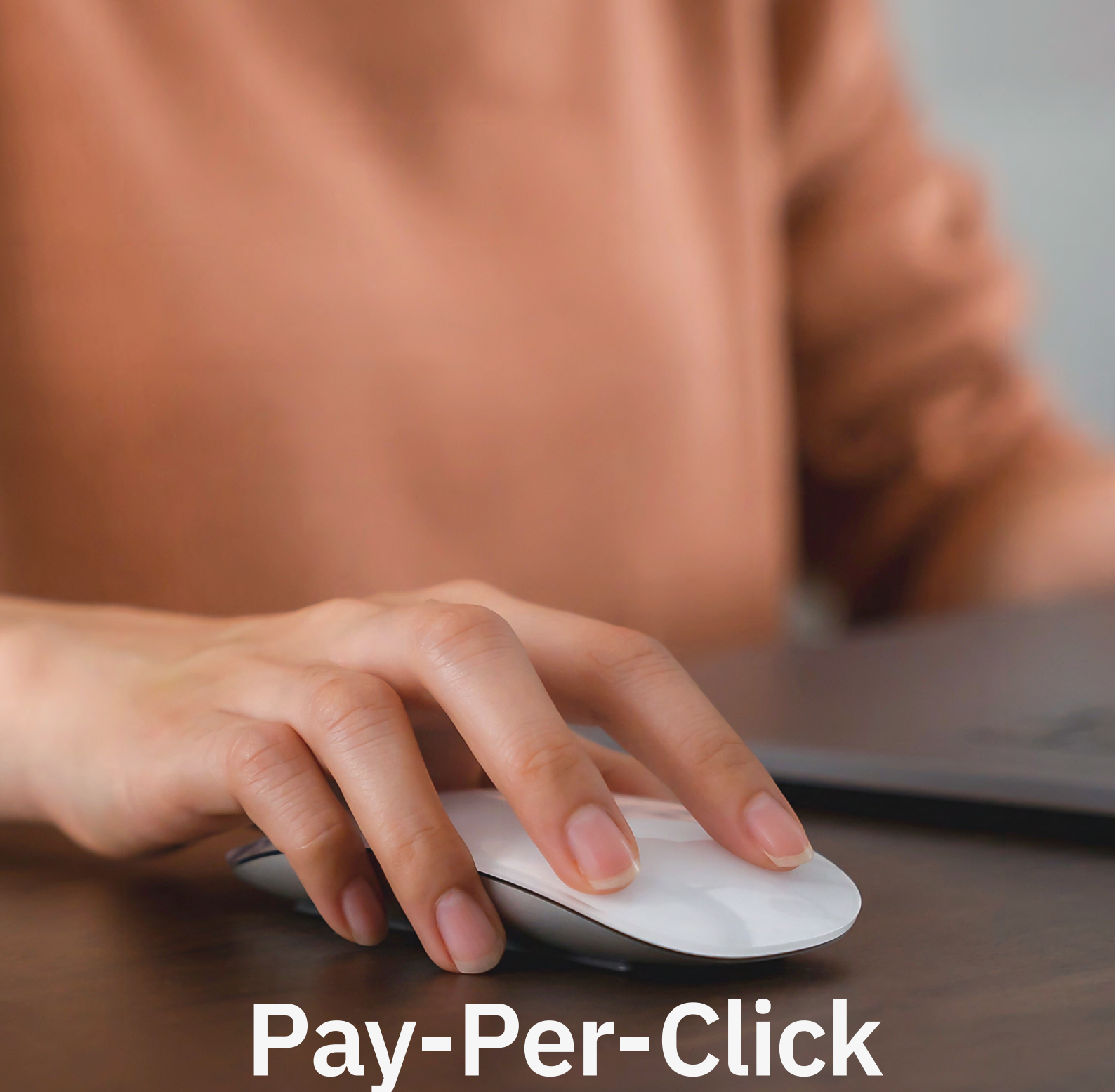




# Pay-Per-Click FAQs



# Pay-Per-Click

If you're involved in marketing in any way, it's safe to say PPC will already be on your radar. A vast majority of businesses use some form of paid advertising to reach their target audience, but very few deeply understand the why or the how behind what they do, and run the risk of wasting both time and budget as a result.

