HIGH-UP ADS

FREE GUIDE

THE 2026 GUIDE TO GOOGLE ADS

From an empty account to campaigns that bring in orders, appointments, bookings, or quote requests.



15 CHAPTERS

123 CHECKBOXES

16 BLOCKS TO COPY

HIGH-UP ADS · highupads.ro/en · November 17, 2026

WHAT'S INSIDE

CONTENTS

★ What's inside and the order to work in

01 What kind of business you have and where you start

02 The math before the money: what you can afford to pay

03 The account, set up right from day one

04 Tracking: how Google finds out what sold

05 Campaign types and when to use each one

06 Keywords in 2026, and negative keywords

07 Ads: headlines, descriptions, and the landing page

08 Bidding strategies and when to switch

09 Budget: what the minimum is and why

10 What's different in the US: location, billing, and policy

11 How to read your results

12 Four example businesses, worked start to finish

13 The mistakes that burn your money

14 Frequently asked questions

15 The action plan

The first thing you do in Google Ads is not run an ad.

That sounds backward, we know. You opened the account to get customers. But Google bids for you automatically, and it learns from the conversions you send it: the orders, appointments, bookings, or quote requests you count as results. Send it the wrong ones and it learns the wrong lesson, then spends your money on people who don't buy. So the account comes first, then the math, then the tracking. The ad comes last.

This guide is for you if you want to run your own Google ads, or at least understand what the person running them is doing. Google changes menus and limits often, so check the official pages in the sources before an important setting. We name buttons exactly as they appear in Google Ads. The businesses in the examples are made up, and so are their numbers.

WHAT'S INSIDE AND THE ORDER TO WORK IN

You'll learn how much you can afford to pay for a customer, worked out from your own numbers. How to set up the account and the tracking so Google learns from real sales, not clicks. Which campaign to start with, on which searches, with what ad text. When to give Google a target, how much budget it needs to learn, and what's specific to the US: location settings, sales tax on ad spend in some states, and the policy rules for housing, jobs, credit, health, and politics. Then how to read your results, and four example businesses worked from start to finish: an online store, an auto repair shop, a cabin rental, and a steel building company.

What you'll do, in this order:

1. Open the account and launch nothing. Use a business email, skip the campaign Google pushes you toward, and turn off the recommendations it applies on its own (chapter 3).
2. Work out what you can pay for a customer. The worksheet in chapter 2 takes about an hour, with your own numbers and a cost per click from Keyword Planner.
3. Set up tracking and test it. Google has to see every real order or lead, once. Then you place a test order and check that it shows up.
4. Launch the first campaign. Search ads on 10 to 30 searches that show someone wants to buy now, plus a small campaign on your business name. Google Search only, no partner sites, no Display, and AI Max turned off. An online store starts with Shopping ads instead of the keyword campaign.
5. Clean up once a week. Look at what people searched before they clicked and block what has nothing to do with you.
6. Take stock after 30 days. Put the account's results next to your real sales and decide with the table in chapter 8.

Short on time? Read chapter 2, the example in chapter 12 that looks most like your business, and the checklist in chapter 15.

01 WHAT KIND OF BUSINESS YOU HAVE AND WHERE YOU START

Launch a campaign before you can see orders or leads in the account and you pay for clicks you can't judge. You see the money go out. You don't see what it brought in.

On Google, everything starts with two questions. What counts as a result for you? And how soon after the click does it happen? An online store counts orders that come in the same day. A builder counts quote requests that turn into contracts months later. Same tool, used very differently.

A form sent twice: one customer or two?

Say you run an auto repair shop. Someone fills out your form, isn't sure it went through, and sends it again. One customer or two?

One. Same person, same car. A store is different: every order brings in money, so the store counts them all. In the account, the two options are "Every" and "One," and Google suggests "Every" for sales and "One" for leads.

Counting, by type of business

TYPE OF BUSINESS	WHAT YOU COUNT AS A RESULT	HOW YOU COUNT	FIRST CAMPAIGN
Online store	The order, with its value	"Every"	Your store name, plus Shopping
Service by appointment or quote (repair shop, dentist, salon, plumber)	The form sent and the call from the ad	"One"	The service plus the city
Bookings (cabin, B&B, small hotel, restaurant)	The call and the inquiry form, plus the confirmed booking if your site can send it	"One"	The area, with your phone number in the ad
Business to business	The quote request, then the qualified lead from your CRM	"One"	The customer's problem, with a long negative keyword list

Which campaign you start with

Read from the top and stop at the first line that fits.

1. You can't see orders or leads in Google Ads yet. Launch nothing; go to chapter 4.
2. An online store with products in Merchant Center (where you list products for Google): your store name plus Shopping. Hold off on Performance Max until you have around 30 tracked orders a month (our rule; chapter 5 explains).
3. People find you by service and city (repair shop, dentist, plumber): your most profitable services, location on "Presence" (chapter 10).
4. People find you by place (cabin, B&B, restaurant): the area and what people want there, location on "Presence or interest," phone number in the ad.
5. You sell to other businesses over months: the customer's problem, with your negative list built before launch and qualified leads coming back from your CRM (chapter 4).
6. Nobody searches for what you sell yet: the problem it solves. Demand Gen, which reaches people who aren't searching, needs the budget in chapter 5. YouTube comes last.

COPY THIS

STEP: YOUR STARTING POINT

My business is (pick one): online store / service by appointment / bookings / sales to other businesses
The result I count: ....
I count every one ("Every") or only one per ad click ("One"): ....
My first campaign: ....

Filled it in? Then you know what you count and where you start, and you still haven't launched a single ad. Good.

02 THE MATH BEFORE THE MONEY: WHAT YOU CAN AFFORD TO PAY

Without the number in this chapter, you can't tell whether a campaign is expensive or cheap. Is $60 for a customer a lot? It depends only on what you keep from a sale.

US benchmarks exist. LocaliQ's 2026 search benchmarks put the average cost per lead across industries at $66.69. That's a fair sanity check, but an average of other people's accounts says nothing about your margin.

Already paid for clicks that brought no customers? You probably didn't get the settings wrong. You skipped this step, and paid to learn what one evening with your invoices would have told you.

You need two numbers. The break-even cost is the most you can pay for a conversion without losing money. The target cost is what you want to pay so you keep a profit too. Don't know yet how much you want to keep? Start at half the break-even.

2.1. The math on a repair shop

Say you own an independent auto repair shop in Columbus, Ohio. An average job brings in $600. After parts and what you pay your technicians for the hours, $240 is left. That's your break-even per job.

But Google doesn't bring you jobs. It brings leads, a form or a call, and not everyone who calls brings the car in. Say 4 out of 10 do. Then a lead is worth $240 times 4, divided by 10: $96. That's your break-even per lead. Want to keep half? Your target cost per lead is $48.

What will a lead actually cost? Keyword Planner, in your Google Ads account, estimates a click on your keywords at $4.50. You assume 10 out of 100 visitors send a form or call, so 10%. The estimated cost per lead is $4.50 divided by 0.10, which is $45. That's under your $48 target, so you launch.

With what budget? You want about 30 leads in the first month (chapter 9 explains why 30). Thirty leads at $45 is $1,350 a month, about $44 a day, because Google divides the monthly budget by 30.4. Chapter 12 has the full example.

2.2. The same math for your business

Your break-even per sale is your profit on one sale before ads. Start from the price you collect, without sales tax, and subtract the product or materials, the shipping you pay, card fees, and any other cost that comes with each sale. Sales tax belongs to the state, so it stays out of the math.

Your target is the break-even minus the profit you want to keep. If you sell services, rentals, or to other businesses, you work per lead: multiply both numbers by how many leads out of 10 become sales, then divide by 10.

Run an online store? You need one more number, ROAS (return on ad spend). Google writes it as a percentage: 500% means $5 in sales for every $1 in ads. Say your average order is $160, your break-even is $48, and your target is $32. Your break-even ROAS is 160 divided by 48, times 100, about 333%. Your target ROAS is 160 divided by 32, times 100: 500%. The account shows this as "Conv. value / cost"; multiply that figure by 100 to compare. Chapter 8 covers the target you actually enter.

The value you send to Google is the order subtotal before sales tax. We leave shipping out too, since most of it goes to the carrier, and count only the part of shipping you absorb as a cost. Do it the same way everywhere, or the account's ROAS won't line up with your break-even.

2.3. The worksheet

Fill it in line by line, on paper or in a spreadsheet.

WHAT	YOUR NUMBER	WHERE YOU GET IT
Average price collected per sale, before sales tax		Invoices or your store platform, last 3 months
Costs that come with every sale		Product, shipping you pay, card fees, packaging
Profit per sale, before ads (your break-even)		Price minus costs
Target cost per sale		Break-even minus the profit you want to keep
Out of 10 leads, how many become sales		Your CRM or calendar; if you don't know, count for 4 weeks
Break-even and target per lead		Per-sale numbers × leads out of 10 that buy ÷ 10
Sales tax on your ads?		Only at billing addresses where Google charges it (chapter 10); if so, divide both numbers by 1 plus the rate
Estimated cost per click		Keyword Planner, once the account is set up
Visitors out of 100 who buy or ask		GA4 (Google's free site analytics) if you have history; otherwise assume it and fix it after a month

WHAT	YOUR NUMBER	WHERE YOU GET IT
Estimated cost per conversion		Cost per click ÷ visitors out of 100, as a decimal (4 out of 100 = 0.04)
Break-even and target ROAS (stores)		Average order ÷ break-even, then ÷ target, × 100
Starting monthly budget		30 × estimated cost per conversion; per day, ÷ 30.4

Two ways people fool themselves. Repeat customers: a dentist's patient may come back for years, but start with the first sale so you don't inflate your break-even. And visitors out of 100: it's the shakiest number on the sheet, so redo it with real numbers after 30 days.

2.4. What you do with the result

A store compares per sale, everyone else per lead.

WHAT YOU GOT	WHAT YOU DO
The estimated cost is under your target	Launch, with the starting budget
It's over your target but under break-even	Launch, and work on the landing page in the first week. A page that convinces more people lowers your cost per conversion
It's over break-even	Don't launch yet. Find keywords with clearer intent, or a price or offer that leaves more profit
The starting budget is more than you can afford	Launch one campaign that sells (your clearest keywords or, for a store, Shopping), plus the one on your business name, and judge over a longer period

- [ ] I filled in the worksheet, line by line.
- [ ] I know my break-even and my target, with sales tax on ad spend if it applies to me.
- [ ] I found my row in the table above.

With these numbers in front of you, every cost in the account means something. You can tell at a glance whether it's good, needs work, or means you should stop.

03 THE ACCOUNT, SET UP RIGHT FROM DAY ONE

Say you own a dental practice (made up, like every business in this guide). The freelancer you hired to run your ads says, "I'll set up the account under my name. It's simpler." Sounds reasonable. This is where you politely say no.

Google learns from your conversion history. Every appointment that comes from an ad helps it find similar people, and you paid for that history, click by click. If the freelancer leaves and the account is in their name, the history leaves with them. So the account belongs to the business, not to whoever runs it.

3.1. Create the account without a campaign

At signup, Google steers you toward a campaign: a few questions, a budget, and you're live. But a campaign launched before you know what you're measuring spends money to show you what you could have worked out on paper. Google lets you create the account without a campaign and skip its recommendations. Do that.

