# GOOGLE SHOPPING

has arrived in Ireland.

**Are You ready?**

# Content

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# Introduction

E-commerce is becoming ever more important, with global sales on a seemingly constant upward curve. In Europe alone, e-commerce turnover accounted for €419.8 billion, an increase of 13.5% on the previous year.

In Ireland, approximately 2.9 million people use the Internet. Some 1.8 million of these regularly buy online.

Online sales in Ireland in 2014 were worth €5.3 billion, an increase of 15.2% on the previous year. Final figures for 2015 are expected to be around €5.9 billion, covering sales of both goods and services.

In October 2016, Google shopping was launched in Ireland, bringing new opportunities to Irish e-commerce retailers.
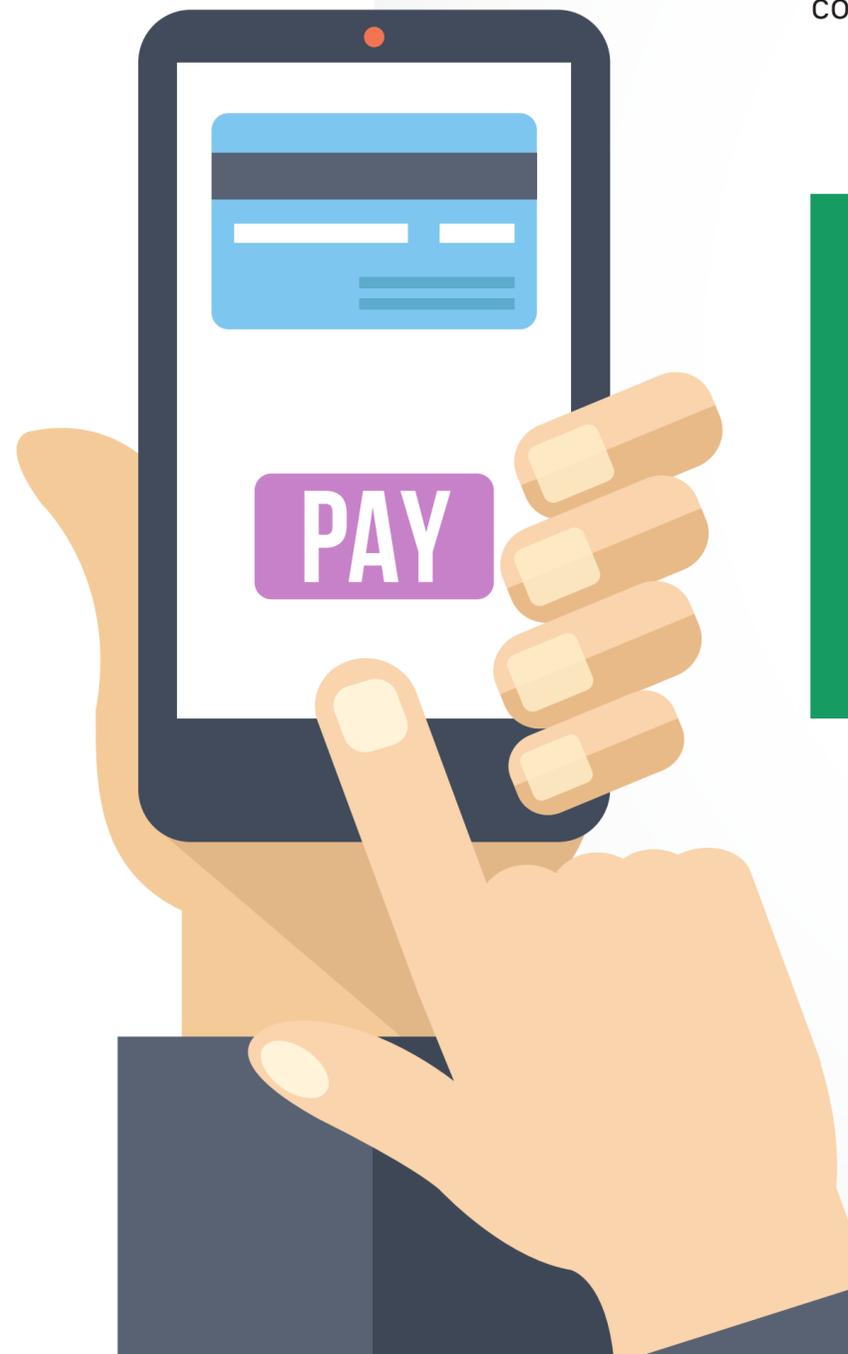
## Online Sales in Ireland
covering sales of both goods and services

