The Complete Keyword Research Workbook

Your How-To Manual for Better Organic Rankings





INTRODUCTION

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There are so many things that people are searching for nowadays— and with such high competition over queries, it seems almost impossible to rank on page one.

However, it's not as hopeless as it may seem. Proper keyword research can help you appear in organic results, slowing pushing consistent traffic to your website.

But in order to compete and stand out, you have to have a strategy beyond guesswork or a simple Google Suggest recommendation.

That's why we created this workbook.

That's right, this is a workbook, meaning there are assignments! But before you slide into panicky flashbacks of college exams, adjust your mindset.

This book is intended to help you do actual keyword research. Instead of simply reading about best practices, you'll be applying the lessons to narrow down the right search phrases for your campaigns.

Together, we'll help you to:

- + Craft a keyword brainstorming document and host a kickass thinktank workshop
- + Develop a data-backed keyword strategy, with SMART goals to achieve your KPIs

Basically, after reading this guide, you'll leave with a full understanding of what keyword research is, how to whip up your own comprehensive keyword target sheet, and—most importantly—increase your organic rankings.

Contents

- 1. Getting Started: Goal Setting & Brainstorming
- 2. Accessing Your (& Your Competitors) Current Organic Reach
- 3. Determining New Keyword Targets



GETTING STARTED

Goal Setting & Brainstorming



Any good plan begins with a brainstorming session—so grab a notepad and a pen, and get your thinking cap on. While we'll eventually unite for a group thinktank, this initial exercise starts with you.

Get Some Focus

Where, specifically, do you want more organic traffic?

Are there certain products or services that you (and your company at large) are hoping to push or currently promoting?

To conduct keyword research on and devise a ranking strategy for every product or service on your website would be quite a feat for many mid-to-large-sized businesses.

Instead, start small. Choose your top 3-5 products or services to promote. Jot them down.

Next, narrow those down the one focus-area to build out during this workbook. This might mean having a conversation with your C-suite or stakeholders to validate the best move, but, for now, jot down your best guess.



ASSIGNMENT #1

Choose one of your products or services to do keyword research on.



In order to give you some context during this workbook, we've developed a fun backstory.

Let's say there's an eco-friendly kitchenware supplier named Eco-Kitchen. They make kitchen equipment, tools, etc. made from recycled, environmentally-friendly materials and products designed to reduce food waste. One product the company sells is a line of silicon, washable sandwich bags. These reusable bags replace the need for wasteful plastic alternatives and are called Eco-Bags (I know— what a clever fictitious name!).

Eco-Bags are Eco-Kitchen's newest product and projected to be a top seller, so their marketing head decides to do keyword research around reusable bags and similar synonyms. Excellent.

With this in mind, let's get started!



Analyze Your Searcher's Intent

In theory, Eco-Kitchen may have performed keyword research before deciding to name their Eco-Bags product, but let's say they didn't. (They have this nasty habit of just putting the word "Eco" in front of everything!). That's okay, it works perfectly for our example, since you, as our reader, are likely going to be promoting a product you weren't responsible for naming too!

Before you do any keyword hunting, it's crucial that you understand a few things about your target demographic and their problems. You see, searchers are problem-solvers by nature. When they take to Google, they're asking questions or typing phrases aimed at getting them some answers.

Searchers don't think in terms of keywords. This is an important notion to realize early on. Searchers think about solutions, and in order to rank organically, you need to serve them answers to their common questions, concerns, desires, etc.

No matter how much you stuff a crappy article or product page with keywords, it's not going to stack up on the search engine results pages (SERPs) the same way a helpful, informative page does.

What You Need is a "Persona"

Begin your private brainstorm by asking yourself, "Who is the type of person that would want my product or service? What problems do they have? What do they enjoy? What do they hate? How can my product or service help them?"

These are the types of questions you ask to develop a little thing called a buyer persona. A buyer persona is a fictitious representation of one of your customers, and by answering questions like these, you can develop your very own persona for the product or service you chose for this keyword build, if you don't already have one.

Remember, you have to understand the wants and struggles of your audience before you can start thinking about what they're searching for online. Please don't skip this step! Download our 8 Questions to Ask When Developing Buyer Personas ebook to create a persona for your keyword build.

