With all the talk in the SEO world today about content, authorship and social signals it’s easy to forget a little thing that happens to be the foundation of SEO: **keyword research**.

I’m not exaggerating when I say that *without keywords, there’s no such thing as SEO.*

*Keywords are like a compass for your SEO campaigns: they tell you where to go and whether or not you’re making progress.*

They also help you figure out the thoughts, fears, and desires of your target market (as your Analytics stats will tell you, people type their inner-most thoughts into Google’s little search bar).

In fact, keyword research is just market research for the 21st century.
If you can master the lost art of finding awesome keywords for your business — you’ll not only benefit from more search engine traffic – but you’ll also know your customers better than your competition.

Despite the importance of keyword selection, most people’s keyword research process looks something like this:

Well today, all that changes.

Because now you have a comprehensive guide that’s going to show you exactly how to find words and phrases that your target market uses to find information on the web.

And when you tailor your on-page SEO around the right keywords, you’ll watch your site rocket to the top of Google — landing you more leads, sales and commissions in the process.

But there’s a catch:

Before you fire up a keyword research tool or fiddle with a single title tag, you need to identify niche markets in your industry.

Once you find these niche markets, you’ll be able to tap into untapped buyer keywords that your competition doesn’t know about.
As I mentioned earlier, most people begin the process with a keyword research tool, like the Google Keyword Planner (GKP).

**This is a HUGE mistake.**

Why? Because as great as the GKP is at spitting out closely related keywords, it's horrible at coming up with new keyword ideas.

**Here's an example:**

What do you think of when you hear the word “basketball”?

Whether or not you’re a diehard fan, here are some words that may have popped into your head:

![Diagram showing related keywords for basketball](image)

But when you enter the word “basketball” into the GKP “Search for new keyword and ad group ideas” box…

![GKP search result for basketball](image)

…none of those related words show up.
In other words, the GKP only shows you keywords that are VERY intimately tied to the keyword you gave it.

Keywords that are closely – but not directly – related are rarely shown to you. And these are **often the most profitable keywords in your market.**

No wonder so many keywords are next to impossible to rank for: everyone and their mom are targeting the exact same keywords!

That’s not to say you shouldn’t target any keywords that the GKP gives you (in fact, there’s an entire chapter in this guide dedicated to using the tool).

But don’t rely on the GKP (or any other tool out there) to show you the full breadth of what’s out there.

To do that, you need to identify niche markets.
Niche Clouds: The Easiest Way to Find Niche Markets

You may be wondering:

“What is a Niche Market, exactly?”

A Niche Market is simply a sub-segment that’s part of a larger market.

For example, let’s say that you run a business that sells basketball hoops.

As we saw earlier, the GKP is essentially useless at giving you anything but very, very closely related keywords:

While some of these keywords might be a great fit for your business, there are dozens of others that are less competitive and are just as valuable to your site.

In my experience the easiest way to find these untapped keywords is to map out your industry’s Niche Clouds.

Niche Clouds are simple mind maps that identify niches that are closely related to your bread and butter niche.
The goal with your Niche Cloud Map is to map out the different “clouds” that tend to float around your actual industry. Each cloud represents a Niche Market.

All you need to start is mind mapping software or (if you want to go old school) a pen and paper. You should be able to come up with at least 5 different Niche Markets off of the top of your head... which is enough to find some great keywords.

If you’re struggling – or want to find more Niche Markets – here are a few simple strategies you can tap into.

Here’s what our basketball hoop example would look as a Niche Cloud map:

You should be able to come up with at least 5 different Niche Markets off of the top of your head... which is enough to find some great keywords.
A buyer persona is a super-simple way to identify other Niche Markets that potential customers belong to.

And once you identify these Niche Markets, you can easily find keywords that potential customers use when they’re not searching for your products and services (in other words, most of the time).

Your keyword research-focused buyer persona should include your target audience’s:

- Gender
- Age
- Approximate income
- Hobbies and interests (what they do for fun)
- Things that they struggle with
- What they want to accomplish (personally and professionally)

Depending on your niche you may have several different buyer personas.

For example, following our basketball hoop example, you might have buyer personas for basketball players AND for parents (who in many cases will be the ones that ultimately buy the product).

In my experience the easiest way to make a buyer persona is to create a PowerPoint slide:

```
Persona: High School Basketball Player Parent

Age: 37 - 59
Gender: Male or Female.
Approximate Income: $50,000 - $150,000 per year.
Hobbies and Interests: Celtics fan, playing pickup basketball, spending time with son or daughter.
Things they struggle with: Having more free time to exercise and spend time with kids (hence the desire for a basketball hoop).
Goals: Son or daughter to play college basketball for Division I or II school.
```

This slide helps you get into the head of your target customer, which will help you think of with Niche Markets that you may have overlooked the first time you sat down with your Niche Cloud Map.
Forums

Forums are like having live focus groups at your fingertips 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

The easiest way to find forums where your target audience hangs out is to use these search strings in Google:

“keyword” + “forums”
“keyword” + “forum”
“keyword” + “board”

You can also use BoardReader.com, which is a search engine for forums.

1. First, click on “forums” in the top left corner of the screen:

2. Then, enter a keyword and hit “search”:

3. Find forums that your target audience hangs out on:

4. Once you find a forum, note how the forum is divided up into sections: Each of these sections is often a Niche Market.

5. To dig deeper, check out some of the threads on the forum to find other Niche Markets your ideal customer belongs to.
In about 10 seconds I’ve identified 3 potential Niche Markets from a single basketball forum:
- Basketball socks
- Basketball confidence
- Basketball accessories

One you’ve found a few Niche Markets that make sense for your site, add them to your Niche Cloud Map.

**Wikipedia Table of Contents**

Wikipedia is an often-overlooked goldmine of niche research. Where else can you find overviews on a topic curated *by thousands of industry experts* and organized into neat little categories?

Here’s how to use Wikipedia to find Niche Markets.

1. First, head over to [Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org) and type in a broad keyword:

2. Then, look for the “contents” section of the page:

   ![Wikipedia Table of Contents](https://example.com/wikipedia-content)

   - 1 History
     - 1.1 Creation
     - 1.2 College basketball
     - 1.3 High school basketball
     - 1.4 Professional basketball
     - 1.5 International basketball
     - 1.6 Women’s basketball
   - 2 Rules and regulations
     - 2.1 Playing regulations
     - 2.2 Equipment
     - 2.3 Violations
     - 2.4 Fouls
   - 3 Common techniques and practices
     - 3.1 Positions
     - 3.2 Strategy
     - 3.3 Shooting
     - 3.4 Rebounding
     - 3.5 Passing
     - 3.6 Dribbling
     - 3.7 Blocking
   - 4 Height
   - 5 Variations and similar games
   - 6 Social forms of basketball

3. That will take you to the Wikipedia entry for that broad topic.

4. And take a look at the sections of the page.

   Some of these sections will be killer Niche Markets that you may not have found otherwise:
You can also click on some of the internal links on the page to check out the Table of Contents of other, closely related entries.

For example, on the basketball entry we have a link to Rebounding.

When you click on that link, you’ll notice that the table of contents for the Rebounding page has a few more Niche Markets for you to add to your map:

In this case we found three more Niche Markets:

- Types of rebounds (offensive, defensive)
- Boxing out
- Notable NBA rebounders

Easy, right?

**The Head, Body and Tail**

Now that you’ve identified a large group of Niche Markets it’s time to find some keywords!

Most people in SEO (myself included) divide keywords into three main categories: head, body and the (long) tail.
Head Keywords:
These are usually single-word keywords with insane amounts of search volume and competition (for example, “insurance” or “vitamins”). Because searcher intent is all over the place (someone searching for “insurance” might be looking for a car insurance quote, a list of life insurance companies or a definition of the word), Head Terms usually don’t convert very well.

Body Keywords:
Body keywords are 2-3 word phrases that get decent search volume (at least 2,000 searches per month), but are more specific than Head Keywords. Keywords like “life insurance” or “order vitamins online” are examples of Body Keywords. These almost always have lower competition than Head Terms, but can still be very competitive.

Long Tail Keywords:
Long tail keywords are long, 4+ word phrases that are usually very specific. Phrases like “affordable life insurance for senior citizens” and “order vitamin D capsules online” are examples of long tail keywords. Even though they don’t get a lot of search volume individually – when added together– long tails make up the majority of searches online.
I recommend putting most of your effort behind Body and Long Tail Keywords.

**Why?**

As you just read, Head Terms are a) super competitive and b) don’t convert well. So those are out.

In my opinion, Body Keywords hit the sweet spot of search volume, buyer intent and competition. And when you optimize pages around Body Keywords, you’ll usually rank for related long tails automatically. Not to mention the 15% of all keywords that have never been typed into a search engine before (!).

In other words, when you optimize for Body keywords, you tend to gobble up a lot of long tail traffic naturally from totally unique searches and from crazy long 5-12 word keywords (if you’ve ever checked your Analytics to see what people use to find your site, you know what types of loooong keywords I’m talking about).

Because they’re usually easier to rank for than Head or Body Keywords, many SEOs focus on Long Tail Keywords. Although Long Tail Keywords are less competitive (and tend to convert well), they’re not without problems.

**What do I mean?**

Remember that each Long Tail Keyword may only get 100-1000 searches per month. Which means – in order to get lots search engine traffic from long tails — you need to bang out dozens (or even hundreds) of articles...each optimized around a single Long Tail Keyword. Publishing reams long tail-focused content puts you at serious risk of a Google Panda penalty. In fact, companies like Demand Media and Suite101 lost millions betting on this strategy.

That’s not to say you shouldn’t use long tails as part of your search engine optimization strategy (in fact, there’s an entire chapter in this guide dedicated to finding them). But don’t fall into the trap of banging out hundreds of pages hoping to rank for long tails.

**Next Step: Learn How to Use The Google Keyword Planner**

Now that you’ve identified the Niche Markets that make up your industry, it’s time to learn how to leverage this information using the Google Keyword Planner.
There’s no way around it: without objective data, keyword research is a shot in the dark.

Fortunately, the SEO Gods have given us an awesome (free) tool that tells us almost all of the information we need to make informed decisions about which keywords are best for our business. It’s called the Google Keyword Planner.

Unlike the now-defunct Google Keyword Tool, the new tool has an entire suite of features that will help you identify a keyword’s growing (or shrinking) popularity, filter out low-volume searches, and create hundreds of keyword combinations in seconds.