**€5.3** billion — 2014

**€5.9** billion — 2015

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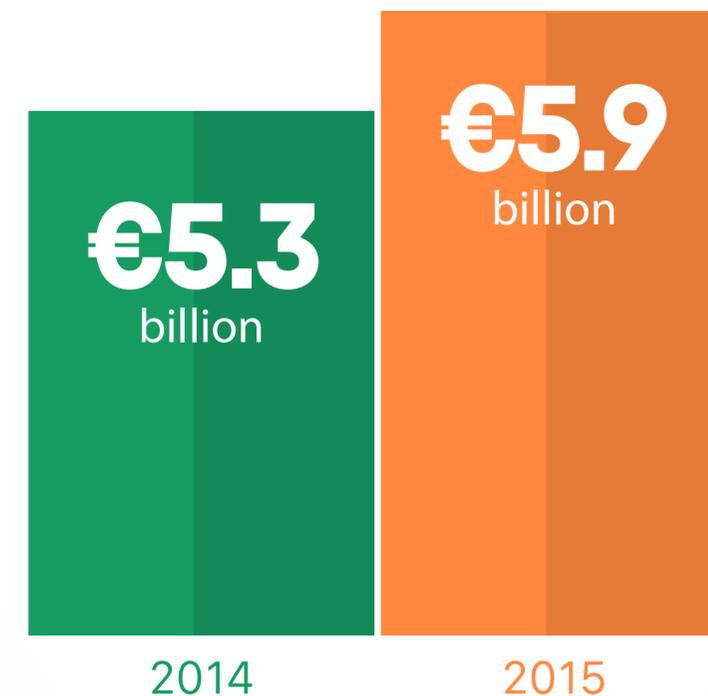
# What is Google Shopping ?

Google Shopping is available in 23 other countries across Europe, America, and Asia. Now that it has launched in Ireland, shoppers will be able to use the Google Shopping e-commerce platform to search for and compare products based on factors such as location, price, and availability in Ireland and abroad.

From a consumer point of view, what makes Google Shopping stand out is its visual, product-centred approach to e-commerce. Searchers get to see pictures of what they are looking for and can choose whether to visit the online shop and buy the product, or to visit Google and compare prices and other options, on the product.

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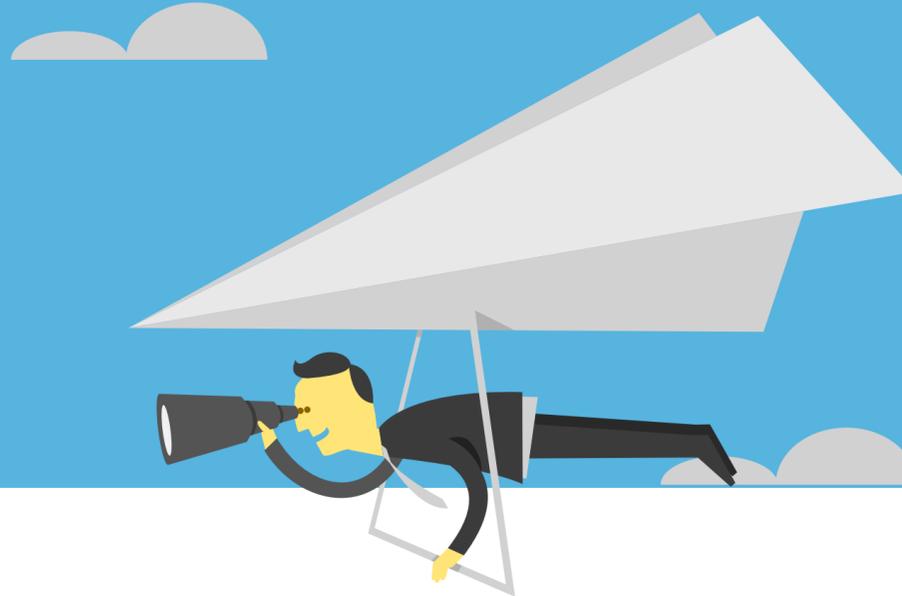
# The Opportunity