For the sake of our example, we made a sample buyer persona for our ideal Eco-Bag customer!

Eco-Friendly Emily

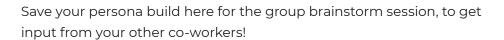
Emily is a stay-at-home mom who loves eating home-grown, organic food. Some she harvests right from her small garden, and gets the rest at her local farmer's market.

She cares deeply about healthy living—from what she and her family eat to the chemicals they use to clean their home. She's also concerned about the environment beyond her garden, and is a devoted recycler and clean product purchaser.

Emily's always looking for new ways to introduce her children to natural, sustainable options — with hopes that they'll grow into eco-friendly, health-conscious adults like herself.









Great, you have a persona built out now. Your next step is to understand that your persona will have different life stage cycles in a thing called their buyer's journey.

The buyer's journey is essentially a path a potential customer takes from initially determining their "problem" to the moment they choose a way to fix it. It consists of three stages: Awareness, Consideration, and Decision.

During each stage, Eco-Friendly Emily—for instance—will have a different set of motivations.



ASSIGNMENT #2

Develop a buyer persona for the type of searcher who would be interested in the product or service you chose in assignment #1.



THE AWARENESS STAGE & TOFU-FOCUSED KEYWORDS

Before Emily even realizes that plastic bags are a way for her to be more eco-friendly, she might be looking up broad **Awareness stage** content. This is where she'll start looking for an opportunity to become more aware of her carbon or waste footprint, and may search open-ended queries focused on becoming more environmentally-conscious.

During this initial discovery stage, Emily may type into Google phrases like "ways to be more environmentally conscious" or "reducing food waste." This is what we call **top-of-the-funnel content (TOFU)**.

Not only do you have the buyer's journey to consider, but there's also your marketing funnel. If you can catch prospects in the wide-mouth top of your visitor's funnel with broad, helpful content, you can slowly nurse them down the funnel to more brand-focused content, aimed at converting them into customers.

Start by brainstorming a set of awareness-focused, TOFU keywords for your persona. Don't focus heavily here on your product or service. Instead, think of problems that your product or service will help to solve. Later in the funnel, you'll push what you sell; for now, you're pushing educational content, exclusively.

THE CONSIDERATION STAGE & MOFU-FOCUSED KEYWORDS

Let's say that through top-of-the-funnel searches or through her own self-discovery, Emily realizes she's throwing away a lot of plastic bags when preparing daily to-go snacks and meals for her children.

In the **Consideration stage**, searchers are educating themselves on some ways to solve a problem, and Emily's now defined her problem as plastic waste.



Ask yourself what Emily might start searching on Google to find a solution to her plastic waste problem. Then, take it a step further and actually search the terms to see real SERP results. This is crucial, and we recommend doing it alongside your initial brainstorming for your own product or services. Here's why...

Emily may type "reusable bags," which sounds like a perfectly reasonable term, only to realize that she's inundated with eco-friendly shopper bags for groceries. A search for "alternatives to plastic bags" may yield similar results. Although, on paper, these keywords seem spot on— with a simple search, you'll see that there's a completely different **search intent** that she may not have considered (and something crucial for you to consider too when crafting content to support your product or service).

Emily pivots and tries "alternatives to plastic sandwich bags," adding that crucial differitator keyword (sandwich) to the search phrase. Success! She finds washable, reusable snack bags. In the world of marketing, this is what we would call a **middle-of-the-funnel (MOFU)** keyword query. She's considering solutions to solving her problem now, and a little further along the buyer's journey.

Write down a list of possible MOFU, consideration-stage keywords queries. Keep the ideas flowing! A longer list can be whittled down upon further research.

THE DECISION STAGE & BOFU-FOCUSED KEYWORDS

Let's say that while searching, Emily finds a few different solutions to her plastic waste problem. She finds reusable sandwich pages made out of a lot of different materials, with different closures and use-cases and unique features (some can be frozen, some are dish-washer safe, etc.).

