

RAISING YOUR QUALITY SCORE IN GOOGLE ADS

Advanced Strategies & Solutions





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INTRODUCTION

Time and time again, we come across Google Ads accounts suffering from low ad Quality Scores (QS). Measured on a scale of 1-10 (where 10 is the highest), QS gives you an idea of how well your ads are delivering what customers are searching for. When your QS is low, you run the risk of higher bid costs and lower ad rankings, which can in turn wreak havoc on your advertising budget and prevent your ads from showing.

QS is in place to help you figure out what within your account needs work, but it isn't always intuitive what you should do to improve it. All it takes is a little bit of patience and some time to experiment for you to see how a higher QS can help your ads perform as best they can.

There are three major components of QS: an ad's expected click through rate (CTR), the ad's relevance to the targeted keyword, and the landing page experience that the ad leads to. This guide will show you step by step how to identify problems with each of these QS components and strategies for solving them.

Having your Google Ads account open and following along while you go through this guide is recommended, as you'll occasionally have to do a little bit of digging to find some of these data points. Now let's get started!

GETTING STARTED

The first step any business should take to improve QS is analyzing their current scores. Under the keyword section of your Google Ads account, you can view current QS and factors that influence it—Expected CTR, Ad Relevance, and Landing Page Experience. In addition, you can also see the last known, historical values of those data points. To see all this information, simply add the relevant columns into your report.

Modify columns for keywords



Performance



Conversions



Attribution



Bid simulator



Competitive metrics



Call details



Message details



Quality Score



☒ Quality Score

☒ Exp. CTR

☒ Ad relevance (hist.)

☒ Landing page exp. (hist.)

☒ Ad relevance

☒ Landing page exp.

☒ Quality Score (hist.)

☒ Exp. CTR (hist.)

After reviewing your account, you'll likely notice that your ads' QS vary. Google recognizes a QS of 5 as being the standard, but any score below 6 could use improvement. Discovering exactly what within your account is pulling down QS should be your primary concern.

For each of the factors that contribute to QS, Google assigns a grade of "Above Average," "Average," or "Below Average." It's here that you will be able to determine which components of QS need your attention. Pinpointing where your advertisements could use improvement saves you the time you'd spend trying to fix things without all the relevant data.

But before making any changes, it's important to draw your attention to a different metric within your Google Ads account that has a close relationship with QS, Ad Rank.

AD RANK

Fundamentally, QS is a way to measure the past performance of a particular keyword when it has gone to an ad auction. These auctions, which Google executes automatically, establish which ads will actually appear during a Google search and in what order. The order that ads appear in is determined by Ad Rank.

In order to be eligible to appear on a search engine results page (SERP), an ad has to possess a high enough Ad Rank. This metric is determined by a variety of factors, including: the location where the search took place, the device it was made on, the presence and utility of ad extensions, language preference, bid amount, and more. Ad Rank is recalculated every time one of your ads is triggered by a search query, taking into account the context of when, where, and how the search was made.



Having a high QS will lead to a better Ad Rank and, therefore, a higher ad position. The only way to achieve a high ad position without a high QS is by increasing your CPC bids. That is, if your ad's QS is on the lower end of the spectrum, it will require a high CPC to achieve a top Ad Rank. If, on the other hand, your ad has a high QS, you won't need to pay as much per-click for a high Ad Rank. The trick to consistently landing top ad placements is balancing out these two factors so that you're both placing a competitive max CPC bid and maintaining a great QS.

QS and Ad Rank are intrinsically connected. The efforts you make to change one will affect the other. If you are hoping to better the placements your ads receive you should focus on increasing QS, as it is easier to control than Ad Rank and won't force you to increase your CPC bids. And the most effective way to increase QS is by improving your clickthrough rate, so that's where you should turn your attention to first.

EXPECTED CLICKTHROUGH RATE

Your ads' Expected CTR reflects Google's prediction of the likelihood that someone will click them to visit your site. Improving your CTR in the meantime will positively influence how well Google believes your ad will do in the future. Essentially, if your ads are getting a lot of clicks now, Google will be more inclined to believe that trend will continue. So if an ad for one of your keywords has an "Above Average" expected CTR, it means that Google is predicting that your ad will receive more clicks than average. And if your ad has been assigned a "Below Average" status, it means you're likely to receive fewer clicks than average.

Identifying your low performing keywords based on Expected CTR helps you decide which ads you should be investing in. Digging deeper into what might be causing Google to assign a "Below Average" keyword status to one of your ads might reveal that you are better off spending your efforts on a different, more relevant keyword. A low Expected CTR indicates that Google doesn't have much faith in the future performance of your ad. Something about your ad just isn't compelling to them for one reason or another. By constantly reevaluating your advertisements' effectiveness, you'll be in a better position to stay on top of things, lessening the chance that your ads suffer from low page placements.