If you're looking to start a PPC campaign, or simply want to know more about the subject, this guide should help you get your head around the basics and understand what course of action is best for you and your business.

If you already have a good idea of what it is you want and why, or simply want to pick our brains about something, feel free to head over to our PPC services or contact page instead. For the rest of you, let's get started!

# PPC FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## What is Pay-Per-Click Advertising?

Pay-Per-Click (PPC) is a form of online advertising in which the advertiser (you) shows adverts across search engines or social media websites, then only pays when one of these adverts is clicked on, regardless of the number of times it was shown.

In essence, it is a way of paying for relevant visitors to your site almost immediately, which can give it huge advantages over slower and higher effort methods of inbound marketing, such as content marketing and SEO. Due to this, PPC is incredibly powerful when run alongside your other marketing channels, both to reinforce them and plug the gaps, especially at outset when they're still picking up traction.

The screenshot shows a Google search for "2nd hand trombone". The search bar at the top contains the text "2nd hand trombone" and a magnifying glass icon. Below the search bar, there are navigation tabs for "All", "Shopping", "Images", "Videos", "News", and "More". The search results indicate "About 7,930,000 results (0.70 seconds)".

The first section is labeled "Ads · Shop 2nd hand trombone". It features five shopping ads, each with a product image, title, price, and seller information:

- Student Tenor ...**: £149.99, Gear4music.com, By Productcas...
- Thomann SL 5 ...**: £99.00, Thomann UK, By BiddingLab
- Startone SSL-45**: £119.00, Thomann UK, By BiddingLab
- Thomann SL-35**: £167.00, Thomann UK, By BiddingLab
- Coppergate Al**: £149.99, Gear4music.com, By Productcas...

Below the shopping ads is a text ad for eBay:

**Ad - https://www.ebay.co.uk/**  
**Used trombones | eBay - eBay.co.uk**  
Free Shipping Available. Buy Top Products on eBay. Money Back Guarantee! Buyer Protection Program. Returns Made Easy. Fast 'N Free Shipping. Make Money When You Sell. World's Largest Selection. Shop with Confidence. Huge Selections & Savings.  
★★★★★ Rating for ebay.co.uk: 4.5 - Average delivery time: 1-2 days

The ad includes four sitelink extensions:

- Under £10**: Fun Stuff. Ships Free. Brand New. Guilt Free.
- Local eBay**: Feel Part of The Community. Buy & Sell In Your Local Area.
- Collectables & Art**: Huge Selection of New & Vintage. From Hornby, Bachmann, PECO & More
- Daily Deals**: Lowest Prices on Top Items. Save Money with eBay Deals.

Below the eBay ad is an organic listing from Gumtree:

**https://www.gumtree.com > trombone**  
**Second-Hand Trombones for Sale | Gumtree**  
Second-Hand Trombones for Sale · Mirage TT61 Deluxe Student Bb Tenor Slide Trombone Kit w/ Case & Mouthpiece · Trombone (Yamaha) · CONN 62H BASS TROMBONE (Bb/F/D).

Here we can see two types of paid ads above the organic listings, shopping ads (the line of products with images) and a text ad, with 4 sitelink Ad Extensions. We'll cover the different types of advert and their unique purposes below. Outside of marketing, the acronym PPC has several other meanings, such as; Pocket PC, Party Planning Committee and Police Pistol Combat to name but a few. We don't do those. Just Pay-Per-Click.

# Is PPC Worth It?

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PPC marketing is critical to millions of companies worldwide: with 80% of marketers choosing to leverage paid advertising as part of their marketing plan. Most businesses using paid marketing will see an average 200% ROI from PPC, though we do need to stress that this can vary considerably depending on your budget, audience, product and the skill and knowledge of those setting up and running your campaigns.

