

4 Steps to Building a Great Keyword List

1) Brainstorm

Begin by writing down all keyword possibilities that relate to your business. How do your products or services affect others? What issues or stories surround your business? List as many possibilities as you can come up with. Use this list of questions and tools to help you get started and digging a little deeper.



Brainstorm

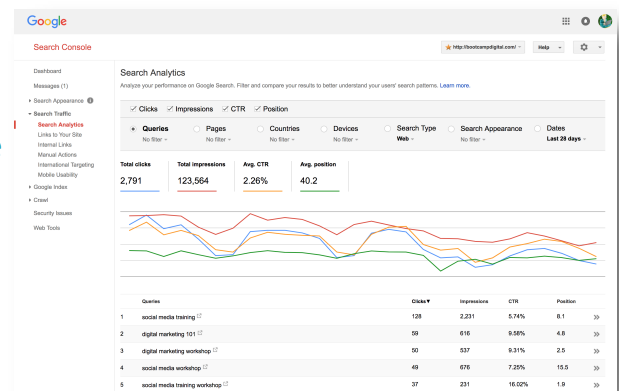
- ❑ Write down all of your products or services.
- ❑ What problem does your product/service solve?
- ❑ What is your trophy phrase?
- ❑ What keywords do you see or hear in conversations and online that relate to your business?
- ❑ What keywords are you currently getting visibility and/or results for?



Power Tip: Start a spreadsheet. Your list will grow quickly! It will save you time during this process to be able to copy and paste your keyword lists digitally using online tools.

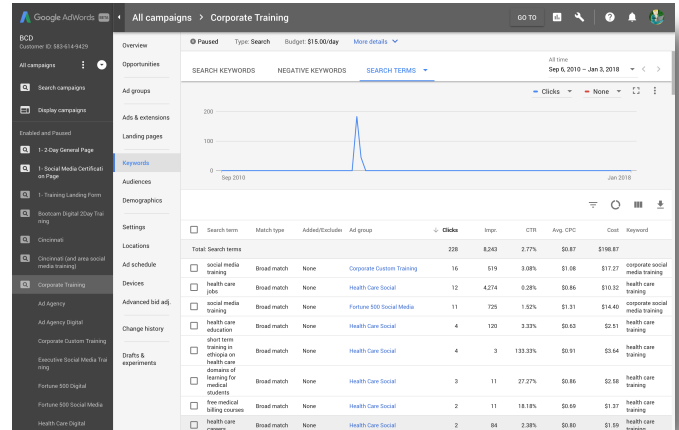
Tools:

- ❑ **Google Auto-Complete** – Look for additional keyword ideas using Google auto-complete. Go to <https://www.google.com> and type in your trophy phrase and other keywords in the search box at the top of the page. Google will auto-complete keywords that are currently popular and trending. Words or phrases that appear in purple are keywords that you have searched for recently.
- ❑ **Google “related to” Feature** – Look for additional keyword ideas using the Google “related to” feature. Google “related to” keywords appear at the bottom of the SERPs (Search Engine Results Page) and show keywords that are popular over a longer period of time.
- ❑ **Google Search Console** – This tool provides insight into which keywords users are searching for when they land on your site. Go to <https://www.google.com/webmasters/tools/home> and enter the url of your website. If this is your first time using this tool, you will need to verify ownership of your site, then allow Google time to gather data. Depending on the size of your site, this may take up to a day or longer.



Power Tip: Don't panic if you don't see all of the keywords you think you should be ranking for in the Google Search Console. Use this list to spot trends over time and keep an eye on popular keywords that are driving traffic and results.

- ❑ **Google Adwords** – If you are currently running ads or have run ads in the past on Google Adwords, use this tool to see which keywords are generating traffic. You can run a **Search Terms Report** that will show actual keywords that people are using when they see your ad and click on your site. Check it out at <https://adwords.google.com>.



2) Research

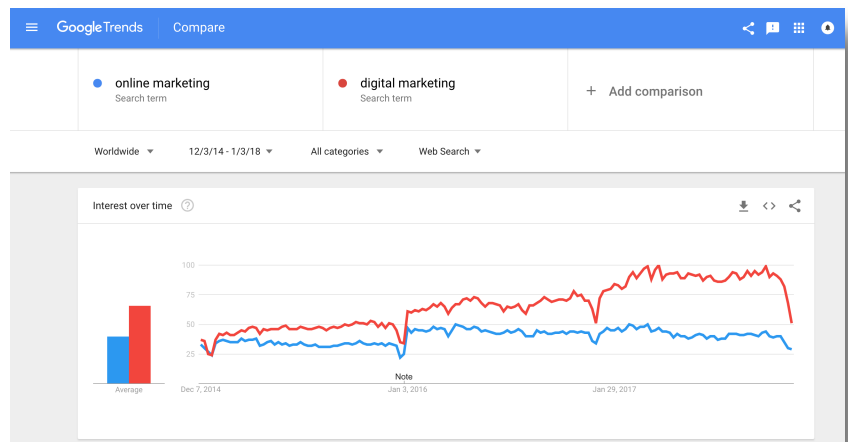
Now that you have a list of possibilities, use these tools to discover other keywords that are working for your competitors and that you may not have thought of initially. Add these to your list of potential keyword targets.