Four things need care at signup.

- [ ] Time zone. Reports and billing run on it, and you can't change it later. Pick your business's time zone.
- [ ] Currency. Also permanent. US dollars.
- [ ] Email. Use a business address, not the personal Gmail of someone who might leave.
- [ ] Billing. Enter the business's legal name and address and choose an organization account, not an individual one. Your billing address decides whether Google adds sales tax (chapter 10).

3.2. Advertiser verification

Google is gradually asking every advertiser to verify who they are, and some industries get asked sooner. You'll see a notice in the account with a deadline. Don't put it off: the deadline can't be extended, and if you miss it, Google pauses the account. The upside is that your business name and location then show in the ad's disclosures, so people can see a real business is behind it.

3.3. Turn off auto-applied recommendations

Google can apply some of its recommendations on its own. Two of them change where your money goes: "Add broad match keywords" (chapter 6) and "Use Display expansion," which puts your Search ads on websites and apps that show image ads. The list also includes search partners, targeting expansion, and bidding targets. Auto-apply never raises your budget, but it can change your bids and targets.

On a new account, turn all of it off.

1. In the left menu, open "Campaigns," then "Recommendations."
2. Click "Auto-apply settings."
3. Uncheck everything and click "Save."
4. The "History" tab shows what has already been applied.

Recommendations stay visible on the same page. Read them once a week and apply by hand only the ones that fit your chapter 2 math.

3.4. Linking GA4 and Merchant Center

GA4 is Google's free tool that shows what people do on your site after the click. You link it from Google Ads: the "Tools" icon, "Data manager," "+ Connect Product," then "Google Analytics (GA4) & Firebase."

Before you link, check:

- [ ] Admin access in Google Ads
- [ ] Edit permission in GA4
- [ ] Auto-tagging on in Google Ads (it tags every ad click so GA4 knows where the visitor came from)

Once linked, you can import important GA4 actions, like an appointment booked on the site, as conversions, and use GA4 visitor lists in your ads. Google says imported data usually shows up within an hour.

Run an online store? You also need Merchant Center, where you list your products for Google. Shopping ads are built from that product data, not from keywords.

3.5. Who gets access

You don't have to drop the freelancer to keep the account in your name. Everyone gets their own access.

WHO	WHAT ACCESS	WHY
You, the owner	Admin, on the business email	The account stays yours, whoever leaves
The agency or freelancer	Access on their own email	You can remove it anytime without changing passwords
Your bookkeeper	Billing only, if needed	They see invoices and don't touch campaigns

Nobody gets your password. If the freelancer leaves, you remove their access, and the history you paid for stays with you.

04 TRACKING: HOW GOOGLE FINDS OUT WHAT SOLD

Smart Bidding, Google's automated bidding, looks at what sold yesterday to decide what to pay for tomorrow's click. Without tracked conversions it has nothing to learn from, and if you've paid for clicks that brought no customers, this is very often the missing step. Say you run a natural skincare store and mark both the order and the add to cart as primary conversions. Google sees more "conversions" than orders and learns to bring people who add to cart and leave. The order should be primary, the add to cart secondary.

The rule to remember: **one primary action for each real result.** Google bids only on primary actions.

4.1. What you count

Primary actions go into the "Conversions" column and into bidding. Secondary actions show only under "All conv." and don't affect bidding. Before you touch the account, fill in a conversion plan:

ACTION	PRIMARY OR SECONDARY	HOW YOU COUNT	VALUE	HOW YOU TRACK IT
Order placed	Primary	"Every"	The order value	Code on the thank-you page, with value and order number
Appointment form	Primary	"One"	A fixed value (say, your break-even per lead: $96 at the repair shop) or none	The thank-you page URL
Call from the ad	Primary	"One"	Same as the form	Google forwarding number (4.6)
Add to cart	Secondary	"Every"	None	The Google tag or GA4

The empty row is yours. What else counts as a customer for you?

4.2. How you set up a conversion on your site

The Google tag is the code on your site that tells Google what people do there. You can count a conversion by the URL of the thank-you page, with no extra code, or with code when you need the order value and order number. You can also import it from GA4 if it's marked there as a "key event." Use both if you like, but only one is primary for the same result.

A store sends the order value and the order number. Without the value you can't use Target ROAS later. Without the number you can count the same order twice.

For a conversion counted by the thank-you page URL:

1. Open "Goals," then "Summary," and click "+ Create conversion action."
2. Under "Conversions on a website," choose "Edit data sources," enter your domain, and click "Scan."
3. Pick the closest category: purchase, submit lead form, book appointment.
4. Click "+ Create conversion," with "Google tag" as the source.
5. Choose "Automatically without code," then "URL is," "URL contains," or "URL starts with," and enter the thank-you page address. Need the order value? Choose "Manually using code" and give your developer the code Google shows you.
6. Mark it primary or secondary, as planned.
7. Turn on enhanced conversions (4.4), click "Save and continue," then "Agree and finish."

If the scan doesn't find the Google tag, Google gives it to you to put on every page. Shopify, WooCommerce, and most store platforms have an app or plugin that adds it without code.

One catch: counting by URL works only if the thank-you page appears only after an order or a form. If people can reach it from your menu or from Google, you'll count fake conversions.

- [ ] I place an order or send the form.
- [ ] I check the "Status" column under "Goals," "Summary."
- [ ] If something's off, I use Tag Assistant, the tool Google recommends for troubleshooting.

4.3. How long Google waits for a sale

Google counts a conversion only within a set number of days after the click, the conversion window. The default is 30 days, and depending on the source you can set anywhere from 1 to 90. Cheap products sell fast, so 30 is plenty. Expensive services and B2B sales take weeks of reading, asking, and coming back, so stretch the window toward 90, or Google won't connect the late sales to your ads.

4.4. Enhanced conversions

Turn these on whatever you sell. They send Google data people already gave you, like their email, hashed with SHA256 before it leaves your site. Google matches it with signed-in users who saw your ads and recovers sales you'd otherwise miss. In 2026, Google merged the web and lead versions into one setting.

4.5. Qualified leads, for a long sale

For expensive services and B2B, a form isn't a customer. Tell Google only "form sent" and it brings you forms, including from people who never buy. So you send back, from your CRM, the people who became qualified leads or signed, and Google learns what a buyer looks like.

- [ ] I keep the email or phone number of everyone who asks for a quote in my CRM.
- [ ] I ask whoever built my form to save them from now on (message in 4.8), even if I start sending them back months from now.

Keep your customers in a spreadsheet? Then stay with the form and the call as primary for now.

CRM STAGE	WHAT GOOGLE GETS	PRIMARY?
New lead (form, call)	Comes in on its own, from your site's code	Primary at first, secondary once qualified leads add up
Qualified lead (budget, need, decision maker)	A "qualified" conversion, with a fixed value	Primary once you have at least 30 in 30 days
Signed contract	A "signed" conversion, with the contract value	Secondary at first, because it's rare

4.6. Calls

If people call from the ad, the call is a conversion. Google forwarding numbers work in the US: Google's number shows in your ad, forwards the call to you, and reports it. Call reporting works only on the Search Network, and Google creates a "Calls from ads" conversion for you.

Set a minimum call length that leaves out wrong numbers and hang-ups, and show the number only during hours when someone picks up. An unanswered call is money spent on nothing. For a repair shop, a dentist, or a rental, the call is often the main result, so track it from day one.

Texting leads with offers? Under the FCC's TCPA rules, marketing texts sent with an autodialer need the person's prior express written consent. Get that consent in writing on your form anyway; it's the safe default.

4.7. Cookie banners and privacy in the US

Google's EU user consent policy applies to visitors in the European Economic Area, the UK, and Switzerland. Sell only in the US and don't care about European visitors? Google doesn't ask you for an EU-style opt-in banner. Want European visitors? Show your banner only to them and connect it to Consent Mode, which passes the visitor's choice to the Google tag. We recommend the advanced version, where the tag loads with consent denied and sends only cookieless signals until the visitor accepts, so Google can model the sales it can't see. (The basic version loads nothing until the visitor clicks.)

US privacy works by opt-out, state by state. About two dozen states (24 as of late October 2026) now have a broad consumer privacy law, and most apply only above a size threshold. California's law covers a business that meets any one of three tests: more than $26.625 million in annual revenue (the 2025 and 2026 figure; it's adjusted for inflation every two years, so check cppa.ca.gov); buying, selling, or sharing the personal information of 100,000 or more California residents or households; or making half or more of its revenue from selling or sharing that information.

If a state law covers you, you need an opt-out link on your site ("Do Not Sell or Share My Personal Information" or "Your Privacy Choices"), and you have to honor Global Privacy Control (GPC), which California treats as a valid opt-out. On the Google side, turn on restricted data processing in your Google Ads tag for users in the applicable states. Conversion tracking keeps working; Google just stops adding those users to your remarketing lists.

Run a medical or dental practice covered by HIPAA? In June 2024 a federal court in Texas struck down one narrow part of HHS's tracking guidance: the idea that HIPAA applies when a tracker only links a visitor's IP address to a visit to a public page about a health condition or provider. The rest of the guidance stands, including pages behind a login, like a patient portal, and any page where patients enter health information, like a booking form or a symptom checker. Keep ad tags off those pages.

If you use a banner, check it in 10 minutes with Tag Assistant.

1. Open a private (incognito) window in Chrome.
2. Go to tagassistant.google.com, click "Add domain," enter your site with https:// in front, and click "Connect."
3. Before you touch the banner, open the first Consent event and the tag's "Consent" tab. Everything should start as denied.
4. Click "Reject all." The state stays denied.
5. Close the window, open a new private one, connect again, and click "Accept all." The state should switch to granted.

If the Google tag sends data before the denied state appears, the order is wrong, and whoever installed your banner fixes it. An empty "Consent" tab means Consent Mode isn't set up at all.

4.8. The message for whoever built your site

Everything technical in this chapter, in one message. Copy it and send it.

COPY THIS

STEP: SEND THIS TO YOUR WEB DEVELOPER

Hi! I want to start running Google Ads, and I need a few things on the site first.

1. The Google tag on every page.

2. The purchase conversion sent with code, with the order subtotal before sales tax and shipping, and the order number, so no order is counted twice. I'll send you the code from Google Ads.

3. Enhanced conversions turned on. Customer data like the email address gets hashed with SHA256 before it leaves the site.

4. If we show a cookie banner to visitors from the EEA, the UK, and Switzerland: connect it to Consent Mode v2, advanced version, with ad_storage, analytics_storage, ad_user_data, and ad_personalization. The default consent state has to load on every page before any config or event command. Please check that our privacy policy describes it.

5. If a US state privacy law covers us: an opt-out link in the footer, the site honoring Global Privacy Control, and restricted data processing turned on in the Google Ads tag for users in the applicable states.

6. On our forms, save the email or phone number and the Google click ID (GCLID) from the landing page URL into our CRM. If we text leads, add a consent checkbox for marketing texts.

7. Later we'll send qualified leads back to Google Ads. Since June 15, 2026, the Google Ads API doesn't accept new users of offline conversion imports, so new setups go through Google's Data manager (in the Tools menu of Google Ads) or the Data Manager API. Uploads with GCLID work up to 90 days after the click, uploads with customer data up to 63 days. Google recommends uploading daily or on a regular schedule.

