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Google Ads Without Wasting Money

A field guide for Miami businesses

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The businesses in the examples are illustrative. Google updates its tools often: check the cited sources for the latest version.

You can also read this book online, chapter by chapter, at nexphaz.com/school/google-ads-miami/

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CHAPTER 1

How Google Ads Actually Works

Before you spend a dollar on ads, it pays to understand **how Google Ads works** underneath the dashboard. Every search runs a tiny auction, and the business with the biggest bid does not always win it. This chapter explains where the idea came from, the campaign types Google will offer you, how the auction decides who shows up and in what order, what Quality Score really measures, why you rarely pay your maximum bid, and what a local business can honestly expect from its first three months.

How Google Ads works: the short version

Every time someone types a search into Google, an auction runs in a fraction of a second. Every business that chose keywords related to that search is entered automatically. Google decides which ads to show, in what order, and how much each advertiser will pay if someone clicks. Then the page loads, and the person sees the results, a few of them labeled "Sponsored."

That is the whole machine. You choose the searches you want to appear for, you write the ad, and you set how much you are willing to pay. On standard Search campaigns you pay only when someone clicks the ad or taps to call. Everything else in this book is about doing those three things well, and about stopping the money from leaking out along the way.

Where the idea came from

Paying to appear next to search results was not Google's invention. According to Wikipedia's history of the service, a 1998 search engine called GoTo, spun off from the Idealab incubator, was the first company to make paid placement

in search results work as a business. GoTo later became Overture and was bought by Yahoo. Google launched its own self-service program, AdWords, in October 2000, and Overture sued Google over it in 2002; the case was settled in 2004, after Yahoo's purchase, with Google issuing shares to Yahoo in exchange for a license to the patent. In 2018 Google retired the AdWords name, and the product became Google Ads, which today places ads on Search, YouTube, Google Play and partner websites.

Those early keyword auctions followed a model economists call the generalized second-price auction: the highest bidder gets the top spot but pays the bid of the advertiser right below, the second pays the bid of the third, and so on. Google's auction today keeps that spirit, but it ranks ads by much more than the bid.

Search, Display, YouTube and Performance Max: where your ad can appear

Google Ads is one dashboard that controls ads in several places, and the "campaign type" you choose decides where you show up. A new account will offer you several, often nudging you toward the most automated one:

Campaign type	Where the ad appears	What the person is doing	Good first campaign for a local business?
Search	Google search results, marked "Sponsored"	Actively looking for something	Usually yes
Display	Banners on websites and apps that partner with Google	Reading, browsing, playing a game	Rarely; more useful later, to remind past visitors
Video (YouTube)	Before, during or next to YouTube videos	Watching something else	Rarely; it builds awareness and needs a creative budget
Performance Max	Across Search, Maps, YouTube, Display, Gmail and Discover, chosen by Google's automation	Any of the above	Usually not first; it works best with solid conversion data
Shopping	Product listings with a photo and a price	Comparing products to buy	Only if you sell products online with a product feed

For a local business with a phone, a service area and a limited budget, Search is almost always the place to start. The reason is intent. A person who types "ac repair hialeah" at two in the afternoon in July has a problem right now. A person reading a recipe website when your banner appears does not. Search lets you pay only when someone who is already looking clicks on you.

Performance Max deserves a word because Google often promotes it heavily. It is a goal-based campaign that spreads your budget across nearly all of Google's channels and decides on its own where each dollar goes. Google itself presents it as a complement to keyword-based Search campaigns. In a brand-new account it has little to learn from, and its reports show less detail about where the money went. The sensible order: start with Search, learn which searches bring customers, and test other types later with real numbers in hand.

Throughout this book we use three example businesses. They are illustrations, not clients: a family HVAC repair company in Hialeah, a dental office in Doral, and a Cuban restaurant in Little Havana. Search fits the HVAC company and

the dentist naturally, because people search the moment they have the problem. The restaurant can use it for "cuban restaurant near me," but much of its traffic will come from Google Maps and reviews, covered in Chapter 8.

The auction in plain words

Someone in Doral searches "emergency dentist open now." While the page loads, Google does roughly this:

1. It finds every advertiser whose keywords match that search, and whose location, schedule and budget settings allow an ad to show at that moment.
2. It removes ads that cannot run: disapproved ads, campaigns that already spent their budget for the day, ads that do not reach the minimum quality required.
3. It calculates an **Ad Rank** for each remaining ad.
4. It decides which ads appear in each location on the page. Google explains that it runs separate auctions for each ad location, so the ads at the top of the page are chosen in a different auction from the ones lower down.
5. It works out what each advertiser will pay if their ad is clicked.

The auction runs again for every single search, so your position is not a spot you rent: you can be first on one search and absent on the next because that person was outside your area. That is also why searching for your own ad over and over is a poor test. Inside Google Ads there is an ad preview tool for checking how your ad looks without touching the real auction.

Ad Rank: bid, quality and context

Ad Rank is the score that decides whether your ad can show and where. Google does not publish the formula, but in its page on how the Google Ads auction works it lists six factors. In plain words:

- **Your bid.** The most you are willing to pay for a click, set by you or by an automated bidding strategy. Google notes that what you actually pay is often less.
- **The quality of your ad and landing page.** How relevant and useful the ad and the page are, whether the page delivers what the ad promised, and how easy it is to use.
- **Ad Rank thresholds.** Minimum quality an ad must reach to show at all, and to show in a given position.
- **The competitiveness of the auction.** When two ads have similar Ad Rank, each has a similar chance at the spot. A bigger lead gives more certainty of winning, and can cost more per click.
- **The context of the search.** The words typed, where the person is, the device, the time, and what other ads and results compete for the page.
- **The expected impact of your assets.** The extras you can add to an ad, like a phone number or links to specific pages, which we cover in Chapter 5.

Here is how that plays out. Imagine two dental offices bidding on "emergency dentist doral." One bids more, but sends people to a generic homepage with a slideshow and no mention of emergencies. The other bids less, but its ad says "Same-Day Emergency Appointments" and leads to a page about exactly that, with the phone number at the top. The second office can end up above the first and pay less per click. Nobody can promise that outcome, but Google says as much: relevant keywords, ads and assets can win a higher position at a lower price.

> **What pros do:** before raising a bid to get a better position, they ask whether the ad and the page truly answer that search. Raising the bid is the most expensive way to improve Ad Rank. Making the ad and the page fit the search is often the cheapest.

Quality Score: the three grades Google gives your keywords

Inside your account, each keyword can show a **Quality Score** from 1 to 10. It summarizes how your ads and landing page compare with those of other advertisers whose ads showed for the exact same search over the last 90 days. The score is built from three components, each rated "above average," "average" or "below average":

Component	What it estimates	What usually fixes a "below average"
Expected click-through rate	How likely people are to click your ad when it shows for that keyword	Ads that name the exact service and the searcher's problem; removing keywords that attract the wrong people
Ad relevance	How closely the ad matches the intent behind the search	Smaller, tighter ad groups so each ad speaks to one service (see Chapter 3)
Landing page experience	How relevant and useful the page is for people who click	A dedicated, fast, mobile-friendly page for that service, with the phone number and the offer easy to find

Here is a secret of the trade that many beginners miss. Google's own Quality Score help page says it plainly: "Quality Score is not an input in the ad auction." It is a **diagnostic tool**. The auction uses its own real-time quality calculations, which take into account things Quality Score cannot, such as the device, the person's location and the time of day. Google even advises against treating the score as a performance indicator. So read it like the warning lights on a car dashboard: it tells you where to look. It is not the engine.

Do not chase a 10. A dash instead of a number only means there is not enough data yet. Look for components rated "below average" on the keywords that spend the most, and fix those first. Landing page experience is the one owners ignore most and the one they control completely; it is the heart of the next chapter, Before You Spend a Dollar.

What you actually pay per click

There are two numbers to keep apart: your **maximum bid**, the most you are willing to pay for a click, and your **actual cost per click**, what you end up paying. On a search auction the actual cost is usually closer to what you needed to beat the competition than to your maximum. In practical terms, you pay roughly what it takes to stay ahead of the advertiser below you, and when you set bids by hand, never more than your maximum.

That is why two businesses can pay very different prices for the same keyword on the same day: the one with the more relevant ad and page often needs less money to hold the same spot. With an automated bidding strategy, Google sets a bid for each auction based on how likely that search is to turn into a conversion, so individual clicks vary and the strategy aims for an average over time. We compare manual and automated bidding in Chapter 6.

- **A tap on your phone number counts as a click.** On mobile, many people call straight from the ad without visiting the page. That click is charged like any other.
- **Prices vary a lot by niche and season.** A Cuban restaurant may pay a dollar or two per click while an HVAC company can pay many times that in summer. For real estimates for your own keywords, use Keyword Planner (Chapter 3), and see our guide on what PPC costs in Miami for typical ranges by industry.

What Google is optimizing for (and what you should optimize for)

Google earns money when ads are clicked, and it also knows people stop clicking useless ads, so it rewards relevance. Keep both facts in mind when you read the platform's suggestions.

Inside your account you will see an **optimization score** from 0 to 100% and a steady stream of **recommendations**: raise your budget, add broad match keywords, try a new campaign type, let Google apply changes automatically.

Google describes the optimization score as an estimate of how well your account is set to perform, and each recommendation shows how much applying it would raise the score. Some recommendations are genuinely useful; others mainly increase reach and spending. A high score means you followed the suggestions, not that the ads make you money. Decide each one on purpose, and check that nothing is being applied automatically without your conscious choice (at the time of writing Google lets you control this, though the setting moves around).

Google's automated bidding is also only as good as the goal you give it. If you tell it that a visit to the "contact" page counts as a conversion, it will find you people who visit the contact page, whether or not they ever call. If you track real phone calls and form submissions, it can look for people who call and fill out forms. That is why conversion tracking comes before launch, as you will see in the next chapter, and why measuring results gets a chapter of its own, Chapter 9.

What should you optimize for? Not clicks or position on the page, but **what it costs you to get a customer**, compared with what that customer is worth.

What to expect in months one to three

Most disappointment comes from expecting the wrong thing at the wrong time. Here is a typical pattern, not a promise, for a local business with a sensible budget, tracking in place and someone checking the account weekly:

Period	What is usually happening	Your job
First weeks	Ads go through review. First clicks and calls arrive. Plenty of irrelevant searches show up while Google tests where your keywords fit. Automated bidding, if you use it, is still learning.	Answer every call. Check the searches that triggered your ads twice a week and block the wrong ones. Fix anything confusing on the landing page.
Month 2	Fewer wasted searches. Enough clicks to see which keywords and ads bring calls and forms, and which only bring visits.	Move budget toward what brings leads, pause what does not, test new ad text against the old.
Month 3	For many local businesses, enough data for a fair verdict on cost per lead, and early signs of cost per customer.	Decide with numbers: scale up what works, fix what is close, or stop and rethink the offer, the page or the keywords.

Some businesses need longer. A dental office whose best patients book implants after weeks of thinking will take more time to see the real return than an HVAC company whose customers call the same afternoon, and a very small budget in an expensive niche can take months to say anything. Do not expect steady profit in week one, a "set it and forget it" campaign, or anyone who can honestly promise a number of leads. What you can expect, if the basics are in place, is to learn quickly which searches bring you customers, which is valuable even if you later invest more in SEO; our guide on Google Ads vs SEO in Miami covers that choice. And if you would rather have a team run the auction side while you run the business, that is what our Google Ads management in Miami does.

Before you launch anything, a handful of things need to be in order, and none of them happen inside Google Ads. That is the next chapter.

Key takeaways

- For a local business with a phone and a service area, **Search** is usually the right first campaign: you pay when someone who is already looking clicks.
- Position depends on **Ad Rank** (bid, quality, context and more), not on the bid alone. A relevant ad with a matching page can beat a bigger bid.
- Quality Score is a **diagnostic** from 1 to 10. Use its three parts to find what to fix, not as a number to chase.
- Google optimizes for what you tell it to measure. Without conversion tracking, it can only chase clicks.
- The first month is for learning and cleaning up. Judge the campaign on cost per customer after two to three months, not on the first week.

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CHAPTER 2

Before You Spend a Dollar

Most wasted ad money is lost before the first click, in things that have nothing to do with the Google Ads dashboard. This **Google Ads checklist** covers what to put in order first: a landing page for each service, a phone that gets answered, conversion tracking that works, a Google Business Profile that matches, an offer worth acting on, and a budget you can keep for long enough to learn something.

Why the work before the ads decides the results

When a campaign "doesn't work," owners usually blame the keywords, the bids or Google itself. Very often the problem starts somewhere else: the ad sends people to a homepage that does not mention the service they searched for, the phone rings while everyone is busy, or nobody can tell which calls came from the ads. Google Ads is very good at delivering visitors. What happens after the click is your part of the job.

Think of the campaign as a pipe with several joints. Google Ads controls the first joint: who sees the ad and who clicks. Every joint after that belongs to you: the page, the phone, the follow-up, the offer. If one joint leaks, raising the budget just pushes more water through the leak. That is why professionals spend the first days of a new account away from the ad platform, checking everything the customer will touch.

This chapter is that checklist. None of it requires technical skill, but all of it requires decisions only the owner can make.

A landing page for each service

A landing page is simply the page someone lands on after clicking your ad. The most common mistake is sending every ad to the homepage. Your homepage tries to talk to everyone; a landing page talks to the one person who just searched for one thing.

Take our example HVAC company in Hialeah (an illustration, not a client). It installs new systems, repairs broken ones, sells maintenance plans and cleans ducts. Someone who searches "ac not cooling hialeah" wants to know one thing: can you come today? If the ad leads to a homepage with a slider about "comfort solutions since 1998," that person hits the back button and taps the next ad. A page titled "AC Repair in Hialeah: Same-Day Service" with a big phone button answers the question in two seconds.

