



# KEYWORD RESEARCH GUIDE

Brand new guide for 2019

[WORDTRACKER.COM](https://wordtracker.com)

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# Chapter 1 : An introduction to keywords

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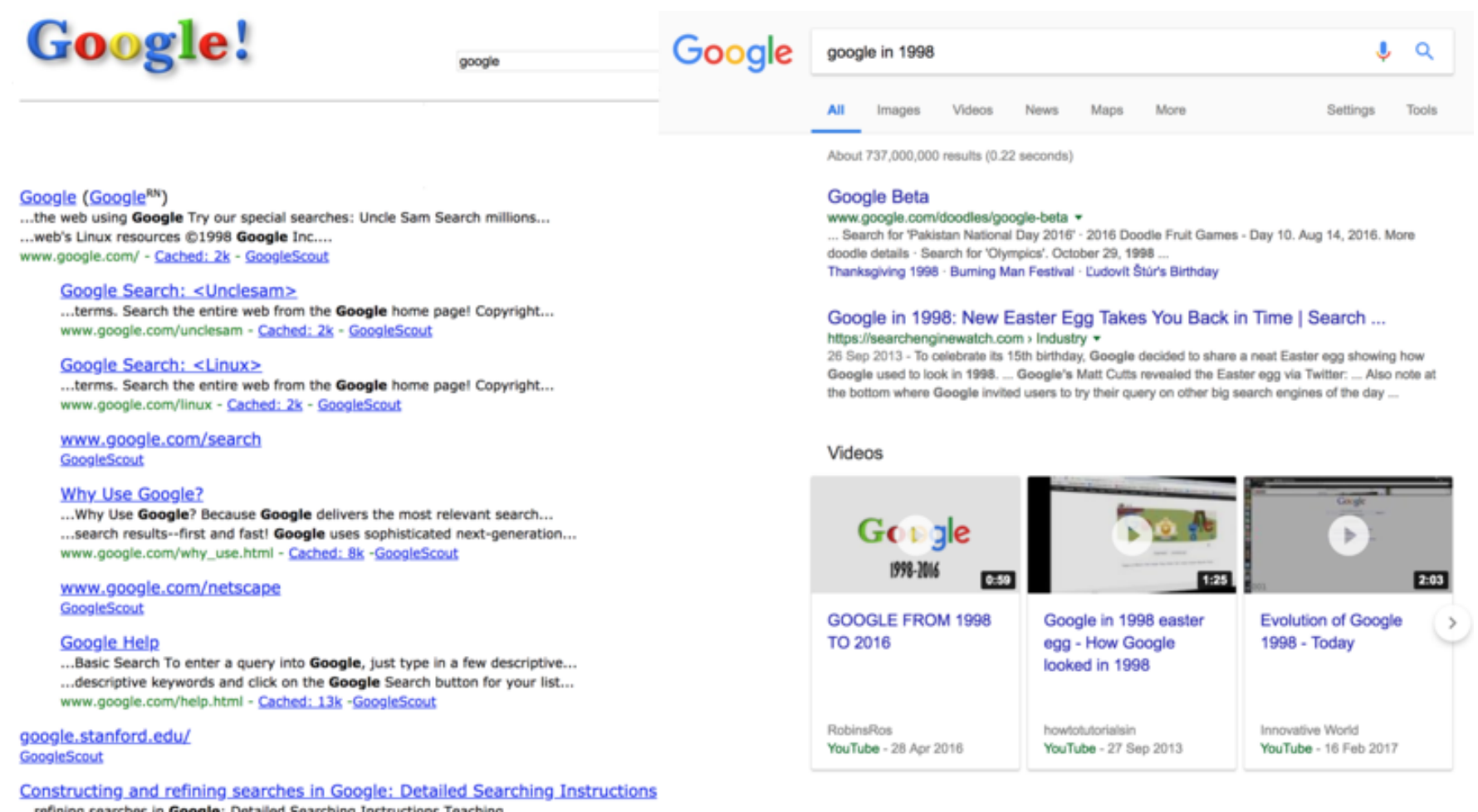
# When is a word a keyword?

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Keywords are arguably the single most powerful tool in SEO and have been for the past 20 years. If you're not using them you're not doing SEO. But just what is a keyword?

All search engines are there to connect the searcher with the content which they are looking for. You use a search term (keyword) and the search engine shows the content it feels is most relevant to that term for the searcher to choose from.

Google has been doing this since its very beginning and 21 years later, an eon in terms of .com companies, Google is still doing the exact same thing. You go to a webpage, enter a search term and you are shown a selection of content to choose from.



*Google in 1998 and Google in 2019... you can search for 'google in 1998' in Chrome to see the results as they were.*

Search engines can also be thought of as connection engines, they connect the user's search to the content they have indexed which will best fulfil the search. This is what the fundamental meaning of keywords is; words used to search.

## Keywords have evolved over time

Although the mechanisms we use to search have remained by and large the same, some things have changed - for example the number of keywords used or the form of the search query - as the devices we use to search have also changed.



*Google Home, Desktop & Mobile*

Results are displayed differently, adapting to new mediums and rich content such as video. The way in which keywords trigger connections to content has also changed significantly over the years. For example [intent is included by Google in keywords](#). Meaning that Google is not only matching keywords to content based on their literal meaning but also what it thinks the intent of the searcher was in using those keywords.

As we see more advances in the devices we use and the technology which drives search engines, keywords will continue to evolve. However the way in which search engines connect content to searches has remained the exact same, through the words we use.





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# Keyword anatomy

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Keywords tend to follow similar forms and whilst there will always be exceptions, understanding these forms is invaluable for quick and efficient keyword research.



## Head, modifier, tail

A little analysis can tell us a lot about what a searcher is really looking for. Once you know what the searcher wants, you can provide relevant content on your site.

Let's take a look at that longer phrase, *restaurant discount online*. The keyword consists of three terms:

restaurant + discount + online

This can be broken down into three core elements: head | modifier | tail

*restaurant | discount | online*

### The head

*Restaurant* is the head of the keyword. This is the focal point of the user's search and what the rest of the keyword relates to. Whether the user searches for *restaurant discount online* or *luxury restaurant* we know they're searching for a restaurant.

## The modifier

The modifier is a term which can be interchanged with other words in order to change a single aspect of the keyword's meaning. Unlike the head of the keyword it will not alter the type of the search.

Typical keyword modifiers are things like:

- locations
- brands
- styles

In this example, *discount* is the modifier:

*restaurant | discount | online*

head | modifier | tail

So, how do we distinguish between the head term and the modifier? Well, if you were to change the word *discount* to *critic* it would fundamentally change the meaning of the search, or the type of search. It would now form part of the 'head' of the keyword.

*restaurant critic | online*

head | tail

The searcher is no longer looking for a restaurant. The subject of the search has changed.

## The tail

The tail of the keyword clarifies or adds further detail to the head term. Yet, it doesn't fundamentally change the searcher's intent. In our *restaurant discount online* example, the use of '*online*' suggests that the searcher is looking for discount codes that can be found online.

A keyword where these three elements - head | modifier | tail - are used is often referred to as a 'long tail' keyword. Some examples of long tail keywords include:

*restaurant | discount | online*

*dog training | best | Chicago*

head | modifier | tail

A keyword may also be referred to as long tail where only the head and tail of the term are used. Here's another long tail keyword that contains no modifier:

*directions to restaurant | from Manhattan*

head | tail

## Order doesn't matter

The head, modifier and tail of a keyword are named according to their properties, not according to the order in the keyword they occur in. The head of the keyword may not be at the start and the tail may not be at the end.

So, a searcher might type:

*online restaurant discount*

tail | head | modifier

Your keyword research will tell you which combination of words has the most potential in your industry.

If you already have a website that attracts traffic you can use Google Search Console to find the keywords that already bring you traffic and sales. Use Google Search Console or Analytics to look for modifiers that convert well and try applying them to other popular keywords in your market.

# Chapter 2 : Finding Keywords

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87 of 437 keywords

350 more keywords available...

SAVE

EXPORT

REMOVE...

⚙️

+ Volume...

+ Competition...

+ IAAT...

<input type="checkbox"/> Keyword		Volume <sup>①</sup>	Comp. <sup>①</sup>	IAAT <sup>①</sup>
<input type="checkbox"/> hotels		13600000	43.8	334845
<input type="checkbox"/> hotel near me		2740000	3.21	2
<input type="checkbox"/> motels		673000	15.39	2714
<input type="checkbox"/> cheap hotels		450000	18.65	6574
<input type="checkbox"/> cheap hotels near me		368000	3.21	2
<input type="checkbox"/> cheap motels near me		165000	3.21	2
<input type="checkbox"/> pet friendly hotels		110000	13.78	1631
<input type="checkbox"/> priceline hotels		110000	3.92	5
<input type="checkbox"/> cheap hotels in nyc		74000	2.77	1
<input type="checkbox"/> cheap hotels las vegas		74000	3.21	2
<input type="checkbox"/> google hotels		49500	2.77	1
<input type="checkbox"/> last minute hotels		40500	7.08	76
<input type="checkbox"/> booking hotel		40500	6.55	53

INCLUDE KEYWORDS

ADD

EXCLUDE KEYWORDS

ADD

MY LISTS

Hotels list

Saved keywords

hotel booking

book hotel

extended stay hotels

cheap motels

cheap hotels in nyc

cheap motels near me

# Using the keyword tool

If you want keywords, your best bet is to use a custom made tool to help you find one. Luckily you can sign up to Wordtracker completely for free to do just that.