Ireland ranks fourth in the European e-GDP, with online sales accounting for just 2.86% of GDP. This compares to 5.74% of GDP in the United Kingdom where Google Shopping is already well established and continues to grow.

A recent study from Adobe's Digital Index on online advertising noted a 47% growth in spending on Google Shopping Campaigns, while spending on Google text adverts actually declined 6% over the same period. These figures indicate that in areas where Google Shopping is active, it quickly comes to dominate the online shopping market.

With Irish consumers spending an average of €685 per person over a 6-month period, the Irish e-commerce market offers online retailers an unrivalled opportunity to grow their businesses.

Google Shopping Campaigns bring a step change to the e-commerce market by transforming the way customers can find your products online. The product-focused approach on offer allows users to search specifically by location and availability. This can provide great value for the merchant with higher click-through-rates (CTR) compared to alternative advertising methods.

To fully grasp the advantages Google Shopping can bring to retailers, it is important to prepare your business properly for Google Shopping, and to understand how this new platform can be used to benefit your business.

We look at the importance of Google Shopping for retailers, and explain how to make full use of it for your business.

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# What do you need to take advantage of

# Google Shopping

Getting Started with Google Shopping is easy. If you are involved in any type of online retail, you probably already have both an e-commerce website and a product feed, and these are the only two things you need to get started.

To begin working with Google Shopping you will need to register at the Google Merchant Center (merchants.google.com). The first time you sign in to the Merchant Center, you will be asked to configure your account and select your location. Once that has been done, you will need to provide simple information about your business by clicking on the Settings tab.

One of the first pieces of information needed is your website URL. You should enter your URL so that it begins with either http:// or https:// — you are not allowed to use IP addresses or ports in this field.

You'll need to get this step right because when uploading your product feeds later, they must come from the same domain.

**Before you can use Google Shopping, Google will need to verify that your website meets their basic conditions.**

**To be considered for Google Shopping you must:**

Display accurate contact information on your website, including at least a telephone number or email address

Have a secure checkout process that ensures all financial transactions are securely processed using a secure processing server

Have a clearly displayed Returns policy

Display your Billing terms and conditions to your website visitors

Have a working checkout process

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# Exploring the
# Google Merchant Center

Finding you way around the Google Merchant Center is fairly straightforward. Your account dashboard will give you an overview of everything you need. The area you will probably use most is the Products Overview where you can see how many products you have active for a specified destination. The Feeds area will also be helpful. This shows your recently updated data feeds and also displays information on the schedule and status of each feed.

Other sections of the Google Merchant Center cover Performance and Products.

These sections will probably interest merchants most as they show all the products on your account and all the clicks received from your Shopping campaigns. This information is derived from your Google Adwords account. We will look later at how to link your Shopping and AdWords accounts.

