

A collage of holiday-themed items including yellow gift boxes with red ribbons, white sneakers, green mesh watches, and red lipstick, all set against a blue background.

Google Ads Academy: Holiday 2024 Best Practices

Key Takeaways

Unwrap full-funnel YouTube strategies

Discover how to leverage the full potential of YouTube to inspire shoppers, delight viewers and drive sales. Learn about various video formats designed to guide potential customers through the entire purchase journey, from awareness to conversion.

KEY INSIGHTS



Creative is the dominant ROI driver across all media platforms¹. Yet holiday is the most difficult time of the year to stand out among competitors in an increasingly crowded retail space.



YouTube's influence cuts down the average online video shopper's journey by 6 days². From inspiration to purchase, the entire shopping journey unfolds on YouTube. And when shoppers are on YouTube, they are deciding faster.



Don't wait until the end of the season to know if your campaign is working. YouTube is uniquely positioned to deliver real-time feedback on how your creative is resonating with key audiences.

SOLUTIONS



Adopt [ABCD best practices](#) to maximize impact and review the [holiday readiness checklist](#):

- Improve performance by aligning bids to KPIs.
- Ensure multiple creative variants (:06s, :15s, :30s) for each creative message you have.
- Add [vertical, square, and horizontal assets](#) - remember, 1 long, 1 short, 1 vertical!
- Drive lower-funnel actions using video remarketing lists. Go the extra mile by retargeting users who have previously engaged with your ads earlier in the holiday season.
- Make sure you attach your product feeds and use custom labels to prepare your digital storefront.



Plan out a full-funnel YouTube program to build consideration and capture demand.

- Set your brand apart earlier in the season with [Mastheads](#) & [YouTube Select](#)
- Lean on a higher mix of [Video Reach](#) and [Consideration](#) campaigns to push for brand awareness ahead of peak holiday.
- Have an always on [Demand Gen](#) and [Video Action](#) strategy to meet shoppers wherever they are. Dial it up in October!
- Let creators build credibility and social proof for you with [Partnership Ads](#).
- Enable [product feeds](#) on every video format.
- Reach out to your account team for more info on the Sponsored YouTube Shorts Accelerator program.



Tune campaigns for your objectives and test early and often to optimize throughout the season

- Early signals for success: use [Brand Lift](#) and [Video Experiments](#) to understand creative effectiveness early on. Ensure reach coverage, maximizing reach and frequency of key audiences before peak Cyber.
- Use [Search Lift](#) and [Assisted Conversions](#) (Attribution Paths) to understand impact on brand demand.
- Tune CTAs and bid strategies (volume; profitability) for conversion-focused campaigns to drive better results throughout the season.



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Sources:

1. Source: Nielsen Catalina Solutions 2023

2. Google/Material, Role of Video in Shopping Journey, US, 2023, N=2,420 Online survey, Americans 18+ who used an online video platform to shop, Aug - Sep 2023

Capture Demand with Performance Max

Learn how to maximize your online shopping campaigns with a focus on budget optimization, prioritizing key products, utilizing Performance Max specifically for retail, building customer loyalty, and leveraging shopping apps.

KEY INSIGHTS



Set AI as foundation to capture consumer demand.

Nearly 3 in 4 purchases are either made online or are influenced by online touchpoints¹. As the shopper journey becomes more complex, tap into AI-powered ads to achieve scale and personalization.



Align budget to demand through the end of the year. Align budgets, targets and investment mix to capture these shoppers and deliver maximum value for the business.



Adapt to shopper mindsets to capture the bulk of demand. Omnichannel shopping is important throughout the season, but there is variance in what retailer competitive advantages stand out. Return policy picks up in October, promotions become critical during Cyber Week and on Christmas, while near me is critical on Black Friday and after shipping cutoff dates.

SOLUTIONS



Set AI foundation to cast a wide net

- Maximize performance by using AI best practices, like a simplified account structure, [conversion data signals](#), high quality image / text assets and complete SKU/keyword coverage.
- If you're running standard Shopping campaigns, you can measure the incremental lift of using Performance Max along with your existing campaigns using the [Performance Max experiments feature](#) in Google Ads.



Boost intent with broad match + Smart Bidding

- What consumers want and how they're searching for it is constantly changing. By [pairing broad match](#) with Smart Bidding, you can use auction-time signals to set the right bid for each query.



Align budgets with key periods to remain agile

- Plan and set the right budgets by using [Performance Planner](#) to forecast optimal targets and budgets for your business outcomes during peak season.
- Optimize budgets before & during seasonal periods. [Recommendations](#) will help capture increase in interest with unconstrained budgets, while [Campaigns Simulators](#) will help identify conversion value and investment mix scenarios to deliver maximum returns.
- Efficiently manage budgets by implementing [shared budgets](#) and how budget is delivering on goals with [insights](#) and [Performance Max insights](#).