Thanks! When it's ready, I'll place a test order.

05 CAMPAIGN TYPES AND WHEN TO USE EACH ONE

Search, Shopping, Performance Max, Demand Gen, YouTube: which one first? Search, whatever you sell.

Someone who types "auto repair columbus" already knows they need you, and a Search ad shows up at that exact moment. The other types reach people who aren't searching yet, which takes more data and sometimes more budget, so they come after your conversions are tracked. The one exception is a store: Shopping replaces the keyword campaign from day one, next to a Search campaign on the store's name only.

CAMPAIGN	WHERE IT SHOWS	WHEN YOU LAUNCH IT
Search	Google search results	First, right after tracking
Shopping	Google results and the Shopping tab, from your product data	For a store, from the start, next to the campaign on your store name
Performance Max	YouTube, Display, Search, Discover, Gmail, Maps	Once you have around 30 orders a month, tracked correctly
Demand Gen	YouTube (including Shorts), Discover, Gmail, Maps, Display	After Search and Shopping are working
YouTube (video)	Skippable ads, bumper ads, Shorts	Last, when you want people to remember you

5.1. Search

Search gives you the most control. You pick the keywords, write the ads, and see which searches you showed up for. But a new Search campaign comes with three things on by default that you don't want in your first month.

Search partners are other search sites and apps where your ad can show. Display expansion can put your ad on websites and apps that show image ads. And AI Max, on by default for new Search campaigns, widens matching to new searches (even with no keyword of yours behind them), rewrites your headlines and descriptions, and can send people to pages you didn't choose. All of that needs automated bidding fed by conversions, and in the first month you have few. So: no partners, no Display, AI Max off. Test them one at a time later, once the basic campaign brings conversions steadily.

Building the campaign, screen by screen

Click "+ New campaign" and choose, in order:

1. The objective: "Sales" for a store, "Leads" for everyone else.
2. The campaign type: "Search."
3. The conversions it bids on: only the primary ones from your plan.
4. A name, like "Search, brake repair."
5. The bidding strategy (chapter 8).
6. Networks, locations (chapter 10), and AI Max off.
7. Keywords and ads, by ad group (chapters 6 and 7).
8. The daily budget (chapter 9).

To turn off AI Max, go to "Campaigns," open the "Settings" tab, check your campaign, open "AI Max," and opt out of all AI Max settings. Click "Save." If you turn off only text customization, final URL expansion goes off with it.

To remove partners and Display, go to "Campaigns," hover over the campaign and click the gear by its name. Open "Networks," uncheck "Include Google search partners," and leave the Google Search Network as the only network checked. Click "Save."

Have an older Search campaign with Display expansion on? Starting in February 2027, Google moves those campaigns to a new "channel prioritization" setup automatically. Decide now whether you want Display in it at all.

What the campaign looks like at the start

CAMPAIGN	AD GROUPS	KEYWORDS
Your business name	One	Your business name in exact match
Services or products	2 to 4, one per service or category	5 to 10 per group, all about the same thing; 10 to 30 in total

One group, one topic: "Brake repair," not "brakes, oil changes, and tires." Then your ad answers exactly what was searched, and someone looking for brake repair lands on your brake page, not your home page.

- [ ] Search partners unchecked
- [ ] Display unchecked
- [ ] AI Max off
- [ ] A separate campaign on your business name
- [ ] One topic per ad group

5.2. Shopping, with Merchant Center

For a store, Shopping usually sells most directly, because people see the photo, the price, and your store before they click. Shopping doesn't use keywords. Google decides where to show your products from your product data, so that data has to be good.

Check your feed.

- [ ] Id, title, description, link, image link, availability, and price on every product
- [ ] Brand, plus the GTIN barcode number where there is one, or the manufacturer part number (MPN) if not
- [ ] Color, size, age group, and gender on apparel sold in the US

In the US, Merchant Center also requires shipping settings or costs, and Google recommends adding your return policy. New accounts are opted in to free listings by default, so your products can show on Google for free too.

The title matters most, because it's how Google understands what you sell:

COPY THIS

STEP: PRODUCT TITLE TEMPLATE

[What the product is] [Brand] [Model] [Material] [The feature people search for] [Size or variant] [Color]

"Cordless stick vacuum Brand X V15, 150W, 45-minute runtime, gray" tells Google far more than "Model X Pro". Nobody searches for "Model X Pro". The order shifts by category (size and material for clothing, model and capacity for electronics, dimensions for furniture), but you always lead with what people type, not what's on the box.

5.3. Performance Max

One campaign that shows everywhere Google shows ads. You give it a goal, text, images, and videos, and Google combines them. Tempting, but wait. Google's minimum for stable results is 15 conversions in 30 days; we'd wait for around 30 orders a month, tracked correctly. Until then, a small store stays on standard Shopping plus the campaign on its name.

For services and B2B, Performance Max is worth it only if you send it qualified leads from your CRM. Feed it "form submitted" and it learns to bring you forms, not customers.

Negatives you add at the account level, or to the Performance Max campaign itself, apply to its Search and Shopping inventory. A shared list you applied only to your Search campaigns doesn't carry over unless you add it to Performance Max too. And when a search is identical to an exact match keyword in a Search campaign, the Search campaign wins over Performance Max, which is why your brand campaign keeps searches for your name clean.

5.4. Demand Gen

Not a starter campaign. It reaches people who aren't searching yet, with images, videos, carousels, and Merchant Center products. The catch is budget: with a target cost per conversion, Google recommends a budget of at least 10 times that target. Want orders at $40? That's a daily budget of at least $400. For most owners starting out, that money does more in Search and Shopping.

5.5. YouTube

YouTube is for being remembered, so people search for your name later. Add it after the campaigns that sell are working. You have four kinds of video ads:

- skippable ads, which viewers can skip after 5 seconds; with view-based bidding you pay when someone watches 30 seconds (or the whole ad, if shorter) or interacts;
- non-skippable ads, up to 60 seconds, paid per thousand impressions;
- bumper ads, up to 6 seconds, also paid per thousand impressions;
- Shorts ads, between Shorts videos, which people can swipe past right away.

When people start searching for your name, your brand campaign from 5.1 is there to catch them.

06 KEYWORDS IN 2026, AND NEGATIVE KEYWORDS

Someone searching "how to replace brake pads myself" isn't bringing their car to your shop. If your ad shows and they click, you pay anyway.

A lot of early money goes here, because nobody decided in advance which searches to show up for. Google won't decide that for you.

Say you own the Columbus repair shop. You add `[brake repair columbus]`, because that person wants the service in their city. You add `"brake pad replacement"` in phrase match, which also catches searches with extra words around it. The city is handled by your location setting. And since you don't want "how to replace brake pads myself", `"how to"` and `myself` go on your negative list. Three moves. Let's take them one at a time.

6.1. The three match types

MATCH TYPE	HOW YOU WRITE IT	WHICH SEARCHES YOUR AD CAN SHOW FOR
Broad	`auto repair columbus`	Related searches, even without your words
Phrase	`"auto repair columbus"`	Searches that include the meaning of your keyword, plus other words (`24 hour auto repair columbus ohio`)
Exact	`[auto repair columbus]`	Searches with the same meaning or intent, without extra meaning (`auto repair shop in columbus`)

Type the straight quotes and square brackets right up against the words.

Phrase and exact match also catch close variants, and you can't turn that off. In English that means singulars and plurals (repair, repairs), misspellings, stemmed forms (floor, flooring), abbreviations, and searches that mean the same thing in other words. So you don't need "brake repairs" next to "brake repair". Negatives work the opposite way, as you'll see in 6.3.

New keywords default to broad match, and Google says broad match should run with Smart Bidding. What it says less loudly: without tracked conversions, broad match spends on searches that have nothing to do with you, because the system has never seen a customer of yours. So start with exact and phrase match on 10 to 30 keywords that show someone wants to buy now, and move to broad only once you have steady conversions and bidding on them.

A "buy now" keyword is the product plus a model, size, or "price" for a store; the service plus the city for a service ("emergency plumber tampa"); the place plus what people want for bookings ("gatlinburg cabin with hot tub"); and the customer's problem in their words for B2B ("steel building cost per square foot").

YOU HAVE	MATCH TYPE
Under 30 conversions a month, or bidding on clicks	Exact and phrase
30 or more a month, with bidding on conversions for at least a month	Test broad match on one ad group, negatives up to date
A small budget and expensive keywords	Exact only, on your 10 clearest keywords

6.2. Building your list in Keyword Planner

Keyword Planner, under "Tools," shows how many people search a keyword and roughly what a click costs. Your account needs billing information entered. "Discover new keywords" gives you ideas from a few words or your site. "Get search volume and forecasts" checks a list you paste in.

1. Write down 5 to 10 ways customers have asked you for what you sell, in their words, the way they said it on the phone.
2. Put them into "Discover new keywords," with your location and English.
3. Keep only the ideas that show someone wants to buy now. Searches from people who are learning, browsing, or job hunting go straight to your negatives.
4. Paste the final list into "Get search volume and forecasts" and copy the estimated cost per click into your chapter 2 worksheet. Does your math still hold?
5. Split the list into ad groups, one topic each.

AD GROUP	KEYWORD	MATCH TYPE	WHY IT SHOWS BUYING INTENT	LANDING PAGE
Brake repair	`[brake repair columbus]`	Exact	Wants the service, in your city	/brakes
Brake repair	`"brake job cost"`	Phrase	Checking the price, close to deciding	/brakes, prices near the top

The two rows are from the repair shop. The empty row is for your first ad group.

6.3. Negative keywords, block by block

Negative keywords stop your ad from showing on searches you don't want, and they don't match close variants. Google is explicit: you add synonyms and singular or plural forms yourself. Capitalization and misspellings are handled for you, but "job" doesn't block "jobs". That's why the lists below carry both forms.

The match type of a negative matters as much as the word. Written plain, a negative is negative broad and blocks any search containing all its words, in any order. In quotes, it's negative phrase and blocks searches with those words in that order. In square brackets, it's negative exact and blocks only that exact search.

That's the trap with negative broad match. Write `how to` plain and you also block "how much to replace brakes", because it contains both "how" and "to". That's your best customer, asking for a price. Write `"how to"` and you block only searches with "how to" side by side. Every multi-word negative below is in quotes for that reason.

The other trap is blocking your own offer. Give free estimates and leave "free" on the list, and you block "free estimate" yourself. So the list comes in blocks by topic, and you leave out a whole block, not a word here and there.

- you offer anything free (estimates, consultations, shipping): leave out Free;
- you sell used or refurbished goods: leave out Used;
- you compete on price: leave out Cheap;
- you want marketplace shoppers: leave out Marketplaces;
- you teach classes or sell courses: leave out Learning.

Jobs and careers

COPY THIS

career
careers
hiring
employment
salary
salaries
internship
internships

We left `job` and `jobs` out on purpose. For a repair shop, "brake job" is a buying search. If "job" never describes the work you sell, add both.