What a good landing page needs, in order of importance:

Element	Why it matters	Quick test
One service, matching the ad	The visitor confirms in seconds that they are in the right place; it also feeds the "landing page experience" part of Quality Score	Does the headline repeat what the ad promised?
Phone and offer above the fold	On a phone, many people decide before scrolling	Open it on your phone: can you tap to call without scrolling?
Speed on mobile	Slow pages lose visitors you already paid for	Load it on mobile data, not office Wi-Fi
The customer's language	In Miami, a Spanish ad that leads to an English-only page wastes the click	Is there a page in each language you advertise in?
Proof you can back up	Reviews, photos of real work, license number where it applies	Is every claim on the page true and checkable?
A short form	Not everyone can call at work; a form with three or four fields catches them	Can you fill it out on a phone in under a minute?

On speed, Google publishes a set of measurements called Core Web Vitals. In Google's guidance, the main content should load within about 2.5 seconds, the page should respond to a tap in under 200 milliseconds, and the layout should not jump around while it loads. You do not need to master the numbers. Load your page on your own phone, outside your office Wi-Fi, and be honest about whether you would wait.

For the dental office in Doral, the same principle means separate pages for emergency visits, cleanings for new patients, implants and Invisalign, if it offers them. Each page speaks to a different worry: pain right now, price, a big decision. One page cannot answer all of those well.

If you do not have a website yet, you can start with a free website for your business and add service pages from there. If you have one but it is slow or generic, fixing the pages you will advertise is usually a better first investment than a bigger ad budget.

> **What pros do:** before launch, they click their own ad path on a phone, as a stranger would: search, read the ad, tap, look at the page for five seconds, try to call, try the form. Any moment of doubt in those five seconds is a leak to fix before money flows.

Who answers the phone, and how fast

For most local service businesses, the phone call is the sale. A paid click that ends in voicemail is money spent to send a customer to your competitor, because the person who searched "emergency dentist" will simply call the next office.

Before launch, answer these questions in writing:

1. **Who answers during business hours?** A name, not "whoever is free." If that person is on another call, where does the second call go?

2. **What happens after hours?** An answering service, a call forwarded to someone's cell, or ads that simply do not run at night. Scheduling ads is covered in Chapter 7.
3. **Who speaks Spanish?** If you run Spanish ads, a Spanish-speaking caller must reach someone who can help, not a menu in English.
4. **How fast are forms answered?** Someone who fills out a form at 10 a.m. and hears back the next day has probably booked elsewhere. Decide a target, such as within the hour during business hours, and stick to it.
5. **What does the person answering say?** A short script helps: greet, ask what they need, ask where they are, offer the next step (a visit, an appointment, a price range).

A simple test that reveals a lot: call your own business at 12:30 p.m. and again at 5:45 p.m. on a weekday, from a number they do not recognize. Then fill out your own form and time the reply. Many owners are surprised by what they find.

For the Cuban restaurant in Little Havana, the "phone" is often a reservation or a takeout order, and the busiest hours are exactly when nobody can pick up. If calls cannot be answered at lunch rush, it may make more sense to send ad clicks to an online ordering or reservation page than to a phone number. And for inquiries that do not turn into a sale today, capturing an email lets you follow up later without paying for the click again; our email marketing service exists for exactly that second chance.

Conversion tracking before launch, not after

A **conversion** is an action you count as valuable: a call, a form, a booking, a purchase. Google explains in its page on conversion measurement that you choose what counts, and the platform then uses that information to report results and to steer automated bidding. Without conversions, Google Ads can only tell you about clicks, and as we saw in Chapter 1, clicks are not customers.

Setting tracking up "later" is one of the most expensive habits in paid search. The first weeks of a campaign produce the most useful lessons: which keywords bring calls, which bring only browsers. Without tracking, those lessons are lost for good. Here are the pieces, conceptually. The exact screens change often, so follow Google's current instructions or have someone do it for you.

Website conversions: forms and bookings

A small piece of code called the **Google tag** goes on every page of your site. When someone completes an action, such as reaching the "thank you" page after a form, the tag records it. If you use Google Analytics 4, you can mark important actions there as key events and import them into Google Ads; Google notes that only events marked as key events can be imported. Either route works. What matters is that one form submission is counted once, as one conversion.

Phone calls

Calls are the trickiest and the most important for local businesses. Google's help page on measuring calls from ads separates three kinds:

- **Calls from your ads**, when someone taps the phone number shown in the ad itself.
- **Calls from your website**, after someone clicked an ad and then called the number on your page. Google can show a forwarding number on your site to connect the call to the ad.
- **Taps on the phone number** on your mobile site.

You can also set a **minimum call length**, so that a ten-second wrong number does not count as a lead. Many businesses also use a call tracking service that shows a different number to ad visitors and records the calls, which helps you hear what callers actually ask for.

Test before you trust

Before launch, trigger each conversion yourself: fill out the form, call the number from a phone, complete a booking. Then confirm each one appears in Google Ads (it can take hours to show). A conversion that was never tested is a guess.

Two traps to avoid: counting page views or button clicks as conversions (automated bidding will then chase visits, not customers), and counting the same lead twice through two different tags. We go deeper into measuring leads and sales, and connecting them to real revenue, in Chapter 9.

Your Google Business Profile in order

Your Google Business Profile is the listing that appears on Google Maps and in the local results, with your hours, reviews and phone number. It is free, and for many local searches it is the most visible thing about your business. Your ads and your profile live on the same results page, so they should tell the same story.

Google's guidelines for representing your business ask that the business name reflect your real-world name, as used on your storefront and website, without extra keywords stuffed in, and that you choose the fewest categories that describe your core business. Google also says local results are based mainly on relevance, distance and popularity, and that complete, accurate profiles are more likely to show up, in its tips to improve your local ranking.

Before launch, check:

- Name, address or service area, and phone match your website and your ads exactly.
- Hours are right, including holiday hours. An ad promising "open today" next to a profile that says "closed" costs you trust.
- Categories and services describe what you actually want to sell.
- Recent photos of real work, real staff, the real dining room.

- Reviews are answered, the bad ones especially, calmly and briefly.

Later, you can link the profile to Google Ads so your address and distance appear in your ads. How Maps and Local Services Ads fit into the plan is the subject of Chapter 8.

A clear offer and a budget you can sustain

The offer

An offer is not necessarily a discount. It is the reason to act now and to choose you. For the HVAC company it might be "same-day repair or the diagnostic is free," for the dental office "new patient exam and X-rays, appointments this week," for the restaurant "family platter for four, ready in 20 minutes." Good offers share three traits: they are specific, they matter to the customer, and you can honor them every single time. An offer you cannot deliver on a busy Friday does more damage than having none. We turn the offer into ad text in Chapter 5.

The budget

The first months of any campaign are partly paid education: finding wasted searches, learning which services bring calls, adjusting the page. That education needs enough clicks to mean something. A budget that buys a few dozen clicks a month in an expensive niche cannot tell a good keyword from a bad one.

So pick a monthly amount you could keep for about three months without strain, even if the first month brings little. If that amount buys too few clicks in your niche, narrow the plan instead of spreading it thin: one service, a smaller area, business hours only. Typical cost ranges by industry are in our guide on what Google Ads costs in Miami, and we set daily budgets and choose a bidding strategy step by step in Chapter 6.

The Google Ads checklist before launch

Print this, or copy it into your notes, and do not launch until every line has an answer:

Area	Ready when...
Landing pages	Each service you advertise has its own page, it loads fast on mobile data, and the phone number and offer are visible without scrolling
Language	Every language you advertise in has a matching page and someone who can answer in it
Phone	A named person answers during ad hours; after-hours calls have a plan
Forms	Short form, tested on a phone, with a reply target you can meet
Tracking	Forms, calls from ads and calls from the website are tracked, and each one was tested by hand
Business Profile	Name, phone, hours and services match the website and the ads
Offer	Specific, valuable to the customer, and something you can honor every time
Budget	A monthly amount you can sustain for about three months

If several lines are still open, that is useful information too. You may decide to fix the website first, or to work on the profile and reviews while you save a budget. If you would rather have someone else handle the setup and tracking, our PPC management in Miami starts with exactly this checklist. Either way, once every line has an answer, you are ready for the most important decision inside the account: which searches to pay for. That is Chapter 3.

Key takeaways

- Send each ad to a **page about that service**: fast, built for phones, with the phone number and the offer visible without scrolling.
- A missed call is a click you paid for. Decide **who answers, during which hours**, and run ads only when someone can pick up.
- **Conversion tracking goes in before launch**, and you test every conversion yourself. Without it, you cannot tell good keywords from bad ones.
- Your Google Business Profile, website and ads should show the **same name, phone, hours and services**.
- Plan a budget you can sustain for about **three months**; a campaign that stops after three weeks teaches you almost nothing.

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CHAPTER 3

Keywords Miami Customers Really Type

Keywords are the searches you agree to pay for, so choosing them is the most important decision inside the account. Good **Google Ads keyword research** is less about finding popular words and more about finding the words people type when they are ready to hire you. This chapter shows how to read search intent, how to get real numbers from Keyword Planner, how Miami neighborhoods and Spanish change the list, why competitor names are tricky, and how to group everything into tight ad groups by service.

Google Ads keyword research starts with intent, not volume

Google defines keywords as words or phrases used to match your ads with the terms people search for. You choose them, and they decide which searches your ad can compete for. What beginners miss is that two searches with nearly the same words can come from completely different people.

Look at these four searches, all about air conditioning in Hialeah:

- "ac repair hialeah same day"
- "how much does a new ac unit cost"
- "how to reset ac breaker"
- "hvac technician jobs hialeah"

The first person has a broken AC and a phone in hand. The second is planning, maybe for weeks. The third wants to fix it alone. The fourth wants a job, not a technician. If our example HVAC company (an illustration, not a client) pays the same for all four clicks, three out of four are mostly money spent on the wrong people. That is why professionals start keyword research by asking "what does this person want right now?" before asking "how many people search this?"

High volume is tempting. "Air conditioning" alone gets far more searches than "ac repair hialeah." But a broad, vague keyword mixes all four intents together, and you pay for every one of them. A smaller keyword that only buyers type is usually worth more than a big one that everyone types.

The four kinds of searchers

Every search you might pay for falls roughly into one of these groups. Sorting your list this way is the single most useful exercise in this chapter:

Intent	Typical words	Example (HVAC, dental, restaurant)	What to do
Ready to buy	repair, near me, emergency, open now, appointment, order, book, price, the service name plus a place	"ac repair hialeah", "emergency dentist doral", "cuban restaurant little havana"	Your core keywords. Most of the budget goes here.
Researching	cost, best, reviews, vs, how long, is it worth	"how much do dental implants cost", "best cuban sandwich miami"	Test carefully with a page that answers the question; often better served by SEO content.
Do it yourself	how to, diy, fix myself, reset, video, parts	"how to clean ac coils", "home remedy toothache"	Usually exclude. They want instructions, not a provider.
Job seekers and others	jobs, salary, hiring, training, course, school, license	"dental assistant jobs doral", "hvac school miami"	Exclude. They will never be customers.

The "researching" row deserves a second look. Someone asking how much implants cost may become a patient worth thousands of dollars, but probably not today. For a dental office, that search can justify a helpful page on the site, and maybe a small test in ads, while the budget stays on "ready to buy" searches. Our guide on Google Ads vs SEO in Miami explains when that kind of research search is better served by organic content than by paid clicks.

The last two rows become your first list of **negative keywords**, words that stop your ad from showing. We build those lists properly in Chapter 4.

Using Keyword Planner for real numbers

Guessing what people type is where most keyword lists go wrong. Google's free **Keyword Planner**, available inside a Google Ads account, gives you estimates instead of guesses. According to Google's Keyword Planner help page, it has two main uses: *discovering new keywords* related to your business or website, and *getting search volume and forecasts* for keywords you already have in mind.

A practical way to use it for a local business:

1. **Start with your services, in your customers' words.** Write down how customers describe their problem on the phone, not how your industry names it. People say "my AC is blowing hot air," not "refrigerant system diagnostic."
2. **Set the location to where you actually work.** Miami-Dade, or the specific cities you serve. National numbers are useless for a local plumber.
3. **Check both English and Spanish.** Run your list in each language and compare.
4. **Look at two numbers per keyword:** average monthly searches, and the estimated bid range to appear at the top of the page. The second one tells you roughly what clicks may cost in your area.
5. **Mark intent next to each idea**, using the table above, and drop the ones you would never want to pay for.

Two cautions from experience. First, the numbers are estimates, and Google itself says actual results depend on your bid, budget, ad quality, location targeting and customer behavior. Second, very specific local searches often show little or no data, and Google notes that keywords with very low volume are not shown at all. That does not mean nobody searches them. "Ac repair west hialeah" may show nothing, yet a few people a month may type it, and those few may be ready to buy.

> **What pros do:** they treat Keyword Planner as a starting map and the real searches as the territory. After launch, the search terms report shows the actual searches that triggered your ads. Within a few weeks, that report teaches you more about your customers' words than any planning tool. Read it weekly, add the good searches as keywords and block the bad ones.

Local modifiers: Hialeah, Doral, Kendall, Brickell and "near me"

Miami is not one market. Someone in Kendall and someone in Brickell may never cross paths, and a technician in Hialeah may not want a call from Homestead. Keywords can carry that local meaning, but there is an important detail most owners do not know: **the person searching rarely types their own neighborhood.** Someone sitting in Doral usually types "dentist," not "dentist doral," and Google uses their location to show nearby results.

