

Tapping into Mobile App Installs

Building a Valuable User Base for Your App

Introduction

If your business has an app, or you're planning to launch one, you've probably spent a lot of time thinking about the unique value it offers. Does it make your users' lives easier with ridesharing to parties? Help them buy with just a single click? Or simply entertain them as they tap a flying squirrel through digital treetops?

Whatever your app does, you want it to be found. This white paper will show you how to use AdWords to build a valuable user base for your app and promote your app to users: as they're playing, watching, searching, shopping, and yes—even as they're flying through treetops.

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Estimate the Value of an App Install

Key Takeaway

- Estimate how much an app user is worth to your business.
-

Every good app starts with an audience that you want to reach. Your ideal user—age, gender, interests—should be carefully defined.

TIP:

Things to include when estimating the value of an install: in-app purchases, website orders, in-store purchases, call orders, and ad publishing revenue.

Once you have a target audience in mind, estimate how much a user is worth to your business. That number will inform the amount you should spend to acquire that user, or cost per install (CPI).

Let's start by determining the full "lifetime value" of an install for your app.

Example: Here's a calculation for a flying squirrel game that sells power-ups like acorn boosters and super-fluffy tails as in-app purchases, as well as T-shirts and collectibles through physical retail store partnerships.

TIP:

When defining a user's lifetime, think about how long it takes before a user decides to abandon your app. In this example, we estimate that it's a year.

- Total in-app purchases for 1 year: \$5
- Estimated in-store purchases for 1 year: \$5
- Estimated word-of-mouth referrals: 10%

$\$5 + \5 gives you \$10 in total sales. Multiply that by 1.1 (the 10% gained by word of mouth) and you get $\$10 \times 1.1 = \11 . That's the average lifetime value of an install, or the maximum you can pay for an install while remaining profitable.

For extra credit, think about how this user value could potentially differ by region (English-speaking versus other countries) or by operating system (Android versus iOS).

Then adjust your estimates for each segment. You can update these values and your CPI targets as you build and analyze your user base.

TIP:

Some advertisers may track word-of-mouth and in-store purchases influenced by their apps. If you have access to this data, include them in your projections.

TIP:

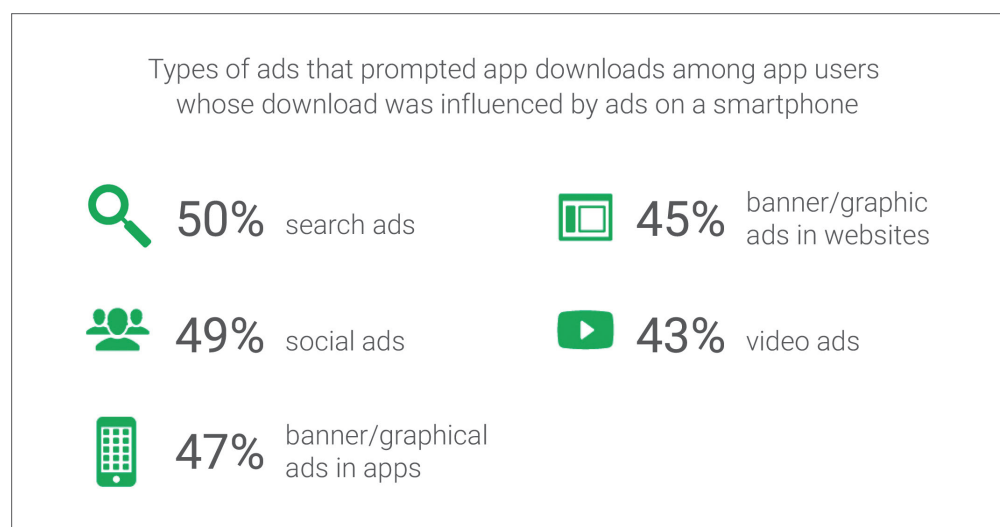
More downloads will boost your rank in the app stores, so that your app will be more easily discovered by users, which leads to even more downloads.

Create Compelling Ads and an App Store Page

Key Takeaway

- Develop ads and an app store page that clearly describe your app's value.

It turns out that people discover apps in a variety of ways.



