SEO MASTERY

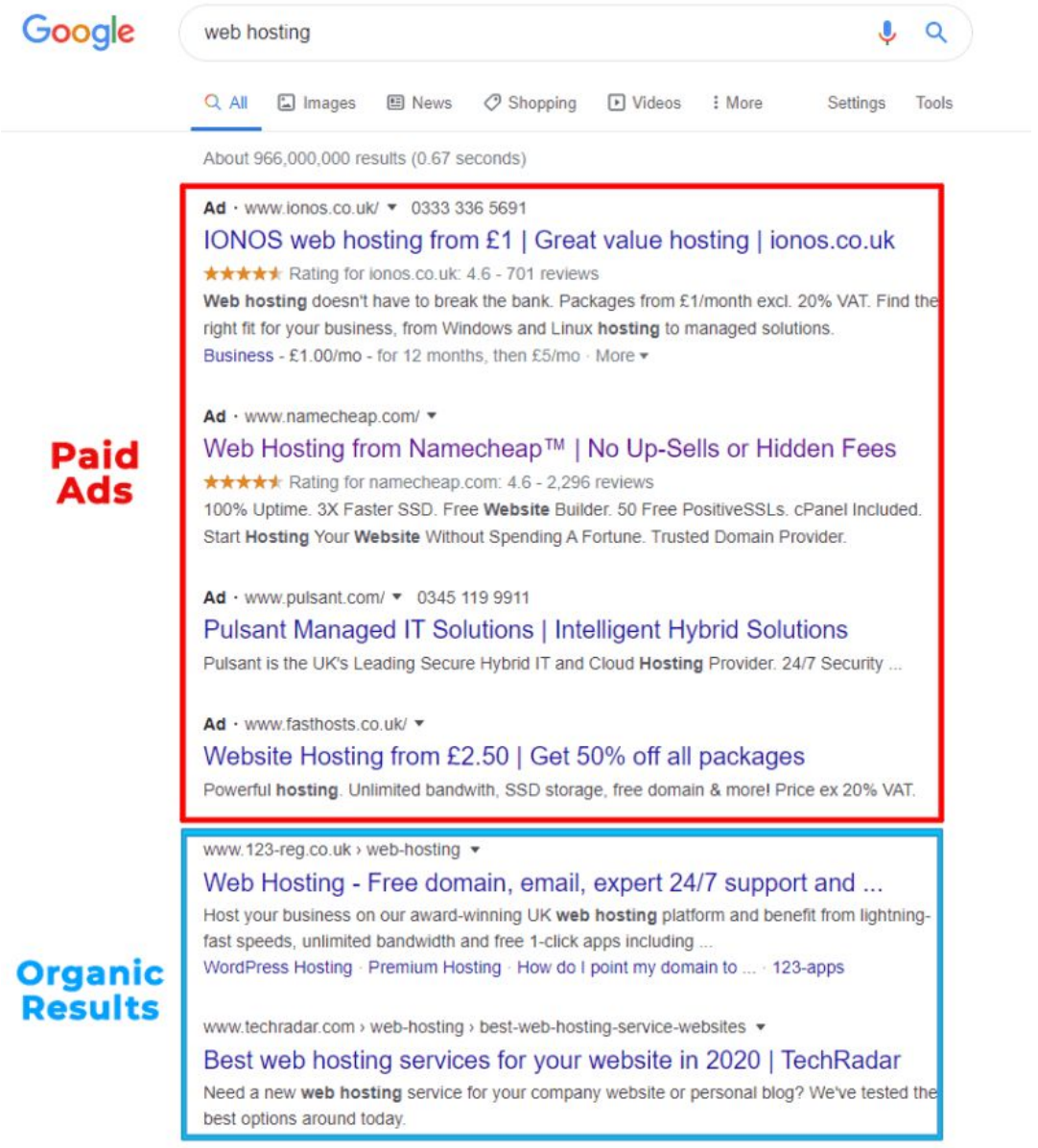


CRACK THE ALGORITHM AND RIDE THE TRAFFIC WAVE.

WHAT IS SEO?

What Is SEO?

SEO stands for Search Engine Optimization.
It is a collection of techniques and methods used to help improve your search engine ranking.
In other words, it is all the work done that will go towards increasing website traffic through search engines.
When done correctly, SEO will result in an increase in the quality and quantity of traffic your website receives through organic search engine results.
SEO is done to increase your website's organic ranking and is completely unrelated to paid traffic.



As you can see in the image, the paid results do appear first, but the organic results have not needed to be paid to appear here. This alone shows how important SEO is because you can organically get onto the first page of search results without needing to pay for any ads.

The key parts of SEO:

On-Page SEO –
On-Page SEO refers to the practice of individually optimizing web pages to earn a higher ranking in search engine results pages.
It refers to all content, including text, images, videos, and the HTML code for the website.

Keyword Research –
Keyword research is the work you do to find the keywords and phrases that your target market are typing in search engines.
The end goal is to optimize your website's content to rank for those keywords/phrases or 'terms'.

Off-Site SEO –
It refers to the actions taken outside of your website to help increase your rankings in search engine results pages (SERPs).
Off-Site optimization includes improving your site's popularity, trustworthiness, authority and relevance.
This can be done by having other relevant and high authority websites linking to your website.

Local SEO –
Local search engine optimization is all about increasing visibility on search engines for businesses that sell to their customers in a physical location, as well as or instead of online.
These types of businesses could be anything that operates offline from a local bakery to a service-based company, like a plumber or a window cleaner.
Local SEO can include anything from setting up a Google my business page, to adding your businesses local information to your website.

Technical SEO –
Technical SEO usually refers to the work that needs to be done to optimize your website for crawling and indexing, it can also include any technical process that is used to improve search engine ranking and visibility.
The main reason that it is called “technical” is that it has less to do with the content on your site, and focuses on the more technical aspects, including page loading speed, URL structure, XML sitemaps, mobile-friendliness and more.
If you do all of these correctly and comprehensively, you have a higher chance of ranking on the first page of the search engine results.

How Search Engines Work

Search engines are quite complex, but the way they process can be put into three simple to understand steps.
1- Crawl: First search engines crawl the internet for content, looking at each page they find and following every link on those pages.
2- Index: Then they store and sort all of the content that has been found from crawling the web, once sorted, the content is ready to be displayed to users.
3- Rank: Finally the content is displayed in search results, ranked in order of how relevant and useful it is deemed to be based on the search query.
So to simplify it even more, search engines like Google scan through all of the content on the internet by crawling it, then they store and sort it, and then finally display the most relevant content in the search engine results pages.

Why SEO Is Important

You can just use paid ads to generate website traffic, but organic search engine traffic will cost nothing and will give better results in the long run.

Visibility

One of the most important aspects of SEO is to increase your site's visibility, this is done by making it easy for users to find your website when they type a query into a search engine that is relevant to your content.
If your SEO efforts are successful and you manage to get a high ranking the visibility of your site will increase massively.

Web Traffic

Increased website traffic is one of the most sought after goals in an SEO campaign, it is achieved when you increase your site's search engine rankings.
If you want more users to find your website through Google or another search engine, you must optimize your website for search engines.
Getting your site to the first page of search results will increase website traffic, and if you manage to get into the top five results, you are doing it right!
The first five organic results on Google search results pages amount to over 65% of all clicks.

User Experience

A good SEO plan also forces you to improve the quality of the content that you produce and optimize the user experience/usability of your site, in turn making it easier for users to navigate your content.
If your site has a good user experience, for example, the menu is easy to navigate, and the pages are mobile responsive, you will increase the time that users spend on your website and lower the percentage of people who close your site after viewing just one page (bounce rate).
Other great ways to improve user experience include: optimize the page loading speed, use images & videos, and make content that is easy to read.

Authority

Your website's authority and trust are improved when you optimize properly, mainly by building relevant links to your site and creating high-quality fresh content.
With age brings trust, if your site's pages are being updated when needed, receiving quality backlinks, and contain high-quality content – over time the authority and trustworthiness will continue to build on their own.

Should I Hire A Professional?

Whether or not you should hire a professional is all down the size of your website, and your ability to learn the ins and outs of SEO.
Reasons to Hire a professional:

- You don't have any time to put aside to do SEO work.
- Google has penalised your website.
- Your website traffic has been declining and you don't know why.
- The website is very comprehensive, meaning the SEO work will be more complicated.

Reasons to do SEO yourself:

- You will save the money that you would have spent hiring a professional.
- You can learn search engine optimization, which is a very valuable skill.
- The website is very simple (only a couple of pages), meaning SEO should be straight forward.

It is all down to how you view it and whether or not you think you have the time and learning ability to do it yourself.

How Much Time Does It Take?

The SEO process can take a different amount of time for every website.
The average site will start seeing some results after 6 months, so don't think you will be at the top of Google in just a couple of days! However, some aspects can change how quickly you will start seeing positive results.

The design of your website:

A badly designed website that is difficult for users to navigate can negatively impact your site's search engine rankings.

The size of your audience/target market:

If your site is focused around a very specific niche which is easy to target, it may be easier to rank on the first page of search results.

The competition:

If your website is in a highly competitive industry, where you have massive competitors, it can be difficult to get into the first page of search results.

KEYWORD RESEARCH

What Is Keyword Research?

Keyword research is the work you do to find the keywords and phrases that your target market are typing in search engines.
The end goal is to optimize your website's content to rank for those keywords/phrases or 'terms'.
There are many places where you can build your keyword list: text document, spreadsheet, in a keyword research tool, or just on a sheet of paper if you want.

Why Is Keyword Research Important?

Well quite simply because it shapes the content that you make.
It is usually the first step you take when optimizing a website for SEO.
By researching the keywords you want to rank for in your content, you are giving yourself a much better chance in ranking positively in search engines, and also in getting relevant traffic to your website.

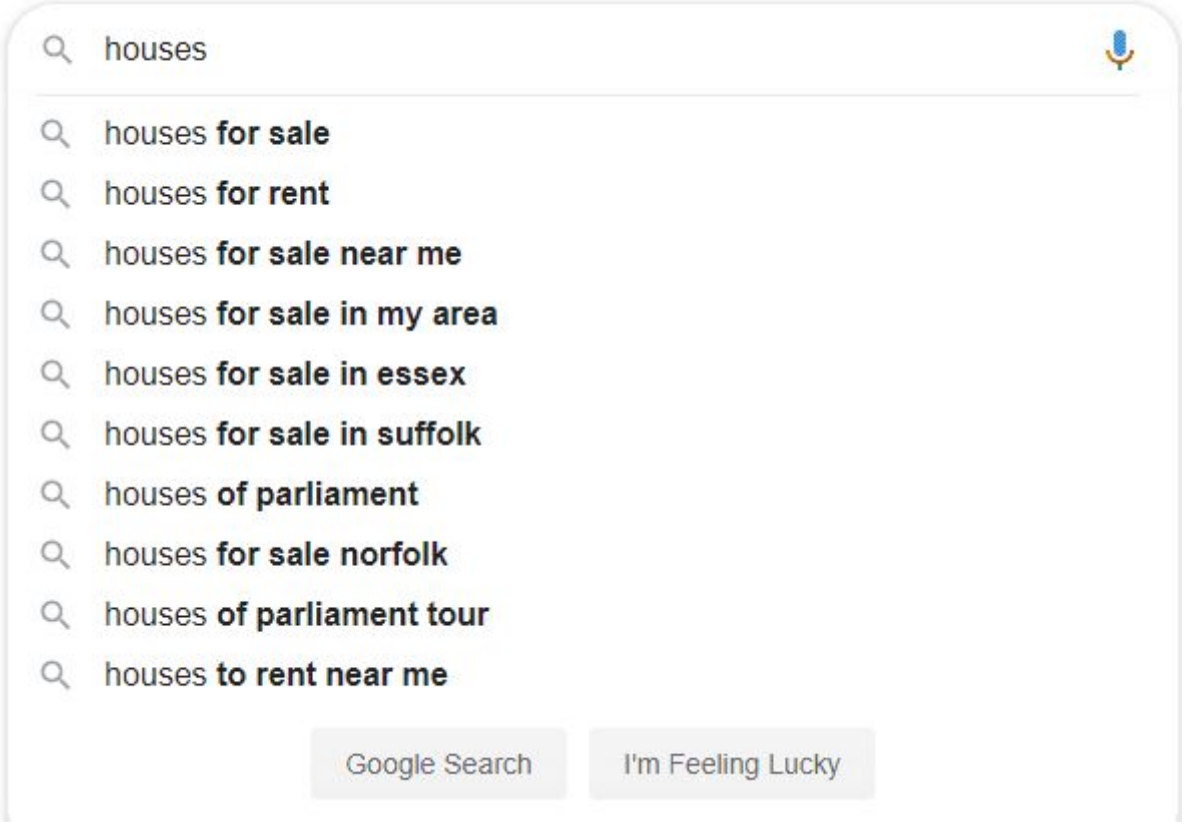
Generating Keyword Ideas

The easiest way to start coming up with ideas is to have a brainstorming session.
What you want to do is start by writing down a list of topics that are related to your business.

So, let's say you run a real estate business, you will want to write down topics like:

- **Land**
- **Houses**
- **Condo**
- **Flats**
- **Apartments**

Once you have a list of topics, you will want to start the process of narrowing them down into keywords.
The first step is to type each of them into Google, but don't click search!
You will see some different options below your original search, this is called Google Suggest because these are searches that a lot of other users have made, which is why Google is suggesting them to you.
Now you should add all of these to your initial keyword list.



You can also do the same with any other search engine, like YouTube, Bing or Amazon to see what searches users are making on there too!
The next thing you can do is use the related searches section that Google gives us.
Simply search for each of your topics (and actually click search this time), and then scroll to the bottom of the results where it says "Searches related to ..."
Here you will see 8 more keywords that are related to the search that has been made.



Add all of those to your list.
Now click on one of the searches related to your keyword, and if you scroll down again you will see 8 new possible keywords that you can add to your list.



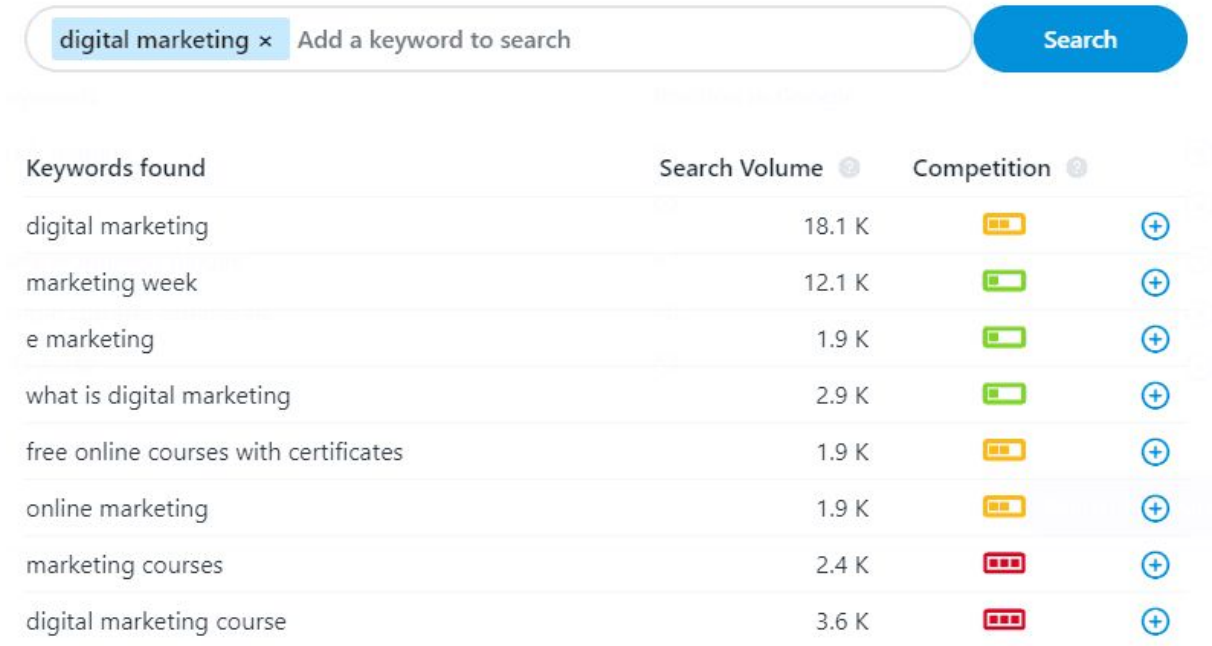
This is a great way to start building your initial list of keywords.
You should keep doing this until you are happy with the number of keywords in your list.

The Best Keyword Research Tools

Tools make the whole process of finding and checking keywords much easier and faster.
Here is a list of some of the most helpful keyword research tools currently available:

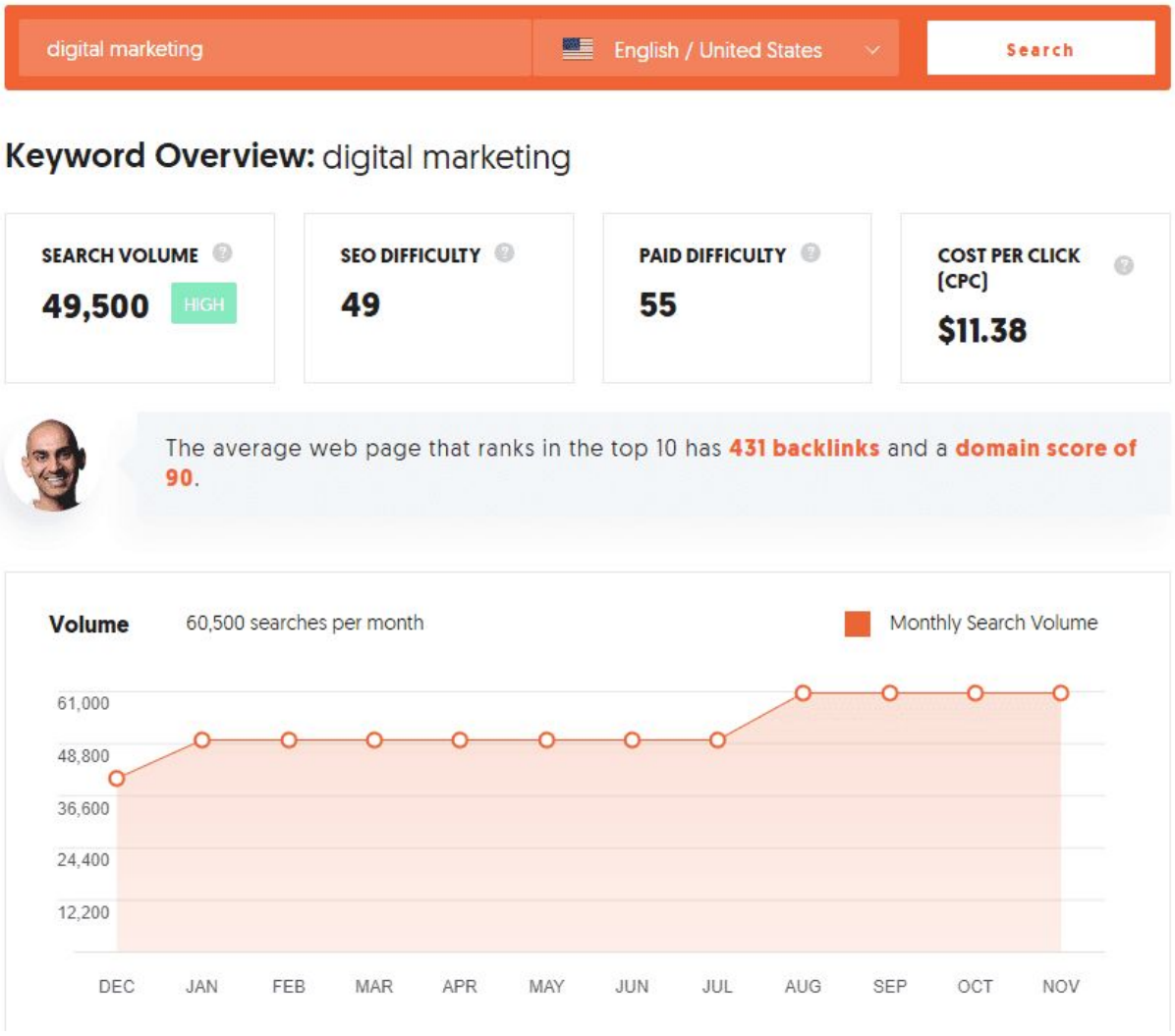
marketgoo

An SEO auditing platform which also has a useful keyword research tool which is easy to use.
Just enter one or more keywords into their research tool and they will give you keyword ideas with the search volume and competition data for each keyword that they suggest.

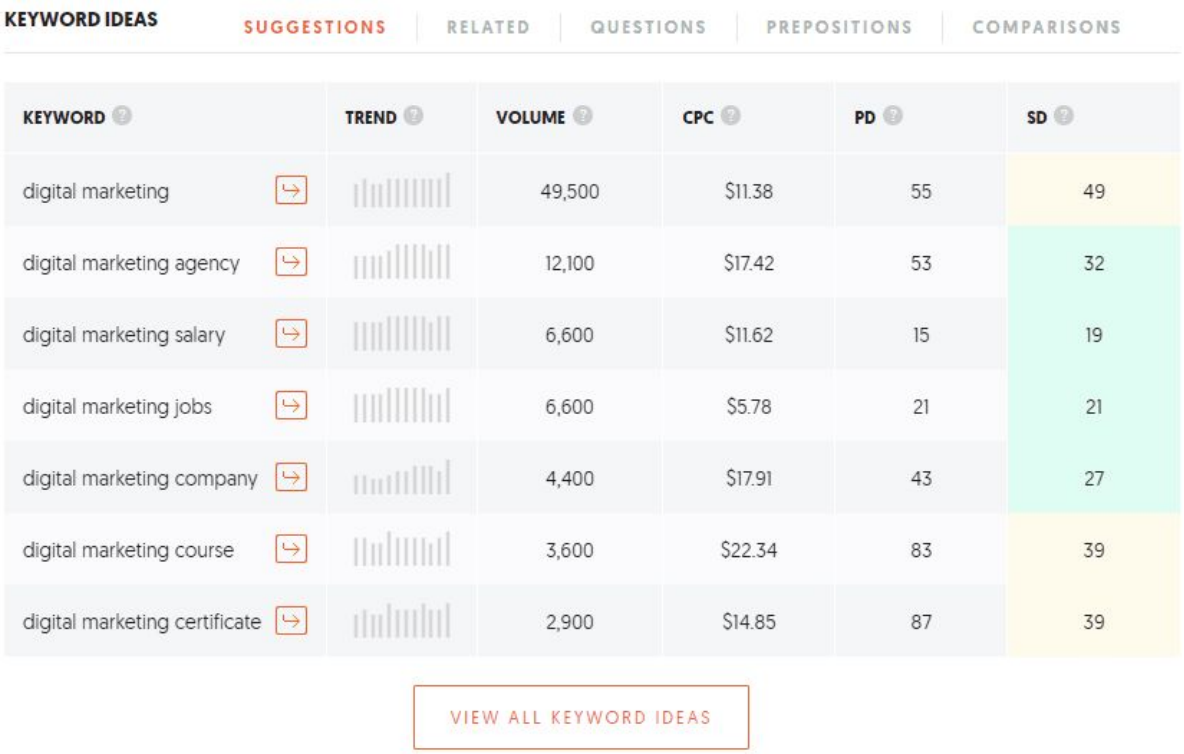


Ubersuggest

This is a keyword research tool that scrapes data from Google suggest.
This will save you a lot of time and also gives you information on search volume, keyword difficulty, CPC and more for every keyword.
Just enter your keyword & click search and all of the information will be right in front of you.



It first analyses the keyword that you searched, and then below that it gives you keyword ideas, suggestions, questions & more, all related to the original keyword that you entered.
You can even filter the suggested keywords and export them or choose to copy them if you want!



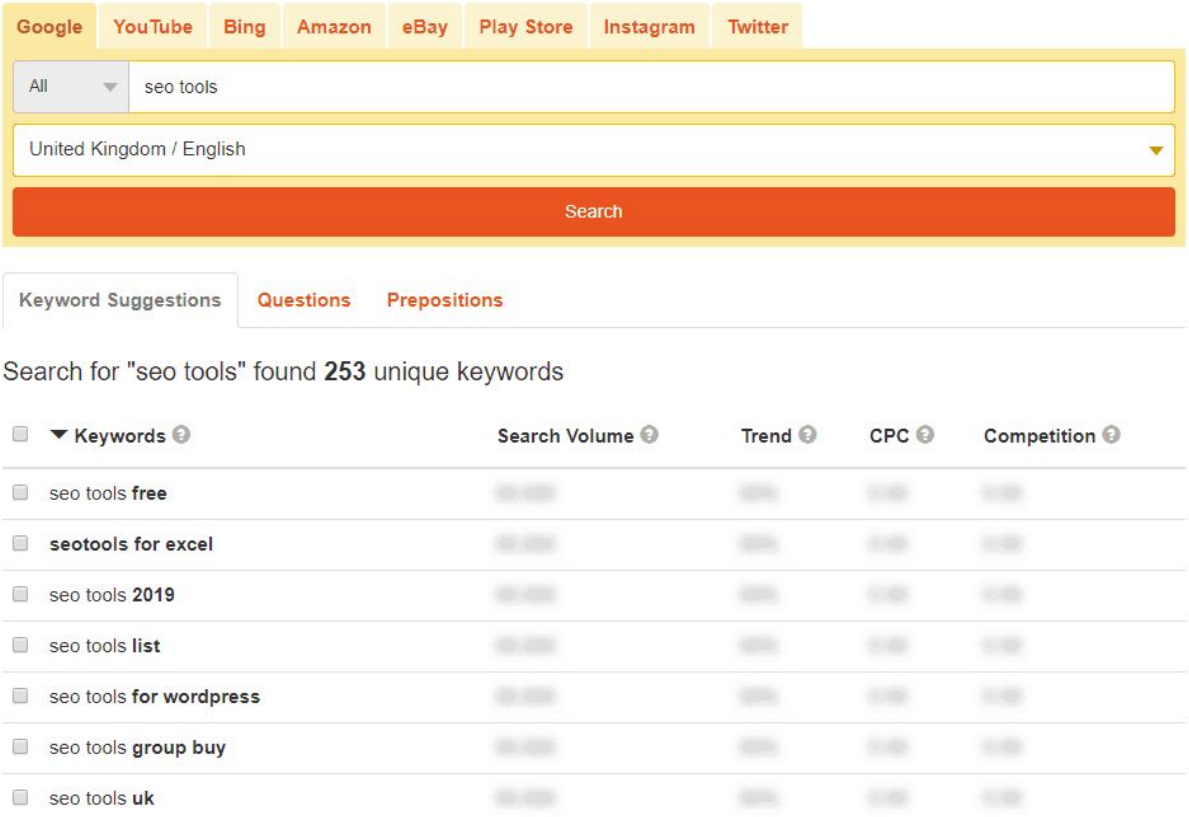
Considering this is free, it is probably one of the best SEO tools available right now. (And that's not even looking at all of the other features that Ubersuggest has like it's traffic analyser, SEO analyser and more!!)

SEMrush

This is one of the best-paid keyword tools on the market!
It tells you what keywords other sites rank for, so enter a competitors web address into their tool and BOOM!
Now you can see every keyword that their site organically ranks for, along with A LOT of technical information.
Some of the information that you will see for each keyword includes: Search position, traffic amount, traffic %, volume, CPC and more!
You can now get inspiration from their keywords when building your keyword list.

KeywordTool.io

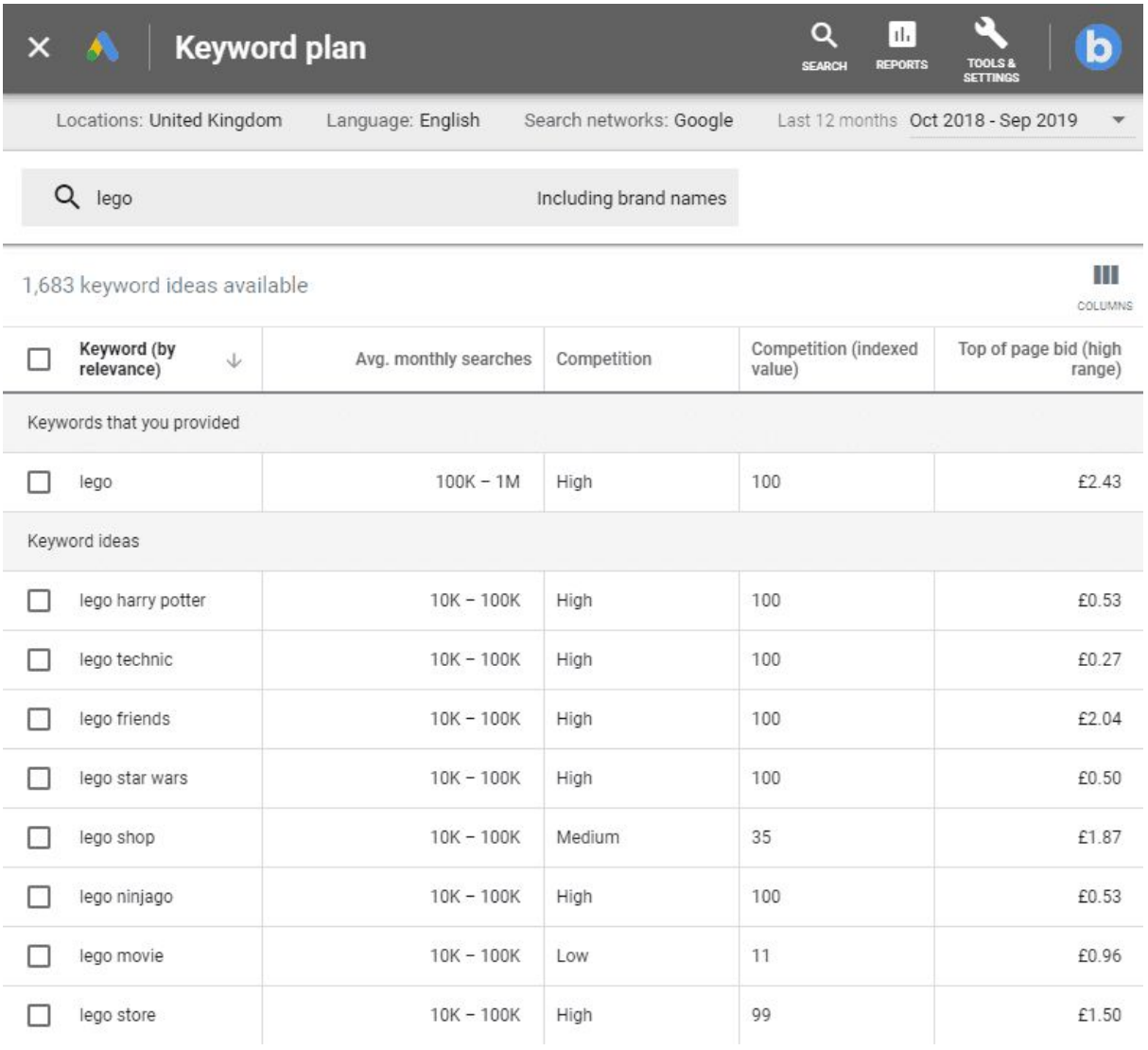
This is a free & paid keyword research tool.
It covers Google, YouTube, Bing, Amazon, eBay, Play Store, Instagram & Twitter. The free plan is fantastic for finding keywords, questions & prepositions.
The paid plan gives you search volume data, CPC, competition & more! I would suggest that for building your keyword list, this is one of the best free tools available even without the paid information.



Google Keyword Planner

Data shown in the Google keyword planner comes straight from Google as the tool is made by Google, so it is certainly a trusted & accurate source!
The keyword planner gives you all of the information you need to find keyword ideas, along with large amounts of accurate data. Use this tool as you would with any other by entering your term and clicking search.

They give you the EXACT information for every single keyword, including CPC, competition & average monthly searches
I highly recommend Google keyword planner as it is free, it is made by Google and it works very well.
It was made to be used with Google AdWords but it is a very useful keyword research tool, so many people use it for just that!
And then just like with the other tools, you can extract them by clicking “download keyword ideas” and it will download them to an excel document.
Take a look at the image below to see just how much data you get when you use Google keyword planner and they remember that it is completely free … incredible.



Keyword (by relevance)	Avg. monthly searches	Competition	Competition (indexed value)	Top of page bid (high range)
Keywords that you provided				
lego	100K – 1M	High	100	£2.43
Keyword ideas				
lego harry potter	10K – 100K	High	100	£0.53
lego technic	10K – 100K	High	100	£0.27
lego friends	10K – 100K	High	100	£2.04
lego star wars	10K – 100K	High	100	£0.50
lego shop	10K – 100K	Medium	35	£1.87
lego ninjago	10K – 100K	High	100	£0.53
lego movie	10K – 100K	Low	11	£0.96
lego store	10K – 100K	High	99	£1.50

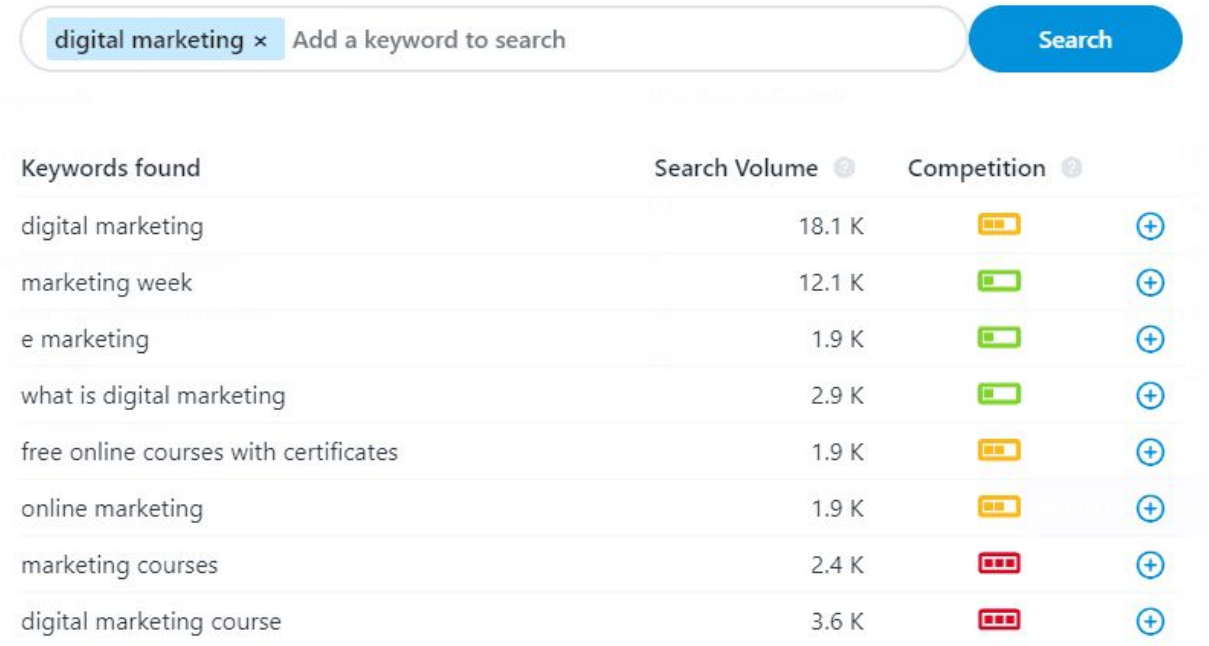
Ahrefs

This is probably one of the most comprehensive SEO tools.
It has EVERYTHING that you can think of, from backlink tools to a keyword explorer, and even an SEO toolbar for Google Chrome and Firefox!
The main subscription starts at $99 per month, so if you are a starter, this may not be for you.
Its keyword explorer gives you massive amounts of data for each keyword, so it is great for helping you choose whether or not a particular keyword is worth using.
The UI is also very clear displaying keyword difficulty, search volume, CPC and global volume for each keyword that you enter into the tool.
It is very good, but I think that if you are just using it for the keyword explorer I would suggest using Ubersuggest, or Google keyword planner as they are both free.
So to recap, Ahrefs is an incredible suite of SEO tools, but it is not worth the price if you are only paying for it to use one of the tools that they offer!

Keyword Competition

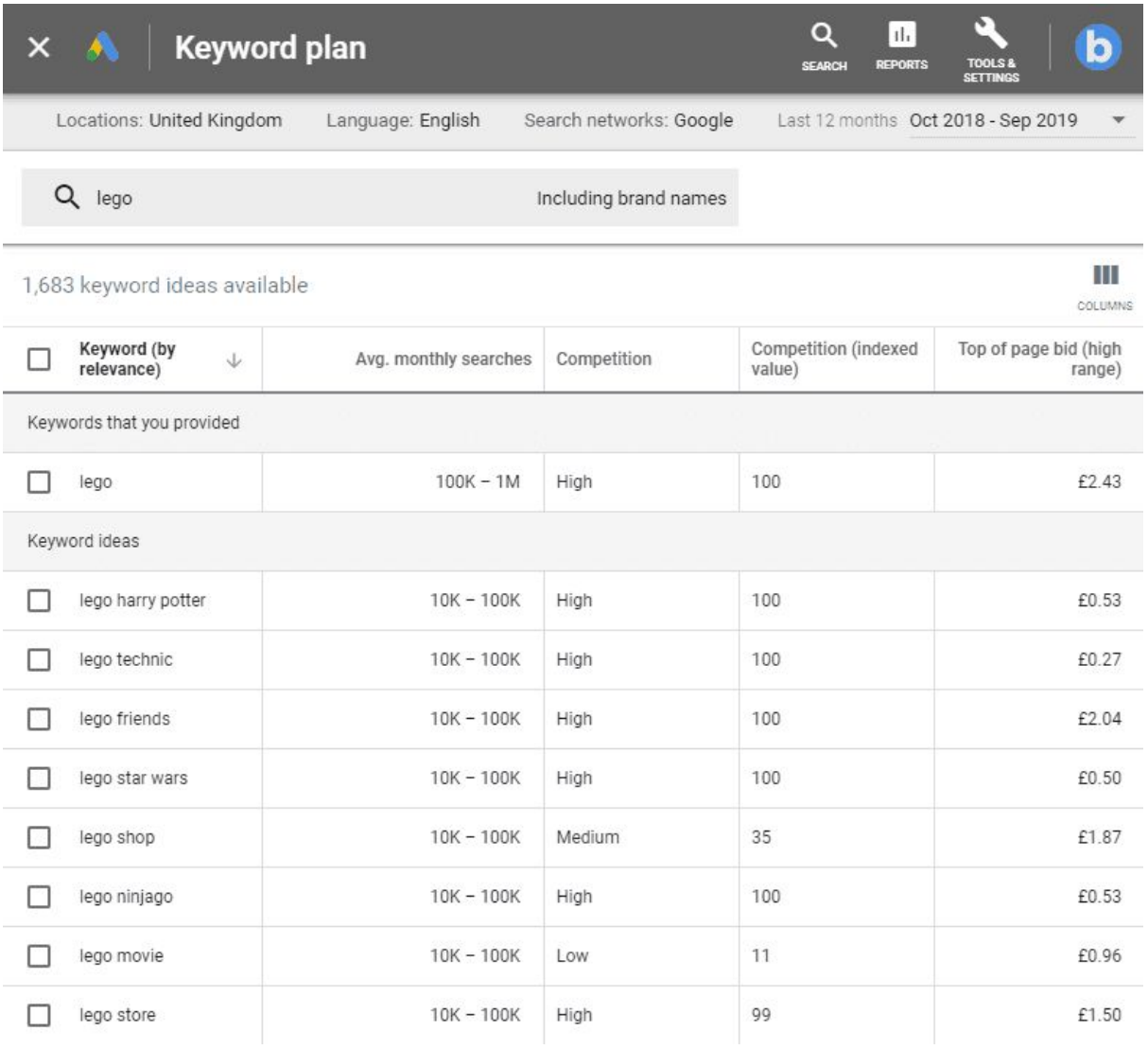
You want to see the keyword competition (or keyword difficulty) because it shows you how many other websites are ranking with the same keyword.
The more sites using the same keyword means the more difficult it will be to rank for that particular keyword because you are not the only one!
If you try to rank for a keyword that has high competition, likely, you will not rank very high and your page will be hidden at the bottom of the search results.
However, if you find a keyword with very little competition or difficulty, you could see your site ranking well for that particular keyword.
This means it is important to research the competition of a particular keyword before using it.

Luckily, there are many easy ways to do just that!
First, we will look at the easiest way to compare keyword competition and that is with keyword tools that just give you all the data you will ever need!
We have already looked at many brilliant keyword research tools, so now we will have another look at them to see the data they each give on keyword difficulty.
First, we have **marketgoo**, their competition data is simplified with red, orange and green bars:



The green bar means that the competition for that particular keyword is low, orange is in the middle and then if you see a red bar next to a keyword it means that it will be difficult to rank for as the competition is high.

Next, take a look at the competition data on the **Google keyword planner**:



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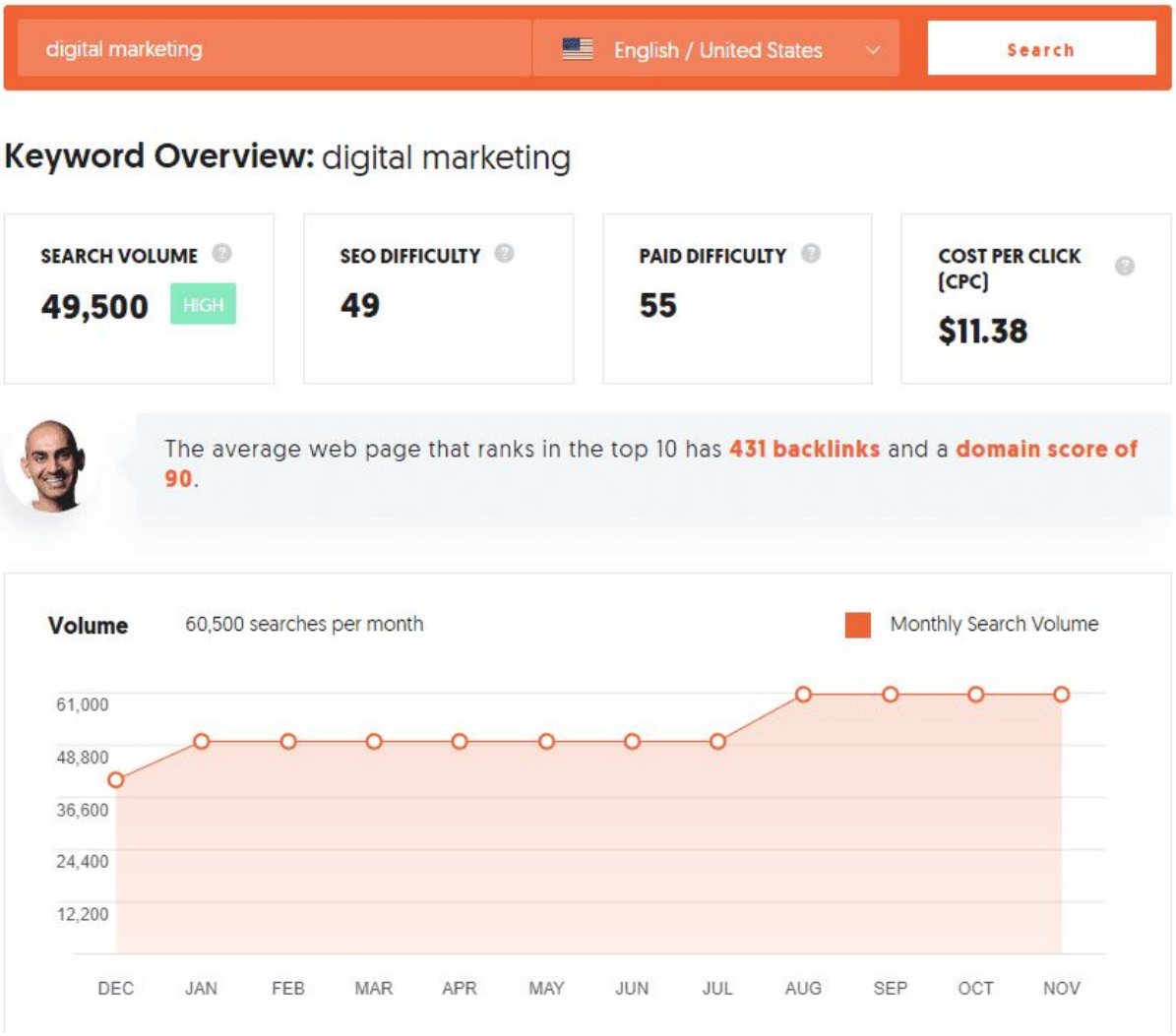
The final tool we will look at the competition data for is Ubersuggest:



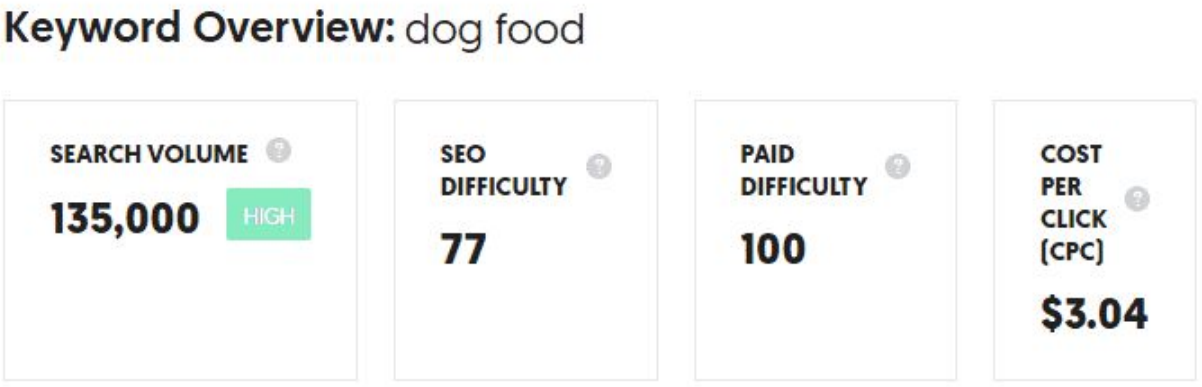
As you can see, Ubersuggest gives you the difficulty/competition data for both SEO ranking and also paid search.
Because of this, I would say that Ubersuggest is the overall best free keyword research tool.

Now Let's Talk About "Long tail keywords"

Long-tail keywords are keywords but longer, usually they are phrases of 4 or more words.
If you are struggling to rank your pages, you should try using long-tail keywords.

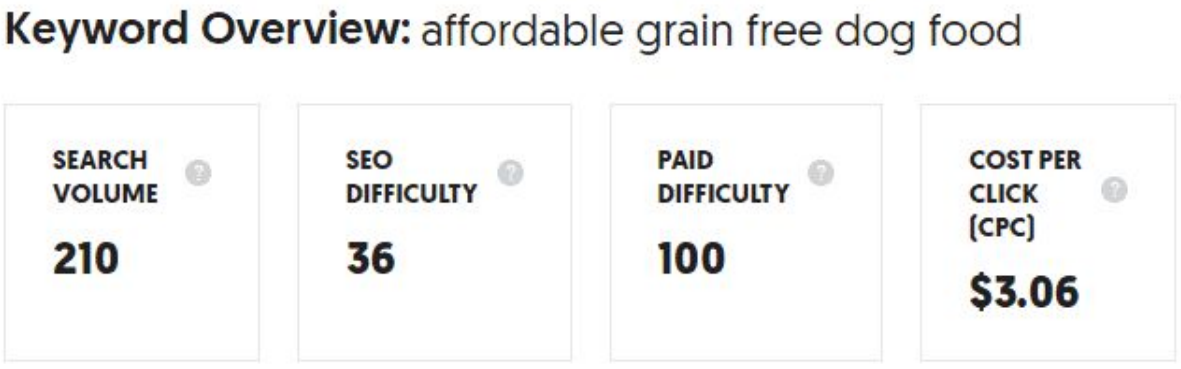
These are less competitive as they are more specific keywords, as opposed to other broader keywords which are much more competitive.
Here is an example for you:
The keyword “dog food” is very generic which means many people are searching for it and many websites are ranking for it already.





Now if you look at the keyword “affordable grain-free dog food“, you can see that it is much more specific and the difficulty is lower. This is because fewer users are searching that particular term, so fewer websites are trying to rank for it.





Even though fewer people are searching for the more specific long-tail keywords, the people that are will likely be people that find your content more relevant.

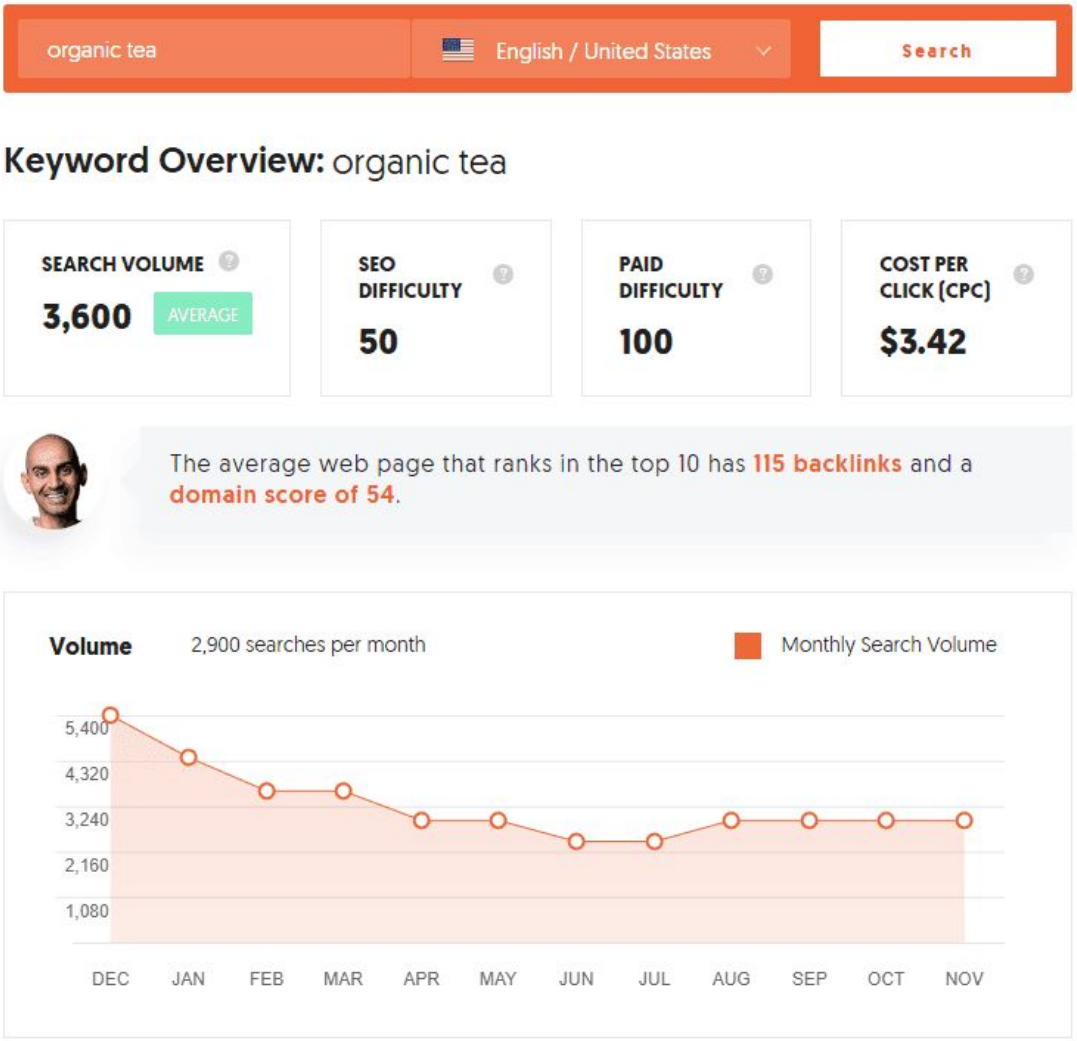
So if you try to rank for more specific long-tail keywords, you will have less competition, have a high chance of ranking higher, and also start seeing more relevant traffic to your site.

Picking Your Keywords

No tool can tell you which keyword to pick, that's why there are a few more steps to take before finally picking the keyword that you will use.

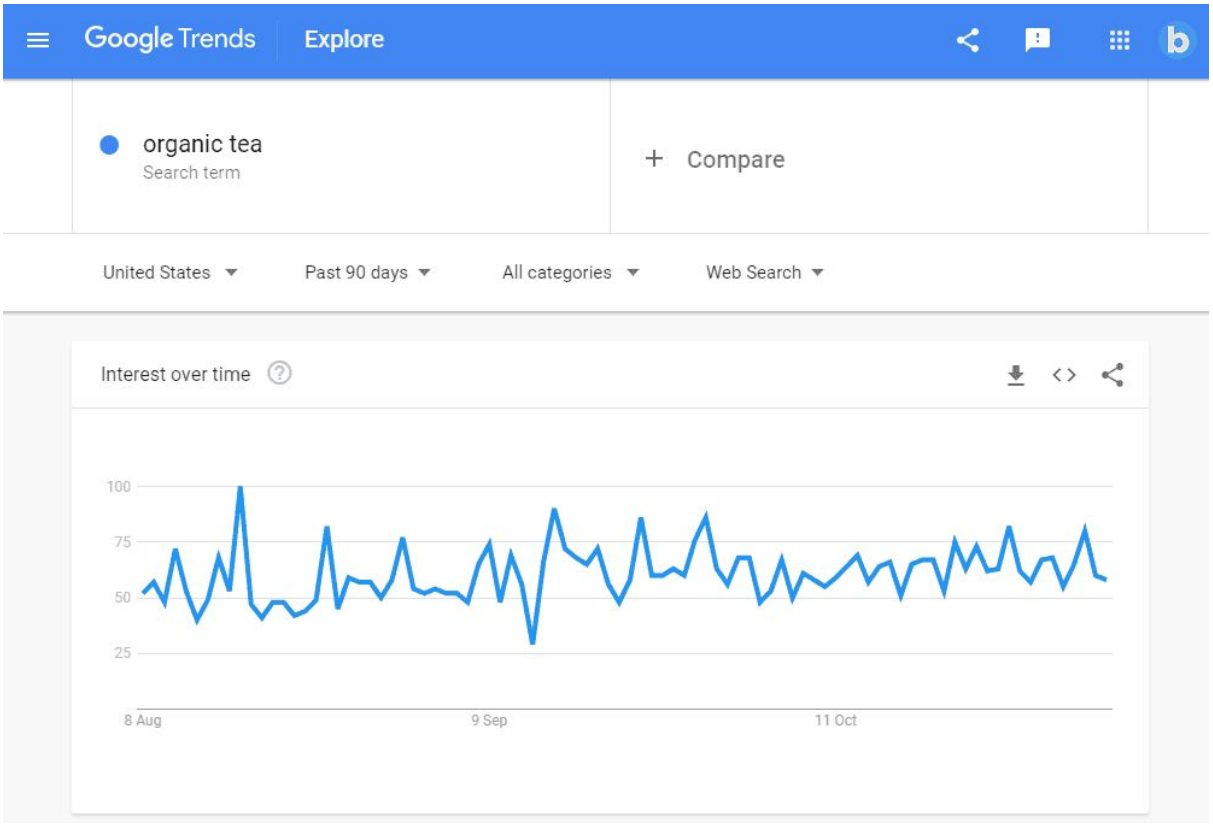
Search Volume

The perfect keyword will be high in **search volume**, with ranking difficulty which is not too high, it also needs to be relevant to the content on your page.
When picking your keyword you first want to look at the search volume, as of course if 0 people are searching for it, there is no reason to try and rank for it.
Every niche is different, so it is down to you to research the optimum search volume for a keyword in your particular niche.
You should go back to some of the keyword research tools that we have looked at, and then pick out the keywords that have a good amount of monthly searches.



Google Trends

Next, you should look at **Google Trends**.
With this free tool by Google, you can see if your keyword is currently gaining or losing traction.
You just need to enter your keyword and then you can filter by country, time range and more.
You can also use it to compare two keywords side by side, so then you can pick which one has a higher search volume.
This is incredibly helpful as it shows you whether or not a keyword currently has high traffic and whether it is or isn't currently trending.
Google trends also have some other features that you should try, including Interest by region, related topics and related queries.



Click-Through Rate (CTR)

The next thing you want to look at is the **Click Through Rate (CTR)**.
The CTR is the ratio of searchers who click onto your page.
Some tools estimate the CTR, but I recommend you estimate it yourself.
To do this you need to look at the search results page for your keyword, and see if there are google ads and featured snippets above the results.
If there are, it means that the chances of someone clicking onto your page are lowered.
To improve your CTR it is also important to carefully optimize your page title and your meta description, as these are the first things users will see when looking at your listing in search results.
If the estimated CTR is low, I wouldn't necessarily avoid that keyword.
If the search volume is high, but the CTR is low, you can still try to rank for that particular keyword. It is all down to your decision of which keyword you think will be best.

Cost Per Click (CPC)

Now let's talk about the **Cost Per Click (CPC)**.
The CPC tells you if people searching your keyword are spending money.
You can easily see the CPC by using any of the keyword research tools.
The CPC is the price that advertisers are paying Google for every click that their advert gets.
So if it is quite high they must have a reason for spending a high amount of money per click, and more often than not that is because their target market is spending a lot of money.

Competition

And the final piece of the puzzle when picking your keyword is to take a last look at the **competition**.
When you have a new website you want to start by ranking for keywords with low competition.
This will help you to increase your website's authority in search engines.
Doing this will give you a strong base to help you rank for more competitive keywords.
But don't forget, high quality and relevant content will be key to your success!

Keyword Research Tips & Tricks

You always want some sneaky tricks that will help you with your keyword research process.
These tips & tricks will save you time, money and also help you to sort the best from the worst keywords.
Let's Go...

Write Evergreen Content

What is evergreen content?
It is optimized content that will stay relevant and fresh for a large amount of time.
Evergreen content keeps it's relevance and can continue to drive traffic long after it is originally published.
Types of evergreen content can often include How-to-content, product/service reviews, lists, recipes and more.
The two main reasons that make writing evergreen content important are that it can continuously drive traffic to your website and it can improve your search rankings.
Examples of evergreen content:

- How to Properly Clean a Fish Tank
- Best Red Velvet Cake Recipe
- 10 Mistakes to Avoid When Building a New Home

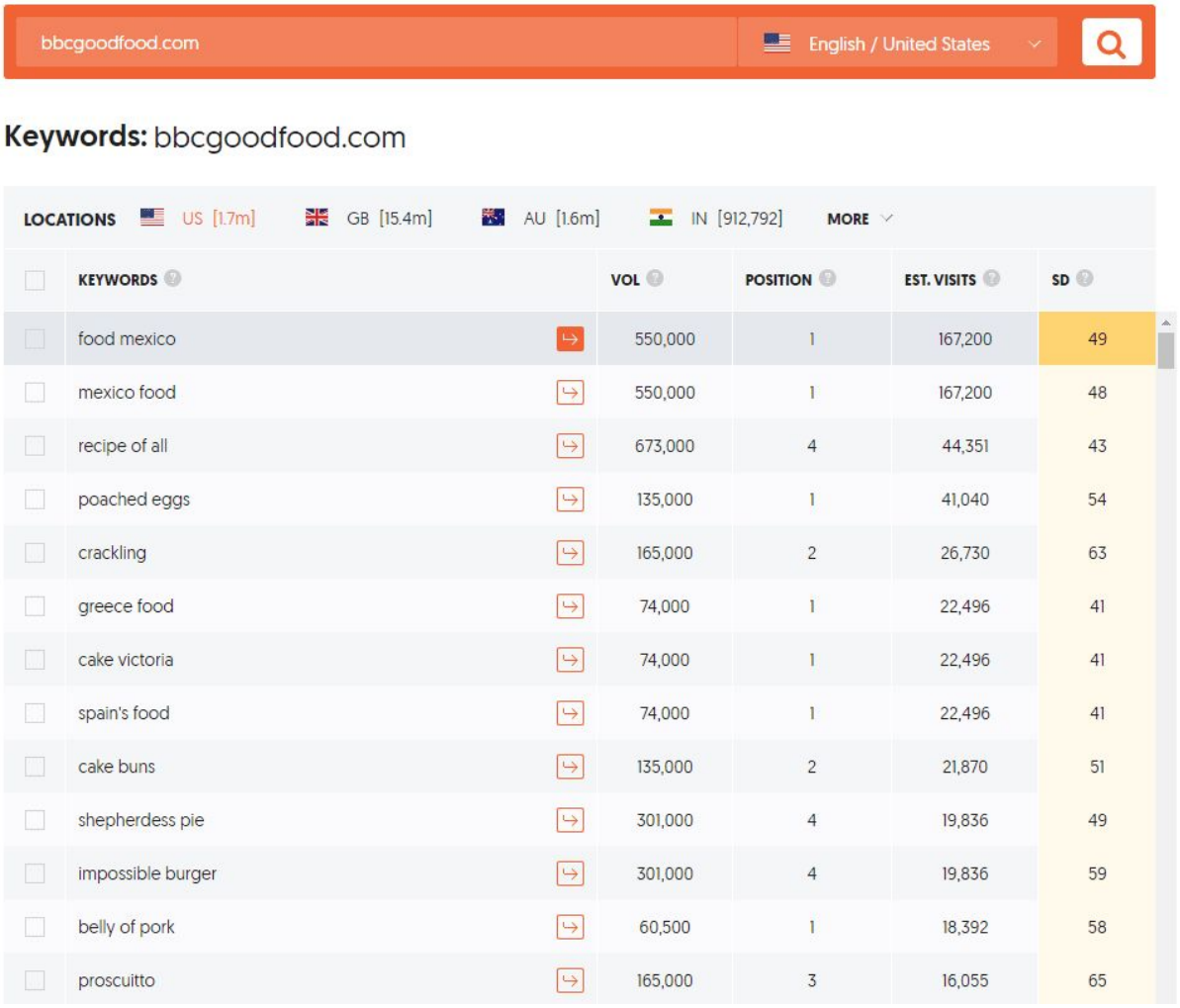
You mustn't only publish evergreen content, you want to write timely content on current topics too.
You should highlight your evergreen content so that it can be seen in more places.
Some good places to put your evergreen content include the sidebar, home page, social media, etc.
One final thing to remember is that every time that you update, or add to your evergreen content, you should promote it again.
What is not evergreen content:

- News Articles
- Current Trends
- Statistics & Reports that go outdated quickly

When you think you are writing evergreen content you should remember that it is only content that will keep its value for a long time.
For example, An article about a current trend will not be relevant next year.

‘Steal’ Keywords From Your Competitors

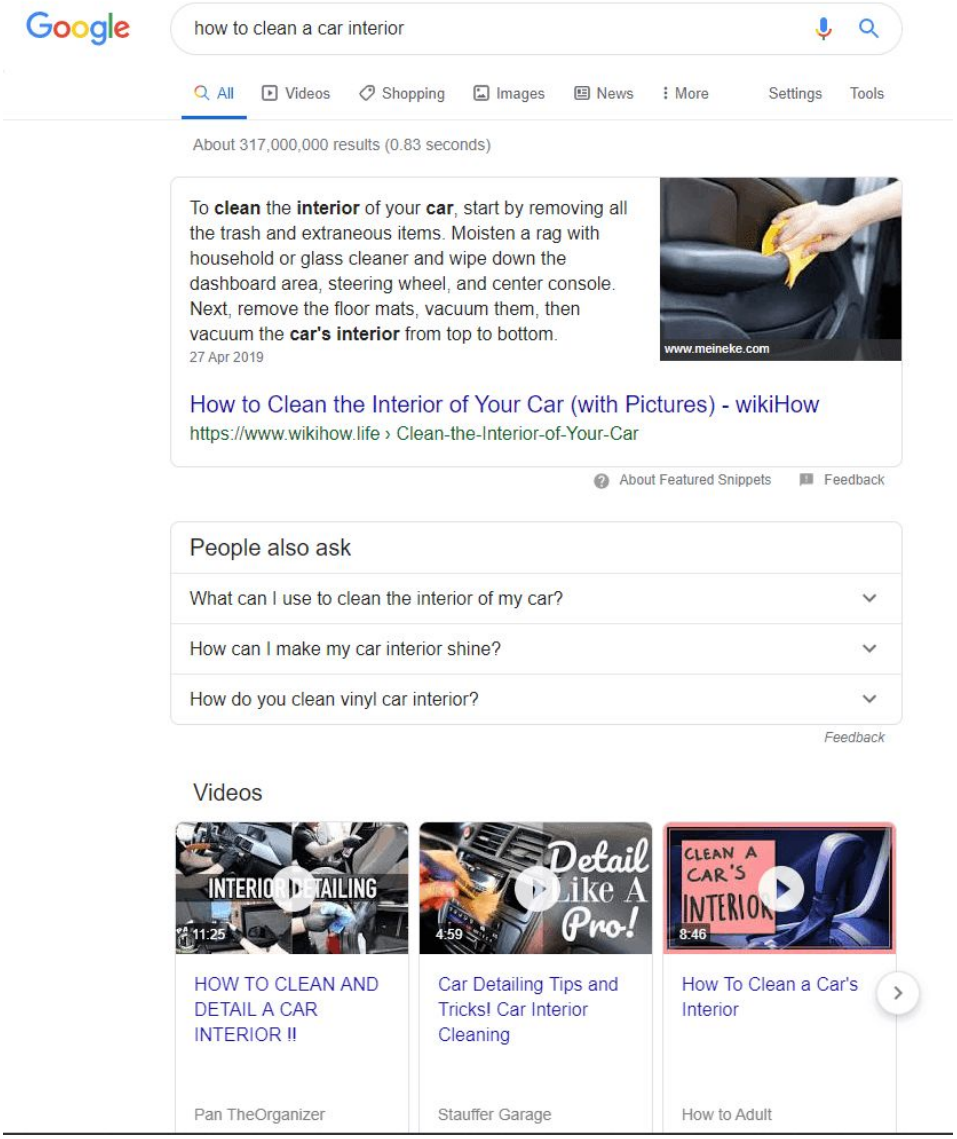
Many SEO tools allow you to enter any domain to see what keywords are ranking well for that site.
If you use ubersuggest and enter the domain for one of your competitors, you can see which keywords they are ranking for and which pages of theirs are ranking highest.
This is great because it allows you to learn from what your competitors are doing well, to help you shape your keyword research process.



KEYWORDS	VOL	POSITION	EST. VISITS	SD
food mexico	550,000	1	167,200	49
mexico food	550,000	1	167,200	48
recipe of all	673,000	4	44,351	43
poached eggs	135,000	1	41,040	54
crackling	165,000	2	26,730	63
greece food	74,000	1	22,496	41
cake victoria	74,000	1	22,496	41
spain's food	74,000	1	22,496	41
cake buns	135,000	2	21,870	51
shepherdess pie	301,000	4	19,836	49
impossible burger	301,000	4	19,836	59
belly of pork	60,500	1	18,392	58
proscuitto	165,000	3	16,055	65

Rank For Google's Special Features

Google now has many special features that show up at the top of some search results pages.
There are featured snippets, people also ask, videos and more.
If you can get your content to appear in one of these, you are in for a winner.
You can't ask Google to put your content in their featured snippets, but if you make high-quality content that answers questions, you are in for a chance.



As you can see, these features are put above all of the organic rankings, so having your content here will massively increase traffic.

ON PAGE SEO

What Is On-Page SEO?

On-Page SEO refers to the practice of individually optimizing web pages to earn a higher ranking in search engine results pages. On-page refers to all content, including text, images, videos and also the HTML code for the website.
If you are new to On-page SEO and SEO in general, this will be perfect for you.

On-Page SEO Checklist:

This checklist will cover all the steps that you need to take to correctly optimize the pages on your website so that they have a higher chance of ranking in search engine results pages.

Keyword In Page Title

To help work towards improving the optimization of your page, you should include your keyword or phrase in the title of your page.
I also suggest that you put it at the beginning for best results.
The majority of search engines only display the first 60 characters of your title, so keep it to the point but also relevant.
If the title that you have written is too long, it may not be displayed in its entirety in search results.
Double-check that the title you have written is unique and will stand out from other pages on your site and search engines.
Don't just give your pages one-word titles that simply title your blog page 'blog', take a look at the title of our blog page below as an example.



It is important that you never write your keyword in your page title more than once, this is seen as a negative by search engines and it is spammy to users that are reading it.
Avoid 'stop' words, these are words like if, that, and, an, a – these types of words will not simply help the SEO for your page.

The title of your page is the first thing that users will see when they find your page in search results and it tells search engines what your page will be about.
Optimizing the title of your page will give a good first impression to users, which will increase your click-through rate (CTR).
Search engine crawlers also pay a lot of attention to your title tag when scanning your website, so it should be relevant, descriptive and to the point.
When done correctly, a well-optimized title tag will help towards increasing search ranking and it will also increase the click-through rate when the page is ranked on search engines or linked to on social media.
To learn more about how to write the perfect title, read this post.

Keyword In The *meta-description* Tag

For your meta-description tag, you need to pin down what your page is about in under 150 characters.
Once again, it should be relevant and descriptive, but to the point. This will make it easy for users to see what your page is about and it should draw them in, it should also be well written and should not feel spammy when you read it back.
You must write a unique meta description for every post, page and product and you must also remember to include your focus keyword when writing your meta-description.
I recommend that you use call-to-actions within your description, these are words & phrases like: Read more, buy now, learn more and download.
These words and phrases make the reader more likely to click onto your page, but remember, it must be contextual to your page and not just a random description.
The meta-description should 'sell' your content and make a user want to click onto your page to see your content.
Writing high-quality meta-descriptions does not technically improve your SEO or page ranking, but it does increase the chance

of a user clicking onto your page, so this is still a very important part of your SEO plan.

Let's take a look at what a meta-description will look like in search results.



The meta description is the snippet of text below the URL, as you can see it is written in a way that it will entice a user to click onto the page and read more.

Keyword In URL / Slug

To have your URL display properly, it should have no more than 95 characters.
When writing the URL for a webpage, you want it to be relevant, descriptive and also snappy.
If you look at the URL and more importantly the slug for this page, you can see that is short and simple, but descriptive.
You know what you are going to get.
The part of the URL you can easily change when writing a blog post is the slug.

Usually, it is a shorter version of the page title, as it will explain the page in a concise format.

Keyword In Introduction

Ideally, you should include your keyword at the beginning of your page's content, this means within the first 50 words and in the first paragraph.

It should make sense and should fit in naturally, you must also make sure that it is grammatically correct.

Keyword In The H1 Tag

The H1 tag is the most important heading tag that will describe the content beneath it, it will appear larger than all of the others.
It is important to naturally include your keyword within your H1 tag as it stands out to both readers and also search engines.
You should include the keyword in your heading tags when you can because it helps the search engines to understand what the content is about and it will help when the content is being ranked.

Keyword In Sub-heading

As well as including your keyword in your main headings, it is also important to include it in your sub-headings.
Once again, it will help to show readers and search engines what your content is about and it helps when organising the content on your site.

Keyword Density

The keyword density is the number of times that your keyword or key phrase appears in your written content.
You don't want to overuse or underuse your keyword.
It is recommended that your focus keyword appears in about 0.5 to 2% of your written content, so if your article is 500 words, you should aim to naturally include your keyword 3-10 times.
If you spam your keywords, search engines are likely to stop indexing your site as spammy websites are seen as low quality and are not trusted by users or search engines.
Overusing your keywords like this is known as keyword stuffing.
It's important to find the right balance of how often to mention your key phrase, as it must be natural.
Your keyword must be a word or short phrase that describes your content, so it must be written within your content as it helps search engines understand what the topic of your article is about.

Realistically, if your keyword describes your content, you should naturally include it multiple times when writing so this should not be too difficult.

Image Alt Text

Adding images to your articles is proven to increase engagement in your articles and will also increase your SEO strength.
The image alt text is read out by screen readers for the visually impaired, so you should use the alt tag to describe your images.
All of your images should have alt text, it will usually be a sentence or two as it does not need to be too long.
If possible you should use your focus keyword within your image alt text, but only if it fits naturally for that particular image.
Never stuff multiple keywords as readers and search engines see this as spam and can negatively affect your site's SEO.
So when writing alt text for your images, you should focus on being informative, using keywords (only when relevant), and keep it snappy.
Let's say you are writing an article on how to bake a carrot cake and you are including an image of the carrot cake, a great alt tag for the image could be: "Classic carrot cake".

Although this is very simple, it explains exactly what it is (so it's informative) and it also has the keyword "carrot cake", so it will help to rank the image in google images and the web page in search engine results pages!

Meta Description Length

The meta description for your page should be no more than 150 characters.
If it is too long, it simply will not be readable for some users.

So when writing your meta description it is important to keep it relevant, concise and of course below 150 characters.

Outbound Links

Linking out to other relevant websites is a signal of relevancy that helps Google to figure out what the topic of your page is.
For example: If you are writing a blog post about a particular type of food, you could link to another blog that has written about something similar.
Outbound links also help your audience by linking them to more relevant information that will be useful to them.
It is important to only link to relevant websites.

Internal Links

You should add 2-3 relevant internal links to every post.
A website that does very well is businessdictionary.com as you can see they link to other word explanations, you can also link to blog posts, products, etc.
The internal links must naturally fit into the context of your article, if I am writing about SEO it is relevant for me to link to our article on how to generate a free SEO audit.

Types of internal links:

Navigational links –
These are the links within your header, footer and navigational bars which help users to find other pages within your website.
Search engine crawlers also use internal links to understand the structure of your website.
Contextual links –
These links are usually found within your articles and they are created when you link to another relevant article.
Once you have various articles on a certain topic, you can link them to each other.
Contextual links show search engines and also users, that those particular articles are topically related.
These links also have higher SEO value.

Text Length

When you are writing content it is important that your content is not just high quality but also of a good length.
It is best to always write articles with at least 300 words but it is also recommended that you write one article a month that is over 1000 words.
Studies have shown that longer content does tend to rank much higher in Google's search results, but I also suggest that you also focus on quality and not just the quantity of your content.

Original Keyword

It's important that your focus keyword has not been used on your website before, otherwise, you will be competing against yourself as you will have multiple pages trying to rank for the same keyword.

If you want to learn how to properly research your keyword, read our complete keyword research guide here.

Search Intent

Optimize For Search Intent
The search intent is the reason that a user makes their search. Why they are making that specific search, are they looking for an answer to a question, or a specific website, or are they looking to buy something online?
There are four different types of search intent:

- **Informational Intent**

Firstly, we have informational intent.
This type of search intent is found when a user is looking for information about a particular topic, in many cases, this involves searching a question.

- **Transactional Intent**

The transactional intent is when a user is looking to purchase something online.
Users can browse the web to find the specific item they are looking to buy.

- **Commercial Intent**

Commercial intent is when a user is looking to research before buying something.
For example, they could search: What is the best 4K television? Or Which vacuum cleaner has the best suction?
By searching these questions the user is trying to find out specific information on a product or which product they should buy.

- **Navigational Intent**

The final type of search intent is navigational, this is when a user is searching for a particular website.
If they search for Amazon they are likely to be looking for the Amazon website.

How can you optimize for search intent?

The best way to do this is to try and optimize the pages on your website so that they fit the search intent of your audience.
If someone is just looking for information, you don't want to try and sell them something straight away as they are likely to click away.
Your main focus should be to satisfy the search intent of the user.
For example, if a user searches: 'How to re-wire a light switch?'
They are looking for a post with information that will show them how to do just that.
They are not necessarily looking to buy a light switch, although what you can do is promote your product or service after you have given them the information that they were originally looking for.
A great tool that will help you to find what questions users are searching is AnswerThePublic.
This free tool lets you find questions people search based on the keywords that you input.
Make sure that you are optimizing your website pages, products and blog posts for the relevant keywords, questions and queries

that people are searching to find the information that you are offering.
This can be somewhat time-consuming, but search intent is a very important part of SEO, as you don't want your website's visitors to click off of your page straight away because you are not offering what they are looking for.

Social Sharing

Adding social sharing buttons to your website pages, products and specifically to your blog posts will give your audience an easy way to share your content online to other people using social media.
The better your content is and the more accessible the social sharing buttons are, the more likely your audience will share your content via social media.
Of course, this will also help you gain even more traffic to the page, post or product that has been shared.

Fresh Content

Search engines prefer content that is fresh, fresh in more meanings than one.
First, it means that the content is recently updated or published and secondly it means the content is original and not just copied from someone else's website.
To keep your content 'fresh' be sure to keep your text and images up to date and you MUST only write unique content for your website or blog!

OFF SITE SEO

What Is Off-Site SEO?

Off-Site SEO refers to the actions taken outside of your website to help increase your rankings in search engine results pages (SERPs).
Off-Site optimization includes improving your site's popularity, trustworthiness, authority and relevance.
This can be done by having other relevant and high authority websites linking to your website.
This will effectively act as a vote of confidence for the quality of your site's content.
There are three main parts to Off-Site SEO, link building (also known as backlinks), social media marketing, and earning brand mentions.

Why Is Off-Site SEO Important?