The best way to learn how to use the tool is just to get started searching and that's really easy to do. The source is pre-set to Google (more on that later) and United States for the territory. Enter your keyword, hit the search button and you're off.

**Click on any of these terms to start a search with them:**

**Chocolate**

**Air Conditioning**

**Car Insurance**

**Or click here for a fresh search and enter your own keyword.**



Great, you've just done your first bit of research, and you should have the latest Google data right in front of you:

The screenshot displays the Google Keyword Planner interface for the keyword "dress" in the United States. The search bar at the top shows "Google" as the search engine and "dress" as the keyword. The "Territory" is set to "United States". The main results section shows "77 of 707 keywords" and "630 more keywords available...". The results are sorted by "Volume" (descending). The table lists various keywords related to dresses, such as "prom dresses", "wedding dresses", "dresses for prom", "dress", "dress barn", "homecoming dresses", "bridesmaid dresses", "dresses for homecoming", "white dress", "cocktail dresses", "maxi dresses", "macys dresses", "plus size dresses", "formal dresses", and "black dress". Each keyword entry includes a small bar chart, the volume, competition score, and CPC. The interface also features a "Suggestions" sidebar on the left, a "FILTER RESULTS" sidebar on the right, and a "MY LISTS" sidebar at the bottom right.

Keyword	Volume	Comp.	CPC
prom dresses	823000	15.81	0.854528
wedding dresses	823000	19.01	0.754667
dresses for prom	823000	4.74	0.854528
dress	673000	49.59	1.242391
dress barn	673000	8.32	0.27208
homecoming dresses	368000	9.95	0.554426
bridesmaid dresses	368000	12.46	1.683595
dresses for homecoming	368000	2.77	0.554426
white dress	301000	10.71	1.246243
cocktail dresses	246000	10.54	1.379836
maxi dresses	246000	10.07	1.233418
macys dresses	246000	2.77	0.634611
plus size dresses	201000	6.85	1.355569
formal dresses	201000	14.87	1.033943
black dress	201000	16.13	1.265461

Here are the different sections of the results, we will go through these individually in the following sections.

## Suggestions

As well as generating results which are closely related to the search term, we also generate results which are much more loosely related. This allows you to expand your keyword research using terms which you may not have initially thought of. This is especially useful for words which have multiple meanings.

The screenshot displays a keyword research tool interface. On the left, a 'Suggestions' panel lists various terms related to 'dress', including 'clip', 'apparel', 'arrange', 'clothe', 'attire', 'do', 'groom', 'formal', 'crop', 'curry', 'set', 'garment', 'decorate', 'trim', 'garnish', and 'coiffure'. The main area is titled '1000 keywords for 'dress'' and features a table of results. The table has columns for 'Keyword', 'Volume', 'Comp.', and 'IAAT'. The 'Volume' column includes a small line graph icon. The 'Comp.' and 'IAAT' columns have information icons. The table lists 15 keywords, each with a checkbox, a line graph, and numerical values for Volume, Comp., and IAAT. The keywords are: 'prom dress', 'prom dresses', 'dresses', 'dress prom', 'special occasion dresses', 'wedding dresses', 'wedding dress', 'dress', 'little black dresses', 'women dress', and 'womens dresses'. The 'Volume' values range from 2,891 to 18,843. The 'Comp.' values range from 5.66 to 49.59. The 'IAAT' values range from 27 to 593,173. Above the table, there are filters for '+ Volume...', '+ Competition...', '+ IAAT...', and '+ Questions...'. At the top right, there are buttons for 'SAVE', 'EXPORT', and 'REMOVE...'. The interface also shows 'PPC' and 'SEO' tabs, and an eye icon.

Keyword	Volume	Comp.	IAAT
<input type="checkbox"/> prom dress	18,843	17.75	5,227
<input type="checkbox"/> prom dresses	18,063	15.81	3,065
<input type="checkbox"/> dresses	13,076	33.76	101,038
<input type="checkbox"/> dress prom	12,538	5.98	35
<input type="checkbox"/> special occasion dresses	10,044	9.44	285
<input type="checkbox"/> wedding dresses	9,852	19.01	7,179
<input type="checkbox"/> wedding dress	7,692	15.4	2,719
<input type="checkbox"/> dress	3,821	49.59	593,173
<input type="checkbox"/> little black dresses	3,267	5.66	27
<input type="checkbox"/> women dress	3,106	14.94	2,366
<input type="checkbox"/> womens dresses	2,891	11.9	829

In this search for *dress* there are suggestions for both the clothing item *attire* and *apparel* but also for the verb *to dress* such as *clothe*, *decorate*, and even terms for the use of *dress* as in *to dress a salad* such as *garnish*.

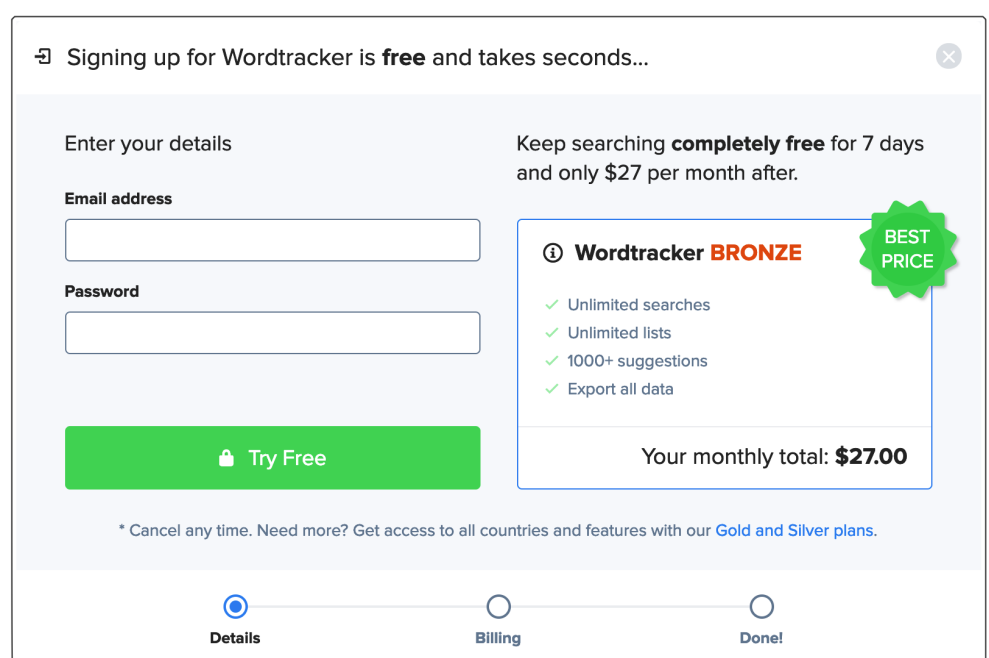
You have two options with the keywords: you can click on them directly which will perform a new search with that term, or click the icon to the suggestion's right to add that keyword to the list. It will display according to any existing filters you already have selected on your results.

Suggestions are one of the most powerful ways of rapidly expanding your results and building keyword lists which are a far better fit for how Google now works. Simply repeating closely related terms just doesn't cut it any more. You need to build a keyword universe right there on the page, understanding how terms are related and using them effectively.

## Run out of free searches... then sign up for unlimited free searches!

You get your first week completely free and it just takes seconds to sign up and get searching. You can cancel at any time.

Sign up is quick and easy and you'll then get full access to our complete keyword database.



Signing up for Wordtracker is **free** and takes seconds...

Enter your details

Email address

Password

[Try Free](#)

Keep searching **completely free** for 7 days and only \$27 per month after.

**Wordtracker BRONZE** **BEST PRICE**

- ✓ Unlimited searches
- ✓ Unlimited lists
- ✓ 1000+ suggestions
- ✓ Export all data

Your monthly total: **\$27.00**

\* Cancel any time. Need more? Get access to all countries and features with our [Gold and Silver plans](#).

**Details** **Billing** **Done!**

## Main results

This where the keywords are returned alongside key metrics which help you decide which keywords are, or aren't useful. From here you can choose to filter the keywords, which we'll go through in a moment. Or you can add them directly to your active list, to the right of the results, by clicking on the keyword.

434 keywords

✓ SAVE

EXPORT

REMOVE...

+ Volume...

+ Competition...

+ IAAT...