That is why the location settings of your campaign, which decide who can see your ads at all, do most of the local work. We set them carefully in Chapter 7. Local words in keywords still help in three situations:

- **People planning ahead from elsewhere.** A person in Fort Lauderdale looking for a dentist near their new job in Doral will type "dentist doral."
- **Neighborhoods with strong identity.** Brickell, Little Havana, Coral Gables, Miami Beach, Hialeah, Kendall and Doral are words people

actually use. Visitors searching "cuban food little havana" are telling you exactly where they want to go.

- **"Near me" searches.** People add "near me" when they want something close and soon. Those searches are usually high intent. Your location targeting still decides who sees the ad; having "near me" keywords in their own ad group lets you answer them with an ad about speed and distance.

One mistake to avoid: adding every city and neighborhood in South Florida to your keyword list "just in case." If you do not serve Homestead, a keyword with "homestead" in it just buys calls you will turn away. Keep local keywords to the places you actually want to work.

Spanish and Spanglish searches in Miami

Miami's language mix is not a marketing cliché. Wikipedia's article on Miami describes it as the second-largest U.S. city with a Spanish-speaking majority, after El Paso, Texas, and the largest with a Cuban-American plurality. People here search in English, in Spanish, and very often in a mix of both, the blend Wikipedia's Spanglish article notes is an important part of Hispanic communities in places like Miami.

What that means for your keyword list:

- **Spanish searches are their own list.** "Reparación de aire acondicionado," "dentista en Doral," "restaurante cubano cerca de mí." Research them separately in Keyword Planner; volume and competition can be very different from the English versions, so check rather than assume.
- **Many people skip accents and mix words.** "Reparacion de aire acondicionado," "el AC no enfria," "limpieza dental precio," "cuban food cerca de mi." These are real ways people type on a phone.
- **English brand and product words stay in English.** People say "AC," "Invisalign" and "delivery" even when the rest of the sentence is in Spanish.

- **Spanish searches deserve Spanish ads and pages.** Writing those ads is covered in Chapter 5. Google now matches ads to the language of the search, so a Spanish search needs an ad written in Spanish (more in Chapter 7).

The rule that overrides everything: only advertise in a language you can answer in. A Spanish keyword that leads to a voicemail in English, or a receptionist who cannot help, wastes the click and the customer's goodwill.

Competitor brand names: handle with care

Sooner or later someone suggests bidding on a competitor's name, so your ad shows when people search for them. It is a common tactic, and it is worth understanding before you try it.

On the policy side, Google's trademark policy says it will not restrict trademarks used as keywords. What it can restrict, after the trademark owner files a complaint, is the use of the trademark in a direct competitor's ad text, and any use that is confusing or misleading. In other words, the keyword is generally allowed; putting their name in your ad is where trouble starts. For legal questions about a specific case, ask a lawyer, not an ad platform.

On the practical side, there are good reasons to be careful:

- **The intent is weak for you.** Someone searching a specific restaurant or dental office by name usually wants that business, its phone or its menu.
- **Relevance is low.** Your ad and page are not about that business, so your quality signals suffer and clicks can cost more than on your own service keywords.
- **It can start a war.** Competitors who notice may bid on your name in return, and both of you end up paying for customers who were already looking for you.

A more useful first step is protecting your own name. If competitors appear when people search for your business, a small campaign on your own brand is usually cheap, because your site is the most relevant result. Our guide on PPC costs in Miami discusses when that is worth it.

Grouping keywords into tight ad groups

Inside a campaign, keywords live in **ad groups**. Each ad group holds a set of keywords, the ads that show for them, and the landing page they lead to. The rule professionals follow is simple: **one ad group, one service, one promise.** If the keywords in a group would need different ads to answer them well, they belong in different groups.

Here is how the example HVAC company in Hialeah might organize its first campaign:

Ad group	Sample keywords	Ad promise	Landing page
AC repair	ac repair hialeah, ac not cooling, ac repair near me, emergency ac repair	Same-day repair, call now	AC repair page
AC installation	new ac installation, ac replacement hialeah, central ac install	Free in-home estimate	Installation page
Maintenance	ac maintenance plan, ac tune up hialeah, ac service	Yearly plan, priority visits	Maintenance page
AC repair (Spanish)	reparación de aire acondicionado, técnico de aire acondicionado hialeah, el ac no enfría	Servicio el mismo día	Spanish AC repair page

Why bother with this structure? Because each ad can then speak directly to the search, which helps the ad relevance and expected click-through rate you met in Chapter 1, and the visitor lands on a page that matches. One large ad group with every keyword and one generic ad is the most common structure in neglected accounts, and the hardest to improve.

A few rules of thumb:

- **Keep groups small.** A handful to a couple of dozen closely related keywords is usually enough. If you have a hundred, you probably have several services mixed together.
- **Do not repeat near-duplicates.** Google's page on keyword matching options notes that very similar keywords, like the same words in a different order, end up competing as one; adding both does not buy extra reach.
- **Start with fewer services.** If the budget is limited, launch with the one or two services that bring the most valuable customers, and add more once those work.
- **Separate languages.** Spanish keywords in their own ad groups, with Spanish ads and pages.

For the dental office in Doral, the same logic gives ad groups such as emergency visits, new patient cleanings, implants and Invisalign. For the Cuban restaurant, it might be dine-in, takeout and delivery, and catering, each with its own page.

How tightly each keyword matches the searches it triggers depends on match type, the subject of the next chapter. If you would rather have a team build and maintain this structure for you, that is part of our Google Ads management in Miami.

Key takeaways

- Sort every keyword by **intent**: ready to buy, researching, do-it-yourself or job seeking. Pay mainly for the first group.
- Use **Keyword Planner** for real volume and cost estimates in your own area, and treat the numbers as estimates, not promises.
- Neighborhood names and "near me" help, but **location targeting** does most of the local work.
- In Miami, check **Spanish and Spanglish** versions of every important search, and only advertise in a language you can answer in.
- Group keywords into **small ad groups, one service each**, each with its own ad and landing page.

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CHAPTER 4

Match Types and Negative Keywords

Your keywords do not decide exactly which searches trigger your ads. **Google Ads match types** do, and they are looser than most owners expect. This chapter explains broad, phrase and exact match as they work today, why broad match only makes sense with smart bidding and real conversion data, how to read the search terms report, and how to build the negative keyword lists that stop paying for jobs, DIY tips and the wrong side of town. It ends with a 20-minute routine to repeat every week.

What Google Ads match types mean today

When you add the keyword *ac repair hialeah* to your account, you are not telling Google "show my ad only when someone types exactly these three words." You are telling it "show my ad for searches that match this keyword," and the **match type** sets how loose that match can be.

In the early years of Google Ads, match types were mostly about words: whether the search contained your words, in your order, with or without extras. That is no longer how they work. Google now matches by **meaning**. According to Google's page on keyword matching options, even exact match can show your ad on searches with the same meaning or the same intent as your keyword, not only identical text. Small differences in wording, a plural, a misspelling or a different word order can all count as "the same."

This is good news and bad news. Good, because you no longer need to list every spelling and plural. Bad, because Google's idea of "the same meaning" is not always yours. To Google, "ac repair" and "ac repair training" may look close. To the owner of an HVAC company, one is a customer and the other is a student. That gap is what this chapter is about.

Broad, phrase and exact match, side by side

There are three match types. You choose them with simple symbols when you type the keyword:

Match type	How you write it	What it can match (Google's description, in plain words)	Example: keyword "dentist doral"
Broad	dentist doral	Searches related to your keyword, which can include searches that do not contain its direct meaning	"emergency dental care near me", "teeth whitening doral", maybe "dental hygienist school miami"
Phrase	"dentist doral"	Searches that include the meaning of your keyword, which can be implied or a more specific form of it	"best dentist in doral fl", "pediatric dentist doral", "dentist doral open saturday"
Exact	[dentist doral]	Searches with the same meaning or the same intent as your keyword	"dentist in doral", "doral dentist", "dentists doral"

The examples are illustrations of how matching tends to behave, not a guarantee of what Google will match in your account. That uncertainty is exactly why you will check real searches every week.

Some useful facts from Google's documentation:

- **Broad match is the default.** If you type a keyword without quotes or brackets, it is broad. Many owners run broad match for months without knowing it.
- **Broader types include the narrower ones.** A phrase match keyword covers the searches its exact version would, and broad covers both.

Adding the same words in all three types does not triple your reach.

- **Broad match looks beyond the keyword.** Google says it can take into account the person's recent searches, the content of your landing page and assets, and the other keywords in the ad group.

For a new local account with a modest budget, a sensible starting point is **phrase and exact match** for your core services. They give you more control while you learn which searches bring customers. Broad match can come later, deliberately, as the next section explains.

Why broad match needs smart bidding and conversion data

Google's own guidance is direct: "It's critical to use Smart Bidding with broad match." That line, from Google's keyword matching page, explains a lot about how the system is designed.

Smart Bidding is Google's name for automated bidding strategies, such as Maximize conversions or Target CPA, that set a bid for each individual auction based on how likely that search is to lead to a conversion. Broad match casts a wide net; Smart Bidding is supposed to decide, search by search, which fish are worth paying for. The two are meant to work together.

Here is the catch that professionals understand and beginners often learn the hard way: Smart Bidding learns from your **conversions**. If you have no conversion tracking, or it counts the wrong things, or you only get a handful of conversions a month, the system has very little to learn from. Broad match then keeps widening the net, and the bidding cannot tell good searches from bad ones. The result is a lot of clicks from loosely related searches and a budget that disappears fast.

So before you turn on broad match, ask three questions:

1. **Is conversion tracking working and tested?** Calls and forms, counted once each, as set up in Chapter 2.

2. **Are you getting conversions regularly?** Not one or two a month, but a steady flow the system can learn from.
3. **Are you using a Smart Bidding strategy?** Broad match with manual bids or "maximize clicks" removes the safety net Google itself says it needs.

If the answer to any of these is no, stay with phrase and exact for now. We look at the bidding strategies in detail in Chapter 6. Note that, at the time of writing, Google is renaming some of these strategies in the interface, so the labels you see may differ slightly from the ones in this book.

The search terms report: where the truth lives

Your keywords are what you asked for. The **search terms** are what people actually typed before seeing and clicking your ad. The search terms report lists those searches, with clicks, cost and conversions for each one. If you only look at one report in Google Ads, make it this one.

Reading it is simple. For each search term, ask: *would I have paid for this click if I had seen the search first?*

- **Yes, and it brought calls or forms:** consider adding it as its own keyword, so you can bid on it and write an ad for it directly.
- **Yes, but no results yet:** leave it alone and look again next week.
- **No:** add a negative keyword that blocks it and others like it.

Two things to know. First, the report does not show every single search. Google explains that searches without enough volume are left out to protect user privacy, and may appear grouped into broader themes or as "other" searches. Second, the report is most valuable early on. In the first weeks of a campaign it shows how Google interprets your keywords, and that is when the costly mismatches show up.

For our example dental office in Doral (an illustration, not a client), a first look at the report might show useful searches like "dentist open saturday doral" next to wasted ones like "dental assistant jobs doral," "free dental clinic

miami" or "dentist in coral springs," a city in Broward County well outside the office's area. Each wasted search is a lesson and a negative keyword.

Building negative keyword lists

Negative keywords stop your ad from showing when a search contains them. They are the brakes of your account. You can add them to a single ad group, to a whole campaign, or to a list that you apply to several campaigns at once. Google also offers an account-level list that applies to all eligible search inventory in the account.

You do not have to wait for the search terms report to start. Most local businesses can build a first list before launch, using the intent groups from Chapter 3:

List	Example negative keywords	Watch out
Jobs and careers	jobs, job, hiring, salary, careers, employment, resume, empleo, trabajo	Almost always safe to block
Free and cheap	free, gratis, cheap (only if you are not the budget option)	"Free estimate" may be a search you want if you offer free estimates
Do it yourself	how to, diy, yourself, tutorial, video, parts, manual	"How to" sometimes precedes a buyer; check the report before blocking every variation
Training and education	school, course, class, training, certification, license exam, curso	Block unless you also teach
Wrong services	For the HVAC company: car ac, refrigerator, window unit (if not serviced)	Specific to your business; write it with the person who answers the phone
Wrong places	Cities and neighborhoods you do not serve, such as a city an hour away	Location settings do most of this job; negatives catch searches that name the wrong place

For the Cuban restaurant in Little Havana, a "wrong services" list might include recipe, receta, cookbook and "near me" searches for other cuisines that slipped in through broad matching. For the dental office, it might include insurance plans it does not accept, or veterinary searches if "dental" keywords start pulling in "dog dental cleaning."

> **What pros do:** they keep negatives in a few named, shared lists ("Jobs," "DIY," "Wrong services," "Wrong places") instead of scattering them across ad groups. When a new campaign launches, the lists are applied in a minute, and nobody pays twice to learn the same lesson.

How negative keywords match (and the traps)

Negative keywords use the same three symbols as regular keywords, but they behave differently, and the differences cause real mistakes. Here is what Google's negative keyword page explains:

Negative type	Blocks the ad when the search...	Example negative: *ac jobs*
Negative broad (default)	Contains all your negative words, in any order	Blocks "jobs in ac repair"; does not block "ac job"
Negative phrase "..."	Contains your words in the same order, even with other words around them	Blocks "miami ac jobs hiring"; does not block "jobs ac"
Negative exact [...]	Is exactly your words, in order, with nothing added	Blocks only "ac jobs"

The traps:

- **Negatives do not expand to close variants.** Google says you need to add synonyms and singular or plural versions yourself; blocking "job" does not block "jobs." (Google notes that casing and misspellings are handled for you.)

