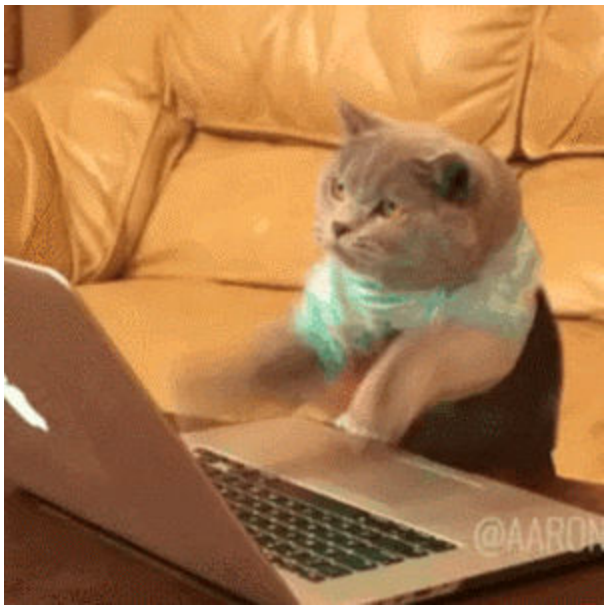
SEO Keyword Research and Mapping

Last Updated / Reviewed: Jan 10th, 2023
Execution Time: *2-8 hours*



Goal: Finding high-volume keywords that are easy to target (i.e. there aren't many other websites that target them too) and which suit your website's niche, grouping them according to search intent and demand, as well as creating an incipient sitemap based on the aforementioned keyword groups.

Ideal Outcome: Creating a comprehensive keyword strategy your SEO specialist(s) and content marketer(s) will be able to use in the months to come.

Pre-requisites or requirements: N/A

Why this is important: Although definitely not *the only* element that ensures excellent Search Engine Optimization, keyword research is by far *the* most important SEO task. A great keyword strategy can give you a competitive advantage against large players in the market, determine what to work on next, who to hire, and how much to invest. You can use your keyword strategy to inform the structure of your site and even define your

content marketing calendar.

Where this is done: In your browser, in a keyword research tool, as well as in a spreadsheet that will help you organize all the keywords you find.

When this is done:

1. Before you (re)create your website.
2. It should also be done recurrently, at least once a year, to refresh your website's SEO.
3. Before rolling out your SEO or content marketing strategy.

Who does this: The SEO Specialist or a V/A you've trained to help you with keyword research and mapping - but if you haven't hired either one (or an agency to handle your digital marketing), you're on your own :)

□ Before starting: understand the SEO keyword mechanism

- SEO keywords are the words and word phrases Internet users search when they want to find a business, a piece of information, etc.
- The better you optimize your website with these keywords, the more likely it is that you will land among the first options provided by a Search Engine's Result Page.
- Keep in mind that SEO is not just about the keywords - they are a crucial element in the optimization process, but not an exclusive one.
- Keyword research can be performed with a lot of tools. Up until not very long ago, Google's Keyword Planner was the top choice among SEO professionals. However, Google recently started to limit the number and quality of their suggestions, especially for users who don't invest money in AdWords campaigns.
- As a result, SEO pros have started using other tools more frequently. Some examples include KWFinder (10 days free trial), SEMRush (free with limited capabilities, excellent when paid), and SEOBook's Keyword Tool (decent free tool). In this SOP, we will use KWFinder, as it provides the best quality-price ratio.

□ Environment setup

1. Sign up for KWFinder or ask for access if your company already has an account.

2. Make sure you have Excel, access to Google Sheets, Libre Office Sheets, or any other similar tool.

3. Arm yourself with patience. This is not a difficult process, but it can be quite time-consuming. Yet, the more time you invest in it, the better your results it will yield.

□ Run an in-depth keyword research

For the purpose of this SOP, we used a fictional wedding venue in New Hampshire that is just building their website and wants to make sure couples will find them when searching Google for venues in the area.

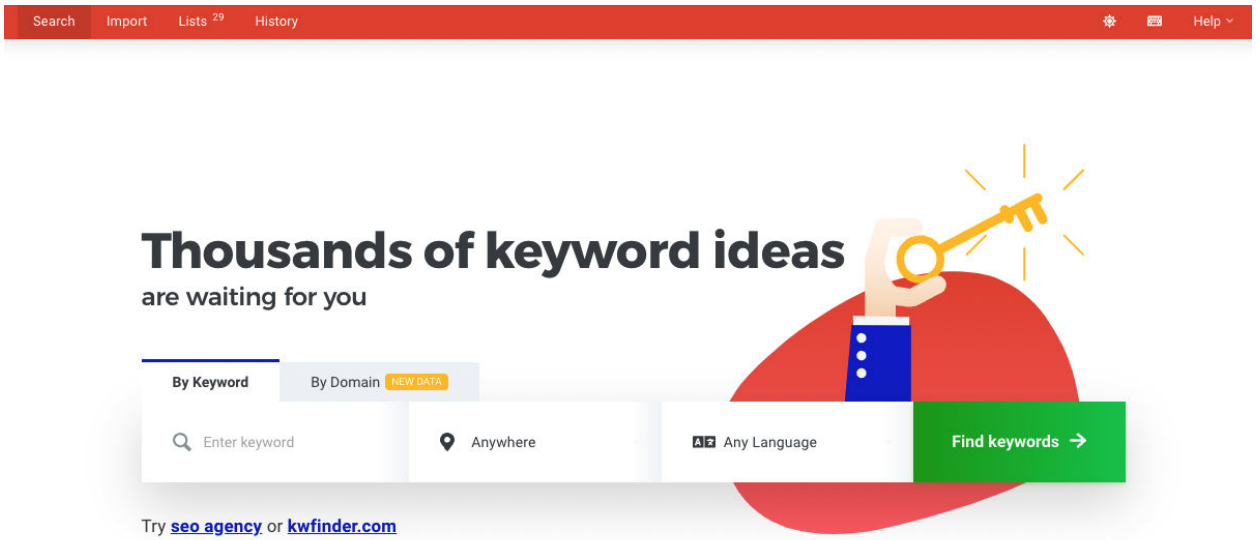
Consequently, the entire SOP is created around the same idea, just to give you an example of how a keyword research and mapping process should look like. Of course, all of the steps described hereon will be adjusted to suit your particular business needs.

1. Go to http://kwfinder.com.

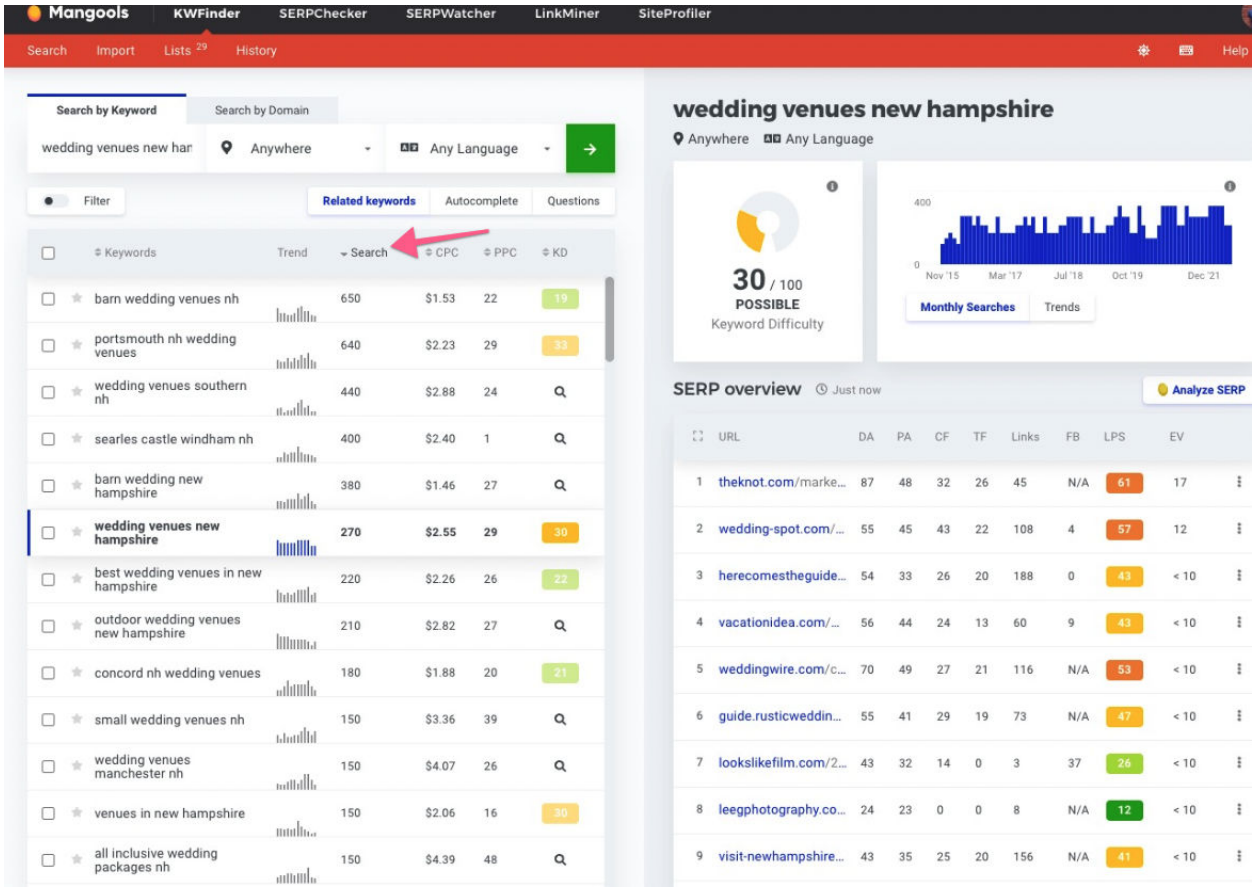
2. Think of what your future clients would search for to find your business. For the purpose of the examples in this SOP, we will imagine we are looking for a wedding venue in New Hampshire and start from there.