Google has loads of different factors which come into play when deciding where to rank each web page.
Just having quality content won't earn your page a high ranking, this is why there are many different steps to take to properly optimize a web page to give it the best chance to rank well in search results.
Looking at Off-Site SEO, earning backlinks on high authority websites is incredibly important.
When a website links to yours, it is seen as a vote of confidence that you produce high quality and relevant content.
Gaining the right backlinks will increase your site's authority in search engines, which will help your pages to rank higher.
It's important not to forget about other Off-Site SEO factors, including social media marketing and earning brand mentions.
Using social media to market the content on your website pages is another step you can take to help your pages rank higher and receive more traffic.
Posting links on social media to new product pages and blog posts will promote those pages to your social audience for free.

Finally, we have brand mentions, another useful Off-Site SEO strategy is to get relevant websites to mention your brand name on their site.
Brand mentions boost brand recognition, and earning one on a relevant site in your niche can help to grow your brand massively.

Off-Site SEO Expert Strategies

Here are my favourite Off-Site SEO strategies that everyone should use to earn the best results.

Use Social Media

Using social media is a great way to boost your site's social presence.
Add a link to your website in your bio on your different social media pages.
You can also post a link to social media when you publish a new product or article on your website.
Both of these can help increase traffic and build a social presence for your website.
I recommend using Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, but you can also use Instagram and YouTube.

Brand Mentions

What Are Brand Mentions?

A brand mention is an online reference to your brand, company, or product/service.
Brand mentions can be found in reviews, social media posts, news articles, and also blog posts.
Having other websites and businesses mention your brand name within their content can improve your brand's reputation.
You will need to be careful though because negative mentions are not good, so you will need to address them quickly.

How To Discover Brand Mentions

To discover pre-existing brand mentions on the web, you will need to use a monitoring tool.
The best tool for this, in my opinion, is called "Mention", this will listen for any mentions of your brand's name on social media or published blogs.
There are free and paid plans available, the free plan has a limit of 250 mentions per month which is adequate for a small brand.
The paid plans have more features available and allow you to look for brand mentions in more places.
It's quite easy to use...
Sign up, choose the plan that's best for you.
Connect your social media pages & enter your brand name.
And there you go, it will now search the web for mentions of your brand.
You can then sort your mentions to see which have the most value.
Some other tools that you could try include Brandwatch, Keyhole, Social Searcher, and Awario.

How To Earn Brand Mentions

There are several ways for you to earn new brand mentions to help grow your brand.
Guest Blogging –
This is probably one of the best ways to earn brand mentions that will put your name in front of a new audience.
Find a blog that accepts guest posts in your niche, and write a high quality, comprehensive article for them that will engage readers into your brand.
Reviews –
Make it easy for your customers to review your products using Trustpilot (or another site similar), and respond to all reviews (especially negative ones).
Share the best reviews on social media, and respond to negative reviews so that you are helping as many customers as possible.
Ad Campaigns –

Discover your demographic by using Google Analytics, and then create a social ad campaign on Facebook or another social platform.
Make sure that your campaign gives your audience the chance to interact on social media, a competition or special promotion will work perfectly.

Turn Mentions Into Links

Links are one of the most powerful ranking factors, so if you can turn any existing brand mentions into backlinks … you should!
This isn't too difficult as it simply involves finding mentions on websites with high domain authority, and then contacting the site owner.
Once you have found a mention that you want to turn into a backlink, you should email the author who wrote it.
Here is a rough outline for how you should write your email:

Hello [Name],

I was pleasantly surprised to see that you mentioned my brand in your recent article [name of article].

I'm very grateful and I want to say thank you for the mention.

Would you mind linking to my site [Your website URL] if it's not too much trouble.

It would help me out more than you can imagine.

Kind Regards,

[Your name]

That's all you need to do.

Most of the emails that you send are more than likely to work as many owners would be happy to give you the link.
I recommend that you only follow up with an email for brand mentions on websites with high domain authority.

What Are Backlinks?

A backlink is a link on another site that directs to a page on your website.
Search engines see backlinks as a vote of confidence for your website's content, this can help improve your site's rankings in search engine results pages.
To help your website's SEO, you want to gain links from high quality and relevant websites.
If you get bad backlinks from low-quality websites that are not relevant to yours, it will impact your website's SEO negatively.
There are two types of backlinks:
dofollow backlinks – These pass on ranking power from your website, to the page that you are linking to.
nofollow backlinks – These links do not give ranking power to the page you are linking to, they just allow users on your page to discover the page you're linking to.

Why Are Backlinks Important?

Backlinks are highly valuable because they act as a vote of confidence between websites.
There are many benefits you will earn from receiving quality backlinks:
Referral Traffic: If a website visitor is reading an article on a website and they see a relevant link pointing to a page on your site, they may click it and be directed to one of your web pages.
If the content on your web page gives them information that is relevant to what they were reading on the other website, they may keep reading.
This is known as referral traffic, as they were referred to your web page from the site that linked to you.

Increase In Authority: Backlinks assist in building your website's authority.
If a high authority site links to you, your site's authority will increase.
Website authority helps search engines trust your site, and therefore help to improve your ranking in search results.
Building your site's authority will also make potential visitors find your content reliable, and keep them returning.
Faster Indexing: Search engines discover new web pages by following backlinks from existing web pages.
If your web page does not have any backlinks, it will take more time for search engines to find your page.
New websites specifically will be indexed much faster if they have other sites linking to their web pages.

What Is Domain Authority?

Domain Authority is a search engine ranking score produced by Moz that estimates how well a website will rank on SERPs.
Your Domain Authority score will range from one to 100, a higher score equals a larger ability to rank well in search results.
Domain Authority is calculated by multiple factors, including:

- The total number of backlinks that a site has.
- The domain authority of the websites that link to you.

Your Domain Authority score can be used to compare the search engine ranking strength between websites.
Another great way to use your domain authority score is to track it over time to see if your SEO efforts are making a positive impact.
It is important to remember that **Google does not use your domain authority score** when ranking your website, it is just a guideline Moz created to help when optimizing your website.

How Can You Check Domain Authority?

You can easily check your domain authority for free by using the Domain Analysis Tool by Moz.
Simply enter your domain and click “analyse”.



Backlink Building Techniques

Some of my favourite techniques that can be used to gain backlinks to your website.
All of these methods are highly valuable and can be done by anyone.

Write A Listicle

A listicle is the combination of a list and an article, thus creating a listicle.
If you write a high-quality list of something in your niche, people will link to it and share it on social media!
It could be a massive list with hundreds of items or a smaller, more specific list.
For example, If you run a vegan blog, you could list the top 10 vegan recipes.
Or, if you run a digital marketing blog, you could list 12 Instagram growth strategies.
Here is a real example, this is a list of the best restaurants in London (it is published by timeout.com).

It has received over 500 backlinks, and that number is only going up.
Take a look at it for yourself.
It is a very comprehensive article with a description of each restaurant, along with price range, and best times to go.
Comprehensive articles like this offer large amounts of value to readers and earn lots of links.



Here is the proof of backlinks:
The tool I am using to discover how many backlinks this article has is called ahrefs.
Simply enter the page URL into the ahrefs backlink checker, then hit “Check backlinks”.
You can then see the number of backlinks that this particular web page has received.



Ask People You Know

Ask friends, family, colleagues, clients, or anyone else you may know!
Some of these people are more than likely to have their own website or know someone that does.
Politely ask them for a backlink from their site to yours.
Remember, you only want links from people who have a website that is relevant to yours.
If their website is in a completely different niche, it is not worth it!
To make it worthwhile for both of you, I suggest rather than just asking for a backlink, you should ask for a guest post on their site.
Then write a high-quality article for their website, this way you are both getting something positive from this.
Just send them an email, call them, or text them, and see what they say.
Here is a basic template that you can send via email to ask someone you know for a backlink:

Hello [Name],

I hope you are doing well.

I've just been looking at your website, and it appears our websites are in the same niche.

Would you mind linking to my site [Your website URL] if it's not too much trouble.

I could write an article for your website, so that we both benefit.

Hopefully this is something you may be interested in.

Have a great day.

Kind Regards,

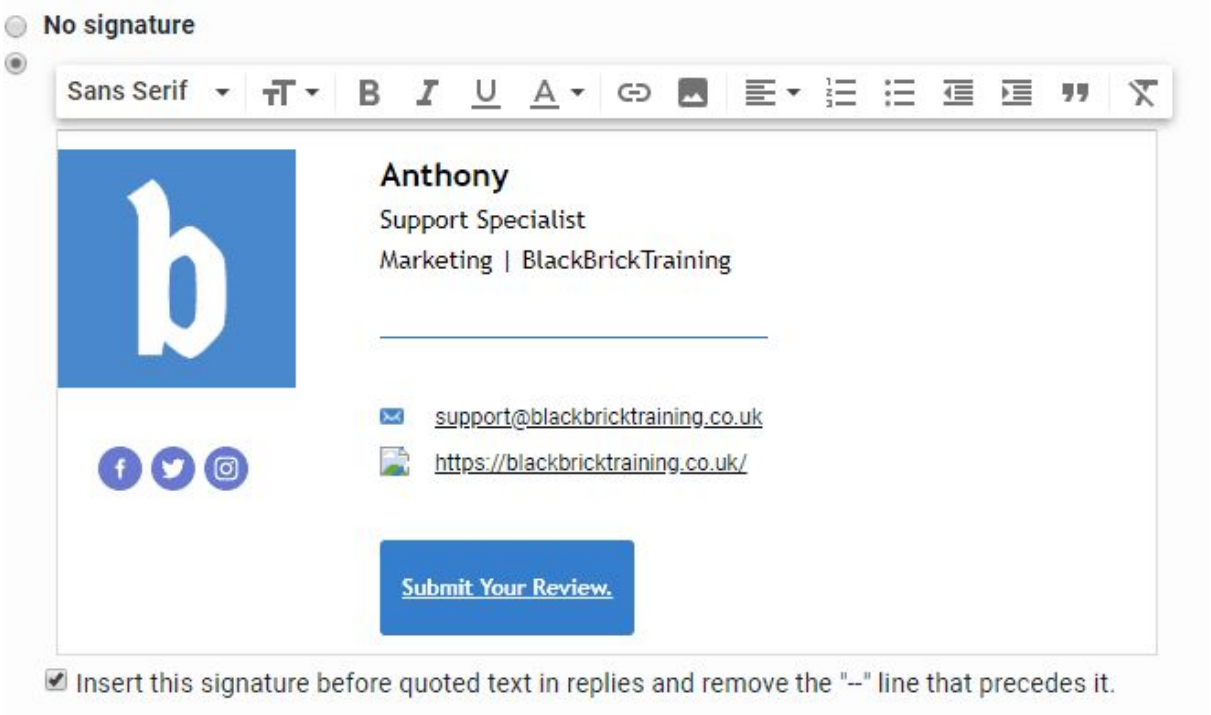
[Your name]

Remember to edit the template so that it is relevant to you.
This isn't the best way to earn backlinks, but it is an easy one.

Email Signature

If you send a lot of emails every day, this could be ideal for you.
Linking to a recent blog post or another web page in your email signature is a great way to automatically send a link to your website to everyone that you send an email to.
This is not technically a backlink, but it is a link to your website, and if you send a lot of emails everyone that receives an email from you will see the link within your email signature.
I like this strategy, because, once it's set up, it will work in the background.
It is also simple to set up and does not take much time.

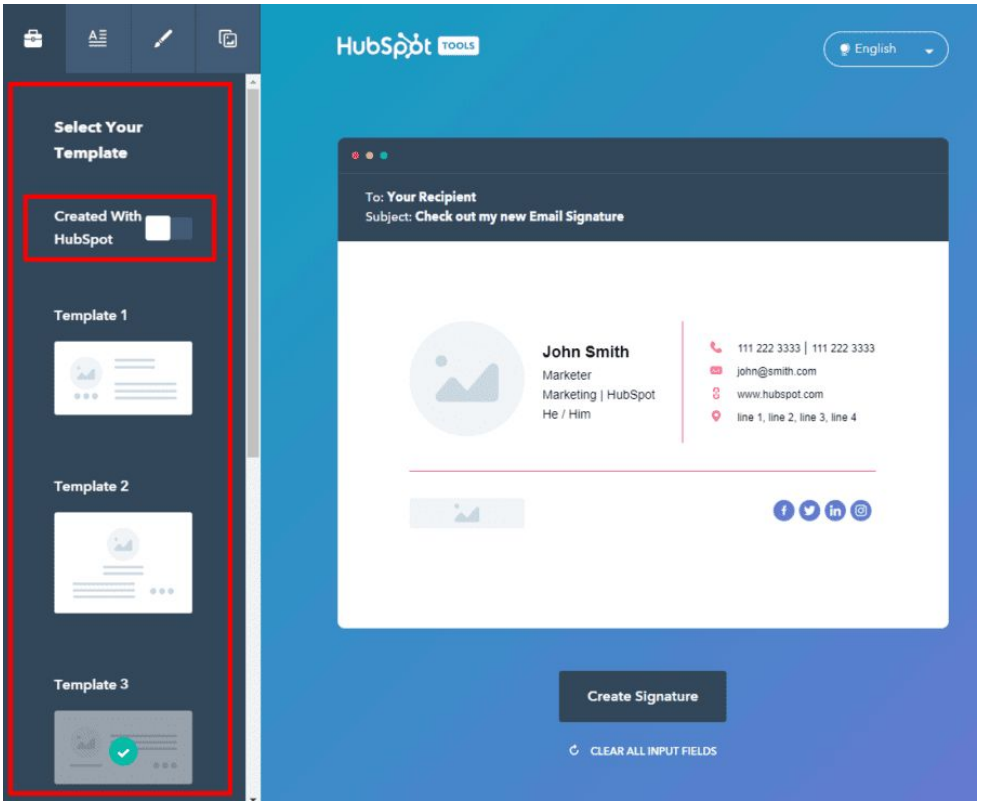
Here's an example of an email signature that I have built:



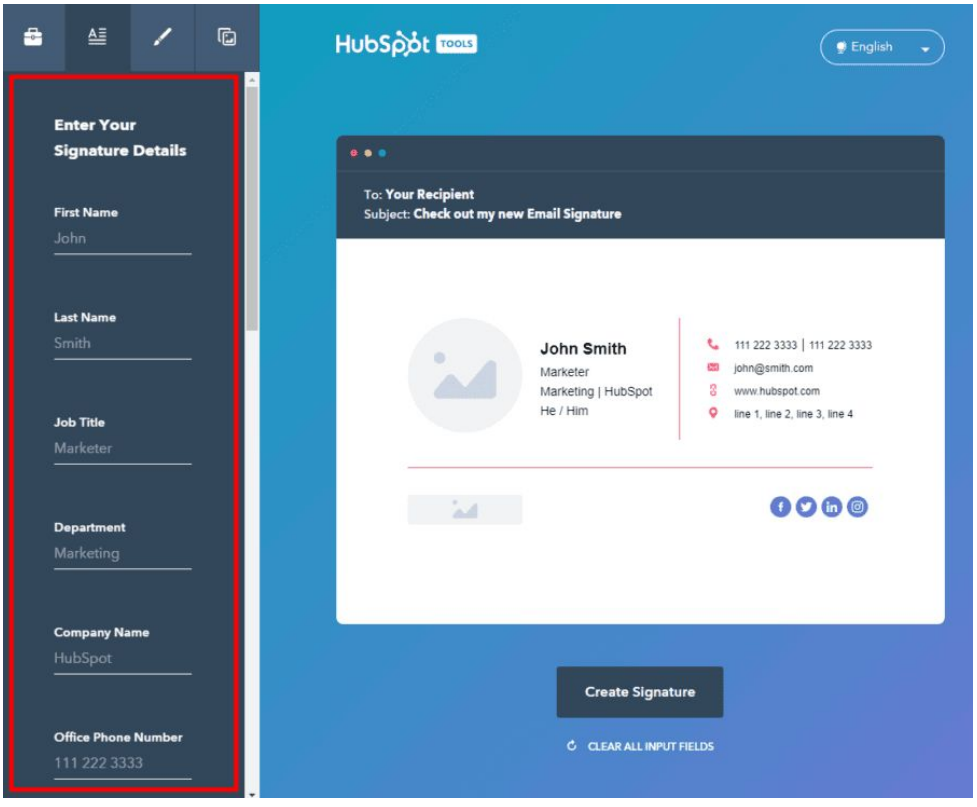
As you can see, I have added all of the normal email signature information, including name, social media, logo, etc.
Then at the bottom, I have added a button which says "Submit Your Review", this button links to my Google My Business customer review form.
Of course, you can change this button to go to your blog, or a particular web page, that is up to you.
Every single email that I send will automatically have this email signature included, which will, of course, have the links to my website.
I built this email signature using the free email signature generator by Hubspot.

How To Generate An Email Signature:

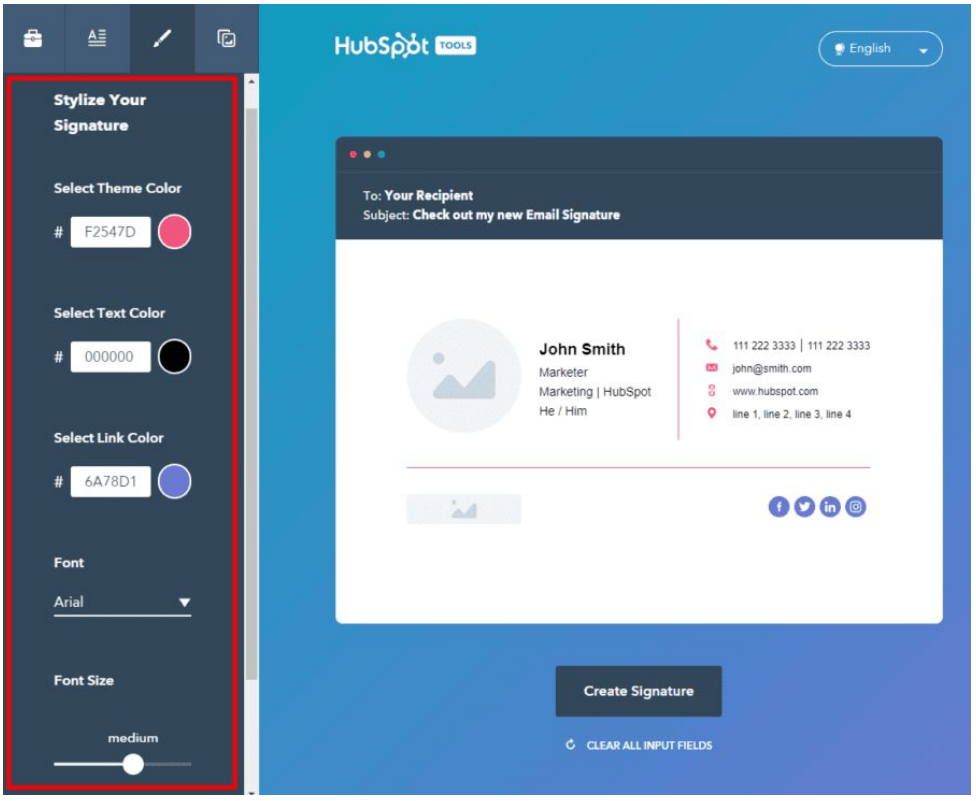
First head over to the email signature generator by Hubspot.
Un-check "Created With Hubspot", to remove the link to the tool from the email signature.



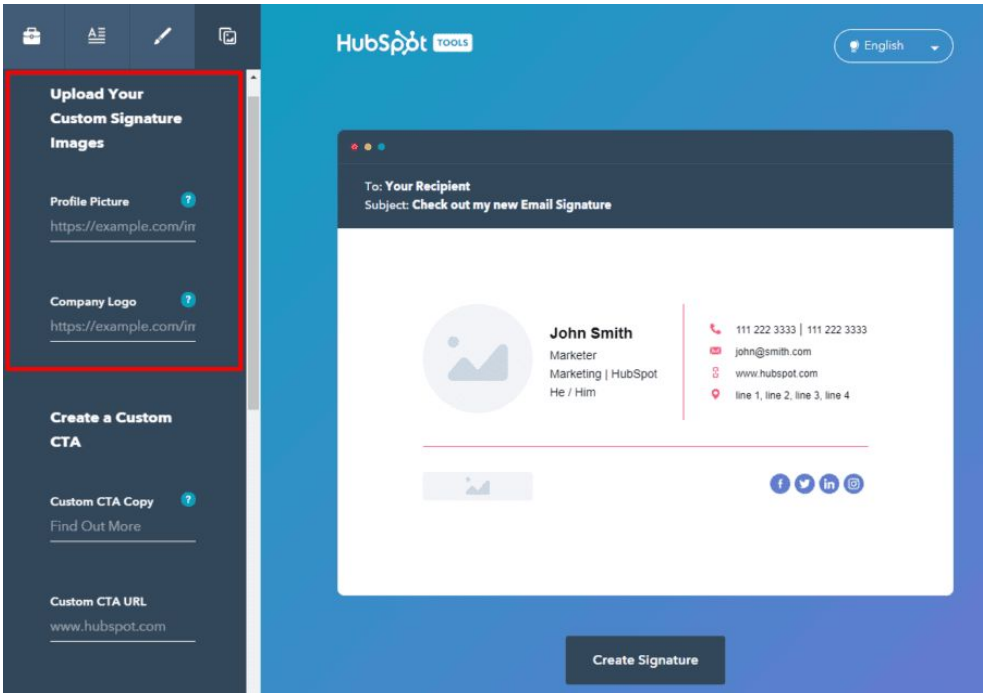
Select a template that will suit your signature, I like template three. Go to the *Signature Details* section, and then enter all of the details that you want to add to your email signature.



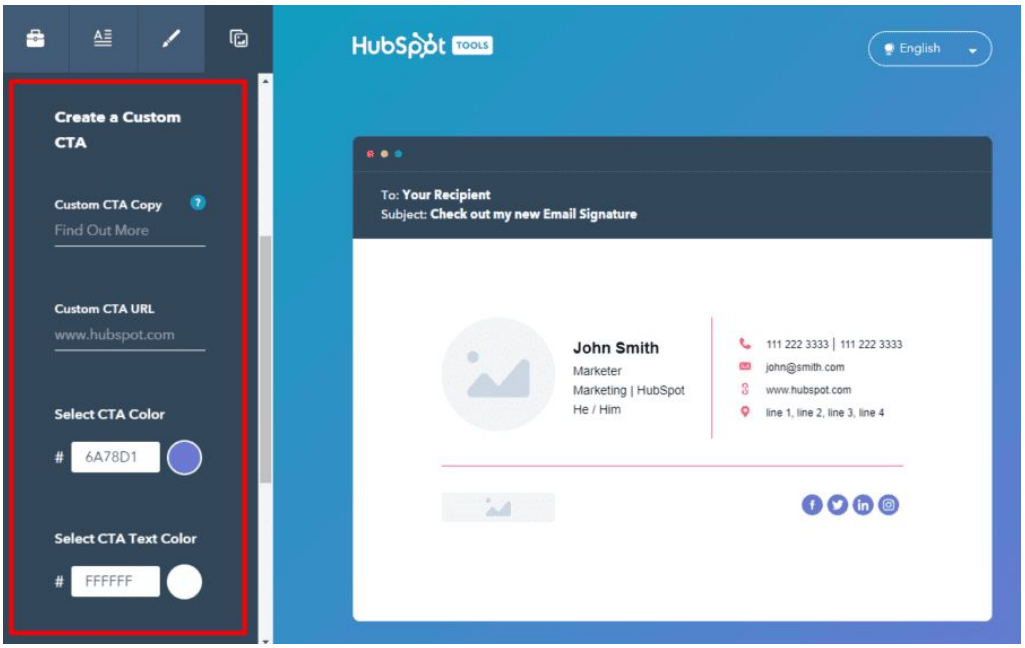
Go to the *Signature Style* section, to customise the colour of the elements within your signature, and then pick a font, and font size.



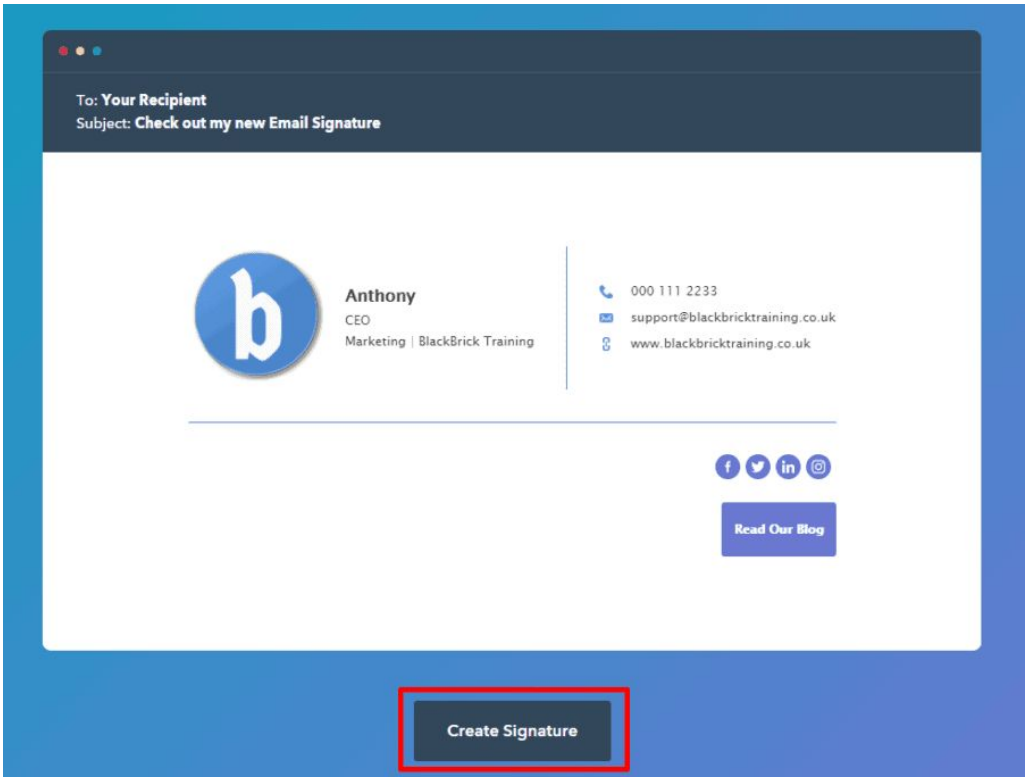
Next, click onto the last section, this is where you will add images to your signature, and create a custom call to action which we will use to create a link to our website.
Paste in the URL for your profile picture, and company logo.



Now we can create our call to action, this is the most important part of the process.
Enter the text that you want to have on the button.



Then enter the URL that you want to button to send users to.
Finally, select the colours for your CTA, you can pick button colour and text colour.
Look at the preview of the email signature, and then when you are happy click “Create Signature”.



Hubspot may ask you for some details to add you to their mail list, enter the required details, then click “Confirm & Submit”.
Once it has finished generating, you will be able to copy your email signature, so that you can add it to your email provider.
At the bottom of the page, you will see links to guides that show you how to add your email signature to each of the most popular email account providers.



Click “Copy Signature”, and then follow the relevant guide to add the signature to your email account.
I highly recommend doing this as it is professional to have an email signature and it is also a great way to help new people discover your website.

Guest Blogging

Guest blogging is the process of posting an article that you have written to a website someone else owns.
This gives the website owner quality content, and usually, the writer is allowed to link to their website, or mention their brand (if it is relevant to).
You must write high-quality content when you submit a guest post, otherwise, it is going to get rejected.
Guest blogging is a great way to earn backlinks, brand mentions, and build relationships with other websites.

Why Guest Blogging?

Guest blogging offers a vast number of benefits for any website.
By writing a high quality, informative article, you are displaying your prowess on other websites.
This helps you to increase your authority within your industry, build relationships with other websites, and expose your brand to a new audience.
Here are five benefits that guest blogging will offer:

- Earn high-quality backlinks to your site.
- Increase brand awareness.
- Exposure to a new audience.
- Increase authority within your industry.
- Build positive relationships with other websites.

All in all, guest blogging is worth spending time on, as it will help you to grow your website and business.
Find some good websites to write guest posts for, and you're good to go.

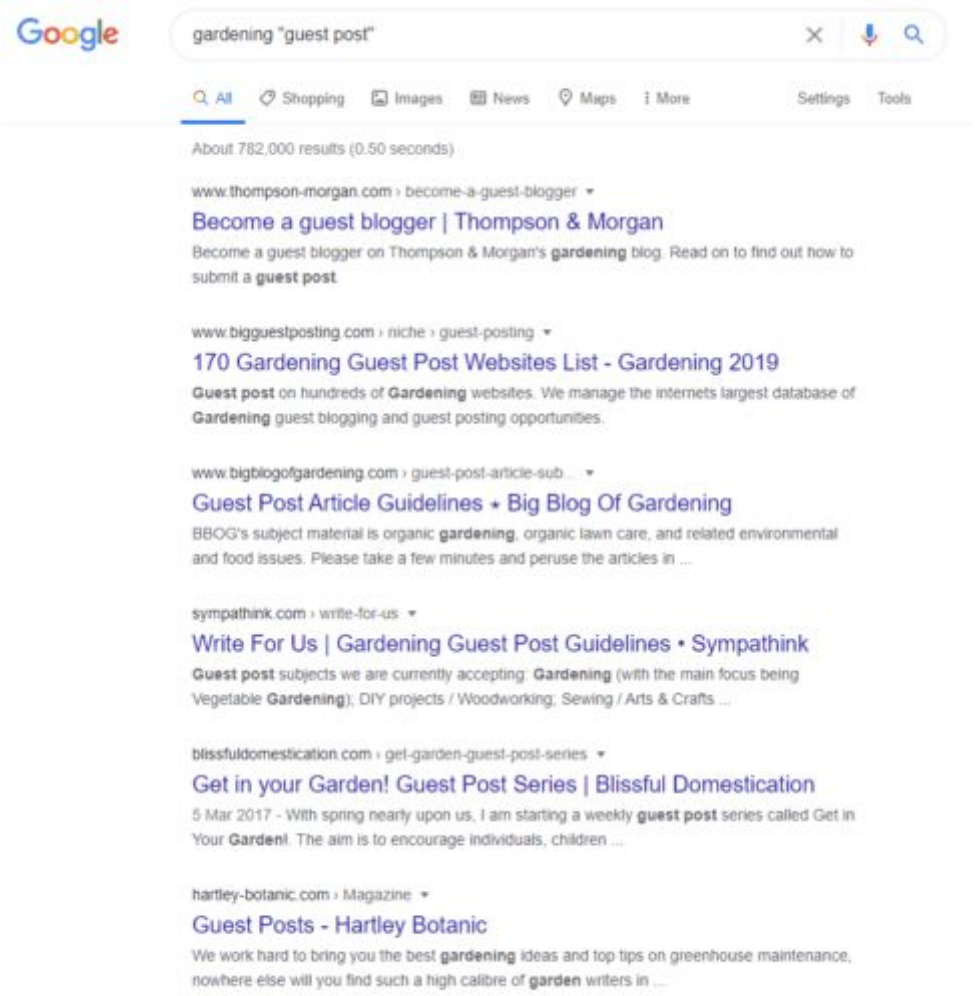
How To Find Guest Blogging Opportunities:

Finding websites in your niche that are looking for people to write guest posts is quite easy.
There are a few different ways to find these sites, but I am going to explain my favourite.
For this method, you need to open Google.
Once you have it open, there are specific searches that you need to make.
What we are going to do is scrape Google for sites that are open to guest writers.
Here are some example searches you can make:

- [topic] "guest post"
- [topic] "write for us"
- [topic] "guest article"
- [topic] "become an author"

Replace "topic" with the type of site that you want to write an article for.

For example, if I want to look for a gardening blog that is looking for guest writers, I could search gardening “guest post”.
Let’s look at the results for that search:



As you can see, the majority of these results are gardening websites that are looking for people to write guest posts for their site.
Before you start applying for a guest post on one of those websites, you want to check the domain authority.
You only want to write guest posts for websites with a domain authority of 20 or more.

To check the domain authority of each of the sites, enter each domain into the Moz Domain Analysis tool.



The domain authority for this site is 64, so it would be perfect for a guest post.

How To Pitch Your Guest Post:

When you are pitching to a website that you want to write for, you need to stand out and look professional.

Here is a proven email template that you should send to guest post websites:

Hello [Name],

My name is [name].

I have been reading your blog for a long while now, and I am really enjoying your content, especially [Article Name].

I'm writing this email to let you know that I am very interested in writing a guest post on your website.

Both of our websites cover the same industry, and I can provide your readers with some great quality content.

I have been carefully planning some ideas for articles that I think would perform very well on your website.

Here are the three I think your audience would like the most:

[Article Idea]

[Article Idea]

[Article Idea]

If you are interested in seeing the way I write and the quality of my writing, you should take a look at my most recent article on [Website Name], here's a link.

Hope to hear from you soon.

Kind regards, [Your Name]

Be friendly, professional, and focus on what you can offer **them.**

You may need to send a few variations of this email to a few different websites before you get a response, but keep trying, it will happen.

Send Personalised Messages To Contact Forms

If you send a message to contact forms on websites that are in your niche, you can get their attention and start to build a relationship with that website.
In your message, tell them who you are, compliment a recent post of theirs, and gently let them know about a relevant post of yours.
You want to write as if you are talking to them directly, so try to find a name for someone that works for, or owns the website you are messaging.
This will increase the chance that the message is acknowledged.
They may take a look, and if they like it, they could give you recognition or even link to your site.
This works best for niche websites, for example, sites like vegan blogs, or fishing blogs.
Here is a rough example of a message you could send to a contact form:

Hi [name],

I'm really enjoying your blog content, I loved your article on [best fishing hooks].

On my blog, [blog name], I recently published a list of [best fishing knots].

As you seem to be a fan of [fishing], I thought you might like to have a read.

Kind regards,

[name]

Of course replace "name", "best fishing hooks", "blog name", "best fishing knots", and "fishing" with terms that are relevant to the message that you are writing.
You must be genuine with your message, and you're not just lying to them.
They may not link to you straight away, but it will help you to build a relationship with another website, which could result in a backlink, or a social share later on.

Broken Link Building

Broken link building is a technique that involves finding links to pages that are no longer live, and then reaching out to the website owner asking them to replace the broken link, with a link to your webpage.
This is usually done by recreating the page that was previously linked to, but you need to ensure the content you create is unique, high quality, and serves a purpose.
This process earns your website a backlink and provides value to the website that is linking to your page, as you are helping them to fix a broken link.

The process can be broken down into four steps:

- Search for broken links.
- Create content to replace the broken link.
- Offer your content as a replacement.
- Receive a new backlink to your site.

Then simply repeat the process for more quality backlinks.

Why Broken Link Building?

There are many different reasons why broken link building is a great backlink building strategy.

Here are my three favourite reasons why broken link building is a great strategy:

Firstly, you are earning a relevant link to one of your web pages, which will help increase your domain authority and put more eyeballs on your content.

Secondly, using this method, you are offering a fix to a broken link on their site, rather than begging for a link, so this makes it a more successful request.

And lastly, if you don't already have content to replace their broken link, you are forcing yourself to create more quality content, which is never a bad thing.

This strategy involves, earning links to your site, helping other websites, and building relationships with website owners, so it is quite popular.

Post Your Blog To Blog Directories

If you are building backlinks for a blog, a super-easy way to gain links is to submit your blog to blog directories.

A blog directory, also known as a blog submission website, is a website that allows you to submit your blog to their site for free. These websites then display and link to all of the blogs that have been submitted to help users and search engines to discover them.

Why Submit Your Blog To Blog Submission Websites?

There are many great reasons why you should submit your blog to a blog submission website.

- Gain exposure
- Receive a backlink
- Improves SEO
- Free marketing
- Builds authority

Making the most of these free blog submission websites can be very beneficial, as you can see.

How Can You Find Blog Submission Websites?

You can Google "blog submission websites", or "blog directories", but this can be quite time-consuming.

If you don't want to have to find each website individually, this list by bloggingask.com has over 200 blog submission websites.

S.N.	Blog Directories Name	DA
1.	Boing Boing	88
2.	Alltop	70
3.	On Top List	58
4.	Entire Web	52
5.	Blog Adda	50

I suggest to start with, submit your blog to about 20 of these websites over a few days.

Don't submit your blog into loads of blog submission sites, look at the domain authority of each site, and only submit your blog to websites with high domain authority.

To check the domain authority of a website, use the Moz Domain Analysis tool.

These aren't the most high-quality backlinks, but they are a good starting point as they are easy and accessible.

Email People You Mention In Your Blog Posts

Whenever you mention or link to another website in your content, kindly email them to let them know that you have mentioned them.
They may like your content, link to your site, or share it on social media.
Here is a template for an email that you could send to people you have mentioned in your article:

Hi [name],

My name is [name].

On my blog, [blog name], I'm writing an article about [topic].

I know that you're an expert in [field], and I would love to include a quote from you in the article I'm writing.

What is your opinion on [specific topic of article]?

I will add your response to the article, and I'll let you know once it has been published.

I hope to hear from you soon, have a great day.

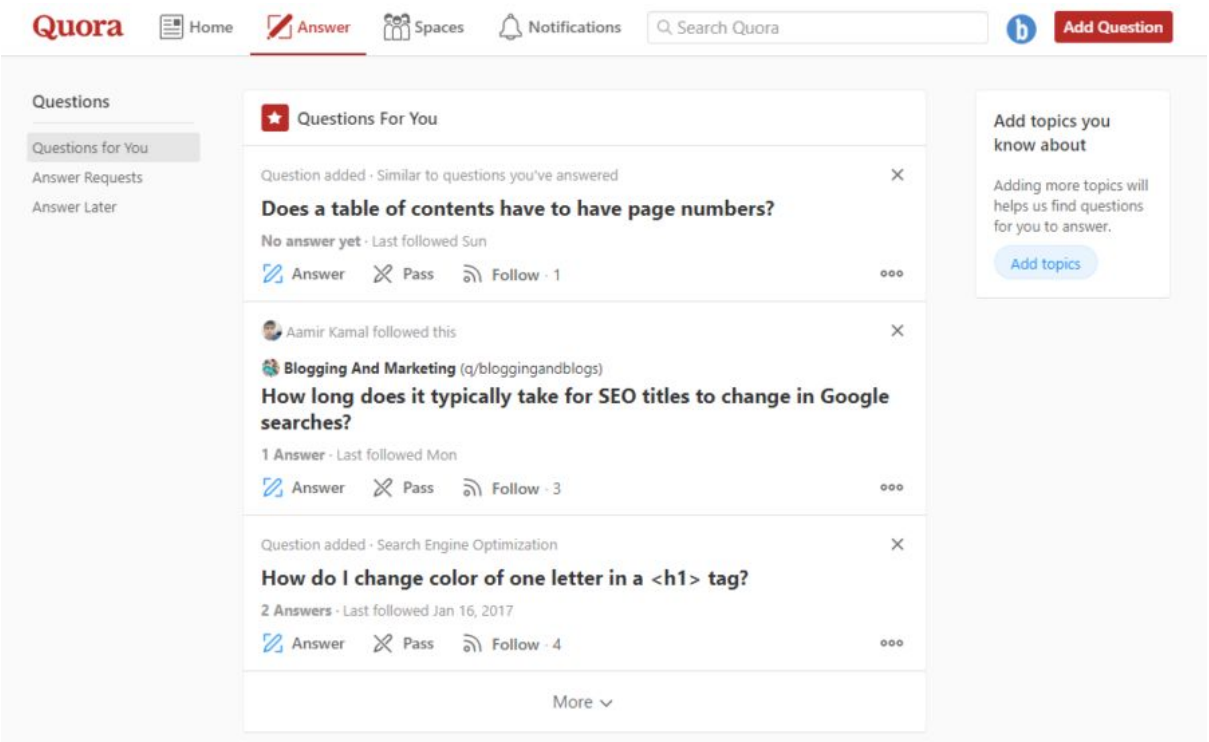
Kind regards,

[name]

Your email must be short, sweet, and simple.
As you can see, I haven't yet told them that I have mentioned them in the article.
This is because you want to get an official quote from them before you publish the article.
If they respond and give you a quote, fantastic if not, don't worry.
Then, once the article has been published, email them once more, in the same thread as the original email.
In this second email, let them know that the article is now live, and send a link to the article.
Whether they sent you a quote or not, just because you mentioned them, they may share the post on social media, and possibly mention you, or link to you in an article in the future.
That's how you get extra publicity on an article.

Answer Questions On Quora

Quora is a website where people ask questions about all different topics.
What you want to do is look for questions that people have asked in your niche, and simply answer them.
You want to try and give a detailed answer, and within your answer, you should link to a relevant blog post on your website to give them more information.
You can also add a sentence to the end of your answer explaining who you are and what you do along with a link to your site.
This is a very easy way to gain relevant backlinks, which will also be seen by people that view your answer.
So make sure you always give high-quality answers that show people that you know what you are talking about.
They might then go to your site to see your blog posts to see if you have any other relevant information that can help them out.



Why Use Quora?

There are many reasons why you should be using Quora for SEO. Here are the three that are the most important:

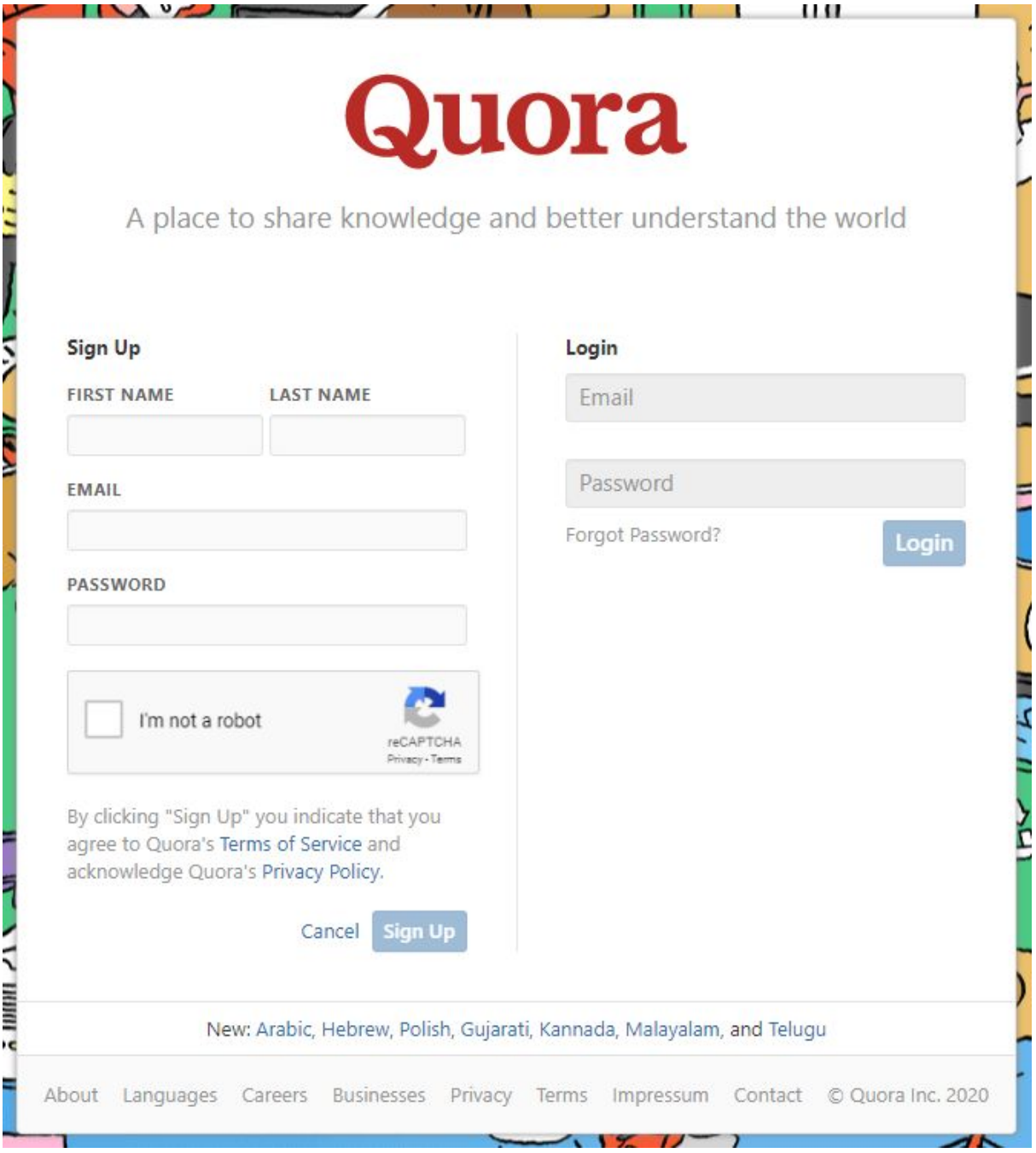
- Earn relevant backlinks
- Receive more website traffic
- Display your expertise in your niche

There are also many more benefits that using Quora will give you.

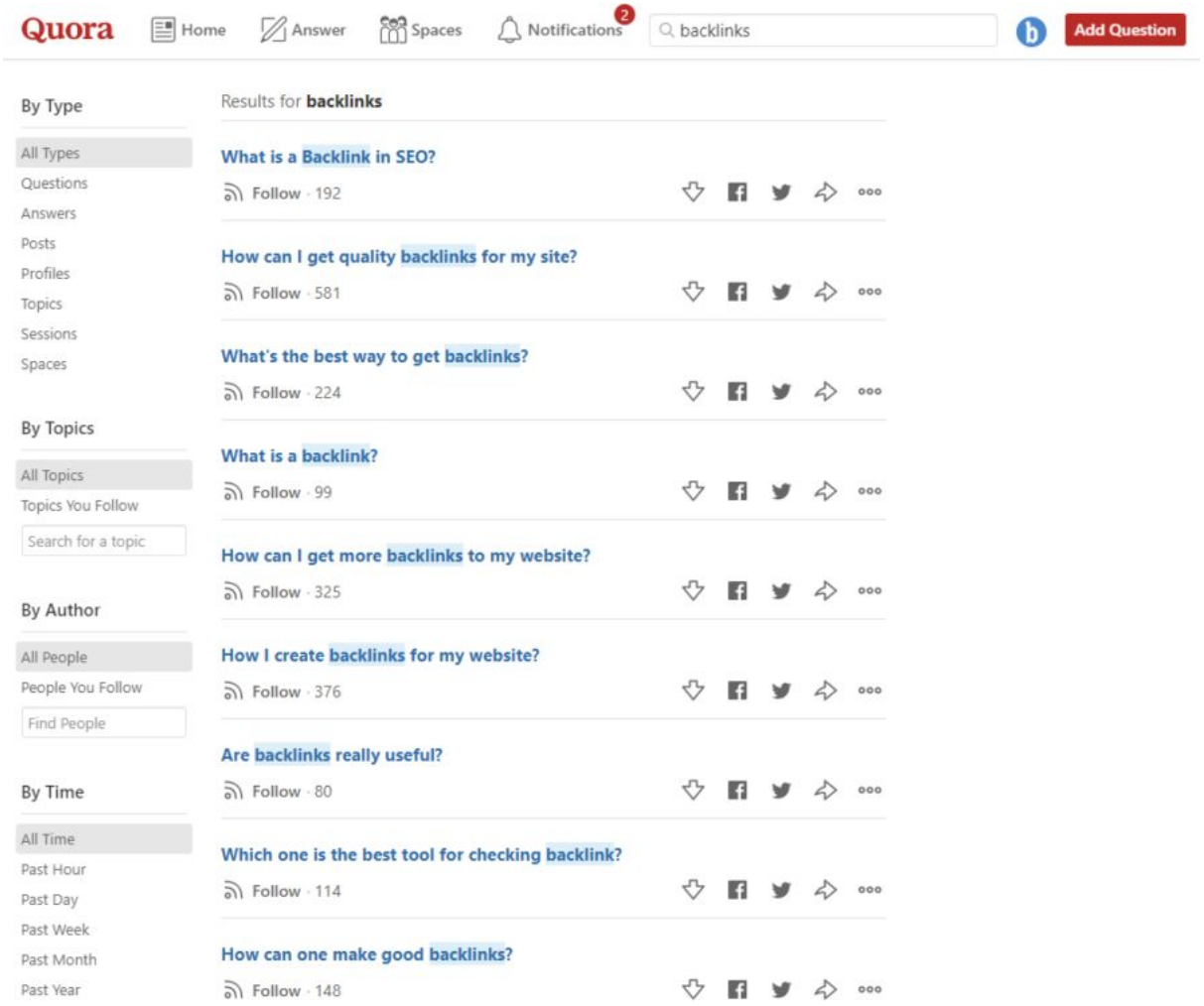
How To Earn Backlinks Using Quora:

Step One – Create an account on Quora.

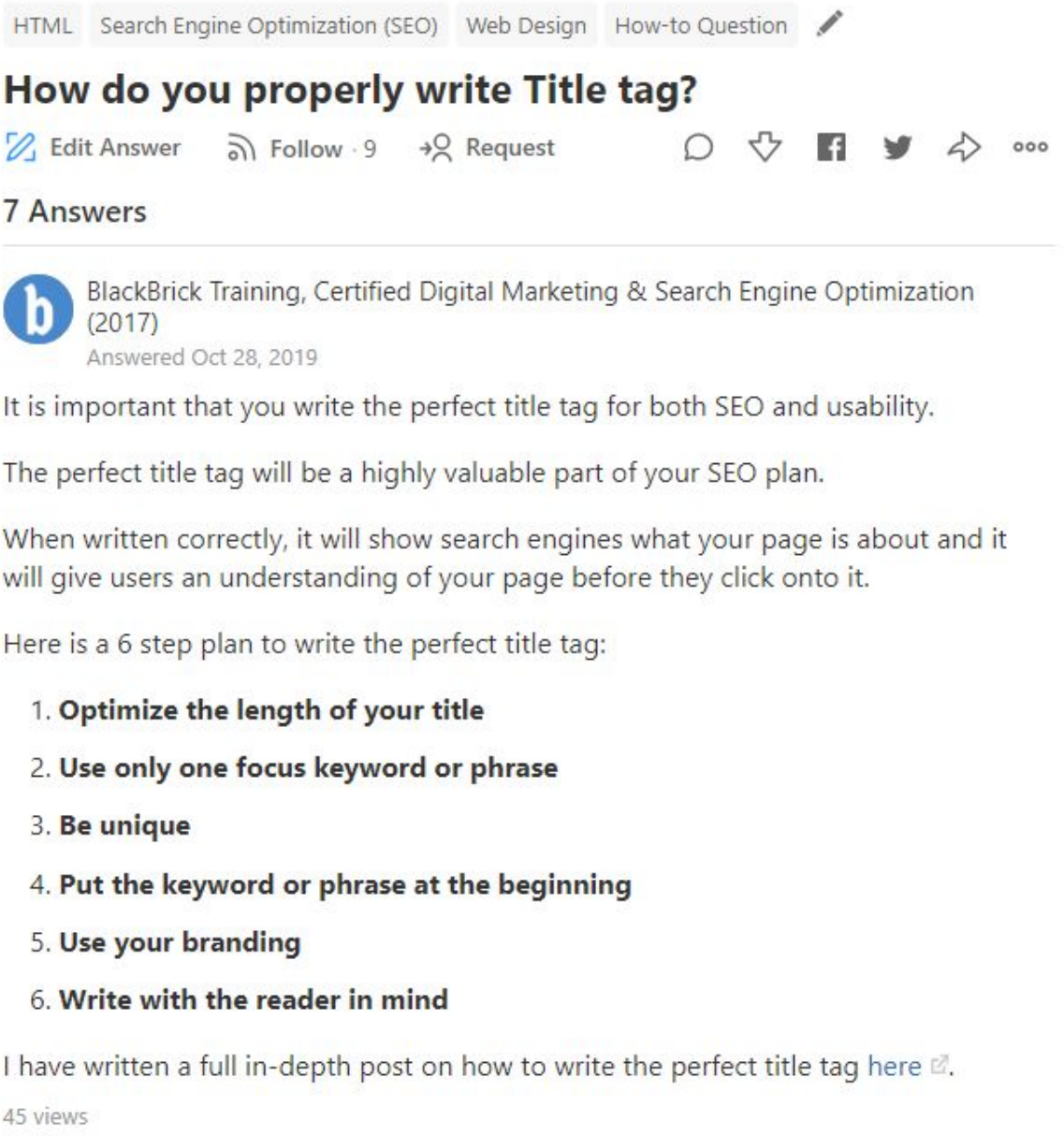
Go to Quora.com and sign up for an account.



Step Two – Find questions in your niche.
Enter keywords relevant to your niche in the search bar, and look for questions that you can answer confidently.

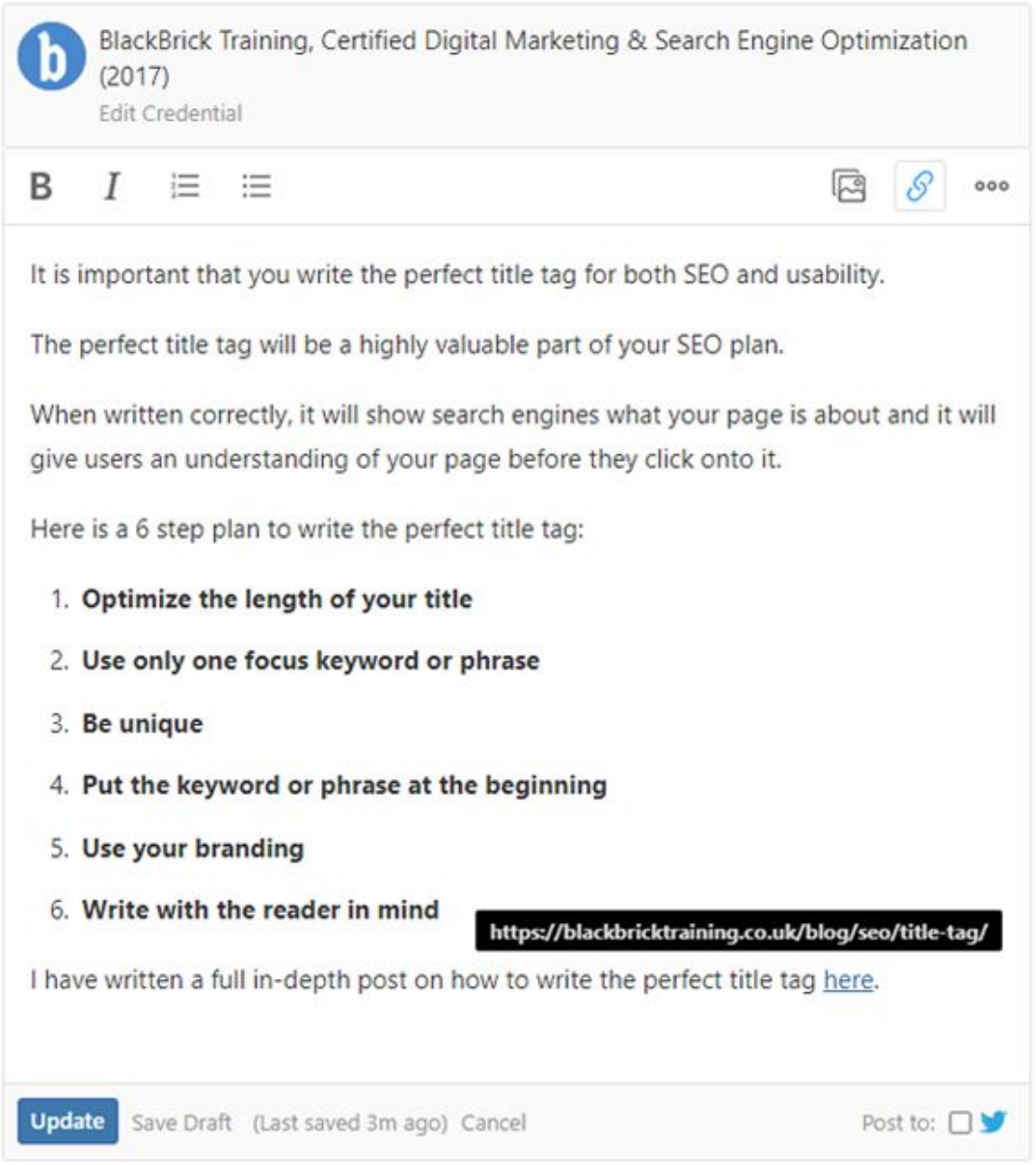


Step Three – Write an answer.
Take some time to write an answer that will help the person who asked the question, and anyone else who reads your answer.
In my opinion, I suggest only answering questions that you can confidently answer, this way, you know what you are writing about.
Here is an example of an answer I have written:



My answer is not too in-depth, so it is easy to understand, but it also gives the reader the information that they need.
You should write an answer that is as comprehensive as mine, if not, more so!
I could have been a bit more detailed with this particular answer, but it is a good guideline.
Step Four – Add a relevant link.
Add a link to a relevant article, tool, or page on your website that will provide the reader with more information that will further answer their question.

If you paste a link into Quora, it will automatically turn into a hyperlink, of course, you can change the hyperlink text if you wish.



Step Five – Repeat the process.
Answer another question, and then another, giving high-quality answers to every question.
This will provide people with answers to their questions, and help you to receive backlinks and traffic to your website.
Remember, only post high-quality answers that are helpful and relevant to the question that you are answering.
If you waste people's time and post spam, this technique will not work.

Contact Sites That Use Your Images

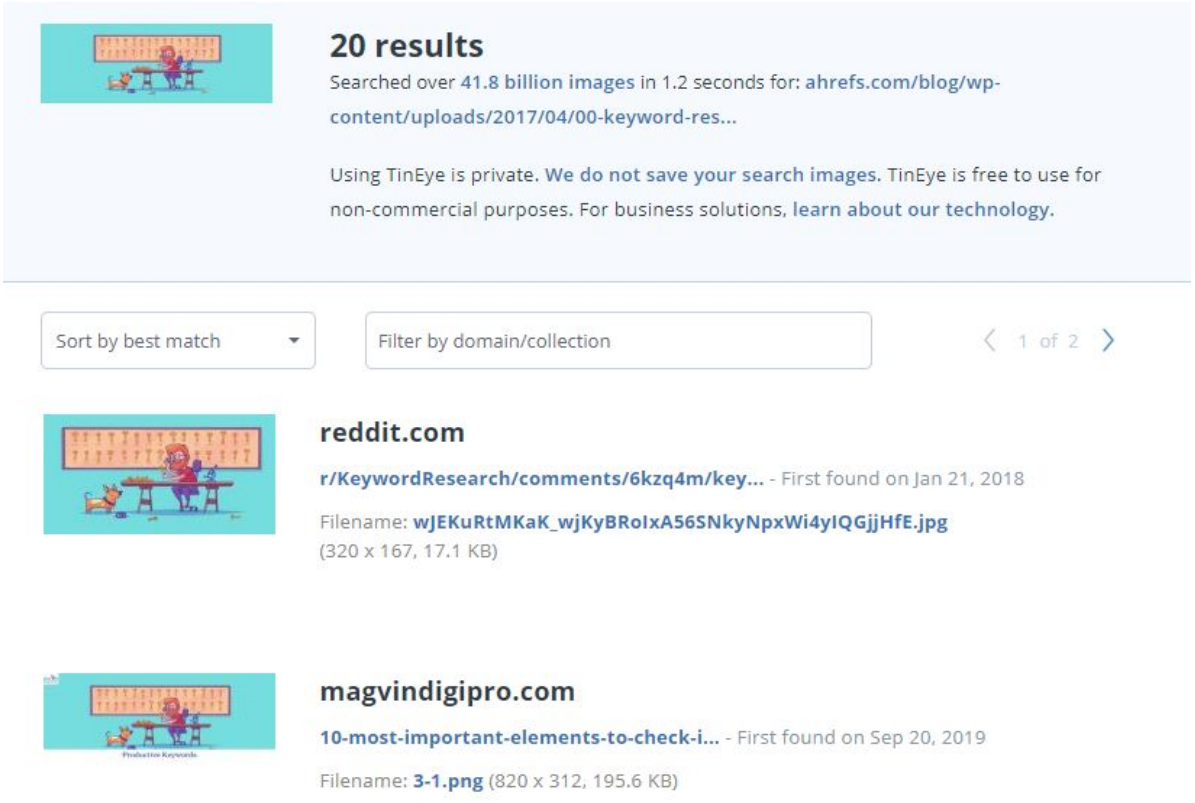
If someone uses your images without giving you credit, you can give them a nudge and ask them to credit you by linking to your website.
To find websites that have used your images, you can use several tools, but my favourite is TinEye.
It lets you input an image and then it shows you all of the sites that are using that same image.
Once you have found an image of yours that has been used by someone else without crediting you, email them nicely asking them to credit you with a link.
Most people will be more than happy to give you the credit you deserve.
Let's go through the process step by step.
Step One – Open TinEye.
Go to TinEye.com to start the process.



Step Two – Upload your image.
Upload or paste in the URL for the image that you want to search, and then click search.



Step Three – Find websites that are using your image.
Take a look at the websites that are using your image, and find the sites that you want to contact.



Step Four – Check domain authority.
Use the Moz Domain Analysis Tool to check the domain authority for each site that is using your image.
You only want to receive links from websites that have a domain authority of 20 or higher, so only contact those particular sites.



Step Five- Email the website owner.
Send an email to the website owner, kindly asking them to credit you for the image.
The email doesn't need too lengthy, just a short and simple email asking for image credit will do the trick.
Most people are more than likely to credit you for the image.
This technique can be used for pictures, infographics, stock photos, and any other type of image that you have uploaded to your website, as long as you created the graphic or took the picture yourself.

Use Forums In Your Niche

A forum is a website where people from all around the world discuss particular topics in different niches.
There are many forums for every niche, so there will be some that are more relevant than others.
What you want to do is sign up to a forum in your niche and start joining discussions that you can provide quality information to.
On most forums, you can have a link to your website on your profile page, so when you answer questions people can click onto your profile and see the link.

Add A Blog To Your Website

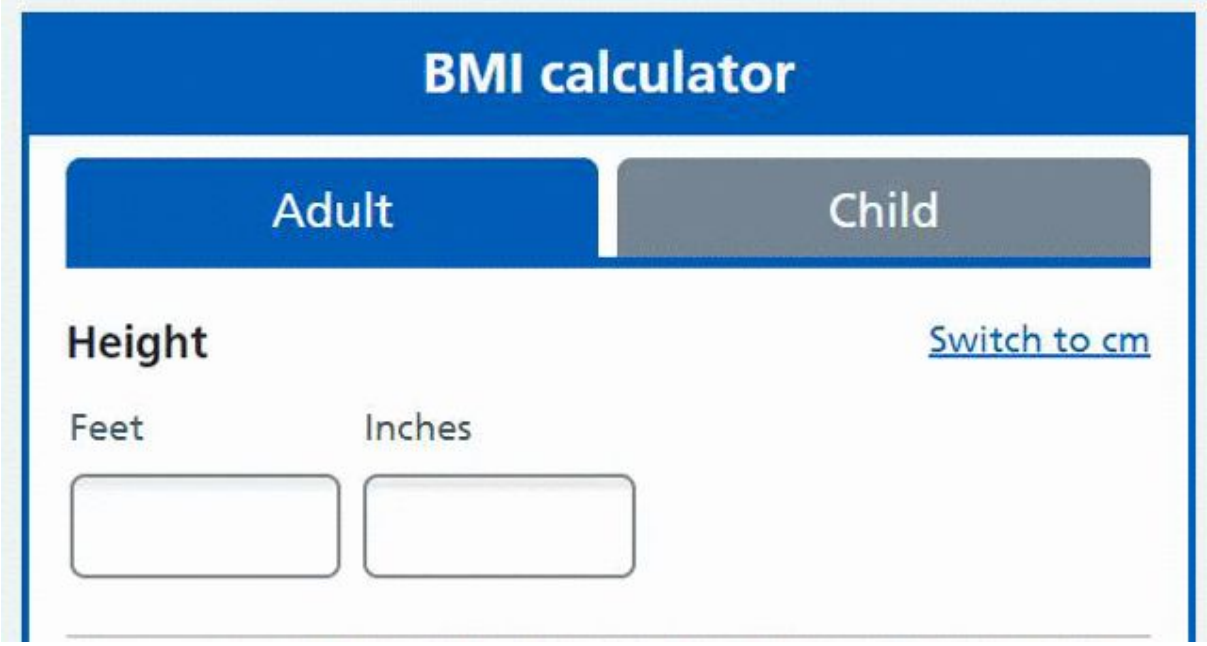
Adding a blog to your website will make it a lot easier for you to rank in search engines simply because you will have more content to rank.
If you consistently publish high quality, relevant posts to your blog, people will link to your posts and share them on social media.
Why Add A Blog To Your Website?
Here are five reasons why you should add a blog to your website.

- Drives traffic to your website.
- Builds your brand's credibility.
- Converts readers into leads.
- Creates linkable content.
- Keeps your website content fresh.

Take a look at our blog here for inspiration.
Hopefully, now you will create a blog for your website and regularly post new articles.

Make A Tool That Your Website Visitors Can Use

For a long time, high-quality blog posts and guides have been one of the best ways to gain backlinks to your website.
Now, the trend is shifting towards web-based tools that website visitors can use for free.
Creating free tools, like template generators, or calculators is a great strategy to earn backlinks to your website.
This can be something simple, it doesn't have to be complex.
A few examples can include an invoice maker, tax calculator, or maybe a BMI calculator.
Here is a BMI Calculator that is on the NHS website:



As you can see, it is easy to use and provides the user with valuable information

The tool that you add to your website should be relevant to your content, for example, if you run a fitness website, a BMI calculator would be a good fit.

If you don't have any ideas for tools that you could add to your site, follow this simple guide:

Step One:

Search for keywords in your industry, followed by terms like "tools", "generator", "templates", and "calculator".

For example, if I run a fitness blog, I could search for "fitness calculators".

Step Two:

Take a look at the tools that appear in the search results for those specific phrases.

Step Three:

Use the Ahrefs backlink checker to see which of those tools have the most backlinks.

Step Four:

Build, purchase, or hire somebody to build a better version of the tool that you have chosen.

Improve the design, add more features, etc.

Let's take a look at a simple example, the NHS BMI calculator has received over 30,000 backlinks from over 2,000 unique domains.



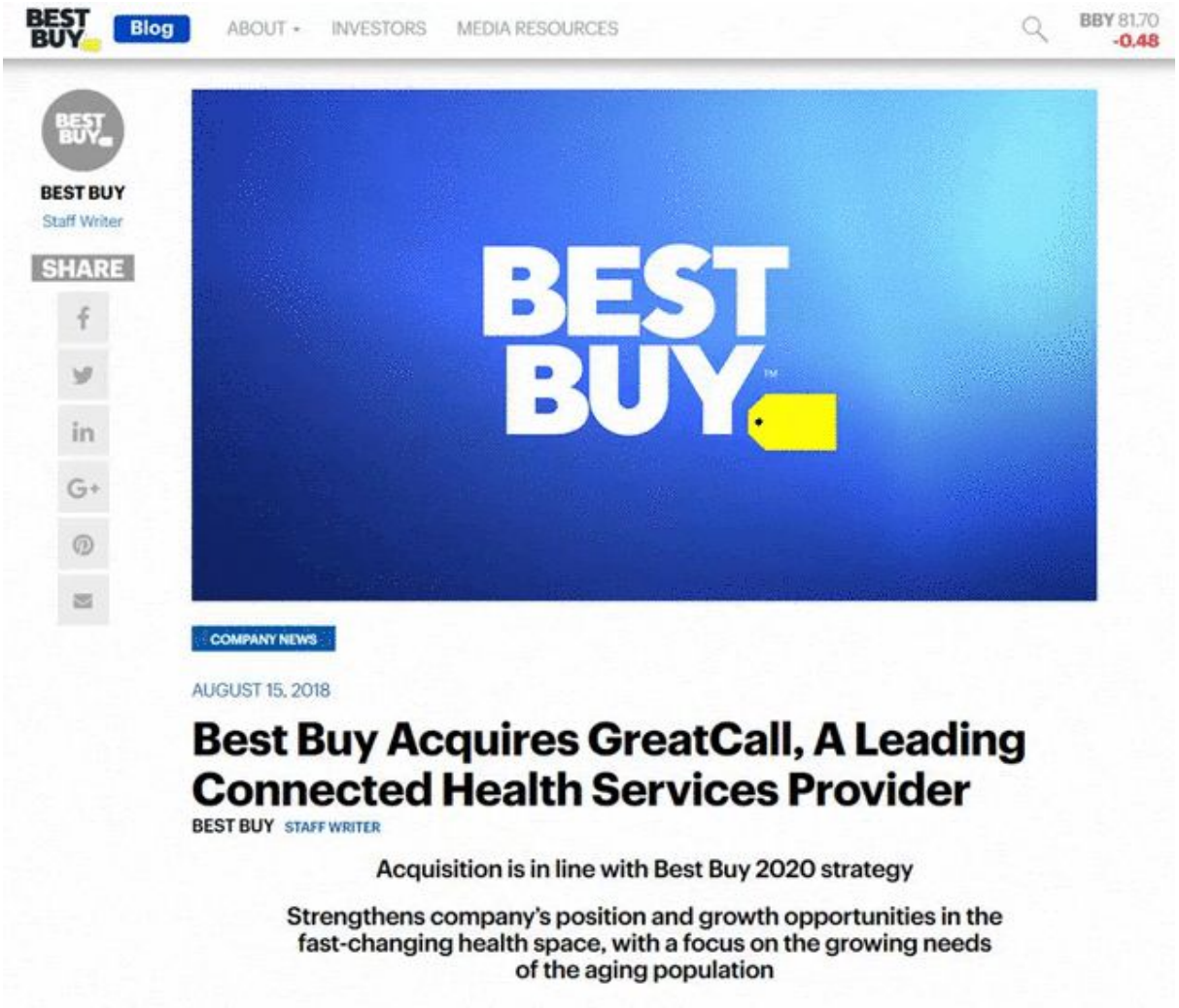
This has helped the NHS website to increase authority and rankings within search engines.

Submit A Press Release

A press release is a written document that summarises important news regarding your company.
Once you have written a press release, you send it to the media (otherwise known as the press) with the main goal of having reporters, editors and media outlets use it in a publication.
In the digital age, the goal is to have them publish it within an article on their website.
If you successfully manage to have media outlets publish your press release, you can earn backlinks, brand mentions, and it will be seen by journalists.
Should a journalist like what they see, they may also write about your brand!
Google has said that they don't positively reward links from press releases, but your press release can still lead to other writers seeing the publication and then decide to write about it on their website, resulting in the possibility of a quality backlink.
There are many reasons why a business may write a press release, such as:

- Product Announcement
- Employee Announcement
- Company Announcement
- Achievements & Awards

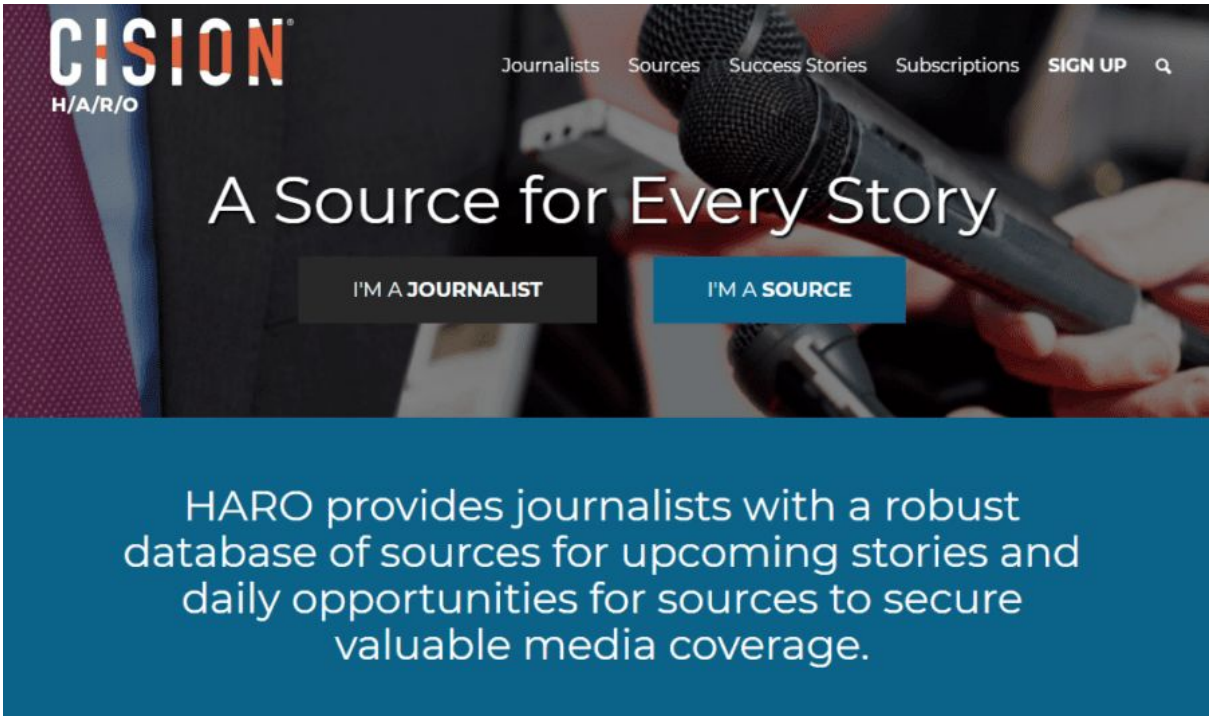
Here is an example of a press release that was published by Best-buy when they acquired “GreatCall”.



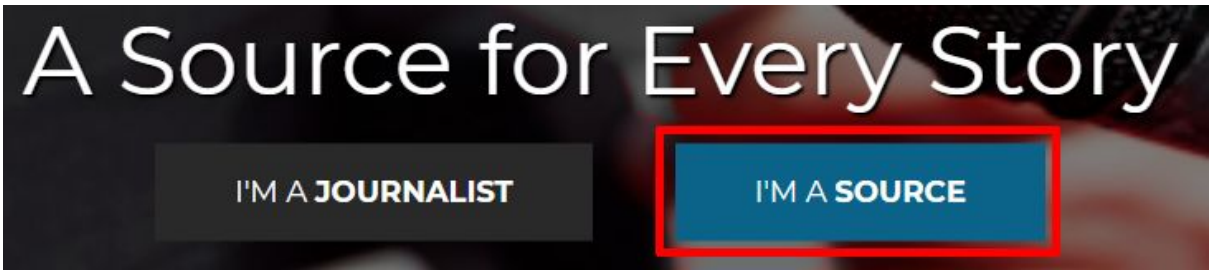
Once you have written a press release, send it to relevant news publications in your niche and in the location that your business operates.
If you don’t want to send your press release to each publication individually, you can use a distribution service.
I suggest using Issuewire.
They will distribute your first press release for free.

Become A Source For Reporters & Bloggers

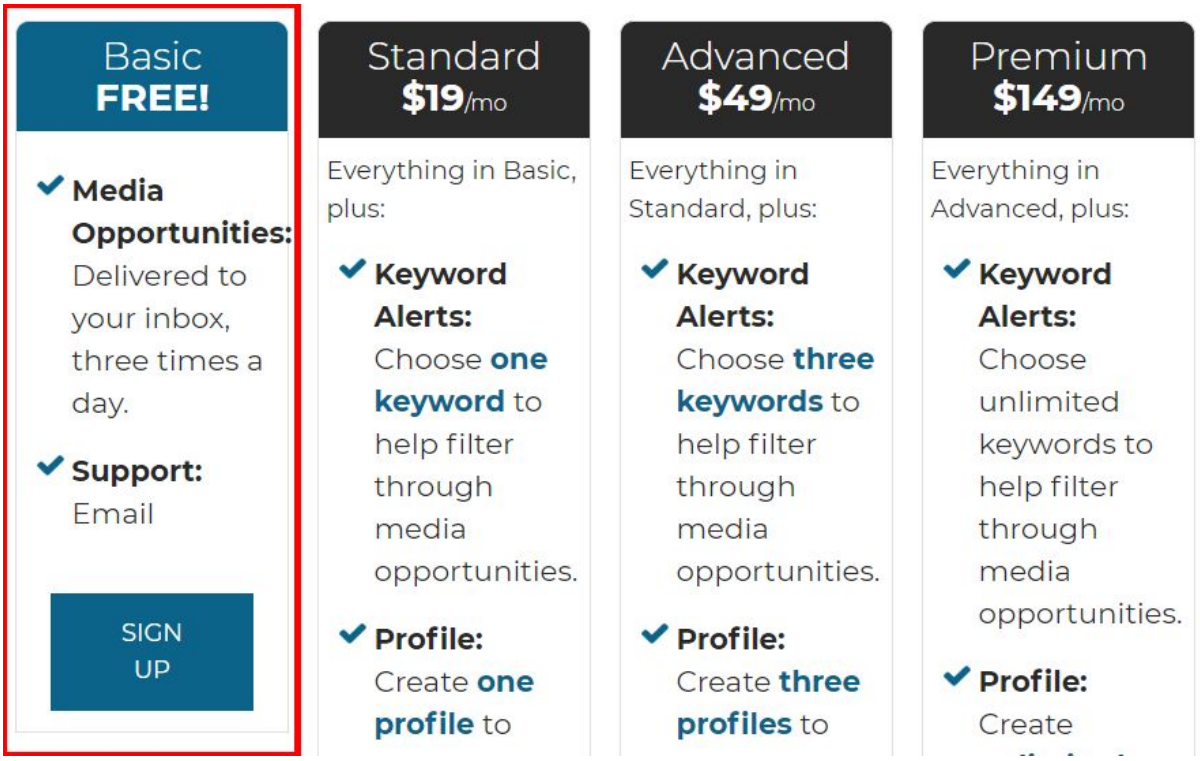
If you want high-quality backlinks, you should look for high authority news websites that are searching for sources for their articles.
This strategy can be a lot of work, but it will earn you high-quality backlinks and media coverage.
To find different publishers that are looking for sources of information for their articles, we will use a service called Help a Reporter Out, also known as HARO.



