Negative Keywords in Paid Search

Google Ads, Microsoft Ads & Amazon Ads

Karooya

A Handy Guide For Paid Search Advertisers

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What are Negative Keywords

Keywords are the terms that advertisers wish to show their ads for. Targeting these keywords will display the ads when a user searches about them. However, there might be some terms that are underperforming or are not relevant to your business. These terms need to be excluded from your targeting and to do that such terms need to be added as Negative Keywords.

Once again, Negative keywords prevent specific words, phrases, and keywords from activating your advertisement. As a result, negative keywords assist you in ensuring that your advertisements only reach the finest possible audience. You can add these negative keywords at Account, Campaign and Ad Group level depending on where you want to apply them. If it is relevant across multiple campaigns, you can consider adding it at account level.

The intent of Negative Keywords remains the same across the many paid search platforms. How they match with the user query is what might differ. We will discuss about that under the Match Types section.

Keywords and Negative Keywords are two things that every PPC advertiser agrees are necessary to get your campaign started. Keywords to assist you to bring traffic to your company site. Negative Keywords to avoid unwanted visitors from draining your paid search budget.

Negative Keyword Match Types in Google Ads

In Google Ads three match types are available for negative keywords: Broad, Phrase & Exact. Each of these are denoted with a specific syntax.

> *If your negative keyword is* **blue pillow** *then in broad match it will be written as* **blue pillow** *(without any syntax). In phrase match the negative keyword will be written as* **"blue pillow"** *and in exact match the negative keyword is* **written [blue pillow]**.

Broad Match Type

Your ad won't show if the search contains all your negative keyword terms, even if the terms are in a different order. Your ad may still show if the search contains only some of your keyword terms. It is the default match type for negative keywords.

Negative Keyword Example: cake

Search Query	Whether Ad Will Show or Not
blueberry cake	X
birthday cakes	✓
online ckae delivery	✓
personalized cake	X
cake	X

Negative Keyword Example : running shoes

Search Query	Whether Ad Will Show or Not
shoes running	X
running shoe	✓
shoe for tennis	✓
shoe for park run	✓
running shoes for men	X

Phrase Match Type

Your ad won't show if the search contains the exact keyword terms in the same order. The ad may still show if the search term includes the keyword but in a different order.

Negative Keyword: "cake"

Search Query	Whether Ad Will Show or Not
blueberry cake	X
birthday cakes	✓
online ckae delivery	✓
personalized cake	X

Negative Keyword: "running shoes"

Search Query	Whether Ad Will Show or Not
shoes running	✓
buy running shoes for men	X
blue shoes for running	✓
shoe for park run	✓
running shoe	✓

Exact Match Type

Your ad won't show if the search contains the exact keyword terms, in the same order, without extra words. Even if a search term contains the keywords with additional words your ad will still show.

Negative Keyword": [cake]

Search Query	Whether Ad Will Show or Not
blueberry cake	✓
birthday cakes	✓
online ckae delivery	✓
personalized cake	✓
cake	X

Negative Keyword: [running shoes]

Search Query	Whether Ad Will Show or Not
shoes running	✓
buy running shoes for men	✓
blue shoes for running	✓
shoe for park run	✓
running shoes	X

Close Variants

Close variants include any misspelling, singular or plural form, acronym, stemming, or abbreviations of the keyword. For example, if your keyword is *jewelry*, the possible close variants would be *gems*, *jewellery, jewelleries* etc.

Here is explaining it with another example:

Keyword	Close Variant
Red Shoes	red sheos (misspelling)
	red shoe (singular form)
	shoe redness (stemming)
	RED or RSD (acronyms)

Note: *Close variants apply only to the targeted keywords and not for negative keywords. If you don't want to show your ad for any of the close variants, you'll need to include them as separate negative keywords.*

Negative Keywords Match Type in Microsoft Ads

Microsoft Ads' negative keywords behave similarly to Google Ads. The one difference is that there is no broad match negative keyword. The available match types are Phrase & Exact. The behavior of these match types is similar to that of Google Ads.

Negative Keyword Match Type in Amazon Ads

The available negative keywords match types with Amazon's Sponsored Product Ads are:

- Negative Phrase Match
- Negative Exact Match

Negative Phrase Match – Using this match type will restrict your ads to show for search queries that have the complete phrase or are a close variant of it. Here you can use at max four words per negative keyword or a total of 80 characters.