Differentiate beyond promotions.

- Better understand customer and competitive landscape with [Merchant Center Insights](#).
- Deliver on last minute demand via upsell and cross-category purchases via omni strategy with [Performance Max for Store Goals](#).
- Ensure [creative coverage](#) for each holiday mindset. This means 4+ unique image assets, 1+ RSA with good or excellent ad strength and business information.



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Shopping Feed Best Practices & Optimizations

MAINTAIN STRONG DATA QUALITY AND OPTIMIZE PRODUCT DATA TO MAXIMIZE PERFORMANCE



Power quality shopping experiences by optimizing your Merchant Center product data

ACTION

Ensure your product data is robust, reflective of your product catalogue, and formatted correctly into a feed to be sent directly to Merchant Center, per Google's [formatting requirements](#).



Influence visibility and drive performance with optimized product titles

Create keyword rich, unique, and meaningful titles using information on the Brand + Gender + Product Type + Attributes (e.g., color, size), depending on what you'd like to achieve (e.g., customer acquisition, brand awareness).



Google is a critical resource for Holiday Shoppers

Provide high-quality images of your products with a solid white or transparent background, no watermarks, with minimal staging or use product studio to improve your existing images.

TIP We recommend images of at least 800 x 800 pixels (images can be up to 64 megapixels & 16MB file size)



Provide detailed product information to help categorize & understand your product

Provide detailed product identifiers such as gtin, sufficient descriptions, and product_type to help categorize and understand your products.

TIP Accurate gtins are essential for matching your products with user searches & maximizing visibility on Google



Leverage additional attributes to drive query relevance

Use additional feed attributes such as color, gender, material, length, width, etc. to provide additional product information and better surface your ads to the right queries.

TIP Additional attributes need to precisely match between the feed and landing page in order

STAND OUT AMONG COMPETITORS

Enable annotations help showcase valuable information and differentiate your products from others.

ACTION



Highlight savings & discounts using the Sale Price Annotation

Add [sale_price](#) & [sale_price_effective_date](#) attributes to schedule price change. This will enable you to automatically switch to sale price when your sales period start!



Drive engagement & differentiate your offerings using shipping speeds

Activate the [Fast & Free](#) and / or [Same Day Delivery](#) annotation to highlight faster shipping speeds vs. competitors.

TIP To further help you stand out, Google Shopping also automatically surfaces free shipping / price drops



Establish trust with your customers & differentiate your products by adding your Return Policy

Implement Return Policy through the Shipping and Returns Tab.

TIP Update your Return Policy if you are offering holiday specific return policies such as extended return window



Showcase timely deals by leveraging Merchant Promotions

Utilize [Merchant Promotions](#) if you have coupon codes or special promos such as BOGO, free gifts, or % off discounts.

TIP Build out promotions three weeks out and submit early to ensure smooth promotional launches



Elevate your Loyalty Program to engage & retain high value members





Add your Loyalty Program details within Merchant Center to highlight key loyalty benefits such as rewards programs, member-only discounts, and free shipping

Shopping Feed Best Practices & Optimizations (cont'd)

POWER OMNICHANNEL EXPERIENCES AND DRIVE IN-STORE TRAFFIC







Take advantage of your local store presence.

ACTION

	Ensure your store information & hours are up-to-date / accurate in Google My Business	Update your business information with relevant holiday hours to ensure the best experience for your customers.
	Leverage Local Promotions to drive in-store traffic	Implement Local Promotions to drive users in-store and enhance your O2O experience. TIP By activating Local Promotions you can elevate specific in-store promotions
	Raise awareness of your differentiated Omni Channel offerings	Activate Pickup Today , Pickup Later , or Curbside Pickup to drive website visits and allow both online conversions and store visits. TIP Enable relevant advanced LIA features to differentiate your offerings and provide variety to how users shop
	Unable to build a Local Inventory Feed or enable Autofeeds? Leverage Pickup Later for PLA	Enable Pickup Later for PLA to promote an omnichannel fulfillment option without having to implement MHLSF. TIP Enable Pickup Later for out of stock inventory, and inventory that can be made available for pickup (even if not carried in store)