There are a huge number of different ways to run a PPC campaign, from the styles of adverts and targeting methods to the platforms themselves. Because of this, it is incredibly important to plan your campaigns thoroughly, starting with what you actually want to get out of it: what goals and target metrics are the most important (i.e. are you aiming for brand awareness, website traffic or conversions). Once we've nailed down the why, we can move on to the how, and decide which campaign types and messaging would be most  $\checkmark$ t for purpose for our target audience. Thorough planning at the outset can make all the difference in both time and results once your campaigns go live.

## How Does PPC Work?

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Ads within Google Search results are displayed on an auction basis each time someone searches for a keyword you've chosen to bid on. Rather than using bid amount alone, a number of factors are used to calculate an "Ad Rank", which is the metric used to determine what order ads should be shown in, if at all.

Ad Rank is calculated by taking your maximum bid amount as a base, then using factors such as the relevance of your ad and landing page to the search query, any ad extensions in use and the expected click-through-rate (among other factors) to form a "Quality Score", which is then used as a bid modifier. The formula for this is understood to be:  $\text{Max Bid} \times \text{Quality Score} = \text{Ad Rank}$ .

Let's look at an simplified example of how this works to understand why this is so important:

Company	Max CPC	Quality Score	AdRank	Position	Final CPC
Bill's Bagels	£1.25	5	6.25	1	£0.81
Sally's Sandwiches	£0.50	8	4	2	£0.38
Pete's Paninis	£1.00	3	3	3	£0.84
Ryan's Rolls	£2.50	1	2.5	4	£1.01
Betty's Baps	£1.00	1	1	N/A	N/A

Although Sally has a much lower Max CPC than her competitors, the quality of her ad experience means her adverts are appearing above competitors who are prepared to pay far more. In this way, advertisers that play smart and ensure their campaigns are as optimised as possible can show their ads for far cheaper rates than their competitors. In turn, advertisers who don't take the time to ensure their user journey across keywords, ads and landing pages is as relevant and helpful as possible will see their budget drain far more quickly.

The  $\checkmark$ nal amount paid is worked out by dividing the Ad Rank of the advertiser in the position below you by your own quality score, then adding the smallest billable unit (1p). As you'll be up against far more advertisers all trying to out-bid one another, terms with higher levels of competition will generally result in much higher cost-per-click than niche or lower value keywords. So don't expect to be able to offer someone a mortgage for the same price as a sandwich.

# What are the Main Advantages and Disadvantages of PPC?

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Like every marketing channel, PPC has some incredible strengths, as well as areas of weakness. To get the most out of your PPC campaign, you need to understand what these are and how to get the most bang for your buck. With this in mind, let's run through the key advantages and disadvantages of this channel, and how to bring out its full potential.

## The Main Advantages of PPC are:

### **Bypass the competition**

One of the key benefits of PPC is that it can bypass organic rankings entirely, getting your website in front of potential customers for highly competitive terms which would be extremely hard to rank for organically. In this way, you can easily reach users you wouldn't normally be able to reach, just at the crucial moment that they're showing interest in the services you offer.

### **Instant results**

While ranking pages organically via SEO can take months, if not longer, PPC can be set up in an incredibly short timeframe, driving traffic from the moment it's set live. Any changes or updates you make to your campaign are also instant, rather than waiting for Google to crawl and index the site to pick up website updates, as is the case with SEO.

### **Precision targeting**

With PPC, you have a massive amount of control over who sees your adverts. From user searching for specific keywords related to your topic, to demographic breakdowns such as age and gender, specific geographic locations, and even likes and dislikes, thanks to Google AI analysis of browsing patterns. With all these different options to narrow down the perfect customer base, it's easier than it ever has been to get the right message to the right people at the right time.

