

Tricks to Get the Click

10 Tips for Writing Better PPC Text Ads



Co-authored by WordStream and Hanapin Marketing

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If you want to sell products or generate leads online, a user-friendly, conversion-optimized website is Step 1. **But when it comes to search engine marketing, it doesn't matter how beautiful your website is if people never get there.**

Pay-per-click (PPC) advertisements placed in search engine results and on other relevant sites can be an extremely effective means of driving qualified traffic to your site — one that more than pays for itself, if you're doing it right.

Even though you have to pay for each click on one of your ads, it's important to aim for a good click-through rate (CTR). CTR — the ratio of clicks to impressions — represents the percentage of people who see your ad and then click through to your website. Lots of impressions without a lot of clicks is a sign that your ad isn't speaking to the people who see it. This could be because you're bidding on the wrong keywords, but almost always, **you can significantly increase CTR — and ROI — by writing stronger ad copy.**

A great PPC ad is a combination of best practices and little details that get you noticed. In this guide, we'll share ten tips for crafting more compelling, more clickable text ads, including information to help you develop:

- **Eye-grabbing headlines** and descriptions that scream “I'm relevant to your needs!”
- **Specific calls to action** that reinforce desires and create urgency
- **Well-structured ads** that earn high Quality Scores and boost your whole PPC account

Don't neglect this core component of your PPC campaign! Read on to learn how you can start writing stronger, more clickable ads today. We'll start with some basic ad writing best practices, then move on to more unusual tricks you may not have thought of.

Let's get started!

1. Include Features, Benefits and a Call to Action

At the end of the day, the most effective ads will have three components: **They will tell the features, sell the benefits and have a call to action (CTA)** for the product or service being advertised. No amount of keyword stuffing (inserting the search term you are bidding on into the ad and landing page as many times as possible) or other tricks will get you as much lift as an ad that is selling compelling benefits and has a strong call to action.

Almost always, you can significantly increase CTR — and ROI — by writing stronger ad copy.

WordStream's Ad Builder tool automatically runs a best practices check to make sure your ad doesn't violate any of Google's guidelines.

[Learn More.](#)

Creating these ads, however, isn't as easy as just sitting at your computer with an open spreadsheet and hoping inspiration strikes. It takes an in-depth understanding of your business (or your client's) and your unique selling proposition (USP). A great way to accomplish this is by using a [Feature-Benefit Matrix](#) spreadsheet to uncover the USP and the strongest points to convey in an ad.

The Feature-Benefit Matrix looks like this:

	Feature	Benefit a	Benefit b	Benefit c	CTA List
1					
2					1 _____
3					2 _____
4					3 _____
5					4 _____
					5 _____

You simply list your features to the left, then list out a few benefits of each feature, and on the right you fill in your most compelling calls to action for your PPC ads. Then you go back through and identify you strongest 2-3 combinations, and you have an ad!

2. End Description Line 1 with Punctuation

If you end the first line of your ad after the headline with a period or other end punctuation, and your average position is in the top 3 spots, you will get a single **elongated headline that has a lot of pulling power.**

Take a look at the sponsored results for a Google search for "Pet Insurance":

Ads related to pet insurance Why these ads?

Pet Insurance in Colorado - Top Rated Pet Insurance.
www.gopetplan.com/
1st Choice of Veterinarians Across the World.

VPI Pet Insurance - 9 out of 10 veterinarians recommend
www.petinsurance.com/
VPI, America's Trusted Choice.
Dog Insurance Quote - Cat Insurance Quote - Pet Insurance Plans

Top Rated Pet Insurance | HealthyPawsPetInsurance.com
www.healthypawspetinsurance.com/
#1 Customer Rated Pet Insurance. Pays 90%, No Limits. Free Quote!
Free Quote - #1 Customer-Rated Plan - Customer Reviews - Quote & Learn



Free AdWords Performance Report

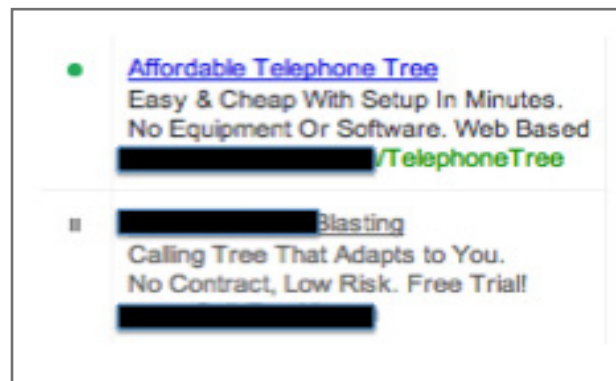
How do your PPC campaigns measure up? Get a free, instant PPC audit with the award-winning [AdWords Performance Grader](#).

