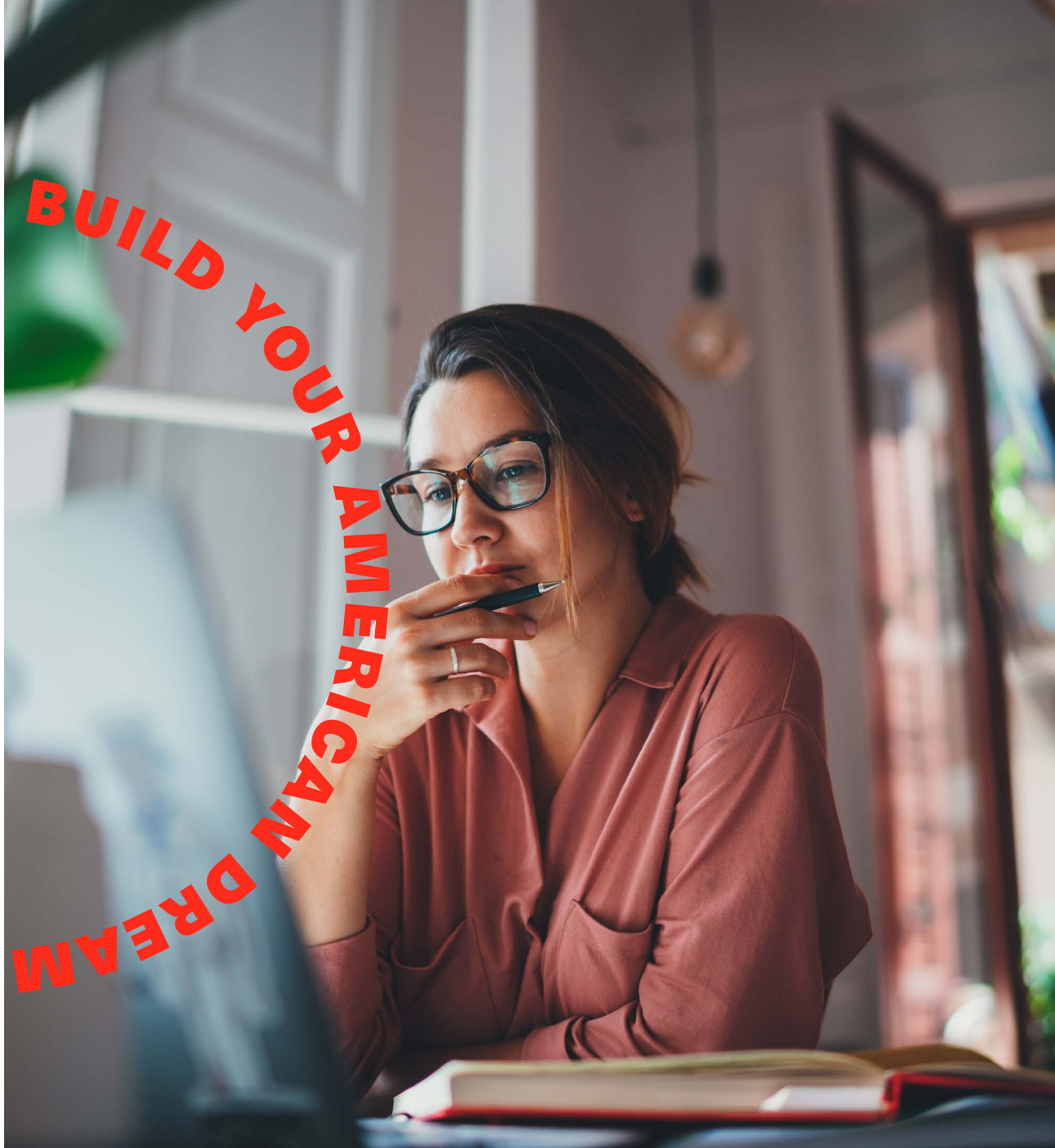


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**YOUR STEP-BY-STEP
GUIDE TO CONDUCT
KEYWORD RESEARCH**

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YOUR STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO CONDUCT KEYWORD RESEARCH

If you're a business owner interested in increasing your traffic, ranking on Google, and improving your overall content, **search engine optimization (SEO)** can be the key to accomplishing all the above. But in order to master SEO, you must also master the art and science of keyword research.

