

# Paid Search Ad Copy Primer:

Quickstart Guide to Understanding  
Reviewing & Approving **PPC Text Ads**



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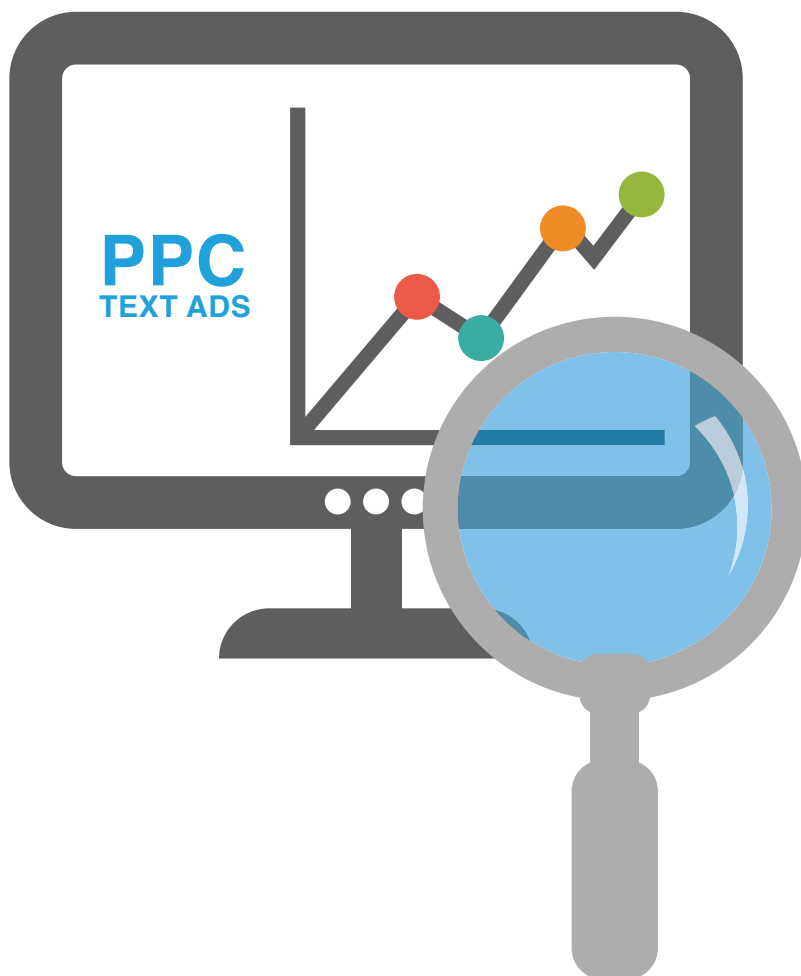


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# Why Read this Ad Copy Primer?

- Learn what goes into successful PPC copy (it's not what you think!)
- See how top brands craft their ads.
- Find out how the search term used on Google affects the type of ad you'll want to run.
- Know what to look for when reviewing ad copy.
- Get the official rules and regulations for your compliance and legal departments.





# A Snapshot of PPC Ads “In The Wild”

If you're completely new to PPC ads, let's take a quick look at where they can appear on the Google Search Network:

The screenshot shows a Google search for "mutual funds". The search bar at the top contains the text "mutual funds". Below the search bar, the "All" tab is selected, showing "About 42,200,000 results (0.50 seconds)".

Organic search results are listed below the search bar:

- Vanguard Mutual Funds - Vanguard.com**  
Ad [www.vanguard.com/](http://www.vanguard.com/) ▼  
Vanguard offers no-load funds. Pay less & keep more. Invest today.
- Mutual Funds - MerrillEdge.com**  
Ad [www.merrilledge.com/](http://www.merrilledge.com/) ▼ (866) 280-4299  
Thousands Of Mutual Funds & Account Bonus Up \$600. Open A New Account.  
Open An Account - ETFs - MarketPro™ - College Investing
- Mutual Funds - Fidelity.com**  
Ad [www.fidelity.com/](http://www.fidelity.com/) ▼  
Find a Mutual Fund. Fidelity Offers Many Mutual Fund Options.  
25 Favorite Funds – Kiplinger  
Browse Our Fund List - Research Sector Funds - Research Mutual Funds

Below the organic results is a definition for "mutual fund":

**mutual fund**  
noun NORTH AMERICAN  
plural noun: mutual funds  
an investment program funded by shareholders that trades in diversified holdings and is professionally managed.

