

Google Ads Troubleshooting Checklist

Find out why Google Ads stopped working before you change a setting. A fix applied too early destroys the evidence you need.

- 1 Identify the problem type
- 2 Confirm the change is real
- 3 Rule out measurement
- 4 Check delivery
- 5 Check traffic economics
- 6 Find where it started
- 7 Decide, document, monitor

First split: impressions and spend near zero means ads aren't showing. Impressions and clicks with worse results means ads aren't performing. They need different checks.

ADS NOT SHOWING

- ☐ **Account billing and notifications**
A payment or verification issue stops everything.
- ☐ **Campaign, ad group, ad and keyword status**
Paused, ended, disapproved, low search volume or auto-paused keywords can't serve.
- ☐ **Budget, schedule, locations and negatives**
Any of them can block the searches you're checking.
- ☐ **Ad Preview and Diagnosis**
Tools → Troubleshooting. Shows whether and why your ad would show.

VALIDATE THE CHANGE

- ☐ **Equal-length, same-weekday periods**
Unequal windows fake a trend.
- ☐ **The same period a year earlier**
A familiar dip may just be the calendar.
- ☐ **A window that ends several days ago**
Recent days are still filling in with conversions.
- ☐ **Planned changes listed**
Budget, bid, targeting, creative or tracking changes in the window.

VALIDATE MEASUREMENT

- ☐ **Conversion action active, primary and recording**
A paused, renamed or switched-to-secondary action looks like a real drop.
- ☐ **Conversions vs. All conv.**
A gap that opens on one date points to a setting change.
- ☐ **Single-day cliff vs. gradual drift**
A cliff points to tracking. Drift points to the account or market.
- ☐ **An independent source**
GA4, CRM or call tracking moving the same way confirms the change.

DELIVERY

- ☐ **Lost IS (budget) vs. lost IS (rank)**
The fixes are opposite: money vs. bids, quality, relevance.
- ☐ **Ad and asset disapprovals**
A policy issue removes impressions with no auction explanation.
- ☐ **Bid strategy status**
"Learning" or "Limited" after a target change.

TRAFFIC ECONOMICS

- ☐ **CPC, CTR and conversion rate together**
CPA up with CPC up is the auction. CPA up with conversion rate down is after the click.
- ☐ **Auction insights for new entrants**
Rising CPC is often the market, not your account.

CONVERSION PERFORMANCE

- ☐ **The actual conversion path, tested**
A broken form or checkout looks identical to bad traffic.
- ☐ **Conversion rate by device and segment**
An average can hide one segment's real problem.

SEGMENTATION

- ☐ **Campaign, device, geography and network**
An account-wide number is often one segment in disguise.
- ☐ **Each segment against its own baseline**
Not against the account average.

DECISION

- ☐ **Evidence matched to a response**
Use the response matrix on page 2.
- ☐ **What you're not changing yet, written down**
A fix for an unconfirmed cause is a new variable.
- ☐ **One signal set to monitor next period**
A fix only counts once it's confirmed.

Response matrix

Match the evidence to a response. Decide just as deliberately what to leave alone until you're sure.

Category	Finding	Next step	Don't change prematurely
Status or eligibility	Ads, keywords or the account can't serve: disapproval, billing, low search volume, a paused or ended campaign	Fix the specific status, then confirm with Ad Preview and Diagnosis	Bids or budgets. They can't help ads that aren't eligible.
Measurement	A conversion action, tag or consent flow broke or changed	Fix tracking, apply a data exclusion if you use Smart Bidding, then re-baseline	Bids, budgets or creative. The numbers behind them aren't confirmed yet.
Delivery or demand	A budget cap, an Ad Rank loss, or a real seasonal shift	Address the specific constraint (budget, bid or relevance), or wait out the season	Bids or budget broadly, before you know which constraint it is
Auction or cost	CPC rose from competitive pressure or a Quality Score change; conversion rate unaffected	Review Quality Score components and Auction insights, then adjust bids deliberately	Budget cuts or pauses, before confirming conversion rate is unaffected
Traffic quality	A campaign, network or match type change diluted who's clicking	Judge the new traffic on its own CPA and lead quality	Reverting because broader traffic looks worse, before checking cost per outcome
Conversion performance	Clicks and delivery are normal; the drop starts after the click	Test and fix the landing page or offer, and compare by device and segment	Ads, bids or targeting. The ad already did its job.
No meaningful problem	The change is within normal variance, or reverted once isolated	Document the finding and close the investigation	Anything. A fix for an unconfirmed cause is a new variable.

Session notes

Fill this in as you work through the steps. It's the record you'll compare against next period.

Problem type:

☐ Not showing

☐ Not performing

☐ Pacing

What changed (metric, from → to)

Date it started

Where it concentrates (campaign, device, region, network)

Category from the matrix

Evidence that confirms the cause

What I'm deliberately not changing yet

Signal to watch

Re-check on

Know when to troubleshoot

The free Google Ads Performance Report skill flags anomalies from live Google Ads data, calculated by Databox.

[Get it free](#)