



hanapin  
marketing

Guide

# Ultimate Guide to AdWords Remarketing

# How remarketing works

Remarketing in Google AdWords consists of static image, animated image, video and text ads that are placed on the Google Display network. What makes remarketing different from standard Display advertising is the targeting. Remarketing consists of using a special tracking code to place cookies in the computer of people visiting your website, and then serving ads to those with that cookie, specifically, on the Display network.

The main point with remarketing is that you want to find those people who have shown enough interest in your products or services to visit your website. These people are more likely to perform whatever activity you're considering a conversion than people who have not yet been to your website. There are a variety of strategies for how to best target these people, which website visitors to target, how to make the most of your remarketing ads, and how to optimize these remarketing campaigns. In this guide, we will delve into these topics and give best practices based on experience and Google recommendations.

# ULTIMATE GUIDE TO ADWORDS REMARKETING

## 1

### Selecting your Audiences

The very first step to remarketing, like most things in paid search, is to analyze your data and develop a strategy. You'll need to decide which visitors to your site you'd like to target ads to and which visitors you don't want to target ads to. All of these groups, the ones you want to target separately and the ones you don't want to target at all, are audiences. There are different ways to target these audiences:

- Based on the product page they visited
- Based on visiting a certain page of your checkout process
- Even based on not visiting a certain page.

There are also custom combinations, which we'll describe more in detail later, but these allow you to target people who visited one page without visiting another. The strategy here would be, for example, to target people who visited the first page of your checkout process without hitting the thank-you page. This would mean targeting users who were interested enough in your product to add an item to their cart, but for whatever reason didn't actually complete the process.

You can target any audience based on URLs. If you've got a thank you page after people submit their email address for signing up to get more information or register to see a special deal, you could use the URL of that thank you page for a remarketing list.

Here are some possible steps you can use as you're getting started:

- Think about all of the URLs you want to target on your site and make a list in Excel. Name the audience and list the URL for reference later.
- Include all the ideas you come up with for custom combinations while creating the sheet.
- If you have Google Analytics goal funnels set up, use the data they've gathered to analyze and find points to remarket to.
- If you don't have Google Analytics funnels set up yet, here's a blog article we wrote about how to do that here.



## 2

### How to set-up remarketing codes

The first step in building your remarketing campaign is to generate and place the special code you'll need to place cookies in your website visitors' computers. How you do this changed during 2012. You used to do this by going to the "shared library" tab in your AdWords account and creating an individual code for every page you wanted included in one of your audiences. Currently, this code can be generated within Google Analytics or within AdWords. It involves the placement of a single code on every page (called a run of site code). This is the same one that Analytics already uses to monitor traffic on your site with a slight modification. Whichever way you use to generate the code, simply place the code on every page of your site and use URLs to build custom combinations and audiences.

If you have a Google Analytics account, you can get a remarketing code there. If you don't have one, we suggest you get one (they're free!), but we'll describe how you can still generate a code in AdWords in a moment just for you. The reason you want a remarketing code from Analytics is the cool feature of being able to set-up remarketing lists based on goals instead of just pages visited. You could set one up for people who have visited at least 4 pages, spent at least 5 minutes on your site, etc. It will also save whoever manages your site a lot of time, as it will greatly reduce the amount of code that needs to be placed on your site.

## 3

### Create Remarketing Lists within Analytics

If you're using Google Analytics to remarket, here's how to set up that code: once you're in your Google Analytics account, click to the "admin" section.

The screenshot shows the Google Analytics Admin interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for Home, Standard Reporting, Custom Reporting, Admin (highlighted with a red arrow), and Help. Below this is the 'Visitors Overview' report for the period 'Sep 28, 2012 - Oct 28, 2012'. The report includes options for 'Advanced Segments', 'Email', 'Export', 'Add to Dashboard', and 'Shortcut BETA'. A line chart displays the 'Visits' metric over time, with a peak of 3,000 visits. The chart is set to 'Hourly' view. The website URL 'hanapinmarketing.com' is visible in the bottom right corner.