On the right side of the search results, there is a sidebar of ads, indicated by an orange arrow pointing down. The ads are:

- E\*TRADE® – Official Site**  
[www.etrade.com/](http://www.etrade.com/) ▼  
Invest in the stock market now with our easy to use stock selectors.
- Scottrade® Mutual Funds**  
[www.scottrade.com/MutualFunds](http://www.scottrade.com/MutualFunds) ▼  
No Transaction Fee Funds, Load/No-Load Funds & More with Scottrade®  
3344 N Texas St, Ste B, Fairfield, CA  
(707) 434-1980
- Top Mutual Fund Advisors**  
[www.mutualfundstore.com/Advisors](http://www.mutualfundstore.com/Advisors) ▼  
Planning. Investing. Retirement.  
Compare Your Mutual Fund Options.
- Top Mutual Funds**  
[www.troweprice.com/Mutual-Funds](http://www.troweprice.com/Mutual-Funds) ▼  
85% Of Our Mutual Funds Beat Their 10-Year Lipper Average—Invest Today

In this example, you'll notice that no organic listings appear “above the fold” of the results page, meaning that the ads are competing only with each other for attention, not with unpaid listings.





## A Text Ad isn't Just a Mini-Billboard

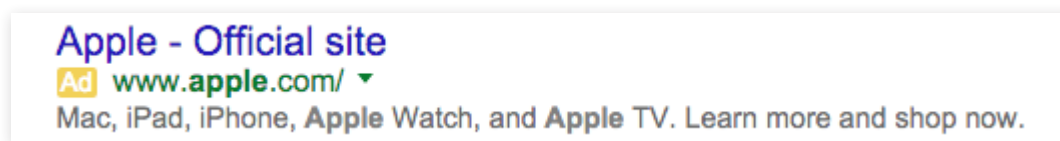
Learning what goes into successful text ads can take some work, and it may seem counter-intuitive at first. Headlines and taglines that you're used to seeing in traditional forms of advertising don't perform well on Search Engine Results Pages (SERPs).

Ads that are informative, *unsexy*, and downright boring consistently **win A/B tests**.

For example, Apple has become synonymous with “creativity” and “innovation” in both its products and advertising:



When it comes to text ads, the company with a \$1 billion ad budget has learned that informational descriptions perform the best. Here's the PPC ad they're currently running:



In this PPC primer, we'll look at what makes text ads successful across different themes and topics. One of the key principles in writing compelling copy is making sure your ads are relevant to the search.





# Successful PPC Ads Depend on Relevancy

The purpose of this primer is not to make you an expert in PPC ads (that would be a much, much longer guide). But it's important to understand the basics of how ads relate to keywords. Here's an example of a search sequence:



If someone searches for “[vacuum cleaner](#),” Google will want to make sure that they see ads for vacuum cleaners, and that the pages they click to are about vacuum cleaners. This provides a better user experience for their visitors, and makes it more likely they’ll keep coming back to Google.

A quick note about this sequence: Google rewards relevancy with a high Quality Score (meaning you pay a lower cost per click if your keywords / ads / LPs all relate to each other):

Quality score [Learn more](#)

10/10

Expected clickthrough rate: **Above average**  
Ad relevance: **Above average**  
Landing page experience: **Above average**

## Being Relevant Saves You Money

While Ad Rank and Quality Score rely on complex formulas that Google’s fairly secretive about, you should have a general understanding that your **ad relevancy will affect your cost and performance**. When reviewing content written for ads keep in mind the landing page that the user will land on, and make sure they relate to one another.

The next section will show you how to have a relevant ad in the limited characters text ads provide.



