

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE · WW-014

Audit a Google Ads Search account

Review a Google Ads Search account in a fixed order (tracking, settings, structure, keywords, ads and landing pages) and produce a prioritised action plan.

GOOGLE ADS

VERSION 1.0	EFFECTIVE 5 October 2026
NEXT REVIEW 5 April 2027	TIME 3 hours
DIFFICULTY Advanced	RELATED WW-013 · WW-015
AUDIENCE Paid media specialists with at least read-only access to the account	
TOOLS Google Ads · Google Analytics 4 · Google Sheets	

Purpose

An audit finds where a Google Ads account is wasting budget or missing opportunities. Working in a fixed order matters: if conversion tracking is wrong, every other metric is misleading. This procedure checks the account from the foundations up and ends with a short, prioritised action plan the client can approve. It is finished when the audit sheet is complete and the action plan has been presented.

Scope

In scope

- Conversion tracking accuracy
- Campaign settings: networks, locations, budgets and bidding
- Account structure, keywords, match types and search terms
- Ads, assets, landing pages and Quality Score
- A prioritised action plan

Out of scope

- Performance Max, Display, Video and Shopping campaigns
- Making changes during the audit (read-only)
- Landing page redesign

Roles and responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Auditor	Completes the audit sheet and drafts the action plan.
Senior reviewer	Challenges findings and approves the plan.
Account manager	Presents the plan and agrees next steps with the client.

Prerequisites

- Read-only or higher access to the Google Ads account (WW-015) and GA4.
- The client's business goals, target cost per lead or return on ad spend, and monthly budget.
- An audit sheet with the columns **Area** , **Finding** , **Evidence** , **Impact** , **Effort** , **Recommendation** .
- A date range of the last 90 days, compared with the previous 90 days.

Procedure

Check conversion tracking first

Every later decision depends on accurate conversions.

1. Open **Goals**, then **Conversions**, then **Summary**. List each action with its status, primary or secondary setting, count setting and source.
2. Flag duplicate primary actions, actions counting **Every** for leads, inactive actions, and micro-actions such as page views set as primary.
3. Compare the last 30 days of Google Ads lead conversions with leads in GA4 or the CRM for the same period. A gap of more than 20% needs investigation (see WW-013).

[!IMPORTANT] If conversion tracking is broken, make fixing it the first recommendation.
Bidding and optimisation advice is unreliable until it is fixed.

Review campaign settings

Settings errors silently waste budget.

1. For each Search campaign, check **Networks**: Search Partners and Display Network expansion should be off unless there is evidence they perform.
2. Check **Locations** targets the areas served, and that location options target **Presence** (people in the area) rather than presence or interest, unless intentional.
3. Check whether campaigns are **Limited by budget** while performing well, and whether budgets are spread across too many campaigns.
4. Check the bid strategy suits conversion volume: smart bidding needs a steady flow of conversions (as a rule of thumb, 15 or more per campaign per month) to work well.

Assess structure and keywords

Check the account mirrors the business and controls who sees the ads.

1. Check campaigns and ad groups map to distinct services or themes, with closely related keywords in each ad group.
2. Review keywords for match types, spend with no conversions, and low Quality Scores. Note keywords spending more than the target cost per lead with no conversions.
3. Open **Insights and reports**, then **Search terms**, for the last 90 days. Flag irrelevant terms with spend and check a shared negative keyword list exists and is applied.

[!TIP] Sort search terms by cost, highest first. The top 50 usually reveal most of the waste.

Review ads and landing pages

Check the message matches the search and the page delivers on it.

1. For each ad group, check there is at least one responsive search ad with relevant headlines that include the main keyword theme, and note ad strength.

2. Check assets are in use: sitelinks, callouts, structured snippets, call and location assets where relevant.
3. Open the landing page for the top five ad groups by spend. Check it matches the ad's promise, loads quickly on mobile, and has a clear form or phone number above the fold.

Write the action plan

Turn findings into a short, prioritised plan.

1. Score each finding for impact (budget or conversions affected) and effort, from one to three.
2. Group the top recommendations into **Fix now** (tracking and settings errors), **Next 30 days** (structure, keywords, negatives) and **Next 90 days** (ads, landing pages, testing).
3. Write a one-page summary of the account's health, the three biggest opportunities and the estimated budget being wasted, and attach the audit sheet.

Quality checks

- ☐ Conversion tracking was reviewed first and compared with GA4 or CRM data.
- ☐ Every Search campaign's networks, locations, budget and bid strategy were checked.
- ☐ Search terms for the last 90 days were reviewed and wasted spend quantified.
- ☐ Each finding has evidence, impact, effort and a recommendation.
- ☐ The action plan is grouped into Fix now, Next 30 days and Next 90 days.
- ☐ No changes were made to the account during the audit.

Troubleshooting

Symptom	Likely cause	Fix
Too little data to judge	Low spend or new account	Extend the date range and focus on settings and tracking.
Conversions far exceed CRM leads	Duplicate or loose conversion actions	Recommend fixing tracking before any optimisation.
Search terms report mostly hidden	Low volume terms are withheld by Google	Focus on visible terms with spend and broader negative themes.

Records

- Save the audit sheet and one-page summary in the client's paid media folder, named **WW-014** · **<account>** · **<date>**.
- Record the baseline metrics used so the impact of changes can be measured later.

References

- [About conversion tracking \(Google Ads Help\)](#)
- [About location targeting options \(Google Ads Help\)](#)
- [About the search terms report \(Google Ads Help\)](#)
- [About Quality Score \(Google Ads Help\)](#)
- [About responsive search ads \(Google Ads Help\)](#)

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