Determining the cause behind a low Expected CTR isn't always clear-cut. Remember, Google bases this evaluation on the past performance of your ads. It is possible that your ads have consistently appeared too low on the SERP and they just haven't been seen. Despite the uncertainty over what causes a low expected CTR, there's one common culprit: a mismatch between your ads and the keywords they're tied to.

SEARCH KEYWORDS		NEGATIVE KEYWORDS		SEARCH TERMS ▾
<input type="checkbox"/>	Search term	Match type	Added/Excluded	Campaign
Total: Search te... ②				
<input type="checkbox"/>	storage units near me	Exact match	Added	Orem
<input type="checkbox"/>	storage american fork	Broad match	None	American Fork
<input type="checkbox"/>	storage units	Exact match	Added	Orem

It is important to note that the "Expected CTR" keyword column in the QS section is different from the "CTR" column under Performance. Where the latter takes into account the influence ad position and inclusion of ad extensions bring to the table, the "Expected CTR" column is Google's prediction of the ad's effectiveness at its most simple form. Understanding how Google believes your ad will stack up against other ads targeting the same keyword without any kind of assistance will ensure that your ads aren't depending on high placements and ad extensions to appear engaging.

To improve a stubborn Expected CTR, take a look at your Search Terms Report to see exactly what people are typing into the Google search bar to come across your ads. You'll find this list under the keyword tab of your Google Ads account. Adding all the unrelated terms you come across to your negative keyword list, in addition to tinkering with the match type your ad is targeting, should positively affect your expected CTR over time.

While CTR isn't the only factor influencing the QS assigned to your targeted keywords, it might hold the biggest sway in the equation. If you aren't sure how your ads are doing, checking in on Google's appraisal of each keyword, which is based on past performance, would be a great way to start the account optimization process.

Expected CTR goes hand in hand with the other components that influence QS. Without a clear relationship between your keywords and their ad groups, Google isn't likely to believe many people will engage with your ad.

KEYWORD & AD GROUP RELEVANCE

The relevance of your keywords to your ads is essential to your (Expected) CTR and, therefore, your QS. Keyword Relevance matters because it is how Google determines whether or not your ad will meet the needs of searchers. The same goes for Ad Group Relevance: if your ad groups contain too broad a selection of keywords, Google won't consider those ads applicable when someone conducts a search using one of your targeted keywords. Looking at how ad group performances contribute to overall campaign effectiveness allows you to see where improvements are necessary.

Google rewards accounts that group together similar keywords by ad group. Establishing the initial connection between your ad and your targeted keywords is much easier when your keywords are arranged in tightly themed ad groups. One system for grouping keywords is by the individual products or services that you are advertising for. By keeping your ad groups strictly organized and tidy, your ad relevance should increase and raise your QS as a result.

Here at Logical Position, we find it is in our clients' best interest to separate all keywords into their own ad groups. This grants us a certain level of customization that helps ensure better ad relevance and a higher CTR. Not only do these single keyword ad groups perform better but this organizational method allows us to easily monitor both keyword and campaign performance.

FREE ACCOUNT REVIEW

Learn How To Increase Ad Relevance and CTR

By targeting highly specific, long-tailed keywords alongside general, broader search terms, you cover more ground, increasing the chance that potential customers come across one of your ads. Long-tailed keywords give advertisers the ability to create ads that are unique to the actual product or service they are advertising for. By targeting something like "men's size 11 blue running shoes" instead of just "men's shoes," your ad becomes specialized to a particular product people are looking for. If you find that a keyword you are targeting doesn't result in a lot of clicks you might want to scrap it all together and dive deeper, getting more specific to what you offer.



In addition, if a targeted keyword within an ad group is tanking the ad group's averaged QS, you might need to rethink your advertising strategy for that keyword. A good first step here is to check the ad copy for that ad group. Maybe it doesn't quite harmonize with that particular keyword as well as the others in the ad group and needs to be more relevant. Pulling that keyword out and placing it in a different ad group with new ad copy could result in a stronger connection between the keyword and its ad group and, as a result, a higher QS.

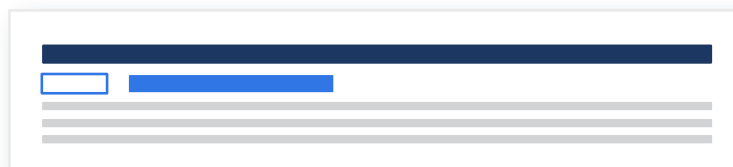
AD TEXT RELEVANCE

Like Expected CTR, the Ad Relevance metric gives great insight into how relevant Google judges your ad is to searchers. So, if your Ad Relevance is assigned a “below average” status, a problem might exist within the ad text. To change this, it would be wise to write a more detailed description of your product or service in the ad copy, making sure to include your targeted keyword in the body and the headline.

