytics and SEO training courses

With an emphasis on results and learning, we break down these complex subjects so you have a thorough understanding and are able to apply what is relevant in your own business or website.

No longer do you have to feel intimidated by or fumble your way through these powerful digital tools. Get to know how they work and how to best apply them to your current role, company or strategy.

These training courses are ideal for:
- micro, small and medium business owners, managers and marketing/communications professionals
- website owners, content writers and editors
- bloggers
- web developers and designers.

And anyone who wants to:
- understand the capabilities of web analytics and SEO
- stop being overwhelmed by Google Analytics when reporting
- jump into the world of analytics and SEO but are not sure where to start
- improve their search engine rankings
- provide comprehensive reporting on a site they manage
- learn in a supportive environment
- upskill and refresh their existing Google Analytics and SEO knowledge.

2017 course calendar

Our current courses and dates are:

COURSE	2017 COURSE DATES	(ALL 9AM-1PM)	
Introduction to Google Analytics	Thurs 20 April	Thurs 6 July	Thurs 28 September
Taking Google Analytics Further	Thurs 11 May	Thurs 3 August	Thurs 26 October
Introduction to SEO	Thurs 8 June	Thurs 31 August	Thurs 23 November

Courses can be taken individually, but have also been designed to work together to build on the knowledge and skills gained.

What is Google Analytics and how does it work?

Google Analytics is a free website analytics software that measures the traffic to, and activity within a website or online application. It functions through a combination of Cookies and JavaScript.

The Google Analytics tracking code is a snippet of JavaScript code that is added to every page of the website or application. The tracking code then runs in the visitor's Internet browser when the visitor browses the website (providing JavaScript is enabled within the browser). It anonymously collects the visitor's data and sends it to a Google data collection server.

As well as transmitting information to the Google server, the tracking code sets a first party cookie (providing cookies are enabled in the browser) on each visitor's computer. This cookie stores additional anonymous information that allows Google Analytics to determine such factors as:

- Whether the visitor is new or returning
- The timestamp of the visit
- The traffic source that directed the visitor to the website e.g. search engine, referral site, social media etc.

What prevents Google Analytics from tracking data?

If JavaScript or Cookies are disabled within the browser, Google Analytics cannot operate, and will not collect any data from that visitor's session. Ad blocking programs can also disable Google Analytics, preventing data collection. Privacy networks can also mask users' locations, which create inaccuracies in geographical data.

All of these factors can prevent some visitors and activity from being tracking, leaving some gaps in the data.

However, these limitations are considered to be small, affecting only a small portion of visitors. These limitations also affect the majority of web analytics software, as most operate using JavaScript and Cookies.

With this in mind, it is important to understand that while Google Analytics data isn't 100% thorough and accurate, it can be the best understanding we have about our websites' visitation and activity.

So rather than thinking of it as **specifically** what has occurred on the website, it provides valuable information about **website trends**, by using **sampling**.

> *Sampling*
> *The practice of selecting a subset of data from your traffic and reporting on the trends detected in that sample set. Sampling is widely used in statistical analysis because analyzing a subset of data gives similar results to an analysis of a complete data set, but can produce these results with a smaller a computational burden and a reduced processing time.*

Why use a web analytics tool?

By regularly reviewing the historical visitation, activity and behavior trends of visitors to our websites, we can better understand how people are really interacting with our site, and make informed, strategic and results-focused marketing decisions.

Other website analytics tools

There are a number of alternatives to Google Analytics, some free, some paid.

Some examples include:
- Piwik: https://piwik.org
- Open Web Analytics: http://www.openwebanalytics.com
- Kiss Metrics: https://www.kissmetrics.com
- Crazy Egg: https://www.crazyegg.com
- Clicky: https://clicky.com/

Crazy Egg is an example of a heatmap tracking software, and can be used in conjunction with Google Analytics.

Clicky offers more detailed real time analytics, and can be used in conjunction with Google Analytics.

Why does Google Analytics data vary from other website analytics' data?

Website platforms that allow you to build and host websites on their server (rather than you selecting your own independent hosting), such as Wordpress.com, Weebly, Wix and Squarespace, offer their own website visitor statistics, which often varies from that provided by Google Analytics. This is due to a different tracking method.

This data is generated based on the number of impressions – or how many times the pages are loaded and viewed – and page refreshes are counted as new visits or views. This is why these statistics often show a higher number of "visitors" than Google Analytics.

These statistics are also gathered based on server activity, and so are limited with what information they can collect about a visitor. The combination of cookies and JavaScript that Google Analytics (and other tools) use, allows a more accurate understanding of individual website "sessions", and more details about the visitor and their activity on the website.

The benefits of Google Analytics

The main benefits of Google Analytics include:
- Free to use
- Relatively basic implementation
- Well documented
- Integrates easily with other Google products (Google Search Console, Google Adwords etc)
- Easy data exports as PDF or Excel
- Easily connects to other tools, e.g. dashboarding tools
- Regularly updated

How to best structure your Google Analytics account

The Google Analytics' set up is comprised of three main components:
- Account
- Property
- View

Account:
An account is the highest level of organization, and your access point for Google Analytics. You need at least one account to have access to Google Analytics, and to identify the property you want to track.

An account can contain one or more properties.

Property:
A property is a specific website, mobile application, or device (e.g. a kiosk or point-of-sale device).

When you add a property to an account, Google Analytics generates the tracking code that you use to collect data from that property. The tracking code contains a unique ID that identifies the data from that property, and makes it easily identifiable in your reports.

Google Analytics will only begin collecting data from the date and time at which the tracking code is successfully installed in the web pages.

It takes 24 hours for a full day's data to be collected and confirmed, so when undertaking full monthly reports (e.g. 1-31 January) it is recommended to wait 1-2 days after the end date to ensure all data is populated.

View:
Properties contain views, which are defined views of reporting data for the property.
A property can contain one or more views.
Google Analytics automatically creates one unfiltered view for each property you add.
You should leave this original view unfiltered, so that you always have a view in which you can see all the data. You can create additional views and apply filters to them so that they each include the specific subset of data in which you're interested.

For example, within a property you might have:
- one view of all the data for www.example.com
- one view of the data from www.example.com EXCLUDING all traffic from the organisation's own main IP address (to block out their own internal visits)

Once you create a view, the reports for that view will show data from the creation date of the view forward. For example, if you create a view on 1 January, that view will show data from 1 January forward, but will not show any data collected prior to 1 January.

If you delete a view, that specific perspective of the data is gone forever. Don't delete a view if you think you might ever want to report on that particular perspective of the data.

Please note: Previously you could not move a Google Analytics property from one account to another. This has now changed (see link below).

https://support.google.com/analytics/answer/6370521?hl=en

However, we still strongly recommended that you create and use one Google Analytics account for each organization/business, with only related organization/business properties within it. You are able to create and manage up to 100 Google Analytics accounts, per individual Google account.

Users and permissions

You add users to an Analytics account. These actions are managed within the Admin tab.

You can add those users at the account, property, or view level; and you can restrict their access at each level.

When you add a user, you identify that person by an email address that is registered in Google accounts, and you assign the appropriate permissions.

Depending on the permissions you assign, that user can manage other users, perform administrative tasks like creating additional views and filters, and see the report data.

You must have full permissions to add and edit other users.

User permissions

You can assign user permissions at the account, property, and view levels.

Permission	Explanation
Manage Users	Can manage account users (add/delete users, assign permissions). Does not include Edit or Collaborate.
Edit	Can perform administrative and report-related functions (e.g., add/edit/delete accounts, properties, views, filters, goals, etc., but not manage users), and see report data. Edit permission is required at the account level to create filters. Edit permission is required at the view level to apply filters. Includes Collaborate.
Collaborate	Can create personal assets, and share them. Can collaborate on shared assets, for example, edit a dashboard or annotation. Includes Read & Analyze.
Read & Analyze	Can see report and configuration data; can manipulate data within reports (e.g., filter a table, add a secondary dimension, create a segment); can create personal assets, and share them, and see shared assets. Cannot collaborate on shared assets.

Parent permissions are inherited by default (account > property > view). For example, when you set permissions for a user at the account level, that user then has those same permissions for all the properties and views in that account.

Permissions set for a child supersede permissions set for the parent.

The Google Analytics Interface

The Google Analytics Interface is comprised of three main sections:
1. Customisation
2. Reports
3. Admin

Customisation
Contains your individually created and saved:
- Dashboards
- Custom Reports
- Shortcuts
- Custom Alerts

Reports
Contains all reporting data, including Real-Time reports, and past activity (more detailed than Real-Time).

Admin
Contains all settings, tracking code, filters, integrations and user management.

Main reporting options

Reporting period

Excluding Real Time reports, all Google Analytics data is collected and displayed in retrospect, based on a time period identified in the date selector in the top right hand corner of the main interface.