Free

COPY THIS

free
freebie
freebies

Downloads

COPY THIS

download
downloads
pdf

Do it yourself

COPY THIS

"how to"
diy
"do it yourself"
myself
tutorial
tutorials

Learning

COPY THIS

course
courses
class
classes
definition
"what is"
wikipedia

Used

COPY THIS

used
secondhand
"second hand"
"pre owned"
refurbished

Cheap

COPY THIS

cheap
cheapest

Marketplaces

COPY THIS

craigslist
ebay
"facebook marketplace"
offerup

Complaints

COPY THIS

complaint
complaints
lawsuit
scam

To add them, open the negative keywords section of your Search keywords, pick the campaign, click "Edit exclusions," and paste one per line, quotes and all. Check "Save to new or existing list" and name it, say "Base negatives," then click "Done."

To apply that shared list to other campaigns:

- [ ] Go to "Tools," then "Shared library," then "Exclusion lists"
- [ ] Open the "Negative keyword lists" tab
- [ ] Select the list and click "Apply to campaigns"
- [ ] Check the campaigns and click "Done"

You get up to 20 lists per account, with up to 5,000 keywords each. A change to a list hits every campaign using it, so make sure no negative clashes with your own keywords, or your ads stop showing.

6.4. What people actually searched

Your list is a guess. The search terms report shows reality: the searches that triggered your ads. Open it once a week under "Campaigns," "Insights and reports," "Search terms." Very rare searches are left out for privacy, so the totals won't add up perfectly.

WHAT YOU SEE	WHAT YOU DO
The term has nothing to do with what you sell	Add it to your shared negative list, singular and plural
It's related, but from another city or state	Add the place as a negative, or fix your location setting
It's related and brought conversions	Add it as an exact match keyword in the right ad group
It's related and gets clicks, but no conversions	Let it spend as much as two target conversions. Then move it to negatives or give it a better page
It's a competitor's name	Your call (chapter 14)

The two-target rule is our rule of thumb, not Google's. Say you're the cabin rental from chapter 12, with a target of $35 per inquiry. A keyword that spent $70 without a single inquiry comes off. No "one more week, maybe." You decided in advance how long it gets, and the math decides.

07 ADS: HEADLINES, DESCRIPTIONS, AND THE LANDING PAGE

Send everyone to your home page and you pay for the click, then lose the person in your menu. They searched for something specific. Now they have to search again, on your site.

Search ads are responsive search ads: you give Google the pieces and it assembles them. At least 3 headlines and 2 descriptions, up to 15 headlines and 4 descriptions. Each headline has to make sense alone, because Google mixes them however it likes.

PIECE	LIMIT
Headline	30 characters
Description	90 characters
Each path field in the display URL	15 characters
Headlines shown at once	Up to 3 in the headline spot

At the Columbus repair shop, "Auto repair in Columbus" and "Appointments within 24 hours" both work next to anything, because each says one whole thing. "And Saturdays until 2 pm" sounds great right after the second one, but Google ignores the order you had in mind, and a headline that starts with "And" reads oddly in plenty of combinations. Write it whole: "Open Saturdays until 2 pm."

Google rates each ad's Ad Strength from "Poor" to "Excellent" and recommends at least 2 responsive search ads rated "Good" or "Excellent" per ad group. You can pin a headline to a position, but Google doesn't recommend it for most advertisers and it can lower Ad Strength, so pin only a message that must always show. Two more tips from Google: put the keywords that get the most traffic in that ad group into your headlines, and replace headlines and descriptions rated "Low" with new ones.

7.1. How to write 15 different headlines

On a blank page, fifteen is a lot. So give them jobs:

- 4 with what the person searched for, in their words, with the place: "Auto repair in Columbus."
- 3 with the price or a concrete offer: price, shipping, turnaround, warranty. All true.
- 3 with proof or what sets you apart, in words that fit 30 characters: a written warranty, certifications, years in business, longer hours. Photos and reviews don't fit here.
- 2 that answer an objection or make life easier: "Drop it at 8, pick it up at 5."
- 2 with what to do now: "Call now to book," "Get a quote today."
- 1 with your business name.

To collect the exact words your customers use, the customer words workbook at highupads.ro/en/resources/customer-words-workbook helps. Fill in the template before you open the account.

#	JOB	YOUR TEXT	CHARACTERS
1 to 4	What they searched for and where		max. 30
5 to 7	Price or offer		max. 30
8 to 10	Proof or what sets you apart		max. 30
11 to 12	Objection answered or convenience		max. 30
13 to 14	What to do now		max. 30
15	Business name		max. 30
D1	What they get, with a detail they can check		max. 90
D2	How it works: booking, delivery, quote		max. 90
D3	Proof: warranty, hours, stock		max. 90
D4	What to do now and what happens next		max. 90

Count characters in any editor or with `=LEN(A1)` in Google Sheets. Spaces and punctuation count.

7.2. Sitelinks and your phone number

Sitelinks are the extra links under your ad that take people straight to another page. Google recommends at least 6, with descriptions, on busy ad groups and campaigns. Each link's text has up to 25 characters, and up to 6 show on desktop, 8 on mobile. At the Columbus shop: "Oil change," "Brake repair," "Check engine light," "Written labor warranty," "Hours and directions," and "Book an appointment," each to its own page.

Add your phone number too, with the hours you answer. Plenty of people call straight from the ad on their phone, and a 10 pm call nobody picks up is a click you paid for.

7.3. The page people land on

Google won't fix your landing page. A dental practice in Scottsdale, Arizona, running an ad for "dental implants Scottsdale" should send the click to its implants page, with a price range and a booking button, not to the home page, where many people give up and click the next ad.

Before launch, open every landing page on your phone and check it.

- [ ] The page headline says the same thing as the ad.
- [ ] The price, a price range, or a "starting at" shows without much scrolling.
- [ ] The button (order, book, request a quote, call) is on the first screen.
- [ ] The form asks only for what you need to call back or quote.
- [ ] The page loads fast on cellular data, with Wi-Fi off.

An unchecked box is a note for whoever built your site, and you found it before paying for the first click.

08 BIDDING STRATEGIES AND WHEN TO SWITCH

Change the strategy Monday, the target Wednesday, and the keywords Friday, and when two leads come in Saturday you'll never know which change did it.

Your bidding strategy tells Google what to aim for when it decides what to pay for a click. Selling services, bookings, or to other businesses? Start on "Maximize conversions," as many leads, appointments, bookings, or calls as possible for your budget. Running a store? Start on "Maximize conversion value," because you care what the orders are worth, not just how many there are.

You add a target, "Target CPA" (cost per conversion) or "Target ROAS" (return), under "Bidding" in campaign settings, once you have enough conversions. Since June 2026 these are simply "Target CPA" and "Target ROAS"; older guides call them "Maximize conversions with a Target CPA" and "Maximize conversion value with a Target ROAS."

STRATEGY	WHAT IT DOES	WHO IT'S FOR
Maximize conversions	As many conversions as possible for the budget	Services, bookings, B2B, at the start
Target CPA	Conversions at an average cost you choose	The same, once you have data
Maximize conversion value	As much value as possible for the budget	Stores, at the start
Target ROAS	Value at a return you choose	Stores, once you have data

All four need tracked conversions. Target CPA can start without history, but Google recommends judging a strategy on the last 30 days with at least 30 conversions.

Back to the Columbus shop. In its first month it gets 32 leads at $41 each, $1,312, inside its $1,350 budget. It's past 30, so it can switch to Target CPA. Its chapter 2 target was $48, but entering $48 would let Google pay more than it's paying now. So it enters $41, its actual average.

8.1. When you switch

From "Maximize conversions" to "Target CPA": once you have at least 30 conversions in the last 30 days. Start the target at your average cost per conversion for that period, allowing for leads that come in late.

From "Maximize conversion value" to "Target ROAS": Google requires at least 15 conversions in the last 30 days on Search and Shopping. That's a floor. We'd wait until you're close to 30, because a target set on 15 orders swings a lot from week to week. Take the starting target from the "Conv. value / cost" column times 100: if it says 5, start at 500%. A target set too high cuts your traffic, so if you want more volume, lower it gradually.

After the first 30 days:

SITUATION	DECISION
Under 30 conversions, cost per conversion under your chapter 2 target	Stay on Maximize conversions or Maximize conversion value; raise the budget if you can
Under 30, cost over target	Keep the strategy; check tracking, search terms, and the landing page
30 or more, cost under target	Switch to Target CPA at your actual average
30 or more, cost over target but under break-even	Switch to Target CPA at your actual average, then lower it toward your target step by step
30 or more, cost over break-even	Don't switch; fix keywords, the landing page, and tracking first
Store with 15 to 29 orders, actual ROAS above break-even ROAS	You can switch to Target ROAS at your actual ROAS; safer to wait until close to 30
Store with 30 or more orders, actual ROAS above break-even	Switch to Target ROAS at your actual ROAS
Store with actual ROAS under break-even, any number of orders	Keep the strategy; check tracking, prices, and the landing page
Store under 15 orders	Stay on Maximize conversion value

When the numbers don't work, you almost never fix it in the strategy. You fix what comes before it.

8.2. The learning period

The status "Learning" appears when you create or restart a bid strategy, add or remove campaigns, ad groups, or keywords in it, or change its conversions in a big way. Google's help page says the "Learning" label disappears within 7 days, but performance typically takes 1 to 2 conversion cycles to settle on the new goal. Changes to budgets, targets, ads, or targeting settings don't trigger it.

Out of "Learning" still doesn't mean ready to judge. Judge over two conversion cycles or 2 weeks, whichever is longer. A conversion cycle is the time from click to purchase: hours for a clothing store, months for a builder.

- [ ] I started on the right strategy for what I sell.
- [ ] I wrote down the date of my last change.
- [ ] I judge results over at least 2 weeks or two conversion cycles.
- [ ] I add a target only once I reach the numbers in the table.

09 BUDGET: WHAT THE MINIMUM IS AND WHY

What's the minimum budget on Google? Google doesn't set one. Yours comes out of your own math.

Say you run a fence installation company. You pay $6 a click, and 1 in 25 visitors asks for a quote, which is 4%. A lead costs you 6 ÷ 0.04 = $150. Plan for 30 conversions a month, so 30 leads at $150 is $4,500 a month, about $148 a day. That's your minimum. Google didn't pick it; your business did.

Why 30? It's our planning rule, built on Google's guideline: 30 conversions in 30 days is what Google recommends for judging a conversion-based strategy. Under 30, you're guessing.

9.1. How the daily budget works

You set an average daily budget. On a busy day Google can spend up to twice that, but over a month it won't charge more than 30.4 times your daily budget. So divide your monthly budget by 30.4: to spend $3,040 a month, set $100 a day.

There's also a campaign total budget now, for Search, Shopping, and Performance Max: one amount for a fixed period of 3 to 90 days, available only on new campaigns (Demand Gen and YouTube have them too). It's built for promotions with dates, like Black Friday.

9.2. How you work out your minimum

COPY THIS

STEP: YOUR MINIMUM BUDGET

Cost per click, from Keyword Planner: $.....
Visitors out of 100 who buy or ask: ..... (for example 4)
That number divided by 100: ..... (4 ÷ 100 = 0.04)
Cost per conversion = cost per click ÷ the number above: $.....
Monthly budget = 30 × cost per conversion: $.....
Daily budget = monthly budget ÷ 30.4: $.....

