

searching

| keyword ...



Seventh-day
Adventist[®] Church

NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION

Search Engine
Optimization

SDAdata.org/SEO

*Created through a collaborative
partnership between the
Social Media + Big Data
department and the
Center for Online Evangelism.*



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Why Search Engine Optimization Matters for the Adventist Church



Search Engine Optimization, Online Marketing, Content Strategy, Big Data...why should the Seventh-day Adventist Church prioritize these digital strategies and tools?

Most of the world spends hours online each day. Many people have become addicted to research, googling anything they have a question about. They look for maps and location information, check product reviews, read articles, watch videos, post comments, check in with old friends...they'll even google questions close to their heart—questions they don't feel comfortable asking close friends or family. Many people may google questions about topics such as spirituality, health, or information to help them through an inner struggle.

To be specific, 74,000 people google "Bible study" each month. That's almost the entire population of Scranton, Pennsylvania.

The name "Jesus" is googled 1,500,000 times a month, and "Adventist" 18,100 times a month.

The screenshot shows a Google search for "bible study". The search bar displays the query and the Google logo. Below the search bar, there are navigation tabs for All, Images, Videos, Books, News, More, Settings, and Tools. The search results show "About 46,700,000 results (0.45 seconds)". The first result is "Bible Study Tools" from biblestudytools.com, with a description: "Use our free online Bible to better know the Word of God. Read verses by topic, study Scripture with commentary while using our large library of biblical ...". Other results include "Online Bible Study Guides and Articles - Bible Study Tools", "Top 10 Bible Studies 2017 | Christianity Today", "Bible Studies | Bible Study Lessons | Lifeway", and "Bible Study Minute Daily Devotional - Crosswalk.com". A map at the bottom shows locations like Glendale Bible Study and Intensive Care Ministries. On the right side, there are two sidebars: "Related Keywords" and "People Also Search For".

Keyword	Vol	CPC	Comp
bible study lessons	12,100	\$1.59	0.64
bible study topics	12,100	\$0.71	0.51
bible study guide	9,900	\$1.19	0.99
online bible study	9,900	\$2.39	0.74
daily bible study	3,600	\$1.17	0.69
bible study guide books	720	\$0.86	0.99
daily bible study online	480	\$2.93	0.58
online womens bible study	83	\$2.88	0.92

Keyword	Vol	CPC	Comp
bible study lessons	12,100	\$1.59	0.64
daily bible study	3,600	\$1.17	0.69
bible study fellowship lessons	1,900	\$1.23	0.39
bible study guide pdf	1,000	\$1.84	0.35
bible study guide books	720	\$0.86	0.99
bible study fellowship criticism	590	\$1.50	0.17
bible study guide for beginners	590	\$1.35	0.99
bible studies for small groups	450	\$0.91	1
online bible study tool	390	\$1.05	0.32

(Pulled August 2018 from keyword research tools Keyword Planner (Google Ads), Ubersuggest and Keywords Everywhere.)

This is a huge ministry opportunity—if Adventist websites can rank high in the search results Google displays for these search terms.

Currently, however, that's not the case. Other websites are catching this traffic.

This is a missed opportunity to introduce these seekers to the hope and help that the Adventist message can provide. To quote *Forbes*, "Websites without SEO are like brick-and-mortar businesses without doors."

That’s exactly why this blog series and resource guide (*coming soon!*) have been created. By educating our worldwide church body in fundamental Search Engine Optimization techniques, we can significantly bolster our collective web presence. We can ensure that Adventist resources are more easily findable and accessible to those ***already searching for what we already offer!*** We don’t need to reinvent the wheel; we just need to focus on making our content searchable and accessible to the modern seeker.

What is SEO?

Search Engine Optimization, or SEO, is an ever-evolving set of strategies used in online marketing to help organizations reach more of their target audience. It is the process of utilizing a variety of techniques to positively impact a website’s visibility in unpaid search engine results. The higher a website ranks when a person googles search terms related to it, the more web traffic it receives. Most people do not scroll past the first page of search engine results. With this important fact in mind, I challenge you to google Seventh-day Adventist Church, Jesus, Bible prophecy, or the name of your church, ministry, organization, etc. What do you find? What kind of digital “[curb appeal](#)” did your search results reveal? Was it good or bad? Are people being led away by the competition or misinformation?

This resource will dive into what SEO strategies involve and how it relates to each of our ministries, from local to global. By being intentional and strategic, we can improve our digital curb appeal and encourage more people to encounter, and possibly embrace, our message.

Just as Seventh-day Adventists made strides in popular media throughout history—from print to radio to television—it’s now time to leverage the near limitless missionary opportunities the internet and digital technologies provide for us.

We can’t ignore this vast online audience (“the online mission field”) that already wants what we have to offer—an audience we may never otherwise meet!

SEO is both highly technical and an art form. Professionals in this arena are highly sought-after and highly compensated by many types of businesses that know their true profitability depends on their findability and reputation online. But we can, with some education, invest the time (and sometimes money) *ourselves* to implement these valuable techniques. This is your chance to learn insider information and use it for the gospel—ultimately aiding the fulfillment of the Great Commission (Matt. 28:16-20).

As with all things digital, the technology and tricks-of-the-trade will continually change, but the underlying philosophy will remain largely the same. With careful, prayerful guidance, let us begin. We recommend working through this series in the order presented.

Introduction to Search Engine Optimization (SEO):
Helping More Seekers Find Your Ministry



Whether you're a conference, union, church, a school, a regional office, a service organization, or a retailer, you may be asking:

What is SEO, and what does it have to do with my ministry?

One way to understand SEO is to think of the internet as a traditional library, but bigger. All the world's content is in this library. To find material on a certain topic, you don't just wander through each aisle. This is a large, multi-story building with shelves from floor to ceiling. If you want to find what you need, and fast, you ask the librarian: Google.

You approach Google: "I need snow leopard information." With that, Google brings you stacks of books. There are travel magazines about zoos that have snow leopards, kids' picture books of snow leopards, decor magazines about snow-leopard-print area rugs, reference books on animal facts, a few encyclopedias, some National Geographics, and some support manuals for Apple OS X Snow Leopard.

You're overwhelmed, so you say, "Actually, I just want to know where snow leopards live."

Google whisks the previous stack away and returns with a smaller stack of literature. You pick the first book off top, quickly scan through, and find, "Ah—they live in the mountains of Central Asia."

Done. And you only needed to look at the first few pages of the top book.

The goal of Google's search engine is to give searchers exactly what they're looking for. If it didn't do that very well, people wouldn't use their search engine.

Google acts as the Great Virtual Librarian, seeking content that is most relevant to what was typed in the search box. The more specific the search query, the more specific the search results.

On the other hand, if an author wants *their* book to make the librarian's short list for a certain topic, they must demonstrate to the librarian that, for a certain topic, their book is the best match or contains the most reliable information.

An author might do this by designing a catchy cover. They might also make the book title contain words that are often used when people ask questions about this topic. They write a subtitle that further specifies what readers will learn, and they craft the back-cover copy as a teaser to draw the reader in. They also have someone write an author bio that positions that author as an expert in the field.

The author will also seek to get on bestseller lists, be quoted in various magazines, and even get recommended by other authors. Maybe this author will write forewords to other books and have other prolific authors write the foreword in theirs. The author will be posting ads, participating in interviews, doing readings, etc.

The author creates a credible "buzz" and elevates this book as relevant for its topic.

The librarian sees all this and brings this book to all readers asking about this topic.

And if the library patrons willingly receive it, or even come back to read it again, all the more reason to keep bringing out this book for queries on this topic.

The author catered to the librarian by catering to what the readers were looking for.

Keep this analogy in mind as we go through this series. Each of those elements represent an online process involved in search engine optimization and, ultimately, the success of your web presence.

See also: thegospelcoalition.org/how-mormons-are-winning-the-internet,

SEO is all about helping the right people in the “online mission field” find YOUR ministry. There are people out there that are searching for what is already your specialty—a cooking class, a good private school, a small friendly church, a big friendly church, a health seminar, an online Bible study, information about a perplexing Bible verse, how to deal with peer pressure, or how to find help and support when your friends and family aren’t helpful.

You may have heard the term “SEO” or “Search Engine Optimization” if you work with websites, content management, social media, or web development.

It’s a catch-all term to describe a collection of efforts to make your web presence more prominent in search results after someone types a related phrase into a search engine (most likely Google, but some use Bing, Yahoo, etc.)

Because it’s such a widely-applied and ever-evolving process, SEO does not have a set definition in a dictionary—it has several definitions! The most important thing to keep in mind, however, is that:

SEO is all about people—their behaviors and preferences—and not just search engines.

It’s about your target audience’s needs, desires, and questions, and learning how you can best make the connection so they realize that, yes, *you* can provide what they need. *You* are worth their time.

Then they either buy from you, subscribe to your content, follow you on social media, join your cause, or come to your event or location (all possible calls-to-action—which will be studied later in this series!).

SEO combines some technical work with creative, strategic content work. Often, a complete SEO project involves an SEO specialist, a content strategist (copywriter), and a web developer. However, there are several SEO best practices you can implement yourself as a content manager, communication director, webmaster, or tech-savvy volunteer.

The process of SEO can have a big effect on your ministry's online presence, whether your audience is local or global.

SEO is so big in the business world that there is an overabundance of tools and techniques being pushed by various "authorities" in the industry. It can be an overwhelming field to try to learn and keep up with, and it's often difficult to know who to trust. Even experienced specialists in this industry still find it challenging.

That's why this guide was created to help you through SEO fundamentals, step-by-step, to make sure our Church's ministries do not miss out on these potentially far-reaching benefits.

Glossary of Terms in Digital Marketing
and Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

path-way / 'pɑθ·waɪ
pa·tience / 'pɑ-shəns/
being patient 2 c

forbearance

Based on generally accepted definitions as defined by Google.

Web presence - Any web page, whether owned by you or not, that mentions your brand and can show up as a search result listing. Your website certainly should be the most prominent part of your web presence, but other pages can show up as well, such as social media accounts, reviews from sites like Yelp or Google or Manta, externally published articles, videos on YouTube, mentions of your brand on other sites, and more. The bigger your web presence, the more you can dominate search results listings for search queries that relate to your brand.

Search engine - A software program that searches throughout a database of information to identify keywords or phrases specific by the user. Google is the largest and most popular search engine for online searches, followed closely by Yahoo! and Bing. Social media search engines also get a lot of press, such as that of YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.

Algorithm - A process, set of rules, or program for the purpose of calculating various operations. In the context of SEO, the algorithms used by search engines determine which pages to suggest for a given search query.

Algorithm Update [Google] - Google is known for continually perfecting its search engine algorithm in order to deliver the most fitting, relevant results to the searcher. The more Google learns about natural language, searcher intent, and trends in content and web development, the more it fine-tunes its algorithm. If you keep up with digital marketing news, you may have heard of Google's recent major algorithm updates, such as "Hummingbird," "Panda," "Pigeon," etc.

Above the fold - Adapted from the newspaper term for the front-page area above the paper's fold, this refers to the upper area of a website that appears on screen before the user has to scroll. It's important to put the necessary introductory information above the fold so new visitors don't have to scroll to figure out how to navigate the site. However, putting too much content above the fold can be distracting—the eye doesn't know what to look at first.

Alt text/Alt Attributes - Text applied to images on a website, within the image's HTML code, to explain what a picture/image placed on your site is about. This allows Google to index it, and it also helps blind users know what photos are on your site, via screen readers.

Analytics - Collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data from your website. Typically, this refers to Google Analytics, though some content management systems have their own analytics software that can provide similar data.

Anchor text - The clickable word(s) of an active hyperlink.

Anchor point - A point/location on a webpage, such as halfway down through the content or the very end, that a user can "jump" to based on a specially-coded link.

Authority (online credibility) - The combination of cues search engines use to determine websites and webpages' credibility, which affects ranking.

Backlink (inbound link) - A link to a webpage or website that originates from an external website.

“Black hat” - Risky SEO techniques that go against Google’s Webmaster Guidelines. Most black hat methods were in attempt to “cheat the system” of Google’s algorithms, so Google made updates to penalize this type of activity that impeded user experience.

Blog - A blog is a website or page that is consistently updated with new information about a chosen topic. Often run by a single person or a small group of people, the writing tends to be less formal and more like a conversation.

Internet Bot - A software application that does an automated task over the internet. These tasks are usually simple and repetitive, and performed much faster than any human could. Bots are used for crawling the web to analyze and file information from web servers. The most common is referred to as a Spider, which are used by search engines to understand and categorize content.

Broken Link - A link that leads to a 404 Not Found error code. Generally, a link becomes broken when the destination URL is changed without arranging a redirect, when a website goes offline, or a web page is removed without implementing a redirect.

Bounce Rate - Percentage of visitors who leave without visiting another page on that website.

CMS (Content Management System) - This could refer to two types of software that create and manage digital content, often in a collaborative environment: web content management (WCM) and enterprise content management (ECM). WCM can refer to a web development platform such as [WordPress](#), [Joomla](#), [Wix](#), [Drupal](#), [AdventistChurchConnect](#), [Squarespace](#), etc.; ECM means a system of managing content alone, separate from the web development platform, but used in conjunction, and with extended content-focuses features such as content scheduling and collaborative editing.

Content - Any information you place on your website. Content can be anything from written information, to infographics, to charts, to photos.

Content Marketing - Is the practice of creating content that is intended for a specific audience and optimizing that content to make it more easily found in *search engines*.

Conversion - When a user/visitor completes a desired action on a website.

Call to Action (CTA) - Is the primary “ask” on a webpage—the action you want your reader to do after reading the convincing content on your page. For example, “Register for Webinar” or “Watch video now” or “Join today!” or “Donate now!” or “Download PDF.” It could also be, “Will you join our cause by supporting our goal financially?”

Clickbait - Content, primarily headlines, created to attract people to click. Often overly-dramatic, playing on emotions, oversimplifying, communicating urgency, and suspected of overpromising for the sake of getting more traffic, more reads, more sales, more sign-ups, etc..

Google's most recent update further scrutinizes clickbait headlines to protect against misleading content. However, clickbait content done carefully and correctly can still make a big impact.

Crawl / Crawler / Spider- An internet "bot" that systematically categorizes and indexes websites and webpages to make sure they are categorized and listed appropriately.

Crawl Error - When a googlebot is blocked from crawling your website or web page. A page that is not crawled by googlebots will not be indexed and therefore cannot be found on the web.

Directory - Phonebooks of the internet. A directory lists the location of your organization, hours of operation, brief description, phone number, and photos. This helps significantly with local SEO, as each directory listing can show up as a separate search result. (It is extremely important that all information in your directory listings match exactly. See entry for "NAP.")

Domain Name - The part of a website's URL that directs your browser to the web server where a particular website is stored. In "analytics.google.com," the domain name is "google.com."

Duplicate Content - Blocks of content on a webpage that match content that exists elsewhere on the same website or a different website. It is possible for duplicate content to cause one page to rank in search results while the other will not, as Google indexes it as covering the same content. Quoting or referencing content is safe, but *copied* content is not. ([Beware of tactics to "spin" content to make it only slightly different.](#))

Engagement - Is the interaction between a visitor and your website. Did they click on a link, does it seem like they have read whole pages of your website all of these actions are used together to determine your websites engagement. A website with high engagement will do better than one with low or no engagement.

Featured Snippets - Found at the top of search results pages for certain topics, these are short captions that answers a commonly-asked question. Each snippet is extracted from a webpage the googlebot thinks best addresses the topic in a concise way. (example: google a topic like "how to tie a slip knot" and note the featured box on the top of the page)

The image shows a Google search interface. The search bar contains the text "how to tie a slip knot". Below the search bar, there are tabs for "All", "Videos", "Images", "Shopping", "News", "More", "Settings", and "Tools". The search results show "About 17,300,000 results (0.38 seconds)". A featured snippet is displayed, titled "Slip Knot Tying Instructions". It contains three numbered steps: 1. Make a loop by doubling line back onto itself. 2. Run tag end back toward loop and lay over the doubled lines. 3. Make one or two turns with the tag end around doubled lines and through new loop created. To the right of the text is a diagram showing four steps of the knot-tying process, labeled 1 through 4. Below the instructions, there are two search results. The first is "Slip Knot - How to tie a Slip Knot - NetKnots" with the URL "https://www.netknots.com/rope_knots/slip-knot". The second is "Slip Knot | How to tie the Slip Knot | Knots - Animated Knots by Grog" with the URL "https://www.animatedknots.com/slip/".

“Findability” - How easily the content on a website can be found, both by users and search engines.

Google Webmaster Guidelines - Google’s guidelines on acceptable website optimization practices, as well as improper practices that can result in manual action.

Google Analytics - A free web analytics program that can be used to contain performance, track audience behavior, traffic, content performance, and loads more.

Google Search Console - According to Google’s Search Console, it is a free service offered by Google that helps you monitor and maintain your site's presence in Google Search results.

Footer - The footer is the information found at the bottom of a web page. Here you should place information such as your privacy policy, contact information, copyright, site map, Terms of use, Social Media Icons, email signup, Login information etc.

Footer Menu - is the information placed inside the footer, such as Navigation.

Header - The top of a webpage that typically displays a page title, navigation menu, hero image, or other introductory content.

Heading(s) - In web development and in word processing, headings can refer to styles such as H1, H2, H3..., which indicate the content hierarchy. There should only be one H1 per page, and best practices recommend they include the webpage’s keyword and entice the visitor to read the page.

Homepage - The default, or introductory web page, of a website.

Hero Image- Is a large image at the top of the page that takes up much of the screen when you enter a website. Sometimes they have text overlay, sometimes they

HTML / CSS - HTML stands for Hypertext Markup Language used by web developers and is the standardized system that tags files so your site has the font, colors, graphics and hyperlink effects you want. CSS stands for Cascading Style Sheets, or files dedicated to telling browsers how a page should be displayed, including various HTML elements. It is considered more efficient than using HTML alone, which can be repetitive.

HTTP - Hypertext Transfer Protocol is how data is transferred from a computer server to a web browser.

HTTPS - Hypertext Transfer Protocol Secure uses a Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) to encrypt data transferred between a website and web browser. Google prefers to rank secure websites, so those that display https instead of http may perform better in search results.

Inbound Link - A link coming from another site to your own website. Also referred to as a backlink. When these are legitimate, they can demonstrate authority and credibility, which are ranking factors. If they are purchased or coerced, Google can penalize your site for having them.

Internal Link - A hyperlink from one page of your site to another page on your site. If your site is about cooking and you mention egg substitutes on one page, instead of explaining it on that page while you already have a page all about egg substitutes, you make the words “egg substitutes” into a hyperlink to the “All About Egg Substitutes” page on your site.

External Link - A link on your site that leads the user to another site. Best used for reference, citing sources, referrals to trusted sources, or as a way of avoiding reinventing the wheel if another site has information you’d like to include in your content progression. (Note: set external links to open in a new browser tab, so users don’t have to leave your page to view it)

Index - The database search engines use to store and fetch information gathered during the “crawling” process.

Keywords - The words, phrases, topics, ideas, or questions that describe what your content is all about. This also refers to the words or phrases your target audience typically uses in Google searches. The goal is to match your audience’s language as much as possible, so Google sees your content as a good fit for their related searches.

Keyword Research - The process of discovering any relevant terms, topics, or subjects people enter into search engines. This can also include the rate of competition and the amount of searches conducted for each term or topic.

“Keyword Stuffing” - Repeating keywords beyond what is natural, in the hopes of increasing search rankings. This is now considered a spam tactic goes against Google’s Webmaster Guidelines and can result in a ranking penalty.

Landing Page - A stand-alone web page designed to capture leads or generate conversions, usually with persuasive content built around a single, clear, concise call to action (sign up, download, subscribe, register, enter contest, etc.)

Manual Action - Google’s term for a penalty. According to Google, *“The Manual Actions report lists instances where a human reviewer has determined that pages on your site are not compliant with Google’s webmaster quality guidelines.”* A penalized websites can either be demoted or removed from Google’s search results.

Metadata / Meta description - A description of a webpage’s content displayed under the webpage title in search results. While it isn’t used in ranking algorithms, it helps users preview the page content in the form of a teaser or intro, which can help convince them to click on that link.

Mobile Responsive / Mobile First - Websites information like image, links, text, videos are easily shrunken and available across platforms like smartphones and tablets and still providing great user experience.

NAP - Internet acronym for “Name, Address and Phone Number,” used commonly in the subject of online directory listings, as it’s imperative that an organization’s NAP match exactly on each listing, or Google may count them as different/separate entities.

Navigation Menu / Website Navigation - A website's main menu of links (Home, About, Contact, Services, Blog, etc.), telling the user what they can find on this website. It can also display the major topics the website covers.

Organic search results - What appears in search result listings after typing in a search query after paid ads or sponsored posts. "Organic" refers to the fact that the websites' content is what caused them to rank, rather than pay-per-click advertising.

Page Speed - The amount of time it takes for a webpage to completely load. Page speed is ranking factor.

Paid search results - Pay-per-click advertisements that appear above and often below the organic results on search engines.

PPC (Pay-per-click) - A type of advertising where advertisers are charged a certain amount (usually determined by bid, relevance, account history, and competition) every time a user clicks on the ad.

Redirect - A technique that sends a user (or search engine) who requested one webpage to a different (but equally relevant) webpage. There are two types of redirects:

301: Permanent

302: Temporary

Permanent (301) redirects are recommended.

Robots.txt - The Robots Exclusion Protocol (or Standard) is a text file, accessible at the root of a website, that tells search engine crawlers which areas of a website should be ignored.

ROI: Return on Investment. While a broadly used business term, ROI is often discussed in digital marketing and SEO because these practices are not cheap to apply, but can have remarkably positive effects on an organization's online reputation, influence, and visibility.

RSS Feed - An acronym for Really Simple Syndication, RSS feeds allow content published on another site to display on your site. For example, daily news headlines, posts from a recommended blog, or even YouTube videos on a certain topic can be "fed" into a designated area on your website. You can also create content to be distributed via RSS to other websites.

Search Engine Marketing (SEM) - To increase a website's visibility in search engine results pages with both *paid* and organic activities.