You can see here that the top ad has a long headline that includes the first description line and ends with a period: “Pet Insurance in Colorado – Top Rated Pet Insurance.”

The second ad, on the other hand, has “9 out of 10 veterinarians recommend” pulled into its headline — this is great copy, but it would have been even stronger if that headline was a complete thought. Instead, the end of the sentence is under the display URL (the full thought being “9 out of 10 veterinarians recommend VPI”).

3. Make Full Use of the Display URL

The display URL is a great way to find some extra space in a PPC ad for a compelling call-to-action or benefit statement, or simply to increase relevancy by adding in the search term (as in domain.com/search-term).



For this ad group, the ad with /TelephoneTree in the display URL had a similar click through rate to the ad without it, but **the conversion rate was almost double!** Of course, these two ads do not have the exact same text, so it’s not a perfect sample. However, the trend does typically, if not always, indicate that ads that make good use of the display URL have an increased CTR and/or conversion rate.

In this ad the search term was inserted into the display URL, but you could also insert a strong call-to-action here, such as “Free-Quote” or “Free-Credits.” Doing this provides one last reason for the searcher to click your ad instead of one of your competitors’.

4. Conclude Your Tests

Ad testing always starts out with the best of intentions. You know you want to see a lift in CTR or conversion rate so you take a look at your current ads, gather some ideas on unique selling propositions, and write 1-2 new ads for every ad group. You go into your account, pause your lowest performing ad, upload the new ads and sit back and wait for the new and improved results to roll in.

A colleague once told me that the first thing he did to increase an account's performance was pause all ads in every ad group except the top performer.

Over the next few weeks, or even months, you check back, sometimes pausing an ad that is under-performing, but never really concluding your test. Over time, you realize that you have a few ad groups that have been running an ad test for 6 months. Sometimes it is longer.

A colleague once told me that the first thing he did to increase an account's performance was **pause all ads in every ad group except the top performer**. He did this because concluding the ad test is so often forgotten long after statistical significance is reached — the ads continue to run side-by-side, sharing at least a portion of the impressions, and wasting potential leads and/or sales. Don't forget to eventually declare a winner so you can claim all those extra clicks and leads!

5. Don't Repeat Yourself

Beginner ad writers don't always know how to make the best of the limited space available in a PPC text ad. Here's what's available to you as an advertiser:

	Max Length in Characters	Example Ad
Headline:	25 characters	Exciting New Offer
Description Line 1:	35 characters	You Don't Want to Miss This!
Description Line 2:	35 characters	Sign Up for a Free Trial Now
Display URL:	35 characters	www.example.com/trial

One common mistake that PPC marketers make is stating the same information twice. Since you have so few characters to work with, it's best not to repeat yourself.

There's a trick to learning how to say what you need to say in this small amount of space.

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For example, don't put the name of your business in your ad's headline — your display URL should tell people the name of your business. Instead, use that valuable space to show relevance to the keyword you're bidding on. If that keyword is "web design," your headline might be "Expert Web Design." It's crucial that users see that keyword quickly if they're going to click. In addition, that show of relevancy contributes to a higher Quality Score. Your business name is less important to users than knowing what you can offer them. Similarly, don't simply repeat the keyword three or four times — make sure you're providing some additional information to help guide the user's decision.

6. Use Active Verbs

Strong verbs make for better story-telling, and they make for better ad copy too. For example, in one A/B test, two very similar ads differed mostly in the headline. The original ad used the headline “Virtual Memory Repair” and the challenging ad used the headline “Increase Virtual Memory.” The second ad increased clicks by 150% — in other words, it more than *doubled* the original ad’s performance.

PPC Ad #1	PPC Ad #2
Virtual Memory Repair Increase Virtual Memory Instantly! Free Download. 100% Guarantee. [REDACTED].com/VirtualMemory	Increase Virtual Memory Increase Windows Virtual Memory. Free Download. 100% Guarantee. [REDACTED].com/VirtualMemory

When writing your PPC ads, **imagine that the search engine user is thinking “I want to....”** and it’s your job to complete that sentence somewhere in your ad. In this case, the searcher wants to increase their virtual memory, and the winning ad repeats that need back to them. If you can’t work an active verb into your headline, use one in your call to action.

7. Use Symbols

It’s well-established that **using symbols in your PPC ads can increase click-through** — and conversions too! Don’t go overboard — Google will reject your ads if you use symbols inappropriately. But it’s definitely worth experimenting with asterisks, numbers, ampersands, exclamation points (you can only use one, and not in the title) as well as registered (®), trademark (™) and copyright (©) symbols. Using these brand-boosting symbols in particular can make a big difference, especially in highly competitive industries, by helping you stand apart from competitors and lending authority to your products.

In one test, a PPC advertiser found that adding a registered symbol to his text ads — while making no other changes — led to an 89% improvement in CTR and improved conversions across his brand campaigns by 12.6%.