TYPE OF BUSINESS	MINIMUM CONVERSIONS	WHAT IT MEANS FOR THE BUDGET
Store	30 orders a month; for Target ROAS, at least 15 in 30 days	Covers 30 orders at your cost per order
Services and bookings	30 leads, bookings, or calls a month	For bookings, it rises in season with demand
Business to business	30 quote requests a month	Qualified leads come slower; judge over a whole sales cycle

Demand Gen needs at least 10 times your target cost (chapter 5), which is why it comes after Search and Shopping.

Can't reach 30 conversions a month? Don't split the budget across five campaigns. Put it into one campaign that sells (your clearest keywords or, for a store, Shopping), plus the cheap campaign on your business name. One campaign that collects data beats five that don't.

9.3. When you raise the budget

WHAT YOU SEE	WHAT YOU DO
The budget runs out daily and cost per conversion is under target	Raise it gradually; Google says a budget change doesn't restart learning
The budget runs out but cost is over target	Don't raise it; fix keywords, ads, and the landing page first
The budget doesn't get spent	Too few keywords, match types too tight, or the area too small; widen one at a time

- [ ] I did the math in the template before running any ad.
- [ ] I set the daily budget at the monthly budget ÷ 30.4.
- [ ] If I can't reach 30 conversions, I run one campaign that sells, plus my brand campaign.
- [ ] I raise the budget only when cost per conversion is under target.

10 WHAT'S DIFFERENT IN THE US: LOCATION, BILLING, AND POLICY

A repair shop that leaves location on "Presence or interest" pays for clicks from people three states away who once searched for its city. They're not bringing in a car.

Four things deserve a careful look in the US: the language of your ads, the area you show them in, how Google bills you, and the policy rules for a few sensitive categories. Each one, left on the default, can cost you.

10.1. Ad language

Google's help page says that starting in September 2026, Search campaigns no longer have a language setting: Search ads match on the language they're written in. So your ad text decides where it shows.

- Write your Search ads in plain American English.
- Serve Spanish-speaking customers? Write separate Spanish ads in their own ad group or campaign, and add Spanish negatives with and without accent marks, since Google treats them as

two different words.

- In Performance Max, the language setting still applies to YouTube, Display, Discover, and Gmail. Check it matches your ads.

Then check off:

- [ ] My Search ads are in the language my customers search in
- [ ] I run Spanish ads separately, if I serve Spanish speakers
- [ ] In Performance Max, the language setting matches my ads

10.2. Location

The default, and Google's recommendation, is "Presence or interest": people who are in or regularly in your area, plus people who've shown interest in it. The other option, "Presence," reaches only people who are in or regularly in the area.

Ask one question: is my customer already here, or coming from somewhere else? A repair shop or a plumber picks "Presence." A cabin rental near Gatlinburg, Tennessee, picks "Presence or interest," because its guests search from home in Atlanta or Nashville, and "Presence" would show its ads only to people already in Gatlinburg. So does a practice that draws patients from out of state.

BUSINESS	OPTION	AREA
Repair shop, plumber, salon	Presence	Your city and nearby towns, or the ZIP codes you serve
Practice with out-of-state patients	Presence or interest	Your city
Cabin, B&B, small hotel	Presence or interest	The US, or the states and metro areas your guests come from
Restaurant	Presence	Your city, or a radius around you
Online store	Presence	The states you ship to
Business to business	Presence	The states or regions you work in

You can target a state, a metro area, a city, a county, a ZIP code, or a radius around an address. The smallest radius is about 0.6 miles (1 km), but a tiny area gets few searches. Start with the whole city and nearby towns, or your ZIP codes, and narrow later.

To exclude many places at once (say you don't ship to Alaska and Hawaii):

1. Go to "Campaigns," then "Locations," and open the "Locations exclusions" tab.
2. Click the blue pencil, select the campaign, and check "Add locations in bulk."
3. Enter the places, one per line. For a city or ZIP code, add the state ("94103, California").
4. Click "Exclude all," then "Save."

If customers come to you, add your address to the ad with location assets, so it can show your address, distance, and a map on Google and Google Maps. The address comes from your Google Business Profile, which you link under "Tools," "Shared library," "Location manager."

- [ ] I picked the location option that fits my business
- [ ] I targeted my city and nearby towns or ZIP codes, not a tiny radius
- [ ] I excluded the places I don't serve or ship to
- [ ] I linked my Google Business Profile and added my address to the ad

10.3. Billing and sales tax

Your payment setting depends on your billing country and currency. With postpay (formerly called automatic payments), Google charges your payment method after your costs build up. Google's help page lists the US among the countries where prepay (formerly manual payments) isn't available. Monthly invoicing is a line of credit for businesses that qualify, for example registered for at least a year, with an account in good standing for 6 months and about $5,000 a month in spend.

There's no VAT in the US, and Washington is the only state Google names on its tax page. The state began taxing digital advertising services on October 1, 2025, and Google's tax page says Google started collecting that sales tax on January 1, 2026, based on your billing address, with local tax possible on top. If you have a valid exemption certificate, Google's page has a form for it.

If your billing address is in Washington, that tax is a real cost and goes into your math. Say the repair shop were in Washington instead, with a combined rate of 10% (assumed for the example; check your own city's rate). Then $1,000 of ads costs $1,100, and the $1,350 starting budget costs $1,485. Divide your break-even and target by 1.10: the $96 break-even per lead becomes about $87, and the $48 target about $44. Your $45 estimated cost per lead is now just over the $44 target, which puts you on the second row of the table in 2.4: still launch, and work on the landing page in week one. Only the target (or your actual average, chapter 8) ever goes into Google Ads, and it's the one after the division.

Tax rules move, so check Google's tax page once a year, and tell whoever does your books that you're buying Google ads.

COPY THIS

STEP: SEND THIS TO YOUR BOOKKEEPER

Hi,

Starting in [month], we're paying for Google Ads. The invoices come from Google, and the account is set up as an organization with our business name and address.

Two quick questions:
1. Do you need anything from us for the tax side, given our billing address? (Google charges sales tax on ads in Washington state.)
2. Should we send you the invoices each month, or would you rather have billing access to the account?

Thanks,
[your name]
[business name]

- [ ] I know whether Google charges sales tax at my billing address
- [ ] If it does, I redid the chapter 2 math with the tax in it
- [ ] I sent the message to my bookkeeper

10.4. The policy rules that change your setup

If you're in one of these categories, find out before you build the campaign, not after it gets limited.

Housing, employment, and consumer finance (which includes credit). In the US and Canada, Google limits personalized ads in these categories to protect equal access to the opportunity. You can't target by gender, age, parental status, or marital status, or by ZIP code. City, country, and radius targeting still work, with a radius of at least 0.6 miles (1 km). A landlord, a staffing agency, or a lender builds location on cities or a radius from the start.

Political ads. Election ads in the US (about federal or state candidates and officeholders, parties, or qualified state ballot measures) need Google's US election ads verification first. Once you're verified, Google adds a "Paid for by" disclosure to most formats automatically. Google doesn't allow ads about state and local candidates or ballot measures in Washington and Maryland at all.

Healthcare. Online pharmacies need accreditation from LegitScript or NABP plus Google certification. Telemedicine and drug and alcohol addiction treatment need LegitScript certification. Speculative and experimental treatments aren't allowed. A dentist or clinic advertising its own services isn't on that list. But if your ads promote treatments for health conditions, Google's personalized advertising policy can block remarketing lists, Customer Match, and lookalike segments for them, so check its Health section before you build audiences.

- [ ] I checked whether my ads fall under housing, employment, consumer finance, politics, or health
- [ ] If they do, my targeting and certifications are set before launch

11 HOW TO READ YOUR RESULTS

Monday morning, 30 minutes, the account open: that's the whole routine once you're running. You look at a few numbers, set them next to your target, and make two or three decisions. Once a month, you put the same numbers next to your real sales.

Why monthly? If an online parts store sees 50 orders in Google Ads and 30 in its platform, the problem is the tracking, and tuning ads to a number that doesn't exist won't fix it.

11.1. The columns that matter

"Conversions" holds only primary actions, the ones Google bids on. Judge the campaign by this.

"All conv." adds the secondary ones. Good for seeing the whole path, not for judging.

"Cost / conv." is what a conversion costs you. Set it next to your chapter 2 target. Under is good. Over means work to do.

"Conv. value / cost" is your ROAS, for stores. Times 100, it's the percentage you'd set as Target ROAS: 4 means 400%. Compare it with your break-even ROAS.

The rest help you find causes. Clicks don't make payroll.

11.2. How often you look

WHEN	WHAT YOU DO
Daily, in the first week	Check that conversions are recording and the budget is being spent
Weekly	Review search terms, add negatives, find weak ads
Every 2 weeks or 2 conversion cycles	Judge the bidding strategy
Monthly	Compare Google Ads conversions with real sales

The Monday routine, 30 minutes, 7 boxes:

- [ ] conversions for the last 7 days, against the week before
- [ ] cost per conversion, next to your target
- [ ] search terms, with new negatives in the shared list
- [ ] keywords that spent two target conversions' worth with no conversion (with a $100 target, the ones that spent $200 and brought nothing)
- [ ] headlines rated "Low," replaced
- [ ] recommendations read, and only the ones that fit applied by hand

- [ ] a short note of what you changed and when

That last box isn't fussy. In two weeks you won't remember what you changed last Tuesday.

11.3. What Quality Score tells you

Quality Score runs from 1 to 10 for each keyword, built from expected click-through rate, how well the ad matches the search, and the landing page experience. Google calls it a diagnostic tool and says plainly that it isn't an input in the ad auction. Use it to find the weak spot: if the landing page part is low, rewriting headlines ten times won't help. Fix the page.

11.4. The reality check

Once a month, put your real orders, CRM leads, or bookings next to the conversions in Google Ads. If Google shows more, you're usually counting the same order twice, counting canceled orders, or running two primary actions for the same thing. Get a lot of refunds? Subtract refunded orders each month, since Google counted them when they were placed.

To know which real sales came from Google, ask every lead "How did you hear about us?" at a repair shop or practice, note the source in your booking log or CRM, and for a store look in GA4 for orders with source "google" and medium "cpc" (paid clicks).

MONTH	CONVERSIONS IN GOOGLE ADS	REAL SALES OR LEADS FROM GOOGLE	SPEND	REAL COST PER SALE	UNDER BREAK-EVEN?

A small gap between the first two number columns is normal: with Consent Mode or enhanced conversions, Google models part of the picture, and a model won't match your sales to the unit. A big gap either way means the tracking is wrong.

11.5. When something isn't working

Find the symptom and start in one place.

SYMPTOM	WHERE YOU LOOK FIRST
Lots of impressions, few clicks	The ads: do they answer the search? Is the offer in the headlines?
Lots of clicks, few conversions	The landing page (right page, price, button visible on a phone), then search terms
Lots of conversions, few real sales	Tracking: wrong primary actions, double counting, spam forms
The budget isn't being spent	Too few keywords, match types too tight, area too small, disapproved ads
Cost per click jumps	New competitors or the season. Did conversions go up too?
The campaign stopped serving	Ad status and payments, then advertiser verification (chapter 3)

Paid for clicks that brought no customers? You don't need a new campaign. Find the symptom and do the step that was skipped.