Additionally, 40% of smartphone users browse for apps in app stores.¹ With millions of apps to choose from, how can you let folks know about yours?

First and foremost, create ads to help with discovery and craft an app store page that clearly shows how your app can meet people's needs. That way, you can attract users who are more likely to download and engage with your app.

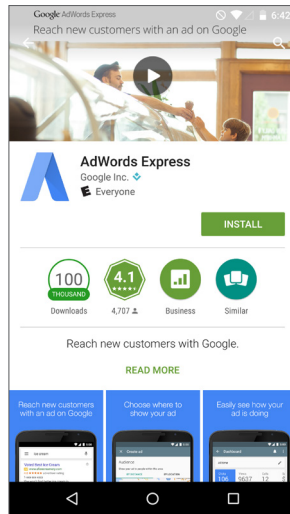
Search ads, video ads, and ads on sites can all influence whether a user downloads an app and over 60% of app users find information included in your app store page (description, reviews, and ratings) to be an important factor when deciding to download an app.²

Create ads that hone in on one unique selling point (e.g., Easy to Use) and include a clear call-to-action: (e.g., Install)

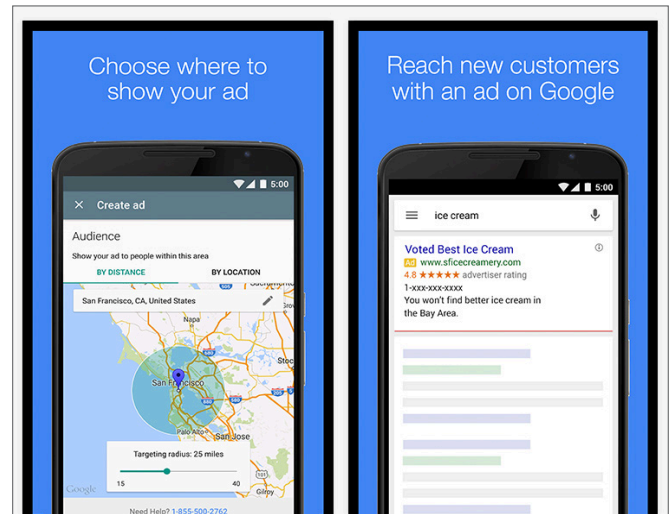
¹ Source: [Mobile App Marketing Insights study](#), Google/Ipsos 2015

² Source: [Mobile App Marketing Insights study](#), Google/Ipsos 2015

Then create an app store landing page that reinforces your ad messaging, mentioning one key point per screenshot along with concise descriptions and video previews that speak to your target users.



[Screenshots from the Google Play Store](#)



Write concise descriptions for your users.

Enable App Conversion Tracking

Key Takeaway

- Check that you're accurately tracking & attributing installs.

Make sure that you're able to track the installs driven by your AdWords campaigns.

You can measure the performance of your AdWords campaign using Conversion Tracking in your account.

- For campaigns promoting Android apps, conversions can automatically be tracked with codeless install tracking via an integration with Google Play. AdWords will also exclude users who have already installed your app from your campaign.
- For your Android apps and iOS apps on the Google Display Network, the [AdWords conversion tracking SDK](#) lets you tag events and actions in your app to be tracked as conversions. When users perform the tagged action after interacting with an ad, the event is recorded and can be viewed in your AdWords campaign reports.




If you're using a third-party solution to track conversions, check that their server-to-server API notifications are [set up](#) and reporting accurately for AdWords. You can receive confirmation when a user first opens your Android or iOS app after clicking on an ad on search, display, or YouTube by setting up a postback URL in your AdWords account.

Promote Broadly to Drive App Installs

Key Takeaway

- Reach all potential users for your app across display, search and video.

Your app promotion strategy should reach every potential user, whatever they happen to be doing on their devices.

