



## PPC Keyword Match Types

White Paper

DaBrian Marketing Group, LLC

10/21/2013

Pay per Click (PPC) advertising can be one of the most efficient and effective forms of Internet marketing. Efficient because you only have to pay when a user reads and interacts (Clicks) on your ads. Imagine being able to run print ads in a magazine, but only having to pay for the portion of the ads that are seen, read and engaged with. The effectiveness of PPC advertising is largely due to its targeting capabilities. One can focus on geographic location (country, state, city, etc.), specific time frames (seasons, days of the week, hours of the day, etc.), as well as search queries. Going back to our magazine example, imagine being able to place ads only in the magazines purchased by people interested with your product/service, and only had to pay for those ads which people interacted with.

So far, PPC advertising sounds foolproof. However, for Pay per Click to be efficient and effective, the account and its settings need to be implemented and managed properly. In my experience as a Search Engine Consultant, I have seen numerous accounts that have been set up too narrowly, negatively impacting their effectiveness, or targeted too broadly, making them inefficient.

One of the most misunderstood and often misused aspects of PPC is the use of Keyword Match Types. When used correctly, Match Types can aid in research, testing, optimizing, and (of course) targeting. But before any of that can be done, first the Match Types (Broad, Modified Broad, Phrase, Exact and Negative) need to be fully understood. The following is a list of the various Match Types, including examples with proper punctuation, best practices, and recommendations for usage.

**Broad Match Type** – This match type, which is the default, is simply typed in with no punctuation and will match singulars/plurals, synonyms, misspellings, close variations, stemming, and other related searches. Being the most general type of keyword, it will generate the highest number of impressions and reach a very broad audience. Below is an example (courtesy of Google AdWords) of Broad Match Type and search queries that would trigger an advert.



### Example

Phrase match keyword	Ads won't show on searches for
tennis shoes	buy tennis shoes best shoes for tennis tennis shoe laces running shoes tennis sneakers

Since Broad Match Type reaches such a large audience, it is best used for brand awareness. I would also recommend using this Match type as research on search trends and for more specific long tail keywords (keyword phrases consisting of multiple words.)

**Modified Broad Match Type**- Adding a plus sign (+) in front of selected (or all) broad match type keywords increases the targeting capabilities for those keywords. The modified words within your Broad Match Type keyword phrases will trigger ads for searches that include close variations, singulars/plurals, and stemming, but not for synonyms. The following chart (from Microsoft adCenter) depicts this difference well.

Query	Will ad be eligible to be served?	
	Broad Match Keyword: Hawaii Hotels	Broad Match Modifier Keyword: Hawaii +Hotels
Hawaii Hotels	✓	✓
Hawaii Rentals	✓	✗
Maui Hotels	✓	✓
Maui Rentals	✓	✗
Hotels Hawaii Maui	✓	✓
Hotels Maui Rentals	✓	✓
Rentals Hawaii Maui	✓	✗

Modifiers are best used on necessary words within a long tail keyword phrase, (keyword phrases with multiple words). They work well on branded names used as keywords, as you often do not want your ad coming up for synonyms of your brand name.

Phrase Match Type – Identified by the brackets ([keyword]) surrounding a keyword, this match type requires the search query to include the exact keyword phrase (in the same order) as the Phrase Match Type Keyword. The table below (from Microsoft adCenter) clearly details how Phrase Match works.

Phrase match "keyword"

Your ad is eligible to be displayed when a search query includes the word or words in your keyword *in the same order* as a customer's search query--even if other words are present in that query.

To show your ads to more potential customers than with an exact match, but get more clicks than with a broad match.

If you set your keyword to be "red flower", your ad is eligible to display when someone searches for *big red flower* and *red flower*, but not *yellow flower* or *flower red*.

This match type works best with long-tail keywords, since the exact phrase must be included in the search query. Phrase Match Type will generate fewer Impressions, but will most likely be more relevant to the searcher and therefore achieve more Clicks. This makes the Phrase Keyword Match Type good for reaching a specific target market, without drastically cutting into the reach and visibility of your Pay per Click advertising.

Initially, this match type required a direct match of the keyword phrase within the search query. However, Google has developed a Near Phrase Match Type, which will include typos, close variations (misspellings), and singulars/plurals. Unfortunately, there is no visual difference between Phrase Match Type and Near Phrase Match Type. The Table below (from Google AdWords) shows examples of which searches will trigger one of your adverts from a Near Phrase Match Keyword.