Google Keyword Planner Icon

Sound cool?

*It is.*

Keep in mind that the tool is designed with Adwords advertisers in mind. So there are a lot of features in the tool (like keyword bidding features) that won’t be useful for you.

In this guide I’ll show you how to get the most SEO value out of the Google Keyword Planner. Here’s how to use it.
In order to use the Google Keyword Planner, you’ll need to have a Google Adwords account. If you don’t have one already, you can set one up here:

(Just follow the prompts, enter some basic information about you and your business, and you’re in.)

Next, login to your Google Adwords account. Click on “Tools and Analysis” from the green toolbar and choose “Keyword Planner”:

You’ll be presented with four different tools within the Google Keyword Planner (under “What would you like to do?”):
The Keyword Planner is a Swiss Army knife of different keyword research tools. Here I'll show you how to use the three tools within the Google Keyword Planner that will land you a fantastic list of keywords for your SEO campaigns.

**Search for New Keyword and Ad Group Ideas**

This is the bread and butter tool that’s perfect for finding new keywords. Keep in mind that the keywords you get from this tool are usually very closely based on the seed keywords you put into it (as we saw in The Introduction, the GKP doesn’t tend to generate completely new keyword ideas).

When you choose the “Search for New Keyword and Ad Group Ideas“ tool, a menu appears with a list of options:
Let's break down each of these options:

**Enter one or more of the following**

- **Keywords**
- **Internal page or homepage**
- **Your niche**

This is a REALLY important option. The value you get from the planner is largely based on the information that you enter here.

Here's how to get the most out of it:

**Your product or service:** This is actually a list of keywords. You don’t want to enter a broad industry keyword like “flowers” (despite what the tool suggests) or you’ll end up with a list of super-competitive Head Keywords. I recommend entering 1-3 keywords here, each in a slightly different Niche Market. Following our example from The Introduction, you’d want to enter terms like “free throws” and “basketball accessories” here.

**Your landing page:** This is primarily for Adwords users. But you can sometimes find a few solid keywords here using your site’s homepage or an article from your site.

**Your product category:** This allows you to access Google’s internal database of keywords for different industries. You can sometimes find keywords here that you might have missed. It’s worth playing around with if you’re not able to find any keywords using the first two options.

Once you’ve entered your information into one – or all three – of the options, it’s time to choose your “Targeting” options.

**Targeting**

- **Country**
- **Language**
- **Search engine**
Targeting is simply the country, language and search engine that you’re marketing on. These options are automatically set to target English-speaking people in the US searching in Google. If that’s your target audience (in most cases it will be), you can leave these options as they are.

But let’s say you’re based in Germany. You’d want to change the country to “Germany” and choose “German” as the language.

The last option is called “negative keywords”:

Negative keywords are keywords that you don’t want to advertise on. This is another feature that only applies to Adwords.

**Customize your search**

Here’s what each of these options mean:

**Keyword filters:** This simply allows you to filter out keywords that don’t meet a set of criteria. For example, let’s say that you weren’t interested in any keywords with less than 2000 monthly searches. Just click anywhere on the “Keyword filters” box and enter your minimum monthly search volume:
You can do the same thing with the suggested bid (which is a proxy measurement of commercial intent):

(“Ad impr. Share” is a feature that’s just for Adwords advertisers)

**Keyword options:** This simply tells the tool how broad you want your results to be. I recommend leaving this as-is. The other options (“Hide keywords in my plan” are Adwords-only options).

**Include/Exclude:** You can choose to either always include or always exclude certain keywords from showing up in the results.

Why would you want to exclude keywords?

Let’s say that you’re already ranking for a number of keywords related to “blue t shirts,” you don’t want those results to crowd out new keyword ideas.

If you have a list of keywords that you do or don’t want to see, simply click on the “Include/Exclude” button and add that list in the appropriate field:

Once you’re done, click on “Get Ideas” and you’ll see the Keywords Results Page. I’ll show you how to use that part of the Google Keyword Planner later in the guide.

**Get search volume for a list of keywords or group them into ad groups**
This is a feature that's useful if you already have a long list of keywords in hand and just want to quickly check their search volume. In other words, this tool won’t help you generate new keyword ideas.

You can either copy and paste a list of keywords into the search field or upload your list in a CSV file:

Although the tool claims that you can you can specify a match type (like the old Google Keyword Tool)...

...I’ve found the search volume information to be EXACTLY the same no matter what match type that I use:

So it doesn’t look like Google supports this feature anymore.

No big deal. You want to see exact match information 99% of the time anyway. And that's what the Google Keyword Planner shows you by default.

You can target your result’s language and country here just like you did with the “Search for new keyword and ad group ideas” tool:

Finally, click “Get search volume” to see how many people search for the keywords you entered.
Multiply keyword lists to get new keyword ideas

This tool takes groups of keywords and mashes them together into hundreds (or even thousands) of combinations. Most of the results will be gibberish, but the tool will occasionally spit out a gem.

This tool is especially helpful for ecommerce keyword research because it helps you identify almost every possible combination people use to search for your products.

First, enter a list of keywords into “List 1”: And another list into “List 2”:

You can add a third field by clicking on the grey “X”: When you do, simply add another set of keywords in “List 3”:

When you’re done, click on “Get search volume”, and you’ll be able to see what keywords the tool came up with.
STEP #3: USING THE KEYWORDS RESULTS PAGE

All three of the tools I described will take you to the “Keywords Results Page”, which looks like this:

Here’s a breakdown of the page:

On the left hand sidebar, you have the same targeting and filtering options you saw on the last page:
The advantage of using them here is that you can modify your results after you’ve performed your search. So if you’re getting a lot of low volume keywords, you can simply filter out all keywords that don’t meet a certain search volume.

Next, you have two tabs: “Ad group ideas” and “Keyword ideas”:

Most people will tell you to quickly click over to “Keyword ideas” and ignore “Ad group ideas”. This is a HUGE mistake. As you’ll see in a minute, you can usually find great keywords from the “Ad group ideas” tab.

When you do click over to the “Keyword ideas” tab, this is what you’ll see:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Search terms</th>
<th>Avg. monthly searches</th>
<th>Competition</th>
<th>Suggested bid</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>basketball hoops</td>
<td>18,100</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>$1.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lifetime basketball hoops</td>
<td>1,900</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>$1.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>basketball hoop</td>
<td>27,100</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>$1.09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here's what each of the terms in this area mean:

**Search Terms:** These are the exact keywords that you entered in step 2.

**Keyword (by relevance):** This is the list of keywords that Google considers most relevant to the “Search Term” keyword.

**Avg. monthly searches:** Pretty self-explanatory. However, keep in mind that this is a rough estimate and not a super-accurate indicator of search volume. Also, certain seasonal keywords (like “Halloween costumes”) may get 50,000 searches in October and 100 in May. So the average monthly searches can be somewhat misleading in some cases.
When you hover over this little icon:

The tool will show you search trends for that keyword over the last year.

This is useful for identifying keywords with large seasonal fluctuations. It also helps you determine if a search term is becoming more or less popular over time.

**Competition:** This reflects the number of advertisers bidding on that keyword (you can read more about how to determine commercial intent in Chapter 3: How to Determine a Keyword’s Commercial Intent).

**Suggested bid:** Yet another rock-solid determinant of a keyword’s monetization potential. The higher the suggested bid, the more lucrative the traffic.

**STEP #4: FIND AWESOME KEYWORDS**

Now that you know how to use all of the tools, features and options within the Google Keyword Planner, it’s time for the last step: finding awesome keywords that you can optimize your site’s content around.

(For this step I’m going to be using the **Search for New Keyword and Ad Group Ideas** tool because this is the best tool within the Google Keyword Planner for finding new keywords)
First, come up with a keyword that’s somewhat broad…but also describes your product, service or content idea somewhat specifically.

(If you developed a list of Niche Markets from the introduction, you want to use them here)

For example, let’s say that you ran an ecommerce site that sold organic food.

If you wanted to write a blog post about the health benefits of organic coffee, you wouldn’t want to use the keyword “coffee” (too broad) or “health benefits of organic coffee” (too narrow). A keyword like “organic coffee” would work well.

Enter that keyword into the field labeled “your product or service”:

And click “Get ideas”:

The first thing you want to do is take a look at some of the Ad group names listed here:

You can sometimes find awesome Niche Markets or keyword ideas from the names of the Ad groups themselves.

Next, click on one of the Ad group names:
And see what keywords make up this Ad group:

```
Ad group: Best Coffee
```

- best organic coffee
- best coffee beans
- best coffee
- best organic coffee beans
- the best coffee
- best green coffee
- best green coffee beans
- best coffee bean

Another place to find great keywords that don’t show up under the “Keyword ideas” tab.
Jot down any that seem like they might be a good fit for this piece of content (or for another page on your site).
Next, click on the “keyword ideas” tab:
And take a look at the keywords that come up:

How do you know which keywords to choose?

There are dozens of different factors to consider, but I prefer to evaluate keywords based on 3 main criteria:

**Search Volume:** Very straightforward. The higher, the better.

**Commercial Intent:** Determining the monetization potential of a keyword is more of an art than a science (that’s why I’ve created an entire chapter in Keyword Research: The Definitive Guide) — Chapter 3 – to commercial intent). In general, the higher the competition and suggested bid, the easier it will be to convert that traffic into paying customers.

**Organic SEO Competition:** Like commercial intent, evaluating a keyword’s competition in Google’s organic search results takes some more digging. Chapter 4: Keyword Competition Analysis covers everything you need to know about sizing up your competition.

That’s all there is to it. By now you should have a hefty list of potential keywords. Nice work!

**Next Step: Find Long Tail Keywords**

“Looking for more seed keywords to enter into the Google Keyword Planner? Then you’ll LOVE Chapter 3: How to Find Long Tail Keywords.”
As much as I love the Google Keyword Planner, it has one fatal flaw:

It gives the **exact same keywords** to everyone that uses it (including your competitors).

No wonder most keywords are so competitive!

How can you get around this problem?

Set the tool aside. Instead, use lesser-known keyword research strategies that will show you untapped long tail keywords.

And that’s **exactly** what I’m going to show you how to do in this chapter.
What if there was a way to find the exact keywords people use to find your competitor’s sites? Wait, there is. It’s called the **SEO SearchTerms Tagging** plugin (which has been downloaded over 400,000 times).