MEET THE ADWORDS APP PROMO TEAM	 Display Reaches 900M unique devices per month. ³	 Search + Play Google Play reaches more than 1 billion people on Android devices in more than 190 countries.	 YouTube Average user is 2x more likely to download apps. ⁴
REACH PEOPLE AS THEY...	Use apps on their mobile devices and sites on the mobile Google Display Network	Look for something related to your app	Watch videos and listen to music
WITH ADS IN...	Other apps that show ads to their users	The Google app, Google Play, Google.com, and the Search Network on a mobile browser.	YouTube's mobile app

TIP:

Set a daily campaign budget that's at least 50x⁵ your CPI target. To improve the likelihood that Conversion Optimizer will achieve your CPI target on a daily basis, it needs at least 50 installs a day to have enough training data.

Display, Search and YouTube: let's look at how to succeed with each.

The DISPLAY Formula for Success:

Conversion Optimizer + Broad Targeting + App Install Ad Template

Step 1: Enable the Conversion Optimizer. When setting up your mobile app installs campaign for the Google Display Network, pick the bid strategy that will "Focus on installs

³Source: Internal AdMob data, 2014

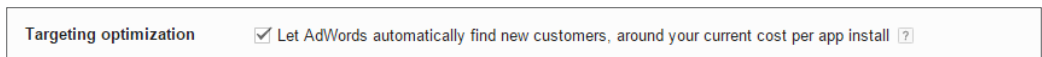
⁵Source: Internal Google data, 2014

⁴Source: YouTube Global Audience Study, IPSOS 2013

([Conversion Optimizer](#)).” Note that [app conversion tracking](#) must be enabled for your account before you can use this. Conversion Optimizer will save you time by automatically adjusting your CPC bids using information about the user and device to predict how likely a click will become a conversion.

Step 2: Start with broad targeting. When creating an ad group for your campaign, choose the option: “Show my ads to all potential app users.” Limit your campaign to only one ad group while running the Conversion Optimizer. This single, broadly-targeted ad group will let the Conversion Optimizer bid on all eligible auctions across the entire network, reaching as many potential users possible at your target CPI.

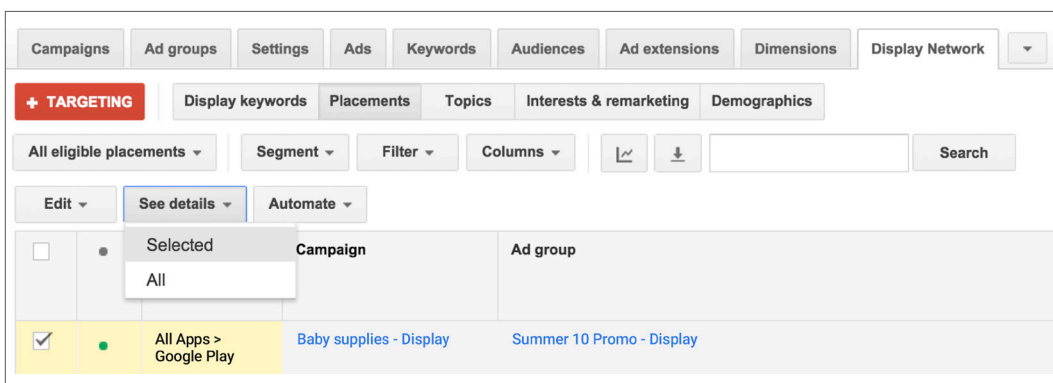
Expand the reach of your app install ads for Android apps by showing them on both the AdMob in-app network and the mobile Google Display Network (mGDN). Selecting this targeting option allows AdWords to automatically extend your app install ads to people engaging with the 2M publisher websites across the GDN.



Early testers saw install volume increases of 28% on average while keeping cost-per-installs steady.⁶

Once you’ve accrued conversion data, you can identify placements that are driving enough profit and traffic to justify separating them into another ad group. For example, you could set a higher target CPI with Conversion Optimizer and try to get even more valuable users from these placements.

First, click on “See details” in the “Display Network” tab to see placement-level reporting:



Then sort by conversions to see which mobile apps and sites are driving performance.

⁶Source: Internal Google Data, March 2015

Campaigns

Ad groups

Settings

Ads

Keywords

Audiences

Ad extensions

Dimensions

Display Network

←

Filter

Columns

⬇

Your ads appeared on the placements listed below. You can add a placement from the list to your managed placements, or you can exclude a placement if you'd like to prevent your ad from appearing on that placement.

