

Users Guide to Mastering Google Analytics

Do you know your website traffic? How about where your visitors are coming from? Or which pages get the most visits? These are things every business needs to know to be successful.

But does just the thought of using Google Analytics intimidate you?

You're not alone. Google Analytics can be complicated. But in this Insider's Guide to Mastering Google Analytics, we'll take a look at how Google Analytics works, what data is available, and how you can use it to improve your business.

Google Analytics Defined

Google Analytics is a powerful web analytics tool that can help businesses of all sizes make data-driven decisions. This free tool gives you an in-depth look at your website performance, providing valuable insights into how visitors interact with your website, what content is most popular, and how effective your marketing efforts are.

It integrates with Google's marketing and advertising products such as Google Ads, Search Console and Data Studio. This makes it a popular choice for those using different Google platforms and tools.

Keep in mind that there is both a free and a paid version of Google Analytics. Most of the features you need for small or medium sized businesses can be found in the free version. The paid version, Analytics 360, begins at \$150,000 per year.

The current version of Google Analytics is called GA4. This is the version you would have if you created an account after October 2020.

It's basically the tool that website owners can use to track who their customers are, where they arrived from and what they are most interested in on your website.

How Google Analytics Works

Now that you know what it is, you need to understand the basics of how Google Analytics

Google Analytics works by adding a tracking code to your website that collects data on how visitors interact with your website. This tracking code sends data to Google's servers where it is processed and made available for analysis. This data can be used to generate reports that provide insights into visitor behavior, website traffic, and marketing campaigns.

By adding this code to your website you'll be able to generate reports you can analyze to help you improve your business.

Ways Google Analytics Can Improve Your Business

You know that Google Analytics is basically a code that allows you to analyze your website statistics. This can help you improve your business in many ways.

1. It can help you answer questions about visitor behavior, such as:
 - What are the most-visited pages or products on your website?
 - How much is the average time people spend on a particular page?
 - How many visitors are new? Returning?
 - Which marketing campaign or channel brings in low quality traffic who leave without taking further action?
 - What is the most popular devices your website is viewed from?
 - What percentage of visitors add a product to their cart?
 - What percentage of people actually complete the checkout process?

By analyzing which pages are most popular, you can optimize your content to better meet the needs of your visitors. And by analyzing visitor behavior, you can identify areas where the user experience could be improved.

2. Google Analytics can help you understand or figure out who your customers or visitors are. It gives you the age, gender and interests of your visitors helping you to understand who your target audience is.
 - Who are the people visiting your website or interacting with your emails, social media posts or your ads?
 - How old are they?
 - What do they do?
 - What are their interests?
 - Where are they located?

Google Analytics collects the data that tells you about the people interested in your products. It can tell you who is most likely to buy. This helps you refine your marketing strategy, gearing it towards these people. This helps you maximize your budget, get better conversations, and build relationships with more customers.

For example, if you run an interior design business that specializes in high-end design, you assume your clients are local high-salaried homeowners. Using Google Analytics, you can analyze the curated audience segments it gathers to not only confirm your assumptions but also see what other online interests your audience has.

3. Another thing GA does is provide great insights on which marketing campaigns are effective. Google Analytics can help you determine which marketing channels are driving the most traffic and conversions. It shows what marketing tactics are working and which

ones need improvement. This allows you to create and run more targeted campaigns. You'll also be able to see where users are having trouble with your site.

4. Google Analytics helps you see how you can grow your business. Within your GA account, you'll know which platforms are bringing in the highest engagement for your website, how much traffic they have brought you and how many of them turned into customer conversions.
5. The data from Google Analytics shows how customers are moving through your funnel. How many potential customers drop off from the sign-up process? Is there an issue that is causing your customers to leave your site or not complete the desired action? GA includes data on the number of visitors who complete a desired action on your website, such as making a purchase or filling out a form.

