

Digital Insight

Google Shopping: The Essential Beginner's Guide.

Google Shopping has fast become both a leading traffic source and a sales advantage. Here's your ultimate Web Bureau guide to leaping ahead of the competition...

GOOGLE SHOPPING: YOUR SHOPPING CART'S NEW BEST FRIEND

The Web Bureau's eCommerce experts work alongside your team to feed your products into a strategic selection of online marketplaces and global channels.

Whether you're already retailing online or exploring how you can go from bricks and mortar to a virtual store, there's never been a better time to do it.

The opportunities to not only make instant sales, but to also find, target and reach your most lucrative customer base, growing a business into a brand along the way, are practically infinite.

But that also means the challenges are many too: how and where do you focus your marketing activity? How do you meet customers' ever increasing expectations of what makes a good shopping experience? And how do you cut through the competition, whether they're the big players or smaller outfits in the margin-cutting race to the bottom?

Meet Google Shopping...

Get Set Up for Success

The first of a two part series, this essential Google Shopping guide, tells you everything you need to know about creating and optimising your 'Feed'.

Ready to open your Google store? Let's go...

The logo for Google Shopping, featuring the word "Google" in its multi-colored font followed by the word "Shopping" in a grey sans-serif font.

WHAT? WHY? HOW? YOUR GOOGLE SHOPPING QUESTIONS ANSWERED.

Google Shopping (formerly Google Product Search, Google Products and Froogle) is a Google service which allows users to search for products on online shopping websites and compare prices between different vendors.

[Google Shopping - Wikipedia](#)

Before we get into the 'how', let's explore the 'what?'

Google Shopping is the next big thing in retail.

Otherwise known as Product Listing Ads (PLAs), these little thumbnails appear in the top or top right of a search results page and they also populate the 'shopping' tab page.

For now, we're concentrating on the results that appear on the main search results page – because that's where you want to be!

Why?

These ads are now one of the leading traffic sources, enabling you to attract new customers at a competitive cost.

If you're not showing up in these search results, you're missing out!

Ask us how we would analyse your data to explore customer journeys, review your sales funnel and monitor the check-out process. By refining the experience for existing users and maximising their conversion rate, we can help you drive sales.

LET'S GO GOOGLE SHOPPING!

It's not rocket science. But there is an art to getting Google to love your stuff so much, they push it out to your potential customers. So let's begin with the mechanics of it all...

Powered by two platforms, Adwords and Google Merchant Center, Google Shopping puts the power of your products showing up in search results in Google's hands.

Google Merchant Center is home to your product feed.

Adwords houses your shopping campaigns and is where you manage your budget and bids, and fine tune insights and optimisation.

To determine which search queries are best answered by your ads, Google takes into account your feed, your site and your bids. Which makes setting up your ads a bit like working on your SEO. But different...

Watch out for our second guide – Advanced Google Shopping – to find out more about managing your budget and bids.

Setting up and managing Google Shopping ads is very different from setting up traditional text ads. With text ads, you'll create campaigns and ads around keywords. In Google Shopping, you'll need to concentrate on:

Creating and Optimising Your Feed

...which is a big job as it covers product data, images and price. Mastering this is key!

Ready to get started? Let's go...

Web Bureau: A Certified Google Partner

We work alongside our Google Account Manager to provide the highest level of insight into market trends, competitor data, conversion rates, search volumes and more.

CREATING A SUPERIOR SHOPPING EXPERIENCE: THE BASICS

Google is a data driven company that, to be successful, wants to give its shoppers useful information. This approach is also good for retailers as it drives sales. So Google does want you to succeed – it's just not always straightforward!