### **Stable traffic**

If you've been involved in marketing for a while, you've almost certainly had a website you're responsible for suddenly take a tumble down the rankings following a Google algorithm update. Whilst many of these dips are short-lived tests (provided you've been following the rules!) it can be hugely disheartening to see so much work undone overnight. Paid advertising doesn't share this uncertainty, as positioning is based on an entirely separate auction, with your main concern instead being increased competitor activity.

### **Detailed performance statistics**

The most important question for any marketing channel is always "is this worth the investment?". PPC offers detailed performance analytics to be able to dig into how your campaigns are performing, which areas are doing the best and which are in need of improvement. Platforms such as AdWords also offer AI driven insights on how best to improve campaigns, though these will always need to be sense-checked by a human to see how relevant they are before putting any changes live.

### **Keep connected with customers**

As well as finding new customers, PPC can be used to reconnect to users who have already visited your website previously via a remarketing campaign. These campaigns keep you connected with users who have already displayed an interest in your brand, or those who have purchased from you previously, to keep you in the forefront of their minds. For certain campaigns, such as shopping, you can even reconnect with users who showed strong purchase intent but never completed their transaction, such as those who left items abandoned in their cart.

# What are the Main Advantages and Disadvantages of PPC?

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The Main Disadvantages of PPC are:

## Cost

Fairly self-explanatory: PPC takes continuous investment to run, both from the costs of the ads themselves as well as ongoing maintenance (either through the wage of an internal specialist, or the costs of an external agency). Unlike organic listings, when you stop investing in PPC, the ads simply disappear from SERPs, so ongoing marketing budget needs to be assigned to this channel.

## Specialist knowledge required

Whilst it seems easy to set up a PPC campaign at first glance, it's hard to set up a campaign that actually works. Diving straight in without putting careful planning and research into targeting, or simply relying too heavily on Google's automated suggestions can be a sure-fire way to burn your budget without seeing the results you need.

Always take the time to consult an expert on the best platforms, campaign types, keywords and targeting to reach your target audience, as well as how to create the perfect messaging and landing pages to encourage these users to convert. Getting the set-up right can save a lot of time and effort correcting these mistakes further down the line.

## Time investment

Many advertisers make the mistake of thinking PPC is a simple "set and forget" channel, but that simply isn't the case. Your PPC account needs regular maintenance and updates to ensure the account continues to bring in good quality traffic at sustainable costs through any changes in the market or levels of competition. Depending on the size of your campaign, it may not always be realistic to have a dedicated specialist on-site at all times, which is why many businesses outsource this to a PPC agency.

## Competition

The effectiveness of PPC is both a pro and a con. You won't be the only business that's decided to invest in paid marketing, so you'll need to go toe-to-toe with your competition to fight for first page rankings. If you play it smart, you can not only come out on top of your competition, but also pay less for relevant traffic than they do. Get it wrong, however, and you'll see your cost-per-click steadily creep up over time through competitive pressure.

## Cynical users

It's no secret that people are becoming increasingly cynical of being sold to. While some users treat all results in SERPs the same, others may choose to skip past ads entirely. This isn't necessarily as bad as it sounds, as PPC ads only charge when clicked on, so these users will still be exposed to your brand even if they choose not to click your ad, and at no charge to you.

## Results are not guaranteed

As with all marketing, results and return can vary massively depending on a number of factors, including the budget invested, the lifetime value of a customer, the size of your audience and the skill of those that set up and run the account. Always take the time to talk carefully through your goals and aims with a professional beforehand to see how realistic they are and how well they fit your business needs.

# How to Get Started with PPC Advertising?

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So you know what PPC campaigns are and when you should consider them, but how do you actually get started?

Firstly, you'll need to decide what's best for you, taking into account your budget, goals, audience and key metrics of success. The simplest and most effective way to do this is always to talk to a professional. Now you're unlikely to be short of people trying to sell their services (which is ironic for me to say, I know), so the real decision comes down to who's best for you.

Never be afraid to ask questions when choosing who to work with: Are they local? Are they Google partners? Do they have expertise within your industry? Then, once you talk with them directly: what do they suggest for you and why? And how will they measure success? If someone is promising results that sound too good to be true, then they probably are. Take your time and do your research to make sure your chosen partner is the best fit for your business.

