Beginner's Guide to

KEYWORD RESEARCH for SEO

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction to Keyword Research

Traffic from search engines can be some of the most valuable traffic you will ever have. These are the visitors who are looking for answers and are ready to buy. However, if you aren't providing a way for them to get to your website, you are missing out.

Without properly targeting the right keywords, your site will be missing out on free traffic and more revenue. Simply knowing which keywords to target can significantly boost your online presence in many ways. This is why it is so crucial to perform keyword research for your business. **Otherwise, you will suffer from low ROI thanks to low quality keyword targeting.**

In this guide, we'll walk you through everything you need to know about doing keyword research for your website or business. We'll introduce you to long-tail keywords - some of the most valuable keywords that exist - and show you how to not only identify the ones most suited for your site, but also demonstrate a few free tools that can help you find them.

As a beginner to SEO, keyword research may seem daunting, but with the help of this guide, we think we can make it easier for you.

Let's get started!

Chapter 1: Where Do I Start?

Starting your research is actually very simple.

To start the keyword research process, create a list of words, phrases, or buzzwords that you might think of when someone talks about your industry or niche. **These will not be your keywords,** but they are a great starting point for this process.

Take a moment to start brainstorming some simple one-to-three word combinations that represent your business or industry. List them all out in a notebook or in a document on your computer until you can't possibly think of any more.

Once this is done...

Take a look at your list. The words you have listed are most likely somewhat short or vague, and won't quite signify a high quality keyword just yet.

If you owned a bicycle shop, you might make a list like this:

☐ Bicycles
☐ Bike seat
☐ Bicycle rack

If you focused all of your content creation on shorter, more basic words like this, you wouldn't see much search engine traffic or sales. It's probably pretty difficult to rank highly for "bicycles"... but it's also hard to say what someone searching for such a vague term really wants. Does someone searching for "bicycles" want to buy a new bike, see photos, or just learn more about biking? Does a bicycle shop really have a chance at gaining a new customer if it ranks for a phrase with such vague intent?

We need to get a little more detailed. **Let's turn those short phrases into long-tail keywords.**

Chapter 2: Long-Tail Keywords

What is a long-tail keyword?
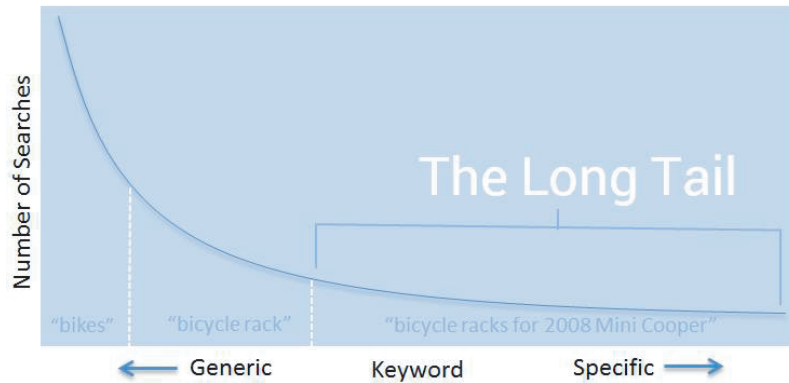
The majority of online searches are for short, one-to-two word terms. There are probably similar to the keywords you came up with above. However, competition for these phrases is high, and there are literally millions of results for them. Even if you do rank highly for one of these terms, **visitors probably won't convert into paying customers as quickly as someone who searches for something more specific.**

Long-tail keywords are generally longer phrases or keywords related to specific topics. For example, consider the example above, showing the difference between "bikes," "bicycle rack," and "bicycle racks for 2008 Mini Cooper." In this case, "bicycle racks for 2008 Mini Cooper" is the long-tail keyword - **the more specific phrase or query showing interest and intent.**

The difference between these last two searches alone are incredible. A person looking up the long-tail phrase above, most likely wants a bike rack for their Mini Cooper and is ready to make a purchase. However, the person looking for "bicycle rack" might just be wondering how to install one, what kinds there are, or what they are even used for in the first place.

Big difference, right? Although the search volume for "the long tail" of search may be lower, you'll often find that the conversion rate is higher, simply because people using these keywords are ready to buy.

Now that you understand the difference between long-tail keywords and more generic ones, let's turn your short search terms into long-tail keywords that will drive quality traffic to your website.

Chapter 3: Creating Long-Tail Keywords

Your long-tail keyword toolkit

There are tons of tools you can use to find and improve your suggestions for keywords. The ones you will be using along with this guide are Ubersuggest and the Google Keyword Planner.

These tools will give you suggestions for more keywords that are geared towards the long-tail end of searches. The more suggestions we can collect, the better! Now let's find out how to use them.