3. Set your business' location using the box in the middle of the page (this is set by default to "Anywhere", but you can change it by clicking on it and entering your own desired location) .
    a. Our suggestion is this: use a broader location (country) in the beginning - you can narrow it down by using a specific search term (e.g. "wedding venue New Hampshire", the primary keyword we used in the example). Doing this will help you find more keywords (both general and location-specific).

4. Enter your search term in the box saying "Enter keyword". Click on "Find Keywords" button or hit the "Enter" button on your keyboard.
    a. A list of keywords will appear on the page. Next to each of them, you will see the number of average monthly searches (in the "Search" column), as well as the difficulty score of ranking for that particular keyword (in the "Difficulty" column).

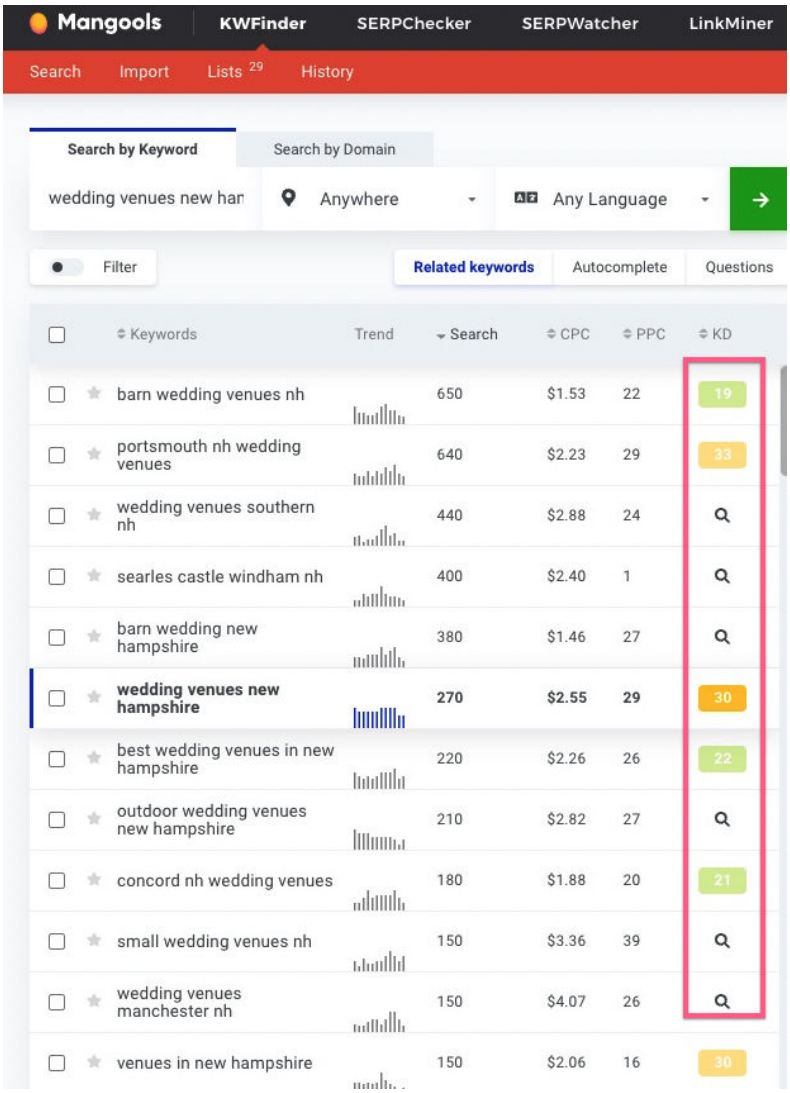


5. Choose the sorting criteria for the list of keywords displayed by KWFinder:
    a. “Suggestions”: This is the default (and actually recommended) sorting criterion; it will sort the keywords based on how relevant they are in relation to the primary keyword you searched (“wedding venues New Hampshire” in our example).
    b. “Search”: Select this sorting criterion only if you are interested in pure volumes (this is not usually recommended because a successful optimization takes both volumes and search intent into consideration).

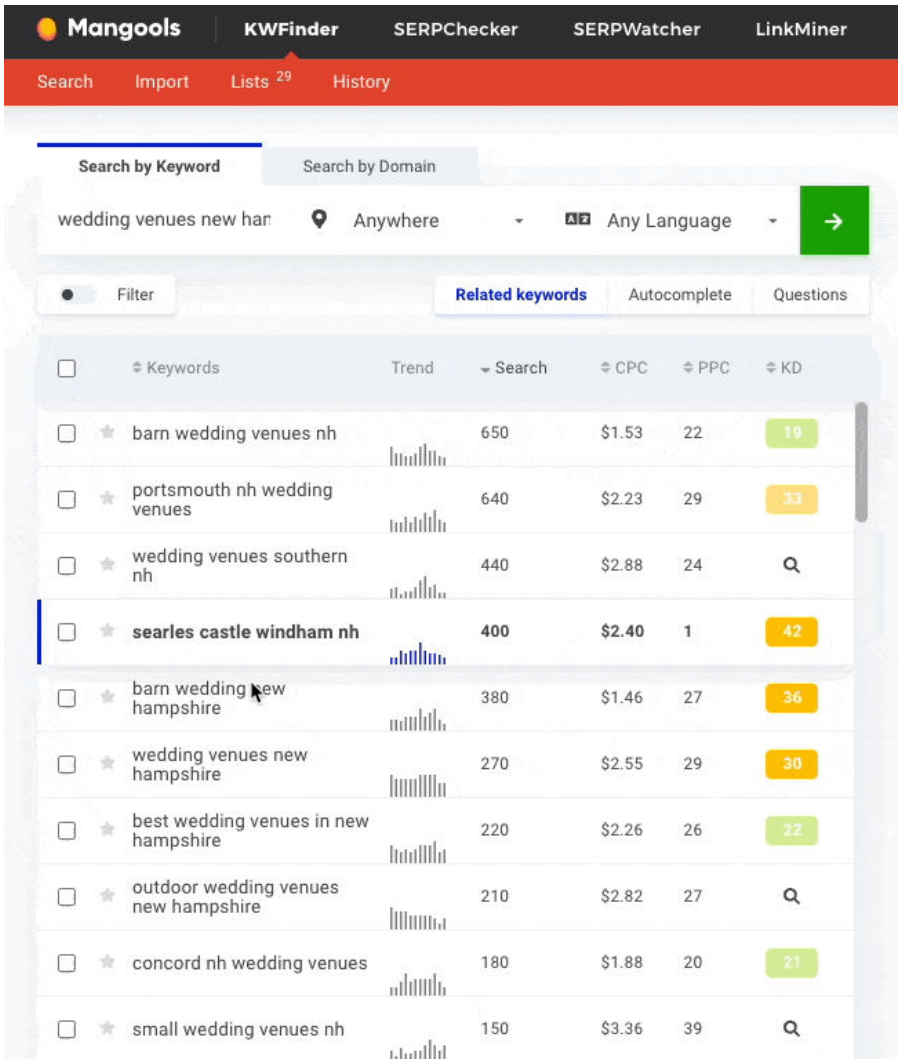


c. “PPC” and “CPC” are sorting criteria you will only use if you proceed with a paid advertising campaign online (e.g. Google’s PPC program). So you will most likely not need to use these options for keyword research and mapping.
d. “Diff” will sort the list of keywords according to the difficulty of each keyword. To use this criterion, you should first make sure to generate the difficulty score for keywords that have not been scored yet (see below).