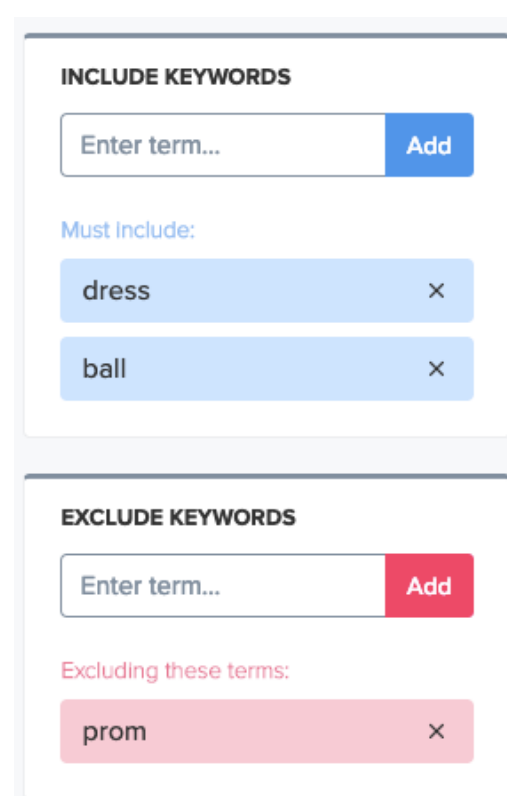
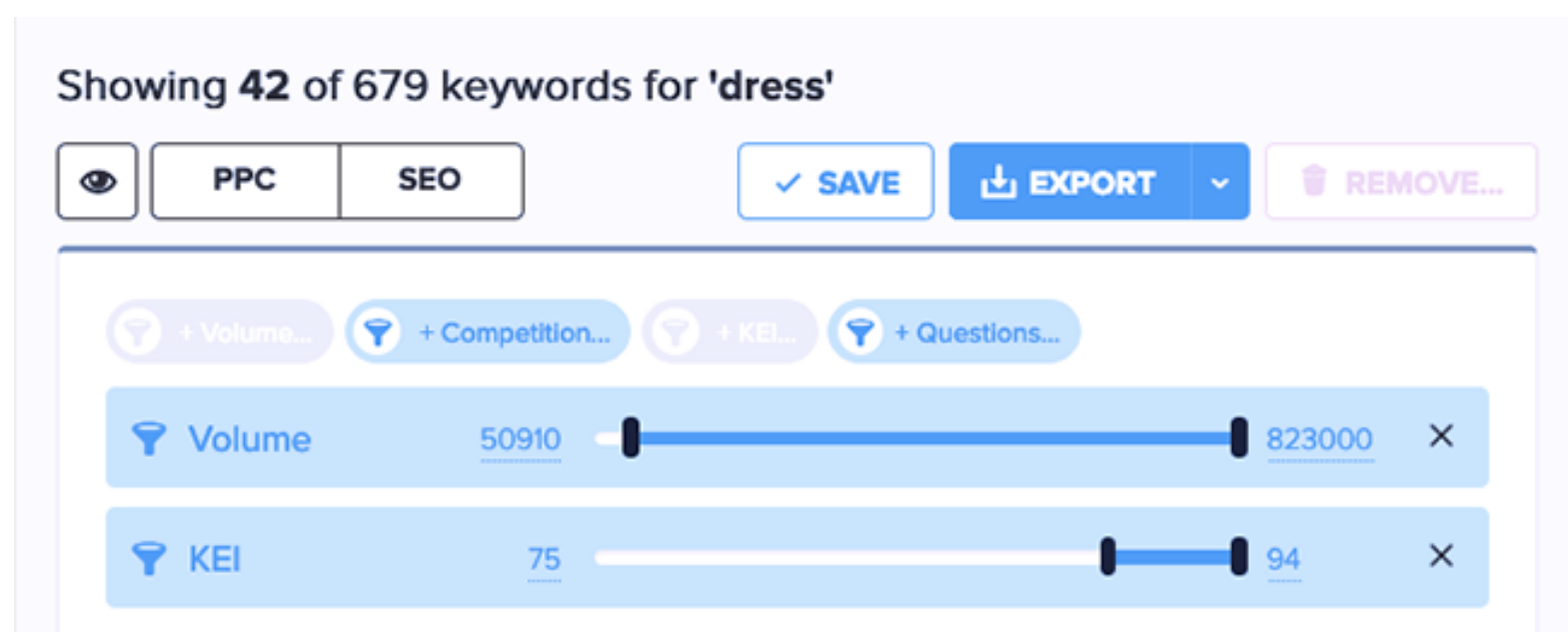
<input type="checkbox"/> Keyword		Volume <sup>①</sup>	Comp. <sup>①</sup>	IAAT <sup>①</sup>
<input type="checkbox"/> hotels		13600000	43.8	334845
<input type="checkbox"/> hotel near me		2740000	3.21	2
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<input type="checkbox"/> google hotels		49500	2.77	1
<input type="checkbox"/> last minute hotels		40500	7.08	76
<input type="checkbox"/> booking hotel		40500	6.55	53
<input type="checkbox"/> cheap hotels in vegas		40500	4.34	8
<input type="checkbox"/> cheap motels		40500	8.01	134
<input type="checkbox"/> extended stay hotels		40500	9.9	356

This is your workspace, where you can build your list and refine it. When you find terms you like, just add them to your list. You'll see the terms being added to your active list, and you'll be able to access this and other lists in the List section of the tool.

## Filtering keywords

Use the filters above the results list to refine large sets of terms to find the absolute best keywords.

Just click on the filter type to add, and click on the X to remove. Select the range by dragging the left and right handles and your results list will update immediately.



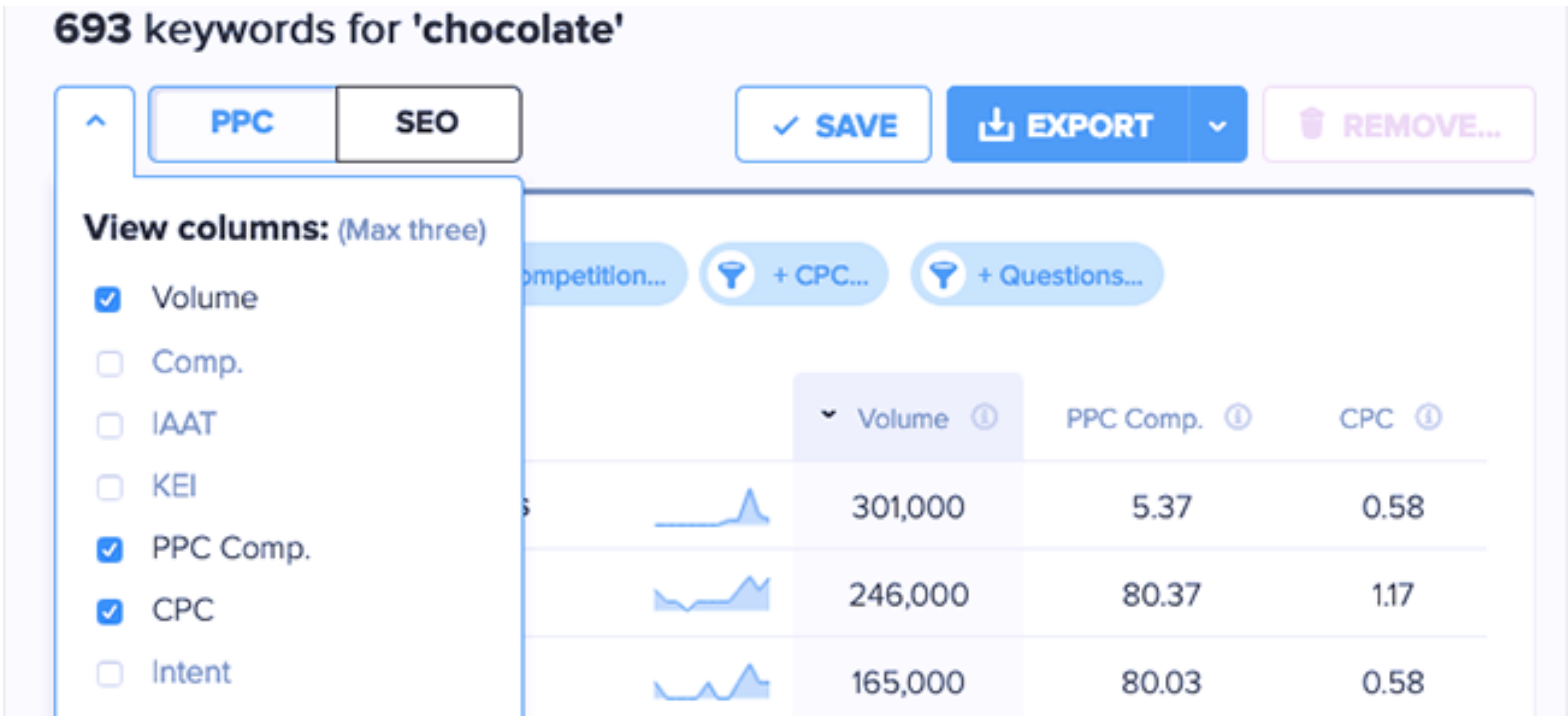
You can also use the really handy 'Include' and 'Exclude' keywords filters to focus your results super quickly on just the terms you're looking for.