Your ad might be shown on a specific placement depending on your campaign settings and the targeting methods you've added to your campaign. [Learn more](#)

Exclude placements

Manage placement and bid

<input type="checkbox"/>	URLs	Ad group	Campaign	Clicks [?]	Impr. [?]	CTR [?]	Avg. CPC [?]	Avg. CPM [?]	Cost [?]	Converted clicks [?]	↓	cor
<input type="checkbox"/>	Mobile App: Baby Supplies Delivered (Google Play), by Baby Supplies	Delivery promo summer10	Baby supplies - Display	2,715	914,465	0.30%	\$0.19	\$0.56	\$515.32	47		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Mobile App: Baby Supplies Delivered (Google Play), by Baby Supplies	Late night delivery promo10	Baby supplies - Display	2,309	186,661	1.24%	\$0.22	\$2.66	\$497.43	34		

Step 3: Use the App Install Ad Template. This template pulls data directly from your app store page (icon, ratings, screenshots) creating ads that automatically render across all available ad sizes on the Display Network. That means your ad will automatically change size based on where it's eligible to appear.

If you choose to upload your own images using the Image App Promotion Template instead, make sure to include the network's most common ad sizes: 320x50, 320x480, 480x320, 768x1024, and 1024x768. The more [ad sizes](#) you can cover, the more potential users you can reach.

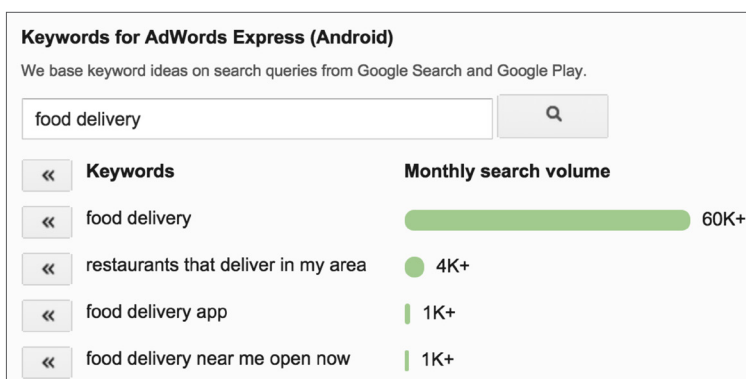
Case study: [Pocket Gems](#)

Mobile game developer Pocket Gems launched app install campaigns on the Google Display Network to promote their latest game Episode. The campaigns delivered impressive return on investment while driving significant volume. As a result, Pocket Gems was able to scale their display campaigns in AdWords, getting 300% more installs while maintaining a CPI of less than \$1.

The SEARCH Formula for Success:

Keyword Suggestion Tool + Broad Match + Target CPA Bid Strategy

Step 1: Use the keyword suggestion tool. When setting up a search mobile app installs campaign, create an [extensive keyword](#) list to reach as many potential users for your app on the Google Search Network, Google Search, and Google Play. Let's say your app offers food delivery service. The Keyword ideas tool uses search data from both Google Play and Google Search to come up with all the related search terms people might be using to search for your app. Give it a term like *food delivery* and it can suggest related terms like *food delivery service* or *restaurants that deliver*.



Find inspiration for new keywords: check your app description, user reviews, and keywords in standard search campaigns for terms you may be missing.

Case study: [FarFaria](#)

FarFaria, a leading children's e-book app, used the Keyword Suggestion Tool to expand the keyword list for their app install campaigns. They unlocked 30% more app downloads while maintaining a cost-per-install that was 50% below other mobile networks.

TIP:

Remember to include non-branded keywords to capture a highly interested audience who may not know your app by name yet.

Step 2: Since you're trying to reach users with high intent—people looking for you and your app—start off by using [broad match](#) for your keywords, so that your ads can be triggered against as many relevant searches as possible. You can then review the [search terms reports](#) to understand what keywords people are using to find you and improve your keyword list by adding negatives or expanding with new keywords.

You can gain more control over how you bid and advertise on keywords where you want to be more targeted, like your brand or app name, by setting them to exact and phrase match as well.

