FREE FIELD SHEET · Nº 007
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KEYWORD GAP

GA4 VS GOOGLE ADS CONVERSION GAP CHECKLIST

Find out exactly why your numbers do not match, and which one to use for what

CHECKS	DO FIRST	PARTS	COST
11	4	3	Free



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Google Ads and GA4 almost never show the same conversion count, and that is normal, not a tracking error. The two platforms use different attribution models, different counting rules and different data sources. This checklist explains the five most common causes of the gap, how to check each one in your own account, and which number to trust for which decision.

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2 The 5 reasons for the gap, and how to check each one — 5 CHECKS
3 Which number to use, for what — 4 CHECKS

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PART 1 OF 3 — 2 CHECKS

Why the numbers never match

☐ 1.1 DO FIRST

Understand the core difference in attribution models

Google Ads counts conversions using its own data-driven or last-click model tied to ad clicks, while GA4 uses its own data-driven model across all channels. A session that Ads attributes to a paid click can be attributed by GA4 to organic, direct or another channel, so the same user action gets counted in different places.

☐ 1.2

Accept that some gap is expected, not a sign one tool is wrong

As an example, if Google Ads shows 40 conversions and GA4 shows 22 for the same period, that difference can be fully explained by the five reasons below rather than by broken tracking. Treat a gap as normal until you have checked each cause.

PART 2 OF 3 — 5 CHECKS

The 5 reasons for the gap, and how to check each one

☐ 2.1 DO FIRST

Check for conversion action duplication in Google Ads

Open the conversion actions list and look for the same action imported more than once, for example both a native Ads tag and a GA4 import of the same goal. Count only one source per action to avoid inflating the Ads number.

WHERE `Google Ads › Goals › Conversions › Summary`

☐ 2.2

Compare the attribution window settings on both platforms

Google Ads defaults to a 30 day click and 1 day view window for most actions; GA4 defaults to a 30 day lookback for acquisition reports. A longer window in Ads can capture conversions that happened outside the period GA4 is reporting on.

WHERE `Google Ads › Goals › Conversions › [Action] › Edit settings › Attribution`

☐ 2.3

Check whether you are comparing conversions or sessions-based events

GA4 counts conversions by event occurrence per session in some reports and can deduplicate differently than Ads, which counts by click-through or view-through. Confirm you are looking at the same metric type, not just the same date range.

WHERE `GA4 › Reports › Engagement › Conversions`

☐ 2.4 DO FIRST

Verify your GA4 to Google Ads conversion import mapping

If you import GA4 conversions into Ads, open the mapping and confirm only the intended events are marked as conversions. An extra event marked as a conversion in GA4 will pull through to Ads and inflate the Ads total.

WHERE `Google Ads › Goals › Conversions › Google Analytics (GA4)`

☐ 2.5 DO FIRST

Check for cross device and cross browser gaps

Google Ads can use signed-in Google account data to stitch conversions across devices, which GA4 cannot always do without Google Signals enabled. If Google Signals is off in GA4, cross device conversions counted by Ads will not appear in GA4.

WHERE `GA4 › Admin › Data Settings › Data Collection`

PART 3 OF 3 — 4 CHECKS

Which number to use, for what

☐ 3.1

Use Google Ads conversions for bidding and budget decisions

Smart Bidding optimizes against the conversion count Ads itself reports, so this is the correct number for judging campaign performance and setting target CPA or ROAS.

☐ 3.2

Use GA4 conversions for cross-channel and full-funnel reporting

GA4 shows how paid traffic compares to organic, email, direct and other channels, so it is the right source when the question is about overall marketing performance, not just ad spend efficiency.

☐ 3.3

Report both numbers side by side with the reason for the gap

When presenting results, show the Ads figure, the GA4 figure, and a one line explanation such as attribution window or Google Signals status, so the audience understands the difference instead of assuming an error.

☐ 3.4

Pick one source of truth per decision, not per report

Decide in advance that bidding decisions always use Ads data and channel mix decisions always use GA4 data, so the choice is made once and applied consistently rather than argued over each time a number is questioned.

WANT ME TO LOOK AT YOURS?

If you have gone through this and want a second pair of eyes, book a free call. We open the account together and look at what is actually happening. No deck, no pitch.

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