GETTING STARTED WITH GOOGLE ANALYTICS

An Introduction for Beginners

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4 Reasons
to Use Google Analytics

There are two kinds of site owners: the ones using Google Analytics and the ones who don't know what they're doing with their websites. If you're reading this, you've made your first step toward becoming one of the former.

Now, website analytics may seem daunting, but fear not, the tool that you'll learn about is beginner-friendly. While it is definitely not the only analytics tool out there, Google Analytics has several advantages over similar platforms:

1 **Your Competitors Use It**
Most probably, the businesses you compete with are among the 54% of the websites that use Google Analytics. This tool is a must-have for any serious digital project, be it a blog, an e-store, or any other type of a website.

2 **It's from Google (aka the World's Largest Data Collector)**
Think about it, Google is famous – if not notorious – for spying on every aspect of our online lives. Google Analytics lets you harness Google's tracking power and use it for a good purpose.

3 **It is Free. Well, Mostly Free**
Google Analytics is a freemium service. All of the important stuff comes at no cost, and the paid version mainly caters to really large corporate websites. In a nutshell, the service is free to use for anyone.

4 **It Gives You Tons of Insights**
Google Analytics monitors every on-site action performed by your visitors and tells you almost everything you'd want to know about them (provided that you can interpret the data).

Getting Started with Google Analytics | What Information Does Google Analytics Provide?

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What Information Does Google Analytics Provide?

We've talked about the "tons of insights" before, but let's be more specific. What kind of information does Google Analytics provide and how can you use it? Below are some of the questions that you can have answered thanks to Google Analytics:

- How many new and returning visitors did your site attract today (... this week, month, etc.)?

- How many pages did they view?

- For how long did they stay on every page?

- Did they find what they were looking for?

- What website did they come from?

- What browser and operating system do they use?

- Where do they live, how old are they, and what is their gender?

- How many people subscribed to your content or purchased your products?

- What types or content or products get more attention from your audience?

- Are there any speed issues with your site?

Real-Life Cases With 3 Big Brands

Google Analytics keeps you informed about the key stats related to your site, your audience, and your customers. Here are several cases of big brands using these insights to boost their marketing and sales:

Puma

Data from Google Analytics helped the sportswear giant optimize its website, attract 47% more visitors from growing markets, and increase order rates by 7.1%.

Nissan Motor

The automobile manufacturer uses Google Analytics to analyze the global demand for its products.

BT Financial Group

Google Analytics enabled BT Financial Group to develop a new, efficient online application form which outperformed the old one by more than 61.7%.

Getting Ready
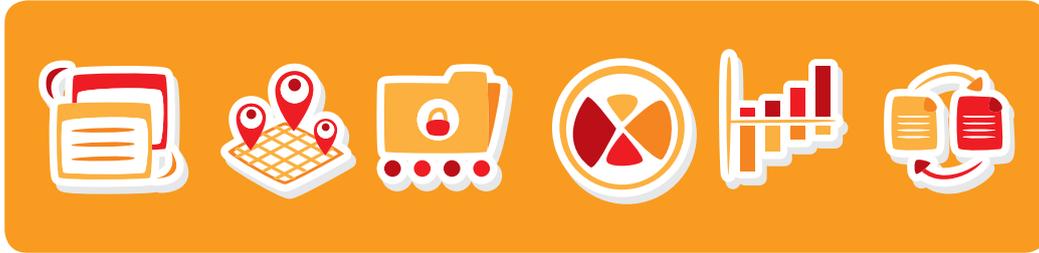
Let's begin with the things required for a Google Analytics account. The good news is this checklist contains only two points:

1 The first one is pretty obvious: you need a **website** that's already up and running. This includes domain registration, hosting, and filling up your site with some content. If you're only thinking about starting a website, check out our guide to choosing the right website platform.

2 The second one is a **Google account** – just like the one you already have for Gmail, Drive, or YouTube. You can opt for your existing account or create a separate one. There are a couple of tips to consider:

- Treat security as a top priority. Create a strong password, turn on two-step verification, and go through all of the Sign-in & security settings. Keeping an eye on your Personal info & privacy settings is also a good idea.

- If you plan to work with an SEO specialist, a web developer, or any other third-party specialist, they may offer to use their own account to manage your site. In that case, you should insist that they create a new one that you can access. This way you won't lose your data if you stop working with them.

- If you plan to manage Google Analytics yourself, make sure you are the sole owner of your account. You will be able to share your Google Analytics data without compromising the privacy of your Google Account.

