KEYWORD RESEARCH GUIDE

A DIGITAL MARKETING E-BOOK BY
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KEYWORD RESEARCH GUIDE

WHAT IS KEYWORD RESEARCH AND WHY SHOULD I BOTHER?

Keyword research is the process of discovering words and phrases that people use when conducting online searches relevant to your specific products, services, or content, as well as determining the motivation or intent of each search. As such, keyword research has many, many uses for your website and your overall digital marketing and search engine optimization (SEO) tactics over time. The primary uses for keyword research include the following:

Brand Development

Keyword research done in conjunction with brand development (or refinement) may help you better associate your brand with common search terms used by your target audiences. You may consider adding important keyword phrases to your brand tagline, promise, or mission statement so that journalists and customers alike begin to naturally correlate important keyword phrases when discussing your brand.

Site Architecture

By understanding keyword categories and their search volumes (or lack thereof) you can better determine which topics or categories deserve to become sections of your site navigation. Architecture most frequently dictated in part by keyword research includes services and sub-service menus, product categories, resource sections, and blog categories.

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SEO

Keyword research is and always has been the crux of all SEO strategies in some form or another. By understanding which topics and phrases have the most search volume, the content team can tailor website metadata and copy for maximum search presence potential. Additionally the marketing team or webmaster can use the keyword research to make intentional decisions for how to interlink pages together and how to develop a content strategy for optimal SEO impact.

Optimizing for Unique User Journeys

To advance your keyword research and its usefulness, you may include specific audience-based keyword user journeys within your keyword spreadsheet. While we have not covered that strategy in this document, you'll definitely want to always think about how different keywords or keyword topics apply to different website visitors depending on where they fall in the customer acquisition funnel. For example, someone doing research is going to use different keywords than someone looking to make an immediate purchasing decision.

Content Ideation

Good keyword research is quite comprehensive. If your research is organized by topics, then it becomes a great reference for making data-informed decisions about what topics to write about on your website or blog. Having search volume and competition data can also help you prioritize your content strategy and plan.

>>> Start a Keyword Matrix

A keyword matrix is mini keyword research. It is the foundational keyword map that allows you to succinctly view important words to use across your site. A good keyword matrix also makes the process of conducting keyword research much easier.

The following is an example of what a keyword matrix could look like for a company like JB Media Group that offers digital marketing services.

Qualifiers	Service Area	Offering	Audience
outsourced	internet marketing	agency	businesses
full service	online marketing	company	online stores
strategic	digital marketing	expert	social entrepreneurs
ethical	SEO	consultant	social enterprises
professional	search engine optimization	services	events
ecommerce	social media	firm	
integrated	social media advertising	consulting	
collaborative	advertising	specialist	
	PPC	service provider	
	pay per click	solutions	
	AdWords	support	
	digital advertising	help	
		management	
		training	
		coaching	

The best matrices include words that are important for brand purposes, as well as keywords important for search. Additionally, the matrix is a living and breathing document that can be added to over time. It's also quite possible that you could have more than one matrix depending on what you do or offer. We could easily have a separate keyword matrix for each JB Media Group service area (social media support, content management, Google AdWords, etc.).

HOW TO DEVELOP A KEYWORD MATRIX

Take a Hard Look in the Mirror

The first step is to start with your business—or your website, really. What do you offer? Who is it for? How would those people search for what you offer? What sets you apart? It can be difficult to have enough perspective or distance from your brand to understand how someone might search for what you do, which is why keyword research is so important to begin with. In these initial brainstorming phases of keyword research, there are several tactics to help you flesh out your keyword matrix.

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You may also consider interviewing key stakeholders, sales team members, custom service team members, customers, and topic area experts in order to further flesh out your keyword matrix.

Use Pinterest Categories

Pinterest is very helpful for building your keyword matrix, particularly if you have an e-commerce business. Similarly helpful sites include Etsy and Amazon. If you enter a topic into Pinterest, you are shown peripheral topics or categories of interest.

For example, if you are building a keyword matrix for an online retailer of orchids, you may take a look at the Pinterest categories and develop new angles for discussing your product offerings or consider new ways to meet the interests or needs of your audience. Before you develop new content ideas, however, you simply add the topics to your keyword matrix, so you can do keyword research later for new discovered themes or angles.