Click the blue link labeled “remarketing lists”. (If you don’t see anything that says remarketing lists, there is a chance you’re not logged in under a user that’s granted admin access to the Analytics account you’re in. If that’s the case, get access and check back here.)

[Account list](#) > [PPC Hero](#) > <http://ppchero.com> ▾

## http://ppchero.com

Property ID: UA-1567789-1

Default URL: http://ppchero.com



[Profiles](#) [Tracking Info](#) [Property Settings](#) [Social Settings](#) [Remarketing Lists](#)

+ New Profile

Name



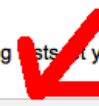
Profile Permissions

Click the button that reads “new remarketing list”.

[Profiles](#) [Tracking Info](#) [Property Settings](#) [Social Settings](#) [Remarketing Lists](#)



Remarketing lists let you target your Google Display Network remarketing campaigns to specific kind of visitors.



+ New Remarketing List

Name



Description

1.

All Visitors

All Visitors

Show rows: 10 ▾

These options you’ll see now include naming your list, choosing an Analytics profile and AdWords account to use with your list, specifying the type of remarketing you want to opt into (all visitors or those that visit certain pages), and the ability to modify the membership duration.

### Create New Remarketing List (Beta)

Follow these steps to activate Remarketing:

**Step 1:** Review the [Terms of Service](#) to find out what you need to include in your site’s privacy policy and review the [Terms of Service](#) where your lists will be used, such as the [Google AdWords Remarketing Policy](#) and the [sensitive category restrictions](#).

**Step 2:** Modify your tracking code.

Profile

- Remarketing type
- All of my site visitors
  - Visitors who visited a specific page/section of my site (e.g. homepage, landing page, shopping cart)
  - All visitors who completed a conversion goal
  - Create my own remarketing type using Visitor Segments

List name

Membership duration  days

Number of unique visitors assigned to this list: N/A

#### AdWords Account

Select the AdWords account that will have access to this Remarketing List.

This choice can not be changed once you have saved this Remarketing List.



You'll want to name your list whatever your intention is. We'll get more into custom combinations later, but you could name it "All site visitors", "cart abandoners", etc. We'll discuss custom member duration more later as well.

In order to start collecting the appropriate data, you will need to make a minor adjustment to your current Analytics code that you've already placed on your website.

Look for this... `ga.src = ('https:' == document.location.protocol ? 'https://ssl' : 'http://www') + 'google-analytics.com/ga.js';`

Replace with this... `ga.src = ('https:' == document.location.protocol ? 'https://' : 'http://') + 'stats.g.doubleclick.net/dc.js';`

This modification is compatible with both the synchronous and asynchronous versions and won't affect any prior changes you've made to your code.

After you've made the changes to your Analytics code, you will also need to take care of a few additional items, as stated by the Google team:

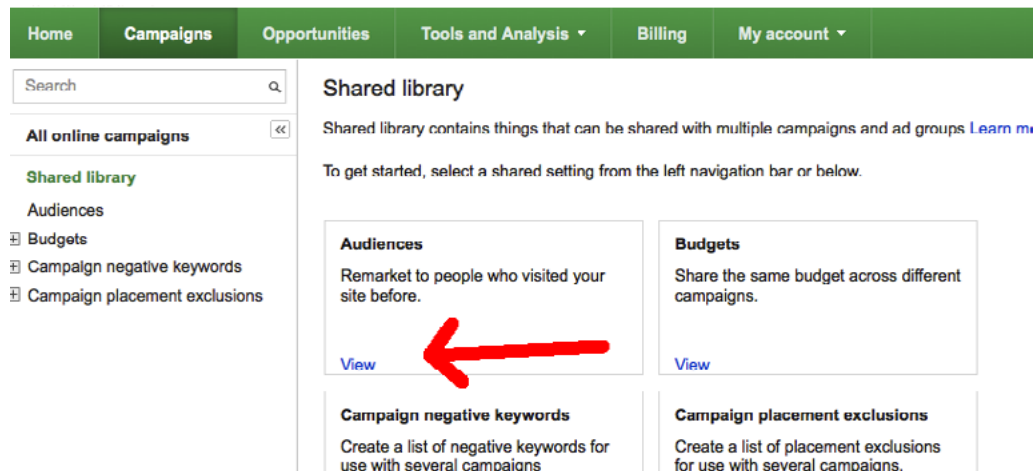
- Have at least one active Google AdWords account that is linked to your Analytics account (admin access required).
- Agree to the Google Analytics Terms of Service.
- Agree to the Google Analytics for Display Advertisers Policy.
- Update your privacy policy and include an appropriate description of your use of remarketing in online advertising.