Periods are selected in full days (not by time) and as it takes 24 hours to fully populate a day, it is recommended to not select "today" as the end date (without understanding that it will be incomplete, and so inaccurate).
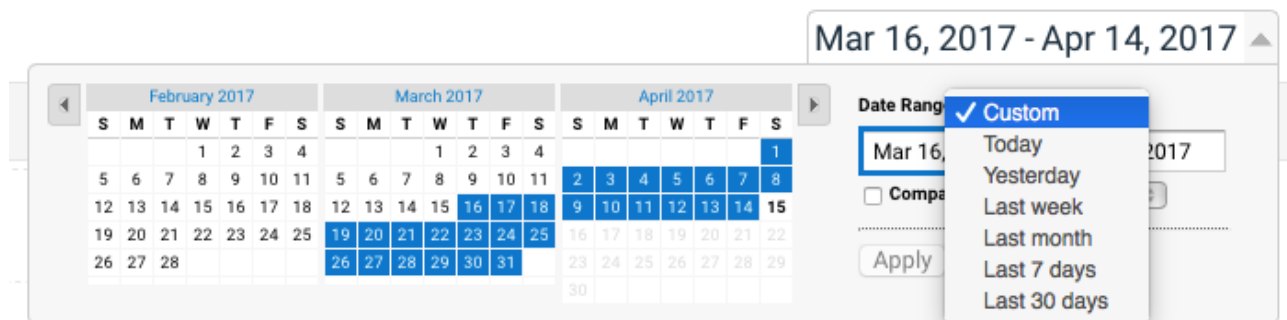
There are some default time periods which can be selected from the "Date Range" drop down menu.

The "Custom" option allows you to select your own start and end dates using the calendar picker.

The "Compare to:" check box allows you to compare the selected date range with another period.

The "Previous period" is exactly the same number of days prior to the primary period, and "Previous year" is the same period of the year prior.

Or you can select your own "Custom" period.

Remember to click the "Apply" button to set any date range or comparison changes.
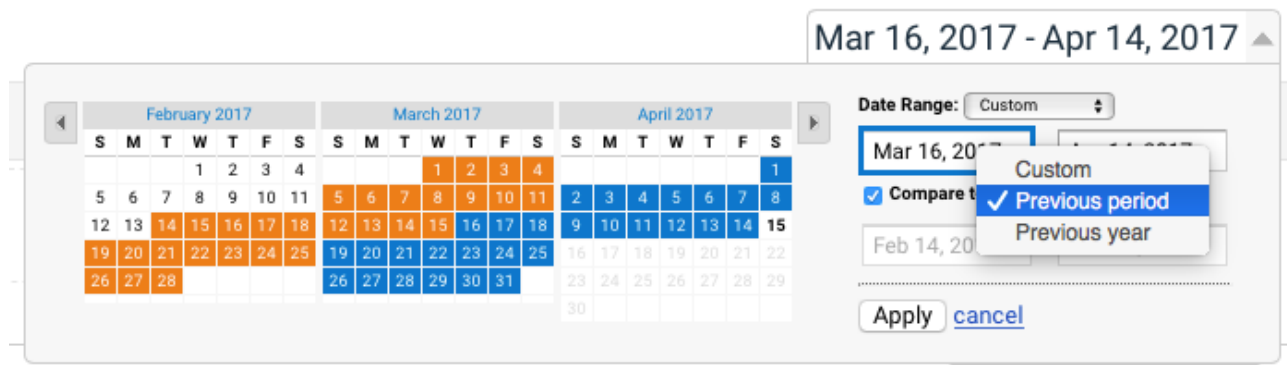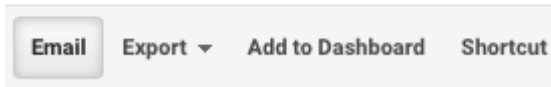

By default, the main graph will show activity by Day, but you can select other options from the buttons on the far right:

Report actions

Beneath the report title there are a number of actions that can be taken on any report shown:

Audience Overview

Email   Export ▾   Add to Dashboard   Shortcut

Email
Create and send a once off, or scheduled report via email, to yourself, or anyone else based on their email address. These can be sent as CSV, TSV, XLS or PDF.

Export
Export the data from the currently visible report as a CSV, TSV, XLS, Google spreadsheet or PDF.

Add to Dashboard
Add the current report shown to a custom dashboard.

Shortcut
Add a shortcut to the current configuration of the shown report. All customizations, including advanced segments, secondary dimensions, sorting, etc are automatically applied whenever you view the report from this shortcut.

Default Channel Grouping

Channel Groupings are rule-based groupings of your traffic sources.

Throughout Google Analytics reports, data is organized according to the **Default Channel Grouping**, a grouping of the most common sources of traffic, like Paid Search and Direct. This allows you to quickly check the performance of each of your traffic channels.

Dimensions and Metrics

Every report in Google Analytics is made up of dimensions and metrics.

Dimensions:
Dimensions are **attributes** of your data.
For example, the dimension City indicates the city, for example, "Adelaide" or "Melbourne", from which a session originates.
Dimensions appear in all of your reports, though you might see different ones depending on the specific report. Use them to help organize, segment, and analyze your data.
Analytics also lets you create custom dimensions to hold additional types of data you send via the tracking code, or by using Data Import, or by using the Analytics API.

Metrics:
Metrics are **quantitative measurements**.
The metric Pageviews is the total number of pages viewed.

The tables in most Analytics reports organize dimension values into rows, and metrics into columns.
For example, this table shows one dimension (City) and two metrics (Sessions and Pages/Session).

Dimenson	Metric	Metric
City	Sessions	Pages/Session
San Francisco	5,000	3.74
Berlin	4,000	4.55

Data display options

By default, most reports are shown within a table.
You can change the display options using the button options on the far right:

Links to more information

Any blue text in Google Analytics reports will link through to another, more detailed report for that item.

1. m.facebook.com
2. l.facebook.com
3. t.co

Term explanations

Many items within the Google Analytics reports, such as dimensions and metrics, include a question mark icon next to them. When hovered over, more information is provided about what this item is. Definitions for many of these are also included in this document.

Link to open reference page or site

Referral sites or specific page links included in reports will include a square and arrow icon next to them. Clicking on this icon will open up that actual web page in a new window.

1. /social-media/how-to-merge-your-facebook-page-and-facebook-place/
2. /
3. /contact/

Reports: Real-Time

In 2011, Google Analytics introduced the Real-Time section to its reporting, which shows basic information about the actual visitors and activity that is happening on your website right now.

As all other Google Analytics data is historical, this can be useful for monitoring actual activity at a specific point in time, for example if you have just launched a campaign, or sent an email campaign, and want to see if it is encouraging visitors and what they are doing.

Activity: Try it for yourself! If no current "real time" visits are occurring, open another browser window and visit your own website.

Please note: data collected about these visits is very basic, and focuses on:
- Overview
- Locations
- Traffic Sources
- Behaviour
- Events
- Conversions
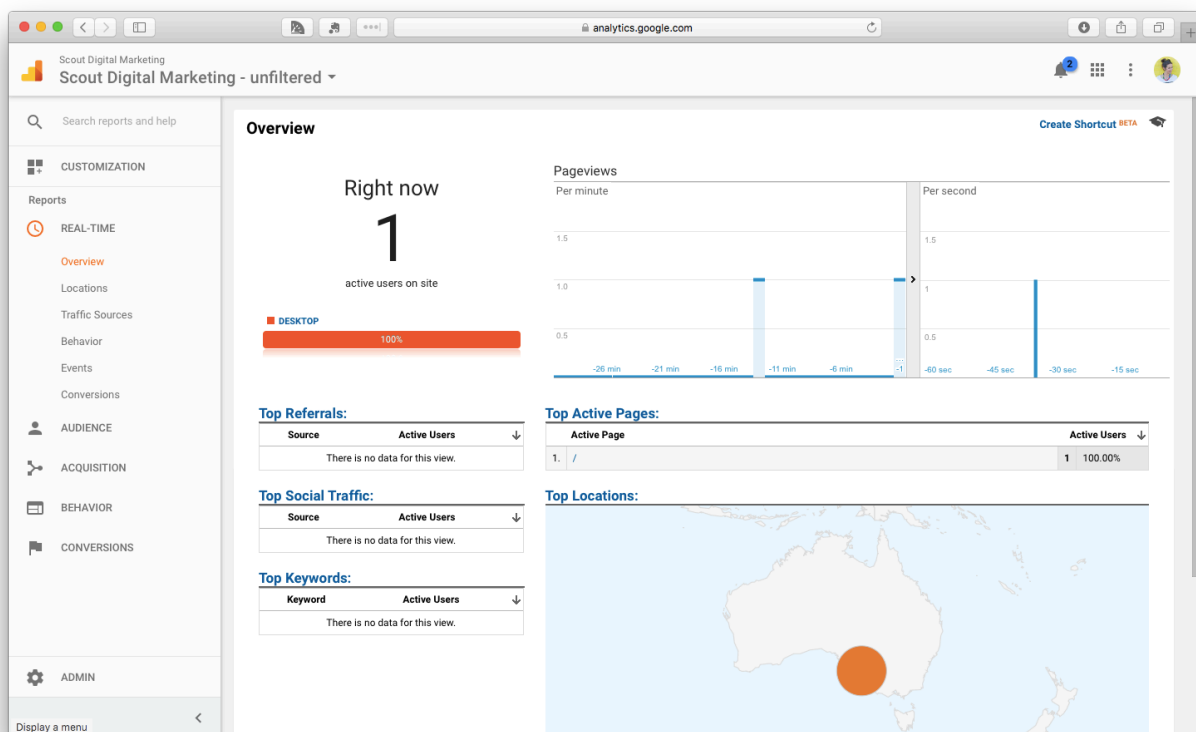
Reports: Audience

The Audience section of Reports is all about your website's visitors: where they are from, what devices and browsers they are using, and general collated data about how long they are on your website, how many pages they have viewed etc.

Audience Overview

The Audience Overview report provides a very useful general snapshot of your website's visitation and activity, in the selected date range (and comparison period if selected).

If the comparison period is selected, additional percentage change data will be shown for all metrics, either positive or negative.

