

Choosing the right keywords

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Choosing the right keywords are critical to your AdWords success. They will help you target your ad at the right customers, as well as determine how much you end up spending on your campaign.

Video: How to choose the right keywords

At the [start of this series](#) we saw that one of the key advantages of pay-per-click advertising is that you only show your ad to relevant customers and only pay when customers are truly interested in your product - in other words when they actually click on your ad.

Remember, with Google AdWords you choose the search terms or keywords that you want to trigger your ad; every time someone searches for this combination of words on Google, your ad appears. Choosing the right keywords is of ultimate importance to ensure that you show your ad to the right person at the right time, and that you never pay more than you need to.

Here are three tips for choosing the right keywords:

1) Find your niche and be specific

What we call "keywords" can consist of one word, a combination of two words or a phrase consisting of several words. As a general rule of thumb your keywords should be at least 2-3 words long and not be too broad in their description.

Let's say you own a bed and breakfast in Robertson (and you give your customers tips on the best wine tasting in the area). It may seem like a good idea to advertise on the keyword "accommodation", but by doing so you'd be making two big mistakes:

- You'd be showing your ad to thousands of irrelevant people, who may be looking for accommodation elsewhere in South Africa, luxury accommodation or even permanent accommodation!
- To get to the top of the ad results, you'd be competing with every travel operator and property website in South Africa, most of whom have much larger budgets to spend per click.

So always look at making your keywords at least 2-3 words long and as specific as possible. "B&B Swellendam" or "Cape Winelands Accommodation" or "wine tasting Robertson accommodation" would help you show your ad only to the right people, give you a higher ad ranking and limit your cost-per-click.

2) Use negative keywords

Don't just think about what you want people to search for, but also about what you don't want people to search for. AdWords allows you to choose negative keywords that keep your ads from appearing for searches that aren't likely to drive business your way.

Back to our Swellendam B&B: if you don't have camping facilities, you wouldn't want to show your add to someone searching for "camping accommodation Swellendam". Or, if your B&B is aimed at the discerning traveler, you may prefer to exclude searches for "cheap accommodation Swellendam". You'd then add the words "camping" and "cheap" as negative keywords.

This helps you control who your ad is shown to, and also limits your cost - someone looking for camping accommodation, clicking on your ad, and discovering you don't offer these facilities will be unlikely to book with you, which means you would have wasted that cost per click. With millions of searches on Google per day, adding negative keywords could significantly reduce the cost and increase the ROI of your campaign.

3) Discover new keywords

Placing yourself in the shoes of your user and thinking about what words they would use to search for your product is a good place to start generating the keyword list you want to trigger your ad. But users may use terms that you never thought of.

The [Keywords Tool](#) in your account can help you generate more keywords by showing you what users are actually searching for and how often.

To find it, go to the **Reporting and Tools** tab in your in your account.

Simply type words or phrases you'd like to use into the tool, and it will suggest keywords and negative keywords that you may wish to consider including, based on a history of real search results.

Looking at the number of searches each of these keywords generate on average, will also help you find your niche. It's almost always better to choose keywords that generate fewer but more specific search results - while you may show your ad to less people, they are more likely to buy your product and you'll end up having to pay less per click.

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