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) - The process of optimizing a website which includes the content, so it will appear in prominent positions in the *organic* search results of search engines like Google.

Offsite SEO - Activities that are associated with your brand which take place outside of a website. Can include email marketing, social media marketing, TV, radio, high-quality natural backlinks, and more.

Onsite SEO - Activities that take place directly on your website that help your pages rank. This includes SEO focuses such as title tags, meta tags, intuitive website navigation, intuitive sitemaps, high-quality content, etc.

SERPs - Acronym for "Search Engine Results Page(s)"

Sitemap - A list of pages on a website. There are two types of sitemaps:

HTML: This type of sitemap, typically organized by topics, helps site users navigate a website.

XML: This type of sitemap provides crawlers with a list of webpages on a website and assists the indexing process.

SSL Certificate (http vs https) - A digital certificate used for website identity authentication and to encrypt information sent to the server using Secure Sockets Layer technology.

Subdomain - A domain that is part of a primary domain: **blog**.thiswebsite.com.

Top Level Domain (TLD) - The extension of a given web address, such as .com, .org, .net, .info, etc.

Traffic - The measurement of people (and sometimes bots) who visit your website.

URL - The "physical" address of a web page. For example, <https://www.sdadata.org/> is an URL—it tells your browser which website to "go" to.

UX (User Experience) - The overall impressions users have while interacting with a brand, its online presence, and its product/services. Those who work in the field of User Experience Engineering (UXE) work as software or website reviewers/testers, as an advocate for users specifically in the digital field.

User-generated content (UGC) - Forms of content like blog posts, comments, podcasts, reviews, videos, blog posts, etc. that is created by customers or users about a certain brand.

Vlog - A blog in video form.

Webmaster - A person who manages the technical aspects of the website. Note: a webmaster is not the same as a web developer, though at times one person can occupy both roles. A webmaster may use a CMS to create, post, archive, or move content without getting into the code at all, while a developer has the capability to edit a website at the code level.

White Hat - Tactics that comply with Google's Webmaster Guidelines (as opposed to "black hat").

Widget - A stand-alone mini-program that can be installed/embedded into a website through code to perform a certain action. Widgets can be ads, submission forms, quizzes or polls, or they can display content from another website, such as headlines, weather, etc.

Webpage - A document that exists on the World Wide Web and can be viewed by web browsers. A website is made up of several webpages, linked together by a sitemap, or navigational structure.

SEO Basics: Breakdown and Summary Check-List



You may be wondering, what can we actually *do* to optimize our web presence?

Since **optimizing content for search engines primarily means optimizing content for people**, many principles of SEO follow fundamental principles of advertising, marketing, psychology, and sociology. Remember, it's all about people and their behaviors.

However, since **search engines are the vehicle by which this content is delivered, there are several technical aspects involved as well**, such as web development, data gathering and analysis, and research (get your spreadsheets ready!).

This why digital marketing agencies and large organizations typically have an entire team to carry out SEO strategies, often comprised of copywriters, content managers, web developers, and SEO specialists. These team members spend considerable amounts of their time just keeping up with this industry, as trends and best practices can change even daily!

While this can sound overwhelming, take comfort that much of this research has already been done for you, and each blog post in this series is based on the latest data available.

We'll introduce you to the concepts and processes that are major players in a complete SEO strategy: a checklist overview, writing and optimizing content for online readers, User Experience Engineering (UX/UXE), off-site SEO basics, tracking and analyzing your audience's activity, and any technical setup or modifications that will be needed throughout.

Let's start with a checklist of major elements involved in SEO.

***NOTE:** Make sure to check the dates of our SEO blogs as you read through—this guide will be updated frequently as trends change or if there's a major Google algorithm update.*

The following SEO fundamentals checklist has three categories: roles, onsite work, and offsite work.

ROLES refers to the different positions, expertise, and points of view that contribute to successful SEO. Often this means specific job positions that work together as part of an SEO team, but it can also demonstrate the wide range of different facets involved in truly optimizing content for search engines (people).

ONSITE refers to adjustments and development done directly on the pages of your website.

OFFSITE refers to SEO efforts done on platforms other than your website, such as social media, directories, review sites, external websites, etc. This can create more listings in search results that relate to your website/topic/organization, and they can also catch different audiences

and send that traffic back to your website. When done correctly and legitimately, offsite efforts can also boost credibility, relevance, and authority.

(Note: Most offsite SEO, especially with external websites, is also referred to a “backlinking,” and it must be managed with care.)

These items will be covered in depth in later posts.

1) COMMON ROLES IN A WELL-ROUNDED SEO TEAM

- [Copywriters](#) and [content writers](#) are trained differently than academic writers or creative writers. Advertising theory plays a big part in creating content that connects with its target audience.

Rather than an artistic focus, these writers focus on clarity, connection, directness, and appropriate emotional appeal. They write to *relate*. They write to enhance understanding and lift up the reader, making *them* feel like the hero of the story—not to condescend and make their brand the star of the show. They inform and educate, emphasizing the benefits in store for the reader, not simply describing the features of a product or service.

When it comes to SEO, these writers know how search engines work and how to use keywords/phrases [without sounding unnatural](#). *Overall, it’s important to note that not just any writer—even a very good writer—will be successful with copywriting or content writing without proper training.*

- **SEO specialists** often act both as a consultant and a technical implementor. It’s their job to stay current in what Google’s doing, what the digital marketplace is doing, and how it’s affecting the way people use the internet—how they consume content and what drives them to conversions (making a purchase, subscribing to a newsletter, donating to a cause, sharing content, etc.). This helps them advise writers, marketers, and web developers, and also test or measure a strategy’s effectiveness.

SEO specialists conduct audits on an organization’s websites and/or their entire web presence, and they monitor and interpret analytics to see how users behave on a website or social media page. They do keyword research and use variety of software programs to audit websites, create content briefs, and keep up with the numerous ways a brand can expand and enrich its web presence (much of which will be covered further down in this checklist).

- **Web developers** play an integral supporting role to SEO specialists and writers. They use their knowledge of HTML, CSS, XML, Java, etc., along with user experience and web design best practices to create a website that best supports the recommendations for the site’s content and SEO.
- **Social media specialists** are experts at the big picture of social media. They don’t just write great posts, they coordinate [campaigns](#), manage advertising, and work to coordinate a brand’s overarching goals for SEO and the perception of its web presence.

2) ONSITE SEO BASICS

- [Keyword Research](#)
 - **Keyword Research** refers to the process of discovering which words, phrases, or entire sentences or questions are commonly typed into Google’s search box regarding the topic you want to cover (e.g., “Easy Vegan Desserts,” or “Monetizing Your Blog”). Typically using software like [AdWords’ Keyword Planner](#) or [Keyword Explorer](#), this process gives you a window into current search data to help you develop a strategy for content creation.
- **Measuring and Analyzing User Behavior**
 - Knowledge is power. It’s hard to determine how to optimize your site if you don’t know how people are using it! Find out how many people come to your website, what page they come in on, how long they stay, what pages they’re most likely visit, links they click, etc. You might find that the page you want people to see is getting skipped! Or, if you change something without looking at user activity, you might lose existing traffic—and recovering from that is tougher than gaining new traffic. In short, this data tells you what’s working and what isn’t, so you can focus your effort where it will make the most difference. Properly installing [Google Analytics](#) and [Search Console](#) will show you this data, and much more. While there is a learning curve, they are *incredibly* useful tools. Don’t start your SEO plan without them!

- **Tags, Headers, and Meta Descriptions**

- These are the small pieces of content that dictate the way your site appears in the list of search results. Based on keyword research, you should make sure to use the most-searched keywords in each of your pages' titles (that appear at the top of the browser window), headers (headline and subheads for the page's content), and meta descriptions (the intro blurb that shows underneath the page title and link)—this helps draw users in by introducing the site's content.

- **Fixing Page Errors**

- If your website has broken links or other page-load errors, Google takes notice when it crawls your site (aka when google visits your website for tracking purposes. This is done by Google's Spider crawler). This dings your credibility with Google—and frustrates site visitors! There are several ways to [audit](#) for these errors, and then you can fix link misspellings, apply redirects, or optimize other items that affect navigation.

- **Optimizing Page Load Speed**

- You may have seen Google's latest [announcement](#) that page load speed is a ranking factor, especially for searches on mobile devices. If your page takes longer than 1.5 seconds to load, your ranking—and the patience of your audience—may be at risk. Fortunately, there are several things you can do to address this, which will be discussed in a later post in this series.

- **Mobile-FIRST**

- While you've heard about mobile-friendliness and mobile-responsiveness, [mobile-FIRST](#) is the most recent term sprinkled through web development articles and guides. Bottom line: your website MUST be easily viewable and usable on a mobile screen. If not, users will leave your site AND Google will rank mobile-friendly sites over yours. Also keep in mind that this means more than just having a mobile friendly template. It has to do with content organization, text size, link click/tap-ability, and navigation.

- **Optimizing Site Security**

- It's not a question of *if* your website will be hacked, but *when*—regardless of how much traffic it gets or what topics are covered. If you're not using good security

plugins and your site is hacked, all your hard work on optimization can be lost as well. Additionally, websites without an [SSL certificate](#), which [tells browsers that a website is secure](#), can cause a lower ranking, and cause [skeptical site visitors to reject your site](#).

- **Optimizing Navigation**

- You want to make sure your [XML sitemap is submitted to Google](#), and this sitemap should facilitate easy, user-friendly navigation throughout your site so users can follow a logical path that leads them to an action. To help users visit archived content and to give them whatever supporting information they need, use [internal linking](#) strategies.

- **Targeted, Topical, Reader-Centric Content**

- To achieve higher visibility for the key topics you want to work with, a good rule of thumb is to keep each webpage to one topic or subtopic and [structure these subtopics logically](#). This makes for better navigation *and* it's easier for Google to determine what each page is about—and direct the right traffic to it.

- **Consistent Updates (Fresh Content)**

- To determine if a site has fresh, relevant content, Google looks at how often a site is updated. If your site hasn't been updated in 6 months—and other websites covering related topics *have* been updated—it will cause the other sites to appear higher in search results. Additionally, if a site visitor spots out-of-date information, credibility is hurt as well (which is even tougher to recover from).

- **Links to Other Sites Within Your Web Presence (And Some That Aren't)**

- To help show relevance, linking to other websites can boost credibility—if the links are to quality content about similar topics. Additionally, linking to sister websites, your social media sites, or review sites can direct traffic where you want it to go, and demonstrate that you have a robust web presence. But don't overdo it! You don't want to end up ultimately leading your traffic away from you.

3) OFFSITE SEO BASICS

- **Social Media**

- This is the best place to start for off-site SEO. Whether you use Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn, Twitter, or a custom combination, remember to *always link back to your website* for credibility's sake. Conversations happen on these platforms, but you'll often want to lead users back to your website's blog, contact page, product page, or landing page with a call to action.

- **Review Sites**

- Make sure you set up or "claim" your entity on review sites like Yelp, and also on Google, Facebook, and other platforms that allow users to leave reviews. Bonus SEO points if you regularly respond to reviews ([with caution!](#)) and show an active interest in your audience!

- **Directory Sites**

- Especially if you have a brick-and-mortar entity such as a church, school, office, or ministry, directory sites such as [Google My Business](#), [Google Maps](#), [Yellowpages.com](#), [Better Business Bureau](#), and several [niche-specific directory sites](#) help legitimize your entity and provide places to add additional information, such as hours of availability, driving directions, parking information, contact information, area-specific tips, and more. Proper attention to directory sites can do wonders for your SEO—but this process also needs to be done carefully. Not all directory sites are respected.

- **External Publishings**

- When you're featured as a guest blogger or you publish an article in an external online publication, you can name your organization in your bio. Anywhere your content is curated or quoted may show up in search results related to your organization.

- **Other Websites**

- When a webpage that is not run by your organization links to you, or even mentions you by name, it can show up as a listing in search results. If the page this mention/link appears on is a respected site with quality content, this can be a

considerable reputation boost. However, if low-quality websites/pages link to your site, this could actually ding your credibility (even worse—some organizations have created fake websites to link back to themselves. That'll get a Google penalty as well as a big reputation hit). This is why it matters how you represent your organization to other entities. If you do discover questionable sites linking to yours, [make sure to disavow](#) these links.

While this checklist covers several of the fundamental facets of SEO, this is a process of perpetual motion. Your work is never “[done](#).”

Google releases updates, websites need to consistently post fresh content, and trends in online behavior can change almost instantaneously.

However, a consistent, concentrated effort can reap big rewards. You can find these checklist concepts expanded in the coming posts.

GETTING STARTED: YOUR SEO SETUP WORKSHEET



Now that you've learned about the importance of SEO and the various fundamental features of creating a successful SEO strategy, you don't want your organization to miss out on the far-reaching opportunities for exposure and influence. It's time to get started!

You may be asking: "What does my organization need to do first? How can I make sure my organization is ready?"

This starter worksheet will help you complete the first essential steps of your SEO plan. [Click here](#) to download a fillable PDF.

SEO SETUP WORKSHEET

1) Make sure your organization has a dedicated Google account.

Much of your SEO work will be done within your organization's general Google account—a gmail account along with extended features and apps—that is solely dedicated to the organization as a whole, not to one particular employee. It might be something like **[MinistryName]Webmaster@gmail.com**. You'll use this to set up and access Google Analytics and Search Console, set up your map and Google My Business listings, and more.

Having a dedicated general email account for your organization helps keep SEO and online marketing efforts separate from other email accounts, such as personal or employee-specific accounts. In some cases, it may need to be shared between two or three employees that are all involved in managing your organization's online marketing strategy and reputation. This shared access can streamline your SEO efforts. To keep things safe, the login information can be kept and monitored internally by a management position, preventing problems in the event of employee turnover. [Click here for more account management best practices for ministries.](#)

What is your organization's dedicated, general Google account login information?

If you don't yet have one, use this space to plan out your ideas:

Gmail address/Google login: _____

Username (do not use an employee's name. Choose something relating to the organization. There is a spot for first name and last name, so something like First Name: [Organization], Last Name: [Webmaster] will suffice.):

Password (or use a [generator](#)): _____

Existing email address (used for verification, and/or password recovery [make sure this is an email address that multiple people in management positions have access to, so a single employee won't be in complete control of account recovery.):

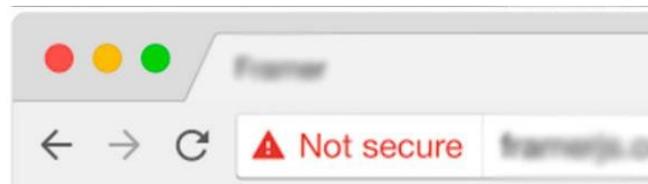
Phone number (preferably a mobile number to use for account verification and/or recovery. If possible, use a mobile phone of a department head or management position that is close enough to your position that you can easily work together on any verification or recovery tasks.):

Setting up your Google account (skip this step if your organization already has an account that meets the aforementioned requirements):

Start [here](#), filling in the information you wrote out in the previous section. Make sure you have quick access to the email and/or phone number you gave, as Google will send you a code you will need to enter to complete the account setup and verification.

2) Make sure your site appears secure to Google with an SSL Certificate (http:// vs. https://)

To ensure that a user's connection to your website is secure, you want to make sure you have a valid SSL Certificate installed ([read more here](#)). This new security measure became a must-have in July 2018, when Google Chrome started marking each site without an SSL Certificate (or https) as not secure.



Not only is this a [factor in search engine ranking](#), but it can also alarm users who visit your website. This is especially detrimental if you sell products or accept donations online.

Additionally, when you set up various analytics tools for your website, you'll want the SSL certificate set up properly, so you can effectively track user data. This is an important preliminary step in preparing for SEO work.

Getting an SSL Certificate does not have to be difficult or costly. They can be obtained for free at letsencrypt.org or set up through your hosting provider. These steps will help you determine the best way to get one for your organization's website. If you already have an SSL Certificate on your organization's website, skip to step 3.

What is the hosting provider for your organization's website (e.g. [Siteground](https://www.siteground.com), Hostgator, GoDaddy, your ministry's parent organization, etc.)?

Will your hosting provider allow you to use an SSL Certificate from letsencrypt.org? (You may need to check with your web developer, webmaster, IT department, etc. to determine this.)

Your SSL Certificate is set up through: _____

Is your SSL Certificate [current/valid](#)? _____

3) Is your website error-free?

Before you bring more traffic to your organization's website, you want to make sure they're not going to leave as quickly as they came due to frustration with errors! We recommend the following FREE tool to detect any errors on your website such as broken links, invalid redirects, server issues, and more. This is crucial to your onsite SEO efforts.

[Screaming Frog SEO Spider](#)

This free software saves you from having to review and test each page, link, or image manually. Download this software onto your hard drive, open the program, and type in your organization's website information. The software will "crawl" the website to pull data to populate the program's chart. You can also export the data into an Excel spreadsheet.

Need more assistance? Try this beginning [walk-through](#) on SEO Spider.

Does the report list any errors? _____

4) Is your website [mobile-FIRST](#) (mobile-friendly/mobile-responsive)?

You don't want to frustrate new visitors with a website that isn't easy to read on a mobile screen. With [over half](#) of all website traffic worldwide coming from mobile devices, this cannot be ignored. What's more, Google is continually updating its search algorithms to [favor websites](#) that are optimized for mobile browsing. Your search engine ranking will be impacted by this.

Being mobile-friendly involves more than just installing a mobile-responsive website theme. It means also considering text size, page load speed, whether your site uses Java or Flash, if you have text in tables or embedded in an image, and more.

First, start with testing your organization's website to see if it's considered "mobile-friendly."

Use: <https://search.google.com/test/mobile-friendly>

What do the results say? List any errors or page-loading issues:

Use this space for notes to forward to your website developer, webmaster, designer, etc.

5) Verify your organization's NAP.

Especially if your organization has brick-and-mortar locations, you need to verify what Google considers your organization's [NAP: Name, Address, and Phone number](#).

It may sound simple enough, but this is a common place for inconsistency, errors, and can have an unnecessary negative impact on your search engine rankings.

These three bits of information are the most critical components of your local listing data, and they have to appear in exactly the same way (i.e., 123 Thisway **Rd.**, vs. 123 Thisway **Rd** vs. 123 Thisway **Road**) in every place they appear, including on your website, in directory listings, on your social media accounts, etc. Any discrepancies can cause Google to not list one of those URLs (website, directory listing, social media, etc.), or to treat a slightly different NAP as a separate entity altogether.

After confirming your NAP with your organization, use this space as the official listing place for the name, address, and phone number. This can serve as a guide for all places your NAP will be listed:

If your organization has multiple locations: Make sure all your locations are treated as separate entities, each with its own NAP. See also: [Local SEO for Multiple Locations, Everything You Need to Know](#)

If you have a large number of locations, create a centralized, master document that contains *all location details*. Create a new version each time any location data changes.

If you are a virtual organization: Your NAP will be your organization **N**ame, *email* **A**ddress, and primary **P**hone number.

Once you've completed this worksheet, you're ready to dive in to the foundational tasks of a successful SEO effort.

Constructing Your SEO Foundation: Setting up Google Analytics and Search Console



It's the feedback you've always wanted! Finally, you'll be able to see how your audience is using your website.

This chapter is all about getting you connected to the right data that will continually fuel your SEO strategy. You no longer have to guess what your audience likes or doesn't like about your website, your content, your products, etc.

As mentioned in the beginning checklist of SEO fundamentals, if you want to further improve both search-engine-findability and user experience, you first need to see how your website is currently being used.

It can be risky to change a link, move a page, or even change a title or headline without considering how many people are already visiting that page and how they're getting to it.

The information you get from [Google Analytics](#) and [Google Search Console](#) (previously called Google Webmaster Tools) helps you quantify specific goals and objectives to include in your overall SEO strategy. You can learn *a lot* about your audience!

Yes, this is a lot to learn, and it is highly technical. But skip this chapter at your own risk—all the SEO techniques you will learn in the following chapters only work well if your actions are being driven by data from these free, behind-the-scenes tools.

We'll cover:

- How to set up Google Analytics
- How to set up Google Search Console
- Beginner Tutorial for Google Analytics
- Beginner Tutorial for Google Search Console

NOTE: The following setup describes how to set up Google Analytics and Search Console for a [WordPress](#) website, a highly recommended and widely-used development platform (CMS or Content Management System). If your organization's website is not a WordPress site, what you see will be slightly different, but overall the process tends to be similar.

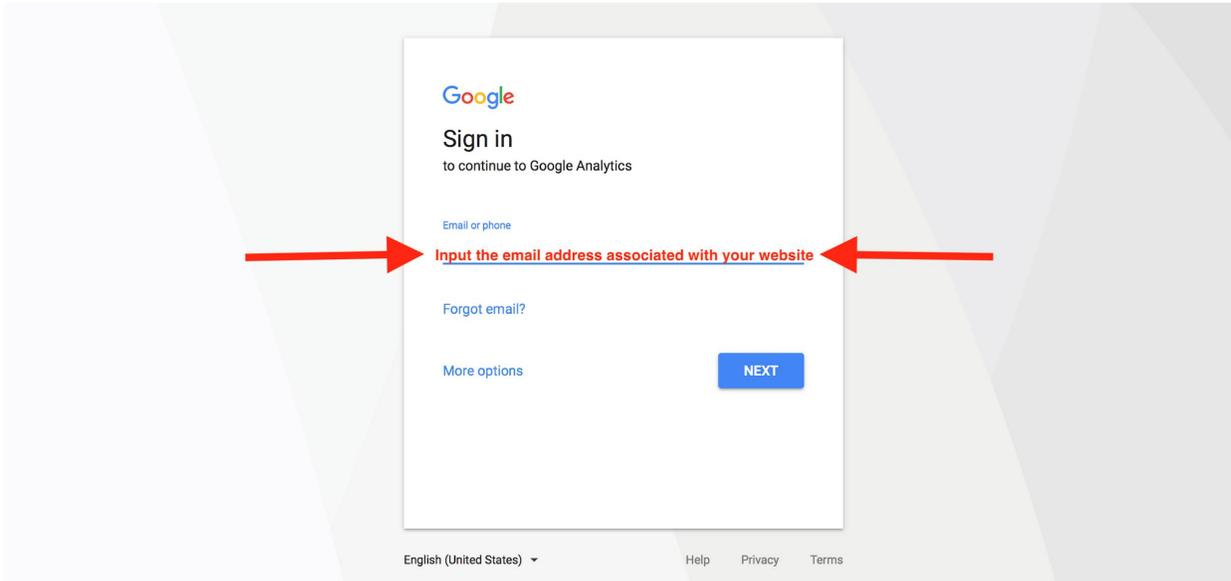
Key differences may arise during steps that involve web development, such as applying tracking codes and uploading verification files. If you have questions, contact your CMS or website provider's technical support, consult the help section of your platform or reach out to your IT team.