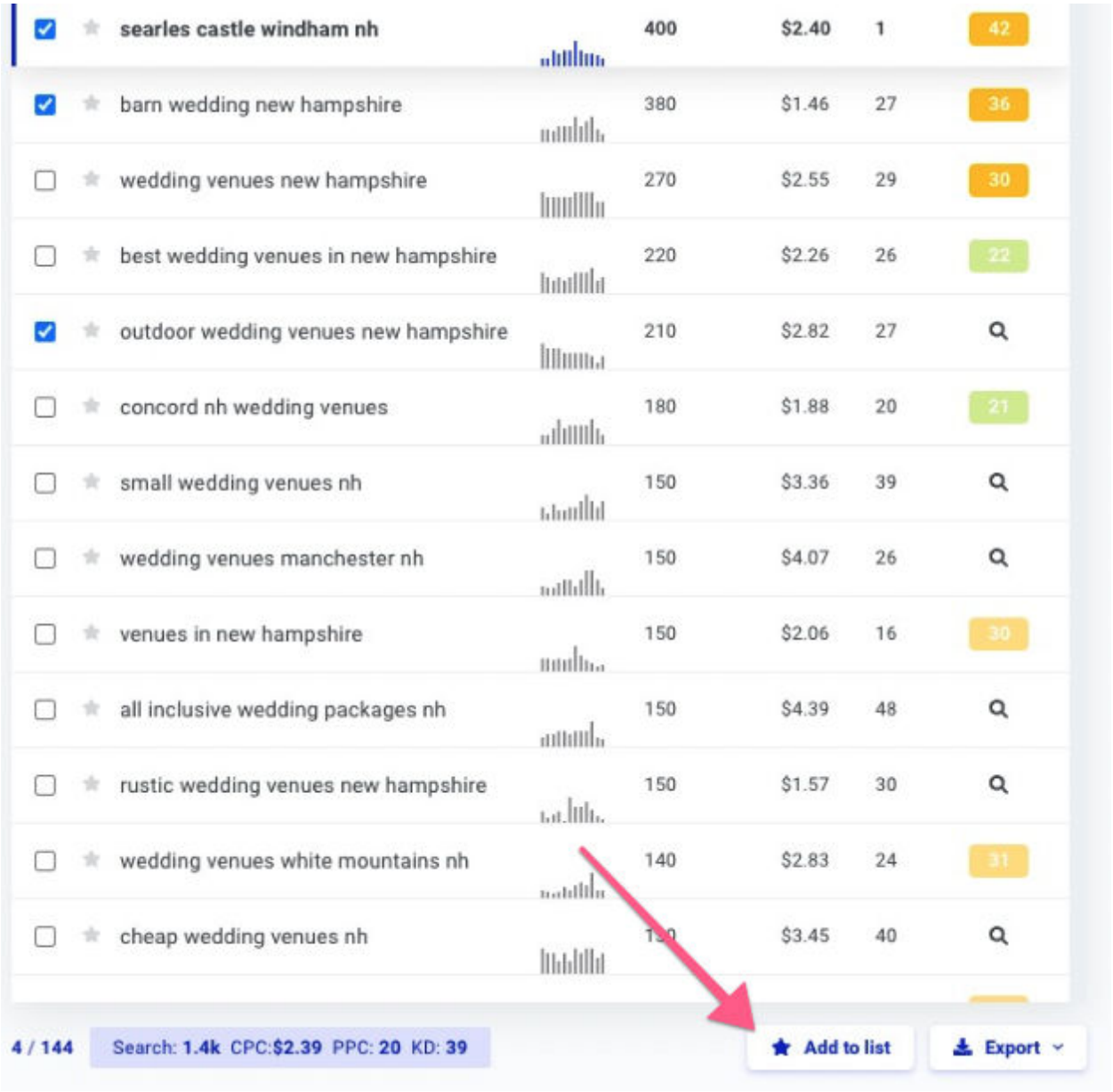
6. You should see the keyword difficulty score in the “KD” column. If there isn’t a number. Click the magnifying glass icon and KWfinder will generate one based on current data. Remember, this should be done with <u>all</u> keywords that are important and relevant for your business (which you will later on add to a list).



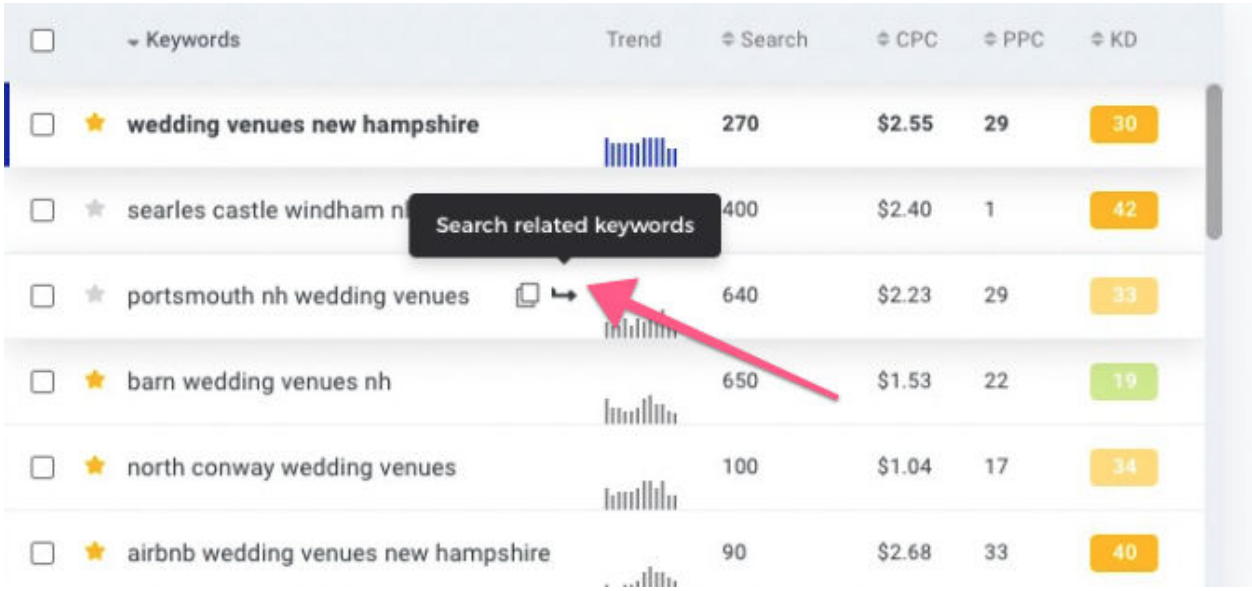
7. Tick each of the keywords you find suitable for your website. Pay attention to the search intent (what you think the users wanted to know when they searched that particular term), the search demand (the average monthly searches), and the difficulty of the keyword.
    a. At this point, you shouldn't worry too much about selecting very broad or very different topics—the idea is to create a very comprehensive list of relevant keywords.



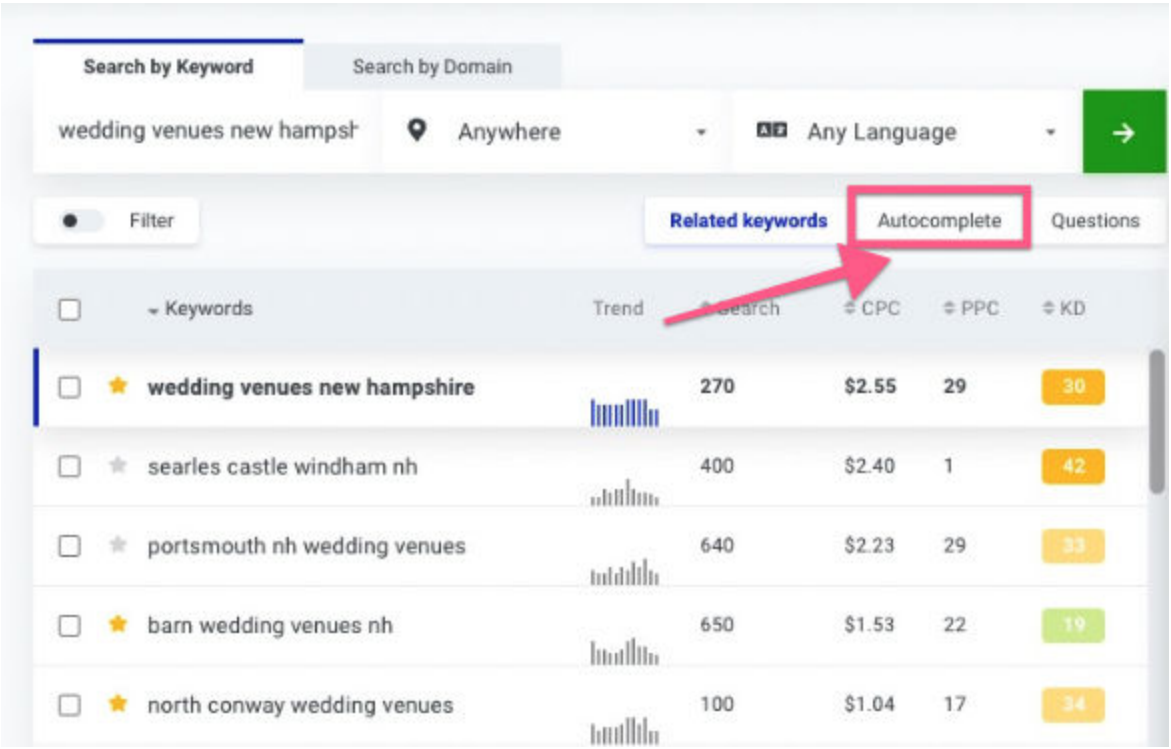
8. Add the ticked keywords to your list. You can do this by clicking on the green “Add to list” button at the bottom of the page. If this is a new project, you will have to create a new list (e.g. “New Hampshire Wedding Keyword Research”). If you have been working on this project before, you will simply have to select the list you want for these keywords.