She finds too that companies are making washable wrappings made out of fabrics and coated in ethically-sourced bee's wax. Then there's a few "easier" solutions, like washable silicon-based snack boxes instead of bags. One good thing is, Emily has ruled out glass products to keep her kids safe from shattered glass.

As you can see, Emily still has a ton of choices. It's in the **Decision stage** where she'll begin to research specific brands and product types to make a final purchase decision. To help her choose the right product, she'll be on the hunt for what we call **bottom-of-the-funnel (BOFU)** content.

She may search "bee's wax wrap vs silicone sandwich bag." She might be researching direct product-to-product comparison queries too, such as "Eco-Bags vs. Stasher Bags" (or any other competitor's product). Or, she could simply type, "review of Eco-Bags."

We have a section specifically devoted to competitor research later in this ebook, so don't fixate too heavily on other brands quite yet. If there are a few that instantly come to mind, jot some comparison queries down. If not, don't stress. Just consider other ways/things your customer could solve their problem compared to your solution and write out a few possible keyword phrases.



ROLEPLAY QUESTIONS THEY'D ASK IN GOOGLE

Before wrapping up your brainstorm build, look over your list and see how many of your queries are poised in the form of a question. Think of question words, like "why, how, what, when, who, etc." and how those terms might fit into your phrases. For instance, Eco-Kitchen may go back and add a few phrases like "is Eco-Bag better than (insert competitor here)" or "how much cheaper is Eco-Bag than "(insert competitor here)."

We just pulled BOFU queries in our example, but be sure to do this for every stage of the buyer's journey and marketing funnel. Emily might search, "do Eco-Bags seal well?" or "can I put an Eco-Bag in the dishwasher?" or "what is an Eco-Bag made of?" just to name a few.

Actually Use Google (& Other Free Assets)

While thinking of your question queries, don't be afraid to pull up your computer and do a few searches. As you start typing in the search bar, you'll see that Google tries to guess what you're trying to type next. This is what we call "Google Suggest" and is an excellent resource to see what others have looked up in the past.

After you hit "Enter" and do a search, you'll notice that Google offers a "Related Searches" section on the SERP, listing a few things people searched after the original query or instead of your chosen search.

In addition to Google's help, other free tools like Ubersuggest offer similar features, even showing search volumes for the search phrases. But don't get too caught up in the numbers yet, we'll get to that in a later chapter...

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ASSIGNMENT #3

Brainstorm four lists, including TOFU, MOFU, and BOFU keyword queries and the questions your persona may be searching to solve their problem. Then, jot down question-specific queries to start thinking like a real searcher. Finish strong by pulling up Google and typing in a few of your ideas to spur even more ideas!

Bring in the Team!

You've done a lot of great preliminary work, but don't limit yourself to the inner-workings of your brain alone. Arrange a team brainstorm session to show your crew what you've put together and get their opinions, suggestions, etc.

Be very clear with the team that these aren't particularly data-driven ideas, just mind-mappings to start thinking like your persona and to get the conversation rolling.

After you all collaborate, divide your efforts to assess your current state of SEO affairs and research your competitors for more ideas— so be sure to read our next chapter before setting up the meeting!



Current Organic Reach

You need to understand the direction you're taking before you get behind the wheel to drive your keyword strategy. During this stage of your keyword research, you're going to see what you've been already doing that's been working— as well as observe what your competitors' current SEO tactics are.

Analyze Your Traffic Sources

The reality is, many companies aren't even sure what they're currently ranking for! All they know is that they need organic traffic, but they're not thinking strategically about what topics and content are bringing it in and what's not.

In this step, you're going to take a close look at your website analytics to help you prioritize where to start your organic ranking quest.

If your website platform reveals traffic sources, let's start there. Check to see which website pages are giving you the most traffic, and click into the traffic category to see what type of traffic it is.

Are people finding your content through direct traffic (by manually entering your URL in the search bar or by revisiting a bookmarked page on their browser), through social media posts, via email marketing, through internal site hopping, or by organic search? For the sake of your keyword research, we're only focused on the organic traffic right now, which you gain by ranking on Google or other search engines.

Jot down your top 10 *organic* performing website pages. Then, hop over to your blog analytics and do the same for your content there.