Negative Exact Match – Using this match type will restrict your ad to show for search queries that have the exact phrase or is a close variant of it. Here there is a limit to use ten words per negative keyword or a total of 80 characters.

Keyword – red shoes		
Search Terms	**Phrase Match**	**Exact Match**
red shoes for boys	✗	✓
red shoes	✗	✗
red colour shoes	✓	✓
kids red shoes	✗	✓
red shoe	✗	✗

Understanding Google Ads Negative Keywords With Examples

Understanding negative keywords and their match types might help you figure out how and when to employ each match type. Allow us to walk you through the negative keyword match types with an explanation:

1. Negative Exact Match Type

Example – [Track Pants]

Search Query	Ad Status	Reason
track pants	✗	The ad will be blocked for this search query as the search query matches the negative keyword exactly. The order & form (singular or plural) of the word is also same.
track pants for girls	✓	This ad will be shown as there is an additional word in the search query
men's track pants	✓	The ad will be shown as "man" written in a plural form
jogging track pants	✓	The ad will be shown as there is an additional word in the search query

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Note: *Because this match type doesn't block a lot of traffic, you'll need to include a lot more negative keywords to filter out irrelevant terms.*

2. Negative Phrase Match Type

When the search query contains the terms in the same order, using the negative phrase match type will help to stop showing the ad to an irrelevant audience. You must add each variant or similar term as a negative keyword separately to block them.

Example: "bedding sets"

Search Query	Ad Status	Reason
sets bedding for resorts	✓	The ad will be shown as the order of the words have been changed
bedding sets for home	✗	The ad will be blocked as the search query mentions the keyword in the same order and form
bedding green sets	✓	The order of the words have been changed and there is an additional word between bedding & sets
beddings sets for hotel	✓	The ad will be shown as search query mentions the word bedding in plural form

Note: *Though negative phrase match will automatically block any combinations of words before and after the phrase, do Keep an eye out for any words that might be a keyword for which you'd like to get traffic.*

3. Negative Broad Match Type

Like broad match keywords, negative broad match keywords must be present in the search query, regardless of order. As this match type does not consider close variants, do remember to add any related terms as a negative keyword too.

Example: sponge cake

Search Query	Ad Status	Reason
wedding sponge cake	✗	Both words are present in the search query hence ad will be blocked
soft cake for party	✓	The ad will be shown as the word sponge is missing fromm the search query
cake sponge for birthda	✗	Both words are present in the search query irrespective of the worder in the which they are written
sponge for washing	✓	The word cake is missing from the search query hence the ad will be displayed

> **Note:** A *negative broad match is difficult to use because it prevents triggering your ad for a large number of search queries. This match type can be used if you are positive that you do not wish to receive traffic for a certain group of keywords. Try revisiting these terms, as they may be preventing some important traffic as well.*

Finding Negative Keywords in Google Ads

To optimize your PPC efforts, it's crucial to review and update your Negative keywords on a regular basis. One of the ways to identify negative keywords is through Google Ads Search Term Report.

Instead of grilling yourself in doing mental keyword research, you can take help from the search query report to identify terms you want to bid for and terms that you would prefer excluding.

What is Google Ads Search Terms Report?

Now how does an advertiser find the terms that a user entered in the searched engine? Google Ads lets you review these search terms that users entered before viewing your ad and visiting your website. This report is called the search terms report or search query report. It helps you improve your keyword targeting so that you can reach a more relevant audience.

How to view the Search Terms Report?

You can access the search terms report under the keywords tab of your campaign

Step 1: Go to campaigns

Step 2: Expand the Keywords Tab and click on Search Terms to view the list of terms for which your ad got triggered

Step 3: You can also download the search terms report by clicking on 'Download'

