

Keyword Selection Tips

Too often, keyword selection can be based on desire or a best guess. But choices should involve many variables and data.

I'm an advocate for focusing on your keyword "sweet spot." Let me explain. You should assess how well you're ranking now for keywords and their estimated search volume on Google. You can see Google search data when using Google Ads (ads.google.com) and with tools like SEMrush (semrush.com). Look at how you're ranking today for keywords in the top 10 positions on Google.

If you don't have top 10 rankings, you should go for keywords with the lowest monthly search volume – like 10 searches a month. You can always revise your SEO efforts and pursue more competitive keyword phrases down the road.

Hopefully, you have some keywords that are ranking in the first 10 positions with some search volume even if it's only 10, 20 or more searches per month. Pick keywords that are in the "sweet spot," a reference to your top keyword ranking correlated with the search volume. Maybe most of your keywords in the top 10 positions have 30-70 searches a month. That would be your sweet spot. You can always shoot higher, but I wouldn't invest too much energy beyond the sweet spot.

With keyword selection, you should also think about other data and realities, including:

Relevancy

You want to make sure that you consider keywords that aren't too broad. Think about searcher intent. Here is a Content Marketing Institute article I wrote about that subject: <https://contentmarketinginstitute.com/2018/11/search-intent-seo/>

Domain Age

If your website is brand new, you definitely need to go for the least competitive keyword phrases. Higher search volumes simply attract many more websites that likely have been around much longer.

Domain Name

It helps if one of your keywords is in the domain name.

Your Ability to Add Content

Keep producing new website pages that feature your target keyword phrases in the page content headers (like headlines).

Website Authority

Moz (moz.com) is a well-respected industry resource that rates websites on a 1-100 scale, primarily based on the number and quality of inbound links. See how your website compares to your competitors.

Competition

Keep in mind that your realistic online competitors are other websites that rank higher than you for a target keyword phrase. In other words, they're not only the competitors you think about every day. They can be any number of websites that vary depending on your preferred keyword phrase.

Paid Search (like Google Ads)

Your keyword choices should involve a look at paid search. Clearly, marketers can pay to appear at the top of search engine results pages (SERPs). Maybe those advertisers don't rank well with the natural search results. Regardless, the fact that they're paying for the keywords may be a signal that the keywords are useful.

Related Keywords

For all clients, I often look for some similar keyword phrases beyond the core set that I target. When you create content, all of those words – and your overall website structure – can give rise to all sorts of close variations. Although Google Analytics doesn't reveal natural keyword phrases, you can get a strong sense of them by using SEMrush, which correlates keyword with rankings, search volume and page URLs.