

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE · WW-025

Build a Google Ads Search campaign for a local service business

Plan and build a lead-focused Google Ads Search campaign with tight ad groups, controlled keywords, local targeting, responsive search ads and assets, then launch it safely.

GOOGLE ADS

VERSION 1.0	EFFECTIVE 5 October 2026
NEXT REVIEW 5 April 2027	TIME 3 to 4 hours
DIFFICULTY Intermediate	RELATED WW-005 · WW-013 · WW-014 · WW-026
AUDIENCE Paid media specialists building new Search campaigns for service businesses	
TOOLS Google Ads · Keyword Planner · A campaign planning spreadsheet	

Purpose

A Search campaign built with default settings often spends money on the wrong searches, in the wrong places, with nothing to show for it. This procedure builds a campaign around one goal (leads), targets only the area the business serves, groups keywords by service so ads stay relevant, and launches only after conversion tracking is working. It is finished when the campaign is live, ads are approved and the first-week checks are booked.

Scope

In scope

- Planning services, budget and location targeting
- Building ad groups, keywords, responsive search ads and assets
- Pre-launch checks and the first week of monitoring

Out of scope

- Performance Max, Display, Video and Shopping campaigns
- Conversion tracking setup (complete WW-013 first)
- Ongoing optimisation beyond the first week (see WW-026 and WW-014)

Roles and responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Paid media specialist	Plans and builds the campaign and monitors launch.
Business owner	Approves services, areas, budget, offers and ad wording.
Reviewer	Checks settings and ads against this procedure before launch.

Prerequisites

- A Google Ads account the business owns, linked to the agency manager account (WW-015).
- A lead conversion action showing **Recording conversions** or tested in GTM (WW-013).
- An agreed monthly budget and target cost per lead, if known.
- A landing page for each main service, with a clear call to action and phone number.

Procedure

Plan the campaign

Decide the structure before opening Google Ads.

1. In the planning spreadsheet, list the services to advertise, in order of priority and profit.

2. Create one ad group per service, such as **Boiler installation** and **Boiler repair**. Do not mix services in one ad group.
3. For each ad group, list 5 to 15 keywords from WW-005 and Keyword Planner, focused on buying intent, such as "boiler installation cost" rather than "how does a boiler work".
4. Start a negative keyword list with terms the business never wants, such as **jobs**, **course**, **free**, **diy** and services it does not offer.
5. Agree the daily budget: the monthly budget divided by 30.4.

Create the campaign

Choose settings that keep spend focused.

1. In Google Ads, click **Create**, then **Campaign**. Choose the **Leads** objective and the **Search** campaign type.
2. Select only the website lead conversion goal (and calls, if tracked) as the campaign's goals.
3. Untick **Google Search Partners** and **Google Display Network** at launch, so you can judge Search results on their own.
4. Under **Locations**, add the towns, postcodes or radius the business serves. Under **Location options**, choose **Presence: people in or regularly in your included locations**.
5. Set the language to English and add an ad schedule matching when leads can be handled, if the business cannot respond out of hours.
6. Choose **Maximise conversions** bidding, without a target cost per action, until the campaign has enough conversion history.

[!WARNING] The default location option also includes people who are only interested in your area. For a local service, that can spend budget on searchers hundreds of miles away.

Build ad groups and keywords

Keep each ad group tightly themed.

1. Create each planned ad group and add its keywords using **phrase match** (in quotes) or **exact match** (in square brackets).
2. Set each ad group's final URL to the matching service landing page.
3. In **Tools, Shared library**, create a negative keyword list, add the planned negatives and apply it to the campaign.

Write responsive search ads

Give Google enough good options to test.

1. In each ad group, create one responsive search ad with at least 10 headlines (up to 30 characters each) and 4 descriptions (up to 90 characters each).
2. Include the service name, the location, a proof point (years trading, reviews, accreditation), an offer or price signal and a clear call to action across the headlines.
3. Pin only where required, such as a compliance statement. Pinning reduces the combinations Google can test.

4. Aim for an ad strength of **Good** or **Excellent**, but never at the cost of accuracy.

Add assets

Make the ad bigger and more useful.

1. Add at least four **sitelinks** to key pages, such as pricing, reviews, about and contact.
2. Add at least four **callouts**, such as "Free quotes" or "Gas Safe registered", using only claims the business can prove.
3. Add a **structured snippet** listing services, a **call** asset with the tracked business number, and a **location** asset by linking the Google Business Profile.

Launch and monitor

Check everything, then watch the first week closely.

1. Before launching, confirm the conversion goal, locations, location option, networks, budget, bidding, ads and negatives against the planning spreadsheet.
2. Publish the campaign. Within 24 hours, confirm ads show **Eligible** or **Approved** and fix any disapprovals.
3. After three days, review the **Search terms** report and add negatives for irrelevant searches (WW-026).
4. After seven days, check spend against budget, clicks, conversions and any lead quality feedback from the business.

Quality checks

- ☐ The campaign uses the **Leads** objective and only the lead (and call) conversion goals.
- ☐ Search Partners and Display Network are off at launch.
- ☐ The location option is **Presence** and covers only the service area.
- ☐ Each ad group covers one service with phrase or exact match keywords.
- ☐ Each ad group has a responsive search ad with at least 10 headlines and 4 descriptions.
- ☐ A negative keyword list is applied.
- ☐ Sitelinks, callouts, a structured snippet, call and location assets are added.

Troubleshooting

Symptom	Likely cause	Fix
No impressions	Budget, bid or keyword volume too low, or ads not approved	Check ad status, widen keywords or raise the budget.
Clicks but no leads	Weak landing page, tracking fault or wrong intent	Test the form and tracking, then review search terms.
Spend from outside the area	Location option set to presence or interest	Change it to Presence .
Ads disapproved	Policy issue, such as unverified claims or trademarks	Read the policy detail, edit the ad and resubmit.
Budget spent by mid-morning	Daily budget too low for the keyword volume	Narrow keywords, set an ad schedule or raise the budget.

Records

- Save the planning spreadsheet, launch checklist and first-week notes with the client's account record.
- Record the launch date, budget and bidding strategy in the account change log.

References

- [Create a Search campaign \(Google Ads Help\)](#)
- [About keyword matching options \(Google Ads Help\)](#)
- [About responsive search ads \(Google Ads Help\)](#)
- [About assets \(Google Ads Help\)](#)
- [About location targeting options \(Google Ads Help\)](#)

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