Creating an Account

Once your website and Google account are all set up and ready, it's time to get a Google Analytics account. To do this, go to https://www.google.com/analytics/ and sign up for Google Analytics. You'll also see a short description of the three steps that you'll need to complete. Take a look at these steps and hit *Sign up*:

Once Google redirects you to the next page, fill in the information regarding your account and website:

Tracking ID and Data Sharing

On the same page at https://www.google.com/analytics/, you'll see a section called *Data Sharing Settings*. This one helps you configure which of the Google's services can access your data. A rule of thumb is to leave all checkboxes checked.

Once you're through with this, hit the *Get Tracking ID* button. After you've read and accepted the terms and conditions, Google will redirect you to your dashboard and provide you with your tracking ID.

Tracking Code Installation

Google Analytics works thanks to a tracking code snippet. You can find this code along with your tracking ID:

Have a look at the script above. To make it work, you'll need to insert it into every page that you want to track. To do it the hard way, you can find your website's source HTML file (.html or .htm) and paste the code right before the </head> tag. Sounds too techy? Luckily, there are easier ways to do this.

As a matter of fact, very few people insert tracking scripts directly into the site's code. Instead, they install Google Analytics plugins (like the one from Yoast) or use the functionality provided by their content management system or e-commerce platform. For instance, Cherry Framework and similar WordPress frameworks have dedicated fields for Google Analytics code:

Hierarchy of Accounts

With a 99% probability, you have one website at the moment. But what if there are two, three, or, say, 50 websites? Google's hierarchy of accounts helps you handle situations of this kind. Besides, it enables you to organize the collected data.

Here's how the hierarchy of accounts works:

One Google account lets you create up to 100 Google Analytics **accounts**.

Each Google Analytics account can contain up to 50 websites or **properties**.

Each property can include up to 25 filtered subsets of reporting data or **views**. You can filter data by particular country, website, device type, IP-address, etc.
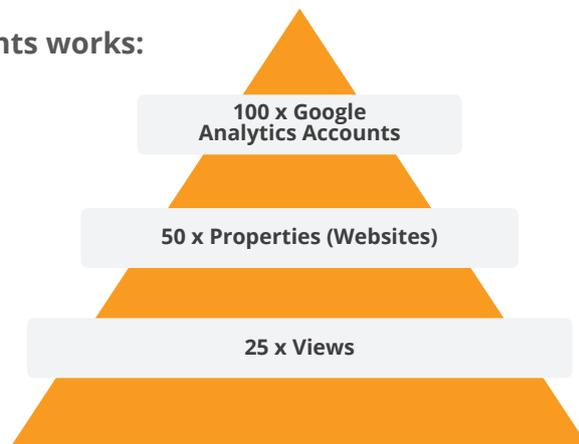
100 x Google Analytics Accounts

50 x Properties (Websites)

25 x Views

Click on *Admin* in your dashboard and see how its UI reflects the hierarchy mentioned above. You've got separate menus for account, property, and view settings:
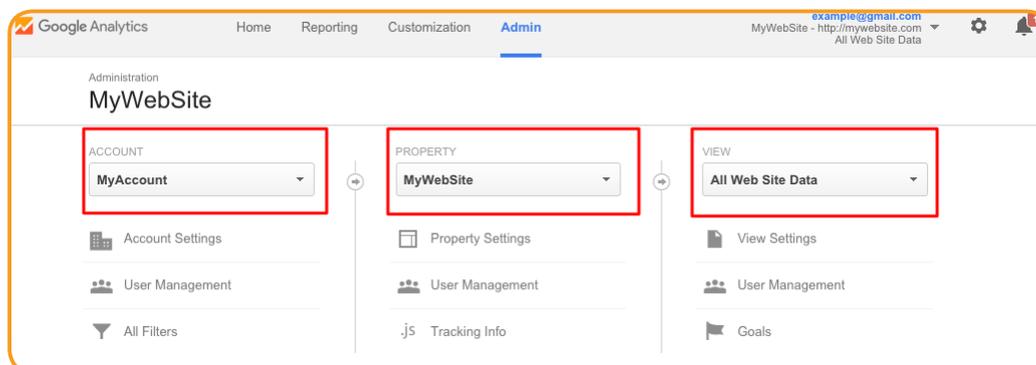
Users and Permissions