**Now here's the plug we all knew was coming, so let's get it out of the way.**

Breckenridge are a Google partnered growth agency based in Hampshire who have over 35 years expertise in all things marketing. We specialise in B2B technology, engineering and professional services businesses - so if this sounds like you, pop on over to our contact page and let's have a chat to get things started.

Now that that bit is out of the way, let's run through the key details you'll need to think through before you can start a successful PPC campaign:

## **Know your audience**

One of the first questions you need to ask at the outset of every PPC campaign is "who exactly am I targeting". If you're B2C, this will likely mean the key demographics that your product resonates with, but for B2B industries this can be a more complex question.

As a B2B business, you'll know the types of companies you want to work with or sell to, but within each is a complex hierarchy of users who all have their own distinct pain points, so need different messaging to reach effectively. The higher-ups might hold the purse strings, but will they understand the problem you solve as well as the ground-level staff do? And do you target just one demographic, or several with their own bespoke campaigns and messaging?

Deciding who to target and how for maximum impact will inform how the entire account is built from start to finish

## **Know your PPC campaign goals**

It's at this point I normally get a blank stare followed by the words "to sell more", but there are a huge number of ways to influence every stage of the buyer's journey, rather than focusing purely on the bottom of the funnel "buy this now".

If your business, product or service are relatively new, it may be far more valuable long term to spread awareness to a wider audience than to go directly in for the sale. People are far more likely to buy from brands they know and trust, so starting to build up this familiarity over time is far more likely to result in a sale than going directly in for the sale before the user knows or trusts you or your product. This is especially true if your offering is a new innovation, as your audience is unlikely to be searching for a solution it doesn't know exists. In these cases, your most important metric will simply be impressions: how many people you can get your message in front of.

Users in the consideration stage know they have a problem and want to know more about the solution before deciding whether or not it's for them. When targeting the middle of the buyer's journey, your most important metric is likely to be clicks: how many people you can get to your website to learn more.

Even if we decide to focus purely on conversions, there are still a number of shapes this can take. What goals are most important to your business in the long run? Deals closed there and then are always the most ideal, but we should be measuring every important milestone on the journey to the sale. This will include clicks on telephone numbers, downloads, live chats and form completions - anything that results either in direct contact with the customer, or that adds their details into your system to be contacted later.

Keeping an open mind to all the steps to success and thinking of the longer term journey is nearly always far more effective at driving sustainable conversions than simply focusing on pure ROI from the word go.

### **Where are you targeting?**

When creating your campaign messaging, the 'where' is just as important as the 'who'. If you're a business that has branches in both England and Scotland for example, you'll likely want two separate campaigns with different phrasing tailored to each area. If you do most of your business in-store, you'll likely want to show your ads for a set radius around your individual branches, helping to shepherd local customers to the right location.

Google revealed in 2017 that over two years, searches for local places without using the qualifier "near me" had grown 150%, faster than comparable searches that didn't include "near me". Simply put, users are expecting their results to be local by default, so are feeling less need to specify it within their searches. Ensuring you serve the most relevant results on an area-by-area basis will always result in greater engagement than simply serving the same page to users countrywide, or even worldwide.

## **Should I Work With a PPC Agency?**

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A PPC agency simplifies the process of running a successful PPC account by using their years of expertise to take care of the research, creation and management of your paid advertising account.

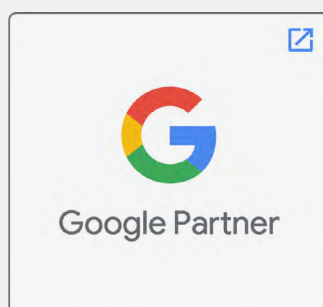
As PPC itself is constantly evolving, keeping on top of the changes and ensuring your knowledge stays up-to-date can be challenging, so unless you have the resources to hire a dedicated in-house team for your digital marketing, you run the risk of falling behind. A key benefit to hiring external specialists is their dedicated, expert knowledge and access to tools which would otherwise come with large costs attached.