HARO is a service that connects journalists with sources for their stories and articles.
We are going to register as a source, this way we can secure media coverage, and earn quality backlinks.
Let's go through the process step by step.
First, you want to register as a source.



After that, pick your plan.
I'd suggest starting with the free plan, so then you can see if this is the service you want to use.



Then, monitor your email inbox for source requests, and look for any that are relevant to your industry, and expertise.

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4) "X" Effortless virtual networking tips to stay connected without trying hard (TruPath)

5) Productivity calculations (Hubstaff Blog)

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7) One tip for email marketing that has worked for your like magic (Anonymous)

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11) Are you a startup in Canada? (Blog)

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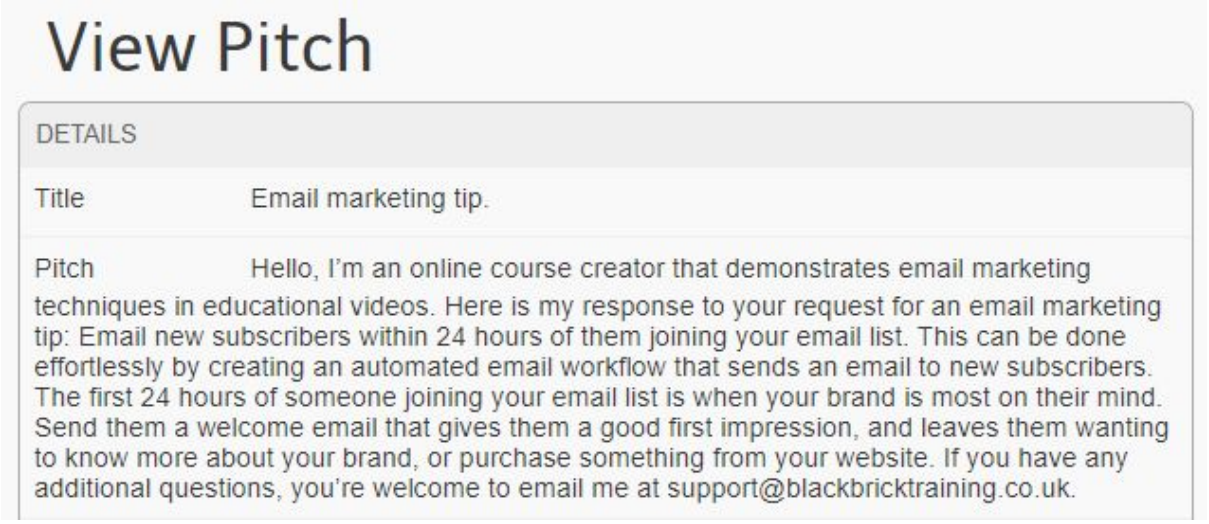
Finally, once you have found a request you like, the last step is to send the journalist a pitch.
Here is a pitch that I recently submitted:


View Pitch

DETAILS

Title: Email marketing tip.

Pitch: Hello, I'm an online course creator that demonstrates email marketing techniques in educational videos. Here is my response to your request for an email marketing tip: Email new subscribers within 24 hours of them joining your email list. This can be done effortlessly by creating an automated email workflow that sends an email to new subscribers. The first 24 hours of someone joining your email list is when your brand is most on their mind. Send them a welcome email that gives them a good first impression, and leaves them wanting to know more about your brand, or purchase something from your website. If you have any additional questions, you're welcome to email me at support@blackbricktraining.co.uk.

If the journalist is interested, they will reach out to you.

TECHNICAL SEO

What Is Technical SEO?

Technical SEO refers to the steps taken to improve the technical aspects of a website with the main goal being to increase the site's search engine rankings.
The reason it is called "technical" is that it has nothing to do with the website's content, it solely focuses on improving the site's indexing, crawling & usability.
Technical SEO is done to help search engines crawl and index your website more effectively, improving the likelihood of your web pages earning a high organic search engine ranking.
Some of the tasks that can be done to technically optimize a site include, improving web page loading speed, ensuring the site is mobile friendly and responsive, submitting a sitemap for the website, installing an SSL certificate, and more.
In my opinion, technical SEO can be the most complicated part of any SEO plan, so its important to concentrate.

Why Is Technical SEO Important?

You need to put together all the parts of an SEO plan to see real results, so if you miss out a vital part like Technical SEO, you will be making it difficult for yourself to rank in search results.
Because of what Technical SEO entails, avoiding it will damage your chances of appearing in search results, therefore resulting in a much lower amount of traffic to your site.
Let's say you get lucky and rank in search results without properly doing technical SEO, there will still be problems.
If your website is not secure, or mobile-friendly, or takes a long time to load, when people click onto your site they will probably just leave.
Your website's technical SEO does not need to be perfect to be able to rank.
However, you do need to make it easy for your site's visitors to access and engage with your content.

Search engines also need to be able to easily access your web pages so that they can crawl them and then index them in search results.

Google Search Console

What Is Google Search Console?

Google Search Console is a free service made by Google that makes it easy for you to monitor and maintain your website's presence within Google Search results.
You don't have to use the Search Console to have your site rank in search results, but using the tool will help you to maintain your rankings and improve how Google crawls your website.

Google Search Console Features:

Here are just some of the features that are available to you within this tool.

- Fix indexing problems & request pages to be re-indexed.
- See which websites link to yours.
- Receive alerts when Google discovers any issues on your site.
- Confirm that Google can properly crawl your website.
- Troubleshoot technical issues for mobile usability, site speed, and more.

As well as all of that, there are also many more features and capabilities inside the Google Search Console.

Who Should Use Google Search Console?

Every single website owner and creator should have Search Console set up for their website, including:

- Website Developers
- SEO Specialists
- Business Owners
- Website Administrators

Even if you are not going to be using Search Console yourself, it is recommended that you understand the basics of it.

Why Is Google Search Console Important?

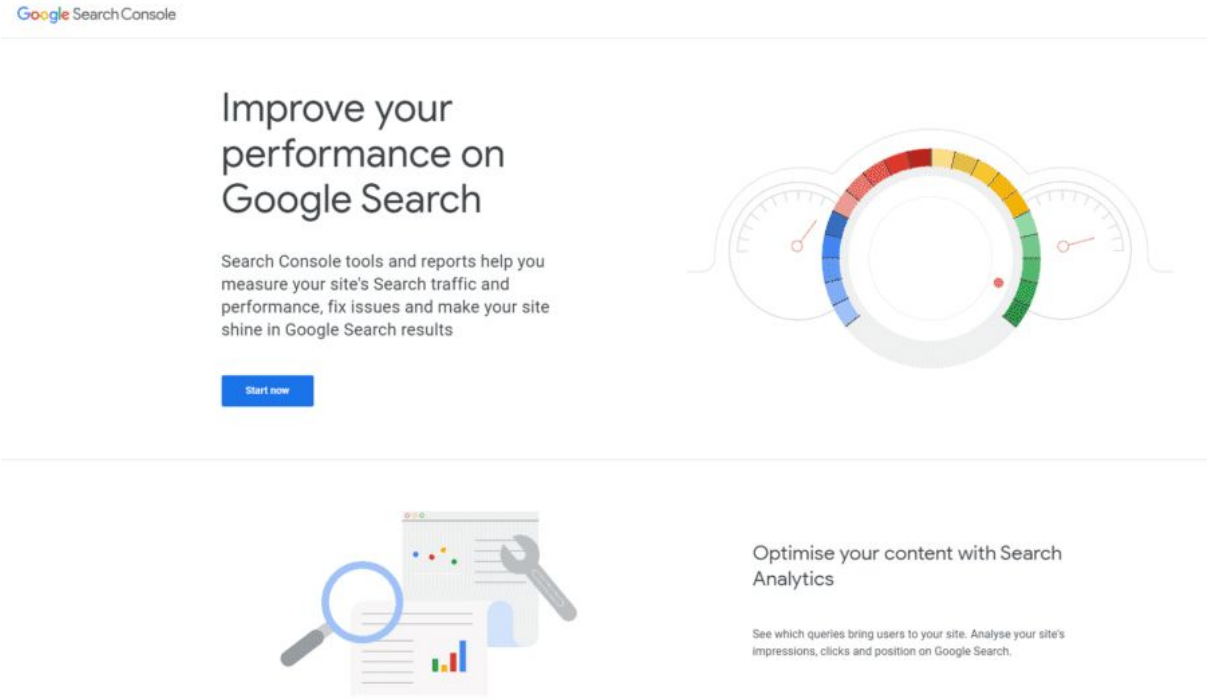
Search Console is the best tool in the industry when it comes to maintaining your site's Google search engine rankings.
With Search Console you can track your website's search engine ranking performance, so you can see if your traffic from organic rankings is going up or down.
You can use the tool to submit a sitemap for your website which allows Google to crawl and index your web pages and understand the structure of your website.
Google Search Console has a section which focuses on enhancing your website, this section gives you tips to increase the loading speed for your web pages and improve the usability of the mobile version of your website.
You can connect your Search Console account with your Google Analytics account, this allows you to access Search Console data within Google Analytics.
Google Search Console also has a security section which gives you tips to improve your website's security, this can be very helpful if you missed anything out or didn't already know how to secure your site.
Using the Search Console platform will massively help you to improve your website's search engine rankings and make the user experience better for all visitors.

Add Your Site To Google Search Console

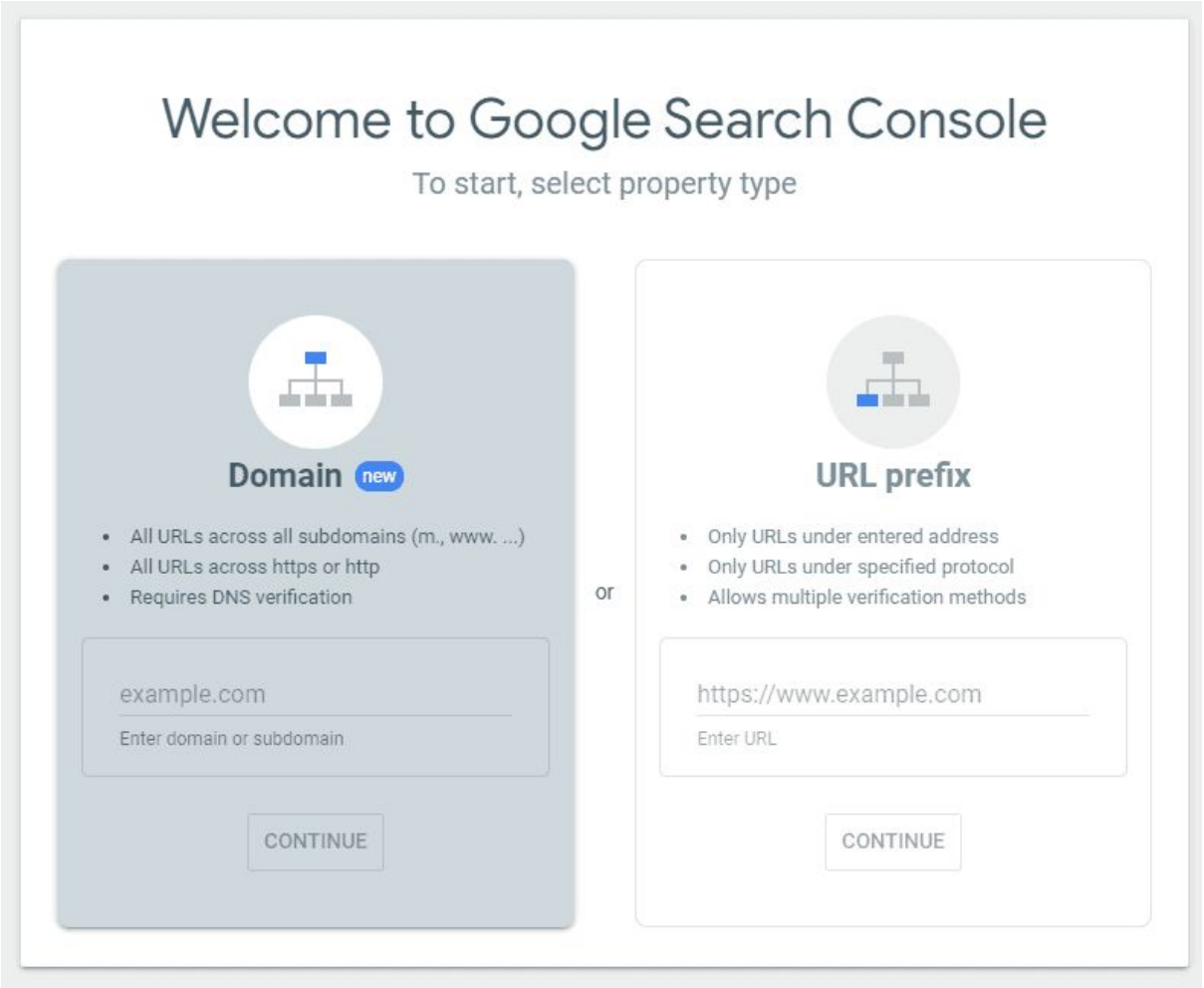
To use Search Console, you must sign up and add your website to your account, so let's start by doing that.
A Google account is required for you to create a Search Console, so create one if you don't have one already.
Once you are signed in to your Google account we can start the process of creating your Google Search Console account.

Create Your Google Search Console Account

Open the Search Console website, and then simply click the blue "Start now" button.



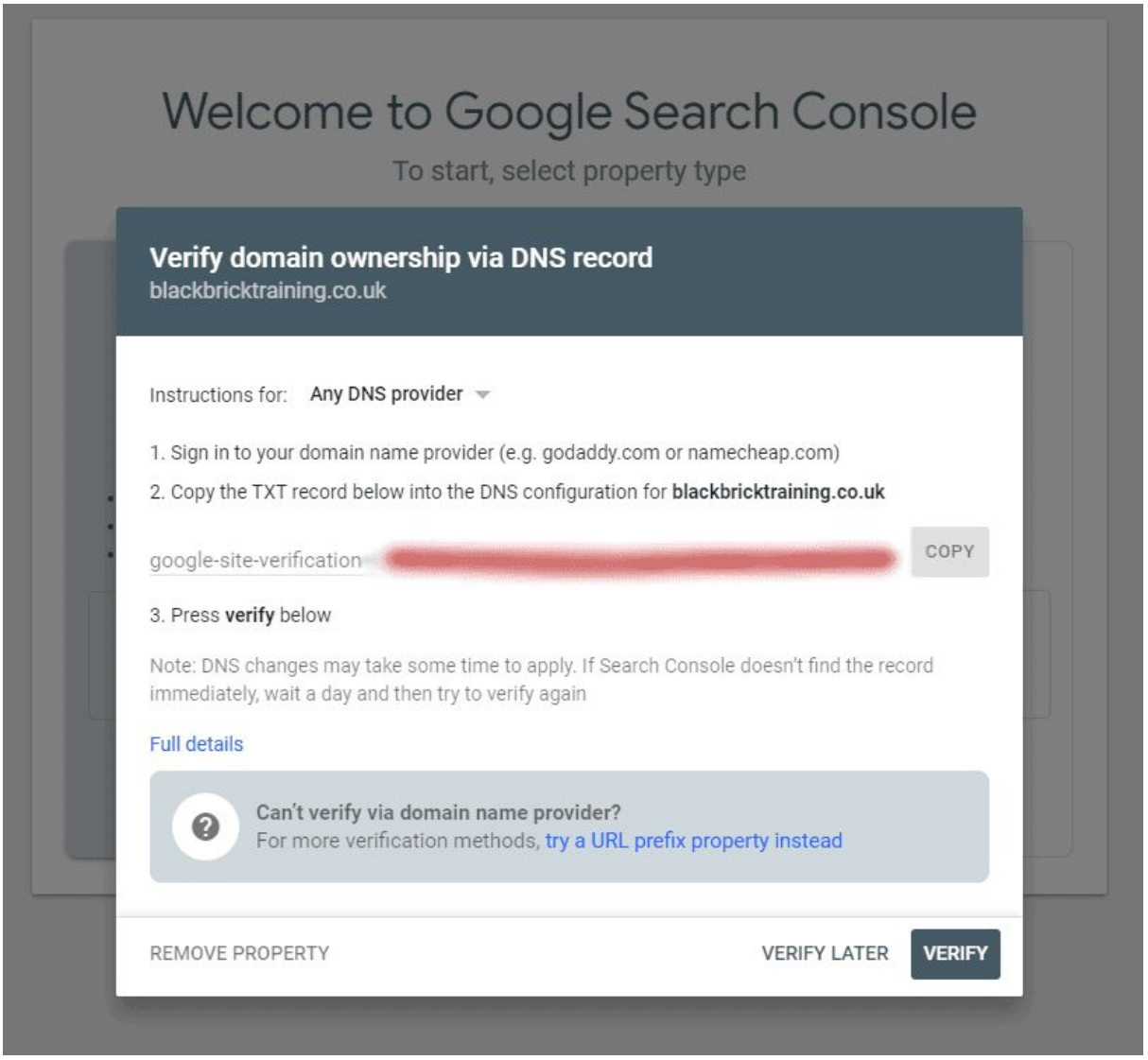
If you are not yet signed in to your Google account it will ask you to sign in.
Then you will need to select the property type for your website.



There are two options:

- **Domain**
- **URL Prefix**

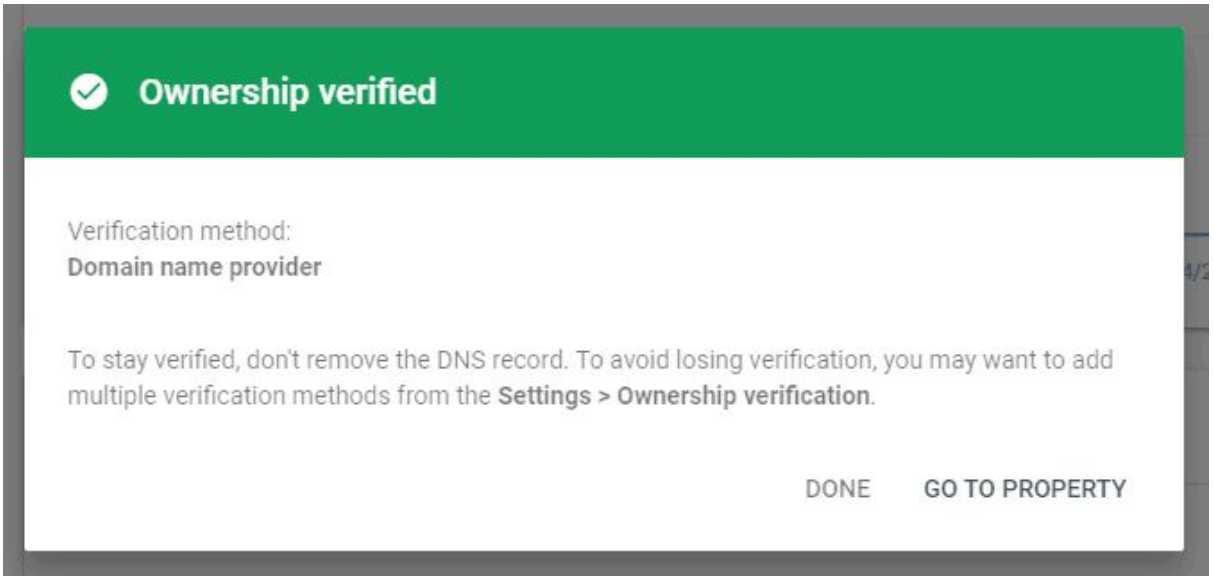
I recommend selecting domain as it will allow you to work with a broader range of data for your website.
Once you have selected your property type, you need to enter the domain for your website.
Then click “Continue”.
You will now be required to verify that you own this domain name.



To do this you have to log in to the domain name provider where you purchased your domain, and then add a TXT record to your domain's DNS configuration.
This may sound complicated, but I'll guide you through it.
Login to your domain name provider (mine is Namecheap).
Go to the Advanced DNS settings for your domain.
Click "Add New Record" under the DNS settings for your domain.
Select the "TXT Record" option, then in the "host" box enter "@".
In the box labelled "Value" paste in the TXT record that you were given from Google Search Console.
If you have an option to edit the "TTL" set it to "Automatic", then click save.



Then go back to the Search Console and click “Verify”.
If you get a popup that says “verification failed”, give it a couple of hours for the changes you made within your domain name provider to apply.
Then click “Verify” again, and it should say “ownership verified”.



You have now successfully added your website to Google Search Console.
Most data will now be accessible, but some can take up to 24 hours to be visible.
You can now start using the Search Console!

Users, Owners, and Permissions

There are two roles that Google Search Console accounts can have within a property.
Owner: An owner has complete control over a property within Google Search Console. They can view all data, access every tool, change settings, and add other users and owners to a property.

User: A user can see data and take some actions depending on the restrictions that are in place, but that cannot add new users or owners to a property.
It is crucial that you carefully think about who you give each particular role to, as you don't want to give full access to someone that can't be trusted or just doesn't need it.
How To Add A New User To A GSC Property:

1. On the Google Search Console dashboard, click onto the "Settings" page.
2. Click onto the "Users and permissions" page.
3. Click "Add User", then enter the Google email address for the user you are adding.
4. Select the permission level that you want to give the new user.
5. Finally, click "Add" to add the user to your Google Search Console property.

The new user will now be added to your property.
How To Remove A User From Your GSC Property:

1. Click "Settings" on the menu at the left of your Google Search Console Dashboard.
2. Click onto the "Users and permissions" page.
3. Select the three dots next to the user you want to delete from your property, and then click "Remove user".

The user will be instantly removed from your Google Search Console property.

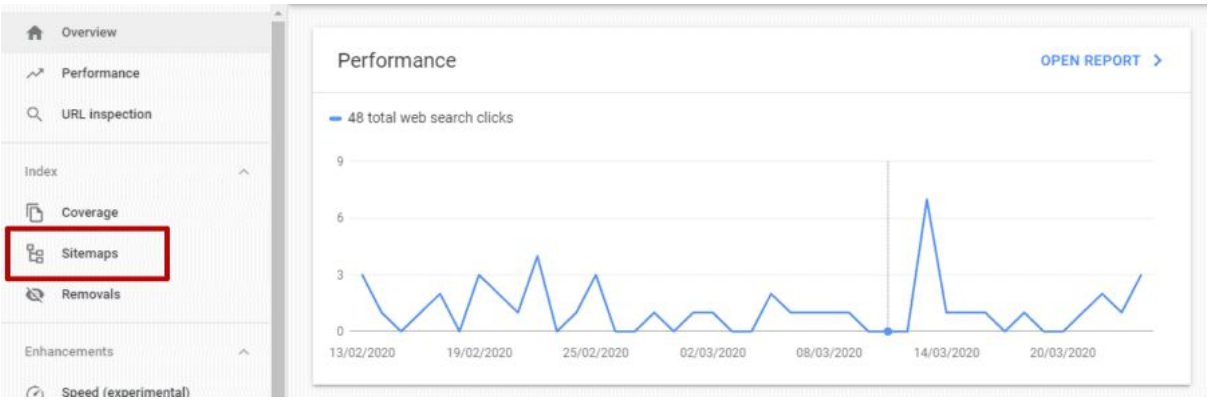
Submit Your Sitemap

Submitting a sitemap is not required to be able to rank in search results, but it will help Google to find all of your web pages and understand the structure of your site which will make it easier for them to crawl and index your web pages.

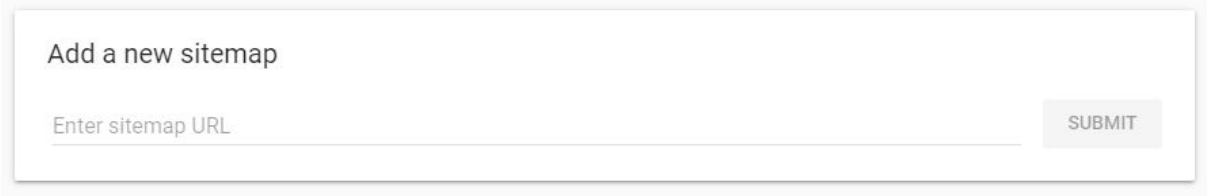
It is recommended that all websites have a sitemap, but there are two cases where you must generate a sitemap for your website:

1. **The website is new.** If you have a new website, you should have a sitemap because you will have fewer backlinks meaning your web pages are more difficult for search engines to find organically.
2. **The website has many pages.** If you have a big website, search engines are more likely to miss a page out, so adding a sitemap will show them the structure of your site helping them to find every single page.

How To Submit Your Sitemap To Google Search Console:
Once you have generated a sitemap for your website, it is quite easy to submit it to Google Search console.
First, log in to Search Console and select the property that you want to add the sitemap to.
From the Search Console dashboard, click on “Sitemaps”.
On this page, you can add a new sitemap, or view sitemaps that you have previously submitted.



In the box labelled “Add a new sitemap”, paste in the URL for your sitemap.
Finally, click “Submit”!



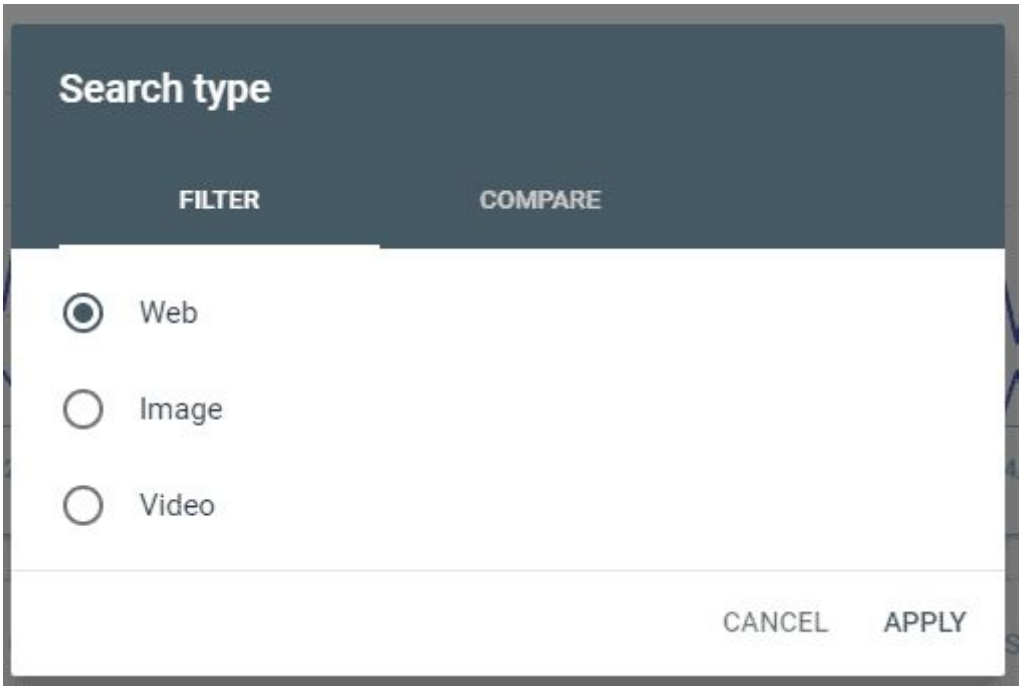
It's as easy as that, you're all done!
The sitemap has now been submitted to your property in Search Console.
Google will now crawl the sitemap that you have submitted.

Filter Data In Google Search Console

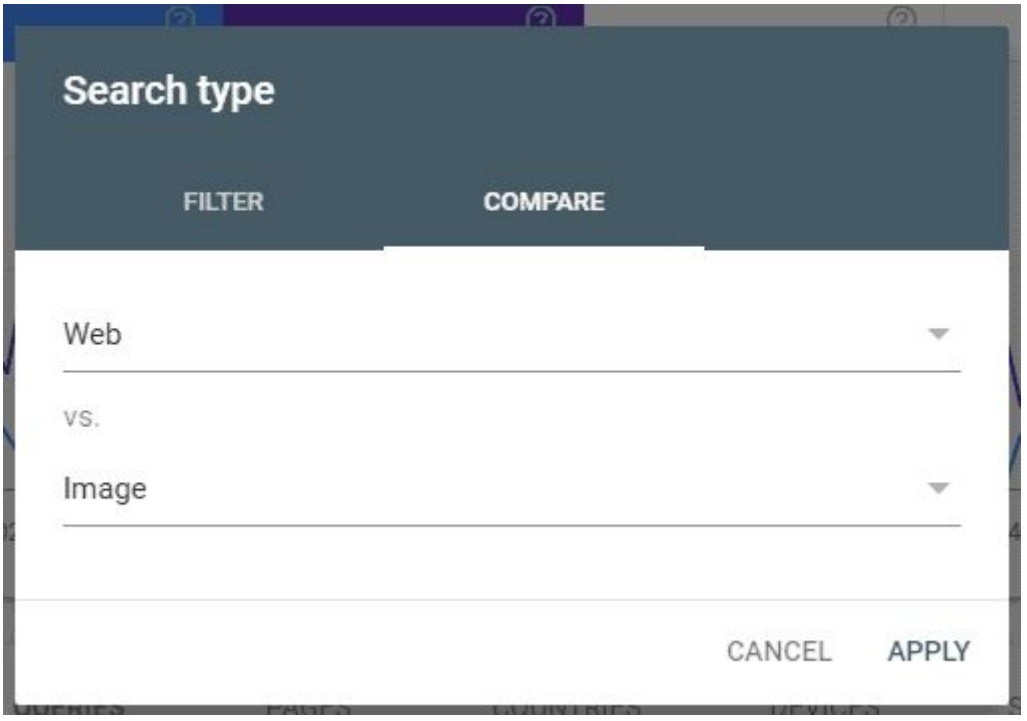
Within GSC there are multiple ways for you to view and filter different data.
At first, they may be confusing, but once you know how to use them, they are very useful to have.
These are the three main filter types:

Search Type

There are three search types that you can filter data by web, image, and video.
The most common one that people use is web, but if you gain a lot of traffic through image or video search you should try them out as well.



Alternatively, you can choose to compare two types of traffic.
To do this, click the "compare" tab and then choose the two traffic types that you want to compare, and click "Apply".

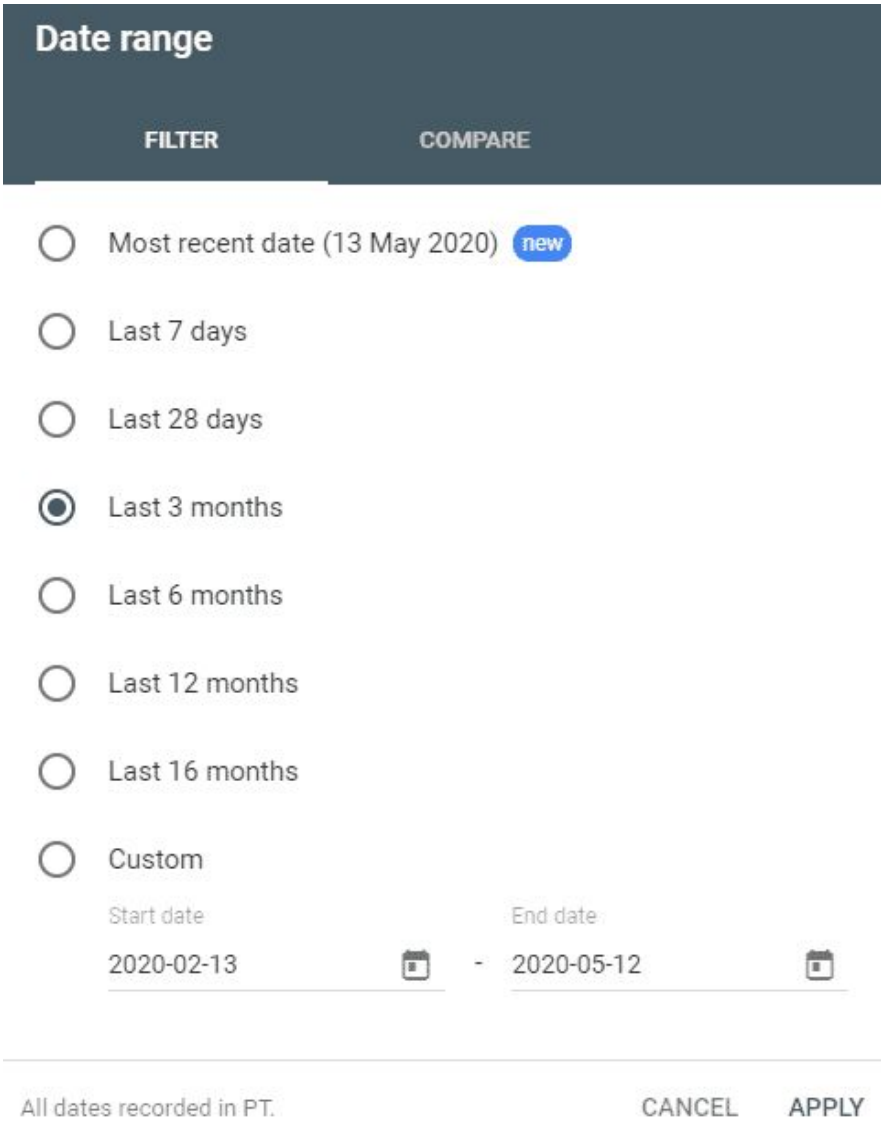


By comparing different traffic types, you can find some interesting information about how your web traffic compared to image or video traffic.

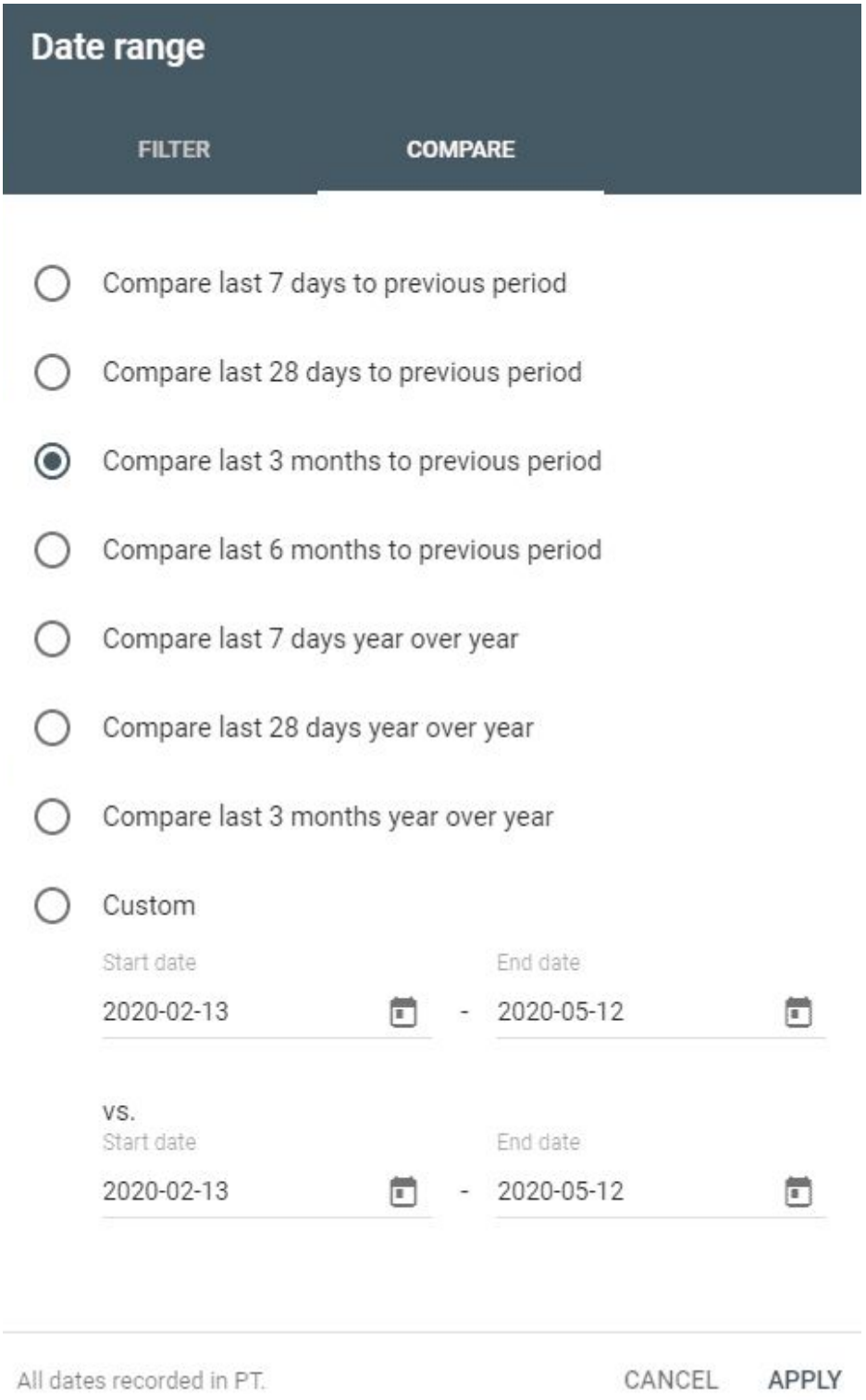
You could, for example, find out that you get more traffic through image search than you previously thought.

Date Range

You can use this filter to display data from a specific date range. It's possible to select a preset time range or set a custom range.



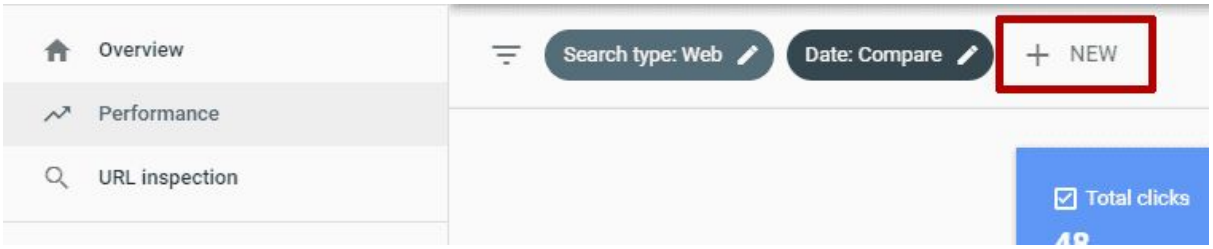
As well as that, you can compare the data from two different date ranges.
To do this, select “compare”, and then pick the dates that you want to compare.



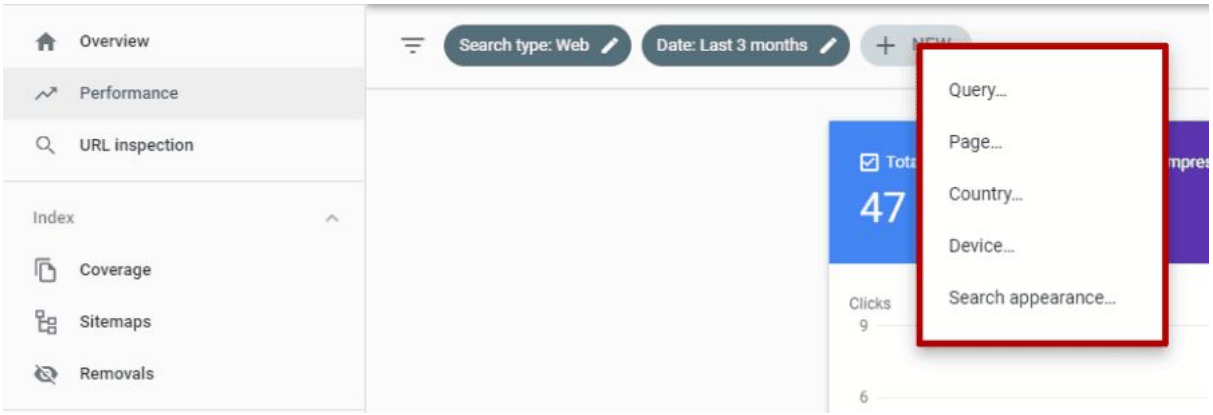
This can be incredibly helpful for comparing data from two different date ranges to see if your website traffic, search engine rankings, and CTR are all increasing.

Query, Page, Country, Device, Search Appearance

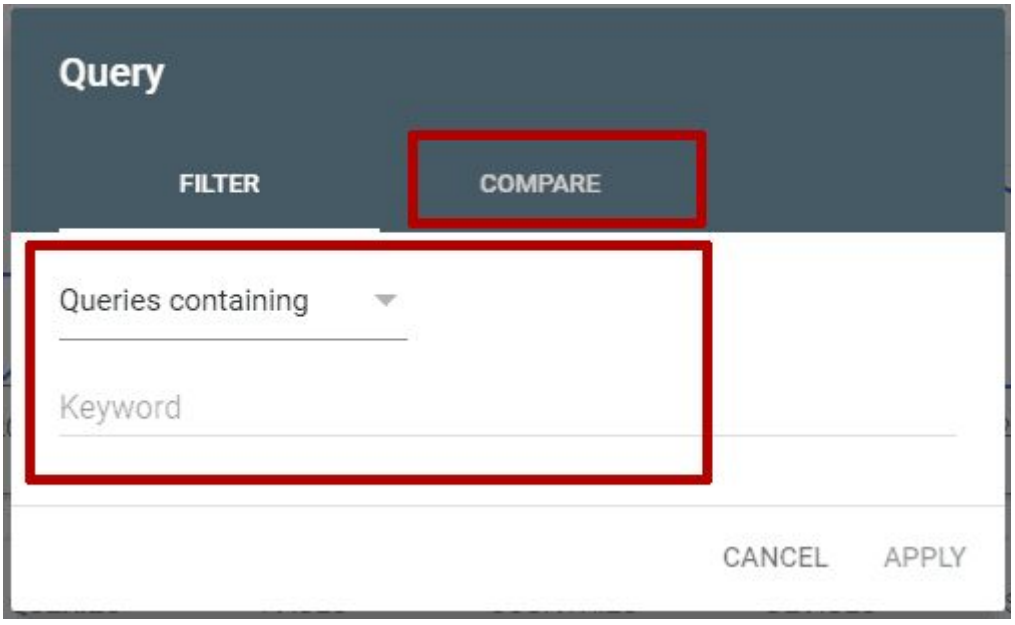
To add one of these filter types, you need to click “New”.



You will then be introduced to five other filter types that you can use to sort Search Console data.
These are query, page, country, device, and search appearance.
It's best to use all of them so that you get the hang of using them, so let's go through each of them.

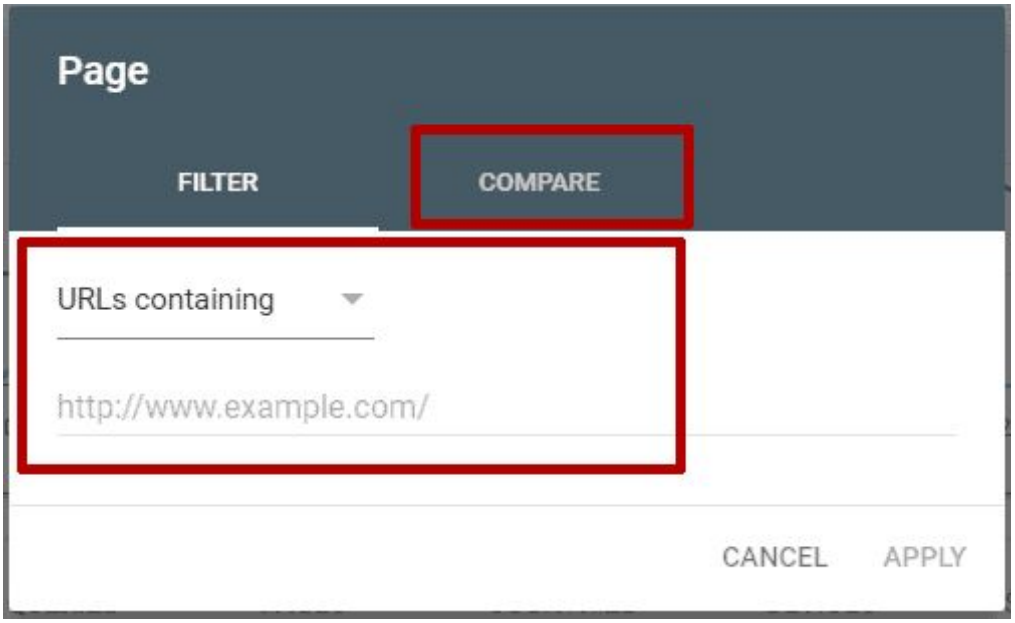


Using the "**Query**" filter you can filter data by "Queries containing", "Queries not containing", and "Exact query".
Or you can compare the data from two queries.

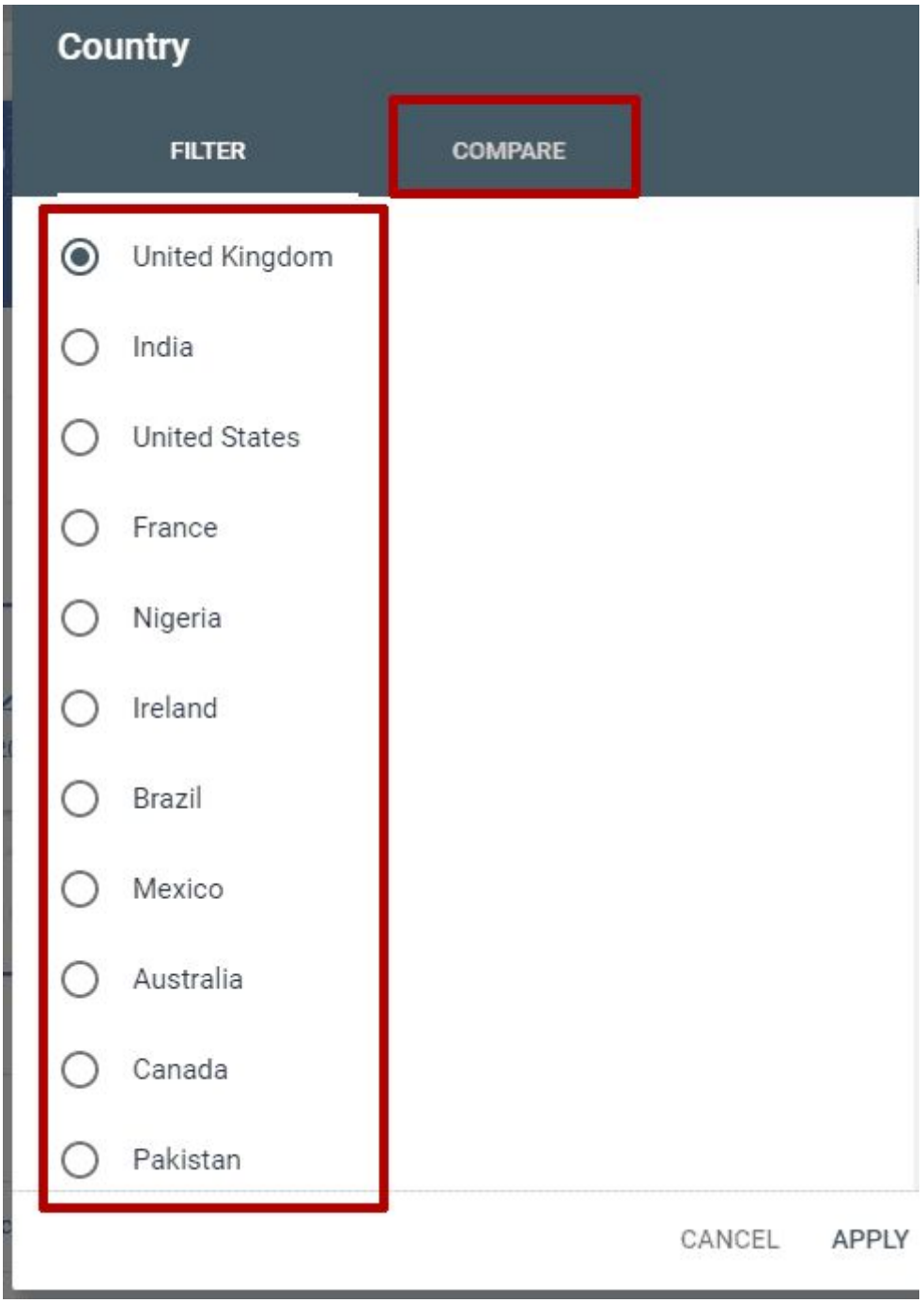


With the "**Page**" filter you can filter data by "URLs containing", "URLs not containing", and "Exact URL".

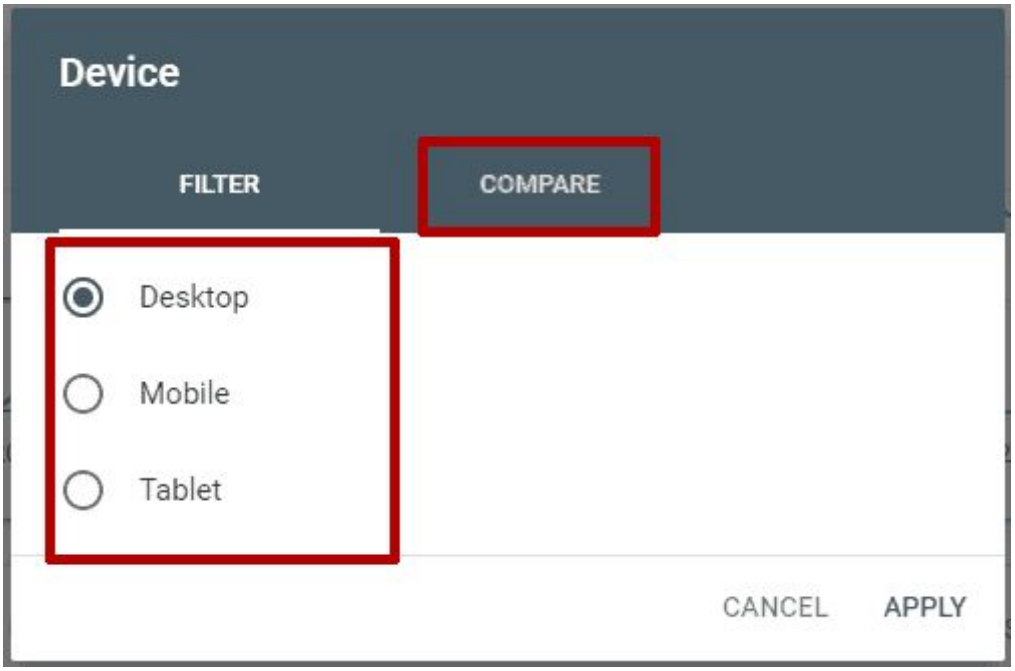
Or you can use the compare option to compare data from two different URLs.



The "**Country**" filter lets you view data from the specific country that you select.
You can also use the compare option to compare data from two different countries.



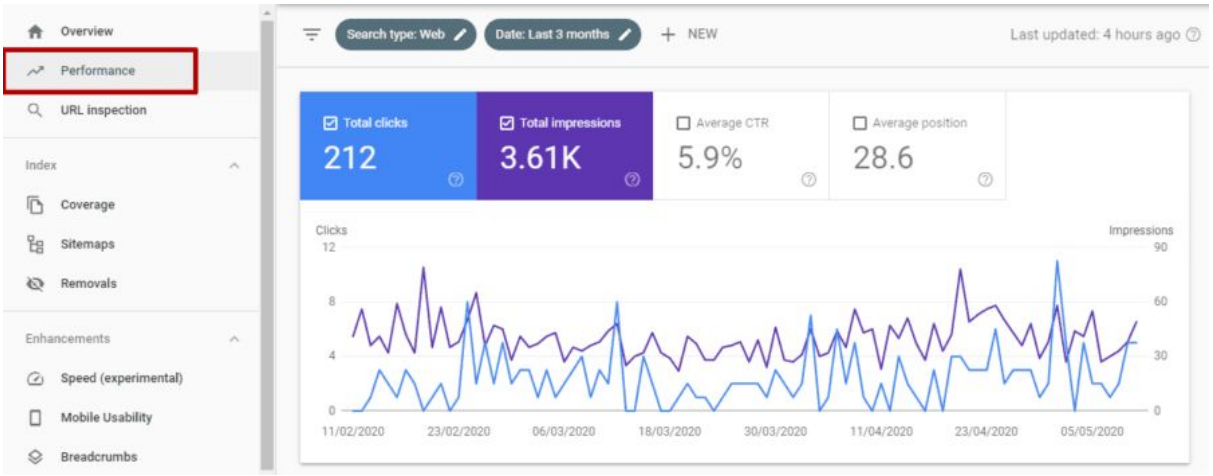
The "**Device**" filter allows you to filter data by device, this includes Desktop, Mobile, and Tablet.
Or you can compare data from two devices, for example, Desktop vs Mobile.



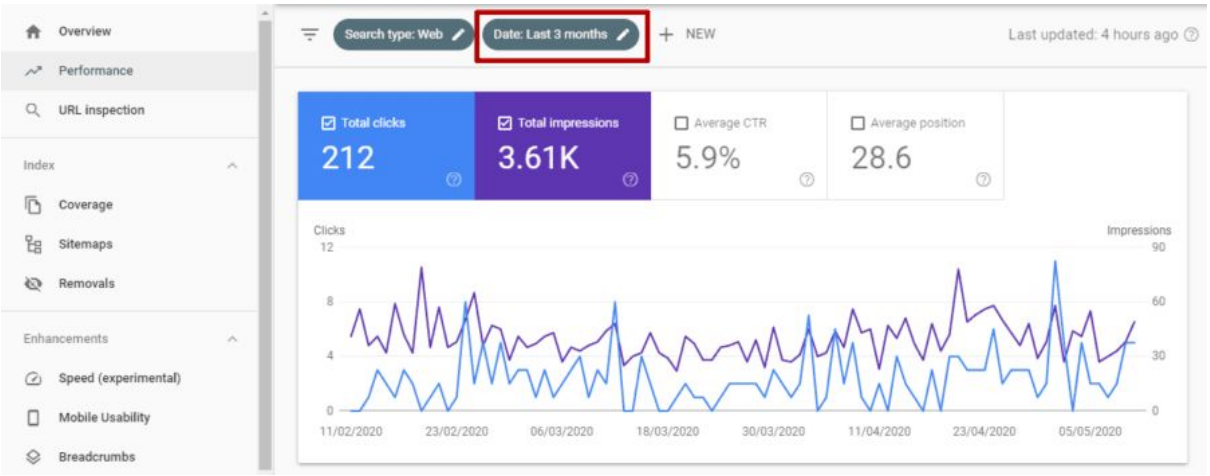
Finally, we have the "**Search Appearance**" filter.
This filter type gives you the ability to compare or filter different types of search results, for example, Web Light results, Rich results, AMP article and more.

View Average Click Through Rate (CTR)

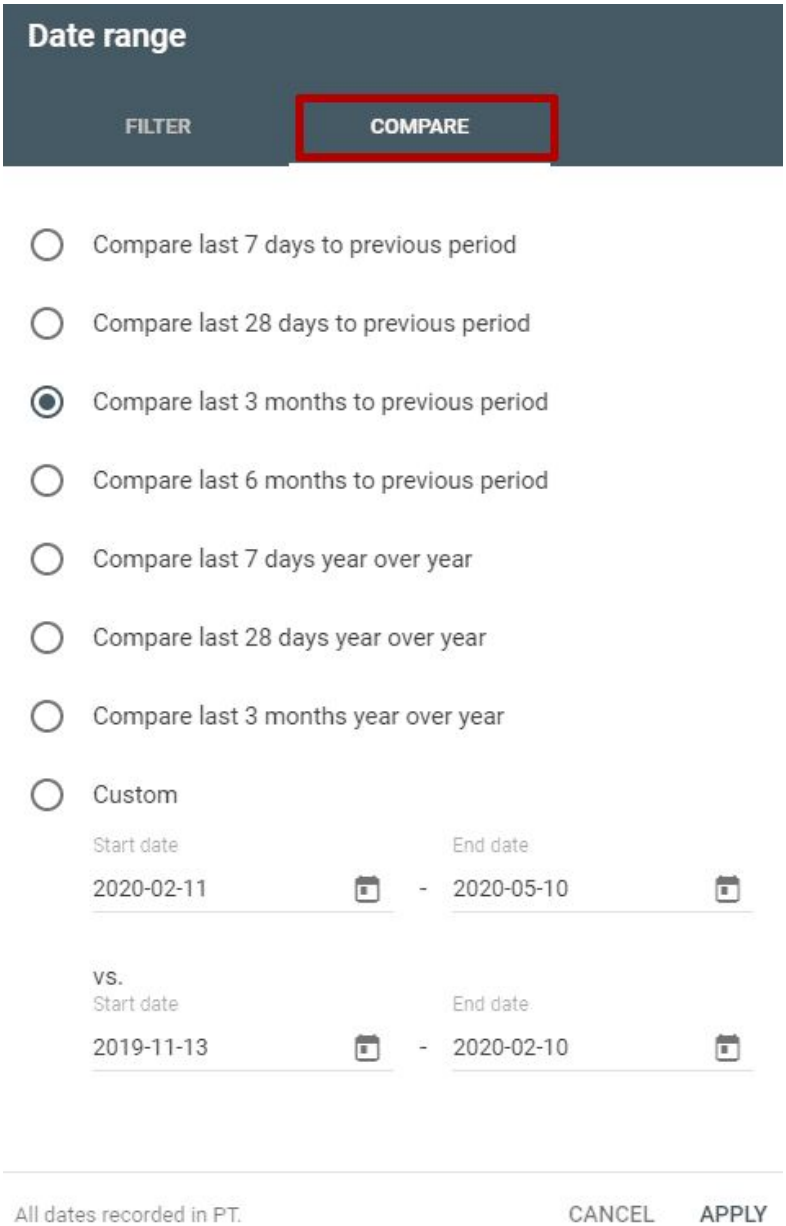
If you want to view the average CTR for your web pages, follow this simple guide:
Click "Performance" (On the left menu).



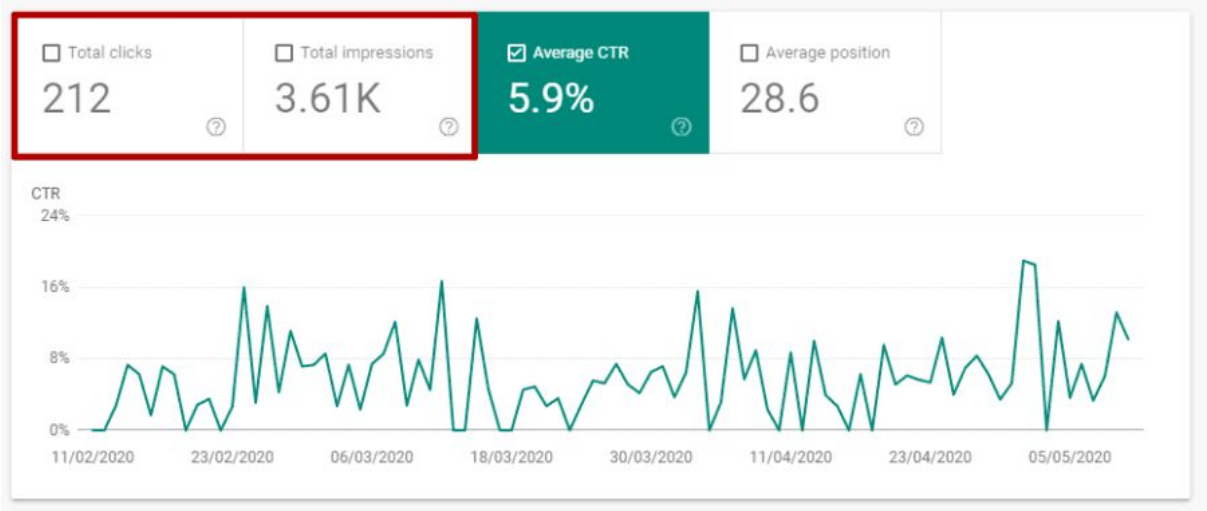
Click "date" to adjust the date range, and select the dates you want to see data for.



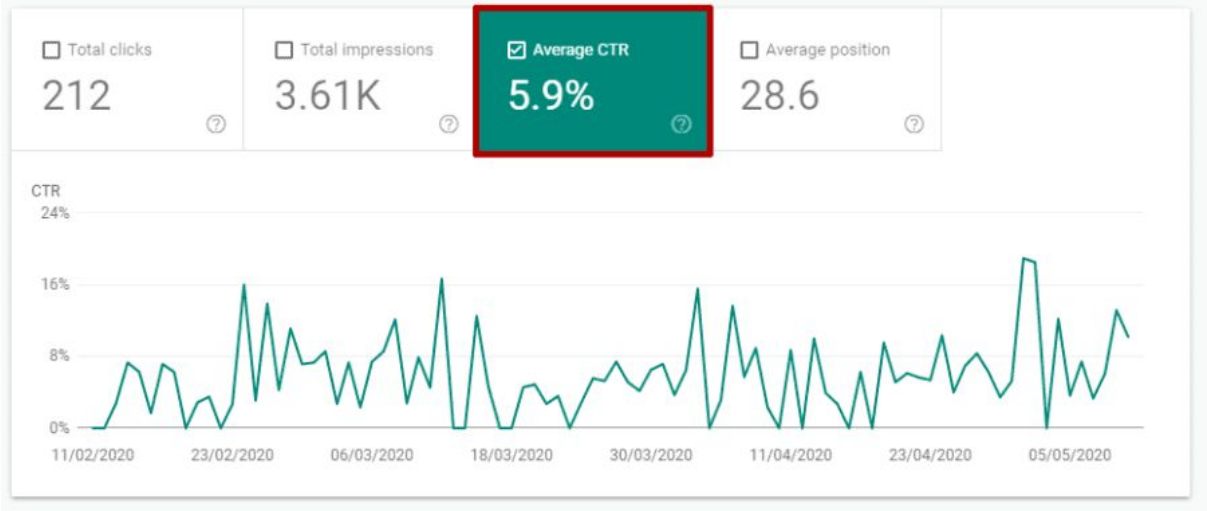
Within the data range, click on “compare” to compare data from two date ranges.



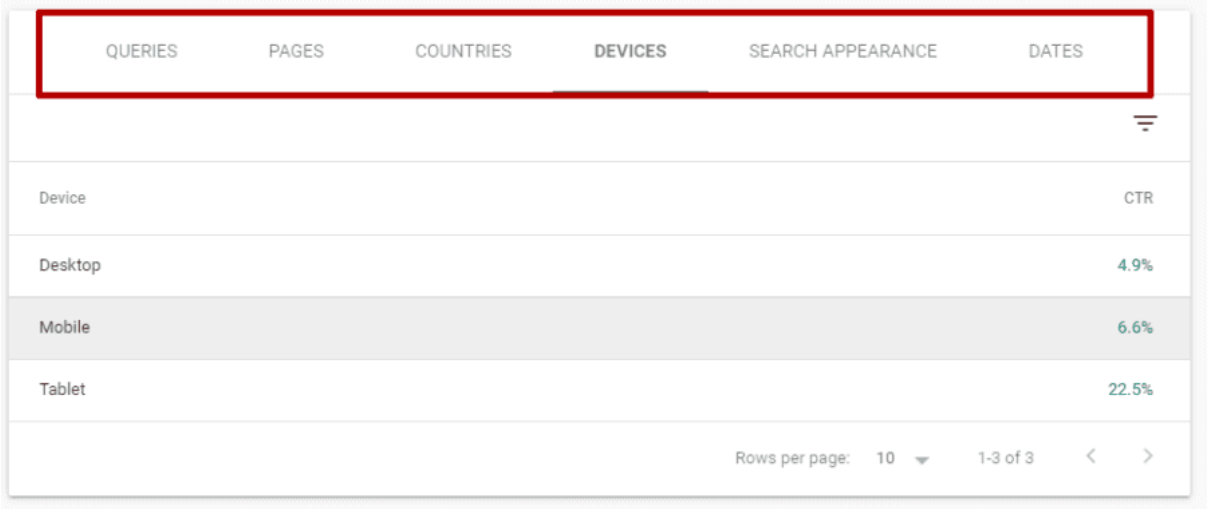
De-select “Total clicks”, and any other data points that are currently selected.



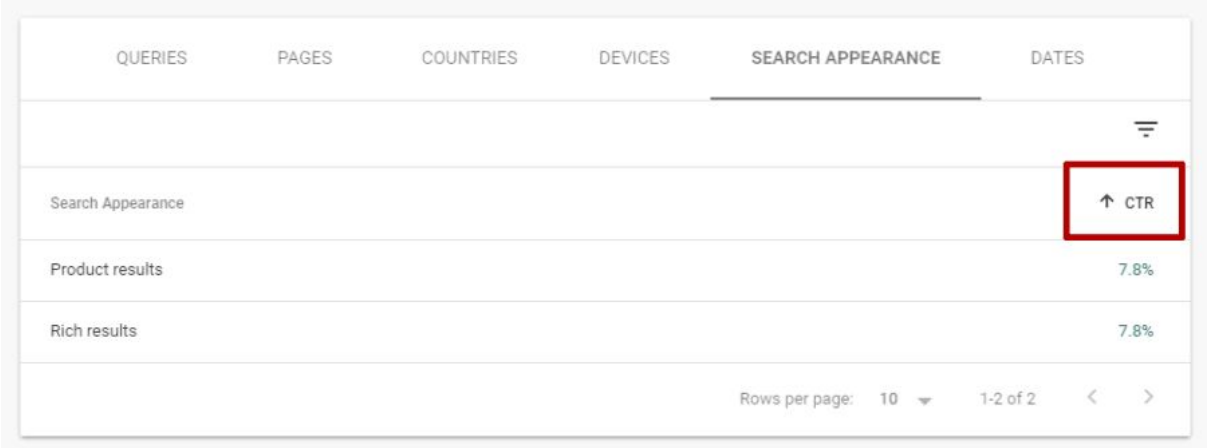
Tick “Average CTR” to only see the average click-through rate.



Click the data type you want to see the CTR for (Queries, Pages, Countries, etc).



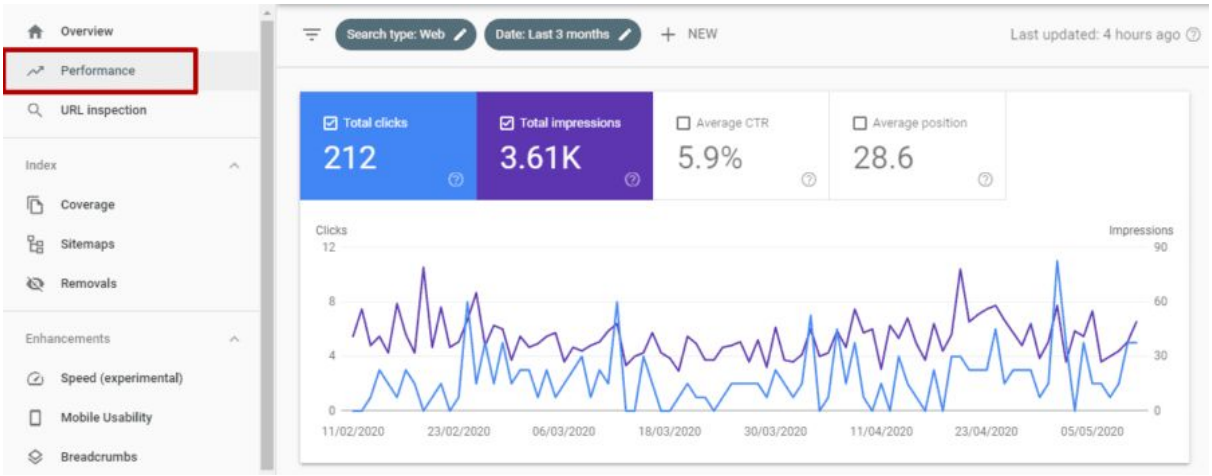
To sort the data from highest to lowest, click the CTR button that has an arrow next to it.



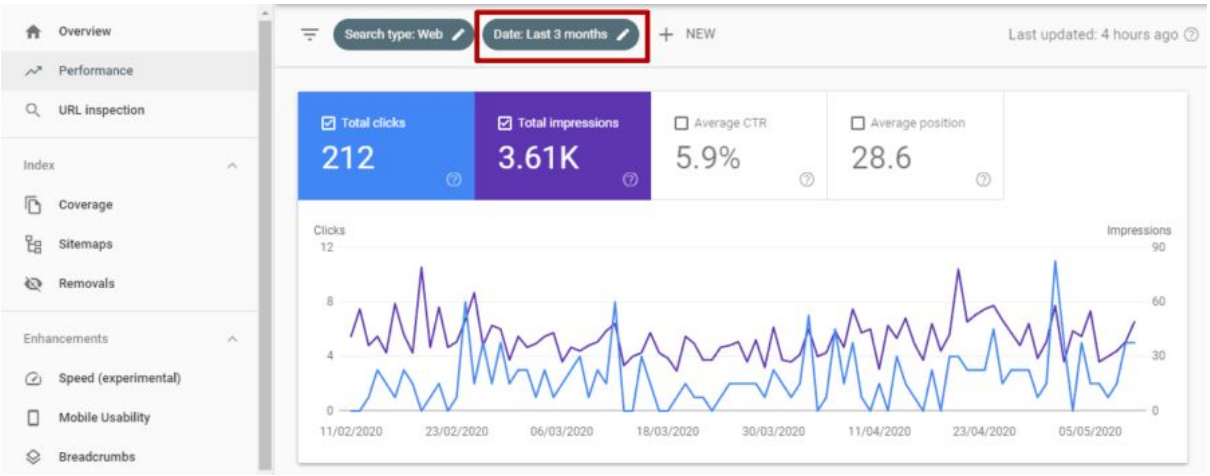
You can now see the click-through rate for search queries, web pages, countries, devices and more.

Identify Your Highest Ranking Pages

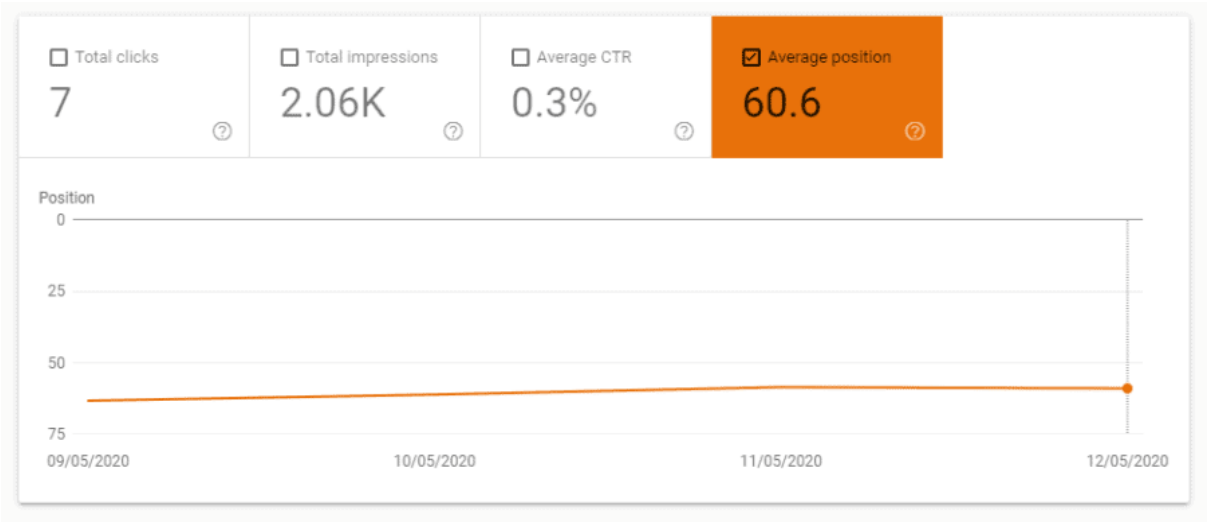
To discover how to identify your site's highest-ranking pages, follow these simple instructions:
First, click on the performance page on the left menu within your dashboard.



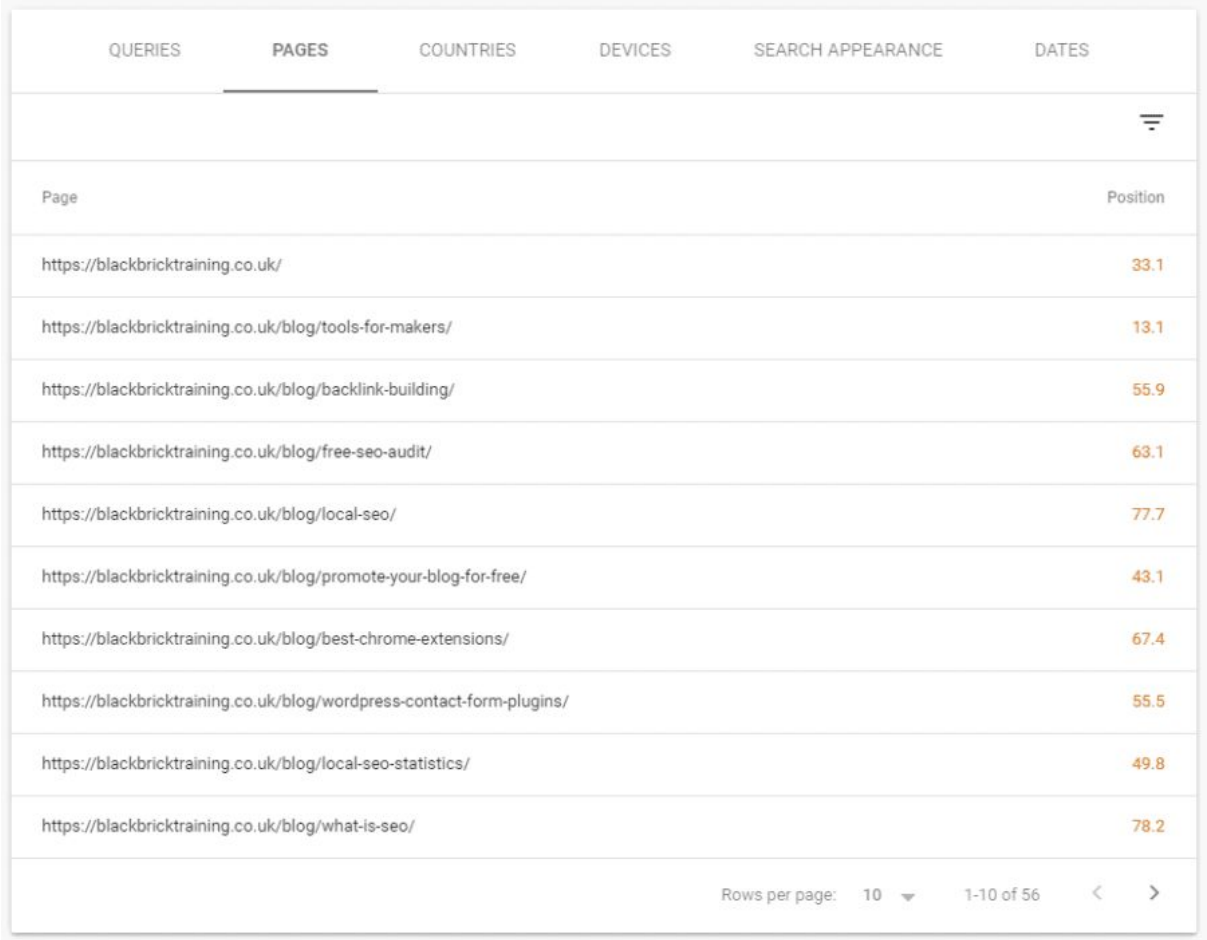
Click "Date" at the top to select the time range you want to view or compare data for.



