Keyword Research Guide

A step-by-step guide to finding and prioritising the right keywords for your business. Learn how to identify search intent, evaluate keyword difficulty, and build a data-driven content strategy.

15%	**70%**	**Intent**	**Free**
OF GOOGLE SEARCHES ARE BRAND NEW DAILY	OF SEARCHES ARE LONG-TAIL KEYWORDS	MATCHING INTENT DRIVES CONVERSIONS	KEYWORD RESEARCH GUIDE

What You Will Learn

This guide walks you through the complete keyword research process: from understanding search intent and brainstorming seed keywords, to evaluating difficulty and prioritising opportunities. By the end, you will have a practical framework for building a keyword strategy that drives targeted organic traffic.

Why keyword research matters: Keyword research is the foundation of every successful SEO strategy. Without it, you are guessing what your audience is searching for. With it, you can create content that matches real demand, target the right opportunities, and outperform competitors in search results.

What This Guide Covers

✓ Understanding the four types of search intent
✓ Keyword types: head terms, long-tail, questions
✓ Research methodology & tools
✓ Volume vs difficulty analysis
✓ Prioritisation framework & scoring
✓ Local keyword strategy
✓ Implementation & content mapping

Common Keyword Mistakes

✗ Targeting only high-volume head terms
✗ Ignoring search intent completely
✗ Not analysing competitor keywords
✗ Keyword stuffing instead of natural use
✗ No content mapping (multiple pages targeting same keyword)
✗ Forgetting local keyword modifiers
✗ Not tracking or measuring results

1 Understanding Search Intent

Search intent is the reason behind a query. Google prioritises content that matches intent, so understanding this is critical for ranking.

INTENT TYPE	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE KEYWORDS	CONTENT TYPE
Informational	User wants to learn something	"what is SEO", "how to build backlinks"	Blog posts, guides, tutorials
Navigational	User is looking for a specific site/page	"Google Search Console login", "Ahrefs pricing"	Brand pages, login pages
Commercial	User is researching before buying	"best SEO tools 2025", "SEO agency reviews"	Comparisons, reviews, listicles
Transactional	User is ready to take action / buy	"hire SEO consultant London", "buy Ahrefs plan"	Service pages, product pages, pricing

How to Identify Intent from SERPs

Search for your target keyword and examine the top 10 results. If the results are mostly blog posts, the intent is informational. If they are product/service pages, the intent is transactional. If you see comparison articles or "best of" listicles, the intent is commercial. **Always match your content type to the dominant SERP intent.**

2 Keyword Types

Head Terms

→ **1–2 words**, very high volume, very high competition. Example: "SEO", "digital marketing"

→ Difficult to rank for as a small or medium business. Often too broad to convert well.

Long-Tail Keywords

→ **3–5+ words**, lower volume, lower competition, higher conversion rate. Example: "SEO audit checklist for small business"

→ These make up **70% of all search queries** and are the fastest path to organic traffic.

Question Keywords

→ Queries starting with **who, what, when, where, why, how**. Excellent for featured snippet opportunities.

→ Example: "how to improve website SEO", "what is keyword difficulty"

Local Keywords

→ Include **location modifiers**: "SEO agency London", "web designer near me", "IT support Manchester"

→ Essential for businesses serving a geographic area. Often lower competition with high buying intent.

Avoid Keyword Cannibalisation

Never target the same keyword on multiple pages. This confuses Google about which page to rank and dilutes your authority. Each keyword should map to exactly one page.

3 Research Methodology

Follow this systematic process to build a comprehensive keyword list from multiple data sources.

Step 1: Seed Keyword Brainstorming

→ List your **core services, products, and topics** — these are your seed keywords

→ Ask your sales team: **what questions do customers ask?** What terms do they use?