# SEO vs PPC

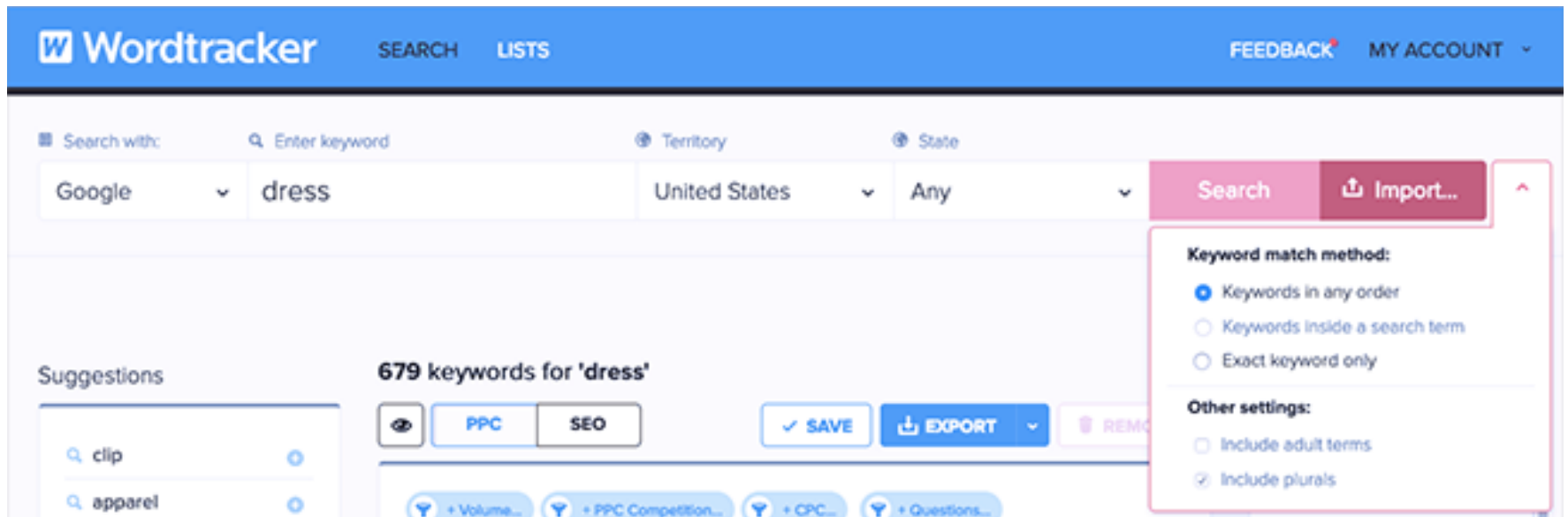
You can switch between SEO and PPC and different metrics are displayed against the keywords depending on the activity you are researching for.

Remember PPC and SEO competition are different. Metrics such as Cost Per Click are shown on the PPC tab, and IAAT (In Anchor and Title) in the SEO tab.



You can change the metrics displayed in your results, with up to 3 shown at a time. All metrics will be shown in an exported list.

## Refining your search



You can choose whether to get keywords loosely based on your seed (**Keywords in any order** is great for this) or keywords that match your seed more closely (**Keywords inside a search term**).

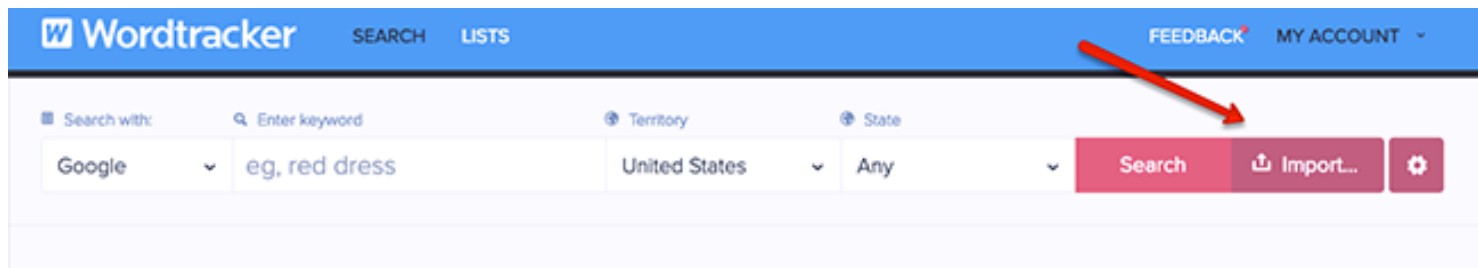
- Using **Keywords in any order** for a seed like wedding photographer will give results including wedding photographer, photographer for wedding and best wedding photographer and so on - the keywords that have wedding and photographer in them.
- **Keyword inside a search term** will return *wedding photographer* and *best wedding photographer*, and any other keywords in the database that contain the exact phrase *wedding photographer*.
- **Exact keyword only** will just give results (where available) for the seeds you enter into the seed word box.

Checking **Include adult terms** will return those keywords that we hide by default for our customers who don't need to be exposed to some of the more dubious searches that are made on the internet.

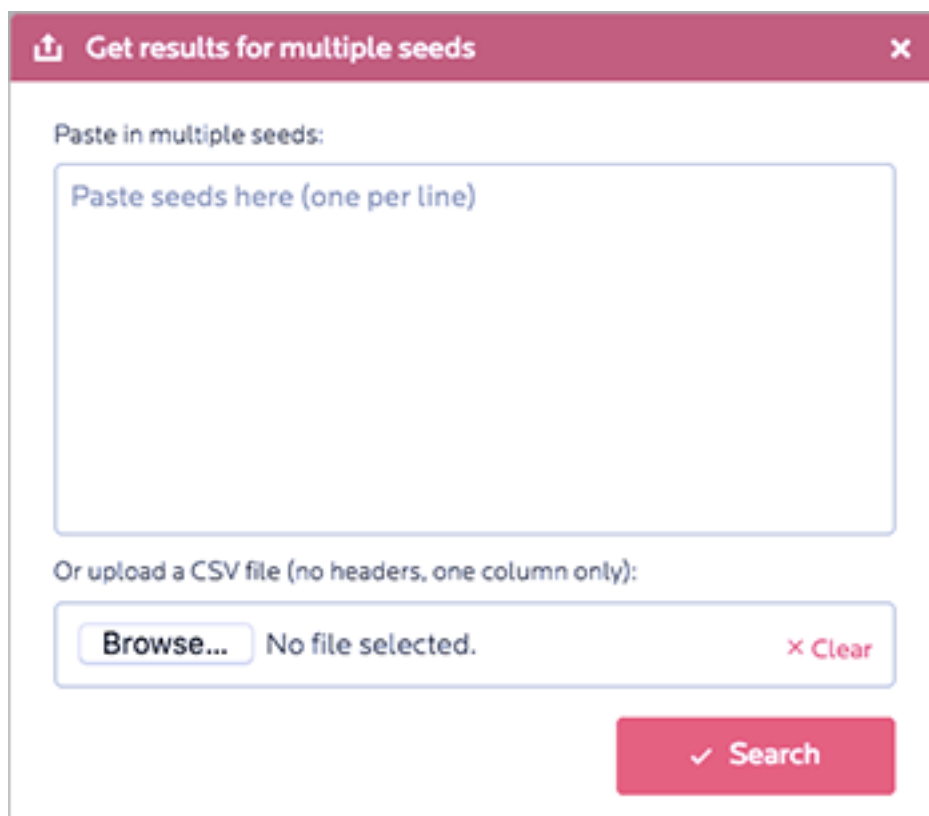
Checking **include plurals** will give plural versions of the keywords returned. For this to work well, always enter the seed in the singular form and use check plurals - that way you'll get both forms of the keywords in your results.

## Bulk search

If you have a large number of keywords you need to research you can use the bulk search feature. Just click on the Import button next to Search.



You can search on lists of words (see our [FAQ](#) for limits) either by pasting them in, one per line, or by uploading a csv.



## What do the numbers mean?

**Volume:** the number of times a search for each keyword appears in our database.

**IAAT:** A count of webpages that have the keyword both in the title tag and also in the text of a backlink.

**Competition:** A guide to how many pages are already optimized on the web for each keyword, presented on a scale of 1 to 100. The higher the number the more competition for the keyword.