The main metrics shown on the Audience Overview report are:

Sessions (previously called "Total Visits")
The concept of a session in Analytics is important to understand because many features, reports, and metrics depend on how Analytics calculates sessions.
A session is a group of interactions that take place on your website within a given time frame. For example a single session can contain multiple screen or page views, events, social interactions, and ecommerce transactions.
A single user can open multiple sessions. Those sessions can occur on the same day, or over several days, weeks, or months. As soon as one session ends, there is then an opportunity to start a new session. There are two methods by which a session ends:
- Time-based expiration (including end of day):
  - After 30 minutes of inactivity
  - At midnight
- Campaign change:
  - If a user arrives via one campaign, leaves, and then comes back via a different campaign.

Users (previously called "Unique Visitors")
Users are the individual visitors to the websites, some of whom have visited multiple times (as can be seen in Sessions). This is based on IP address, and will be registered as a new "unique visit" if the same user clears their browsing history / cache.

Pageviews
An individual instance of a page being loaded (or reloaded) in a browser. Pageviews is a metric defined as the total number of pages viewed.

Pages / Session
The average number of pages viewed during each session (Pageviews / Session).

Avg. Session Duration
The average amount of time spent by each visitor on the website during their session.

Bounce Rate
The percentage of visitors who leave the website after viewing only the single page that they landed on. With this metric, the lower the percentage, the better!

% New Sessions
The percentage of new visitors to the website, as opposed to Returning Visits, individuals who visit the website multiple times.

The Audience section also contains the following data:

Active Users

Through 'Active users' report you can determine the number of users who visited your website in the last 1, 7, 14 or 30 days in the selected time period.

Cohort Analysis

A Cohort is simply a segment of users which is based on a date. For example, a cohort could be all users based on their Acquisition Date (in Google Analytics this is really the Date of First Session).

User Explorer

The User Explorer report lets you isolate and examine individual rather than aggregate user behavior. Individual user behavior is associated with either Client ID or User ID.

Understanding aggregate behavior is important when you're managing large efforts, for example, campaigns that target large geographic areas. Understanding individual behavior is important when you want to personalize the user experience, or when you need to gain insight into or troubleshoot a specific user experience: for example if you want to analyze the behavior of a user who has an unusually high average order value or see where a user ran into trouble with placing an order.

Read more about User Explorer here: https://support.google.com/analytics/answer/6339208

Demographics and Interests

Demographics and interests data provides information about the age and gender of your users, along with the interests they express through their online travel and purchasing activities. This data includes:

Demographics:
- Overview
- Age
- Gender

Interests:
- Overview
- Affinity Categories
- In-Market Segments
- Other Categories

This data relies on being configured and integration with other Google tools. It may only be available for a subset of your users, and may not represent the overall composition of your traffic.

If you are interested in this information, we recommend using it as a general guide only.

Read more about Demographics and Interests here: https://support.google.com/analytics/answer/2799357

Geo

This section of the Audience report provides information about the
- Language
- Location
of website visitors.

Language
Google Analytics takes these values from the web browsers of visitors. Language is a user-selectable setting in most web browsers, generally defaulting to the language of the operating system.
These language codes represent a language and optional country variant.
The codes aren't specific to Google Analytics; they're based on two ISO standard specifications:
- ISO 639 specifies 2-letter and 3-letter codes for languages. See a list from the Library of Congress here.
- ISO 3166 specifies 2-letter and 3-letter codes for countries, as well as 3-digit codes. See a list here.

In most cases, languages in the Google Analytics report have a 2-letter language code (for example, "en" for English) however there may also be a 2-letter country code, with a hyphen separating the two parts (for example, "en-us" for US English).

Location
Location provides a number of geographical dimensions, such as City, Country, Continent, etc. The values for these dimensions are automatically derived from the IP address of the hit, which is convenient but also has a few drawbacks:
- IP-based locations are approximate.
- Values for standard geographic dimensions are localized into the user's preferred language, possibly making it complicated to share the data with users who speak other languages or use other tools.
- Many businesses operate in arbitrary regions that make sense to them but that don't appear on a map. For example in North America, you might operate in East, Central, and West groups of states or provinces. In Europe, companies might operate across North, Central, and South groups of countries.

As an alternative to IP-based regions, you can create your own custom regions by mapping them to a set of geographical ID dimensions. These dimensions are based on widely used standards, so sharing the data with other users and applications is simpler.

Behaviour

The behavior report collates the following characteristics of your visitors:
- **New vs Returning:**
  - New visitors are visiting the website for the first time (or first time since clearing their cookies)
  - Returning visitors have visited your website previously (based on the cookie tracking)
- **Frequency & Recency:**
  - The Frequency report collates "Count of Sessions", grouping data about visitors who visited the website the same quantity of times (1, 2, 3, 4, 5 etc)
  - The Recency report collates the "Days Since Last Session" (0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 etc)
- **Engagement:**
  - The Engagement report indicates how interested visitors were with your website based on the collated Session Durations, and Page Depth (how many pages they viewed in a session).

Technology

The Technology report shows what **Browsers & OS** (Operating Systems) the website visitors are using, along with their **Network** (generally their ISP or Internet Service Provider).

Mobile

The Mobile report outlines what device visitors are viewing the website from.

In the **Overview** report, this information is broken down by:
- Desktop (which includes laptop computers)
- Mobile (meaning smartphones)
- Tablet (such as iPad)

The **Devices** section provides more detailed information about the actual device being used, such as Apple iPhone, Samsung Galaxy, iPad etc.

Custom

If any **Custom Variables** or **User Defined** dimensions have been set, these will show in Custom reports.

Benchmarking

Within the Admin section of your Google Analytics account, you can select to share your data anonymously with Google. This information is then used to help create Benchmarks for website visitation and activity, based on the primary industry selected for your Google Analytics property.

Providing there is enough data available you can see how your site compares against others in your industry based on:
- Channels
- Location
- Devices
- Users Flow

Please note: the industry options are very general, and unless it specifically relates to your industry, the benchmarking values may inaccurately make you feel smug, or despondent. We recommend focusing on your own activity, and setting your own benchmarks from previous performance that you strive to improve upon.

⊙ Activity: How to add Annotations

Annotations in Google Analytics are a simple and useful way of adding notes to the analytics timeline to highlight key actions or occurrences that may affect how the data is interpreted.

For example, you may add an annotation for:
- Launching a key campaign that is expected to increase website traffic
- Sending an enewsletter that links back to the website
- Commencing and concluding a Google Adwords campaign
- Launching a new version or section of the website

What types of annotations might be useful for your website? List them here:

_____

_____

_____

_____

To add annotations to your Google Analytics data timeline:
- Log into Google Analytics and visit the Overview page in the main Reporting section (this may be your default upon logging in).
- Click on the small arrow in the grey bar beneath the main data timeline (see screenshot below).
- Click on the "+ Create new annotation" link that appears on the right hand side (see screenshot below).
- The annotations panel will be revealed (see screenshot above).
- Select the date for the annotation. This may be in the past.
  Please note, due to the main Google Analytics data only updating every 24 hours, you will not be able to select the current day. In this situation, we suggest you select the most recent day (which will be yesterday) and make a note of the actual date in the notes field. You can always edit the annotation in the future and correct the date.
- Complete the notes field, a simple explanation of the item to be noted.
- Select whether the annotation should be Private (for your Google Account login only) or shared (for all Users and Administrators of the Google Analytics profile).
- Click "Save" and you're done!
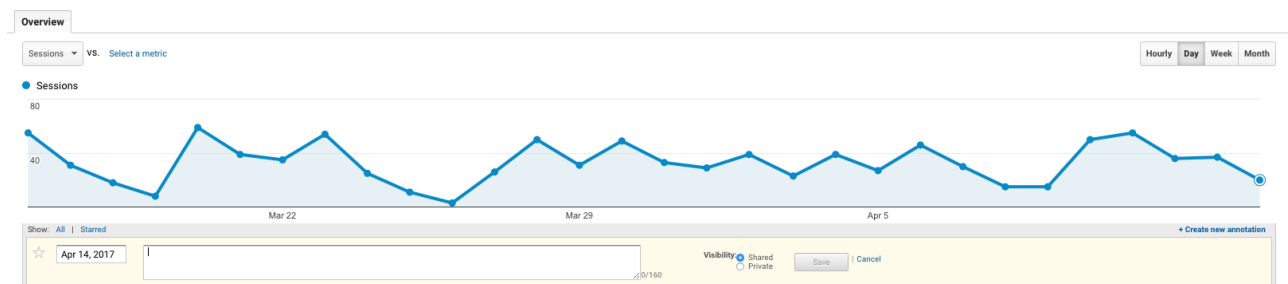
The annotations will then be highlighted by small conversation bubble icons on the timeline, and full details can be seen by clicking the small arrow in the grey bar to reveal the annotations.

This grey arrow is also used to close and hide this panel.

Reports: Acquisition

The Acquisition reports are all about where your visitors have come from *before* arriving on your website (previously called Traffic Sources). They are incredibly useful for understanding the various marketing tactics that are encouraging visits and activity.