Notice any patterns? Are you ranking really well for any particular products or services? Or for a particular search intent?

Maybe it's now that Eco-Kitchen discovers their reusable Swedish paper towels (Eco-Towels) are a big hit on Google's SERPs. The company is getting tons of organic traffic to content they've created around that. Could they learn anything from the success of this campaign or product to boost their Eco-Bags content? They might note this now to dig more into during the next step of our analysis...



If you use other platforms besides your website or blog to host content, login to those too and

YouTube? Go to their Analytics tools and see how searchers are finding that clip. If you publish lots of podcasts, login to your platform and do

do something poking around. What are your three most viewed videos on

the same.



Now that you have a good 30+ top organic performing pages and posts lined up, let's do more digging.

We don't just want to know what's got the most organic views, we want to know what your best content is ranking for.

Take your top organic performing webpage, your top performing blog post and, let's say, your top performing video and stick each URL into an SEO tool like SEMrush.

Here you can check your organic keywords and see what queries Google is serving your content for, as well as what position you rank for on the SERPs. (The lower the number, the better. Number one means you're the first one to show up on the results page for that search term!).



ASSIGNMENT #5

Login to your website, blog, and other content hosting platforms and check out your analytics. Jot down your top 10 organic ranking web pages, your top 10 blog posts, and your top performing content elsewhere.

Note any patterns you see in what topic or type of content is crushing it on the SERPS.





Let's say Eco-Kitchen realizes while analyzing their best ranking content that content around

here soon.

"reviews" for their Eco-Towels is organically exploding! When launching

their Eco-Bags, they may choose to lean more heavily into

demonstration-type content. They may acquire more testimonials and push out a video of customer reactions, or pay social influencers to review and promote their bags!

This realization could spur a whole set of new keyword ideas, all themed around bottom-of-the-funnel search queries to help shoppers make a final purchasing decision, since that's where searchers are looking online. They might search ideas to their brainstorming list, "how long do Eco-Bags last?" or other possible decision-focused questions to get traffic figures on

Reverse-Engineer Your Competitors

So far, you took inspiration from Google's search results and combined it with performance data from your own content pieces. Now, let's take a look at how others in your industry are ranking—and what they're trying to rank for.



ASSIGNMENT #6

Evaluate what's working really well for your business organically and find themes. Is one product or service performing best? In what ways do your searcher's intents relate? Note anything relevant to help you promote the product or service you choose to focus on for this keyword build.

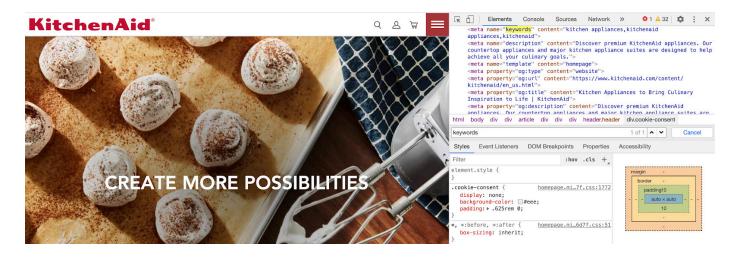


FIND YOUR COMPETITION'S META KEYWORDS

Ahh meta keywords. Although they're not indexed by search engines, many mistakenly think they are and embed them in their site's HTML. You might assume this metadata is only seen by fancy machines reading scripts, but public access to this information is only a few clicks away.

Go to your competitor's homepage and right click anywhere. Select Inspect from the drop-down and rest your eyes on their website's code. Click the shortcut Command F on your Mac (or Control F on your Windows) and a search bar will appear. Type the word "keywords."

In this example, let's said Eco-Kitchen was creeping on KitchenAid's website. Here on their homepage, they can see this brand put "kitchen appliances, kitchenaid appliances, and kitchenaid" under their keyword meta description.



Copy the keywords you discover into a spreadsheet. After your full scope of competitor keyword research, see where all the cool kids toss the ball on the SERP playground.

Not all sites incorporate keywords into their source code like this, so don't fret if your search comes up empty. We've got more tricks up our sleeve.