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**Exploring the**
**Google** Merchant Center
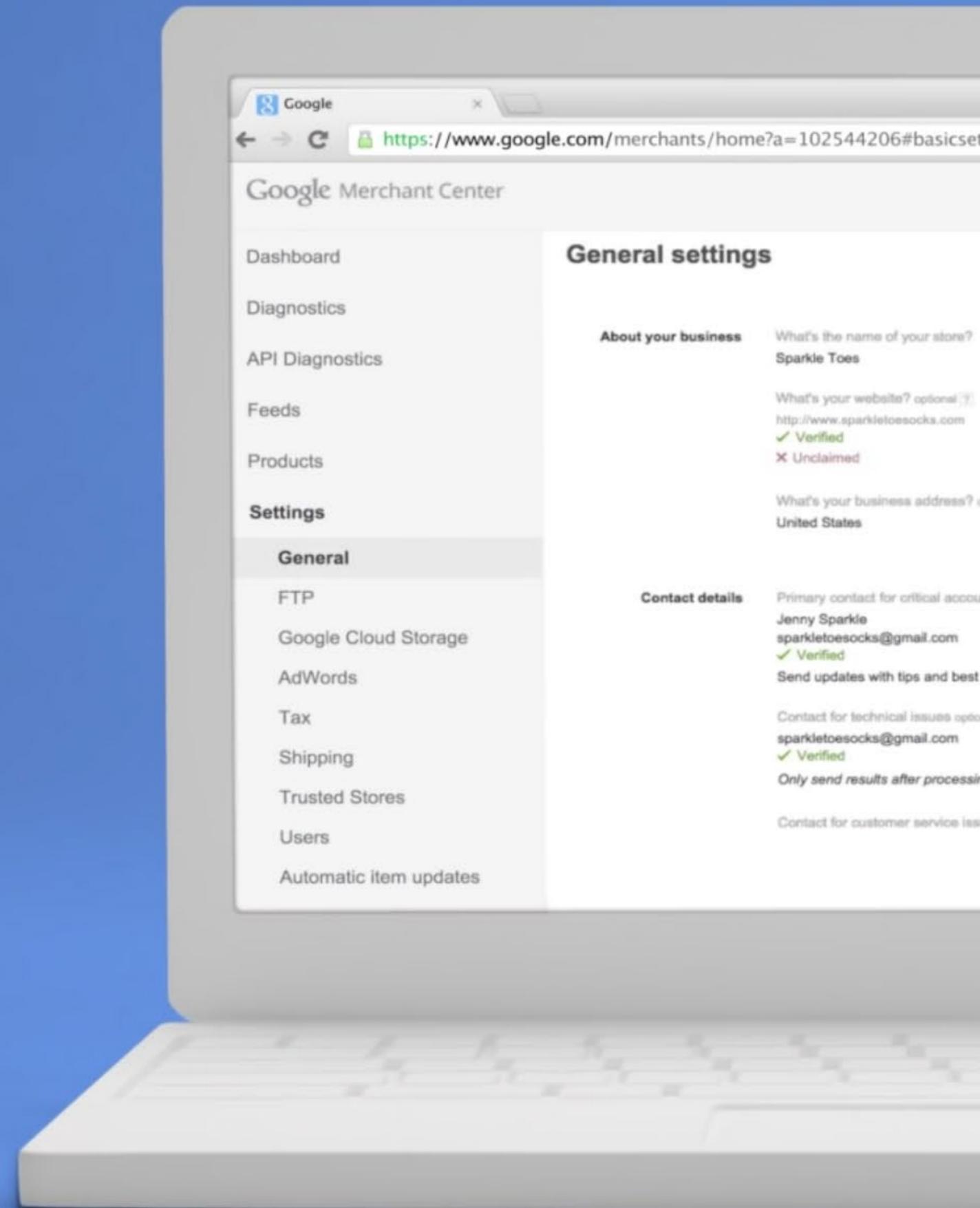
# Setting up your feed

Once you have finished setting up your account, and have looked around the Google Merchant Center, it's time to think about uploading your product data.

* Using a data feed
* Using the Google Content application programming interfaces (API)
* Importing the product data from a supported e-commerce platform

Unless you have a supported e-commerce platform or are comfortable working with the API, the simplest way to proceed is to use a data feed.

# Creating your data feed

Your data feed is simply the file that contains information about the products that you sell. The various pieces of information about your products are called attributes; these allow customers to search for and find each of your products. Some of these attributes will have standard Yes or No answers while others can be filled in with your own custom wording. You can supply your data feed in either .txt or .xml format. For smaller merchants, .txt is the easiest to create. A standard spreadsheet editor such as Microsoft Excel or Google Sheets is sufficient. Google Sheets even offer to generate your spreadsheet from a template, which is handy.