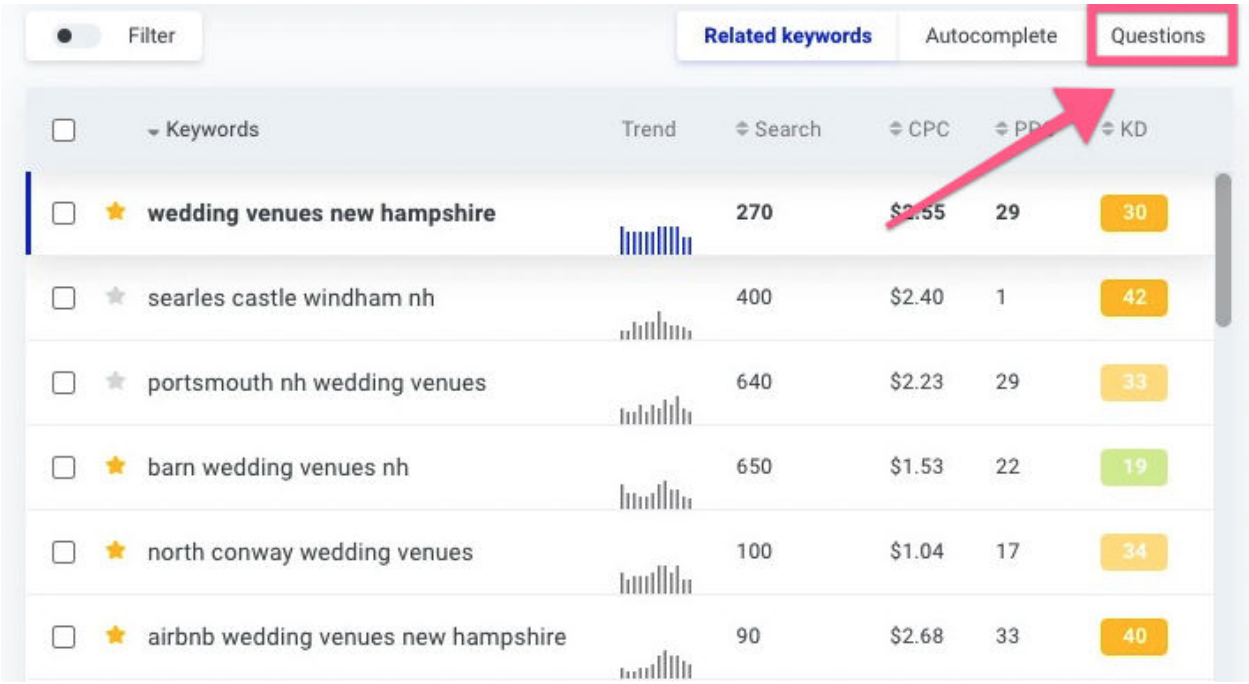
9. Once you are done with selecting keywords from the first list KWFinder pulled, make sure to always go in-depth with your research. Do this by taking each of the keywords in the list and searching its related keywords. To do this, click on the arrow right next to the keyword itself.



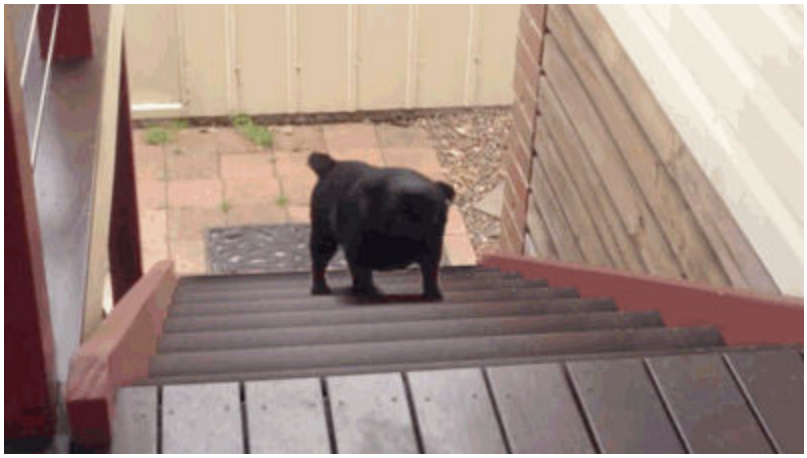
10. Once you are done with the “Suggestions” tab (the default tab), repeat the same keyword research process on the “Autocomplete” tab. This will display a list of results similar to what Google would with their Autocomplete feature (e.g. when you search for a piece of information and Google ends the search phrase for you). The “Autocomplete” KWFinder feature will help you find even more keywords to use for your website.



11. Repeat the same keyword research process with the “Questions” tab. This will pull a list of question-based search terms. With this feature, you might have to work with a broader keyword (“wedding venue” instead of “wedding venue in New Hampshire”, for example).The keyword phrases you will select will most likely be excellent ideas for blog topics, so you should add the suitable ones to your list as well.

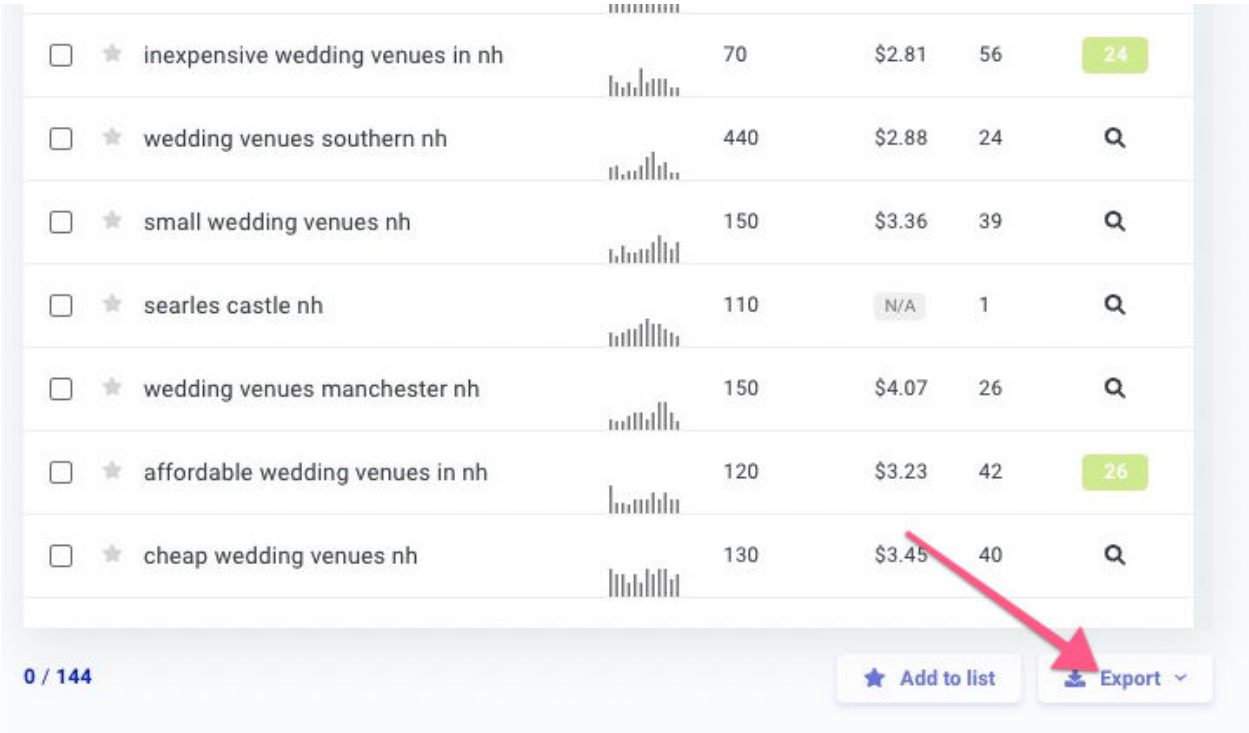


12. Remember, patience is key in this process. Ideally, you should be searching for keywords and creating a comprehensive list. You want as many of them as you can find! If your competition is not doing this, you will have a tangible competitive advantage if you create a great keyword strategy.