This plugin automatically lists the keywords that people searched for to find that particular page. Here’s an example of the plugin in action:

For example, when someone searches for “why stock baking soda” and lands on the page above, the plugin automatically displays it at the bottom of the article.

And you can easily find sites in your niche using this simple search string:

“incoming search terms” + “keyword”

Once you’ve found a page that has a decent list of incoming search terms:
3
Grab the list and enter them into as seed keywords in the Google Keyword Planner.

4
And you’ll usually find a few high-volume gems:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keyword (by relevance)</th>
<th>Avg. monthly searches</th>
<th>Competition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>gluten free foods</td>
<td>33,100</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gluten free thanksgiving</td>
<td>2,400</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gluten free bread</td>
<td>33,100</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gluten free turkey</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>turkey stuffing recipe</td>
<td>5,400</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>turkey stuffing</td>
<td>9,500</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>turkey dressing recipe</td>
<td>3,600</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“Searches Related To…”

Did you ever notice that when you scroll to the bottom of Google’s search results there’s a section called, “Searches related to…”?

It looks like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Searches related to organic coffee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>organic coffee brands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organic coffee vs. regular coffee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organic coffee benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organic coffee starbucks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organic coffee k cups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organic coffee beans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organo gold coffee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organo gold</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Well this little area is a gold mine for long tail keywords.

1. Just type in any keyword that you want to target for an article or product page:

2. Scroll to the bottom of the page and take a look at the “Searches related to…” for that keyword:

Usually you’ll get a mix of close variations of your main keyword:
(These are sometimes great keywords to target because they're very long tail and have less competition than Body or Head Keywords)

Google will also sometimes show you a gem: a related keyword that’s related…but isn’t just another variation of the keyword you entered.

In this case, Google has given us 3 keywords that are thematically related to the keyword I used in this example (“premium headphones”):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Searches related to premium headphones</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>premium headphones brands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zune premium headphones v2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rza premium headphones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>klipsch custom 1 premium headphones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ematic designer premium headphones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>best headphones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sennheiser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>steve aoki signature headphones</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

And these keywords don’t show up when you use the keyword “premium headphones” as your seed keyword in the Google Keyword Planner.

Pro Tip: Take one of the keywords from the “Searches related to…” area, pop that into Google, and check out the “Searches related to…” results for that keyword. Rinse and repeat until you have a laundry list of awesome keywords that the Keyword Planner doesn’t show you.

“Searches Related To…”

One of my all-time favorite ways to brainstorm new keyword ideas is to head over to popular forums in my industry.

Where else can you find hundreds – and sometimes thousands – of people asking and answering questions about your site’s topic?

After all, if someone asks a question on a forum you KNOW that there are other people asking that same question in Google.

First, head over to forums where your target audience hangs out. You may know a few off the top of your head.

If not, just use these handy search strings to find them:
One of my all-time favorite ways to brainstorm new keyword ideas is to head over to popular forums in my industry.

Where else can you find hundreds – and sometimes thousands – of people asking and answering questions about your site’s topic?

After all, if someone asks a question on a forum you KNOW that there are other people asking that same question in Google.

First, head over to forums where your target audience hangs out. You may know a few off the top of your head.

If not, just use these handy search strings to find them:

"keyword” + “forum”  “keyword” + “board”  “keyword” + “powered by vbulletin”

You can also search for a keyword in Google, click on “More”, and choose discussions from the menu:
This will bring up results from forums and Q&A sites (like Yahoo! Answers).

When you find a forum that looks active, take a look the forum’s categories:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recipes and Equipment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Forum Name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bread Q &amp; A</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderators: Kitchen Clean Up Crew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cakes Q &amp; A</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderators: Kitchen Clean Up Crew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cookies Q &amp; A</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderators: Kitchen Clean Up Crew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pie and Pastry Q &amp; A</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderators: Kitchen Clean Up Crew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Equipment Q &amp; A</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderators: Kitchen Clean Up Crew</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The categories themselves are usually excellent seed keywords that you can use the Google Keyword Planner.

Click on a category and check out some of the thread topics:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>All purpose flour for white bread</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author: honeybunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How to make bread healthier</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author: Vivatar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Q about the Many Splendored Quick Bread</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author: likenblythe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How to use corn flour?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author: salinmis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In about 20 seconds I found three keywords that people interested in baking might search for in Google:

- “all purpose flour for white bread”
- “how to make bread healthier”
- “how to use corn flour”

Easy, right?
Use Soovle.com to Mine Long Tail Keywords

Soovle.com is an easy to use, free tool that shows you keyword suggestions results from Amazon, Wikipedia, Ask.com, Google Suggest and YouTube.

First, head over to Soovle and enter a somewhat broad keyword into the search field:

For example, if you were looking for coffee-related keywords, you could use the keyword “coffee”:

Soovle will automatically display suggested results from different websites:
You can download the results in a CSV file by clicking the download icon in the top left corner of the page:

This is a GREAT tool because it shows you keyword ideas from sites that your competition probably overlooks.

**UberSuggest: Google Suggest Scraper**

Like Soovle, UberSuggest.org grabs information from Google Suggest. What makes this tool unique is that it provides A LOT more keyword suggestions than Soovle.

How?

It takes your seed keyword and adds every letter in the alphabet after it to generate hundreds of suggested keywords.

For example, when you type the keyword “coffee” into Google you get a list of suggestions, like this:
But when you enter a keyword plus another letter, Google Suggest gives you yet another list of keywords:

UberSuggest scrapes all of that data for you so you don’t have to manually type in “coffee b”, “coffee c” etc.

To use it, head to UberSuggest.org and enter your keyword:

Next, fill out the captcha and click “suggest”:
The tool will spit out hundreds of suggestions:

Most of the suggested keywords won’t make sense for your site, but several will.

Use ScrapeBox for Keyword Suggestions

Yet another reason to love ScrapeBox.

A little-known feature of ScrapeBox is its “Keyword Scraper” tool. This tool does the same thing as UberSuggest …only you get WAY more results. You can also filter out duplicate keywords and download the results to a CSV files (two things UberSuggest can’t do).

1. First, open up your copy of ScrapeBox and click on “Scrape”. Choose “Keyword Scraper” from the dropdown menu:

2. Enter your seed keyword in the box labeled, “Enter Your Search Keyword(s) Below”:

3. Click on “Append A-Z”.

---

**Image Descriptions:**

- Coffee-related search suggestions example:
  - coffee for less
  - coffee facts
  - coffee filter flowers
  - coffee filter wreath
  - coffee fest
  - coffee futures
  - coffee flavors
  - coffee filters
  - coffee fruit
  - coffee filter crafts

- ScrapeBox interface images for steps 1, 2, and 3.
This will create a list of keyword + letter combinations (just like UberSuggest):

Click on the “Scrape” button to generate keyword ideas:

Finally, choose the sources that you want to grab results from by clicking “Select Keyword Scraper” sources:

You should get a long list of results populating the “Results” field:

And choosing the sites you want to use from the list:

Click on “Remove duplicates” to remove any duplicate results:
To save your results, copy the entire results field:

And pasting the keywords into a .txt file or CSV:

You can quickly and easily get the search volume for these keywords by heading to the Google Keyword Planner, clicking on “Get search volume for a list of keywords…” and pasting your list of keywords:

(You can also upload the list by clicking on the “Browse…” button and uploading a CSV or .txt file)

Thanks to Jacob King for this (very effective) technique.
Sometimes the best keyword is **one that you’re already ranking for.**

What do I mean?

If you’re like most people, you have a handful of pages sitting on the 2nd, 3rd or 4th page of Google.

Sometimes you’ll find that you’re even ranking on Google’s inner pages for long tail keywords **that you’re not even optimizing for.**

And when you give these pages some TLC, they’ll usually hit the first page within weeks.

You can easily find these 2nd and 3rd page keywords in Google Webmaster Tools (GWT).

First, login to your GWT account and click on “Search traffic” on the left sidebar. Choose “Search Queries” from the menu:

1. First, login to your GWT account and click on “Search traffic” on the left sidebar. Choose “Search Queries” from the menu:

2. The top of the chart will be keywords that you’re on the first page for:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Query</th>
<th>Impressions</th>
<th>Clicks</th>
<th>CTR</th>
<th>Avg. position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>backlinks</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>backlinko</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>how to get links</td>
<td>1,600</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on page seo</td>
<td>2,500</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>youtube seo</td>
<td>2,500</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cpa marketing</td>
<td>1,300</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This is a nice confidence boost, but it’s not going to help you identify keywords that you’re on the 2nd or 3rd page for.
To find them, sort the list by “Avg. position”:

Next, set the number of rows to show to “500”:

Keep scrolling down until you start to see an average position of about 11.

Then, take a look at the keywords that are ranking in those positions:
Put any promising keywords into the Google Keyword Planner to check their search volume. If you find a keyword that makes sense for your site and has decent search volume, click on the keyword. That will show you the page on your site that’s ranking for that keyword:

![Query details: google search rankings](image)

Finally, incorporate that keyword as part of that page’s on-page SEO. I recommend checking out my comprehensive guide to on-page SEO. This nifty guide will help you properly optimize your page...without setting off any over-optimization tripwires at Google HQ.
Google Trends

Google Trends is one of my all-time favorite keyword research tools. This tool shows you high-volume keywords in your niche...before they show up in the Google Keyword Planner.

But the most helpful Google Suggest feature is that you can quickly check a keyword’s popularity over time.

About to invest $50,000 on an SEO campaign? You better know whether or not interest in your list of keywords is growing (or falling).

First, head over to Google Trends, and enter the keyword you want to rank for into the search field:

![Google Trends screenshot](image)

The tool will show you “interest over time” based on search volume and news headlines:

![Google Trends chart](image)

In this example, search volume is pretty stable.
But for other keywords, like “Pinterest”, interest picked up suddenly and has now tapered off:

![Graph showing a peak in interest for Pinterest in 2011 and a steady decline thereafter.]

While others, “Google Keyword Tool” in this case, have a steady down trend:

![Graph showing a steady decline for Google Keyword Tool over time.]

The best case is a keyword like “content marketing”, where its popularity is growing consistently over time:

![Graph showing a consistent increase in popularity for content marketing over time.]
Pro Tip: Enter one of your target keywords into Google Trends and scroll down to “Related Searches”:

Some of the keywords listed under “Queries” are potentially lucrative keywords that the Google Keyword Planner won’t show you.

