# Getting Google Ads Right for a Small Business

Setting up a Google Ads campaign can feel like stepping into a crowded room and hoping someone notices you. For a small business, every click matters, and the margin for wasted spend is thin. The difference between a campaign that brings in leads and one that drains money often comes down to the groundwork laid before launch.

Many business owners jump straight into keyword research and bid setting, skipping the structural decisions that determine long-term performance. A thoughtful setup process reduces guesswork and keeps the campaign aligned with what a local audience actually searches for. Below are the key points to check before you hit publish.

## Check your account structure matches your business model

Google Ads organises campaigns into ad groups, which contain keywords and ads. A common mistake is to dump every keyword into one campaign and write generic ads that try to cover everything. For a small business in Chesterfield, that means a prospect searching for "emergency plumber" sees the same ad as someone searching for "kitchen renovation". Neither feels relevant.

Instead, group your services or products into separate campaigns or distinct ad groups. If you offer both residential and commercial services, split them. This lets you write ad copy that speaks directly to what the searcher wants, and it helps Google understand which pages to show. The more tightly connected your keywords, ads and landing pages are, the higher your quality score tends to be, which can lower your cost per click.

## Set up conversion tracking before you spend a penny

Without conversion tracking, you are flying blind. You might see clicks and assume they are turning into enquiries, but the data could tell a different story. Google Ads offers a few ways to track actions: a phone call from a click-to-call ad, a form submission on your website, or a purchase if you sell online.




Install the Google tag (formerly known as the global site tag) on your site and define at least one primary conversion action. For a local business, a phone call or a contact form submission is usually the most meaningful. Test that the tracking fires correctly by submitting a test form or calling the number yourself (with your phone muted so the call is not accidentally billed). Without this step, you cannot optimise for actual results.

## Choose the right match types for your keywords

Broad match keywords can burn through a budget quickly because they trigger your ad for searches that are loosely related. A plumber using broad match on "leak" might appear for "leaky roof" or "leaky tap", which could be irrelevant if you only work on pipes and drains.

For a small business starting out, phrase match and exact match give more control. They still allow room for misspellings and close variants, but they stop your ad from showing for searches that do not match your service. As the campaign gathers data, you can review the search terms report and add negative keywords to block irrelevant traffic. For example, if you do not repair boilers, add "boiler" as a negative keyword so you do not pay for clicks from people wanting boiler repairs.

## Build landing pages that answer what the ad promises

The landing page is where the searcher lands after clicking your ad. It should be the page most relevant to the search, not your homepage. If someone clicks an ad for "emergency boiler repair", the landing page should talk about boiler repairs, show a phone number prominently, and have a clear call to action. A generic homepage with a menu of services will lose that visitor.

Check that the page loads quickly on mobile devices. Many searches happen on phones, and a slow page can cost you the lead. Also, review the page content for trust signals: a physical address, customer testimonials, and professional photos all help. Google considers landing page experience as part of the quality score, so a good page can lower your cost per click while improving conversion rate.

## Use ad extensions to add useful information

Ad extensions give you extra space in the search results and provide information that helps people decide to click. For a local business, the most valuable extensions are:

- Call extension: shows your phone number directly in the ad so people can call without visiting your site.
- Location extension: displays your address and a map marker for searchers near you.
- Structured snippet extension: lets you list services (e.g. plumbing, heating, drainage).
- Callout extension: adds short selling points like "24/7 emergency call-out" or "free estimate".

Using all relevant extensions increases the size of your ad and can improve click-through rate without raising your bid. They also give Google more context about your business, which can help the ad show for the right queries.

## Review location targeting and adjust for your real service area

If you serve customers in Chesterfield and the surrounding villages, set your location targeting to that area. You can choose to target people physically in that area, people who show interest

in that area, or both. For a trade business, targeting people physically in the area is usually the safer option because it shows your ad to someone who can actually use your service.



Check the advanced location settings. By default, Google includes people who are in your targeted location plus people who show interest in it. If you are a Chesterfield plumber and someone in Sheffield searches for "Chesterfield plumber", they might see your ad under the "people interested in" rule. That could be fine, but if you want to keep it tight, switch to "people in your targeted locations". You can always expand later.

The most effective local campaigns are the ones that treat every click as a potential conversation. That means the keyword, the ad, and the landing page all point in the same direction. When you take the time to set up a structure that mirrors your real-world services, you end up with campaigns built around local customers who are actively looking for what you offer. That alignment reduces wasted clicks and helps your budget go further.

## Set a realistic budget and use bid strategies wisely

Your daily budget should be an amount you are comfortable spending every day for at least a month. Google Ads needs data to optimise, so give it at least 30 days before making big changes. If you set a very low budget, your ads may show infrequently, and you will not collect enough data to judge performance.

For bid strategy, start with manual CPC or enhanced CPC. These give you control over how much you pay per click. Automated strategies like "target CPA" need conversion history to work well, so they are usually not suitable for a brand-new campaign. Once you have collected around 30 conversions, you can test automated bidding if it fits your goals.

Check your budget allocation across campaigns. If you run multiple campaigns, put more budget into the one that targets your most profitable service or the one with the highest conversion rate after the first few weeks. Do not set and forget; review weekly and adjust based on data.

## Track your search terms and add negatives

The search terms report shows the actual queries that triggered your ad. Review it every week during the first month. You will likely find irrelevant searches that you can add as negative keywords to stop future clicks. For example, if you are a plumber and someone searches for "plumber training courses", you probably do not want to pay for that click.

Adding negatives is an ongoing task, not a one-off setup. As you gather more data, you refine the list. This is one of the most effective ways to improve return on ad spend without increasing your budget. It keeps your ads in front of people who are genuinely looking for your service and filters out the tire-kickers.

When you keep the campaign focused on the people who can actually become customers, you naturally build campaigns built around local customers. That focus shows in the quality of the leads you receive and in the cost efficiency of the campaign. A well-maintained account with clean data and regular optimisations will outperform a neglected one every time.




## Test ad copy and refresh it regularly

Write at least two or three ad variations for each ad group. Test different headlines, descriptions, and calls to action. After a few weeks, pause the ones with lower click-through rates and write new ones to test against the winner. Google's responsive search ads allow you to pin headlines and descriptions, so you can control which parts stay fixed.

Keep the ad copy specific. Instead of "quality plumbing services", try "emergency plumber in Chesterfield - call now for same-day service". The more specific you are, the more likely you are to attract the right click. Also, include a call to action that tells the searcher what to do next: "call today", "book online", or "get a free quote".

A final point: do not set up a campaign and ignore it. Google Ads rewards attention. Check your account at least once a week for the first few months, review the reports, and make small adjustments. The businesses that see consistent results are the ones that treat the campaign as an ongoing project, not a one-time launch.