After launching your keywords, identify top-performers and enter those into the [Keyword Suggestion Tool for another round of keyword ideas to test](#).

Step 3: Use the Target CPA automated bid strategy. This bid strategy is a feature in AdWords that will automatically adjust your bids to acquire as many conversions possible while working to reach your cost-per-acquisition target. The main advantage of using this strategy is that it will begin optimizing for you right out of the gate; you don't need to wait to accumulate conversion history.

Note: If you're promoting an iOS app, you can use the *Maximize Clicks* bid strategy since these installs are manually tracked.

TIP:

If you have a website and an app, ensure that your audience can find both. Create separate campaigns for your mobile site on Google.com and for your app on both Google.com and Google Play.

Then take advantage of [app extensions](#) in your text ad campaigns to let users choose whether they're interested in your site or your app when viewing your text ads on Google.com.

Step 4: Review and raise your campaign budgets. Prevent budget constraints and restrictions to your app install volume. Many advertisers are seeing substantially higher install rates for their app after their ads started to show in Google Play. By raising and uncapping your budgets, you can take full advantage of this enhancement to Search app install ads in AdWords.

Step 5: Compare open and install rates for your app. If you track first opens for your app with the AdWords SDK or a third-party tracking solution, we recommend that you also track app installs so that you can compare the percentage of people who've installed your app to those who've actually opened it. [Learn more.](#)

The YOUTUBE Formula for Success:

Engaging Video + Targeting Groups + Cost-per-View Bidding

Step 1: Make an engaging video. The video ad format gives you an opportunity to attract users by showing your app in action. You can create video ads targeting users of the YouTube app by creating an [AdWords for video](#) campaign.

Case study: [Machine Zone](#)

Machine Zone, a leading mobile game developer, found that users who download their app "Game of War" from YouTube are 15% more valuable than those from any other video platform.

Under the Ad Formats section of your campaign, choose the option: "Use video ad formats optimized for mobile app promotion." This lets you use the [TrueView ad format](#) to promote your app. With this format, you pay only when a viewer clicks on your video or watches your video (either to the end of your video or to the 30 second mark, whichever comes first). That helps you make sure your ad dollars go to those who are really interested.

When using this format, make the first five seconds of your video ad count. Viewers can skip TrueView ads after that, so you have a small window to truly captivate them. If your flying squirrel character is hilarious, get him in there for those first five seconds. Then make sure you include a strong call-to-action, like "Download to Play Now."

TIP:

You can also create [remarketing lists](#) based on people who've viewed your video ad. Use these lists for future TrueView campaigns or campaigns on the display network.

Step 2: Create extensive targeting groups. As you set up your video campaign, you'll be asked to create targeting groups. In each group, you can specify whether to target your TrueView ads by specific interests (users interested in certain categories even if they're viewing videos about other things) or topics (as users are watching videos on specific topics regardless of what interest categories they might fall into).

You want to create enough targeting groups that will give you full coverage of your target audience. But limit each targeting group to only one or two targeting options—the more options you add, the more you restrict traffic to your ads. Say you want to reach all females interested in gaming for your flying squirrel app. You can set up two targeting groups: one to show your ads to females interested in games, and another one targeting videos on the topic of gaming. These two groups combined will give you full coverage of your intended audience.

Step 3: Optimize your Cost-per-View (CPV) bids. AdWords will offer you a recommended CPV when you set up your online video campaign. Start with that, paying close attention to app installs and your effective CPI to adjust your CPV bids accordingly.

Suppose your target CPI is \$5. You observe that video 1 has a low average CPV (\$0.12) but delivers only 80 conversions, for an effective CPI of \$5.70 while video 2 has a higher CPV (\$0.15) but drives a total of 200 conversions, for an effective CPI of \$3.82. You should probably raise your CPV bid on video 2 to reach more users and lower the CPV bid for video 1 and get it closer to your \$5 CPI target.