- ❑ **SEMrush** – Run a competitor analysis. Go to <https://www.semrush.com> and enter in a competitor’s web address. This tool will show you the keywords that your competitors are ranking for. It will also show you other competitor websites to consider. You can register on the site for free and run up to ten requests. A paid subscription is also available.
- ❑ **Google Keyword Planner** – This tool can be used to see what your competitors are ranking for and to help extend your list. Go to <https://adwords.google.com/home/tools/keyword-planner/> and enter a competitor’s site or landing page. Discover keywords that Google finds on the page. Or, enter a keyword and gain insight into that keyword’s average monthly searches and how competitive the keyword is based on the Google Adwords bidding system. You will also see recommendations for related keywords.



- ❑ **Google Trends** – To discover new keywords and spot trends in keyword usage over time, go to <https://trends.google.com/trends/> and enter one or multiple keywords. You can also compare the popularity of keywords and adjust your strategy when appropriate.

For example, over time, “digital marketing” has become a more popular and more commonly used keyword than “online marketing.” A business should adjust their keyword strategy based on this sizable trend.



3) Refine

Now that you have well-rounded keyword list, begin to refine it and hone in on the keywords that will focus your content.

- ❑ Eliminate any keywords on your list that do not apply or that have proven to not perform well.
- ❑ Group your keywords by **target audience**.

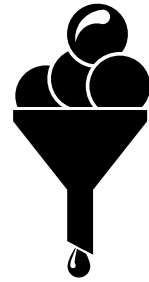
You may have a different set of keywords depending on the target audience your message is intended for.

- ❑ Group your keywords by a **main theme and category**.

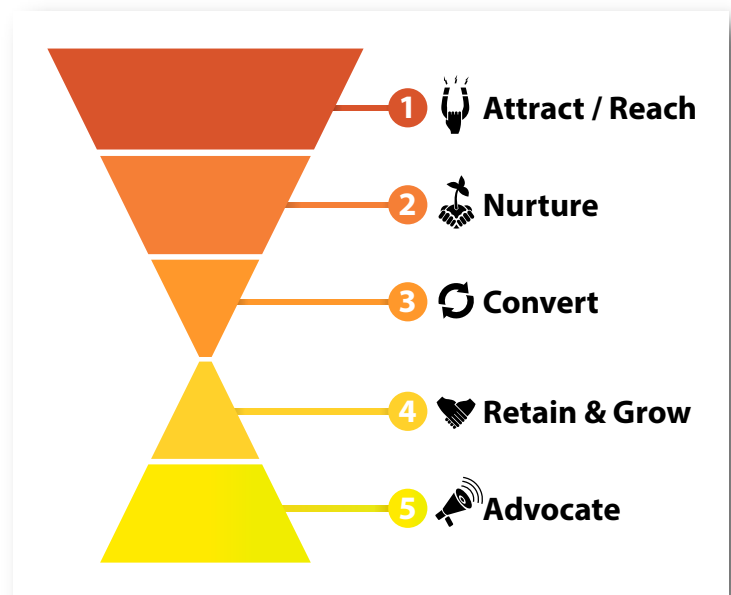
For example, you may have a different set of keywords for the different services your business offers.

- ❑ Group your keywords by **which stage of the marketing funnel** you are developing content for.

Your message will vary as you move your target audience through the marketing funnel. Your keywords should reflect this.



Refine

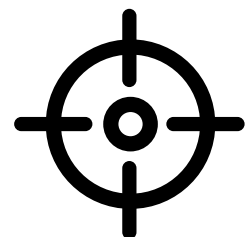


4) Identify Target Keywords

The final step in building a great keyword list is to strategically choose the best keywords from your refined groups to build your content around.

- ❑ Identify any “sweet spot” keywords that have high traffic and low competition.
- ❑ Choose 1-3 focus keywords within each group.
- ❑ Your target keywords should have a clear meaning. Search for your target keywords to ensure that competing sites are similar to your site’s subject matter.

For example, if you are selling coffee and want to rank for the keyword “java,” research first to ensure the top-ranking sites are also about coffee and not about a completely unrelated or unfitting topic.



Identify



Power Tip: The ideal keywords have lots of traffic and low competition. These factors are relative depending on the field you are researching.



The Writing Process

Once you know which keywords to include in your content, ask yourself these questions to clarify the focus of your message. Have this information prepped before you begin writing to ensure you are creating effective content that will encourage engagement.

- What are you trying to achieve? What is your objective?
- What is the main focus keyword of the page?
- Who is the audience you want to reach?
- What action do you want them to take?



Five Things to Consider When Writing Copy That Ranks:

- 1) I am using my main keyword in the heading of the page.
- 2) I am using my main keyword in the first 200 words of the page.
- 3) I am using supporting keywords throughout the copy of my page so that search engines better understand the meaning of my page.
- 4) I am using my main keyword in my title tag and my meta description tag.
- 5) I have read my copy aloud to ensure that what I am writing sounds natural.

How Often Should I Update My Copy?

Use this checklist to analyze the landscape of your data to decide how often you should update your copy:

- How often do you have relevant content?
 - How often do your products/services have updates?
 - How often does your industry have something new to discuss?
- What is realistic timing for you or your content team?
- What is the average frequency of posts from other relevant sites and from your competitors?
- What do your analytics tell you?

Look for signals from your analytics that content is engaging (likes, shares, comments, page views). If you are consistently creating content that is not engaging the audience, it might be time to adjust your strategy.