8. Try an Unexpected Call to Action

As mentioned in our first tip, making sure that you include a call to action — telling readers what you want them to do — is a basic best practice that you should follow in all your ads. Frequently advertisers resort to something like “Buy Now” to create urgency (also known as “asking for the sale”). But sometimes **an unexpected call to action can drive unexpectedly great results**, especially if your goal is to generate leads rather than drive e-commerce sales directly.

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For example, you might:

- Tell them exactly how much money they can save by taking advantage of your offer
- Brag about a high-profile client or show off reviews and testimonials
- Offer instant gratification (such as live chat with an expert)
- Make a bonus offer (one REI ad mentioned “friendly expert travel advice” in addition to luggage brands)



[Carry-On Luggage: Ultra Light Carry-On Bags](#)
\$49.95 - Brookstone

[Discount Carry Bags](#)

at TGW.com - The Golf Warehouse.. 15% off Most Expensive Item in Cart
www.TGW.com
TGW.com is rated ★★★★★

[Carry-on Bags at REI](#)

Eagle Creek, Osprey, Timbuk2, More. Plus Friendly Expert Travel Advice!
www.REI.com/Travel-Gear
REI.com is rated ★★★★★

Again, an unusual call to action can make you stand out from the crowd of other advertisements, and may be the additional enticement the user needs to make the click.

9. Use Provocative Language

When examining PPC ads that get [high click-through rates](#), you often see patterns — for example, use of the word “free.” Another common trait of high-CTR text ads is **provocative language**. Being provocative is a way to grab people’s attention. Obviously you don’t want to go so far as to offend anyone, but a subtle challenge can get people interested — especially considering that people who are searching for new solutions probably have some doubts about themselves or whatever products they’re currently using.

Here are some examples of ways to work direct, provocative language into your ad copy:

- Email Isn’t Dead
- Your Credit Score Should Be Higher
- You Need This Software!
- Your Backup Process Is Wrong
- Your Doctor Isn’t Good Enough
- Stop Wasting Time

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The 20-Minute PPC Work Week

You can make a real impact on your AdWords results in just 20 minutes a week. Really!

[Learn more.](#)

10. Try Countdown Ads — They Work!

Countdown ads are exactly what they sound like: they count down to a specific date, such as a school enrollment deadline, and work best if they change often! This means a lot more work on the front end, but both CTR and conversion rate can see a drastic improvement that makes it well worth the effort.

Here's an example of a test that was conducted where the ads said, "Only X-days left." The left column lists the "X" time frames that were called out in the ads.

	A	D	F	
1				
2	Countdown ads			
3		CTR	Conv Rate	
4	30	0.89%	4.26%	
5	7	0.79%	6.25%	
6	4	0.99%	4.48%	
7	1	0.71%	2.22%	
8				
9		0.88%	4.34%	
10	Change Over Control	85.0%	19.1%	
11				

With the exception of the "Only 1-day left" ad, **they all beat the control in CTR and conversion rate.** (My theory on why the 1-day ad performed poorly was that it only ran for one day, so the sample size was small, and that it was a little too much urgency for a product that had a longer consideration cycle than many others.)

A note with this technique: if you are going to do it, upload all the ads at once and then pause the ones that aren't ready to run. They will get approved while paused, which means the day you want them to go live, they will.

In Conclusion

Your text ads are just one of many moving parts in the complex machine that is your PPC campaign — but they're an important component, so don't treat your ad copy like an after-thought. A combination of best practices and a little creative flair can lead to highly effective ads that drive qualified leads and a great return on your PPC investment. And remember, you don't have to craft the perfect ad on the first try — iterate on your copy, make small changes, and watch your click-through rate and conversions go up.

Real Results, Real Fast: Try WordStream PPC Advisor Free

Build and manage high-performance PPC campaigns and killer text ads in just 20 minutes a week with WordStream PPC Advisor.

About WordStream

[WordStream Inc.](#) provides search marketing software and services to small and medium-sized businesses that want better results from paid search. WordStream's easy-to-use PPC Advisor software facilitates more effective PPC campaigns by providing a customized workflow, the [20-Minute PPC Work Week](#), to help advertisers increase relevance across Google, Bing, and Yahoo and get expert-level results in a fraction of the time. Whether you're new to search marketing or are experienced at PPC management, WordStream's keyword tools and PPC management software can provide the boost you need to grow your business and drive better results.

About Hanapin Marketing

[Hanapin Marketing](#) is a PPC management company that delivers comprehensive results and effective communication for medium to large-sized businesses. The birth of Hanapin Marketing came about after recognizing a tremendous need in the marketing industry for management services that continually strive for improvement, rather than maintaining the status quo. Essentially, we believe that the job isn't done until we see results that indicate significant growth.