TIP:

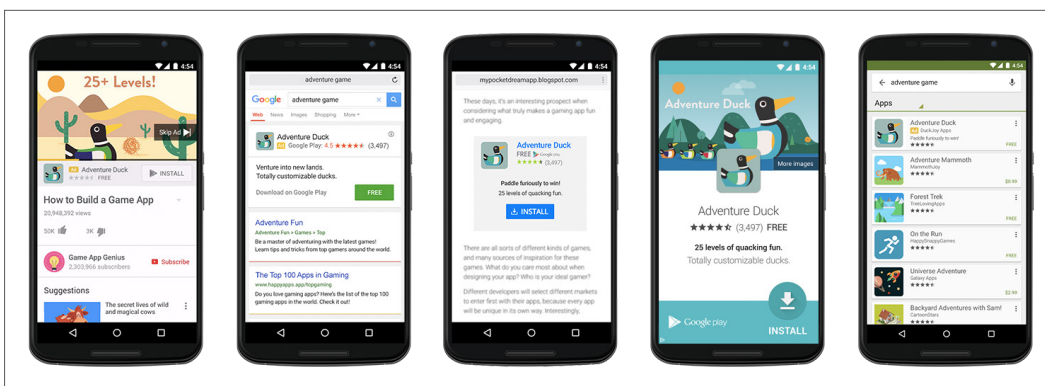
Not every view of your video costs you money. You aren't charged for viewers who quit before they reach the end of your video (or the 30-second mark, whichever comes first). But these people could still install your app. Factor those view-through conversions when you calculate the effective CPI for YouTube.

	Views	Avg CPV	Total Cost	View-Through Conversion	Effective CPI
VIDEO 1	3,802	\$0.12	\$456.24	80	\$5.70 Bid Down
VIDEO 2	5,097	\$0.15	\$764.55	200	\$3.82 Bid Up

The one-stop-shop for app installs: Universal App Campaigns.

Take advantage of managed automation. A [single Universal app campaign](#) can promote your Android app on Google Search, across the Google Search Network, on Google Play, YouTube, the mobile web, and the AdMob in-app network. This campaign type can save you time in setup, optimization, and ongoing management.

Universal app campaigns optimize ad text, bids, and budget allocation behind the scenes to help you achieve maximum install volume at your target CPI. Start a campaign by entering through AdWords or the Google Developer Console.



Examples of ad types generated by Universal app campaigns when you select your app and input a cost-per-install, daily budget, ad text, and who you want to reach.

Analyze and Optimize for Lifetime Value

Key Takeaway

- Start with broader targeting and then fine tune around high value users.

Once a good number of installs start rolling in, assess your campaign results.

Before diving into the data, recognize how various media channels attribute installs to their campaigns. You risk misinterpreting results when you compare channels that use different attribution rules. If using a third-party analytics solution, familiarize yourself with their attribution rules. How do they report an install from a user that has viewed or clicked on ads from different sources?

For instance, AdWords defaults to a 30-day click-through conversion window. That means an install is counted if it happens within 30 days of an ad click. Other channels may use only a 7-day window, or they may automatically count view-through conversions—installs that occur after a user sees an ad but doesn't click it. Make sure you compare apples to apples as you assess campaigns.

When analyzing performance, look for ways to generate even more of the things you want:

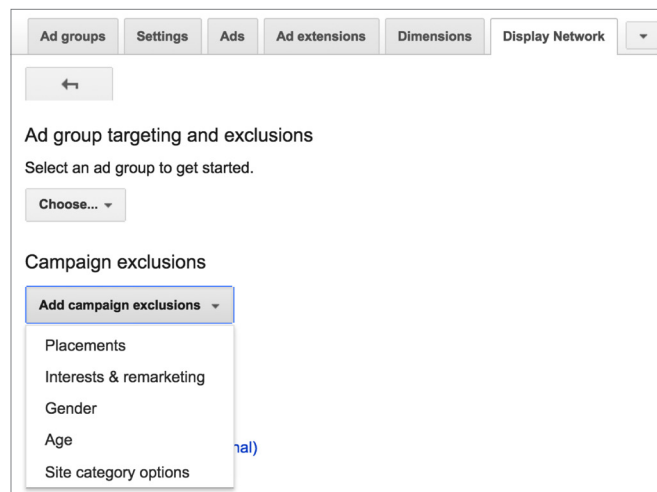
- **More downloads.** To win more downloads, you can optimize your bids or creative:
- **Budgets and bids.** First, check if you're not running out of budget mid-day. If your search or display campaigns are losing [impression share](#) and install volume due to budget, think about increasing the daily limit. If your campaigns are not budget

constrained, you can maximize impression share and install volume by choosing accelerated ad delivery.