Most major platforms will have set instructions for setting up Google Analytics and Search Console. However, it's a good idea to confirm that your CMS allows the Analytics tracking code to be applied to each page of the website. If not, you miss out on most of the invaluable data of how users navigate your site. Make sure to get a clear answer from the tech support representative.

How to Set up Google Analytics

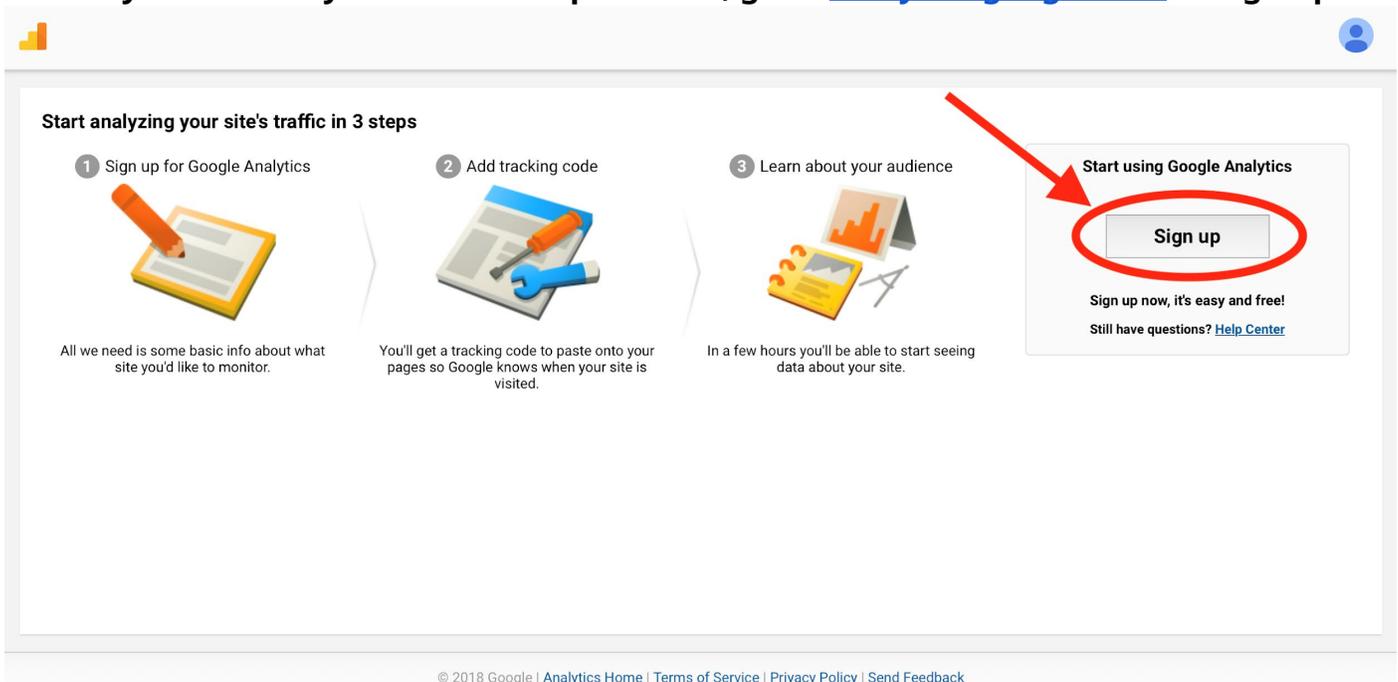
Any website worth building is a website worth tracking.

1. [Sign in](#) to your organization's Gmail account.



The screenshot shows the Google sign-in interface. At the top, it says "Google Sign in to continue to Google Analytics". Below this is a text input field labeled "Email or phone" with the placeholder text "Input the email address associated with your website". There are two red arrows pointing towards this input field. Below the input field are links for "Forgot email?" and "More options". A blue "NEXT" button is positioned to the right of the input field. At the bottom of the page, there are links for "English (United States)", "Help", "Privacy", and "Terms".

2. After you enter in your email and password, go to analytics.google.com to sign up.



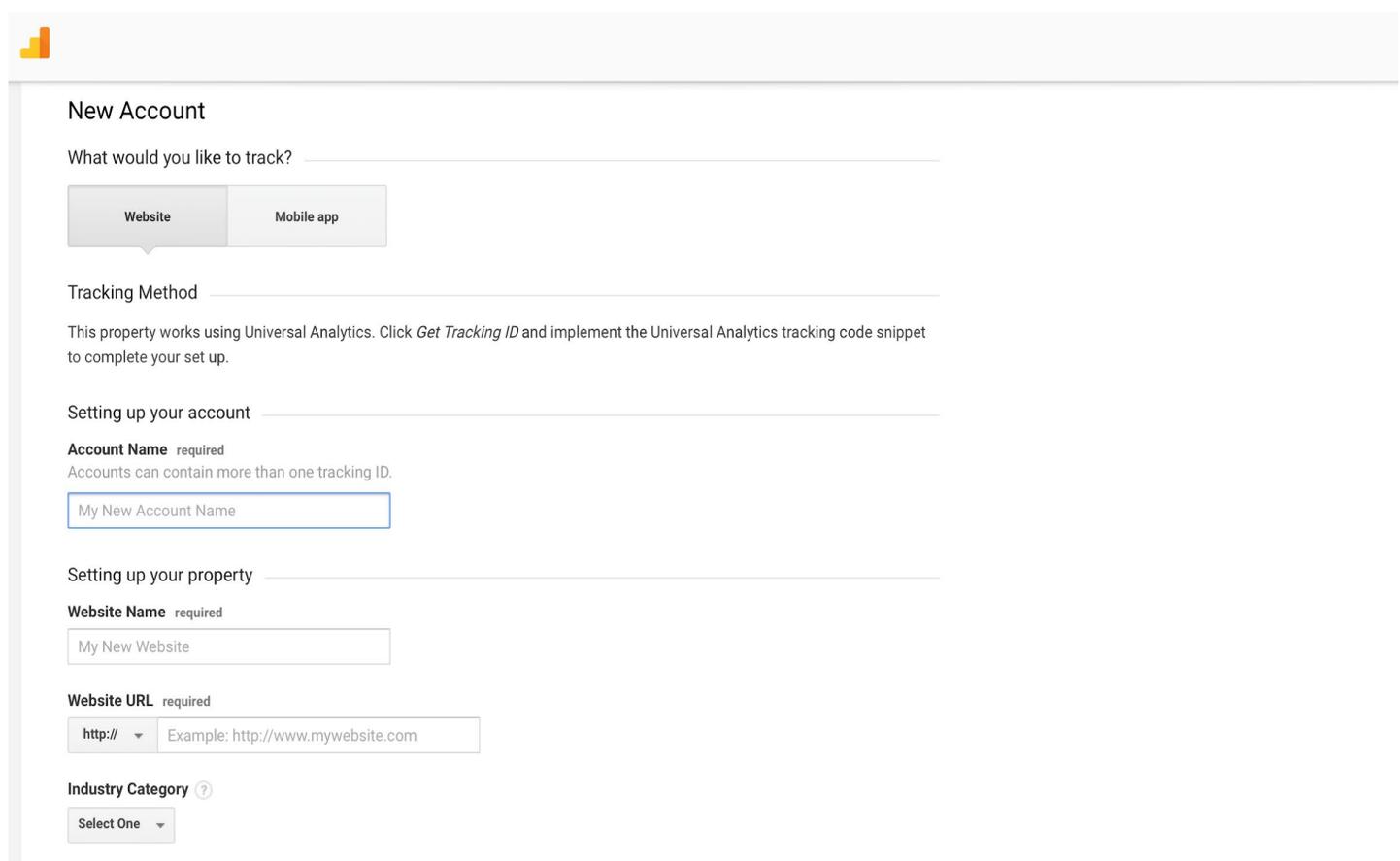
The screenshot displays the Google Analytics sign-up process. It features a header with a bar chart icon and a user profile icon. The main content is titled "Start analyzing your site's traffic in 3 steps" and is divided into three numbered steps:

- 1 Sign up for Google Analytics**: Accompanied by an icon of a pencil writing on a notepad. The text below reads: "All we need is some basic info about what site you'd like to monitor."
- 2 Add tracking code**: Accompanied by an icon of a notepad with a pencil and a blue tool. The text below reads: "You'll get a tracking code to paste onto your pages so Google knows when your site is visited."
- 3 Learn about your audience**: Accompanied by an icon of a notepad with a pencil and a bar chart. The text below reads: "In a few hours you'll be able to start seeing data about your site."

To the right of these steps is a box titled "Start using Google Analytics" which contains a "Sign up" button circled in red. Below the button, it says "Sign up now, it's easy and free!" and "Still have questions? [Help Center](#)". A red arrow points from the "Sign up" button back to the "Learn about your audience" step.

At the bottom of the page, there is a footer with the text: "© 2018 Google | [Analytics Home](#) | [Terms of Service](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Send Feedback](#)".

3. Make sure “website” is selected at the top left.



New Account

What would you like to track?

Website Mobile app

Tracking Method

This property works using Universal Analytics. Click *Get Tracking ID* and implement the Universal Analytics tracking code snippet to complete your set up.

Setting up your account

Account Name required
Accounts can contain more than one tracking ID.

Setting up your property

Website Name required

Website URL required

Industry Category ?

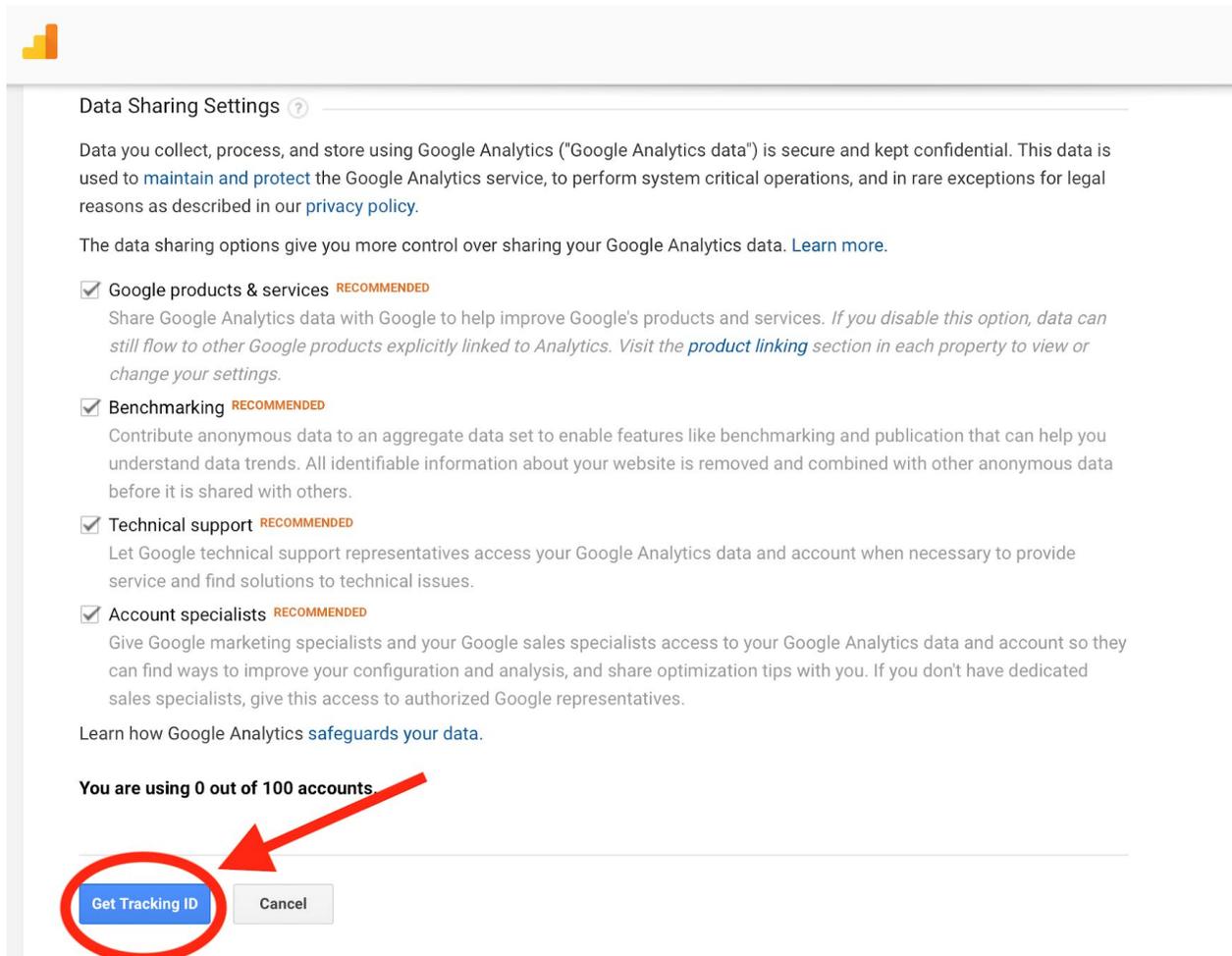
4. Input your organization’s name in “Account Name”

5. Use your website’s domain name for the “Website Name,” e.g., “myministrywebsite.com”

6. “Industry Category” is optional but recommended. This enables Google to show you benchmark data from the websites of similar organizations, giving you a general guide for evaluating website performance and setting expectations.

7. Enter the time zone of your organization’s primary location.

8. Before you finish on this page, note the check boxes. There are some data sharing options. You can read through these links and decide if you'd like to share this information with Google's support team and account specialists. If you don't want to share any of your analytics data, leave the boxes unchecked.



Data Sharing Settings ?

Data you collect, process, and store using Google Analytics ("Google Analytics data") is secure and kept confidential. This data is used to **maintain and protect** the Google Analytics service, to perform system critical operations, and in rare exceptions for legal reasons as described in our [privacy policy](#).

The data sharing options give you more control over sharing your Google Analytics data. [Learn more](#).

- Google products & services** **RECOMMENDED**
Share Google Analytics data with Google to help improve Google's products and services. *If you disable this option, data can still flow to other Google products explicitly linked to Analytics. Visit the [product linking](#) section in each property to view or change your settings.*
- Benchmarking** **RECOMMENDED**
Contribute anonymous data to an aggregate data set to enable features like benchmarking and publication that can help you understand data trends. All identifiable information about your website is removed and combined with other anonymous data before it is shared with others.
- Technical support** **RECOMMENDED**
Let Google technical support representatives access your Google Analytics data and account when necessary to provide service and find solutions to technical issues.
- Account specialists** **RECOMMENDED**
Give Google marketing specialists and your Google sales specialists access to your Google Analytics data and account so they can find ways to improve your configuration and analysis, and share optimization tips with you. If you don't have dedicated sales specialists, give this access to authorized Google representatives.

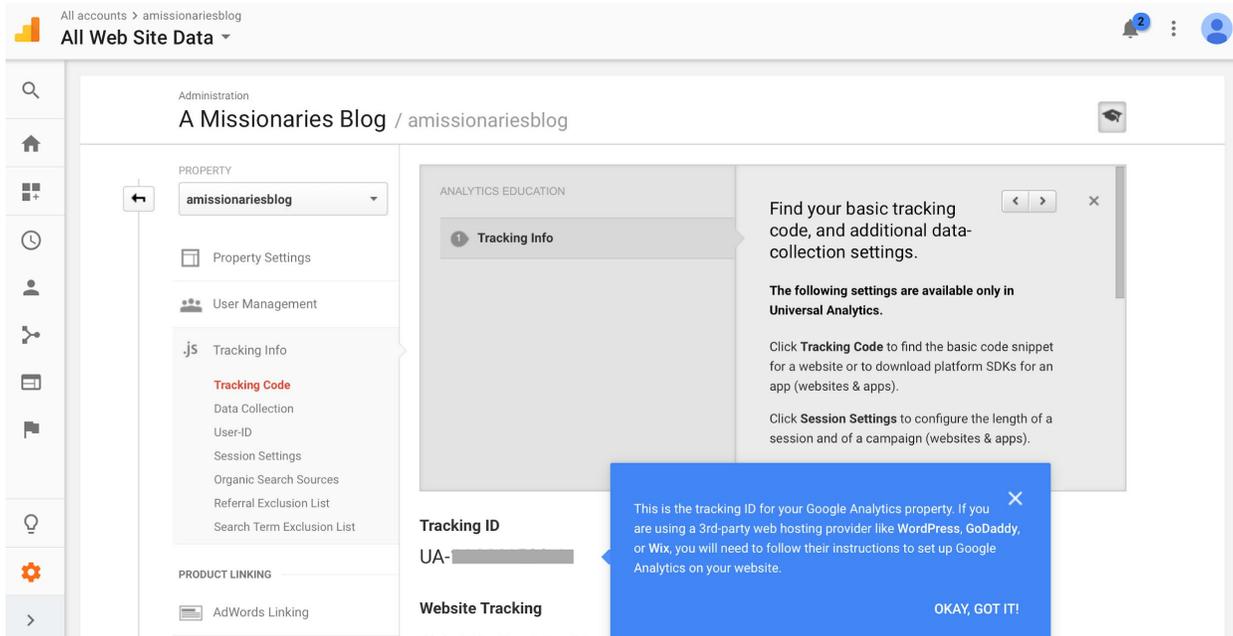
Learn how Google Analytics [safeguards your data](#).

You are using 0 out of 100 accounts

Get Tracking ID Cancel

9. Click "Get Tracking ID," and a pop-up screen will ask you to agree to terms of service. You must accept before you continue.

You'll see a screen similar to this:

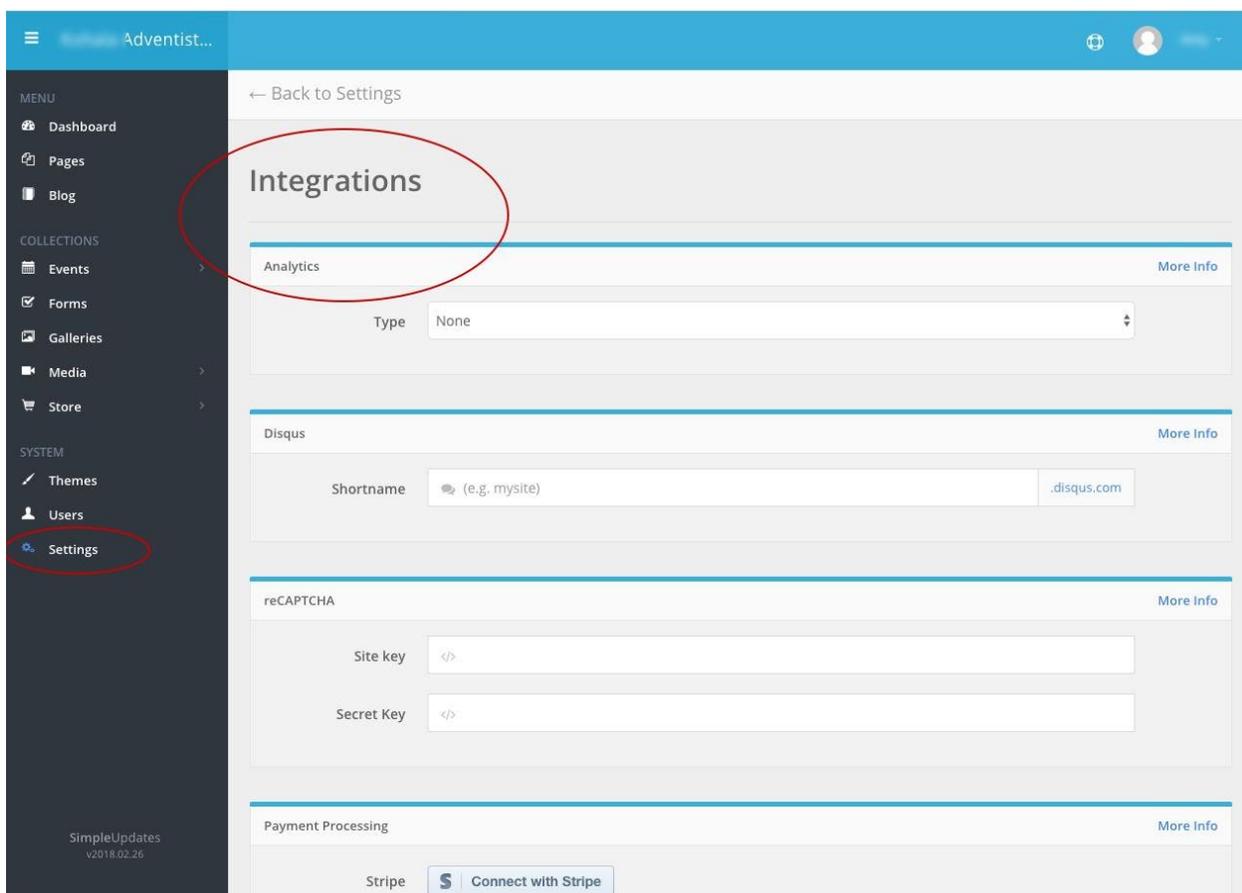


10. The Tracking ID and Website Tracking script (code) you receive will need to be installed on each page of your website in order to start gathering information about how people are navigating your site and to, then, present it in its reports.

There are several ways to install Google Analytics on your site, and it depends on the type of content management system (CMS) used for your organization’s website. **We’ll go through 3 common methods:**

1) Installing the code in AdventistChurchConnect or AdventistSchoolConnect 3.0

- From your ACC dashboard, go to Settings, then Integrations.
- At the top you’ll see an “Analytics” box. Select “Google Analytics” in the “Type” dropdown menu.
- A space will show up to enter your Google Analytics ID. This will apply it to the entire site.