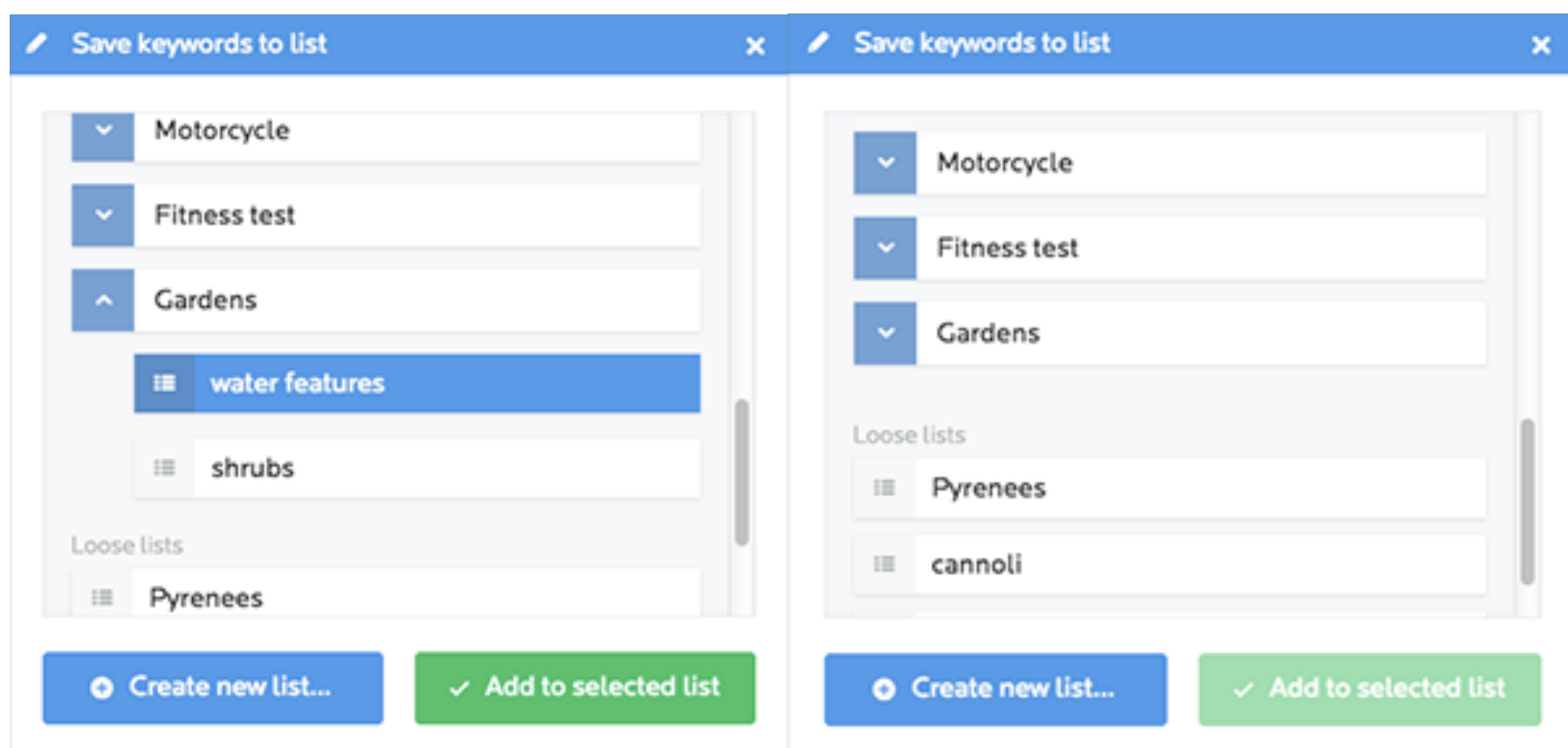
**KEI:** Based on a calculation involving the volume and competition figures. KEI goes up when the keyword's popularity increases but down when there's lots of competition.

You can see more details about these metrics here: [Wordtracker's numbers explained](#).

## Saving keywords

If you'd like to save your keywords, just click on Save at the top of the results list. If you haven't selected any keywords the whole list will be saved.

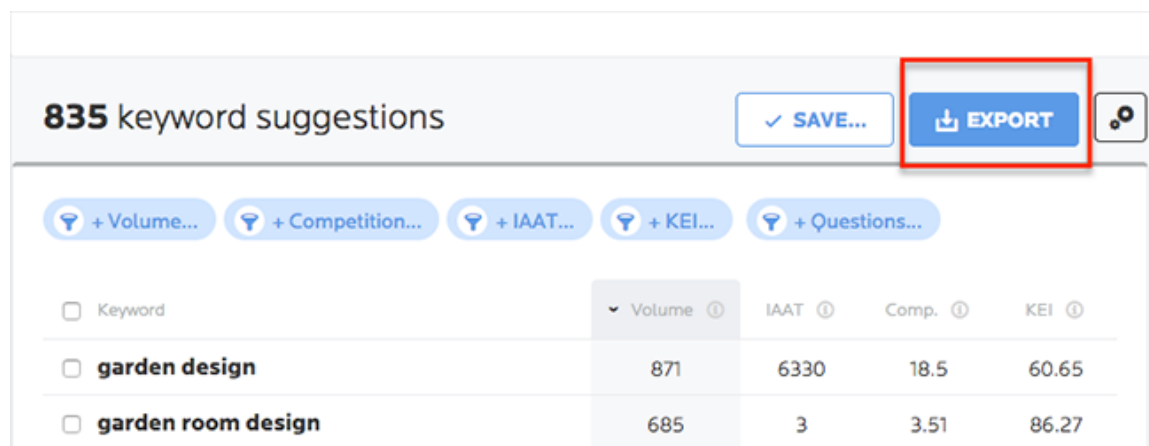
When you hit the Save button you'll have the choice of saving to an existing folder and list, or creating a new list. You'll see a list of your existing folders, followed by your loose lists at the bottom.





## Export

You can export your list at any time from the search page. Just hit the export button and you can choose to export the entire list, or, if you've been using the filters and selectors, you can export just selected keywords. The file will make its way in CSV format to your browser's download folder.



## Remember to sign up for your free week.

You get your first week completely free and it just takes seconds to sign up and get searching. You can cancel at any time.

Sign up is quick and easy and you'll then get full access to our complete keyword database.

The screenshot shows the Wordtracker sign-up form. It has a title 'Signing up for Wordtracker is free and takes seconds...'. The form asks for 'Email address' and 'Password'. There is a green 'Try Free' button. To the right, it says 'Keep searching completely free for 7 days and only \$27 per month after.' Below this is a box for 'Wordtracker BRONZE' with a 'BEST PRICE' badge. The box lists benefits: 'Unlimited searches', 'Unlimited lists', '1000+ suggestions', and 'Export all data'. Below the box, it says 'Your monthly total: \$27.00'. At the bottom, there is a progress bar with three steps: 'Details' (selected), 'Billing', and 'Done!'. A disclaimer at the bottom says '\* Cancel any time. Need more? Get access to all countries and features with our Gold and Silver plans.'



# What about the Google Keyword Planner?

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The Google Keyword Planner leaves valuable data on the table when it comes to keywords. There is good reason why keyword tools are so popular.

Most keyword tools generate keyword data from the Google Keyword Planner. We also show Google data as a source within our keyword tool. Changes that are made in the keyword planner will eventually filter through to keyword tools which use keyword planner data.

This shouldn't be a problem. However Google have made a few changes to the keyword planner and those changes haven't been too welcomed. This is because they are now showing less and less keyword data. This has been especially the case for those looking to use the data for SEO.

Your product or service

trainers, trainer, trained

Get ideas

Modify search

Some keywords that you entered and their close variants have been grouped into one row. [Learn more](#)

This page shows ranges for search volumes. For a more detailed view, set up and run a campaign. [Dismiss](#)

Average monthly searches for all ideas

10M – 100M

Ad group ideas

Keyword ideas

Columns

Download

Add all (702)

Search Terms	Avg. monthly searches	Competition	Suggested bid	Ad impr.	Add to plan
training	100K – 1M	Low	£1.32		»
trainers	100K – 1M	High	£0.47		»

Show rows

30

1 - 2 of 2 keywords

<<

<

>

>>

What the Google Keyword Planner results now look like.



# Grouping results

Google have decided that they don't actually need to show all the keywords they have available in the planner for any given search. This means that searches which used to return multiple keywords within individual searches now return one result with the search data combined. You have no way of knowing whether the keyword you are looking at is grouped or not. So for instance if you search for 'trainers' you will see the combined volume of that term as well as 'trainer'.

Your product or service

trainers, trainer, trained

Get ideas

Modify search

Search Terms	Avg. monthly searches ?	Competition ?	Suggested bid ?	Ad impr.	Add to plan
training	100K – 1M	Low	£1.32		»
trainers	100K – 1M	High	£0.47		»

Show rows

30 ▾

1 - 2 of 2 keywords

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>|

## The Google Keyword Planner grouping results

<input type="checkbox"/> Keyword	▼ Volume ⓘ	IAAT ⓘ	Comp. ⓘ	KEI ⓘ
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>trainer</b>	32346	133588	35.87	62.99
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>trainers</b>	3683	13127	21.68	63.6
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>trained</b>	918	1537	13.61	66.67

## Wordtracker doesn't group results

The keyword planner changes are bad news for everyone, with lots of people in the Search community picking up on them. The reaction hasn't exactly been overwhelmingly positive...

***“for those who use it as a keyword volume tool, the value of this tool just diminished significantly.”***

<http://www.thesempost.com/googles-keyword-planner-now-combines-keywords-for-search-volume/>

Moz also has done some great research on this, making the case that just because the keywords are grouped doesn't mean the search results will be the same for those terms.

***“What it does mean is that we should ignore the grouped volumes when targeting keywords—just because keywords are given the same volume, it doesn't mean you shouldn't target them individually on your site.”***

<https://moz.com/blog/google-grouping-keyword-volumes-what-does-this-mean-for-seo>

Search Engine Land points out that what we see in the keyword planner can only be used as an indication.

