

## Google Analytics Health Check

(Written in Sept 2013)

### Summary

Google Analytics (GA) is a free tool for recording information about visitors and actions on your website or mobile application. Once the Google Analytics 'tracking code' has been added to your website, you can learn more about where your visitors came from and what they do on your site.

Following these steps will help you get more accurate and more useful analytics information by ensuring that Google Analytics is set up correctly and will give you a basic understanding of how Analytics works. This guide is tailored for cultural institutions.

### Key learning outcomes

By consulting this resource you will be able to review and optimise key settings in your Google Analytics (GA) account. Specifically, you will learn how to:

- Check that you have the latest version of the GA code installed
- Create a backup copy of your GA site View (Profile)
- Filter out visits from your organisation ('internal traffic')
- Reduce duplicate data by removing GA's case sensitivity
- Group webmail referrers together
- Track searches on your site
- Understand which basic segments you should add
- Track marketing and social media campaigns
- Track downloads and outbound links from your site.

### Why is this important?

Google Analytics can be a powerful tool for understanding how customers and audiences interact with your website. It can help you understand how they find you, when they leave your site and where your site could perform better.

However, to do this as effectively as possible, the default settings for Google Analytics need some optimisation.

This Health Check resource will walk you through how to get your organisation's Google Analytics account optimised accordingly.

### Who is this resource for?

This resource is for staff that work on websites, or in public engagement or marketing. It does not assume any technical skills.

You will need a modern web browser and access to the Google account linked to your organisation's GA profile. GA accounts have different levels of access. You will require Edit access to follow this Health Check. Find out more about user permissions at: <https://support.google.com/analytics/answer/2884495?hl=en>

## Glossary of terms

Google uses a lot of jargon. Here's a guide to some key concepts.

Each **Account** (identified by an email linked to a Google account, e.g. yourorganisation@gmail.com) can be linked to any number of Properties, which can include websites or mobile apps. Each property has a specific snippet of **tracking code** that includes a unique number. This unique number links the site ('Property') to an account so you can see analytics data based on visits to that site. You can add other **Users** to an account via their Google account.

Each property can have several **Views** (these used to be called Profiles). **Filters** are powerful tools for modifying and limiting the traffic available in a View so that you can work with a subset of data. Filters are applied to Views and are an excellent way of shaping different Views to meet consistent needs, such as excluding internal traffic. Filters only start collecting data from the time they are created so you may need to consult your old and new Views for some reports.

**Segments** are another way of looking at a subset of data, and unlike filters, segments can be applied retrospectively. They are a powerful tool for looking at subsets of visitors within the wider analytics interface and focusing on analytics that relate directly to your core mission.

**Custom Campaigns** are a way of tagging links to your site so you can see which combinations of location and type of campaign (e.g. social media, newsletter, search) send you the most useful traffic.

See also the (unofficial) *Google Analytics Glossary of Terms* for terms like 'bounce rate', 'visits', 'goals', 'funnels' and 'conversions':

<http://www.epower.com/google-analytics-glossary.php>

## How to check the version of Google Analytics you have installed

Google Analytics uses a short piece of text (in JavaScript, if you want to get technical about it) installed on every page of your website to link traffic to your site to a specific GA account.

The steps below will help you check that your code is working correctly and that you are using the latest version of the tracking code:

1. Log into Google Analytics at [www.google.com/analytics](http://www.google.com/analytics)
2. Click on Admin on the top right-hand side
3. Make sure you're in the right Account and Property
4. Click on Tracking Info in the middle column

The screenshot shows the Google Analytics Admin interface for the account 'MCG'. The top navigation bar includes 'Reporting', 'Customization', 'Admin', and 'Help'. The main content area is divided into three columns: ACCOUNT, PROPERTY, and VIEW (PROFILE). The ACCOUNT column shows 'MCG' selected with options for Account Settings, User Management, AdWords Linking, and AdSense Linking. The PROPERTY column shows 'http://www.museumscomputergr...' selected with options for Property Settings, User Management, Tracking Info, and Remarketing. The VIEW (PROFILE) column shows 'www.museumscomputergroup.or...' selected with options for View Settings, User Management, Goals, and Filters.