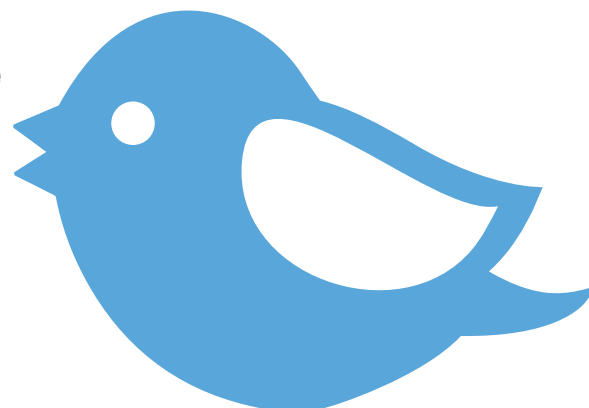


# Ad Anatomy 101

If you've ever struggled to reduce a big thought down to a 140 character tweet, you know that character restrictions can be... restrictive. Try reducing a tweet down by another third, and you've got the 95 characters that comprise PPC ad text.

The limitations don't stop there, since each line of text gets only a certain number of characters to tell its story.

- Headline = 25 characters
- Description Line 1 = 35 characters
- Description Line 2 = 35 characters



Depending on your bid, ad performance, and punctuation, Google may display these 3 lines in many different ways, and they are constantly experimenting with new formats. Here are some examples of how your ad might be seen on the SERP:

Ad on the **right rail** of results page:

**Massage Therapist Schools**  
[www.findmassageschools.com/](http://www.findmassageschools.com/) ▼  
Want to become a **massage therapist**?  
Research schools, get info, easy!

Ad in the main section with description lines combined & **url added to headline**:

**Masage Therapy School - NaturalHealers.com**  
**Ad** [www.naturalhealers.com/Massage-Therapy](http://www.naturalhealers.com/Massage-Therapy) ▼ (855) 589-6059  
Begin your **Massage Therapy** Career. Get Info and Apply for Free Today!

Ad in the main section with **description line 1 added to headline**:

**Massage Therapy School - Train to be a Massage Therapist**  
**Ad** [www.everest.edu/Massage-Therapy](http://www.everest.edu/Massage-Therapy) ▼ (866) 617-3545  
Classes are Starting. Call Now.

Good ad copy is both art and science, but we've found this heuristic can often help us create successful ads. Mileage may vary, and your ads may not exactly follow this formula.

On the next pages, we'll look at some common methods for structuring your copy so the headlines and message are relevant for different types of search queries.

# Why Bid on My Own Brand Name?

## Brand Ads Promote Your Business to Your Customers

Your brand ads will show up when people are specifically searching for your business. Together with your organic listing, you can **command page dominance** and crowd out your competitors. Brand ads usually perform very well and tend to have the lowest costs.

Brand ads almost always use the brand in the headline. Here are some examples of brand ads for well-known companies. Note that many of them feature an offer:



Search Term	Brand Ad
<b>nike shoes</b> (advertiser: Nike)	<b>Nike.com - Nike Official Store</b> Ad <a href="http://www.nike.com/">www.nike.com/</a> ▼ 4.3 ★★★★★ rating for nike.com Shop the Official Nike Store For Shoes, Apparel & More
<b>pizza hut</b> (advertiser: Pizza Hut)	<b>PizzaHut.com - Pizza Hut® \$6.99 Any Deal</b> Ad <a href="http://www.pizzahut.com/">www.pizzahut.com/</a> ▼ 2 Medium Pizzas, \$6.99 Each w/ Your Choice of Any Toppings. Order Today
<b>ford</b> (advertiser: Ford)	<b>Ford.com - Official Ford® Site</b> Ad <a href="http://www.ford.com/">www.ford.com/</a> ▼ Go to the Official Ford Site for Special Incentives & Offers Today.
<b>new york times</b> (advertiser: NY Times)	<b>The New York Times - NYTimes.com</b> Ad <a href="http://www.nytimes.com/Subscription">www.nytimes.com/Subscription</a> ▼ Save 50% On Home Delivery Or Get 4 Weeks of Digital Access for 99¢

## Messaging Funnel: Keywords, Ads & Landing Pages

- **Keywords:** include your brand name
- **Ads:** include brand name, likely in the headline, as well as display URL
- **Landing Page:** Should include brand name, preferably in the headline







# How do I Reach New Audiences with My Ads?

## Unbranded Ads Reach Early Funnel Searches

People often search for products and services without a particular company in mind, and most of your keywords and texts ads will fall in this category. A person looking for “yoga pants,” “oil change,” or “medical school” is still trying to make a decision on the item or business to use, no matter how long or short the buying cycle.