Let's say you hire an SEO specialist to help your business appear and rank high on a **search engine results pages (SERP)**. Keyword research is something they would do to find and analyze search terms that users enter into search engines when looking for products, services, or other relevant information.

Don't let all the acronyms overwhelm you. Once you break down the jargon, and learn how to conduct keyword research step-by-step, you'll see that keyword research is a simple process. In other words, you by no means have to hire an SEO expert to win online sales and engagement. By understanding keyword research, you can lead the SEO strategy for your small business website all on your own. Here's how.

KEYWORD RESEARCH

All SEO activities should start with keyword research. It's the fact-finding process that forms the foundation for all the other steps you'll take after this.

It's important your small business website contains keywords that relate directly to what your business provides. Think of words that summarize what your business sells, and how your target customer would search for you online. Keywords do not only bolster your visibility on search engines like Google and Yahoo but on social media platforms like Instagram and Pinterest.

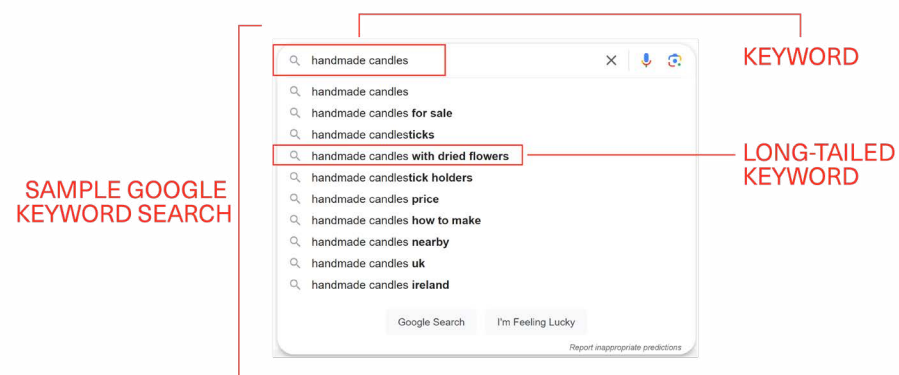
WHAT IS A KEYWORD?

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Some common keywords a typical small business would use are product names, (e.g., 'running shoes' or 'cappuccino'), types of services (e.g. 'plumber' or 'contractor'), and/or geographic areas (e.g. 'Los Angeles' or 'Chicago').

Long-Tailed and Negative Keywords

Long-tailed keywords refer to specific and typically longer phrases that users input into search engines, often indicating a higher level of intent or specificity (example: 'Electric Bike Shops Near Me'). They tend to have lower search volumes but higher conversion rates due to their specificity. On the other hand, negative keywords are terms that you designate as irrelevant to your product or service. By excluding these terms from your ad campaigns or content targeting, you can ensure your ads are shown to the most relevant audience, thereby improving the effectiveness of your marketing efforts and reducing wasted ad spend (Example, if you're a women's-only clothing boutique, a negative keyword would be 'men's clothing').



WHAT IS KEYWORD RESEARCH, AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Keyword research is the process by which you or your SEO professional finds and develops a list of effective keywords relevant to your business. When people surf the Internet, they typically use a set of keywords to find the specific information, product or service they need. So it would be best to optimize a website and/or post with keywords in order to reach your audience. For example, if you're a jewelry brand that features lovely lockets, "locket necklaces," "women's lockets," "heart lockets," and "personalized lockets" would be ideal keywords. These keywords can also be included in your content plan—from advertising to social media campaigns.