## **How Do I Choose a PPC Agency?**

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### **Are they Google Partners?**

If you're trusting an agency to get the best out of your account and budget, you need to be confident they have the skills to back it up. Checking if an agency is a Google partner with up-to-date certifications can be a quick way of weeding out those that aren't up to scratch.





## Are they local?

In an increasingly digital world, having a local PPC agency is not nearly as important as it used to be. For larger businesses serving entire countries, there is little to no benefit choosing an agency down the road over one hundreds of miles away - especially now the last few years has got us all used to taking our meetings online.

That being said, if you run a local business rather than nationwide or even worldwide, there may be some benefit in choosing a partner who has not only local knowledge, but also connections and experience in running campaigns in your area.

As a Southampton-based digital agency, Breckenridge has run campaigns not only for businesses across Hampshire, but across the globe.

## Do they have experience in my sector?

Every sector has entirely unique needs when it comes to advertising, from demographics and targeting, to the right platforms, campaign types and phrasing. Choosing an agency who has proven expertise in your sector can make a real difference to how successful an outcome you can achieve with their help.

Don't be shy to browse through their case studies or, better yet, ask them directly if they've worked in your industry before. Breckenridge specialises in B2B technology, engineering and professional services businesses.

# How are PPC Accounts Structured?

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Whilst it's true that no two AdWords accounts are exactly the same, the basic structure remains identical across the board. Each account contains one or more campaigns, which contain one or more AdGroups, which each contain one or more Keywords (or similar targeting method) and at least one ad.

Being laid out in this way makes it extremely easy to navigate the account to find what you need, even in an account you aren't familiar with. The purpose of each of these levels is laid out below:

## What are PPC Campaigns?

The top-level component of each account are campaigns. These are collections of AdGroups that share the same purpose and targeting.

Each campaign within AdWords can be targeted towards either the search network, display network, shopping network, video or universal app, depending on where you want adverts to display.

## What are PPC AdGroups?

AdGroups are collections of keywords with similar or identical intent. They are used to provide structure and separate keywords into related groups, such as types of product or service that you offer, which are suitable to share the same adverts.

## What are PPC Keywords?

Keywords are the main method used by advertisers to decide when and where their ads should be shown. In essence, they are specific words or phrases that act as triggers when included as part of a user's search query.

Lets say, for example, you were selling golfing equipment - by bidding on "golf clubs" as a keyword, you can appear whenever a user searches for a query containing this term.

Keywords can be targeted in a number of different ways, depending on how broad or granular you want to be when targeting user intent. The main PPC keyword types are Broad match, Phrase match and Exact match. Each of these targeting options have increasing levels of precision and are best used in tangent with one another, with broader options used to capture searches missed by more specific, targeted terms. Broader

targeted keywords can draw in far more traffic, but can also run the risk of drawing in users whose search intent doesn't quite match what the advertiser is trying to sell.

Research is key for any PPC campaign. There are many keyword tools available which can help advertisers research which terms may be relevant for the product or service they're looking to promote, but we would advise new users to always consult a professional when setting up their campaigns, to lower the risk of unexpected results and unwanted traffic.

## What are the Main Types of PPC Keyword?

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### What are Broad Match Keywords:

Broad match keywords are traditionally the most commonly used keywords, and the foundation of most PPC accounts. These keywords are useful for when you want to cast the net wide, showing your advert to everyone that searches using a specific term, regardless of the longer query.

Broad match can be used for either a single keyword, or a series of words. In the case of the latter, each individual word (or a close variant) must be included in the search term for the advert to trigger.

For example, if you bid on the term "wedding suit", you would show for the search "where can I buy a suit for my wedding", but not for "suit stores near me".