Google Correlate

Google Correlate is a little-known tool that shows you keywords that tend to correlate with one another.

For example, people that use the word “SEO” as part of their keyword tend to also search for:

- Link building
- Keyword research
- Internet marketing
- On-page SEO
- SEO company

Google Correlate shows you these “correlated” keywords.
Google Correlate is a little-known tool that shows you keywords that tend to correlate with one another.

For example, people that use the word “SEO” as part of their keyword tend to also search for:

- Link building
- Keyword research
- Internet marketing
- On-page SEO
- SEO company

Google Correlate shows you these “correlated” keywords.

1. Your first step is to go to Google Correlate.

2. Enter a keyword into the search field and click “Search Correlations”:

   ![Google Correlate interface](image)

3. Take a look at keywords listed under “Correlated with baking”:

   (The number next to the keyword indicates the level of correlation. The closer the number is to 1, the more often it’s searched alongside the keyword you entered).
Click on “Show More” to see even more correlated keywords:

These are fantastic seed keywords that you can use in UberSuggest, ScrapeBox etc.

Quora

Quora is an extremely popular crowdsourced Q&A site (similar to to Yahoo! Answers, except people’s responses are actually helpful).

To use Quora, you need to create an account:
Once you’ve logged in, enter a broad keyword into the search bar at the top of any page:

Like forums, Quora will show you the most popular questions on that topic:

**Are baking oil, lard, butter, or shortening interchangeable?**
Russell Stadler, fat snob — It depends on the recipe. ... In baking, often the fats are not completely interchangeable because a recipe will call for a fat based on whether or not it is solid or liquid...

**How can you bake without eggs?**
Dianne Womersley, Gluten free and vegan ... — Eggs in a recipe act as either a binder, thickener, or leavener. There are numerous egg substitutions depending on what you are trying to achieve with the replacement. For ...

**Can one bake with artificial sweetener?**
Chester Jablonowski, Cook and Baker — Yes. Splenda is the better choice for artificial sweeteners then the others. ... If you use Splenda you would substitute Volumetric for Volumetric. In other words if the reci...

Some of the questions will be high-volume keywords themselves...while others might help you brainstorm new keyword ideas in your niche.

For example, in our baking example above, the keyword “how can you bake without eggs” is probably too long to be a popular keyword:
But when I entered the shortened version of the question, “bake without eggs”, into the Google Keyword Planner, I found a list of keywords that could easily be used as the topic of a high quality article. They also have relatively high search volume:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keyword (by relevance)</th>
<th>Avg. monthly searches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>baking without eggs</td>
<td>590</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>baking recipes without eggs</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>how to bake without eggs</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>baked goods without eggs</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>things to bake without eggs</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This is where Quora shines: giving you laterally related keyword and topic ideas that you may not have thought of on your own.

You should have no shortage of long tail keywords after tapping into these strategies.

Next Step: Determine Commercial Intent

No keyword research process would be complete without determining commercial intent (how likely searchers are to buy your products and services). Ready to rock?

Then head over to Chapter 4: How to Determine a Keyword’s Commercial Intent to learn more.
If you asked me to name the #1 keyword research mistake I see most often, I wouldn’t hesitate before answering: “Not spending enough time on commercial intent”.

In fact, most SEO experts agree that – when it comes to choosing keywords — commercial intent is actually MORE important than search volume.

Here’s a quick story that illustrates this point really well...

Google Keyword Planner Icon

One of the first web properties I ever built received over 60,000 unique visitors per month from organic search alone.

Guess how much that site brought in every month.

- $10,000?
- $25,000?
- $40,000?

How about $400?

Yes, that’s four hundred dollars.

Why didn’t the site make any money? Well, when I chose keywords for that site, I focused on search volume…and completely ignored commercial intent.

Which meant that my almost 100% of my traffic came from purely informational keywords. As you’ll learn in this chapter, stemming from informational searches are typically hard to convert into paying customers.
But there’s good news…

Fortunately — with a little bit of research — you can easily find keywords that actual buyers use to search.

And when you get your site in front of those people, turning them into leads and sales is a breeze. Without further ado, let me show you how to find high-converting keywords for your business.

---

Commercial Intent: The Four Keyword Classes

When it comes to commercial intent, all of the millions of keywords out there can be placed into one of four categories:

1. **Buy Now Keywords**

   These are keywords that people use minutes before making a purchase. People searching with Buy Now Keywords may literally have their credit card in their hand.

   Here are words that tend to be part of Buy Now Keywords:

   - Buy
   - Coupon
   - Discount
   - Deal
   - Shipping

   Real life examples of Buy Now Keywords are “Bluehost discount”, “Buy candles online” and “Custom t-shirts free shipping”.

   As you might expect, these keywords convert like crazy. They may not get great search volume, but their sky-high conversion rate makes up for it.
Product Keywords

Product Keywords are searches that focus on a specific product category, brand name, or service. People searching for Product Keywords tend to be a bit earlier in the buying cycle than people using Buy Now Keywords.

In other words, they convert well…but not quite as well as Buy Now Keywords.

Product Keywords tend to include:

- Review
- Best
- Top 10
- Specific brand name (“Nike” or “Toshiba”)
- Specific product (“Macbook Pro” or “Samsung Galaxy”)
- Product category (“Wordpress hosting” or “tennis shoes”)
- Cheap
- Affordable
- Comparison

Don’t be thrown off by terms like “cheap” and “affordable”. Believe it or not, keywords with the words “cheap” in them convert really well.

For example, someone searching for “cheap laptops” has already decided that they want a laptop…they’re just looking for a product in their price range.

Informational Keywords

The vast majority of keywords online are Informational Keywords. As you might imagine, people looking for information don’t tend to convert especially well.

That being said, you can’t ignore Informational Keywords because they make up such a huge chunk of the keywords in your niche.

Informational Keywords tend to include words like:

- How to
- Best way to
- Ways to
- I need to

The best way to leverage Informational Keywords is to find keywords that have high search volume and low competition.

Then, get as much of that traffic as you can on an email list. That way, you’ll be the site on their mind as they’re ready to buy something.
Tire Kicker Keywords

Tire Kicker Keywords are searches that are VERY unlikely to convert now…or in the near future.

Here are a few examples words that tend to make up Tire Kicker Keywords:

- Free
- Torrent
- Download
- …for free

A keyword like “watch The Simpsons online free” is a classic Tire Kicker Keyword. Good luck getting that person to buy anything (or even click on an ad).

On the other hand, keywords like “Buy Simpsons TV episodes” (Buy Now Keyword), “Simpsons DVDs” (Product Keyword) or “How to watch Simpsons Episodes” (Informational Keyword) will convert relatively well.

---

Getting Objective Information on Commercial Intent

Here’s the deal:

The Four Keyword Classes usually reflect buyer intent really well.

Usually.

After all, there’s nothing worse than ranking #1 for a keyword…only to find that you can only generate a penny or two of revenue per visitor.

Here are two quick techniques you can tap into to get **objective information** on how valuable traffic coming from a keyword actually is.

**Adwords Suggested Bid**

Adwords Suggested Bid used to be known as “Average CPC” (CPC=Cost Per Click). They quietly changed the term but kept the dollar amounts exactly the same…which leads me to believe the Suggested Bid is simply the average CPC with a new name.

Regardless, the Suggested Bid is one of the few ways that you can see real world data about commercial intent. You KNOW that if an Adwords advertiser is paying $5 per click then that traffic must be really valuable.

And if you rank for that keyword in organic search, you’ll have no issues converting that traffic into email signups, affiliate commissions and paying customers.
Here’s how to do it:

1. First, login to your Google Adwords account and head to the Keyword Planner:

2. Click on “Search for new keyword and ad group ideas”
3. Enter a single keyword (or list of keywords) into the field and click “Get Ideas”:

![Image of keyword entry interface]

4. Click on the “Keyword ideas” tab.

![Image of keyword ideas tab]
Check out the Adwords suggested bid.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Search terms</th>
<th>Avg. monthly searches</th>
<th>Competition</th>
<th>Suggested bid</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>web hosting</td>
<td>40,500</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>$24.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 - 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keyword (by relevance)</th>
<th>Avg. monthly searches</th>
<th>Competition</th>
<th>Suggested bid</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>free web hosting</td>
<td>27,100</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>$10.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ix web hosting</td>
<td>1,900</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>$1.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>best web hosting</td>
<td>8,100</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>$18.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>what is web hosting</td>
<td>1,900</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>$8.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>web hosting reviews</td>
<td>8,100</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>$15.71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Just look at the HUGE difference between the keywords in the list above.

The keyword “web hosting” is a Product Keyword that boasts a Suggested Bid of $24.75.

On the other hand, “what is web hosting” is an Information Keyword. Because people searching for “what is web hosting” are very early in the buying cycle, advertisers are only willing to pay $8.58 per click for that traffic.

As I said, the Four Keyword Classes are a helpful set of guidelines, but nothing beats seeing what the market is willing to pay for clicks. In my experience Suggested Bid is the single most accurate gauge of commercial intent.

**Adwords Competition**

Adwords Competition is a nice complement to the Suggested Bid. Competition is simply how many advertisers bid on that particular keyword in Adwords.

As you might expect, the more people that bid on a keyword, the more lucrative that keyword is.
You can check the competition by looking at this column in the Google Keyword Planner:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Avg. monthly searches</th>
<th>Competition</th>
<th>Suggested bid</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>250</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>$1.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>320</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>$0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14,800</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>$1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14,800</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>$2.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6,600</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>$1.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>170</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>$0.83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are only 3 levels of competition (Low, Medium and High), so the metric isn’t very precise. But it’s just another piece of real world data to use when figuring out commercial intent.

You can also check Adwords competition by searching for your keyword in Google and seeing how many Adwords ads show up on the page:

If you see a ton of Ads above the fold and on the sidebar, you know that you’re looking at a highly-coveted keyword. In other words, it’s a keyword you probably want to target in your SEO campaigns.
Next Step: Evaluate the Competition

Awesome! You can now find keywords that actual customers use to search online. But how do you know whether or not your site will zoom to the first page for that keyword...or have to fight an in-the-trenches battle with a slew of big brand competitors?

Well Chapter 5: Keyword Competition Analysis will show you the ropes. Let’s do this!
So you’ve found a popular keyword with strong commercial intent.

Nice work.

