



Photo: Stocksnap

I often hear these questions in the Google Analytics courses I teach, “Why do I get ‘Not Set’ in my analytics and how do I fix it?”

Below are several reasons why you might get this. Plus, how to remedy it.

Why does the ‘not set’ data reference appear in my Google analytics reports?

It is frustrating when you look at your website analytics and there is a row with a lot of data, but the source says ‘Not Set.’ That happens for a number of reasons, including one or more of these:

1. Settings in the analytics account are either set incorrectly or not at all;
2. Links shared from the site do not have the URL parameters filled in;
3. AdWords (now Ads) is not configured correctly in the account;
4. Privacy settings for search engines that don’t pass along organic keyword information (e.g., Facebook, or some international sites);
5. An IP address or Server IP may not be shared (in Geo location reports);
6. In goal reports, if all actions by the user are not completed before the goal is completed, additional steps will be set as not set;
7. The title tag (e.g., <title>) on webpages may not be set or is incorrectly defined. This impacts the Site Content > All Pages report; and
8. Expired, broken, or incorrectly implemented sessions will cause the Site Content > Landing Pages to be ‘not set.’

How to fix a 'not set' data reference.

There are a few things that could be done to help you see what's happening with the Not Sets, including using URL builders, like [Google's](#) or [Raven's](#) URL builders, to define link parameters, which aid in several reporting metrics, such as most of the data under the Acquisition reporting area.

Enable Ecommerce Tracking

Before you do anything else, even if you don't sell products on your website, change the ecommerce settings. Here's how.

1. Login to the analytics account
2. Go to Admin (bottom/left corner)
3. In the All Website View data column (usually the third column), click on Ecommerce Settings
4. Turn Enable ECommerce on
5. Turn Enable Enhanced Ecommerce Reporting on
6. Click Save.

Keyword Tracking

In order to track keywords that were used to find your site or are used within your site's search, update the search field for keywords, terms, searches, and queries. Here's how.

1. Login to the analytics account
2. Go to Admin (bottom/left corner)
3. Click View Settings (third column)
4. Scroll down to Site Search Tracking, and turn it on.
 - In the Query Parameter Field, enter this exactly as written (no spaces) search,query,keyword,term
 - Check the Strip query parameters out of URL box
5. Click Save.

Expired/Broken/Misconfigured Landing Page Data

A simple fix here is to change the sessions timeout timeframe. If your site has a lot of information on its pages, it may take someone more than the defaulted 30 minutes to get through it. Or, if someone get interrupted while completing a task on your site, and the timeframe is set too short, the page will get a not set trigger. Here's how you remedy that.

1. Login to the analytics account
2. Go to Admin (bottom/left corner)
3. In the Property column, click Tracking Info (a list should appear), choose Session Settings
4. Change the timeout sessions time to 2 hours
5. Click Apply

Setting URL Parameters

In some cases, the URL parameters may be missing from posts. What that means is the people sharing content on social, in email, print materials, etc., basically anything with a link, are not completing the required fields in the URL builder tool.

Complete the Website URL, Campaign Source, Medium, and Campaign Name.

If someone is using a scheduling tool, like Hootsuite, they must add the URL tracking parameters. Here's how.

1. When adding a URL in Hootsuite, click the Add Tracking button (before shortening the URL).
2. Click Customize
3. Under the Tracking item, choose Google Analytics
4. Complete the Link, Source, Medium, and Campaign fields
 1. Example: [link from my domain], Blog, Twitter, How-to-be-an-amazing-marketer
5. Click Apply
6. Then click Shorten with Ow.ly

Even if you're not using a social media scheduling tool, this practice is extremely helpful in identifying what's working and what's not working on your site. Use some form of a URL shortener (bit.ly, ow.ly, or another form) to reduce the character count for the lengthy URL that URL building tools generate.

Additional Resources

There are dozens—maybe hundreds—of metrics you can track within Google Analytics. Here are some resources to help you set up the tracking and reports.

- [12 Awesome Custom Google Analytics Reports Created by the Experts](#)
- [7 essential Google Analytics reports every marketer must know](#)

- [How to Create a Goal in Google Analytics to Track Conversions](#)
- [4 Google Analytics Goal Types That Are Critical To Your Business](#)
- [How to Create a Google Analytics Social Media Report](#)
- [Substantiating Leads with Analytics](#)