- **Too many words in one negative weakens it.** A negative broad keyword like *free ac repair course* only blocks searches containing all four words. Usually you want the single word *course*.
- **Negatives can block your best customers.** Adding "emergency" as a negative because one emergency search looked odd could shut off your most valuable calls. Before adding a single-word negative, ask whether that word ever appears in a search you want.
- **Check for conflicts.** If a negative blocks one of your own keywords, that keyword stops showing. The platform may warn you about some conflicts, but do not count on it: check new negatives against your keyword list.

A weekly 20-minute cleanup routine

Campaigns drift. New searches appear, seasons change, Google tests new matches. The defense is not a big monthly overhaul; it is a short, boring routine done every week. Here is one that fits in twenty minutes for a small account:

1. **Minutes 1–3: check the basics.** Did the campaign spend roughly what you expected? Are there calls and forms recorded? Any disapproved ads or warnings?
2. **Minutes 4–12: read the search terms from the last 7 days,** sorted by cost. Start with the most expensive ones. For each, decide: keep, add as keyword, or block.
3. **Minutes 13–16: add negatives to the right list.** Single words for whole categories (jobs, course), phrase or exact for specific searches you want to block without collateral damage.
4. **Minutes 17–19: add winners as keywords.** Searches that brought real calls deserve their own phrase or exact keyword in the right ad group.
5. **Minute 20: write one line in a log.** Date, what you changed and why. In three months, that log will explain your results better than any report.

In the first month, do this twice a week; that is when most waste shows up. After that, once a week is usually enough for a small local account. If you notice the same kind of junk search coming back week after week, that is a sign a keyword is too broad and should be tightened, not just patched with negatives.

If twenty minutes a week is twenty minutes you do not have, that is a reasonable thing to hand off; it is the core of what our PPC management in Miami does each week. Either way, once the right searches are reaching you, the next job is making sure the ad they see is worth clicking: Chapter 5.

Key takeaways

- Match types decide how far Google can stretch your keyword. **Broad** reaches the most searches, **exact** the fewest, and all three match by meaning, not only by exact words.
- Broad match without **smart bidding and reliable conversion tracking** is an open checkbook. Start new, small accounts with phrase and exact.
- The **search terms report** shows what people really typed. It is the most useful report in the account.
- Build **negative keyword lists** for jobs, free, DIY, training, wrong services and wrong places, and remember negatives do not catch plurals or synonyms on their own.
- Twenty minutes a week of cleanup usually saves more money than any bid change.

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CHAPTER 5

Writing Ads That Get the Click

Your keywords decide when the ad can show. The words in the ad decide whether anyone clicks, and whether the right people do. This chapter is about **how to write Google Ads** for a local business: how responsive search ads are built, how to write for the searcher's problem instead of your company, which numbers and offers to use, when pinning helps, which assets to add, why "ad strength" is not the goal, how to handle Spanish searches, and which claims to leave out.

How to write Google Ads: start with the searcher's problem

Most first-time advertisers write ads about themselves: the company name, the years in business, "quality service," "customer satisfaction." The searcher does not care yet. They typed a problem into a phone, and they are scanning four or five ads in a couple of seconds, looking for the one that sounds like the answer.

A useful way to write any ad is to answer three questions, in this order:

1. **Is this about what I searched?** Repeat the service and, when it matters, the place: "AC Repair in Hialeah," "Emergency Dentist in Doral."
2. **Why should I pick you?** One concrete reason that matters to this searcher right now: same-day visits, a clear price before work starts, Saturday hours, Spanish spoken.
3. **What do I do next?** Call, book, order, get an estimate. Plain verbs.

Compare two headlines for our example HVAC company in Hialeah (an illustration, not a client). "Excellence in Climate Solutions" is about the company. "AC Not Cooling? We Can Help" is about the person sweating in their living room. The second one usually earns the click, and it also signals relevance, one of the components of Quality Score you met in Chapter 1.

Because each ad group holds one service (the structure from Chapter 3), you can write ads that speak to that one need. That is the real reason tight ad groups matter: they let your ad text be specific.

Responsive Search Ads: the pieces and the limits

The standard text ad on Google Search today is the **responsive search ad**. Instead of writing one fixed ad, you give Google a set of headlines and descriptions, and it assembles combinations for each search, testing over time which ones perform best. The limits, according to Google's responsive search ads help page:

Part	How many	Length	What it is for
Headlines	Up to 15	Up to 30 characters each	The bold lines at the top; up to 3 can show together in the headline position
Descriptions	Up to 4	Up to 90 characters each	The body text under the headlines
Display path	2 fields	Up to 15 characters each	Words added to your web address in the ad, such as /ac-repair/hialeah

Two details are worth knowing. First, Google can show your headlines in places other than the headline line: at the beginning of the description, or, at the time of writing, even as extra links under the ad. So every headline should make sense on its own and next to any other. Second, Google says it avoids redundant combinations, but it cannot invent variety you did not give it.

That is where most ads go wrong: fifteen headlines that all say the same thing in slightly different words. A better approach is to write headlines in a few families:

- **The service and place:** "AC Repair in Hialeah" (20 characters), "Same-Day AC Repair" (18).
- **The problem:** "AC Not Cooling? We Can Help" (27).
- **The reason to choose you:** "Upfront Price Before We Start" (29), "Repairs on All Major Brands" (27), "Technicians Who Speak Spanish" (29).
- **The next step:** "Book Online or Call Today" (25).

And descriptions that add what headlines cannot fit: "AC blowing warm air? Our technicians can visit today in Hialeah. Call or book online." (85 characters). Every line in that example is only usable if it is true for the business; more on that below.

> **What pros do:** they read the search terms report and the questions callers ask, and borrow the customers' own words for headlines. If people keep searching "ac blowing hot air," a headline that says exactly that often beats anything clever. They also keep a simple file with every headline and description, so good lines are reused and bad ones are not rewritten from scratch.

Numbers, offers and proof you can back up

Specific beats vague. "Fast service" means nothing; "Same-day visits, Mon–Sat" means something. Numbers, offers and proof are what make an ad specific, as long as they are true.

- **Numbers:** hours ("Open Until 9 PM"), response time you actually meet, a price or starting price you actually charge. For the dental office in Doral, "New Patient Exam and X-Rays" with a real price, if it publishes one.

- **Offers:** the offer you defined in Chapter 2: a free estimate, a diagnostic fee waived with the repair, a family platter for the Cuban restaurant in Little Havana. Google's misrepresentation policy does not allow promotions that are unavailable or unclear, so an offer that ended last month must come out of the ad the day it ends.
- **Proof:** things a customer could check. Your review rating as it appears on your profile, years in business if accurate, brands you are authorized to service if you are. Proof works because it is verifiable, which is also why made-up proof is dangerous.

A practical test before any line goes into an ad: *could I show a customer, or Google, the evidence for this today?* If the answer is "not really," leave it out.

Pinning: when it helps and when it hurts

Pinning fixes a headline or description to a specific position, such as headline 1, so it always shows there. It sounds like control, and that is why beginners overuse it. Google's help page is clear that pinning reduces the number of combinations that can be matched to each search, and that it is not recommended for most advertisers. Pinning can also lower your ad strength rating.

When pinning makes sense:

- **Required text.** A disclaimer or a condition that must appear every time. Google notes that text which must appear in every ad has to be pinned to headline 1, headline 2 or description 1.
- **Lines that make no sense first.** A headline like "Call Now" should not appear in position 1, where it would read as if you skipped the introduction.
- **Brand consistency in a sensitive niche,** when the owner insists the business name always shows.

A gentler way to pin: pin **two or three** different headlines to the same position. For example, pin "AC Repair in Hialeah," "Same-Day AC Repair" and "Hialeah AC Repair Experts" to position 1. Google can still rotate among them, and you still guarantee the service appears first. Note that a line like "experts" is itself a claim; use it only if it holds up.

Assets: sitelinks, callouts, calls, locations and more

Assets (Google used to call them extensions) add extra information to your ad: more links, a phone number, an address, short selling points. They make the ad larger and more useful, and they can help its position: as you saw in Chapter 1, the expected impact of assets is one of the factors in Ad Rank. Google's assets help page notes that they are free to add and only show when they are predicted to improve performance, and that your ad needs a minimum Ad Rank before assets show. So adding them is close to free; they just do not appear every time.

Asset	What it shows	Example for our three businesses
Sitelinks	Extra links to specific pages on your site	HVAC: "AC Repair," "New AC Installation," "Maintenance Plans," "Financing"
Callouts	Short phrases with no link	Dental: "Saturday Appointments," "Se Habla Español," "New Patients Welcome"
Call	Your phone number, tappable on mobile	All three, scheduled only for the hours someone answers
Location	Your address and distance, from your Business Profile	Restaurant: address in Little Havana, directions
Structured snippets	A header with a list of values, such as "Services:" or "Types:"	HVAC "Services: Repair, Installation, Maintenance, Duct Cleaning"
Images	Photos next to the ad, where eligible	Restaurant: real dishes; dental: the actual office
Price and promotion	Prices for services, or a current offer	Only with prices and offers you keep up to date

Two practical notes. Do not type your phone number into a headline or description; Google's editorial policy does not allow phone numbers in ad text, which is exactly what the call asset is for. And link your Google Business Profile so the location asset uses the same address and hours customers see on Maps, a connection we return to in Chapter 8.

Ad strength is a guide, not the goal

When you write a responsive search ad, Google shows an **ad strength** rating from "Poor" to "Excellent," with suggestions: add more headlines, make them more distinct, include popular keywords. The suggestions are often useful, especially "make headlines more unique."

But understand what the rating is. Google's ad strength page says the rating does not determine whether your ad is eligible to serve, and puts it plainly: "It isn't used to calculate Ad Rank, Quality Score, or auction wins." It measures how much variety and relevance your set of headlines and descriptions has, not whether the ad brings customers.

So use it as a writing checklist, then judge ads by results. An ad rated "Average" that brings calls at a cost you can afford is a better ad than an "Excellent" one that brings clicks and no calls. Chasing "Excellent" by stuffing keywords into every headline, or by adding claims to fill slots, is a common way to make an ad worse.

Ads in Spanish for Spanish searches

In Chapter 3 you put Spanish keywords in their own ad groups. Those ad groups need ads written in Spanish, and written by someone who speaks it the way your customers do. Machine translation of English ads often produces Spanish that is correct but stiff, or that uses words nobody in Hialeah would use.

- **Mind the length.** Spanish usually needs more words for the same idea, and the 30-character limit is the same. "Reparación de AC en Hialeah" (27

characters) fits; many literal translations will not.

- **Keep the words people use.** "AC" and "Invisalign" stay as they are. If customers say "el aire," say "el aire."
- **Match the whole path.** Spanish ad, Spanish landing page, and a Spanish-speaking person on the phone. A Spanish ad that leads to an English page wastes the click.
- **Consider a callout in English ads.** "Se Habla Español" in an English ad tells bilingual searchers they can switch languages when they call.

Example headlines for the HVAC company's Spanish ad group: "Reparación de AC en Hialeah" (27), "Servicio el Mismo Día" (21), "Técnicos que Hablan Español" (27), each one only if it is true.

Claims you can't support: licensing, "best in Miami" and the like

Some phrases are tempting because they sound strong: "best in Miami," "#1 rated," "licensed and insured," "guaranteed results," "lowest prices." Each one is a claim, and claims carry risk.

- **Google's rules.** Its misrepresentation policy does not allow inaccurate claims, or claims that present an improbable result as the likely outcome. Ads can be disapproved, and repeated problems can affect the account.
- **Licensing.** If your trade requires a license and you say "licensed," make sure the license is active and in the business name, and show the number on the landing page where it applies. If you are not licensed for a service, do not advertise that service at all.
- **"Best" and "#1".** Unless you can point to a specific, current source, these words promise something you cannot prove, and searchers have learned to ignore them anyway. A real, checkable detail ("4.8 stars on Google," if that is your rating today) does more.

- **Medical and dental claims.** Health-related ads face stricter scrutiny. A dental office should avoid promising outcomes ("pain-free," "perfect smile") and check the advertising rules of its profession before launch.
- **Other people's names.** As Chapter 3 explained, Google's trademark policy can restrict a competitor's trademark in your ad text. Leave their names out of your ads.

Beyond the rules, there is a simpler reason: the customer arrives expecting what the ad promised. If the page or the phone call does not deliver it, you paid for the click and lost the customer's trust in the same minute.

Write two or three distinct ads per ad group, let them run, and compare them by calls and forms, not by clicks alone. If you would like a second pair of eyes on your ads, or would rather have a team write and test them, our PPC management in Miami does exactly that. Next comes the money side: daily budgets and bidding strategies, in Chapter 6.

Key takeaways

- Write for the **searcher's problem**: repeat what they searched, say how you solve it and what to do next.
- A responsive search ad takes up to **15 headlines of 30 characters and 4 descriptions of 90.** Give Google real variety, not fifteen versions of the same line.
- Use numbers, offers and proof **only if you can back them up** every time; Google's policies and your customers both punish the rest.
- Add every **asset** that fits (sitelinks, callouts, call, location, structured snippets, images). They are free to add and only show when Google predicts they help.
- Ad strength is a writing aid, not a ranking factor. Judge ads by **calls, forms and cost per lead.**

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CHAPTER 6

Budgets and Bidding

Your Google Ads budget is not a price you pay once. It is a dial you set, watch and adjust, and the way Google spends it surprises almost every owner the first month. This chapter explains how the daily budget really behaves, how to size a first budget backwards from the number of customers you need, which bid strategy fits each stage of a campaign, and how to protect your cash flow while Google's systems are still learning.

