A comprehensive guide on using Google Trends for keyword research

30-second summary:

- Keywords are still important for SEO, but what's increasingly important is their relevance, uniqueness, and popularity over time.
- Google Trends is a powerful tool that lets you gauge this and more.
- With Google Trends, you can get a view of what keywords to include, what to avoid, and what to plan for.
- You also get deeper dives into related topics, predictions, and how to overcome blind spots.

As an SEO professional, we're sure that there's one word you've heard and used often, and that is, "keywords". After all, if you know what people are searching for, you can create content that guides them to your site. A great way to identify effective keywords is by using Google Trends, one of the world's largest real-time datasets. It can give you an insight into what people are searching for, interested in, and curious about.

With more than 3.5 billion Google searches conducted every day, this is a powerful tool you can't ignore. In the words of the Google Trends team, "you can now explore minute-by-minute, real-time data behind the more than 100 billion searches that take place on Google every month, getting deeper into the topics you care about."

Now, you may be thinking that this sounds great – but where do I begin? Take a deep breath and pay attention because we're going to outline the 11 best ways you can use Google Trends to

come up with apt keywords.

Ready? Let’s go.

1. Understand keyword search volume

Keyword search volume refers to how many times specific words were searched for during a given time frame. If sites contain words with a high volume, it’s clear that they’re going to get more traffic.

If you enter any keywords into Google Trends, you get to see how interest in that topic has increased or decreased over the course of time.

Here’s an example. Type in “coronavirus” and see for yourself the peaks and valleys in consumer interest. You can also see which regions it is more or less popular in.

Here, we should point out that the popularity of the keywords shown is relative. The graph represents the ratio of the number of times that word was searched relative to the total number of all searches during that time.

2. Identify seasonal trends

One of the great advantages of having search data mapped on a graph is that you can easily spot the highs and lows of how many times keywords were searched for.

As a savvy marketeer which you must be, or you wouldn’t be reading this – you know that capitalizing on seasonal popularity means attracting more customers. You can craft campaigns around such trends and adjust your sales plans and inventory accordingly.

Here are some obvious examples. If you type in “pizza”, you get a graph that’s fairly consistent and more or less flat. But if you type in “Christmas pudding”, you’ll see a flat line rising to a very high peak in December.

Correctly identifying such trends means being able to plan in advance and then taking advantage of heightened interest. Sounds like something you’ll want to do.

3. Avoid jumping onto the trendy keyword bandwagon

When doing keyword research, you need to know whether a search term is going to remain popular or whether it’s just a result of short-lived buzz. Here again, Google Trends can help.

There’s a table on the page that lets you view search interest for a specific keyword over the last few years. This way, you’ll immediately see whether a topic has just spiked once and then dropped or whether it’s of lasting interest.

Here’s another example. Type in “fidget spinners,” and you’ll see that there was a huge spike in 2017 when no-one could get enough of those toys. So if you were counting on attracting people to your site using “fidget spinners” that isn’t going to happen.

4. Stay away from unicorn keywords

Hold on. Aren’t unicorns what they call start-ups valued at over USD one billion? Yes, that’s right, but there are other types. Unicorn keywords, for instance.

These are generic industry terms that may sound good to include in your content but don’t necessarily make much of a difference. They are high volume but low competition. For example, “cloud computing” or even “courier services”.

It’s always better to use more precise keywords. For example, you could modify unicorn keywords to more accurately reflect your services. Checking Google Trends will provide you with information on such generic keywords, which you can then adapt for your needs.

5. Find relevant trending topics

Trends. We all want to stay on top of them as this will attract more customers. Well, Google Trends can obviously help in this case, too.

You can check Google Trends to find out which topics are trending in your niche and then keep track of traffic.

6. Find related topics

Often, even keywords not directly linked to your business can be helpful. There are other keywords that may be related but will still boost traffic.

It’s simple to do this with Google Trends. After you type in a relevant keyword, you can scroll down to find tables of related topics and related queries.

Typing in courier services, for example, will show you rising and falling trends for this search phrase. But in the related queries section, you’ll see “overnight courier services”. If you can use this as a relevant keyword, chances are your traffic will increase. Overnight.

7. Use trends predictions

You can look at Google Trends as a mirror to show you what people are interested in at this moment. But this tool can also help you use forecasting and trend data to suggest which keywords are going to rise in popularity in the future. This lets you plan ahead and prepare for traffic boosting opportunities that will arise in the days to come.

As a start, you can look at this prediction from the Google team on themes that are rising in 2021: equality, data ethics, and reaching the at-home consumer.

8. Use local SEO tactics

You already know the importance of leveraging local SEO strategies. There are many consumers near you, and they are the ones that can easily be targeted with effective digital

and keyword tactics.

Google Trends can be a great help with this approach, too. You can use local keyword trends to see which regions need your products or services. And then, you can fine-tune your strategy to reflect this.

For example, you could type in “cloud computing”, with a USA filter to get overall trends for that keyword phrase. And then drill down further to see in which towns and cities the phrase is most used.

9. Video SEO

A statistic on HubSpot indicates that 86% of businesses use video as a marketing tool. That’s not surprising, after all, 85% of all internet users in the United States watched online video content monthly on any of their devices. And 54% want to see more video content from a brand or business they support.

[Source.]

Hence, video SEO is critical. It’s the process of optimizing your video to be indexed so that it ranks on the results pages for keyword searches.

How can Google Trends help you with this?.

Enter your search term, and then change web search to YouTube search. You can find the relevance and also related queries, as well as which words are trending. This should give you invaluable insights to tweak your video titles and descriptions for better results.

10. Use long-tail key phrases

Long-tail keyphrases are defined as those that are different from general keywords. They are specific to whatever product

or service you’re selling.

For example, while “running shoes” can be a generic keyword, a long-tail version of this could be “men’s running shoes with thick soles”.

As you can see, such phrases have low competition and high conversion. This is why they are so important for effective SEO.

With Google Trends, you can cross-reference the popularity of different keywords. And then, you can combine related terms to get a good idea of relevant long-tail keywords. Whether you’re into cloud computing or running shoes, it makes a difference.

11. Identify blind spots

Blind spots exist in life and also in keywords.

There are keywords that we feel are important, even though they may be generic and high-volume. There are other keywords that somehow never occur to us, even though they may be of interest to consumers.

Intelligent use of Google Trends means that you can probe these areas to arrive at insights that let you capitalize on what’s trending with your target audience.

Use various combinations of keywords, always check the related queries box, and get a wider view of the timeline. Combine these to check whether keywords are popular over time, whether there’s just a specific spike, and if there are other aspects that consumers feel are important.

All this will let you get over the blind spots to give you 20/20 vision.

In conclusion: Google Trends is your powerful keyword partner

At a time when every online expert is hunting for keywords, Google Trends can give you the edge.

You can use it to come up with powerful, popular keywords to boost traffic in surprising and positive ways.

It can help you discover keywords that make sense in context. It can help you to spot profitable trends. And it can help you come up with long-tail keywords that consumers are searching for.

The 11 principles outlined above should go a long way in setting precise and effective keywords for your business. After that, if you want more of a deep dive, head on over to Google's own training center for more lessons.

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More about:

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