> **Note:** *You will be viewing the search terms for all your campaigns. If you wish to only view on the search terms of a specific campaign, then go to the campaign and then go to the keywords section in the left side bar.*
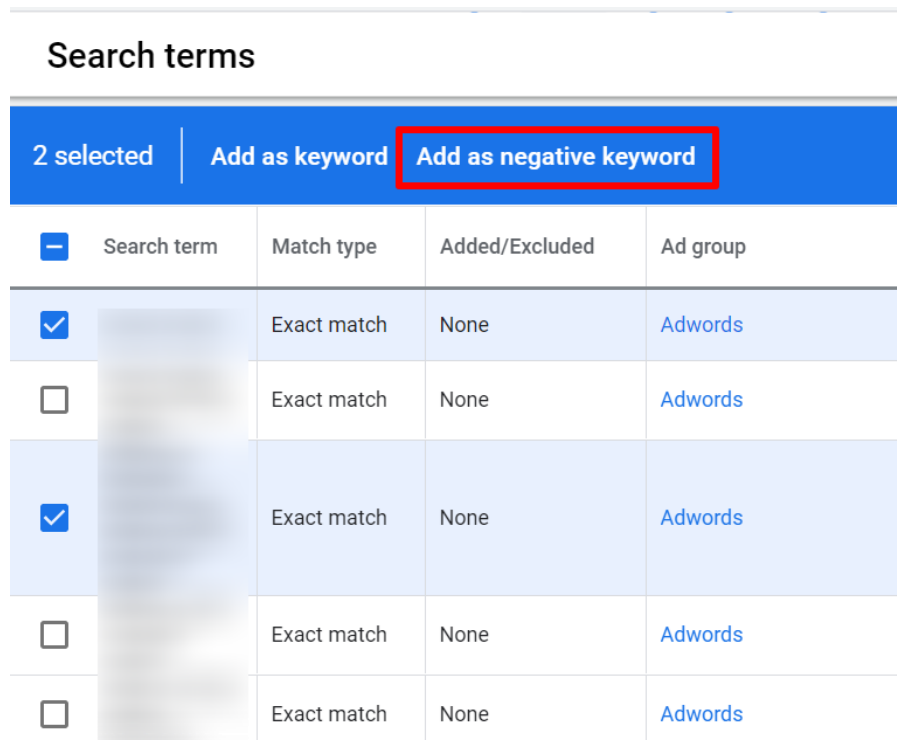
Adding Negative Keywords in Google Ads

The search terms report needs to be thoroughly reviewed to understand which terms are irrelevant and which are not. To come up with the best outcome you need to go to each term and analyze if it is non-performing or is irrelevant to your business.

After reviewing the terms, if you find an irrelevant or non-performing term then you can add it directly from the Google Ads account. Select the search term and add it directly to the ad group or campaign from where the ad got triggered.

Here are the easy steps that you can follow to add directly from your Google Ads account:

Step 1: Select the search term that you wish to add and click on 'Add as negative keyword'

Step 2: Select where you want to add the negative keyword (campaign/ ad group or to an existing negative keywords list). Save your settings.

Here are a few things to note:

1. By default, the search terms are assigned the exact match type. So, you have to manually assign the match types if you prefer to use a broad or phrase instead
2. Google adds the negative keyword to the ad group and campaign from which the search term triggered the ad. So, if you want to add a term as negative keyword in any other ad group or campaign you again have to manually do so.

Going through each search term individually and assigning a specific match type might seem fine for smaller accounts. But with larger accounts where the search term report generates thousands of such words to be reviewed, it might take days to complete the entire process.

It might then be a better idea to download the report and study the data before assigning them a match type. Once done with creating the list of unwanted keywords you can go about assigning them either at the campaign or ad group level. To add the negative keywords manually, you can follow the following quick steps:

Step 1: Go to the Keywords tab and click on Negative Keywords
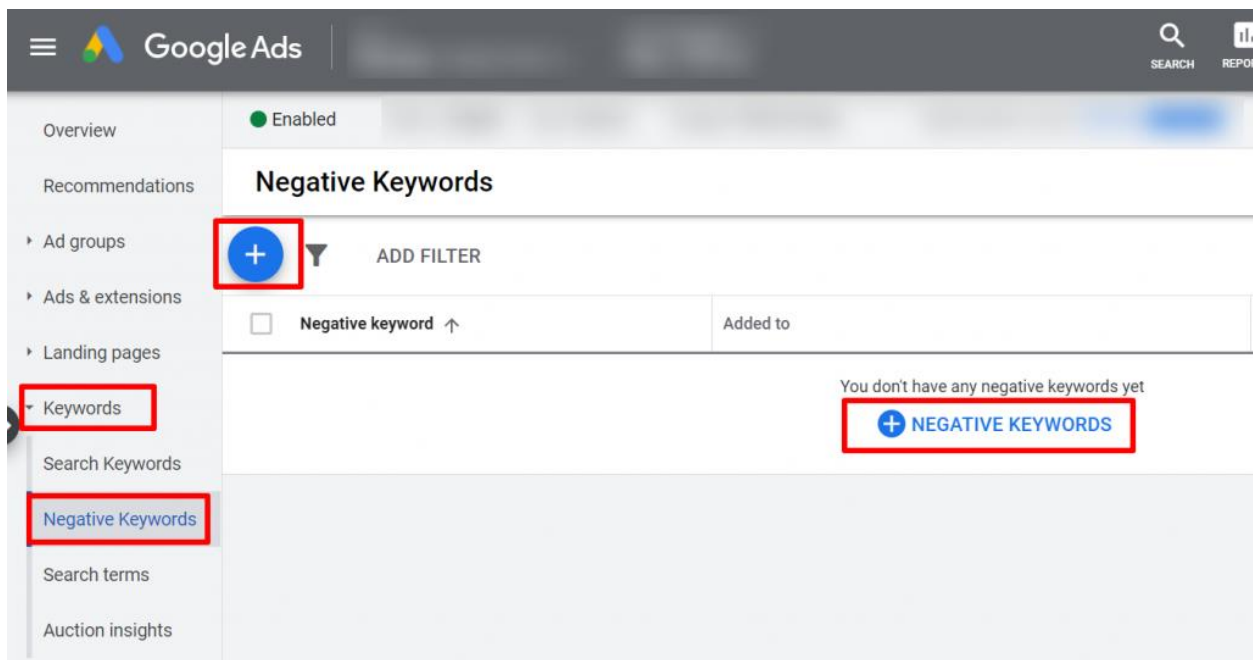
Step 2: Choose whether to add the Negative Keyword at the campaign level or ad group level. Save your settings.
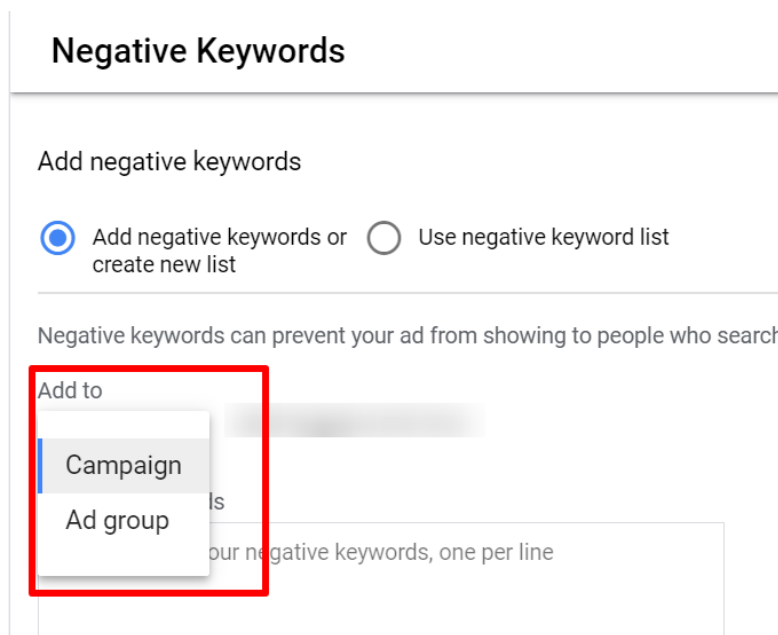
Step 3: If later, you wish to change the match type of the keyword text if required and save the details.
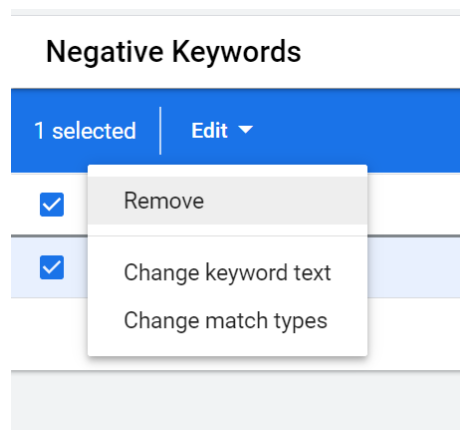
But wait a minute, that's not all. There is more left to do.

So, if your search term report showed that you were getting clicks for the term job, you might as well add it as a negative keyword. But if you really want to block clicks from people looking for a job, you need to add synonyms such as vacancy, career, employment, etc., and any other close variants also as negative keywords.