2) Applying the Website Tracking script to your website's code.

- If you or your website developer is up for it, you can add this Website Tracking script directly to the theme of your WordPress website.
- This small javascript code is copied and pasted into your website's template page before the closing </head> tag.
 - NOTE: Your specific tracking code will replace "UA-XXXX-X"

```
<script type="text/javascript">

var _gaq = _gaq || [];
_gaq.push(['_setAccount', 'UA-XXXXX-X']);
_gaq.push(['_trackPageview']);

(function() {
  var ga = document.createElement('script'); ga.type = 'text/javascript'; ga.async = true;
  ga.src = ('https:' == document.location.protocol ? 'https://ssl' : 'http://www') + '.google-analytics.com/ga
.js';
  var s = document.getElementsByTagName('script')[0]; s.parentNode.insertBefore(ga, s);
})();

</script>
```

3) Using a free WordPress plugin, "MonsterInsites." (Note: There are several plugins designed for the purpose of applying Google Analytics to your WordPress website, this is just one of the recommended plugins)

- From your WordPress dashboard, go to "plugins" and "Add New."
- Do a keyword search for "MonsterInsights" to find the plugin.
- Install MonsterInsights and click "activate."
- Once activated, there will be a new section in your Admin area called "Insights."
- Go to Insights > Settings. You'll need to authenticate your Google account, which allows Wordpress to communicate with Google and send its site visitor information.
- To authenticate, make sure you are still logged in to your organization's Google account. Check that the Gmail address is up at the top right of the pop-up box from MonsterInsights. Click "Allow" and follow the prompts.

- You can also paste the code in manually. Check the “Manually enter your UA code” box, then go back to your Analytics account, click on the Admin link in the main menu, and then “Property Settings” under the “Property” column.
- Copy the code under “Tracking ID” (include the UA portion) and paste the code into the text box in the plugin.
- Click on “Save Changes” and your site should now be tracking your visitor data.

There are also ways to add your tracking code to Wix, Squarespace or other CMSs, many of which have instructions in their help sections or can be found with a simple internet search.

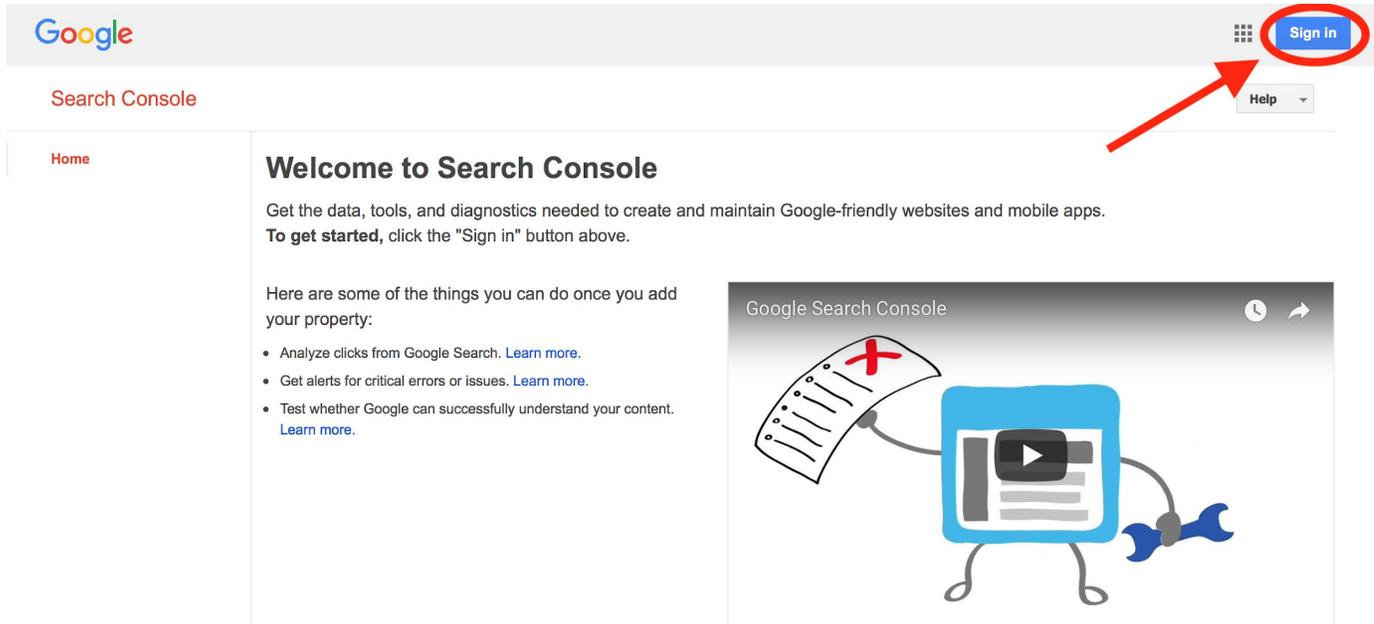
Now that your code is applied to your site, check back in a few days to make sure everything is working. You should see some activity through most of your webpages, though it will take about 30 days to truly get a picture of the regular activity.

Once you have verified that Analytics is successfully installed, then you can install Google Search Console. This essentially submits your website to Google, enabling you to monitor how your website interacts with search engines. It is also a useful tool to check for errors that might keep Google from crawling your site.

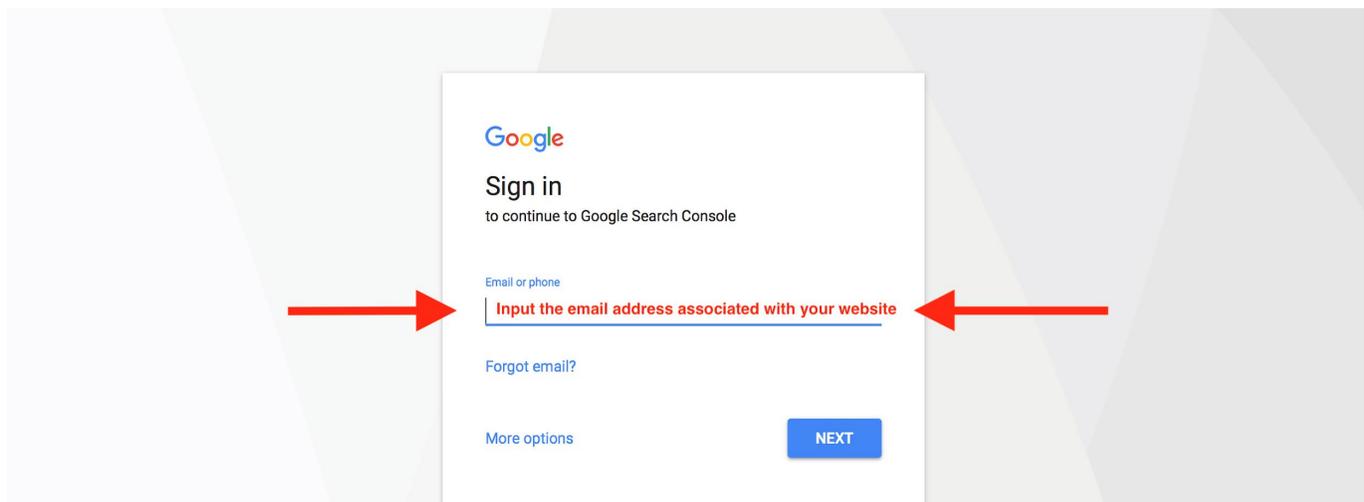
How to Set Up Google Search Console

Monitor how your website interacts with Google searches, and determine if any errors are preventing users from finding your organization's website.

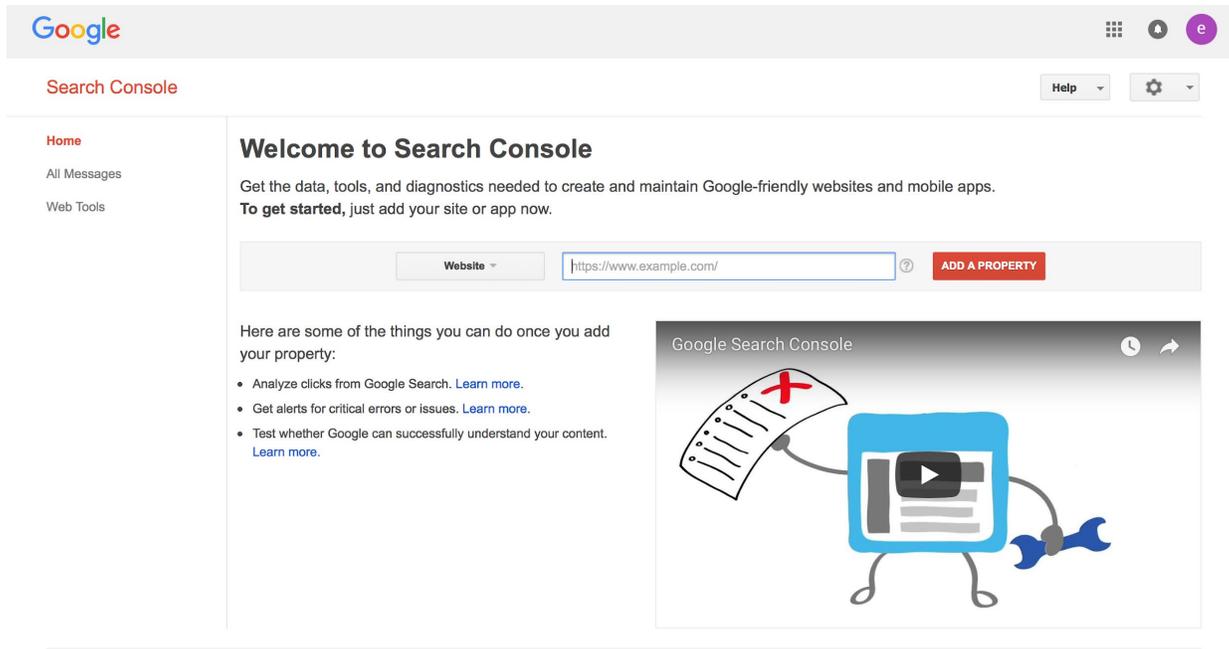
1. Go to [Search Console](#) and click "Sign In."



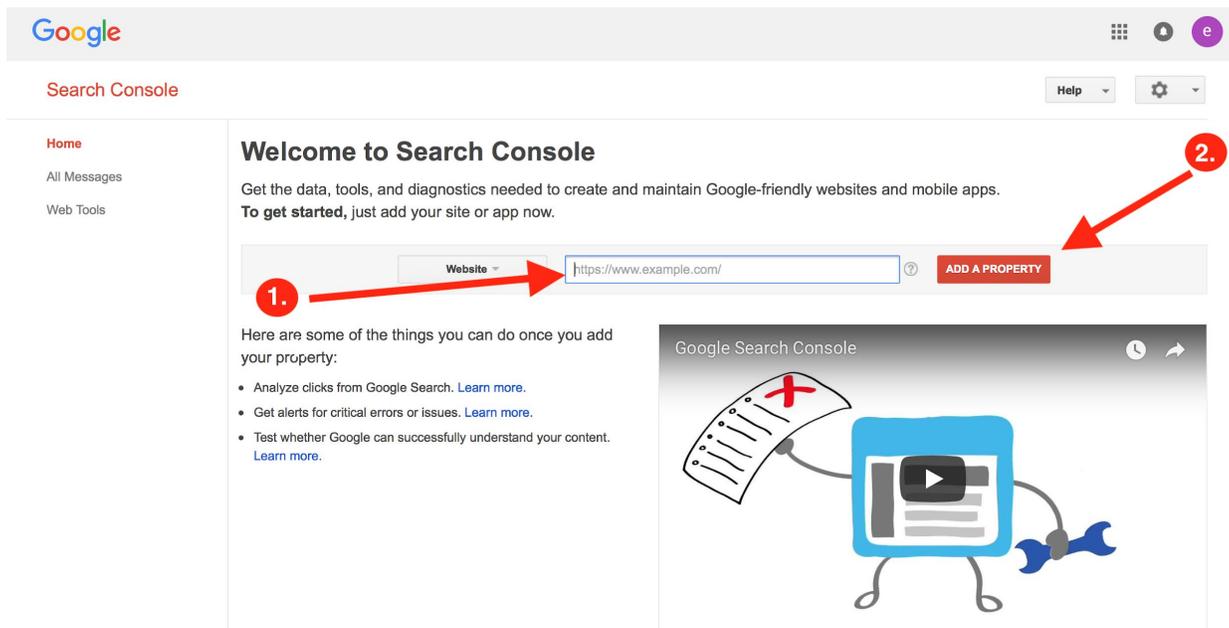
2. Enter the email address & password associated with your organization's website.



3. Once you enter the email and password, you will see the welcome page.



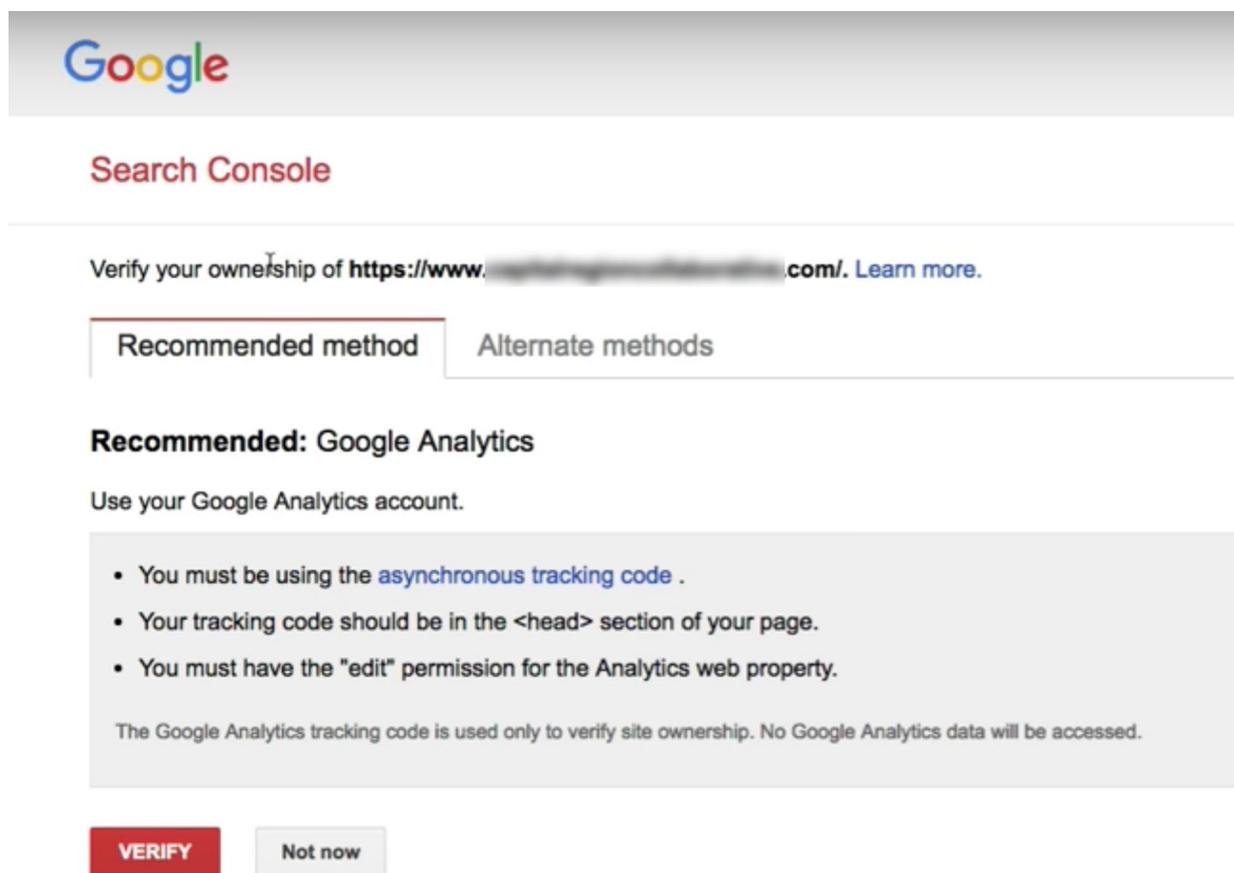
4. First, add the name of your website and then, click "Add a property."



NOTE: The actual function of adding a property isn't included in the **NEW** Google Search Console yet. That's why Search Console automatically switches back to the old version where you can add your website. (Google Search Console recently updated and is slowly getting rid of the old format. We will provide an updated lesson with newer screenshots when Google permanently removes the old format.)

5. Next you'll be asked to verify if you own the website. Since you already have Google Analytics installed and are logged in to the same Google account, you may try the first recommended method of verification/ownership. Hit "Verify," and then you'll see a confirmation page.

NOTE: *If this method of verification does not work, please see the next step for additional instructions. If you are using a CMS other than WordPress, this process will likely need an alternative method of verification.*



6a. Just in case this process needs a few extra steps, it may be a good idea to have your website administrator/developer available for guidance or assistance. Note the recommended methods of verification:

- **HTML file upload**—which requires ftp access to your website. Google will give you a file to download, and you will upload that same file to your ftp. Then come back to Search Console and click "Verify."
- **HTML tag**—There are plugins available to assist in this, such as Jetpack or Yoast SEO. This involves adding a meta tag to your site's homepage. You may add this meta tag straight to your website theme's header php file, though if you change your theme you'll need to paste this meta tag back in.
- **Domain name provider**—This involves signing in to your domain provider account to upload a file. Google will provide steps to walk you through this process.

- **Google Tag Manager**—If you are using Google Tag Manager, you can utilize this process for verification. Tag Manager is not covered in this lesson.

If you are still having trouble verifying your website for search console, feel free to ask for help at info@centerforonlineevangelism.org.

Verify your ownership of <http://amissionariesblog.wordpress.com/>. [Learn more.](#)

Your Google Account will be recorded in Google's systems as an official owner of this property.

Note - your ownership information will be stored and be visible to other owners (both current and future).

Recommended method

Alternate methods

Recommended: HTML file upload

Upload an HTML file to your site.

1. **Download** [this HTML verification file](#). [googleba5819ed9ead3051.html]
2. **Upload** the file to <http://amissionariesblog.wordpress.com/>
3. **Confirm** successful upload by visiting <http://amissionariesblog.wordpress.com/googleba5819ed9ead3051.html> in your browser.
4. **Click** Verify below.

To stay verified, don't remove the HTML file, even after verification succeeds.



I'm not a robot



VERIFY

Not now

6b. For WordPress users who use Yoast SEO we recommend using the HTML tag within the “Alternate methods.” You can easily copy this code and paste it into the “Webmaster tools” tab within the Yoast SEO plugin:

Verify your ownership of <http://freshbooksolutions.com/>. [Learn more.](#)

Recommended method **Alternate methods**

- HTML tag**
Add a meta tag to your site's home page.

Choose the HTML tag under Alternative Methods to Verify Site

1. Copy the meta tag below, and paste it into your site's home page. It should go in the <head> section, before the first <body> section.

```
<meta name="google-site-verification" content="5UJ230_#K0W00SL3NTMLY760-#JLW488R#W74" />
```

[▶ Show me an example](#)

2. Click **Verify** below.

To stay verified, don't remove the meta tag, even after verification succeeds.

Note: Copy only the code

- Domain name provider**
Sign in to your domain name provider.
- Google Analytics**
Use your Google Analytics account.
- Google Tag Manager**
Use your Google Tag Manager account.

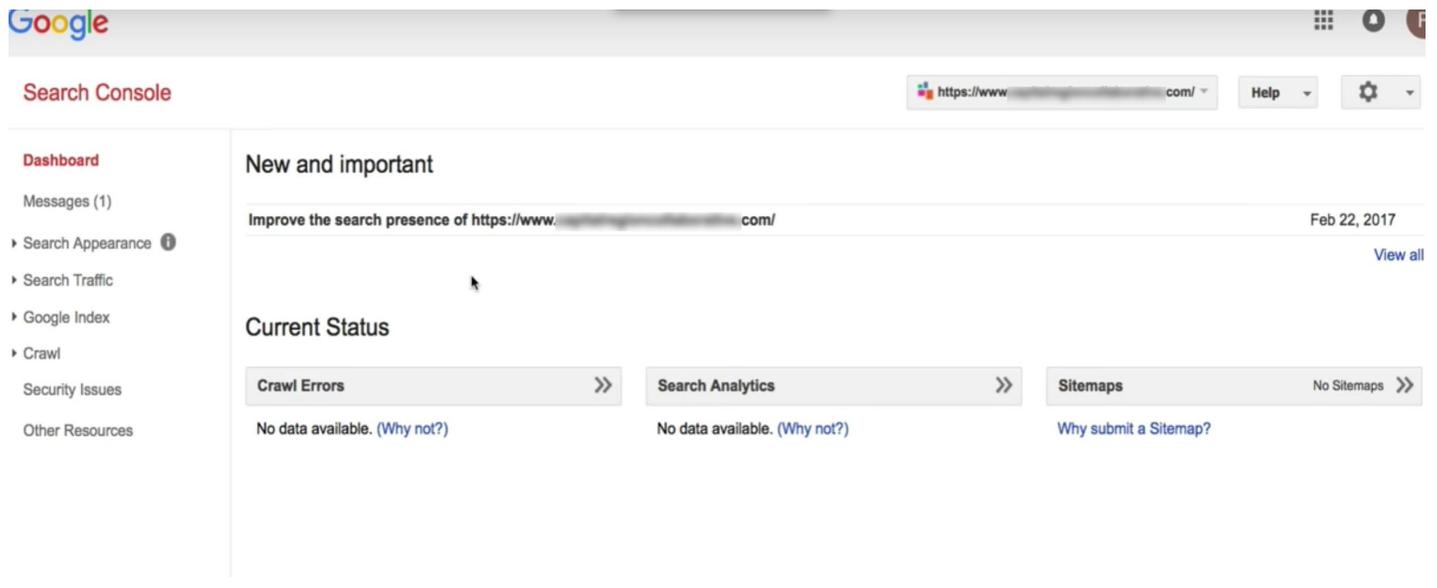
VERIFY

Not now

Place the copied code in the Google Search Console box. After saving this, you can return to Google Search Console and click on the “Verify” button to confirm.