Great Google Shopping starts with:

A Google Merchant Account

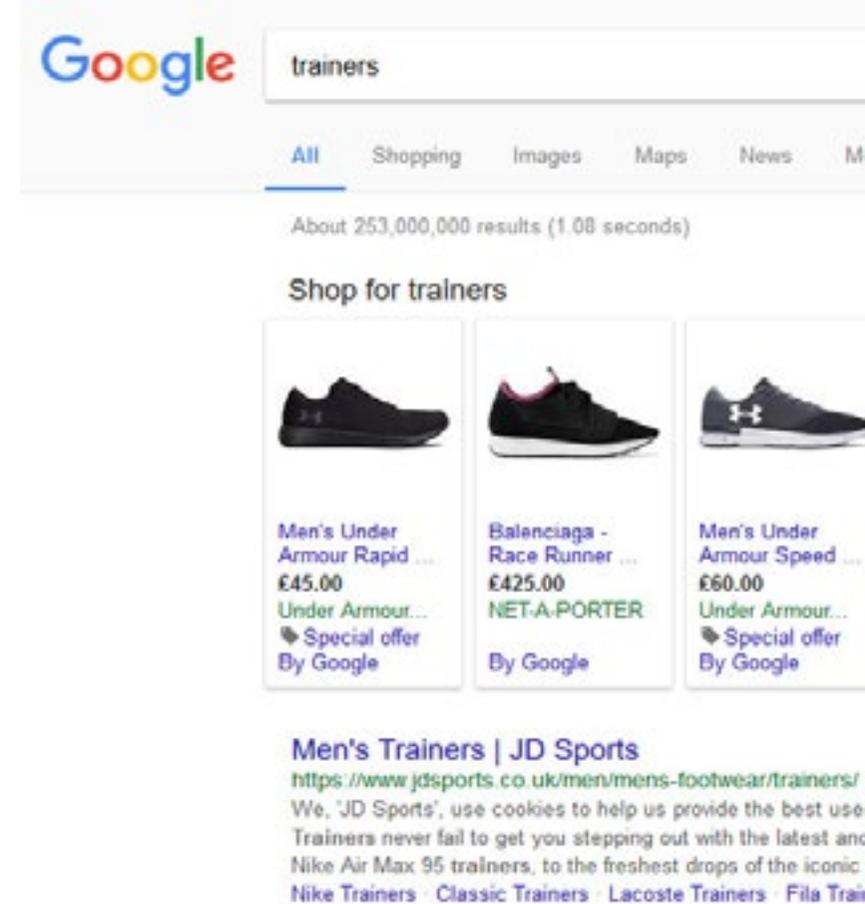
A Google Merchant Account is free, easy to manage and essential to getting your product to their millions of search engine users faster and better. So, if you haven't already, get your products listed as a matter of priority. **BONUS FEATURE: Google's location-based technology and availability checking features can also drive shoppers to your bricks and mortar store.**

A Sharp Image

Advertising with Google Shopping can double or triple click through rates in comparison with text only ads. Plus: optimising your product images gets your image to users faster than anything else. That's because it's a more visual experience, and when Google is incorporating your product feed into category pages for comparison shopping, the best images will stand out, time after time.

Doing What Google Tells You!

Sticking to the rules and presenting your best side are essential – exactly as Google Merchant Center says:



“In order to provide a high-quality experience to our users, the product data provided to Google needs to accurately describe your items and has to reflect the status of the products on your website at all times. If your product data doesn't meet our quality standards, your products will be removed from Google shopping until the issues have been addressed.”

GOOGLE'S SHORT GUIDE TO LOOKING SHARP

DO

Use a solid white, gray, or light coloured background

Show the product in clear, even lighting

Show the product with a view that clearly represents the item being sold. Back views and close-ups can be used for additional images, but not the main image

Show the product at the correct scale, not too big or too small. A product should ideally fill no less than 75%, but not more than 90%, of the full image

Make sure the image is free of blur, noise, excessive jpeg artifacts, or other image artifacts like pixelation, fringing, and fading out

Any or all of these things won't just impact on sales, it may also mean Google will delist you.