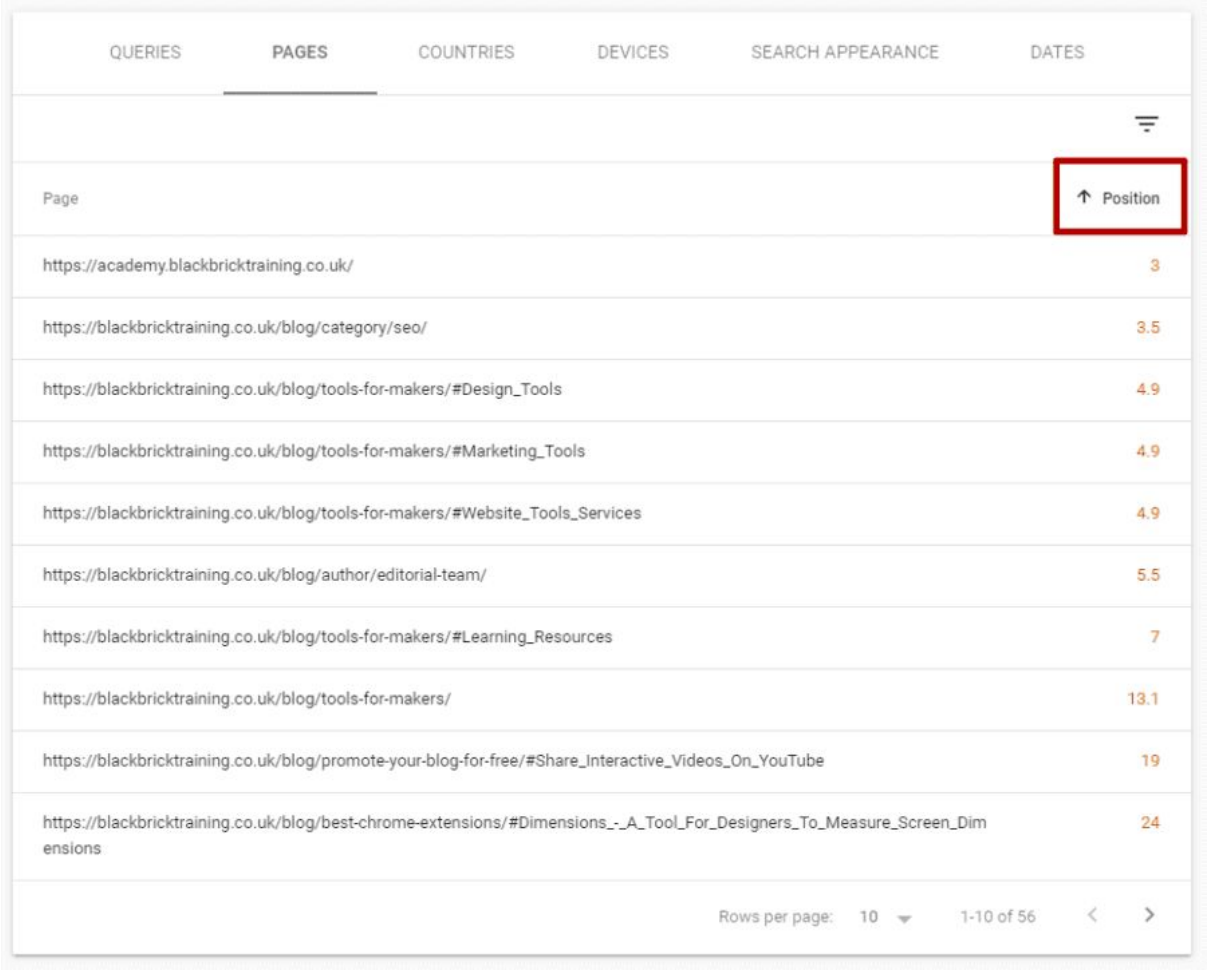
De-select “Total clicks”, “Total impressions” and any other data points that are currently selected, and select “Average position”.



Scroll down to see the different data types and select “pages”.



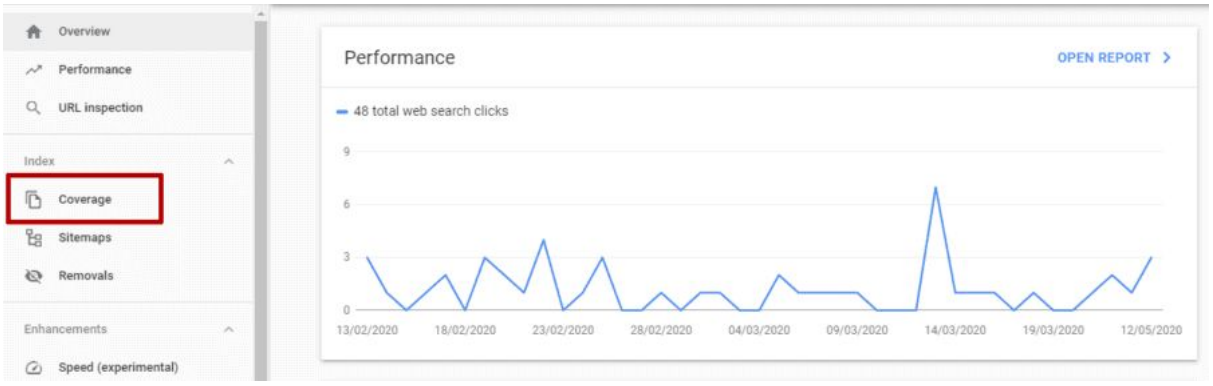
Sort the ranking position from highest to lowest (remember with search engine rankings the lower number equals a higher ranking).



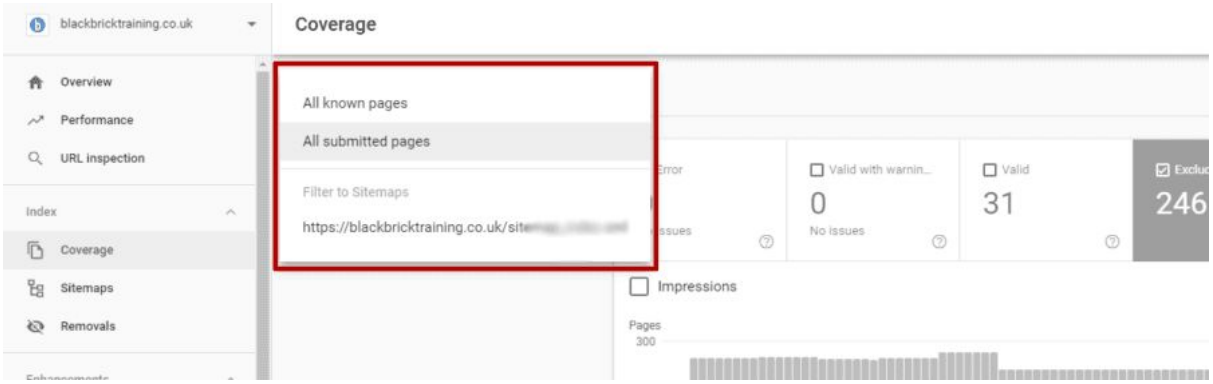
There you go, that's all you need to do!
You can now see which of your web pages have earned the highest ranking in search results.

See Which Pages Haven't Been Indexed

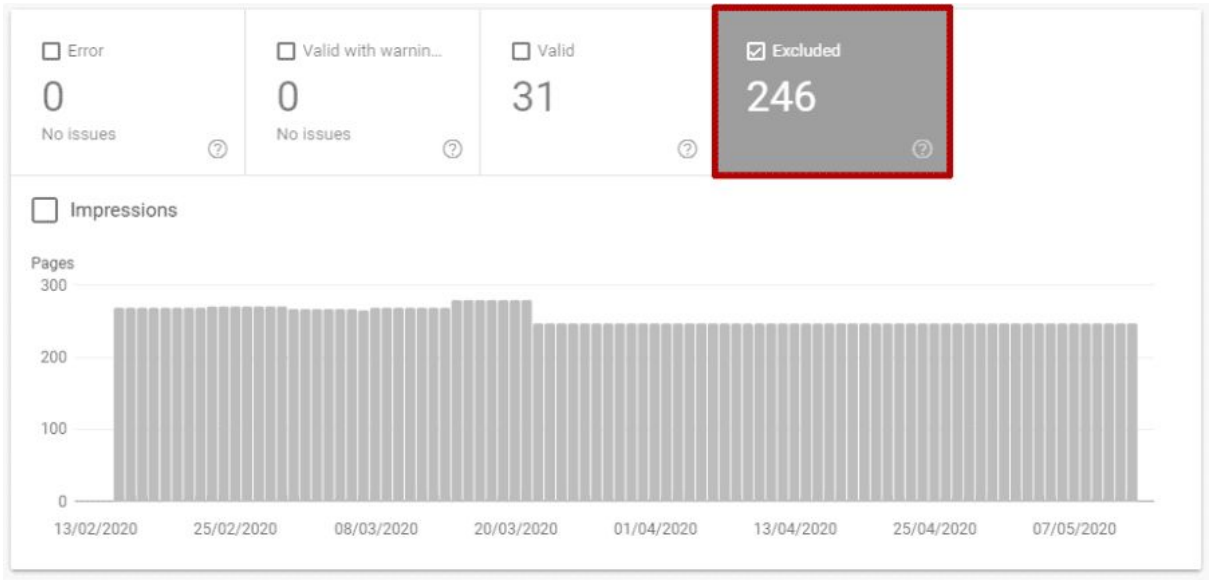
Doing this will help you to understand which of your web pages have not been indexed by Google, and also why.
Follow this simple step by step guide to learn how:
Click "coverage" on the menu located on the left of your dashboard.



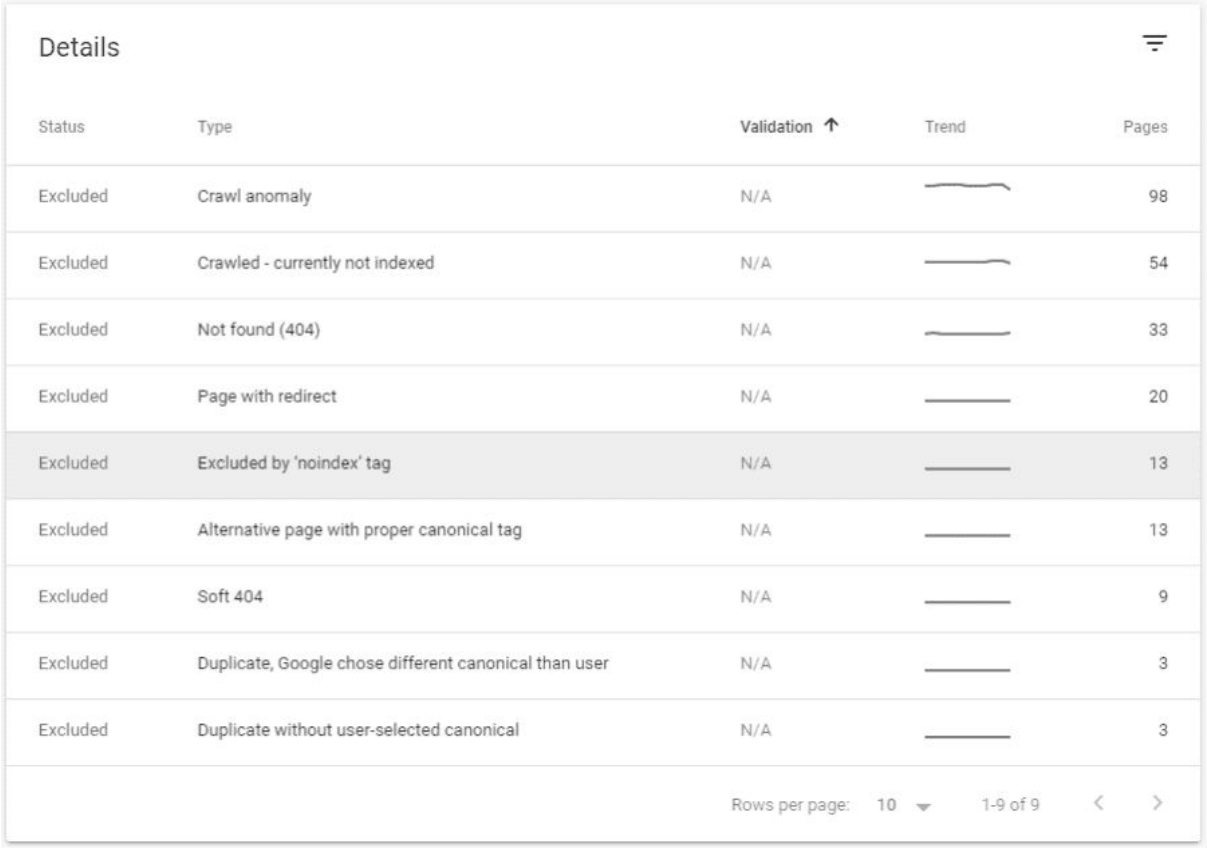
At the top of the page, you can select to view data for all submitted web pages, or just pages from a particular sitemap. This is very helpful if you have re-structured your website, and you are using a new sitemap.



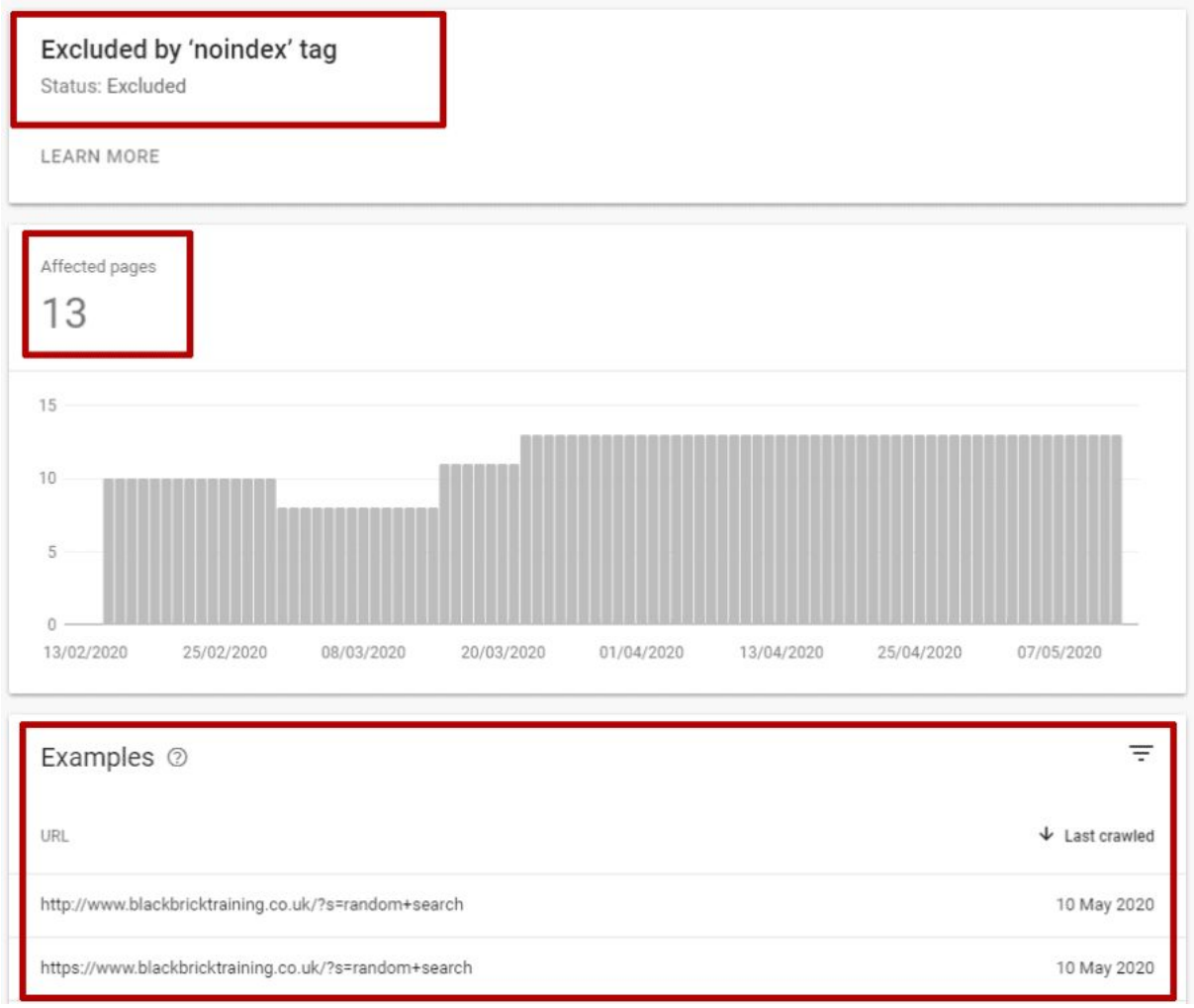
De-select “Error” and any other data points that are currently selected, and select “Excluded”.



Scroll down to the “details” box to see the errors that are causing your pages to be excluded from being indexed.



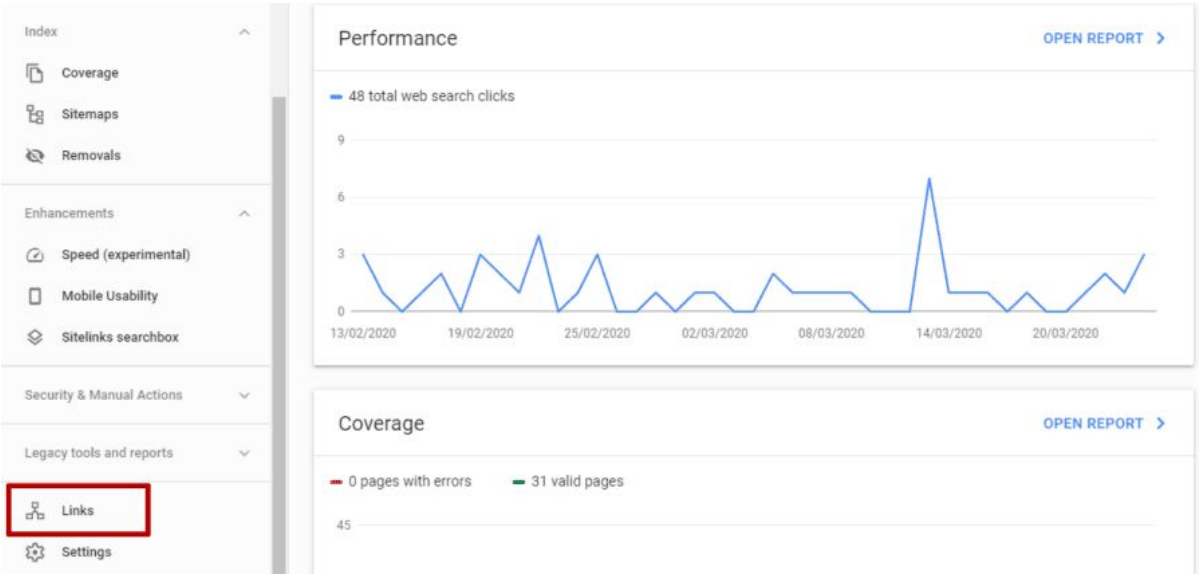
Click onto an error type to see the URLs for pages that are not being indexed because of these errors.



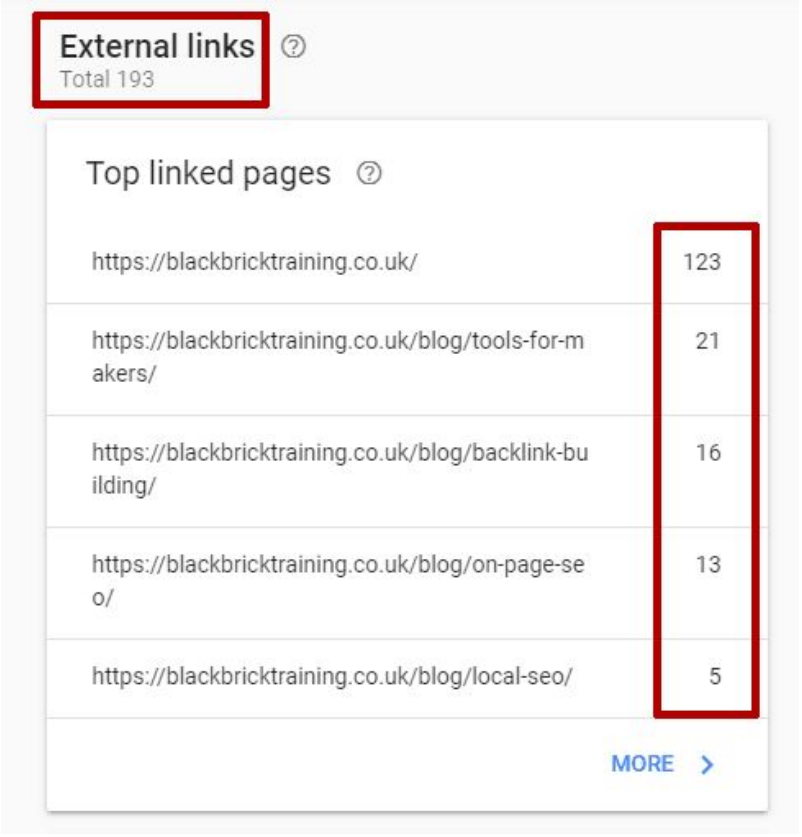
Now you can see all of your web pages that are not being indexed and what the reasons for this are, as well as when Google last crawled each of these particular pages.

Learn How Many Backlinks Your Site Has

Everyone website owner wants to know how many backlinks their site has, and it's super easy to find out.
Follow these simple steps to learn how:
Click onto the "links" page which is on the menu on the left of your Google Search Console dashboard.



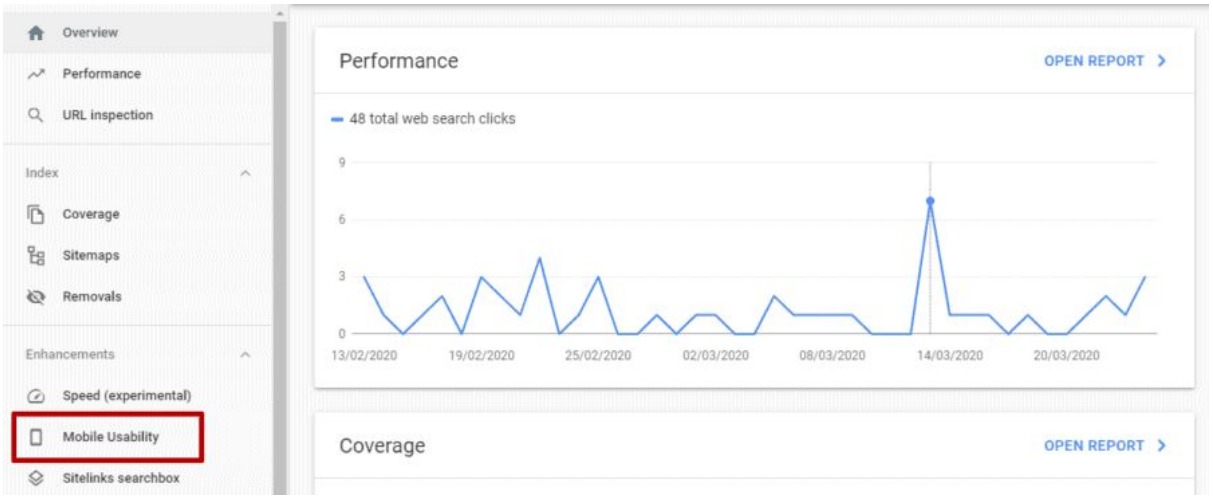
Find the “External links” section.
The total amount of backlinks your site has received is displayed directly below the “External links” heading.
Within this section, you can also see how many backlinks each of your individual web pages have.



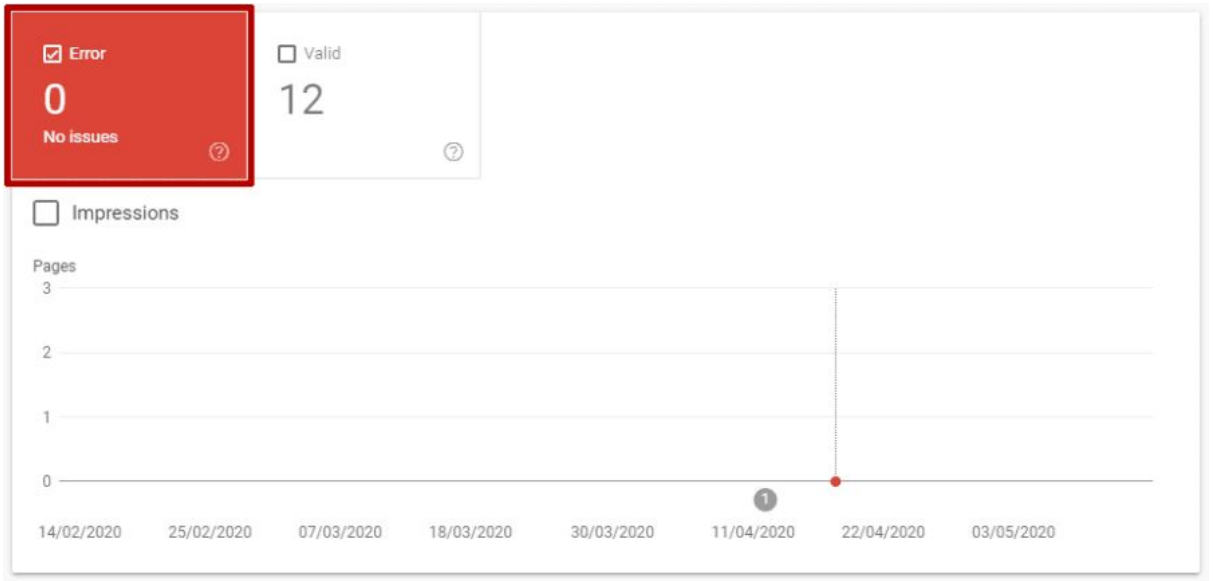
It’s as simple as that, you now know how many backlinks your website has.

Identify Mobile Usability Issues

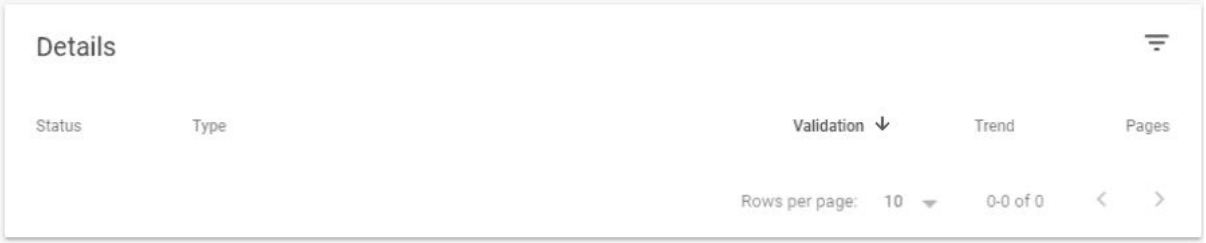
It is now crucial to have a website that is responsive and fully functional on all devices, including smartphones and tablets. Google Search Console has a feature which will show you if your site has any mobile usability issues.
Follow this quick guide to see how to do it:
Click “Mobile Usability” on the menu on the left of your Search Console dashboard.



Ensure that “Error” is selected, and “Valid” is de-selected, this will show you how many errors your site has.



Scroll down to the “details” box to see more information surrounding the mobile usability errors that your web pages have.



Finally, click onto any of the error types (if you have any), to see which web pages are affected.
Now you know how many mobile usability errors your website has, which pages are affected, and what the errors are.

Site Speed

What Is Page Speed?
The term “site speed”, or “page speed” usually refers to the amount of time that it takes for a web page to be fully visible and interactive, including images, forms, text, etc.
This is the time from when the page was first clicked on until all of the content has finished loading.
Many different techniques can be used to increase your web page loading speed.
It is estimated that just a one-second delay in web page loading time will result in:

- 11% fewer page views.
- 7% decrease in conversions.

Amazon executives have said that one second of load lag time would cost the company $1.6 billion in sales per year.
Why Is Page Speed Important?
If it takes too long for a web page to load, users will just leave, these users could be potential customers that you are just throwing away because of a slow website.
A slow page load speed means your website has a poor user experience.
Here are a few different stats that show how important it is to improve page loading speed:

- 25% percent of people would abandon a website if it took more than 4 seconds to load.
- 75% of mobile users would leave a site if it took longer than 5 seconds to load.
- 47% of consumers expect a web page to load in 2 seconds or less.
- 79% of online shoppers who are unsatisfied with website performance will be less likely to buy from the same site again.

How To Improve Page Speed

We won't go too in-depth yet, but here are a few different ways to improve your web page loading speed:

- Install a performance plugin.
- Optimize your images.
- Switch to managed hosting.

There are also many more methods and strategies that people use to improve page speed.

How To Test Page Speed

There are many tools available that will test the speed of your website pages, but the one I prefer is the free tool by Google called PageSpeed Insights.

This tool tests page speed for the mobile and desktop version of your website, and it also gives you lots of information that will help you to improve the speed of your web pages.

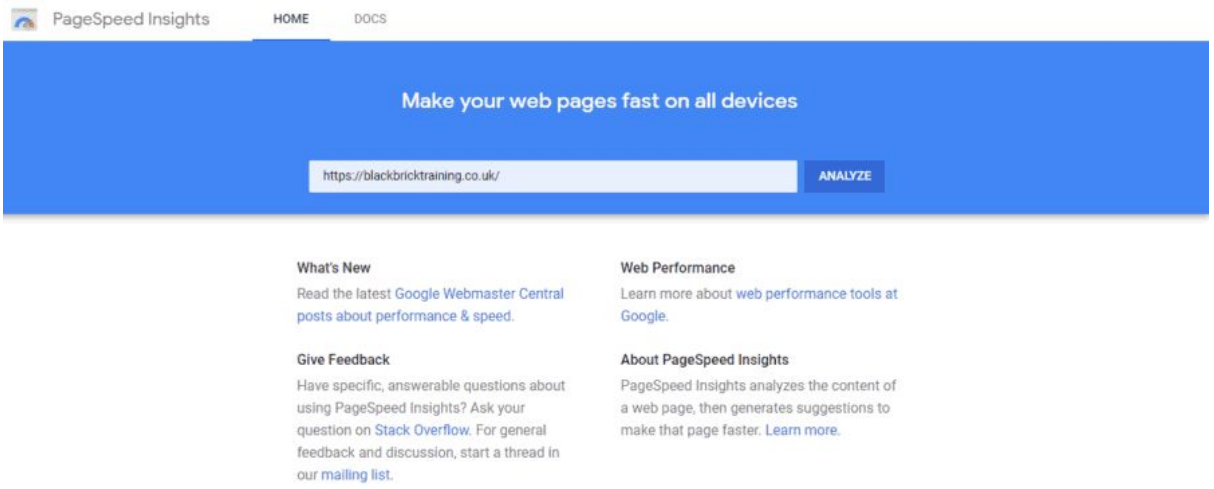
There is a simple process to test your page speed with this tool:

Step One – Open PageSpeed Insights

Go to the page speed insights website.

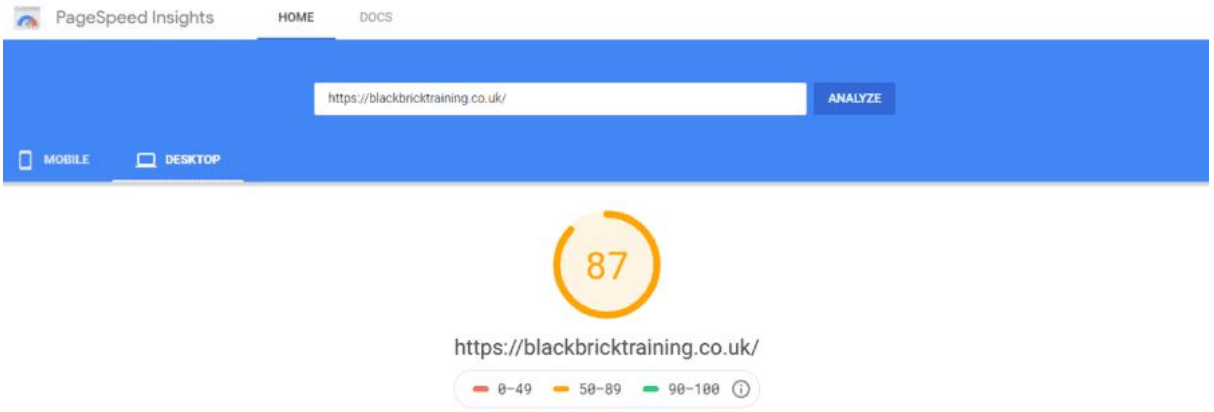
Step Two – Enter Web page URL

Paste in the URL for the web page that you want to test the loading speed for & click "Analyse".



Step Three – View Mobile & Desktop Speed

To view mobile page speed click "Mobile", and to view page speed on desktop click "Desktop".



You will see an overall score for both mobile and desktop page speed, anything above 90 means your web page is fast to load. Below the score, there are three more sections of data:

- Lab Data
- Opportunities
- Diagnostics

Lab data gives you data about the speed of different aspects of your web page, including time till the page is interactive, speed of first visible content, and so on.
Opportunities are suggestions and strategies that you can use to help make the page load faster.

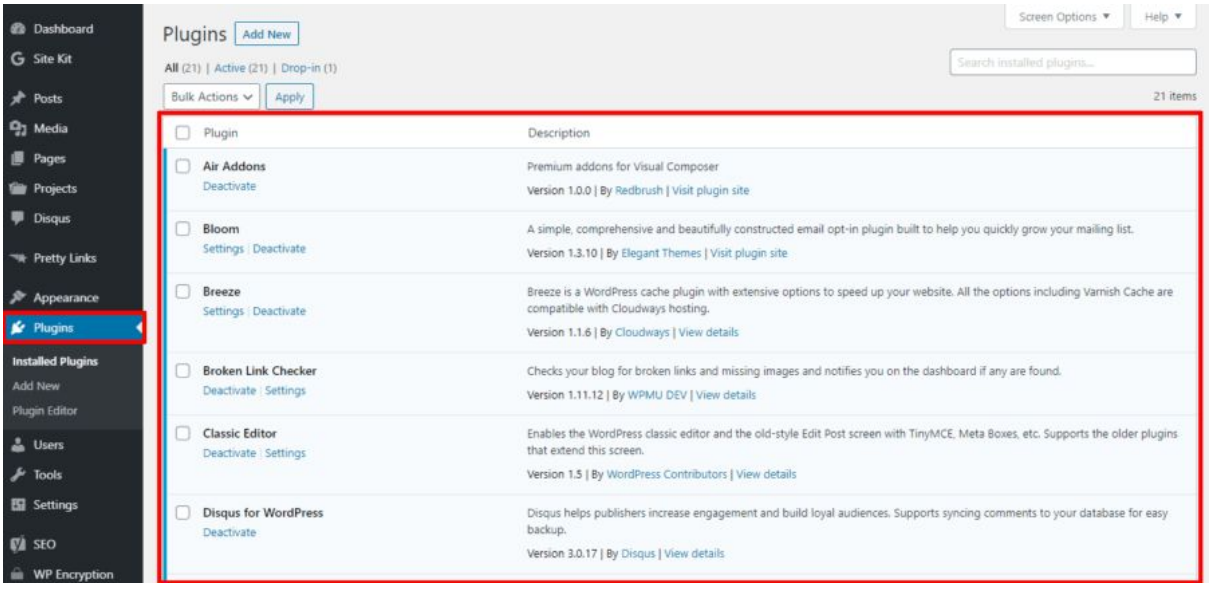
Diagnostics provide you with more information about the performance of your website.

Remove Unused Plugins

This is mainly for websites that are being run on a content management system like WordPress or Weebly.
If you have installed many plugins on your website, you must uninstall any that are not being used.
Plugins that are installed to a WordPress website can slow down the loading speed, creating a bad user experience.
When you install a plugin you should think about whether it will improve your site and make it better for users.
You don't want to install a plugin for the sake of it, as it will slow down your website.
However, it is important that you only delete plugins that you know will not damage your site, or are already inactive and not being used.

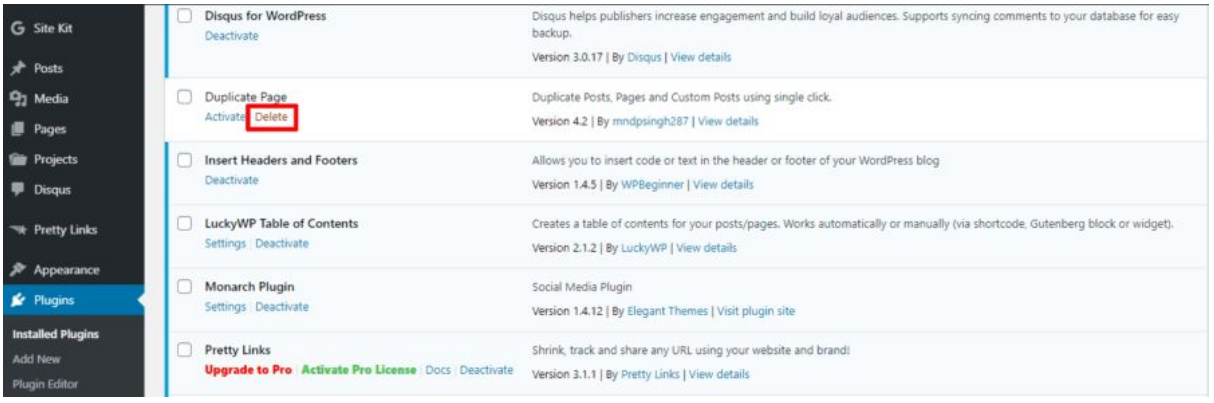
How To Remove Plugins From A WordPress Website:

This is very simple so it will just take a couple of minutes.
First, go to the dashboard for your site.
Next, click "Plugins" on the menu located on the left of your dashboard.

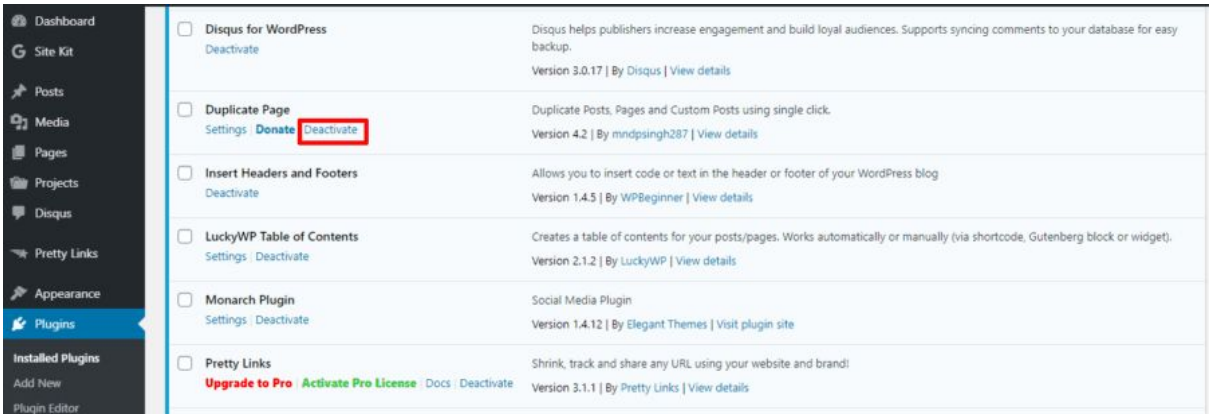


Now you will be able to see all of the plugins installed on your website.

If the plugin that you want to delete is already deactivated, you just need to click “Delete”, and it will be removed from your site.



Or, if it is an active plugin, click “Deactivate” to deactivate it, and then click “Delete” to remove it from your website.



It’s as simple as that, removing a plugin is super simple and you should not forget how to do it.
Do this to all of the plugins that you want to remove, and it will speed up your website.
I recommend testing the speed of your website after removing each plugin to see how the speed increases for each plugin you remove.

Install Performance Plugins

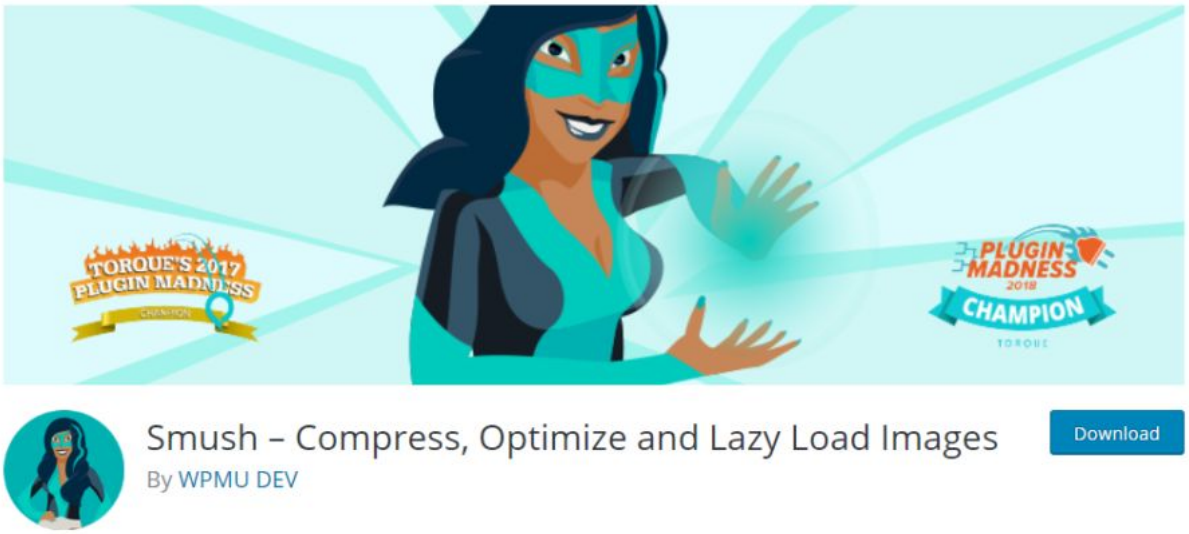
If your website is running on WordPress, there are many different plugins available that will help to improve your website’s loading speed.
These performance plugins can also vary in functionality, some functions these plugins offer include caching, image optimization, lazy load, file compression, and so on.

It is crucial that you backup your website before installing any plugins that alter your website files if anything goes wrong you must have a version of your website that you can restore.

Here Are Some Of The Most Useful Performance Plugins On WordPress:

I have used each of these plugins myself, and in my opinion, they are the best WordPress performance plugins on the market.

Smush:



This is an image optimization plugin that compresses, resizes, and adds lazy load to your images.

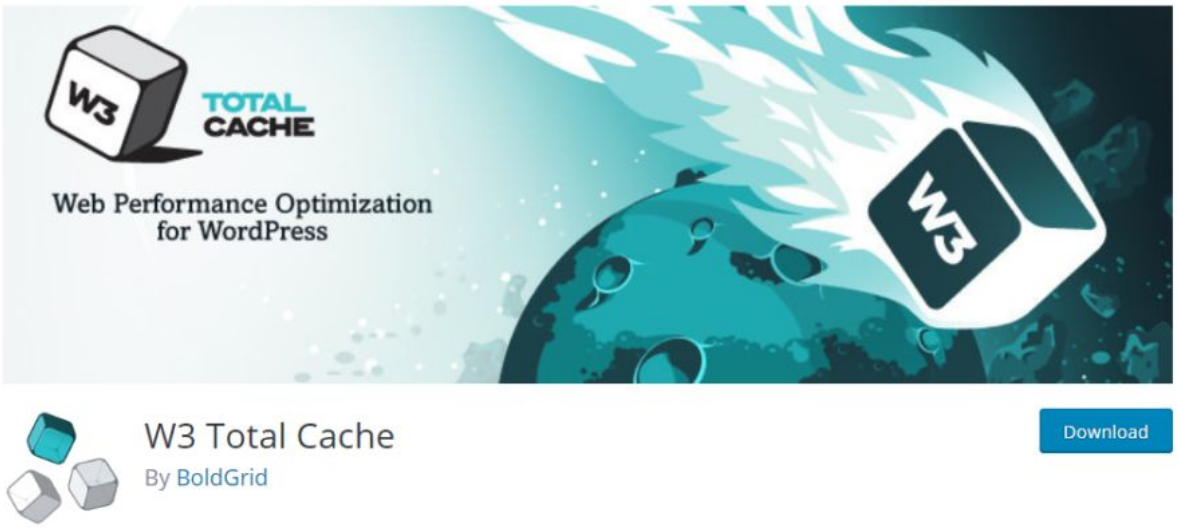
The plugin compresses images while preserving their quality.

It can bulk compress images in your media library, and automatically compress images that are being uploaded to your site.

This plugin also has a lazy load feature, which improves page speed by only loading images that are currently visible on the user's screen.

It's easy to set up, and will visibly increase your page speed, after optimizing each image on your site.

W3 Total Cache:



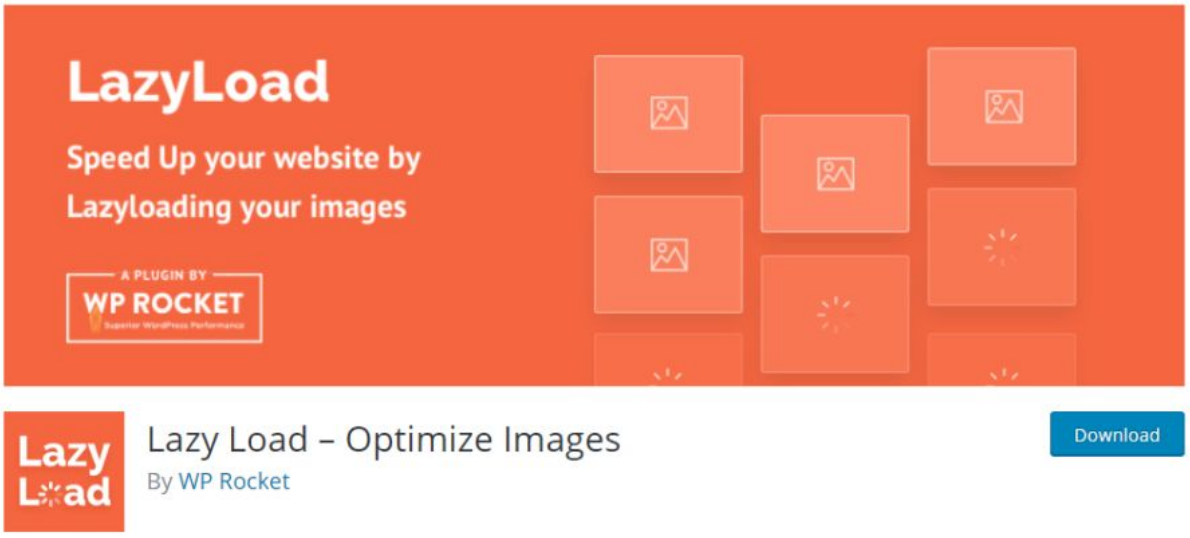
This plugin improves user experience by increasing website performance and reducing page load times.
It will minify CSS, JavaScript, and HTML files.
Minification refers to the process of removing unnecessary or redundant code within these file types.
This plugin also has a caching system which boosts page speed for users who return to your site.
As well as all of this, there are more features within this plugin that help to improve your website's performance.
There have been over 10 million downloads, it's free to use and simple to set up.

WP Rocket:



The WP Rocket plugin is the best WordPress performance plugin available, it stands out from all of its competitors.
Over 1 million WordPress websites have WP Rocket installed onto their website.
If you want the best of the best when it comes to performance optimization plugins, this is the one for you.
WP Rocket has all of the same features as it's competitors, just with some extras, including Database optimization, Lazyload, eCommerce friendly, and more.
This is the go-to WordPress optimization plugin for WordPress experts, that is also said to be the most powerful.

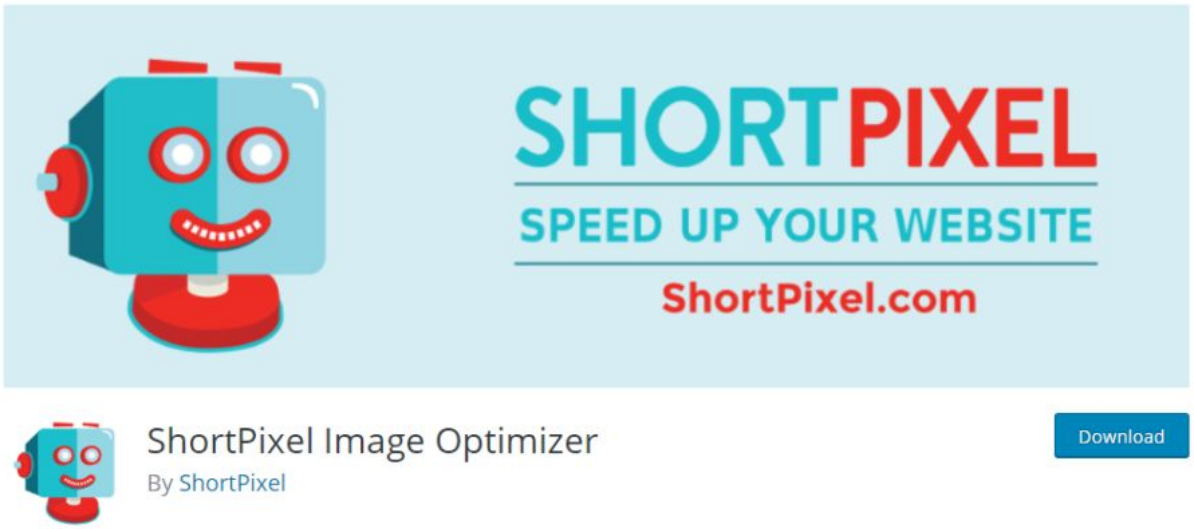
Lazy Load:



Lazy Load – Optimize Images
By WP Rocket
Download

The lazy load plugin forces images and iframes to only load when they are visible to the user.
It works with thumbnails, images within blog posts, widget images, avatars, and iframes.
You can also use the lazy load plugin to replace YouTube iframes with a preview thumbnail to further improve page load speed.
The plugin is lightweight, which means installing it will not slow down your site.

Shortpixel:



Shortpixel is an easy to use, lightweight image optimization plugin that can compress all of your images and PDF documents.
It will automatically compress images as they are uploaded to your site, and it can also bulk optimize all previously uploaded images in one click.
There is also an option to convert PNG to JPG to further reduce the file sizes for your images.
The shortpixel website also has a tool which allows you to bulk compress up to 50 images at once.
If your WordPress website is slow, installing just one of these plugins will improve your site's performance.
You mustn't go and install all of these plugins, only install one at a time and then test your site speed to see the improvement.
Some of these plugins do the same job, for example, Shortpixel, and Smush both focus on image optimization, so you only need one of those.
I suggest Smush and WPRocket for the ultimate combination, or for a free option, you can use W3 Total Cache with Smush.
Just using these two plugins, my site's Google Page Speed Insights score went from 68 to 87.
Hopefully, you now know the value that performance plugins offer.
Install a performance plugin on your WordPress website, set it up, and then watch your page speed increase.

Image Optimization

Generally speaking, larger image files take longer to download than smaller ones.
The page load time will depend on the size of the media files that are on the web page.
If you have many large image files on a web page, it will take longer to load.
This is where optimizing the image files comes in.
If you optimize your images before you upload them to your website, they will load faster for the end-user.
There are a few different methods that can be used to optimize your images.

Use Fewer Images:

The easiest way to optimize your images is to use less.
Of course, it is great to add images to your web pages, but if you keep it to a minimum it will keep your pages lighter and faster.
Carefully choose the images that you upload to your website, and don't add too many.

File Format Selection:

There are different file formats that you should use depending on the type of image.
You should use **JPGs** when it is crucial that your image is high quality, and does not need modifying.
If your images have logos, text, illustrations, icons, or anything with transparent background you should use the **PNG** file format.
You will rarely use **GIFs**, but they should only be used for small and simple images, and nothing complex.

Image Sizing:

By properly sizing the images that you create for your content, you will save valuable bytes from the image file size (this means it effectively weighs less).
When I say image sizing, I'm talking about the width and height of your image.
Don't make images that are taller and wider than they need to be.

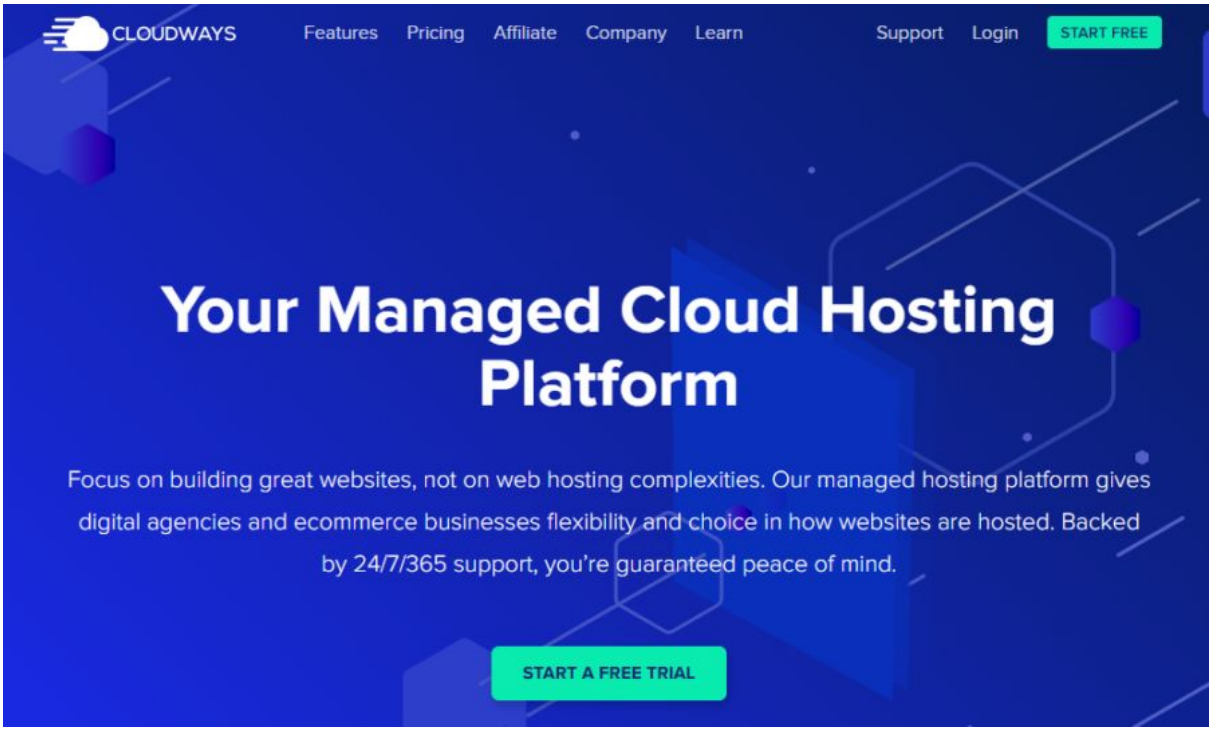
Image Compression:
The most effective image optimization method is to compress your images before uploading them to your website.
You can use a plugin if you have a WordPress website, or use an online image compression tool.
I suggest if you are looking for a WordPress image compress plugin, you should use Smush.
If you want to use an online image compression tool, I recommend TinyPNG or Shortpixel.



All of the tools and plugins that I have told you about are free and easy to use.
Once you have optimized your images, they will have smaller file sizes, and load faster within your web pages.

Switch To Managed Hosting

It may cost a bit more, but there are many advantages of switching your website to a managed hosting plan.
Switching to managed website hosting will improve website security, performance, support, and more.
Managed hosting is favoured by small to medium-sized businesses that want to set up their online presence, and individuals who are serious about their website.
If you are unsure which managed hosting provider to use, I suggest Cloudways, it's easy to set up, has great support, and has many useful features.



With Cloudways, you can pick from many different application types, including WordPress, Magento, PHP, and more.
You can also select your server type from many available options, including Digital Ocean, Amazon Web Services, Google Cloud, and more.

Managed Hosting Features:

- Database optimization
- Content delivery network
- Cache optimization
- 24/7 Support
- Performance optimized servers
- End to end encryption

On top of all of this, there are also many more features included with managed hosting plans.

Why Use Managed Hosting?

Here are some key reasons why you should switch to managed hosting.

Backups

You will never have to worry about losing your data if you have managed hosting.

This is because managed hosting solutions have specialised and automated server backups.
Just ensure that backups are enabled in your account before you start working on your website.

Support On Standby

The majority of managed hosting providers offer 24/7 support, so if your site ever goes offline, they will help you to bring it back online.
The support staff are specially trained to resolve any technical issues.
The quality of support is one of the biggest benefits of switching to a managed hosting solution.

Lower Operating Costs

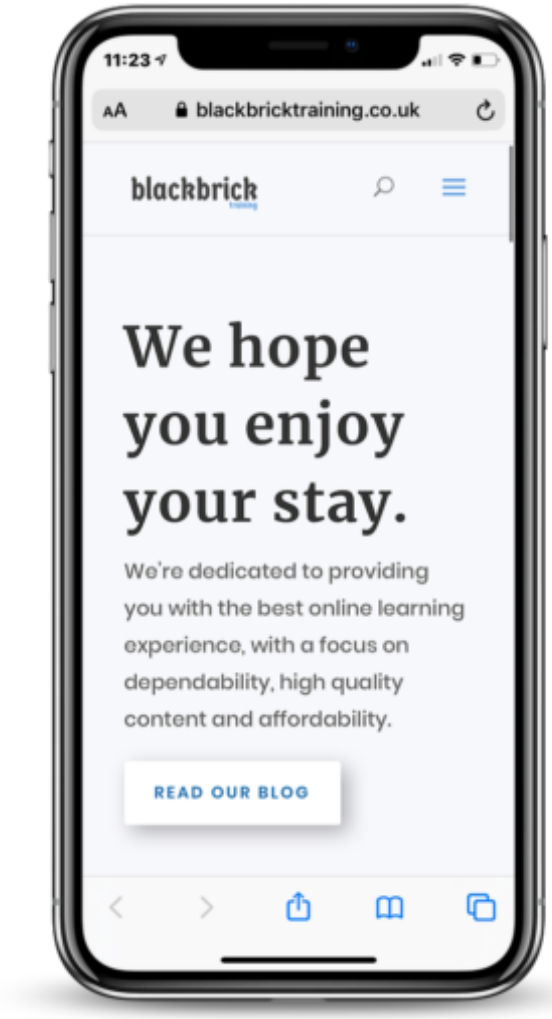
Within other hosting options, there are many hidden costs, including backups, security, support and so on.
Moving to managed hosting eliminates the need for the majority of these, as they are included.
Choosing the right hosting solution will save you time, money, and stress in the future.

Security

Managed hosting solutions have server backups, updates, firewalls, and virus scanning to protect your website from any attacks.
This will give you peace of mind from any security issues, so you can be certain that your web server is secure.
Due to the increased security efforts from managed hosting providers, any vulnerability will be identified as a threat before the server is attacked.
This gives you the upper hand against any virus, spam, or any other security threat.
Hopefully, I have convinced you to switch your website to managed hosting as it is a massive step up from shared hosting.

Mobile Friendly

What does mobile-friendly mean?
If a website is mobile-friendly, it means that the site is optimized to be used on mobile devices.
The website must be able to shrink when it is being viewed through a mobile device so that it is fully functional and user friendly.
Many different techniques can be used to improve the usability of a website on a mobile device.
More users view websites through mobile devices than through desktop computers, so your site must be mobile-friendly.
A mobile-friendly website will have easily readable text, clickable links and buttons, and all other content must be functional.
For example, take a look at this screenshot of our website on a mobile device:



As you can see, the site responds to being on a mobile device and all of the content shrinks down so that it is accessible and functional.

Before going through the process of optimizing your website for mobile devices, you should test your site to see if it is already mobile-friendly.

Why Is It Important To Have A Mobile-Friendly Website?

First of all, it is important that your website looks good and is fully functional on all different screen sizes and devices.

If your site looks bad or unusable on a particular device, you will lose traffic and potential customers.

Mobile usability is a key ranking factor on Google and other search engines, so if your site is not mobile-friendly you will not rank as high as you could if it was optimized for mobile.

More internet users access websites through mobile devices than through desktop, so if your site is not mobile responsive users who access your site through mobile will probably just leave.

Here are some statistics that show how crucial it is to have a mobile-friendly website:

- Over 50% of website traffic is through mobile devices.
- 96% of people who browse the web on mobile use Google.
- Over 50% of PPC advertisement clicks come from mobile.
- More than 60% of emails are read on a mobile device.

Hopefully, some of those stats have helped you to understand the importance of having a website that is mobile friendly and accessible on all devices.

How To Improve Mobile Usability

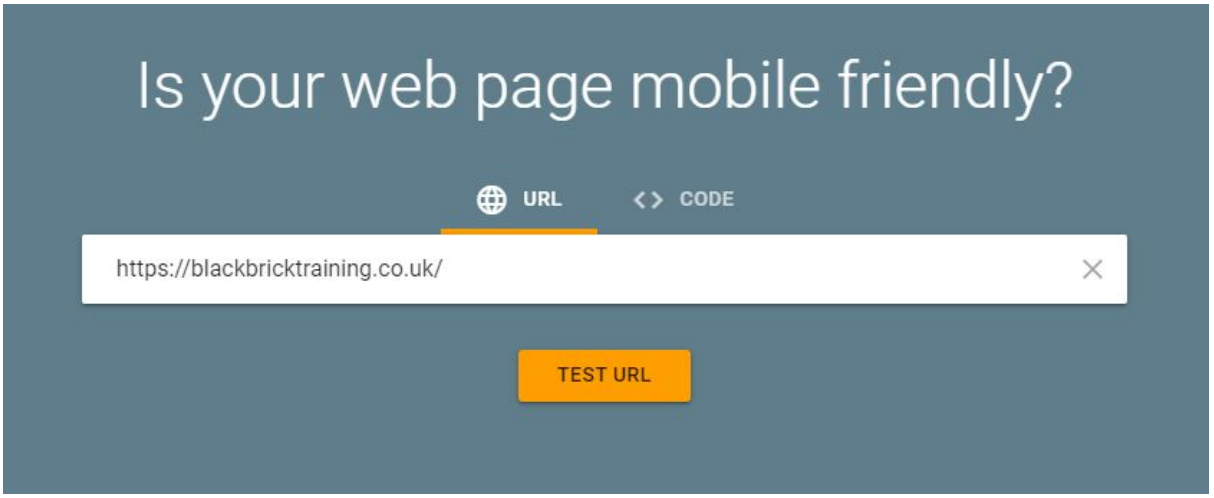
Here are a few different methods you can use to improve the usability of your website on mobile devices:

- Install a responsive theme
- Keep menus simple
- Remove pop-ups on mobile
- Use short forms

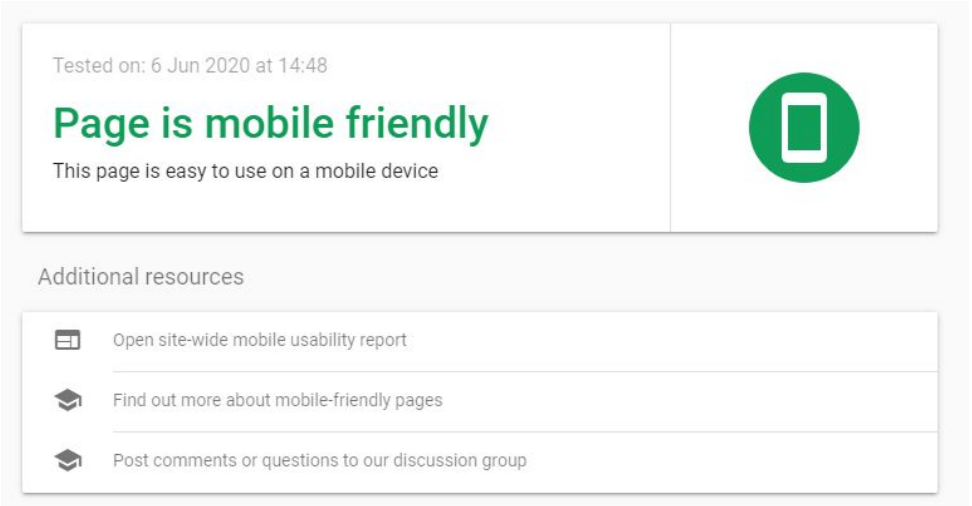
There are also many more techniques you can use to ensure your site is mobile friendly.

How To Test Your Site To See If It's Mobile Friendly

Many tools will test your site's mobile functionality, but there is one that stands out from the others.
Google has created a tool that you can use called the Mobile-Friendly Test, which can be used to see if your web pages are mobile-friendly.
To use it, simply enter your URL into the tool, and then click "Test URL".



The tool will now scan your webpage to see whether or not it is mobile-friendly.
Once the scan is complete, you will see a page that looks like this:



On this page, you will see the results for your web page.
As you can see, my web page has passed and therefore, it is mobile friendly.
The mobile-friendly test tool will also generate a render of your web page so that you can see what it will look like on a mobile device.

Install A Responsive Theme

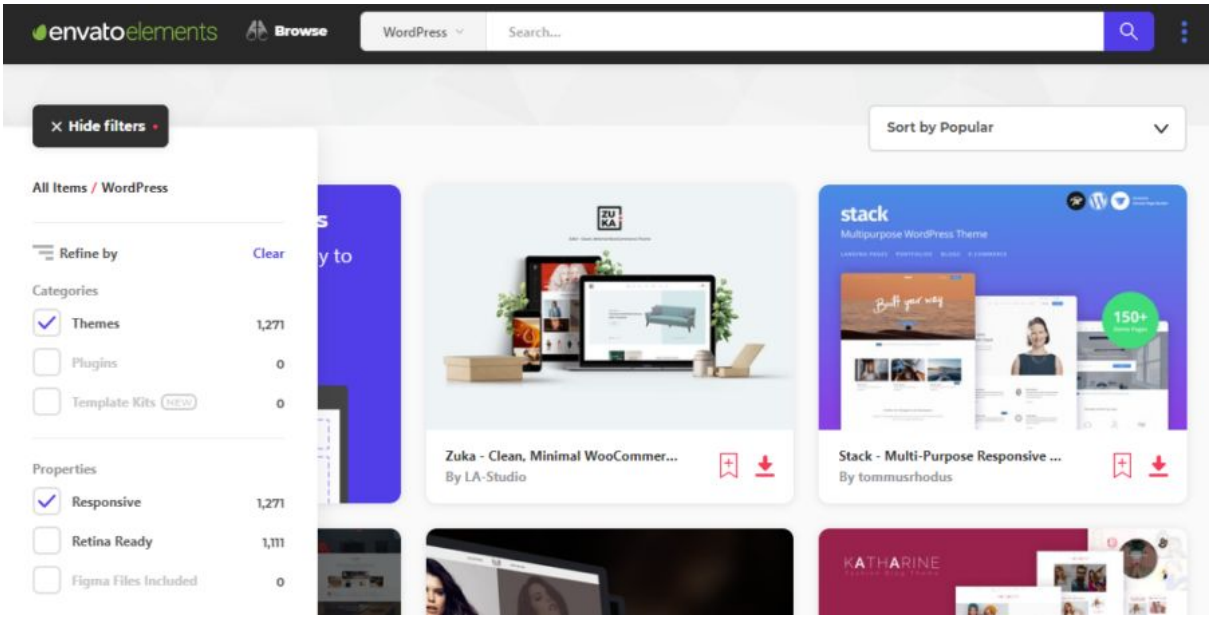
If you want to quickly and easily make your website mobile-friendly, you could install a responsive theme.
A responsive theme is designed in a way that will make the webpage shrink to the size of the user's device so that the content is readable and fully functional.
This is the perfect option for new websites, or websites with low traffic.
You do not want to disrupt any website visitors, so if you have an established website, this may not be the best option for you.
Installing a new, responsive theme is the easiest way to ensure that your website is mobile-friendly.

Where Can You Find Responsive WordPress Themes?

There are two places where you can look for responsive WordPress themes, one is free, and one is paid, so we will look at both.

Envato Elements

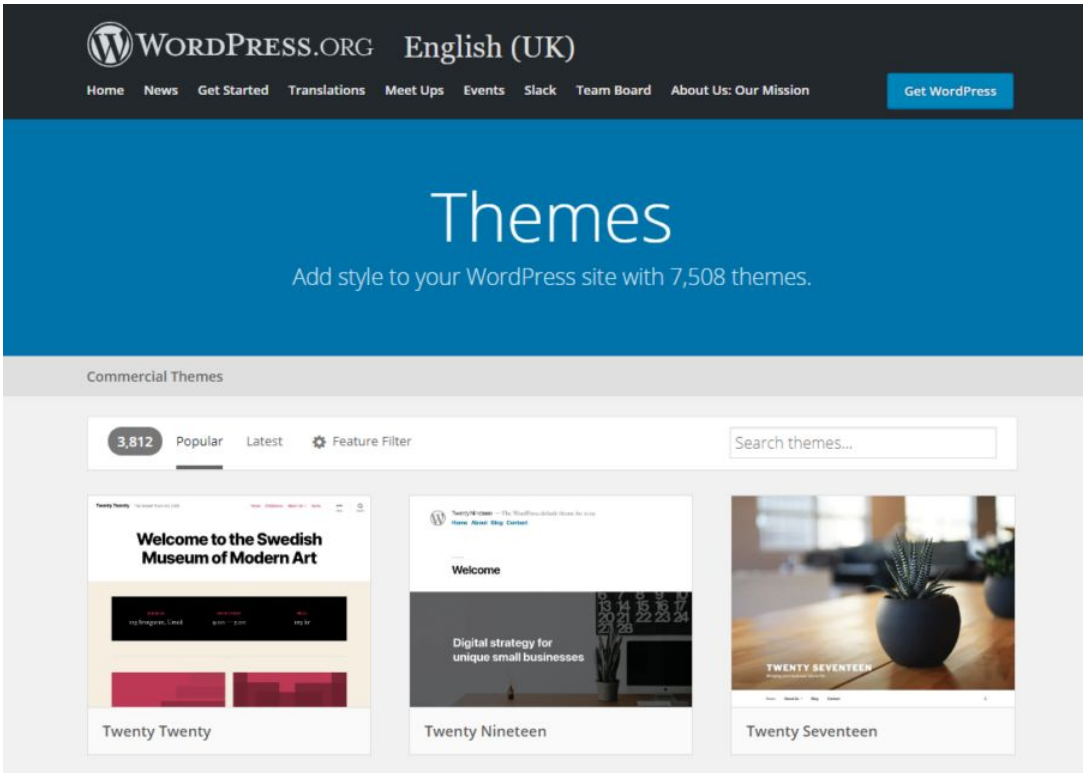
This is a subscription service, once you have purchased a subscription, you can download anything from their library.
Every download within Envato Elements also has a commercial license included, so you can use items that you download for work or personal projects.
Browse WordPress themes, and then refine the results to only show responsive themes.



Then select the theme that you want to use for your website.
I suggest looking at a couple of different themes, previewing them, and then picking your favourite.

WordPress Theme Database

The official WordPress theme database is where you will find all of the free WordPress themes.
There are good, bad, and fantastic themes in this database, so you will need to carefully pick the best theme for your site.

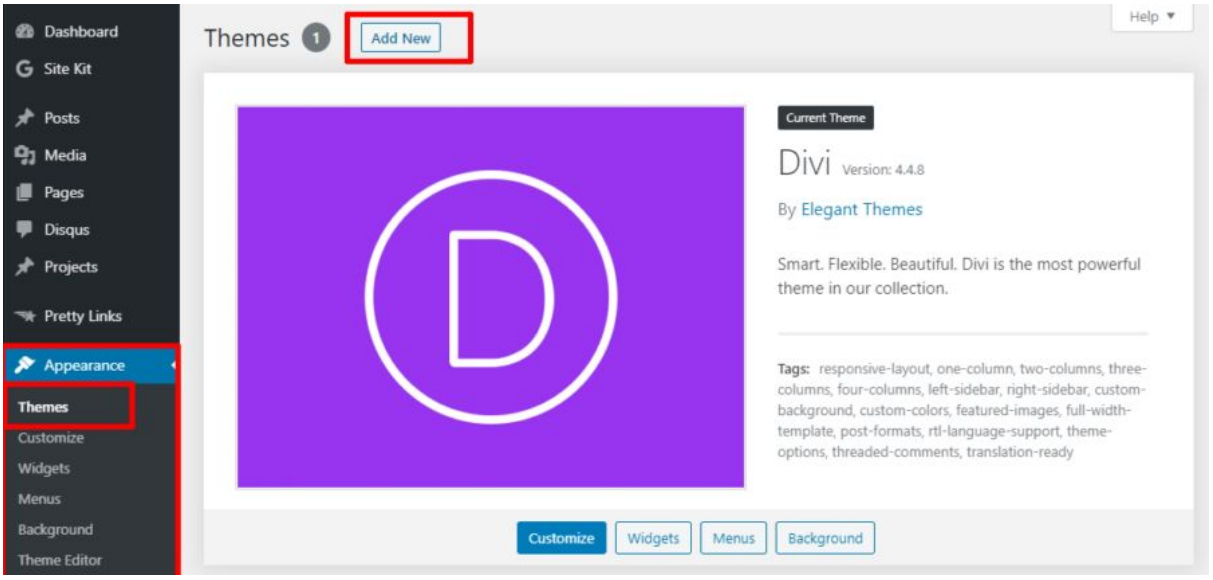


Pick out the theme that you want to use, and then look at its preview to ensure it is right for your website.

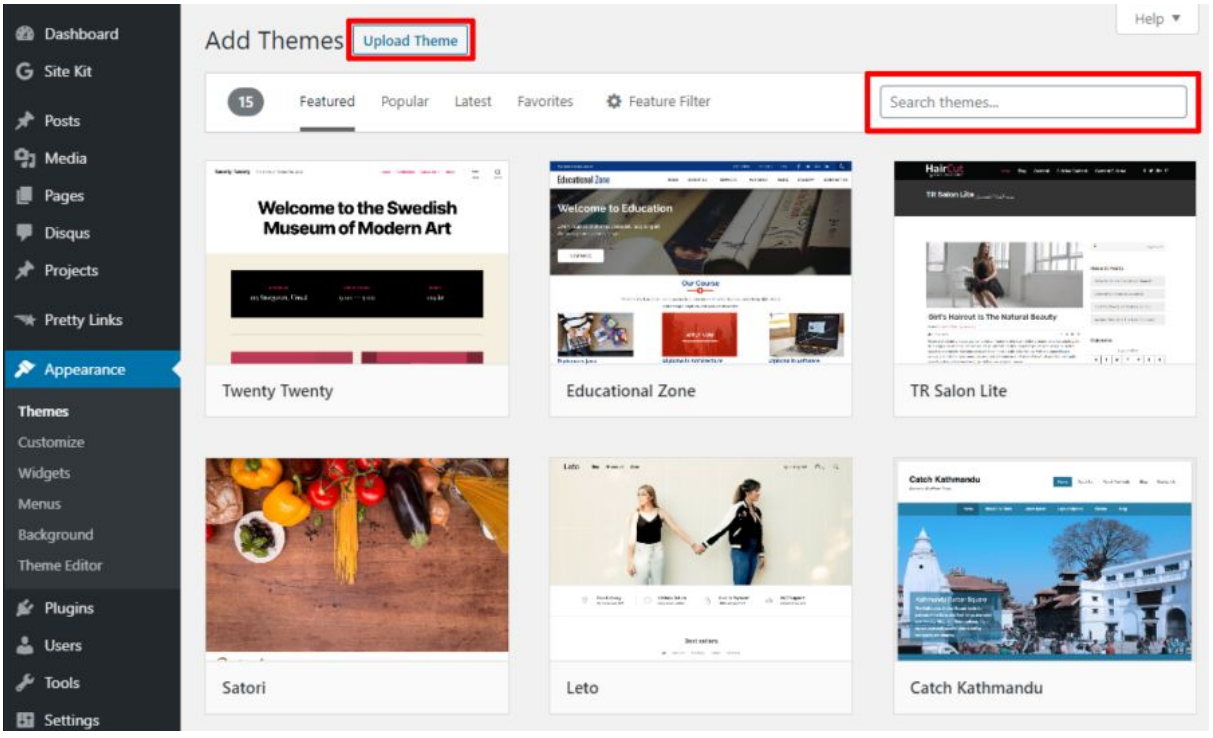
WordPress Theme Installation

Once you have chosen your theme, installing your WordPress theme is simple.

Go to your WordPress dashboard, then under “appearance”, click on “themes”, and then click “add new”.



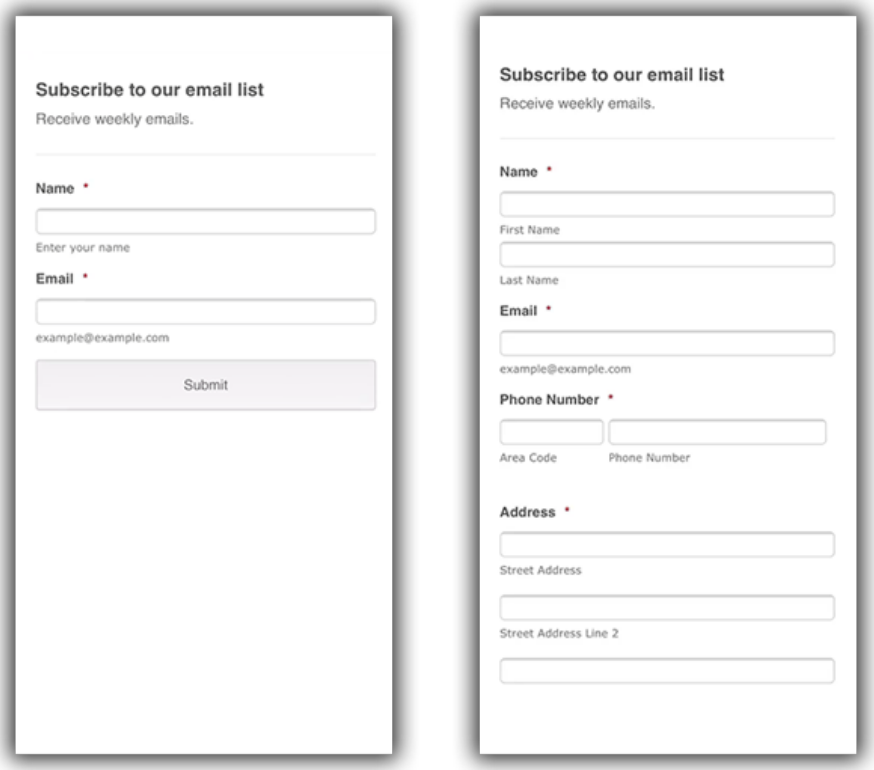
From here, you can either upload your theme or search for the theme you want within the WordPress theme database.



Once you have installed and set up your theme, open your site on all devices, and use the Mobile-Friendly Test to ensure that your website is mobile-friendly.