Using Ubersuggest

bicycle + a

- bicycle accessories
- bicycle ambulance
- bicycle ambulance santa monica
- bicycle angels
- bicycle art
- bicycle airbag
- bicycle adventures
- bicycle ab exercise
- bicycle anime
- bicycle accident

bicycle + b

- bicycle blue book
- bicycle brands
- bicycle built for two
- bicycle baskets
- bicycle built for two lyrics
- bicycle bags
- bicycle bell
- bicycle brakes
- bicycle bob's
- bicycle built for two song

bicycle + c

- bicycle cards
- bicycle crunch
- bicycle casino
- bicycle chain
- bicycle coffee
- bicycle clothing
- bicycle computer
- bicycle colorado
- bicycle cover
- bicycle companies

Ubersuggest is a great tool for finding long-tail keyword suggestions. Go ahead and enter some the initial buzzwords you listed into the tool. Ubersuggest will spit out hundreds of ideas for you, **all based on what people are actually searching for.**

For each keyword you try, copy and paste the results into a document on your computer for future reference.

To give you an idea for how many keyword ideas you should have for the next step, we came up with spreadsheet of over 1000 ideas. **Don't panic!** This only took us about five minutes. By using Ubersuggest and inputting three very vague keywords, we got a ton of ideas! Just copy and paste them into your document and you are all set.

Collect all of these ideas into a document you can easily copy and paste into other tools. An Excel spreadsheet or a Google Doc should do the job. The more you have, the better, but we will be eliminating a lot of them in the next step. We want to trim it down as much as possible in order to find the very best of the bunch!

As you can see, finding new keyword ideas doesn't take as long as you might expect.

Chapter 4: Picking the Best Long-Tail Keywords

Using Google Keyword Planner

Here comes the fun part! We will be taking your gigantic list of keyword ideas from Ubersuggest and trimming it down to just a handful that make the most sense for your website.

Let's move on to the second tool that is crucial for this process: the Google Keyword Planner.
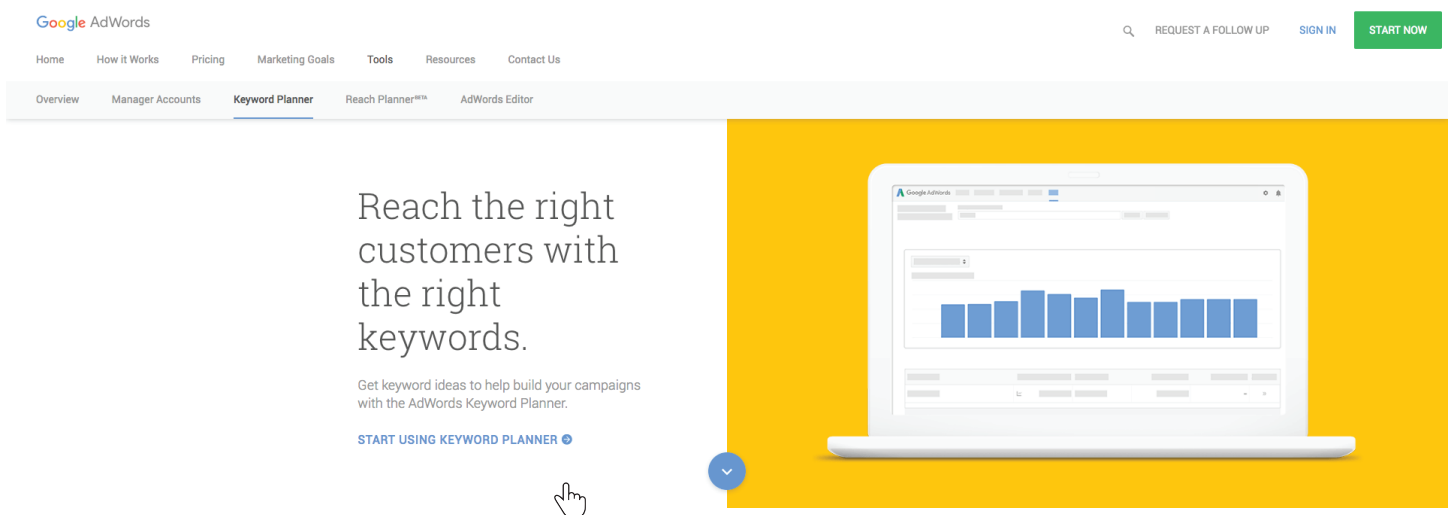
The Google Keyword Planner is a helpful tool that can provide some extremely valuable information for your keyword research. By inserting your list of keywords, **you will get back a data set that includes the number of searches each keyword receives.**

This tool can also indicate how competitive a search is for a particular phrase, and give you the average cost of Pay-Per-Click (PPC) advertising associated with that term. The tool was originally designed to help businesses make smart decisions about their PPC advertising, but it's also immensely helpful for SEO and keyword research, too!

While the Google Keyword Planner is definitely not the only way to find the best long-tail keywords, it is often one of the best places to start. So let's move on to a step-by-step guide to converting your long list of keyword ideas from Ubersuggest into a targeted list of long-tail keywords using the planner!

