JANUARY 09, 2023 BY KEVIN MILNES

A Complete Google Analytics 4 Guide

Share: (G) (f) (◉)

Everything you need to know about Google Analytics 4, but were afraid to ask.

As you may know, Universal Analytics (UA) will cease collecting data soon.

Don't panic!

You have up to 1st July 2023 to switch to Google Analytics 4. After this deadline, reports from the old version will stay active, but it's unlikely they'll work after January 2024. This article will shed more light on what Google Analytics 4 is, how it works, and the importance of upgrading as soon as possible, among other things.

What is Google Analytics 4?

Google Analytics 4 is also known as GA4. It's Google's new service designed to measure how users interact with your apps and websites. It'll leverage machine learning and AI to help you better understand the customer journey.

Instead of using traffic sessions like its predecessor, it will use events to better understand the customer's journey across multiple platforms.

It will show important details like:

- Engagement
- Retention
- Monetisation

Is GA4 GDPR Compliant?

It's worth noting that GA4 will comply with GDPR and CCPA laws, giving clients more privacy. However, as with everything relating to data privacy, you need to make sure that how you use GA4 is also compliant.

Is Google Analytics 4 Available Now?

Yes, it is.

GA4 is formerly known as 'App+Web' and has been around since 2020. After graduating from its beta version, Google renamed it to its current name.

Will Google Analytics 4 be Free?

Google Analytics is a free property type for small businesses. Note that just like with Google Universal Analytics, its GA4 Standard package will allow you to sign up for multiple GA4 accounts for free.

The free plan will be adequate for most businesses unless your website processes astronomical amounts of data. In that case, you might need GA4 360.

360 will also come with enterprise-level support and service-level agreements.

However, note that GA4 can be very costly, and you should only consider it if the free version doesn't serve you well. Therefore, it'll be better first to try out the standard plan and only upgrade if it isn't suitable for collecting your data.

How is Google Analytics 4 Different?

GA4 differs from Universal Analytics in the following ways:

App Tracking

UA tracks website and app traffic separately. GA4 combines web and app data in one place using a new tool called Google Analytics Firebase. This will make checking reports more convenient.

Hit Types

Universal Analytics captures hit types (interactions) like page views, transactions, and social interactions without giving further information about them.

GA4 will take this up a notch by giving you more information about each visit. For instance, instead of just showing how many page views you had, it will show details like page title, user location and whether they opted for cookies.

Session Calculations

GA4 will also time out sessions after 30 minutes of inactivity, like UA. However, there will be a critical difference between the services.

While UA only processes sessions 4 hours after the day closes, GA4 will continue processing them way after that, for up to 72 hours.

So if a user loses or abandons a session and gets back to it after 56 hours, GA4 will still process it, while UA won't.

Big Query Exports

Unlike UA, GA4 will not limit Big Query exports - to premium accounts. In other words, GA4 will come with a free connection to BigQuery, allowing both GA4 Standard and GA4 360 users to access raw data.

Bounce and Engagement Rates

Google Analytics 4 will track engagement metrics much more accurately than UA.

In addition, instead of using bounce rates to show sessions that users didn't engage with, GA4 will use engagement sessions to gauge how users interact with your site.

Here are some engagement metrics you can expect to see from GA4:

- Engagement Rate
- Engagement Sessions
- Engagement Session Per User

What types of Analysis Can I do in Google Analytics 4?

- Life Cycle Reporting - This will provide default reports to help you understand the customer's journey from acquisition to retention.
- Funnel Analysis - Funnel Exploration will reveal whether the journey a user takes to complete a task is successful or not.
- Path Analysis - Path Analysis will show how new users navigate your site from the home page and the issues they might encounter.
- Segment Overlap - This will enable you to compare segments of up to 3 users.
- Cohort Analysis - This will show the behaviour of users that share the same attributes
- User Lifetime - User Lifetime will show a user's behaviour (purchase or last purchase date) over time.
- Predictive audiences and metrics - This forecast will show what actions will likely take in the future.

Will My Existing Custom Reports and Dashboard Work With Google Analytics 4?

Unfortunately, no.

Your existing custom reports and dashboards will not work with the new property as it has a different way of calculating and analysing metrics. As such, you will need to create them from scratch.

Will My existing Custom Segments Work With Google Analytics 4?

You'll also need to create new custom segments, as they won't work with GA4.

How do I Know if My Website Is Using Google Analytics 4 or Universal Analytics?

This will be very easy to test.

UA will display a blue notification at the top with this message: "Universal Analytics will no longer process new data in standard properties beginning July 1, 2023."

Your property ID will also help you to differentiate between multiple properties.

While UA IDs start with UA followed by numbers, GA4 IDs will only have numbers.

When Should I Switch to Google Analytics 4?

The earlier, the better, since GA4 will no longer collect crucial customer data after 1st July 2023.

How Do You Upgrade to Google Analytics 4?

First things first– reviewing the data you want the property to collect will be paramount.

After that, you'll need to update the tagging. The process can get complex, and an analytics specialist can help you avoid the pitfalls of errors that might occur if you don't have the skills to handle the process expertly.

Does Google Analytics 4 Work With Shopify?

Google Analytics 4 will work with Shopify. However, you must be a Shopify Plus to make the most of this feature right now.

Otherwise, you will be able to manually place the GA4 tags on your site, but it won't be possible to place the new tags to track eCommerce activity on your site.

Note that Shopify has stated on its website that all its users will be able to switch to GA4 by March 2023.

How Long Does It Take To Learn Google Analytics 4?

You'll need a day or two to learn about five topics on GA4, namely:

- Discover the Next Generation of Google Analytics
- Use Google Analytics to Meet Your Business Objectives
- Measure Your Marketing with Google Analytics
- Go Further with Your Google Analytics Data
- Google Analytics Certification

Need Some Assistance Getting Ready for Switch to GA4?

Making a switch to GA4 as soon as possible is paramount so that you can start gathering data. Liberandum Digital, a specialist digital consultancy, can help you prepare in advance if you're stuck on how to do it.

Drum roll, please ......

If you sign up for the GA4 Switch newsletter, we'll give you a free custom report!