# Registering your data feed

Before uploading your first data feed, you are required to register it with the Google Merchant Center. You need only do this once, but it is important to let Google Shopping know that your feed is on its way. To register a feed you will need to access your Google Merchant Center account and find the Feeds tab. Next, click on the + Data Feed button near the top of the page; doing this will load the Register a new feed interface. Here, you will need to enter the following information:

* Mode: Choose whether you want to upload a test feed or a standard feed. Test feeds can be useful in identifying processing errors or other problems before you let your feed go live.

* Feed type: This field identifies the type of data in your feed. For Google Shopping feeds, it should be set to 'products'.

* Target country: Set the location where your products are sold. For example, setting your country as 'Ireland' indicates that your items are available for purchase in Ireland.

* Content language: Select the language used to describe the products in your feed; this must be the official language of your country.

* Feed name: This is a descriptive name that helps you identify the feed.

* Input method: There are four ways of uploading your feed:

  • Google Sheets: Using either the provided template or a sheet you've created.
  • Automatic Upload /Scheduled fetch: Using an existing feed hosted on your website.
  • Regular uploads: Direct uploading of files using FTP or Google Cloud storage.
  • Import from e-commerce platform: Importing from a supported e-commerce platform.

* Filename: Enter the exact name of your file including the valid extension.

* Which Google products can use the feed: Google Shopping is the default selection. You may add other options if you wish.

* Fetch Schedule and Fetch Settings: If your feed comes directly from your website, you will be asked what times the file should be fetched.

  When you have finished adding all this information, make sure you click Save to avoid losing any of your data.

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# Formatting your feed

Now that Google Shopping is expecting your feed, you are free to begin formatting your product information. Google has strict data requirements and it is important to follow their guidelines carefully to avoid any errors in your feed. It is always a good idea to make your first upload to Google Shopping a test feed and to carefully check every detail to make sure everything displays as it should.

Google Shopping has the following fields that should all be filled in as described to produce a feed that complies with Google standards.

✱ ID: This is a unique alphanumeric identifier for each product, usually your site's unique identifier code. Make product IDs unique to avoid using the same IDs for multiple items.

✱ Title: 150-character limit; 70 characters is recommended. Use a clear, concise title to help shoppers easily identify the product. Avoid excessive, repetitive or irrelevant keywords and promotional text.

✱ Description: 5,000-character limit; 500-1000 is recommended. Include the most relevant description and visual attributes such as size, colour, materials, dimensions and technical specifications, providing user-friendly keywords to match shopper's search queries.

✱ google_product_category: This field must match a single value from Google's product taxonomy tree.

✱ product_type: This field indicates your site's category value. As with the 'google_product_category' attribute, include the full breadcrumb category string.

✱ Link: The value in this field must link directly to the product page without pop ups or redirects to other pages.

✱ image_link: This value must be provided for products to be accepted. Use high resolution images of at least 800 x 800 pixels. Avoid thumbnails, logos and watermarks.

✱ Condition: Google only accept these values: new, used and refurbished.

✱ Availability: Google only accepts these values: in stock, out of stock and pre-order.

✱ Price: Google accepts decimal values along with an ISO 4217 Standard (eg, €15). The price value must be greater than 0.00 and must match the price displayed on the landing page.

✱ Brand: 70 character limit.

✱ GTIN: This field can be populated with the following values: EAN in Europe (13-digit number), UPC in North America (12-digit number), or ISBN for books (10 or 13-digit number). GTIN is required when MPN is not provided.

✱ MPN: Manufacturer Part Number (MPN) is manufacturer-specific identification number. MPN is required when GTIN is not provided.

✱ identifier_exists: Google accepts a value of FALSE for products that don't have identifiers such as GTIN, MPN or brand.

✱ Gender: For clothing items, Google requires this field to have a value of 'male', 'female' or 'unisex'.

✱ age_group: For apparel items, Google requires that this field have a value of 'newborn', 'infant', 'toddler', 'kids' or 'adult'.

✱ item_group_id: For apparel items with variations within the same product group, Google allows values of 'colour', 'material', 'pattern' or 'size'.

✱ Size: This field is required to indicate the size of a product in 'clothing' and 'shoes' categories.

✱ size_system: Use this attribute to indicate the country's sizing system in which you are submitting your item. There are 11 accepted values: US, UK, EU, DE, FR, JP, CN (China), IT, BR, MEX and AU.