There’s only one thing left to do: check out the competition on Google’s first page.

If you see a page littered with authoritative, bid brand results, you might be better off moving to the next keyword on your list.

But if you take the time to evaluate keyword competition, you can usually find keywords that get great search volume AND have little to no competition.

That means that you need less content, links and promotion to claim your spot on page one.

In this chapter I’m going to show you how to quickly evaluate a keyword’s competition in Google’s organic search results.
There are two free browser toolbars that make Keyword Competition faster and easier: SEO Quake and MozBar.

Here's how to install and set them up:

**SEOQuake**

Head over to SEOQuake.com and click on the big orange button:

![SEOQuake installation](image)

(SEOQuake supports Firefox, Chrome, Opera and Safari browsers)

Follow the prompts to install and activate the toolbar:
MozBar

Point the same browser you installed SEO Quake on to this page. Choose either Firefox or Chrome:

And install and activate MozBar.

When you do a search in Google you should see information from SEOQuake:

And from MozBar:

(Sometimes the two toolbars don’t get along and show funky results when they’re both on at once. If that’s the case you can use one — gather the information you need — and then use the other.)

Now that you have SEOQuake and MozBar set up, it’s time to size up the competition.
PageRank and Page Authority

There's an old SEO adage that goes: “Google doesn’t rank sites... it ranks pages.”

Although a site’s domain authority and brand presence play important roles, the #1 factor in a page’s ability to rank in Google is the authority of that page.

So there's a lot of truth to that old adage.

The two best measurements of a page’s authority are PageRank and Moz's Page Authority.

PageRank gets a lot of flack from the SEO community (“PageRank doesn’t matter!”). But you know what? It's data straight from the horse’s mouth. That’s why I actually pay a lot of attention to PageRank (when it's actually updated).

To check a SERPs PageRank on the fly, search for the keyword and look at the “PR” measurement in SEOQuake:

(Because toolbar PR isn’t updated very often, newer pages may not show any toolbar PageRank...even if they have tons of authority in the eyes of Google)

Page Authority is a nice complement to PageRank. Because it's updated monthly, it's much more fresh than PR.

You can easily check PageAuthority by looking at the “PA” number in the MozBar SERP Overlay:

It's OK for a SERP to have a few high PR/PA results on the first page. That's the case for most medium or high volume keywords.

You want to keep an eye out for low PR/PA pages. Those pages are ripe for getting knocked off by your new, awesomely-optimized page. If you see a lot of these, consider giving your potential keyword the green light.
Referring Domains

At its very core, Google is a vote collection engine. The more “votes” a page gets (in the form of backlinks), the higher it tends to rank.

(Think metrics like these don’t matter anymore? Moz’s most recent ranking factors research study found that the number of referring domains was the 3rd most important ranking signal)

Which means that the number of referring domains is worth taking a look at.

Because there are several link analysis tools out there, there’s no shortage of conflicting data about how many links a page has pointing to it.

That’s why I recommend using the same tool throughout the keyword research process. That way you’ll be using consistent information as you size up the competition.

SEOQuake shows you the number of referring domains in its SERP overlay, called “LD” (Linking Domains)

(SEOQuake pulls this data from SEMRush, a popular keyword research tool I’ll show you how to use in the next chapter)

You can also see the number of referring domains from the MozBar (in my experience, Moz’s link metrics are MUCH more accurate than SEMRush):

[Image of SEOQuake and MozBar data]

1. **Backlinko: SEO Training and Link Building Strategies**
   *backlinko.com/*
   
   by Brian Dean - in 527 Google+ circles
   
   ... more search engine traffic within days. Just enter your email updates! “When it comes to link building, Brian Dean is the business.”
   
   Link Building - How to Get Backlinks - The Definitive Guide to L
   
   SEOQuake | PR: 5 | T: 82 | L: 341 | LD: 1098 | L: n/a | Rank: 12245

[Image of SEOQuake data]

1. **Backlinko: SEO Training and Link Building Strategies**
   *backlinko.com/*
   
   by Brian Dean - in 527 Google+ circles
   
   ... more search engine traffic within days. Just enter your email updates! “When it comes to link building, Brian Dean is the business.”
   
   Link Building - How to Get Backlinks - The Definitive Guide to L
   
   PA: 59 | 955 Links / 316 RDs | DA: 52 | 6,075 Links / 793 RDs

[Image of MozBar data]
You can also use a tool like ahrefs to see how many referring domains point to a particular page. Just take a URL from the top 10:

Pop it into ahrefs and hit “search links”:

And the tool will show you the number of referring domains linking to that page:

This process takes longer than using one of the toolbars, but the information from ahrefs tends to be more accurate.

Domain Authority and Brand Presence

I don’t need to tell you that Google loves ranking pages from major authority sites like Wikipedia, Amazon and CNN.com.

While a lot of pages from these sites rank on page authority and merit, quite a few get a huge bump from the simple fact that they’re on an authoritative domain.

Which means that – when you evaluate keyword competition — you also want to take a look at the sites you’re competing against (not just the pages).
The MozBar displays Domain Authority on the SERP overlay:

In general, results with high PA and DA are super-competitive.

As you might expect, you want to see a lot of the top 10 results with low PA and DA. Those are keywords that you can easily rank for.

In other words, a page’s authority is most important…but you also want to take DA into consideration.

**Brand Results**

Brand signals – signs that show search engines a site is part of a large brand – is becoming more and more integrated into Google’s algorithm.

Which means you want to take a brand’s size into consideration. For example, sites like Amazon, ESPN.com and YouTube are given an edge over small brand results with similar page and domain authority.

If you’ve been in the SEO game for a while you know that DA and PageRank can be VERY misleading metrics.

Sites with spammy link profiles may boast high DA and PageRank – but because they’re using spam links – they’re not going to stick on the first page over the long-term.

If there’s a keyword that looks especially competitive, but you have a gut feeling there’s a lot of black hat SEO behind the results, spot check the top 10’s link profile.

You may also want to see if any of the top 10 have links that are going to really, really hard for you to get (for example, media mentions on major news sites).

Either way, if you’re going to put a lot of effort behind ranking for a keyword, it makes sense to have a feel for how the top 10 got to where they are. And the best way to do that is to check out their link profile.
First, copy the URL of one of the top 10 results:

1. Go to Google and search for the best Android apps.

2. Click on one of the top results and copy the URL.

Paste that URL into the field on ahrefs homepage (if you prefer, you can use another similar tool like Open Site Explorer):

3. Visit ahrefs homepage and paste the URL into the search field.

4. Click on the 'Search Links' button to see the backlinks for the page.

Note: This is a step-by-step guide on how to use ahrefs to find backlinks for a specific page.
3. Click “External” under the backlinks section of the sidebar:

   This will display all of the external links pointing to that page.

   ![Site Explorer](image)

   **OVERVIEW**
   - URL Rank: 40
   - Ahrefs Domain Rank: 78
   - Referring Pages: 13,929
   - Total Backlinks: 13,928

4. Click on “One link per domain”. This makes interpreting the results significantly easier by removing sites that link to a page multiple times:

   ![One Link per Domain](image)
Finally, glance at the top 10-25 links in their link profile:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IF Rank</th>
<th>Domain Rank</th>
<th>Referring Page URL</th>
<th>Referring Page Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. 81</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>techmeme.com</td>
<td>Techmeme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. 44</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>mnumber.com</td>
<td>Mr. Number - Identify spammers and black ops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. 29</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>blog.livedoor.jp/crazi/i/archives/5012470...</td>
<td>1海外の方が選べるAndroidアプリTOP301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. 20</td>
<td>84</td>
<td><a href="http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/03/12/new">www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/03/12/new</a>...</td>
<td>New Android Phone Trends To Look For In 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. 19</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>plus.google.com/110139778935739836...</td>
<td>Marcel Martens - Google+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. 17</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>t3n.de/news/kostenlose-android-apps-282...</td>
<td>Die 15 besten Quellen für kostenlose Android Apps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. 17</td>
<td>72</td>
<td><a href="http://www.scoop.it/t/android-for-education">www.scoop.it/t/android-for-education</a></td>
<td>Android for Education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You can usually tell within a few seconds whether or not the page uses black hat SEO.

Links coming from these places tend to indicate a black hat link profile:

- Low quality web directories
- Article directories
- Blog networks
- Blog comments

Also keep an eye out for over-optimized anchor text. That’s another sign that a page isn’t going to last.

On the other hand, if a page has a lot of these links, beating them might be more competitive than the PR and DA numbers indicate:

- Major news sites, like The Huffington Post
- Editorial links from authoritative sites in your industry
- Hard to get directory links (like DMOZ)

The point here isn’t to obsess over their link profile. It’s just another layer of information to help you make an informed decision about a keyword.
You already know that on-page SEO can make or break a site's ability to rank.

That’s why you want to pay attention to the on-page SEO of your would-be competitors in the top 10 results.

First, take a look at the page’s title tags. This is the blue link displayed in Google’s search results:

The two results above are examples of well-optimized title tags. First, they’ve used the exact keyword in the title tag (“Premium headphones”)...not a synonym or variation (like, “High end headphones” or “Premium high performance headphones”).

But they’ve also included the keyword in the beginning of their title tags, which gives them an on-page boost.

To dig deeper, click on one of the results. Next, click on the magnifying glass icon in the MozBar:

Choose “Page Elements” from the dropdown menu:
And this will display information on the page’s URL, H tags and image alt text:

If the keyword is included in an H1/H2 tag, the URL and as part of an image’s alt text, consider the page well optimized.

On the other hand, if a page has lazy on-page SEO, it’s often easy to knock off the first page… even if it has decent authority.

Easy Target Results

When you see one or more Easy Target Results in the top 10, it’s time to celebrate. You just found a low-competition keyword.

Here are results that tend to indicate a very, very low competition keyword:
Here are some examples of keywords with Easy Target results:

**What do crickets eat?** - Yahoo Answers
answers.yahoo.com » All Categories » Science & Mathematics
Dec 22, 2005 - (m) Crickets eat just about anything – they're omnivores. You'll see them in your garden eating rotten tomatoes and other debri. They'll even eat...