Map your keywords

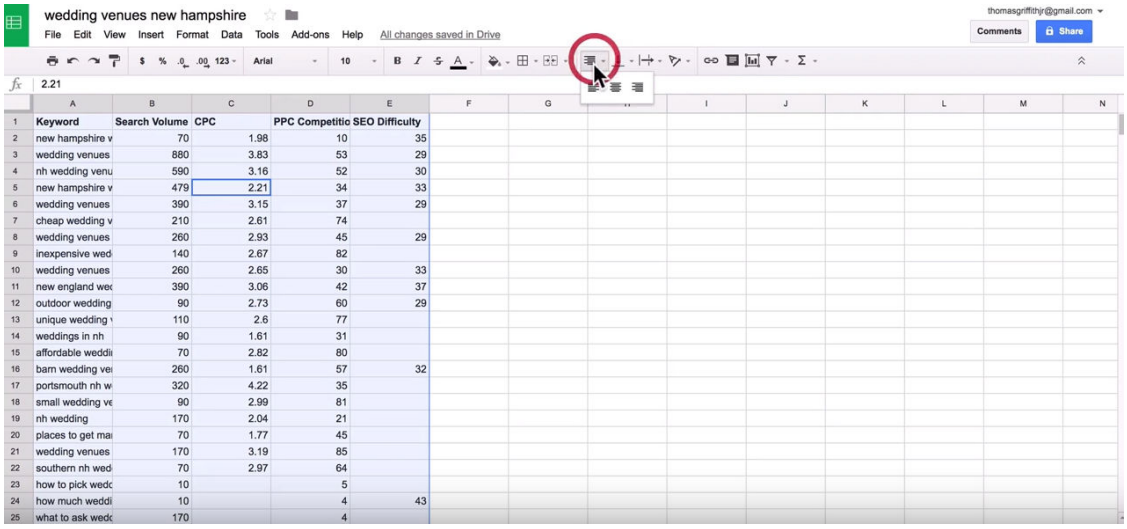
1. Once you have (finally!) created a comprehensive list of keywords, export them to your computer. You can do this by clicking on the “Export” button at the end of the KWFinder list (right next to “Add to list”). You can copy the list to clipboard or you can export it as a .csv file.



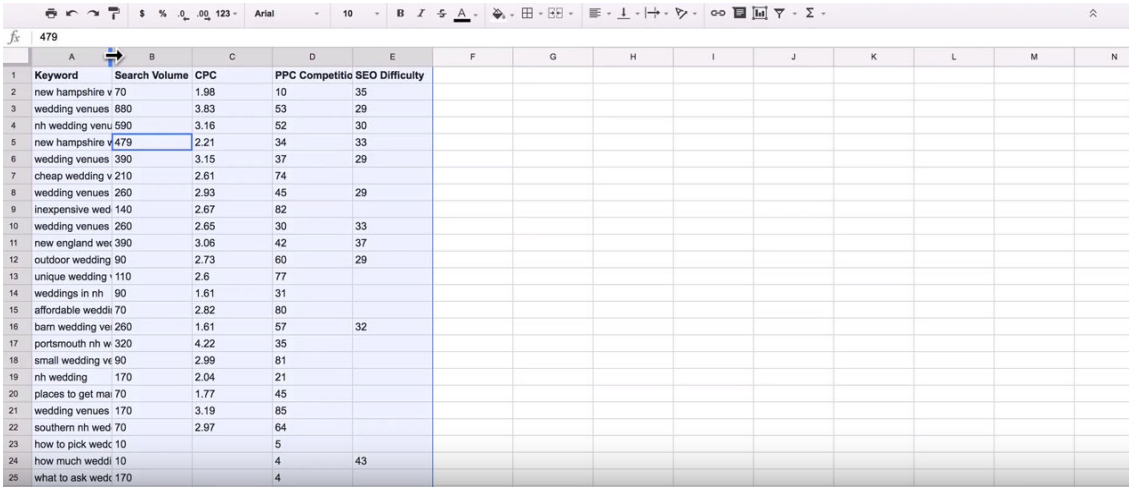
2. Pull the .csv file into Google Sheets (or any other spreadsheet tool you are using). You can do this by opening your spreadsheet software and importing the keyword list into it (go to File -> Open and then select the .csv file).

3. Duplicate your sheet, so that you have a backup at all times. Re-name them “Canonical List” (for the original version) and “Keyword Mapping Blueprint” (for the sheet you will actually work with). From hereon, you will only work in the “Keyword Mapping Blueprint” sheet.

4. Center all the text, then enlarge your cells so that you can see all the important data in it.



Keyword	Search Volume	CPC	PPC Competitio	SEO Difficulty
new hampshire v	70	1.98	10	35
wedding venues	880	3.83	53	29
nh wedding venu	590	3.16	52	30
new hampshire v	479	2.21	34	33
wedding venues	390	3.15	37	29
cheap wedding v	210	2.61	74	
wedding venues	260	2.93	45	29
inexpensive wed	140	2.67	82	
wedding venues	260	2.65	30	33
new england wed	390	3.06	42	37
outdoor wedding	90	2.73	60	29
unique wedding	110	2.6	77	
weddings in nh	90	1.61	31	
affordable weddi	70	2.82	80	
barn wedding ver	260	1.61	57	32
portsmouth nh w	320	4.22	35	
small wedding ve	90	2.99	81	
nh wedding	170	2.04	21	
places to get mai	70	1.77	45	
wedding venues	170	3.19	85	
southern nh wed	70	2.97	64	
how to pick wedc	10		5	
how much weddi	10		4	43
what to ask wedc	170		4	



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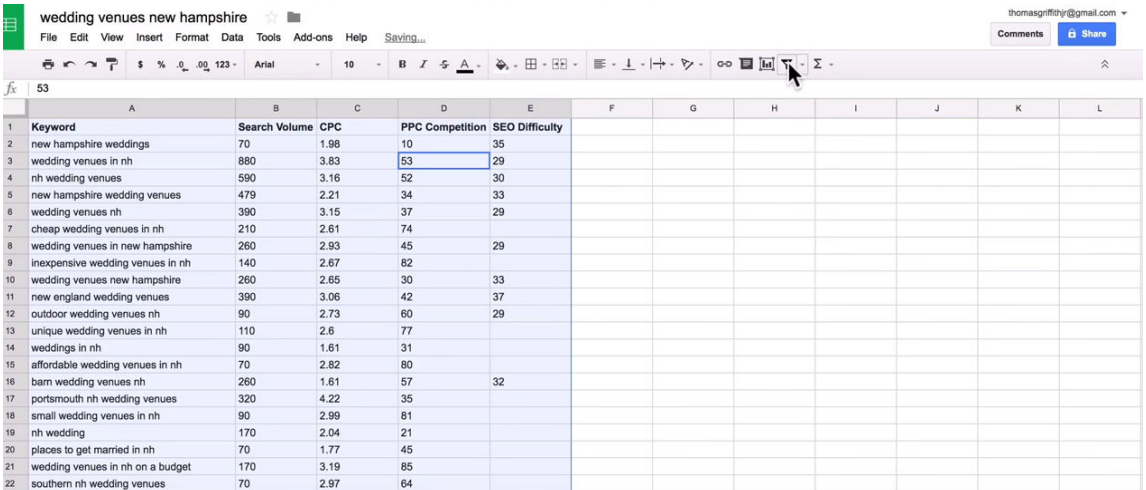
how much weddi	10		4	43
what to ask wedc	170		4	