✱ size_type: Use this attribute to indicate the cut of your item. There are five accepted values: Regular, Petite, Plus, Big and Tall, and Maternity.

✱ Tax: Required only if tax settings have not been defined in Google Merchant Center settings.

✱ custom labels: Custom labels can be used to categorise products by values that are unique to your store.

Note: Google insists that data in your product feed matches information displayed in your store. Any mismatches relating to availability, price or condition could cause the product to be rejected.

# Setting Up Shopping Campaigns

Once your feed has been uploaded to the Google Merchant Center, you can begin to plan your first Shopping Campaigns. You must start this by linking your Google Merchant Center with your Google AdWords account. Linking your accounts will enable you to take advantage of all the AdWords campaign tools in your marketing. You will also be able to set up campaigns for local inventory ads, and dynamic re-marketing.

The request to link the accounts must come from the Google Merchant Center.

**1** From your Merchant Center account, click on Settings>> AdWords. Next, enter your AdWords customer ID. This number is displayed on any AdWords page when you are logged in. When you have entered the number, click Add.

**2** In your Google AdWords account, select Linked Accounts from the gear icon, then open the Google Merchant Center section. Click the View request button and review the request details that you find there. Click Approve to approve the link.

With your accounts linked, you can now set up and structure your very first Shopping campaign in Google AdWords.

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# Your First Campaign

Anyone who has used Google AdWords previously will find creating and managing Google Shopping campaigns fairly straightforward.

Start by logging in to your Google AdWords account and clicking on the Campaigns tab. Select +Campaign and then select Shopping.

Many of the settings on this page are optional so we will view only those most important for your campaigns.

**1** First, you'll need to give your campaign a name. Go to the Campaign Settings page and decide what you will call your new campaign. Also on this page you'll need to click on Select account and choose the right Merchant ID associated with this

**2** You must choose a 'Country of Sale', which is the country where your products are sold. It will filter your products based on the settings you added to your product feed.

**3** Campaign priority: By default this is set to Low. If you run multiple campaigns you can prioritise them here.

**4** Locations: This field sets the geographical areas where your Shopping campaign adverts appear. You can decide which specific locations you want to include or exclude.

**5** The Google default setting is for your adverts to appear on both the Google Search Network and on Google search partner websites. This is generally good as it increases the reach of your adverts and gives you much higher visibility. If you decide not to include search partners in your campaigns, you can select that option here.

**6** Bid Strategy: The default here is 'I'll manually set my bids for clicks'; this gives you the freedom to set your own maximum cost-per-click bid. Other options are available.

**7** Default Bid: This is where you can enter your maximum CPC bid. The bid you enter here will apply to your first advert group and product group you create in your campaign. You will be able to adjust your bids later from the Product groups tab.

**8** Budget: You have the choice of using an individual campaign budget or applying a budget from a shared library. If you use an individual budget just enter the amount you want to spend each day for this campaign.

**9** Click Save and continue to the Create ad groups page.

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# Organising your campaigns

How you choose to structure your Google Shopping Campaign will depend on your stock, and the way the various items you sell are performing. Which product group do you want to promote first? Which one comes next? And so on, until you have accounted for your entire catalogue.

Google Shopping Campaigns can be thought of as a pyramid. You assign the first product group to form the basis of the pyramid. This group is now cut out from the product feed and you can assign the next segment to be cut from the feed. Eventually you will reach a point where you get an option to assign 'Everything else'.

You can choose to break up your feed in numerous ways. You can assign groups by using the following attributes:

1. Category (Google Product Category)
2. Brand
3. Item ID
4. Condition
5. Product Type

Or you can use one of five Custom Labels of your own. To use a Custom Label you'll need to access your feed and manipulate the custom columns there.

# Campaign Optimisation

There are two main ways that you can optimise your use of Google Shopping. You can focus on optimising your shopping feed or you can optimise the way you run your campaigns. To get the best out of Google Shopping, you really need to look at both aspects.

We will start by considering the Product feed.