Acquisition Overview
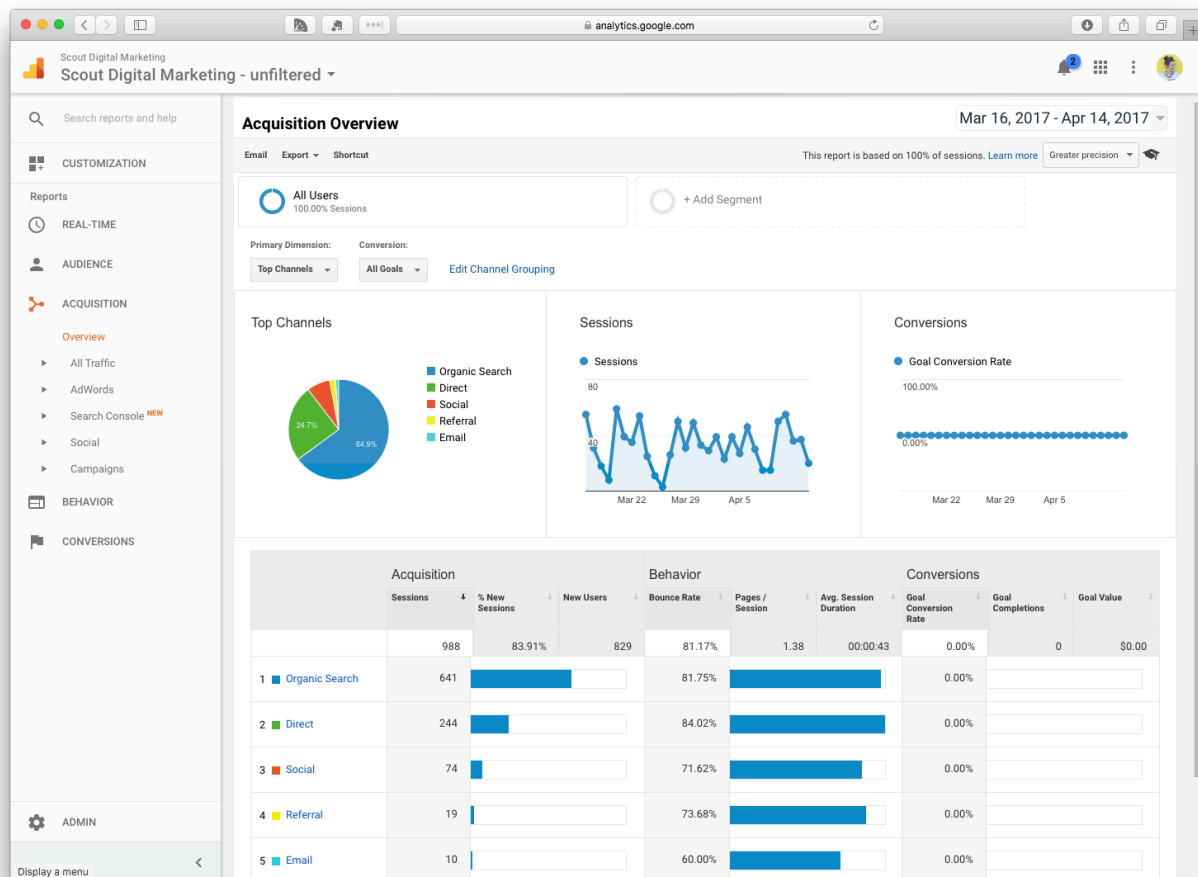
All Traffic > Channels

The main traffic sources (or channels) to a website are:

Organic Search
These visitors have used a search engine such as Google, Bing or Yahoo, and entered a keyword or phrase to look for a website that matches their requirements. They have then clicked on a SERP (Search Engine Result Page) from your website to arrive on your site.

Paid Search
These visitors have clicked on a paid advertisement such as Google Adwords or Bing Ads that has then taken them to your website. Please note: These ad accounts must be correctly integrated with Google Analytics to show in this Default Channel Grouping, otherwise these visits may be attributed to Direct or (Other).

Direct
Direct visitors know your website's address and have typed it directly into their browser to visit your website, so haven't searched, or clicked on another link. Often these visitors are regular, returning, staff or related suppliers.

Referral
Referral visitors click on a link from another website that links to your website, e.g. a listing on yellowpages.com.au that includes your website link, or another blog that links to one of your blog posts.

Social
Visitors from social media channels are grouped under Social. Due to the varied tools used for monitoring social media channels, some might also be grouped under Referral or Other. This is where Campaign tracking is useful for understanding exactly where visitors are coming from. Despite this, the Social channel report is vastly improved in accuracy from when it was first introduced.

Email
If you send email campaigns from email marketing systems that include links to your website, these visits will be grouped under Email. However, you must integrate your email marketing system with Google Analytics, or select Google Analytics link tracking (options vary depending on your email marketing system). This channel will not collate any visits from clicks in a direct email that you send from your own email client (such as Outlook) to another user, just bulk emails like MailChimp.

Display
Similar to Paid Search, Display collates any visits from display advertising, such as Google Display banner ads. Again, Google Adwords must be integrated to show these.

(Other)
Any visits that Google Analytics cannot attribute to the other Group Channel Groupings will be collated under (Other). Clicking on this link to view more details will usually show you what they are, often Social or Email.

Treemaps

The Treemaps report lets you visually explore trends in your Acquisition channels so you can quickly and intuitively develop hypotheses about your incoming traffic.

Treemaps represent data as rectangles. The size and color of each rectangle represent different metrics, so you can combine different aspects of your data into a single visualization.

Treemaps are a good hypothesis-generation tool because they can help expose the relative importance of, and the relationship between, different entities.

Source and Medium

All traffic Channels are made up of a Source and Medium.

Source:
Every channel that referrers traffic to a website has an origin, or source.
Possible sources include: "google" (the name of a search engine), "facebook.com" (the name of a referring site), "spring_newsletter" (the name of one of your newsletters), and "direct" (users that typed your URL directly into their browser, or who had bookmarked your site).

Medium:
Every referral to a website also has a medium. This is the general category of the source.

Possible mediums include: "organic" (unpaid search), "cpc" (cost per click, i.e. paid search), "referral" (referral), "email" (the name of a custom medium you have created), "none" (direct traffic has a medium of "none").

Source/Medium:
Source/Medium is a dimension that combines the dimensions Source and Medium.
Examples of Source/Medium include *google/organic*, *example.com/referral*, and *newsletter9-2014/email*.

Referrals

The Referrals report shows all websites that visitors have clicked a link on that has then taken them to your website.

Please note: This does not include the specific page or context of the link, just the parent referring site.

You will occasionally see social media channels included in here, where they have been attributed by default as a referral site rather than Social channel. This can occur when using non-native tools, such as Facebook Mobile (m.facebook.com) or a shortened Twitter URL (t.co).

These can be cross-referenced against Social traffic, and also provide a useful understanding of how visitors are accessing your site from these channels.

Referral Spam and Ghost Traffic

The Referral report is unfortunately often the target of Referral Spam or Ghost Traffic.

Unfortunately it is possible to "fake" traffic in Google Analytics. This doesn't mean these visitors have come to your website, rather they are either bots (see below) rather than real, human visitors, or simply fake data that is put into your Google Analytics.

A spammer or hacker simply needs your Google Analytics property ID (visible in website code) to be able to add fake data without account access. Even using the premium version of Google Analytics does not protect from you being spammed or hacked.

Why create fake Referral spam or ghost traffic?
- Affiliates may create fake traffic to get commission
- Internet marketers (such as SEOs) may send fake traffic to imply results
- Referral spam often encourages Google Analytics users to click on the unknown link to find out more, driving traffic back to their site
- Or simply to annoy us

What are bots?
A bot is a program developed to perform repetitive tasks with high degree of accuracy and speed.
Bots are generally used for search engine indexing, but are also used for malicious purposes like:
- Committing click fraud
- Harvesting email addresses (for mass spamming)
- Creating fake user accounts
- Submitting comments (for spamming)
- Scraping website content
- Spreading malware
- Scraping Google Analytics IDs for sending fake traffic
- Sending fake website traffic
etc

Adwords

If you are also using Google Adwords, and have integrated your Adwords and Analytics accounts (in the Admin > Property section) you will see details of the activity of these users once they visit your website from an ad here.

Search Console (new)

Google offer another free product called Search Console (previously known as Webmaster Tools).

https://www.google.com/webmasters/tools/

It provides useful information about *how your website is seen by Google's search engine*, and provides many useful "health checks".

It is incredibly useful for Search Engine Optimisation, and we explore it in more detail in our Introduction to SEO Best Practices course.

A huge benefit for setting up Search Console and integrating it with your Google Analytics account, is to see what organic keywords visitors are using to find your website.

Previously this information was included in the Search > Keywords section of Google Analytics, however on 18 October 2011, Google announced some big news for website owners:

> *when a search is made on a secure Google webpage and the result clicked, the search term would no longer be passed to the destination website. Instead, these visits would simply be grouped together in Google Analytics under the keyword "(not provided)".*

Why did Google do this?
The official reason was that this was done in the name of privacy. Google suggested that those searching using a secure Google connection would not want their search term to be passed on to the destination site.

This meant that we lost this valuable data, however some of it can be regained through Search Console (once set up and integrated via the Admin > Property Settings section.

Once integrated, you can see valuable data about:
- Landing Pages
- Countries
- Devices
- Queries (the search terms used to find your website)

Social

Visitors to your website who come via social media channels are predominantly grouped in the Social report (with some slipping into Referral and Other). However this report is becoming increasingly accurate.

It is useful to see what social media channels are driving the most traffic, and how engaged they are.

Social reports include:
- **Overview**
- **Network Referrals;**
  details per Social Network

- **Landing Pages;**
  what pages they enter the site – or "land" – on when coming from social channels
- **Conversions;**
  if Goals are set up, whether traffic from Social is converting these
- **Plugins;**
  which social buttons are clicked on your site, and which pages are shared and liked. Requires further set up: https://support.google.com/analytics/answer/1316556
- **Users Flow;**
  how these visitors travel through the site, based on what Social Network they originate from

Campaigns

The Campaigns report groups together traffic from activity either specifically classed as, or assumed as a "campaign". This includes:
- Email campaigns (if tracking is enabled/integrated)
- Google Adwords campaigns or other paid text advertising (**Paid Keywords**)

etc

This section also includes the previous "Search > Keywords" report – now called **Organic Keywords** – although you will generally find that most search terms are classed as "not provided".