How the Google Ads daily budget really works

When you create a campaign, Google asks for a daily budget. Most owners read that number as "the most I will spend in a day." It is not. At the time of writing, what you enter is an **average daily budget**, and Google spends it with some flexibility. Its help page About average daily budgets spells out the two limits:

- **On a single day, spend can reach up to twice the daily budget.** If you set $50, a busy Tuesday can cost close to $100. Searches are not spread evenly across the month, and Google tries to catch the days when more people are looking for what you sell.
- **Over a calendar month, you should not be charged more than about 30.4 times the daily budget.** 30.4 is the average number of days in a month. With $50 a day, the monthly ceiling is roughly $1,520. If Google spends heavily early in the month, it spends less later to stay under that line.

Two practical rules come out of this. First, never set a daily budget you could not afford to see doubled on any given day. Second, think in months, not days: decide what you can invest in a month, divide it by 30.4, and enter that result as the daily budget. Changing the budget mid-month is allowed, but it makes the month harder to read.

Average daily budget	Highest spend on a single day	Approximate monthly ceiling
$20	About $40	About $608
$50	About $100	About $1,520
$100	About $200	About $3,040
$150	About $300	About $4,560

You will also meet a status that worries many owners: **"Limited by budget."** It means the campaign could have shown your ads more often with more money. That is not automatically a reason to spend more. First open the search terms report (see Match Types and Negative Keywords) and ask whether those extra searches are people you want. Often a campaign is "limited" because it chases broad searches that will never become customers, and tightening keywords helps more than a bigger budget.

Sizing a first Google Ads budget backwards

Google's setup screens will suggest a budget. Treat that suggestion as Google's opinion, not yours. The professional way to size a first budget starts from the other end: from the customers you need, working back to the clicks that produce them. You need five numbers, and you can estimate all of them before spending a dollar.

1. **New customers you want per month from Google Ads.** The first months are for learning, so pick a modest number.
2. **Your close rate.** Out of every ten people who call or fill out a form, how many become paying customers? Look at your own history, or ask

whoever answers the phone.

3. **Your landing page conversion rate.** Out of every hundred people who click the ad, how many call, book or send a form? If you have no history, use a cautious guess and correct it after the first month. Your page and phone handling (see Before You Spend a Dollar) move this number more than anything inside Google Ads.
4. **Expected cost per click.** Get it from Keyword Planner for your own keywords and your own area, as explained in Keywords Miami Customers Really Type. Use the higher end of the range, not the lower one.
5. **What a new customer is worth to you.** Not the first ticket only, but what that customer typically brings over a reasonable period, minus the cost of serving them.

Then do the math in this order: customers divided by close rate gives leads; leads divided by conversion rate gives clicks; clicks times cost per click gives the monthly budget; the monthly budget divided by 30.4 gives the daily budget.

A worked example: the dental office in Doral

Take our example dental office in Doral. The numbers below are invented to show the method. They are not benchmarks, and your Keyword Planner results will be different.

Step	Illustrative assumption	Result
New patients wanted per month	10	10 patients
Close rate (calls and requests that become booked patients)	4 out of 10	10 / 0.4 = 25 leads
Landing page conversion rate	8 out of 100 visitors	25 / 0.08 = about 313 clicks
Cost per click (from Keyword Planner, high end)	$7	313 x $7 = about $2,190 a month
Daily budget	Monthly budget / 30.4	About $72 a day
Cost per new patient	$2,190 / 10	About $219 per patient

The last line is the one that decides everything. If the office knows that a new patient typically brings far more than $219 in profit over the following year, the campaign is worth testing. If not, the plan has to change before launch, not after three months of losses.

When the math does not fit

Often the honest answer is that the budget you can afford does not buy enough clicks to cover everything you do. The beginner's reaction is to spread the money thin: every service, every city, every hour. The professional's reaction is to **concentrate**:

- **Fewer services.** Our example HVAC company in Hialeah might advertise only "AC repair" and "AC not cooling" at first, and leave new system installations for later.
- **A smaller area.** The ZIP codes you serve fastest, not all of South Florida.
- **Fewer hours.** The hours when someone answers the phone, so every paid click has a chance.

A useful sanity check: the daily budget should buy at least several clicks a day at your expected cost per click. If it buys one or two, information arrives so slowly that you cannot tell a good keyword from a bad one for months. In that case, narrow the campaign until the budget covers it properly.

Bid strategies in plain English

Once the budget is set, you choose how Google bids in each auction. If you need a refresher on the auction itself, see How Google Ads Actually Works. Google's names and groupings for these strategies change from time to time, but at the time of writing the main options for a search campaign are these:

Strategy	What you decide	What Google does	Fits best when	Watch out for
Manual CPC	The maximum you pay per click, keyword by keyword	Runs the auction with your bids	You are starting, the budget is small, or you want full control	More work; you must review bids yourself
Maximize Clicks	The budget, and ideally a maximum bid limit	Gets as many clicks as possible for the budget	A new campaign needs traffic to gather data	It chases cheap clicks, which are not always the ones that call
Maximize Conversions	The budget	Bids to get the most conversions the budget allows	Conversion tracking is working and recording real leads	It tends to spend the whole budget, and it optimizes for whatever you call a conversion
Target CPA (target cost per action)	An average cost per conversion you aim for	Bids up or down per auction to hit that average	Results are steady and you know your real cost per lead	A target set too low shrinks traffic; it is an average, not a ceiling
Target ROAS (target return on ad spend)	The revenue you want back per dollar spent	Bids for conversions with higher value	Each conversion carries a reliable dollar value, such as online orders	Useless if the values are guesses

The last three are what Google calls **smart bidding**. Some context helps here: Google Ads started life as AdWords in 2000 and took its current name in 2018, and for much of that history advertisers set bids keyword by keyword. Smart bidding moved that decision to Google's systems, which set a bid at the moment of each auction, something Google's About Smart Bidding page calls "auction-time bidding." Their strength is that they adjust the bid in every single auction using signals you cannot see or manage by hand, such as the device, the time, the location and the language settings of the person searching. Their weakness is simple: they are only as smart as the conversions you feed them. If your tracking counts a visit to the "Contact" page as a conversion, smart bidding will work hard to buy you visits to the "Contact" page. Before you hand bidding to Google, make sure each conversion is something you would gladly pay for. Measuring Calls, Leads and Sales covers what should and should not count.

Google has moved these names around more than once. For a while, Target CPA lived as an optional target inside Maximize Conversions, and Target ROAS inside Maximize Conversion Value. At the time of writing, Google's Target CPA help page says those combined names are changing back to simply "Target CPA" and "Target ROAS." The idea is the same whatever the menu looks like: first let the system find conversions freely, then give it a target.

When to move from one bid strategy to the next

Think of bidding as a ladder you climb as you collect evidence. Skipping rungs is the most common and most expensive mistake.

1. **Start with control.** Manual CPC, or Maximize Clicks with a maximum bid limit, for the first weeks. Your goals here are to confirm tracking works, clean up search terms and see real cost per click in your market.
2. **Move to Maximize Conversions** once conversions are being recorded correctly and arriving regularly. Practitioners often wait for a few dozen conversions a month before trusting smart bidding, though Google may

allow it sooner. With very few conversions, the system has little to learn from.

3. **Add a Target CPA** only after the cost per lead has been stable for several weeks. Start at, or a little above, what you are already paying.
4. **Use Target ROAS** only if your conversions carry real values. Most local service businesses never need it; an online ordering system for a restaurant might.

The ladder also works downward. If tracking breaks, conversions dry up for reasons outside the campaign (a phone line problem, a long holiday closure), or the cost per lead jumps and stays high, it can be wiser to step back to a simpler strategy while you fix the cause.

> **What pros do:** when they first add a Target CPA, they set it close to the cost per lead the campaign is already achieving, then lower it in small steps every couple of weeks while watching volume. Setting the target at the number you wish you were paying usually does one thing: the campaign stops showing your ads.

The learning period, and why daily changes hurt

When you switch to a smart bidding strategy, or make a significant change to one (a new strategy, a large budget or target change, new conversion actions), Google shows a "learning" status. During this time the system is testing how to bid with the new rules, and results can swing. According to Google's page About Smart Bidding learning, that status lasts up to seven days, but performance can take one or two *conversion cycles* (the usual time between a click and a lead) to settle on a new goal. Google suggests judging the result over two conversion cycles or two weeks, whichever is longer. Ads keep running normally while the label is on.

This is why changing things every day is so damaging. Each meaningful change can restart or extend learning, so a campaign that is edited daily may never settle. There is also a statistics problem: a small account might get two calls on Monday, none on Tuesday and four on Wednesday purely by chance. Reacting to Tuesday is reacting to noise.

A healthy rhythm looks like this:

- **Daily, five minutes:** are the ads running, is the phone being answered, is the website up? Fix broken things, change nothing else.
- **Weekly:** review search terms and add negative keywords. Look at the week as a whole.
- **Every two to four weeks:** adjust bids, budgets or targets, in one batch, with a reason for each change.
- **Monthly:** compare cost per lead and cost per customer with your plan.

Keep a simple change log: date, what you changed and why. Google Ads keeps its own change history, but not your reasons, and those are what you will need later.

Protecting your cash flow

Google pays itself first. With automatic payments, which is how most small accounts work, your card is charged when spending reaches a billing threshold or at the end of the billing cycle, whichever comes first. Your customers, on the other hand, may pay you weeks later: an HVAC system on financing, a dental treatment waiting on insurance. Ad spend is cash out today for cash in later, and a campaign that is profitable on paper can still squeeze a small business.

- **Decide a monthly ceiling in writing** before you launch, and calculate the daily budget from it, as shown above.
- **Use a dedicated card** for ad spend, so the charges are easy to see and do not collide with payroll or suppliers.

- **Raise budgets in steps.** When a campaign works, grow the budget gradually and check that the cost per lead holds. Doubling overnight often buys pricier, weaker clicks.
- **Avoid stop-and-go.** Pausing for weeks and restarting can put smart bidding back into learning; a lower budget is usually better than an on-off switch.
- **There is no contract with Google.** You can lower or pause spend at any time. Any lock-in comes from agreements you sign with people; Doing It Yourself or Hiring Help covers that.

Seasonality in a Miami budget

Demand in South Florida moves with heat, tourism and the calendar, and your budget should move ahead of it. Our example businesses each have their own rhythm:

- **The HVAC company in Hialeah** sees calls rise with the heat. The budget should go up as temperatures climb, not after the phone is already ringing and competitors have already raised their bids.
- **The dental office in Doral** may see interest rise toward the end of the year, when many patients try to use insurance benefits before their plan renews, and again around back-to-school checkups.
- **The Cuban restaurant in Little Havana** lives with the winter tourist season and holiday traditions, such as orders for Nochebuena.

Two habits help: plan the year on one page (which months to push, which to hold, roughly what to spend in each), and change budgets a week or two before a season starts. Smart bidding already learns recurring patterns on its own. For short, unusual events, such as a three-day promotion, Google offers at the time of writing a seasonality adjustment that tells smart bidding to expect a temporary jump in conversion rate. Google describes it as ideal for events of one to seven days and warns it may not work as well for periods longer than about two weeks, so it is not a tool for whole seasons.

The next chapter, Location, Schedule and Devices in South Florida, looks at the local calendar in more detail: hurricane season, snowbirds, Art Basel and the holidays. For the full picture of what goes into an ad budget besides clicks, including management fees and the landing page, see our guide on PPC cost in Miami. And if you would rather have someone size and watch the budget with you, that is what our PPC management in Miami covers.

Key takeaways

- The daily budget is an average: one day can spend up to twice that amount, but a month is capped at about 30.4 times it.
- Size the first budget backwards: customers you need, leads per customer, clicks per lead, then the real cost per click from Keyword Planner.
- Start with control (Manual CPC or capped Maximize Clicks), move to Maximize Conversions once tracking works, and add a Target CPA only after results are steady.
- Every big change restarts learning. Judge by the week, change in batches and keep a written log.
- Raise budgets before your busy season, not in the middle of it, and never set a daily number you could not afford to see doubled.

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CHAPTER 7

Location, Schedule and Devices in South Florida

Google Ads location targeting, the ad schedule and device settings decide *who* sees your ads, *when* and *on what screen*. They look like small checkboxes, but in South Florida they carry a lot of weight: the region mixes residents, snowbirds and tourists, people switch between English and Spanish in the same sentence, and the calendar is shaped by heat, hurricanes and high season. This chapter shows how to set each of them so you pay only for people you can actually serve.

Google Ads location targeting: presence or interest

When you set the locations for a campaign, Google asks a question that most owners skip past. At the time of writing, it offers two main options for the places you include:

- **Presence:** people who are in, or regularly in, your targeted locations.
- **Presence or interest:** people who are in, regularly in, *or have shown interest in* your targeted locations.

Google's help page About advanced location options calls the broader option the default and recommended setting, and points to travel, real estate and education as areas where it tends to help. The same page also explains when plain "presence" makes more sense. Read that as what it is: a general recommendation from the company that sells the clicks, not a decision about your business.

The difference sounds technical, but it decides who you pay for. With "presence or interest," a person in Chicago who searches "AC repair Hialeah" or simply looks at Miami trip content can see your ad. For our example HVAC company in Hialeah, that click is almost always wasted money: nobody in Chicago needs a technician in Hialeah today. For that business, **presence** is the right choice.

Now take our example Cuban restaurant in Little Havana. A couple in Toronto planning a February trip and searching "best cuban food little havana" is exactly the kind of customer the restaurant wants. For a business that lives partly on visitors, "presence or interest" can make sense, ideally in a separate campaign with tourist-style keywords and its own budget, so you can see what travelers cost compared with locals.

South Florida also has a group in between: **snowbirds**, people who spend the winter here and the rest of the year up north. While they are here, they are "in" the area like any resident. Before they arrive, they may be searching from New York or Montreal for a dentist or an AC check for the condo they are about to open. Whether you want those early searches depends on your business, and that is the point: decide it on purpose instead of accepting the default.