5. You should see a message similar to that below, confirming the Status 'Receiving Data'.

The screenshot shows the Google Analytics Tracking Info page for the property 'http://www.museumscom...'. The Tracking ID is 'UA-488521-3' and the status is 'Receiving Data'. The page is divided into two main sections: 'Website tracking' and 'This is your tracking code. Copy and paste it into the code of every page you want to track.' The 'Website tracking' section includes options for 'Subdomains of museumscomputergroup', 'Multiple top-level domains of museumscomputergroup', 'Display Advertiser Support', and 'Custom campaign tags', all of which are currently turned off. The 'This is your tracking code' section contains a text area with the following JavaScript code:

```
<script type="text/javascript">
var _gaq = _gaq || [];
_gaq.push(['_setAccount', 'UA-488521-3']);
_gaq.push(['_trackPageview']);

(function() {
var ga = document.createElement('script'); ga.type = 'text/javascript'; ga.async = true;
ga.src = ('https:' == document.location.protocol ? 'https://ssl' : 'http://www') + 'google-analytics.com/ga.js';
var s = document.getElementsByTagName('script')[0]; s.parentNode.insertBefore(ga, s);
})();
</script>
```

6. If it doesn't say 'Status: Receiving Data' then follow the steps to *Verify your web tracking setup* at <https://support.google.com/analytics/answer/1008083>

*Tip: ensure the Google account linked to your Analytics belongs to your organisation - not an agency or employee account.*

If you've used GA for a while, you may wish to check that your site has the latest version of the tracking code, as displayed on the lower half of the screenshot above. To check your tracking code:

1. Go to a sample page on your website.
2. Follow your browser's instructions to 'view source' and search in the page code for '\_gaq' (without the quote marks). If you see that - you have the right version. You can further verify it by comparing it to the tracking code displayed in Step 5 above.
3. If you can't find it, look for the older 'gaJsHost'. If you see that instead, you should update your code to the newer version.

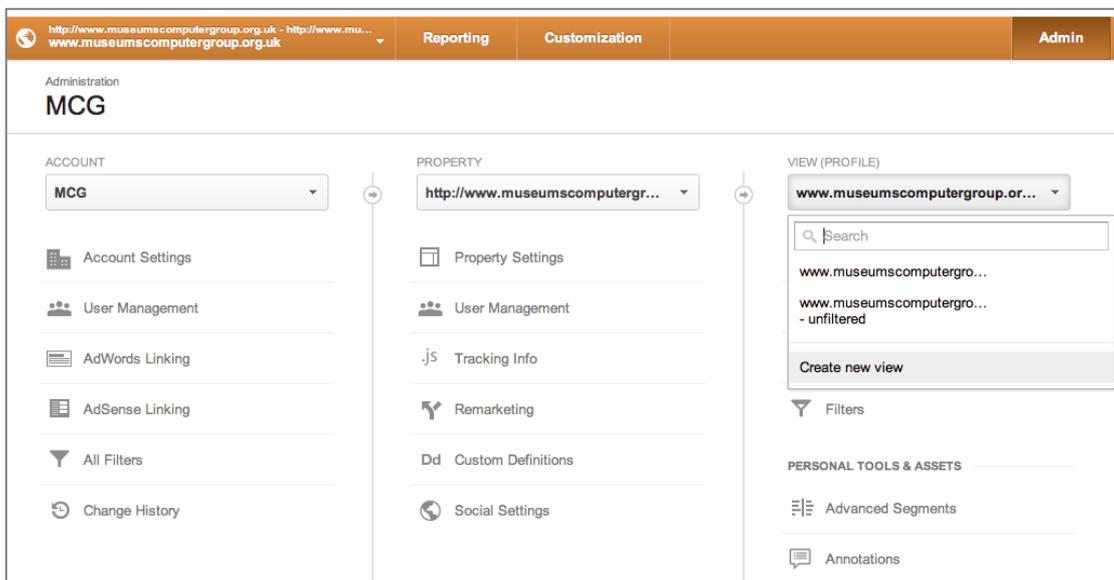
*Tip: a newer version of GA called 'Universal Analytics' is under development. You can find out more at*

[https://support.google.com/analytics/answer/2790010?hl=en&ref\\_topic=2790009](https://support.google.com/analytics/answer/2790010?hl=en&ref_topic=2790009)

## How to create a clean copy of your View

Do this before doing anything else! Think of it as creating a backup of your View.