Step-by-step instructions

1. Go to the Google Keyword Planner tool and select the second option: "Get search volume for a list of keywords or group them into ad groups."

2. Copy and paste your list of keywords into the "Option 1" box. If you have more than 1,000 keywords, you can upload them via CSV file. Once you have them all in there, click "Get search volume."

3. **Click on the keyword ideas tab.** You will now see a huge list of your keywords with the corresponding average monthly searches, competition, suggested PPC bid, and ad impression share. Don't be overwhelmed: we'll trim this list down.

The key here is finding the sweet spot between a high amount of monthly searches and low competition. Look at the left sidebar and you will see an area for customizing your search. With keyword filters, you can really drill down to the most relevant keywords with the best opportunities.

4. **First, try limiting the search to just keywords with low competition.**

5. **Next, click on the top of the list where it says "Avg. monthly searches."** This will sort the list by the number of searches per month from greatest to smallest.

If your list is still pretty long, **try narrowing it down even more by limiting the suggested bid to a few cents.** This further removes the competition. Through filtering and sorting, try to get it down to a level where you can manage looking over them and selecting a few by hand.

6. **Pick out four or five keywords.** These keywords should have a good balance of monthly views and relatively low competition.

7. **You might have a few really good options for keywords to go after now...** But chances are that they are common 3 or 4 word phrases that still have millions of search results. You will need to go deeper to find those more specific long-tail keywords.

Take those four or five keywords you found and put them back into Ubersuggest. That's right - do the process all over again. What you find might surprise you!

By doing this process step-by-step, we were able to find a great bicycle-related keyword to target:
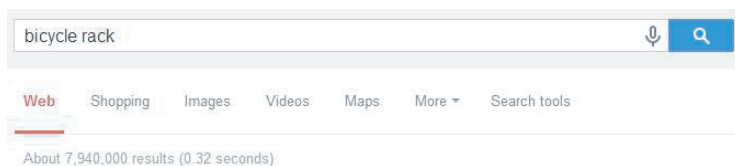
While the monthly searches are somewhat low, this is the exact type of long tail keyword you want. There really isn't very much competition, and visitors coming to your site are close to making a purchase, because they know exactly what they want.

A great landing page for this might be titled "The Best Bicycle Rack for a Car with a Spoiler." You could easily list 4 or 5 different products, providing the visitor with information and links to purchase them.

Chapter 5: Concluding Thoughts

Things to note

- **The accuracy of the competition column in the Google Keyword Planner should be taken with a grain of salt.** While it may have some indication of how many people are competing for the top search position, it is actually only reporting on paid search results. These are directed towards the ads on the page rather than the organic search results. Always keep this in mind, as high competition doesn't always necessarily indicate a lot of search results, and low competition doesn't necessarily mean few competing search results. It may be close, but not exact.

- **There will also be some keywords mixed in your research that may not be very relevant.** For instance, "Bicycle playing cards" were mentioned a few times in our example list of keywords. Just ignore those, or eliminate them if they become problematic.

- **You may also want to manually search for some of the terms on your list just to verify how good they are.** Sometimes a particular search is dominated by super high authority sites that will always outrank you no matter what.

Additional keyword research methods

There are literally *hundreds* of tools out there that can help you perform keyword research. A lot are free, but some are fairly expensive. [You can find some others we recommend in our list of 250+ SEO tools](#).

There certainly is an art to finding more keywords for your website, though, and different methods might prove to be better than others. So be sure to test out many methods and see what works the best for you.

Some additional ways to find keywords include:

- Analyzing your competition for keywords you aren't currently targeting
- Browsing niche communities for those odd long-tail keywords you may not know about
- Using the Google Keyword Planner in other ways. There are more options for keyword research on the [Planner's homepage](#).

Final thoughts

Keyword research is a very important step in the SEO process. Without it, you will be blindly creating content in hopes of getting it to rank while your competitors are nabbing easy keywords that you aren't targeting. By researching and targeting long-tail keywords, you'll have the upper hand - and you'll have the advantage of reaching search engine users at the most crucial stage of their research and buying process.

We hope you enjoyed our beginner's guide to keyword research, and that you found these strategies, tips, and recommended tools helpful. Feel free to reach out to us with any feedback you may have on Twitter or Facebook - we'd love to hear it!

If you're new to SEO, feel free to check out our other free marketing guides to continue learning how to improve your business and grow your revenue online.

Need help with your website?

A long term, revenue-building strategy requires some in-depth keyword research that you may not have the time to perform. Why not let the experts at WebFX help you? We can get you headed in the right direction while you focus on what matters most: growing your business.

To learn more about what WebFX has to offer, check out our search engine optimization plans or contact us today for a free evaluation of your business and no-obligation quote. We can't wait to hear from you!

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