When integrated with the advertising budget, a "**Cost Analysis**" report is also generated.

We explore defining your own custom Campaigns via UTM codes in the Taking Google Analytics Further course.

Useful article about tracking Facebook advertising in Google Analytics:
https://adespresso.com/academy/blog/facebook-ads-google-analytics/

Activity: How to set up and use Segments

Segment
A subset of sessions or users that share common attributes. Segments allow you to isolate and analyze groups of sessions or users for better analysis.
Segmentation allows you to isolate and analyze subsets of your data. For example, you might segment your data by marketing channel so that you can see which channel is responsible for an increase in purchases. Drilling down to look at segments of your data helps you understand what caused a change to your aggregated data.

By default, Google Analytics will show all reports as All Users, and flattering as this may be, it may be better to focus on a smaller concentration of visitors, who are more relevant to your website, e.g. All Australian or South Australian visitors, or based on an interesting aspect of your regular reporting, you may wish to focus on the activity of a dedicated subset of visitors, e.g. all Facebook visitors.

By applying a Segment, you can either compare their activity against that of All Users (if both are applied) or navigate your entire Google Analytics reports interface focusing just on that Segment of users.

Google Analytics includes a list of default Segment types, however you can also create and save your own custom Segment.

Please note: You will need to select and apply your specific segment each time you log on to your Google Analytics account.
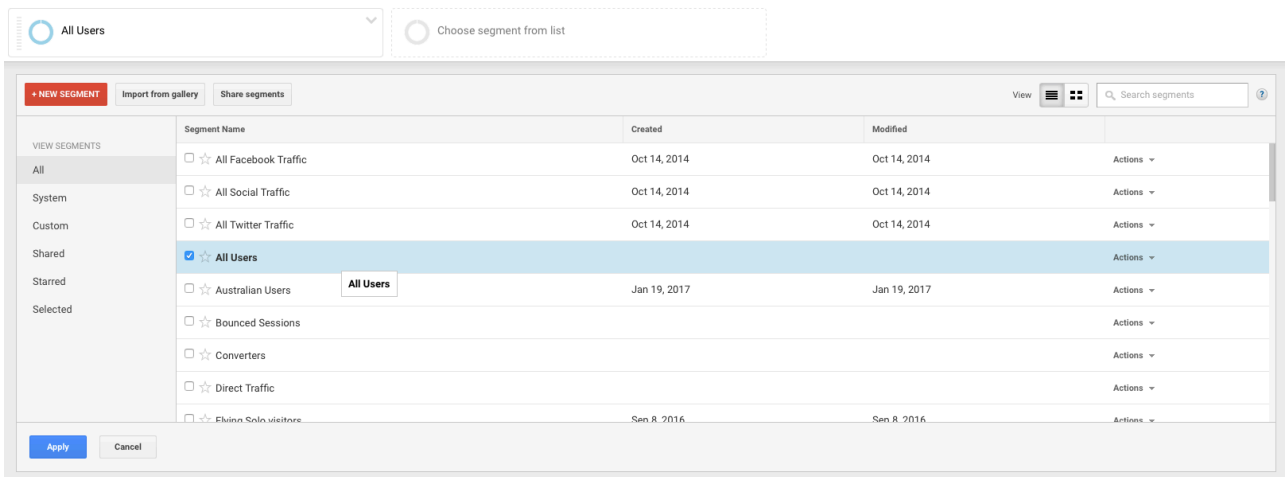

What types of segments might be relevant to your site? Are they standard or custom? List them here:

_____

_____

_____

Reports: Behaviour

The Behaviour reports section focuses on what pages people are looking at on your website, along with how your site is performing (based on speed) and if visitors are searching within your website (if in-site search is available).

Overview

The Behaviour Overview report looks similar to the Audience Overview report, however also includes a short summary of the Top Pages based on total page views.
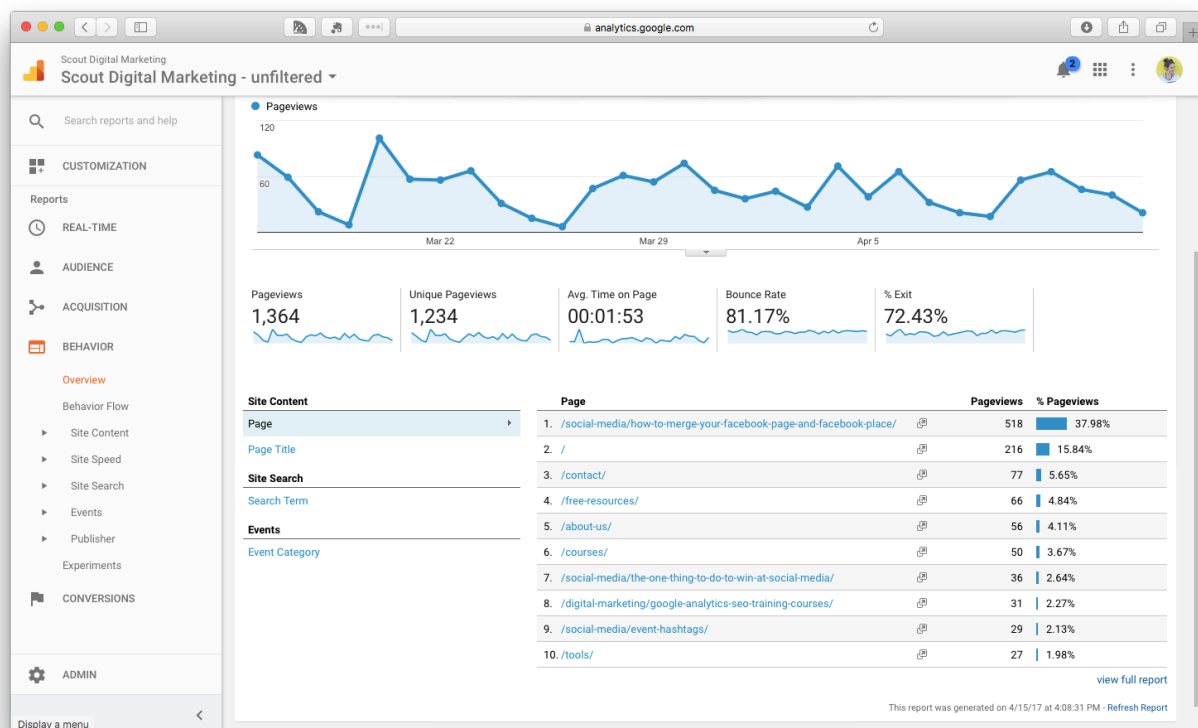
Behaviour Flow

The Behaviour Flow report shows an interesting visualization of how visitors move through your website, and where the drop offs – or exits – occur.

By default, this report is created based on the visitor's Landing Page (where they first enter the website), but clicking on this drop down menu allows you to select different dimensions.
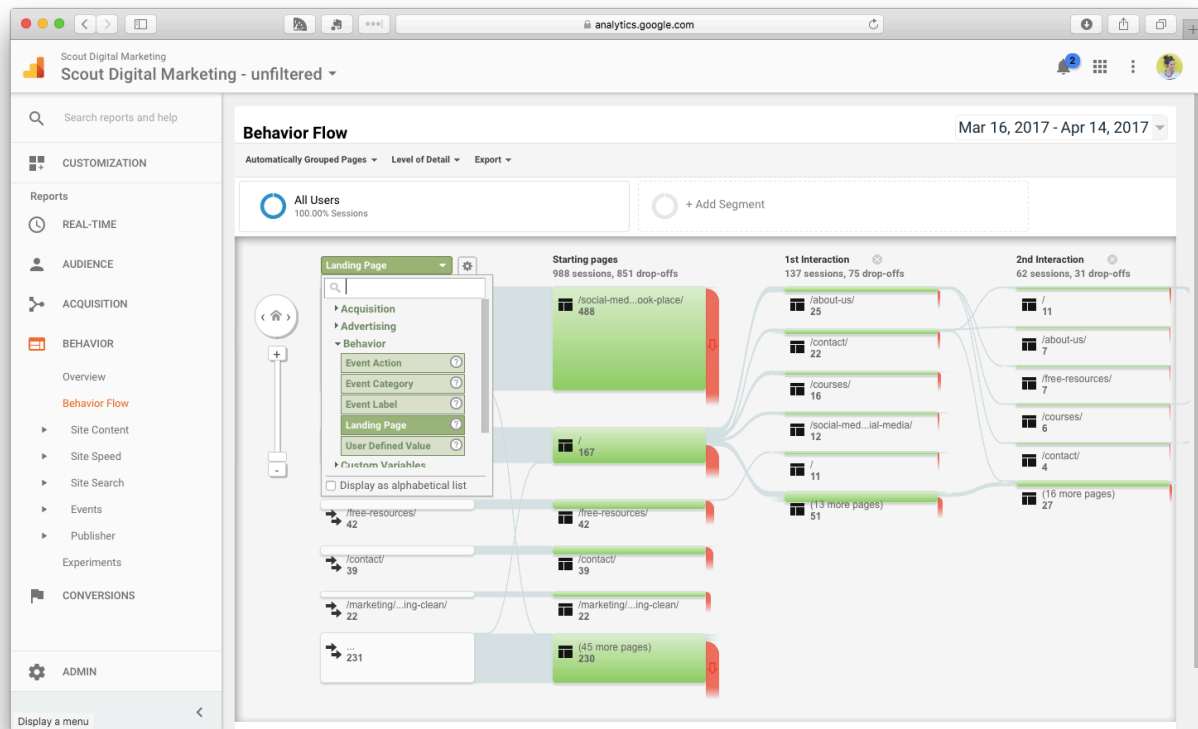
Site Content

The Site Content report shows how visitors are engaging with the various pages of your website:
- Which ones they visited most
- How long they are viewed for
- Which are landed on (Entrances)
- Their Bounce Rate
- Their Exit Rate
- Page Value (if using eCommerce Analytics, not covered in this course)

All Pages
The All Pages report shows All Pages of your website, ordered by total Pageviews.
- By default, 10 results are shown per page, and you can either tab through these at the base of the report, or change the number of results per page.
- You can also click the Metrics column titles to change the ordering (default order is Pageviews, descending).
- Pages are shown by "Page" by default, which is the URL of the page, what comes after your domain.
- You can also view pages by "Page Title" which is the overall page title based on the <title> tag used in the meta description.