Once you integrate relevant keywords on your homepage and product pages, think about developing content your audience wants to learn about. Think about content that goes beyond sales, but can educate or inform your audience about your industry or product. For example if you are a hiking equipment startup, think of designing blogs and entries that teach your audience best practices for hiking safely, or the best places to travel for hiking. Also, think of keywords that also align with your vision and mission. For example, if you're a stylish athleisure brand but are also focused on sustainability, be sure to add "sustainable leggings" or "eco-friendly yoga wear" to appropriate web pages.

Now that you have the glossary down pat, here's a step-by-step guide to conducting keyword research:

- 1. First, understand your niche.** Know your audience in and out by studying your industry, target audience, and the products or services you offer. Take the extra step of also knowing your competitors in the space, and look at what keywords they are ranking for. This can give you insights into potential keywords you may have overlooked. This will help you identify relevant keywords to not only compete but also distinguish yourself in the market.
- 2. Start brainstorming.** The goal is to develop a comprehensive list of relevant keywords. Make a list of potential keywords related to your business by thinking about what your customers might search for when looking for your products or services—and think from every angle. For example, if you sell chic and modern furniture for children's nurseries in unique colors, think of general terms like "cribs for small spaces," "minimalist cribs," and then think of more specific terms like "mint green cribs."
- 3. Use keyword research tools for assistance.** You can turn to platforms like Google Keyword Planner, SEMrush, Ahrefs, or Ubersuggest, which provides data on search volume, competition, and related keywords. Most tools, like Google Keyword Planner, are free or offer a free trial.

4. **Identify singular terms (such as “lockets”)–as well as long-tail keywords:** Long-tail keywords are longer and more specific phrases (ex. “women’s gold locket”). Long-tail keywords often have lower search volume (or not as popular) but higher conversion rates (or more engagement). A keyword could be a phrase (key-phrase) like “what to wear to a wedding”.

5. **Put yourself in your customers’ shoes.** Google Keyword Planner is a wonderful tool, but you can also rely on your knowledge of your customer. Understand the intent behind different keywords. Are users looking for information, products, or services? Tailor your keyword strategy to match search intent. For example, you might consider yourself a fancy “custom homebuilder,” but if you really want to get on your target customer’s radar, think of how your customers think of or define your product or service. That’s why, in our example, a search term like “home renovators near me,” “home renovation New Jersey,” or wherever you live, might be more effective.

6. **Identify your priority keywords,** or high value keywords that align with your business goals. This is when it becomes a balancing act. Be specific but not too specific. Prioritize keywords based on relevance, search volume, competition, and search intent. Assess the competition for each keyword. Choose keywords with a balance of decent search volume and manageable competition.

7. **Develop content around your keywords.** Start building a content strategy that takes your keywords into account. Think of a content calendar that includes web pages, blog posts, and updates to existing pages that strategically leverage your chosen keywords. No matter what, ensure the content provides value to users and incorporates the keywords naturally.

8. **Monitor your keyword performance.** Track your keyword rankings and performance monthly, and perhaps weekly. SEO is a continuous process where you monitor industry trends, customer demand, and your own web analytics, and adjust your strategy based on data. Keep an eye out for search trends, what your competitors are up to, and your own website’s performance. The goal is to ensure you are peppering your webpages with the right keywords–these keywords are the building blocks of your online content and digital presence

These steps prove you don’t have to hire an SEO specialist or agency to drive performance for your website. By understanding the basics of keyword research, any business owner can improve SEO efforts and drive more traffic to their business website.

YOUR KEYWORD PLANNING WORKSHEET

1. Describe your ideal customer (be specific) _____

2. What terms are they searching for online? What phrases do they use? _____

3. What topics do you want be known for? _____

4. What are some words that directly reflect your business? What are some phrases that directly reflect your business? _____

5. What are some other words that kind of reflect your business? What are some other phrases that kind of reflect your business? _____

6. What are some terms people would search on Google to find your business? _____

7. What are terms that do NOT reflect your business? Research and prioritize the top 5 keywords with the highest search volume and write them below.
 1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
 4. _____
 5. _____
8. Brainstorm topics and ideas related to each of these 5 keywords. Use the space below to capture your thought and ideas: _____



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