The following is an example of what a keyword matrix for an online orchid retailer could look like.
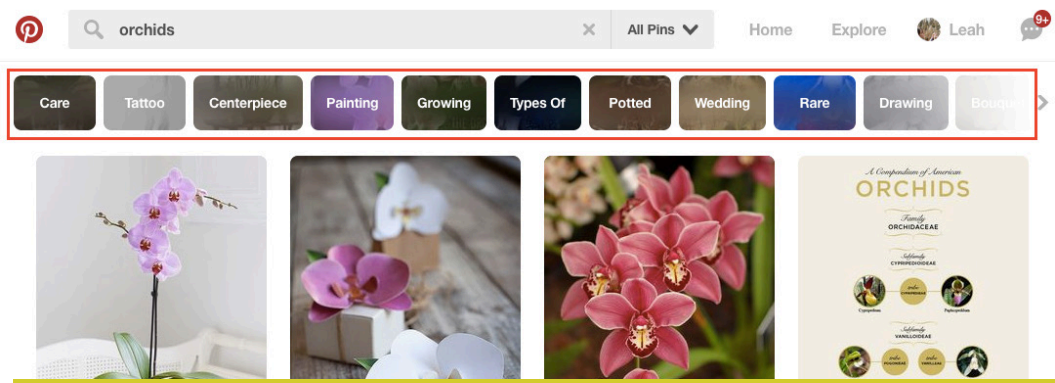
Look at Competitors

Competitor websites can be very helpful to review, so you can see what topics they cover on their site, how they organize their products or services, and what descriptors and qualifiers they use to describe their brand. For the purposes of

keyword research, however, it's important that the competitors you review are your search results competitors. What do you think your top keyword phrases are? When you enter those into search results, who appears in the top several positions? These are the competitors you want to review. Any company appearing at the top of search results for a crucial phrase, for example, "Facebook advertising company" or "buy orchids online," has invested time, energy, and a budget to being there. Those are the people you want to mine for keyword ideas to add to your matrix (or use in other ways).

Chrome Plugin: Wordtracker Scout

The **Wordtracker Scout plugin** for Google Chrome is an easy way to keyword brainstorm off competitors and other sites as you browse online. You simply install the plugin and then launch it when you're on a page you're interested in mining for keyword ideas. Then Wordtracker generates a word cloud from the page and provides additional keyword information.

>>> Explore Keyword Context

To further flesh out the keyword matrix and prepare for full keyword research, we need to make sure we're considering not only the keywords themselves, but the intent behind the keyword. Remember every Google search is some form of a question. We must ask of our potential audiences what it is they are really after. For example, someone searching "orchid rebloom" likely has an orchid that has bloomed before and not since, and wants to know how to make the orchid rebloom. This context is critical when imagining how keyword research can become a resource for future content development.

Fortunately, there are several free tools that help uncover the context or intent behind a search.

Answer the Public

Answer the Public is a very fun keyword tool that essentially takes a core phrase and attaches common questions and prepositions that surround that phrase in search results. For example, "orchid" would become "how to make orchid rebloom" and "orchid root or stem." The following example shows the Answer the Public questions for "orchid."

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Keywordtool.io

Keywordtool.io is very similar to Answer the Public, but while Answer the Public has nicer visualizations for keyword questions and prepositions, Keywordtool. io works for keyword phrases that have less search volume, which can be very helpful for smaller or more niche companies. Additionally this tool also shows specific search context for YouTube, Amazon, and App Store searches.

The following example shows the Keywordtool.io question results for "orchid flower."

>>> Getting Search Volume & Competition Data

Google's own Keyword Planner is still the best and most reliable way of acquiring the real search volumes of the keyword phrases you're interested in. To access Google's Keyword Planner, you must have or sign up for an AdWords account. Unfortunately, you will only get a search volume range unless you are running or have run paid AdWords campaigns. If you have not performed any paid campaigns and are not interested in running paid campaigns, you can sign up for temporary subscriptions to SEO tools like Keywordtool.io, discussed above, or Ahrefs and Moz.

Understanding Keyword Planner Terminology

Search Term - This is the keyword phrase (and it often includes minor variations) that is entered into Google search.

Average Monthly Searches - Unless you set your location targeting, the Keyword Planner shows the average amount of times per month each search term is searched in the United States or whichever country you are searching from.

Competition - Competition refers to how many advertisers are vying to pay for advertising space in search results for each search term. Competition is scored on a 0-1 scale, 1 being the most competitive. Typically, the more advertisers actively buying ad space, the more difficult it will be to target that particular search term with SEO strategies.

Suggested Bid - Suggested bid is the suggested cost per click Google recommends someone pay for top ad placement in search results for that particular search term.

There are two approaches to keyword research depending on how much time you have and how comprehensive your initial research is.