Please note: If you change your Page Title or Page URL, this will create another separate result for this individual Page Title or URL. Google Analytics will not automatically group them as it does not know they were once the same.
Similarly, if you have two or more pages with the same Title, these metrics will be grouped, as Google Analytics cannot tell them apart.

Please note: It is not best practice to have duplicate Page Titles, as it can have negative impact on search engine rankings. We explore this in our Introduction to SEO Best Practices course.

Content Drilldown
The Content Drilldown report collates activity by sub folder. This is only relevant and useful for websites that use a consistent sub folder structure in their URLs.
The images show whether this is a page or subfolder.

Landing Pages
It is often assumed that all visitors enter your website via the homepage.
This is not the case, and the Landing Pages report clearly demonstrates this. While often the homepage may be the dominant landing page, it is useful to see what other pages are most often "landed on" or used to enter the website.
This can be due to great search engine rankings for this page, or direct links to internal pages.

Exit Pages
These are the pages that visitors most often *leave* your website from, and can provide useful information about how they are using your website, or where to focus your attention to encourage them to stay.

Site Speed

The Site Speed reports show how quickly users are able to see and interact with content. You can identify areas that need improvement, and then track the extent of those improvements.

Read more about the Site Speed reports here: https://support.google.com/analytics/answer/1205784

Site Speed is a factor of search engine rankings, and we explore it more in our Introduction to SEO Best Practices course.

You can also access more information about your website's speed performance using:
- YSlow http://yslow.org
- Google's PageSpeed Insights tool: https://developers.google.com/speed/pagespeed/

Site Search

If set up on your site (as further integration is required) Site Search lets you understand the extent to which users took advantage of your site's search function, which search terms they entered, and how effectively the search results created deeper engagement with your site.

Read more about set up and use of Site Search here: https://support.google.com/analytics/answer/1012264

Events

Events are user interactions with content that can be tracked independently from a web page or a screen load. Downloads, mobile ad clicks, gadgets, Flash elements, AJAX embedded elements, and video plays are all examples of actions you might want to track as Events.

Some Events, such as links to outbound articles (on other websites) or PDF downloads may be tracked automatically, whereas others may require custom set up.

Read more about Events here: https://support.google.com/analytics/answer/1033068

Please note: Events are different to Goals, which we will explore further.

Publisher

If you use Google AdSense or Ad Exchange, and they are integrated with your Google Analytics account, this advertising data will be shown here.

Experiments

The Experiments section allows you to test which version of a landing page results in the greatest improvement in conversions (i.e. completed activities that you measure as goals) or metric value.

You can test up to 10 variations of a landing page.

If you want to conduct experiments with your apps, you can use the Experiments API, or you can create those experiments in Tag Manager. You can also use the API for web-page experiments.

Content Experiments uses a somewhat different approach than standard A/B and multivariate testing.

Content Experiments uses an A/B/N model. You're not testing just two versions of a page as in A/B testing, and you're not testing various combinations of components on a single page as in multivariate testing. Instead, you are testing up to 10 full versions of a single page, each delivered to users from a separate URL.
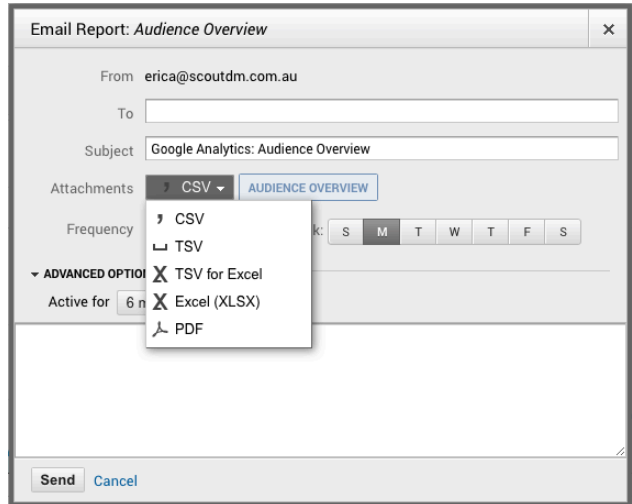
Please note: You will benefit most from using experiments if you have a larger quantity of traffic, e.g. a minimum of 200-300 pageviews of the target landing page per month.

Read more about Experiments here: https://support.google.com/analytics/answer/1745147

🔍 Activity: How to set up scheduled email reports

You can create a simple once-off or scheduled email report from any report view within Google Analytics.

1. When viewing the report you wish to email, simply click the "Email" button in the top left corner, which will open the panel shown on right:
2. Define the recipient/s, using commas to separate multiple email addresses.
   Please note: the email will automatically come from your Google Analytics' account's email address.
3. Update the Subject heading if you wish.
4. Select the report attachment file type.
5. Select the frequency:
   a. Once, will immediately send a once off email.
   b. Any other option will create a scheduled email report of that frequency.
6. Select the day you wish the email to send.
7. Click "Advanced Options" to define how long the scheduled report should occur for (in months).
8. **Please note:** You must enter some text (or at least 1 character) in the message area, this will be included in the body of the email.
9. And click the "Send" button to either send immediately if a once-off email, or this will save the scheduled report to send on the next selected date.

The above steps are required to set up a scheduled email report, but will only include the single attachment of the report page it was created on.
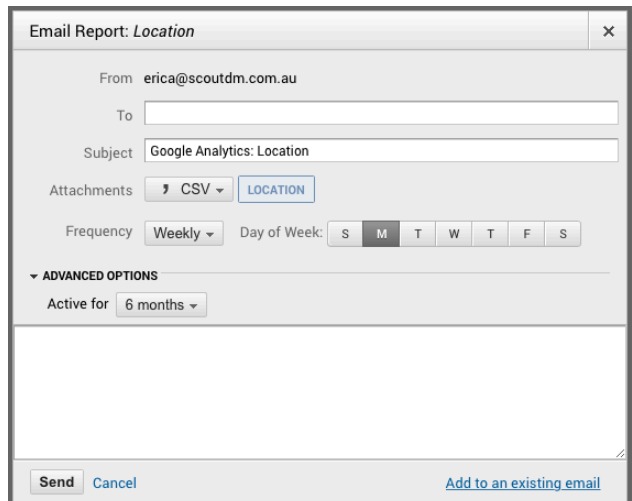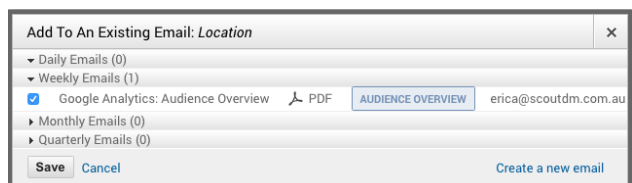
10. To add more reports, visit other pages, and repeat the process.
11. Once one scheduled email exists, you will see a further option in the bottom right hand corner of the pop up panel to "Add to an existing email (see example on right).
12. Click this link, and locate your email based on its frequency of send, and click "Save".
13. You can also opt to create a new email, either from this panel, or the previous.

Please note: You cannot change the email Subject, message or any other details of an existing email from the "Email" button in the Reports section.
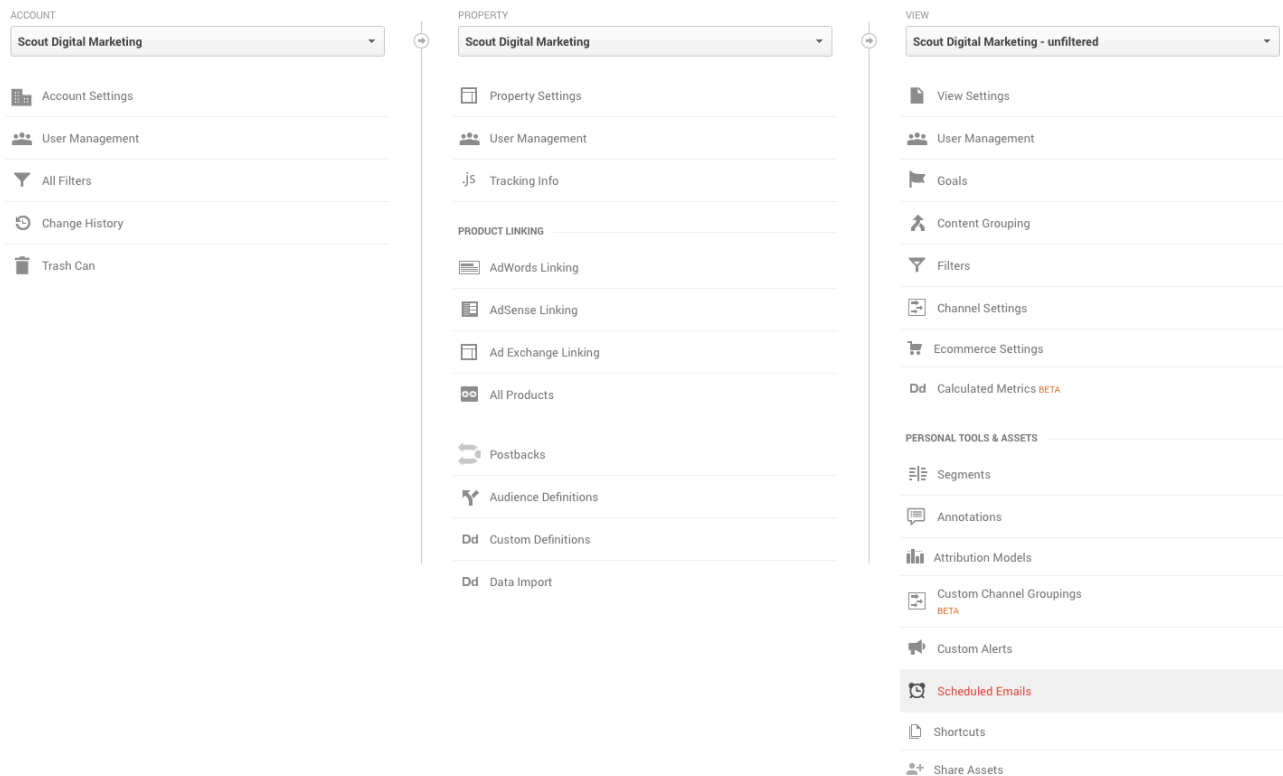
To make any broader changes to the email, you must visit:

the Admin section > View > Scheduled Emails

(see steps on following page).

Admin section > View > Scheduled Emails

14. Click on the "Scheduled Email" section to view all scheduled email reports.
15. Click on the Subject of the email (blue underlined text link) to edit the email settings, including Subject, recipients, message, included reports, file format, frequency etc.
16. Click the "Actions" drop down button on the right of the list to quickly Extend the sending duration of the email, or Delete the email.

Subject	Frequency	Reports	Recipients	Start Date	End Date	
Google Analytics: Audience Overview,Location	Weekly, Mon	Audience Overview and 1 other	erica@scoutdm.com…	Apr 17, 2017	Oct 17, 2017	Actions ▾
						Extend
						Delete

What types of reports seem to be most valuable? Who should they be emailed to? List them here:

Reports: Conversions

In Google Analytics, a conversion is the completion of an activity that is important to the success of your organisation, such as a completed sign up for your email newsletter or online enquiry form submission (a Goal conversion) or a purchase (a Transaction, sometimes called an eCommerce conversion).

You need to set up a Goal/s and/or eCommerce tracking (not covered in this course) to see Conversion data in this section.

Once you've set up Goals and/or Ecommerce tracking, you can use the Multi-Channel Funnels reports to see how all your channels worked together to create sales or actions.

The Conversions section of Google Analytics' Reports includes the following data:

Goals:
- Overview
- Goal URLs
- Reverse Goal Path
- Funnel Visualization
- Goal Flow

eCommerce:
- Overview
- Product Performance
- Sales Performance
- Transactions
- Time to Purchase

Multi-Channel Funnels:
- Overview
- Assisted Conversions
- Top Conversion Paths
- Time Lag
- Path Length

Attribution:
- Model Comparison Tool
- ROI Analysis (BETA)
- Model Explorer (BETA)

Once you have set up a Goal/s, you will also see this data appear in all of your report tables (right columns):

Default Channel Grouping	Acquisition			Behavior			Conversions Goal 2: Website Enquiry (new site)		
	Sessions	% New Sessions	New Users	Bounce Rate	Pages / Session	Avg. Session Duration	Website Enquiry (new site) (Goal 2 Conversion Rate)	Website Enquiry (new site) (Goal 2 Completions)	Website Enquiry (new site) (Goal 2 Value)
	683 % of Total: 100.00% (683)	76.87% Avg for View: 76.87% (0.00%)	525 % of Total: 100.00% (525)	50.66% Avg for View: 50.66% (0.00%)	2.02 Avg for View: 2.02 (0.00%)	00:01:16 Avg for View: 00:01:16 (0.00%)	0.88% Avg for View: 0.88% (0.00%)	6 % of Total: 100.00% (6)	$0.00 % of Total: 0.00% ($0.00)
1. Paid Search	366 (53.59%)	73.22%	268 (51.05%)	46.72%	2.10	00:01:13	1.09%	4 (66.67%)	$0.00 (0.00%)
2. Organic Search	217 (31.77%)	74.65%	162 (30.86%)	50.69%	2.10	00:01:40	0.92%	2 (33.33%)	$0.00 (0.00%)
3. Direct	60 (8.78%)	95.00%	57 (10.86%)	65.00%	1.62	00:00:34	0.00%	0 (0.00%)	$0.00 (0.00%)
4. Referral	24 (3.51%)	95.83%	23 (4.38%)	87.50%	1.25	00:00:13	0.00%	0 (0.00%)	$0.00 (0.00%)
5. Social	16 (2.34%)	93.75%	15 (2.86%)	31.25%	1.94	00:01:00	0.00%	0 (0.00%)	$0.00 (0.00%)

Goal types

Goals can be used for tracking useful website conversions such as:
- Sales
- Leads
- Trial signups
- Account creations
- Newsletter subscriptions
- Downloads like whitepapers, ebooks, product guides etc
- Enquiry or contact form completions
- Clicks to social accounts (like Facebook, Twitter, Google+, and Pinterest)
- Engagement goals like time on site or pages per visit
- Events like watching product videos
- Clicks to trigger live chat with your customer service reps

Google Analytics goals must be created as one of four types:

Goal Type	Description	Example
Destination	A specific location loads	*Thank you for registering!* web page or app screen
Duration	Sessions that lasts a specific amount of time or longer	10 minutes or longer spent on a support site
Pages/Screens per session	A user views a specific number of pages or screens	5 pages or screens have been loaded
Event	An action defined as an Event is triggered	Social recommendation, video play, ad click

Destination goals are the simplest to set up, and are useful for tracking any form submission where the visitor is directed to a dedicated "success" page upon form submission, such as a thank you page.

This goal type can also be used for downloads where the file has a dedicated URL.

Duration and **Pages/Session** goals are useful for support and customer service websites, where helping visitors quickly and easily is important.

Event goals include actions such as:
- External links
- Downloads
- Time spent watching videos
- Social media buttons
- Widget usage

Event goals can be more complex to set up, and some may be better set up as Events, rather than Goals.

Read more about tracking outbound links as Events: https://support.google.com/analytics/answer/1136920

Please note:
- You can have up to 20 goals per profile in Google Analytics (4 goal sets, and 5 goals per set).
- We recommend making goal names intuitive to easily remind yourself, and others, what they are.
- **You can edit goals, but you cannot delete them**. So create wisely.

Read more about Goals here: https://support.google.com/analytics/answer/1012040

⊙ Activity: Setting up Goals to track Conversions

What types of important actions can visitors take on your site that you would like to track? What types of goals should they be? List them here:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Goals are created in the **Admin section > View > Goals**.

When creating a new Goal, you can either use Google's template (which offers some useful suggestions of Goal types, or "Custom" which allows you to add your own parameters based on one of the four different goal gypes.

① Goal setup

◉ Template
Select a template to start with a pre-filled configuration

REVENUE
○ Place an order   Completed purchase or pre-order request

ACQUISITION
○ Create an account   Successful sign up, account, or view created

INQUIRY
○ Contact us   Viewed phone number, directions, chat or email
○ Read reviews   Viewed reviews and ratings
○ Get callback   Requested service or a phone call
○ Live chat   Contacted via chat
○ Update   Downloaded or installed new version

ENGAGEMENT
○ Compare information   Compared features, products, or options
○ Add to favorites   Saved product or information to a list
○ Media play   Played interactive media, like a video, slideshow, or product demo
○ Share / social connect   Shared to a social network or emailed
○ Sign up   Subscribe to newsletter, update alerts, or join group

○ Smart Goal   Smart Goal not available.
Measure the most engaged visits to your website and automatically turn those visits into Goals. Then use those Goals to improve your AdWords bidding. Learn more

○ Custom

How to create a Destination goal

To create a Destination goal, you must first identify the URL of the "destination" page, e.g. /thank-you/ (remembering that this is what comes after your domain).

The URL of the destination page will either be:
- Fixed (is always the same, never changes)
- Variable (is dynamically created, or varies due to query terms or parameters

Fixed URLs
Many websites use fixed URLs for a given webpage. The structure of these pages depends on the web technology used for the site. For example:
http://www.myownpersonaldomain.com/2008/category/name-of-blog-post/
http://www.examplepetstore.com/dogs/food.php
http://www.examplepetstore.com/cats/food.html

Dynamically generated or variable URLs
If your URLs include query terms or have parameters at the end, use either Begins with or Regular Expression match types when entering funnel or destination goal URLs. Examples of dynamic or variable URLs are:
http://www.example.com/about/pageWithParameter.html?id=89
http://www.example.com/sales/JanuaryOffer.html?utm_source=NewsLetterJan&utm_medium=email
http://sports.example.com/checkout.cgi?page=1&id=002

To configure goals for these types of URLs:
First verify that the URL for the goal is both unique to that page/Goal, and consistent from view to view.
If the URL changes from view to view, or if it has name/value parameters, see the instructions for dynamically-generated URLs.

Destination: Enter the request URL part of the goal.