With Google Analytics, you can let other users access and manage certain aspects of your website. To do this, select *User Management* in the *Account*, *Property*, or *View menu*. To add new users, input their emails into the corresponding field:
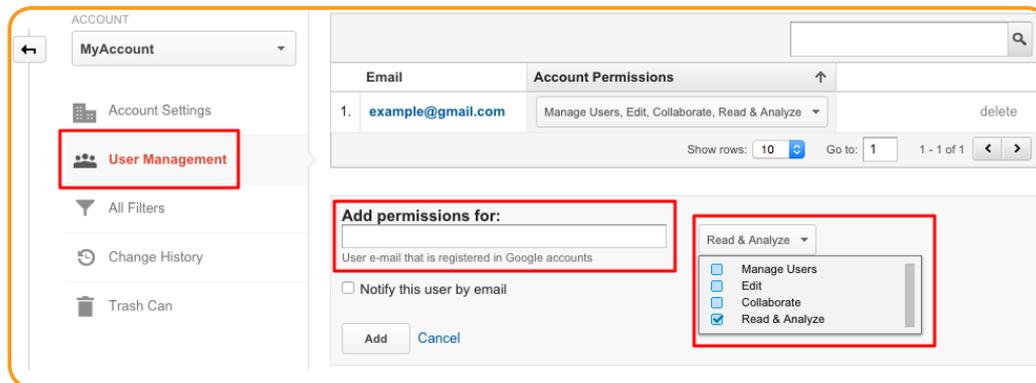
You can assign several permissions to any user – just make sure you've checked the right checkboxes and understand what every permission implies. Below is a short description of permission types:

Permission Types

Manage Users	Edit	Collaborate	Read & Analyze
Add and delete users, assign permissions	Add, edit, and delete: - accounts, - properties, - views, - filters, - goals	Edit dashboards and anotations	View and edit reports

Goals Setting

Goals tell you a lot about your audience's on-site behaviour. For instance, you'll want to know if they visit certain pages and view certain content. To track actions of this kind, access your View menu and click on the Goals button.

Click on *Admin* in your dashboard and see how its UI reflects the hierarchy mentioned above. You've got separate menus for account, property, and view settings:
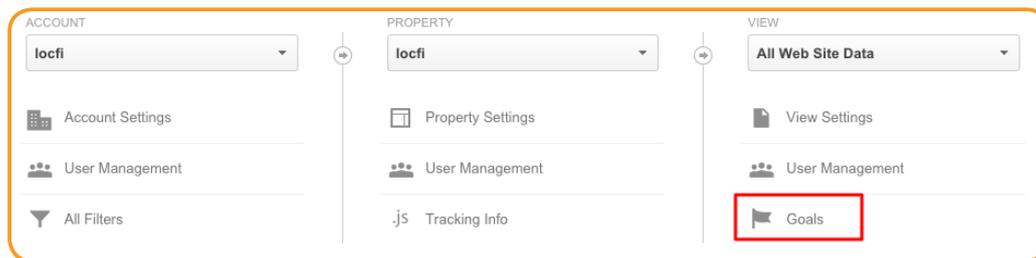
In the upper-right corner of the *Goals* menu, you will find a small button with an icon resembling a square academics cap. Click on it to open a brief introduction to Goal settings.
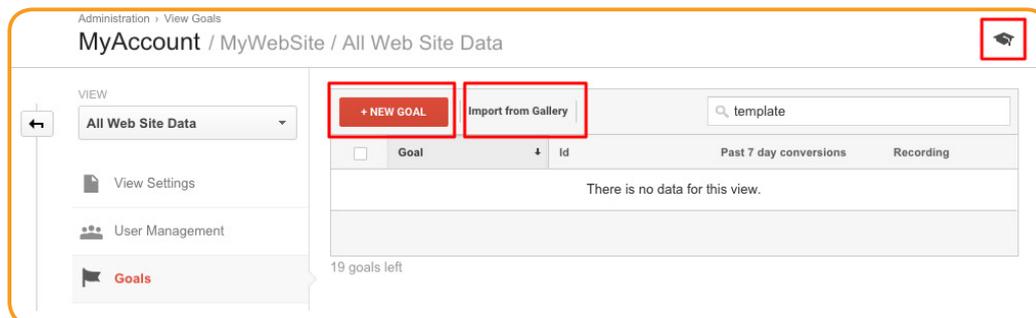
As you can see in the image above, there are two options for creating goals: you can either import an existing goal from the Gallery or create a new one. Now, there are ready-made goals for websites of any type. Yet, you will learn more about Google Analytics Goals if you try to create a new one.

Creating a New Goal

For starters, hit the big red button that says *"+ NEW GOAL"*. After that, you'll need to give your goal a name and select its type.