12 FOUR EXAMPLE BUSINESSES, WORKED START TO FINISH

One of these four probably looks like yours. The businesses are made up and every number is assumed, so we have something to calculate with; they're not market averages or anyone's results. When you redo one, use your own numbers.

12.1. Example 1: an online cookware store

You sell stainless steel and cast iron cookware for induction cooktops online, plus knives and kitchen tools, and ship nationwide. Your products are in Merchant Center. All prices are before sales tax.

The math

1. An average order is $160, before sales tax and shipping.
2. After the product, packaging, the shipping you pay, and card fees, you keep $48. That's your break-even: an order can cost at most $48 in ads.
3. Break-even ROAS: 160 ÷ 48 × 100 ≈ 333%. Below that, every order from Google loses money.
4. You want to keep $16 per order. Target cost: 48 − 16 = $32.
5. Target ROAS: 160 ÷ 32 × 100 = 500%.
6. Refunds: 1 order in 10 comes back, so Google counts 10 orders and you keep the money on 9. A real 500% needs 500 ÷ 0.9 ≈ 556% in the account. (If you pay return shipping, add it to the costs in step 2.)
7. Keyword Planner, as a rough proxy for Shopping, estimates $0.80 a click. You assume 25 visitors in 1,000 order, which is 2.5%.
8. Estimated cost per order: 0.80 ÷ 0.025 = $32. With refunds, an order you keep costs 32 ÷ 0.9 ≈ $36. That's over the $32 target but under the $48 break-even, the second row of the chapter 2 decision table: launch, and work on your product pages in the first week.
9. Starting budget: 30 × 32 = $960 a month, about $32 a day.

The setup

Two campaigns: one on your store name in exact match, and standard Shopping on all your products. Strategy: "Maximize conversion value." Hold off on Performance Max until you're past 30 orders a month, tracked correctly. The primary conversion is the order, counted "Every," with its value and order number.

Once Shopping is running, you might add a Search campaign on categories, with keywords like these:

- `[induction cookware set]`
- `"stainless steel frying pan"`
- `[cast iron skillet price]`

Leave out the Free block, since you offer free returns, and on top of the other base negatives add `recipe` and `recipes` (the DIY block already covers "how to"). Don't want to show up when people search for other stores? Add `ikea` and `walmart`.

HEADLINE	CHARACTERS
Induction-ready cookware	24
Stainless and cast iron pans	28
Ships in 1 to 2 business days	29
Free returns within 30 days	27

A starting description: "Pans, knives, and tools in stainless steel. Ships in 1 to 2 business days. 30-day returns." (90 characters). Every promise in it has to be true for your store.

After 30 days

Your break-even was 333%, but the account counts refunded orders too, so compare against 333 ÷ 0.9 = 370%.

- 15 or more orders and the account shows ROAS above 370%? You can switch to Target ROAS, at your actual ROAS. Safer to wait until you're close to 30 orders.
- ROAS under 370%? Keep the strategy. Check your product titles, prices, and search terms.

12.2. Example 2: an independent auto repair shop in Columbus, Ohio

You do maintenance, brakes, belts, and diagnostics, by appointment. Customers call or use the form on your site.

The math

1. An average job brings in $600.
2. After parts and what you pay your technicians for the hours, $240 is left. That's your break-even per job.
3. 4 out of 10 leads (form or call) become jobs, so a lead is worth 240 × 4 ÷ 10 = $96. Pay more than $96 per lead and you lose money.
4. You want to keep half. Target cost per lead: $48.
5. Estimated cost per click: $4.50. You assume 10 visitors in 100 send a form or call: 10%.
6. Estimated cost per lead: 4.50 ÷ 0.10 = $45. Under target, so you launch.
7. Starting budget: 30 × 45 = $1,350 a month, about $44 a day.

LocaliQ's 2026 benchmarks put auto repair at a 15.51% conversion rate and $29.96 per lead on average, so your assumed 10% is on the careful side. Repeat visits aren't in the math either. They're extra profit.

The setup

Two campaigns: one on the shop's name, one on services with an ad group each for maintenance, brakes, belts, and diagnostics. Location: "Presence," on Columbus and the towns around it. Strategy: "Maximize conversions." Two primary conversions, the form and the call, both counted "One." Set a minimum call length so hang-ups don't count, and show the number only during shop hours.

For the brakes ad group:

- `[brake repair columbus]`
- `"brake job cost"`
- `[brake pad replacement columbus]`
- `"brakes and rotors"`

On top of the base negatives, add `"at home"`, `video`, and `youtube`, plus the towns you don't serve. If you don't compete on price, keep the Cheap block.

#	HEADLINE	CHARACTERS
1	Auto repair in Columbus	23
2	Car maintenance by appointment	30
3	Check engine light diagnostics	30
4	Brakes, belts, and maintenance	30
5	Appointments within 24 hours	28
6	Get a price before we start	27
7	ASE-certified technicians	25
8	Written warranty on labor	25
9	Open Saturdays until 2 pm	25
10	Loaner car on request	21
11	Minutes from downtown	21
12	Drop it at 8, pick it up at 5	29
13	Call now to book	16
14	Get a quote for your service	28
15	[Your shop's name]	

#	DESCRIPTION	CHARACTERS
D1	Maintenance, brakes, belts, and diagnostics. You get the price before we start the work.	88
D2	Book online or call. We're open Saturdays until 2 pm.	53
D3	Written warranty on labor and new parts on every invoice. See our prices on the site.	85
D4	Appointments within 24 hours, Saturdays included. We're in Columbus, Ohio.	74

The hours, the certification, the warranty, and the loaner car are only a model. If your shop doesn't offer them, don't write them.

After 30 days

Thirty or more leads? Switch to Target CPA at your actual average. Then open your calendar and count how many Google leads became jobs. Fewer than 4 in 10? Redo the math from step 3 and correct your target with it.

12.3. Example 3: cabins with hot tubs near Gatlinburg, Tennessee

You own four cabins, each with a hot tub. Guests book through Airbnb and Vrbo, where you pay a fee on every booking, or directly, by calling, texting, or using the form on your site. Is paying Google worth it on top of the platforms? Let the math decide.

The math

1. An average booking is 2 nights × $225: $450.
2. Subtract what each booking costs you (cleaning, linens, supplies, card fees), say $110. That leaves $340, your break-even per booking.
3. What do you want to pay for a booking? Look at the fee Airbnb or Vrbo takes on a $450 booking under your agreement. A direct booking from Google should cost you no more than that fee, and the guest's email is yours for next time. Say the fee is $70. (Your break-even per inquiry would be 340 × 5 ÷ 10 = $170, far above it.)
4. 5 out of 10 calls or forms turn into bookings. So per inquiry you can afford 70 × 5 ÷ 10 = $35.
5. A click costs about $2.00. You assume 6 visitors in 100 call or send an inquiry: 6%.
6. Estimated cost per inquiry: 2.00 ÷ 0.06 ≈ $33.33. Under the $35 target, so you launch. Per booking it's about $67, roughly 15% of what you collect.
7. For 30 inquiries in a month in season: 30 × 33.33 = $1,000, about $33 a day. Off-season, searches drop, and so does the budget.

The setup

Two campaigns: one on your cabins' name, one on the area, with an ad group for each thing people look for:

- `"gatlinburg cabins"`
- `"gatlinburg cabin with hot tub"`

- `"gatlinburg cabin new years"`

Location: "Presence or interest," across the US or only the states and metro areas your guests come from. People book from home. Strategy: "Maximize conversions." The call and the inquiry form are primary, both counted "One." Ask whoever built your site whether your booking engine can send the booking value; if it can, the confirmed booking becomes the primary conversion, with its value.

New Year's or the Fourth of July coming? Leave the base campaign alone and build a separate one with a total budget for a few weeks, with start and end dates.

Extra negatives: `camping`, `campground`, `tent`, `map`, `weather`, `trails` (if you don't want people who are just reading up), plus other towns' names.

HEADLINE	CHARACTERS
Gatlinburg cabins, hot tubs	27
Mountain views from the deck	28
Book direct with the owners	27
Call to check open dates	24
A hot tub on every porch	24

COPY THIS

Four cabins, each with a hot tub and a mountain view. Call and we'll check your dates.

That's 86 characters. Show the phone number only when someone actually answers.

After 30 days

Put your booking log next to the account's conversions. If fewer than 5 in 10 inquiries book, the problem is usually the price or the open dates, not the ad.

12.4. Example 4: a company that builds steel buildings

You design and erect steel buildings for warehouses, shops, and farms across Texas. A sale takes months: request, site visit, quote, negotiation, signature. Judge this campaign after one month and you'll shut it off right before the first contract.

The math

1. An average contract is $350,000, and you keep 12% profit: $42,000.
2. You'll spend 10% of that profit to land a new customer: $4,200.
3. Out of 20 quote requests, 6 are qualified (land, budget, timeline) and 1 becomes a contract. So you can pay 4,200 ÷ 20 = $210 per lead, or 4,200 ÷ 6 = $700 per qualified lead.
4. A click costs about $6.00. You assume 3 visitors in 100 ask for a quote: 3%.

5. Estimated cost per lead: 6.00 ÷ 0.03 = $200. Under target, but only just.
6. For 30 leads a month: 30 × 200 = $6,000, about $197 a day.
7. You have $2,500 a month. That buys 12 or 13 leads, and if the ratio in step 3 holds, one contract every 1.6 months, about 7 weeks.

The setup

At that budget you won't reach 30 conversions a month, so you stay on "Maximize conversions," judge over a whole sales cycle, and stretch the conversion window toward 90 days.

Two campaigns: one on your company name, one on the customer's problem, with an ad group per building type:

- `[steel building contractor texas]`
- `"metal building cost"`
- `[warehouse building construction]`
- `"steel barn builders"`

Location: "Presence," in Texas and any neighboring states you build in.

Your negative list is longer than the others, because technical terms bring in students, engineers, and suppliers. Extra negatives: `"senior project"`, `thesis`, `autocad`, `"load calculation"`, `"structural analysis"`, `kit`, `kits` (if you don't sell kits), `rental`, `rent`. Notice that `plans` isn't on the list, even though students search for plans. Plenty of buyers search "steel building plans and prices", and `plans` alone would block them.

The quote request is your primary conversion. In your CRM, every lead gets tagged "qualified" or "not qualified" within a week, and you send qualified leads back to Google Ads from the start as a secondary action (chapter 4). They'd become primary only at 30 in 30 days, which this budget won't reach.

HEADLINE	CHARACTERS
Steel buildings, fully erected	30
Design, permits, and erection	29
Quote in 5 business days	24
Warehouse and shop buildings	28
Get a quote for your building	29

COPY THIS

We design, permit, and erect steel buildings. Send us your size and get a quote.

That's 80 characters. The form asks only for what you need to quote: approximate size, county, what the building is for, and timeline. Fifteen fields get you fewer leads; two get you leads you can't qualify.

After 30 days

Contracts haven't had time to show up, so judge on leads and how many are qualified. If none of 10 leads is qualified, don't add budget. Fix your keywords and negatives.

12.5. The four, side by side

Find the column that looks most like your business and start there, with your own numbers.