STAY COMPLIANT WITH MERCHANT CENTER POLICY AND PREVENT DISRUPTION TO YOUR CAMPAIGNS

ACTION

	Be notified when there is an issue in Merchant Center!	Ensure you added all the relevant contacts for feeds-related email notifications . TIP You can now add more than 2 email contacts for Merchant Center notifications!
	Regularly check that your account is not at risk of suspension	Regularly check the Products Tab > View Setup and Policy Issues tab in GMC Next to find existing account level issues. TIP Pay special attention to preemptive item disapprovals, crawl issues – it could indicate a systemic issue
	No account suspension? Fix high-impact item-level issues	Regularly check the Products Tab > Needs Attention to find all items that are warned for disapproved. TIP Pay special attention to preemptive item disapprovals, crawl issues – it could indicate a systemic issue
	Ensure your feed is accurate, up-to-date, & reflective of your website	Review how frequently you are sending your feed to GMC and ensure that the feed upload schedule aligns with how frequently your website is updated. TIP Pay special attention to preemptive item disapprovals, crawl issues – it could indicate a systemic issue
	Easily upload fixed product data	Take advantage of Supplemental Feeds & only update attributes that are incorrect! TIP Supplemental Feeds need an id attribute column + at least one additional attribute column
	Preventing / understanding item disapprovals due to image promotional overlay	Enable automatic image improvements so Google will try to automatically fix these images. TIP Google will try to remove the promotional overlay from the disapproved items and show the outcome in the diagnostics tab so that you can get insights of what is a good quality image for Shopping

The Omnichannel Holiday Opportunity

Our Omni solution truly make every connection possible this holiday seasons, and will be a winning strategy for showing up everywhere your omni shopper is. Through October and December, activating Omnibidding and Omni Formats will allow you to maximize your visibility efficiently, while prioritizing convenience and information that omni shoppers prefer.

KEY INSIGHTS



Make every connection count. Omnibidding is how we maximize connection opportunities, and do it profitably. Omnichannel shoppers reported spending 73% more on average than non-omnichannel shoppers.¹ These customers don't view your website and store in a silo, to them it is the same experience of your brand. Therefore, stores are your competitive advantage this holiday to efficiently scale your brand's visibility online targeting these profitable shoppers.



Digital is a key driver for store traffic. Retailers that are showing up AND enabling seamless Omnichannel experiences are poised to win shoppers because consumers are increasingly leveraging digital and in-store resources to make these final decisions. This past holiday season, more than half of shoppers used five or more channels, like video and social media, to shop over a two-day period, and across the US, online search was used before 95%² of in-store holiday shopping occasions.



Shoppers want to make choices quickly. With less shopping days this year post cyber, shoppers don't want to spend excess time and energy sorting through extraneous information to find what they need. Many leverage technology to get their shopping done as quickly as possible. 50% of shoppers say ease and convenience is a top driver to choose where to shop, followed by price promotion at 35%.³

SOLUTIONS



Prioritize the omni shopper throughout Q4 to maximize your reach & profitability

- Finalize testing omnibidding and formats going into October. Use A/B experiments for Omni Bidding on Search and Regular Shopping and incrementality testing available.
- [Including store visits in your Smart Bidding conversion goals](#), will automatically adapt to omni shopper behavior, finding more relevant auctions that drive online and offline traffic, plus revenue, more efficiently than online-only goals.
- Activate first party customer data to reach your highest value customers. Use [customer match](#) for omnichannel and in-store shoppers. Consider uploading purchase data to be able to bid to [store sales](#).
- Build long term relationships during and after holiday season through Google App Campaigns to acquire new, quality app users and retarget existing app users



Create store demand with PMax, YouTube & App Campaigns

- Use Performance Max for Store Goals as a lever to scale into more online auctions, drive foot traffic, and raise awareness for your stores.
- YouTube video action, with omnibidding enabled, is a great platform to influence purchase consideration and bring awareness for your brand and doorbusters.
- Heavy up on offline driving tactics post-shipping cutoff to do a final push to stores. Consider using a [Performance Max for Store Goals](#) to promote must-win categories and flighted "Burst" Campaigns throughout the holiday season.
- Leverage App Campaigns for install and engagement to promote in-store offers & deliver the best omni experience to shoppers.



Capture demand when omni shoppers are ready to buy

- Tune conversion optimization with [Conversion value rules](#) for first party audience, geo, and [store visits](#) or sales to prioritize the most profitable shopper segments.
- Ensure full coverage of store goals across all Google experiences, esp. full coverage with [Local Inventory Ads](#) by using a [catch-all campaign](#) and Zombie SKUs campaign or by using [pickup](#) to increase coverage for your in-store products and prioritize customer preference.
- Make sure fulfillment options like BOPIS and store deals will be visible to customers in your LIA feed. Use [Merchant Promotions](#) for Local Inventory Ads, Store Coupons pilot for Performance Max for store goals, and promotional creative in Video Action Campaigns to drive awareness of your promotions.



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