Keep in mind that Google works out location from signals such as device location, IP address and the place names in the search. It is good, not perfect. Some clicks from outside your area will slip through. Google Ads has a report of where the people who saw or clicked your ads were located; look at it after the first weeks and adjust.

Miami-Dade, Broward or a radius: drawing your map

Google lets you target a country, a state, a county, a city, a ZIP code or a radius around an address. In South Florida, the choice between them matters more than people expect, because the map is a patchwork of separate cities.

Targeting method	Good for	Weak spot	Example
County (Miami-Dade, Broward, Palm Beach)	Businesses that truly serve the whole county	Miami-Dade alone runs from the Broward line down toward the Keys; that is a lot of driving	A mobile service with crews spread across the county
City	Simple setups for a clear city market	The City of Miami is not Miami-Dade; Hialeah, Doral, Miami Beach and Coral Gables are separate cities	Targeting "Miami" alone would leave out the dental office's own city of Doral
ZIP codes	Matching your real service area	Takes time to build the list	The HVAC company's list of ZIP codes reachable within its promised response time
Radius around an address	Walk-in or drive-in businesses	Circles ignore water, bridges and traffic	A few miles around the restaurant for local lunch and dinner searches

A radius is the easiest option and often the least accurate here. Draw ten miles around Little Havana and part of the circle falls on Biscayne Bay, while some places inside it can take a long time to reach across a causeway at rush hour. Ten miles in South Florida is not a distance, it is a drive time. For service businesses, a list of ZIP codes built with the people who do the driving is usually the most honest map.

Two more tips. Google's boundaries for a city or neighborhood may not match the official ones exactly, so check the map preview before saving. And if you use manual bidding, you can bid more for the ZIP codes closest to you and less for the edges. At the time of writing, smart bidding strategies set those adjustments on their own and mostly ignore manual location adjustments, which is one more reason to get the map itself right.

Excluding areas you do not serve

Excluding places is as important as including them. Exclusions protect you from areas that sit inside your targeting but that you do not want: a far corner of the county, an island neighborhood your crews cannot reach quickly, or a city where you have no license to work.

- **Exclude the far edges** of a county or radius if your technicians cannot get there on time. A late arrival costs you the review, not just the job.
- **Exclude other countries** when you serve only local customers. Miami is searched from all over Latin America, often in Spanish, and with "presence or interest" those clicks can add up.
- **Prefer "presence" for exclusions.** At the time of writing, Google lets you choose how exclusions apply too; excluding people physically in a place is the usual choice.
- **Pair location exclusions with negative keywords** for place names. If you do not work in Homestead, add "homestead" as a negative so searches like "ac repair homestead" do not trigger your ads from inside your area. Match Types and Negative Keywords explains how.

Ad schedule: run ads when someone can answer

Every paid click that ends in a call nobody answers is money handed to a competitor, because the caller simply dials the next result. The ad schedule fixes this: it lets you choose the days and hours your ads appear.

First, a setting to get right on day one: the **account time zone**. It is chosen when the account is created, and your schedules and reports are read in it. For a South Florida business, it should be Eastern Time. An account created by a freelancer abroad or set up while traveling can end up hours off, every schedule built on it will be wrong, and fixing that later is far more trouble than choosing well at the start. Google's page About Ad Scheduling covers the schedule options in detail.

Then build the schedule around reality:

1. **List the hours someone picks up the phone,** not the hours on the door. If the front desk at the dental office closes at 6 p.m. but the last person leaves at 5:30, the schedule ends at 5:30.
2. **Separate calls from forms.** A form or online booking can be answered tomorrow morning; a call cannot. A common approach is to let ads run a little longer than office hours while the call button (the call asset) follows its own, shorter schedule.
3. **Be honest about "24/7".** The HVAC company can run ads at 2 a.m. only if a technician or answering service really picks up and can dispatch. Otherwise the late-night budget is better spent during the day.
4. **Match the restaurant's moments.** For the Cuban restaurant, searches happen before lunch and before dinner, and on weekend mornings for breakfast. Ads at 4 a.m. buy curiosity, not tables.
5. **Review after a few weeks.** Google Ads shows results by day and hour. With enough data, you may lower bids in weak hours or raise them in strong ones (directly with manual bidding; smart bidding adjusts by time on its own).

> **What pros do:** they call the business from a mobile phone during the scheduled hours, a few times, on different days, just as a customer would. If the call goes to voicemail, rings forever or reaches someone who cannot help, they fix that before touching anything in Google Ads. The cheapest improvement in most local accounts is answering the phone.

Mobile and call-heavy searches

For many local services, a large part of the searches come from phones, often from people who want to call right now. Do not take that on faith for your own business: Google Ads shows your results by device, so after a few weeks you

will know your real split. But plan for mobile from the start.

- **A call button changes the game.** With call assets (see Writing Ads That Get the Click), someone can call straight from the ad without visiting your site. For urgent services this is often where most leads come from. At the time of writing, Google also offers ad formats built around the call itself, called call ads.
- **The page must work on a phone.** Fast loading, the phone number visible without scrolling, a short form. A page that looks fine on your office computer can be painful on a phone with weak signal in a parking lot.
- **Different devices, different intent.** Someone researching dental implants may compare options on a computer at night; someone with a broken AC calls from the phone at noon. The dental office may see more forms from computers and more calls from phones.
- **Device adjustments.** With manual bidding you can raise or lower bids by device. At the time of writing, a -100% adjustment excludes a device, and that one works with smart bidding too. Excluding phones is rarely wise for a local business; excluding tablets because of a few expensive clicks usually is not worth the effort.

Calls also need to be counted, not just received. How to track them, and how to tell a real lead from a two-second hang-up, is covered in Measuring Calls, Leads and Sales.

Language targeting for bilingual Miami

For years, Google Ads had a campaign-level language setting, and it seemed obvious to choose Spanish for a Spanish campaign. In Miami that often backfired, because many bilingual people have phones and Google accounts set in English while they search in Spanish. Google has since changed the rules: starting in September 2026, the campaign language setting no longer applies to ads on the Search Network. Google now matches ads to the

language of the search itself, preferring ads written in the same language as the query. At the time of writing, older articles (and some accounts mid-transition) still show the setting, so it helps to understand both.

Imagine a customer in Hialeah whose phone is in English searching "reparación de aire acondicionado hialeah." Under the old setting, a campaign restricted to Spanish speakers might not have reached him. Under the new rules, what decides is whether you have an ad written in Spanish for that Spanish search. The practical approach in bilingual markets is the same either way:

- **Write ads in both languages.** With the new rules, the language of your ad is what matches it to the language of the search. If your account still shows the old setting, include both English and Spanish instead of trying to sort people by it.
- **Let keywords do the sorting.** Spanish keywords in their own ad group or campaign, with ads written in Spanish. English keywords with English ads. Keywords Miami Customers Really Type covers how people actually search in Spanish and Spanglish.
- **Send Spanish searches to a Spanish page,** and make sure whoever answers the phone can switch languages. An ad in Spanish that leads to a page and a voice in English loses the customer at the last step.

The South Florida calendar: hurricanes, tourists and holidays

A campaign that runs the same way twelve months a year ignores how this region lives. The table shows the main moments. Dates are approximate, and how much each one matters depends on your business.

Moment	Roughly when	Who feels it	What to think about
Hurricane season	June 1 to November 30; the National Hurricane Center puts most activity between mid-August and mid-October	Home services, roofing, generators, insurance, restoration	A storm plan: pause before, specific ads after
Summer heat	The hottest months	AC repair and installation	Raise budget as demand climbs; stay inside your crew's capacity
Winter high season and snowbirds	Roughly late fall through spring	Restaurants, tourism, seasonal residents' services	More visitors; consider a separate traveler campaign
Art Basel Miami Beach	Early December	Restaurants, hospitality, events, Miami Beach businesses	Heavier competition and traffic around Miami Beach
Spring break, Calle Ocho festival, music events	Around March	Restaurants and nightlife; Little Havana in particular	Budget and schedule for crowds; plan for full capacity
Miami Spice	Usually August and September	Restaurants	Promote menus during a slower tourist stretch
Holidays	Thanksgiving, Nochebuena, New Year, Three Kings Day	Restaurants (orders), clinics (closures), services (slow weeks)	Schedule closures in advance; push pre-orders early

A little context on three of those dates. The National Hurricane Center dates the Atlantic season from June 1 to November 30 and marks September 10 as its statistical peak, though storms can form before and after the official dates. Art Basel Miami Beach has been held since 2002, in early December at the Miami Beach Convention Center, and anchors what is now called Miami Art Week. And the Calle Ocho Festival, started by Cuban exiles in 1978, takes over SW 8th

Street in Little Havana every March. For our example Cuban restaurant, that weekend is not a normal Saturday: the schedule, the budget and the kitchen all need to be ready for it.

A storm plan for your ads

When a hurricane approaches, offices close, crews prepare their own homes and phones go unanswered, but campaigns keep spending unless someone stops them. After the storm, demand can jump for repairs, water damage and AC service once power returns. Write the plan before the season:

- Who pauses or lowers the campaigns when a storm alert is issued, and from which device if the office is closed.
- Which ads and services go live after the storm, already written and approved, with honest, practical wording.
- How you will handle more calls than you can serve, so you do not pay for leads you cannot attend.

Keep the tone helpful. Google's ad policies on sensitive events list natural disasters among the events during which Google may restrict ads, with the stated aim of cutting insensitive or exploitative content. Customers also remember who tried to profit from a bad week. Plain information ("We are open, here is how to reach us, here is what we can fix") works better and keeps you within the rules.

For the budget side of seasonality, such as when to raise spending and how fast, see Budgets and Bidding. If you would rather have a team keep the map, the schedule and the storm plan up to date, see how our PPC management in Miami works. The next chapter moves to the map itself: Local Services Ads and Google Maps.

Key takeaways

- Use "presence" when you serve people who are here; consider "presence or interest" only when travelers planning a trip are real customers.
- Target the ZIP codes or areas you truly serve, remember that the City of Miami is not Miami-Dade, and exclude places you do not cover.
- Run ads, and especially call buttons, only when someone can answer. Pick Eastern Time when you create the account.
- In bilingual Miami, write ads and landing pages in both languages: Google now matches ads to the language of the search.
- Write a storm plan and a seasonal calendar before you need them: who pauses ads, what runs after a storm, which months to push.

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CHAPTER 8

Local Services Ads and Google Maps

Local Services Ads are the boxes that can appear at the very top of Google for searches like "AC repair near me" or "dentist in Doral": a business name, a rating, sometimes a verification badge, and a button to call or message. They work differently from the Search ads in the rest of this book. You pay per lead instead of per click, Google screens the business first, and reviews and answering the phone matter as much as money. This chapter explains how they work at the time of writing, how they relate to Google Maps and your Business Profile, and how a local business can combine them without paying twice for the same customer.

What Local Services Ads are

Local Services Ads are a separate ad product from the Search campaigns covered in earlier chapters. According to Google's getting started guide, leads arrive as phone calls and messages sent through your ad, and in the US customers can also request a booking. You manage them from a leads inbox where you can reply to messages, track bookings and pause the ad when you are too busy.

Three things make them different from everything else in Google Ads:

- **You pay per lead, not per click.** Someone who looks at your profile and leaves costs nothing. Someone who calls or messages you does.

- **Google screens the business first.** Before your ad runs with a badge, you go through checks that depend on your category and location.
- **There are no keywords.** You choose your category, the job types you do and the areas you serve. Google decides which searches show your ad.

They are only available for certain categories. At the time of writing, Google's US list includes many home services such as HVAC and plumbing, professional services such as lawyers and real estate, health categories such as dentists, and even several types of restaurant. Being on the list does not mean the product is available in your area, so check eligibility in Google's tool before planning around it. The list changes over time.

The Google Verified badge and screening

If you read older articles about Local Services Ads, you will see two badges: "Google Guaranteed" for home services and "Google Screened" for professional services. That has changed. Google's page About Google Verified badge explains that it simplified badging into a single **Google Verified** badge for all advertisers, and that it discontinued the Money Back Guarantee that came with the old Google Guarantee badge. So if a salesperson promises your customers a Google-backed money-back guarantee, ask them to show you the current terms.

To earn the badge, a business passes Google's screening and verification. The checks vary by category and location and can include business registration or license, insurance, reviews and, in some categories, background checks of the owner and of the workers who go into customers' homes. Depending on the industry and location, Google also checks that your Google Business Profile is claimed by you and matched to the ad account.

A few practical details from Google's help pages, as of this writing:

- **Pre-badge ads.** In many categories you can start receiving leads after passing preliminary checks while you finish the rest. Those listings appear below providers who already have the badge.

- **Not every category gets the badge.** Google notes that the badge is currently unavailable for auto, beauty and dining categories.
- **Health care has extra limits.** Booking leads and pre-badge ads are not offered for health care verticals, and in the US call recordings and lead credits are not available for them either. For our example dental office in Doral, that changes how much it can rely on the product to sort good leads from bad ones.

> **What pros do:** they start the verification paperwork before anything else, and they gather license, insurance and worker information in one folder. Verification is where most new Local Services accounts stall, not the ads themselves. A business that has its documents ready can be live much sooner than one that searches for them when Google asks.

How Local Services Ads rank: reviews and answering the phone

Local Services Ads still use an auction, but money is only one part of it. Google's page About ad rankings lists three groups of factors:

- **Your bid.** The most you are willing to pay for a lead. Google recommends letting it set bids automatically to get the most leads for your budget, and at the time of writing calls that mode "Maximize Leads."
- **How likely your ad is to produce a lead.** This includes your responsiveness (missed calls can hurt), what the person is searching for, and how relevant your services and profile are.
- **Profile quality.** Your rating, the number of reviews, your average response time, good photos and the verification checks you have completed.

