



Tapping into Mobile App Installs

Building a Valuable User Base for Your App

Introduction

If your business has an app, or you're planning to launch one, you've probably spent a lot of time thinking about the unique value it offers. Does it make a user's life easier with ridesharing to parties? Help him buy with just a single click? Or simply entertain him as he taps a flying squirrel through digital treetops?

Whatever your app does, you want it to be found. This white paper will show you how to use AdWords to build a valuable user base for your app and promote your app to users: as they're playing, watching, searching, shopping, and yes — even as they're flying through treetops.

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Estimate the Value of an App Install

Key Takeaway

- Estimate how much an app user is worth to your business.
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Every good app starts with an audience that you want to reach. Your ideal user — age, gender, interests — should be carefully defined.

Once you have a target audience in mind, estimate how much a user is worth to your business. That number will inform the amount you should spend to acquire that user, or cost per install (CPI).

Let's start by determining the full "lifetime value" of an install for your app.

Example: Here's a calculation for a flying squirrel game that sells power-ups like acorn boosters and super-fluffy tails as in-app purchases, as well as T-shirts and collectibles through physical retail store partnerships.

- Total in-app purchases for 1 year: \$5
- Estimated in-store purchases for 1 year: \$5
- Estimated word-of-mouth referrals: 10%

$\$5 + \5 gives you \$10 in total sales. Multiply that by 1.1 (the 10% gained by word of mouth) and you get $\$10 \times 1.1 = \11 . That's the average lifetime value of an install, or the maximum you can pay for an install while remaining profitable.

For extra credit, think about how this user value could potentially differ by region (English-speaking versus other countries) or by operating system (Android versus iOS). Then adjust your estimates for each segment. You can update these values and your CPI targets as you build and analyze your user base.

Create Compelling Ads and an App Store Page

Key Takeaway

- Develop ads and an app store page that clearly describe your app's value.
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It turns out that 60% of apps have never been downloaded.¹ That's a daunting number. So once your app is launched, how can you let folks know about it?

¹ Source: New Relic, 2013

Tip:
Things to include when estimating the value of an install: in-app purchases, website orders, in-stores purchases, and ad publishing revenue.

Tip:
When defining a user's lifetime, think about how long it takes before a user decides to abandon your app. In this example, we estimate that it's a year.

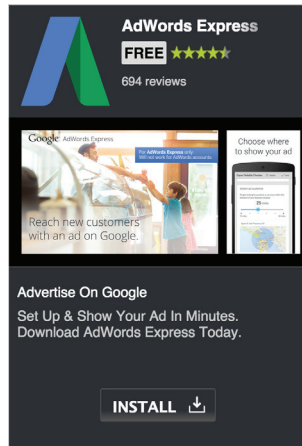
Tip:
Some advertisers may track word-of-mouth and in-store purchases influenced by their apps. If you have access to this data, include them in your projections.

Tip:
More downloads will boost your rank in the app stores, so that your app will be more easily discovered by users, which leads to even more downloads.

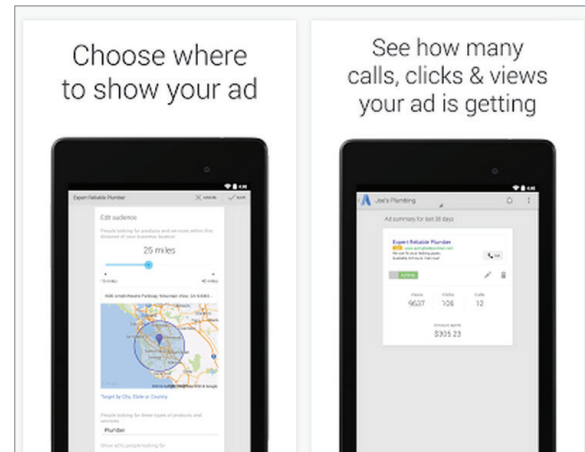
First and foremost, create ads and an app store page that clearly show how your app can meet people's needs. That way, you can attract users who are more likely to download and engage with your app.

Create ads that hone in on one unique selling point (e.g., Easy to Use) and include a clear call-to-action (e.g., Install).