**Do crickets eat carrots?**
7 answers 16 Aug 2012

**What kind of foods do crickets eat?**
2 answers 5 Aug 2009

**What do Crickets eat to keep em alive & drink?**
10 answers 6 Sep 2008

**What do Crickets eat?**
More results from answers.yahoo.com

**What Do Crickets Eat?** - Ezine Articles
ezinearticles.com » Travel and Leisure » Outdoors
Feb 2, 2006 - Crickets are insects that belong to the Order Orthoptera and the Class Insecta. Crickets are an important part of the ecosystem since they help...

**Chinese words - Fruit and vegetables - Digital Dialects**
digitaldialects.com/Chinese/Fruit.html

Chinese words for fruit and vegetables. Word list with audio and online game for learning the words for vegetables in Chinese language. Game gives audio ...

**List of Chinese Fruits** - eHow
ehow.com » Food & Drink

List of Chinese Fruits. When Americans think of Chinese food, the dishes that come to mind are typically foods like egg rolls, chow mein, General Tsos chicken ...

**25 Weird and Exotic Fruits From Asia You've Probably Never Heard Of**
May 10, 2013 - This fruit is revered in Southeast Asia as the King of Fruits...sweet, soft and white, and is mostly canned and served in Chinese desserts. 14 ...

**Answer - what is China Fruit? everyone this name is mentioned ...**
answernews24.com/Question/what%20is%20China%20Fruit?/42783

China Fruit is fruit (like prunes for example) that have been dried and flavoured with granular sweet and spicy seasoning. I think cherries are used as well.

And finally, we have:

**Cool Last Names** - Cool Words
coolwords.com/content/cool-last-names

Whether you are looking to change your last name, want to find a last name for a character, or whatever reason you have put together a list of cool last names for...

**What are some cool last names?** - Yahoo Answers
answers.yahoo.com » All Categories » Society & Culture » Languages
Jul 17, 2009 - Daft, Martin, J Hale, [Twilight c Keating, Amador, Radke, ... Peter Parker, D Bourne, Jason Bourne, xD ...

Cool sounding last names?
4 answers 12 Nov 2010

Some cool last names? I NEED HELP?!?
12 answers 21 Mar 2011

Emo names and cool last names?
8 answers 4 March 2010

Cool guy names? Last name?
10 answers 15 Aug 2009

More results from answers.yahoo.com

**Best Last Names - Top Ten List** - TheTopTens.com
wittoptens.com/best-last-names/

Sexy, dark, cool and mysterious, who wouldn't love this last name? "Love that name I'm going to use it in my story. LOVE IT. I love the darkness in the last name ...

**Cool Last Names** - Buzzle
buzzle.com/articles/cool-last-names.html

Dec 26, 2012 - Having a cool last name is a thing of pride. If you're looking for some unique last names, scroll down and take a look at the collection listed ...

**A Cool Last Names List For Character Creation** - Squidoo
www.squidoo.com » Relationships & Family » Family History

Three Easy Target results!
With all the talk of referring domains and title tags, it's easy to forget that the **quality of your content** is a huge part of your ability to crack the top 10.

In other words, if you want to rank for a competitive keyword, be prepared to match (or beat) the quality of the top 10 results.

Although highly subjective, you can usually get a feel for what type of content you’ll have to bring to the table to beat the top 10 with a minute or two of digging.

How?

Just search for your keyword and read the content of the top 5-10 results.

Let’s look at an example, “health benefits of kale”.

---

**Table: Content Quality**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health Benefits of Kale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Truth About Kale, Nutrition, Recipe Ideas, and More - WebMD</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.webmd.com/food-recipes/features/the-truth-about-kale">www.webmd.com/food-recipes/features/the-truth-about-kale</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathleen Zelman, MPH, RD, describes the many nutritional perks of kale.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Top 10 Health Benefits of Eating Kale - MindBodyGreen.com</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr 2, 2012 - Kale is being called 'the new beef', 'the queen of greens' and 'a nutritional powerhouse.' Here are ten great benefits of adding more kale to...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HowStuffWorks: “Health Benefits of Kale”</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>home.howstuffworks.com/kale3.htm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Include kale in your diet, and you’ll add a great source of antioxidants, fiber and more. Learn about the health benefits of this important vegetable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**9 Health Benefit of Kale + Diet Cautions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.care2.com/health-health-benefit-of-kale-diet-cautions.html">www.care2.com/health-health-benefit-of-kale-diet-cautions.html</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>by Diana Harrington - in 88 Google+ circles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 10, 2013 - Discover the newest superfood of the stars, its health benefits AND cautions: “Every leaf of kale you chew adds another stem to your tree of life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kale - The World’s Healthiest Foods</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.whfoods.com/genpage.php?fn=foodspice&amp;dbid=38">www.whfoods.com/genpage.php?fn=foodspice&amp;dbid=38</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You’ll want to include kale as one of the cruciferous vegetables you eat on a regular basis if you want to receive the fantastic health benefits provided by the...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The first result, from WebMD, is a high-quality article written by a registered dietitian:

![The Truth About Kale](image)

The article also cites several scientific research studies, making the content more credible and worthy of links:

**Super Rich in Vitamin K**

Eating a diet rich in the powerful antioxidant vitamin K can reduce the overall risk of developing or dying from cancer, according to a study in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*. Vitamin K is abundant in kale but also found in parsley, spinach, collard greens, and animal products such as cheese.

Vitamin K is necessary for a wide variety of bodily functions, including normal blood clotting, antioxidant activity, and bone health.

In other words, it will take some very good – although not necessarily amazing – content to beat the first result.

The second result is from Mind Body Green.
Unlike the WebMD article, this article wasn’t written by a certified expert and doesn’t cite any research. That’s good news: this is easy content to beat!

Let’s look at one more result from the top 5: an article from WHFoods.com.

The first thing I notice is the layout and design is REALLY dated looking. This probably hurts their ability to generate links and social shares. Now you know that design is one way to stand out from the current top 10.

However, the content itself is outstanding, featuring charts:

Cooking tips:
And a list of scientific references:

**References**


What keeps this page from hitting the #1 spot is its poor design and on-page SEO.

The title tag of the page is simply “kale”, and there’s little mention of the keyword “health benefits of kale” anywhere else on the page.

Otherwise, the content itself is A+ and should be the considered the benchmark for the content you create around that keyword.

**Next Step: Leverage Keyword Research Tools**

Nice job! You can now size up the competition in Google for any keyword you come across.

There’s nothing wrong with manually following these steps. But you can save A LOT of time using a high-quality keyword research tool designed to streamline this process.

That’s what the next chapter, Chapter 6: Keyword Research Tools, is all about. See you there.
There’s no other way to put this:

If you’re serious about SEO, you should strongly consider investing in a keyword research tool.

Sure, you can sort through keywords in the Google Keyword Planner one-by-one. And you can manually evaluate the first page competition for your target keywords.

But the right tool makes the process MUCH faster, easier and more effective.

Keyword Research Icon

Because keyword research tools work at light speed, you’ll usually come away with fistfuls of untapped, low-competition keywords in minutes.

But which keyword research tool is best for you and your business?

Well in this guide I’ve put five of the top tools to the test. I’ll show you an overview of how they work, key features, and a list of pros and cons.

(And to show you that I’m being straightforward and objective with my reviews, there are no affiliate links anywhere on this page)

Let’s do this!
The first keyword research tool I’ll go over is SECockpit.

Like any other keyword research tool, you pop in a seed keyword and get a list of results. But what makes SECockpit unique is the built-in features that allow you to get an incredible amount of depth on search trends, organic competition and traffic estimates.

Here’s how it works:

1. When you login you’ll automatically go to your Dashboard, where you can create projects around sets of keywords... or jump right in with a single keyword search:

2. To start the keyword research process, click on “Start a Keyword Search”:
3. Then, enter a seed keyword in the field marked “Keyword Phrase”:

4. You can get even more results by choosing to include Google Suggest, Related Searches and synonyms pulled from Google Adwords:

5. When you’re done, click on “save and close” and the tool will get to work:
Here's what you'll see:

Most of the results should be familiar to you as they’re exactly what you’re used to seeing in the Google Keyword Planner.

In fact, the columns “Phrase”, “Monthly Searches” and “CPC” are pulled directly from the GKP:

(The only difference is that CPC is called “Suggested Bid” within Adwords)

What does the other information in SE Cockpit mean?

Well you’ll notice a bunch of green bars under the column labeled “Niche”: 
This bar is a single metric that takes into account top 10 competition, monthly search volume, and commercial intent. In other words, whether or not it’s a good choice. The larger the bar, the better the keyword.

Next to monthly searches you’ll notice a series of orange bars labeled “Rank 1-10”

This bar indicates the difficulty of ranking for that particular keyword based on the current top 10 results.

You can actually get an in-depth overview of a keyword’s first page competition in Google by clicking on that keyword:

SECockpit will display important competition metrics for the top 10 pages in the results, including MozRank, Domain Authority and total links:

This is a great way to quickly size up competition without having to look one-by-one at Google’s search results.
If you go back to the keywords page, you can actually add at least 20 more columns to the results:

![Image of column selection](image)

For example, you can see a ratio of the keyword’s competition in comparison to its search volume. Or you can get a comparison of the estimated traffic you’ll get from hitting the top 3 for that keyword compared to the level of competition for that keyword. Lots and lots of advanced features in SECockpit.

But there’s one optional column that I really like, called “Top 10 Sites Sniper”:

![Image of Top 10 Sites Sniper](image)

If you see an icon in this column it means that there’s a very weak result in the top 10, like HubPages, Squidoo or Ezine Articles (similar to the Easy Target Results I talked about in Chapter 4). These are typically keywords that you can rank for quickly and easily.
The first thing you’ll notice about SE Cockpit is that it’s a tool designed for SEO professionals.

Sure, newbies can get value out of it, but there’s no doubt that SE Cockpit is targeted for people that sleep, eat and breathe SEO.

If you’re brand new to SEO, the sheer number of features in this tool might be overwhelming for you. But if you’re looking for lots and lots of depth, you’ll get your money’s worth with SE Cockpit.

**Moz Analytics’ Keyword Analysis Tool**

This tool isn’t nearly as feature-rich as some of the other Keyword Research tools on the market. But to be fair it’s just one part of a larger suite of tools found within Moz Analytics.

And it’s very straightforward and easy to use.

1. First, login to your Moz Analytics account, hover over “Research Tools” and click on “Keyword Analysis”:

   ![Keyword Analysis Tool](image)
2. Enter one or more keywords and click on “Check Difficulty”:

```
Keyword Difficulty and SERP Analysis
```

3. The tool will show you the Keyword’s overall difficulty (displayed as a %) and the exact match search volume from Bing:

```
Keyword Difficulty and Analysis
```

The higher the keyword difficulty %, the harder it is to rank for.