***“the search volumes (and estimated CPCs) in Keyword Planner should be seen as directional signals, not hard facts”***

<http://searchengineland.com/heck-going-google-keyword-planner-253062>

## Banded results

Google has always banded the results you see in the keyword planner. This is because they don't actually show the number of searches a keyword has. Instead they work out the number of searches from a sample and then scale this up to give the numbers they put in the planner.

Because of this process volumes were always provided in bands, so lots of keywords had the same volumes around certain numbers. This was generally ignored as there were lots of bands so it was still reasonably accurate. However this isn't the case any more.

Unless you have an active Google Ads campaign this is the sort of data you now see:

Keyword (by relevance)	Avg. monthly searches ?	Competition ?	Suggested bid ?	Ad impr.	Add to plan
dog training	10K – 100K	Medium	£1.76		»
training dogs	1K – 10K	Medium	£1.28		»
womens trainers	10K – 100K	High	£0.60		»
trainer shoes	1K – 10K	High	£0.74		»

In other words, pretty useless. You can't do any real optimization work based on these figures as the bands are so broad. 1K - 10K meaning 1000 to 10,000 searches for a keyword is not enough information and makes picking which terms to optimize for, all of which fall in the same band, a game of pot luck without another data source.



Here's a small sample of what people are saying about these changes...

***“AdWords users with a “lower monthly spend” could see limited data in the planner. How limited? Very. The ranges that Google will provide for those with small (or no) spends makes the tool almost useless.”***

<http://searchengineland.com/google-officially-throttling-keyword-planner-data-low-spending-adwords-accounts-255795>

***“there is a wide range between 1,000 and 10,000 for those doing keyword research. But for overall totals, showing 100,000 to 1,000,000 total would be fairly useless for anyone using these numbers for research reasons.”***

<http://www.thesempost.com/google-adwords-begins-restricting-keyword-planner-data-non-advertisers/>

## Wordtracker to the rescue

We have never shied away from Wordtracker data being from an entirely different source to Google's data. Ours comes from a separate search engine network. However, unlike Google, we don't scale ours up. After filtering out spam we leave the data pretty much as is, fiddling with it as little as possible to give you access to the raw data.

However we decided that we should take the step of introducing Monthly Average search volumes, which is how data is shown in the planner by default, to make up for the shortfalls in Google's keyword data.

As an effect of this is we are now showing more long tail keywords than ever before.

Check out the amount of results you can get for terms in the Wordtracker data...

Trainers

Hotels



We also, crucially, give access to up to date Google data within the tool. So you can see the broadest terms within the Wordtracker data and get up to date Google search volumes all in one place. We give you access into the keyword data that the keyword planner won't show you.

# Chapter 3 : Using Your Keywords

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# Mapping keywords

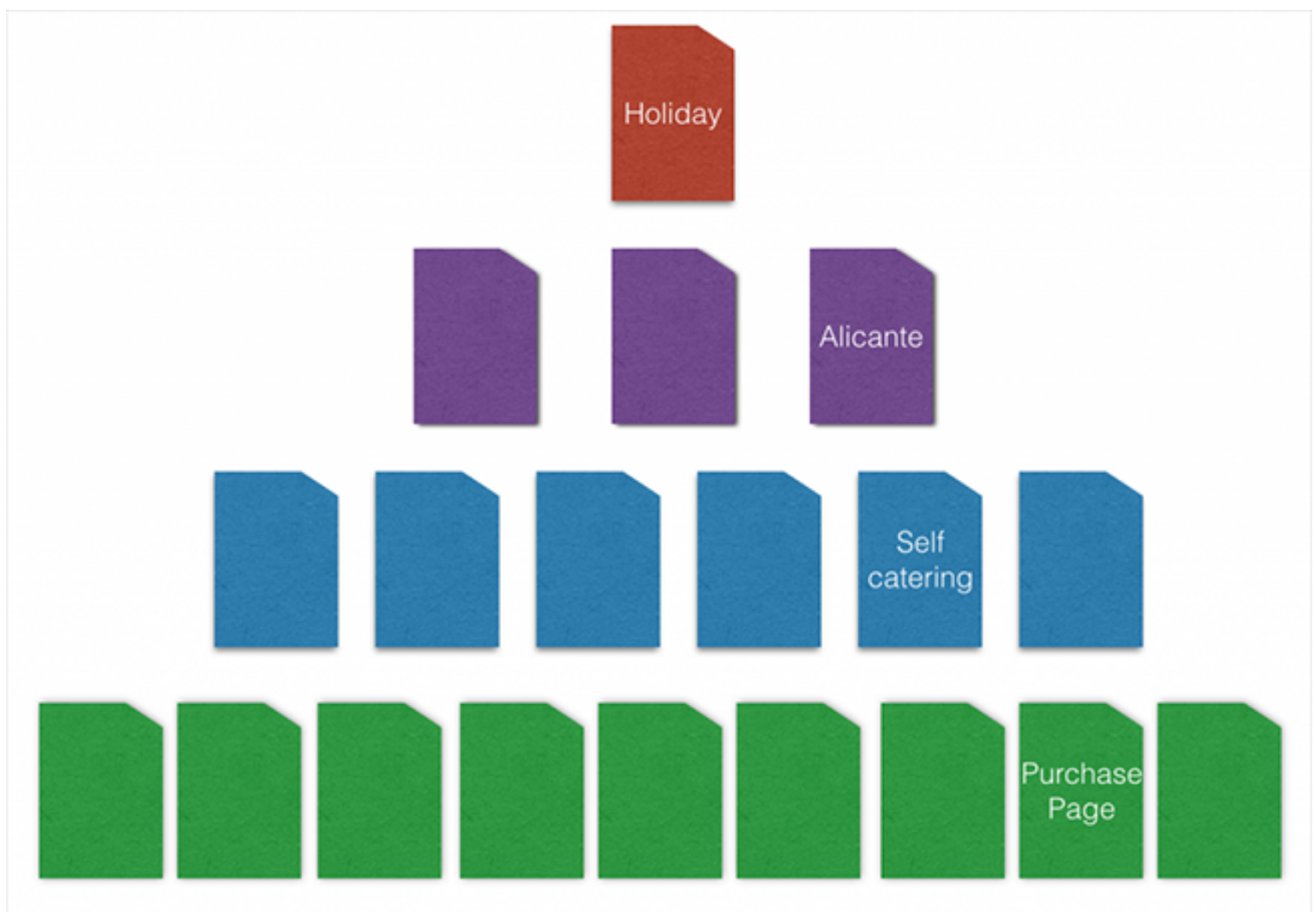
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What's the use of having great keywords if you don't use them effectively... and this includes knowing how to distribute them within your site structure.

## Site structure and keywords

A good site structure is like a triangle, or pyramid, with the single homepage on top then an increasing number of pages as you move through the site.

Now let's think about this from a keyword perspective. You have your home page at the top, and this is probably the least focused page on your website. It's not tied to any specific product or service (unless you only sell one), and will tend to attract the broadest audience.





When choosing which keywords to map to which pages it can be useful to understand the intent of the customer. Thinking about where they may be in the buying cycle is a useful tool for achieving this.

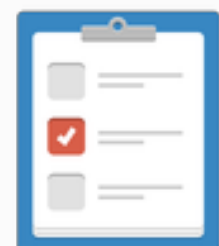
## The buying cycle

**Research:** At this point people are looking for a broad solution to fit their need. So they will be searching for broad terms, like *holiday*.

**Refine:** At this point people are starting to get an idea of the market and what they want exactly, so are searching with more exact terms such as *all inclusive holidays*

**Purchase:** By this stage the customer knows pretty much what they want and are ready to buy, so they will be using very exact, or long tail keywords like *all inclusive holidays in alicante*

Use the 'Intent' metric (available within the Google data) to find keywords from different parts of the buying cycle. High intent keywords are closer to purchase.



## Top level pages

These tend to be generic pages focused on the niche rather than individual products. This is going to be the stage in the buying cycle that uses the broadest terms, the 'research phase'. Being broad, like *holiday* they will get lots of traffic. That's great, lots of people are searching for that term.

However people searching with that term won't be at the point where they are ready to buy, so they will likely be low converting.

This doesn't mean they won't buy anything from you; just that they will have to travel through the rest of the buying cycle to do so. They may well do this in a few clicks on your website, or they may go away and come back at a later stage.

## Category Pages

This is where people are refining their choices; looking for something more exact. So rather than looking for a specific product they are likely to be using keywords which could relate to a group of products. Within the buying cycle this would be the 'refining phase'.

So while your homepage might target a very broad term, like *holiday* the category pages would target groups within this such as:

- *all inclusive holidays*
- *self catering holidays*
- *half board holidays*

At this level you have moved down the buying cycle. There will be less traffic for these terms, but people who use them will be closer to making a purchase. So you'll have a better conversion rate from these terms.