Two of those are things money cannot fix: reviews and answering. Google's getting started guide is direct about it: if you regularly fail to answer calls or respond to messages, your ranking may suffer. For our example HVAC company in Hialeah, that means the person who answers the phone on a July afternoon is as important to the ad as the budget. Turning on message leads also helps for the hours when nobody can pick up.

Reviews for Local Services Ads are managed through your Google Business Profile, the same reviews people see on Maps. Asking every satisfied customer for a review is not a marketing extra; it is part of how this ad works.

Which leads you pay for, and what happens with bad ones

Google's page How leads work explains that you pay for *valid* leads, and describes what counts at the time of writing. Among them:

- A call you answer, or a missed call you return and connect.
- A missed call during your business hours where the customer stays on the line for more than 20 seconds.
- A text message, email or voicemail from the customer.
- A booking request, in the US and Canada.

You set an average **weekly** budget, not a daily one. A single week can spend more than that average, but Google says you will never spend more than the monthly maximum (the weekly budget times the average number of weeks in a month). Once you reach it, the ad stops showing for the rest of the month unless you raise the budget. Follow-up calls from the same customer within 15 days are not charged again.

What about bad leads: spam, wrong numbers, people looking for a job? Owners used to dispute them one by one. Today the process is largely automatic. Google says it filters out invalid activity before charging, then keeps reassessing charged leads and credits the ones its systems judge to be low quality. You can still rate each lead to give feedback. But there is an important change: at the time of writing, Google no longer gives credits for

leads about a job type you do not do or an area you do not serve. That makes your settings the real protection. If the HVAC company does not install new systems, that job type should be off; if it does not go to Homestead, Homestead should not be in the service area.

Local Services Ads vs Search ads

Owners often ask which one to use. They answer different questions, and many local businesses that qualify run both.

	Local Services Ads	Search ads
You pay for	Valid leads (calls, messages, bookings)	Clicks, including people who never contact you
Targeting	Category, job types and service areas; no keywords	Keywords, match types and negatives you control (see Match Types and Negative Keywords)
Where people land	Your Local Services profile, then call or message	Your own landing page (see Before You Spend a Dollar)
Trust signal	Google Verified badge, rating and reviews	Your ad text, assets and your page
Setup effort	Verification paperwork up front, then little to manage	Little paperwork, but ongoing work on keywords, ads and bids
Control	Low: Google matches searches to your profile	High: you choose searches, text, schedule and bids
Available to	Only certain categories and areas	Almost any legal business

A common pattern for eligible service businesses: Local Services Ads catch the "I need someone now" searches with a verified profile, and Search ads cover services, neighborhoods and Spanish searches that need more control, sending people to pages built for them. Keep an eye on the total: if both show for the same search, you may be paying to compete with yourself, which is why the next chapter insists on measuring leads by source.

Google Business Profile and the Maps results

Below the ads, Google usually shows a map with a few local businesses. That map pack is not an ad, and it is where a lot of local customers make their choice, especially for restaurants. It is fed by your **Google Business Profile**, the free listing with your name, address, hours, photos and reviews.

Google is unusually clear about how it ranks these results. Its page Tips to improve your local ranking names three main factors: **relevance** (how well your profile matches the search), **distance** (how far you are from the person searching) and **prominence** (how well known you are, including reviews and links from other websites). The same page states, "There's no way to request or pay for a better local ranking on Google."

That sentence matters when someone calls offering to "put you first on Maps" for a fee. What you can do is give Google complete, accurate information and earn real reviews:

1. **Claim and verify the profile,** and keep the owner login in your own hands, not only with a vendor.
2. **Choose the most specific primary category** and add secondary ones that are true.
3. **Keep hours exact,** including holidays and storm closures. A customer who drives to a closed door does not come back.
4. **Add photos** of the work, the team and the place. For the Cuban restaurant, photos of the actual dishes and the dining room do more than any slogan.
5. **Ask for reviews and answer them,** in the language the customer wrote in. A thoughtful reply to a bad review is read by every future customer.

Distance is the factor you cannot change. A dental office in Doral will rarely appear in the map pack for someone searching from Aventura, however good its profile. That is one place where paid ads help: they can reach people the free listing will not.

Location assets and Performance Max for local businesses

Two more pieces connect your ads to the map.

Location assets

If you link your Business Profile to Google Ads, your Search ads can show your address, distance and a link to directions. These location assets take their data from your Business Profile, and they can also let your ads appear in Google Maps. For businesses that want people to walk in, such as the restaurant or the dental office, they are a simple addition. One rule follows: fix your address, phone and hours in the Business Profile, because that is where the ads read them from. Writing Ads That Get the Click covers the other assets.

Performance Max, briefly

Performance Max is a campaign type in which Google's automation decides where your ads appear across its properties. Google announced its launch to all advertisers in November 2021 and said the older Local campaigns would be upgraded to Performance Max in 2022, which is why it now shows up in conversations about local advertising.

The trade-off is control. You give Google goals, a budget, creative and audience signals, and it decides the rest. For a local business, the honest list looks like this:

- **It can reach people beyond Search,** on other Google properties, which a small Search campaign never will.
- **It depends completely on good conversion tracking.** If it is told to find "conversions" and those are weak signals, it will find more weak signals.
- **You see less about where your money went** than in a Search campaign, although Google has added reporting over time.
- **It can overlap with what you already get,** such as people searching for your business name who would have found you anyway.

For most small local businesses, Performance Max is something to test after Search is working and measured, not a first step.

Putting it together for a Miami business

Here is how our three example businesses might combine these tools. These are illustrations of the thinking, not recommendations for any specific company; eligibility and costs depend on the area and change over time.

Business (example)	Business Profile and Maps	Local Services Ads	Search ads
HVAC repair, Hialeah	Complete profile, photos of jobs, steady reviews	Strong candidate if eligible: urgent searches, pay per lead, badge	Specific services, Spanish searches, ZIP codes the LSA settings miss
Dental office, Doral	Essential: patients compare ratings and distance	Possible if available in the area; note the health care limits on credits and recordings	High-value treatments with their own landing pages
Cuban restaurant, Little Havana	The main channel: photos, hours, reviews, menu	Check eligibility; the badge is not available for dining	A small campaign with location assets, for visitors and special dates

Whatever the mix, the order is the same: a solid Business Profile first, because it feeds everything else; then the paid tools that fit your category; then measurement, so you know which one actually brings customers. That last step is the subject of the next chapter, Measuring Calls, Leads and Sales. If you are still deciding between paying for visibility and earning it, our guide Google Ads vs SEO in Miami compares the two, and our PPC management in Miami page explains how we handle paid campaigns alongside the free listing.

Key takeaways

- Local Services Ads charge for valid leads (calls, messages, bookings), not clicks, and Google decides what counts as valid.
- At the time of writing, Google uses a single Google Verified badge; the old Money Back Guarantee has been discontinued.
- Ranking depends on your bid, your reviews and how reliably you answer. Missed calls hurt.
- There is no way to pay for a better position in the Maps results; that comes from a complete, active Business Profile and real reviews.
- Set service areas and job types carefully: Google no longer credits leads for jobs or areas you do not serve.

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CHAPTER 9

Measuring Calls, Leads and Sales

To measure Google Ads honestly, you have to follow the money past the click: to the call, the form, the appointment and, finally, the paying customer. Google will happily show you impressions, clicks and click-through rates, but none of those pays rent. This chapter explains what should count as a conversion, how to track and listen to calls, the difference between cost per lead and cost per customer, how to connect sales back to your ads, which numbers to review every week and month, and how to decide when a campaign should stop, be fixed or grow.

How to measure Google Ads: what counts as a conversion

In Google Ads, a **conversion** is whatever you tell Google is valuable. Google's own page About conversion measurement puts it simply: you choose what you identify as valuable, such as a purchase, a sign-up or a phone call. That freedom is the trap. Google will count whatever you choose, report it proudly, and, if you use smart bidding, spend your budget to get more of it.

The setup itself belongs in Before You Spend a Dollar. This chapter is about judgment: deciding what deserves to be counted. A simple test helps. For each action, ask: "Would I pay money for one more of these?"

Action	Count it as a main conversion?	Why
Phone call from the ad or the website, above a minimum length	Yes	For most local businesses, this is the lead
Completed contact or quote form	Yes	A person left a way to reach them
Appointment booked online	Yes	Often the most valuable action of all
Chat or WhatsApp conversation that asks for service	Yes, if you can track it reliably	Many Miami customers prefer messaging to calling
Online order (for example, restaurant takeout)	Yes, with its value	It is a sale, not just a lead
Visit to the contact page	No	Looking is not contacting
Time on site, pages viewed, scrolling	No	Engagement, not business
Click on "directions"	Only as a secondary signal	Useful for a restaurant, but many people never arrive

Google Ads lets you mark conversion actions as **primary** (used for bidding and in the main Conversions column) or **secondary** (recorded for observation only). Keep the soft signals as secondary. If you are using smart bidding, that choice is not cosmetic: Budgets and Bidding explains why the system optimizes for exactly what you count.

Tracking calls, and listening to them

For an HVAC company or a dental office, most leads arrive by phone, so call tracking is not optional. Google Ads can track calls in a few ways, described in its page About phone call conversion tracking: calls made directly from your ads (through call assets), calls to a Google forwarding number shown on your website to people who clicked an ad, and taps on the phone number on your mobile site. For the first two, you set a **minimum call length**, and only calls that last at least that long count as conversions.

Choose that minimum with care. Too short, and wrong numbers and robocalls count as leads. Too long, and a quick "Can you come today at 3?" that turned into a job is ignored. Look at your real calls: how long does a genuine first conversation usually take at your business?

Many businesses also use a separate call tracking service that assigns numbers by source and records calls. Recordings are the best quality-control tool in local advertising, because they show what the numbers cannot: whether the caller wanted what you sell, whether they spoke Spanish and got an English-only answer, whether the person on the phone gave a price and lost them.

Recording has a legal side, and Florida is strict. Section 934.03 of the Florida Statutes generally makes recording a call lawful when all parties have given prior consent, which is why recorded business lines here usually begin with a notice such as "this call may be recorded." Set up that notice before you record anything, and ask your attorney about your specific situation; this book is not legal advice. Note also that some platforms limit recordings in sensitive categories: Google's Local Services Ads, for example, do not offer call recordings for health care businesses in the US (see Local Services Ads and Google Maps).

> **What pros do:** they listen to a sample of calls every month, from the start of the call to the end, with a simple checklist: Was it a real customer? Was the service something we do? Did we answer in time and in their language? Did we book it? Ten calls a month will teach you more about your campaign than any dashboard.

Cost per lead vs cost per customer

Most reports stop at **cost per lead** (CPL): what you spent divided by the number of conversions. It is useful, but it is a halfway number. Leads are not equal. Ten calls from people asking whether you sell window units, and two

calls from homeowners whose central AC died, are twelve "leads" with very different value.

The number that tells you whether ads pay is **cost per customer**, sometimes called cost per acquisition: what you spent divided by the number of leads that became paying customers. Here is an illustrative month for our example HVAC company in Hialeah; the figures are invented to show the method:

Line	Illustrative figure	Calculation
Ad spend	$2,000	From Google Ads
Conversions recorded by Google	50	Calls and forms
Cost per lead	$40	$2,000 / 50
Real leads after reviewing calls	36	14 were spam, wrong service or duplicates
Leads that became paying jobs	12	From the lead sheet
Cost per customer	About $167	$2,000 / 12
Revenue from those jobs	$6,000	From invoices

A $40 lead sounds cheap, and a $167 customer sounds expensive, but neither means anything until you compare it with what a customer is worth after the cost of doing the job. That comparison is the heart of the budget method in Budgets and Bidding, and it is the only honest answer to "are my ads working?"

Following each lead to a sale

To get cost per customer, you need a record of what happened to each lead. A CRM does this well, but a shared spreadsheet is enough to start. What matters is that someone fills it in every day, not once a month from memory.

- **Date and time** of the call, form or message.
- **Source:** Google Ads, Local Services Ads, Maps, referral, repeat customer. Ask "How did you find us?" and also use tracking numbers, since people often misremember.
- **Name and phone or email.**
- **Service requested,** and whether it is one you offer.
- **Language** of the conversation.
- **Outcome:** booked, quoted, lost (with a reason: price, timing, no answer, out of area), or not a real lead.
- **Sale amount** when it closes.

For our example dental office in Doral, the sheet might reveal that implant consultations from ads close well, but cleaning inquiries mostly ask whether a specific insurance plan is accepted. That is not something Google can tell you. It might lead the office to state accepted plans on the landing page and spend less on general searches.

Sending sales back to Google: offline conversions

Once you know which leads became customers, you can tell Google. This is called **offline conversion import**, and Google describes it in Set up offline conversions using Google Click ID. The concept is straightforward:

1. When someone clicks your ad, Google adds an identifier to the page address, the GCLID (Google Click ID).
2. Your form or CRM stores that identifier next to the lead.
3. When the lead becomes a customer, you upload the sale with its identifier, by file or through an integration.
4. Google connects the sale to the click, the keyword and the campaign.

Google also offers enhanced conversions for leads, which matches sales using lead information such as an email address, sent in hashed (scrambled) form, in addition to the click identifier. According to Google's conversion help pages,

click identifiers must be uploaded within 90 days of the click.

Why bother? Because it changes what smart bidding chases. A campaign optimized for form fills learns to get form fills. A campaign that also learns which forms turned into paying jobs can lean toward the searches that produce real customers. This is more advanced work and needs some technical setup, so it usually comes after the basics are reliable. The technical plumbing also changes over time; Google's help pages already note changes to the technical route these uploads take, which is one more reason to describe the goal here and leave the click-by-click setup to the current documentation.