Then create an app store landing page that reinforces your ad messaging, mentioning one key point per screenshot along with concise descriptions and video previews that speak to your target users.



Ad was created using the App Ad Template for the Google Display Network.



[Screenshots from the Google Play Store](#)

Enable App Conversion Tracking

Key Takeaway

- Check that you're accurately tracking & attributing installs.

Make sure that you're able to track the installs driven by your AdWords campaigns. You can measure AdWords performance reliably by installing the [AdWords conversion tracking SDK](#) onto your app, which counts only confirmed installs and doesn't rely on estimation to attribute conversions. Any new ad formats and features in AdWords are usually first supported by the SDK before any other tracking option. By having this SDK in your app, you'll be able to test and report on the latest features sooner.

If you're using a third-party analytics solution to track conversions, check that their server-to-server API notifications are [set up](#) and reporting accurately for AdWords.




Once conversions are automatically tracked (either with the SDK or server-to-server API notification), AdWords will automatically exclude users who already have your app installed from seeing your app install ads.

Promote Broadly to Drive App Installs

Key Takeaway

- Reach all potential users for your app across display, search and video.

Your app promotion strategy should reach every potential user, whatever they happen to be doing on their devices.

MEET THE ADWORDS APP PROMO TEAM	 Display Reaches 900M unique devices per month. ²	 Search Over 100B searches on Google per month. ³	 YouTube Average user is 2x more likely to download apps. ⁴
REACH PEOPLE AS THEY...	Use apps on their mobile devices	Look for something related to your app	Watch videos and listen to music
WITH ADS IN...	Other apps that show ads to their users	The Google app & Google.com on a mobile browser	YouTube's mobile app

Display, Search and YouTube: let's look at how to succeed with each.

The DISPLAY Formula for Success:

Conversion Optimizer + Broad Targeting + App Install Ad Template

Tip:

Set a daily campaign budget that's at least 50x your CPI target. For Conversion Optimizer to achieve your CPI target on a daily basis, it needs at least 50 installs a day to have enough training data.⁵

Step 1: Enable the Conversion Optimizer. When setting up your mobile app installs campaign for the Google Display Network, pick the bid strategy that will “Focus on installs ([Conversion Optimizer](#)).” Note that [app conversion tracking](#) must be enabled for your account before you can use this. Conversion Optimizer will save you time, automatically adjusting your CPC bids using information about the user and device to predict how likely a click will become a conversion.

² Source: Internal AdMob data, 2014

³ Source: Internal Google data, 2013









⁴ Source: YouTube Global Audience Study, IPSOS 2013

⁵ Internal Google data, 2014

Step 2: Start with broad targeting. When creating an ad group for your campaign, choose the option: “Show my ads to all potential app users.” Limit your campaign to only one ad group while running the Conversion Optimizer. This single, broadly-targeted ad group will let the Conversion Optimizer bid on all eligible auctions across the entire network, reaching as many potential users possible at your target CPI.

Once you’ve accrued conversion data, you can identify placements that are driving enough profit and traffic to justify separating them into another ad group. For example, you could set a higher target CPI with Conversion Optimizer and try to get even more valuable users from these placements.

First, click on “See details” in the “Display Network” tab to see placement-level reporting: Then sort by conversions to see which mobile apps are driving performance.

Campaigns Ad groups Settings Ads Keywords Audiences Ad extensions Dimensions Display Network											
<div> <div>←</div> <div>Filter ▾</div> <div>Columns ▾</div> <div>⬇</div> </div> <p>Your ads appeared on the placements listed below. You can add a placement from the list to your managed placements, or you can exclude a placement if you'd like to prevent your ad from appearing on that placement.</p> <p>Your ad might be shown on a specific placement depending on your campaign settings and the targeting methods you've added to your campaign. Learn more</p> <div> <div>Exclude placements</div> <div>Manage placement and bid</div> </div>											
<input type="checkbox"/>	URLs	Ad group	Campaign	Clicks 	Impr. 	CTR 	Avg. CPC 	Avg. CPM 	Cost 	Converted clicks 	Value / converted clicks 
<input type="checkbox"/>	Mobile App: Jumping Ducks (Google Play), by Acme Games	Flying Squirrel (App Install Ads)	Flying Squirrel - Display	2,715	914,465	0.30%	\$0.19	\$0.56	\$515.32	47	\$5.37
<input type="checkbox"/>	Mobile App: Hopping Puppies (Google Play), by Acme Games	Flying Squirrel (App Install Ads)	Flying Squirrel - Display	2,309	186,661	1.24%	\$0.22	\$2.66	\$497.43	34	\$5.16