The screenshot shows the Yoast SEO plugin interface. The top navigation bar includes 'Dashboard', 'General', 'Features', 'Your info', 'Webmaster tools', and 'Security'. The 'Webmaster tools' tab is active and highlighted with a red box. Below the navigation bar is a 'NEED HELP?' dropdown. The main content area is titled 'Webmaster Tools verification' and contains instructions: 'You can use the boxes below to verify with the different Webmaster Tools, if your site is already verified, you can just forget about these. Enter the verify meta values for:'. There are three input fields: 'Bing Webmaster Tools:', 'Google Search Console:', and 'Yandex Webmaster Tools:'. The 'Google Search Console:' input field is highlighted with a red box. At the bottom of the section is a 'Save changes' button.

7. Once your website ownership is verified, your Search Console dashboard should look similar to this:



You will have to wait 5-7 days to see any meaningful data. Make sure to check back regularly—set calendar appointments to make sure you don't forget!

After you've confirmed that both Analytics and Search Console are properly set up and working, the next chapter will show you how to start using these important tools.

If you want to keep learning more, here are some recommended videos:

- [How to Set up Google Search Console \(and add a sitemap\)](#)
- [How to Increase Your Search Traffic Using Google Search Console](#)

Beginner Tutorial for Google Analytics

Helping you get the most out of viewing and interpreting this valuable data to most effectively optimize your website.

When you log in to Google Analytics or Search Console with no prior knowledge of these tools, it can seem overwhelming!

But soon you'll discover just how much you can learn from this data, and how useful it can be in planning technical or content updates. It will become second nature with continued use.

In this section, you'll learn how to quickly check for site errors that may affect search engine performance or user experience, and you'll learn to interpret how effectively users are navigating your site. You'll find out if any important pages are being missed, or if certain pages are causing a drop-off in traffic.

By tracking your audience's patterns, you can better plan your content to match their preferences and behavior, which can dramatically improve engagement.

We'll start with terms and basic functions, followed by a screenshot-assisted walk-through of each tool.

You will see these terms in the menus and reports of Google Analytics or in Search Console displays, so you'll likely understand them even better when you see them in context. A technical vocabulary list can seem intimidating at first, but as you get to know and interact with the platform it will quickly start to make sense. (**NOTE:** Not all terms will be covered in these tutorials—only the most immediately necessary).

Google Analytics Terms and Functions

Terms change so if you run across a term in Google Analytics that you are unfamiliar with, hover over it and a brief description pops up.

Average Session Duration: The average amount of time a visitor stayed on your website. Two to three minutes is favorable, while less than one minute implies that visitors didn't find what they were looking for.

Behavior: This element measures how users interact with your site, or with applications on the website. Standard metrics include the number of users interacting with your application, the number of sessions those users create, and the screens or web pages they visit.

Bounce Rate: The percentage of users that come to the website and then click out immediately, signifying that they did not find what they were looking for. The lower the number, the better. When the number is higher, this tells Google the page isn't relevant to the search terms being used to find it.

NOTE: Don't take this number too seriously—Google often considers it a “bounce” whenever someone hits the “back” button, which doesn't always mean that the person didn't find what they needed in the page content! It may be that they found what they needed on that one page and left.

Conversion: Completion of an activity that is important to the success of your business, such as a completed sign up for your email newsletter (a Goal conversion) or a purchase (a Transaction, sometimes called an Ecommerce conversion).

Direct Visitors: Direct visitors have come to your site by typing in your organization's exact URL into the address bar in their browser.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs): Measurable values that demonstrate how effectively your website is achieving its objectives, such as number of sessions, target bounce rate, number of returning visitors, demographics engagement, etc.

New User: A first-time visitor to the website (unique IP address)

Page/Session: This shows how much a visitor engaged on the website, such as how many pages they clicked on.

Referral Visitors: Visitors who visit the website because it was mentioned somewhere on another website or blog that they were visiting.

Sessions: A “set” of a user's interactions within your website that take place within a given time frame (set to a default of 30 minutes). This can mean multiple page views, social commenting, or ecommerce transactions (for more information, try this [Google support article](#)).

Users: People who have started at least one session during the date range.

Navigating Your Google Analytics Dashboard

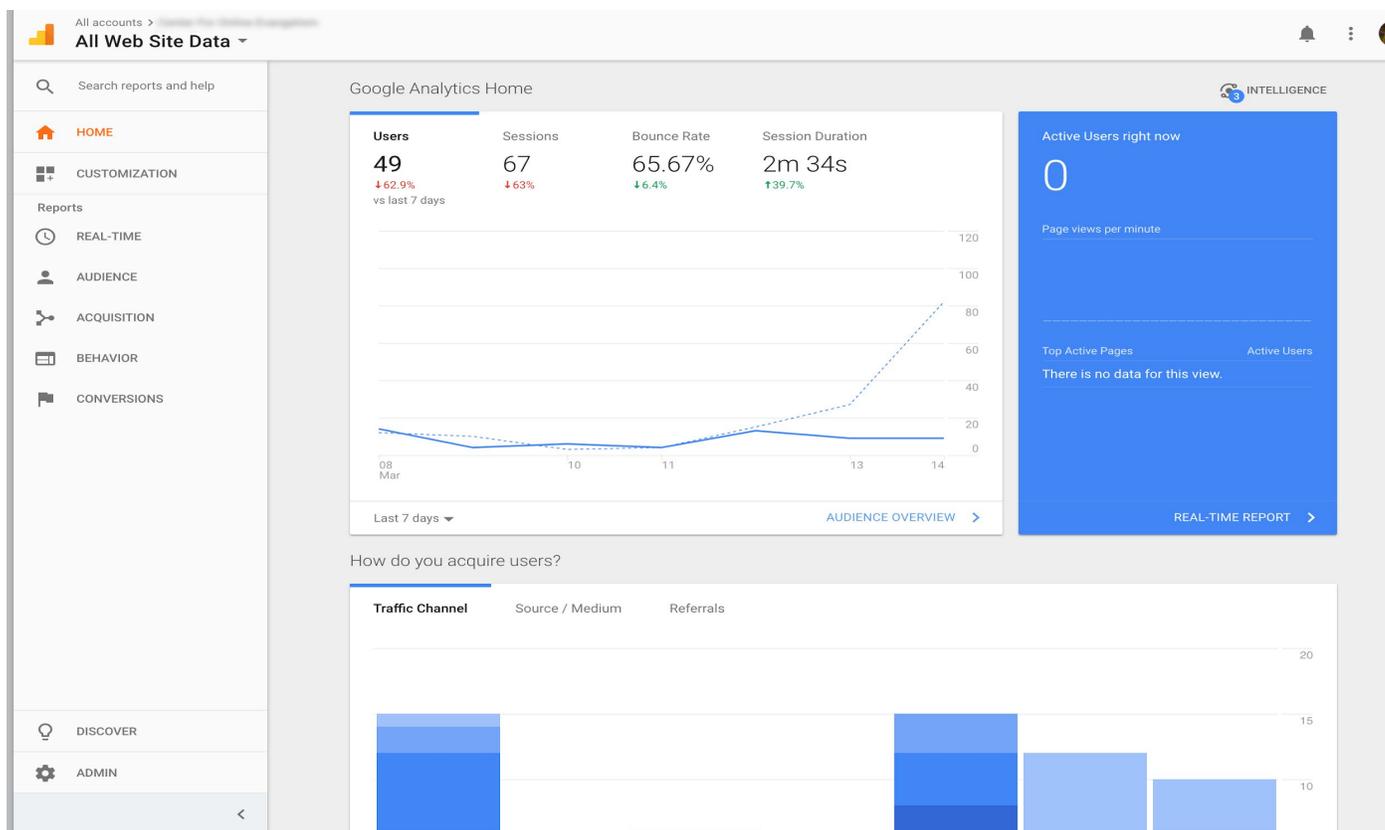
NOTE: If you just set up Google Analytics, we recommend letting it gather a month's worth of data before making in-depth analyses. Otherwise you will not have enough data to truly determine usage patterns. Usage patterns fluctuate throughout the year and around holidays. Over time, you'll become familiar with the regular patterns of visitors.

After logging in, you'll immediately be taken to your Home area which provides a snapshot of (by default) the last seven days of activity on your website.

By selecting "28 days" in the drop-down menu on the bottom left of that box, you'll get a more complete picture of average use patterns.

Other boxes on the Home screen show user trends, regions users are browsing from, and which devices are used for browsing (desktop, mobile, tablet).

It can also be helpful to scroll to the last box that displays which pages your users visit, with the most popular on top.



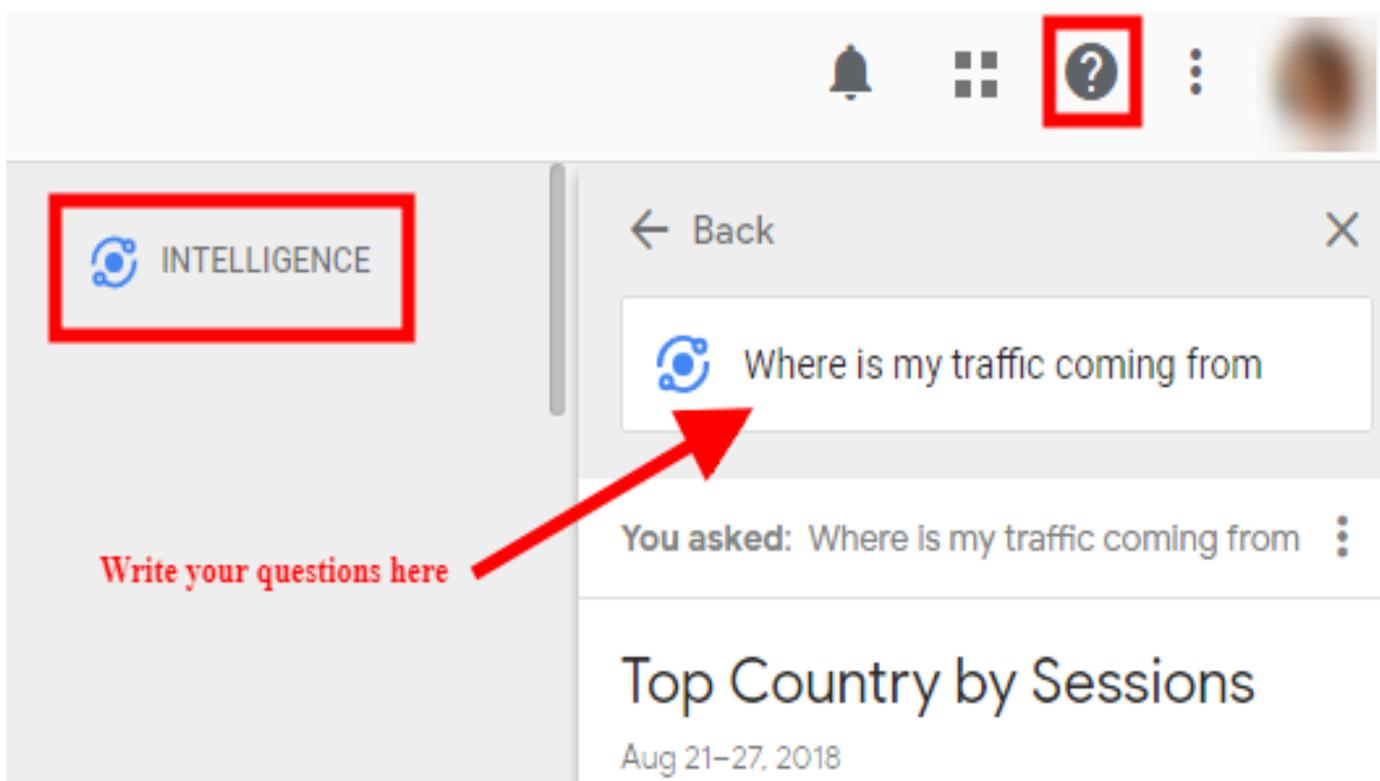
Got specific questions already?

A great place to start your Google Analytics journey is at the top left of the page, the **Intelligence** section.

This will guide you through Google Analytics by asking **questions** like “Where is my traffic coming from?” or “What were my most popular pages from July 1-24?”

This will also notify you of any inconsistencies in your data. These **anomalies** (the term Google uses) will be presented as insights.

Insights will explain opportunities, trends, or changes that can have an impact on your website. For example, it can show you that a certain landing page is getting more traffic than before or if the number of new users is dropping. The information presented here allows you to adjust accordingly.



You can find your insights on your Home page in the second row on the right.

The screenshot displays the Google Analytics interface. At the top, it shows 'All accounts > [Account Name] All Web Site Data'. The main content area is divided into several sections:

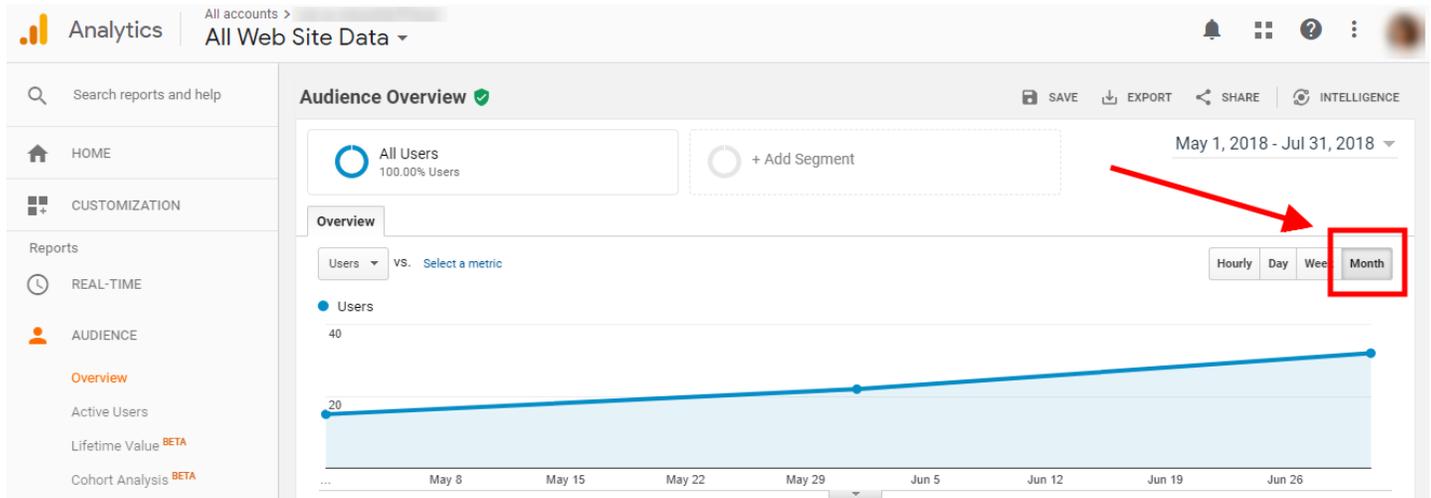
- Google Analytics Home:** A summary card with four metrics: Users (↓ 2.8% vs last 7 days), Sessions (↓ 2%), Bounce Rate (↑ 0.7%), and Session Duration (↓ 13.7%). Below these are line charts for each metric over a 7-day period (Aug 23-29). A red arrow labeled 'Insights' points to the 'AUDIENCE OVERVIEW' link at the bottom of this card.
- Active Users right now:** A blue card showing '0' active users and a 'Page views per minute' bar chart. It also lists 'Top Active Pages' and 'Active Users', with a note 'There is no data for this view.' and a 'REAL-TIME REPORT' link.
- How do you acquire users?:** A card with a stacked bar chart showing traffic channels (Organic Search, Social, Direct, Referral, Other) from Aug 23-29. A legend at the bottom identifies the colors for each channel. A link for 'ACQUISITION REPORT' is at the bottom right.
- Anomaly Detected:** A red-bordered card on the right side. It features the Google Analytics logo and the text: 'Anomaly Detected: spike in Pageviews for Page [URL]'. It specifies the date 'Aug 8, 2018' and provides a forecast range of '2.31-42.7' for pageviews, noting that the actual value of 79 is higher. A small line chart shows the actual value as a red dot above the forecasted range. At the bottom, there are links for 'EXPAND CARD' and 'MORE INSIGHTS'.

Helpful Reports

With several reports to choose from, the most immediately helpful reports can be:

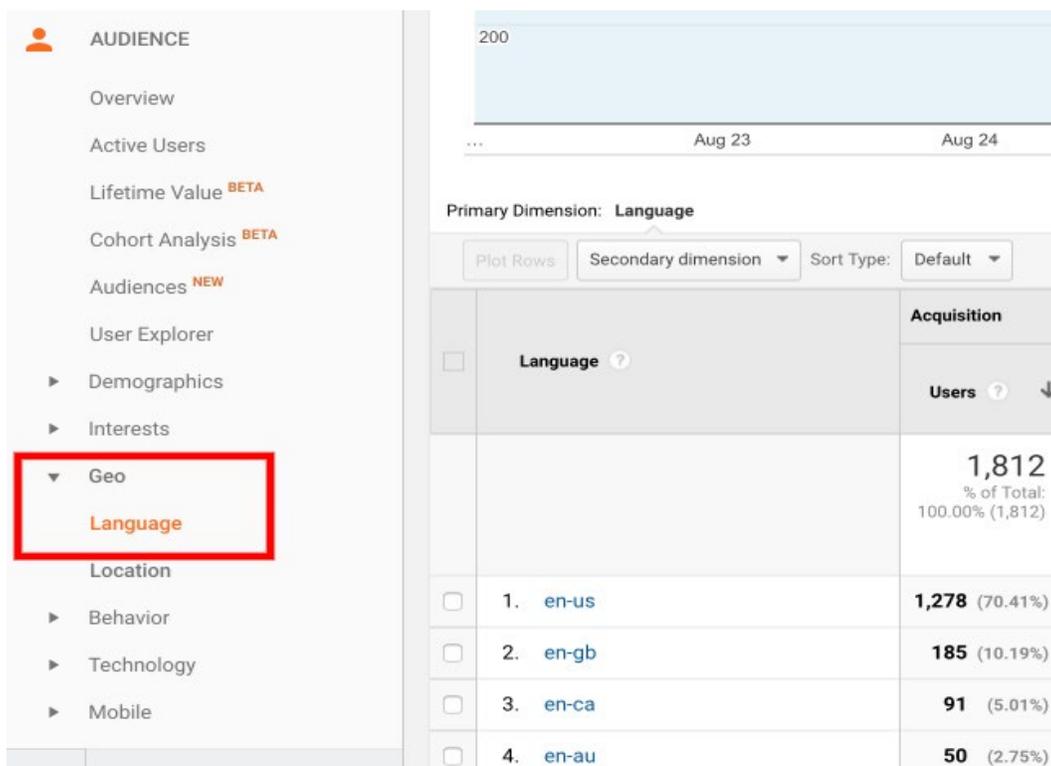
AUDIENCE—Overview (Who's visiting?)

Above the line graph to the right, select "Month" to get a clearer average. This will give you a more in-depth look at how many users are coming to your site and how they spend their time.

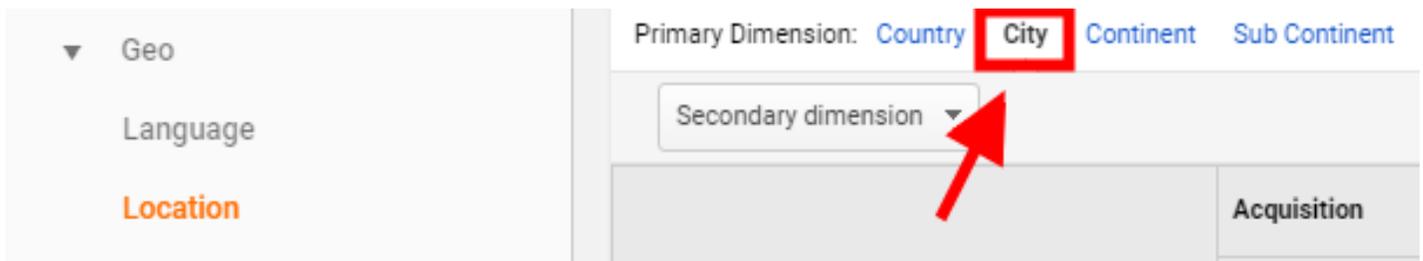


AUDIENCE—Geo

Under **Geo** you can view the **Language** used by the viewer. If you see significant percentages in different languages, it could be a tip that a translated page could be helpful to your audience.