DON'T

Submit images smaller than 32×32 pixels or larger than 64 megapixels (apparel images must be at least 250×250 pixels)

Scale up images or thumbnails

Use watermark, logo, or text overlay

Use borders around the image

Include more than one product in the image, unless it's a bundle

Use a multi-coloured, dark, or patterned background

eCommerce. Integrated

More efficient eCommerce starts and ends with fully integrated solutions that minimise admin time and manual input. And we can recommend the best ones for you, whether in stock management, accountancy, EPOS, CRM or email marketing.

CREATE YOUR ACCOUNT

It's pretty straightforward – just follow our guide to get going, and then we can get on to the fun stuff: building your feed and optimising the lot to sell, sell, sell! Look out for our advanced guide to find out how to really optimise your feed through better and more effective bidding.

The three accounts you'll need are:

Google Merchant Center

This is where your feed will live – that's your product data – and where you set tax and shipping rules. You can build your feed by manually entering product data or by using a plug-in, app or extension that pulls in data from your site and formats it in the way Google likes. www.google.com/merchants

To get started, you'll need to verify ownership of your site – you can do this easily by logging into your domain registrar and giving Google access. You'll also need to enter any relevant sales tax and shipping rates. You'll then need to link Merchant Center to...

Adwords

In your Merchant account, you'll find AdWords under settings – click to use your 10 digit AdWords ID to join your accounts. You'll need to use the same email address for both accounts.

Now you're ready to set up a Google Shopping Campaign in the Campaigns tab.

Google Analytics

While you're here, set up and connect Google Analytics and conversion tracking, so you can get Analytics data inside AdWords and AdWords data in Analytics! You can do this either by generating an AdWords tracking code and dropping that into your order confirmation page. Or you can pull in conversions from Google Analytics.

To connect your AdWords and Analytics accounts, click on the top right wheel by your email address and account ID, click through to linked accounts, and click on Merchant Center.

You can create conversion tracking in AdWords by going into Conversions in the Tools tab.

Google Analytics is great if you want the benefits of:

More ways to track conversion – get the details like seeing where customers are coming from, or if they visited your site more than once, from first click to assisted conversion – all essential to evaluating Google Shopping as a channel.

Evaluating engagement data – assessing things like time spent on site, average pages per session and bounce rate can give valuable insights to your customer experience.

The value of remarketing lists – you can create lists based on time spent on site, pages visited or activities carried out, such as filling in a form. These kinds of segmented lists gives you more options for better targeting.

OPTIMISE YOUR FEED. MAXIMISE YOUR SALES.

If you can't pick the keywords your product listing gets selected in search for, how do you optimise your product feed to get results?

As Google trawls your feed and determines if one or more of your products are suitable for a search query, you must format your feed in a way that Google likes - so it can read and understand.

So Google Shopping is similar to SEO: you just need to find and follow the structure Google can make sense of.

You are always aiming to set up your feed to:

- Show up in the RIGHT search queries
- Earn clicks
- Easily manage optimisation and management

