# The Beginner's Google Analytics Glossary: 50 Terms Simplified

When you're new to digital marketing or just Google Analytics, it may seem like you've gone into another dimension. So many reports, so many terms. Where do you even start? But I got you! I've compiled the top 50 terms to get you started, so you can get to playing with your data sooner than later. If you're looking for a specific keyword, go ahead and hit CTRL+F to search for a term you need right away.

## Building Blocks

### Metric

Think of metric as an answer to "How Many?" A metric is any quantifiable value to measure a characteristic or attribute for web activity. A metric will always be a number, so you can do all sorts of mathematical tricks to it from sum, average, to even count for a dimension (explained below).

### Dimension

Now a dimension is the characteristic or attribute for web activity. A dimension will always be a text value for categories to group quantifiable values in. Dimension answers the question of "Which is it?" or "What is it?"

### Hit

Any single interaction done on a website. A hit can include a page view, a button click (event), and some ecommerce interactions including a product view. Let's say a user lands on an online store website and starts viewing 5 photos from a product gallery. The page view is considered 1 hit, plus the 5 photo views equal 5 hits. Bringing us to a total of 6 hits.

## Page View

Now, a page view is categorized as a Hit, but is solely counting an individual, full page load. If the page only loads 50%, it typically isn't counted as a page view unless your tagging masters accounted for the slow page load. Think of Page Views as pages of a book, but rather pages of a website. You wouldn't count the pages you skipped as pages you read.

## Session

We're going up the metric ladder now. A session count is one single visit to a website without 30 minutes of inactivity. What does that mean? Well, once the user lands on your website, everything is counted as part of the session until either they leave the website or they leave the tab open while doing nothing after 30 minutes. A session is most similar to an in-person store visit. Everything you do in the store during that one visit is considered part of one session. Once you leave, the session is closed.

## User

Now, a user can be self-explanatory, but it gets a bit trickier when it comes to website tracking. A user is the closest metric to identifying a single person online. The limitation lies in the cookie. A person can be going through 3 devices from the phone, PC, to their iPad. Usually, Google Analytics will count this as 3 users as there's no way to link that to one person unless additional configurations are setup.

## Cookie

A cookie is the foundational tracker that gets us all the data in Google Analytics, and many other marketing analytics tools. Though, it does come with its limitations. And why is the cookie so special for web analytics? Well, you must hear "clear your cookies" all the time. Essentially, each website places a little tracker on your browser and remembers you each time you come back. But if you delete your cookies often, the website would think you're two different people. The first time you visited, and

after you deleted your cookie. Also, cookies are unique to the same browser, the same device. So if you're using Firefox one day, and Chrome the next, you're considered as two people there.

## Unique Page Views

Another term for Sessions, but this metric is specific to Page-related reports to maintain consistency. One report where "Unique Page Views" is used is for the Landing Page report. The main metric shown is Page Views, so Google Analytics keeps it related by offering the Unique Page Views metric. But it's technically just like a session where you're seeing how many sessions included the landing page view.

## Conversion

A conversion will be unique to your website, but this is the indicator of your business goals. It can either be a purchase or a lead that can be made on your website. The easiest way to track a conversion is creating a dedicated confirmation page with something like "yourstore.com/thank-you." Otherwise, you'll need to do extra tagging work to get it rolling into Google Analytics.

## Keyword

A keyword is the search query or phrase that users enter into search engines like Google. For instance, think of a few things you type into Google's search bar to find information. Those "few things" that you type in like "buy blue boots" or "local contractors in California" are considered "keywords." For privacy, Google Analytics does prevent you from looking at the keyword breakdown since you can find out more of the user through his web activity. Usually, you will see "not provided" in the Keywords section. One way to go around it is to use Google Search Console, separate from actual web activity.

## New Visitor

Taking into account the cookie limitations as mentioned above, a New Visitor is counted when it's the first time the cookie was placed on the browser. Again, if you use multiple devices (or browsers) and only visit once for each, you could be counted as 3 New Visitors.

## Returning Visitor

Now that the cookie is placed on your browser, you'll be counted as a Returning Visitor the second, third, or upteenth time you visit the same website on the same browser. IF you don't delete your cookies.

## Pages per Session

Pages per Session is quite useful for engagement purposes to gauge how the user interacts with your website. How many pages do they view in one sitting before they leave your site? Do you have enough content to keep users on your website? On the other hand for ecommerce websites, you want the least Pages per Session as possible to get an immediate sale.