4. To take a closer look at the top 10 results, click the “View” button under “SERP Analysis Reports”:
You get a bird’s eye view of the top 10 results’ Page Authority and Domain Authority in Google:

![Top 10 Ranking Pages for keyword research](image)

And if you scroll down you can see in-depth information, including the URLs of the pages ranking for that keyword and the number of referring domains linking to each page:

![In-depth information for keyword research](image)
As you can see, Moz’s keyword competition tool is easy to use. And its “Keyword Difficulty” score makes determining a keyword’s difficulty simple.

However, it doesn’t actually help generate new keyword ideas. It’s only helpful to size up the top 10 results for a list of keywords you’re interested in ranking for.

Next up we have **Long Tail Pro**, a user friendly (and high quality) keyword research tool.

1. First, launch the desktop software and enter one or more seed keywords into the tool:

   ![Long Tail Pro Software](image)

   **Select Campaign:** Backlinko
   **Generate Keywords**
   ```markdown
   | keyword research |
   ```

2. You can also choose to have the tool grab some extra pieces of data, like Google Title Competition (the number of pages in Google’s index use that keyword in their title):

   ![Generate Keywords](image)

   **Fetch Additional Data (optional)**
   ```markdown
   - Global Search Volume
   - Domain Availability
   - Google Title Competition
   - Bing Title Competition
   ```

3. Finally, you can set up a few filters so that low search volume keywords are excluded from the results:

   ![Apply Filters](image)

   **Apply Filters (optional)**
   ```markdown
   - Average Local Searches: 200 to 20000
   - Average CPC
   - Number of Words
   ```

4. When you have everything set up, click on “Generate Keywords”:

   ![Generate Keywords](image)

   **Data (optional)**
   ```markdown
   - Generate Keywords
   ```
And Long Tail Pro will show you information pulled from the Google Keyword Planner:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keywords (861)</th>
<th>Avg. CPC</th>
<th>Local Searches</th>
<th>Advertiser Competition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>keyword research</td>
<td>$2.97</td>
<td>2,900</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>keyword research tool</td>
<td>$4.63</td>
<td>1,900</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>seo keyword research</td>
<td>$6.84</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>keyword research tools</td>
<td>$4.34</td>
<td>720</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>how to do keyword research</td>
<td>$2.32</td>
<td>720</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>best keyword research tool</td>
<td>$4.00</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>keyword research software</td>
<td>$2.46</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>free keyword research</td>
<td>$3.69</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What makes the tool worthwhile is the Keyword Competition feature. Just click on any keyword from the list and Long Tail Pro will automatically analyze the top 10 competition for that keyword:

Like some of the other tools you've seen, Long Tail Pro shows you the Page Authority and Domain Authority of the top 10. But the tool also shows you the number of inbound links, PageRank and the site’s age (an important ranking factor that most tools overlook).

And if you find that a keyword is a bit too competitive, just hit the red “x” next to it and it’s gone:

This makes it easy to filter out irrelevant or overly-competitive terms.
For an in-depth keyword research tool that's also very easy to use, Long Tail Pro is an excellent choice.

SEMrush works a bit differently than the keyword research tools I’ve shown you so far. Instead of entering a seed keyword and getting a long list of keyword ideas, SEMrush shows you keywords that your competition is already ranking for. These are often outside-the-box keywords that would be impossible to find using any other tool.

Here's how it works:

1. Enter a competitor's domain name in the field at the top of the page.
2. Click “Search”:

   ![SEMrush Dashboard](image)

   If you’re doing SEO in a country outside of the US (for example, in Google.co.uk), you can choose to see information about that specific market. Just choose that country from this menu:
Next, take a look at the “Overview” box:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SEMrush rank</td>
<td>186,560</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE Traffic</td>
<td>2,294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE Traffic price</td>
<td>$8,107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ads Traffic</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ads Traffic price</td>
<td>$0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adsense ads</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here’s what the different terms in the Overview box mean:

**SEMrush rank** is where the domain ranks in its database of domains (like Alexa, the lower the number, the better). SEMrush rank is based on total organic traffic and the value of that traffic.

**SE Traffic** is the estimated number of monthly organic visitors that come from Google.

**SE Traffic price** indicates how valuable this traffic is (based on Adwords CPC).

So if you see a domain with a lot of SE Traffic but a relatively low SE Traffic price, you know that they’re targeting keywords that probably don’t convert especially well.

But the real value of SEMrush comes from the “Organic Keywords” data:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keyword</th>
<th>Pes</th>
<th>Volume</th>
<th>CPC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>backlinks</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4,490</td>
<td>1.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>how to get high</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5,400</td>
<td>1.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>get backlinks</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>1.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quality backlinks</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>4.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gsa marketing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>5.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This box will show you 5 of the top keywords that your competitor’s are ranking for. To see more, click on “Full Report”:
And you’ll get a list of all of the keywords that the site or page is currently ranking for:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keyword</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Volume</th>
<th>CPC</th>
<th>URL</th>
<th>Traffic %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>backlinks</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4,400</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>backlinko.com/17_sources</td>
<td>12.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>how to get high</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5,400</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>backlinko.com/hhigh_links</td>
<td>10.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>get backlinks</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>backlinko.com/hhigh_links</td>
<td>8.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quality backlinks</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>4.51</td>
<td>backlinko.com/hhigh_links</td>
<td>5.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cpa marketing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>5.50</td>
<td>backlinko.com/npa-marketing</td>
<td>5.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>high quality backlinks</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>backlinko.com/hhigh_links</td>
<td>3.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on page seo</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>880</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>backlinko.com/npa-page-seo</td>
<td>3.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>back links</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1,300</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>backlinko.com/17_sources</td>
<td>2.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>how to get backlinks</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>backlinko.com/hhigh_links</td>
<td>2.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>backlink</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1,900</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>backlinko.com/17_sources</td>
<td>2.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>google ranking</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1,300</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>backlinko.com/google_rank</td>
<td>2.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>seo case studies</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>6.95</td>
<td>backlinko.com/white-hat-seo</td>
<td>2.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brain dean</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>380</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>backlinko.com/brain</td>
<td>2.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>youtubeseo</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>4.26</td>
<td>backlinko.com/youtube_videos</td>
<td>1.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>how to get backlinks</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>backlinko.com/hhigh_links</td>
<td>1.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>edu backlinks</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>7.74</td>
<td>backlinko.com/17_sources</td>
<td>1.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>how to get quality backlinks</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>backlinko.com/hhigh_links</td>
<td>1.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>seo case study</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>19.12</td>
<td>backlinko.com/white-hat-seo</td>
<td>1.68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This page alone will usually give you a handful of solid keywords.

But if you want more ideas, go back to the domain’s overview and check out the “Competitors in organic search” box:

When you click on one of those results, you’ll see what keywords they’re ranking for.

There will be some overlap from what you just saw, but you’ll also usually dig up some real gems.
You can also start your SEMrush search with a keyword instead of a competitor’s site:

SEMrush will show you a “Phrase match report”, which is a list of long tail keywords that include the keyword you entered:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keyword</th>
<th>Volume</th>
<th>CPC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>keyword research</td>
<td>2,900</td>
<td>4.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>keyword research tool</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>5.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>google keyword research</td>
<td>720</td>
<td>10.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>how to do keyword research</td>
<td>590</td>
<td>4.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>google keyword research tool</td>
<td>590</td>
<td>8.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>seo keyword research</td>
<td>590</td>
<td>5.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>best keyword research tool</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>4.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>keyword research tools</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>6.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>keyword research software</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>5.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>keyword research for seo</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>3.67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This is really helpful for finding long tail variations of Head and Body Keywords. For example, if you wanted to rank for the keyword “weight loss”, you’ll quickly find that it’s simply too competitive.

But SEMrush will show you long tail variations, like “weight loss tips”, that are MUCH easier to rank for:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keyword</th>
<th>Volume</th>
<th>CPC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>weight loss</td>
<td>60,500</td>
<td>4.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>weight loss calculator</td>
<td>27,100</td>
<td>3.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>weight loss tips</td>
<td>18,100</td>
<td>2.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>weight loss programs</td>
<td>12,100</td>
<td>7.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or vs weight loss</td>
<td>12,100</td>
<td>1.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rachael ray weight loss</td>
<td>9,900</td>
<td>2.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quick weight loss</td>
<td>9,500</td>
<td>3.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>weight loss supplements</td>
<td>8,100</td>
<td>2.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>before and after weight loss</td>
<td>8,100</td>
<td>2.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>weight loss blogs</td>
<td>8,100</td>
<td>4.36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When you start your search with a keyword SEMrush will also show you a “Related keywords report”, which (as you might expect) is a list of related keywords:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keyword</th>
<th>Volume</th>
<th>CPC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>weight watchers</td>
<td>1,500,000</td>
<td>0.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ww</td>
<td>1,000,000</td>
<td>4.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>weight watchers online</td>
<td>301,000</td>
<td>0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>weight watchers login</td>
<td>248,000</td>
<td>0.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>how to lose weight fast</td>
<td>165,000</td>
<td>3.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>how to lose weight</td>
<td>110,000</td>
<td>4.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>weight watchers 360</td>
<td>90,500</td>
<td>0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>watchers web</td>
<td>90,500</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lose weight fast</td>
<td>90,500</td>
<td>3.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nutrition</td>
<td>74,000</td>
<td>2.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SEMrush is surprisingly good at linking together thematically related keywords. As you can see in the example above they were able to figure out that keywords like “weight watchers” and “nutrition” were related to the keyword “weight loss”. These are often excellent keywords to target because they’re not keywords that the Google Keyword Planner suggests to everyone (including your competition).

**BOTTOM LINE**

If you’re looking for a fresh list of keywords to use as the foundation of your SEO campaigns, SEMrush is a must-have tool.

**Keyword Snatcher**

If you want a lot – and I mean a lot – of keyword ideas, Keyword Snatcher is a dream come true. You’ll usually generate at least 4,000 keywords from a single seed keyword.