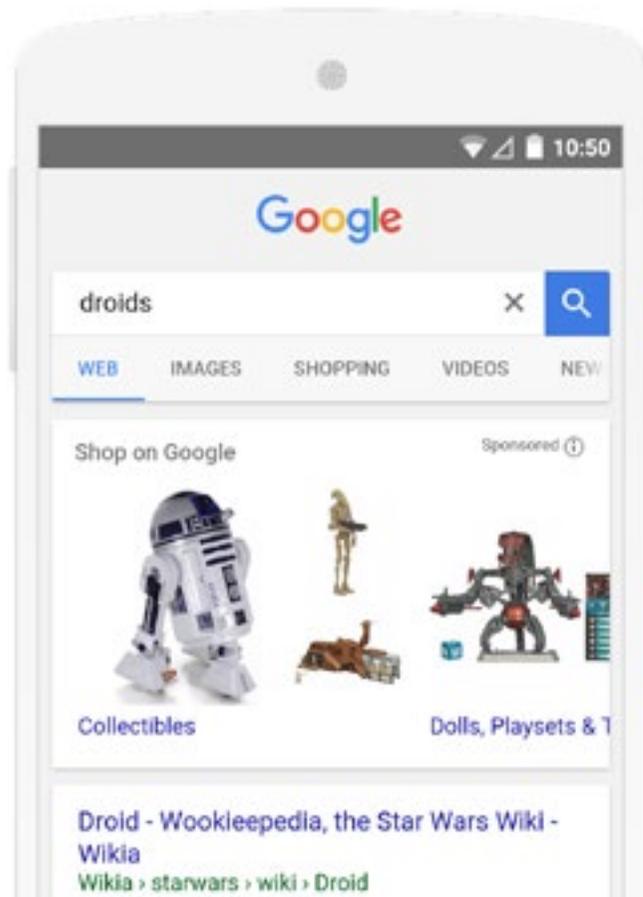
The two main ways you can do this are by:

- Manually entering your product information into a spread sheet
- Using an extension, plug-in, app or service that uses the data from your site and formats it for you

You can easily decide which is for you from the volume of your products: if you have just a few, manual entry is quick and easy. If you have hundreds or thousands... you'll need to automate!

MASTERING YOUR FEED: THE KEY ELEMENTS

Getting the basics right is key to optimising your feed. And while requirements will vary by product or category type, there are some boxes that everyone has to tick:



Product Title

This **MUST** be accurate and descriptive or Google just won't know where to put it, meaning you show up in all the wrong places. If you've experience of SEO, you'll know just how important a title tag is – this is exactly the same!

So you must:

- Include top keywords
- Use the name of the product
- Include the details – colour, size, brand – this is **ESSENTIAL** to maximising your chances of showing up in an active buyer's search
- Front load the details – put the important stuff first (Product / Brand / Size / Colour is a good guide)
- If you're in a specialist area, include things like model numbers or known category identifiers like year or edition

The key is to squeeze the maximum out of Google's 150 character limit: think carefully about what is essential and use all of those characters to the max! With that in mind, there are a few things you should never do – use these as your guide:

- Never use a keyword more than once in the title
- Never add promotional text – this is not the place!
- Never be vague – it's not a catch all and in fact will do the opposite, leaving you out of specific searches
- Never use ALL CAPS – Google disapproves!

Product Description

Now we're getting into the detail. We would say your description is just as important as your title as Google uses it to help determine which keywords trigger listings.

It's essential to get it right:

- Be concise and accurate – that means thinking carefully about how the marketplace or your customer would describe the item
- Use keywords – and choose them carefully
- Don't overdo it – only use a specific keyword once
- Keep it straightforward and simple: You don't need to tell a story or oversell
- Short is sweet – you won't get penalised for an overlong description, but on the other hand, concise, descriptive and accurate is the gold standard

Category

Google has a category and subcategory for almost everything, meaning everything has its place.

If your product is in the right place, it's easy for Google to find it.

However, Google has (currently!) 6,215 categories and sub-categories to choose from.

So you can see how categorising your product correctly is essential.

In most cases, your product will fit neatly into a category. Where it doesn't, get in the category you feel is most appropriate – your Product Type will then help Google to identify your product.

Product Type

While not essential, Product Type can be important if you haven't been able to find the right category. In any case, it's always helpful to fill out wherever possible.

- Use your site's taxonomy or category breadcrumbs – in fact, you can copy and paste these easily!
- Be descriptive – layer the info as per breadcrumbs, for example:

Image

First impressions aren't just important, in Google Shopping, they're critical.

The image is perhaps the most important factor in getting clicks – so it must be good.

So make sure:

- It's clearly visible – even in thumbnail size
- There's a white background – Google demands it
- There are no watermarks/logos – Google prohibits it
- It's compelling – if your product isn't attractive, it won't attract clicks

Price

After the image, the price can be the click-through deal maker or breaker! Particularly so if your product is exactly the same as the other retailers or in markets where customers are price sensitive.