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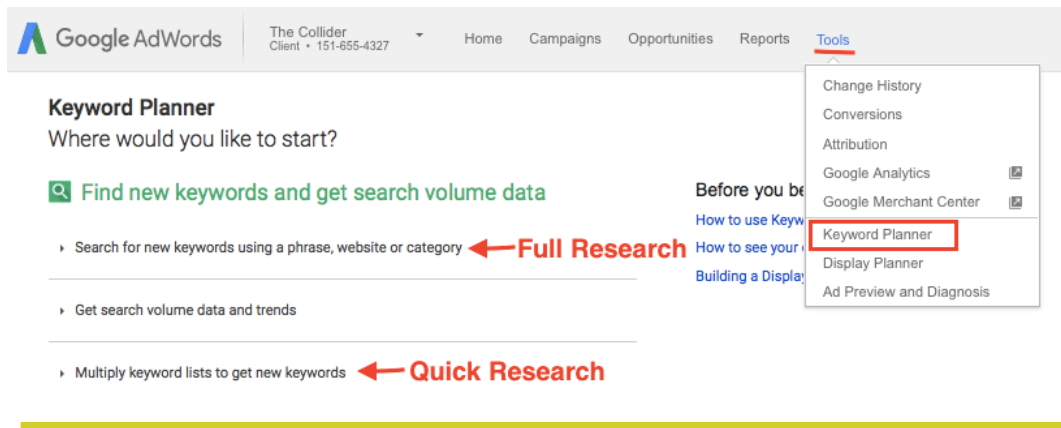
QUICK RESEARCH

If your keyword matrix is fully formed, you can use a quick Keyword Planner technique that multiplies your matrix columns against one another to form full keyword phrases and get the search volumes and competition scores of those phrases. There are limitations to this method, as you do not get additional suggested new keyword phrases beyond the words you've multiplied. Therefore, we recommend this technique only if you are short on time or if you do this in conjunction with the full research techniques.

For example, reconsider the sample JB Media Keyword Matrix:

Qualifiers	Service Area	Offering	Audience
outsourced	internet marketing	agency	businesses
full service	online marketing	company	online stores
strategic	digital marketing	expert	social entrepreneurs
ethical	SEO	consultant	social enterprises
professional	search engine optimization	services	events
ecommerce	social media	firm	
integrated	social media advertising	consulting	
collaborative	advertising	specialist	
	PPC	service provider	
	pay per click	solutions	
	AdWords	support	
	digital advertising	help	
		management	
		training	
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Let's say we're currently interested in exploring search volumes and competition scores for social media services. We can use the multiply keyword list feature of the Keyword Planner:

The result is an exportable list of keyword phrases relevant to that specific service offering:

Keyword Topic - Social Media			
Keyword	**Avg. Monthly**	**Competition**	**Suggested bid**
social media agency	3600	0.55	11.89
social media consultant	3600	0.53	7.86
social media marketing companies	3600	0.67	15.6
social media marketing agency	2900	0.65	15.3
social media specialist	1600	0.26	7.21
social media companies	1600	0.53	10.26
social media marketing services	1600	0.38	14.64
social media management company	1600	0.65	15.77
social media services	1300	0.43	7.82
social media management services	1000	0.31	13.61
social media firm	480	0.22	7.02
social media marketing firm	480	0.48	11.26
social marketing agency	390	0.23	8.28
social media advertising agency	320	0.6	15.97
social media marketing consultant	320	0.61	10.54
social media management agency	320	0.48	12.98
social media help	210	0.71	3.42
social media consulting firm	170	0.17	7.07
social media consulting services	170	0.46	7.85

You can follow the same steps to match each service area to the additional important columns and keywords within the matrix.

FULL RESEARCH

Full keyword research can take a great deal of time. At least eight hours on the low end. However, good, thorough keyword research ultimately leads to important insights or opportunities that may have been neglected by competitors. These days there is more content out there to compete against, so it's important to leave no stone unturned so that you might find your opportunity to hold space in search results.

Full keyword research can be done after or in conjunction with quick research. The following images share some tips for using Google's Keyword Planner.

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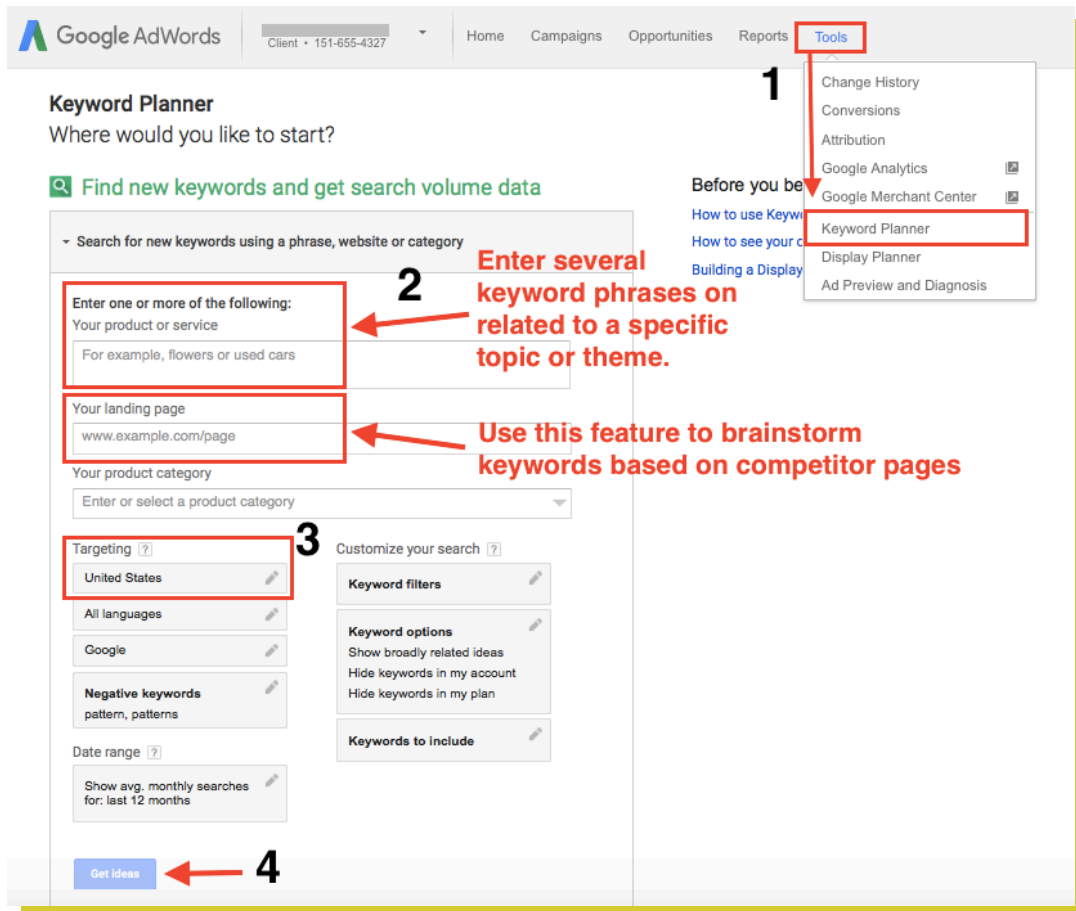
1. The Keyword Planner is located within Google's AdWords tools dropdown menu. You must have an AdWords account to access the Keyword Planner.

2. The Keyword Planner will deliver very broad keyword recommendations if you do not make an effort to narrow the focus. The best approach is to include 3-8 similar keyword phrases that all have the same theme or focus. Once you pass step 4, your initial keyword set will appear at the top of the ideas results.

3. You can set specific locations for keyword search volumes. If you only serve a particular country or region, consider limiting your geographic targeting to those areas.

4. Get your new keyword ideas!

5. Once you start scrolling through your suggested keyword ideas based on step 2, you'll likely notice keywords appearing that don't match your criteria. You can add negative keywords here so you have fewer keywords to sort through overall. Likewise, you can limit the keywords you're sorting through by filtering for specific keywords.

6. As you uncover keywords that are relevant to your optimization efforts and content ideas, you check the boxes on the right-hand side to add your keywords to a plan. Once you added keywords to a plan, your keyword work is automatically saved in the Planner, so you can always take a break and pick back up where you left off, even if you've exited the Keyword Planner.

7. After you're happy with the keyword list you've compiled, you can export the list as a spreadsheet that you can then filter, sort, and organize as you see fit.

Plug Keyword Questions into Keyword Planner

The Keyword Planner does not often show keywords that include context for search intent, meaning you won't find keywords framed within a question in Google's Keyword Planner suggestions. Those types of keywords are very important, as they offer more insight for how to shape content. If you want to explore search volumes of exact questions, you can copy the question lists from the keyword tools listed above.

Copy and paste into a spreadsheet so you can remove irrelevant questions. Then simply copy and paste the resulting list into the Keyword Planner.

The resulting ideas show you search volumes for the questions you entered, as well as provide additional keyword suggestions based on the theme of your keyword group.

KEYWORD RESEARCH RESULTS

Your resulting keyword research takes shape as a large spreadsheet organized by keyword topics and themes. The sample keyword research within this bundle demonstrates how to utilize spreadsheets to sort your keyword list into useful groups.

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