Here’s how it works:

1. Just open up the tool (it’s browser-based), and you’ll be able to choose the sources that Keyword Snatcher pulls its keyword suggestions from:

```
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources:</th>
<th>Google</th>
<th>Yahoo</th>
<th>Bing</th>
<th>Amazon</th>
<th>eBay</th>
<th>YouTube</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Country:</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
```

I recommend keeping them all checked off so you can generate as many keyword ideas as possible.
2. Next, enter a seed keyword into the field and click “Get Suggestions”:

3. And after a long wait, you’ll get an insane amount of suggestions:

   The one downside of this keyword research tool is that it doesn’t show you helpful information about the keywords that it generates (like search volume and keyword competition). It’s simply a keyword generation tool.

4. To get that information, you need to extract the list of keywords by clicking on “Download Suggestions” and saving your keyword list as a text or CSV file:
Then, head over to the Google Keyword Planner and choose “Get search volume for a list of keywords...” Upload the file that you downloaded from Keyword Snatcher:

![Google Keyword Planner Interface]

Then you can see the search volume, suggested bid and Adwords competition for all of the keywords that the tool gave you:

![Keyword Snatcher Data]

**BOTTOM LINE**

When it comes to generating massive lists of keyword ideas, you’d be hard pressed to find a more robust tool than Keyword Snatcher. I’d prefer if you could see data from the Google Keyword Planner without having to upload a file, but that’s not a deal breaker for me because it only takes an extra minute.
Next Step: Turn Keywords into SEO-Optimized Content

Keywords aren’t worth anything without the content to back them up.

In the next chapter – Chapter 7: Turning Keywords Into SEO Content — I’ll show you how to create keyword-rich content that makes users and search engines happy.
So you’ve worked hard on the keyword research process and put together a list of lucrative, low-competition keywords.

Now what?

Well, it’s time to take that lifeless group of phrases and turn them into living, breathing pieces of content.

But not just any content: content designed to rank highly in search engines.

Here are some simple – yet powerful – guidelines to keep in mind as you develop SEO content for your site.
Most people’s approach to their title tag’s optimization is this:

1. Find a keyword for that page
2. Add that keyword to the title tag
3. Hope for the best

Considering that your page’s title tag is (by far) the most important on-page SEO ranking factor, it makes sense to get the most value you can out of it.

The best way to do that is to tap into The Title Tag Double Dip.

The Title Tag Double Dip is simply optimizing your title tag for a short AND long tail version of your keyword.

When you do that, you’ll rank for the long tail quickly (because it’s less competitive). And over time, **you’ll also rank for the short tail keyword.**

Here’s an example:

Let’s say you wanted to rank for the keyword “SEO Tips” because you saw that it had solid search volume and buyer intent:

As you may expect, in a competitive industry like SEO, it’s going to be a while before you rank for that keyword.
So instead of simply using the keyword “SEO tips” in your title tag, use a long tail version of that keyword:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Search terms</th>
<th>Avg. monthly searches</th>
<th>Competition</th>
<th>Suggested bid</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>seo tips</td>
<td>4,400</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>$8.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>seo optimization tips</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>$10.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>seo tips and tricks</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>$11.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>free seo tips</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here’s what a Title Tag Double Dip might look like in practice:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title Tag</th>
<th>Custom Title Tag</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SEO Tips &amp; Tricks: 25 Ways to Get Higher Rankings</td>
<td>Search engines allow a maximum of 70 characters for the title.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

That way, you’ll quickly rank for the less-competitive “SEO tips and tricks”. And as you build links to that page, you’ll also crack the top 10 for “SEO tips”.

**Publish Loooong Content**

In depth 1500+ word articles blow run-of-the-mill 400-word blog posts out of the water in terms of SEO, content performance and user satisfaction.

The only downside is that long pieces of content take more time and effort :-)

But that’s actually a competitive advantage for you.

Your competition is probably too lazy to write in-depth pieces. Which means that you’ll instantly separate yourself from the pack when you start publishing insanely-thorough stuff (like this guide you’re reading right now).

Why is long content so important?

First off, long content is strongly tied to higher rankings in Google.
The SEO bloggers at SERPIQ.com noticed that the top 10 results for most keywords tended to boast at least 2000 words:

Why does long content rank better?
There are a few reasons:

- Longer content helps give Google more information about the topic of that page (spider food). This makes them more confident that your page is a relevant result for that keyword.
- A piece of long content is usually more in-depth than a 300-word blog post on the same topic. That means long articles are going to answer the searcher’s query better than short pieces of content.
- Long content tends to attract more links and social shares than shallow content.

In fact, Moz found that long content pieces on their site tended to generate more links and comments than shorter articles:
This makes sense if you think about it:

What are you more likely to link to?

A 350-word post titled, “5 tips for interval training”...

...or a 3000-word guide called “The Ultimate Guide to Interval Training?”

I thought so.

Keep in mind that you don’t need to necessarily include your target keyword more often in longer content. In other words, don’t sweat keyword density.

Just make sure that you sprinkle your keyword in the content a few times... especially in the beginning.

Which leads me to my next tip...

---

**Keyword Prominence**

Keyword Prominence is where your keyword appears on the page.

The higher up on the page a keyword first appears, the more Google considers that page about that keyword.

For example, in my post [17 Untapped Backlink Sources](https://www.backlinko.com/post/17-untapped-backlink-sources), I don’t waste any time mentioning my target keyword, “backlinks”:

![17 Untapped Backlink Sources](https://www.backlinko.com/content/17-untapped-backlink-sources.png)

This makes sense from Google’s point of view. If you’re writing an article about a particular topic, why wouldn’t you mention a word related to that topic (in other words, a keyword) right off the bat?

**Bottom line:** use your target keyword in the first 100-words of a page.
Great user experience has VERY powerful direct and indirect SEO benefits.

The direct benefit comes from the fact that Google measures things like “short clicks vs. long clicks” (in other words, how much time someone spends on a page in Google’s search results before hitting the “back” button).

As you might imagine, the longer people stay on your page, the better.

On the other hand, people that pogo stick from your site back to the search results send a strong message to Google that says: “This result doesn’t seem to be helpful, better push them further down the page”.

The indirect benefit is simply that people that enjoy their time on your site are more likely to link to it :-)

So what can you do to make people stick on your site like super glue?

Here are a few actionable strategies that can help you maximize user experience for SEO and conversions:

**Make the first few sentences REALLY short:** Research shows that people prefer to read short sentences online. People also don’t like wide blocks of text that spread from one end of the screen to the other.

That’s why you want to make the first few sentences of every article and landing page on your site super, super short.

Also, **crunch those first 5-10 sentences between huge margins** so that people’s eyes don’t have to dart back and forth as far.

I do this for every post on my site:
The easiest way to generate this effect for your site is to add an image to the top of every page that’s aligned to the right of the first paragraph.

**Create multimedia experiences:**

Text-only content is soooo 2005.

Today, you need to step your content game up to include video, audio, diagrams, charts, interactive media, quizzes, games and infographics.

When you have quality multimedia on your site, you satisfy a larger chunk of the people that are visiting your site from Google. People that like video sit back and watch your YouTube clip. Users that like to read enjoy skimming blog posts. And audio junkies love to listen to your Podcast.

In fact, Moz discovered that content with 3 types of media tended to attract more backlinks:

![](image)

And a leaked Google Quality Guidelines document told human reviewers to consider pages with “supplementary content” (in the form of calculators, downloads and diagrams) higher quality search results than text-only pages.

In short, using multimedia on high priority pages is worth the extra effort.

**Use H Tag Subheadings:**

If you’re publishing long content (and if you’re not, you should be), you want to use lots and lots of subheaders to break up your content.

Nothing hurts user experience metrics worse than a mile-long, subheader-free page.

Also sprinkle in related words and phrases into your subheaders as H2 and H3 tags. This will give you a small-yet-significant on-page SEO boost.

A good rule of thumb is to include at least one subheader for every 200-words of content.
Optimizing Pages for Google Hummingbird

The first thing you should know about Google Hummingbird is: there’s no need to freak out.

Like any publicly announced Google change, the SEO community over-hyped the impact of this update a hundred fold.

After all, Hummingbird had been rolled out for an entire month before Google publicly announced it, and no one in the SEO world even noticed!

That being said, the idea of creating pages that target topics and keywords is a smart move for both user experience and SEO.

In other words, Google Hummingbird impacted how we optimize pages around keywords... not how we find and evaluate them.

The same process you use to find long tail keywords, determine commercial intent, and evaluate a keyword’s competition is exactly the same as it was pre-Hummingbird.

The only thing that’s changed is how you optimize your site’s pages based on the keywords that you want to target.

When you optimize pages with proven on-page SEO principles in mind – and add a few wrinkles to feed Google Hummingbird — you can get **even more traffic** from every page on your site.

**HERE’S HOW:**

- Distill long conversational keywords (like “where in Paris is The Louvre located?”) into shorter, to-the-point-keywords (“The Louvre Location and Address”).
- Stop creating 10 pages for 10 different long tail keywords. Just look at this search result:
Google is able to identify that the words “display resolution”, “screen resolution” and “browser display” are synonyms for the keyword “desktop resolution”.

In fact, there’s no result in the top 10 that has the keyword “desktop resolution” in their title tag.

So instead of creating one article optimized around “display resolution”, another around “browser displays” etc., create ONE awesome article optimized around the keyword in that group. That way you’ll rank for that keyword and for all of the synonyms that Google connects to it.

---

**MIX UP YOUR ANCHOR TEXT**

You already know that over-optimizing anchor text is a risk factor for a Google Penguin slap. But it can also hurt you when it comes to Google Hummingbird. If 25% of your anchor text includes the keyword “best water bottle”, you won’t rank as well for similar searches like “best reusable water bottle” or “best new water bottle”.

**USE INTELLIGENT CO-CITATIONS**

Co-citations are the new anchor text. Google now uses the text around a link to determine the topic of that page.
For example, you can see that the words “link building” appear next to this link:

I invited Brian Dean, founder of Backlinko.com, to share some of his top link building marketing agencies pay him big money to for and that he uses in his own business to the most competitive keywords on the planet.

The more often Google sees people using the words “link building” around a link to my site, the more that association grows in Google’s eyes.

Just like anchor text, mix up your co-citations to include your target keyword AND synonyms. That way, Hummingbird will rank you for multiple keywords.

Next Step: Review the Rest of Keyword Research: The Definitive Guide

You ROCK!

By now you know pretty much everything there is to know about keyword research.

If you don’t have a list of awesome keywords yet, I recommend hopping back to one of the other chapters in the guide: