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# The Google Ads Audit Checklist

Find out where your ad budget is leaking – in 15 minutes flat



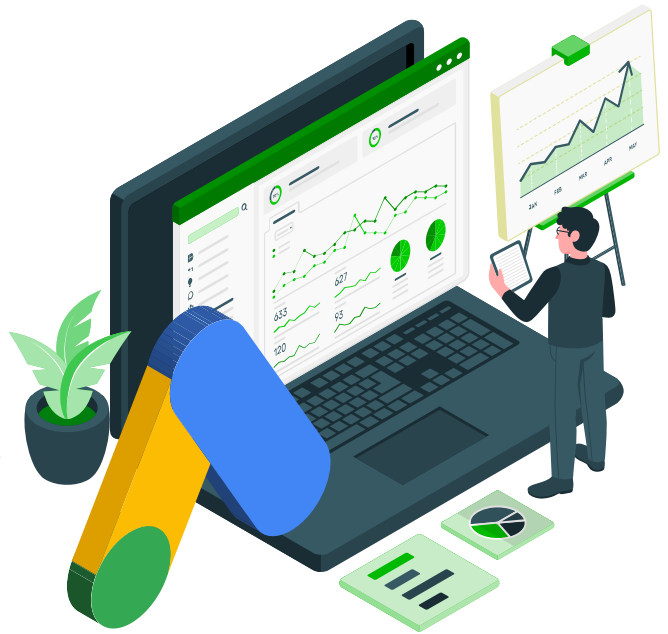
# The Google Ads Audit Checklist

## Find out where your ad budget is leaking — in 15 minutes flat

Most Google Ads accounts have 20–40% of their budget going to waste. We know because we audit them every week. The good news? Most of that waste is fixable once you know where to look.

This checklist walks you through the same first-pass audit our team runs before we quote any new client. Tick each item honestly. Your final score tells you whether your account needs a tune-up or a rebuild.

How to use it: Open your Google Ads account in another tab. Work through each section. Don't guess — if you're not sure, mark it as a "no."



### Section 1 Account Foundations

Before tactics, get the basics right. These checks take five minutes and reveal more waste than any other section.

- Conversion tracking is firing correctly (tested in the last 30 days using Google Tag Assistant)
- Enhanced conversions are enabled
- GA4 is linked to your Google Ads account
- Auto-tagging is turned on
- Conversion actions are categorised as Primary or Secondary (not all set to Primary)
- Account-level negative keyword lists exist and are applied to all relevant campaigns
- Your account goals connect to real business outcomes (revenue or qualified leads), not vanity metrics like clicks or impressions

**Common Mistake We See:** Conversion tracking that "worked when we set it up." Google updates, GTM changes, and site migrations break tracking constantly. If you haven't tested in 30 days, assume it's broken.

## Section 2 Campaign Structure

Messy structures cost money. Every campaign should have one job.

- Each campaign covers one clear theme, not five different products lumped together
- Search and Display campaigns are separated (never mixed)
- Locations are set to "Presence" — not "Presence or Interest"
- Language targeting matches your actual customers
- Ad schedule reflects when leads convert, not just when traffic arrives
- Budgets are allocated by campaign priority, not split evenly across all campaigns

**Common Mistake We See:** "Presence or Interest" is Google's default for locations. It serves your Sydney ads to anyone interested in Sydney — including someone in Perth researching a holiday. Switch to "Presence" and watch your wasted spend drop overnight.

## Section 3 Keywords & Match Types

This is where most waste hides. The search terms report is the single most valuable screen in Google Ads.

- You've reviewed the search terms report in the last 7 days
- Match type mix is intentional — not 100% broad match by default
- Negative keywords are added weekly, not yearly
- Branded and non-branded campaigns are separated
- Competitor keyword campaigns (if any) are tracked separately and have their own ROI target
- Single keyword ad groups or tightly themed ad groups — not 50 unrelated keywords per group
- Duplicate keywords across campaigns have been resolved

**Common Mistake We See:** Broad match got smarter in 2024–2025, but it still serves irrelevant terms when your signals are weak. We've seen accounts spending thousands on broad match keywords for "free" versions of paid services. Always pair broad match with strong negatives and tight conversion data.