To figure out all such related keywords you might think of doing the following:

- Brainstorm with your team to identify the related or close variants of the search term
- Use the Free Keyword Research Tools or Google's Keyword Planner to figure out related words
- You can try and search for terms directly on Google's search platform
- Use the automation tools for negative keywords discovery

Phew! This is a time taking task and marketers must prepare themselves for the monotony as it is an inevitable part of the PPC campaign. If the Search Terms report or keywords/ negative keywords are not analyzed you might end up driving low-quality traffic to your site.

Negative Keywords Lists in Google Ads and Microsoft Ads

Negative keyword lists make it easy to add a group of negative keywords to several campaigns without having to manually do so. Understanding how to group comparable negative terms together becomes critical in this situation.

You might think, that adding one or two negative keywords is sufficient. Your campaigns and negative keywords, on the other hand, will increase in tandem with your business. Lists are a lifesaver when it comes to tactically managing the surge of negative keywords. For example, if your business of shoes has 15 ongoing campaigns, then you may realize that the following areas may use some work:

Campaigns   Negative Keyword Lists
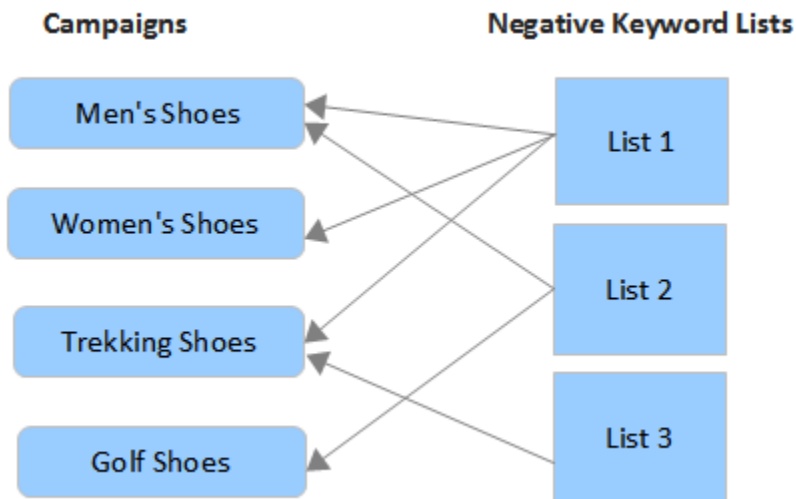
1. There are some common negative keywords for 4-5 campaigns
2. You find that each campaign needs some individual negative keywords
3. There is a generic set of negatives for all the campaigns etc.

Many more such questions would come up now and then. Simply put, you want to centralize some negatives and assign individual negatives to some campaigns. But assigning lists manually to campaigns can become tedious.

As you go on modifying and adding new keywords you tend to lose track of where you added and where you missed. You might find it tiring to sync the keywords across the campaigns. This purpose is met by Google Ads Shared Negative Keyword Lists, or Microsoft Ads Shared Negative Keyword List which lets you add negatives to one or more campaigns.

Unfortunately, Amazon Ads doesn't have this feature yet. We have an inbuilt feature in our Negative Keywords Tool that helps you create lists for Amazon Ads. Check out more about it here.

Negative Keywords Quiz

Take this Negative Keywords Quiz with 10 questions and see if you are a PPC Yoda!

Get Started Now!

1. If the exact match negative keyword is [nike shoes], for which search query your ad will not show?

    a) nike shoes for men
    b) nike shoes
    c) shoes of nike brand
    d) nike shoes in India
    e) green shoes of nike

2. For which search queries your ad will show, if the phrase match negative keyword is - "keyword match type"

    a) is broad keyword match type the best?
    b) use keyword match types in your campaign
    c) using negative keyword match type in Google Ads
    d) learn about Google Ads match types
    e) which keyword match type to use

3. For the broad match negative keyword *salsa dance class*, which search queries won't trigger your ad?

    a) dance class to learn salsa
    b) dance class timing to learn ballet and salsa
    c) I want to learn ballet and salsa
    d) best dance class to learn salsa
    e) take salsa dance class online

4. If the phrase match negative keyword is "free trial", for which search queries, your ad will not be shown?

    a) enjoy a three month trial for free
    b) get a free product sample with a trial
    c) get a free trial of our software
    d) free trials of our product available
    e) discounted 3 month free trial