Placement level reporting in the Display Network tab

Step 3: Use the App Install Ad Template. This template pulls data directly from your app store page (icon, ratings, screenshots) creating ads that automatically renders across all available ad sizes on the display network. That means your ad will automatically change size based on where it’s eligible to appear.

If you choose to upload your own images using the Image App Promotion Template instead, make sure to include the network’s most common ad sizes: 320x50, 320x480, 480x320, 768x1024, and 1024x768. The more [ad sizes](#) you can cover, the more potential users you can reach.

CASE STUDY: Pocket Gems

Mobile game developer **Pocket Gems** launched app install campaigns on the Google Display Network to promote their latest game Episode. The campaigns delivered impressive return on investment while driving significant volume. As a result, Pocket Gems was able to scale their display campaigns in AdWords, getting 300% more installs while maintaining a CPI of less than \$1.

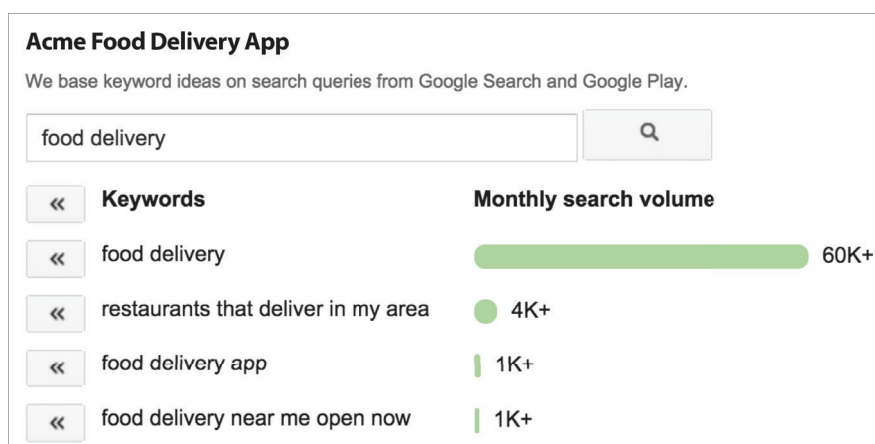
The SEARCH Formula for Success:

Keyword Suggestion Tool + Broad Match + Target CPA Bid Strategy

Step 1: Use the keyword suggestion tool. When setting up a “mobile app installs” campaign, create an extensive keyword list to reach as many potential users for your app on Google Search. Let’s say your app offers food delivery service. The Keyword Suggestion Tool uses search data from Google Play and Google Search to come up with all the related search terms people might be using to search for your app. Give it a term like food delivery and it can suggest related terms like *food delivery app* or *restaurants that deliver*.

Tip:

Include popular search terms suggested by the keyword tool in your ad copy. Since AdWords will automatically feature your app’s name in the headline of your search ad, focus on creating compelling copy for your description lines to attract potential users.



Suggestions from the keyword suggestion tool

Check other potential sources for seed keywords: your app’s metadata (keywords, titles, descriptions) in your [app developer’s console](#) or keywords from standard search campaigns.

CASE STUDY: FarFaria

FarFaria, a leading children’s e-book app, used the Keyword Suggestion Tool to expand the keyword list for their app install campaigns. They unlocked 30% more app downloads while maintaining a cost-per-install that was 50% below other mobile networks.

Tip:

Gain more control over how you bid and advertise on keywords where you want to be more targeted, like your brand or app name, by setting them to exact and phrase match as well.

