

Basic Google Analytics

Website traffic monitoring software comes in 2 flavours. There's one kind that sits on your server and analyses log files, then there's the other kind that requires you to add some JavaScript to your web pages and logs each time the script is initiated. Server based traffic software tends to be more accurate, but is also far more expensive. If you want cheap and good quality traffic monitoring tools, then Google Analytics (GA) is the best free option.

At first glance, Google Analytics is daunting. It has grown more powerful over the years but at the same time, more complex. About 90% of the options in GA are quite advanced and not really used very often for simple traffic monitoring.

To start using GA, you will need a google account, which is free to get. Once you have an account, go to <https://www.google.com/analytics> and click on the button at the top labelled 'access google analytics'.



Fig 15: Initial setup process for Google Analytics

Click on the signup button and then enter some details:

Account name – this is the name that you will use for your google analytics account, and all websites are stored in these 'accounts'. Note you should only have one google account, but you can create multiple analytics accounts. This is useful if you are an SEO company and need to track groups of websites separately from each other. Currently the limit is 100 analytics accounts, but if you need to create more than 100 you will need to register a second google account.

Website name - The name of your website is not so important. Generally we use the website address as the name since sometimes websites change their names but have the same address.

Website URL – put here the primary url for the website. If your website uses more than one address, e.g. .co.uk and .com versions, then it is better to put the one that appears on your business cards and stationary. Note if you use redirects on your website, then put the URL of the target site.

Industry Category – select the most relevant. This option is not really used much so not important if you don't find an applicable category here

After you have entered this information, click on the 'get tracking id' button, then accept the terms of service in the popup.

The next page will show you your tracking code. It will probably look something like this:

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<script>

(function(i,s,o,g,r,a,m){i['GoogleAnalyticsObject']=r;i[r]=i[r]||function(){
  (i[r].q=i[r].q||[]).push(arguments)},i[r].l=1*new Date();
a=s.createElement(o),m=s.getElementsByTagName(o)[0]; a.async=1; a.src=g;
m.parentNode.insertBefore(a,m)
})(window,document,'script','//www.google-
analytics.com/analytics.js','ga');
ga('create','UA-XXXXXXX-1','auto');
ga('send','pageview');

</script>

```

You will need to copy this code into every page of your website.

Once the code is in your site, you can start tracking your visitors. Click on 'home' at the top, then on 'All Web Site Data'. To test your code is working, select 'Real-Time' > 'Overview' in the left hand panel then open your website in a new browser window. You will see, if the code is working correctly, the activity will be shown in the real time monitor and you will be able to see information about who is on your site right now, where they came from, where they live, and what pages they are looking at.

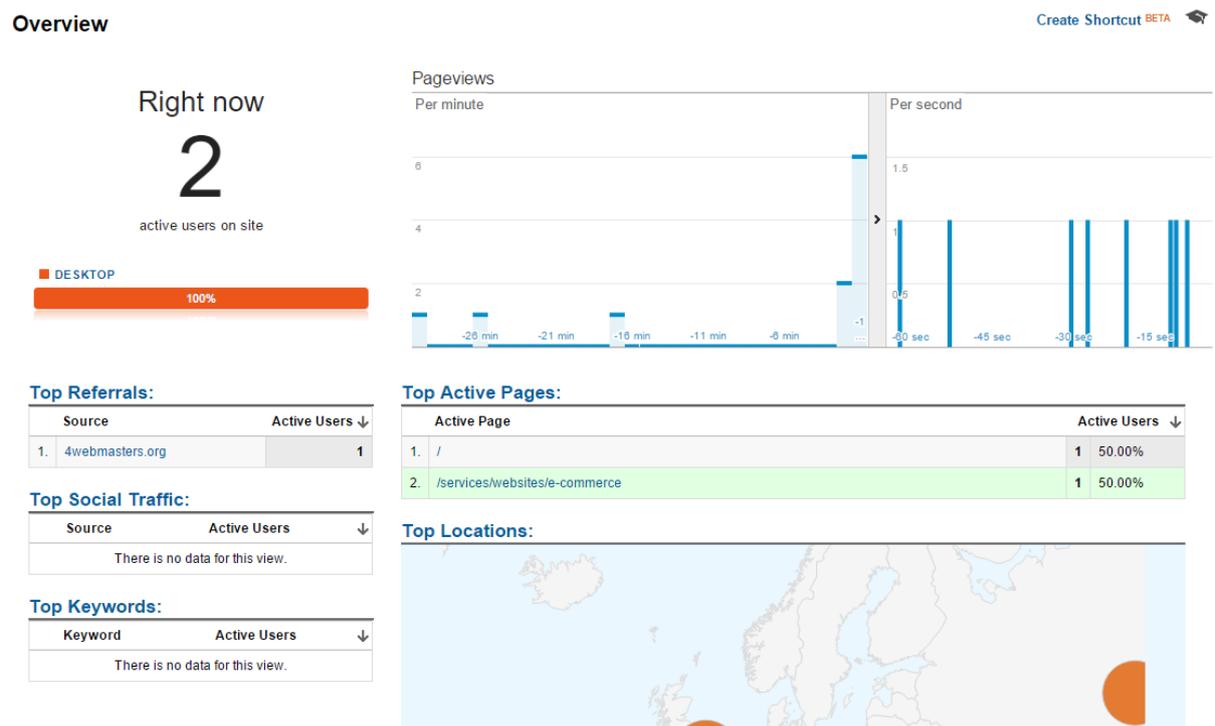


Fig 16: Google Analytics real time statistics view

To view your website traffic, you will need to click on 'Audience' > 'Overview'. This will give you a snapshot of your traffic in the time period selected. (To change the time period, click on the dates in the top right corner).

The most useful traffic measurements in Google Analytics are:

1. Number of users/sessions - this will show you how many people have visited your site in a certain time period. Generally on established sites we like to compare traffic on a year by year basis. This is because there are seasonal variations in traffic that are affected by things like summer holidays or Christmas periods and there are regular patterns of activity. Comparing traffic on a month by month basis is generally not a good indicator of performance (even though Google Analytics uses monthly comparisons in traffic trends).
2. % of new visits - knowing how many potentially new customers are visiting your site will give you a good understanding on how your marketing is going. If a large proportion of your site is new customers then that is a sign that you are reaching new audiences, but if your business model relies on repeat custom then having few returning visitors is not a good sign.
3. Pages per visit – a low number of pages per visit means your site is not engaging, and people are unwilling to find out more about you. The exception to this is the one-page website templates that are becoming more popular.
4. Page views – the number of pages that were viewed in total, the higher the better.

Other useful information includes:

1. Landing and Exit pages (Behaviour > Site Content > Landing Pages) - entry and exit points for your website will let you know what people are looking for (landing pages) and when they leave it means they have either found what they wanted, e.g. payment confirmation on ecom site, or they have given up. Examining your exit pages is a good way of enhancing your site's experience.
2. Referral sources (Acquisition > All Traffic > Referrals) – knowing where traffic comes from is vital in online marketing as it lets you know what is it that you did which generated the best results. Until a couple of years ago, you could get good information on what keywords people used in google to find your site. Nowadays more searchers use https version of google which means that referral keywords cannot be passed through to your website, so the referral keyword is just listed as 'not provided'. This is a great loss in SEO, although you can get some info about referring keywords from google webmaster tools, but it will not allow you to examine which referrals generate the best quality of traffic.

You can use the search bar at the top of the left hand side to find other reports quickly if you are not sure where to find them in the menu.