→ Review your **website navigation and page titles** for existing keyword themes

→ Check **Google Search Console** for queries you already receive impressions for

Step 2: Competitor Analysis

→ Identify your **top 3–5 organic competitors** (not always your business competitors)

→ Use Ahrefs/SEMrush to find **keywords they rank for that you do not**

→ Look for **content gaps** — topics they cover that you have not addressed

Step 3: Tool-Assisted Expansion

TOOL	BEST FOR	FREE/PAID
Google Keyword Planner	Search volume, CPC data, keyword ideas	Free (with Google Ads account)
Google Search Console	Existing queries, impressions, CTR	Free
Google Trends	Seasonal trends, rising queries, regional interest	Free
Also Asked / AlsoAsked.com	Question-based keyword discovery, PAA boxes	Free / Freemium
Answer The Public	Question & preposition-based queries visualised	Free / Paid
Ahrefs / SEMrush	Competitor analysis, keyword difficulty, SERP analysis	Paid
Ubersuggest	Keyword suggestions, content ideas	Free / Paid

Step 4: Volume vs Difficulty Matrix

Plot keywords on a **2x2 matrix**: high volume + low difficulty = **quick wins**. High volume + high difficulty = **long-term targets**. Low volume + low difficulty = **easy content**. Low volume + high difficulty = **avoid**.

> **Evaluating Keyword Difficulty**
>
> Keyword difficulty scores (KD) from tools like Ahrefs estimate how hard it is to rank in the top 10. KD 0–20 = Easy (can rank with quality content alone). KD 21–50 = Medium (needs quality content + some backlinks). KD 51–75 = Hard (needs strong domain authority + multiple backlinks). KD 76+ = Very Hard (requires significant authority and link building).

4 Keyword Prioritisation Framework

Use this scoring system to rank your keyword opportunities and decide where to focus your efforts first.

Priority Score Formula: Volume Score (1–5) + Intent Match (1–5) + Difficulty Inverse (1–5) + Business Relevance (1–5) = Priority Score (out of 20)

KEYWORD	MONTHLY VOLUME	DIFFICULTY	INTENT

Quick Wins (Target First)

✓ Keywords with KD under 30
✓ You already rank positions 11–30
✓ High business relevance
✓ Clear content gap to fill
✓ Can be published within 1–2 weeks

Long-Term Targets

✗ Keywords with KD 50+
✗ High volume, high competition
✗ Requires link building campaign
✗ Needs cornerstone content
✗ 6–12 month ranking timeline

Content Mapping: Assign Keywords to Pages

Each keyword should be assigned to **one specific page** on your site. Map primary keywords to existing pages where possible. Create new pages only for keywords that have no existing content match. Group related secondary keywords under the same page.

5 Local Keyword Strategy

For businesses serving a specific geographic area, local keywords are often the fastest path to qualified traffic and leads.

"Near Me" & Location Keywords

→ **"Near me" searches** have grown 500% in recent years — they signal high buying intent

→ Target **[service] + [location]** combinations: "SEO agency London", "IT support Birmingham"

→ Include **neighbourhood and borough-level** modifiers for large cities: "web design Shoreditch"

→ Create **dedicated location pages** for each area you serve with unique content per page

Google Business Profile Keywords

→ Your GBP **primary category** is the strongest local ranking factor — choose it carefully

→ Use target keywords in your **business description, services, and posts**

→ Encourage reviews that **naturally mention your services and location**

Local Pack Ranking Factors

→ **Relevance:** How well your GBP matches the search query

→ **Distance:** How close your business is to the searcher

→ **Prominence:** How well-known your business is (reviews, citations, backlinks)

Industry-Specific Keyword Patterns

INDUSTRY	EXAMPLE KEYWORDS	INTENT
IT Services	"managed IT support London", "cloud migration services UK"	Commercial / Transactional
Legal	"employment solicitor Manchester", "commercial lease lawyer"	Transactional
Healthcare	"private GP near me", "physiotherapy clinic Leeds"	Transactional
E-commerce	"buy organic skincare UK", "best running shoes 2025"	Transactional / Commercial
B2B SaaS	"project management software for agencies", "CRM comparison"	Commercial

6 Implementation Plan

Turn your keyword research into action with this implementation framework.

Keyword-to-Content Mapping Template

TARGET KEYWORD	TARGET PAGE / URL	CONTENT TYPE	STATUS

Content Calendar Template

WEEK	TOPIC / KEYWORD	CONTENT TYPE	OWNER
Week 1			
Week 2			
Week 3			
Week 4			

Tracking & Measurement KPIs

→ **Organic traffic** — total sessions from organic search (GA4)

→ **Keyword rankings** — position tracking for target keywords (weekly)

→ **Impressions & CTR** — search visibility in Google Search Console

→ **Organic conversions** — leads, sales, or goals from organic traffic

→ **Pages indexed** — ensure new content is being crawled and indexed

Notes

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