Step 2: Start with broad match. Since you’re trying to reach users with high intent — people looking for you and your app — start off by using [broad match](#) for your keywords, so that your ads can be triggered against as many relevant searches as possible. You can then review the [search terms reports](#) to understand what keywords people are using to find you.

After launching your keywords, identify top-performers and enter those into the Keyword Suggestion Tool for another round of keyword ideas to test.

Tip:

If you're also running standard search campaigns for your mobile site, let your users choose between your site or your app by using [app extensions](#) for your text ads.

Step 3: Use the Target CPA bid strategy. This bid strategy is a feature in AdWords that will automatically adjust your bids to acquire as many conversions possible while reaching your cost-per-acquisition target. The main advantage of using this strategy is that it will begin optimizing for you right out of the gate; you don't need to wait to accumulate conversion history.

Note: If you're promoting an iOS app, you can use the Maximize Clicks bid strategy since these installs are manually tracked.

The YOUTUBE Formula for Success:

Engaging Video + Targeting Groups + Cost-per-View Bidding

Step 1: Make an engaging video. The video ad format gives you an opportunity to attract users by showing your app in action. You can create video ads targeting users of the YouTube app by creating an [AdWords for video](#) campaign.

CASE STUDY: Machine Zone

Machine Zone, a leading mobile game developer, found that users who download their app "Game of War" from YouTube are 15% more valuable than those from any other video platform.

Under the Ad Formats section of your campaign, choose the option: "Use video ad formats optimized for mobile app promotion." This lets you use the [TrueView ad format](#) to promote your app. With this format, you pay only when a viewer watches your video (either to the end of your video or to the 30 second mark, whichever comes first). That helps you make sure your ad dollars go to those who are really interested.

When using this format, make the first five seconds of your video ad count. Viewers can skip TrueView ads after that, so you have a small window to truly captivate them. If your flying squirrel character is hilarious, get him in there for those first five seconds. Then make sure you include a strong call-to-action, like "Download to Play Now."

Tip:

You can also create [remarketing lists](#) based on people who've viewed your video ad. Use these lists for future TrueView campaigns or campaigns on the display network.

Step 2: Create extensive targeting groups. As you set up your video campaign, you'll be asked to create targeting groups. In each group, you can specify whether to target your TrueView ads by specific interests (users interested in certain categories even if they're viewing videos about other things) or topics (as users are watching videos on specific topics regardless of what interest categories they might fall into).

You want to create enough targeting groups that will give you full coverage of your target audience. But limit each targeting group to only one or two targeting options — the more options you add, the more you restrict traffic to your ads. Say you want to reach all females interested in gaming for your flying squirrel app. You can set up two targeting groups: one to show your ads to females interested in games, and another one targeting videos on the topic of gaming. These two groups combined will give you full coverage of your intended audience.

Step 3: Optimize your Cost-per-View (CPV) bids. AdWords will offer you a recommended CPV when you set up your online video campaign. Start with that, paying close attention to app installs and your effective CPI to adjust your CPV bids accordingly.

Suppose your target CPI is \$5. You observe that video 1 has a low average CPV (\$0.12) but delivers only 80 conversions, for an effective CPI of \$5.70 while video 2 has a higher CPV (\$0.15) but drives a total of 200 conversions, for an effective CPI of \$3.82. You should probably raise your CPV bid on video 2 to reach more users and lower the CPV bid for video 1 and get it closer to your \$5 CPI target.

Tip:

Not every view of your video costs you money. You aren't charged for viewers who quit before they reach the end of your video (or the 30-second mark, whichever comes first). But these people could still install your app. Factor those view-through conversions when you calculate the effective CPI for YouTube.

	Views	Avg CPV	Total Cost	View-Through Conversion	Effective CPI
VIDEO 1	3,802	\$0.12	\$456.24	80	\$5.70 Bid Down
VIDEO 2	5,097	\$0.15	\$764.55	200	\$3.82 Bid Up

Analyze and Optimize for Lifetime Value

Key Takeaway

- **Start with broader targeting and then fine tune around high value users.**

Once a good number of installs start rolling in, assess your campaign results.