1. Go to the Admin section. (Via the Admin button on the right-hand side when you're logged into GA).
2. Check that you are in the right 'Property' (or site) of the right 'Account'.
3. In the 'View (Profile)' section on the right-hand side of the Admin screen, click on the button showing the current View, and click 'Create new view' in the drop-down menu.
4. On the 'New Reporting View', give your View a descriptive name e.g. '[your URL] - filtered' and set the Reporting Time Zone to match your local time zone.



Now you've created a new View, you can apply some basic filters to it. Apply the filters in the order listed below.

## How to filter out visits from your organisation ('internal traffic')

You'll get more accurate and informative results from GA when you exclude visits from your own organisation. Creating a filter that excludes internal traffic also reduces the chance of accidentally over-stating site usage. GA offers predefined filters for excluding traffic from specific domains or IP addresses.

IP addresses can change at the whim of your internet service provider, so it's better to use your network name if you can. Find out the relevant service provider name before you start. If you don't have IT support, you may be able to find it in GA by going to Reporting / Audience / Technology / Network and choosing 'Network Domain' as a Secondary Dimension.

1. Go to the Admin section
2. Make sure you've selected your new View in right-hand section of the Admin screen.
3. Click on Filters
4. Click on '+ New Filter'
5. If you have already created filters for other Views, you can choose to 'Apply existing Filter'. If not, just leave 'Create new Filter' selected.

### Choose method to apply filter to view

Create new Filter  
 Apply existing Filter

### Filter Information

Filter Name

Filter Type  Predefined filter  Custom filter

Exclude  
 Include  
 Lowercase  
 Uppercase  
 Search and Replace  
 Advanced

Filter Field

Filter Pattern

Case Sensitive  Yes  No

[? Filter Help: Exclude > ISP Organization](#)

6. Fill in the fields as follows:
  - Filter Name: Filter own institution
  - Filter Type: Custom filter
  - (select "Exclude")
  - Case sensitive: No
7. If you are using your network name:
  - Filter Field: Audience/Users / ISP Organization
  - Filter Pattern: YOUR HOST NAME

Audience/Users
Browser
Browser Version
Browser Size
Operating System Platform
Operating System Version
Language Settings
Screen Resolution
Screen Colors
Java Enabled?
Flash version
Connection Speed
Type
<b>ISP Organization</b>
ISP Domain
IP Address
IP Version

8. If you are using your IP address:
  - Filter Field: Audience/Users / IP Address
  - Filter Pattern: YOUR IP ADDRESS
  - For more information on excluding IP addresses, check *Exclude internal traffic*  
[https://support.google.com/analytics/answer/1034840?hl=en&ref to pic=1034830](https://support.google.com/analytics/answer/1034840?hl=en&ref_to_pic=1034830)

9. Click Save

*Tips:*

- *If your venue provides public kiosks or interactives that access your site, think about how to include or exclude these as appropriate*
- *If it's not possible to exclude only internal traffic (e.g. you are part of a local authority network or your network name contains something generic like 'nationaltheatre'), it's better not to risk excluding external traffic*
- *If your organisation changes internet service providers or domain names (perhaps for an office move or a re-branding), you will need to review the 'internal traffic' filters*
- *If you need to find your IP address, asking a search engine 'what's my IP address' will usually give you the information directly.*

## How to filter case insensitivity

By default, GA is 'case sensitive'. It sees a request for Whats-On.HTML as being different to whats-on.html and therefore creates duplicate data for each variation it thinks it sees. By forcing all URLs to lowercase, GA will stop seeing false duplicates.

1. As above, click '+ New Filter'
2. Fill in the fields as follows:
  - Filter Name: Force URI case to lower
  - Filter Type: Custom filter
  - Select: "Lowercase"
  - Filter Field: Request URI
  - Click Save

### Choose method to apply filter to view

Create new Filter  
 Apply existing Filter

### Filter Information

Filter Name

Filter Type  Predefined filter  Custom filter

Exclude  
 Include  
 Lowercase  
 Uppercase  
 Search and Replace  
 Advanced

Filter Field

[? Filter Help: Lowercase > Request URI](#)

## How to group webmail referrers together

This will help you see traffic visiting your websites from links in emails, in a unified way rather than broken down per web mail provider which becomes unnecessarily confusing

Follow the instructions at *Handling Email Referrals in Google Analytics*

[http://www.roirevolution.com/blog/2011/01/handling\\_email\\_referrals\\_in\\_google\\_analytics.php](http://www.roirevolution.com/blog/2011/01/handling_email_referrals_in_google_analytics.php) to group webmail referrers together.