Use Short Forms

If you have forms on your website, this could be contact forms, order forms, etc, they should be short and easy to access on mobile devices.
No one likes filling in long forms on desktop, but on mobile, it takes even longer, and is even more difficult, because you are using a smaller device.
Take a look at these two forms on mobile websites:

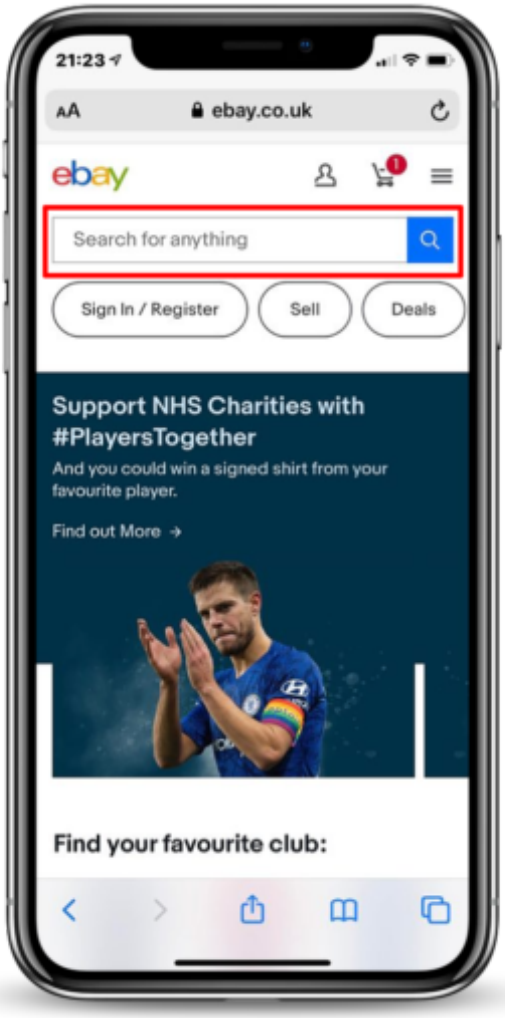


Would you subscribe to an email list if you need to fill in a long, and complicated form?
Every single website visitor would prefer the shorter, more simple form, as it saves time and removes any complications.

If I am on a website on my phone, and I need to fill in a form, if there are too many unnecessary input boxes, I will just leave the site.
To improve the user experience for users who visit your site on a mobile device, ensure all forms are quick and simple to fill in.
As well as that, shorter forms will also increase engagement and conversion rate within your website.
For example, if you have an email signup form, you just need to ask users for their name and email address, nothing more!
If users try to make a purchase on your site via a mobile device and then come across a complicated checkout form, they will probably end up leaving your site without making a purchase.
Put yourself in the mind of the visitor, and think about what would make you leave the website.
So to recap, ensure all forms are short, simple, and easy to fill in when accessed from a mobile device.

Add A Search Function

Every page on your website needs to be super easy to access via a mobile device, so adding a search box will massively improve the user experience.
If your website has many pages, products, or posts, you can't expect users to find them through navigating your site on a mobile device.
Imagine you are visiting a website, and you can't find a specific page that you are looking for.
You are likely to just leave, as there is no other reason for you to visit the site.
However, if the website has a search bar, you can search for the page you are looking for, and find it instantly.
Adding a search bar is even more crucial if you have an eCommerce website, as it will help visitors to find your products.
If you have hundreds, or thousands of products on your site, but no search bar, how do you expect to receive any sales from mobile users?
Let's take a look at the home screen of the eBay website on mobile:



The search bar is easily accessible and helps visitors to find the exact product they are looking for.
eBay has over 25 million sellers and over 1 billion live listings. Imagine how difficult it would be to find a product without the search feature available.
You will not have as many products or pages as a site like eBay, so if they can add a functional search bar, you can too.
I highly suggest implementing a search bar to make it simple for mobile users to navigate your site and find the page or product that they are looking for.

How Can You Add A Search Bar To Your Website?

If you have an HTML website, you should hire a web developer to build a search function into your website.
If your website runs on a content management system like WordPress, or Shopify, you can install a plugin that will add a search bar to your website.

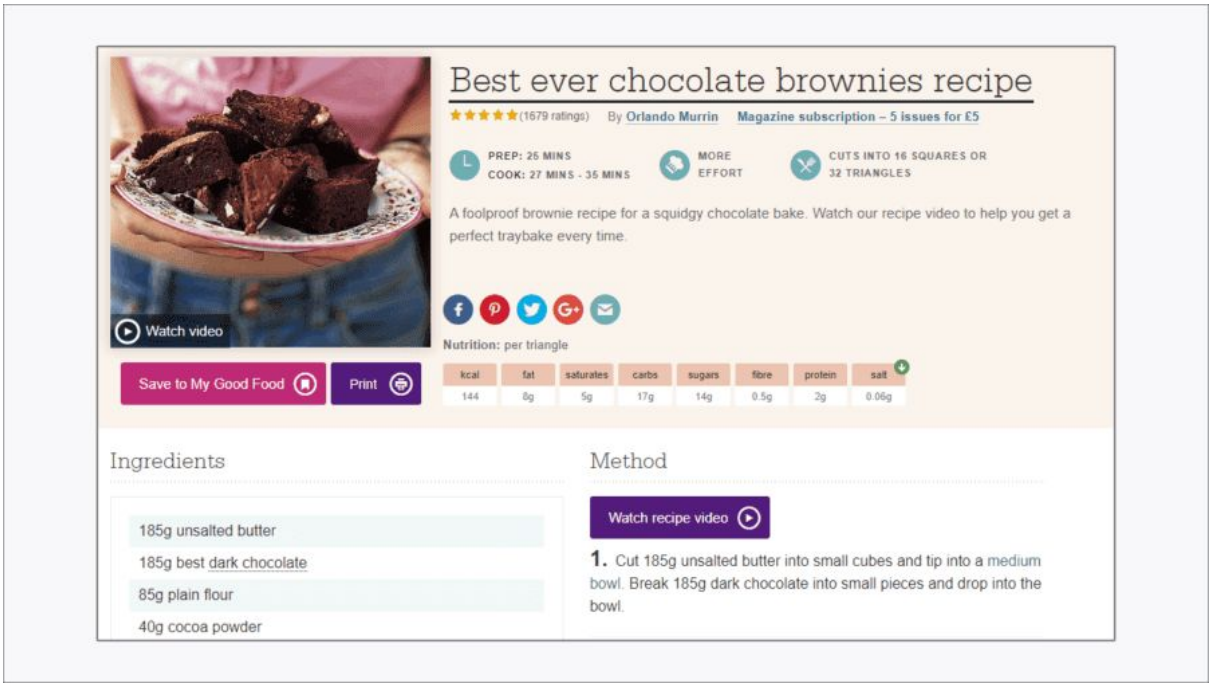
A good plugin for WordPress is the Ivory Search Plugin, this plugin has both free and paid options.
Once you have added a search bar to your website, open it and test it on both mobile and desktop devices to ensure it looks good and is fully functional.

Structured Data

What Is Structured Data?
Structured data is a piece of code that gives search engines additional information about your web page.
Google and other search engines have multiple uses for structured data.
How do search engines use structured data?

- To understand more about the contents of a particular web page.
- To create rich results for your web page.

Humans and search engines look at web pages differently, for example, we can understand the details and format of a recipe, but they can't.
Adding structured data will help the search engine understand the structure and content within a web page.
Structured data can be complicated to understand at first, so let's look at an example:
Here we have a simple recipe that any human can understand easily.

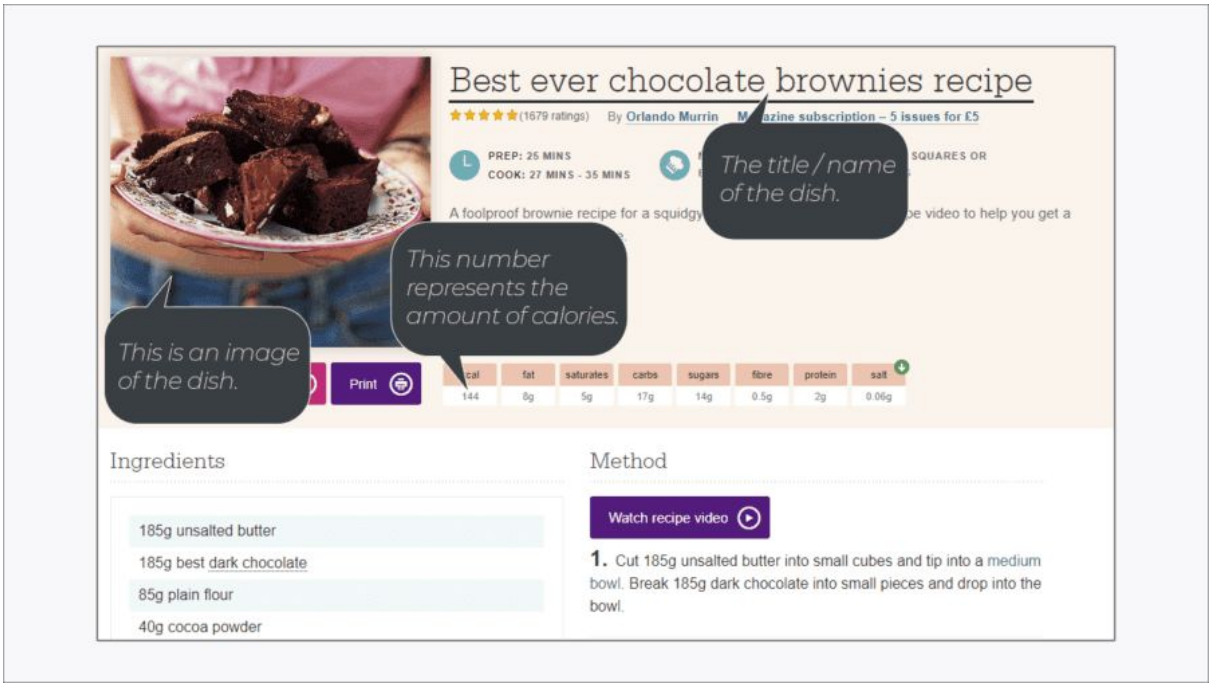


All of the information within this recipe makes sense to you or me, but a search engine will need clear guidance to understand the specific information on the web page.

We need to tell Google and other search engines what each of these pieces of information actually means.

Let's be more specific, imagine you are looking at the number of calories within the recipe, you can understand which number on the page is the number of calories because it is labelled.

Search engines need structured data to tell them which number represents the number of calories there are in a serving of these delicious brownies.



We do this by adding structured data to our markup.
The structured data is simply a piece of code that tells search engines what the information means.
Without structured data, search engines won't be able to understand the content within a web page.
There are many different items you can markup using structured data, depending on the content within your page.
The main goal of adding structured data to a web page is to earn a rich result in search results.

What Is A Rich Result?

When you search Google, you will be given a list of results, some are normal results and some are displayed as rich results.
A normal result would usually look something like this:

Soup Recipes | Easy Soup Recipes | Tesco Real Food
https://realfood.tesco.com › recipes › collections › soup-recipes ▾
Blitz up a hot and delicious **soup** for lunch. At Tesco Real Food you'll find **recipes** for healthy soups, creamy soups, light broths and so much more.

The title is displayed in blue, URL in green, followed by a brief description of the web page.
A rich result, also known as a rich snippet, shows the user extra information on top of what you would see in a normal result.

A rich result has many different display variations, here's an example:



On top of the normal information, you'd see in a search result, in this rich result Google also displays an image, star rating, baking time, and amount of calories.
As you can see, a result like this is much more appealing to click onto rather than the boring normal result.

Structured Data Markup Languages

The most common markup language that is used to add structured data to a web page is called JSON-LD.
The JSON-LD script is used in the header of a web page.
Other formats are available, but **JSON-LD** is the easiest, and most widely used.
Here's an example of what the JSON-LD structured data markup looks like:

```
<script type="application/ld+json">
  {
  "@context": "http://schema.org",
  "@type": "LocalBusiness",
  "address": {
    "@type": "PostalAddress",
    "addressLocality": "Borough Market",
    "addressRegion": "London",
    "streetAddress": "4 Borough High St"
  },
  "description": "Pizza Express is a popular chain of pizza restaurants.",
  "name": "Pizza Express",
  "telephone": "123-4567-8910"
}
</script>
```

Remember, this differs slightly for every item that you markup, but the concept is the same.

It's handy to understand it, but don't worry you won't have to write this as there are generators that will do it for us.

What Is *Schema.org*?

It is a community-run project used to power structured data on the internet.

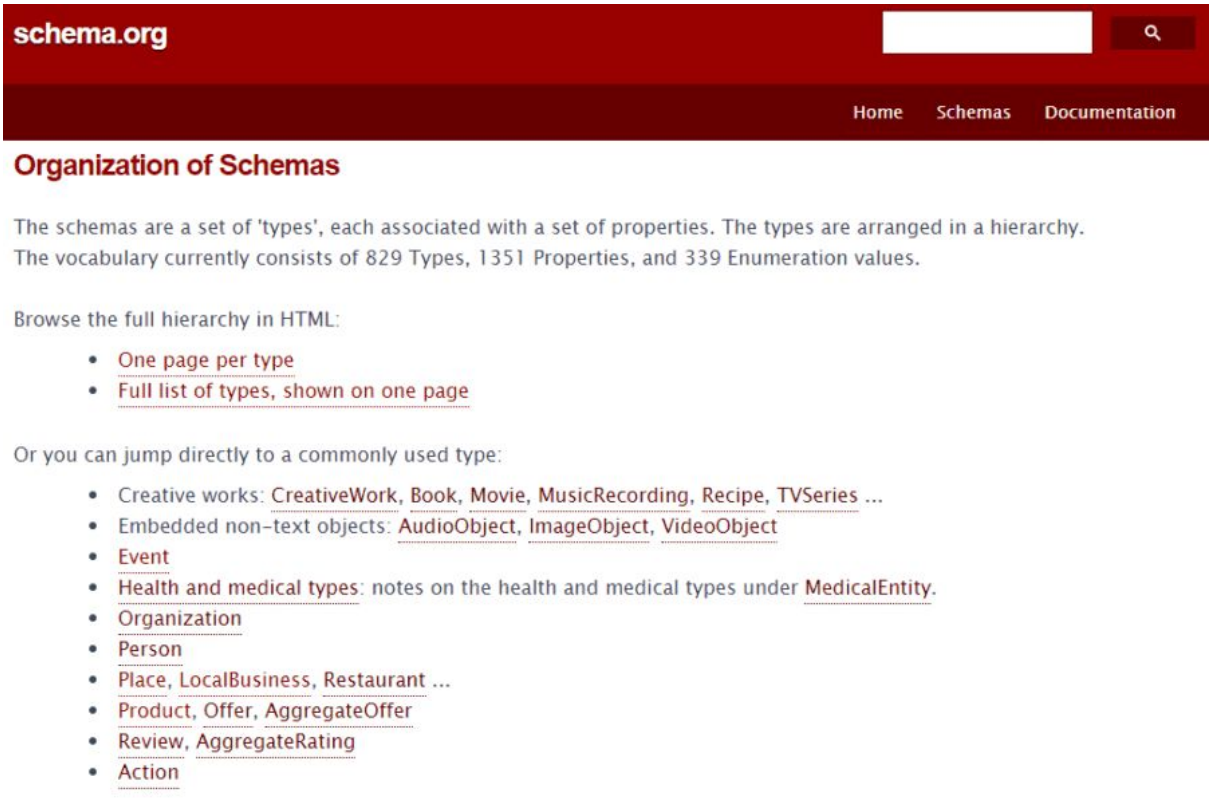
Schema.org is a vocabulary that can be used with many different markup languages, including Microdata, RDFa, and JSON-LD.

Many search engines, including Google and Bing, use Schema vocabularies to power rich search results.

Over 10 million websites use Schema.org to markup their web pages.

A shared vocabulary like this makes it easier for website owners, developers, and search engines maximise benefits for their efforts.

Essentially, it is a database of different schema types that can be added to web pages and elsewhere on the internet.



The most common types of schema markup include events, products, recipes, and reviews.

Best Practices

- Always use the JSON-LD markup format.
- Be specific with the information you add to structured data.
- Only markup content that is visible on your web page, don't spam.
- Choose the correct markup item for your web page.
- Always test and validate your structured data markup.

Once you properly understand what it is, and how to implement it, you should be good to go!

How Can Structured Data Boost SEO?

Adding structured data is a fantastic way of making your website look professional within search results.
There are many different ways of adding structured data to your web page can improve your SEO.

Higher CTR

Structured data can give search results a better visual appearance, especially products, recipes and reviews.
This can entice users to click onto your page, therefore resulting in a higher click-through rate.

Increase In Conversions

If your site has a higher click-through rate, you will also have more conversions as you will have more people visiting your web pages. More conversions mean more visitors, customers, sales, etc.

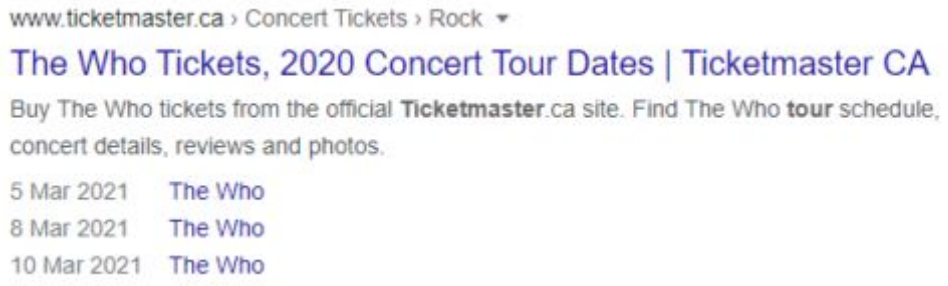
Boost Search Engine Rankings

The more information Google has about your web page, the better they will understand it, making it easier for them to rank your page. By providing structured data, you are helping search engines to understand the structure and content within your page.
Structured data is not a ranking factor, but it can help search engines to understand what will make the page content relevant for more search queries.

Increase Authority
Having your web page earn a rich result in Google, will make your website look more trustworthy, enticing, and authoritative to users. This will make users more likely to click onto your web page, and then return in the future if your content was worthwhile to them. Search engines will see that users trust your site and view it as authoritative, and that can help to then improve rankings.
This shows just how beneficial it is to add structured data markup to your website.

Items That Can Be Marked Up In Structured Data

There are plenty of items that can be marked up using structured data.
Here are some of the most popular items that are currently supported by Google, and display as rich results:
Event –
For events, Google will display the event name, locations and upcoming dates within a rich search result.



Product –
When product pages appear as rich search results, users will see the rating, price, and whether or not the product is in stock.



Recipe –
In my opinion, recipes are currently one of the most appealing rich results, displaying an image, rating, cooking time, and calorie amount.



Music –
For songs and albums, music markup can display release date, genre, producer, songwriter and album-length, depending on what information you give Google.



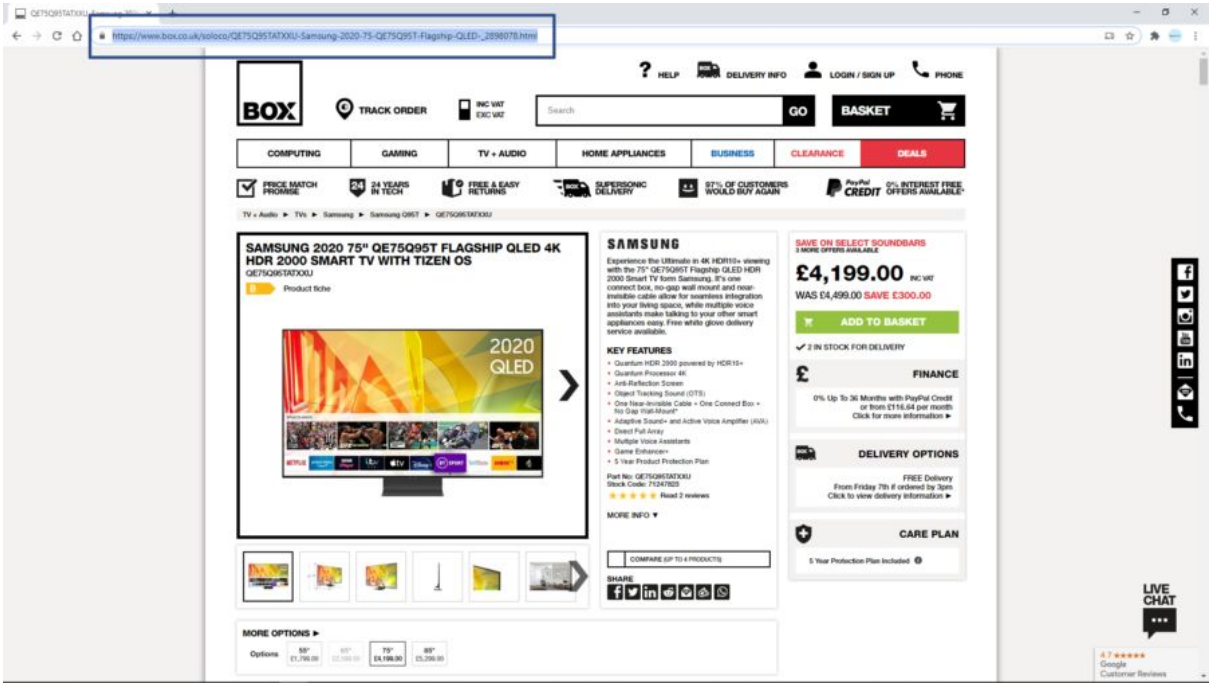
Review –
When someone writes a review, by adding schema markup the rich result can display the review date, rating, and the name of the person who wrote the review.



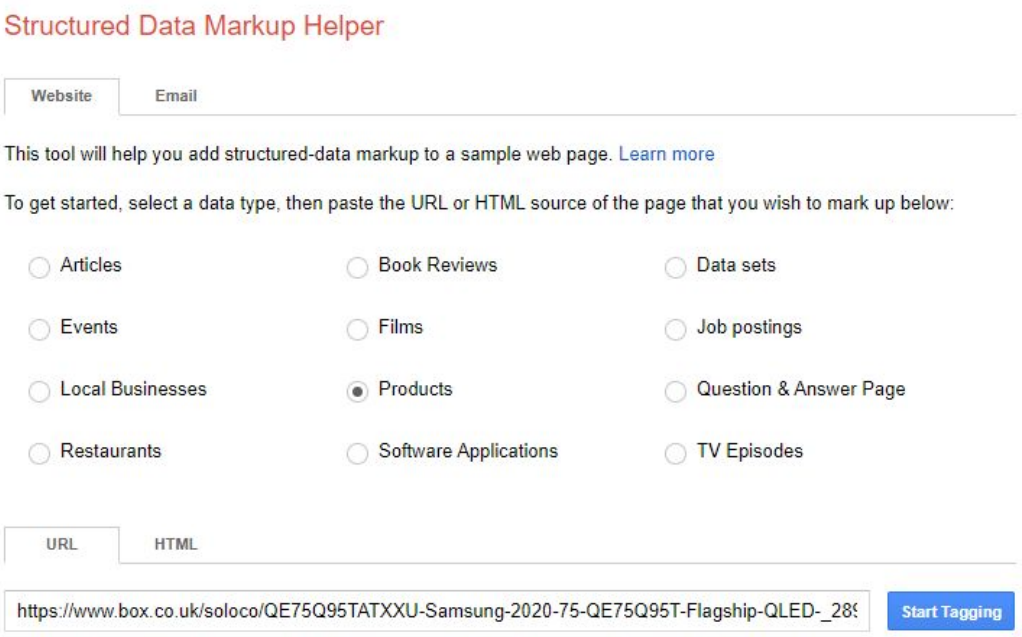
All of these structured data items are supported by Google and have rich results that make them look more appealing within Google searches.
You can view the full list of structured data items that enable rich snippets on the Google developers reference guide.

How To Add Schema Markup To Your Website

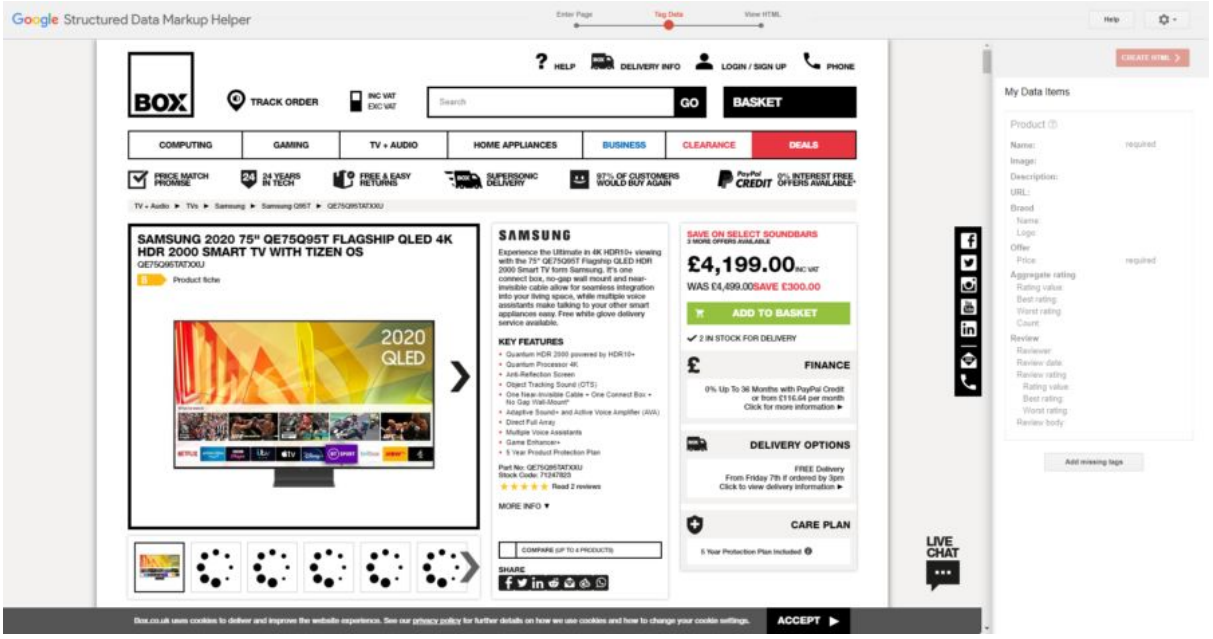
Now I'll show you how to add schema markup to your web pages.
Before adding it to your web pages, we need to generate structured data markup for each page.
To do this, we are going to use a free tool called the Structured Data Markup Helper, which is created by Google.
This tool will make the whole process much quicker and easier.
Let's go through the process step by step.
First, open the webpage that you want to add structured data to.
I have chosen a product page for a television.
Copy the URL for the webpage (we will need this soon).



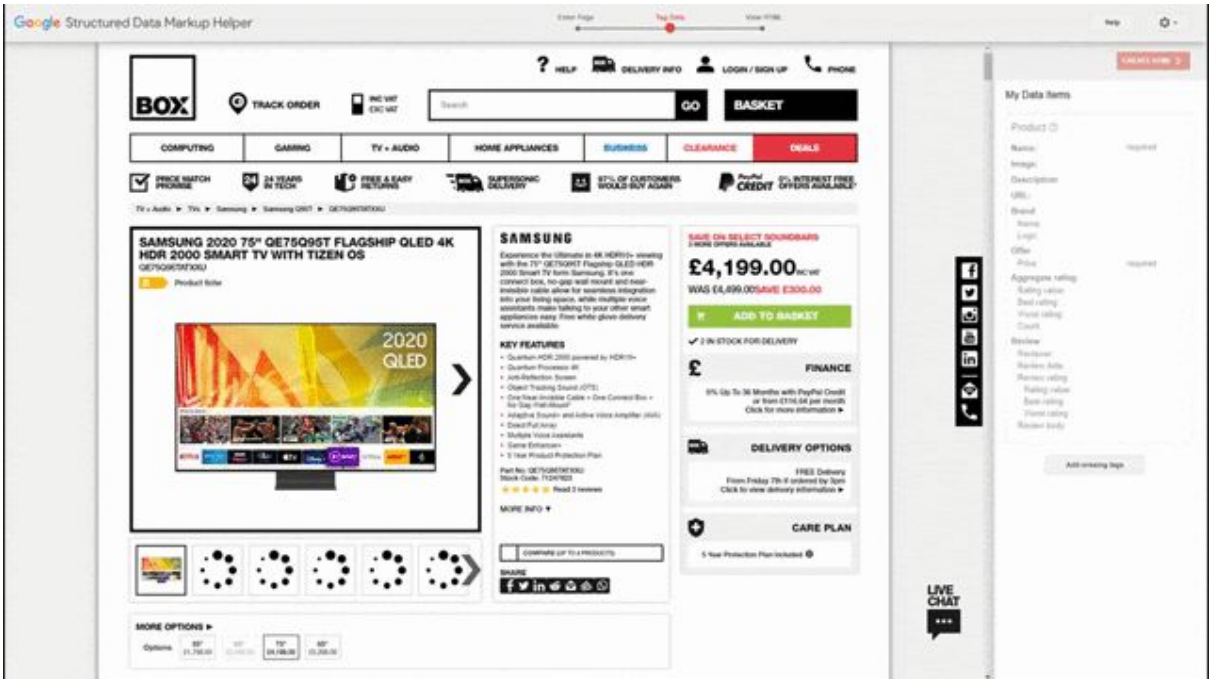
Now, open the Structured Data Markup Helper.
Paste your URL into the URL box.
Then, select the most relevant data type for your webpage, as I am adding structured data to a product page, I will select "Products".



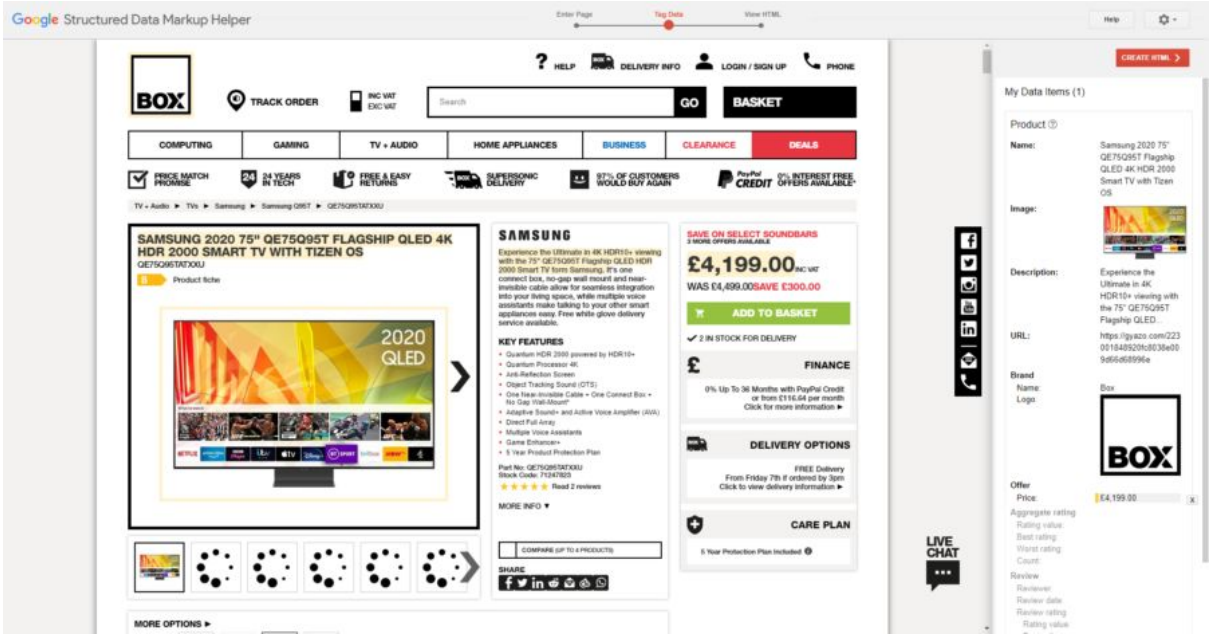
If your webpage is an event page, select “Events”, if your webpage is an article, select “Articles”, and so on.
Once you have selected your data type and entered your URL, click “Start Tagging”.
You will now be given an interactive version of your webpage, which allows you to tag specific data.
You’ll be required to select a different set of data based on the type of structured data that you chose for your webpage.



To tag data, you need to highlight either a section of text or an image, and then match it to the data items on the right.
So, let's start with "Name", this will be the product name.
Highlight the name of the product, and then select "Name" as the data type.

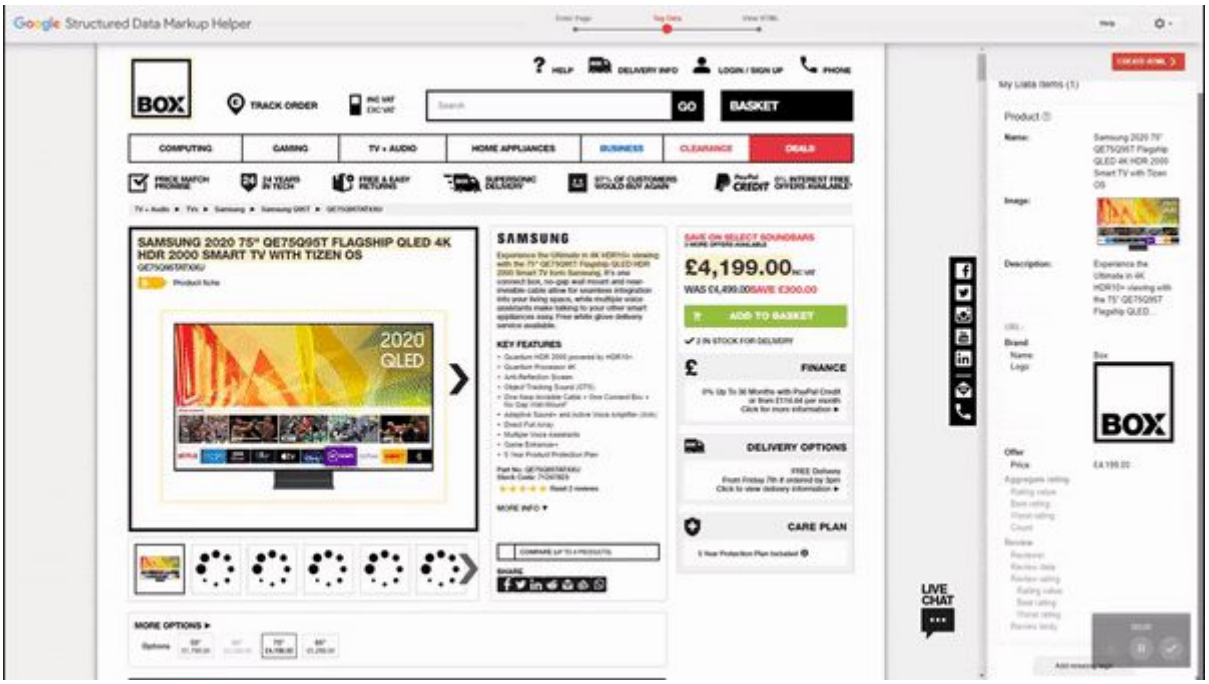


Now, go through the list and add more data items, as many as you can.
At the very least, fill in all of the data items that say "required".

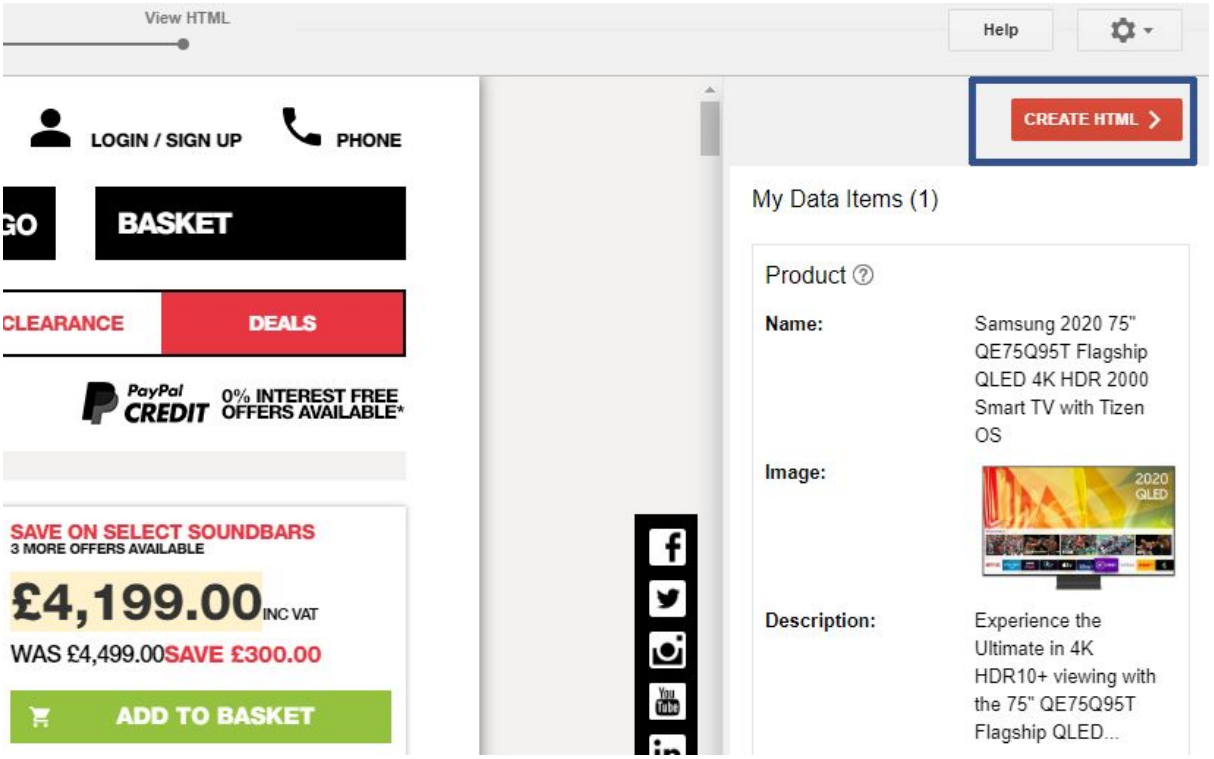


If there is data that you are unable to highlight, you can click "Add missing tags" to add it.

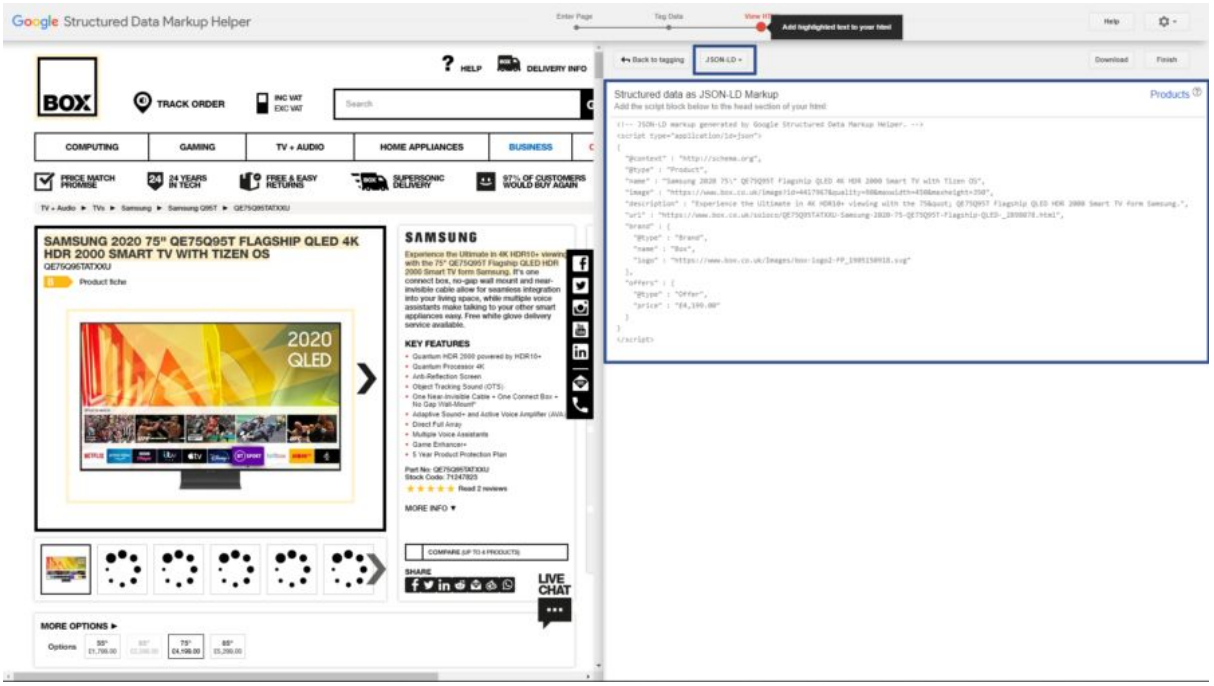
For example, if you want to add the URL, click “Add missing tags”, select “URL” as the tag type, then enter the URL for your page, and click “Save”.



Then, once you have finished adding data items, click “Create HTML”.



Ensure that “JSON-LD” is selected at the output format.

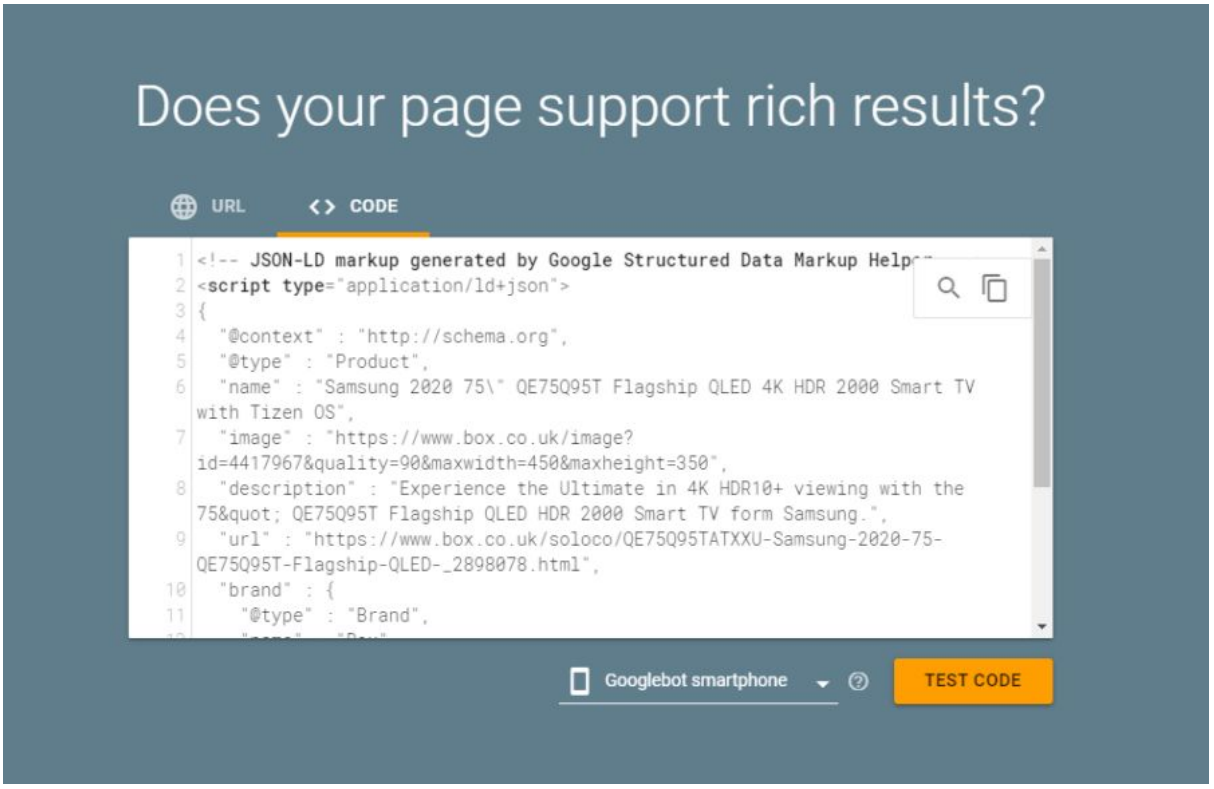


Copy the script that has been generated.

Now we are going to validate the structured data that we have generated.

Open the Rich Results Test Tool.

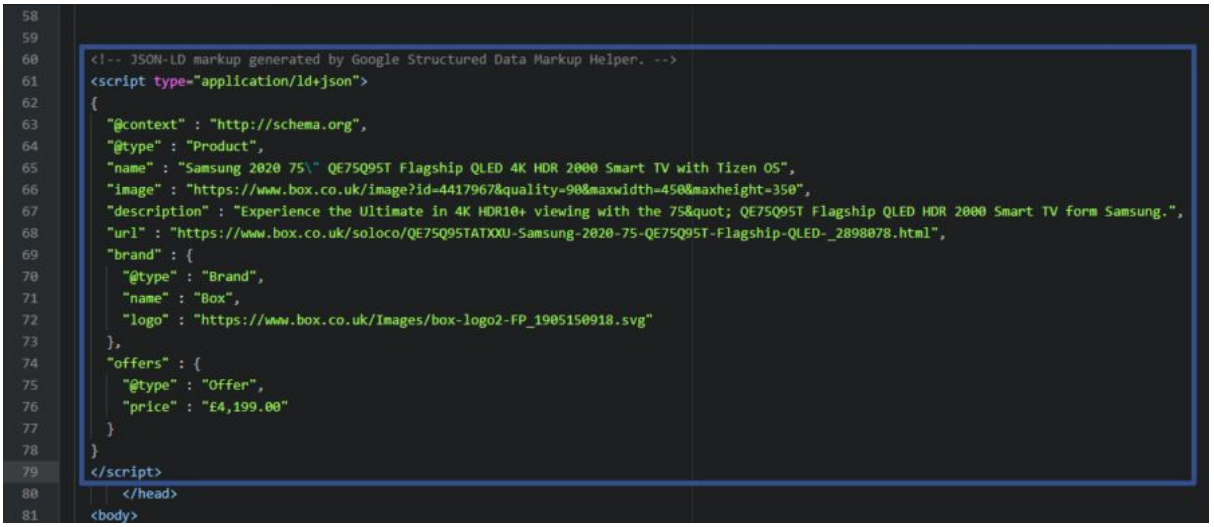
Select “CODE”, and paste in the code that you have just copied.



Now click “TEST CODE”.

The Rich Results Test will now check your code to see if there are any issues.
Once it has loaded, you will get your results.
If you see a big green tick next to text that says “Page is eligible for rich results”, you have successfully generated functional structured data and there are no errors.
You can also ignore any warnings that appear in yellow.

However, if you see red text that says “Not all markup is eligible for rich results” you will need to go back to the structured data markup helper, and fix any errors.
The majority of errors are simply missing data items, so ensure that you tagged all of the required data items.
Once you have fixed any problems, regenerate your markup, and copy it back into the Rich Results Test Tool.
Continue fixing errors until you see green text that says “Page is eligible for rich results”.
Then, copy the code once again, and paste it into the header section of your webpage.



You will then need to save your webpage, and upload it to your web server so that it is live on the internet with the schema markup that you have just generated.

Remember, you don't have to select the "product" structured data type like I have, there are many other structured data types that you can select that can be more relevant for your webpage.

If you run a WordPress website, there are multiple plugins that you can install, to do the bulk of the work for you.

In this case, I suggest using RankMath, or Schema – All In One Schema Rich Snippets to generate schema markup.

However, if your website does not use WordPress, this is the **best method** for adding schema markup to your webpages.

Robots.txt

What Is Robots.txt?

Also known as the "Robots Exclusion Protocol", the robots.txt file is a text file that is saved to your website's server.

The file tells search engine robots (also known as crawlers) how to crawl particular pages within a website.

When a search engine crawler reads the robots.txt file, they will learn which URLs within a website they can and can't crawl.

All major search engines will respect the robots.txt file, so you shouldn't have to worry about any ignoring the file.

What Is The Robots.txt File Used For?

Generally speaking, the file is used to manage crawler traffic to your site, and sometimes exclude a page from search results depending on the file type.

There are three-page types that you can add to a robots.txt file, and the functionalities differ between each of them.

Web page:

This includes HTML, PDF, and other non-media formats that are readable by Google.

The robots.txt file can be used to manage crawler traffic to web pages, but not restrict them from being indexed in search results. You must not use the robots.txt file to attempt to hide a web page from search results, this is because if it is linked to by other pages on the internet, it could still be indexed by search engines.

Media file:

This includes image, video and audio files.

The robots.txt file can be used to manage crawler traffic, and prevent these types of pages from appearing in search results. Excluding a media file from search results will not prevent other pages from being able to link to it.

Resource file:

This includes image, script, or style files.

Adding a resource file URL to your robots.txt file can manage its crawler traffic, and stop it from being indexed in search results depending on the parameters that you set.

It is important that you only block unimportant resource files that will not significantly affect the functionality of webpages that use the particular file you are blocking.

Why Should You Create A Robots.txt File?

Before search engine crawlers index a web page on a domain that they have not previously discovered, they will read it's robots.txt file.

Upon reading the robots.txt file, they will see which URLs they can and can't crawl.

If you have a web page that you do not want a particular search engine to crawl, you can add it to your robots.txt file.

Typically, search engines will refresh the robots.txt file daily, so any changes you make will come into effect relatively swiftly.

How To Check If You Have A Robots.txt File

If you are unsure whether or not your website already has a robots.txt file, you can find out in no time at all.

Simply type your domain into the search box, and add "/robots.txt" to the end.

It should look like this: "www.website.com/robots.txt"

Then search for this URL.

If your site does have a robots.txt file, you will find a page that looks something like this:

```
# www.nike.com robots.txt -- just crawl it.

User-agent: *

Disallow: */member/inbox
Disallow: */member/settings
Disallow: */p/
Disallow: */checkout/
Disallow: /*.swf$
Disallow: /*.pdf$
Disallow: /pdf/
Disallow: /ar/help/
Disallow: /br/help/
Disallow: /hk/help/
Disallow: /kr/help/
Disallow: /uy/help/
Disallow: /xf/help/
Disallow: /xl/help/
Disallow: /xm/help/

Disallow: */*/*_*_*/retail
Disallow: */retail/s/directory
Disallow: */retail/s/search
Disallow: */retail/*_*/
Disallow: */retail/appointmentpage
Disallow: */retail/*nike-store
Disallow: */retail/services
Disallow: */*_*/retail/*/directory
Disallow: */retail/*search
Disallow: */retail/*frontend
Disallow: */retail/*/sitemap
Disallow: */hk/en_gb/retail
Disallow: */retail/*/api/
```

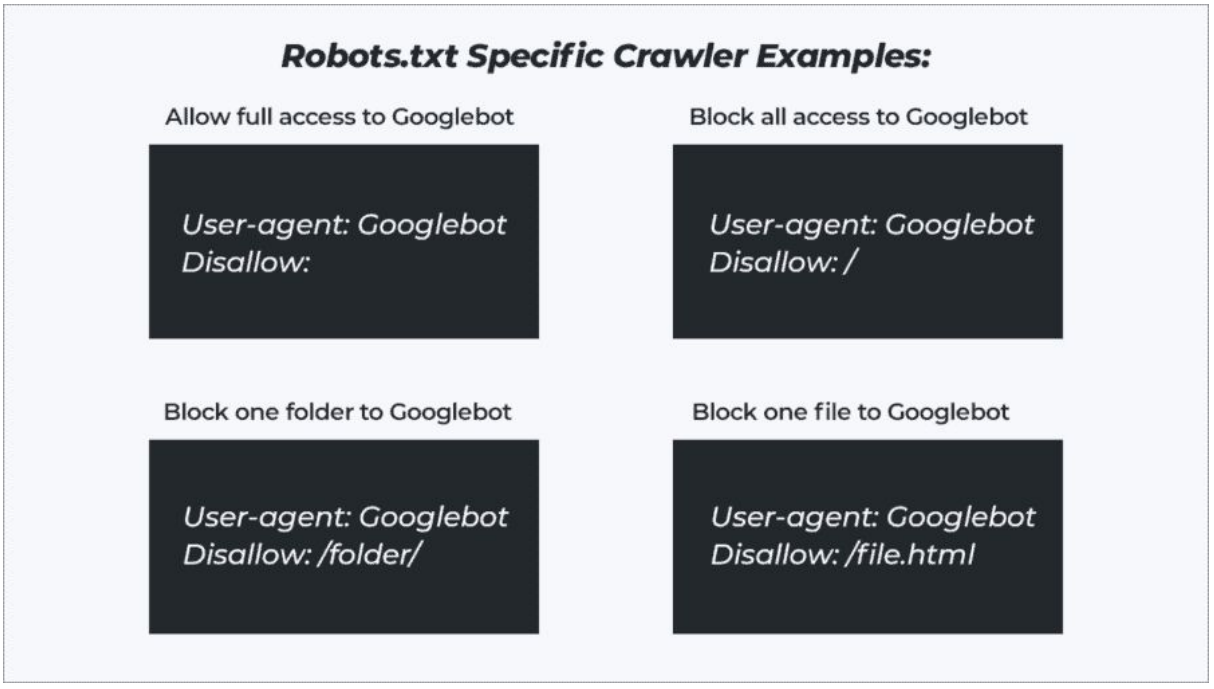
If your site doesn't yet have a robots.txt file you will just see an error.

Basic Format, Syntax & Rules

When you create a robots.txt file there is some basic information that you should understand first.
The robots.txt file usually uses these three keywords, *User-agent*, *Disallow* and Allow.
User-agent: This is used to identify a specific crawler C or set of crawlers.
Disallow: This rule is added when you want to block a search engine robot from crawling a particular file or folder.
Allow: You add the allow rule when you want to allow a robot to crawl a file or folder.
Let's look at some basic examples:

As you can see, in each of these examples we have put User-agent, followed by "*", this means these rules apply to all search engine crawlers.
On the second line, we have the disallow rule.
As you can see we have used the disallow rule in four different ways.
First, leaving it empty will disallow nothing, so every crawler can access everything.
In the second example, we just have a forward slash, this basic says "everything", so it blocks all folders and files.

For the third example, we have used the disallow rule to block one specific folder.
Then, for the final example, we have used the disallow rule to block a specific file.
Let's look at some specific crawler examples:



The only change that we have made is specifying a user-agent, the Googlebot.
The Googlebot is Google's web crawler.
All of these examples have the same rules, just with this one change.
Because I have specified a user-agent, these rules will only apply Google's crawler "Googlebot".
This is a useful feature if you want to block a specific file, or folder from a specific user-agent.
It's likely that you won't remember the names of all user-agents, so you can view the complete list of user-agents here.

Best Practices

- The robots.txt file must be located at the **root of the website**
- The file must be named "**robots.txt**"
- Your website must **only have one** robots.txt file
- You can **add comments** to the file after a "#"

Read through the file after writing it, and test it to ensure there are no errors.

How To Create A Robots.txt File

To create a robots.txt file you just need a text editor, I will use notepad.
First, create a new text document, name it “robots.txt”, and then open the file.
In the robots.txt file that we create, we are going to block specific crawlers from specific webpages, and then place our sitemap URL at the bottom of the file.
By adding the sitemap URL, we are telling crawlers where our sitemap is located.
We are going to block the “wp-admin” page from all crawlers.
This is the page that admins will use to login to the WordPress dashboard, so we do not want crawlers to crawl this webpage.
Then we will block the “contact” page from Google and MSN crawlers.
This isn’t needed, but it is just an example to show you how to block specific pages from specific crawlers.
In your case, you only want to block pages or folders that you need to block, so don’t just copy me as this is just an example.
So, now that we have an empty file, let’s start writing.
First, I’m going to add a comment, crawlers will ignore this, so it won’t affect the file.
To add a comment, just add a “#” symbol, and then write anything you want on the same line.

You do not need to add a comment, usually, they are used in more complicated robots.txt files to explain what does what.
Next, we will add the text that will block all crawlers from the wp-admin page.
To do this we will put “User-Agent:”, then add a space followed by an “*”.

This says “we are talking to all crawlers”.
Then, on the next line we will put “Disallow:”, followed by a space, and then “/wp-admin”.



This will disallow this specific page from being crawled by all crawlers.
That is the first part done.
Now, we will disallow the Googlebot from crawling the “contact” page.



So, type “User-Agent:”, followed by a space, and then “Googlebot”.
This line is telling the Googlebot to listen to this specific part of the file, and all other crawlers will ignore it.
On the next line type “Disallow”, followed by a space, and then “/contact”.
This will disallow the contact page from being crawled by the Googlebot.
And now we will do the same thing with the MSNBot, and blog it from crawling the contact page.
Once again, type “User-Agent:” followed by a space, and this time add “MSNBot”.
On the next line type “Disallow:”, space, then “/contact”.



Now we have successfully blocked the Googlebot and the MSNBot from crawling the contact page.
Finally, we will tell crawlers where our sitemap is located.
To do this, type in “Sitemap:”, space, and then enter the URL for your sitemap file.

This will tell all crawlers where our sitemap.xml file is located.
Save your file, and ensure that it is saved as a text document, and the file is named “robots.txt”.

You have now successfully created a robots.txt file for your website.

All that's left is to upload the file to the root of your website, with all of your other webpages.
It is important to remember that you only need to block the pages and folders from crawlers that you require to be blocked.
You shouldn't just copy exactly what I've done, and you definitely shouldn't block your contact page from crawlers as it could result in fewer people finding that page organically.
This is just an example to help you understand how to create a robots.txt file.
You should now understand how to create a simple robots.txt file that is sufficient for your needs.

Sitemap.xml

What Is Sitemap.xml?
A sitemap is an XML file that is saved to your web server and lists all of the pages within your website.
The sitemap helps search engines crawl your website and understand the structure of the site so that they can index and rank each web page more accurately.
Sitemaps provide information about the website's content, including:

- When each web page was last updated.
- Total images on each page.
- URLs for each web page.

Once you have generated your sitemap, you will need to submit it to search engines, for Google you will use the Google Search Console.

Why Is It Important To Generate A Sitemap?

It is recommended that all website have a sitemap, however, there are some cases where it is crucial:

- **The website is new.** If you have a new website, you should have a sitemap because you will have fewer backlinks meaning your web pages are more difficult for search engines to find organically.
- **The website has many pages.** If you have a big website, search engines are more likely to miss a page out, so adding a sitemap will show them the structure of your site helping them to find every single page.

It costs nothing to add a sitemap to your website, and it has many fantastic benefits, so it is worth generating one.

How To Generate A Sitemap For Your WordPress Website

There are many different tools and plugins that will generate a sitemap for your website without you having to do any complicated work.

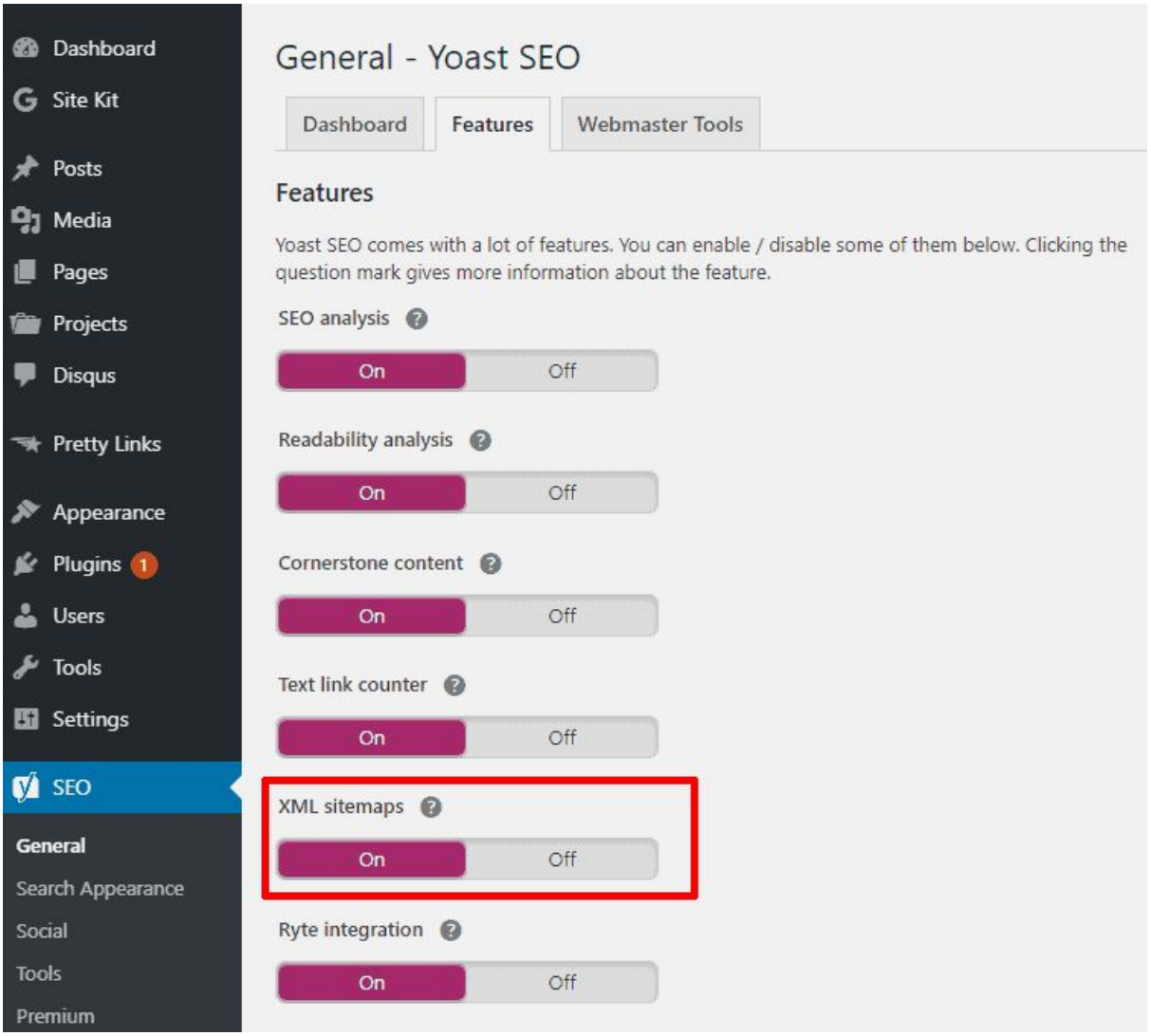
If your website is running on WordPress, I suggest using the Yoast SEO plugin.

First, Install and activate the Yoast SEO plugin to your WordPress website.

Once the plugin is active, click “SEO”, on the menu located on the left of your WordPress dashboard.

Next click “General” on the expanded menu.

Now click onto the “Features” tab.



Finally, toggle the "XML Sitemaps" switch to "On", and then click "Save Changes".

You now have a sitemap for your WordPress website, generated by the Yoast SEO plugin.

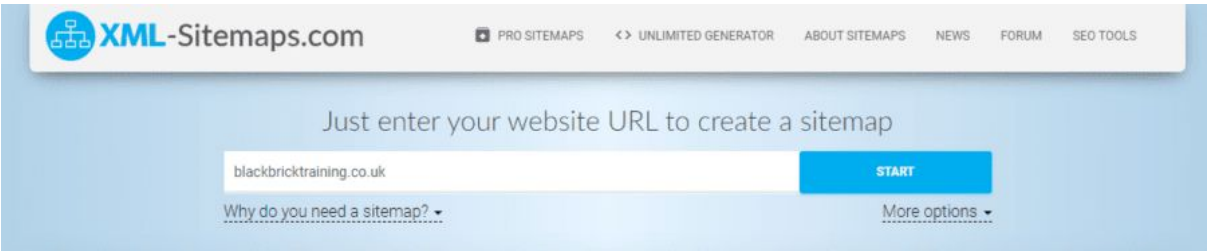
How To Generate A Sitemap For Your Website

If you don't run your website on a content management system like WordPress, there are still ways that you can generate a sitemap.

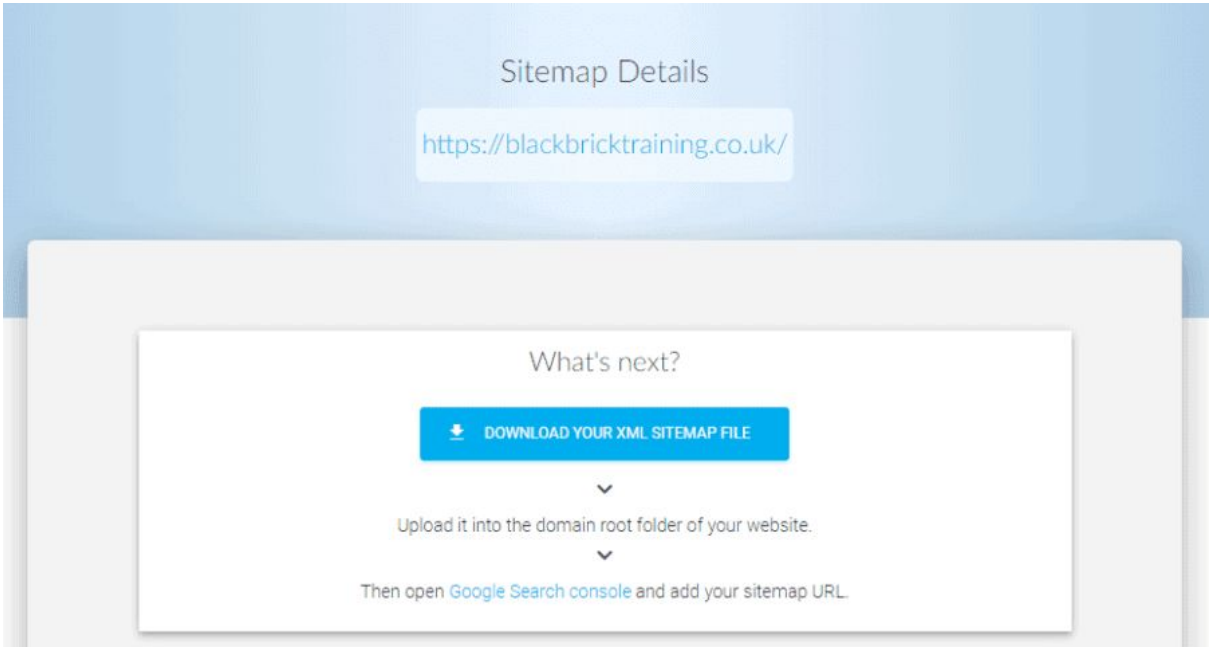
The tool that I suggest using is simply called XML-Sitemaps.

This tool will create a sitemap for a website which has up to 500 pages for free, but you will need to get the pro plan if you have more than 500 pages on your site.

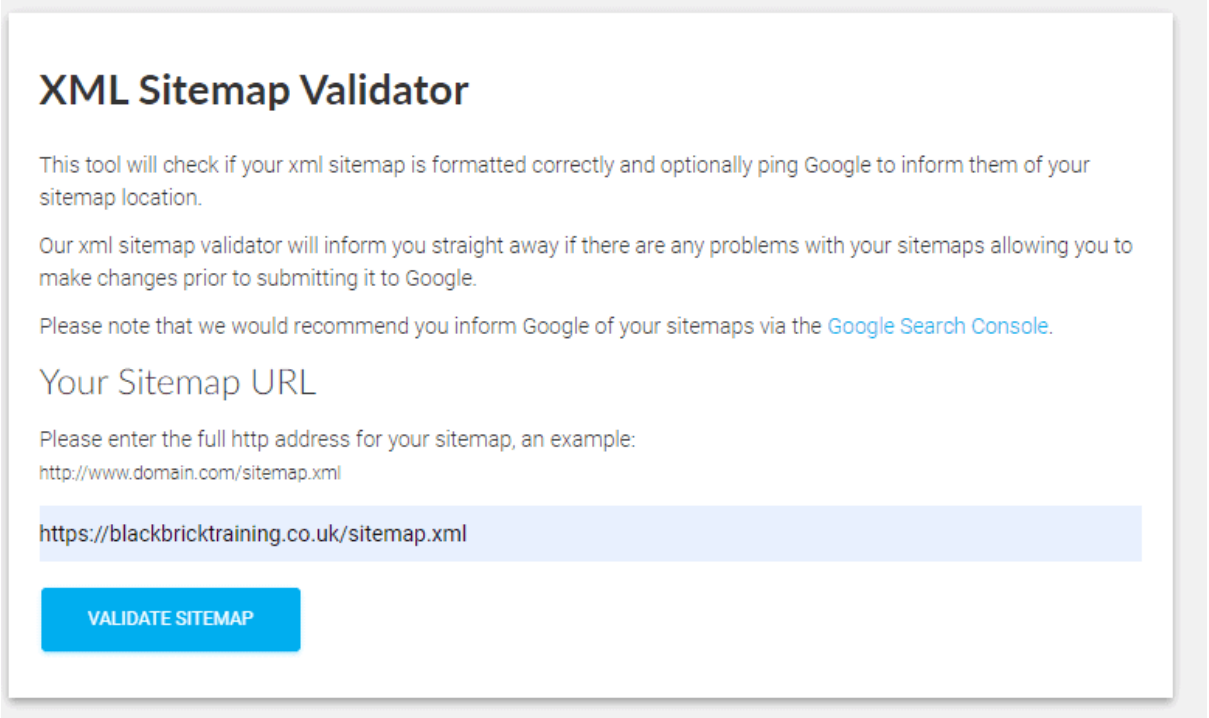
To use this tool you just need to enter your website's URL and then click "Start".



You will then have to wait a couple of minutes for the sitemap to be generated.
Once it is done, click “Download your XML Sitemap file”.



When it has finished downloading, upload it to the domain root folder that all of your web pages are uploaded to.
You should then see your new sitemap at www.yourwebsite.com/sitemap.xml
This tool will also **validate your sitemap.**
Go to the XML Sitemap Validator, then enter the Sitemap URL.
Once the URL is entered, click “Validate Sitemap”.



This will let you know if there are any issues with your sitemap.

Website Security

What Is Website Security?

Website security also known as “cyber-security” is the process taken to protect a website from any possible security threats. This includes detecting, preventing and responding to any security threats to ensure the website is secure and safe for users.

It is an ongoing process and is an essential part of running a website.

There are many different techniques and strategies that are used to secure a website from an attack.

Why Is Website Security Important?

It’s quite simple really, nobody wants their website to get hacked. As well as that, no website user wants their data to be breached. Having an unsecure website is just as bad as having no website at all!

Securing your website can do many things, including:

- Prevent data breaches
- Protect your reputation

- Gain customer trust and confidence
- Increase Google rankings
- Increase conversions

Of course, having a secure website will also do much more as well as all of this.

Common Security Threats

These are some of the most common threats that you need to secure your website from:

- **Malware**

Malware stands for “malicious software”, there are many forms of malware, including spyware, trojans, viruses & more.
Essentially, it’s downloaded onto a web server and then accessed by the hacker, the thread varies depending on the type of malware.

- **DDoS Attacks**

A DDoS attack is a malicious attack which overwhelms a web server by flooding it with traffic which results in the website going offline.

- **Brute Force**

A brute force attack is quite a simple concept, the attacker programs a script that attempts multiple combinations of usernames and passwords until it finds one that works.
Then, the attacker can access the part of your website that they managed to log in to.
You must go through the right procedure of defending your website from these kinds of attacks.

How Can You Secure A Website?

We won’t go too in detail yet, but here are a few of the best ways to secure your website:

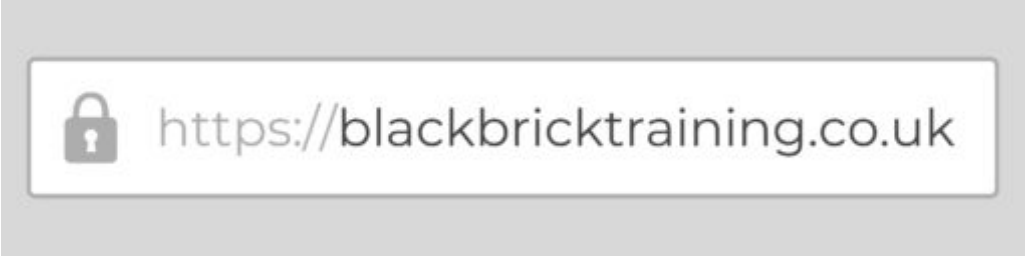
- Install an SSL Certificate
- Backup your website
- Install a security plugin

- Limit user access
- Keep software and plugins up to date

There are also many more techniques used to secure your website and defend it from attacks.

SSL Certificate

What Is An SSL Certificate?
An SSL is a certificate that you can install on your website.
SSL stands for “secure sockets layer”.
Having an SSL certificate installed on your site allows you to use the “https” in the address bar.



This encrypts the traffic between the website visitor, and the website itself.
Essentially, this protects any data which is sent between the visitor and the website.
This is especially important for websites that use passwords and credit card data, as the SSL certificate stops this information from being accessed by anyone else.
Having an SSL Certificate on your website is a ranking factor within Google, so having one can also increase search engine rankings.
Google mark websites that don’t have an SSL Certificate as “not secure”, whereas if your site does have one, it will receive a padlock which essentially says “this site is secure”.



43% of consumers abandon websites when they see security alert messages, so not having an SSL will decrease traffic and conversions.
You can install a trusted SSL Certificate for free, and it is becoming easier to install them onto websites.

Why Does Your Site Need An SSL Certificate?

There are many reasons why your website needs to have an SSL Certificate, but I'll name the three that stand out.

Establish trust with website visitors:

If your site has an SSL Certificate installed, it will have a padlock in the search bar.
When users see that your website is secure, they are likely to trust your site, therefore making them more likely to make a purchase, or return in the future.

Improve your website's SEO:

Google and other search engines check websites for an SSL Certificate before ranking each web page.
If you have an SSL Certificate installed, you are likely to earn a higher search engine ranking, as it shows that your site is secure.

Secure user data:

Securing your website with an SSL Certificate will encrypt the data that users enter into your website.
This secures your site from a data breach, making it more difficult for hackers to try and steal your user's private data.
You can install an SSL Certificate in less than 10 minutes, so to secure your website, and improve your SEO, do it now.

How To Tell If A Website Has An SSL Certificate

When you visit a website there are a couple of key ways to see if it has an SSL certificate installed.

- **The URL will say "https://" instead of "http://".**

You'll see an extra "s" after the HTTP on the website's URL.

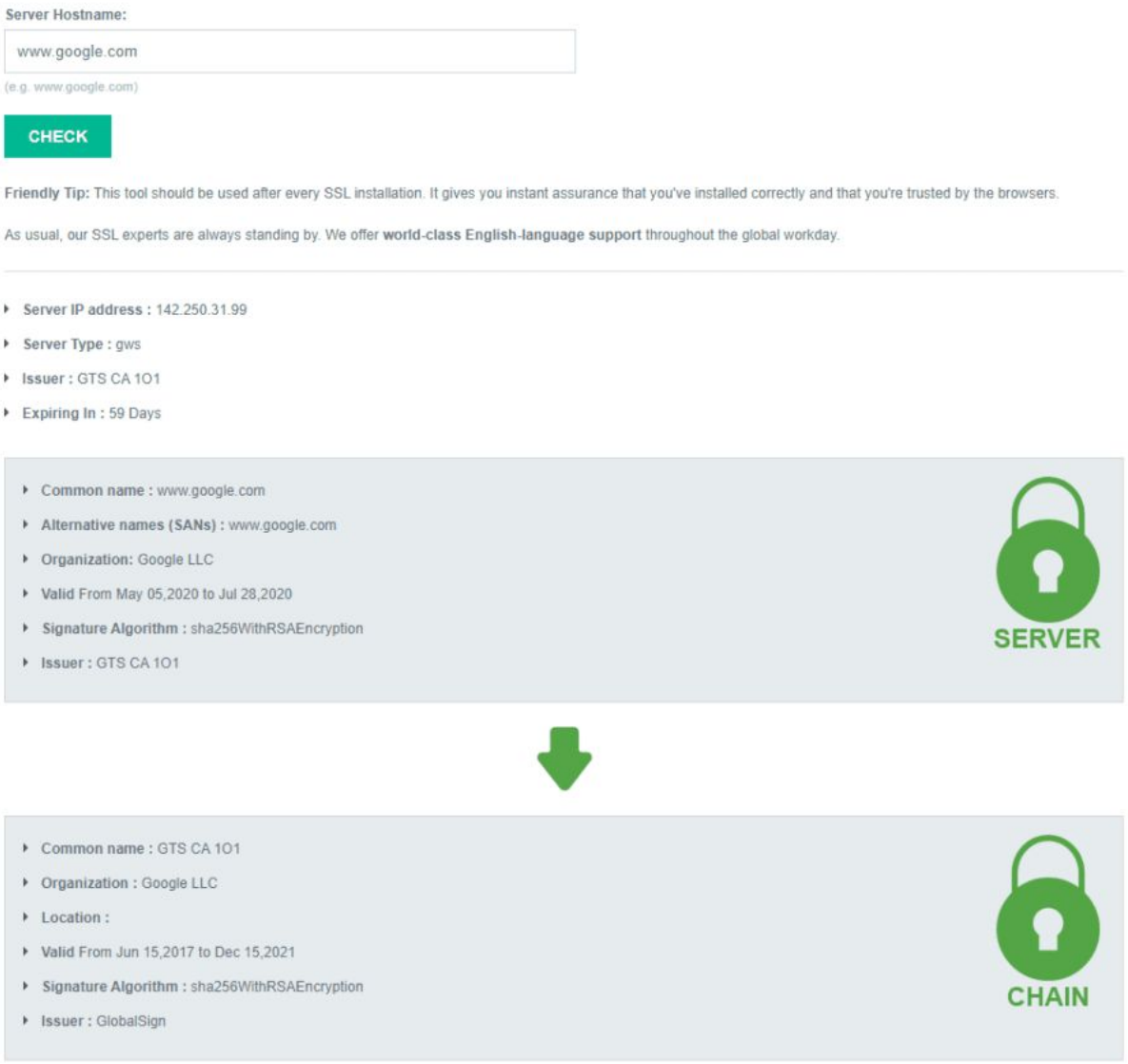
- **There will be a padlock next to the URL.**

On site's that have an SSL, you will see a padlock next to the URL, on Chrome it's just to the left.
You can then click onto the padlock to see more information about the site and its SSL certificate.