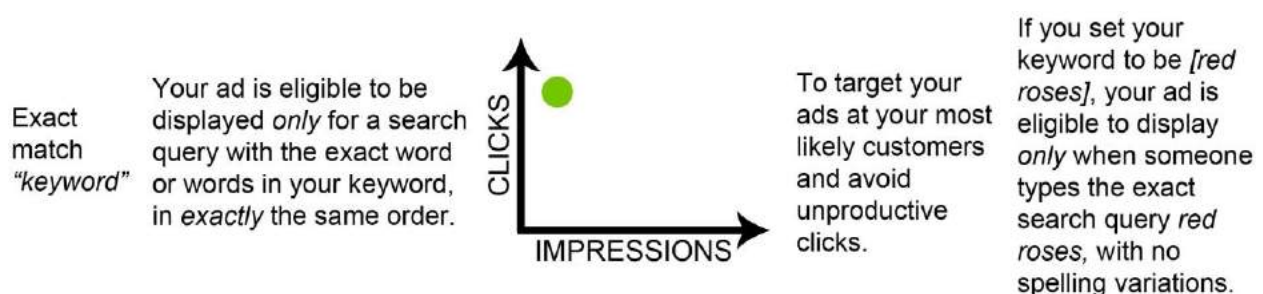


## Example

Phrase match keyword	Ads may show on searches for	Ads won't show on searches for
"tennis shoes"	red tennis shoes red tenis shoes	shoes for tennis tennis sneakers

By default, Google AdWords automatically reads all Phrase Match Types as Near Phrase Match Types, unless the advertiser goes into options and turns Near Match off. This variation of the Phrase Match Type increases the keywords' reach and visibility, but decreases their targeting ability. When deciding whether to use or turn off the Near Phrase Match setting, keep in mind the goals and objectives of your Campaign. This feature can help achieve some goals, but could prevent you from reaching others.

**Exact Match Type** – As the title of this match type indicates, the term being searched must match your keyword exactly. Unlike the Phrase Match, the term being searched cannot have anything prior to or following your keyword; otherwise your advert will not be triggered to be viewed. The image below (From Microsoft adCenter) reveals that Exact Match will produce the least amount of Impressions, but should get a high volume of Clicks from those Impressions.



This Match Type is great for reaching smaller niche markets that will be searching for your exact keyword. Although the reach and visibility of Exact Match Type is limited, its relevance, Click Through Rate, and Conversion Rate are usually high. For this reason, Exact Match Type is an excellent choice for achieving goals such as lead generation and online sales.

Google has also developed a Near Exact Match Type. This match type, similar to Near Phrase, widens the array of possible matches for the exact match type keyword. Instead of needing to be a precise match for the Exact Match Type to trigger your ad, the Near Exact will match singulars/plurals, stemming, and

close variations (misspellings). An example of a Near Exact Match Type keyword and the search queries that it would and would not match (from Google AdWords) is below.



## Example

Exact match keyword	Ads may show on searches for	Ads won't show on searches for
[tennis shoes]	tennis shoes tenis shoe	red tennis shoes buy tennis shoes

Again, visually Exact Match and Near Exact match are the same, and Near Exact is automatically used, unless turned off. Even with the Near Match variation, Exact Match is the best option for reaching niche target audiences. It will most likely have fewer Impressions, but if reaching the correct audience can be very effective with those few Impressions.

**Negative Match Type** – It is impossible to predict which phrases every user is going to search hoping to find your product, service, or business. However, there are most likely Keywords that could trigger one of your ads that you know are not relevant. These are perfect for the Negative Keyword Match Type, which will prevent your ad from showing if included in the user's search query. This is an excellent way to weed out irrelevant traffic that might include one of your keywords in their search. The goal of Negative Match Keywords is to reduce unwanted Clicks by restricting the search queries that will trigger an Impression for your advert. The explanation below (from Google AdWords) gives examples of how Negative Match Keywords work.

Negative Keywords are easily spotted by the Minus (-) sign placed prior to the keyword. One can also use the other Match Types as negative Keywords. In other words, if you wanted to block only the exact search query for a given keyword, then you could use a Negative Exact Match Type. It is highly recommended to use Negative keywords to better target your ads and make your PPC ads more efficient and effective.

Before adding all the various Match Types to a PPC Campaign, it's important to take a step back and consider what you are trying to accomplish with the Campaign. Is it for brand awareness? Or are you expecting a direct response (a purchase or newsletter sign-up)? Knowing your end goal and how its success will be measured will help you decide which Match Types to use throughout your Pay per Click Campaign. As mentioned above, Broad Match is better for brand awareness as it will generate the most impressions, while Exact Match is best for lead generation as it should generate a high volume of Clicks per Impression and be very relevant to the searcher. Hopefully, you found this intro to Keyword Match Types informative and helpful. Keep an eye out for more upcoming PPC-related whitepapers concerning bid management, importance of Landing Pages, and more.