# Optimising your product feed

We have already seen that Google Shopping requires your feed to be arranged in a particular way for it to be accepted by the Merchant Center. It is vital that you take the time to ensure that every item in your feed has all the data required by the Merchant Center.

A missing piece of information or a single typo can lead to problems and unprocessed items in your feed.

# Dealing with feed errors

Even if you think you have everything right, it is still possible for errors to occur. Common errors generally break down into:

* **Data Processing Errors**
  Invalid, unrecognised or missing attributes in the feed. For example, Brand is a required attribute for clothing, everything else must have a GTIN or MPN.

* **Data Quality Errors**
  · Image errors:
    - Broken image URLs
    - Images that are too small
       (400 x 400 pixels recommended, 250 x 250 pixels minimum)

To optimise the data quality of your feed, Google suggests that you do the following:

  • Update your feed daily
  • Submit high quality images
  • Submit all required attributes
  • Mind your descriptions and titles (remember character limits)
  • Include important information upfront
  • Mirror product information on the website
  • Adhere to their editorial guidelines

## Things to avoid

  • Do not put promo text such as 'Free shipping' in your product descriptions
  • Do not use BLOCK CAPITALS
  • Do not include a description of your store
  • Do not use up characters with your brand name

# Optimisation of Your Shopping Campaigns

Creating your campaigns is the first step in Google Shopping success, but you need to be constantly working on your campaigns to increase their effectiveness, and to maximise the benefit you receive.

## Product Titles

If there is one thing that influences how many people see your products, it is your Product titles. Think about how people find your products and write your titles and descriptions accordingly. Adopt a consistent naming convention for all the products you list.

The most important information about the product needs to come as close to the start of the title as possible. Remember that Google matches search queries according to the relevance of product titles so try to include the top search queries in your titles.

There is a 150-character limit for Google Shopping Product Titles so make full use of it, but there are reports of a maximum of 30 characters being visible on a standard desktop search, which is why the most important information needs to be placed at the start of your titles.

# Bidding Strategy

Google Shopping Campaigns cost money, with a CPC charge similar to that of standard AdWords Campaigns. The key to creating a profitable Shopping campaign is to constantly monitor your campaign to see how your Shopping ads perform, relative to your bid amount. If you are paying so much for your clicks that you aren't making sufficient profit, it is time to rethink your strategy. Once your campaigns have been running for a while, you will be able to examine how profitable your product groups are with their current bids, and can adjust your bids accordingly. You may adjust your bids as often as you like so don't be afraid to experiment.

Once your campaign has been running a while and you have begun to gather data on its performance, you can begin using some of the competitive metrics available such as, benchmark CTR, impression share and click share. Tools such as Bid Simulator will also be useful in determining how effective your campaign's performance is, and in helping you to refine your bid strategy.

## Custom Labels

In addition to bid strategy, one of the best ways to enhance your campaign performance is by segmentation. Work out where your highest profit margins are, and focus on those products. When putting together your Shopping campaigns, we saw that it is possible to add Custom Labels. These open up many possibilities. You can use Custom Labels to match products with similar themes to create sophisticated Shopping campaign structures. You can group high value or margin products together so that by bidding at product group level, you achieve maximum ROI.

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## Advanced Features

Google Shopping has a great range of features that retailers can use to hone their Shopping campaigns and drive customers to their stores.

Let us look at three of them, and see how they can help you achieve maximum benefit from Google Shopping.

## Google Special Offers

If you want to display a coupon or deal as a part of your Google Shopping Campaign, Google Special Offers allows you to do that. Google Special Offers display advertiser sales next to product ads on search.

Using Google Special Offers is an easy way to highlight your product both on the Google SERP and also under the Shopping tab, all the while leveraging all the existing sales that your store is running.

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# Seller Reviews or Ratings

Most established, reputable sellers have lots of ratings on Google Shopping. These seller ratings are aggregated by Google and other third-party sites, including comparison shopping engines.

Getting a high number of ratings is important as it gives shoppers confidence in your business, and increases conversions (or the likelihood that a browser will convert into a sale).