- **Use An SSL Checker.**

An SSL checker will see if a website has an active SSL certificate. You can also use an SSL checker to ensure you have properly installed an SSL certificate to your site.
I prefer using the comodo SSL checker, as it's easy to use and is very fast.



Using the tool, you can see the details of the SSL Certificate that is installed.

Install A Security Plugin

If your website is run on a content management system like WordPress, or Shopify, there are plugins available that will secure your website.
The methods of security that the plugins offer can vary, for example, some limit failed login attempts, and others scan for malware.
Here are some of the best WordPress security plugins:

Wordfence:



Wordfence Security – Firewall & Malware Scan
By Wordfence
Download

Wordfence is a free plugin that has some incredibly handy website security features.
Some of the features that this plugin offers include:

- Brute force protection by limiting failed login attempts.
- Password breach alerts.
- Web application firewall.
- Two-factor authentication setup.
- Monitor attempted security breaches.

In my opinion, this is the very best WordPress security plugin.

All in One WP Security & Firewall:



All In One WP Security & Firewall
By Tips and Tricks HQ, Peter Petreski, Ruhul, Ivy
Download

This is another free WordPress security plugin that covers pretty much everything.
This plugin is good for personal websites or small business websites.
Some features include:

- IP blocking & filtering.
- Limit login attempts.
- Strong password generator.
- Scan for malicious activity.

I'd say that this is not the most beginner-friendly security plugin as other plugins, so don't pick this if you're new to security plugins.
WPS Hide Login:





WPS Hide Login
By WPServeur, NicolasKulka, tabrisrp

Download

This free plugin allows you to change the URL for the login page.
By doing this, it makes it more difficult for hackers to try and get access to your website.
It is easy to set up, and from a security standpoint, it is massively beneficial.

Google Authenticator:



Google Authenticator – WordPress Two Factor Authentication (2FA , MFA)
By miniOrange

Download

The concept of this plugin is simple, it allows you to set up two-factor authentication on your website.
It's free to use, easy to set up, adds an extra layer of security to your site, uses the Google Authenticator app for security codes.
You don't need all of these plugins, I suggest using both Wordfence and WPS Hide Login.
Once you have installed and set up a security plugin, your site will become more secure, and less likely to be breached by viruses or hackers.

Backup Your Website

What would you do if you discovered that your website has been accidentally deleted?
Well, if you haven't got it backed up, it is gone forever.
What Is A Website Backup?
A website backup is simply having your website files saved to a secondary location so that if your site is deleted for any reason, you are able to use your backup instead of having to start your site from scratch.
You could backup your website files to a secondary server, or offline to your computer.

Having a backup of your website is crucial for every single website owner, especially large sites, as they would take much longer to re-build.

Why Are Website Backups So Important?

There are many different reasons that show why it is so important to backup your website.

- **It's Your Responsibility**

You can't rely on other people to back up your website unless you have paid for a backup service.

If you want to be able to bring your site back online if it's removed from the web server or infected with a virus, you must ensure you periodically back it up.

- **Protection Against Viruses**

Even if you think your site is protected against viruses, they still may find a way in.

This means that the only way to be truly protected against viruses is to backup your site.

- **Peace Of Mind**

Of course, having an up to data backup of your site will also give you peace of mind, so you know you are safe if anything does happen.

It's always good to know that the backup is there, so you can stay calm if your site is deleted, gets hacked, or becomes infected.

How Can You Backup Your Website?

Depending on the type of website that you run, there are multiple ways to backup your site.

- **Automated Backup Solutions**

If you don't want to backup your website yourself, you can purchase an automated backup service.

Here are the two backup services that I recommend:

Dropmysite:
Backup unlimited websites, the small plan offers 10GB of storage, the large plan offers 30GB, or you can sign up to a custom plan which goes up to 1000GB.
Backup machine:
There are three different plans, the smallest offers monthly backups with 200MB of storage, the medium plan offers weekly backups with 50GB storage, and the large plan offers daily backups with 600GB storage.
Pick your backup provider, sign up, and start automatically backing up your website.

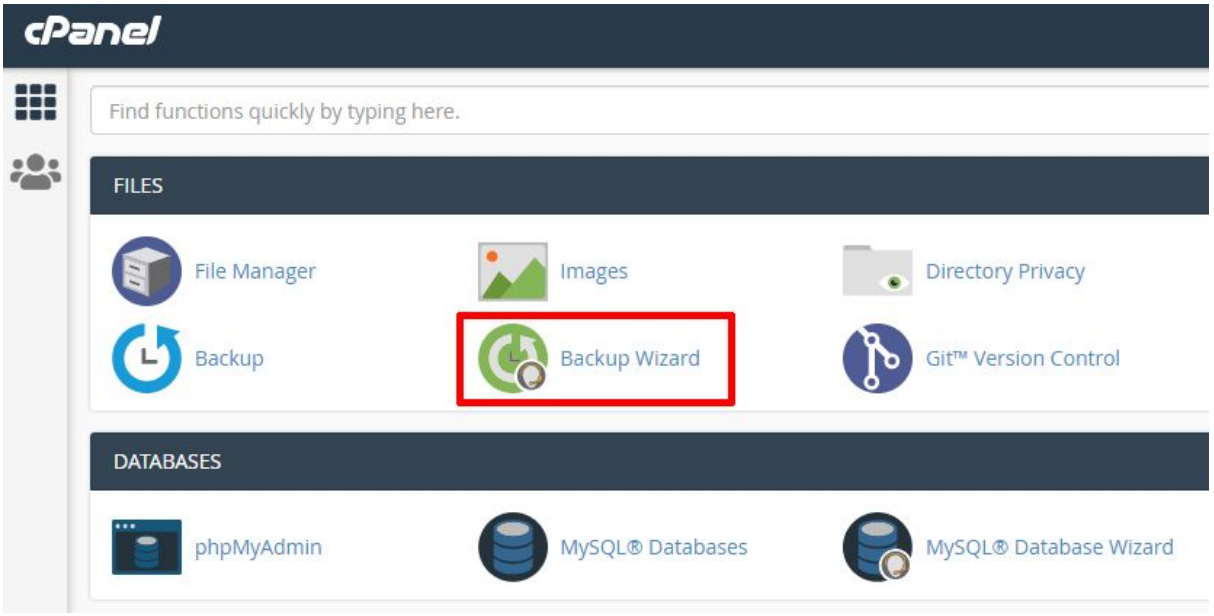
- **WordPress Website Backups**

If your website runs on WordPress, there are several plugins that you can install to create backups of your WordPress website.
Here are my favourite WordPress backup plugins:
BackupBuddy:
This is the most popular premium WordPress backup plugin.
With this plugin, you can schedule daily, weekly, and monthly website backups.
There are no monthly fees, you just pay once a year, and backup your site as much as you wish.
UpdraftPlus:
This is the most popular freemium WordPress backup plugin.
With this plugin, you can backup your WordPress website to the cloud or your computer.
You can also set up scheduled backups, and on-demand backups, as well as having the ability to choose exactly which files you want to backup.
BackWPup:
This freemium plugin allows you to create complete WordPress backups and store them on the cloud, or to your computer.
This plugin also has a feature that allows you to schedule automatic backups.
All three of these plugins also allow you to restore your backup from within the WordPress dashboard.
It's now down to you to pick the backup plugin that you prefer.

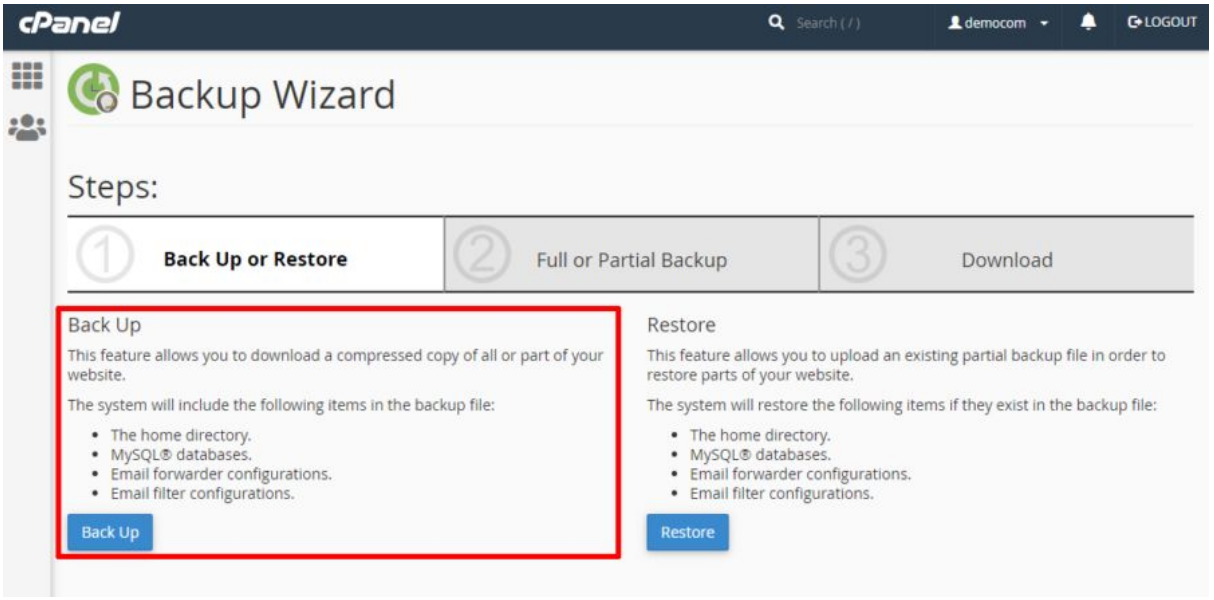
Once you have a backup plugin, remember to periodically backup your website to be safe from any potential problems.

- **cPanel Backups**

It is easy to backup your website using cPanel.
Follow this simple process to backup your website using cPanel:
Login to your cPanel control panel.
Click the “Backup Wizard” button.

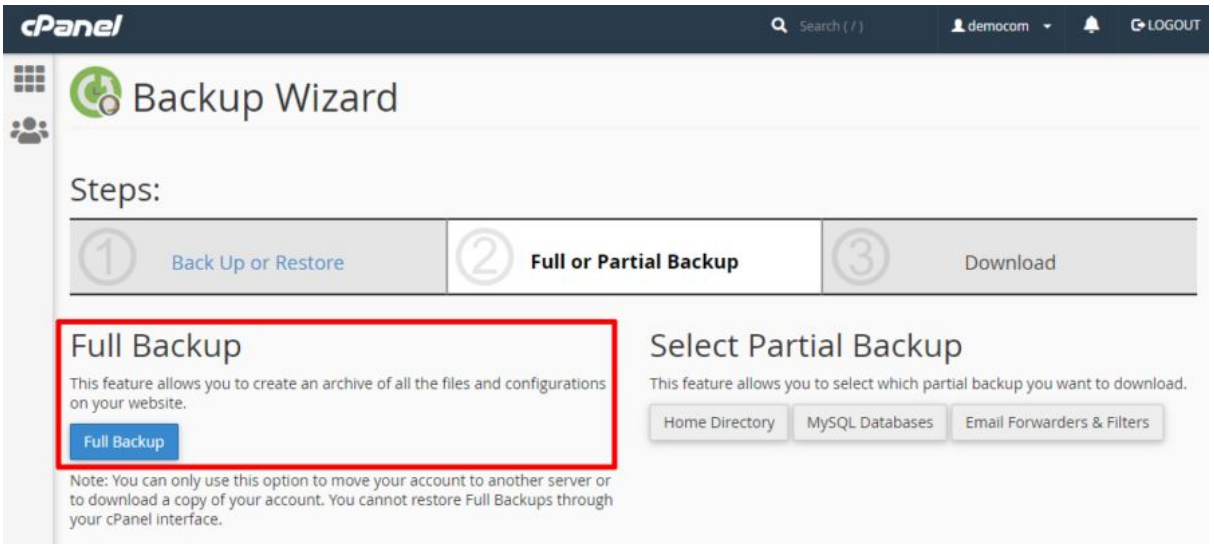


Next, you get the option to choose between “backup”, and “restore”, of course, you want to click “backup”.

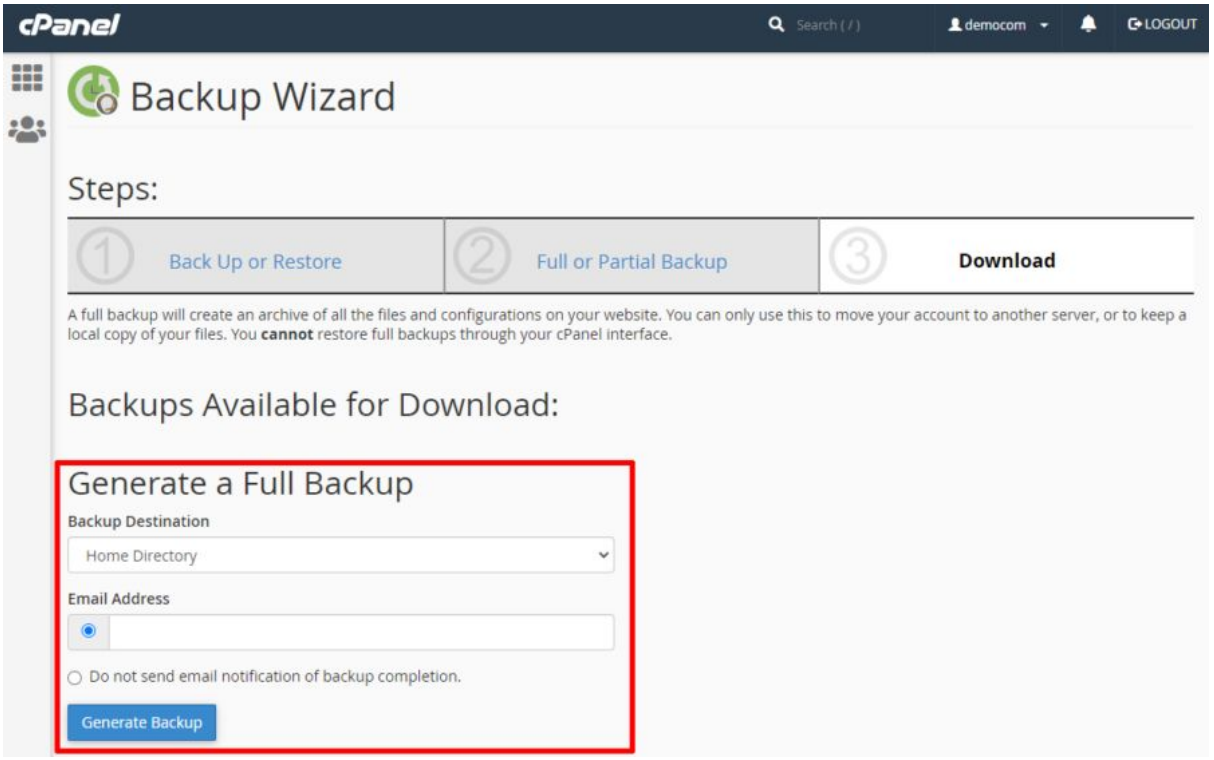


After that, you will get some specific backup options.

Decide whether you want to create a full backup or a partial backup.
In this example, we are going to select “full backup”.



Finally, download your backup.
Select the “Home Directory” backup destination, and enter your email address so that you know when your backup is complete.
Then click “Generate Backup”, and the backup will start being generated.



Make sure that you download your backup to your computer and keep it stored until you create a new backup.

Just remember to decide on at least one backup method, and backup your website periodically so that you are safe from the possibility of losing your website.

Best Practices

- Check your backups regularly to ensure all files work and are not corrupt.
- Backup your site periodically to include new pages and files.
- Choose a secure & reliable backup service.
- Backup your site to an offline hard drive.

It is crucial that you backup your site to be prepared for anything that could happen.

Limit User Access

The majority of cybersecurity attacks are the result of an administrative error.

There is only one way to prevent that, and that is to limit the number of people who can make those errors.

Not everyone needs to be able to access the back end of your website, so think about who you give access to.

If you are hiring a freelancer, or someone to do a specific job on your website, only give them the required access level.

For example, let's say you are hiring a website designer to make some edits to the front end of your site, you should not need to give them access to your site's settings.

Once their work is complete, you can revoke their access back to their regular role, or remove their access completely.

Three Ways That You Can Limit User Access:

- **Create Separate Accounts For Each User**

It is highly recommended that each person who has access to your site has their own account.

This will allow you to minimise security threats, and ensure that if there are any security breaches, the user at fault will be accountable.

Another reason not to share accounts is that if you want to remove access from a particular person, you will have to renew the password for everyone.
If everyone has their own account, and someone leaves your organisation, you can just delete their account.

- **Assign Users Specific Roles**

If you have multiple people working on your website, you can assign each account a specific role so that they can only access what is required for their work.
Depending on the type of website you have, the specific roles can vary.
For example, on a WordPress website, you give writers the “author” role, so that they can only access and edit posts on your website.

- **Grant & Revoke User Permissions**

Once everyone has their own account, and user-specific roles, you can tighten your security even more by adding and revoking specific permissions on each account.
Give each user the minimum amount of permissions they need to be able to complete their work.
Not every user will need the same permissions.
Then if someone leaves your workplace, you can revoke their permissions, or delete their account.
If you are hiring a freelancer for a short period of time, you can give them specific permissions that they require, and then remove them when the job is done.
So realistically, you just need to be smart and responsible with who you give access to, and what permissions each user receives.

Broken Links

What Are Broken Links?
Broken links are simply links that send visitors to a web page that no longer exists.
Here are some of the main reasons why a link might not work:

- The website's URL structure has been changed.
- A web page has been moved without the old URL being redirected.
- The website that the link goes to is no longer available.

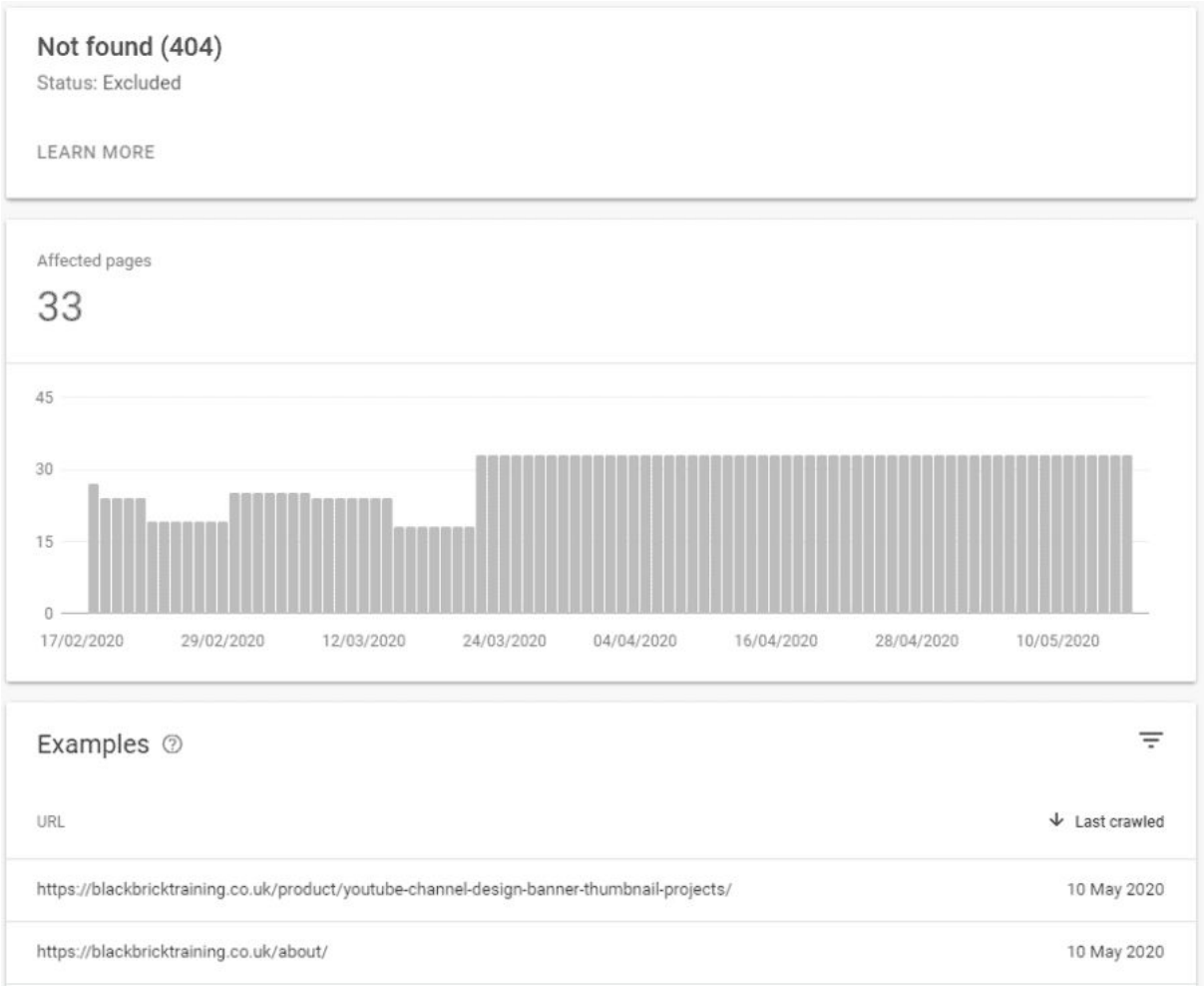
When a user clicks onto a broken link, they will be directed to a 404 page which explains why the web page is not available.
A user is less likely to return to your website if they encounter broken links while browsing your content, as it is just frustrating.

How Can You Check For Broken Links?

It is quite easy to check for broken links on your website, and it's something you should do periodically to ensure all links, direct users, to live web pages.
There are two main ways that you can check for broken links on your website:

Use Google Search Console

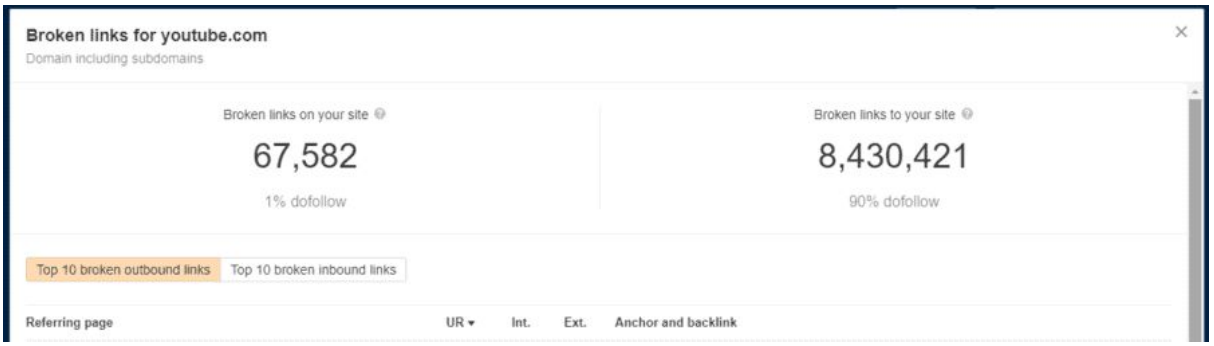
Login to your Search Console account, and select the property that you want to check for broken links.
Click "Coverage" on the menu on the left of the dashboard.
De-select "Error", and select "Excluded".
Scroll down to see the details of pages that have been excluded.
Look for "Not found (404)", and click it.
Scroll down to "Examples", and you will see the URLs for all of your webpages that have broken links.



If any of these are URLs for pages that are now deleted, you can ignore them, or create a new page at same URL.
For all other URLs, you should redirect them to relevant pages on your website.

Use Ahrefs Broken Link Checker

First head over the broken link checker.
Once you are there, enter your domain or URL (I suggest entering the domain).
Then pick “Subdomains” on the dropdown box so that it searches for broken links everywhere on your site.
Click “Check broken links”.
You will then instantly get a report showing how many broken links there are on your website, and how many there are to your website.



If you scroll down below the total amount of broken links, you will also see the URL for each link.

Now you know what links you need to fix!

How Can You Fix A Broken Link?

Once you have found broken links on your site, you will want to fix them.

There are a few different methods you can use to fix a broken link.

- **Redirect the broken link to another location.**

You can redirect the URL to a relevant page on your website, or to the new location of the page that had a broken link.

- **Create a new page at the broken URL.**

Create a new page with updated content at the same location of the broken URL, all links to this URL will now take users to the new page.

After you have decided how you will go about fixing the broken link, you should reach out to any website that has linked to the URL and update them on the situation.

LOCAL SEO

Local SEO Basics

The basics will cover what it is, why it is important to optimize for local searches, and what type of businesses will benefit from it.

What Is Local SEO?

Local search engine optimization is all about increasing visibility on search engines for businesses that sell to their customers in a physical location, as well as or instead of online.
These types of businesses could be anything that operates offline from a local bakery to a service-based company, like a plumber or a window cleaner.
Local SEO can include anything from setting up a Google my business page, to adding your businesses local information to your website.
Local search includes all of the search terms where you are asking for local business information, such as:

- "Plumbers in ***London"***
- "Cinema in ***San Francisco"***
- "Bakery ***near me"***
- "Electrician ***near me"***

These can also be made as voice searches on devices like the *Google Home*, or *Amazon Echo*.
With devices like these becoming more popular, local search will become more and more important in your SEO strategy.

Why Is Local Search Important?

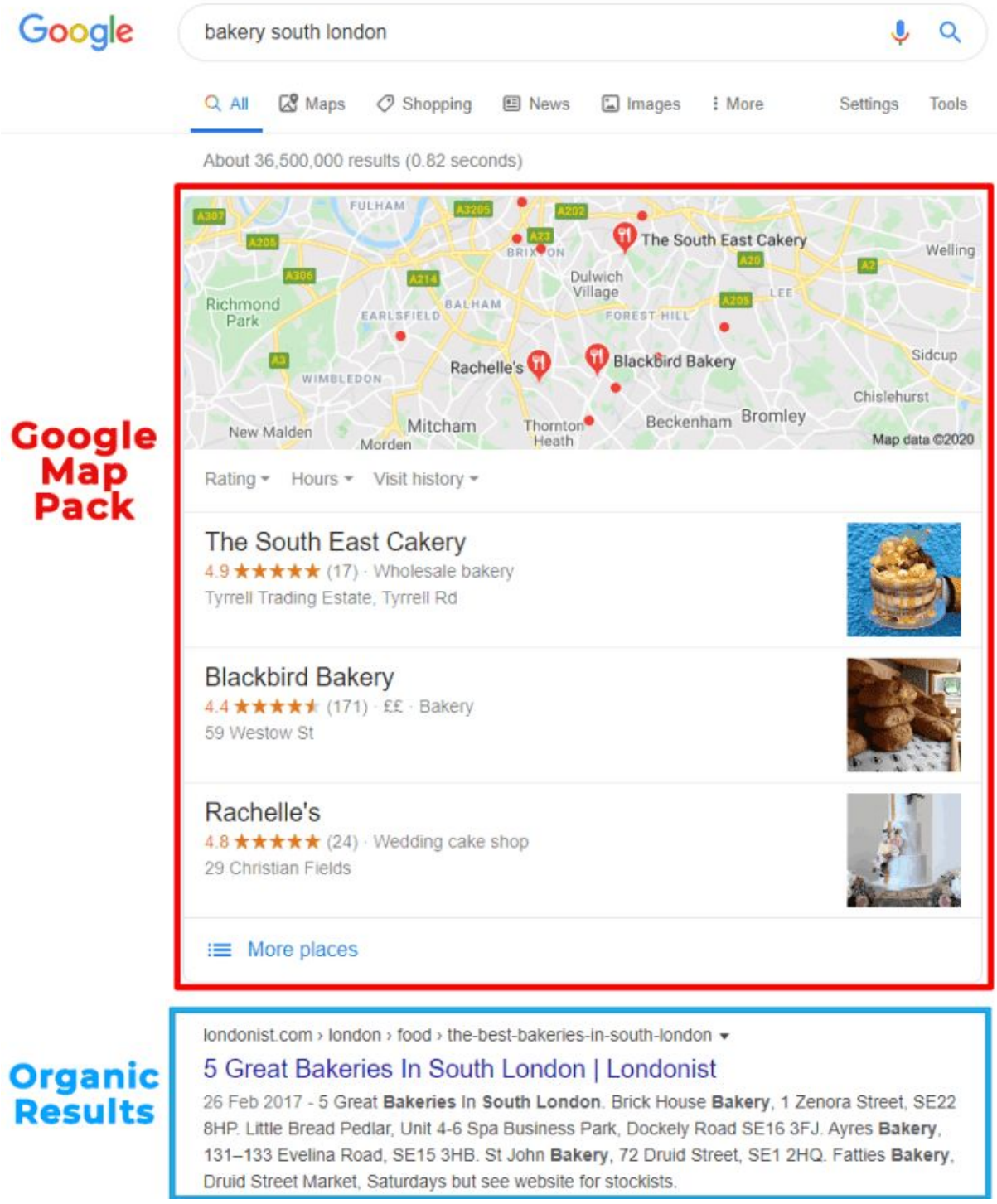
Local search optimization is important because it can quite simply increase the number of eyeballs on your business, therefore increasing sales.
Here are some statistics that will give you an idea of how important it is:

- More than **45% of Google searches** are from people *looking for something local.*
- Over **50% of users visit a store** within a day of finding it *through a local search*!
- ***28%*** of **all local searches** end in a purchase.

After seeing these stats, you should realise just how vital local search currently is, and it is only getting bigger!
For more stats like this, check out this article.

Local SEO Appearance

If you are doing Local SEO, it is important to know what the Local search results look like.
Let's look at a few different examples of how local search results are displayed to the end-user.
First, we have a typical local search made on Google:



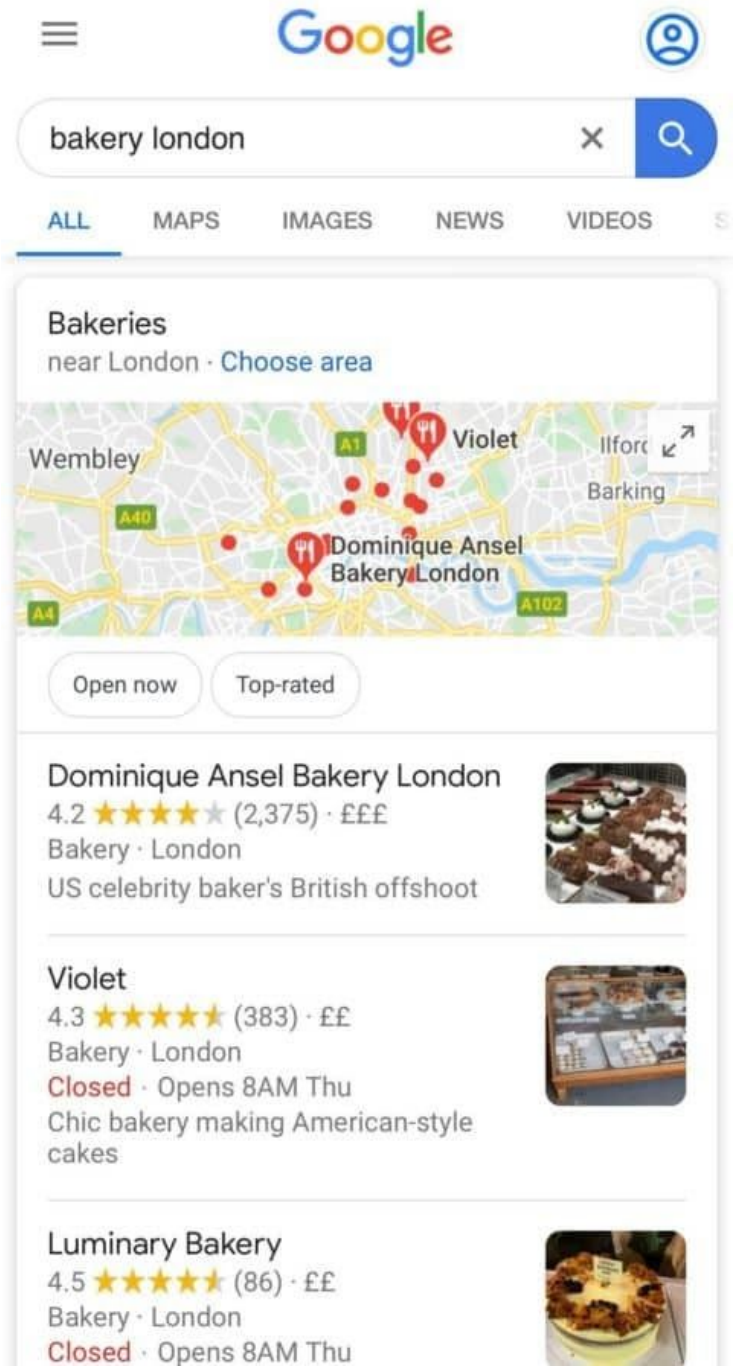
This is usually known as the “Google Map Pack”, or the “Local 3 Pack”, it displays a map with three local listings and then the normal organic results are shown underneath it.

You should already be fairly familiar with the organic Google search results.

But what are the “Map Pack” results that appear when you make a local search?

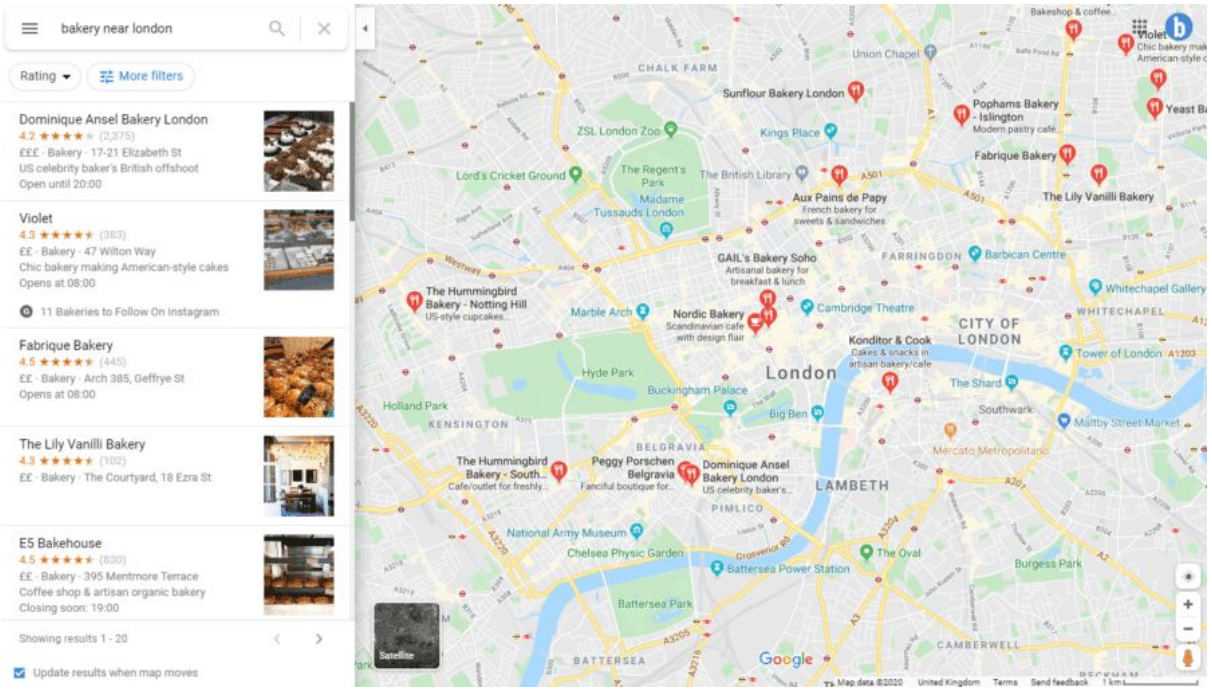
The “Google Map Pack” is what Google uses to display the three most relevant results when a local search is made.
It takes into consideration the user’s location to make sure that the results that appear are relevant to both the search that has been made, and also the physical location of the user.
There are also many more places where local search makes an effect.

Google Maps Mobile:



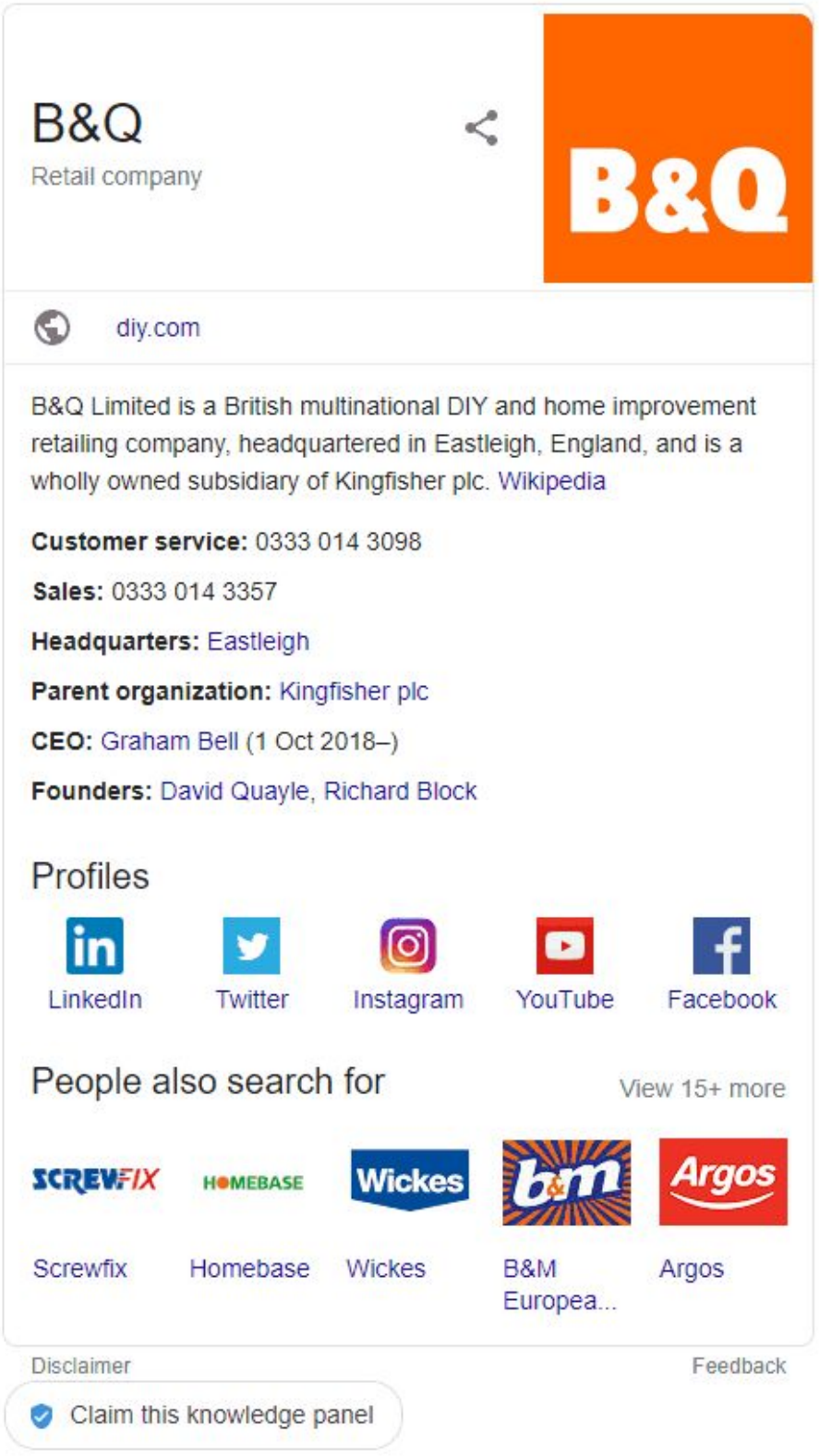
On Google maps mobile you see a map with the different businesses below, with the more relevant and popular appearing first.
As you can see each business has a star rating, a category, location, opening times, and also a short description.

Google Maps:



This is how Google Maps displays businesses if you are on a computer, each business gets star ratings, location, opening time and a short description.
These are ranked by most relevant and by popularity, as you can see, it helps if you have a large number of reviews.

Google Knowledge Panel:



The knowledge panels are boxes of information that appear on Google when you search for people, places, or businesses that are in Google's knowledge graph.

You can claim one for your business by getting a free Google My Business listing.
All of the examples that I have shown are from Google, but you need to remember that other search engines have special results for local searches too!
Local search is becoming increasingly important if you are a brick & mortar business, or a service-based business that offers services in a specific location.
Keep reading as we will cover everything you need to know to ensure your business will show up in relevant local searches.

Local SEO Keywords

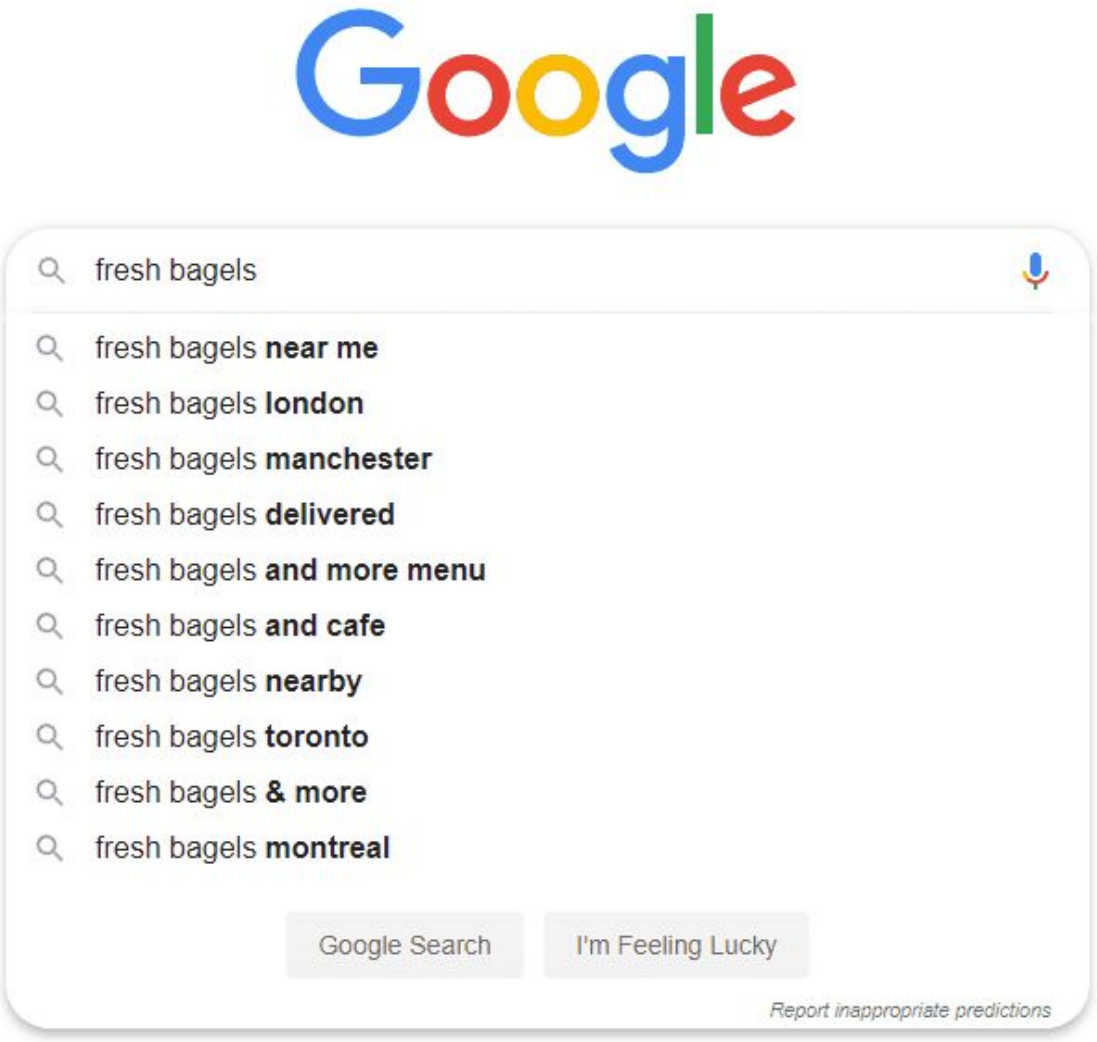
For this section, we are going to look into local keyword research.
Local SEO keyword research is very simple compared to keyword research for a blog or eCommerce website.
This is because most local keywords are generic across your business, and local keywords are usually a set few phrases.
As an example, let's say you run a local bakery in London.
Your goal would be to rank in search engines for phrases like:

- "*fresh bagels* in London"
- "*bakery* in London"
- "bakery near me"

And of course many more phrases like this.
The easiest way to find keywords and phrases like this is to use keyword research tools or the 'suggest' feature on search engines.
Some good local search engines that you could use include Yelp, Google and Bing.
To show you how to do this we will have a look at a few of these different sites.
Once you have found a selection of keywords and phrases that you like, put them in a list or write them down so that you can use them later.

Google

This can be very helpful when looking for local keywords as it is the most used search engine for local searches.
You need to put yourself in the mind of a potential customer and start making searches.
For example, I have typed “fresh bagels” and this is the list of suggested searches that Google has given:

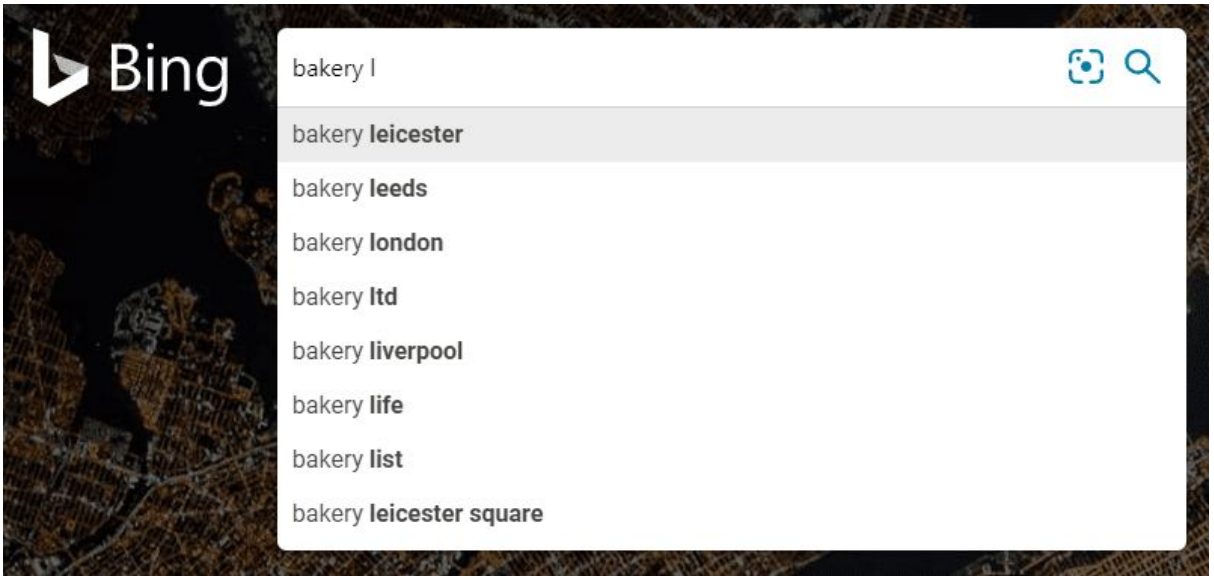


You can take any local keyword from here that would be relevant to your business and then add them to your list.
So, if you are a bakery in London, you could add all of these to your list:

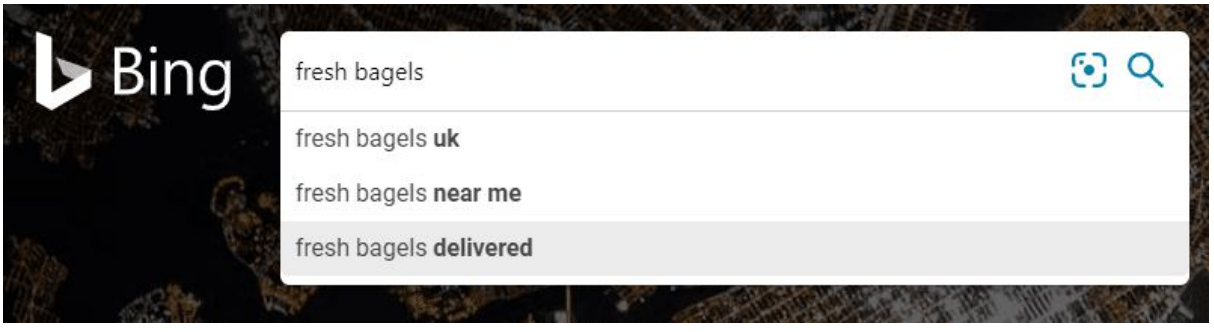
“fresh bagels near me”
“fresh bagels London”
“fresh bagels delivered”
“fresh bagels nearby”
As these are all somewhat relevant.

Bing

Once again, this is another search engine that can be used to find local businesses.
All I have done is type “bakery l” and bing has given me some suggested phrases that other people use frequently.
From here you just want to take the phrases that are relevant and add them to your list.



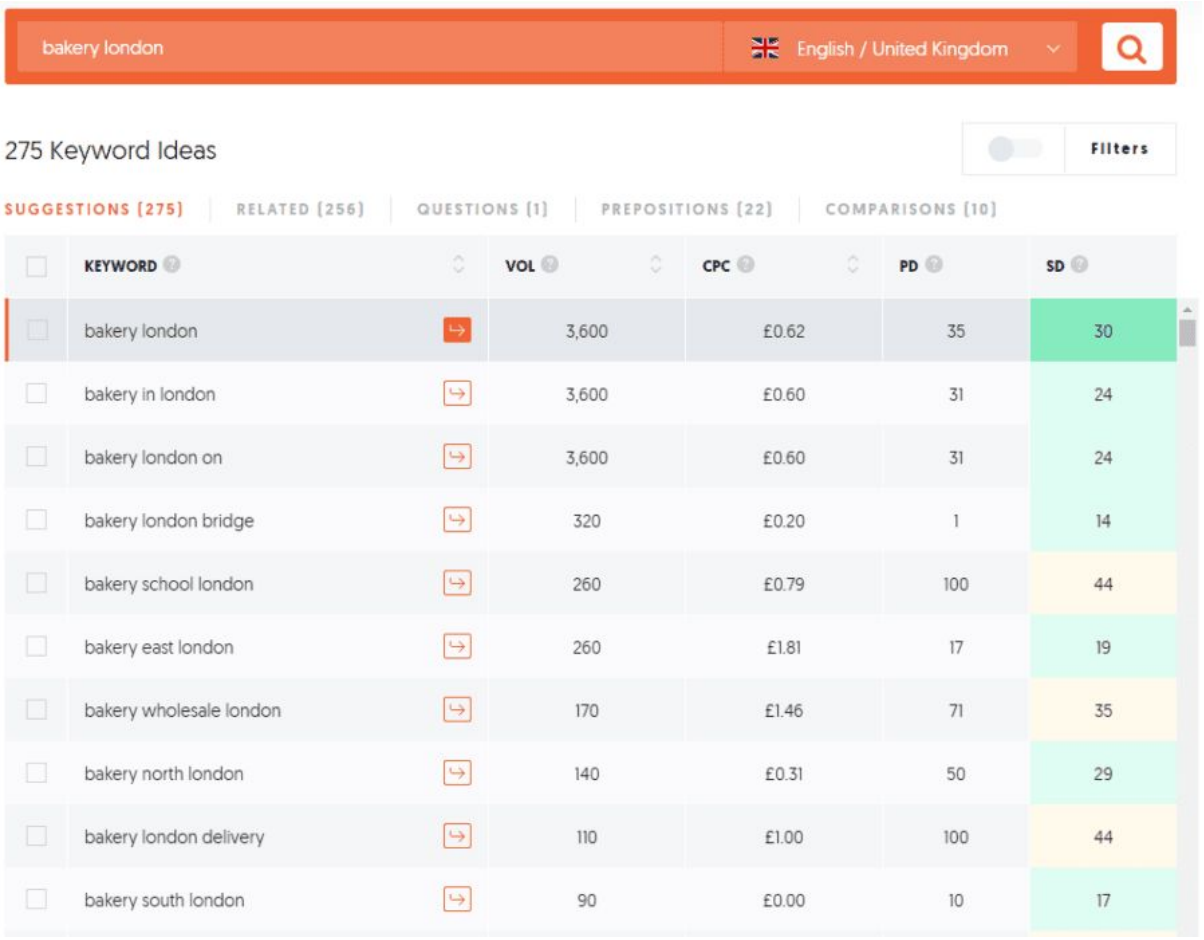
As I put “bakery” followed by the letter “l” I have been suggested different phrases that actual people search for.
Now not many of these would be relevant to me, so let’s make another search.



Now I have just searched for “fresh bagels”.
Once again, if they are relevant you should add them to your list.
If I run a bakery in London, all of these are relevant to me, so I’ll add them to my list.
It is also a good idea to use your favourite keyword research tool.
As an example, we will use ubersuggest to find local keywords for a bakery in London.

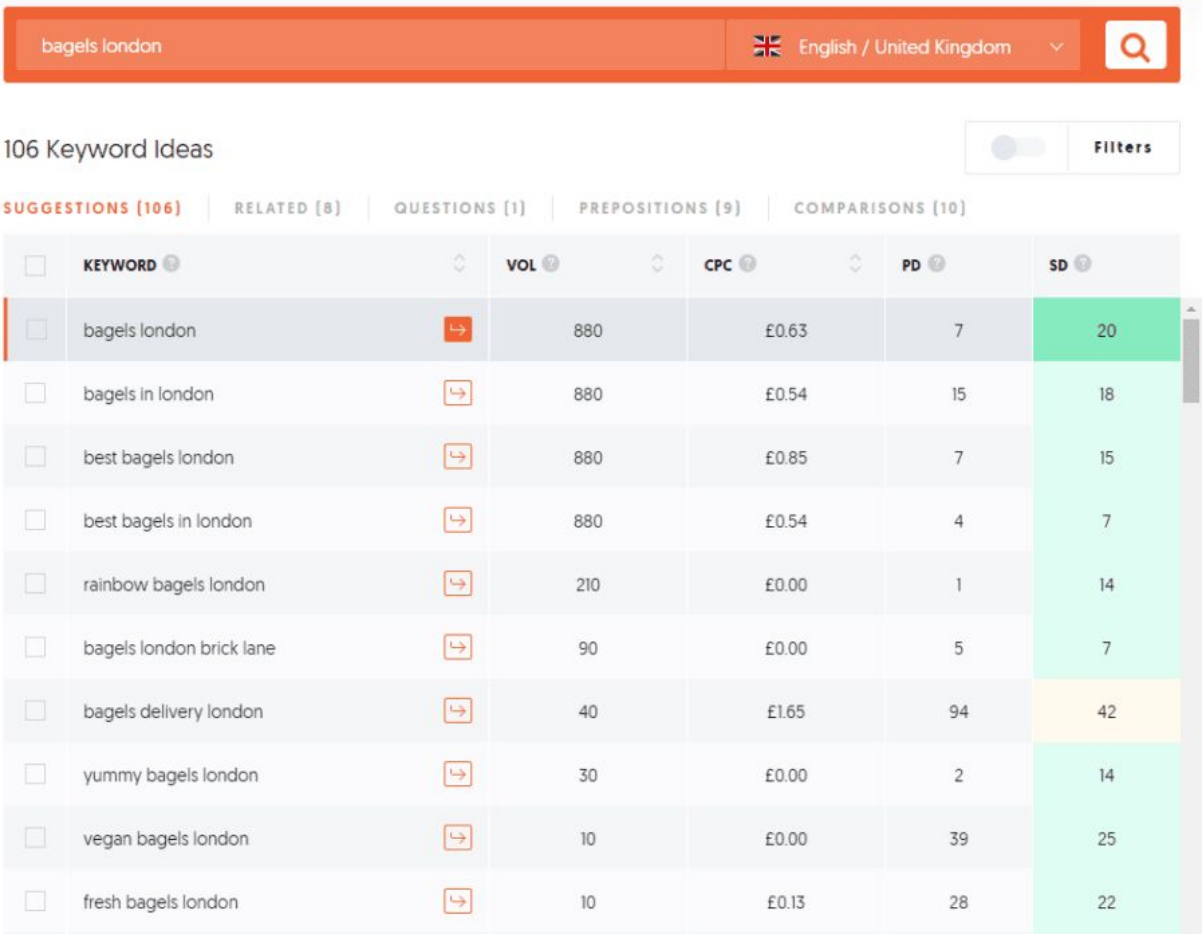
Ubersuggest

Simply enter a keyword that is relevant to your business and you will be given loads of phrases and keywords that are similar (some local, some not).
You just need to sift through to find the ones that are both local, and relevant to your business and then add them to your list.
First I searched for “bakery London”, I have been suggested many phrases and also given the search volume for each.



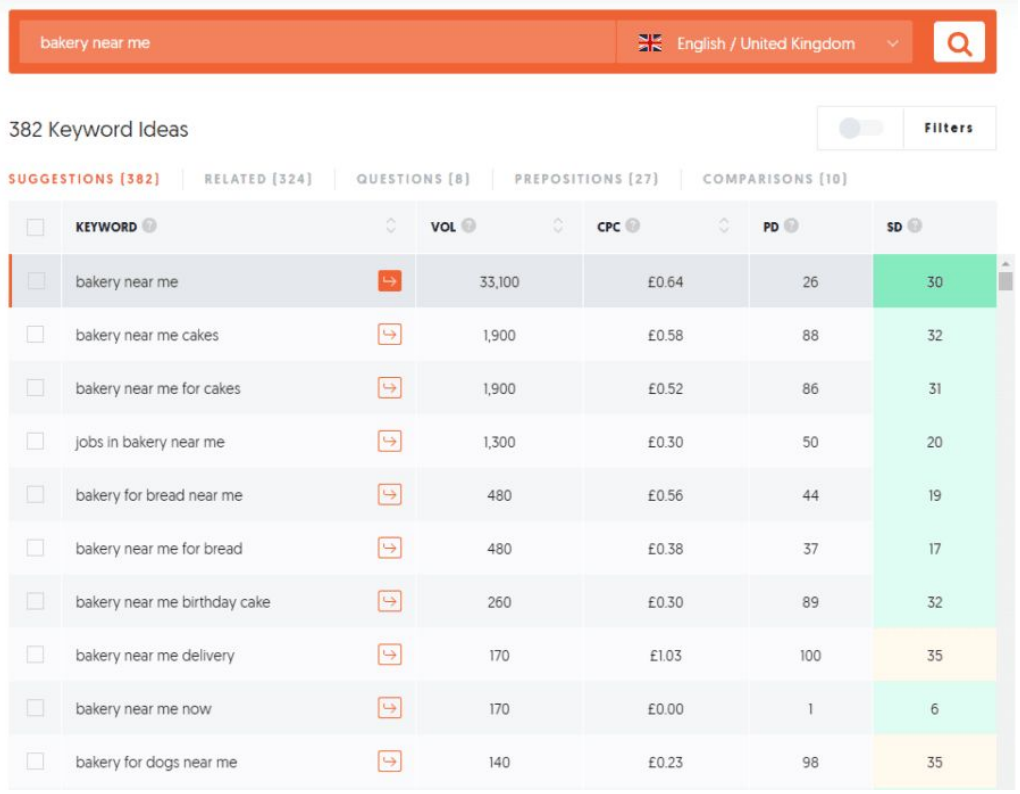
KEYWORD	VOL	CPC	PD	SD
bakery london	3,600	£0.62	35	30
bakery in london	3,600	£0.60	31	24
bakery london on	3,600	£0.60	31	24
bakery london bridge	320	£0.20	1	14
bakery school london	260	£0.79	100	44
bakery east london	260	£1.81	17	19
bakery wholesale london	170	£1.46	71	35
bakery north london	140	£0.31	50	29
bakery london delivery	110	£1.00	100	44
bakery south london	90	£0.00	10	17

Here I searched for “fresh bagels London”, once again



KEYWORD	VOL	CPC	PD	SD
bagels london	880	£0.63	7	20
bagels in london	880	£0.54	15	18
best bagels london	880	£0.85	7	15
best bagels in london	880	£0.54	4	7
rainbow bagels london	210	£0.00	1	14
bagels london brick lane	90	£0.00	5	7
bagels delivery london	40	£1.65	94	42
yummy bagels london	30	£0.00	2	14
vegan bagels london	10	£0.00	39	25
fresh bagels london	10	£0.13	28	22

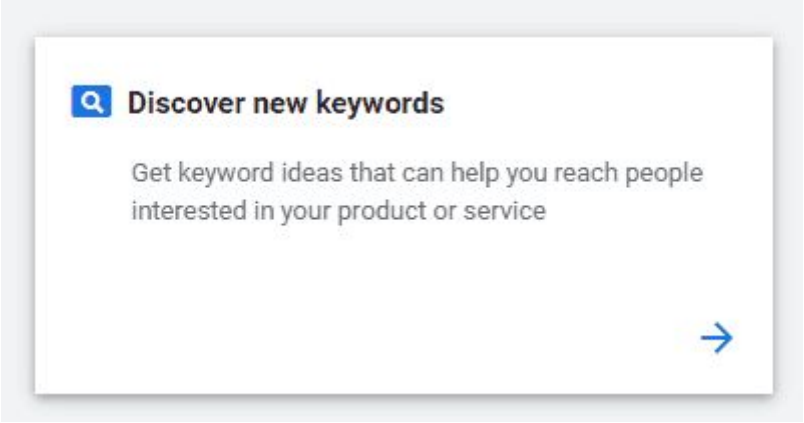
And for the final try, I searched for “bakery near me”.



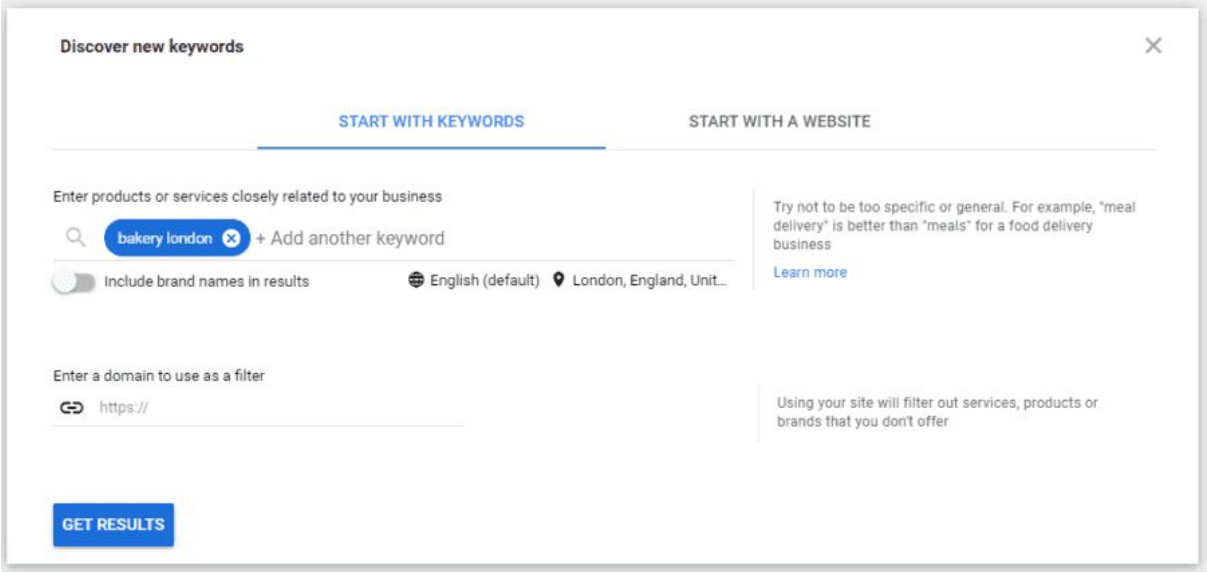
KEYWORD	VOL	CPC	PD	SD
bakery near me	33,100	£0.64	26	30
bakery near me cakes	1,900	£0.58	88	32
bakery near me for cakes	1,900	£0.52	86	31
jobs in bakery near me	1,300	£0.30	50	20
bakery for bread near me	480	£0.56	44	19
bakery near me for bread	480	£0.38	37	17
bakery near me birthday cake	260	£0.30	89	32
bakery near me delivery	170	£1.03	100	35
bakery near me now	170	£0.00	1	6
bakery for dogs near me	140	£0.23	98	35

Google Keyword Planner

The final tool I will show you is Google Keyword Planner.
The best part about it is that you know the data will be accurate because it is made by Google.
First head over to the keyword planner, and then select “discover new keywords”.



Once you have done that you will be able to enter the information to help find your keywords.



In the box that says “add a keyword”, I have put “bakery London” (You should put a keyword for your business followed by the location you operate).
I have also unticked “include brand names” so that it does not add other brand’s names to my keywords.
And then you want to select your chosen location below the keyword box and to the right of the language selector.

Finally, click “Get Results”, and Google will give you loads of keywords.

Add filter

RESET

Keyword	Avg. monthly searches	Competition	Competition (indexed value)	Top of page bid (high range)
Keywords that you provided				
bakery london	1K – 10K	Medium	36	£1.70
Keyword ideas				
vegan cakes london	1K – 10K	Low	33	£0.97
best bakery in london	1K – 10K	Low	29	£0.47
cake shop london	1K – 10K	Low	24	£1.04
gail's west hampstead	100 – 1K	Low	0	–
bakery brixton	100 – 1K	Low	0	–
french bakery london	100 – 1K	Low	11	–
bakery islington	100 – 1K	Low	19	–
gail's hampstead	100 – 1K	Low	0	–
bakery london bridge	100 – 1K	Low	1	–
seoul bakery london	100 – 1K	Low	0	–
cake covent garden	100 – 1K	Low	2	–
cake bakery london	100 – 1K	High	96	£0.71

I have sorted it by average monthly searches so that the phrases that are searched the most appear first.
Boom!
That’s it, now you have loads of local keywords with accurate search volume and competition difficulty right in front of you.
Now that you know how to find good local keywords, you want to put them into a list.
To build a good keyword list, you could use a spreadsheet, a text document or a tool that will store your keywords for you.

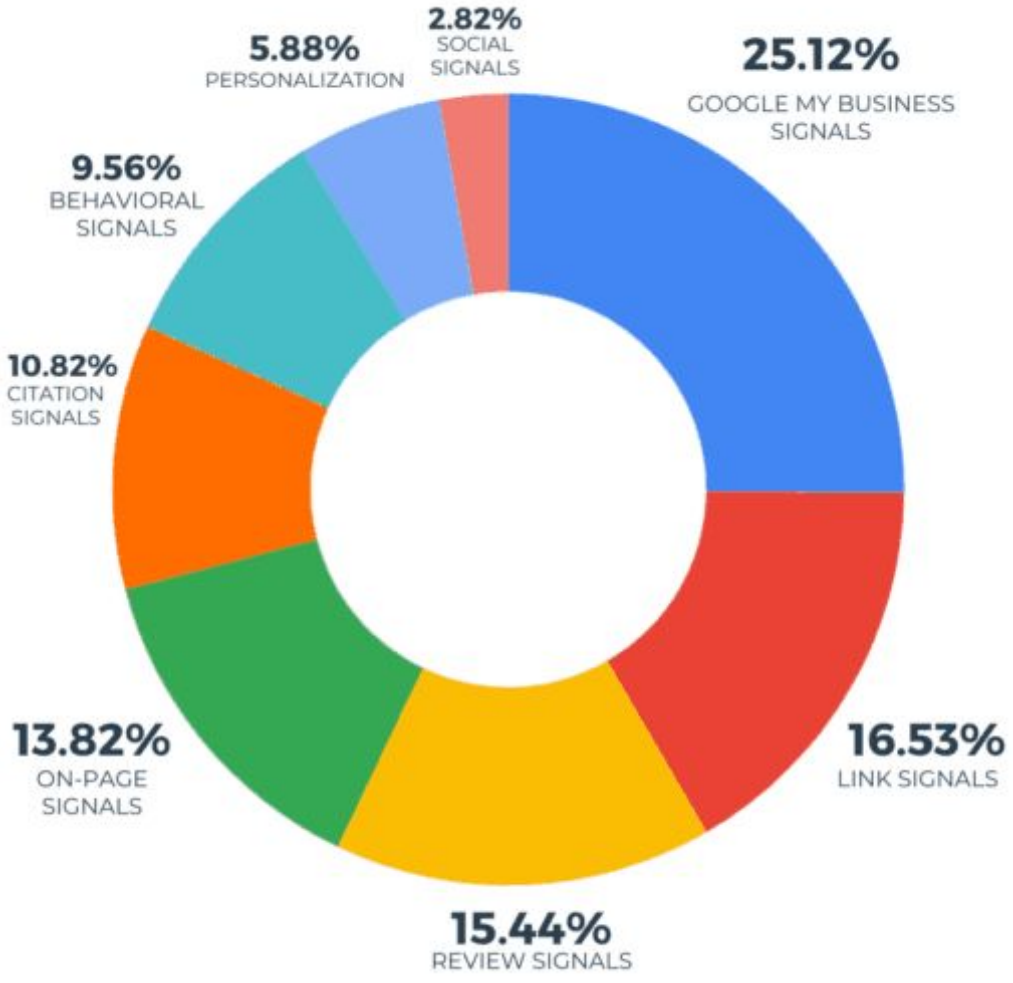
Local Ranking Factors

You must learn exactly what factors influence your local search rankings.
We will look at some of the most important ranking factors that you will need to keep in mind.
The two most important Local SEO rankings are:

1. Google Map Pack
2. Organic Local Search

Google Map Pack Ranking Factors

Take a look at this Google Map Pack Ranking Factors study by Moz.



Google My Business Signals

According to the study run by Moz, your Google My Business profile is the primary ranking factor for ranking in the Google Map Pack. This means it is crucial that you properly optimize your Google My Business profile, but don't worry, we will cover that later.

Citation Signals

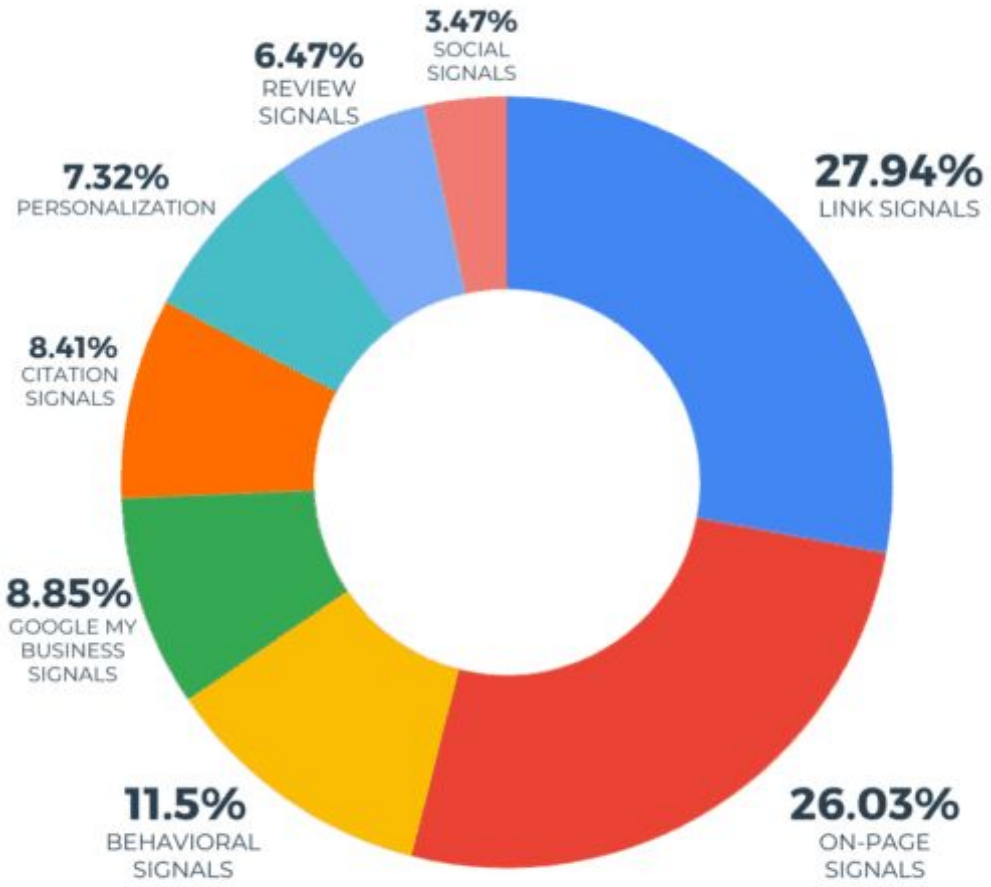
NAP (Name, Address, Phone Number) citations are key Google Map Pack, and Local Search ranking factors.
NAP citations are online mentions of your business's name address and phone number.
Search engines look at your NAP citations to confirm whether or not your business information is correct.
The higher number of NAP citations that your business has, the more confident that Google and other search engines will be to trust you are giving them legitimate information.
Your goal is to get your business's NAP citations on as many reputable websites as possible.

Review Signals

Reviews also play a huge role in ranking in the Map Pack.
Negative reviews on your Google My Business profile can damage your reputation and rankings, so reply to all reviews and be as helpful as possible.
You want to get legitimate positive reviews from customers on Google My Business, and other reputable review websites.
Replying to all reviews, negative or positive is beneficial to your Local SEO strategy.

Organic Local Search Ranking Factors

In the same study, Moz also researched the factors that go into ranking organically for Local Searches.
These are the different factors that go into your site ranking organically in localized searches.



Link Signals

Links play a huge role in ranking both in local searches and, the Google Map Pack.
Backlinks improve your site's authority, tell users that your content is high quality, and make it easy for search engines to crawl your website.

On-Page Signals

The optimization of your website's pages still helps when ranking your site for local searches.
This includes all of the normal on-page SEO strategies, just with some extras for local search.

That can include, having your NAP on your site, improving domain authority, and using the right keywords within your content.

Behavioural Signals

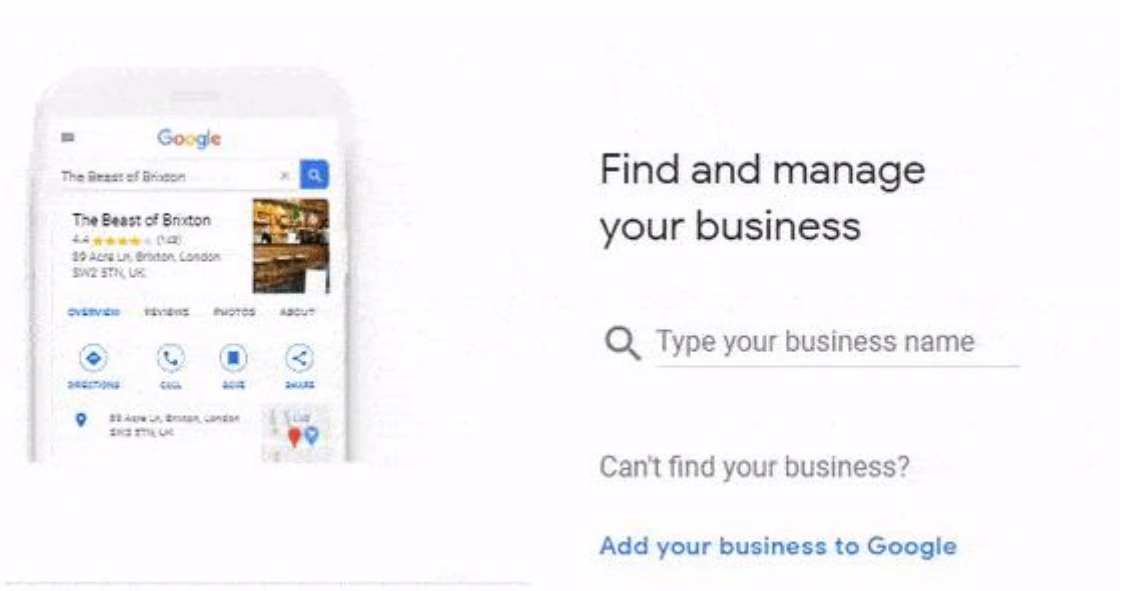
This includes your website's click-through rate (CTR), mobile clicks to call, bounce rate, etc.
Google looks at how long people spend on your site before leaving, the click-through rate from search results, and many more user behavioural signals before ranking your website.
To keep users clicking on your site, and spending more time on it, you need to write intriguing titles, high-quality content and create content that is relevant to your website's niche.