5. Add a filter to your columns and sort the entries by “Search Volume”.



Keyword	Search Volume	CPC	PPC Competition	SEO Difficulty
new hampshire weddings	70	1.98	10	35
wedding venues in nh	880	3.83	53	29
nh wedding venues	590	3.16	52	30
new hampshire wedding venues	479	2.21	34	33
wedding venues nh	390	3.15	37	29
cheap wedding venues in nh	210	2.61	74	
wedding venues in new hampshire	260	2.93	45	29
inexpensive wedding venues in nh	140	2.67	82	
wedding venues new hampshire	260	2.65	30	33
new england wedding venues	390	3.06	42	37
outdoor wedding venues nh	90	2.73	60	29
unique wedding venues in nh	110	2.6	77	
weddings in nh	90	1.61	31	
affordable wedding venues in nh	70	2.82	80	
barn wedding venues nh	260	1.61	57	32
portsmouth nh wedding venues	320	4.22	35	
small wedding venues in nh	90	2.99	81	
nh wedding	170	2.04	21	
places to get married in nh	70	1.77	45	
wedding venues in nh on a budget	170	3.19	85	
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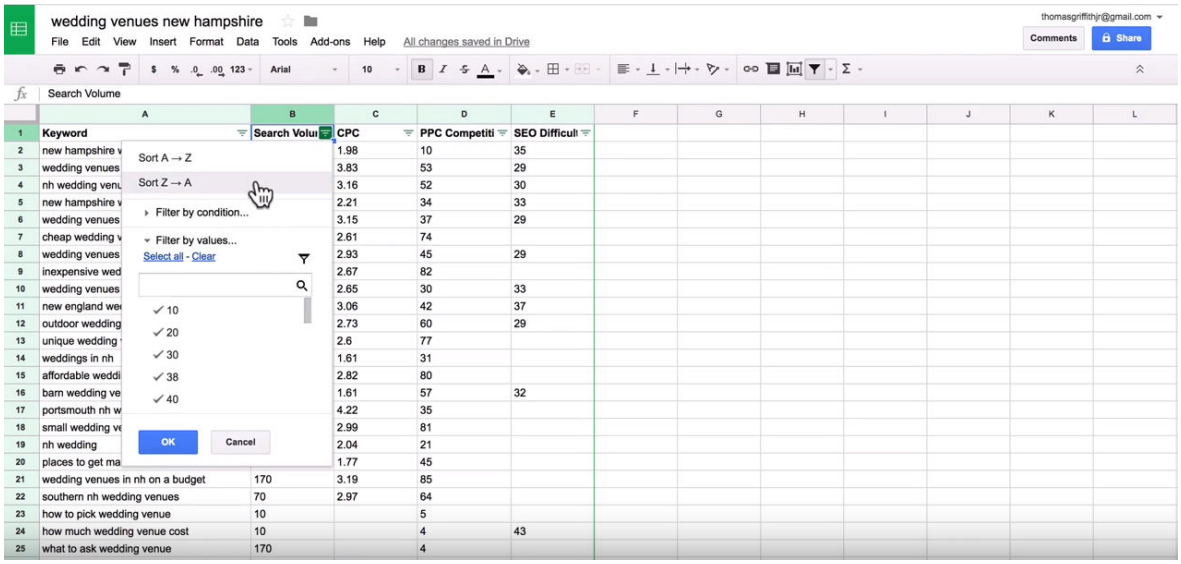
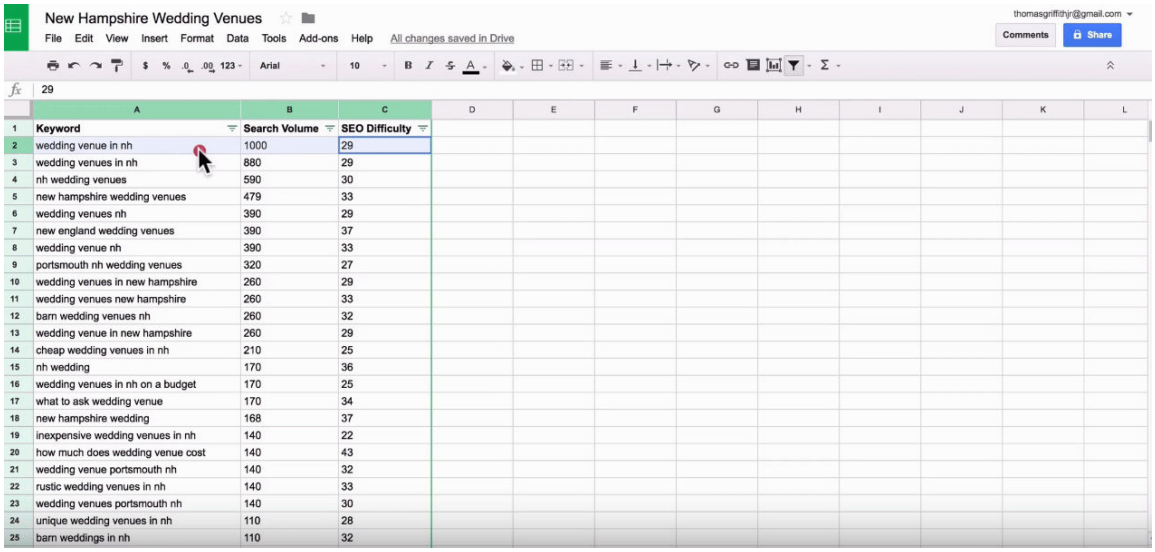


6. Remove columns that are not of interest to you right now (e.g. the CPC and the PPC Competition columns).

7. Group keywords according to search intent, by moving them in separate, smaller lists - we will call them “buckets”:
    a. For example, “wedding venue in nh” and “nh wedding venues” both have the same search intent (users want to find the venues available in the named area, so this is a location-intended search focused specifically on New Hampshire).
    b. However, “new england wedding venue” broadens the search (so the intention behind it is not to find wedding venues in *just* New Hampshire, but in the entire New England area).

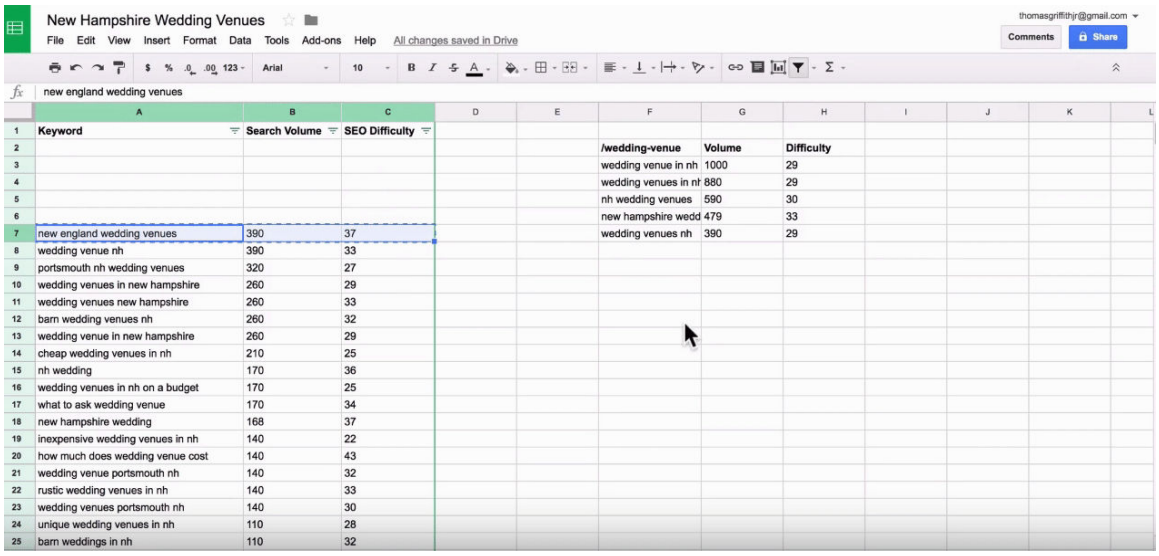
8. Re-name each of these buckets according to the site page you will think they would work on.
    a. In our example, the New Hampshire wedding venue-related keywords were placed under “/wedding-venue” (which would work as a homepage).

b. However, the New England wedding venue-related keywords were placed under “/new-england-wedding-venues”(this could be a completely different page - maybe even one that would link to the competitors).



New Hampshire Wedding Venues

Keyword	Search Volume	SEO Difficulty
wedding venue in nh	1000	29
wedding venues in nh	880	29
nh wedding venues	590	30
new hampshire wedding venues	479	33
wedding venues nh	390	29
new england wedding venues	390	37
wedding venue nh	390	33
portsmouth nh wedding venues	320	27
wedding venues in new hampshire	260	29
wedding venues new hampshire	260	33
barn wedding venues nh	260	32
wedding venue in new hampshire	260	29
cheap wedding venues in nh	210	25
nh wedding	170	36
wedding venues in nh on a budget	170	25
what to ask wedding venue	170	34
new hampshire wedding	168	37
inexpensive wedding venues in nh	140	22
how much does wedding venue cost	140	43
wedding venue portsmouth nh	140	32
rustic wedding venues in nh	140	33
wedding venues portsmouth nh	140	30
unique wedding venues in nh	110	28
barn weddings in nh	110	32



New Hampshire Wedding Venues

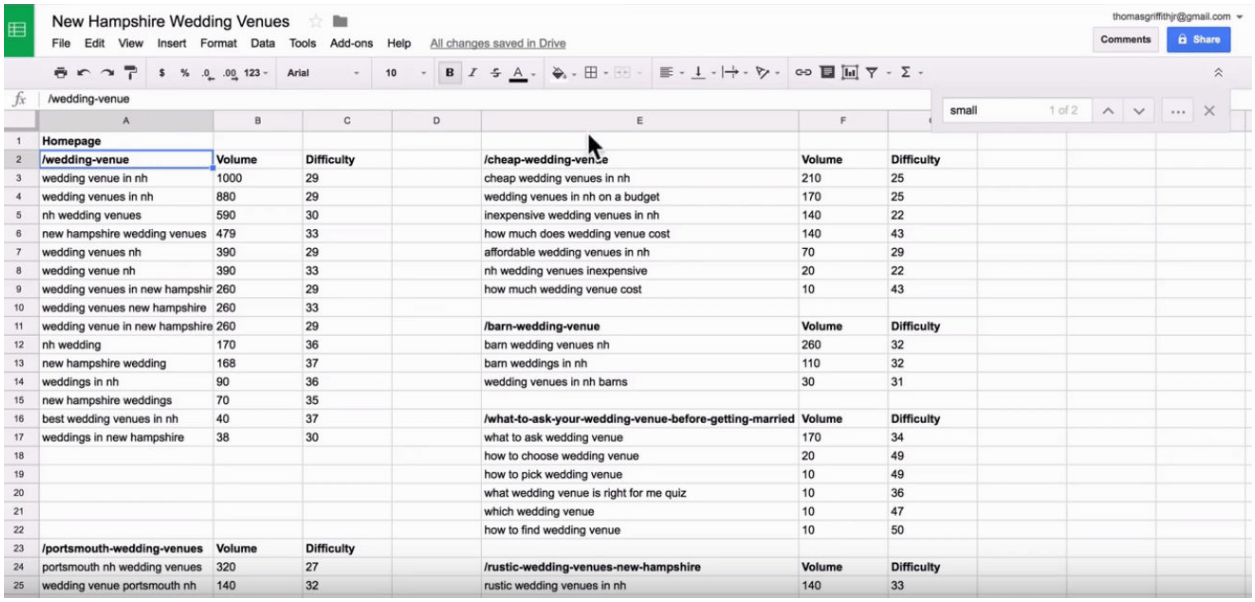
Keyword	Search Volume	SEO Difficulty
new england wedding venues	390	37
wedding venue nh	390	33
portsmouth nh wedding venues	320	27
wedding venues in new hampshire	260	29
wedding venues new hampshire	260	33
barn wedding venues nh	260	32
wedding venue in new hampshire	260	29
cheap wedding venues in nh	210	25
nh wedding	170	36
wedding venues in nh on a budget	170	25
what to ask wedding venue	170	34
new hampshire wedding	168	37
inexpensive wedding venues in nh	140	22
how much does wedding venue cost	140	43
wedding venue portsmouth nh	140	32
rustic wedding venues in nh	140	33
wedding venues portsmouth nh	140	30
unique wedding venues in nh	110	28
barn weddings in nh	110	32