Now, if you don't have Analytics for some strange reason, don't have admin access to it and/or don't want to agree to the terms of service, you can still create and manage remarketing lists directly in AdWords.

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### Create Remarketing Lists Directly in AdWords

To do this, you'll want to go to the "shared library" in your AdWords account. Click "Audiences".



The screenshot shows the Google AdWords interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with tabs for Home, Campaigns, Opportunities, Tools and Analysis, Billing, and My account. Below this is a search bar and a list of navigation items: All online campaigns, Shared library, Audiences, Budgets, Campaign negative keywords, and Campaign placement exclusions. The 'Shared library' section is expanded, showing a description: 'Shared library contains things that can be shared with multiple campaigns and ad groups'. Below this, there are four cards: 'Audiences' (with a red arrow pointing to the 'View' link), 'Budgets', 'Campaign negative keywords', and 'Campaign placement exclusions'. A small red icon is visible in the bottom right corner.

Click “new audience”.

Shared library >  
**Audiences**  
Use remarketing to show ads to people who visited your site before, or reach specific audiences using custom combinations. [Learn about remarketing](#)

**+ New audience** Add to ad groups Filter Search by list name Search

<input type="checkbox"/>	↑ Audiences	Type ?	Open / Closed ?	Membership duration ?	List size ?	Tags / Definitions ?
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Since you haven't set any remarketing lists up yet, you'll want to choose “remarketing list”.

**+ New audience** Add to ad groups Filter Search by list name

**Remarketing list** Create a list of people who have recently visited your website or mobile app.

Custom combination

Here you'll want to name it and generate the code. Again, the name will depend on what your intentions are for the remarketing list. You now want to place this code on the appropriate page. If you want to target all visitors to your site, you'd want to place the code on your home page. If you'd like to target people who visit a specific product page, place the code there. Just make sure you name it properly to reflect the page you're targeting to ensure you don't get confused about what you meant to do later. You can now manage all of your remarketing codes in your AdWords account.

Shared library >  
**New remarketing list**

[Learn about remarketing strategies](#)

**New!** Use one remarketing tag for all your lists. Place a single tag across your entire site, and create remarketing lists based on your site URLs. [Learn more](#)

List Definition  Define a list of site visitors based on the selection below:

Recommended if you've already placed a remarketing tag on all your webpages. You can then create new lists without adding more tags to your site. [Learn more](#)

Define a list of site visitors by placing a new tag on your site

Recommended only if you want a new remarketing tag. If you've already placed the remarketing tag across your website, select the other option to create new lists. [Learn more](#)

Search by name Search + New tag

Tags: 16

[Redacted]	Add
[Redacted]	Add
[Redacted]	Add
[Redacted]	Add
[Redacted]	Add
[Redacted]	Add
[Redacted]	Add
[Redacted]	Add

Selected tags

Membership duration  days

Remarketing list name

Description optional



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The big differences between placing the code from your Analytics account versus your AdWords account are:

- How you place the code and where you manage it
- Analytics code requires you to change a snippet of your existing Analytics code
- AdWords code requires you to place a code, in addition to your Analytics tracking code (if you have one) across all pages that you want included with your remarketing audience.

### How to choose your member duration

The member duration is how long you'd like to store a cookie in someone's computer and target him or her. There are many different strategies to selecting membership duration. You want to think about your business and your goals when selecting membership duration. They can last up to 180 days.