*Tip: this will pick up on any site with 'mail' in the URL, so if e.g. the Daily Mail website is a key referrer for you, this would also be incorrectly picked up and grouped together as webmail traffic. Be aware if this could be happening to you and exclude for this source from the group.*

## How to set up and configure Site Search

Being able to view search terms people have used on your website is a great way to understand what content people are expecting to find but can't. However this functionality in GA is not switched on by default.

Understanding search terms can guide plans to create content or to review the navigation and structure of your site, so update your settings to capture this information.

Before you begin, you will need to know the 'search parameters' for your site. These are parts of a URL that contain information about search terms used.

1. Search for something through your website search form.
2. Look at the URL for the results page. Look for the part just before your search term. It may look something like '?q=keyword' e.g. in the example below, the search parameter is 's':  
<http://museumscomputergroup.org.uk/?s=museum+technology+conferences...>
3. Now you have your parameter, follow the steps for *Setting up Site Search for a view* at <https://support.google.com/analytics/answer/1012264>
4. If there's nothing like that in the URL, you may need to follow the steps at *Setting Up Site Search for POST-Based Search Engines* <https://support.google.com/analytics/answer/1012264>

## How to set up basic segments

For more information on how to create segments, see the resource within this Audience Finder Guide that relates to Google Analytics Segments . You should consider setting up basic segments within your GA account so you can examine the web behaviours of different groupings of audience. Common basic segments include:

- Segments for traffic from key locations, whether that's your city, local region or country
- Segments for traffic from important social media referrers and campaigns
- Segments for visits referred from searches for your brand name
- Segments for visitors who purchased from your online shop or ticketing service

## Campaign tracking

Implement 'custom campaigns' to track visitors from email newsletters and other sources so you can measure the effectiveness of your marketing and outreach efforts. Work with marketing staff to create campaign URLs for any links they're promoting in email, social media, etc. Find out more:

- *About Custom Campaigns*  
<https://support.google.com/analytics/answer/1033863?hl=en>
- *URL builder*  
<https://support.google.com/analytics/answer/1033867?hl=en>
- *Best Practices for creating Custom Campaigns*  
<https://support.google.com/analytics/answer/1037445>

## How to track downloads and links from your site

Whatever downloadable media you provide - whether brochures, education packs, donation forms, maps, etc - you can add special code to measure their effectiveness. You can also track links to ecommerce, ticketing or partner sites.

Check the GA Help site for the latest advice on:

- *Tracking Download links (PDF, AVI, WMV)*  
<https://support.google.com/analytics/answer/1136922?hl=en>
- *Outbound links*  
<https://support.google.com/analytics/answer/1136920?hl=en>
- *Additional kinds of tracking*  
<https://support.google.com/analytics/answer/1012044?hl=en>

## Key issues

Google are actively developing their Analytics product, adding new features and re-organising the Analytics screens and even sometimes using new versions of their tracking code. As a result, these instructions may not exactly match current Analytics interfaces.

It is important to understand the limits of analytics: they are great at telling you 'what' but cannot tell you 'why'. You will need to use other methods to find out whether a person spent a long time viewing a number of pages because they were happily exploring your content or because they couldn't find the information they were looking for.

## Other resources/references to consult

For more on creating and applying segments to answer more specific questions about your site's visitors, check the guide to Google Analytics Segments.

*Set up Ecommerce tracking*

<https://support.google.com/analytics/answer/1009612?hl=en>

*Google's Analytics Help pages* <https://support.google.com/analytics/>

*Google Analytics IQ Lessons* <http://www.google.com/analytics/iq.html>

*Five Questions To Ask of Your Site Search Data*

[https://support.google.com/analytics/answer/1032402?hl=en&ref\\_topic=1031951](https://support.google.com/analytics/answer/1032402?hl=en&ref_topic=1031951)