

## What is Remarketing Lists for Search Ads (RLSA)?

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Definitions: 'remarketing for Google Search', is known in the Google Ads interface as 'Remarketing Lists for Search Ads'. Which shortens to RLSA. So everywhere you see 'RLSA' in this article, we're talking about remarketing for search.

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You've probably heard of remarketing for the Google Display Network, where you place ads on websites around the internet. You visit some website, and they follow you around the internet for a while.

So what is remarketing for search? How can a search campaign follow you around the internet?

Well the answer is it doesn't.

Let's say you own a small used car store. If somebody is searching for you by name, "Rob Drummond's Super Sales Used Car Lot," then they're looking specifically for you, and the keyword should be affordable in a regular Google Search campaign.

But if they're just looking in a more general sense, they may search for "used cars", or "used car lot near me." Maybe those keywords are \$20 per click. Maybe they also doesn't convert well, because the person doing the search is just beginning to look. In marketing terms they're at the 'top of the funnel', and they're going to do multiple searches before they buy anything. They probably have every used car lot website in town open in different browser tabs.

So normally the keyword "used cars" might be too expensive to bid on in a regular Google Search campaign. But with remarketing for search, you're only advertising to people who search for "used cars", AND who are in your retargeting audience.

Maybe they're an old customer. Maybe they watched your YouTube video. Or maybe they visited your website recently. They've already seen, known, or interacted with you at least once, otherwise they wouldn't be in that list. The fact that they've seen your name and possibly remember you means they are a little more likely to take action. This allows you to bid on keywords that would otherwise be prohibitively expensive.

This doesn't mean the cost of the click will necessarily be cheaper. But it means you're advertising to a smaller pool of people, and the people who do click should be more likely to convert. You're being more focused in your advertising strategy, rather than just targeting people based on their search query.

## Create a Discovery Campaign

"How do I know what keywords to bid on?" is a question most people ask when setting up a Google Ads campaign. Of course the common answer is, "Do your keyword research." The trouble is, even very thorough keyword research often does not match what people search for in the real world, especially on a local level. The Google Keyword tool only gives you the broad strokes, and will never show you ALL of the terms that are entered into Google.

No matter how good of a job you do of keyword research, nothing beats real search query data. But it's going to take time to verify which keywords are actually viable for you to advertise on. So one of our favourite ways to speed up that learning process is to use an RLSA campaign that we call a 'Discovery campaign'...

Remember the scenario where somebody is searching for a very general term like "used cars", or a "used car lot"? That person was likely doing those searches over multiple days, or at least multiple hours in the same day. It's the same for any significant purchase. (Especially if your spouse is a co-decision maker!)

In your RLSA Discovery campaign you might enter 'used cars' in on broad match, which you could never do in a regular search campaign. At least, not without personally funding the Google Christmas party. You generally don't want to use broad match keywords in a normal Google Search campaign.

Broad match is the widest possible type of keyword targeting, and incidentally the default when you add keywords. With broad match Google will show your ads in unexpected places.

I (Jonathan) once worked with a local iPhone repair store. They were using loads of broad match keywords. When I looked at the search term reports, their ads had been showing for people searching for obscure commercial grade telco equipment.

Telco runs wires 100's of miles across the country, and installs telecoms boxes at the street corner of your neighbourhood. So when people were searching for that equipment, Google was showing ads for my local client's iPhone repair store. It was literally the broadest possible interpretation on the word 'phone'.

So we don't normally use broad match keywords in a regular search campaign. But if you use them in an RLSA campaign, Google is only going to advertise to the people who have already visited your website. It's an amazing way to find out what else those same people are searching for.

Which is an amazing keyword research tool. I also generally don't ever add negative keywords to the discovery campaign, because I'm advertising to people who have recently visited my site. If they click on my ad when they're searching for something completely unrelated, I'm fine with that. Essentially the RLSA ad interrupts them during a different search and reminds them to come back to my website.

(I DO add them as negative keywords in my other Google Search campaigns, where I'm targeting cold traffic).

## **Audience Minimums**

You need at least 1000 people in your remarketing audience before Google will let you run RLSA ads. On Google Display this number is only 100, which is why Display is usually a better place to start with remarketing.

Another way to use RLSA is to show people other things that you offer, or make them aware of additional services. If you were managing Yamaha's advertising account, then you might advertise motorbikes to people who had previously looked at keyboards.

Obviously Yamaha is an extreme example – most product portfolios are not so diverse. But your customers pay less attention to your products and services than you do. Often they'll go elsewhere simply because they don't believe you offer something. With RLSA you're catering to the blind spots that they might not have thought of.

If you've got more than say 1,000 visits a week, then you could create an overall list of people who've been on the website and haven't converted. That's still useful because you can then start to make them aware of

the different things you offer, and you can bid on keywords that normally would be too broad or too expensive.

## **Bid adjustments only**

You can also use RLSA raise your bids if a previous website visitor searches again for one of your primary keywords. So now you're targeting with regular keyword-based targeting, but then layering a bid modifier on top. If somebody is in your audience of people who've been on the website recently, you might want to raise your bid.

You can make these bid-only adjustments in all your regular Google Search campaigns. If somebody searching for one of your primary keywords has already been on your website, it makes intuitive sense to raise your keyword bid. That person is likely to be thinking of placing an order. They're a hotter prospect.

Hot traffic is actually more important than cheap traffic. We're not just trying to find the cheapest traffic, we're trying to find the hottest traffic and make it hotter. If those clicks are expensive then that's not the worst thing, because it's harder for your competitors to copy.

## **Competitors can't copy your strategy**

If you're making use of RLSA, it's impossible for a competitor to look at your ad history and deconstruct your search strategy. In fact, you can really confuse your competition, because they'll wonder how you're managing to bid on such expensive keywords.

As a general trend, Google is edging more and more towards audience targeting, where you target people based on who they are, what they're interested in, and what they've done recently. RLSA combines audience targeting with traditional keyword targeting. Which at scale is a powerful combination.

If your ads strategy extends to Bing, then you should be aware that Bing has a remarketing for search option too.

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Got questions about RLSA? Something we didn't cover? Email [info@mazemastery.com](mailto:info@mazemastery.com). Please pass on to friends and colleagues.