- Do you have an e-commerce site that people only buy from once every three months? You should extend your membership duration to 90 days.
- Do you have a service that requires people to sign up again after 30 days? Try a 60-day membership so you know they're getting heavily targeted if they forget to renew directly after 30 days.

You are always at risk of annoying people if you show them your ad too much all over the Internet.

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### Frequency Capping

Another feature in a similar vein to membership duration is frequency capping.

#### Advanced settings

+ Schedule: Start date, end date, ad scheduling

- Ad delivery: Ad rotation, frequency capping

Ad rotation ? **Optimize for clicks: Show ads expected to provide more clicks** Edit

Frequency capping ?

No cap on impressions  
 10 impressions per day per ad group  
   
per day  
per week  
per month

+ Social settings



This feature allows you to decide how often you'd like each individual user to see your ad during specified time period. Keep in mind that if you show your ad too often to users, just like if you show it to them for too long, there is a possibility that you will cross the line and they will become annoyed by your product or service.

A classic example of this is the story about a group of successful, upper class wives that were being remarketed to by Prada. They would get served Prada ads all day, on every site, all over the Internet. It started to become very obvious that they were being targeted, and it came off as creepy. Resentment toward the brand began to build, which is exactly the opposite of what they were trying to accomplish.

You don't want this to happen with your ads and your remarketing audiences, so pick a frequency cap that seems appropriate for your goals. If your customers have a long average time between conversions, you'll need fewer impressions to gently remind them of your brand again from time to time.

If your business is built for repeat customers, you may want to focus on impressing as much as possible. For instance, restaurants like Jimmy John's ideally want people to order their sandwiches every single day. They're not going to care about burning someone out, as it's feasible that someone could order from them multiple times in a week. Repeat business is important to them, so they show ads to users constantly. They'll show ads directly after someone has just ordered, even!

The main point is to pick something that makes sense for your business goals.

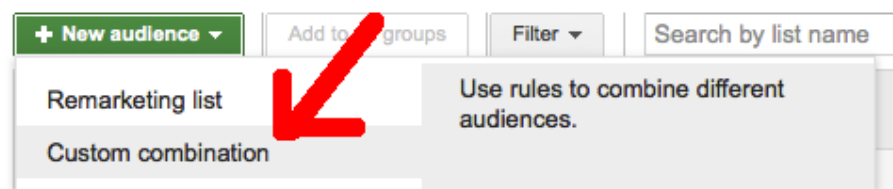
## How to set-up custom combinations

You can set-up custom combinations in the "Shared Library" tab in your AdWords account in the exact same place where you set up your AdWords-based remarketing.

Create a new audience, but this time it will be a custom combination.

### Audiences

Use remarketing to show ads to people who visited your site before, or reach speci



If you wanted to target users who hit the first page of your checkout process without reaching your order confirmation page, then you would want to set up a custom combination.

Select the remarketing audience you've set up for people who hit the first page of your checkout process. You should have done this by just creating a new remarketing audience and using the URL of that page. Then, select "none of this audience" and select the remarketing audience you set up for people who have hit the thank you page. You can also select anyone who has performed your AdWords conversion, if that's what you're tracking as an AdWords conversion. Save this, and then select this custom combination as your audience in the ad group you've created for this audience.

**New custom combination**

Combination name: Visited but not converted

Description: Optional

Users included or interested in... ?

any of these audiences (OR) : select audiences

Remove Hanapinmarketing.com all visitors

and

none of these audiences : select audiences

Remove User Conf

Add another

Save Cancel

You can interlace interest categories with remarketing audience for custom combinations as well.