While common sense may say to lead with your brand in the headline, there’s often not room for both your brand and the keyword, and relevancy usually wins. Plus, top ads often feature the branded domain name right in the headline, giving you the best of both:



Search Term	Brand Ad
<b>MBA</b> (advertiser: WSU)	<b>Earn Your MBA Online - wsu.edu</b> Ad <a href="http://www.wsu.edu/mba">www.wsu.edu/mba</a> ▼ Best Online Graduate MBA Programs Graduate in as few as 22 months.
<b>prom dress</b> (advertiser: Vicky Dresses)	<b>Prom Dresses - VickyDresses.com</b> Ad <a href="http://www.vickydresses.com/Prom-Dresses">www.vickydresses.com/Prom-Dresses</a> ▼ Your Style, Your Fit, Your Dresses. Custom Made, High Quality, Shop Now!
<b>hair color</b> (advertiser: Clairol)	<b>Clairol® Hair Color - Clairol.com</b> Ad <a href="http://www.clairol.com/Nice-'n-Easy">www.clairol.com/Nice-'n-Easy</a> ▼ Superior Natural Looking Color. Try Clairol Nice 'N Easy Color Now!
<b>wedding photographer NYC</b> (advertiser: Matt Stallone)	<b>NYC Wedding Photographer - mattstallonephotography.com</b> Ad <a href="http://www.mattstallonephotography.com/">www.mattstallonephotography.com/</a> ▼ New York Wedding Photographer Wedding packages include Engagement

## Messaging Funnel: Keywords, Ads & Landing Pages

- **Keywords:** do not include brand terms
- **Ads:** include brand in the display URL and possibly in the description, but rarely if ever in the headline
- **Landing Page:** Page should be branded but headline should match the search query

# 🎯 Should I Bid on my Competitors' Name?

## Competitor Ads let you Compete for New Customers

A person who's looking for your competitor is often your target customer too, and bidding on competitor terms allows you to show on these searches. Because you don't actually offer your competitors' products, it's hard to be 100% relevant, and your ads on these terms will usually cost more. Still, some businesses do very well by leveraging interest in the competition to their own advantage.



Here are some ads that businesses are running on searches for their competitors. Note that some run a brand-style ad, and some position themselves as being better than their competitors:

Search Term	Brand Ad
<b>dominos</b> (advertiser: Pizza Hut)	<b>PizzaHut.com - Pizza Hut® \$6.99 Any Deal</b> <small>Ad</small> <a href="http://www.pizzahut.com/">www.pizzahut.com/</a> ▼ 2 Medium Pizzas, \$6.99 Each w/ Your Choice of Any Toppings. Order Today
<b>kissmetrics</b> (advertiser: Mixpanel)	<b>Mixpanel - Tired of your reports hanging? - mixpanel.com</b> <small>Ad</small> <a href="http://www.mixpanel.com/">www.mixpanel.com/</a> ▼ Use Mixpanel instead and never wait
<b>wrike</b> (advertiser: Liquid Planner)	<b>A Better Alternative - LiquidPlanner.com</b> <small>Ad</small> <a href="http://www.liquidplanner.com/UpgradeFromWrike">www.liquidplanner.com/UpgradeFromWrike</a> ▼ Project management for modern business. Work smarter. Free Trial!
<b>ontraport</b> (advertiser: Automational)	<b>Small Business Marketing - Automate Marketing</b> <small>Ad</small> <a href="http://www.automational.com/smallbiz">www.automational.com/smallbiz</a> ▼ Increase Sales. Marketing & CRM for small business

## Messaging Funnel: Keywords, Ads & Landing Pages

- **Keywords:** include names of competitors
- **Ads:** include brand name in the display URL and possibly in the description, but rarely if ever in the headline. Do not include name of competitors\*
- **Landing Page:** Headline should focus on product or service but typically will not mention the competitor that was used as a keyword

**\*Trademark usage:** Unless otherwise requested by your team, we'll typically bid on competitor terms, but we don't use competitor names in text ads or on landing pages. We are fully compliant with AdWords' trademark policy.