5. For which search queries, your ad will show, if the exact match negative keyword is [pink dress]

    a) where can I buy pink dress
    b) pink dress at discounted price
    c) pink dress
    d) pink frock for girls
    e) dress in pink color

6. If the broad match negative keyword is *cheap*, ads for which search queries doesn't get blocked?

    a) cheap desktop computers
    b) where can I buy cheap, second hand laptops
    c) discounted laptops
    d) laptops sold for cheap rates
    e) where to find laptops that can be purchased at cheap price

7. For which search queries your ad will be blocked, if the broad match negative keyword is *digital camera*

    a) I want to make a purchase online for a camera that is digital
    b) which is a good and trustworthy online portal where I can review and purchase a cheap digital camera
    c) where can I buy good digital camera
    d) what is a digital SLR camera?
    e) where can I read reviews about SLR cameras

8. If the exact match negative keyword is *[blueberry]*, for which search query your ad will not show?

   a) blueberries
   b) blueberry cake recipe
   c) benefits of blueberry
   d) recipes of blueberry
   e) blueberry

9. For the phrase match negative keyword *"fiction novels"*, your ad will not show for which search query

   a) fiction novel
   b) romantic fiction novels
   c) fiction romantic novels
   d) novels in fiction genre
   e) romantic novels

10. For which search queries your ad will not be blocked, if the broad match negative keyword is *tea cups*

   a) tea cup online
   b) bone china tea cups
   c) tea cups and saucer
   d) tea mugs
   e) buy red cups for tea

Answer Key

A1. (a) - The ad will not show for *nike shoes* query, as in exact match the search query should match the negative keyword 'exactly'. The order of the words should be the same as well as the form (singular or plural)

A2. The correct answers are:

- (b) *use keyword match types in your campaign* - As the word '*type*' is mentioned in its plural form, the query will trigger the ad.
- (d) *learn about Google Ads match types* - This search query doesn't match the keyword as the word '*keyword*' is replaced with '*Google Ads*' in the query. The ad will show for this query

A3. The following search queries have all the words as mentioned in the negative keyword. Irrespective of the order in which they are written, these search queries won't trigger the ad

- (a) dance class to learn salsa
- (b) dance class timing to learn ballet and salsa
- (d) best dance class to learn salsa
- (e) take salsa class online

A4. The following search queries mentions the word 'free' and 'trial' in the same order and form, as the negative keyword

- (c) get a free trial of our software
- (e) discounted 3 month free trial

A5. For all these search queries, the ad will show as the negative keyword is of exact match type. As the queries have additional words other than 'pink' and 'dress' the ad will be triggered

- (a) where can I buy pink dress

- (b) pink dress at discounted price
- (d) pink frock for girls
- (e) dress in pink color

A6. Unlike positive broad match keyword, negative keywords broad match doesn't consider synonyms of the keyword. Hence, the ad will show in this case

- (c) discounted laptops

A7. The keywords *digital* and *camera* are mentioned in all these search queries. Irrespective of the order in which they are written, the ad will not show for all these queries

- (a) I want to make a purchase online for a camera that is digital
- (c) where can I buy good digital camera
- (d) what is a digital SLR camera?

A8. This search query is an exact match of the keyword; hence the ad will not show.

- (e) blueberry

A9. The keywords in this search query are mentioned in the same order and form hence, the ad will not show for it.

- (b) romantic fiction novel

A10. The correct answers are:

- (a) *tea cup online* - The ad will not be blocked, as in this search query the word 'cups' is in singular form
- (d) *tea mugs* - Negative keywords broad match don't consider synonyms of the keyword. In this case 'mugs' (synonym for 'cups') will not be considered. Hence, the ad will not be blocked for this search query.

Resources

1. [Choosing The Right Negative Keyword Match Types in Google Ads](#)

2. [Broad Match Negative Keywords: All You Need To Know](#)

3. [How To Remove Negative Keywords in Bulk From Your Google Ads Account](#)

4. [7 Things To Check Before Adding Negative Keywords](#)

5. [How To Identify Negative Keywords Through Google Ads Search Terms Report?](#)

6. [Upload Negative Keywords in Bulk With Google Ads Editor](#)

7. [How to download negative keywords from Google Ads?](#)

Karooya's Negative Keywords Tool is a quick and easy way to cut down ad spend by 10-20%. We offer a generous Free Tier for accounts on Google Ads, Microsoft Ads and Amazon Ads.