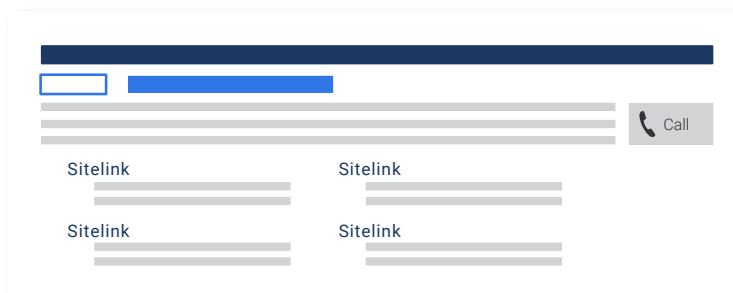
Once the ad text is fully fleshed out with details personalized by keyword and engaging language that incentivises the reader to learn more, it’s time to start thinking about ad extensions. By utilizing extensions like click-to-call and sitelinks, your ads have the potential to differentiate themselves from those they are competing against for better ad placements. You can include ad extensions that display your phone number, a link to a specific page on your website, special offers, and more.

Ads with extensions take up more space on the results page which raises the likelihood that your ad will catch the viewer’s attention. Furthermore, ad extensions have the potential to give off an authoritative air to your ad. The simple addition of a sitelink or a visible address and phone number make an advertisement look more reliable and trustworthy.

Without ad extensions



With ad extensions



Once you’ve created your ad, you can compare different versions of it through A/B testing. To run an A/B test, identify which component of the ad you want to test (headline 1, headline 2, description, etc.), and then create a second version of the ad with that component modified. At the end of the test, you’ll know which version of the ad leads to a higher CTR and QS. A/B tests take some time to conduct, so wait until the ads have accumulated a several weeks of impressions before you declare one of them “the winner.”

LANDING PAGE EXPERIENCE

The last thing to consider when thinking about the variables that determine QS is the landing page quality and relevance. The landing page is where a person is redirected to when they click on your ad. The number one mistake advertisers make here is designating their website's home page as the landing page for all their ads. By instead choosing the landing page based on each targeted keyword, Google will be more likely to believe the advertisement is pertinent to the search term, resulting in a higher QS.



In choosing landing pages for your ads, it's a good idea to pick a general one when the keyword is general, and a more specific one when the keyword is specific. For example, if you are creating an advertisement for a product that you sell online, designate the landing page for that ad as the page where a person can learn more about that individual product. The key point here is that, above all, a landing page must be consistent with both the targeted keyword and the ad copy.

Keep in mind the number of steps your audience will have to go through to make a purchase or get in touch for more information when choosing a landing page. The more hoops you force them to go through, the less likely they are to stay on your site. Whatever the landing page is, it must provide meaningful information in regards to what you're advertising for. In addition to being informative on product/service, Landing Page Experience takes into account what information about your business you make accessible on your site and how easy it is to navigate.

Having essential business information—like your address, phone number, and other contact information—available for website visitors to view improves QS because it helps foster a sense of accountability in Google's eyes. Making sure website visitors can get from page to page with ease can do wonders for landing page experience. And if your website isn't mobile-friendly, you should make that a priority.

Not only are you missing out on any mobile traffic your ads might bring in, but your Landing Page Experience will improve as well.



Other factors that influence Landing Page Experience include how fast a user is redirected after clicking on an ad. The quicker that landing page loads the better your QS will be, but there is a benchmark of three seconds. If you are unsure of your page loading times, Google has a [service](#) where they will tell you and even supply a complimentary review with more detailed results and suggestions on how to improve it.

These reports walk you through how they calculated your loading time and an estimated percentage of viewer loss due to load times over the three second standard.

If the status of your landing page remains "below average" after implementing a few changes, you should ask yourself how valuable is the information on your site to visitors? Is it useful, relevant, and original content? As long as your landing page is directly related to your advertisement, is easy to navigate, and offers some form of utility to website visitors you should see that status rising to an "average" or "above average" in no time.

CONCLUSION

Securing and preserving a high QS can be a struggle. Improving your QS is a process—it takes time to see results—so don't get discouraged if you don't see immediate improvement. QS is an average of your ads historical performance, fixing the problems that are negatively influencing it now will put everything in place for that average to increase over time.

Once everything is squared away, your efforts should produce higher ad positions at a lower cost. If you find that your QS isn't getting any better after implementing the changes detailed above, you should consider getting your account professionally reviewed. Here at Logical Position we offer account reviews that provide businesses with a variety of strategies that can help enhance overall account performance, at no cost and with no commitments required. Schedule your account review here and learn how you can get more out of your digital advertising endeavors.

Maximize Your Google Ads Budget
& Capture More Customers

GET YOUR FREE REVIEW





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