> The request URI is that part of the URL that comes after the domain address.
> Using the URL examples listed above, you would enter:
> /2008/category/name-of-blog-post/
> /dogs/food.php
> /cats/food.html

Case sensitive: Check this box only in the situation where you want to match only one of two identical URLs which differ only by case (e.g. /contactus.html and /CONTACTUS.html).

Match Type: Use the match type that works best for your purpose. In most situations, the default (Equals to) match works well. See Match types below for more details.

Value: If you have an imputed value for your page, turn this option on and enter that value in the field. See About goals, goal Value for more information.

Match Types: Begins with, Equals to, & Regular Expression
There are three diferent match types that define how Analytics identifies a URL for either a goal or a funnel.

The match type that you select for your goal URL also applies to the URLs in the funnel, if you create one.

Equals to—for standard, fixed URLs:
- An Equals to match is an exact match on every character in your URL—without exception—from beginning to end.
- Use this when your URLs for your site are easy to read and do not vary.
- This option requires that the URLs you provide for your funnel or goal exactly match the URLs shown in the reports.
- There can be no dynamic (changing) information in the URL such as session identifiers or query parameters.
- If you are using an Equals to match for a goal (e.g., /shopping/thanks.html), leading or trailing whitespaces in the destination field will invalidate the goal.

Begins with—to eliminate trailing URL parameters:
- This matches identical characters starting from the beginning of the string up to and including the last character in the string you specify.
- Use this option when your page URLs are generally unvarying but when they include additional parameters at the end that you want to exclude.
- If your website has dynamically generated content, use a Begins with match filter and leave out the unique values.
- For example, a URL that a particular user went to might be http://www.example.com/checkout.cgi?page=1&id=9982251615
- In this case, the id varies for every other user.
- You could still match this page by using /checkout.cgi?page=1 as the URL and selecting Begins with as your match type.

Regular Expression Match—for matching on multiple criteria:
- A regular expression uses special characters to enable wildcard and flexible matching.
- This is useful when the stem, trailing parameters, or both, can vary in the URLs for the same webpage.
- For example, if a user could be coming from one of many subdomains, and your URLs use session identifiers, you could use a regular expression to define the constant element of your URL.
- For example, checkout.cgi\?page=1 will match http://sports.example.com/checkout.cgi?page=1&id=002 as well as http://fishing.example.com/checkout.cgi?page=1&language=fr&id=119
- As another example, you could use regular expressions to set a goal for a user goes to any page in a subdirectory: ^/sports/.*.

Verifying Correct URL Expressions for goals
You can verify that you have written a goal URL correctly by searching for the page in the Pages report using the exact URL or regular expression you want to use in creating your goal. If you are able to successfully view the pages you expect after doing a search, you can safely assume your URL or expression will work.

Read more about Destination goal examples here: https://support.google.com/analytics/answer/1116091

Reporting Best Practices

As mentioned in the Benchmarking section, it can be very tempting to compare your own website and results to others, however, in our experience, *the best approach is to focus on your own website's performance and growth.*

By regularly monitoring your own website's activity, making informed updates, and reviewing changes from:
- month-to-month,
- year-to-year, and
- year-on-year

you can see the impact your strategic updates are making, and the results they create.

Recommended reports to focus on

The **most relevant and important reports** will vary slightly from site to site, depending on your type of website, industry, audience, aims etc.

However, these are the reports that we find offer a valuable overview of your website's health and performance, and allow you to identify any significant changes or trends that then may warrant further investigation into other areas.

Audience > Overview
This report gives a great snapshot of key visitation and activity metrics on your website.
By comparing it from month-to-month, you can see the growth and improvement, and quickly identify any drops that may be of concern.

Please note: A slight variation either up or down per month is quite normal, however sustained decreases in visitation or engagement should be seen as of concern and investigated further.

Audience > Geo > Locations
Depending on your target audience, it is useful to monitor your traffic by Country, Region (state) or City.
If you have a very specific geographic audience, it may be more useful to create a dedicated Region or City segment, and concentrate on only visitation and activity of that segment.

Audience > Mobile > Overview
Internet browsing habits are fast changing, and it is valuable to understand what devices visitors are using to access your website, especially if it is not mobile responsive.
It is also very useful to view reports using the Desktop and Mobile segments to understand if these visitors are using your website differently.

Acquisition > All Traffic > Channels
This report provides a simple overview of the different channels visitors are using to access your site.
Monitor not only the percentage of visitors using each, but how engaged each of the different audience types are. If your Social Media visitors are fewer, but more engaged, it may be worthwhile to invest time in attracting more of them.
If Goals are enabled, also monitor how many of your Goal Conversions are occurring per channel.

Acquisition > All Traffic > Referrals
Which sites are referring the most traffic to your website? (especially if your proportion of Referral visitors is large). Weed out the spam referrals and focus on the genuine ones. Is it worthwhile investing time in more quality backlinks to encourage more referrals? This is incredibly valuable for SEO…

Acquisition > All Traffic > Source/Medium
Specifically in the Source/Medium report, we like to focus on how much traffic each of the different search engines are driving to the site.

The Organic Search dimension groups all visitors from Google, Yahoo, Bing etc together. While Google is likely to be the dominant one, there are a small portion of Internet users who use other search engines. You don't need to spend a long time on this, but ensuring your website is indexed by Yahoo and Bing, and seeing how much traffic is coming from these search engines should be a consideration of your SEO strategy.

Acquisition hell> Social > Network Referrals
If you invest time in social media, it is valuable to understand how much traffic different social media channels are driving to your website. This may also help understand which social media network audiences are most engaged with your content and brand.

If you aren't active on social media, this report can provide useful insights into which naturally occurring social networks may provide the best opportunities for you.

Behaviour > All Pages
A review of this report will provide understanding of what pages your visitors are viewing most.

Are they what you expect? Are there any surprises? Is there a high performing news article or blog post that provides insights into what type of content your audience enjoys most? If so, create more of this type of content. Is a page achieving high page views, but also high bounce or exit rate? Is there an opportunity to update the content on the page to help keep these visitors on your site longer through links to more content, or restructuring the page?

It is also worthwhile to glance regularly at:
• Behaviour > Landing Pages
• Behaviour > Exit Pages
to keep an eye on how visitors are entering and leaving your website.

Conversions > Goals
If Goals are set up within the website, these will appear within your other reports, however valuable information is provided in this section.

Reports to focus on include:
• Goals > Overview: What days are your goal occurring on? Any patterns here? Or relationships with any other marketing activities? (keep track of them as Annotations).
• Goals > Overview > Source/Medium: If you aren't monitoring this in Channels, know which traffic sources and mediums are contributing to your goal conversions
• Goals > Reverse Goal Paths: What pages are visitors viewing before completing your goals? Are there any interesting patterns? Can you improve this experience further?
• Multi-Channel Funnels > Time Lag and Path Length: How long does it take for a visitor to complete your goal? How many interactions do they make? Are there any patterns here, or information that can assist with your marketing efforts and expectations?
• Attribution > Model Comparison Tool: *(I like to set this to First Interaction vs Last Interaction model)* Is there a difference between how visitors first accessed your website, and then returned (if relevant) to complete your Goal? What can be learnt or improved from this?

Reporting template and best practices

Google Analytics provides an incredible wealth of data, but often there is too much which distracts us, and it only enables us to focus on one period, or one period compared to another.

By pulling out the relevant data into a separate file at a regular basis (e.g. monthly) we have a better understanding of trends, and can use this to monitor a greater period, using any stand out changes to delve deeper as required.

Our recommended approach to website analytics is:

1. Identify the dimensions and metrics that are most relevant to your website.

2. Define a regular reporting period to review these metrics (we recommend at least monthly, however quarterly may suit your needs better).

3. Review your Google Analytics reports, typing the period's metrics for your key dimensions into a separate report, such as our Excel spreadsheet.

4. Compare the month-on-month change, and if possible, compare the year-on-year change.

5. Look for any significant changes that highlight an interesting trend.

6. Delve deeper into more specific reports if required.

   e.g. we had a large increase in the quantity of referral traffic from New South Wales. Let's isolate this segment and identify where it came from, what page it landed on etc. Is this an isolated incident? Or something we can learn from or improve on?

7. Use results and change trends to identify any strategic website changes.

   e.g. this particular old blog post continues to attract a lot of traffic, but it also has a high bounce rate. Firstly, can we add any additional calls to action on the page, or links to other similar blog posts that may entice these visitors to stay longer on our website? (monitor results in the coming months). Can we create any more similarly themed blog posts that may also attract more visitors to our website?

8. Continue to review and report at regular intervals, adapting the focus reports depending on your needs, or what you learn is of value to other parties within your organization.

Useful tools and resources

The Internet offers a wealth of useful information and tools that can assist with understanding and making the most of your Google Analytics data. Here are some of our favourite tools and resources:

Google Analytics mobile app:
- For iOS from iTunes: https://itunes.apple.com/au/app/google-analytics/id881599038?mt=8
- For Android from Google Play:
  https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.google.android.apps.giant&hl=en

Google Analytics Help Centre: https://support.google.com/analytics?hl=en#topic=3544906

Google Analytics Glossary: https://support.google.com/analytics/topic/6083659?hl=en&ref_topic=3544906

Google Analytics Academy: https://analytics.google.com/analytics/academy/

Eliminating Bot Traffic from Google Analytics once and for all:
http://www.lunametrics.com/blog/2015/04/01/eliminating-bot-traffic-from-google-analytics-once-and-for-all/

How to track Facebook Ads in Google Analytics: https://adespresso.com/academy/blog/facebook-ads-google-analytics/

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