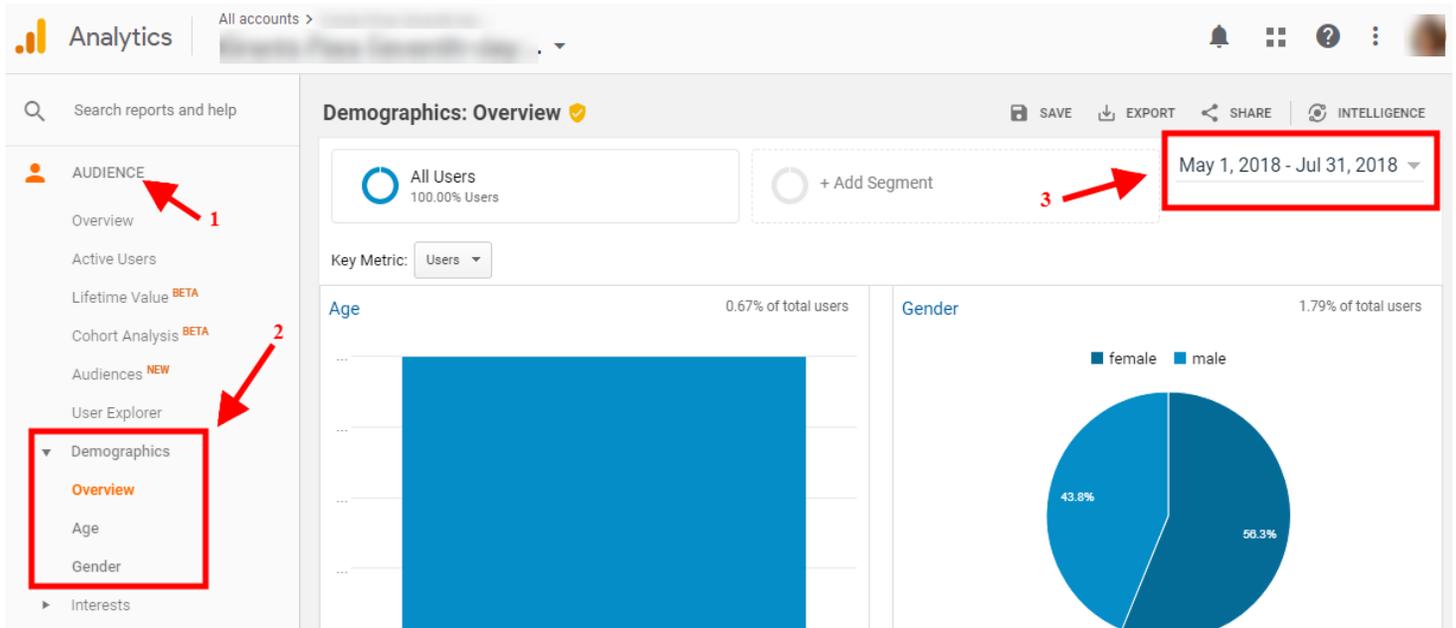
If you are a local organization that depends upon local traffic to your website, click **Geo > Location > City** to see if your target area is engaging with your site.



AUDIENCE—Demographics—Overview

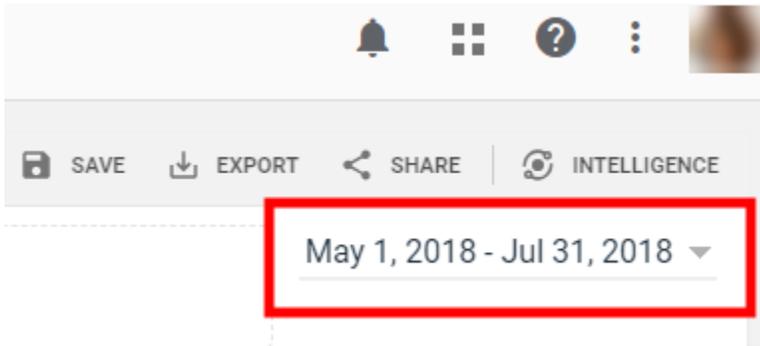
If your content is targeted to a certain age or gender, you'll want to look here. You can view the age and gender (see arrow 2) of the users who visited in the last selected timeframe.

At the top right you can customize the timeframe by date (arrow 3).



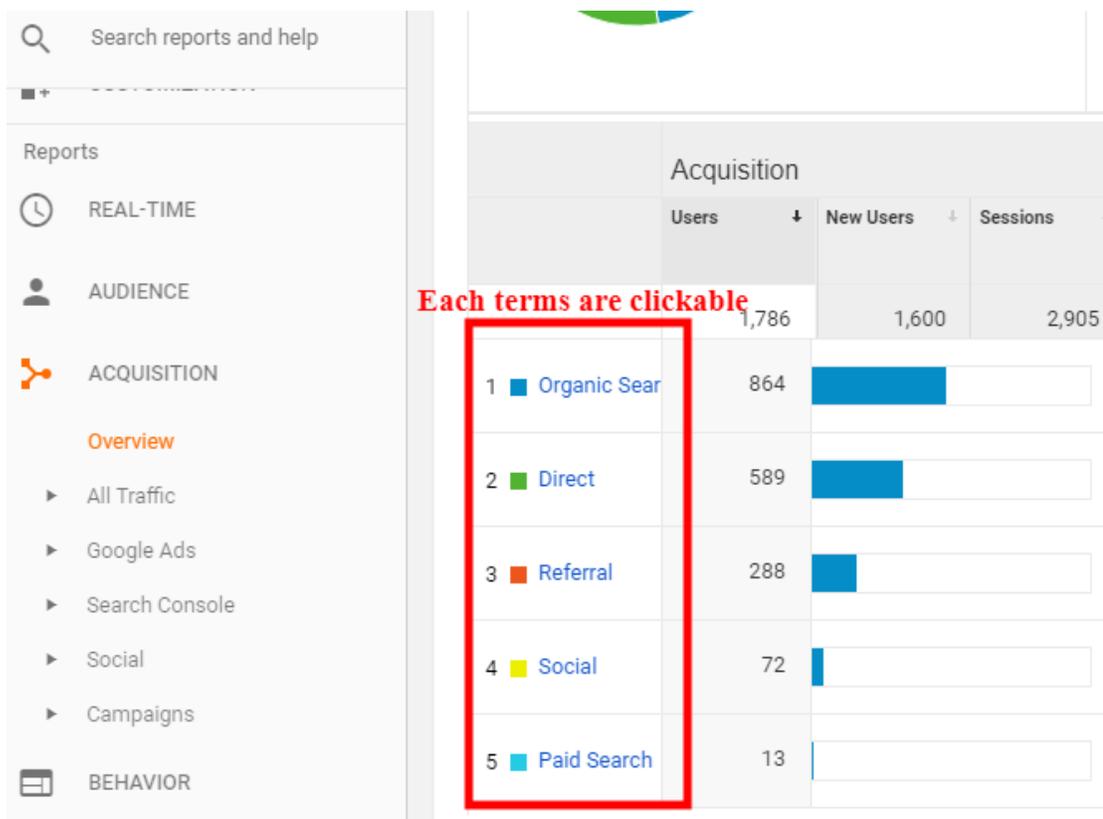
ACQUISITION—Overview (How are they getting here?)

With the default timeframe set to 3 months (found in the right corner of the page), view how people are getting to your site:



These visitors may have clicked to your site via:

1. **Organic Search** (they searched for a keyword or phrase, found your site in the listing and decided to click on it)
2. **Direct** (they typed your URL into their browser)
3. **Referral** (they clicked on a link on another site)
 - a. To find out which sites are linked to yours, you'll need to use Search Console
4. **Social** (they clicked on a link from social media)
5. **Paid Search** (they clicked on a pay-per-click ad)



ACQUISITION—Social—Overview

Scroll down in the Overview window to Social Value. Unless you've worked ahead, you won't have any goals here. However, you will be able to see how many sessions have come from which social media platform. Study this data and compare it to how many posts you've published in the selected timeframe (3-month default).

The screenshot displays the Google Analytics 'Social Value' report. A central message states: 'You haven't defined any goals, so we're unable to measure the value of social referrals on your site. Create a goal'. To the right, a summary shows 1,113 sessions, with 128 sessions via social referral. Conversion metrics for contributed and last interaction social conversions are all zero. A table at the bottom lists social network sessions: Facebook (116 sessions, 90.62%) and Twitter (12 sessions, 9.38%).

through your site.

[Don't show education messages.](#)

This Report Uses Goals

Goal conversions are the primary metric for measuring how well your site fulfills business objectives. A goal conversion is registered once a user completes a desired action on your site, such as a registration or download.

Contact your view's administrator to enable goals.

% of sessions: 100.00%

Social Value

Sessions: 1,113
Sessions via Social Referral: 128
Contributed Social Conversions: 0
Last Interaction Social Conversions: 0

Social Sources	Social Network	Sessions	% Sessions
Social Network	1. Facebook	116	90.62%
Pages	2. Twitter	12	9.38%

view full report

ACQUISITION—Social—Network Referrals

This is big for social media managers! This report lets you see which pages users are coming in on through social media referrals. This can help you track which posts are driving users to your site, depending on which URL was linked in the post.

The screenshot shows the Google Analytics interface for the 'ACQUISITION' section, specifically the 'Social' category and 'Network Referrals' sub-report. The left sidebar menu is visible, with 'Social' and 'Network Referrals' highlighted by a red box. The main content area shows a bar chart with a value of 250. Below the chart, the 'Primary Dimension' is set to 'Social Network'. A dropdown menu for 'Secondary dimension' is visible. The main content area displays a list of social networks ranked by referral volume:

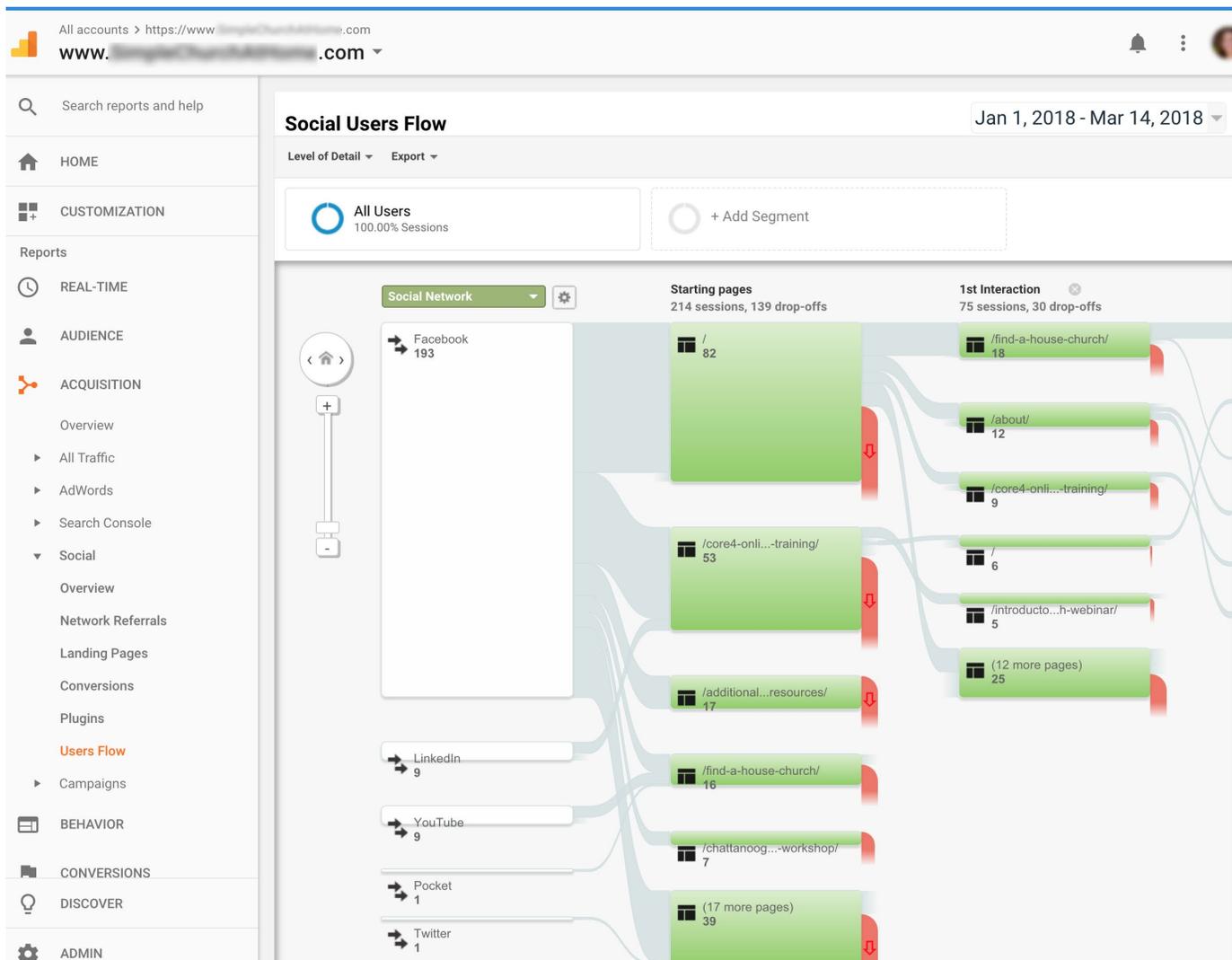
Social Network ?	
1.	YouTube
2.	Pinterest
3.	Facebook
4.	WordPress

A red arrow points to the 'Facebook' link in the list, with the text 'Clickable Terms' written below it.

ACQUISITION—Social—Users Flow

This journey map starts with the social media platform that brought the user to your website. See which page URL they clicked on, which can indicate which posts are getting the most activity and which events are encouraging click-throughs.

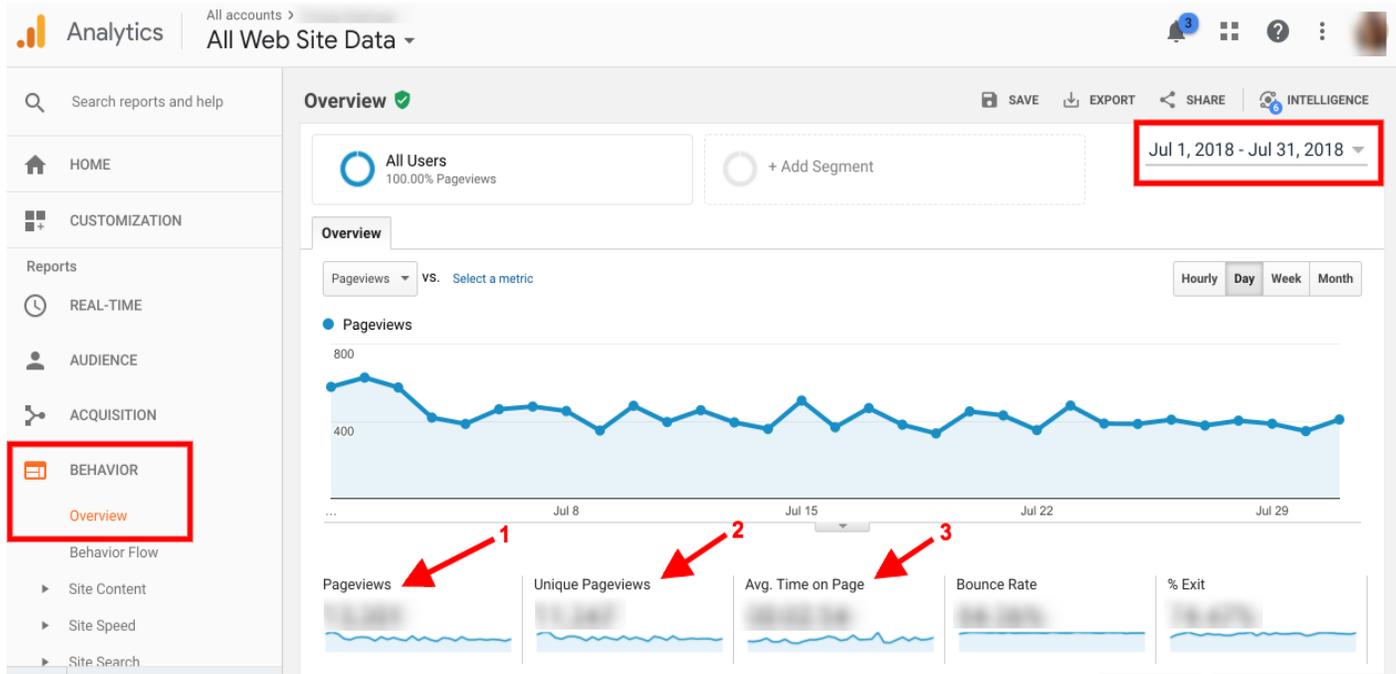
If you hover over the Starting Pages or Interactions, you'll see a pie chart representation of how many users kept navigating your site, and how many dropped off at this point. Use this data to review your site content and determine if users are finding what they need or getting frustrated/bored and leaving.



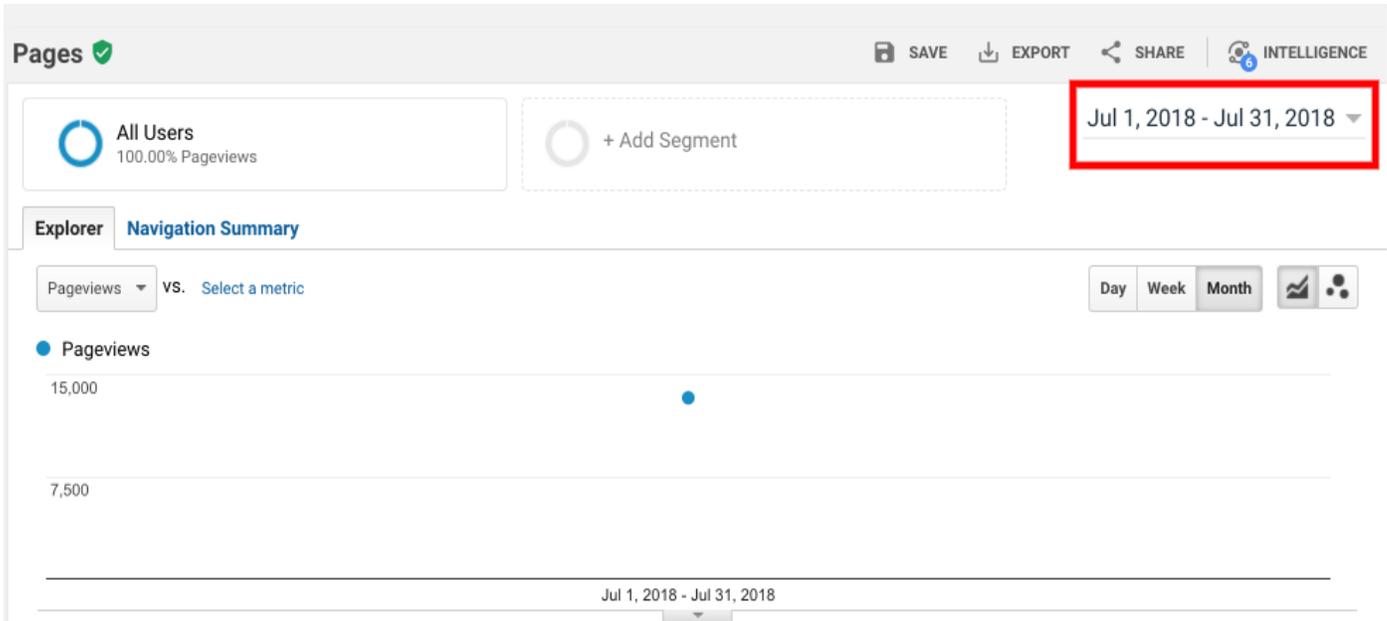
BEHAVIOR—Overview (What are they doing?)

The Behavior Overview provides a graph showing the amount of traffic your website receives and how they use your site. Make sure to select “Month” above the line graph.

These are the most important metrics here: 1) Pageviews, 2) Unique Pageviews, and 3) Average Time on Page.



The **Site Content** section describes how visitors engage with pages on your website. For example, under **ALL PAGES** you can see your top pages and how many views they receive, average time on page, plus which type of page is most popular—helping you determine what content performs best on your website (remember the best way to determine this is to select it by month on the upper right on the screen).



Analytics | All accounts > All Web Site Data

Primary dimension: Page | Page title | Other

Plot Rows | Secondary dimension | Sort Type: Default

Search reports and help

HOME

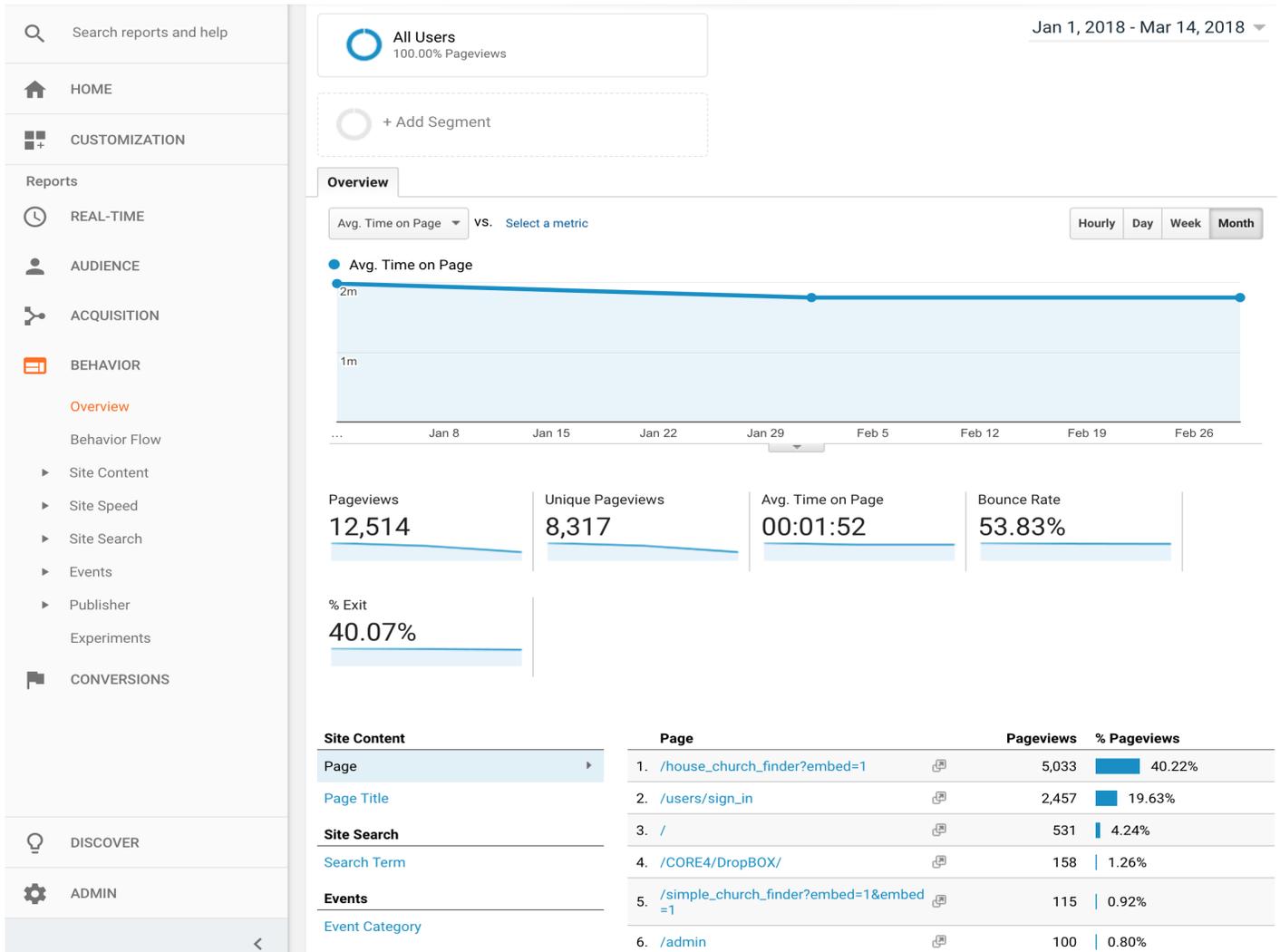
CUSTOMIZATION

Reports

- REAL-TIME
- AUDIENCE
- ACQUISITION
- BEHAVIOR
 - Overview
 - Behavior Flow
 - Site Content**
 - All Pages

Page	Pageviews	Unique Pageviews	Avg. Time on Page	Entrances	Bounce Rate	% Exit	Page Value
Top performing pages on your website							
1.	3,604 (27.10%)	3,145 (27.72%)	00:04:13	3,090 (31.20%)	87.83%	86.02%	\$
2.	1,574 (11.83%)	1,352 (11.92%)	00:04:59	1,325 (13.38%)	87.62%	84.37%	\$
3.	759 (5.71%)	656 (5.78%)	00:05:23	638 (6.44%)	86.21%	83.40%	\$
4.	520 (3.91%)	376 (3.31%)	00:01:04	324 (3.27%)	47.84%	41.35%	\$
5.	507 (3.81%)	354 (3.12%)	00:01:01	209 (2.11%)	57.89%	37.28%	\$
6.	425 (3.20%)	364 (3.21%)	00:04:56	349 (3.52%)	84.24%	81.65%	\$
7.	391 (2.94%)	324 (2.86%)	00:04:53	318 (3.21%)	83.33%	81.07%	\$
8.	276 (2.08%)	244 (2.15%)	00:03:03	225 (2.27%)	85.33%	81.16%	\$
9.	238 (1.79%)	196 (1.73%)	00:04:52	174 (1.76%)	85.06%	75.63%	\$

If you find that your most popular pages are different from the ones you'd like more people to view or spend time on, you might need to adjust your content or how your sitemap is organized.