## Section 4 Ads & Creative

Your ads are the only thing your customers actually see. Treat them like it.

- Every ad group has at least one Responsive Search Ad
- RSAs use all 15 headlines and 4 descriptions
- Asset strength rating is "Good" or "Excellent"
- Pinning is used strategically, not on every asset
- Sitelinks, callouts, and structured snippets are active
- Call extensions are added (with call tracking)
- Location extensions are connected to your Google Business Profile
- Lead form extensions are tested where relevant
- Image and video assets are uploaded
- You have a documented ad testing cadence (not "set and forget")

**Common Mistake We See:** Over-pinning. We see accounts with every headline pinned to position 1, then wondering why their ad strength is "Poor." Pin one or two non-negotiable headlines. Let Google test the rest.

## Section 5 Performance Max & Smart Bidding

PMax is powerful when you steer it. Dangerous when you don't.

- PMax asset groups are segmented by theme or product line
- Audience signals are added (don't rely on Google's exploration alone)
- Brand campaigns are excluded from PMax — or brand exclusions are configured
- Account-level negatives apply to PMax campaigns
- Your bidding strategy matches campaign maturity (Manual CPC for new, Maximise Conversions next, then tCPA or tROAS once you have data)
- Bid strategy hasn't been changed in the last 14 days (let it learn)
- Target CPA or ROAS targets are based on real numbers, not aspirations

**Common Mistake We See:** Setting a tCPA target 50% below your current CPA and wondering why volume tanks. Smart bidding works inside the bounds you set. Drop targets in 10–15% increments, not 50%.

## Section 6 Landing Pages & Conversion Path

The best ad in the world can't save a broken landing page.

- Your ad headline and landing page headline match
- Landing page loads in under 2.5 seconds on mobile (Core Web Vitals: LCP)
- Page is mobile-friendly with no horizontal scrolling
- One clear primary CTA above the fold
- Form length matches the offer (short for low-commitment, longer only when needed)
- Phone numbers are clickable on mobile (tel: links)
- The thank-you page is tracked as a conversion
- Trust signals are visible: ratings, partner badges, testimonials

**Common Mistake We See:** Sending all ad traffic to the homepage. Your homepage is for everyone. Your landing page should be for the exact person who clicked that exact ad.

## Section 7 Reporting & Optimisation Cadence

Set-and-forget is how accounts decay. Hygiene is what keeps them sharp.

- Weekly account check-ins are scheduled and documented
- Search terms are reviewed weekly
- Negative keywords are added weekly
- Monthly performance review against goals
- Quarterly strategy review (not just performance review)
- Attribution model is reviewed and matches your sales reality
- You can answer "what changed and why" for the last 30 days

**Common Mistake We See:** Reviewing performance without context. Performance dropped 20% — was it seasonality, a Google update, a tracking break, or a competitor change? Without documented changes, you're guessing.

## Your Score

Count your ticks out of 50.

**0 - 20**

**Your account is likely losing serious money**

Most accounts in this range have 30%+ waste. The fixes aren't complicated, but they need to happen quickly.

**21-35**

**Decent foundation, real opportunities**

Your account is functional but leaving growth on the table. A focused optimisation sprint usually unlocks 15-25% more performance.

**36-50**

**Strong hygiene — time to scale.**

You're past the basics. Now the conversation is about experimentation, new channels, and growth.

## Sydney Bonus Round

Three extras for Australian accounts specifically:

- ✓ Currency is set to AUD (not USD)
- ✓ GST is handled correctly in conversion values (revenue ex-GST in most cases)
- ✓ Geo-targeting matches your service area (Sydney metro vs NSW vs Australia)

### Want us to run this audit for you?

We've audited thousands of accounts for Sydney businesses since 2008. We've managed \$115M+ in Google Ads spend. We're a Google Premier Partner — top 3% globally.

If you scored under 35 — or you don't have the time to action what you found — book a free audit. We'll run this same checklist (plus another 100+ checks we don't share publicly) and send you a clear, prioritised action plan. No obligation. No sales waffle. Just the report.

[BOOK YOUR FREE AUDIT →](#)