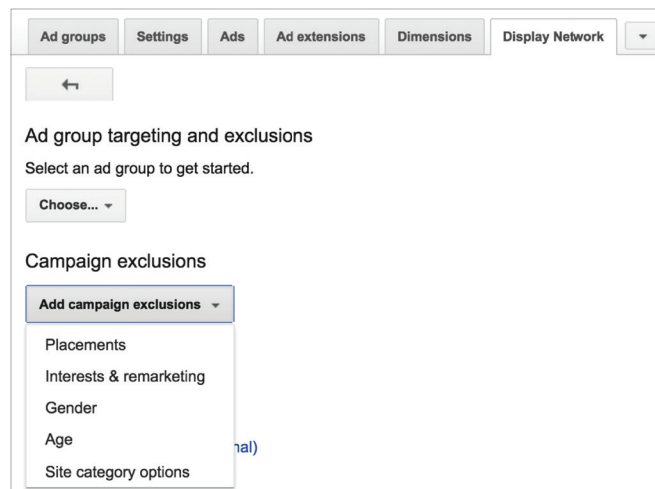
Before diving into the data, recognize how various media channels attribute installs to their campaigns. You risk misinterpreting results when you compare channels that use different attribution rules. If using a third-party analytics solution, familiarize yourself with their attribution rules. How do they report an install from a user that has viewed or clicked on ads from different sources?

For instance, AdWords defaults to a 30-day click-through conversion window. That means an install is counted if it happens within 30 days of an ad click. Other channels may use only a 7-day window, or they may automatically count view-through conversions — installs that occur after a user sees an ad but doesn't click it. Make sure you compare apples to apples as you assess campaigns.

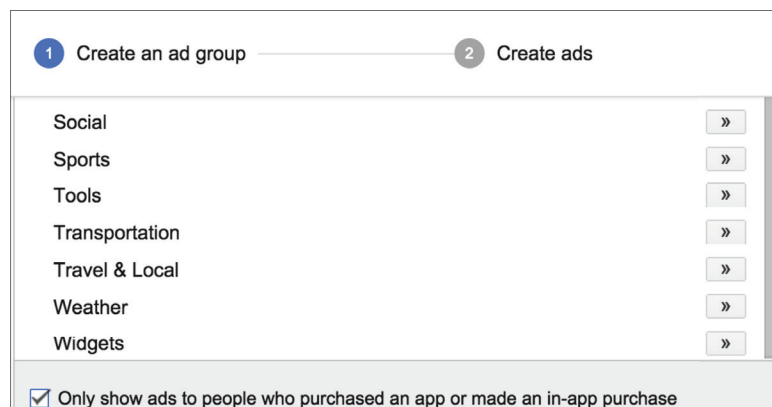
When analyzing performance, look for ways to generate even more of the things you want:

- **More downloads.** To win more downloads, you can optimize your bids or creative:

- **Budgets and bids.** First, check if you're not running out of budget mid-day. If your search or display campaigns are losing [impression share](#) due to budget, think about increasing the daily limit. Next, determine where valuable users are coming from and bid up to see if you can drive even more valuable downloads from those particular parts of your campaigns.
- **Creative testing.** Test different ads, videos and app store creative (icons, screenshots, descriptions).
- **Better CPI.** If you're not getting the CPI you want, try more specific targeting. Test and find traffic sources that can bring more valuable users into your app. Exclude the parts that don't.
- **Display:** If you found that a category you tested isn't converting or driving enough return, bid down on this target or use exclusions. Then you can filter out categories or placements (specific apps) that aren't working for you. You can do this by clicking **+ Targeting** under the "Display Network" tab:



You can also target your display ads to people that have paid for an app (if you're promoting a paid app) or made an in-app purchase (if promoting a free app that monetizes using in app upgrades).



- **Search:** Add negative keywords to prevent your ads from showing for queries that aren't converting. If you learn that people who search for "fast food" don't tend to download your dining app, you can use the negative keyword function to block your ad from showing up for that query.

Then consider adding more precise match types (exact and phrase match) for your high volume keywords, so that you can manage their bids and ads more closely.

- **YouTube:** Add [negative targets](#) or pause targeting groups that aren't doing well for you.