These keywords will include misspellings, synonyms and other related variations, so if you were to bid on the term "Mens Trainers", you could potentially appear for related terms such as "Boys Trainers" or "Mens Running Shoes". This can be helpful if there are several related terms that match the search intent you're targeting, but can also have the (all too frequent) side effect of bringing in a lot of unwanted and unrelated traffic as well. This can be mitigated through the use of negative keywords.

As the targeting range is so broad (as the name suggests), the cost per click for this method can potentially be higher than more focused targeting options. This is due to both the increased competition (as broader targeting means much more potential overlap with competitors keywords) and the fact the advert can often be less relevant to the users search intent, which affects quality score.

Due to the broad nature of this targeting method, it's important to regularly audit the keyword search report and make good use of negative keywords to block any potentially unwanted search terms.

### What are Phrase Match Keywords:

Phrase match keywords will only trigger adverts if the entire phrase specified is included within the users search query. Since the July 2021 update, the targeting of this match type has been expanded to show even if the words present are not in the correct order, provided this order does not change the meaning.

As phrase match keywords are often far more targeted than broad, designed to serve specific search intents rather than broad topics, they are often cheaper per click. This is due in part to the increased relevance to the user intent, but also due to the lower volume of competition (the broader the term, the more likely it is to overlap with the bids of another advertiser, and vice-versa).

### What are Exact Match Keywords:

The most tightly targeted keyword type is Exact Match. This matching option will (in theory) only trigger an advert if the phrase being searched for exactly matches the term you're bidding on. Adverts will not show if the phrase is part of a longer query, or if words are added or removed.

For example, The exact match keyword “Buy running shoes” would not show for the search queries “where can I buy running shoes” or “buy size 10 running shoes”.

Exact match lets you get extremely specific with your AdText and landing page content, matching search intent exactly to keep quality score high and costs low. There are also likely to be far fewer competitors for well-targeted exact match keywords, as there is far less overlap with other search intents than broad or phrase match terms.

In practice, these are not as exact as they once were. Google has started showing wider variations of terms using its machine learning algorithms to match intent. Whilst these can often be relevant, it’s still early days and we’re still seeing a noticeable amount of unwanted traffic from these “close variants”.

### **What are Negative Keywords:**

Negative keywords are terms you don’t want to display your adverts against. For example, if you’re selling apple computers, you likely add words like “fresh” to your negative keyword list to ensure you don’t display your ads to people looking for fruit.

Negative keywords can be applied at AdGroup or Campaign level, or as part of a larger list which can be applied to several campaigns (or the entire account) at once.

### **What are Long Tail Keywords:**

Long-tail keywords are keywords that contain three or more individual words. These are likely to bring in far lower volumes of traffic than shorter, broader keywords, but can be targeted far more precisely, often resulting in greatly increased conversion rates when used correctly.

### **What are Short Tail Keywords:**

Short Tail Keywords are search terms made up of less than three words. These are much more broad than long-tail keywords and will result in higher volumes of traffic, but are also less targeted as a result.

### **What are Broad Match Modifier Keywords:**

Broad match modifiers were made obsolete in a July 2021 update, with their functionality instead being rolled into phrase match. Previously, by adding a + sign to the start of a broad match keyword, you could instruct Google to only bid on the exact keywords you have specified (or very close matches, such as typos) whilst ignoring all potential synonyms. These keywords could still appear in any order within the user’s search query, as long as each term was included.

For example, “+Mens +Trainers” would display for the search “buy trainers for men”, but not “Boys Trainers”.

Aside from this key difference, they performed identically to standard broad match keywords.

## **What is the Keyword Planner?**

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The Keyword Planner is a free Google tool which allows users to plan their paid campaigns effectively by both discovering new keywords and getting search volume data on their existing keyword lists.

To discover new keyword ideas, you can either enter a list of keywords you already have and let Google’s algorithms find related terms, or you can enter a website and let Google suggest keywords relevant to your niche. You can also use a hybrid between the two, entering a keyword list then adding your website as a filter to remove products and services that aren’t relevant to you.

# THANK YOU

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