In these cases, a high price can damage your listing. Conversely, where your product is unique or has well-sold advantages, buyers may expect a higher price point and so this can be a benefit.

Product Description

Lots of products are searched for by brand name and so, whether yours or somebody else's, Google needs to know. Active buyers are most often also brand conscious and so including a brand name can take you to a readymade buyer.

Clothing

The clothing market is a little more complex given the diversity of the audience – so it's good that Google offers the following guide:

- **Gender:** male, female, or unisex
- **Age Group:** newborn, infant, toddler, kids, adult
- **Colour**
- **Size**
- **Size Type:** regular, petite, plus, big and tall, maternity
- **Size System:** US, UK, EU and more

MPN & GTIN

These are the Manufacturer's Product Number and the Google Trade Identification Number.

And they're essential. If you're a product reseller, you'll need to get your GTIN (previously or otherwise known as a UPC) from the manufacturer.

Shipping

For ease and efficiency, set up your shipping rules in your Merchant Center than on a product by product basis. GMC allows you to set up free shipping, flat rate shipping, and carrier calculated shipping.

Sales Tax

Where this applies, you can set up sales tax in your Google Merchant Center in general account settings.

Other Essentials

Don't forget – these bits are essential! They're also quick and easy to fill out so shouldn't cause any headaches.

Availability – choose from in stock, out of stock or pre-order

Condition – choose from new or used

Custom Labels

Solely for your benefit, custom labels can however help you to optimise bids.

You can use them to describe product attributes (such as top seller, seasonal, offer, etc) that make optimisation easier.



Quality Score for PLAs

Quality Score naturally leads to more clicks and happy shoppers.

Text ad campaigns give a quality score for each keyword. But while PLAs aren't quite so transparent, each product has a quality score for relevant search queries determined by:

- Your CTR or expected CTR
- Your ad relevance
- Your landing page experience

Your ad rank is determined by:

Quality Score x Max CPC = Ad Rank

Meaning that a higher quality score can allow you to pay less than a competitor and still outrank them.

For PLAs, the quality score is much the same with one main difference: it's based on feed relevance rather than ad relevance.

So, again, creating a great feed is essential!

Web Bureau Tips:

Try the Google Shopping app for Shopify to get your feed up and running quickly.

Check out MOZ On-Page Grader to see how optimised your product pages are for keywords.

HAPPY SHOPPING!

Find out more today or give us a call...

You're open for business but there's no time to rest on your laurels!

Google Shopping is such a dynamic and evolving platform, it's a good idea to keep an eye on your numbers, reports and the competition - seasonal changes, sales and search will all affect your results. So make a plan to check in with your reporting as frequently as necessary and take a proactive approach to tinkering with bidding and optimisation to see what really works for you.

Check out our Advanced Guide to Google Shopping to see how you can optimise your feed for maximum results.

Ready to be a Google Shopping Superstar?

Work with us! We deliver high performing eCommerce strategies built for growth.

- An ecommerce focused digital agency & multi-award winning team
- Creative ecommerce solutions, aligned with your brand
- Strategies proven to engage and convert customers, time and time again
- An internationally recognised digital marketing team - driving online sales
- Fast, reliable and secure hosting solutions
- Dedicated aftercare - working towards your continual growth

We can show you how to grow your eCommerce capabilities with cutting-edge workshops.

Delivered to small groups of clients with potential for growth, our workshops are tailored and cover all key areas of ecommerce, including:

- Strategy and growth planning
- Design and user experience
- Ecommerce platform user training
- Magento user training
- Social media marketing
- Search engine marketing
- Email marketing

Visit our website for more information or get in touch...

Belfast +44 (0)28 9073 1190

Dublin +353 (0)1 905 3217

Email info@thewebbureau.com.