Google provides a detailed characteristic of goal types, but you can also have a look the short descriptions below to get a general idea:
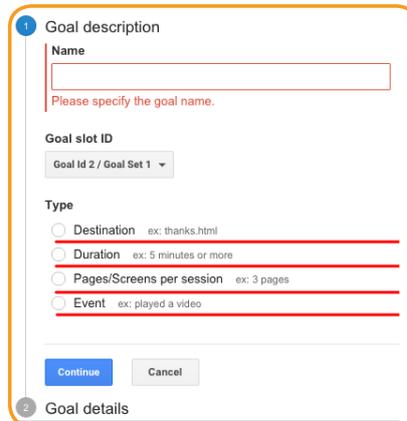
Destination

Destination tells you if people visit a particular page (or multiple pages) on your site. Besides, it helps you see what other websites and pages drive visitors to your target page. To do this, switch on *Funnel* and input the URLs of the external resources that contain links to your page.

Duration

Sometimes, you need to make sure people spend enough time on your website to view your content or learn about your products. With *Duration* settings, you can set the minimum amount of time required to confirm user engagement.

Pages per Session

Another way to see if people find your website engaging is to measure the average number of page views per visit. To do this, set the minimum number of *Pages per Session* and see how many of your users go above this figure.

Event

Event goals inform you about specific actions performed by your visitors. This includes playing online videos or audio tracks, downloading PDFs, completing a purchase, etc. This allows you to measure conversion rates in a more direct manner.

Setting Up On-Site Search

On-site search helps you optimize your content and user experience so make sure your website has it. In a nutshell, internal search queries tell you what people look for on your website. To track queries of this kind, you'll need to set up on-site search in your Google Analytics account.

Start with conducting a search on your site. You can use some random search query like "Nyan Cat". In your browser's search bar you'll see something like this:
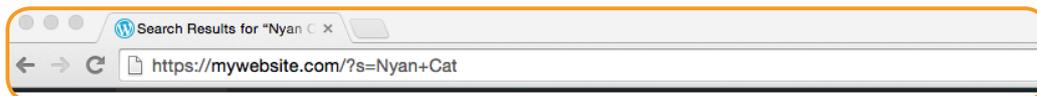
See the "s" in the URL? That's the query parameter of the request. In the case of some websites, you might get a "q" parameter instead. Now do the following:

1. Go to your *Admin* panel and select *View Settings* in the *View* column.

2. Scroll down (way down) and switch *Site search Tracking* on.

3. Type your query parameter into the input field.
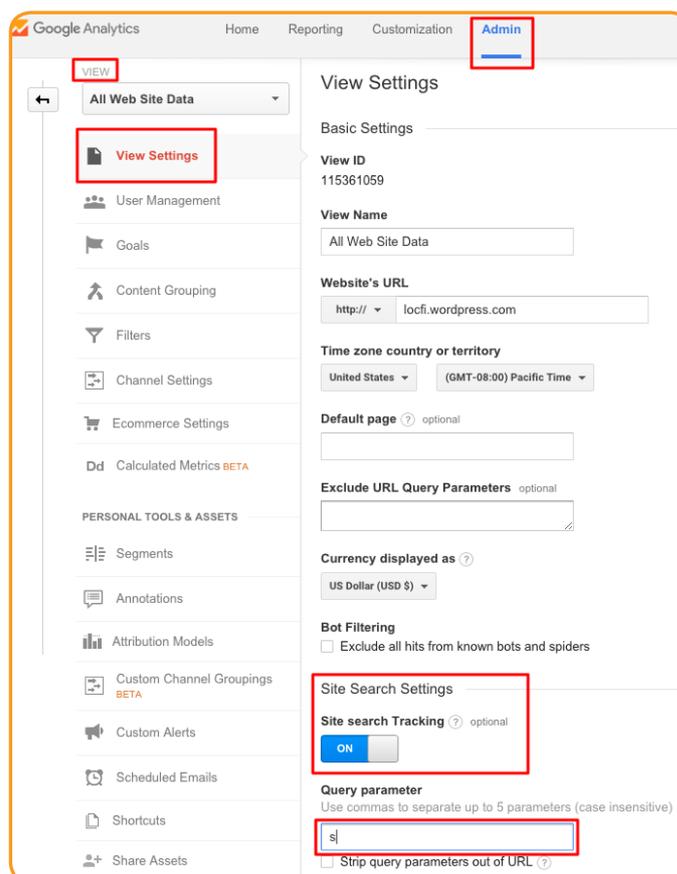
That's it, from now on Google Analytics will monitor your website's internal search queries. Wasn't that easy? 🙂

# Working with Google Analytics: Audience Overview

Now that we're through with the basics, let's get down to working with data. Press the Google Analytics logo in the upper left corner and see where it takes you. If you've got one website, you'll find yourself in the Reporting menu. Otherwise, you'll start with the Home menu where you'll need to choose the property (website) that you'd like to view.