DISCOVER WHAT THEY'RE RANKING FOR

Now that you know a little about your competitor's keyword strategy, let's see what they're actually ranking for. This is where the popular SEO tool, <u>SEMrush</u> comes in handy.

Copy your competitor's URL and paste it into the Domain Overview search bar on the webtool. The dashboard will show you their Top Organic Keywords. Click to reveal the full report and sort by Position.

Here's what Eco-Kitchen sees on their competitor Stasher Bags...



What are they ranking for on page one? (That's the keywords in position 1-10). In the image above, the vertical line highlighted in pale blue shows their position on the SERPs for that keyword phrase.

After analyzing their competitor in SEMrush, Eco-Kitchen may notice that Stasher is ranking on page one of Google in position one for "silicone bags" and "reusable silicone sandwich bags." Eco-Kitchen may add "silicone" related bag topics to their brainstorm list as valuable keywords to investigate.

LOOK FOR OPPORTUNISTIC KEYWORDS

Once you know what phrases your competitors are targeting and actually ranking for, use the stats as fuel for your own SEO strategy. Maybe you see that they're teetering at the top of page two for a juicy phrase. Note this keyword target and try to rank for opportunities they're falling short on. Mark down the keyword density and difficulty so you can choose which to pursue later.



ASSIGNMENT #7

Add the keywords ideas you discovered during your competitor research to your brainstorming document. Be sure to put a star next to opportunistic keywords that aren't too highly competitive.





Determining New **Keyword Targets**

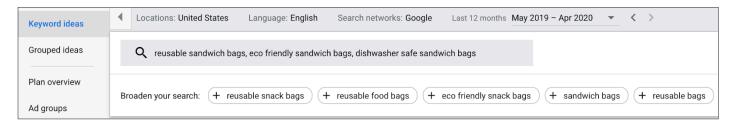
Alright! Your keyword brainstorm sheet probably has a lot of information on it now. Let's see which of the phrases you jotted down are worth targeting—from an organic perspective, specifically.

For users who pay for online advertising through Google Ads (previously called Google AdWords), the platform offers a nifty tool for keyword research called Keyword Planner.

Enter up to three phrases from your brainstorming spreadsheet in the tool's search bar and wait for a wide variety of suggested search terms. Let's say Eco-Kitchen types in "reusable sandwich bags, eco friendly sandwich bags," and "dishwasher safe sandwich bags" into Keyword Planner.

Insider Secret!

You actually don't need to pay for ads to access Keyword Planner, but you do need a Google Ads account. Paid users get more refined results, in terms of search volumes and bid prices, but you don't necessarily need all that info to find good targets.



They get a ton of results!

That's okay! Don't freak out when you get served hundreds of suggestions. Sort them by Google's Keyword Volume to show the phrases in order of most searched per month.

T	Exclude adult ideas ADD FILTER 162 keyword ideas available							COLUMNS	^
	Keyword (by ↓ relevance)	Avg. monthly searches	Competition	Ad impression share	Top of page bid (low range)	Top of page bid (high range)	Account status		
Keywords you provided									
	reusable sand	6,600	High	-	\$0.25	\$1.93			
	eco friendly s	140	High	-	\$1.05	\$3.42			
	dishwasher s	20 /	High	-	-	-			
Keyword ideas									
	reusable ziplo	6,600	High	-	\$0.20	\$2.29			
	reusable snac	3,600	High	-	\$0.20	\$1.40			
	snack bags	2,400	High	-	\$1.33	\$2.68			
	reusable lunc	1,600	High	-	\$1.06	\$5.00			

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It's time to get picky. We typically recommend looking for phrases with a search volume greater than 100. However, volume targets will greatly vary by industry, niche, etc. A great keyword phrase with low competition may only have 20 searches a month (like "dishwasher safe sandwich bags," as depicted), but if it's super focused on the product or service you choose to promote, it could be an amazing target.

Use your judgement! Selecting niche terms helps you to stand out, but make sure the traffic isn't too low, or the competition too high, to justify your time. Competition is rated "low, medium or high." When first starting out, stay away from high level phrases until you've mastered the low and medium targets.