- Next, determine where valuable users are coming from and bid up to see if you can drive even more valuable downloads from those particular parts of your campaigns.
- **Creative testing.** Test different ads, videos and app store creative (icons, screenshots, descriptions).
- **Better CPI.** Target CPA bidding will automatically optimize your bids to help you reach your selected CPI.

If you're using a manual bidding strategy, try more specific targeting to help reach your goals. Test and find traffic sources that can bring more valuable users into your app. Exclude the parts that don't:

- **Display:** If you found that a category you tested isn't converting or driving enough return, bid down on this target or use *exclusions*. Then you can filter out categories or placements (specific apps) that aren't working for you. You can do this by clicking **+ Targeting** under the "Display Network" tab:



- **Search:** Add negative keywords to prevent your ads from showing for queries that aren't converting. If you learn that people who search for "fast food" don't tend to download your dining app, you can use the *negative keyword* function to block your ad from showing up for that query.

Then consider adding more precise match types (exact and phrase match) for your high volume keywords, so that you can manage their bids and ads more closely.

- **Youtube:** Add [negative targets](#) or pause targeting groups that aren't doing well for you.

- **Higher value installs.** To find the highest value users for your Android app, you can create targeted display campaigns optimized for lifetime value:
- **Targeting:** You can show your display ads only to people that have paid for an app (if you're promoting a paid app) or made an in-app purchase (if promoting a free app that monetizes using in-app upgrades):

1 Create an ad group — 2 Create ads

Social	»
Sports	»
Tools	»
Transportation	»
Travel & Local	»
Weather	»
Widgets	»

☒ Only show ads to people who purchased an app or made an in-app purchase

- **Bidding strategies.** Drive installs from users more likely to make an in-app purchase by using Conversion Optimizer for in-app buyers. This strategy combines automated bidding with paid user targeting to optimize bids. Bids are based on each user's probability of making in-app purchases after installing your app.

Conclusion

Building a great app is the easy part. It's getting your app discovered that's the hard part. Promoting your app across display, search and video connects you with users as they're using other mobile apps, looking for things, and entertaining themselves across all their devices, leading to discovery and app installs.

But that's only half the journey. Once you've convinced them to install, you've got to keep them coming back for more acorn boosts and fluffy tail power ups!

To learn about this crucial piece of app success, check out our [Best Practices Guide](#) on driving app engagement.

If you'd like to learn more about promoting your mobile app, including how to set it up in your account, visit the [related article](#) in the AdWords Help Center.

Click through for more AdWords Best Practices:

Read

Guides to get the most out of AdWords

▼

Watch

The insights you need in 3-minute videos

▼

Subscribe

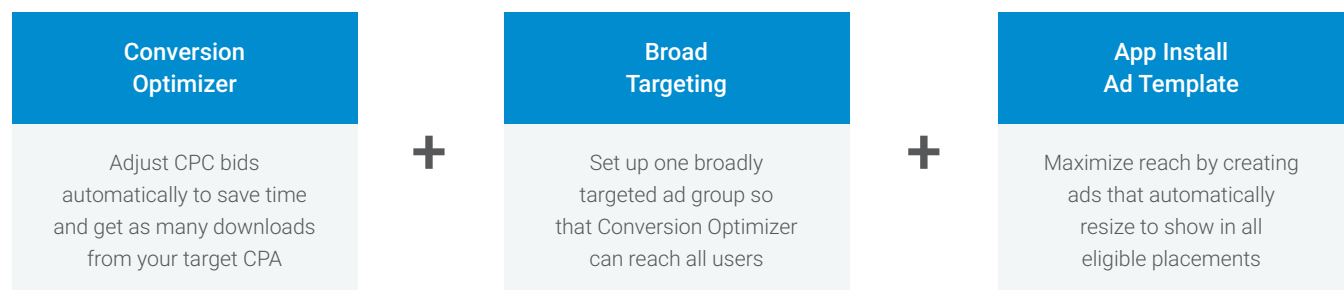
Get tips delivered right to your inbox

▼

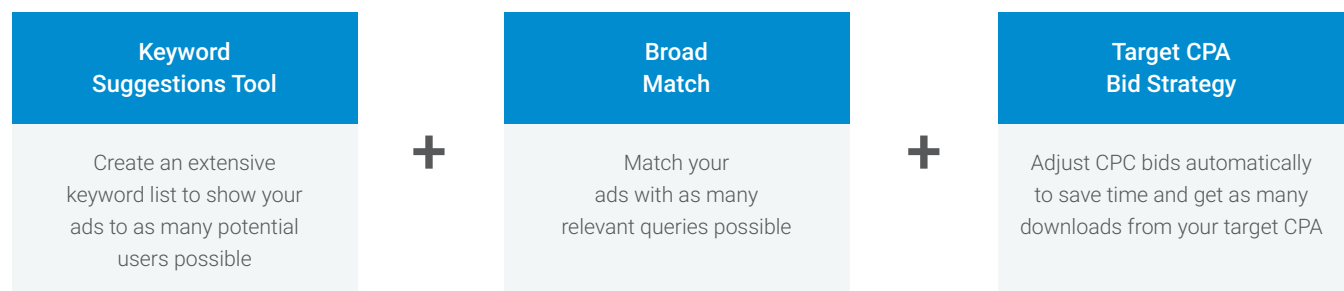
Here's a summary of the best practices for driving mobile app downloads using AdWords.

- ☐ 1. Estimate how much an app user is worth to your business.
Why: Know the maximum limit you can spend per install while remaining profitable.
- ☐ 2. Develop ads and an app store page that clearly describe your app's value.
Why: Attract qualified users who will download and engage with your app.
- ☐ 3. Check that you're accurately tracking and attributing installs.
Why: Measure the effectiveness of your app install campaigns based on reliable conversion data.
- ☐ 4. Promote your app broadly across display, search, and video.
Why: Reach all potential new users while they're using other apps, looking for you, and consuming media on their devices.

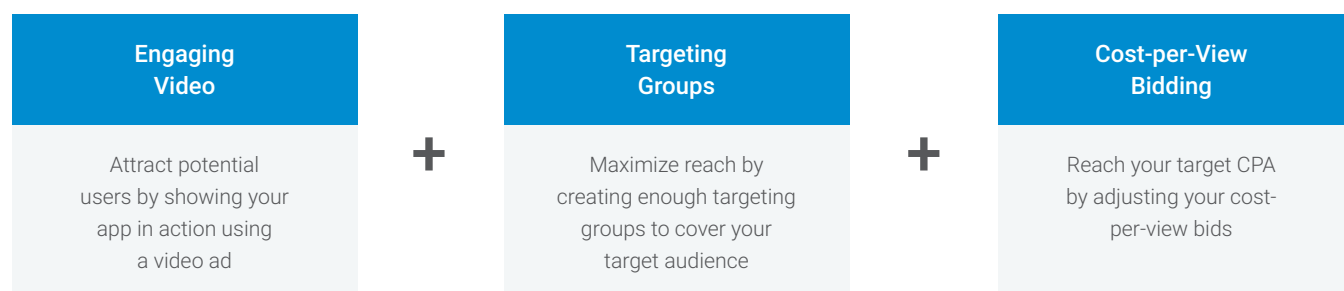
The DISPLAY Formula for Success



The SEARCH Formula for Success



The YOUTUBE Formula for Success



Universal App Campaigns

One Campaign Across Networks

Promote your Android app across Search, Google Play, YouTube*, the mobile web, and the AdMob network—in a single campaign.



Managed Automation

Save time in setup and campaign management. Auto-optimize ad text, bids, and budget allocation behind the scenes to potentially achieve maximum volume at your target CPI.

- ☐ 5. Start with broader targeting and then fine tune around high value users.

Why: Look for ways to generate more of the types of users that you want for your app.

To view the full guide on driving mobile app downloads and other Google Best Practices, check out the full collection at g.co/GoogleBP.