## Segments

Segments are filters you can place on your Google Analytics data to easily see different versions of a report. They are temporary, meaning they don't permanently affect the data that's already there. It is just a tool to help customize your data analysis on a day-to-day for your specific needs. Read more about segments **here**.

## Average Time on Page

The average amount of time people spend viewing your page. Average Time on Page is a success metric that indicates how engaging how your page is. Of course, you want a longer time on the page if it has tons of content.

Well, how is it calculated? The total amount of seconds users spend on the page divided by the number of sessions. But this metric does have its limitations and doesn't count time when a user just leaves after one page view (a bounce) and even when it's the last page of the session. Google Analytics stops the time at the *last* page change of a session. If the page doesn't have a high exit rate, then the Average Time on Page is reliable. If it does, then it's better to rely on this great tip to see how long people do view a Bounced page here.

## Primary Dimension

The Primary Dimension is the first category of attributes or characteristics that you can pivot for a report. It will distribute your metrics according to the first one you choose.

## Secondary Dimension

Consequently, secondary dimension is the second category where you can see a breakdown of activity all at once. For instance, you can set the Primary Dimension as "Default Channel Grouping" and the Secondary Dimension as "Source/Medium" to rank the exact websites bringing in traffic, but also which bucket it's being grouped under.

# Traffic Activity

## Acquisition

Acquisition means the set of reports that give you detail on how you're getting traffic to your site. It breaks down the default channel groups from Google Ads, Google Search to Social and allows you to drill into more detail if needed. Learn more about the Acquisition reports **here**.

## Real Time

Web analytics typically is a view into the past where you can only see the data after an hour or so. Real time, however, means you can see the data live as it rolls in. It's

most useful for live campaign tracking and then you can later reference the other reports for a full campaign performance. Read more about how you can use Real Time reports **here**.

## Channel Grouping

When data rolls into Google Analytics or any other web analytics tool, the referring web domain that sends a user to the website gets categorized under default buckets, aka Channel Grouping. The default channels that are used across marketing are Direct, Paid Search, Organic Search, Social, Affiliate, Email, and Referral. Referral is typically the catch-all bucket for "other" if Google doesn't know how to categorize it in the pre-existing buckets. Check out why it's important and how to set up your Channel Groupings to fit your business **here**.

## Direct Referral

Direct means that the user either typed or bookmarked your website. Most of the time, users are typing it in and your website is appearing in their search history to quickly revisit. One thing to note for Direct is that it can also include a person who already had a tab open, ended a previous session with 30 minutes of inactivity, but came back to it. Even though the previous session might have been referred by another random site, this subsequent session is referred as "Direct."

## Organic Search

This channel grouping contains all the traffic that comes from any search engine, specifically from unpaid search results. If you were to look on the first page of search results, you'd see "ad" as an indicator for paid search results. The results without the ad indicator are organic and unpaid. If you're getting traffic through Organic Search, it's a sign that your content is helping you rank and Google sees your page as a valuable resource to the specified query.

## Entry Page

Entry page is the first page that users land on when they "enter" your site. Another term for this is "Landing Page," which is more commonly used in the industry.

## Exit Page

Exit page is the last page before users leave your website. Exit pages can be an indicator that its content provides little value to your site, especially if the session was short. Though, some exit pages can be considered normal behavior. Maybe from a series of articles, and they left on the last one. When the page is intended to push further clicks into the website, a high volume of exits is a sign for optimization.

## Bounce Rate

A bounce rate is one of the most misunderstood metrics in web analytics. A bounce is counted only when a user lands on a page and leaves from that same page without visiting another. A bounce rate is calculated by the number of bounces divided by number of sessions that included the target dimension (page, channel, etc). Like exits, bounce rates must match the context of the page. A bad bounce rate would apply to a page that tries to push a sale on a second page. If someone found an article through Google Search and left, that's not necessarily a bad thing. They just got what they needed.

## Affiliate

Affiliate is a group used to identify the websites you partner with and often offer a commission for sending traffic or sales. But Google doesn't normally know who you partner with. You'll need to specify the utm_medium in a custom link that the website is an affiliate for Google to categorize your partners properly.