The first report you'll see every time you enter Google Analytics is the *Audience Overview*:

Click on a particular date to select the date range for the report
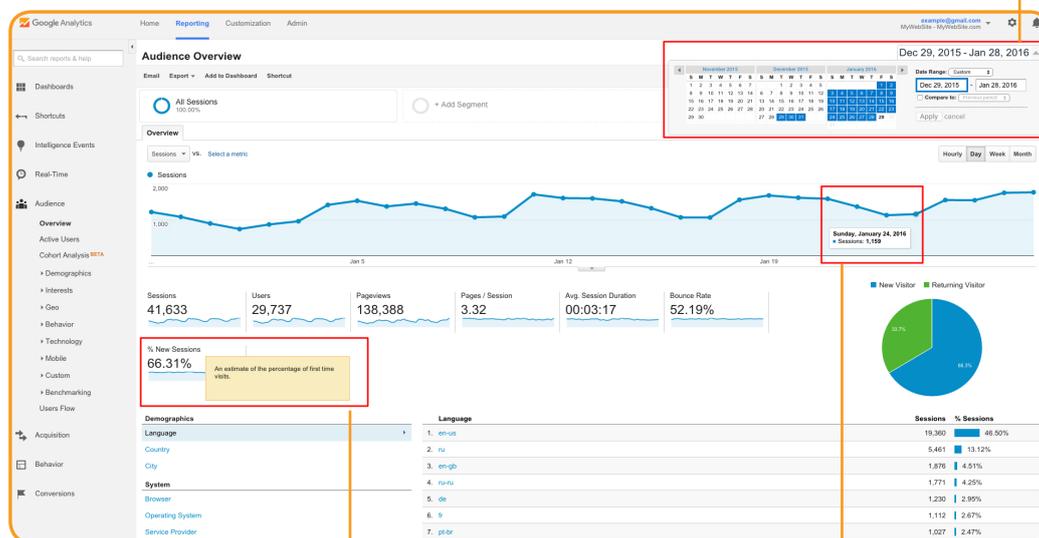
Hover over a metric to see what it means

Hover over the graph to check the number of sessions that occurred on a particular day

Working with Google Analytics: Filters

Have a look at the filtered reports below the main metrics. Click on any of the filters (Demographics, System, Language, and Mobile) to get a more refined view of your site's visitors and the devices they are using:


You can also select a filter and hit *view full report* for a more detailed overview of your data. For instance, you may wonder if it makes sense to prioritise the support of Internet Explorer when updating some of your site's features. To make an informed, data-driven decision, check how many visitors use this browser:

You can also select another view for your data. For instance, you can have your browser statistics displayed as a neat pie chart:

Working with Google Analytics: Types of Reports

Google Analytics uses the information collected by the brainiacs at Google. The service curates data and provides you with reports of four types: Audience, Acquisition, Behaviour, and Conversions. Let's have a closer look at these reports:

Audience Reports

Audience reports contain the data related to your site's visitors. You can use this information to better understand your audience:

Demographics: various age- and gender-related stats.

Interests: the targeting criteria that Google assigns to your audience.

Geo: your audience's location and language.

Behavior: your users' on-site activity, including session duration, the number of page views, and other datasets.

Technology: browsers, operating systems, and network providers.

Mobile: your mobile vs desktop traffic, as well as devices (smartphones and tablets);

Custom: audience-related datasets that you can define.

Benchmarking enables you to compare your data with the average figures provided by other companies.

Acquisition Reports
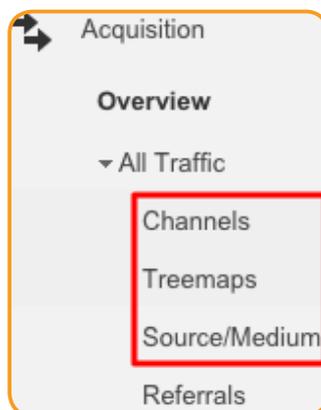
Acquisition reports tell you what drives people to your website. To view some of these reports, you need other Google services. For instance, you'll have to set up your Search Console to use Search Engine Optimization reports. Besides, AdWords reports cover the AdWords traffic and Social reports reflect your activity on Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, and the likes. Still, there are reports related directly to your site:

Channels show you how many people came to your site directly, from search engines, social networks, ads, other websites, etc.

Treemaps are visual comparisons of your traffic acquisition channels.

Source/Medium reports provide you with an in-depth view of your traffic sources, including website names and source types.

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