Keeping track of analytics for your business is important for several reasons:

- Analytics provide a way to measure the success of your business by tracking key performance indicators (KPIs) such as website traffic, conversion rates, and customer satisfaction. By tracking these KPIs, you can determine whether your business is achieving its goals and make data-driven decisions to improve performance.
- When you know your customer behavior and preferences, you can identify opportunities for growth and improvement by creating targeted marketing campaigns to meet their needs.
- Analytics can help you identify areas where your business needs to improve performance by identifying areas where your website or marketing campaigns may be underperforming and make changes.
- Analytics provide insights into the effectiveness of your marketing efforts. By tracking ROI, conversion rates, and other marketing KPIs, you can determine which marketing channels and campaigns are most effective and allocate your marketing budget accordingly.
- By analyzing customer data, website traffic, and other KPIs, you can make decisions based on data rather than assumptions or guesswork, leading to better business outcomes.

These are the most common ways Google Analytics can help improve your business. There are many features available within GA that help your business succeed.

Navigating your GA4 Account

When inside your Google Analytics account, you'll see different features that can be accessed. Let's take a look at some of the sections you should familiarize yourself with.

1. First, you'll need to set up a Google Analytics account and add your tracking code to your website. See the Set-up Google Analytics Worksheet included with this Insider's report on how to do this.
2. On the left-hand side of your account home page is a navigation panel. It is a customizable dashboard that includes your reports, stats, and other figures. You can easily adjust it so that you see the overall performance of your website. For example,

you can have it show users, new users, active engagement time, and average session rate.

3. Next is your Reports tab. It shows an overview of the Reports snapshot. Click on the other reports to see them. These include Reports Snapshot, Realtime, Life Cycle, and User.

Under the User tab is the Demographics and Interests Reports. You will need to enable this essential data to see the report. Do this by:

- Log into your GA dashboard.
- Select your website you Demographics and Interests enabled.
- Click "Audience."
- Select "Demographics" > "Overview."
- Click "Enable."

The interests report shows other topics your audience is interested in. It's broken down into three categories:

- Affinity shows the general interests of visitors.
 - In-market segments shows users who have a high purchase intent.
 - Other categories is the users grouped by general Acquisition, Behavior and Conversion metrics.
4. Then comes the Explore tab. The Explorations in Google Analytics is a way to see how your visitors are navigating your site to discover new content and pages. The Explore tab has several preset explorations you can use, or you can create your own.
 5. Next is the Advertising Tab. This is where you see the channels that drive the most conversions to your site. This one will need to have goals and conversions set up in Google Analytics.
 6. The last tab is the Settings tab. This is where you go to set up your admin and user account settings.

To get quality reports you need to set up your GA4 Events. GA4 did away with goals to eliminate some of the steps for their users. Instead, it has events that can be marked as conversions, giving you control over what counts as a conversion on your site.

These might include:

- Submitting a Form
- Clicking on a video
- Making a purchase
- Downloading your ebook
- Any activity relevant to your business success

Google Analytics 4 makes it even easier by automatically tracking many common things as events on your site, without you having to add event code manually. Events will appear in a list, and you simply need to flip the toggle to track them as conversions.

Navigating Google Analytics might take a little time to get familiar with, but once you have everything set, it will reward you with the information you need to make your site a success.

Types of Reports

The way to see how GA helps improve your business is through their reports. Google Analytics provides a wide range of these reports that you can use to analyze website data for specific actions.

It should be noted that reports generated by Google Analytics before October 2020 will be listed differently than those from the newest version, GA4. In the newest update, Google Analytics reports are listed under main headings such as Acquisition, Engagement, Monetization, Retention, and Demographics.

Here are some of the key reports that you should pay attention to:

Real-Time Report

Real-time report gives you an overall vision of what's happening on your site right now. You can see how many active visitors are on it at this very moment, where they're located, and what pages they are visiting. It shows which social platforms they came from and more.

This one isn't as valuable as some of the others, but you can get good information quickly from it. For instance, you can see how much traffic you are getting from a new social or blog post. It can immediately tell you if that one-day sale or event you are hosting is driving in views and making conversions.