/wedding-venue	Volume	Difficulty
wedding venue in nh	1000	29
wedding venues in nh	880	29
nh wedding venues	590	30
new hampshire wedd	479	33
wedding venues nh	390	29

9. You might find that some keywords don’t fit into any category. Pull these in an “Outlier” bucket. You can use it for blog topic ideas, or you can continue your keyword research by re-entering each of them into the KWFinder and starting the same process all over again. Yes, *again*. :)

10. To make it easier, use different background colors for each of the buckets you create in your spreadsheet.

11. Once you are done organizing all keywords in different buckets, remove all empty columns and pull the buckets together in the same columns. Make sure they are delimited (you can simply leave a few empty rows between the buckets).



New Hampshire Wedding Venues

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1	Homepage						
2	/wedding-venue	Volume	Difficulty		/cheap-wedding-venue	Volume	Difficulty
3	wedding venue in nh	1000	29		cheap wedding venues in nh	210	25
4	wedding venues in nh	880	29		wedding venues in nh on a budget	170	25
5	nh wedding venues	590	30		inexpensive wedding venues in nh	140	22
6	new hampshire wedding venues	479	33		how much does wedding venue cost	140	43
7	wedding venues nh	390	29		affordable wedding venues in nh	70	29
8	wedding venue nh	390	33		nh wedding venues inexpensive	20	22
9	wedding venues in new hampshir	260	29		how much wedding venue cost	10	43
10	wedding venues new hampshire	260	33				
11	wedding venue in new hampshire	260	29		/barn-wedding-venue	Volume	Difficulty
12	nh wedding	170	36		barn wedding venues nh	260	32
13	new hampshire wedding	168	37		barn weddings in nh	110	32
14	weddings in nh	90	36		wedding venues in nh barns	30	31
15	new hampshire weddings	70	35				
16	best wedding venues in nh	40	37		/what-to-ask-your-wedding-venue-before-getting-married	Volume	Difficulty
17	weddings in new hampshire	38	30		what to ask wedding venue	170	34
18					how to choose wedding venue	20	49
19					how to pick wedding venue	10	49
20					what wedding venue is right for me quiz	10	36
21					which wedding venue	10	47
22					how to find wedding venue	10	50
23	/portsmouth-wedding-venues	Volume	Difficulty				
24	portsmouth nh wedding venues	320	27		/rustic-wedding-venues-new-hampshire	Volume	Difficulty
25	wedding venue portsmouth nh	140	32		rustic wedding venues in nh	140	33

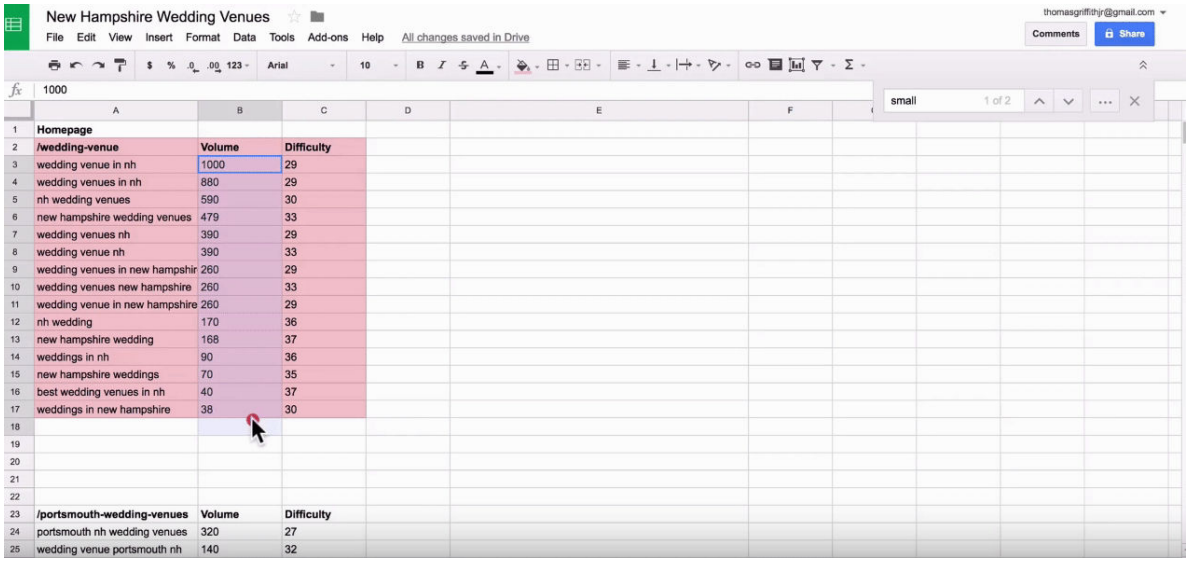
12. These buckets will constitute the foundation of your website. You may not be able to include all of them, but they will give you a very good idea of what your site needs to look like and what keywords to use when optimizing each of its pages.

Use your keyword map to make business decisions

Once you are done with your keyword research and mapping, you can stop there and move on to actually using these on your website. However, if you want to push things even further and reap all the benefits of your hard work, you could use your keyword buckets to make business calculations (and take decisions based on them).

From the total monthly volume of visitors on your website to a very broad idea of the revenue your business could generate, there's a lot you can do with each of the buckets you have just created. Here are some of the steps to take if you want to learn more about your potential market and the user intent you should focus on the most:

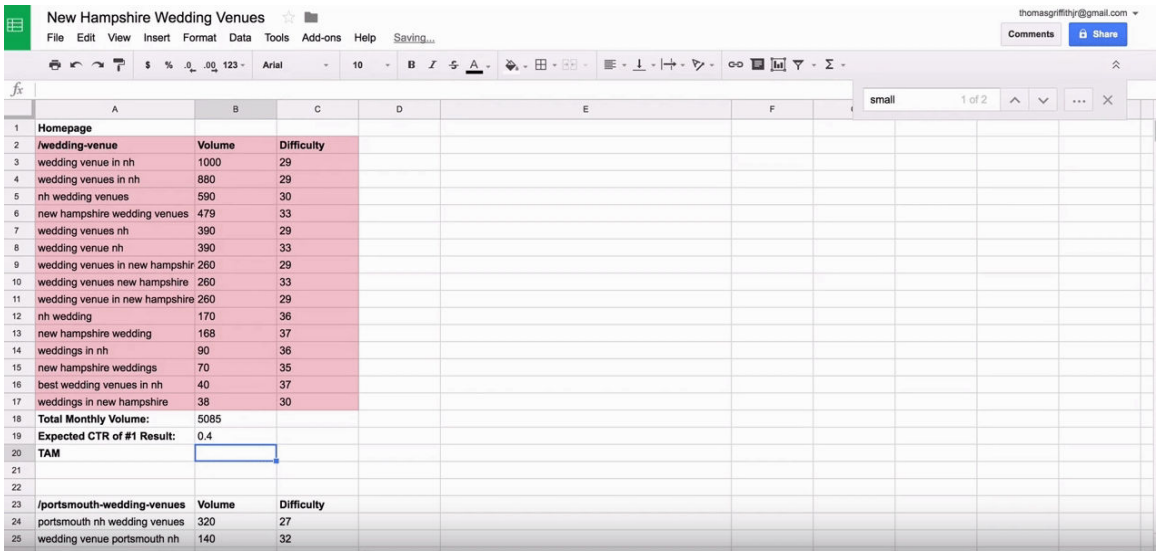
1. First, create a row for "Total Monthly Volume". Select the cell where you want your total monthly searches to be displayed, go to the "Functions" feature of Google Sheets, select "SUM", then select the cells you want to add up. The spreadsheet tool will automatically display the sum.