Most retailers with multiple ratings employ a third-party review aggregator such as Komi, Bazaarvoice, or Yotpo. This can be an effective method of generating confidence-building reviews on your Google Shopping account.
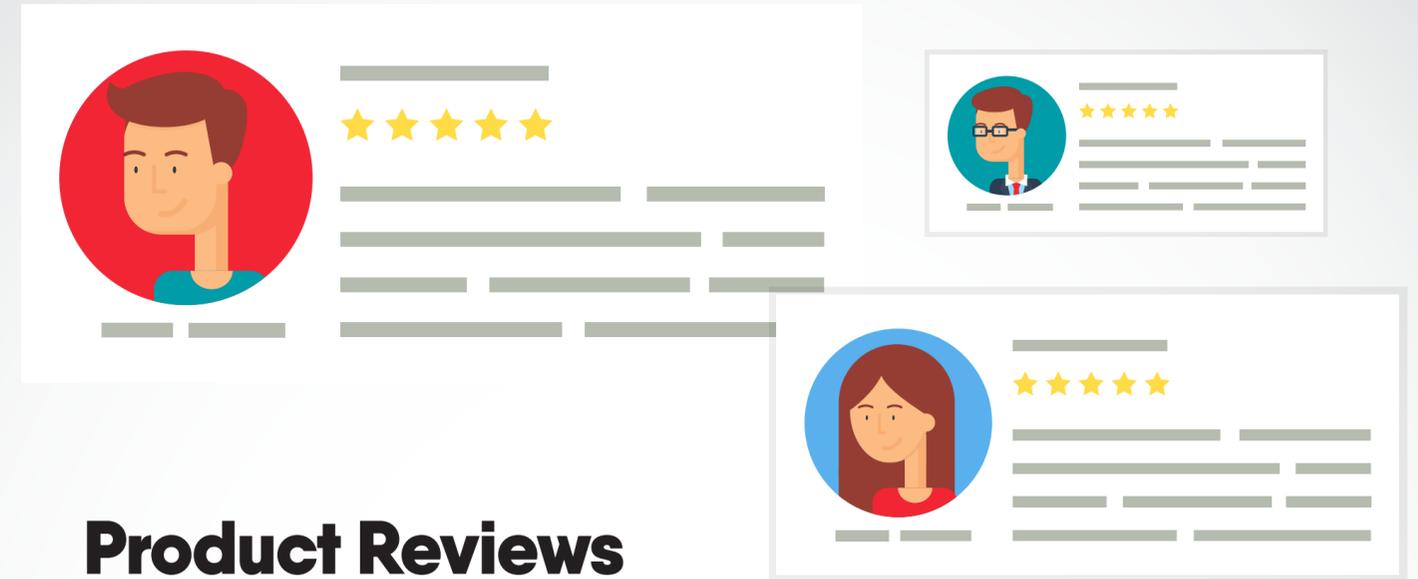
# Product Reviews

Product reviews are becoming an increasingly important feature on Google ads. Receiving good reviews on your products will help them stand out and can increase click-through rates on your products. To get more Product Ratings, consider using party product review sites such as Bazaarvoice or Ekomi or even submitting your own product reviews on certain items. If you receive poor reviews, think about opting out of Product Ratings for these items.

# Google Trusted Stores

Another confidence-building measure to consider adding to your e-commerce program is becoming a Google Trusted Store. Members of the Google Trusted Stores program receive a badge to display on their retail website, and which also appears on their Google Shopping results. Getting certification in the program can be a lengthy process but the rewards can be great. It leverages legitimacy from Google's branding authority and increases the confidence of those viewing your ads, which can play an important role in encouraging potential shoppers to buy from you.

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# WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Google Shopping offers retailers significant opportunities to grow their e-commerce business. With Google Shopping's arrival in Ireland, now is the time to prepare your business for growth with this platform.

## Review your Google Shopping Strategy with an expert

PREMIER

## Google Partner

As a Google Premium Partner with several Google Shopping-certified staff, we would be happy to guide you through all aspects of creating a successful Google Shopping Campaign.

Why waste time and money making the same mistakes as every other newbie. We have all the experience you need to achieve success first time.

**Call us today to arrange a meeting.**

**(01) 485 2611**        **hello@tinderpoint.com**

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