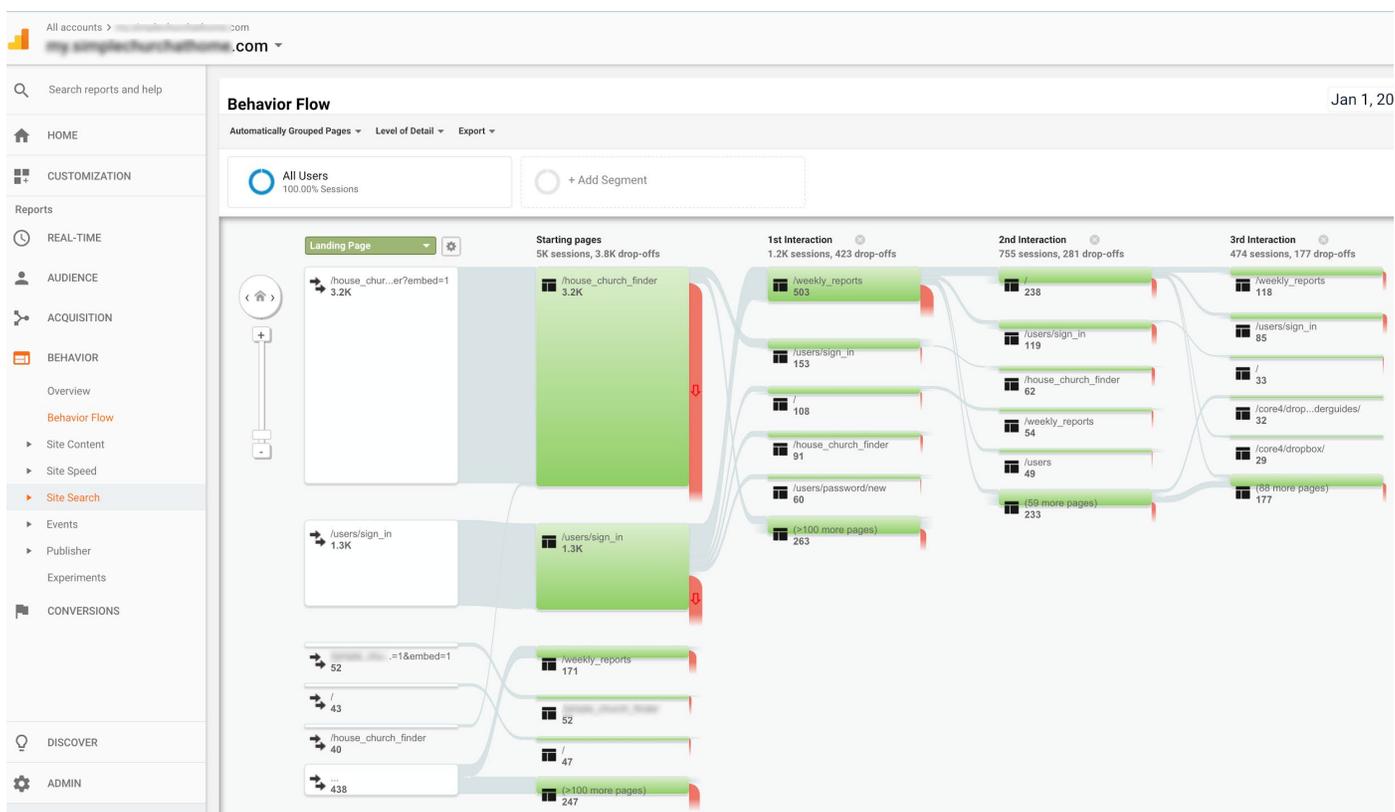
BEHAVIOR—Behavior Flow (Where are they going?)

Another visual journey map shows you which pages users encounter first when they visit your website (listed as the Landing Page). It may be the Home page, or it may be an article, contact page, or a bookmarked link that has a map or login function.

You can drag the map to the side, viewing the first, second, and third interactions, to see where users clicked to after coming to the site.

You can use visual data like this to see if users are taking the path you intend for them. If not, or if they're dropping off before they get to a page where you want them to take an action, such as read an article, download a PDF, or make a purchase, it may mean:

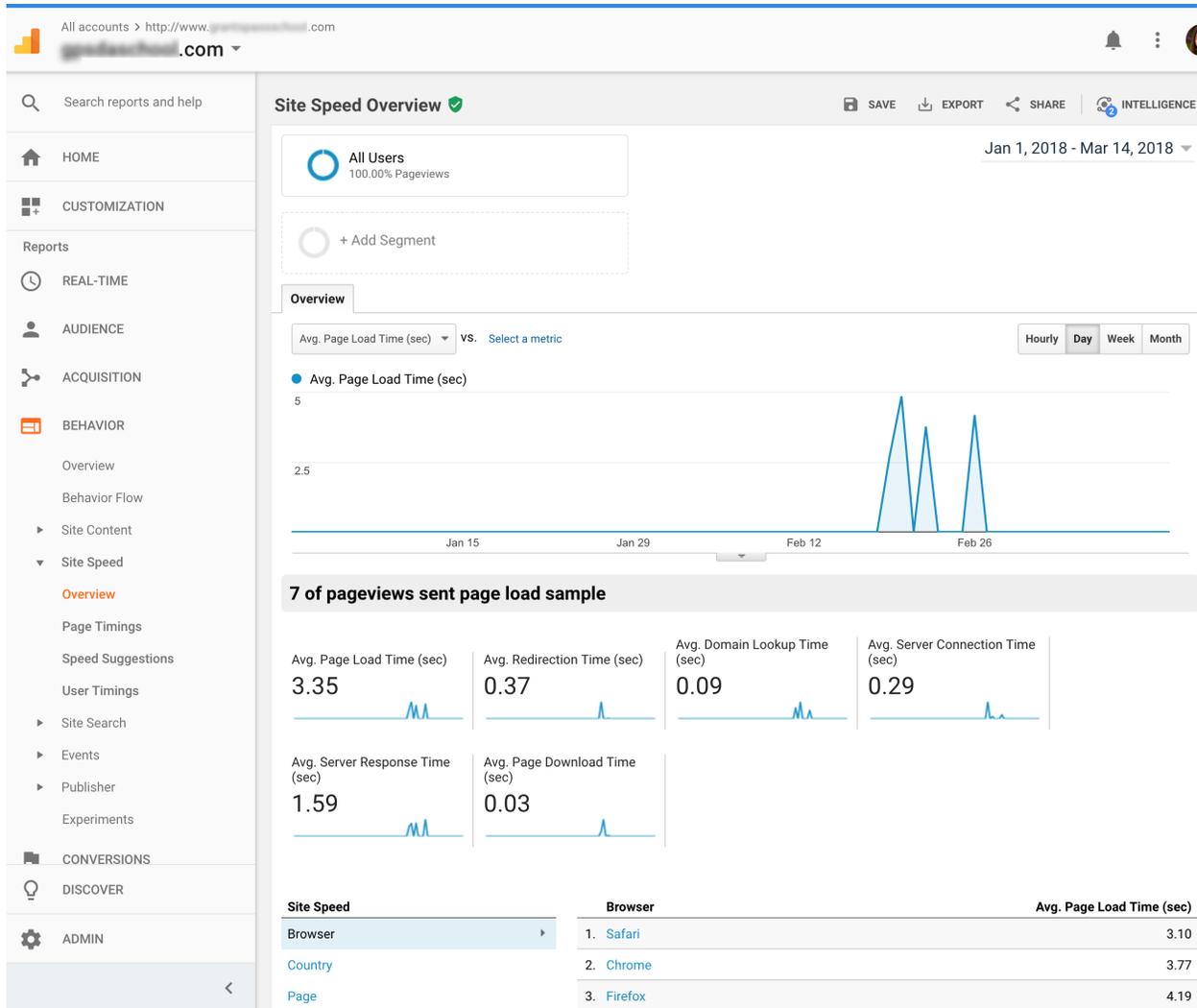
- Your content needs clearer calls to action.
- Your content needs more persuasive language to encourage them to keep reading.
- Users are finding the info they want before reaching the page.
- Users are deciding not to buy/read/download.



BEHAVIOR—Site Speed—Overview

Select “Month” at the top right over the graph. Remember, you’re shooting for a page load time of under two seconds.

Your average page load time averages data from all your pages.



BEHAVIOR—Site Speed—Page Timings

This shows the average load time of each individual page, so you can better pinpoint what pages may be slow and affecting the average site load time.

(You can also run the Screaming Frog SEO Spider tool to determine what elements are affecting page load time, or check [Google's Page Speed Insights tool](#)).

These Google Analytics overview reports will be most helpful for you as you begin consistent use of this tool.

Getting a big-picture view of how your current audience is interacting with your site can help you identify any “roadblocks” that might be inhibiting users from completing a desired action.

It will also help you plan your future content by revealing which content is inspiring further browsing throughout your site.

If you're interested in a full course on the effective use of Google Analytics, check out [Google Analytics Academy](#), Google's free resource for Analytics users.

Additional Resources:

- [A Guide to the Standard Reports in Google Analytics: Audience Reports](#)
- [How to Get Actionable Data from Google Analytics in 10 Minutes](#)
(Setting goals and measuring data against your website goals)
- [Google Analytics: Overview & Set-up](#)
- [Web Tracking + Introduction to Google Analytics \(downloadable PowerPoint\)](#)

Beginner Tutorial for Google Search Console

How is your site interacting with Google searches?

Search Console is incredibly useful in a variety of ways. It's like a peek under the hood to make sure everything is running properly. Not only will it show how Google is interacting with your site when it comes to searches, it can also notify you if the site has been hacked or if there are navigational errors.

Google Search Console Important Terms and Functions

Anchor text: Anchor text is the visible, clickable text in a hyperlink. In modern browsers, it is often blue and underlined, such as [this link to the moz homepage](#).

Crawl: The process of Googlebot discovering new and updated pages to add to the Google Index.

Google Index: In order for your site's contents to be included in the Google's search results, it must be Google Indexed (think of a library!). Google Index lists all of the web pages it knows about. When Google visits your site, it detects new and updated pages and updates the Google Index.

Internal links: Links on one page on your website that links to another page on your website to provide reference information, guide the user through the intended content journey, or to lead them to action. Being strategic with internal linking provides different types of users with the proper pathways for finding what they want.

XML SiteMap: A file where you can list the web pages of your site in its hierarchical order to tell Google and other search engines about the organization of your site content. XML stands for "extensible markup language" schema, which is more precise than HTML (hyper-text markup language).

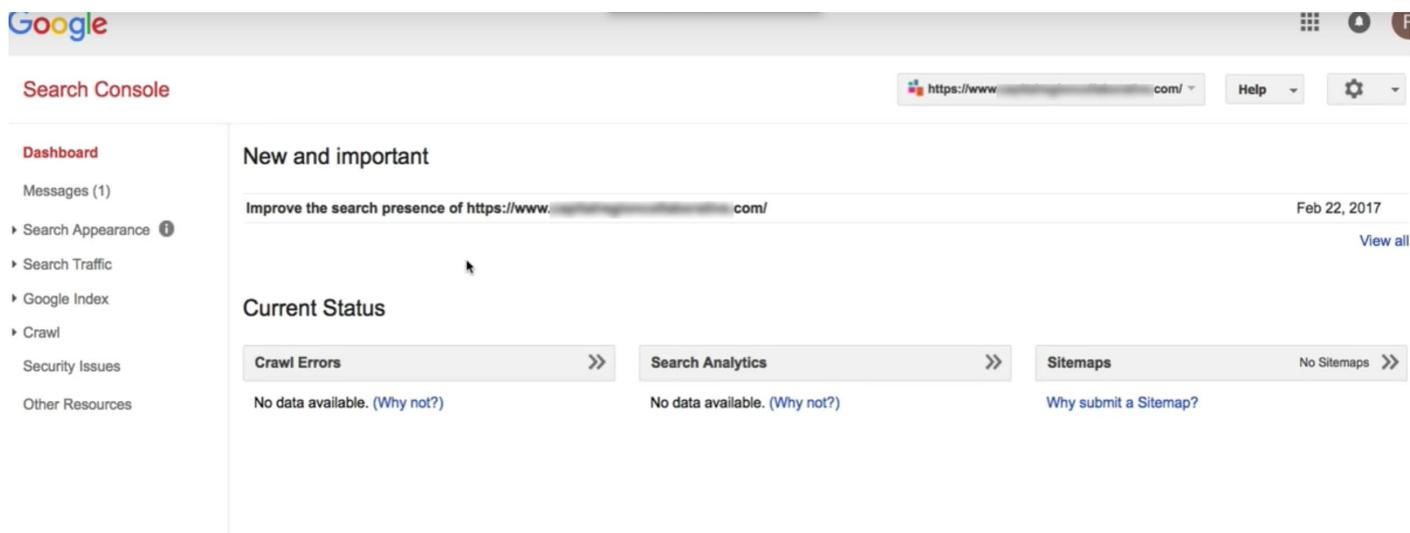
Search Console Home—Your Properties. (Are You Verified?)

After logging into your Google account and navigating to <https://www.google.com/webmasters/tools/home?hl=en>, you'll see the Properties (websites) you selected to manage. If any of them say "Not verified" at the top left of the thumbnail, you'll need to refer back to [the section on setting up search console](#) for verification methods. Most of the Search Console functions will not be usable until the Property ownership is verified.

Once you click on the property/website, you'll be directed to the **Dashboard**.

You'll see three sections under **Current Status** in the lower half of your screen: **Crawl Errors**, **Search Analytics**, and **Sitemaps**.

Here you'll be alerted if there are any immediate issues that need your attention in these areas. However, for the purpose of this lesson, we'll take you through the top priority functions in the left side menu of Search Console as you start to get used to this tool.



Crawl (left menu)

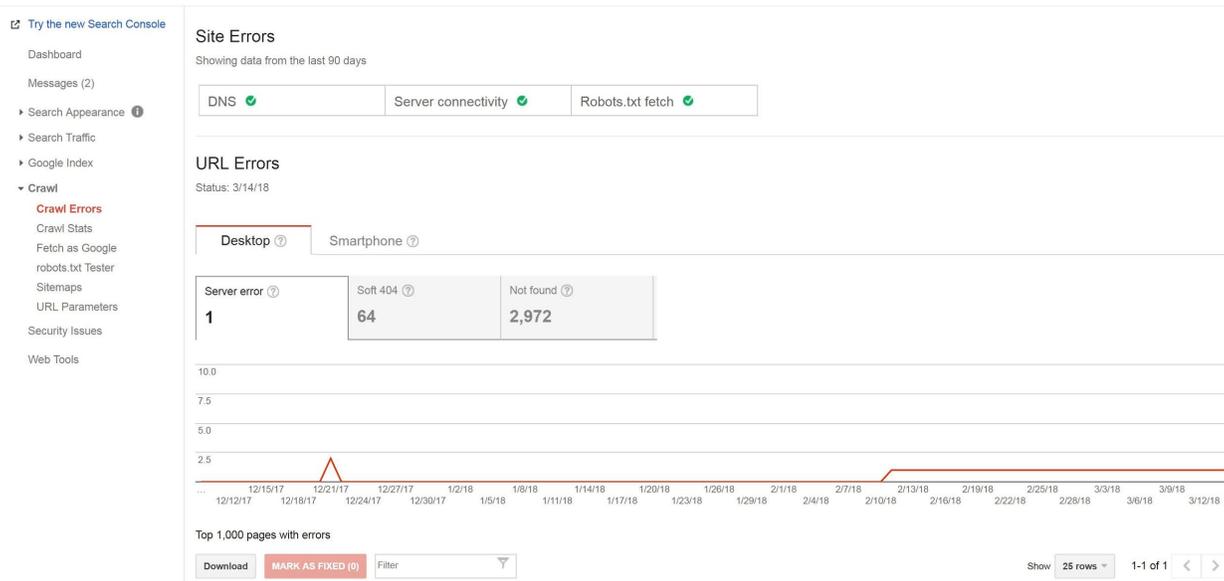
If you have any crawl errors, you can click on **Crawl > Crawl Errors** in the left side menu to learn more about what's causing these errors.

You'll first want to see if your server is causing any crawl errors. If these errors persist, you may need to contact your hosting provider.

Being behind a firewall can also affect Googlebot's ability to crawl your site. You may need to adjust your firewall settings.

Another common crawl error has to do with a [robots.txt file](#), which tells Google which pages it can crawl and which pages you do not want it to crawl. In many cases, though, you want Google to crawl your entire site, and you don't need a robots.txt file.

If you have any broken links, they will be listed under "URL Errors" below the line graph.



Crawl—[Sitemaps](#)

To help Google properly crawl your site with its Googlebot, you'll want to submit a sitemap.xml.

If your website is on the AdventistChurchConnect platform, a sitemap has been created automatically. If you're using WordPress, you'll need a plugin to generate a sitemap.xml file.

For additional guidance:

[What is a WordPress Sitemap](#) or [How to Create a WordPress Sitemap](#).

At the top right you'll see the red "Add/Test Sitemap" button. Clicking the button which will bring up a dialogue box with your website URL with a forward slash. Type in "sitemap" (ACC) or "sitemap.xml" (WordPress and some other CMSs), then submit.

(If your website is on another development platform, such as Wix, Squarespace, 1&1, etc., check with your technical documentation or ask support for information on sitemaps.)

Search Traffic (left menu)—Search Analytics

NOTE: *If you just set up your Search Console account, Google may not have yet had a chance to crawl your site again and send back data. You may need to wait a few days.*

This may be the most important tab for your website in Search Console, at least for now. You can gather a snapshot of how your website is doing in the midst of your SEO efforts.

Before selecting an option, make sure to check the boxes of **Clicks**, **Impressions**, **CTR** (click-through-rate) and **Position**. You'll want to see all this information when you click on the various reports.

Search Analytics

Analyze your performance on Google Search. Filter and compare your results to better understand your user's search patterns. [Learn more](#).

Clicks Impressions CTR Position

Right now, we'll look at the report that will be most immediately useful to you—**Queries**.

Queries No filter ▾ Pages No filter ▾ Countries No filter ▾ Devices No filter ▾ Search Type **Web** ▾ Dates **Last 28 days** ▾

Queries

This lists search keywords and phrases that pull up your site in the search results. Ideally, these terms would match what you intend to rank for.

If you notice a discrepancy between how you *wanted* people to find you and how they *actually* ended up finding you, you might want to adjust your content to include different keywords, or better optimize your content for the keywords you *want* to rank for.

All in all, this gives you an insight into your audience's preferences and goals, as compared to what your site offers. You'll want to ask questions like:

- Are people searching for the keywords commonly used in the site, or are they using other search terms that we may not have thought of yet?
 - How can you optimize your content for these different, or additional, keywords?
- Are people finding your site through a non-relevant keyword, then leaving your site because it's not what they expected? This can raise your bounce rate.
 - Why might you be ranking for this keyword that is not exactly matching your content?

Search Traffic (left menu)—Links to Your Site

This section shows you which outside websites have active links to your site (backlinks). If you just set up your Search Console account, there may not be any data here yet. If you have had Search Console set up for at least a few days and there still isn't any data in this section, it could mean that you have no backlinks at this time.

Having other sites link to your site in a legitimate, true-referral manner (i.e., someone referencing your site in a blog post, social media post, etc.) can act as a significant SEO boost. It tells Google (and people) that other entities online recognize you as a credible authority for the given topic.

Examining your backlinks gives you another look at which content is most popular, by looking at the **"Your most linked content"** section. This is especially positive, meaning that, not only did this page get a lot of traffic, it was liked well enough to receive a link to it from an outside source. This is a better representation of content quality than page traffic alone.