	A	B	C
1	Homepage		
2	/wedding-venue	Volume	Difficulty
3	wedding venue in nh	1000	29
4	wedding venues in nh	880	29
5	nh wedding venues	590	30
6	new hampshire wedding venues	479	33
7	wedding venues nh	390	29
8	wedding venue nh	390	33
9	wedding venues in new hampshir	260	29
10	wedding venues new hampshire	260	33
11	wedding venue in new hampshire	260	29
12	nh wedding	170	36
13	new hampshire wedding	168	37
14	weddings in nh	90	36
15	new hampshire weddings	70	35
16	best wedding venues in nh	40	37
17	weddings in new hampshire	38	30
18			
19			
20			
21			
22			
23	/portsmouth-wedding-venues	Volume	Difficulty
24	portsmouth nh wedding venues	320	27
25	wedding venue portsmouth nh	140	32

2. Secondly, create a row for "Expected CTR of #1 Result" (where "CTR" means "Click-Through-Ratio"). This is usually between 35% and 40%, but for the purpose of this example, we will use 40% ("0.4" in the spreadsheet).

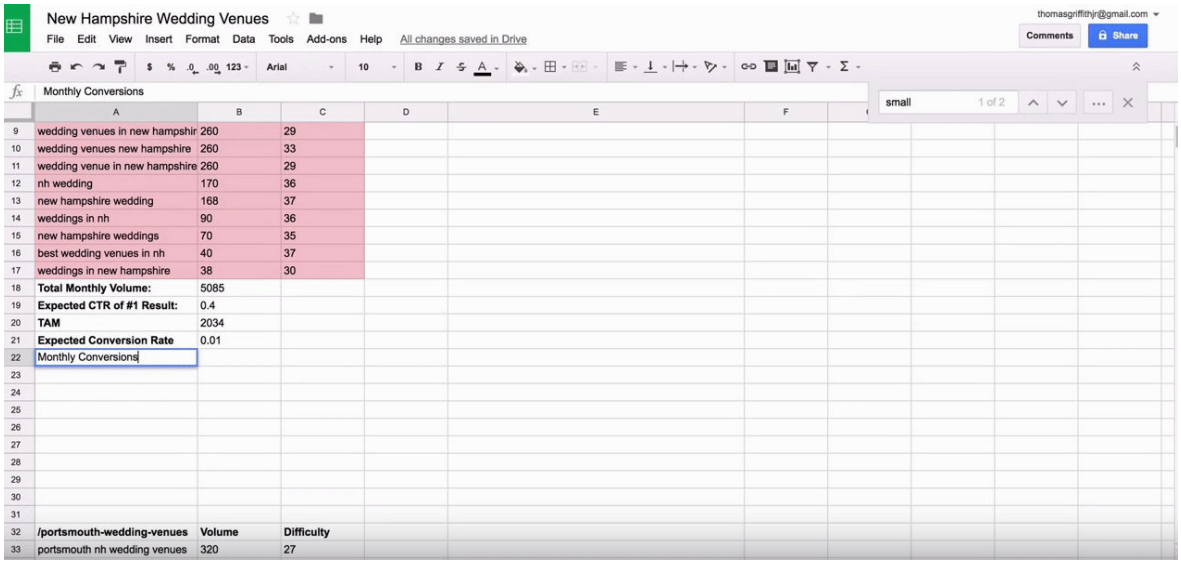
3. Third, create a row for "TAM" (Total Addressable Market). This is the "Total Monthly Volume" of the bucket or category, multiplied by "Expected CTR of #1 Result". To calculate, type "=", followed by the cell representing the "Total Monthly Volume" (B18, in our case), then "*", then the cell representing the "TAM" (B19, in our case). In our example, the equation will look similar to this: "=B18*B19".



	A	B	C	D	E	F
1	**Homepage**					
2	**/wedding-venue**	**Volume**	**Difficulty**			
3	wedding venue in nh	1000	29			
4	wedding venues in nh	880	29			
5	nh wedding venues	590	30			
6	new hampshire wedding venues	479	33			
7	wedding venues nh	390	29			
8	wedding venue nh	390	33			
9	wedding venues in new hampshir	260	29			
10	wedding venues new hampshire	260	33			
11	wedding venue in new hampshire	260	29			
12	nh wedding	170	36			
13	new hampshire wedding	168	37			
14	weddings in nh	90	36			
15	new hampshire weddings	70	35			
16	best wedding venues in nh	40	37			
17	weddings in new hampshire	38	30			
18	**Total Monthly Volume:**	5085				
19	**Expected CTR of #1 Result:**	0.4				
20	**TAM**					
21						
22						
23	**/portsmouth-wedding-venues**	**Volume**	**Difficulty**			
24	portsmouth nh wedding venues	320	27			
25	wedding venue portsmouth nh	140	32			

4. Enter another row, for “Expected Conversion Rate”. If you already know the conversion rate of your pages, use it for this row as a first approximation. If you don’t know the conversion rate, you can use a rough estimate of the expected conversion rate. In this example, we used a 1% (“0.01” in the spreadsheet) - but keep in mind this will vary a lot from one business to the other.

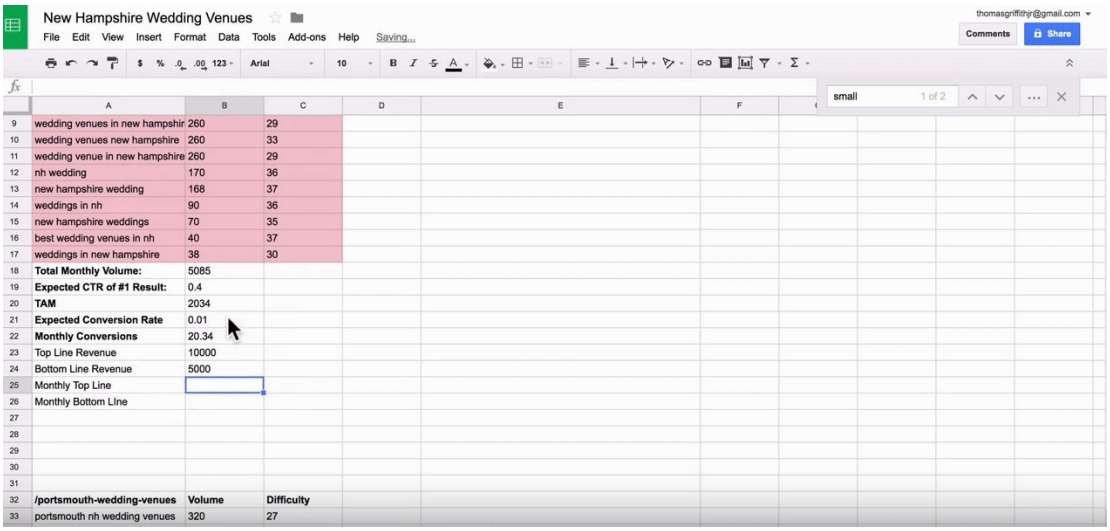
5. Add another row for “Total Monthly Conversions” and use the same principle as you did when you calculated the “Total Monthly Volume” (multiply “TAM” by the “Expected Conversion Rate”).



	A	B	C	D	E	F
9	wedding venues in new hampshir	260	29			
10	wedding venues new hampshire	260	33			
11	wedding venue in new hampshire	260	29			
12	nh wedding	170	36			
13	new hampshire wedding	168	37			
14	weddings in nh	90	36			
15	new hampshire weddings	70	35			
16	best wedding venues in nh	40	37			
17	weddings in new hampshire	38	30			
18	**Total Monthly Volume:**	5085				
19	**Expected CTR of #1 Result:**	0.4				
20	**TAM**	2034				
21	**Expected Conversion Rate**	0.01				
22	Monthly Conversions					
23						
24						
25						
26						
27						
28						
29						
30						
31						
32	**/portsmouth-wedding-venues**	**Volume**	**Difficulty**			
33	portsmouth nh wedding venues	320	27			

6. Enter another row for “Top Line Revenue” (gross revenue you would make with each conversion) and another one for “Bottom Line Revenue” (net revenue you would make with each conversion). These numbers vary a lot from one business to another, but for the purpose of our example, we used $10,000 for Top Line and $5,000 for Bottom Line.

7. Create two new rows, one for the “Monthly Top Line” and one for the “Monthly Bottom Line” and calculate them by multiplying “Monthly Conversions” with the “Top Line Revenue”, respectively with the “Bottom Line Revenue”.



8. Keep in mind: these calculations depend on a lot of variables (for starters, the average monthly searches, which could be off - or your conversion rate, which may vary a lot from one business to another, and one location to another). So, this is just back-of-the-envelope valuation - but it can at least give you an idea on what you could do with a properly optimized website.

You’re (never) done!

We said this from the start: doing keyword research and mapping them is *not* a difficult task. But it definitely *is* time-consuming. Be thorough and unforgiving. Do it until your

eyes bleed, until your friends don't recognize you anymore, until your kids have gone off to college and you didn't even notice.

It's a never-ending process, to be honest - precisely because there will always be opportunities in search. Searcher intents change. Trends change. Keywords change as well. Thus, your SEO strategy should adapt to the new waves too - and this is why it is crucial that you go through the same research and mapping process again, on a recurrent basis, with the same amount of relentlessness and determination.