## Product pages

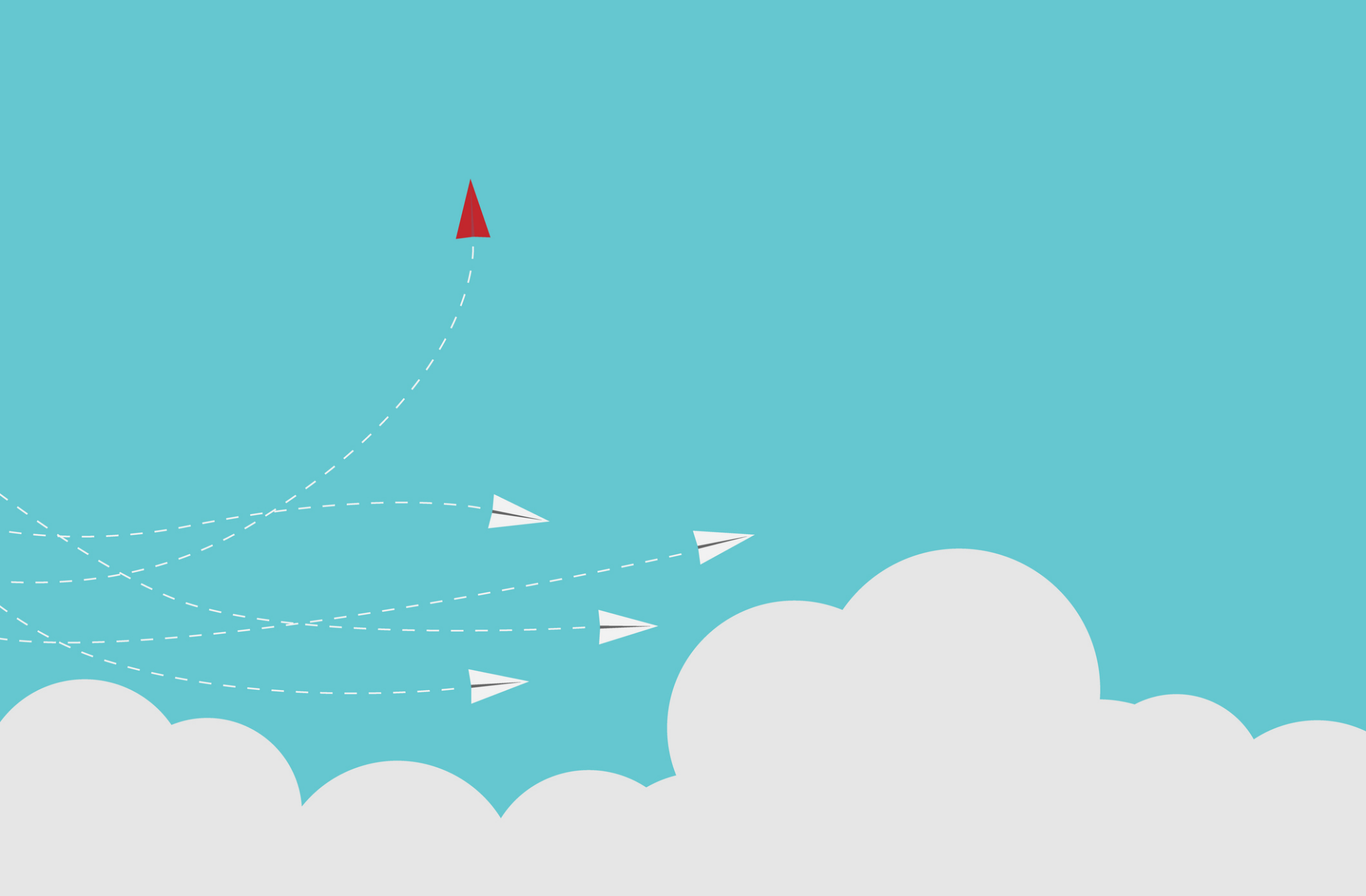
At this stage, the customer has decided on the product they want. They are now searching for something very specific, often using a metric such as price as a differentiator. This is the valuable 'buying phase'. As these are tied to a specific product the keywords are more exact. They are long tail keywords.

Long tail keywords have fewer searches because there are fewer people looking for each specific product. However, they do convert more effectively, as the people who searching with them have a greater intent to buy.

They're inclined to be very specific, and really reflect the journey that the searcher has been on with their research:

- *all inclusive holidays in alicante*
- *barbados self-catering holidays*
- *half board holidays in the UK*





# Using keyword modifiers

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Websites are big and often have dynamically generated content. Understanding keyword modifiers means having a shortcut to optimizing content in bulk.

## How to use modifiers

The use of dynamic sites has led to an increase in the size of many websites. No longer restricted by flat structures, sites can be created many thousands of pages wide.

A good example of this can be seen in retail sites with multiple product pages. In order to maximize the effectiveness of these pages we still need to apply keyword research and optimization techniques, however this is not practical on a page by page basis.

By understanding how to effectively apply keywords with modifiers across these pages we can dramatically reduce the amount of time it takes to optimize the site whilst increasing the potential visibility of each page. We've already covered keyword structure but to give a quick refresher, a keyword can have up to three basic parts; the head, the tail and the modifier. Whilst the head and the tail of the keyword apply directly to its meaning the modifier applies to a single aspect of the keyword.

To give an example, if the user is searching for *cheap restaurant in venice* then the keyword would be made of the following elements:

tail | head | modifier

Changing this to the term *cheap restaurant in rome* has not overtly changed the meaning of what the user is looking for as they are still searching for a cheap restaurant, however it has changed an aspect - the

location - of what they looking for. This is why this part of the keyword is termed the modifier, as the search term can easily be modified to change a single aspect of the search without changing its meaning.

## Modifiers and search volume

A key part of using the modifier is understanding how it affects search volumes.

Click any of the above keywords to check the search volume with the Keyword Tool for each of the above groups of keywords.

*restaurants in new york city*

*diners in new york city*

*restaurants in chicago*

*diners in chicago*

*restaurants in miami*

*diners in miami*



The results shown for the different locations reveal a pattern. No matter which location modifier is used, the term *restaurants...* produces a higher volume of searches than the term *diners...* Although the exact number of searches changes, the keywords which have the greater volume do not.

Where you have large volumes of dynamic content modifiers become very useful. It is also a technique best used in combination with manual optimization, as your most important pages on the site should always be optimized individually.

A good strategy is to optimize a large site is to dynamically adjust keywords then work back through the site manually, reviewing pages and adjusting the optimization as necessary.



# Optimizing with keywords

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Here's the really important bit - just how to use those keywords you've found on site for maximum impact.

# Optimizing URLs

The URL can be a bit of an underrated asset for a page. Not only does it provide additional value to your keywords, it also appears within the search results. Using keywords within your URL is one of the oldest SEO tactics. It shows a clear indication that the page contains content which is highly relevant to the term.

Note that Google shortens longer URLs to make them display neatly. The middle section is hopped over, leaving the most important parts for the user - the domain and the page.

Let's take a look at this example URL:

<https://www.wordtracker.com/academy/learn-seo/on-page-optimization/how-to-optimize-web-page>

It can be broken down into the following sections:

https://www.wordtracker.com	→	Domain
/academy	→	Category
/learn-seo	→	Sub Category
/on-page-optimization	→	Sub Category
/how-to-optimize-web-page	→	Page

Some popular CMS such as WordPress use a numerical default for URLs, meaning that when a page is created it is assigned a numerical code which forms the URL. For SEO this isn't great, you want it to be human-readable.

Luckily enough this is pretty easy to change. Just use the permalinks option within your install, which will change the URLs to words, instead of numbers.



Try and keep your page URL short, don't use too many words. 3 to 4 is a good number but a healthy dose of common sense should steer you in the right direction. Obviously you can use a larger number of shorter words or fewer longer words. Just make sure it's clear, uses your main keywords for the page and it actually looks good on page.

## Categories and site structure

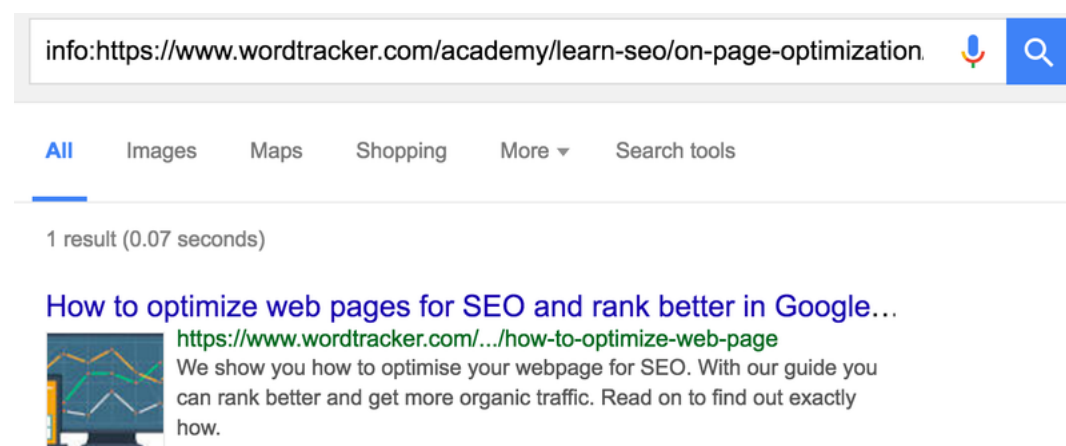
The placement of the page on the site has an impact on how relevant Google deems its content. This is done through the site structure, with content placed in categories which are also relevant to the search term ranking better. Naming your categories and sub-categories utilising keywords will not only benefit those pages but also the pages listed within them.