### Select Audiences

Interest categories

Interest categories

Remarketing lists

	List size ?	
Arts & Entertainment	50M+	»
Autos & Vehicles	10M-20M	»
Beauty & Fitness	3M-5M	»
Books & Literature	10M-20M	»
Business & Industrial	10M-20M	»
Computers & Electronics	30M-50M	»
Finance	5M-10M	»
Food & Drink	5M-10M	»
Games	20M-30M	»
Hobbies & Leisure	500K-1M	»
Home & Garden	3M-5M	»
Internet & Telecom	20M-30M	»

Selected audiences: 1

Hanapinmarketing.com all visitors



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Perhaps you'd like to create an internet category marketing campaign that will be focused purely on trying to get your brand out to as many people who have never heard of your website as possible. You could create a custom combination audience targeting whichever interest category you're interested in targeting and using a remarketing tag for your home page URL, "all site visitors" perhaps, as a negative audience. This custom combination would target your interest category without impressing ads to anyone who has been to your website within the amount of time you set your membership duration to.

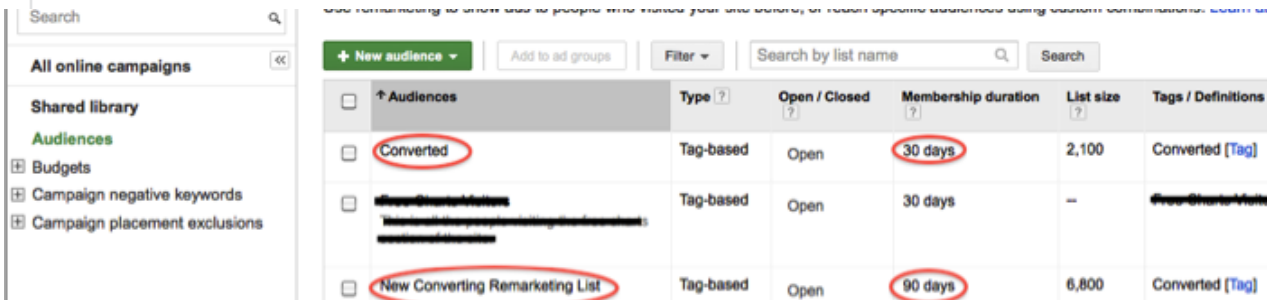
You don't have to only use one positive and one negative for these, either. You could choose to target only people who have been to a certain URL on your site, perhaps a product page, that are also interested in certain interest categories. Let's say your website sells dog beds, and your company has hard data that shows people that Google has marked as being interested in dogs are 65% more likely to convert than people Google has not marked as interested in dogs. Then, you could create a custom combination targeting your dog bed product page and the interest category "dogs".

The main take-away here is to really think about what could work for your website and test all viable options!

### When custom combinations and member duration meet

One strategy that can work really well for some advertisers is what's called delayed targeting.

We'll start with an example. This is a client that is a subscription-based service. Some members select to pay on a month-to-month basis. So, we decided to make an audience that targets people who have converted with member duration of 30 days. We made another identical audience, but made it for 90 days. We then made a custom combination by making the 90-day member duration our target, and excluded the audience for 30 days. This means we're targeting people who have converted, 30-90 days after converting. This targets those users who are due to convert again.



The screenshot shows the Google Ads Audiences interface. On the left is a sidebar with navigation options: "All online campaigns", "Shared library", "Audiences", "Budgets", "Campaign negative keywords", and "Campaign placement exclusions". The main area displays a table of audiences. The table has columns for "Audiences", "Type", "Open / Closed", "Membership duration", "List size", and "Tags / Definitions". Three rows are visible, with "Converted", "New Converting Remarketing List", and "New Converting Remarketing List" circled in red. The "Membership duration" for the first and third rows is "30 days" and "90 days" respectively, also circled in red.

Audiences	Type	Open / Closed	Membership duration	List size	Tags / Definitions
Converted	Tag-based	Open	30 days	2,100	Converted [Tag]
New Converting Remarketing List	Tag-based	Open	90 days	6,800	Converted [Tag]

Member duration will also intersect with the messaging within your ads. If you have offers that give users a seven day free trial, you could target converters starting seven days after their initial conversion.