	STORE	REPAIR SHOP	CABINS	STEEL BUILDINGS
Primary conversion	The order, with its value	Form and call	Call, form, or booking	Quote request; qualified lead only at 30 in 30 days
Counting	"Every"	"One"	"One"	"One"
Target cost (assumed)	$32 per order	$48 per lead	$35 per inquiry	$210 per lead
Starting budget (assumed)	$960 a month	$1,350 a month	$1,000 a month in season	$2,500 a month ($6,000 for 30 leads)
Location	Presence, where you ship	Presence, the city	Presence or interest	Presence, Texas and nearby states
First campaigns	Store name and Shopping	Shop name and services	Cabin name and area	Company name and problem
Conversion window	30 days	30 days	30 days	Toward 90 days

13 THE MISTAKES THAT BURN YOUR MONEY

Evenings and weekends, the phone rings and nobody answers. Every missed call is a paid click, and the cause is a skipped step: no schedule on the number in your ad. Almost every mistake below is a skipped step too. Find what you see in your account, then make the fix on the right.

SYMPTOM	CAUSE	FIX
1. Lots of clicks, no conversions, even though the keywords look right	Search partners and the Display Network were left on under "Networks"	Uncheck them under "Networks" (chapter 5)

SYMPTOM	CAUSE	FIX
2. Your ad shows on searches you never thought of, and people land on other pages	AI Max is on in a campaign that doesn't have conversions yet	Turn it off until you have steady conversions
3. Search terms that have nothing to do with you	Broad match without automated bidding on conversions	Switch to exact and phrase match
4. Lots of conversions in the account, few sales	Small actions, like add to cart, are set as primary	Make them secondary. Only the sale or the lead stays primary
5. Google shows more orders than your store	The same order is counted by the Google tag and by GA4, both primary	Keep one primary, make the other secondary, and send the order number
6. More leads in the account than people who contacted you	Leads are counted "Every"	Switch to "One"
7. Searches you thought you'd blocked keep showing up	Negatives are only in the singular, or a multi-word negative is missing its quotes	Add the plural, and put multi-word negatives in quotes (chapter 6)
8. "How much" searches stopped showing your ad	`how to` was added as a negative without quotes, so it blocks every search with "how" and "to" in it	Change it to `"how to"`
9. Results swing up and down from week to week	The bidding strategy gets changed every few days	Leave it alone for 2 weeks or two conversion cycles
10. Broad match keywords or Display placements appeared without you adding them	Recommendations are being applied automatically	Turn them off in "Auto-apply settings"
11. Lots of clicks, few conversions, short time on site	Everyone lands on the home page	Send each ad group to the page for the service or product in the ad
12. Reports and billing run on the wrong day or in the wrong currency	Time zone or currency picked wrong at signup	Neither can be changed. If it's badly off, create a new account the right way
13. No campaign collects enough conversions to learn from	A small budget split across many campaigns	Pull the budget into one campaign that sells, plus the one on your business name
14. Calls counted as conversions that weren't customers	The minimum call length is too short	Raise it until it filters out short calls and wrong numbers
15. Missed calls in the evening and on weekends	The number shows even when nobody's there to answer	Put a schedule on the number in your ad
16. Sales from a long sales cycle don't get tied to your ads	The conversion window is 30 days, and the sale takes months	Stretch it toward 90 days

14 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How much does a click cost on Google in the US?

It depends on the keyword, the city, and the competition. LocaliQ's 2026 search benchmarks put the average across industries at $5.42 a click, an 8.18% conversion rate, and $66.69 per lead. The same report breaks it down by industry.

INDUSTRY	AVERAGE COST PER CLICK	AVERAGE CONVERSION RATE	AVERAGE COST PER LEAD
Automotive repair, service, and parts	$4.35	15.51%	$29.96
Dentists and dental services	$8.00	10.67%	$72.97
Home and home improvement	$8.33	8.05%	$90.92
Industrial and commercial	$5.87	8.20%	$75.19
Travel	$2.14	5.83%	$44.70
Shopping, collectibles, and gifts	$4.14	4.01%	$49.40

They come from LocaliQ's own customers' campaigns, so use them as a sanity check, not a forecast. For your keywords, use Keyword Planner, then your account's real number after a month.

What's the minimum budget?

Google doesn't set one. Yours is 30 conversions times what one costs you (chapter 9). Can't afford that? Run one campaign that sells plus your brand campaign, and judge over a longer period.

Why did Google spend double my budget in one day?

It's allowed to spend up to twice your daily budget on a given day, but never more than 30.4 times it over a month. Look at the month's total.

How soon will I see results?

Leads can come in on day one. The "Learning" label disappears within 7 days, but Google says performance takes 1 to 2 conversion cycles to settle. Judge results over 2 weeks or two conversion cycles, whichever is longer, and make strategy decisions after 30 days, with the account next to your real sales.

Can I use competitors' names as keywords?

Yes. Google doesn't restrict trademarks as keywords, but it can restrict them in ad text, for example from a direct competitor once the owner complains. So bid on the name, but keep it out of your ad. The same rule lets competitors bid on yours.

Do I need a campaign on my business name if I already show up first?

Yes, a cheap separate one, because competitors can bid on your name. In exact match it keeps those searches clean in your reports and takes priority over Performance Max.

Should I let Google apply its recommendations automatically?

No. Turn them off in "Auto-apply settings" and apply by hand only what fits your math. Broad match keywords and Display expansion both change where your money goes.

Do I need Google Tag Manager?

Not necessarily. You can track a conversion by the thank-you page URL with no code. Tag Manager, where a developer keeps all your tags in one place, helps once you have many tags or need order values and button clicks.

Do I pay sales tax on Google Ads?

Only in some places. Google's tax page says it has collected Washington state sales tax on digital advertising since January 1, 2026, based on your billing address. If that's you, the tax goes into your chapter 2 math (chapter 10 shows how).

How do I tell whether the person running my ads is doing a good job?

Ask for four things: access to the account on your own email, the list of primary conversions, last month's search terms report, and a monthly comparison of the account's conversions with your real sales. If one is missing or they can't explain it, keep asking.

15 THE ACTION PLAN

Day 1 is for the account, not the ad.

When clicks don't turn into customers, the ad is rarely the whole problem. Often there was no math, no tracking, and a campaign that went live the first night. The plan below puts the steps in order, and the order matters more than any setting.

15.1. The first 40 days

Days 1 to 7: the account and tracking

- [ ] Create the account without a campaign, with your time zone, US dollars, and an organization account.
- [ ] Find out from Google's tax page whether Google charges sales tax at your billing address.
- [ ] Do the chapter 2 math, with the cost per click from Keyword Planner.
- [ ] Turn off auto-applied recommendations.
- [ ] Send your web developer the message from chapter 4 (tag, purchase value, enhanced conversions, and, if they apply to you, the EU banner and the state privacy opt-out).
- [ ] Link GA4 and, if you have a store, Merchant Center.
- [ ] Create the conversions from your plan in chapter 4 and turn on enhanced conversions.
- [ ] Run a test conversion and check that it shows in the "Status" column.

If the test conversion doesn't show up, everything after it is guesswork.

Days 8 to 14: the first campaign

- [ ] Build your list of 10 to 30 keywords, in exact and phrase match.
- [ ] Build your negative list, singular and plural, with multi-word negatives in quotes, and save it as a shared list.
- [ ] Build the Search campaign on Google Search only, with no search partners and no Display. Turn off AI Max.
- [ ] Pick your location setting by type of business.
- [ ] Write at least 2 ads per ad group, with 15 headlines each, using the template in chapter 7. Add 6 sitelinks with descriptions and your phone number.
- [ ] Start on "Maximize conversions" or, for a store, "Maximize conversion value."
- [ ] Build a separate campaign on your business name, in exact match.

Run an online store? For you, standard Shopping takes the place of the keyword campaign. Launch it once you've checked your product data in Merchant Center.

Days 15 to 21: the cleanup

You have your first data and you're itching to change everything. Don't.

- [ ] Review search terms and add negatives. From here on, do it once a week.
- [ ] Pause keywords that spent as much as two target conversions without bringing one.
- [ ] Leave the bidding strategy as it is.

Days 22 to 30: the second cleanup

- [ ] Repeat what you did the week before.
- [ ] Don't change the strategy.

The first review: around day 40

The review comes 30 days after the campaign goes live, and you spent two weeks before that on the account and the campaign.

- [ ] Put the account's conversions next to your real sales, in the monthly table from chapter 11.
- [ ] Work out your cost per conversion and set it next to your chapter 2 target.
- [ ] Past 30 conversions in 30 days, with cost per conversion under break-even? For services, switch to Target CPA, starting at your actual average, following the table in chapter 8. For a store, switch to Target ROAS once you have the number of orders that table asks for.
- [ ] Didn't reach 30? Don't cut the budget on a hunch. Check tracking, the landing page, and the search terms first.
- [ ] Pick one single test for month two: AI Max, if you have steady conversions, or, for a store, Performance Max, if you're past 30 orders a month.

Sell to other businesses? Instead of the test, check that sending qualified leads back from your CRM works.

15.2. Months 2 and 3

Start a test, raise the budget, and rewrite your ads in the same week, and when sales go up you won't know why, or how to repeat it. One step at a time:

WHEN	WHAT YOU DO
Month 2, week 1	Redo the chapter 2 math with real numbers from the account: cost per click and how many visitors out of 100 bought or asked.
Month 2, weeks 1 to 4	Run your one test. The rest of the account stays as it is, so you know what the change produced.
Month 2, week 4	Judge the test over 2 weeks or two conversion cycles. Keep it or stop it.
Month 3	Add one new thing.
Businesses that sell to other businesses, instead of the test rows	Check monthly that qualified leads are flowing back from your CRM and how many leads are qualified. Judge contracts over a whole sales cycle.
End of month 3	Put three months of the monthly table side by side. Did your real cost per sale go down, stay flat, or go up? That decides your budget for the next quarter.

Pick just one new thing for month 3.

- an ad group on a new service;
- broad match on an ad group that works, if you've had 30 or more conversions a month for at least a month;
- Performance Max, if you're past 30 orders a month.

15.3. The checklist

Every step in the guide, in one list. Print it and check off each step as you finish it.