## Referral

Referral in general means the websites that are bringing traffic to your website. In Google Analytics, referral is usually the miscellaneous bucket where Google just didn't know where else to categorize a referring website/domain. Best practice is to

check this bucket every so often to see if there's a website you can re-categorize to a default channel or maybe even partner with as an added sales channel.

## Landing Page

Just as it's called, this is the first page users land on when they visit your website. You can test different landing pages and see which one drives users deeper into your website, and ultimately sales. You want your landing page to give a good first impression of your brand and hopefully lower bounce rates!

## Other Advertising

Just as I mentioned in this article for Channel Grouping setup, other advertising isn't always automatically grouped by Google Analytics. Google will look for the utm_medium as shown here, related to paid - cpv, cpa, cpp, content-text.

## Display

Display is default channel grouping for visual advertisements that typically gets priced based on an impression (an ad load on a page or screen). Similar to "Other Advertising," Google Analytics sometimes doesn't automatically group these for you. You'll need to set utm_medium = display, cpm, or banner in the ad link.

## Attribution Model

Set of rules that give credit out of 100% to different channels and websites for influencing a sale or a lead.

## Last Touch

When you view the **Channel report** in Google Analytics, the default attribution model for all web analytics tools is giving 100% credit to the last channel that referred the user to your website. For instance, let's say a person clicked into your website last week from Organic Search aka search engine result. Then, the person returned this week directly because their computer remembered your website - and made a

purchase. Well, Google Analytics will give 100% credit to the "Direct" channel for that one user. Last Touch is helpful in showing which channel helped seal the deal.

### First Touch

The First Touch gives 100% to the first referring website. In the example from the Last Touch definition, the credit is given to Organic Search. First Touch shows which referrers are great in setting up the initial interest for your website. Sometimes, you might even get a channel that's great for both Last Touch and First Touch, meaning the marketing strategy for one channel succeeds in introducing the brand and sealing the deal altogether. Win-win!

## On-Site Behaviour

### Events

User interactions on a webpage independent of the page or screen load. Events can range from button clicks, form submissions, video views, and more. Google Analytics gives you the ability to track any type of action to give you more insight as to how users are engaging with a page. You can categorize your events using 3 parameters: event category, event action, and event label. The hierarchy allows you to organize different types of interactions, so you can easily group them in your segments. More on the Events reports **here**.

## Campaigns

### UTM Parameters

When you're placing your link on external websites, it's helpful to set up additional UTM parameters, so you can see the data neatly organized in Google Analytics. Google Analytics requires at least 3 if you were to customize them: source, medium, and campaign. If you need additional context to identify the link, you can use their other parameters that will show in Google Analytics reports: term and content.

## Tracking URL

The tracking URL is the part of the URL that lists out the UTM parameters after the main slug. It's essentially telling Google where to categorize the link, so you can see it in the reports.

## Source

Just as it's called, source is the referring domain that brings traffic to your website. Keep this as clean as possible as Google will automatically group it into a default channel if it can recognize it ie google.com, facebook.com, etc.

## Medium

Medium will be the keywords that tell Google which channel to categorize the source. Use these keywords [here as a reference](#).

## Campaign

Campaign will be the unique identifier of each marketing initiative. You can label these however you'd like, but it's useful to group each strategy to specific launches, topics, types of content, etc.

## Campaign Term

Term is also known as Keyword. You can use this extra UTM parameter to specify how you're targeting based on an ad. For instance, keyword group for Google Ads or audience group for Facebook ads.

## Campaign Content

Another nice-to-have dimension to identify the specific creative or copy used. This is especially helpful to see when you have multiple creatives up at once for an **A/B test**.

# Success Rates

## Clickthrough Rate

The amount of clicks divided by the amount of views. When you're tracking events like button clicks, clickthrough rate is helpful to see how many people want to continue through the funnel you set up. Was the section that included the button convincing enough for a user to "click through?"

## Conversion Rate

As conversions as based on your website goals, conversion rate is conversions divided by the amount of traffic. Whether it's a sale or a lead, how many people are actually reaching that goal? You want the highest conversion rate as possible since every visitor is valuable.

## Exit Rate

The number of exits on the page divided by the number of sessions. Exit rates are only calculated if a user visited more than one page. Exit rates need to relative to the page it's applied on. If the page is at the end of a series, it makes sense to have a high exit rate. If it's in the middle of a checkout, it's rather a bad indicator and you need to reformat that page or flow.