All these figures can be exported from Google Ads and added to your spreadsheet, or saved separately, for historical reference.

Remember, this is your first keyword build for one product or service, so don't go crazy. **Think quality keywords over quantity**. If you end up with a list of only 10 dynamic keyword targets, that may serve your brand very well!

No matter your industry, we typically recommend not going over 50 targets for one campaign. Speaking of campaigns... let's start thinking about how you'll apply your keyword targets realistically and strategically.

Organizing Your Keywords into a Keyword Sheet & Choosing Your Content Targets

Your brainstorming document might be pretty messy after all the hard work you've been doing. Take some time now to create a clean spreadsheet for your campaign.

Eco-Kitchen might create a spreadsheet on Google Sheets named "Eco-Bag's Keyword Targets" where they'll include stats from Google Ad's Keyword Planner for their chosen keywords.

From there, they may create a column for Content Piece and claim a keyword phrase for a particular piece of content. For instance, they may decide to go after the keyword "reusable lunch bags" in a blog post called 5 Ways Reusable Sandwich Bags Help the Environment. They'll also create a column in their spreadsheet for the Buyer's Stage and label this keyword and title as a Consideration Stage target.



ASSIGNMENT #8

Use Google Ads to see how highly your ideas from your brainstorm document are actually searched. Choose anywhere from 10-50 targets for the particular product or service you chose to promote.



They may then choose to pursue the keyword phrase "the best reusable snack bags" in a YouTube video called A Review of the 3 Best Best Reusable Snack Bags and label that Decision Stage, etc. etc.

We've found that the best way to choose strategic content titles is to group them into topic clusters. <u>Learn more about this here!</u>

After you choose what type of content you'll create to support your keywords, it's crucial you set SMART goals to help you cross them off your list.

Setting SMARTer Goals

Sure, your end goal is likely organic traffic, but let's break this down into actionable steps to help get you the SERP lovin' you desire.

A lot of marketers set vague goals, including objectives such as "get more traffic" or "increase organic reach." These fluffy, broad-sweeping goals have good intent, but in the end, they just don't deliver. Why?

They're not very SMART.

Follow the SMART acronym and make sure your goals are:

- + Specific
- + Measurable
- + Attainable
- + Relevant
- + Timely

So the SMART goal Eco-Kitchen's Eco-Bags campaign might look a little something like this:

Increase the total number of organic visits from our Eco-Bag's service page by 5% from June 1, 2020 to August 1, 2020.





ASSIGNMENT #9

Put your final keyword targets into a clean spreadsheet. Paste important metrics from Google Ad's Keyword Planner to see search volume, competition, etc.

Then, create a column for the type of content you'll create to support the keyword (a blog, a video, an ebook, an infographic, etc.) as well as the buyer's journey stage from earlier in their guide (awareness/TOFU, consideration/MOFU, or decision/BOFU).







Or, your smart goal could be about knocking items off your keyword sheet, like this:

Create 10 pieces of content to support 20 keywords from Eco-Bag's Keyword Target Sheet by August 1, 2020.

To learn more about how to write SMART goals, check out our popular blog post on the topic!

We'll break down each letter of the acronym to help you set realistic SEO goals.



ASSIGNMENT #10

Set up one or two really kick-ass SMART goals for your organic traffic. Remember, they don't have to focus on your product or service page, like the example above. It could be to get organic traffic to one really awesome blog or video supporting it! Just don't overwhelm yourself by setting too many SMART goals right now.

Be sure to coordinate with your marketing, sales, or SEO team and set a team meeting to discuss SMART goal ideas. It's during this pow-wow that you can come to a collective agreement! Remember, we want to make sure all departments are on the same page and are working hand-in-hand to grow your business.



Keyword Research Meets Inbound Marketing

Now that you know how to find your keywords, you've probably already done some research.

Have questions or need help with your SEO strategy?

Here at Impulse Creative, we use your buyer personas and the inbound methodology to generate top-performing organic rankings and conversions.

Improved SEO starts with a simple conversation. Set up a brief chat with us to discuss your goals and receive some professional recommendations. No strings attached.

Chat with our Team, Today!