Conclusion

Building a great app is the easy part. It's getting your app discovered that's the hard part. Promoting your app across display, search and video connects you with users as they're using other mobile apps, looking for things, and entertaining themselves across all their devices.

But that's only half the journey. Once you've convinced them to install, you've got to keep them coming back for more acorn boosts and fluffy tail power ups.

Check out our [Best Practices Guide](#) on driving app engagement.

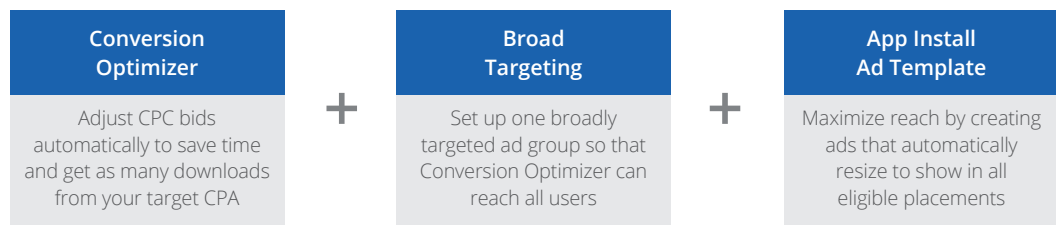
If you'd like to learn more about promoting your mobile app, including how to set it up in your account, visit the [related article](#) in the AdWords Help Center.

To view other Google Best Practices, check out the full collection at g.co/GoogleBP.

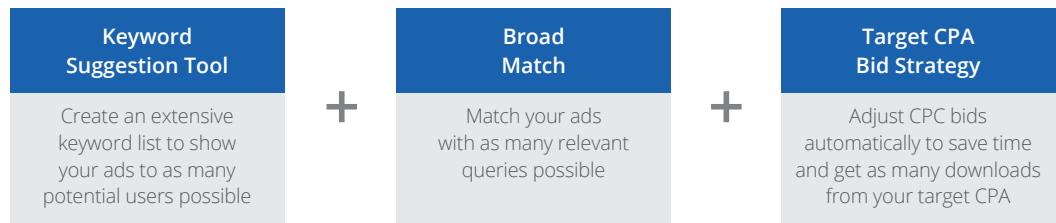
Here's a summary of the best practices for driving mobile app downloads using AdWords. You can download this checklist [here](#).

- 1 Estimate how much an app user is worth to your business.
Why: Know the maximum limit you can spend per install while remaining profitable.
- 2 Develop ads and an app store page that clearly describe your app's value.
Why: Attract qualified users who will download and engage with your app.
- 3 Check that you're accurately tracking and attributing installs.
Why: Measure the effectiveness of your app install campaigns based on reliable conversion data.
- 4 Promote your app broadly across display, search, and video.
Why: Reach all potential new users while they're using other apps, looking for you, and consuming media on their devices.

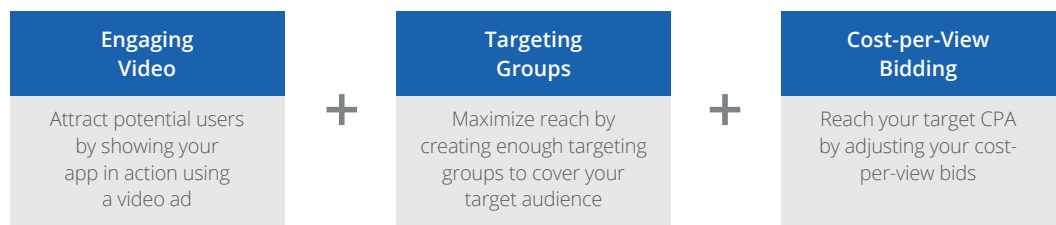
The DISPLAY Formula for Success



The SEARCH Formula for Success



The YOUTUBE Formula for Success



- 5 Start with broader targeting and then fine tune around high value users.
Why: Look for ways to generate more of the types of users that you want for your app.

To view the full guide on driving mobile app downloads and other Google Best Practices, check out the full collection at g.co/GoogleBP.