# How to Review your Ad Copy

When you receive your ad copy for review, it will probably be in an excel file (this helps to show character counts, and can be quickly uploaded to AdWords). You'll see several versions of ad copy across a variety of ad groups and campaigns.

If you've never reviewed PPC ad text copy before, you may feel:

- *overwhelmed* by the variations of ads
- *underwhelmed* by the messaging

That's perfectly normal.

Your PPC ad copy is probably much different from other types of messaging you've had to review. Your ads won't include the taglines and headlines your team carefully crafted for use in other media. The ads might feel choppy, and probably **won't adhere to your branding voice**. They won't include all your brand promises. You'll wish you had more characters to play with.

Skip the wait to **become start earning** an MD **degree!**

If you send your ads back to us marked up with creative edits that don't fit specs, you wouldn't be the first client to do so. But might we persuade you to save yourself some time as you learn to trust the medium?

We've had great success for our clients when we've crafted ads that speak to the desires of customers, even if the branding department would have given the ad an "F." (*How do you think Apple's creative director feels about their PPC ads?*)

We're constantly testing copy, so with enough time and exposure, we can get even more effective with messaging.

As you review your copy, you'll want to make sure that these two criteria are met:

- **Does the ad feature the keyword theme & directly speak its intent?**
- **Does the ad accurately describe what you'll find on the landing page?**

If you feel that the answer is "no" to either question, let's revisit the ads. If the answer is yes to both, we're in good shape to start testing and optimizing your ad copy!

Your ads aren't "set in stone," so as we see how they perform, we can continue to revise and refine for the best results possible. Don't feel locked into the ads you approve longterm-- we will continue to change and improve them (with your approval) as we learn what your users respond to.



# AdWords Policies for Compliance Departments

*Compliance and legal teams are often responsible for reviewing text ad copy. This one-pager provides links that explain the legal restrictions and requirements of running ads on Google:*

Overview of prohibited & restricted content and practices:

<https://support.google.com/adwordspolicy/answer/6008942?rd=1>

## Text Ads

Text ads must meet editorial and character limits or they will not be shown.

Editorial & professional requirements:

<https://support.google.com/adwordspolicy/answer/6021546>

Character limits:

[https://support.google.com/adwordspolicy/answer/6021630?hl=en&ref\\_topic=6021648](https://support.google.com/adwordspolicy/answer/6021630?hl=en&ref_topic=6021648)

(Headline= 25, Description 1= 35, Description 2= 35)

We are compliant with all best practices and restrictions. Please note that all recommendations received from Compliance must also follow these restrictions, and ads that exceed character limits will not be approved or run.

## Trademark Usage

<https://support.google.com/adwordspolicy/answer/6118?hl=en>

We bid on competitor terms, but do not use competitor names in text ads or on our landing pages.

We are fully compliant with AdWords' trademark policy.

## Ad Extensions

Ad Extensions show extra information about the business. DMI currently uses the following extensions:

Callout Extensions - <https://support.google.com/adwordspolicy/answer/6084196?hl=en>

Sitelink Extensions - <https://support.google.com/adwordspolicy/answer/1054210?hl=en>

Call Extensions - <https://support.google.com/adwordspolicy/answer/1054212?hl=en>

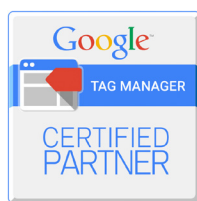
Still need help with your PPC campaigns? Reach out to us:



<http://www.blastam.com/contact>

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**Rocklin Office**

6020 West Oaks Blvd. Suite 260  
Rocklin, CA 95765

**Los Angeles Office**

7083 Hollywood Blvd.  
Los Angeles, CA 90028

**San Francisco Office**

156 2nd Street  
San Francisco, CA 94105

**Chicago Office**

220 North Green St.  
Chicago, IL 60607

**New York Office**

54 West 40th Street  
New York, NY 10018

**Boston Office**

745 Atlantic Ave.  
Boston, MA 02111

**Seattle Office**

500 Yale Avenue North  
Seattle, WA 98109

**London Office**

22 Upper Ground  
London, SE1 9PD