# Optimizing page titles

Next down from the URL it's time to take a look at the page title - probably the most abused and one of the longest serving core on-page SEO factors. Your page title is the element on the page where it is most important to strike a balance between readability and SEO.

Let's start off by taking a look at how Google is displaying your page title. Simply search for the page in Google so it shows up in the results. Using the 'info' command in Google, then putting in the page URL, will show the result without any personalisation:



We can see that there are a few things going on here, so we'll go through those.

## What page title length will Google display?

You can see how the final part of the title is truncated, so cut off and followed by a couple of dots. This is because there is a maximum character limit to what Google can display in the results. This varies depending on the result type and the actual characters you use, because it's actually a pixel



limit. So the space Google has to play with is determined in pixels (512 if you're interested). Use wider letters and you'll fit fewer characters.

Unless you're a web designer you're unlikely to think in pixels and it's much easier to think in characters. I always use a nominal limit of 69. You should be able to fit 69 of all but the fattest characters into your 512 pixels.

## How to use keywords in the page title

The page title is the single most important on-page element for your keywords (unless you count the body copy as one element). You need to make sure your core terms are placed within your title with the most important terms at the front. Let's take a look at the title for an example page:

How to optimize web pages for SEO and rank better in Google |  
Wordtracker Academy

You can see that we have our CMS set up so our brand is added at the end of the page title. This is a good tactic as it means the part most likely to be truncated off matters the least. Some systems place the brand at the front of the page title. I would advise against this as you're using up valuable space with repeated, low value keywords. Keywords placed at the front of the title also carry more value than those at the end.

We have used a 'How to' format for the title as these searches are popular and a great way to capture organic traffic for your site. If you want to pull new visits in, this is an effective way to do it. You can actually filter on Keyword Questions in the Wordtracker Keyword Tool to see which are the most popular questions people are asking in your niche. It's a really

powerful way of generating content that ranks well and captures fresh traffic.

This page title is a good combination of SEO factors, making sure we get the main keyphrase we want to rank for in 'How to optimize web pages for SEO'. Also utilising the additional characters I've added to rank better in Google. This will help with capturing additional long tail keyword traffic and also helps create a more attractive title when read in the search results.

## How to optimize page descriptions for a better Click Through Rate

More clicks means more traffic and that's exactly what you want. Highly relevant traffic coming to your website. Getting the right keywords into your description, your pages and in the search results, can help maximize the clicks you get.

The FAB principle is a good one to follow here. This is a classic sales copy technique where you state:

**Feature** : What it is

**Advantage** : Specifically what it can do

**Benefit** : Why that's a good thing

Here's the example I usually think of when structuring FAB content:

Feature: This canoe is made out of hardened fibreglass

Benefit: So it won't ever leak or break

Advantage : Meaning you can take on more extreme rapids than ever before

Then after this, include a Call To Action, or CTA. Here's the description I created for an example page:

We show you how to optimise your webpage for SEO. With our guide you can rank better and get more organic traffic. Read on to find out exactly how.

I've highlighted the different FAB aspects plus the CTA in different colours. Notice the keywords used within this 'how to optimize a webpage'. Length is once again restricted, much like page titles. Here we have a little more room, with around 156 characters to play with. This isn't a hard limit but I've found that this is a good number to work to.

# Optimizing page headings

Page headings are used as both a styling element and as an SEO element. They are still relevant and an active ranking factor. However their importance has diminished. Once again it's an element that I wouldn't recommend going to great lengths to change, but if you're creating content from scratch then it's definitely worth looking at.

The heading tag is an element that can be added in the page code that denotes the text as a heading within the content. Styling is then automatically applied according to the heading type, so these are often a larger font than the normal body copy.

The code used is a heading tag. This is a piece of html that wraps around the content. You open a heading tag like this `<h1>` and close it like this `</h1>`. You can have as many different heading types as you want, although 3 - 6 is most common. A secondary heading or h2 would be displayed with the `<h2>` tag and `<h3>` and so on.

Google knows that headings are used to denote a summary of the following section, like mini titles for each section within the content. It makes sense that Google would place extra weight on the words used within those headings, so keywords become more important here. Headings carry more meaning than words used elsewhere on the page and have been thought about more carefully.

As they aren't displayed in the results, headings don't carry any restrictions so it's up to you how you use them. I use them as they are intended, as clear concise titles for each of the sections within the page. Higher

numbered headings denote the main sections and the lower numbered headings are for subsections within these.

The readability of the content on page will have a much bigger impact than any SEO benefit derived from headings, so make sure they read well. However, you can still create them thinking about the search terms that you want the page to rank for.

Check out the headings I've used in this article. For example, this section is 'Optimizing page headings for SEO'. I'm thinking about what someone might be searching for and making sure my keywords are in there.

## Keywords within content

Make sure that the primary and secondary keywords are within your body copy and feature prominently. However, don't fall into the trap of sacrificing the quality of the copy to over-include your keywords. Additionally if you find you're having to try and shoehorn your keywords into the page, you probably have the wrong keywords for the copy. As covered in my next point, Google looks at the overall meaning of the page. Including keywords which don't really fit isn't going to do much for you.

## Keyword variance

The way Google assesses keywords is down not only to where they appear but also how they relate to each other. It was previously the frequency with which a keyword was repeated which mattered. This made for substandard content and ultimately a poor experience for the reader. Google has since moved away from this and got a bit cleverer. Now it breaks the content down and looks at the relationship between the words that are used rather than just the number of times they are repeated. So it looks at how those words fit into the overall content of the information on-page.

By keeping your content on topic and focused around a single topic per page you should find that you naturally create content where the keywords have a strong relationship. This gives a strong indication to Google what the page is about and therefore what it should rank for.

## Content length

Ideally you would have at least 500 words of focused content on a page, but the reality is that this is not always possible, especially when you have design or CRO considerations. A single page has to serve many purposes, and ranking in the search engines is just one of the things you need to consider. Think about what purpose the page serves and how important it is that it ranks for non-brand terms or long tail searches.

The more important it is that the page ranks for a broader spread of terms, the more you're going to want to place increased focus on the content. If it's a homepage this is probably less important as you're likely focused on your absolute most important generic keywords. If it's an informational page like this one, then the content becomes much more important.



## Optimizing images with keywords

Images have a couple of elements to them that should be properly optimized. The first is the image file name. Make this descriptive and unique and include your core terms for the page. I've found getting into the habit of naming images properly has come in pretty handy when looking through my laptop or on a CMS to dig out an image to use for an article.

Images also have a written description, through the image title and alt tag. These are two HTML elements which provide written information about the image. I tend to just fill out the alt tag for an image and leave the title blank. Technically the title is there to give the image name and the alt tag is meant to describe the image. The alt tag is also important from an accessibility viewpoint. Screen readers will read the alt tag to describe the image to the user.

Make sure the image alt tag uses keywords related to the information on-page. Google also uses the content surrounding an image to try and determine its purpose. You want to make sure that this all ties together and focuses on the same topic.



# Link optimization

## Outbound links

It's not just who links to you that's important, but where you link to. This can affect both relevance and trust. If you're linking out to on-topic sites from your content that's a good indication that the content is relevant to the terms in question. So linking to sites and pages with core terms which are similar to your own for the page helps to improve the relevance of your content to those pages.

## External link anchor text

This is one of the most important ranking factors. Relevant anchor text shows that other sites also deem the content relevant. Beware of over optimizing anchor text, as this will create a negative ranking signal and certainly damage your rankings.

## Internal link anchor text

It's not just the anchor text from external links, but internal ones as well which count. Use your keywords within the internal links, especially those that appear in your site's navigation.

## Linking domain relevance

The domain that links to you is obviously important from a link value perspective, but also from the point of view of relevance. If the domain is relevant to your keywords then that's going to increase the relevance of the linked page to those terms. So, for example, getting a guest post placed on

a site with content that doesn't match the rest of the site may not pass as much value or relevance.

## Linking page relevance

The relevance of the page as a whole and the text which surrounds the links is really important. This shows the links are in context, making them pass more relevance to the target page. Having the right keywords on the page that links to you is crucial.

## Co-occurrence

This is the correlation between a page and the targeted keywords from content across the web. Where a site is frequently mentioned alongside a set of keywords, even if it's not linked, this indicates a connection between the two, and provides a signal to Google that your page is relevant to the topic.

## Now you just need to get started!

Now you should have everything you need to kick off your keyword research with confidence. So the only thing left to do, if you haven't already, is sign up to Wordtracker.

✕

Signing up for Wordtracker is **free** and takes seconds...

Enter your details

Email address

Password

Try Free

Keep searching **completely free** for 7 days and only \$27 per month after.

Wordtracker **BRONZE**

BEST PRICE

✓ Unlimited searches

✓ Unlimited lists

✓ 1000+ suggestions

✓ Export all data

Your monthly total: **\$27.00**

\* Cancel any time. Need more? Get access to all countries and features with our [Gold and Silver plans](#).

Details

Billing

Done!

It takes seconds to sign up, costs nothing and you can cancel at any time. Make the most of this guide and start searching today to maximize your traffic.