You know your sales cycle better than anyone, so think of creative ways you can make the most of the high level of targeting that remarketing affords you. Users think of your brand 30, 90 or even 180 days after being introduced to it initially. Adjust your messaging accordingly.

## How to optimize remarketing campaigns

Optimization in remarketing comes in a few different forms:

### Ad testing

Strong branding may work well in your ads. Start there as a control, but experiment with other messages. Treat remarketing ads similarly to how you would treat other ads, just keep your audience in mind. These users are already familiar with your brand, so you may need to go a bit farther to win them back to your site. Experiment with different offers, calls to action, images and everything else you can think of.

### Custom combination testing

We mentioned earlier that you may find different results when combining interest categories with previous site visitors. Keep testing and find what works best for your account. Experiment with different combinations of cookie lengths. Messaging for visitors that visited between 7 and 30 days ago may very well end up not working for users who visited between 30 and 60 days ago.

### Frequency cap testing

You don't want to be too annoying, but you also want to maximize the number of interested visitors to your site. Monitor your audience size in combination with the number of impressions your remarketing ad groups get. Maybe your cap is too high and you aren't limiting anything at all. Maybe you're setting it way too low and you're severely limiting your ads' exposure.

### Bid testing

Impression share is something worth monitoring in a remarketing campaign. You're following users and not sites, so if you get to 100% IS you may be annoying some of those users. Monitor your bids both for cost effectiveness and return on investment, but also for impression share.

### Landing page testing

The user that you're bringing back to your site already has a certain level of familiarity. You should experiment landing them on the same page and somewhere completely new. Is your messaging catered to someone who's been there before? Are you asking questions on the landing page that a previous site visitor would already know the answer to? Test to find out which type of content connects most strongly to previous visitors.



While your results may vary, we've found the most success with remarketing ads when they are very brand focused. This is due to the fact that the people you're targeting are familiar with your website. They might not pay any mind to a random creative advertisement, but they may be much more likely to notice an ad that's touting a brand they're familiar with. This is especially true if you plan on testing special offers for remarketing visitors. They may not notice a discount or sale if they don't notice that it's for a site they're familiar with. Our best advice is to start with ads that match your website and your brand as a control set of ads and test from there.



For the most part, you can probably direct remarketing visitors back to wherever they came from. If they got a remarketing cookie from a product page, it's probably safe to land them back on that product page. However, if you're planning on offering specials to them, you'll want to create a custom landing page that reflects that deal. If they come back to the site and don't see anything about the deal they were promised in the ad, they're likely to bounce.

It's a bit tricky to do placement exclusions for remarketing. If you're not familiar with what we mean, placement exclusions happen when you download a placement report and decide which sites your ads are performing poorly on that you should block from showing your ads. This is a very easy task when you're dealing with topics or contextual marketing on the Display network. Then, you can look at performance and relevancy at face value. However, with audience targeting, such as remarketing or interest category marketing, then you're targeting the person who happens to be on that website. Content relevancy of the page itself may not be as important in a remarketing campaign as it will be in other display campaigns. Remember that you're targeting the user and not the content.

So, what do you do? You'll still have websites that perform poorly, and you should still exclude them. Even though we're targeting the people visiting the site, some sites attract bad people (i.e. people who don't want to give you money) more than other sites, display your ads in such a way that invite accidental clicks, etc. However, we recommend being more tolerant with your remarketing placement performance. Give those sites as much tolerance as you can within your goal margins.

Remarketing is a powerful targeting method on the Google Display Network. By tailoring your ad copy and bids to the highly specific audience you're going after, it can show a tremendous return in your accounts.





**Learn more with Hanapin.**

To have your PPC account audited, migrated to an Enhanced Campaign, or to talk to a paid search professional, contact us:

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**812.330.3134**



Hanapin Marketing is a paid search agency based in Bloomington, Indiana. Founded in 2004, the company manages & optimizes clients' paid search programs—increasing sales while simultaneously decreasing budgets. From ad copy composition to keyword research to landing page optimization, Hanapin's core objective is to maximize our clients' return on investment.