Search Console https://www.wagnermeters.com/ Help Settings

Try the new Search Console

- Dashboard
- Messages (2)
- Search Appearance
- Search Traffic
 - Search Analytics
 - Links to Your Site**
 - Internal Links
 - Manual Actions
 - International Targeting
 - Mobile Usability
- Google Index
- Crawl
 - Security Issues
- Web Tools

Links to Your Site

Total links
14,606

Who links the most		Your most linked content	
pagedebate.com	4,457	https://www.wagnermeters.com/	2,979
bsmmag.com	1,235	/concrete-moisture/	1,240
prospeclab.com	847	/top-40-woodworking-tools/	522
f2170reports.com	365	/warning-signs-on-wood-floors/	399
yellowpages.com	344	/flatmaster/	369

[More »](#) [More »](#)

How your data is linked

- [shop now](#)
- [building inspection articles](#)
- [building inspection moisture detection](#)
- [rapid rh newsletters](#)
- [forest products articles](#)
- ..

Search Appearance (left menu)—HTML Improvements

Here you'll look for any HTML errors, such as missing or duplicate title tags, or titles that are too long to be shown in their entirety. If any pages have duplicate or missing meta descriptions, you'll want to craft a 162-character page description to encourage searchers to click through to your site!

Having duplicate or missing tags can affect how well Googlebot crawls your site. These can be simple fixes, especially if you run a WordPress plugin such as [Yoast](#).

You'll want to go to all the pages with either duplicate or missing content and replace with new titles and meta descriptions (learn more about meta descriptions in Section VI).

Google Index (left menu)—Index Status

Especially if you've just set up Search Console, you may have to wait for "Googlebot" to index your website. Once it's indexed, you'll be able to view Google's last index in a line graph.

The blue line shows you how many pages were indexed, and the orange line (click on **Advanced** to view) shows how many pages were blocked (i.e., these pages will not show up in search results).

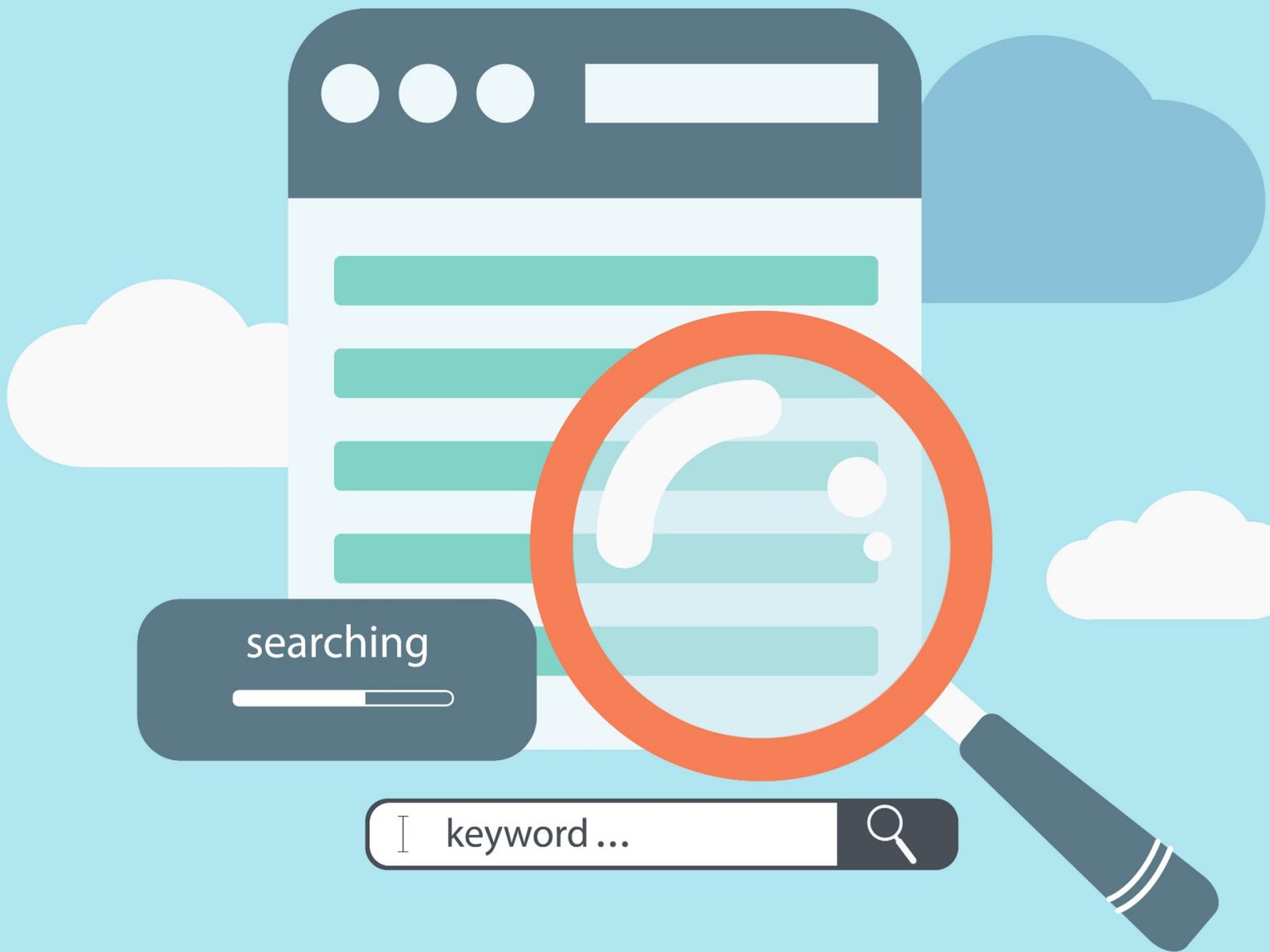
Moving Forward

These introductory steps can keep you plenty busy. Especially if your website is large with several functions, you may find several areas to improve or optimize right away. If your website is still new and growing, this can give you direction for the site's future development.

If you'd like to continue ahead into more advanced features of these tools, here are some recommended resources:

- [A Complete Guide to the Google Search Console](#)
- [An Insider's Guide to Using Google's Search Console to Fix Your Site](#)
- [Google Support's introduction to Search Console](#)

Intro to Keyword Research and Content Strategy



Now that you've established a strong foundation for your SEO strategy and can track activity and engagement, let's get into the nitty-gritty of search engine optimization.

Content—the *right* **content**—is what internet users are searching for. Many are ultimately looking for products, services, locations, restaurant recommendations, etc., but the reason they trust the internet to help them is because they can find *content* that educates them along the way. People want content that guides them toward making the best decisions; content that answers their questions.

A blog post could convince someone to join a gym, or a Yelp review might convince a couple to try a new restaurant. Some are googling symptoms before taking their child to the ER or searching for tips on getting out of credit card debt. Or maybe they're bored, sitting in a waiting room, watching cat videos on their phones.

There are a thousand and one ways to consume content. Optimizing your content for search engines helps you focus your content to best match what your target audience is searching for.

But that's the thing—how do you know what they're searching for?

Keyword research is the core of SEO copywriting: writing persuasive content based on search engine optimization principles. It removes most of the guesswork when figuring out which topics (related to your organization) make the most sense to cover in your content marketing. Whether writing titles and headlines or naming resources or products, it bridges the gap between your hunches, the data, and what information people actually need.

Keyword research uses search query data from Google and other search engines to determine what kind of content interests people. Each phrase typed into the search box is like a voice proclaiming, "I want to see content about this!"

By using the right tools and tactics, you'll find out what terms or phrases people are googling and how often. It will also list how competitive those keywords are. Finding keywords that have a high search volume, but a lower rate of competition, is the sweet spot for your SEO content strategy. Writing about *those topics* improves the chances of your content being found in search engines.

1) Define your topic.

For example, say you want to start a blog to help Pathfinder leaders.

“Pathfinders,” of course, is the topic. But if you title your blog, “Pathfinders,” it’s not specific enough to get search traffic. You’d have to differentiate from Nissan Pathfinders, Pathfinder International, or the Pathfinder Roleplaying Game.

Familiarity with your audience allows you to feature relevant keywords in your titles, headlines and posts, such as:

- Pathfinder leadership
- Pathfinder club meetings
- Pathfinder honors
- Pathfinder investiture
- Pathfinder campouts

While definitely more specific than “Pathfinder” alone, these are also considered **broad-match keywords**, as they can still have a wide variety of subtopics. They’re certainly good ideas, and posts on these topics can be helpful and even enjoyed by your readers. However, they’re harder to rank in Google search results without further specificity.

Let’s say it’s a burgeoning trend to create Pathfinder blogs. The broad topic of Pathfinder leadership is now a highly competitive arena. How do you get your blog to stand out?

2) Refine your topic.

You have to get more specialized in your focus, so start brainstorming **“niche topics”**—subtopics within the broad subjects of Pathfinders and meetings and honors and campouts that people might be searching for information about. Some of these might be:

- Pathfinder knot-tying honor
- Pathfinder winter campouts
- Pathfinder club meeting activities
- Pathfinder Bible Experience prep
- Pathfinder Oshkosh fundraising ideas

These are considered **long-tail keywords**, or keyphrases. Long-tail keywords are low volume and highly-focused search queries that **tend to convert visitors to engaged readers/followers exceptionally well**.

You can also start brainstorming possible blog posts for these subtopics and long-tail keywords:

- How to teach knot-tying to Pathfinders
- Make your Pathfinder Investiture fun and memorable
- Top 10 activities for Pathfinder campouts
- Tips for teaching Pathfinders with disabilities
- Preparing your Pathfinders for Pathfinder Bible Experience
- Best Pathfinder fundraising ideas to cover Oshkosh expenses

Other examples of broad-match vs. long-tail keywords:

- Water bottles vs. BPA-free wide-mouth water bottles
- Vegan recipes vs. 5-minute vegan breakfasts
- Elastic hair ties vs. pink diamond-studded elastic hair ties

Location information can also make effective long-tail keywords, as Google can match the location of searchers' IP addresses to the locations you're mentioning in your content. If you're putting together a website for a cupcake bakery in Austin, TX, you'll certainly include the address and phone number on the contact page. You might also want to use local keywords, such as the part of town it's in, or the recognizable businesses it's near, or even local annual events.

These location keywords can be especially helpful in titles and [meta descriptions](#), the summary of a web page:

6 of Austin's Sweetest Bakeries to Satisfy Your Cupcake Craving

<https://austinet.com/best-cupcakes-austin> ▼

Nov 30, 2017 - Here are the results of my quest to find the best **cupcakes** in **Austin**. ... Owners Olga and Ben Lee's **bakery** is near The University of **Texas** ...

Sweet Treets Bakery

www.sweettreetsbakery.com/ ▼

Sweet Treets **Bakery** is located in **Austin, Texas**, in the Oak Hill area, that makes custom wedding **cakes**, grooms **cakes**, **cupcakes**, cake balls, and specialty ...

To make your blog or organization's website specific to your area, mention which cities are involved, and make sure to list the address of your church or location. You could even list well-known areas nearby that members visit or volunteer. For security reasons, we do recommend caution regarding how much location information is shared online about Pathfinder and other underage group activities.

You'll also want to consider **seasonality**. Keyword activity will change depending on the time of year, especially in topics that deal with a school year, holidays, sports, or activities relating to spring, summer, fall, or winter.

3) Test your topic.

Start by googling your topics, including any related words or phrases. Then ask yourself the following questions:

- What exists already?
- Can you improve on what's already written?
- Are there certain aspects of the topic that aren't already covered in depth (or at all)?
- How are other users responding to this competing content? Review their comments on posts.

This is your first peek at opportunity.

Maybe you find that the knot-tying honor already has several articles that are well-written and popular. There are lots of positive comments on those posts. Therefore, another topic would be more effective in making your blog stand out in search results.

However, maybe there's one particular knot you don't feel the other writers have explained very well, even though the rest of the post is good. Maybe you'll find a couple comments on other blogs about how they'd like more information on the hunter's bend. You might then decide to write a post on "how to teach the hunter's bend knot."

This is an excellent example of how research and testing can help shape meaningful content creation and allow you to create a long-tail keyword opportunity for your blog post.

4) Test some more.

Here's where dedicated keyword research tools come in.

These tools access data that tells how many people are searching for a certain keyword or keyphrase (**search volume**), as well as how much content already exists about that keyword (**competition**). The sweet spot is when you find a word or phrase that has high search volume and low competition.

Here's an example from [Google Keyword Planner](#):

<input type="checkbox"/> Keyword (by relevance)	Avg. monthly searches	Competition
<input type="checkbox"/> seventh day advent...	40,500 	Low
<input type="checkbox"/> sda	12,100 	Low
<input type="checkbox"/> seventh day advent...	14,800 	Low
<input type="checkbox"/> sda church	4,400 	Low
<input type="checkbox"/> 7th day adventist	14,800 	Low
<input type="checkbox"/> sda songs	260 	Low
<input type="checkbox"/> adventist church	2,900 	Low
<input type="checkbox"/> seventh day advent...	5,400 	Low

Many of these keyword research tools provide a ratio of search volume and competition, as well as what the average keyword costs “per click” if you were doing [pay-per-click \(PPC\)](#) advertising (but we won’t focus on that in this beginner’s guide).

There are completely free options for keyword research, where you’ll be able to find similar data. These free keyword tools also show related keywords or phrases, which can be helpful for coming up with good content ideas. Overall, you’ll get a general idea what people are searching for, enabling you to create content that will connect your organization with the needs and interests of your audience.

Here are some recommended *free* options for keyword research or keyword ideas:

[Keywords Everywhere](#) is a free browser add-on for Chrome and Firefox that gathers data on every term you search for on Google. It’s especially easy to use since you don’t have to open a separate program; it already displays keyword results on the side of your browser window. It can also help you find related topics to cover in support of your main topic.

[Ubersuggest](#) was created by renowned digital marketing strategist and author [Neil Patel](#), because he felt that aspiring digital marketers should have a free keyword research tool they could trust. It is touted by many marketers as a great way to get keyword ideas for blog posts, and to possibly provide even more ideas than Google’s Keyword Planner.

[Keyword Planner](#) has been the industry standard tool by which keyword research has been measured. It is still a technically free keyword research tool embedded in a Google Ads (formerly Google AdWords). You will need to set up a Google Ads account to use it. While it costs money to run Google Ad *campaigns*, you can do keyword research with this tool without an active campaign running.

[Twin Word](#) allows ten free searches a day. This tool provides similar data to those already described, but is known for helping you find patterns, and for its filters that allow you to customize how you want results displayed. One such filter shows User Intent in five categories to help you determine the intent your audience may have when searching for a particular keyword. If it doesn't match up with what you're offering, you'll want to find other keyword options. (*Find out more about how and [why you should consider user intent](#).*)

[Google Search Console](#) has functionality that shows what keywords are leading users to your website, as well as lite keyword research.

These tools differ from true keyword research but can be very helpful for “informed brainstorming.”

[Answer the Public](#) is a tool best used for brainstorming, rather than measuring search volume and competition ratios. It's effective for finding out what kind of questions people are asking about a certain topic. It's based on UK data, but the info is still relevant for content creators anywhere in the world.

[Google Trends](#) allows you to compare two or more different topics to see which one is searched more often.

[Soovle](#) is a customizable engine that unites the suggestion phrases from all the major providers (Google, Bing, Amazon, Answers.com, Yahoo, Wikipedia, Youtube) in one place. This tool can be [a major help for search and content creation inspiration](#).

YouTube has its own keyword research tools: [vidIQ](#) and [TubeBuddy](#). Ubersuggest also has an option to look on YouTube.

5) Additional terms to know.

Here are some common terms we haven't yet covered in this section. If you're using a keyword research tool, you'll often come across these words, though some are only relevant for those investing in pay-per-click advertising.

Location - Tools with this option can tell you the search volume and competition of various terms and phrases within a specified geographic location.

Language - Find search volume data for searches conducted in a certain language.

Search Volume - This metric displays how many people are searching online for the specified query.

Competition - This number represents a ratio of the how frequently a term is searched for, compared to how much content already exists on this topic. Ideally, you want to find keywords/topics with high search volume and low competition. Lower numbers are generally 0.1 - 0.3, moderate competition is 0.4 - 0.7, and high competition is 0.8 and over.

Pay-Per Click (PPC) Advertising - Most keyword research tools are made to support this type of advertising, in which advertisers pay to display ads on top of search results pages or on websites set up to show ads. Advertisers only pay for the amount of clicks they get, and certain keywords cost more per click than others. Keyword research is important for PPC because advertisers want their ads to show up when people type in the related keywords or phrases.

If you're just using keyword research tools for content ideas or research, you won't need to get in-depth into this subject.

Cost per click (CPC) - In regard to paid ads, this is how much it would cost the advertiser each time someone clicked on their ad that contained this keyword.

Click-through Rate (CTR) - In digital advertising, this represents the ratio of users who click on a link compared to the total users who view the ad, or the page on which the ad appears.

6) When to pay for a keyword research tool

When businesses rely on search engine ranking for the profitability or exposure of their brand, they want the most exact keyword information possible—especially if their brand must survive in a highly competitive market.

If your ministry relies on e-commerce or content marketing to thrive, AND it operates within a competitive industry, such as health, you would benefit from high-level keyword research tools that also provide insight on what competitors are doing, what they're ranking for (or not ranking for), and a number of other add-ons that help you determine the best possible content opportunities.

Especially if you want to boost your traffic through PPC advertising, this kind of research tool can help you choose the best content strategies for your ads.

Here are a few of the top paid keyword research tools:

Google Ads' [Keyword Planner](#) provides more specific keyword data (notably in Search Volume) when you're regularly spending over a certain amount on active campaigns (currently it looks to be around \$1,000.00/month). Keyword Planner can also help you get a closer look at the search behavior of certain demographics.

[SEMrush](#) is a comprehensive research tool. In addition to unlimited keyword research and keyword strategy suggestions, it also audits your website (and your competitors' websites!) to find errors, SEO opportunities, and content "weak spots." This tool has proved useful in many businesses' Online Reputation Management (ORM) efforts, as it can even show how much competitors are spending on ads and for which topics.

[Ahrefs](#) dives deep into competitor research, provides keyword opportunity alerts, and gives access to a wealth of digital market data. It can also monitor how your site's ranking changes over time.

[Keyword Explorer](#) by Moz has long been used by digital marketing professionals to gather data from its "vetted keyword database" to apply to their content marketing strategies.

While your ministry may not yet have the budget for keyword tools like these, many come with a free trial period, enabling you to test how useful a particular tool might be for your organization.

7) Creating content from keyword research

Once you've utilized these tactics and tools to determine which topics are popular and which content opportunities exist, it's time to use this knowledge for your content planning.

Keyword research used to be much more technical, more of a science than an art.

It's not like that anymore.

Due to shady content practices like "**[keyword stuffing](#)**"—when content writers would repeat keywords over and over on a page so it would rank higher in search results—Google has taken measures to ensure its users aren't led astray by webpages that are trying to "beat the system."

Google has since improved its algorithms to detect the thoroughness of **topic coverage, rather than keyword density**. It factors in synonyms, phrases, and related topics, so that when a page is written about a single topic and covers it well, that page is ranked higher in search results.

Keyword research does more than just tell you which words to use. It tells you which topics are popular, which topics are competitive, and what your best content opportunities may be.

This is good news! This means that the organizational methods you learned for writing essays and research papers in school will now pay off in a practical way. Begin by writing an introduction to a topic (one webpage), then cover the topic (another webpage), then cover related topics (more separate webpages) or background information (another separate webpage or two). It's essentially writing an outline, and each section of the outline is a webpage. Blogs organized like this score highly in both search engine visibility and user-friendliness. For good example of this, visit sdadata.org/seo. From a visitor perspective this help with navigation within a specific topic. Be careful not to take this concept to the extreme, creating a confusing maze of short pages.

NOTE: This outlining method also comes in handy when a webmaster is designing an optimized sitemap, or navigational structure, for a website.

With topics and topic coverage having a stronger influence on search engine ranking than individual words or phrases, the algorithm better rewards quality writing and presentation.

However, keywords do still matter!

Keyword research is done so we know what words and phrases people are using. We still want to use those words and phrases as often as we can on a page—*naturally*. If it sounds hokey to keep repeating a phrase, find another way to say it that means the same thing. Overall, you still want the content to read as naturally and conversationally as possible, as if you were telling this information to a friend. [Click here](#) for tips on how to write conversationally.

Here are some tips for thorough topic coverage in natural language:

If you were telling your friend about Pathfinder knots because you'd done the research and knew they were interested in teaching this honor, you'd certainly use the proper names of each knot, as well as some common nicknames or synonyms.

You'd also provide context for how you learned to master each knot and highlight some parts of the learning process that were trickier than others.

You'd give advice regarding the best time to use one knot over others.

You'd highlight some common mistakes people make when trying to determine which knot to use.

Then, if you had a rope, you'd do a demonstration.

You'd sum up the main ideas and conclude that knot-tying is important, and that there's a reason so many knots exist, because they all serve a unique purpose.

After that, you might ask if your friend had any questions.

Most content pieces can be written in a similar fashion. You work your way through a topic, writing as much applicable information as possible over multiple blog posts. Remember to keep your posts between 600-1,500 words (in most cases) for digestibility. You might also throw in pictures and videos to supplement the text. You might even post a quick quiz at the end so readers could make sure they gathered the info they needed. Then, there might be a form or comment section to submit questions about the topic.

Content organization techniques that may help you include outlines, topic trees, bubble graphs, etc. Using this as your foundation for content creation helps you determine topical goals, objectives, and key takeaways. Plus, it makes the whole writing process easier.

We'll discuss types of content presentation in the next section.

Learn more:

- [SEO Basics: What is Keyword Research?](#) (Yoast)
- [How to Find Long Tail Keywords](#) (Backlinko)
- [Ultimate Guide: Your Content Marketing Keyword Strategy](#) (Curata)
- [Keyword Research for SEO—The Ultimate Guide](#) (Yoast)
- [How to Understand Searcher Intent and Use it to Boost SEO Rankings](#) (SearchEngineLand)
- [How to do Keyword Research the Smart Way: Targeting Interest and Intent](#) (Neil Patel)
- [How to Dominate Keyword Research in Just 30 Minutes a Day](#) (Neil Patel)
- [How to Use the Keyword Planner Tool Effectively](#) (Google Ads)