Another thing you can do is make sure your tracking URLs and custom events are working like they should.

Audience Report

The Google Analytics Audience Report is where you get information such as:

- If the number of users are increasing or decreasing.
- How your efforts to get new users are working.
- The number of sessions per user, telling you whether they are interested enough to keep returning.
- What your visitors are most interested in by the page views and how well those pages are doing in the search.
- The average number of pages that get views with each session suggesting how engaging your content is or how well the links move people within your site.
- The average length of time your visitors are staying on your pages.
- The bounce rate in the report shows how many visitors leave your website before they take any action by clicking a link or purchasing something.

Acquisition

This Google Analytics report provides data on traffic or where your visitors are coming from by source. It divides your web traffic into traffic categories like:

- Organic search – This is traffic that comes from search engines like Google or Bing.
- Direct Traffic – This is traffic that comes from someone who types in your website's URL address, or when they open your website through a bookmark, or if Google does not recognize the traffic source.
- Referral – This type of traffic comes from links to your site from somewhere else on the web.
- Paid search – This traffic comes from Google Ads you are running.
- Organic Social – Here the traffic is from non-ad sources coming from social media platforms like Facebook.

Engagement Report

The engagement report helps you see what your visitors are doing while on your website. It's where you can see the events that trigger conversions, and pages they visited.

To access your engagement reports in GA4, click Reports > Engagement in the left navigation.

Behavior

This report provides data on how visitors interact with your website, such as which pages they visit, how long they stay on each page, and where they click. This data can be used to improve who your audience is, and they interact with the content on your site.

On a behaviors report:

You see the page views and unique page views that tell you if people are returning to the same page or looking at new pages.

You get the average time on page to see how long people stay on your pages to read content or if you need to update your content strategy for better results.

You can break down segments within the Behavior report. These include:

- Site content which is a review of all your pages on your site.
- Content drilldown report breaks down the structure of the site by subdomains and subfolders.
- Landing pages is a GA report shows the first page in a session or the visitors first interaction on your website.
- Exit pages reports the last pages a user visited before they left your site.
- Pages reports shows which pages generate the most actions.

Monetization report

The monetization report shows you the revenue generated from your website's ads, subscriptions, and products. Use it to identify your sources of revenue. Google Analytics 4 includes a monetization overview, in-app purchases, publisher ads and ecommerce purchases reports.

To access monetization reports in GA4, go to reports> monetization in the left navigation.

Conversion Report

Conversion reports help you see when a visitor to your site completes a specific action – making a purchase, filling out a form or when they engage heavily with your site – and they become a customer.

You'll need to set up a conversion goal or e-commerce tracking to access multichannel funnel reports for the conversion rates of all your online channels including social ads, paid ads, website traffic. This allows you to see how they worked together to create the sale.

These are just a few of the many reports you can find in Google Analytics 4. You'll want to explore and use the ones that are pertinent to your business.

Accessing Reports

Now that you know the types of reports available, you need to know how to access reports. You can also set up and run a custom report. Here are the basic steps.

Before you can run reports in Google Analytics, you have to create an account and add your tracking code to your website. See the "Set up Google Analytics Worksheet included with this Insider's report on how to do this.

Now that your account is created, go to the Google Analytics home. This gives you a quick overview of your website performance.

The newest versions of Google Analytics, GA4 is a bit different from the Universal Analytics. In Google Analytics' reporting interface, you'll see it's more structured and easier to navigate. You get access to a custom report visualization builder so you can create reports based on your specific needs.

You can find the GA4 reports within the left navigation of the home page. There are four broad categories:

- Lifecycle reports provide insights into the customer journey such as acquisition, engagement, monetization, and retention.
- User reports provide data on your website visitors. This includes demographic data, location, devices, and app versions.
- App developer reports are used to measure visitor behavior related to apps connected to the firebase.
- Games reporting is the insights about customer behavior across the gaming apps.

To create custom reports:

1. Go to Customization > New Custom Report
2. Enter report name and description.
3. Set your dimensions and metrics to track.
4. Click Save

Your report will be added to your Google Analytics account.