Google My Business Profile (And Other Local Business Listings)

Local business listings will play a huge role in many different things, including local search ranking, business reputation, collecting reviews and more.
This makes it crucial that you claim and optimize local business listings that are relevant to your business.
Your Google My Business profile is also one of the top-ranking factors, so you must do it right!

Google My Business

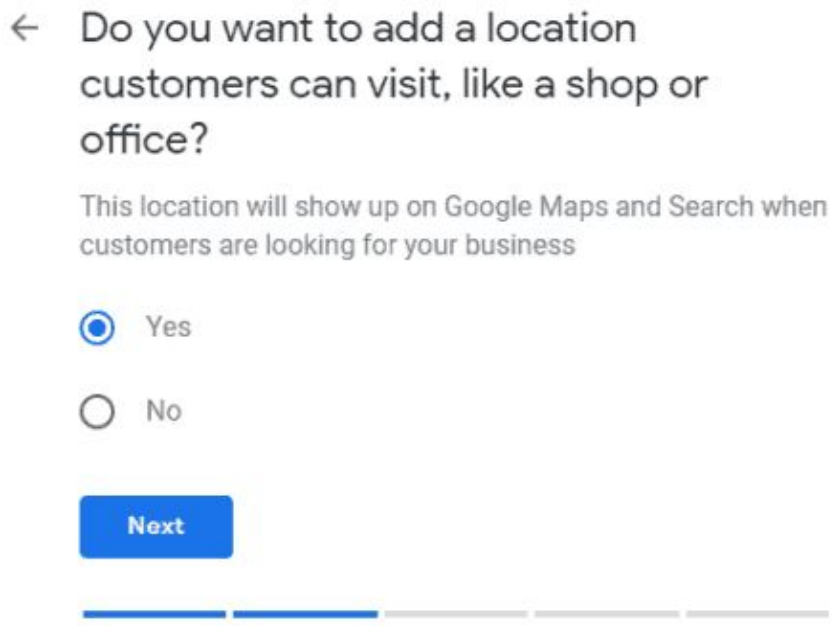
To claim your free GMB profile, head over to the sign-up page here.
Enter your business name, you will either need to claim a business that has already been added to Google, or create a new business.



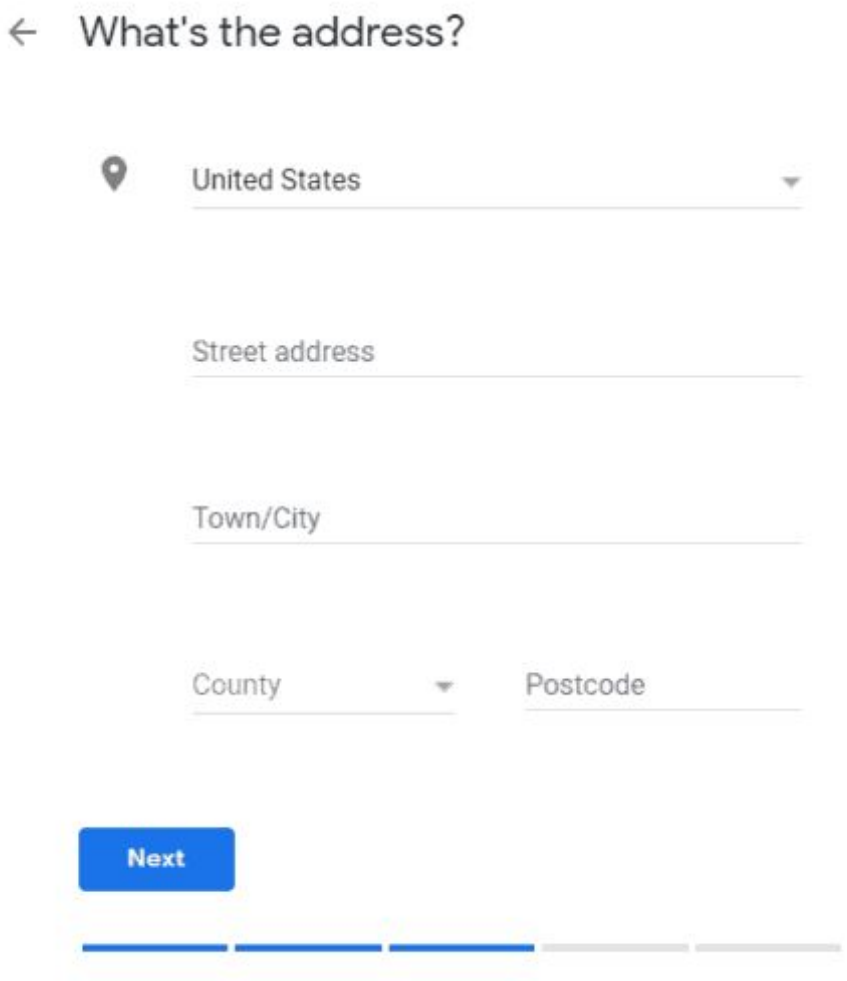
Just start typing and Google will suggest businesses that are in their database.
If they have it, select it.
Should your business not appear, click the option that says “create a business with this name”.
You must enter your exact business name and nothing else as if you add words that are not in your business name, Google may reject you.

Step Two

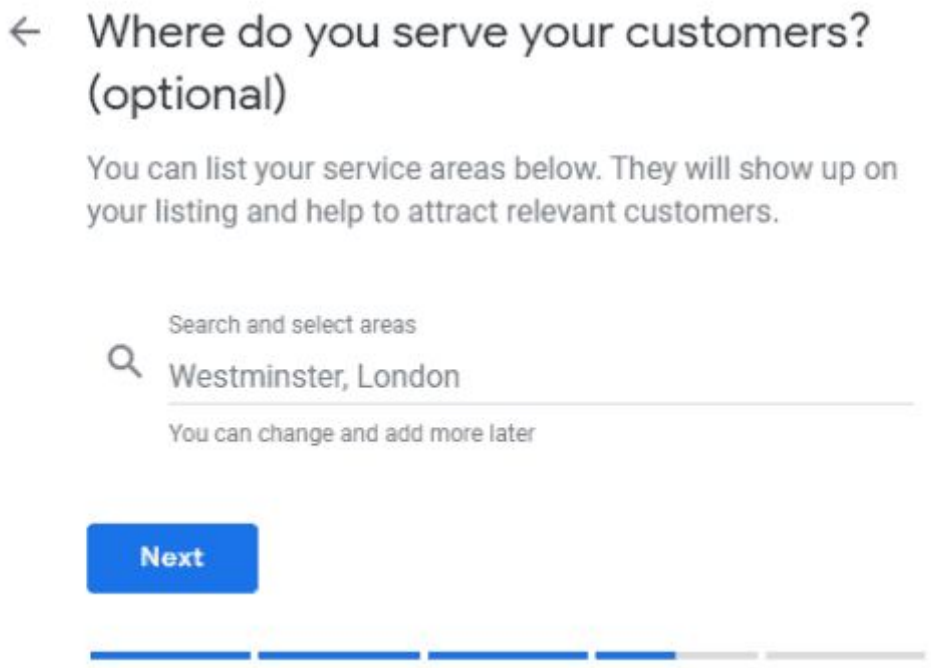
Chose to add a physical location for your business.



If you work from home, or run an internet-based business and do not want customers to see your address, tick “no” so that you don’t need to add your address.
But, If your business does have an address for customers to visit, tick “yes”.



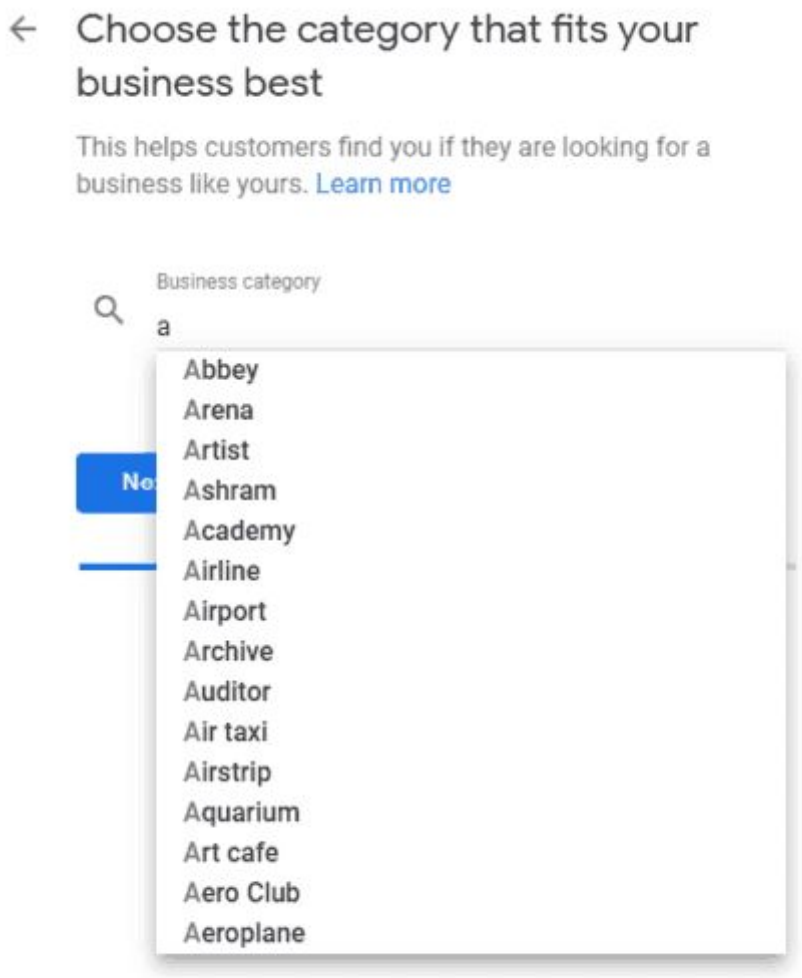
Then, simply enter the address for your business.



If you chose not to add an address, Google will ask if you want to choose a service area instead.
This is also good if you run a takeaway style business, as it allows you to select the area that you serve your customers in.
If you chose to add your business's address, Google will now let you pinpoint exactly where on the map you are located.
But, If you didn't add an address, you can skip to category selection.

Step Three

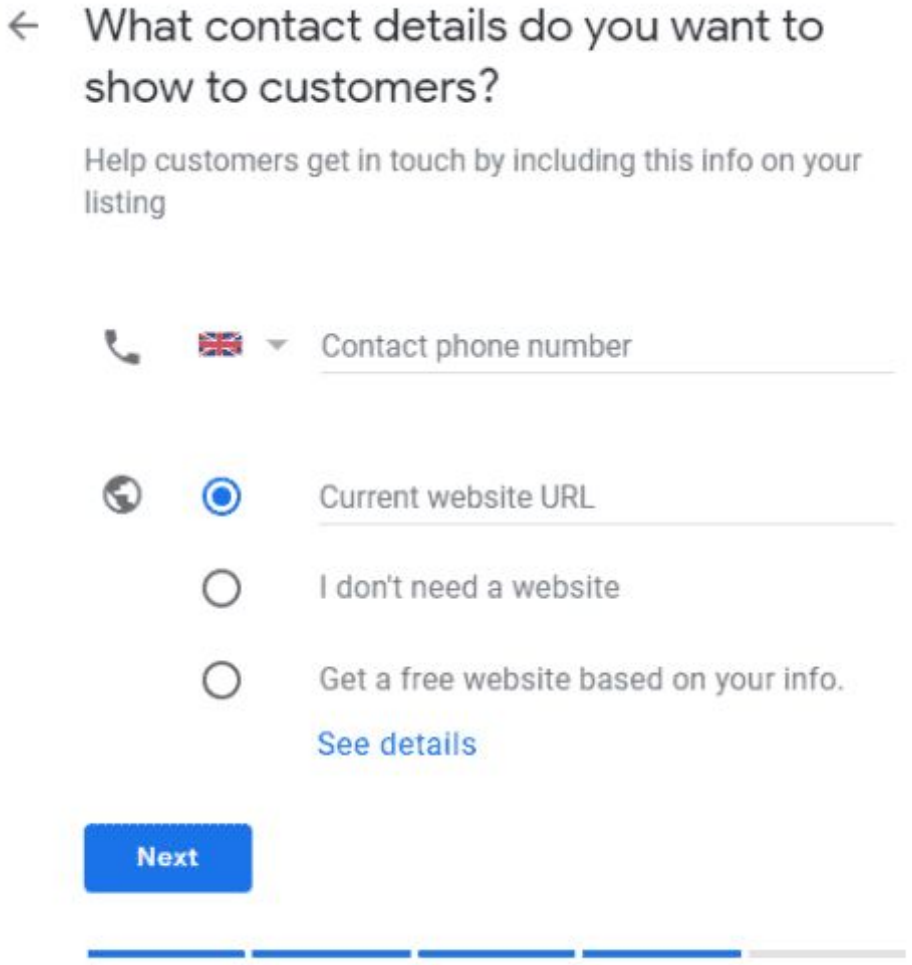
Add the category that your business operates in.



Just start typing and different options will appear.
If you don't know what to put, have a look at your competitors on Google Maps and put the same category that they put.

Step Four

Enter the phone number and website URL for your business.
It is best to add both, but you can just add one or the other.



If you are adding a phone number, make sure that it is the same as the one on your website so that Google trusts you, be consistent with your NAP!

Step Five

Now you just need to verify your listing to allow your GMB profile to go live.

Google will give you some instructions to follow, but usually, they will send you a card in the post with a pin you will need to enter on the setup page.

Once its verified, your listing will be live!

Other local listing sites that you should sign up for include: Bing Places, Apple Maps, and Yelp.

Local Listing Must-Haves

Whether it's Google My Business, Bing Places, or any other listing, you need to follow these steps.

Consistent

You must be 100% consistent across your website, local business listings and NAPs.
Search engines look for information that is consistent across your website, your GMB profile, social media, review websites, and other local listings.
It is key that your local info matches up everywhere!
If Google sees a different address for your business on two different sites, it is a big red flag.
Changing your business address, or phone number? Update your data ASAP.
Your business data must be consistent across the internet for it to positively affect SEO.

Comprehensive

Enter as much information as you can, and complete all profiles.
Let's look at GMB, on the info page you must add as much information as you can, be very comprehensive.
The more information you fill in on your different local listings, the better they will perform.

Keep Data Updated

If any of your business's information changes at all, you must update it ASAP.
Check that your opening hours, phone number and other basic business information are up to date and accurate.
This is all super simple to check, so why wouldn't you do it?
If a change needs to be made, make sure to do it on all of your business listings!

Media

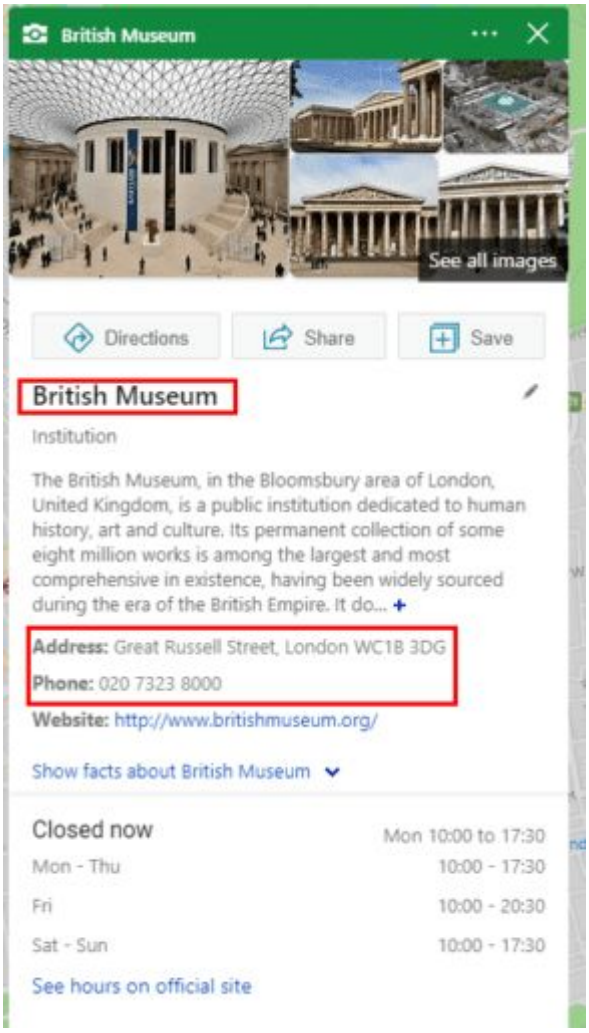
Give the people that are finding your business online a visual idea of what you offer.
Add pictures and videos of your office, daily business operations or even employees.
If you are a bakery, show off your bread, or the bread baking process!

Company Description

Add a detailed description of your business to all of your listings, that way people that find you can see what you do and who you are.
In your description, write about your business's mission, culture and core values.
Let people know what you have to offer and why you are the best that do what you do.

Local Citations (NAPs)

In any complete local SEO strategy, you will have to build local citations.
These are usually known as NAPs because they display your business ***name***, ***address*** and ***phone*** number.
A local citation is any online mention of the name, address and phone number for your local business.



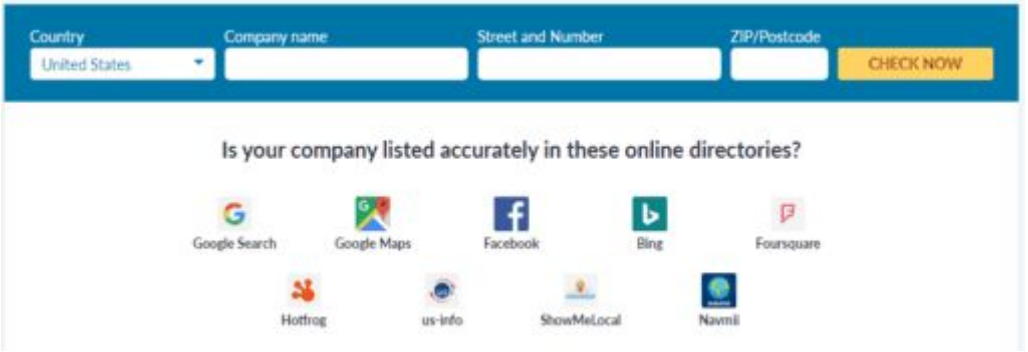
They can be found on social platforms, apps, websites, blogs and of course local business directories.
The reason behind them is to make it easy for users to find local businesses.
Another good reason to build them is that they can also improve your local search rankings.
Local citations are one of the most difficult parts of local SEO, so make sure to give it your full attention.
The NAP citations for your business must be consistent across the web!
Your goal is to have a high volume of consistent NAP citations to help your local ranking.

Why Are Local Citations Important?

It is stated that local citations are key for all local search ranking opportunities.
When determining how you rank in local results, search engines scan the web for mentions of your business name, address, phone number and website URL.
It then compares them to the data that they already have, and if the data is consistent across the board, it can positively affect your local search rankings.
Local citations also help customers to find your business information, so if they are inaccurate, you could lose a customer, or get a negative review.

NAP Citation Audit

A lot of businesses will already have some citations.
If you have not yet done any local SEO, these citations could be incorrect, incomplete, or just useless.
To see if you already have some NAP citations, or to check your current ones, the best thing to do is run an audit.
The best free NAP citation audit tool is the Online Presence Checker by Moz.



All you need to do is enter your country, company name, and address.
This tool will look at the most common citation listings for your business.
It will then tell you if there are any errors, duplicates, inconsistencies or incomplete listings.

Correct NAP Errors

Now that you know which of your citations have errors, you need to fix them.
Keep your list of NAP citations that need updating, and gather your business's current information.
Some tools will edit all of your information for you, but they are not free.
If you want to use one of these tools, I recommend TheHoth and Moz.
Usually, there are two types of NAP citations:

Citations you can change (for example Yelp, or Google My Business).

To update these, you can simply log into the account for the NAP you need to edit.
If you have an outdated address on Google My Business, update it ASAP.
Do you have a new business phone number?
Log in to each of the profiles that need to be changed, and simply update the phone number on all of them.

Citations that were credited to you (for example a local blog or resource page).

If you have NAP citations that were given to you by a local blog or website that you cannot simply login to, you will need to email the website owner and kindly ask them to update the information.
If you don't know what to say, here is a sample email template you can use:

Hello {Name Of Website Owner},

It's {Anthony} from {Anthony's Apples}.

I am writing this email to let you know that we have updated our {business phone number}.

Our new number is {number here}.

I noticed that where you mentioned our business on your blog you still have our {old number}.

If you would be so kind to update it to our new number, I'd be very grateful!

Kind regards,

{Anthony}

A short and sweet email like this will let them know that you have new business information and will nudge them to update it on their website.

Build NAP Citations

All businesses are different, so you will need to build citations based on your specific industry and geographical location.
So, now you have discovered any existing citations, you want to build some more.
The easiest way to start is to build some citations that are the most used in your area.
This list by whitespark covers the best local citations in each country, so I recommend building all of the citations that are top in your country.
If you are from the United States, this list is for you.

If you are from Canada, this list is for you.
If you are from the United Kingdom, this list is for you.
They also cover a lot of other countries, so make sure to look for yours.
Next, you want to look at industry-specific citations, including:
TripAdvisor (for holidays, hotels, etc.)
Edmunds (for car dealerships, etc.)
Taxifarefinder (for taxis, car hire.)
HomeAdvisor (for plumbers, etc)
To find a complete list of citations sorted by industry, use this list.
Your goal here is to build as many relevant citations as possible within your geographical location and specific industry.
*Remember, the information that you put onto the citations must **all** be accurate and also consistent!
Over time you will have more and more citations which will hugely help your local search rankings.

Local On-Page Optimization

If you are a local business, you will need to have a slightly different on-page SEO strategy.
This is because you will want to rank for location-based searches.
There will be a few major steps you will need to take that differ to a regular On-Page SEO plan.
Here are some key steps to making sure your local SEO plan runs smoothly:

Every Location Deserves Its Own Landing Page

Of course, every page has unique content, but you want to do the same with the locations that your business operates in.
If your business operates in multiple areas or cities, and your goal is to rank for each of those locations, you must set up a landing page for every single one of them.

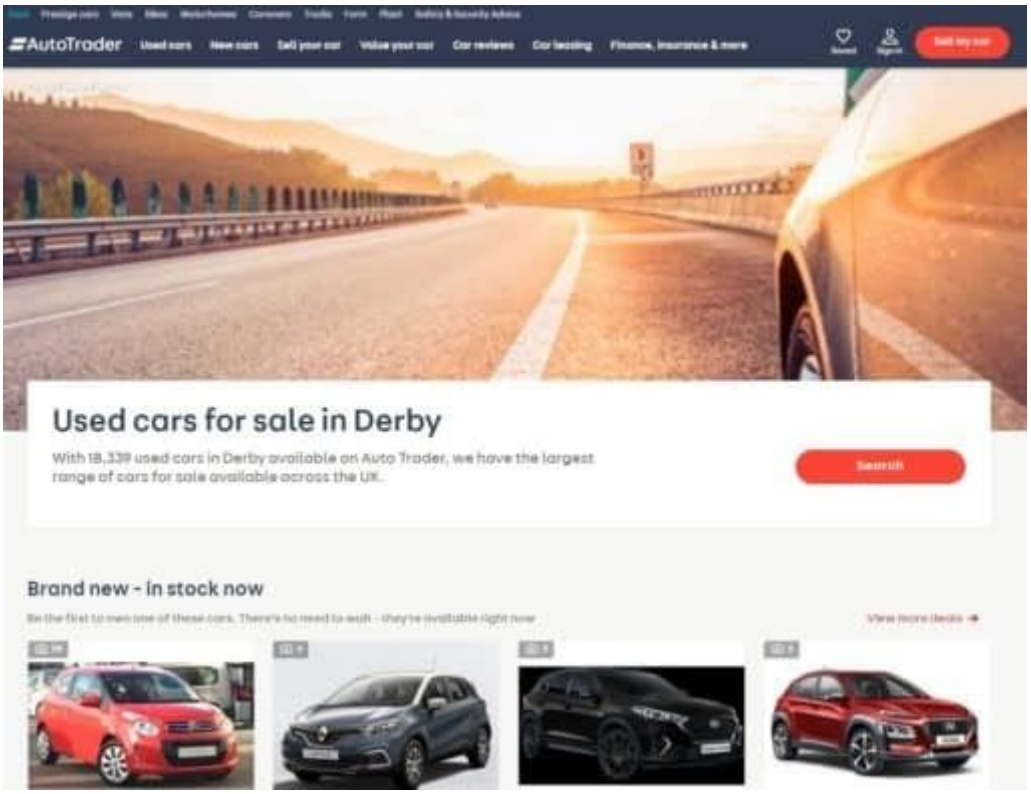
Even if you just operate in a single location or don't have a physical location for customers to visit, you should still do this for the areas that you offer your services to.
A simple structure for area-based landing pages would be something like this:

- yourbusinesswebsite.com/l**ocation-1/**
- yourbusinesswebsite.com/**location-2/**
- yourbusinesswebsite.com/**location-3/**

This gives each location it's own landing page that it can then use to rank in search engines if someone makes a search for your services in that particular area.
You don't have to be physically based in a location that you want to appear in search results for, you just need to create a landing page for it.
A good example of a business that does this well is Autotrader. They have separate landing pages for each location that cars are for sale in.
Take a look at some of their web pages that are ranking.

- www.autotrader.co.uk/cars/**derby** – ranks for "cars in Derby"
- www.autotrader.co.uk/cars/**norfolk** – ranks for "cars in Norfolk"
- www.autotrader.co.uk/cars/**essex** – ranks for "cars in Essex"
- www.autotrader.co.uk/cars/**newcastle** – ranks for "cars in Newcastle"
- www.autotrader.co.uk/cars/**london** – ranks for "cars in London"

All of these web pages are location-specific, and this is the way to go if you want to rank for multiple locations.
Here is an example of what one of their landing pages looks like:



The URL, page title, heading, sub-heading, and content all include their keyword and the location that they are trying to rank for. This is a very good example as they are ranking for all of the locations that they are trying to rank for.

Local Landing Page Tips:

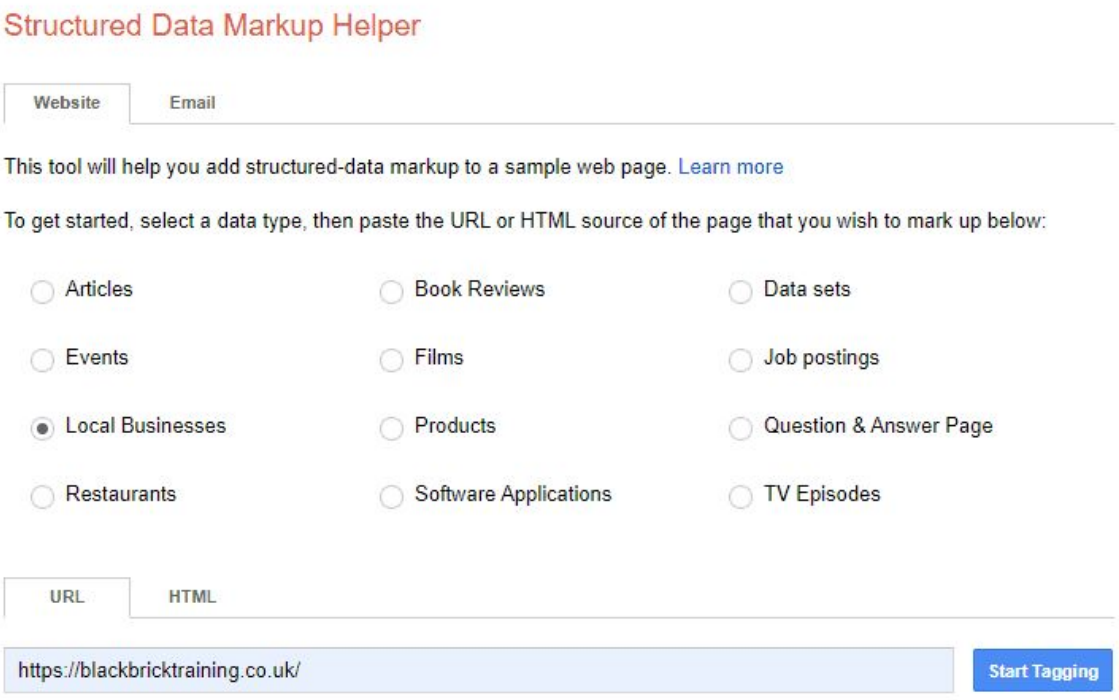
- Only create one page per location.
- Create landing pages that are relevant and not spammy.
- Write unique content for each page.
- Don't create landing pages for locations that you do not operate in.
- Include engaging headlines and media on every landing page.

Information You Must Add To Local Landing Pages:

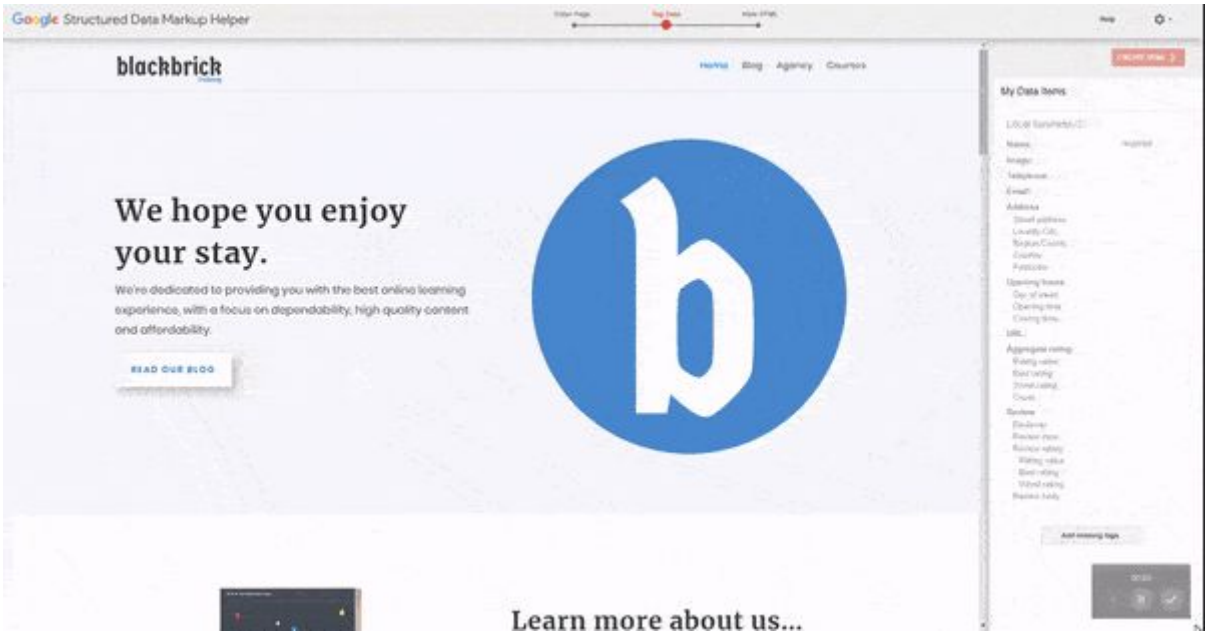
- Opening hours (if applicable).
- Products/services you offer.
- Relevant keywords for that area.
- NAP Info (if you have an office/store in that location).

Add Schema Markup

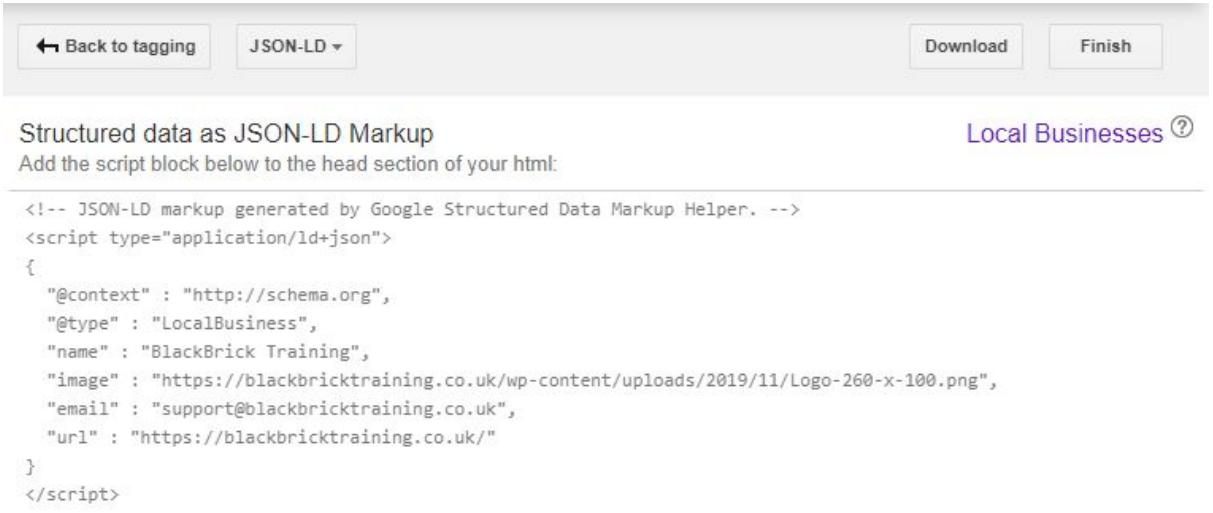
It may sound complicated, but don't worry, it's not.
Schema markup doesn't necessarily help SEO, but it is a good way to attract attention in search results.
There are many variations of schema markup, so you should do some research before adding it to your site.
It can be confusing when you first try using schema, but it is simple once you know what to do.
First, you need to open the Structured Markup Helper by Google.
From here you want to select the schema markup that you want to use, this should be easy to choose if you know what your business does.
For this example, I am going to select "Local Businesses", as this article is covering local SEO.
When you have entered that information, click "Start Tagging".



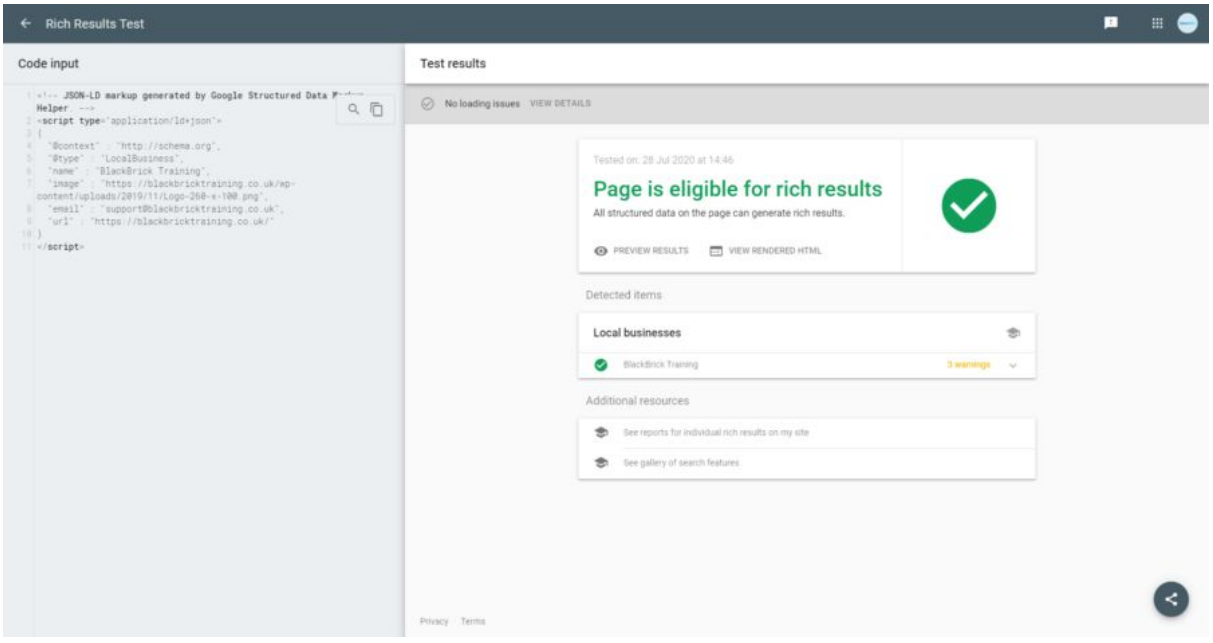
It will open an interactive version of your webpage which allows you to highlight different parts of your content.
You will be required to select a different set of data based on the type of structured markup that you originally chose.



You simply need to use the selector to highlight the required data and put it under the correct item.
For the image I'll select the logo, for the address I'll select the address, and so on.
For local business structured data, you should select business name, address, phone number, image, opening hours, and reviews.
Remember the three most important data values being name, address & phone number, which is the NAP.
Make sure that it matches the data you added to your Google My Business page, as it must be correct.
Once you have selected all of the information, click "create HTML", and make sure that the JSON-LD format is selected.
You will see a snippet of code.



You now want to test this code by using Google's Rich Results Test. On this tool select "code" **not** "URL", paste your code into the box, and click "TEST CODE".
Ignore any warnings in orange, but fix any errors, which appear in red.
If you have any errors, you may need to go back to the structured data markup helper to fix them, and then paste the code back into the testing tool.



Once there are no errors, copy the code once again, and ***paste it into the header section of your webpage.***

Remember, you don't have to use the local business structured data, there are multiple options to choose from depending on the type of website/business you operate.
You can preview the code to see what it will look like in Google search by clicking the green "preview" button in the testing tool.
If you run a WordPress website, there are multiple plugins that will do the bulk of the work for you.
A good WordPress plugin for schema markup is Schema & Structured Data for WP & AMP, or there is another good plugin just called Schema.

Optimize Title Tags, Meta Descriptions, etc

Optimizing the content within your website is still crucial for local SEO.
Just remember to use your local keywords so that you are optimizing your site for localized searches.
Once you have completed the list, your content should be properly optimized.

Local Link Building

When you get to building links to your local business website, a regular link building plan should do the trick.
In fact, with local businesses, you will get more link building opportunities so it is an easier process.
Links are one of the most important factors when it comes to Local SEO, so having people link to your site is crucial.
Here are some of the best ways to build links to a local business website:

Partner With Local Charities

Most charities have websites, if you partner with a charity by donating regularly, or by helping the charity to grow, you may earn a link on their site.
Focus on local charities that are in your area.
Even if you don't get a link, helping a charity is never bad.

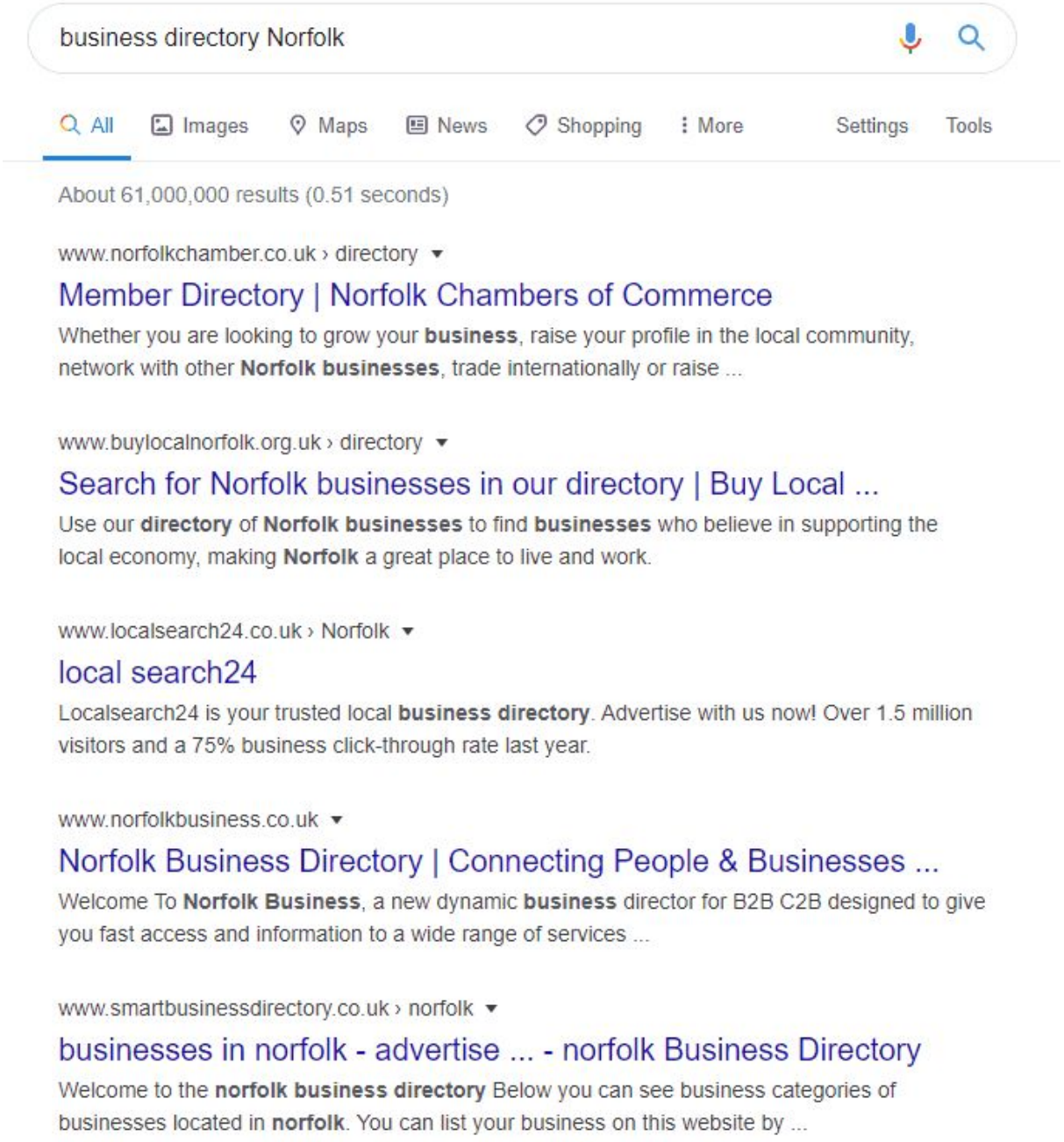
Create Content People Want

Create high-quality content that people will read (or watch)!
Do keyword research, and competitor research to see what type of content you should make.
Some content ideas can include:
Lists:
If you are a bakery, make a list of the best vegan bread.
Maybe you run a pet store, write a list of best organic cat foods and post it to your blog.
Talk About Trends:
If there is a trend going on that is somewhat relevant to your business, use it to your advantage.
Write a blog post around it.
Use it in a promotion.
Make a video on it!
Run A Contest:
Everyone loves a contest.
Offer a prize (cash, one of your products/services), and run a contest for your fans.
If your content is good, people may share it on social media, and link to it on their site.

Business Directories

Get your site on local business directories!
Just search for "business directory your city", and you will get results for business directories in your area.

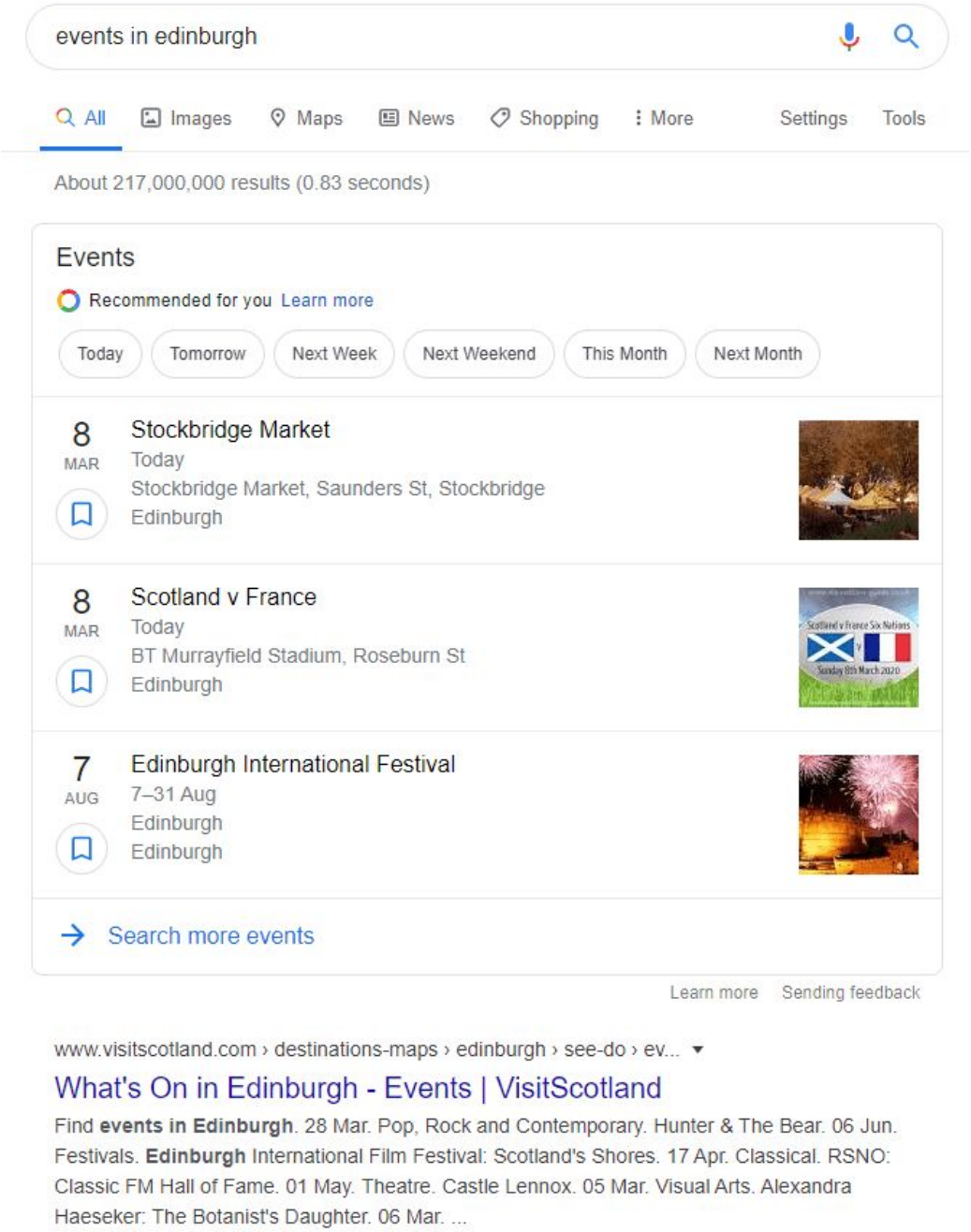
As you can see here, I have searched for “business directory Norfolk”



There are loads of different local business directories listed here, simply do the same for your location and submit your business to them.
Some of these will cross between local backlinks and also NAPs, so that’s a bonus!

Sponsor Local Events

The majority of local events in your area will probably need a sponsor.
If you sponsor an event, you are likely to receive a link on the event's website, usually on a page designated for sponsors.
To find events in your area, just Google "events in location", and you will get many results for events happening in your area.



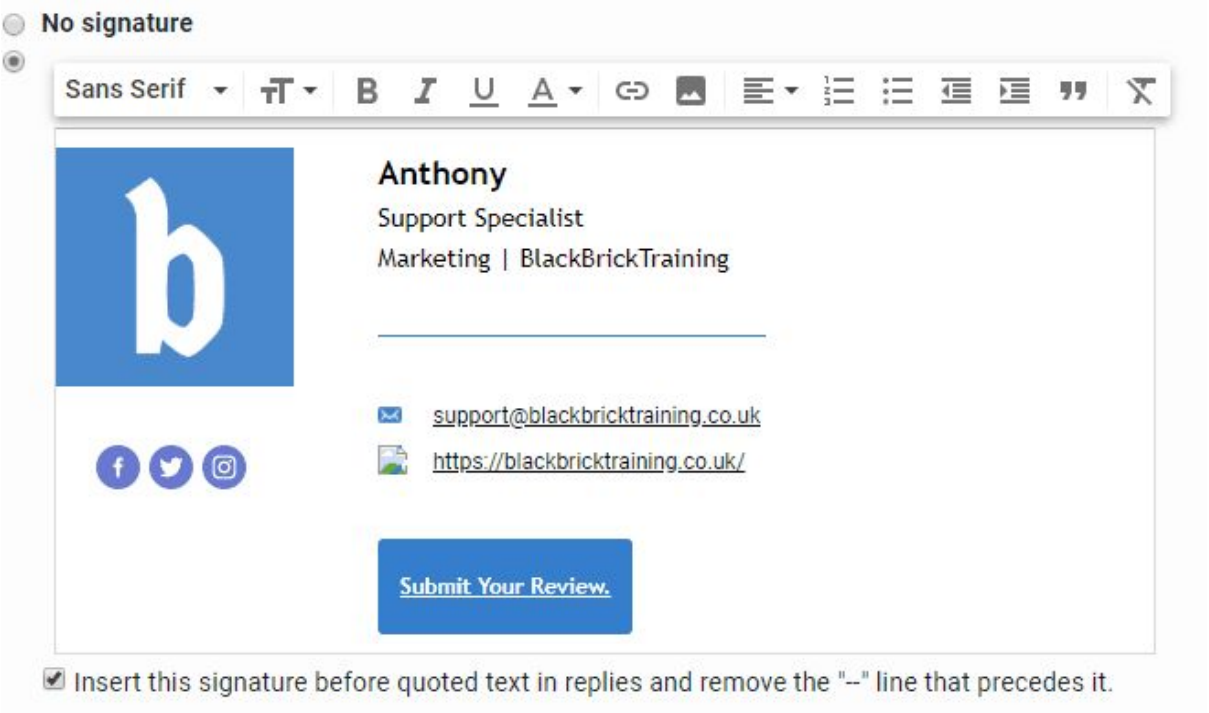
You don't have to give money, you could offer your businesses services or products depending on what the event is!
Sponsoring events will also help to build your local area, as events bring more business.

Customer Reviews

Getting reviews from your customers is one of the best ways to build your businesses reputation.
Reviews are also one of the top local search ranking factors.
So, how can you capture and display more reviews?

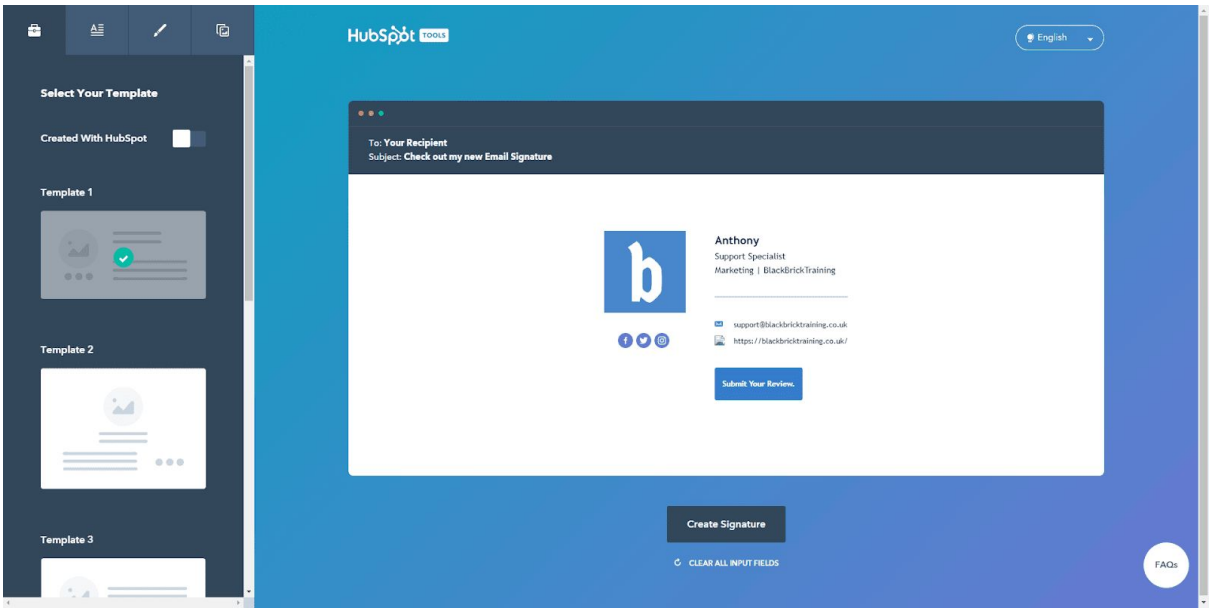
Ask For Reviews Within Your Emails

Most businesses send many, many emails every day, so at the end of any email to a customer simply add a link to leave a review.
This should be quite simple to set up, and won't take too much of your time.
Let's take a look at my example:



This is my email signature within Gmail.
As you can see, I have all of the usual information, including name, website, email address, social media, and even the logo.

I have also added a button which says “Submit Your Review”, this button links to my Google My Business customer review form.
Any email that I send will have this button within the email signature, so if anyone that sees it wants to leave a review they just need to click the button.
I built this email signature using the free email signature generator by Hubspot, and you can too!



The email signature generator is free, easy to use, and has tutorials to add the signature to any email client (I use Gmail).

Create A Webpage Dedicated To Reviews

Dedicate a page on your website to collect and display customer reviews.
You can optimize this page and it will be easy to organise with reviews and testimonials in one page.
Many people search for “company name reviews” to find reviews on a company before making a purchase.
You can rank for searches similar to that by creating a page on your site just for reviews.

Set Up A Business Profile On Review Sites

GoogleMyBusiness, Trustpilot, and Feefo are some of the most popular review platforms that you should get your business on. Having your business on these review sites (and others) will make it easier for people to review your business, and also boost your brand recognition.
When internet users search for reviews for a particular company, review sites like these will almost always appear in the results.
I recommend focusing on the well-known review sites, as they are the ones users will click onto.
Google My Business is a must-have for all local businesses, as it's Google's official platform, and it is trusted by customers.
I also suggest Trustpilot, as it is another review website that is known around the world.

Offer A Discount In Return For A Review

Everyone loves a discount.
To get customers to leave a review, offer them a discount on their next purchase if they review your business.
You choose the discount, keep it low, any incentive is better than no incentive, watch your reviews skyrocket!
This is one of the easiest ways to boost the number of reviews that you receive.

Share Your Reviews On Social Media

Of course, you only want to do this with positive reviews and ratings.
Sharing reviews like this will grow brand recognition and also brand perception.
People are also more likely to leave a review if they think that you may share their review on social media.

Add A Review Widget To Your Website

Certain platforms will have easy to use widgets that you can add to your site to make it nice and easy for customers to leave a review.

You want to be able to collect and display reviews within your website for the best results.

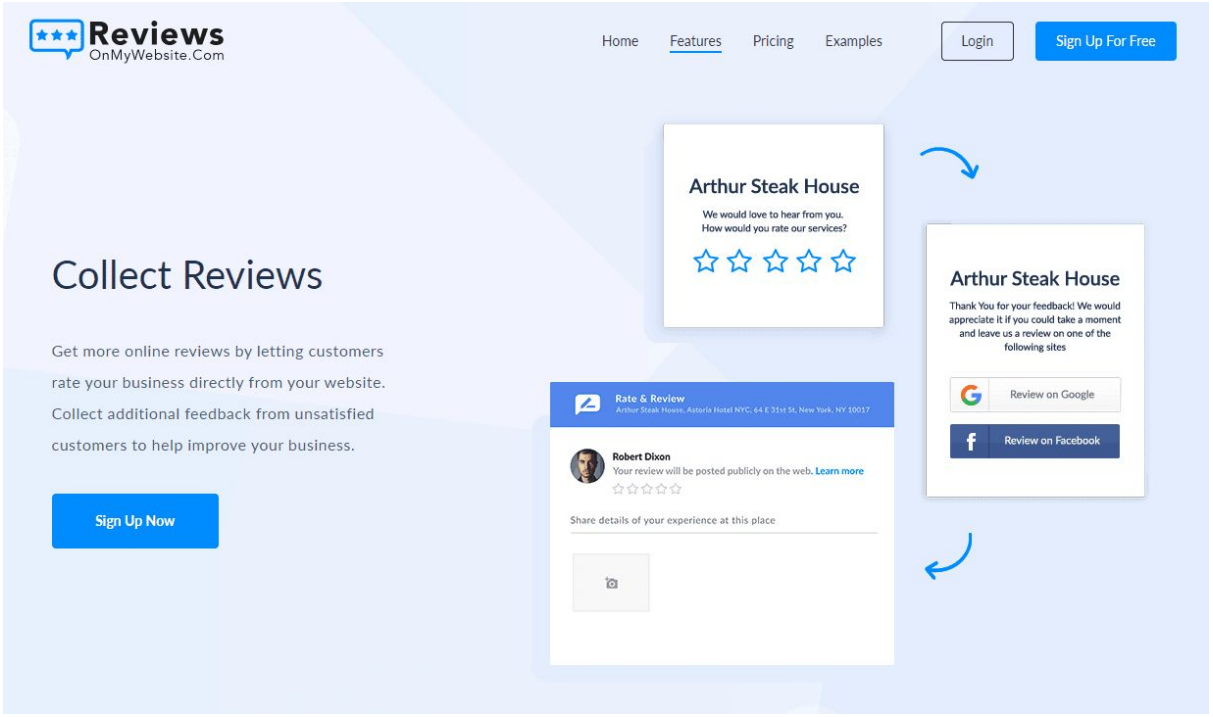
Add A Button

The easiest way would be to add a button on your website that directs a user to a review form.

Use A Widget

You might find one you like more, but I find reviewsonmywebsite.com to be the best option for a widget that does it all.

It collects reviews, displays them on your website, and helps you to request reviews from customers.



Bonus Local Strategies

To give you some extra help, this section will give you even more local SEO tips, tricks and strategies.

They may help your local rankings, but they are more likely to just give your business a boost in terms of an online presence.

Embed A Google Map On Your Site

Embedding a map on your website, especially on the contact page, will make it easy for customers to find your businesses location.
This is crucial if you have a business like a cafe which you need customers to visit to make a transaction.
Google has a guide on how to embed a map onto your site here.
There are many options to the map, you can even set it to be street view.
Once you have built your map, Google will give you the code to paste into your webpage.

Make Sure Your Site Is Mobile Friendly

The majority of website traffic is now through mobile devices, in fact in 2018 52.2% of internet traffic was from a mobile device.
To check if your website is mobile-friendly, use this free tool made by Google.
The Google mobile-friendly test will give you a simple and fast answer to whether or not your website is mobile-friendly.

Display Reviews & Testimonials

Displaying reviews on your website will go towards improving conversions, as it will give users confidence in your brand by showing your reputation.
If you use WordPress there are many plugins that you can use to display reviews within your website.
Here is a good plugin for generic reviews: Site Reviews
Here is a plugin that embeds Google reviews: Google Reviews Widget
However, if your site is **not** made with a CMS like WordPress, you can use a tutorial from w3schools to learn how to display reviews.
For testimonials, use this tutorial.

To create a user rating scorecard, use this tutorial.

Make Sure Your Site Loads Fast

If your site is slow to load, visitors may just click off.
Keep your site fast to keep users engaged in your content.

Optimize Images

Before uploading any images to your website, you should optimize them.
Run all of your images which have a large file size through tinypng, this will compress them and then give you your image with a smaller size.
The smaller the file size, the faster they will load while on your website.

Use The Right Web Hosting

If you want to have a fast website, you should look at which hosting plan and provider you have.
It is important that you use hosting which uses web servers in a geographical location near to your target audience.
For example: If you have a website which has mainly got an audience from India, you want to use web hosting which runs its servers from India.
This information should be clear on the website for the hosting plan that you are purchasing.

Enable Compression

On WordPress you can install a plugin like Autoptimize, this will compress the files that contain the code for your site, making it more lightweight.
Some plugins like this also compress your images, and most of these plugins are free!

BLACK HAT SEO

What Is Black Hat SEO?

Black Hat SEO refers to the process of trying to cheat to receive a higher search engine ranking.
It is very unethical, and can result in receiving a penalty from Google, and a large decrease in search engine traffic & rankings.
Using Black Hat techniques can also tarnish your brand, giving you a bad reputation.
You must avoid all of the following strategies when optimizing your website, as they may result in losing your search engine rankings.

Why Should You Avoid Black Hat SEO?

In the worst cases, black hat SEO can result in having your website banned from Google and other search engines.
Google will not hesitate to give your site a penalty if you are using black hat methods, a penalty could result in having your site de-indexed.
Using black hat strategies will also give your brand a bad reputation.
With the amount of people that use Google to search for content every day, can you afford to have your website de-indexed?
You want to avoid using any techniques that are deemed as unethical or black hat, if you want your site to succeed.

Thin Content

Essentially, thin content is content that offers little to no value to the user.

Content that is not relevant to the user's intent, provides no quality, and wastes their time.
This can include:

- Doorway pages
- Automatically generated content
- Duplicate content
- Pages with small amounts of text
- Low quality affiliate pages

The most common methods to deal with thin content are:

- Remove the page
- Update it by adding high quality, relevant content
- Redirect the page
- Add a "noindex" meta tag to the page to stop it from being indexed

Try your best to avoid publishing any page that would be deemed as "thin content" to save yourself the effort of having to fix it in the future.

Keyword Stuffing

Keyword stuffing refers to the practice of over-using (or spamming) keywords to try and manipulate their position in search results.
These keywords will often appear in a list, or completely out of context and irreverent.
Over-using keywords will result in a negative user experience, which will make users less likely to return to your website.
Keyword stuffing can negatively impact your search engine rankings, as Google and other search engines can tell when keywords are being abnormally added to a site's content.
If the same keywords appear too closely in your content, your website will effectively be demoted in search results and you will lose your ranking position.

Your sole aim should be to create useful content that provides value to the user, and appropriately uses keywords within the right context.
Examples of keyword stuffing can include:

- Lists of phone numbers which add no value to the content.
- Blocks of text listing locations, cities, or places that a web page is trying to rank for.
- Repeating the same words or phrases an unnatural amount.

Here is the example that Google gives:

> *We sell custom cigar humidors. Our custom cigar humidors are handmade. If you're thinking of buying a custom cigar humidor, please contact our custom cigar humidor specialists at custom.cigar.humidors@example.com.*

Duplicate Content

Duplicate content refers to a block of content that appears on more than one web page within the same website, or across multiple.
Search engines aim to give the user the most relevant and helpful search results for their search term, when the exact same content is seen in multiple places, it is considered unhelpful.
If the content on your web page is seen as duplicate content, search engines are less likely to rank your page in search results.
Duplicate content can refer to you copying other people's content, and it can also refer to other websites copying your content.
To see if anyone has copied your content, you can enter your page URL into Copyscape.
This tool will scan your web page and see if the exact same content has been copied anywhere else on the web.
If another website has stolen your content there are a few methods you can take to try and get it removed:

1. Contact the site owner and kindly ask them to remove it.
2. Use whois to find the website owner's name and phone number to contact them directly.

3. File a DMCA Copyright notice with Google and other search engines to have the page removed from search results.
4. Find proof of which site published the content first by using the Internet Archive.

Doorway Pages

Doorway pages are web pages that manipulate search engines by ranking highly for particular phrases and keywords, but provide very little value to the user by containing low quality content.
These pages are usually created to create multiple "doorways" into a website by having multiple listings in search results that go to the same destination.
They are bad for users because they block up search results, and often lead to a bad user experience.
Here are a few examples of doorway pages:

- Multiple web pages which are indexed separately but offer more or less the same content.
- Separate domain names targeting geographical search queries, but direct visitors to one page.
- Pages with many keyword or link variations that only exist in order to rank in search results and direct users to other web pages.
- More than one website that directs users and searchers to the same content.

Buying Backlinks

The process of purchasing backlinks that pass positive ranking power to your site.
Buying backlinks can include many payment methods, including exchanging products for links, or exchanging money for links.

Trying to manipulate your website's ranking by purchasing backlinks can be considered a violation of Google's Webmaster Guidelines.
Doing this can result in earning a penalty on your website, which can lower your rankings or have your site de-indexed from Google.
Here are some examples of link schemes that can negatively impact your search engine rankings:

- Using an automated service to gain links to your site.
- Buying or selling links that pass ranking power.
- Requiring a link as part of your website's "terms of service".
- Link exchanges, for example "Link to me and I'll link to you".
- Large scale guest posting with keyword rich anchor text.

Other types of link schemes include creating links that are not in context to your content, or vouched for by the website's owner.
These are known as "unnatural links".
Here are some examples of what can be seen as unnatural links:

- Text based advertisements that pass ranking power.
- Low-quality directory links.
- Forum comments with links in the signature.
- Paid articles that include links with ranking power.
- Distributed press releases with links that have optimized anchor text.

You only want to earn high quality, natural, and relevant backlinks in order for them to effect your site positively.

Hidden Text & Links

Hidden text or links are simply sections of text that are nearly, or completely invisible to the user.
Hiding text or links within your content to manipulate your search engine rankings is a violation of Google's Webmaster Guidelines.

For example, if you try to add an excessive amount of keywords into your content, and then make them invisible, Google will still see them!
This will result in Google penalising your website, or de-indexing it.
Text can be hidden in several ways, including:

- Putting text behind an image.
- Using white text with a white background.
- Setting the font size of your text to 0.
- Hiding a link by only linking one character rather than a full word or phrase.
- Positioning the text off-screen using CSS.

When evaluating your site to see if it includes hidden text or links, look for anything that's not easily viewable by visitors of your site. When optimizing your website's content, it is important you make sure that all of your text and links are clear and visible, so it is not seen as deceptive.

GOOGLE ANALYTICS

What Is Google Analytics?

Google Analytics is a free website analytics tool created by Google to help you analyse your website traffic.
It is the hub for tracking all traffic and conversions that your website receives.
Google Analytics allows you to get in the mind of your customer by seeing what actions they take while they are visiting your website.
Over 50 million websites around the world are using Google Analytics right now!

Why You Need Google Analytics

Whether you run a blog, an eCommerce store or any other type of website, you need Google Analytics so that you can accurately analyse your site's traffic.
With Google Analytics you can see very detailed statistics, including:

- Which pages on your site are the most popular.
- Which countries your website visitors are from.
- How many people visit your website.
- How many visitors turned into customers or leads.

Once you get used to using Google Analytics and no longer find the interface intimidating, you will be able to use it to maximise your website's performance.

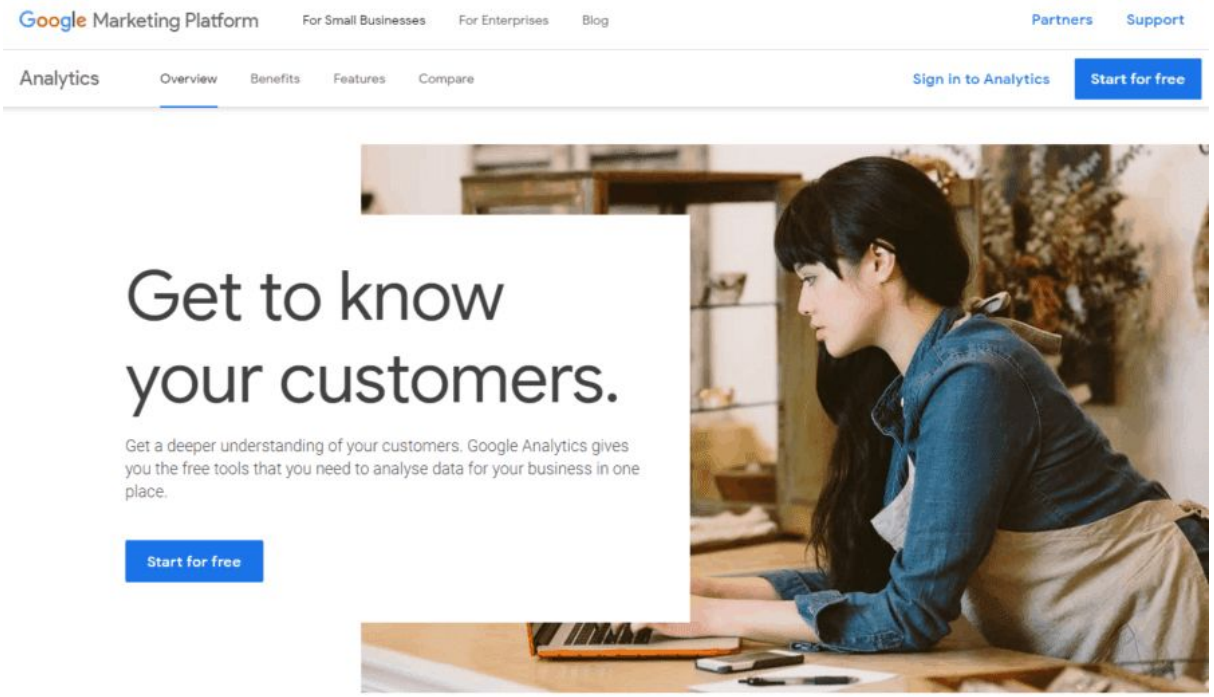
Create Account & Install Tracking Code

Before you start using Google Analytics to track your website's traffic data, you need to create your account.
You will require a Google account to be able to have access to Google Analytics, so you will need to create one if you don't already have one.

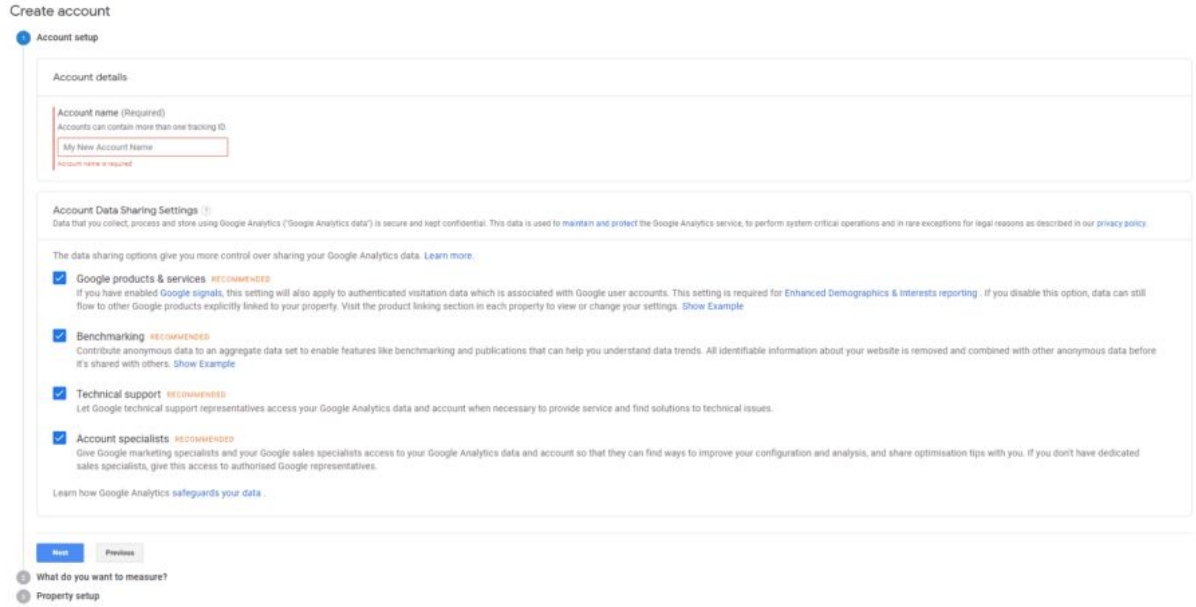
Once you have your Google account ready, you can go to the Google Analytics website to begin the process of creating an account.

Create Your Google Analytics Account

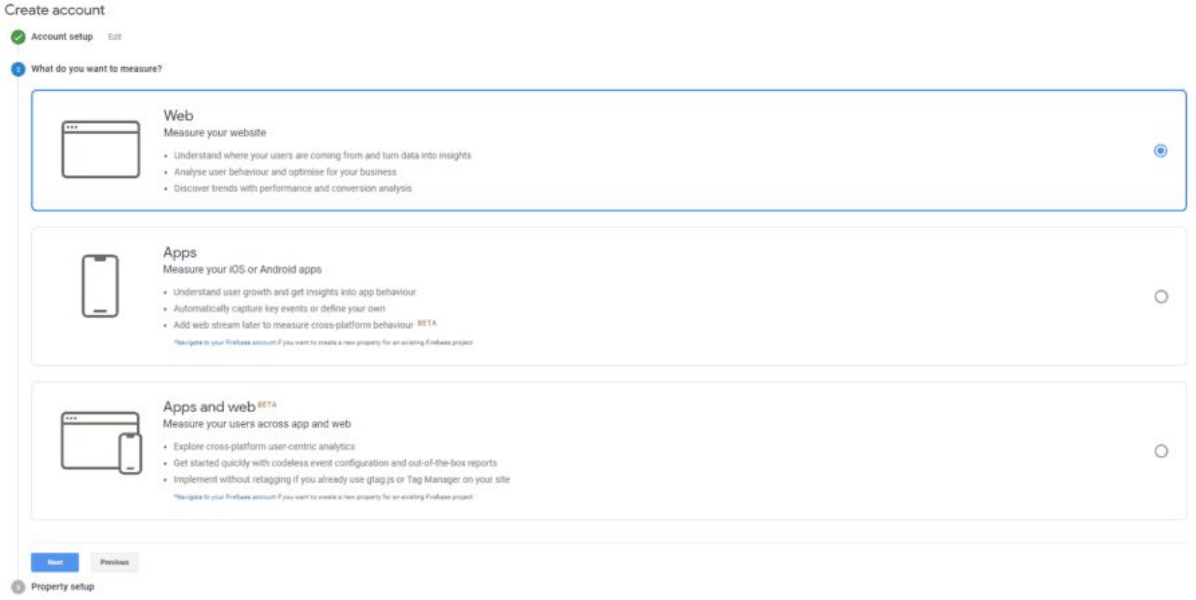
Head over to the analytics page on the Google Marketing Platform website, and click “Start for free”.



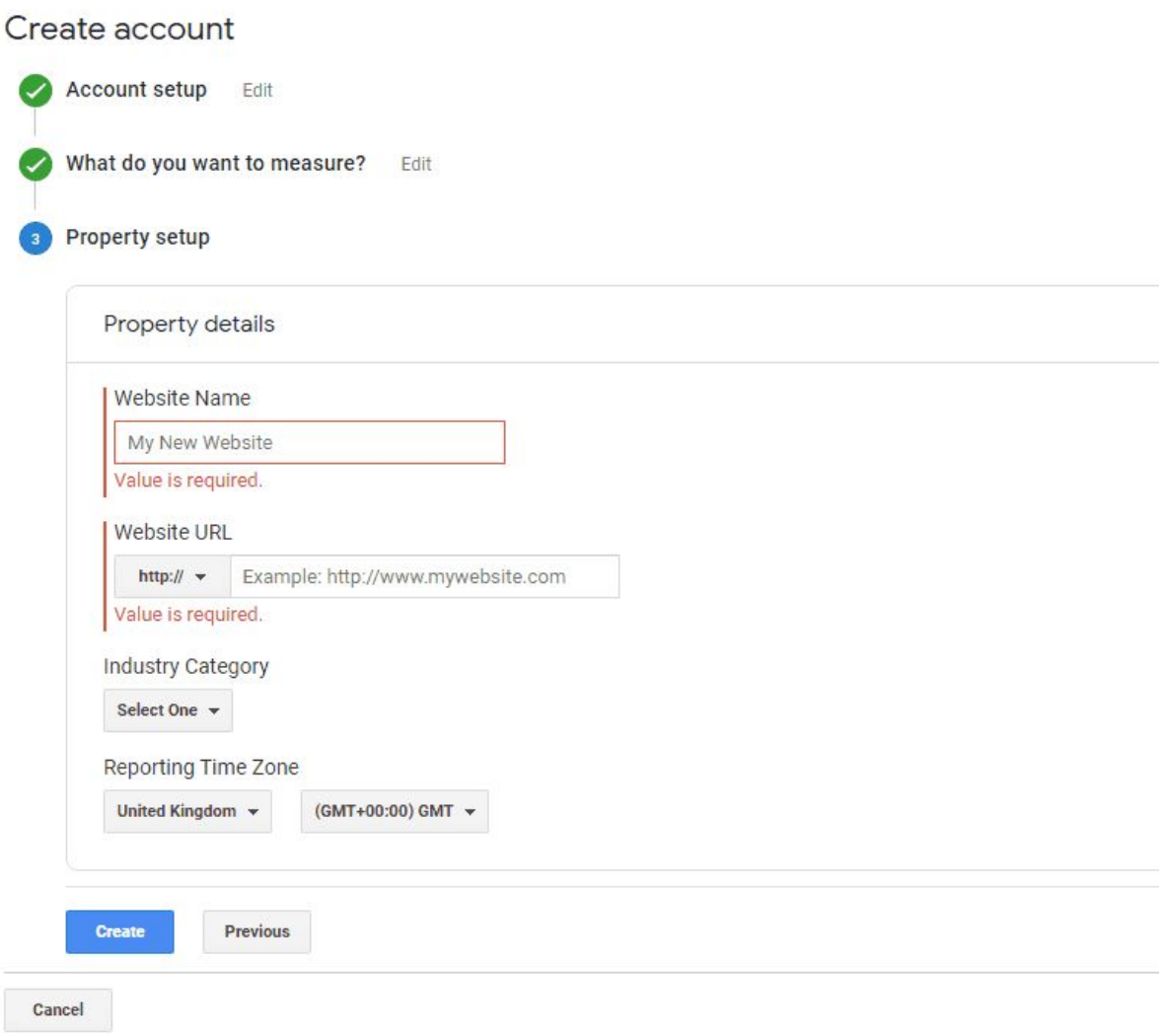
On this page, you will be required to enter your account information.
First, enter a name for your account.
You can leave all of the data-sharing boxes ticked (or unticked, it’s your decision), and then click Next.