The math

- [ ] Break-even and target cost per conversion, worked out from your numbers
- [ ] Break-even ROAS (stores)
- [ ] Sales tax on ad spend, if Google charges it at your billing address
- [ ] Starting budget, worked out from 30 conversions

The account

- [ ] Account created with a business email, without an automatic campaign
- [ ] The right time zone and US dollars (both permanent)
- [ ] Organization account, with the business's legal name and address
- [ ] Advertiser verification done, if Google asked
- [ ] Auto-applied recommendations off
- [ ] GA4 linked, with auto-tagging on
- [ ] Merchant Center linked (stores)
- [ ] Agency or freelancer with access on their own email

Tracking

- [ ] One primary action for each real result
- [ ] The order, with its value before sales tax and the order number (stores)
- [ ] Form and call counted "One" (services, bookings, business to business)
- [ ] Calls with a minimum length and a schedule set
- [ ] Conversion window matched to how long your sale takes
- [ ] Enhanced conversions on
- [ ] Qualified leads sent back from your CRM (business to business, expensive services)
- [ ] EU banner connected to Consent Mode v2 and checked with Tag Assistant, if you get European visitors
- [ ] State privacy opt-out link, GPC, and restricted data processing, if a state law covers you
- [ ] Test conversion seen in "Status"

The Search campaign

- [ ] No search partners and no Display, at the start
- [ ] AI Max off until you have steady conversions
- [ ] Exact and phrase match keywords with buying intent
- [ ] Negatives in singular and plural, multi-word ones in quotes, in a shared list

- [ ] At least 2 ads per ad group rated "Good" or "Excellent," with no pinned headlines except a message that must always show
- [ ] 6 sitelinks with descriptions, and your phone number
- [ ] Landing page that matches the ad
- [ ] Location set by type of business
- [ ] Address in the ad (location assets), if customers come to you
- [ ] Separate campaign on your business name, in exact match
- [ ] Policy check done for housing, employment, consumer finance, politics, or health

Budget and bidding

- [ ] One campaign that sells, plus the one on your business name, if the budget is small
- [ ] Target CPA only after 30 conversions in 30 days
- [ ] Target ROAS only after at least 15 conversions in 30 days, ideally close to 30

The routine

- [ ] Search terms, weekly
- [ ] Strategy judged over 2 weeks or two conversion cycles
- [ ] Account conversions compared with real sales, monthly

SOURCES

Pages checked on November 17, 2026.

1. Google Ads Help, "Create a Google Ads account: How to sign up": https://support.google.com/google-ads/answer/6366720
2. Google Ads Help, "About your language, number format, time zone, and currency settings": https://support.google.com/google-ads/answer/9842104
3. Google Advertising Policies Help, "Advertiser verification": https://support.google.com/adspolicy/answer/9703665
4. Google Advertising Policies Help, "Timelines for Advertiser verification": https://support.google.com/adspolicy/answer/15588490
5. Google Ads Help, "About applying recommendations automatically": https://support.google.com/google-ads/answer/10279006
6. Google Ads Help, "Manage auto-apply recommendations": https://support.google.com/google-ads/answer/10276359
7. Google Ads Help, "[GA4] Product linking: Link Google Analytics 4 properties and Google Ads": https://support.google.com/google-ads/answer/7519537
8. Google Ads Help, "Set up your web conversions": https://support.google.com/google-ads/answer/16560108
9. Google Ads Help, "About conversion counting options": https://support.google.com/google-ads/answer/3438531
10. Google Ads Help, "About conversion goals": https://support.google.com/google-ads/answer/10995103
11. Google Ads Help, "About conversion windows": https://support.google.com/google-ads/answer/3123169
12. Google Ads Help, "About enhanced conversions": https://support.google.com/google-ads/answer/9888656
13. Google Ads Help, "About enhanced conversions for leads": https://support.google.com/google-ads/answer/15713840 and "Updates to your enhanced conversions settings": https://support.google.com/google-ads/answer/16884284
14. Google Ads Help, "Offline conversion imports FAQs": https://support.google.com/google-ads/answer/10029210
15. Google Ads Help, "About offline conversion imports": https://support.google.com/google-ads/answer/2998031
16. Google Ads Developer Blog, changes to offline click conversion imports (May 15, 2026): https://developers.google.com/ads/blog/posts/2026/05/changes-to-offline-click-conversion
17. Google Ads Help, "About call reporting": https://support.google.com/google-ads/answer/2454052
18. Google Ads Help, "About call assets": https://support.google.com/google-ads/answer/2453991
19. Google Ads Help, "Measure calls from ads": https://support.google.com/google-ads/answer/6095882
20. Google, "EU user consent policy": https://www.google.com/about/company/user-consent-policy/
21. Google Ads Help, "About consent mode": https://support.google.com/google-ads/answer/10000067
22. Google for Developers, "Consent mode overview": https://developers.google.com/tag-platform/security/concepts/consent-mode
23. Google for Developers, "Set up consent mode on websites": https://developers.google.com/tag-platform/security/guides/consent

24. Google for Developers, "Troubleshoot consent mode with Tag Assistant": https://developers.google.com/tag-platform/security/guides/consent-debugging
25. Tag Assistant Help, "Troubleshoot with Tag Assistant": https://support.google.com/tagassistant/answer/10039345
26. Google Ads Help, "Helping advertisers comply with the U.S. states' privacy laws in Google Ads": https://support.google.com/google-ads/answer/9614122
27. California Privacy Protection Agency, "Frequently Asked Questions": https://cppa.ca.gov/faq.html
28. IAPP, "US State Privacy Legislation Tracker": https://iapp.org/resources/article/us-state-privacy-legislation-tracker
29. McDermott Will & Schulte, "Federal court invalidates key part of HHS OCR bulletin regarding application of HIPAA to online tracking technologies" (June 25, 2024): https://www.mcdermottlaw.com/insights/federal-court-invalidates-key-part-of-hhs-ocr-bulletin-regarding-application-of-hipaa-to-online-tracking-technologies/ and Nixon Peabody, "Portions of OCR's bulletin on online tracking technologies deemed unlawful" (July 3, 2024): https://nixonpeabody.com/insights/alerts/2024/07/03/portions-of-ocrs-bulletin-on-online-tracking-technologies-deemed-unlawful
30. Cornell Law School LII, "47 CFR § 64.1200, Delivery restrictions" (TCPA consent rules): https://www.law.cornell.edu/cfr/text/47/64.1200
31. Google Ads Help, "About keyword matching options": https://support.google.com/google-ads/answer/7478529
32. Google Ads Help, "Keyword close variants: Definition": https://support.google.com/google-ads/answer/9342105
33. Google Ads Help, "About negative keywords": https://support.google.com/google-ads/answer/2453972
34. Google Ads Help, "Add negative keywords to campaigns": https://support.google.com/google-ads/answer/7102995
35. Google Ads Help, "About the search terms report": https://support.google.com/google-ads/answer/2472708
36. Google Ads Help, "Use Keyword Planner": https://support.google.com/google-ads/answer/7337243
37. Google Ads Help, "About AI Max for Search campaigns": https://support.google.com/google-ads/answer/15910366
38. Google Ads Help, "Set up AI Max for Search campaigns": https://support.google.com/google-ads/answer/15909989
39. Google Ads Help, "About the Google Search Network": https://support.google.com/google-ads/answer/1722047
40. Google Ads Help, "About Display Expansion on Search campaigns": https://support.google.com/google-ads/answer/7193800
41. Google Ads Help, "About responsive search ads": https://support.google.com/google-ads/answer/7684791
42. Google Ads Help, "About Ad Strength for responsive search ads": https://support.google.com/google-ads/answer/9921843
43. Google Ads Help, "Write compelling, genuine ad copy": https://support.google.com/google-ads/answer/6167101
44. Google Ads Help, "About sitelink assets": https://support.google.com/google-ads/answer/2375416
45. Google Ads Help, "About Shopping ads": https://support.google.com/google-ads/answer/2454022
46. Google Merchant Center Help, "Product data specification": https://support.google.com/merchants/answer/7052112
47. Google Merchant Center Help, "Free listings for products": https://support.google.com/merchants/answer/13889434
48. Google Ads Help, "About Performance Max campaigns": https://support.google.com/google-ads/answer/10724817
49. Google Ads Help, "Negative keywords in Performance Max campaigns": https://support.google.com/google-ads/answer/15726455 and "Troubleshoot performance fluctuations and changes in Performance Max campaigns": https://support.google.com/google-ads/answer/12200334
50. Google Ads Help, "About Demand Gen campaigns": https://support.google.com/google-ads/answer/13695777
51. Google Ads Help, "About video ad formats": https://support.google.com/google-ads/answer/2375464
52. Google Ads Help, "About Target CPA bidding": https://support.google.com/google-ads/answer/6268632
53. Google Ads Help, "About Target ROAS bidding": https://support.google.com/google-ads/answer/6268637
54. Google Ads Help, "About Maximize conversions bidding": https://support.google.com/google-ads/answer/7381968
55. Google Ads Help, "About Maximize conversion value bidding": https://support.google.com/google-ads/answer/7684216
56. Google Ads Help, "About Smart Bidding learning": https://support.google.com/google-ads/answer/13020501
57. Google Ads Help, "About average daily budgets": https://support.google.com/google-ads/answer/6385083
58. Google Ads Help, "About campaign total budgets": https://support.google.com/google-ads/answer/10486938
59. Google, "Google Marketing Live 2026: bidding and budgeting news": https://blog.google/products/ads-commerce/bidding-budgeting-google-marketing-live-2026/
60. Google Ads Help, "Target ads to geographic locations": https://support.google.com/google-ads/answer/1722043
61. Google Ads Help, "About advanced location options": https://support.google.com/google-ads/answer/1722038
62. Google Ads Help, "About language targeting": https://support.google.com/google-ads/answer/1722078
63. Google Ads Help, "About location assets": https://support.google.com/google-ads/answer/2404182
64. Google Ads Help, "About Quality Score for Search campaigns": https://support.google.com/google-ads/answer/6167118
65. Google Advertising Policies Help, "Trademarks": https://support.google.com/adspolicy/answer/6118
66. Google Ads Help, "Taxes in your country": https://support.google.com/google-ads/answer/2375370
67. Google Ads Help, "About payment settings in Google Ads": https://support.google.com/google-ads/answer/2375432
68. Google Ads Help, "About the postpay payment setting": https://support.google.com/google-ads/answer/6311
69. Google Ads Help, "Prepay payment setting": https://support.google.com/google-ads/answer/2393016
70. Washington State Department of Revenue, "Interim guidance statement regarding changes made by ESSB 5814 for Advertising Services": https://dor.wa.gov/laws-rules/interim_guidance_statements/interim-guidance-statement-regarding-changes-made-essb-5814-advertising-services
71. Google Advertising Policies Help, "Restricted targeting in Personalized advertising": https://support.google.com/adspolicy/answer/143465
72. Google Advertising Policies Help, "Political content": https://support.google.com/adspolicy/answer/6014595
73. Google Advertising Policies Help, "Healthcare and medicines": https://support.google.com/adspolicy/answer/176031
74. LocaliQ, "Search Advertising Benchmarks for Every Industry [2026 Data]" (last updated June 1, 2026; Internet Archive copy of November 13, 2026): https://localiq.com/blog/search-advertising-benchmarks/
75. MultiState, "Twenty-four states now have comprehensive consumer privacy laws" (October 28, 2026): https://www.multistate.us/insider/2026/10/28/twenty-four-states-now-have-comprehensive-consumer-privacy-laws

HIGH-UP ADS

WANT A SECOND PAIR OF EYES ON YOUR NUMBERS?

Reading the guide is the easy part. The hard part comes later, when you have to decide what a customer is worth to you, what to track, and when to stop. You can get our help with that in two ways, and both are free.

THE NEWSLETTER

One marketing topic a week, written for business owners, with something you can try the next day. One email a week, and you can unsubscribe in one click.

Subscribe

highupads.ro/en/newsletter

A FREE AD AUDIT WITH OANA

An hour on Zoom or Google Meet. Oana goes through your ads and your numbers with you, then sends you a written plan you can use with or without us.

Pick a day

highupads.ro/en/session

The audit is for businesses that can spend at least $1,500 a month on ads, and calls run between 9 am and 2 pm ET. Oana won't follow up with a sales pitch. If you want to work with us after that, you tell us.