The reports you create will depend on the type of business or website you have. An ecommerce store will be different from a blog, for example.

Advanced Tips for Using Google Analytics

Aside from the basics of GA4, there are many advanced techniques you can use the program for. That's why you should use these advanced tips to navigate your way through the program. Use these tips as a guide to navigate Google Analytics.

- **Use Custom Dimensions and Metrics.** Google Analytics allows you to create custom dimensions and metrics, which are additional pieces of data that can be used to analyze visitor behavior. Custom dimensions can be used to track specific user attributes, such as user roles or membership levels, while custom metrics can be used to track specific user actions, such as video views or downloads. Custom dimensions allow you to get more granular insights into visitor behavior and track the metrics that matter most to your business.
- **Create Custom Reports.** Google Analytics provides a range of reports that can be used to analyze website data. However, for a more accurate picture of your business you can create custom reports that are tailored to your specific needs. Custom reports allow you to combine different data points and create visualizations that are most relevant to your business.
- **Use Advanced Segments.** Advanced segments allow you to filter website data to isolate specific user groups or behaviors. For example, you can create an advanced segment that only includes users who have completed a specific goal or who have spent a certain amount of time on your site. By using advanced segments, you can gain more targeted insights into visitor behavior and create more effective marketing campaigns.
- **Filter Unwanted Traffic.** You want to keep data accurate. Do this by filtering out internal or website traffic that comes from you or your employees.
- **GA4 Is All About Events.** Conversions are events. Use events to track things like button clicks, form submissions, video plays and much more. By tracking these types of events, you get a better understanding of how users are interacting with your website. And you can use the event data to create custom audiences for remarketing campaigns.
- **Use Two or More Parameters.** Set up at least two parameters for your events for specific conversions to make it easier to read the reports.
- **Use the Multi-Channel Funnels feature.** This allows you to analyze the different marketing channels that visitors interact with before converting. For example, a visitor

might first find your website through a social media post, then return through a search engine result before finally making a purchase. By using Multi-Channel Funnels, you can gain insights into the different touchpoints that lead to conversions and optimize your marketing efforts accordingly.

These are just a few advanced tips for using Google Analytics. By utilizing these features, you can gain more insights into visitor behavior, improve your user experience, and optimize your marketing efforts.

Tools and Templates

We're including some tools and templates to help you get started as you begin mastering Google Analytics. These include:

1. Google Analytics Terms to Know List
2. Implementing GA4 Checklist
3. Set up Google Analytics Quick Reference Sheet
4. Top Analytics to Track Checklist
5. Tracking Your Metrics Worksheet

What to do Next

Implementing Google Analytics 4 can be overwhelming and scary, especially if you aren't already familiar with analytics programs. But as you've seen throughout this guide, it's important to learn how to use Google Analytics to help your website succeed.

It's how you learn where your visitors are coming from and what their interests are. It shows you how long they stay on a page and what you need to improve.

There is no doubt that customer satisfaction is a critical metric for any business, as it indicates how happy customers are with the products or services they receive. As a new or established business, it's important to track customer satisfaction to identify areas for improvement and ensure that customers remain loyal to the business.

Another important consideration in using Google Analytics is learning your conversion rates. Conversion rates metrics help indicate the percentage of visitors who take a desired action on your website. It helps you analyze conversion rates by traffic source, device type, and user behavior to identify areas for improvement.

Of course, you need to understand your website traffic metrics. This metric gives you the number of visitors to your site and how they interact with it. You want to analyze website traffic to identify trends and opportunities for growth. This includes analyzing traffic sources, user behavior, and engagement metrics all found in Google Analytics 4.

Keeping track of analytics for your business is critical for measuring success, identifying opportunities, improving performance, optimizing marketing efforts, and making informed, data-driven decisions. By analyzing and interpreting data, you can gain valuable insights into your business and make changes to drive growth and success.

Whether you are a new website or an established business, now is the time to implement Google Analytics and begin measuring your data.