On this next step, you will need to select what you want to track using Google Analytics, Web, Apps, or both.
As I only want to measure analytics for a website I am going to select “Web”.
And then once again click next.



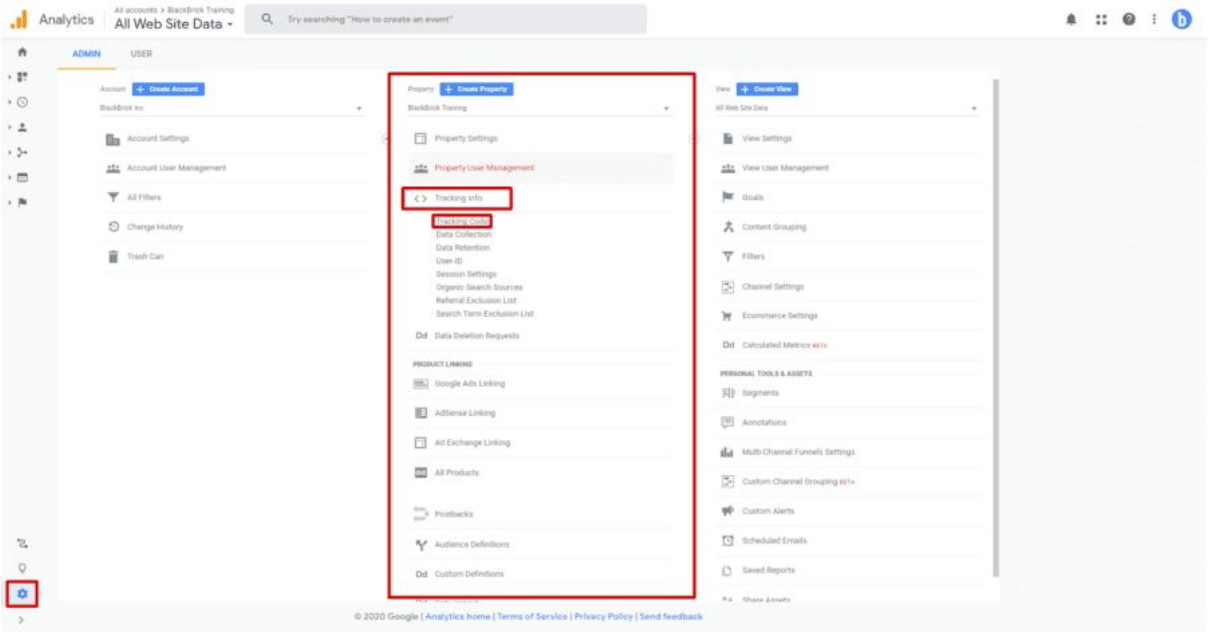
For the final step of the account creation process, you need to add the details for the property that you want to track the analytics for. This includes your website name, website URL, the industry category for your website, and your timezone.
Once you have entered all of the information for your website click “create”.



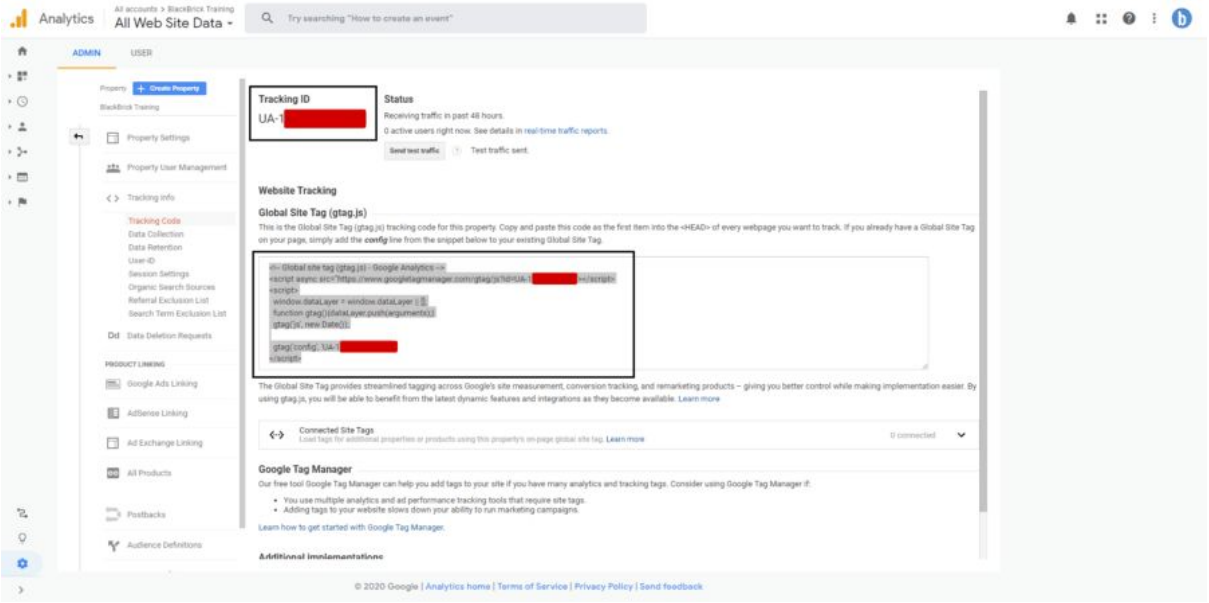
Clicking the create button will finalise your Google Analytics account.
Once it is created you will be provided with a tracking code for your website.
The tracking code is what Google uses to collect the analytical data from your website visitors.
The next step you need to take is to add that snippet of code to your website to begin tracking your analytics.

Add Tracking Code To Your Website

To find your tracking code, click onto the admin panel, and then on the property column click on “Tracking Info”.
You will see a few different options appear, you want to click on “Tracking Code”.



You will then see your tracking ID and your tracking code.
Copy the tracking code, also known as the “Global Site Tag”.



You need to add this tracking code to every page on your website that you want to track with Google Analytics.
If you have a website that runs on HTML files, you need to add your Site Tracking Tag to the HTML file for each web page.
To be precise, the code needs to be the first piece of code after the opening head tag that looks like this: <head>.
Simply hop into the text editor for each page file and paste in your code.



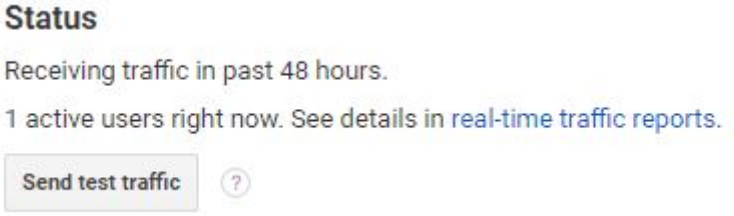
Once you have done this you need to upload the new files into your website hosting so that they are updated on the live website. You can do this by using an FTP (File Transfer Protocol), or by manually uploading the files to your website's server.

Once your web page files have all been successfully uploaded to your server with the Google Analytics tag in the correct location, Google will start tracking data.

To test to see if it is working correctly, on the page where you copied your tracking code, click the button which says "Send test traffic".

This will send test traffic to your site to see if everything is tracking correctly.

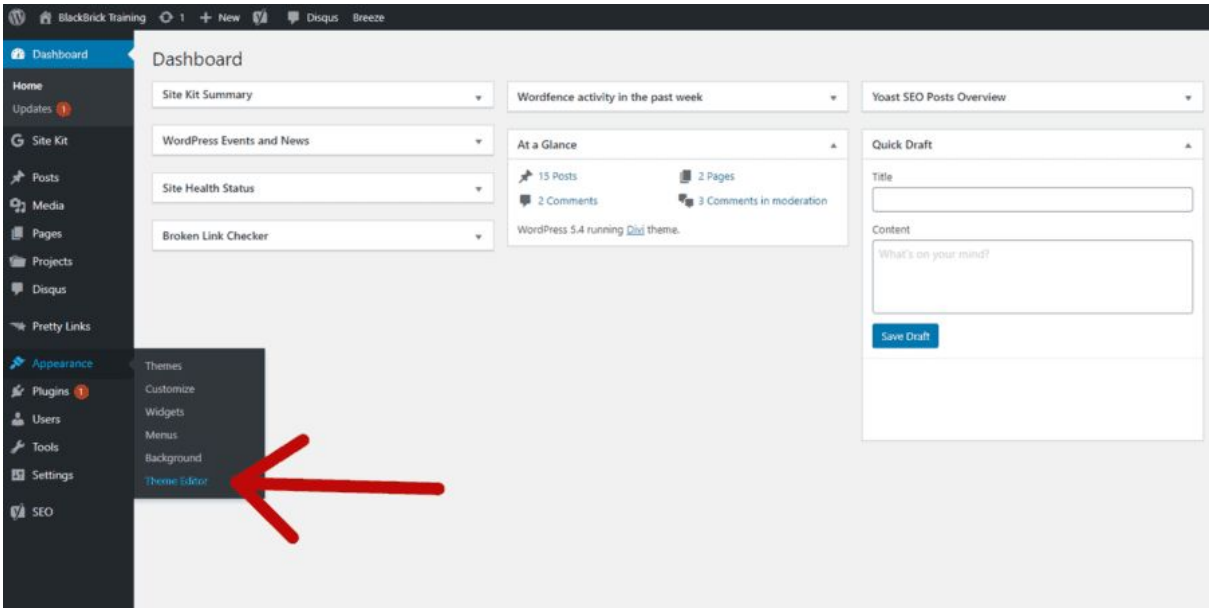
If it is working properly, you will see it say "1 active user right now".



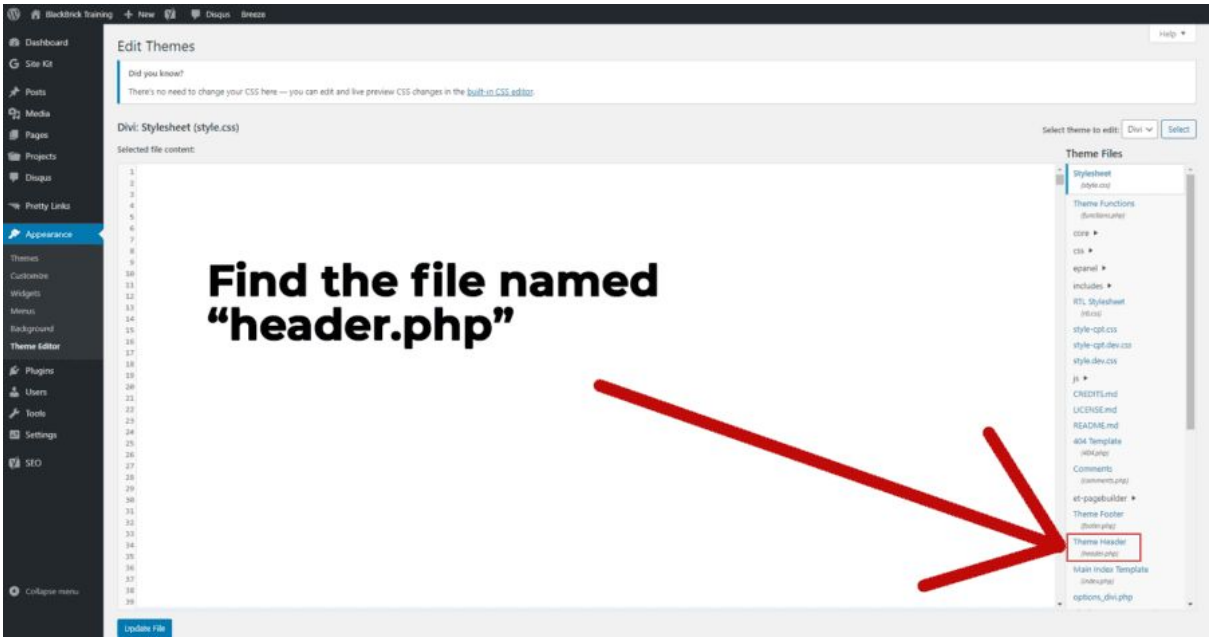
And now it's all set up!

Add Tracking Code To A WordPress Site

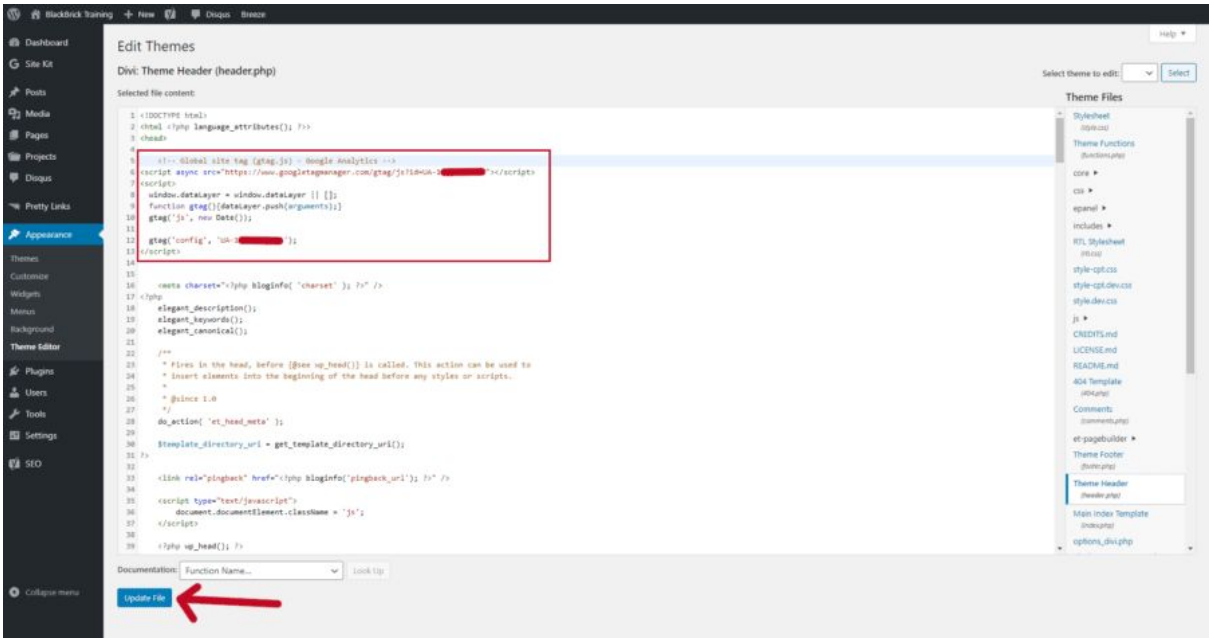
There are a few different ways to add the tracking code to a WordPress website, but this one is my favourite.
Manually add the code to your website, within the WordPress dashboard.
To do this you will need to know the basics of WordPress and be confident that you can edit the code within your website.
So, first, copy the tracking code once again, and then open the dashboard for your WordPress website.
Hover over the Appearance tab on the left menu, and click onto the page called “Editor” or “Theme Editor”.



Now you want to find the file named “header.php”, this is where we will paste in the tracking code.
To find the file, scroll through the “theme files” on the right of the page until you see one titled “Theme Header” with the file name “header.php”
Once you find that file, click onto it.



The final step is to paste your Google Analytics tracking code into this file.
Look for the opening head tag that looks like this <head>, and paste it in directly after it.



After you have pasted in the tracking code, click “Update File”, and you’re all done!
You can test it by sending test traffic from Google Analytics.
You will start to see your real traffic appear within your Analytics account 12 – 24 hours after you have completed the setup process.

Check Basic Settings

Before you start using Analytics there are several settings you should check.
The settings I am showing you are suggested to all websites, but there are also other settings that you can look at depending on the type of website you have.

Property Settings

These settings will ensure your website or app is set up properly. Once you have signed in to your analytics account, head over to the Admin panel and then click on “Property Settings”.
Here are the settings you want to ensure are correct:

1. Check your URL is correct, with https if you have an SSL certificate.
2. Switch on “Enable Demographics and Interest Reports”.
3. Switch on “Use enhanced link attribution”.
4. Ensure you have connected Google Ads and Google Search Console correctly.
5. Switch on “Enable Users Metric in Reporting”.

Once you have changed these settings, your tracking code may change slightly, so if it did be sure to update it on your website.

View Settings

These settings will improve the data that Google Analytics tracks:

1. Double-check your URL is correct.
2. Make sure you have selected the right time zone.
3. Select the correct currency.
4. Filter out spam traffic by enabling “Bot Filtering”
5. Enable “Site search Tracking”

Remember to click save after making changes.

Set Up Site Search

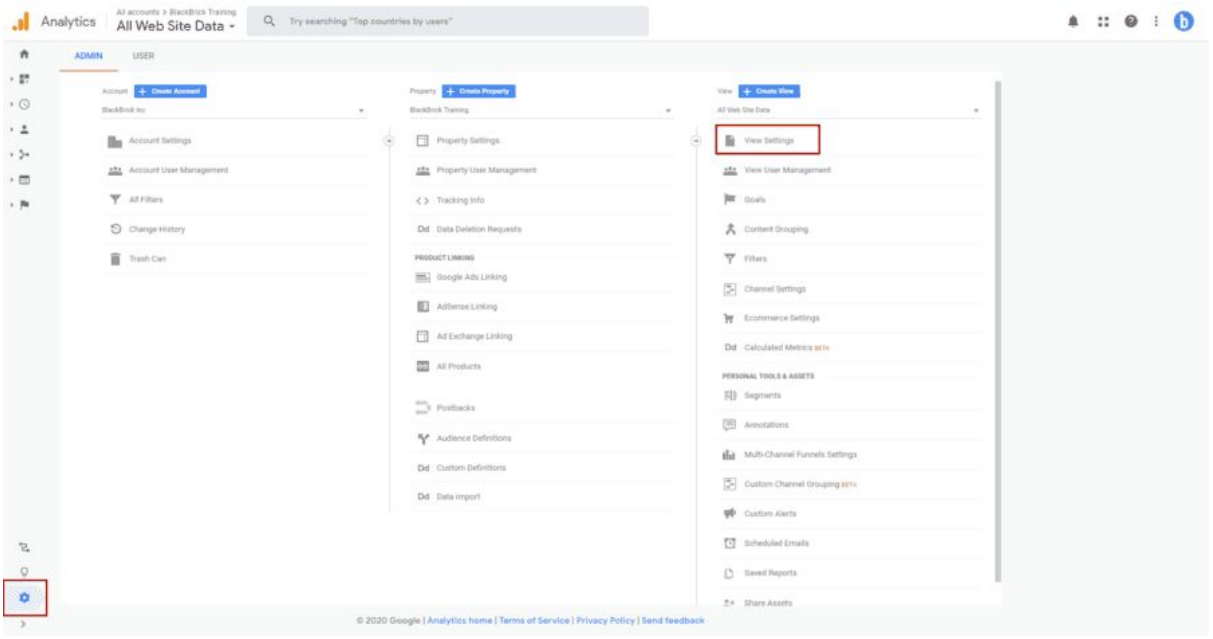
Site search tracking is one of the more straightforward features that Google Analytics offers, but that doesn't mean it's not a handy feature.
Setting up site search allows you to track and analyse the data surrounding your website's search function.
Once it is set up, some of the information you will be able to analyse will include:

- Which queries users search for within your site.
- How many times the search bar is used on your website.
- Which web pages searches lead to most.
- Which web pages users on your site make searches from.

Luckily, setting up site search tracking is very simple and won't take much time at all.

Step 1 – Admin

Head over to the admin tab on your Google Analytics account by clicking the cog on the bottom left of your dashboard.
Then click the "View Settings" button from the "View" column on the right side of the admin panel.



This will open a new menu with some settings for your property.

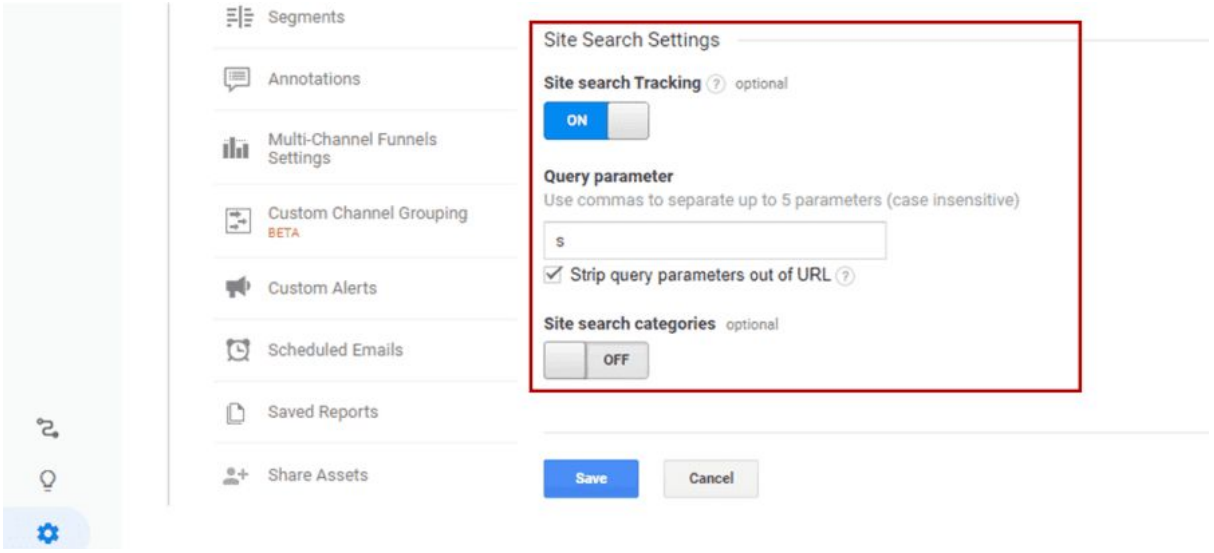
Step 2 – Site Search Settings

Here you want to scroll down until you see the section called “Site Search Settings”.
Toggle “Site search Tracking” so that it says it is “ON”.

Step 3 – Query Parameter

Now enter your Query Parameter.
Don’t worry if you don’t know what this is!
There is a nice and easy way to find out what you need to enter into the “Query Parameter” box.
Make a search using the search box on your website and take a look at the URL.
Here is mine for example:
www.blackbricktraining.co.uk/?s=random+search
The main thing that you want to take from this is the letter after the question mark.
If you look at my URL again you can see that for me, it is the letter “s”, so I will enter “s” into the Query Parameter box.
Yours may be different, so you should also make a search on your website, and look at your URL to see what yours will be.

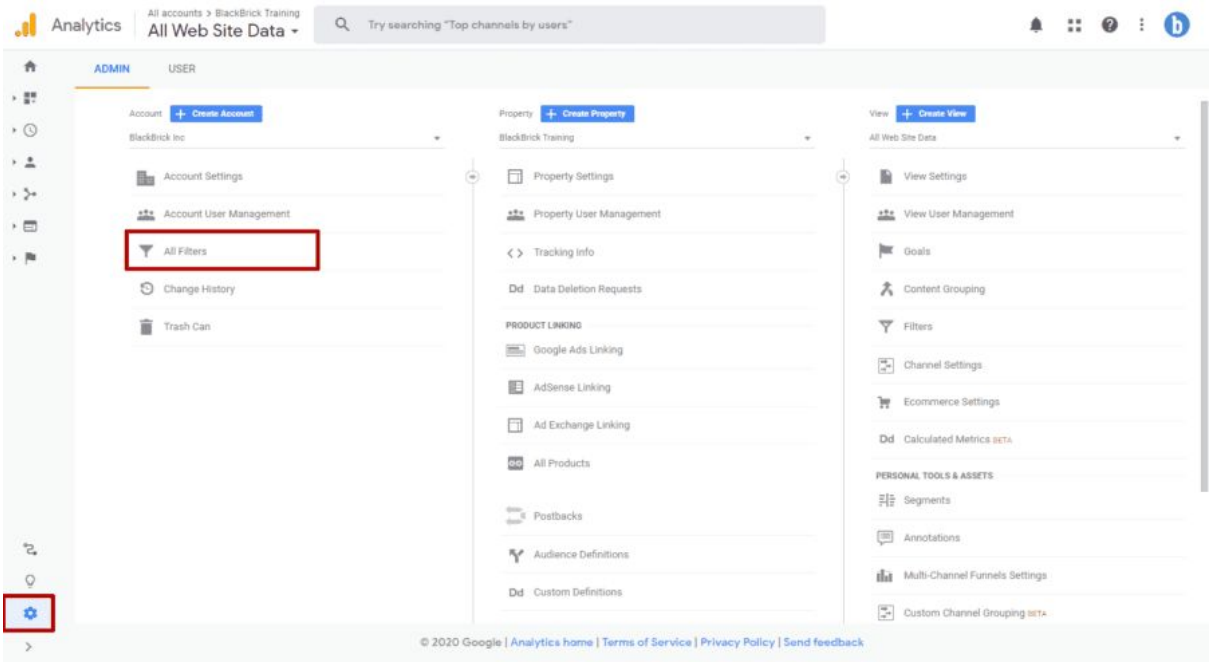
Then simply enter it into the box and that's all you need to do.



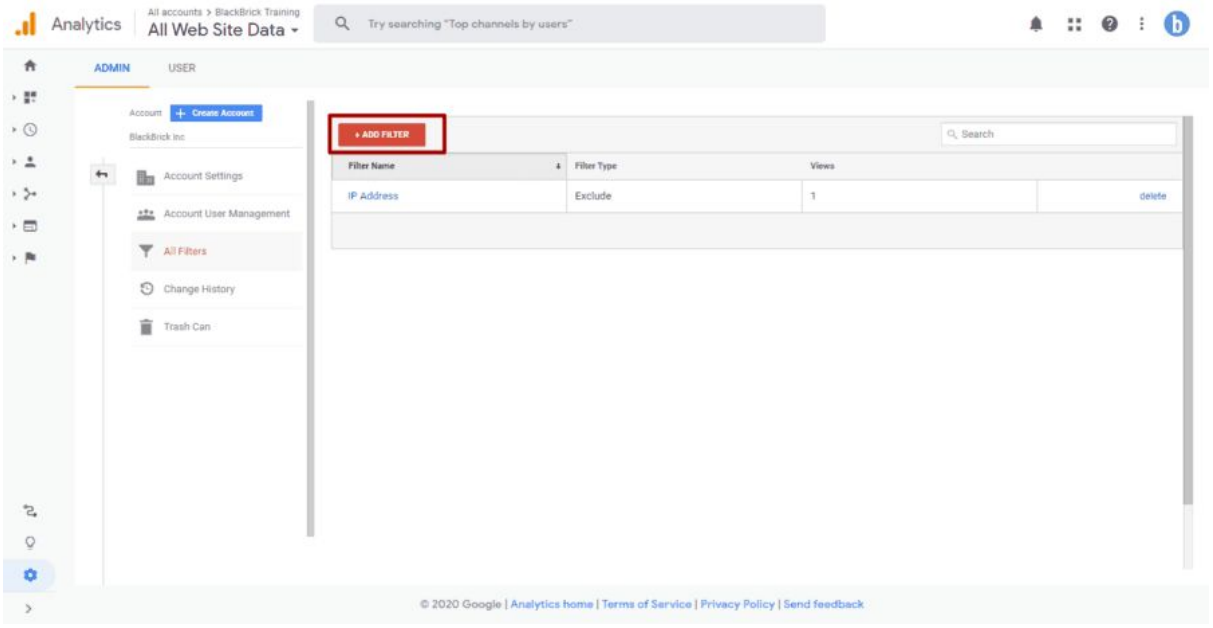
Once you have done all of that, you just need to click "Save", and you are all done.
Site search tracking is now all set up for your website.

Exclude Internal Traffic From Google Analytics

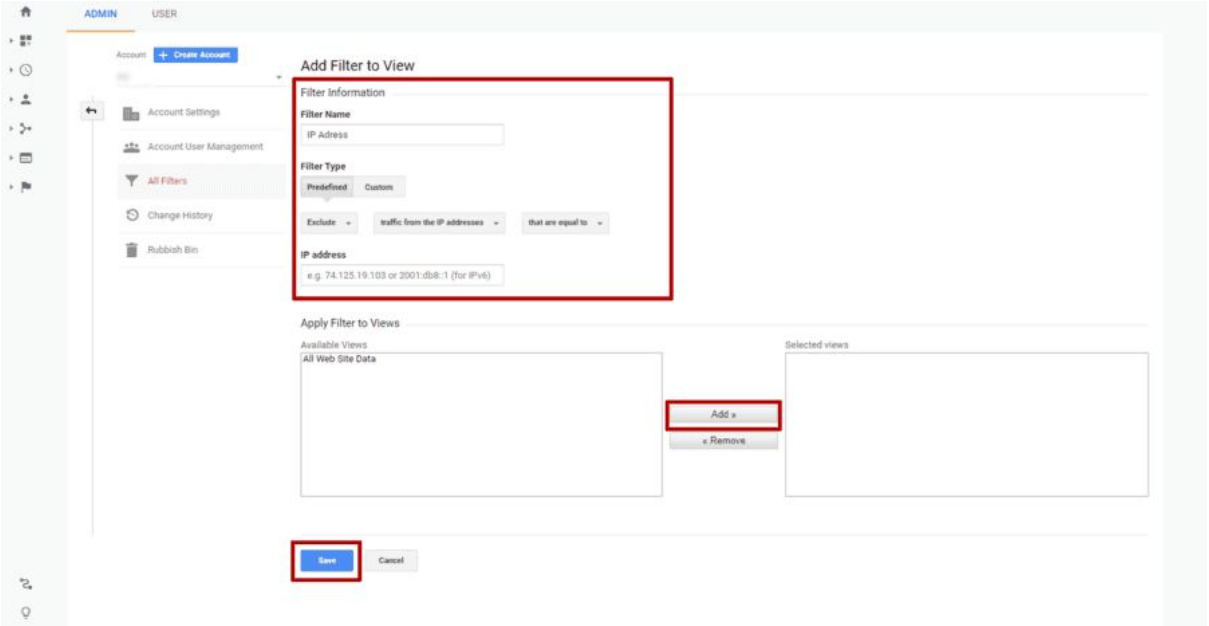
If your analytical data is filled with you visiting your website, you may want to remove it so that you are seeing more accurate data. Let's say you are just visiting your website to test something you have recently added, it will still show on Google Analytics, this is bad.
Having your own traffic clog up your data will make everything confusing, and make your data useless.
You must remove it straight away.
But how can you do that?
First, go to the admin panel within your Google Analytics account. Then click onto "All Filters" on the "Account" menu.



Here you need to click the "+ Add Filter" button to add a new filter.



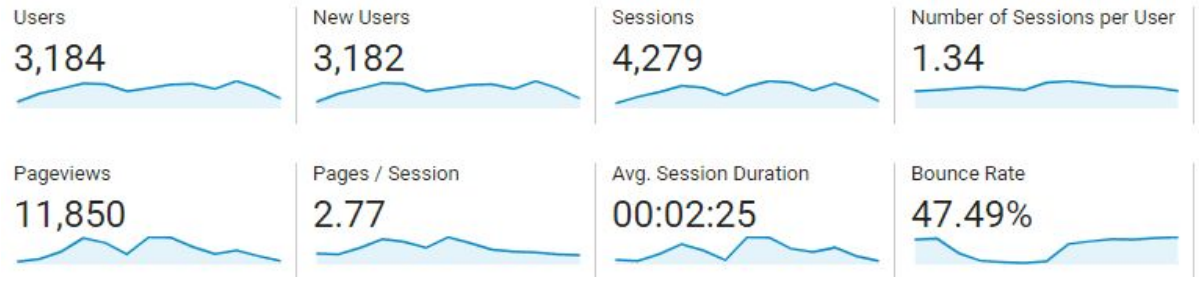
Now name your filter, I will simply name it "IP Address", so it is easily recognisable.



Leave filter type as Predefined.
On the “Select filter type” drop-down menu select “Exclude.
For the “Select source or destination” drop-down menu select “traffic from the IP addresses”.
Then for the “Select expression” drop-down menu select “that are equal to”.
To find your IP address, go to whatismyip.com and take note of your IPv4 address.
Enter your IP address into the appropriate box.
Select your view, and then click add to apply your filter.
Then click Save.
Now Google Analytics won’t track you visiting your own website.

Google Analytics Metrics

Here are some of the most important metrics that you should understand in order to use Google Analytics properly and sufficiently analyse reports.
These particular metrics are used the most and are more common within Google Analytics.



Users: The "Users" metric tells you the number of unique users who visited your website within your selected date range.
New Users: This is the number of users who are visiting your website for the first time.
Sessions: The "sessions" metric will show you the total number of sessions within your selected date range. A session is the amount of time that a user is engaging with your website or app. A single session can include multiple interactions, including Page views, product sales, and events.
Number of Sessions per User: This is the average number of sessions each user has on your website.
Pageviews: The total number of times that your web pages have been viewed. Repeated views on a single page are also counted, this can include reloading the page or returning to a page after navigating through the website.
Pages / Session: This is the average number of pages that are visited in a single session.
Avg. Session Duration: The average duration of time that a session lasts on your website.
Bounce Rate: This is the percentage of single-page sessions where the user does not interact with the web page. This means the user immediately left your website without clicking on anything.
% New Sessions: This is the percentage of new sessions which have occurred on your website, so it's the percentage of sessions from users that have not visited your site before.

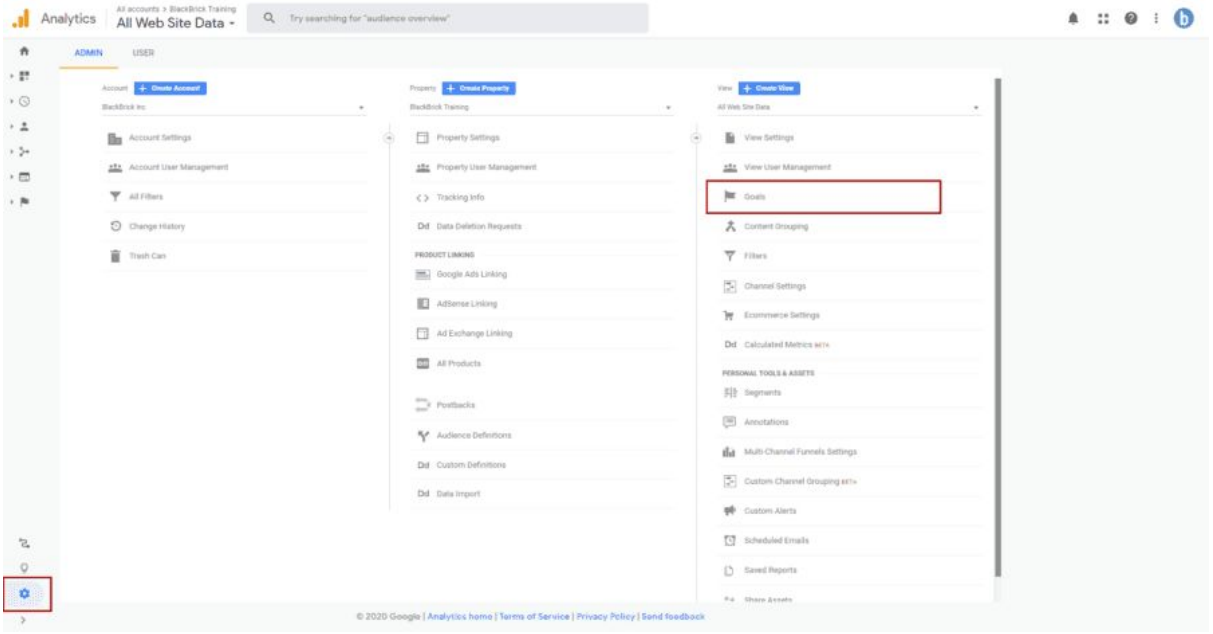
Set Up Goals

Your website likely has a certain goal that it wants to achieve with each visitor.

Some examples of goals that you can set up using Google Analytics include Account creations, newsletter signups and product sales.
Whatever your goal may be, setting up goals within Google Analytics will allow you to track how often they are fulfilled.
This is one of the most useful features available, as it can give you some important analytical data which can help you to achieve your goals more often.

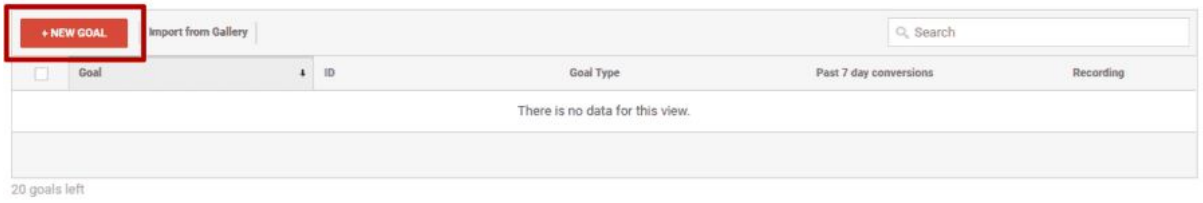
Step 1 – Admin

Once again, head over to the admin tab on your Google Analytics account by clicking the cog on the bottom left of your dashboard.



Step 2 – New Goal

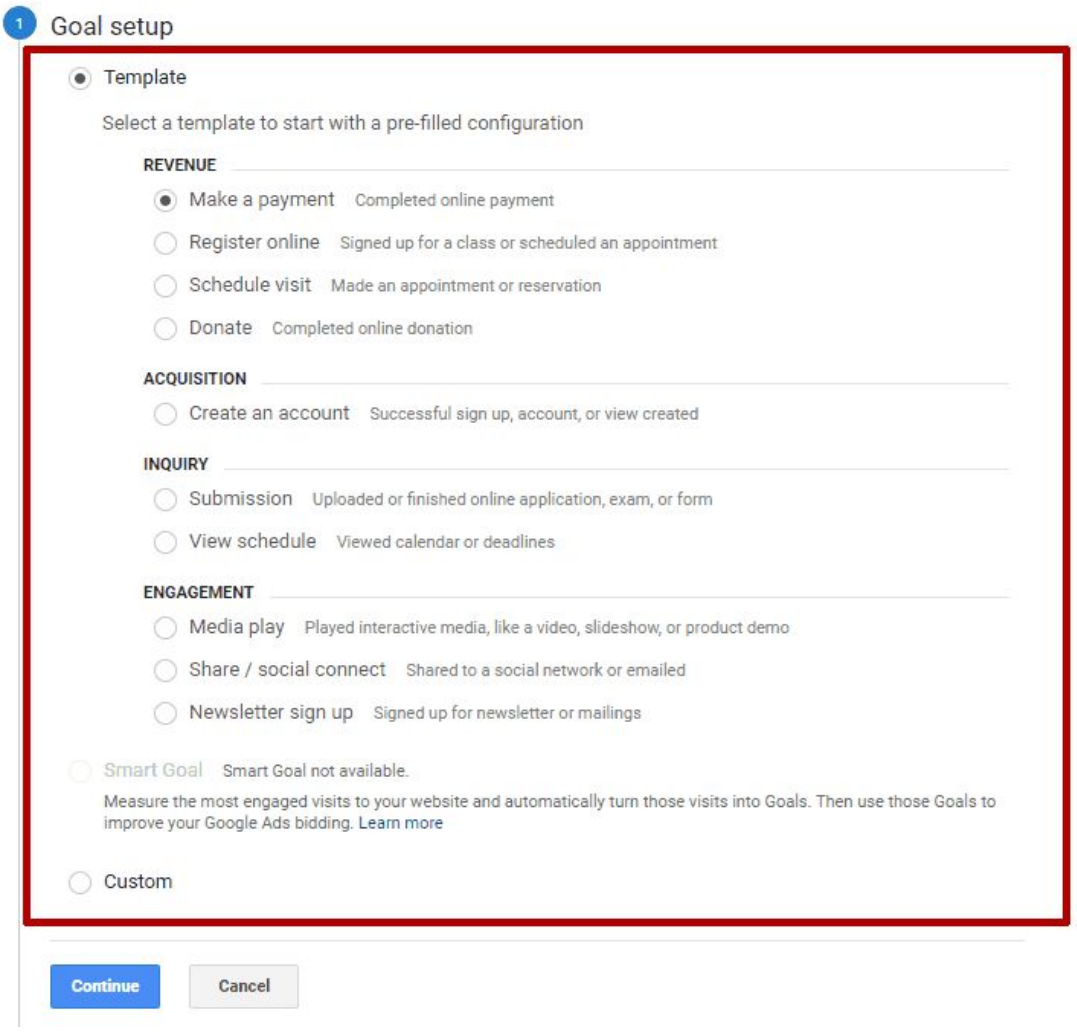
From there you need to click onto the “Goals” option which is located on the third menu titled “View”.
This will open a new page within which you want to click the “+ New Goal” button.



Now the goal setup process will begin.

Step 3 – Goal Setup

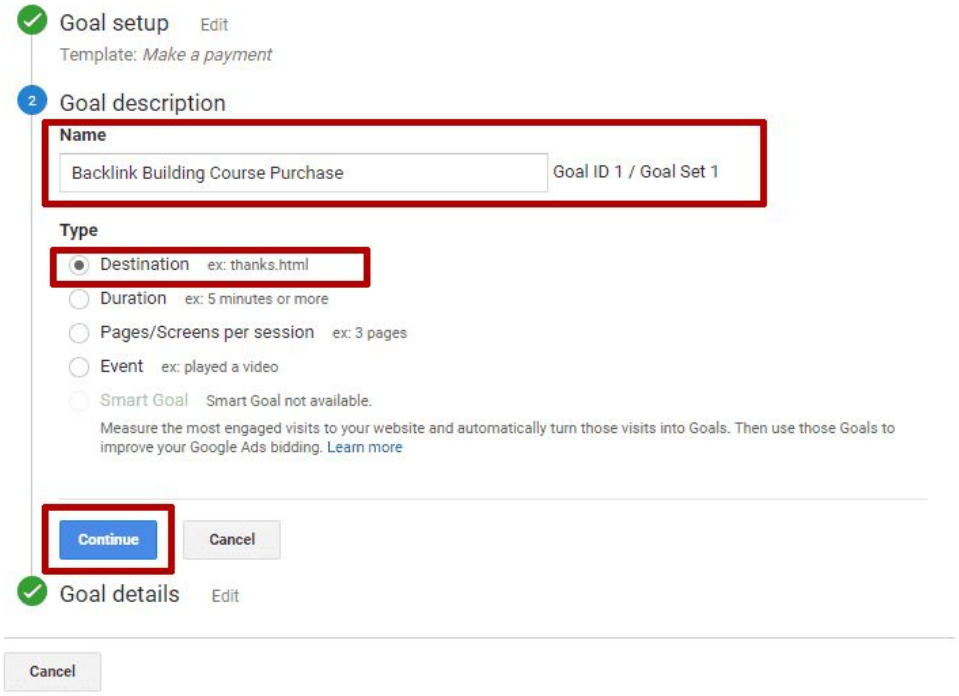
Select either a pre-made goal template, or choose to create a custom goal.
The majority of Google Analytics users will find what they need in a template.
These are created by Google and are designed to track the most common types of goals, including account creation, confirmed sale, newsletter sign up and many more.
In this example, we are going to use a goal template.
I am going to choose the "make a payment" goal template, this is the template you want to use to track sales on your website.



Then click "Continue".

Step 4 – Goal Description

Here you will be required to add your goal description.
First, write an easily recognisable name for your goal.
Add your Goal slot ID, this is only important if you are going to create multiple goals, as it allows you to put them into different sets.
Finally, select your goal type, for this example, we will pick "destination".

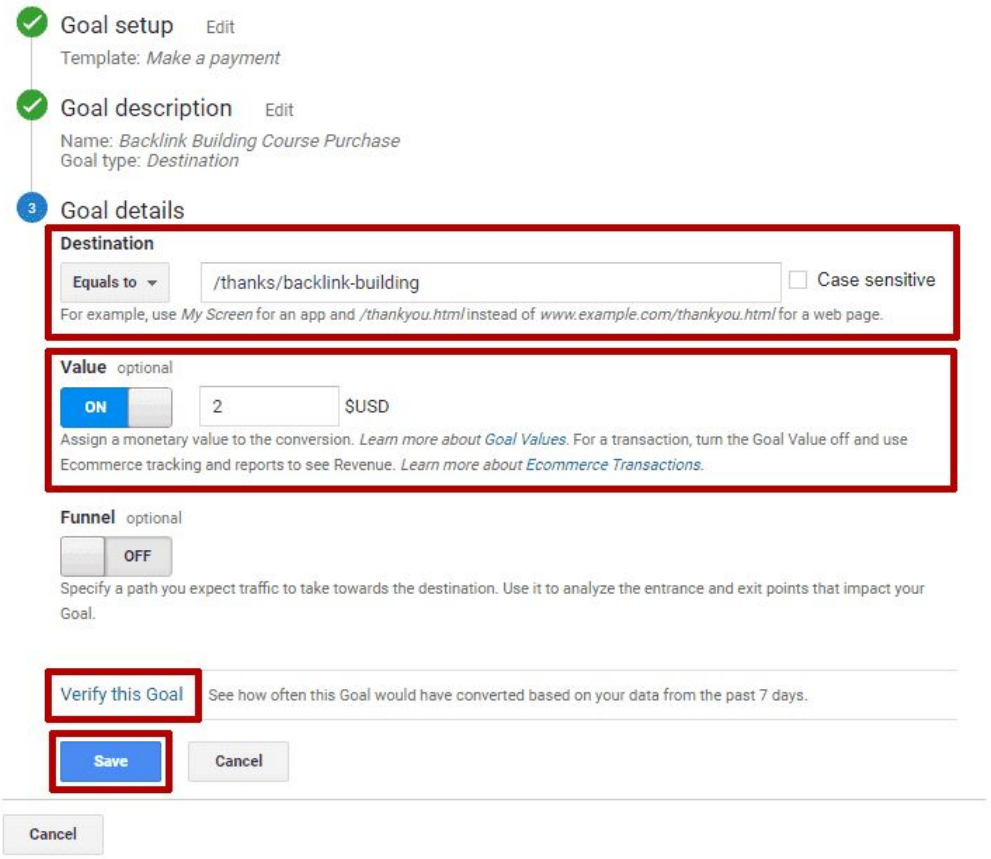


Once again, click "Continue".

Step 5 – Goal Details

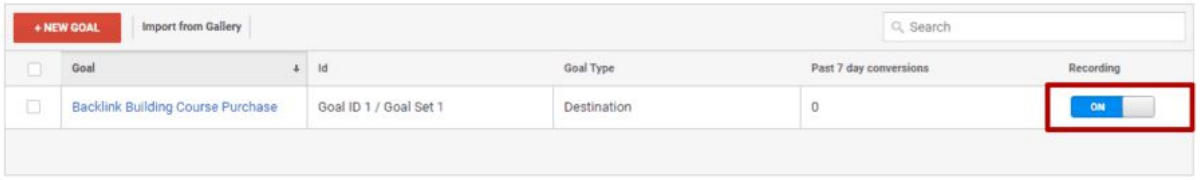
Now you need to add your goal details.
This includes your destination, and the option to add a value and funnel.
For destination, you want to enter the page URL for the web page that the user will see after making a purchase, this is usually a thank you page or an order confirmation page.
To be clear, you don't need to add the whole URL, if your thank you page is "www.example.com/thankyou" it is only necessary to type in "/thankyou" for the destination.

On my website, I have a separate thank you page for every course I sell, so my destination is "/thanks/backlink-building".



Next, you can add a value to your conversion, so this will help you to also track revenue.
If like me you have a different thank you page for every product, you can enter the price of your product here so that you can track sales revenue for each product you have a Google Analytics goal created for.
Simply turn the value option on, and then enter the monetary value for this particular goal.
Finally, we have funnel, this is only needed if you want to track where on the product purchase path your potential customers are giving up on making a purchase.
This can be helpful if you want to find out which pages are decreasing your product sales.
If you want to add funnel tracking, switch it on and then add the name and page URL in the correct order for each page in your product sales funnel.

Then click “Verify this Goal” at the bottom to test your goal and see how often it would have converted in the previous 7 days.
Now click “Save” to save and create your goal.
That’s your first-ever goal in Google Analytics created successfully!



You should also go back to the main goals page just to make sure that the goal you have created is switched on.

Google Analytics Reports

There are five different types of reports on the left menu on the Google Analytics dashboard.
All of these can be used in unique ways, so we are going to look at each of them.

Real-Time Reports

Real-time reports display real-time analytical data about who is currently on your site and what they are doing.
Do you want to see how many people are currently reading your new blog post?
Are you interested in seeing where in the world the people visiting your site right now are from?
With real-time reports you can!
To access your real-time reports, click “Real-Time” on the left sidebar menu within your Google Analytics dashboard, and then select the report you want to see.
Real-time reports show you data from actions that have occurred on your website inside the last 30 minutes.
Now let’s take a look at some of the different real-time reports that are available.

Locations

Using the real-time locations report will show you the geographical locations of your active users.
With this report, you can also see how many different pages were viewed from each city within the previous 30 minutes, as well as which pages were viewed.
This is very useful if you like to see where in the world your real-time website visitors are.

Traffic Sources

The real-time traffic sources report will display the sources that referred the active users who are currently on your website.
This report allows you to keep track of the percentage of active users on your site who were referred from a specific campaign or website.
So to simplify it, this shows you how your active users found your site.

Content

The real-time content report allows you to see which pages have been viewed within the last 30 minutes.
This will show you whether or not your new content is performing well.
You can also click on “Pageviews (Last 30 min)”, which is located below the number of active users, to see the total number of page views that each of your web pages has received in the previous 30 minutes.

Events

The real-time events report displays events that are played out on your site from active users in real-time.
The table within the report shows the top 20 event categories from the last 30 minutes, this is sorted by the number of users that have interacted with each event.
You can also see the percentage of total users inside each row.

To see the event activity for a particular category, simply click onto your chosen event category inside the table.
To view the total number of events occurred for each category within the past 30 minutes, you just need to click the “Events (Last 30 min)” button.

Conversions

The real-time conversions report will show you goal completions in real-time.
The table displays the goals that active users have completed, the total number of users who have completed each goal, and the percentage of total users who have completed each goal.
Click onto a particular goal in the table to see the conversion activity for that specific goal.
To see the number of goal conversions during the past 30 minutes, just click the “Goal Hits (Last 30 min)” button.

Audience Reports

The audience reports will provide you with an insight into the characteristics of your website’s users.
Do you want to see how many of your site’s users return to your website?
Maybe you want to see what percentage of visitors use mobile devices?
With audience reports, you can see all of this information and more.
To access audience reports, click “audience” on the left sidebar menu within your Google Analytics dashboard, then select the report you want to view.
Now let’s take a look at each of the audience reports that can be accessed with Google Analytics.

Active Users

This audience report lets you track the number of users who have visited your website in the past 1, 7, 14, or 28 days.

“1 Day Active Users” are the users who visited your site during the last day, “7 Day Active Users” are the users who visited your site during the previous seven days, and so on.
The data within this report helps you to measure the interest that your audience has for your content.
For example, let’s say you are running a promotion and you see a boost in “1 Day Active Users”, but a decrease after 7, 14, and 30 days, the promotion may be failing and your audience may be losing interest.

Lifetime Value

The lifetime value report calculates the long-term value of website users that you have acquired through social media, organic search, referral traffic, or direct traffic.
For example, with this report, you can discover the lifetime value for users you acquired through an email campaign.
You can then use that data to determine your marketing budget for acquiring those particular users.

Cohort Analysis

A cohort is a group of users who share a common characteristic, for example, all users with the same acquisition date will belong to a cohort.
You can use the cohort analysis report to analyse the behaviour of the users in that particular cohort.
For example, let’s say you launch a new product, you can set a cohort as the launch date and then view specific data about users who responded to your product launch.
See where they are from, what device they use, whether or not they purchased the product, how long they stayed on the page before leaving, and much more.

Audiences

Yes, this is an audience report within an audience report.

Using the audience report, you can create more defined audiences, and then apply them to other reports to look deeper into user behaviour.
You can create up to 20 unique audiences at any one time.
These can be used as secondary dimensions in reports, and as dimensions within segments, custom reports, and custom funnels.

User Explorer

The user explorer report analyses the behaviour of individual users that visit your website.
User-specific data provides you with information for each website visitor, this includes total sessions, average session duration, transactions, bounce rate, and more.
Individual user behaviour is recorded with either Client ID or User ID.
You can use this data to personalise or troubleshoot the user experience, this can help you to increase sales and decrease bounce rate.

Demographics

The demographics report displays the age and gender of your audience.
This information gives you the ability to add more precision to your advertising and content so that it is tailored to the right users.
For example, you can see the number of users on your website who are both male and between the ages of 25-34 within your selected time range.
You could then use that data to tailor your website's content to your specific audience.

Interests

The interests report provides you with information about your audience that you can use to make your advertising campaigns more accurate.
This report is split into three audience types:

- **Affinity Categories:** People labelled as part of a group or collective. For example TV audiences, sports fans, people who like to travel, etc.
- **In-Market Segments:** People who are in the market to purchase something. For example, people looking to buy a smartphone, sports equipment, holiday, etc.
- **Other Categories:** This is a more in-depth version of affinity categories. For example, football fans, game of thrones viewers, people that often travel by bus, etc.

This information can be used to run specific accurate advertising campaigns.

Geo

The Geo Audience report provides you with the language and location data for the users on your website.
This information can be used to create ads and content that would better suit users from countries that you would not have previously thought about.
Doing this can help you to create more successful ads, and bring in more customers and website visitors from around the world.

Behaviour

The behaviour report will help you to determine whether or not new users return to your site.
The report is split into three sections: New vs Returning, Frequency & Recency, and Engagement.
Viewing this report will show you if your site is encouraging first-time users to come back in the future.

Technology

This report helps you to understand more about how users are accessing your website, this includes which Operating System their device uses, which web browser they are using, and more.

You can use this report to ensure your website is operating and fully functional on all operating systems and browsers.
For example, if you suddenly see a drop in users visiting your site through Google Chrome, you may need to check for any possible problems.

Mobile

Use this report to see which mobile devices are being used by your site's visitors to access your content.
This data can be used to see if your site is properly optimized for each specific device.
The report will tell you the specific devices that your users are accessing your site with, such as Apple iPad, iPhone 8, Samsung Galaxy Note 10, etc.
In some cases it may not be able to tell you the exact device, so for iPhone 7 it may just say "Apple iPhone".

Custom

The custom report lets you define and compare more specific user segments.
It is split into two separate sections, custom variables and user-defined.
The data within this report provides very comprehensively, personalised information about how your users engage with your website.
For example, you could compare the bounce rate of new users to those who use a mobile device.

Benchmarking

Benchmarking allows you to compare your site's analytical data with aggregated data from other companies in your industry who share their data.
Having the ability to do this helps you to understand how you are doing in comparison to your competition, it allows you to set

relevant targets, and get insights into trends that are happening within your industry.
Compare your channels, location, and devices data with others in your industry, this is extremely useful to make sure that you are not falling behind.

Users Flow

The user's flow report helps you to learn more about what users do on your website.
This report provides you with a visual representation of the paths that your users took through your website, starting with the source, then through the pages, they visited, and finally where they exited your site.
Understanding more about how users find your site, what they do on it, and where they leave can give you useful information that can help you to improve conversions and session duration.

Acquisition Reports

The acquisition reports display detailed data specifically on how your audience find your website.
Did they find you through another website, also known as referral traffic?
Or did they find your site through social media?
Maybe they found your website through an organic search…
These reports will show you exactly how each user found your website.
To access acquisition reports, click "acquisition" on the left sidebar menu within your Google Analytics dashboard, then select the particular report you want to view.
Now let's take a look at each of the acquisition reports that are on your analytics account.

All Traffic

This report will show you which websites send you the most traffic.
The report is broken down into four sections:

- Channels
- Treemaps
- Source / Medium
- Referrals

It also displays information about the actions these particular users take, including Goal Completions, Bounce Rate, Pages per Visit, Average Session Duration, and more.

Google Ads

If you are running an advertising campaign through Google ads, this report will show you how well it's performing.
To access this data, you will need to link your Google Analytics account with your Google Ads account.
You can view 6 sections of data:

- Campaigns
- Treemaps
- Keywords
- Search Queries
- Hour of Day
- Final URLs

View this report to fully understand the performance of any Google ad campaigns that you're running.

Search Console

This report is incredibly useful if you want to understand how your website pages are performing in organic Google searches.
You will need to connect your Google Search Console account with Google Analytics to be able to view this data.
Once is it set up, there will be four sections of data you can view:

- Landing Pages
- Countries
- Devices

- Queries

For example, with this report, you could find out which web page has the most impressions within Google search results.
You can also use this report to find out which search queries users are searching in Google to find your webpages.

Social

The social acquisition report shows you how people engage with your website through social media.
Sort this data by:

- Network Referrals
- Landing Pages
- Conversions
- Plugins
- Users Flow

This data can be used to help you to identify which social platforms visitors find your site from, see if those users convert into customers, and more.

Campaigns

The campaigns report displays the performance of your paid advertising campaigns and compares them to other traffic sources.
This report also allows you to compare data from non-Google ad campaigns by giving you the ability to import cost data from external sources.
You can sort the data within this report by:

- All Campaigns
- Paid Keywords
- Organic Keywords
- Cost Analysis

Use this report to see if your advertising initiatives are beneficial compared to other forms of exposure.

Behaviour Reports

The behaviour reports display analytical data about the actions users take on your website.
This includes, how fast the pages load, what content they view, how they use the site search function, and more.
The information that you discover from these reports will help you to ensure your website is performing as it should be.
To view behaviour reports, click “behaviour” on the left side of your Google Analytics dashboard, then select the report you want.
Now, let’s take a look into each behaviour report.

Behaviour Flow

The Behavior Flow report visualises the path that users take when moving through your site.
If you want to discover which pieces of content keep your visitors engaged, this report will show you.
As well as that, this report can also help you to uncover any potential problems that users can face when viewing your content.
You will be required to set up and track events before they will appear in this particular report.

Site Content

The Site Content report helps you to discover how well each of your web pages are performing.
Using this report you can see what device visitors use to view each web page, their traffic source, whether users made a purchase after visiting a particular page, and much more.
You can use this data to see which web pages and pieces of content have the best performance.

The report is available in four sections:

- All Pages
- Content Drilldown
- Landing Pages
- Exit Pages

For each web page, you can see many data points, including Pageviews, Unique Pageviews, Avg. Time on Page, Entrances, Bounce Rate, % Exit, Page Value and more.

Site Speed

The Site Speed report shows how fast your web pages load for your website users.
You can sort this data by browser to see if your average page load time changes depending on the web browser.
There is also an option to sort the report into a map so that you can see the average page load time by country, this will show you where in the world users will have a slower loading time when viewing your website.
This report will also offer you suggestions for how you can improve the loading speed for each web page, this will open the Page Speed Insights tool by Google.

Site Search

This report shows how your website visitors interact with the search function on your site.
Using the information that this report displays, you can see what terms are searched for the most.
You can also use it to see the conversion rate for users who made a search on your website.
The report is split into three sections:

- Usage
- Search Terms
- Search Pages

This data is especially useful when it is used in a custom report.

Events

Events are independently trackable actions or interactions that are taken by website visitors.
This can include video views, file downloads, click to call, form submission, and many more.
This data is sorted into three sections:

- Top Events
- Pages
- Events Flow

This report is useful for when you want to view in-depth information about what users are doing on your website.
For example, if you have a PDF that your website visitors can download for free by entering their email address, you can track exactly how many people have done so.

Publisher

If you are using Google Adsense, or Ad Exchange the Publisher report provides you with monetization data about your site, including ad impressions and clicks.
This report requires your Analytics account to be connected to an Adsense or Ad Exchange account.
You can view two sections of data, Publisher Pages, and Publisher Referrers.

Conversion Reports

This section of Google Analytics reports covers completed actions, also known as conversions.
Within these reports, you can find out things like how many users have made a purchase on your site, how many people have created an account, and of course lots more.

Conversion reports provide you with information that will help you to see how you can increase conversions and improve your website's success.
Click "conversion" on the left menu on your Google Analytics account to open the conversion reports, and then select the report you want to view.
Let's take a look at the different conversion reports.

Goals

Setting up goals allows you to track particular actions users take on your website.
Once you have a goal set up, you can use this report to track how these goals are being completed.
The goal report displays data in four sections:

- Goal URLs
- Reverse Goal Path
- Funnel Visualization
- Goal Flow

If you want to find out what users do on your site before completing a goal, where in the world these users are, the source users found your site from before completing a goal, and much more, this report will give you the data you need.

E-commerce

This report helps you understand more about eCommerce statistics, including how well your products are performing, details on transactions, average order value and more.
The E-commerce report covers:

- Product Performance
- Sales Performance
- Transactions
- Time to Purchase

You will need to enable eCommerce tracking in the settings of your Google Analytics account, and add the eCommerce code snippet to access this data for your website.

Multi-Channel Funnels

The Multi-Channel Funnels report displays the different traffic sources that result in conversions, as well as that it shows you the value of each traffic source so you know what sort of marketing strategy you should be putting more time and resources into.
This report displays four different sections of data:

- Assisted Conversions
- Top Conversion Paths
- Time Lag
- Path Length

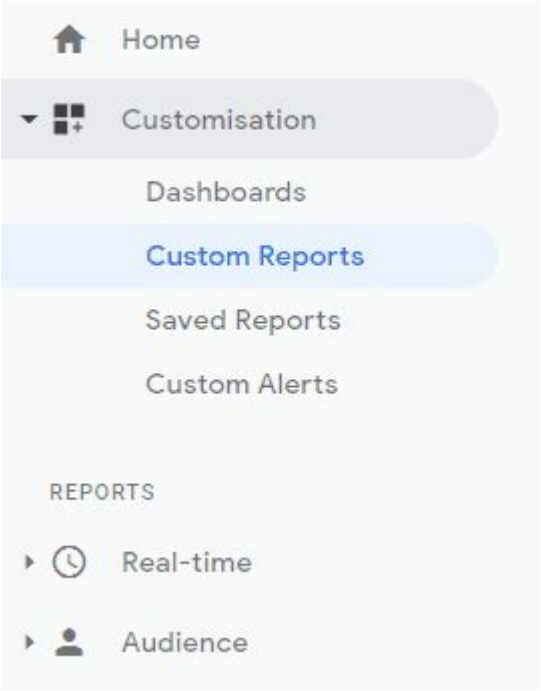
E-commerce businesses find this report especially useful for tracking conversions through social media.
There is also a tool included within this report called the “Model Comparison Tool” which you can use to compare different attribution models to each other to see which impacts the performance of your marketing channels the most.
An attribution model is a set of rules that are used to determine how conversions should be credited to various marketing channels.

Create Custom Reports

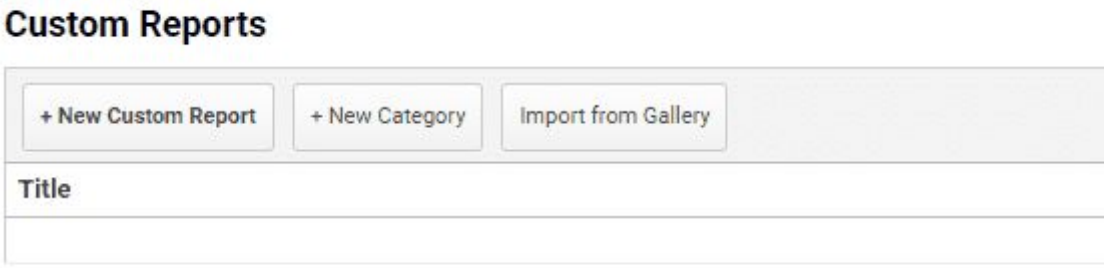
Setting up custom reports within Google Analytics allows you to put all of the most important analytical data in one convenient report.
Having the most important data in one place will help you to generate more leads, convert more visitors into customers, and grow your website.

Step 1 – Create Custom Report

To create a custom report the first thing you need to do is click on "Customization" on the left and then it will open a sub-menu. Here you want to click "Custom Reports".



Next, to create a new report click on "+ New Custom Report".



Now you will have to name your custom Google Analytics report.



This is mainly so that if you create multiple reports you can differentiate between them.

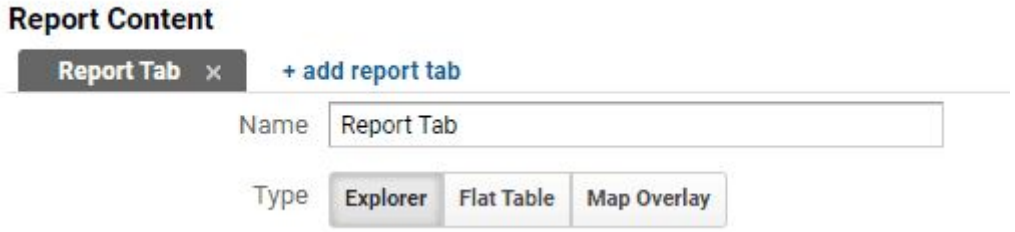
Step 2 – Choose A Report Type

Your custom report will have one tab by default, but you can choose to add more than one.
For this example, we will just have one, and we will also keep the default tab name.



The next step is to choose your custom report type.
There are three different options that you can choose from:

1. **Explorer:** This is the standard type of Google Analytics report, It includes a data table and line graph with dynamic features.
2. **Flat Table:** This type of custom report is a static, sortable table that displays data in rows.
3. **Map Overlay:** This style of report displays your data within a world map, showing you where in the world your site traffic or engagement is from.

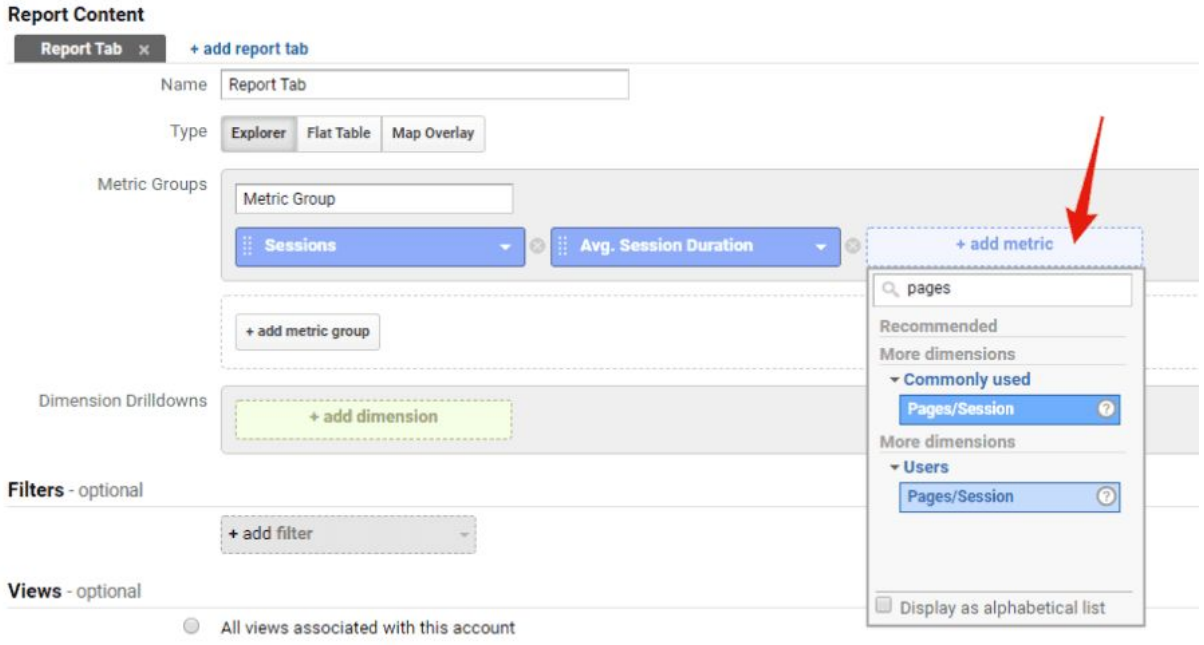


In this example, I am going to select the Explorer report type as it is the easiest for new users to understand.

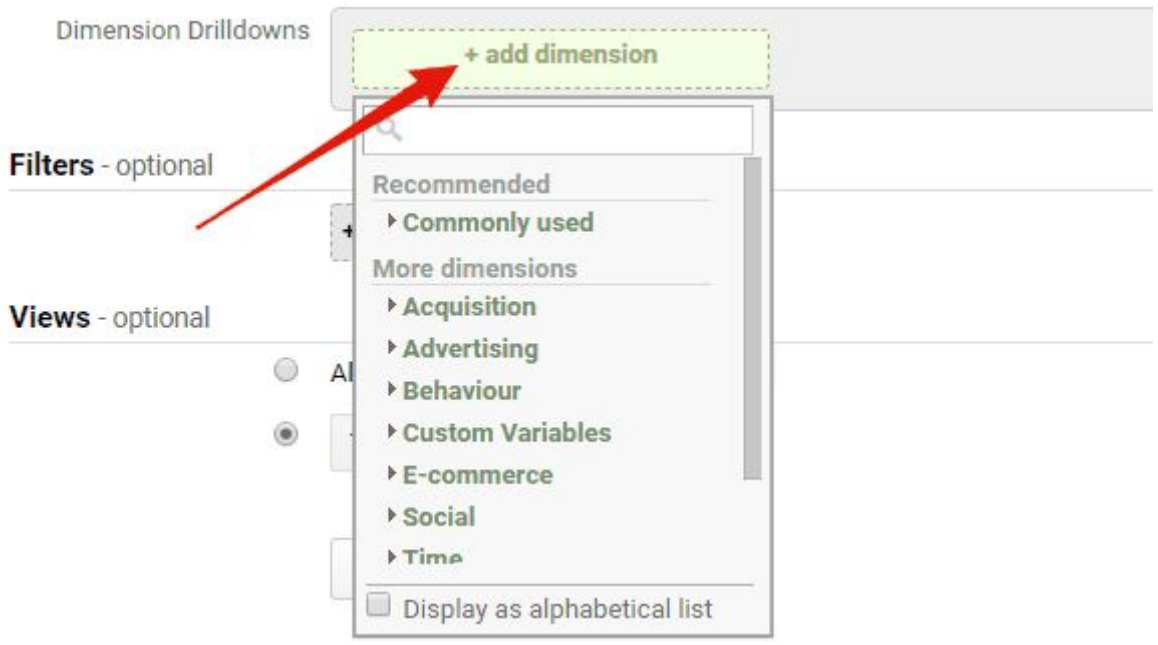
Step 3 – Define Your Report Metrics

The metrics available to you will be different depending on which custom report type you are using.

For every type of report, the metrics you add will decide which data is included inside your custom report.
In this example, I am going to add three metrics: sessions, average session duration and pages per session.
To add a new metric, click on the "+ add metric" button, search for the metric you want to add, and then click on it to add it.



If you wish to be more specific with the data you are targeting in your report, you can add dimension drilldowns.
To add a dimension, click on the "+ add dimension" button and then search for the one that you want to add.
In this example, I am going to select "source" to get more data about the source that referred the traffic to your website.

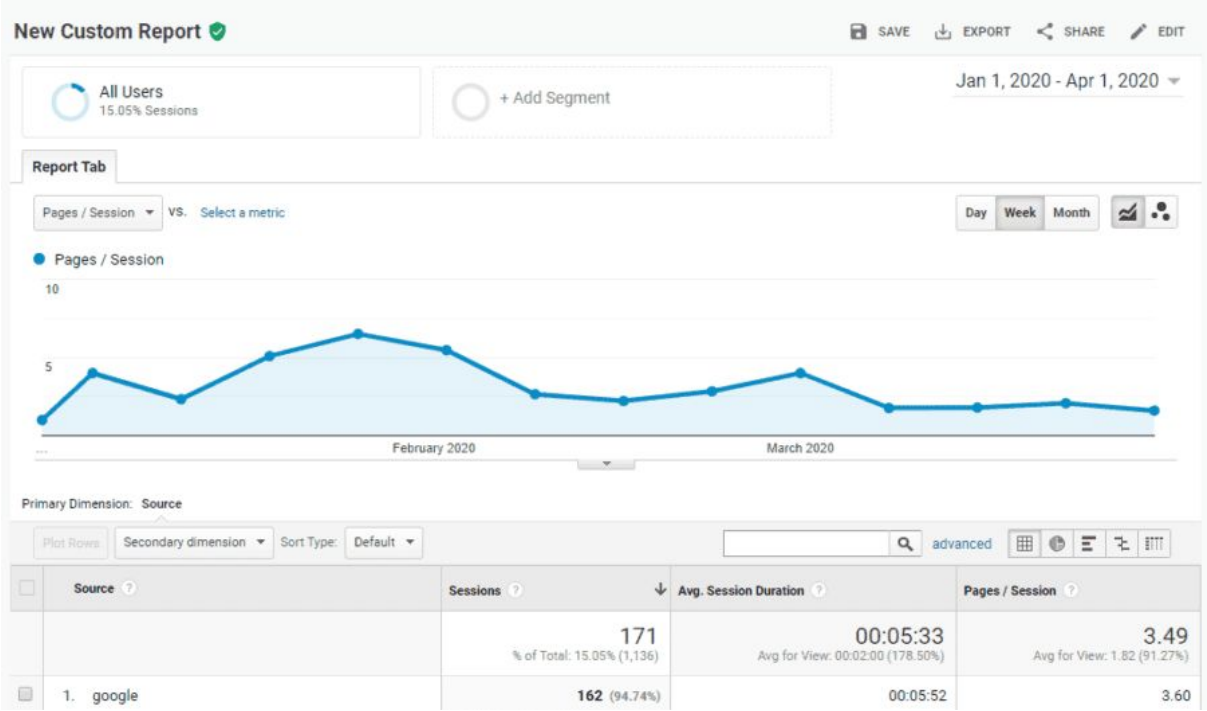


Step 4 – Add Report Filter

The final step is to add a filter to your report, although this is optional.
Adding filters will limit the report to specific dimensions.
You can use filters to exclude or include specific data.
For example, if you add the “Traffic Type” filter, you can restrict the report to show data from specific types of traffic, this could be organic traffic, referral traffic, direct traffic, or another type.



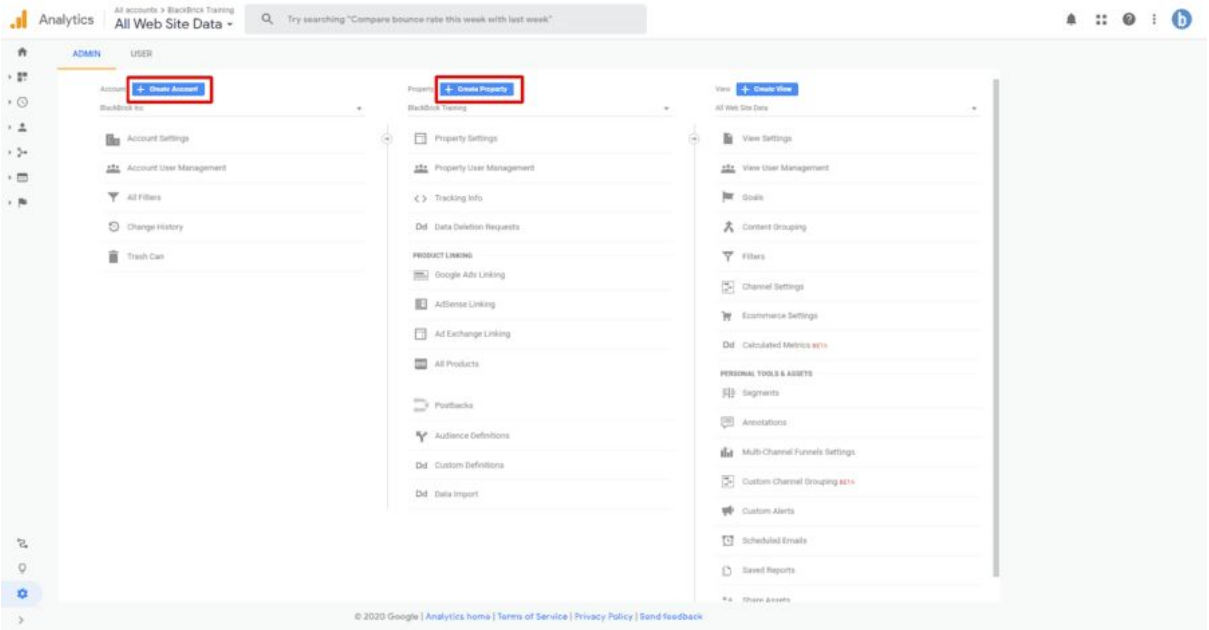
To add your filter, you just need to click on the “+ add filter” button and then pick the filters that you want to add to your report.
Your custom report has been created successfully!
Once you are done, remember to click save, and you will be sent straight to your new custom report.



If you want to view this report in the future, just go to “Customization”, and then “Custom Reports”, and click onto the report that you want to view.

Add Additional Accounts And Properties

Another thing that you may want to know how to do before diving into your analytical data, is adding new accounts and properties. To do this you need to head over the admin menu within your Google Analytics account.



To create a new account, simply click the “Create Account” button, or to create a new property, click the “Create Property” button. Decide which one you want to create and then click the relevant button, after that you will have to go through the step by step process of creating an account or property, just like we did earlier on.

Having a new property will allow you to track the analytical data for multiple websites.

If you want to organise or separate multiple properties by putting them in different accounts, you can do so by creating a new account.

You can have up to 100 Google Analytics accounts, and each account can have up to 50 separate properties.