How to Get Google AdWords Certification: A Step-by-Step Guide by @coreydmorris

Google AdWords certification is an important credential for individuals as it is one of the few standardized ways to prove a certain level of knowledge or topical relevance.

While it isn’t an exclusive badge, it requires a certain level of work learning the concepts or experience in day-to-day AdWords use to attain.

What is Google AdWords Certification?

Google AdWords certification is a process by which Google recognizes marketers as experts in online advertising. After passing two AdWords certification exams, individuals get a personalized certificate and appear on a Google Partners public profile page.

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Like many Google products, properties, and initiatives, the program has evolved over the years.

The certification program used to be a standalone program and had a cost attached to taking exams. That changed with the creation of the Google Partners program.

Individual certification still works in very much the same way it did a few years ago. However, being exclusively offered within the Google Partners program can be confusing for individuals and students who aren’t currently working for or affiliated with a Google Partner agency.

Certification has become a minimum or expected requirement even for entry-level search marketing roles for agencies and corporations over the years.

Even when I hire someone that will go through our training program, knowing that they were willing to invest time and see the importance of taking the step of getting certified is crucial.

Having that base level of subject matter exposure from Google is much more specific than what a school text book can provide on how Google AdWords works.

On top of that, there’s value in being able to affiliate that individual who is already certified with my company Google Partner account as well.

This step-by-step guide provides a walkthrough of how to get AdWords certified in the current Google Partner program as it can be a confusing process when doing it for the first time.

Step 1: Create or Select Your Google Account

Start by determining the right Google account to use for your certification.

If you work for an agency or a company, you’re likely to be required to use your work email address.

If you’re an individual and doing the certification on your own, you’ll want to pick a Google account that you want to have your certification tied to personally and publicly.

This can be a Gmail account or a Google account that you create tied to any personal email account.

You can easily create a new account at http://accounts.google.com.

Step 2: Join Google Partners

When you have your Google account squared away, make sure you are signed out of any other Google accounts.

Like some other Google products, there can be confusion or login challenges when you're currently logged into multiple accounts.

When only logged into the account you want to use for certification, go to http://google.com/partners.

Click on the "Join Google Partners" tab and then on the "Join Now" button.

You'll be presented with the terms of service. Once you click through that, you're officially in the Google Partners program.

The name of the program and wording on the Google Partners home page is often confusing to individuals and those going through the process for the first time.

It sounds very much like just a company or corporate thing.

However, this is the intended and only way individuals can get certified currently.

Don't let the wording on this intro page trip you up – you're in the right place.

Google's help article on the topic provides further validation.

Step 3: Complete Your Profile

Next, it's time to complete your profile.

This is your individual profile that can be publicly listed in the Google Partner directory (if you choose the public versus private option on this page) and is your official profile that your certifications will be tied to.

Once you click on this link in the navigation menu, you're required to complete some specific fields if Google doesn't already have this information in your account.

You also have the option of searching for your company in the directory and requesting to be formally "affiliated" with it.

If you take this step you'll need to submit the affiliation request and administrator for your company Google Partner account will need to verify it on their end to make it official.

Step 4: Prepare for Exams

Google provides both basic educational info and their more extensive academy content.

If you're brand new to AdWords and the certification exams, you should go through the academy content.

You'll need to plan on investing at least four hours of time to go through the video and written content and pass the sample exam questions for each module.

If you've been managing AdWords campaigns, or have deeper exposure, it's still a good idea to go through the modules – even if you do it at a faster pace.

The sample questions are quite helpful – they are written in the same format as they appear on the real exams.

Unless you have previously been certified and/or have a moderate level of AdWords experience – don't skip the training content!

Step 5: Pass Fundamentals Exam + One Additional Exam

To become certified you are required to pass the AdWords fundamentals exam plus one of the additional exams of your choice.

The additional advertising exams include:

- Search.
- Display.
- Video.
- Mobile.
- Shopping.

While search and display are the two long-standing additional exams, Google is heavily pushing video and YouTube advertising.

Any one of the additional exams you pass in addition to Fundamentals will certify you.

I recommend you choose one that is best suited to the specific advertising you do or in an area that you are willing to invest time in learning so it can provide as much value as possible to your current or future role.

If you're an overachiever or love standardized tests, there's nothing that says you can't take them all.



Note that if you fail to pass an exam, there's a waiting period before you can retry. That's the only real penalty to not passing.

Be sure to focus on the AdWords Fundamentals exam and prepare accordingly as that exam is required for certification and you must pass it.

If you pass it and fail one of the secondary exams, you can still get certified inside of the waiting period by passing one of the other exams offered.

Conclusion

Once you've completed your certification, you should be proud of your accomplishment. While it is a requirement to be certified by many hiring managers and companies, it still takes effort to go through the learning materials and/or to have been working in AdWords for a period of time to pass.

Beyond AdWords, the Google Analytics exam is also part of the Google Partner program, as well as some newer certifications on mobile sites and digital sales. Depending on your role and career path, these can be great additional certifications and specializations to attain as well.

Make note of when your exam certifications expire so you can renew in time. Also, make note of other exams in the AdWords suite that you can take to further enhance your knowledge and specialization credentials. Partner companies can achieve specific specializations based on affiliated individuals having passed additional exams on the specific sub-topics providing value for both the certified individual and the company.

More Google AdWords Resources Here:

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