The numbers to review every week and month

You do not need fifty metrics. You need a short list, reviewed on a fixed day, written down so you can compare.

When	Number	What it tells you
Weekly	Spend vs plan	Whether the budget is behaving as expected
Weekly	Conversions and cost per lead	An early sign that something broke (tracking, phone line, page)
Weekly	Search terms	Wasted searches to add as negatives (see Match Types and Negative Keywords)
Weekly	Missed calls and response time	Leads you paid for and lost before the sale
Monthly	Real leads vs recorded conversions	How much of what Google counts is real
Monthly	Close rate from ad leads	Whether the problem is the ads or the sales follow-up
Monthly	Cost per customer and revenue from ads	Whether the campaign pays for itself
Monthly	Results by campaign, service and language	Where to move money

Clicks, impressions and click-through rate still matter, but as diagnostics. If calls drop, they help you find out why. They are not the result.

Attribution: why the numbers never match

Sooner or later, your spreadsheet and Google Ads will disagree. That is normal, and understanding why saves a lot of frustration.

- **Different dates.** Google attributes conversions to the date of the ad click, not the day the call or sale happened. A click on the 30th and a booking on the 2nd land in different months in each report.
- **Different credit rules.** A customer may click two of your ads before calling. Google's page About attribution models explains that data-driven attribution, which spreads credit across the ad interactions along the way, is the default for most conversion actions, while "last click" gives everything to the final click. At the time of writing, Google no longer supports the older first click, linear, time decay and position-based models.
- **Things Google cannot see.** The customer who saw your ad, did not click, and called a week later after a friend mentioned you. Or the one who found you on Maps.
- **Cross-device paths.** People often click on one device and contact you from another. Google reports cross-device conversions in its "All conversions" column, which is why that column can be larger than the main one.

The practical answer is not to chase a perfect match. Pick your own sheet as the source of truth for customers and revenue, use Google's numbers to steer inside the platform, and watch whether both move in the same direction month after month.

When to stop, fix or scale a campaign

Measurement only matters if it leads to decisions. Here is a simple framework, assuming tracking works and the campaign has had enough time and budget to produce real data (a few weeks of clicks is rarely enough to judge).

- **Stop or pause** a campaign, keyword or service when its cost per customer stays above what a customer is worth, after you have already tried fixing the obvious problems. Stopping is a decision, not a failure.
- **Fix first** when the leads are real but they are not closing (look at phone handling, follow-up speed, pricing), or when conversions are mostly junk (look at search terms, location settings and the minimum call length).
- **Hold** when results are acceptable but unstable. More data beats more changes.
- **Scale** what has stayed profitable for several weeks: raise its budget gradually, add closely related services or nearby ZIP codes, and keep checking that cost per customer holds as you grow.

Our example Cuban restaurant would use the same logic with different numbers: orders, reservations and catering requests instead of service calls. If a campaign brings reservations on weekends that are already full, it is not adding much, however good the conversion count looks.

The final chapter, Doing It Yourself or Hiring Help, covers what a good monthly report should contain if someone else manages your ads. And if you want help setting up this kind of tracking from the start, that is part of our PPC management in Miami. Leads that are not ready to buy today are worth keeping, too; our email marketing services page explains how a simple follow-up list keeps them from going cold.

Key takeaways

- Count as conversions only actions you would gladly pay for: real calls, completed forms, bookings, serious chats.
- Cost per lead is a halfway number. Cost per customer, from a simple lead-to-sale sheet, is the one that tells you if ads pay.
- Listen to a sample of calls every month, and in Florida get every party's consent before recording.
- Google and your own records will never match exactly; look for trends, not perfect agreement.
- Stop or fix when cost per customer stays above what a customer is worth; scale only what has stayed profitable for weeks.

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CHAPTER 10

Doing It Yourself or Hiring Help

Whether to hire a Google Ads agency or run the account yourself is less about talent than about time, attention and trust. Many owners manage their own campaigns well, especially for a single location; many others pay for months of clicks nobody is watching. This last chapter lays out what managing Google Ads really takes, how agencies and freelancers charge, the red flags that should end a sales conversation, the questions to ask before you sign, and what a good monthly report looks like. It closes with how we work at NexPhaz, and a few final words for the road.

The real time cost of managing Google Ads yourself

The setup is the part everyone sees: a weekend to research keywords, write ads and launch. The part nobody mentions is what comes after. A campaign left alone drifts: new search terms appear, competitors change bids, Google suggests "recommendations" that often widen your reach, and a broken form or phone line can waste a week of budget before anyone notices.

The table below gives rough planning figures for one owner running a small, single-location account. They are estimates to help you plan, not measurements, and a first-timer will take longer while learning.

Task	How often	Rough time	Covered in
Learning the platform and the basics of this book	Once, then ongoing	Several days spread over the first weeks	Chapter 1
Landing page, tracking and Business Profile	Once, then fixes	From a few hours to a few days	Chapter 2
Keyword research and campaign build	Once, then expansions	A day or two for a simple account	Chapters 3 to 5
Search terms and negative keywords	Weekly	Around an hour	Chapter 4
Checking spend, calls and anything broken	Several times a week	A few minutes each	Chapter 6
Lead sheet, cost per customer and decisions	Monthly	A few hours	Chapter 9
New ads, tests, seasonal changes	Monthly or seasonal	A few hours	Chapter 7

Put a price on those hours. If the owner of our example HVAC company in Hialeah spends them on the account, those are hours not spent on estimates, crews or customers in the middle of summer. Sometimes that trade is worth it, especially at the start, when learning how your own customers search is valuable in itself. Sometimes it is not.

A fair middle path exists, too: some owners build the basics themselves with this book, then hire help once the account is spending enough that mistakes become expensive, or the reverse, hiring help to set up correctly and then taking over the weekly routine.

Some signs that it may be time to get help, whichever way you started:

- You have not looked at the search terms report in more than a month.
- Spend is growing, but you cannot say what a customer from Google costs you.

- You accept Google's recommendations because you are not sure what they do.
- You want to add Spanish campaigns, new services or new areas and do not have the hours to build them properly.
- The account is busy enough that one bad week would hurt your cash flow.

None of these means you have failed. They mean the account has grown past the time you can give it.

Skills a Google Ads manager needs

Whoever runs your account, you or someone you hire, needs more than knowing where the buttons are. The skills that matter most:

- **Understanding your business.** What a customer is worth, which services make money, when the phones are answered, which neighborhoods you can reach. Without this, even an expert optimizes for the wrong thing.
- **Search intent.** Telling the difference between "AC repair Hialeah" and "how to fix AC myself," in English and in Spanish.
- **Discipline with settings.** Saying no to defaults and suggestions that widen reach without improving results.
- **Writing.** Clear ads and landing page text that match what people searched for.
- **Measurement.** Setting up conversion tracking correctly and reading it skeptically.
- **Patience.** Knowing when to change something and when to wait for more data.

Certifications help but are not the whole story. A Google Partner badge, for example, is awarded to companies that meet requirements in three areas, according to Google's page How to become a Google Partner: performance,

spend and certifications. It is a reasonable sign of experience, but because spend is one of the criteria, it reflects an agency's overall activity more than the attention a small account will get.

How a Google Ads agency charges

Agencies and freelancers usually price management in one of three ways. The ranges below are rough figures commonly seen in the US small-business market, not quotes, and they rise with the number of campaigns, languages and locations. Our guide on PPC cost in Miami covers the full budget in more detail.

Model	How it works	Rough range	Good for	Watch for
Flat monthly fee	A fixed amount for management, regardless of ad spend	Commonly from a few hundred to a bit over a thousand dollars a month for small accounts	Predictable costs; small and medium accounts	What is included, and how many hours that really buys
Percentage of ad spend	A share of what you spend with Google	Often around 10% to 20%, usually with a monthly minimum	Accounts that grow, where work grows with spend	It can reward spending more rather than spending better
Hybrid	A base fee plus a smaller percentage above a spend level	Varies widely	Larger or multi-location accounts	Make sure you understand the math at your expected spend

Setup fees, landing pages and call tracking software may be billed separately. None of these models is dishonest in itself. What matters is that you see the fee clearly, separate from what goes to Google.

Red flags when hiring Google Ads help

Google itself sets rules for agencies and other third parties that manage ads for clients. Its third-party policies ask them to be honest and transparent about their services, costs and expected results, and to avoid false, misleading or unrealistic claims. Its transparency requirements go further: a management fee must be disclosed to new customers in writing before the first purchase and on every invoice; where monthly reports are required, they must show costs, clicks and impressions, and agencies must "report the exact amount charged by Google, exclusive of any fees." Agencies must also give you your Google Ads customer ID when you ask for it. Those rules are a good starting checklist. Walk away, or at least slow down, if you see any of these:

- **You do not own the ad account.** If the account belongs to the agency, your history, data and conversion setup can stay with them when you leave. Ask that the account be in your business's name, with you as an admin. Google's page About access levels explains the levels, from email-only to admin; an admin can manage who has access.
- **Long lock-in contracts.** A short initial commitment can be reasonable, since setup takes work. Twelve months with heavy penalties, before you have seen a single report, is not.
- **No access to data.** "We send you a PDF" is not access. You should be able to sign in and look at your own account at any time.
- **Vague reports.** Impressions and clicks, with no calls, leads or cost per lead, and no explanation of what changed.
- **Hidden markup on ad spend.** If you pay the agency "for ads" and cannot see what Google actually charged, you cannot tell how much went to Google and how much stayed with the agency.
- **Guarantees.** "First position guaranteed," "100 leads a month guaranteed." Nobody controls the auction, your competitors or your phone handling. Promises like these are a sales tactic.
- **Pressure on budget before measurement.** Being pushed to raise spend before tracking works is a sign the incentives are pointing the wrong

way.

> **What pros do:** when they take over an account, the first thing they check is who owns it and who has admin access. Agencies often work through a manager account, which Google describes as an umbrella account linked to client accounts, and a manager account can be given ownership of a client account. That is normal and convenient, as long as you, the business, also keep admin access to your own account.

Questions to ask before you hire

Bring this list to the first call. A good agency or freelancer will answer each question plainly; vague answers are answers too.

1. Whose name will the Google Ads account be in, and will I have admin access from day one?
2. What is your fee, how is it calculated, and is it separate from what I pay Google? Do you add anything to the ad spend?
3. Is there a minimum contract, and what happens to the account and the data if I leave?
4. Who will actually work on my account, and how often?
5. How will you track calls and forms? Will I be able to listen to calls?
6. What will the monthly report include, and will we review it together?
7. What do you need from me (access, answers, approvals) and how fast?
8. How do you handle Spanish searches and bilingual customers?
9. What would make you recommend lowering my budget, or stopping?

The last question is the most revealing. Someone who has never told a client to spend less will probably never tell you either.

What a good monthly report contains

A report is not a pile of charts. It should answer three questions in plain language: what happened, why, and what changes next. For our example dental office in Doral, a useful monthly report might include:

Section	What it shows
Spend	What Google charged, shown separately from the management fee
Results	Calls, forms and bookings, with cost per lead, by campaign and service
Lead quality	How many leads were real, based on call review and your lead sheet
Business outcome	New patients or jobs from ads, and cost per customer, when you share sales data
Search terms	The main searches that brought leads, and the wasted ones that were blocked
Changes made	What was changed this month and why
Next steps	What will be tested or adjusted next month, and what is needed from you

If a report only ever shows good news, ask about the bad news. Every account has some.

How NexPhaz works

Since this book is published by an agency, it is fair to tell you plainly how we do it, so you can hold us to the same checklist. In our PPC management in Miami, the management fee is separate from your ad spend, with no hidden markups: you always see what goes to Google and what goes to management. The Google Ads account is opened in your name, with your company email or your Gmail, and you authorize us to manage it, so it stays yours if you ever leave. Reports cover spend, clicks, leads and cost per result, and we start with

a sensible budget and scale only once the numbers show it is working. We work in English and Spanish, which matters in a market where customers move between both.

What we do not do is promise results. Nobody can honestly promise what an auction, a market and a phone line will produce. What we can offer is a careful setup, honest measurement and regular work on what the numbers show. If you want to talk about your account, or have us look at a campaign you already run, you can contact NexPhaz.

Closing words

If you have read this far, you know more about Google Ads than most people who spend money on it. You know that the auction rewards relevance, not just money. That the work starts before the first dollar, with a page that loads, a phone that gets answered and tracking that counts real leads. That keywords are about intent, that negatives save more money than bids, and that a good ad answers the search in the customer's own words, in English or in Spanish.

You also know the less glamorous truths: that a budget is a dial you adjust with patience, that the map you target should match the roads your trucks drive, that a lead is not a customer, and that the most useful number in the whole account is the one you calculate in your own spreadsheet. None of it is magic. It is a trade, learned by doing, measuring and correcting.

Whether you run your ads yourself or hire help, keep the account in your name, keep your eyes on the numbers that pay the bills, and keep asking the question this book started with: is this money coming back? If you can answer that honestly every month, you are not wasting money on Google Ads. You are investing it.

Key takeaways

- Doing it yourself costs hours every week, not just a setup weekend. Count that time honestly.
- Whoever you hire, the Google Ads account should be yours, with you holding admin access.
- Google requires third parties to disclose management fees in writing and to report the exact amount Google charged, separate from their fees.
- A good report talks about calls, leads, customers and cost per customer, and says what will change next month.
- No one can honestly promise you results from ads. Ask for a plan, a measurement setup and a way out.

Sources and further reading

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NEXPHAZ SCHOOL

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