

PAINLESS BLOG ANALYTICS

Learn how to use data to improve your blog!

7 Pitfalls to Avoid When Using Google Analytics

When you're analyzing Google Analytics, there are a few things that you need to watch for.

1. Consider Seasonality

My niche is seasonal. I know that in a normal year, traffic starts dropping in May and bottoms out in July. If I didn't know that, I would be singing the blues in July.

But because I've looked at my traffic year-over-year, I know that it'll come back up starting in August.



This can also apply to the days of the week. If you know that Sunday is your highest traffic day and Monday is your lowest, don't compare them.

2. Keep Percentages in Perspective

Which is worse? A 16% drop or a 34% drop? We would probably say the 34% drop, but we would be wrong.

Percentages are important, but you need to look at the raw numbers too. That 16% drop was actually 43,605 sessions while the 34% drop was 39,759.

Default Channel Grouping		Acquisition		
		Users ? ↓	New Users ?	Sessions ?
		3.38% ↑ 305,486 vs 295,500	7.39% ↑ 292,182 vs 272,087	4.32% ↓ 428,202 vs 447,525
Which is worse?				
1. Organic Search				
	Jan 1, 2020 - Jun 30, 2020	163,721 (51.75%)	152,053 (52.04%)	229,308 (53.55%)
	Jan 1, 2019 - Jun 30, 2019	190,214 (62.43%)	175,078 (54.35%)	272,913 (60.98%)
	% Change	-13.93%	-13.15%	-15.98%
2. Direct				
	Jan 1, 2020 - Jun 30, 2020	74,252 (23.41%)	73,747 (25.24%)	82,929 (19.37%)
	Jan 1, 2019 - Jun 30, 2019	34,036 (11.17%)	33,461 (12.30%)	44,071 (9.85%)
	% Change	118.16%	120.40%	88.17%
3. Social				
	Jan 1, 2020 - Jun 30, 2020	55,204 (17.45%)	47,906 (16.40%)	76,881 (17.95%)
	Jan 1, 2019 - Jun 30, 2019	71,538 (23.48%)	57,691 (21.20%)	116,640 (26.06%)
	% Change	-22.83%	-16.96%	-34.09%

Down 43,605 (arrow pointing to the -15.98% change in Organic Search sessions)

Down 39,759 (arrow pointing to the -34.09% change in Social sessions)

3. Google Analytics May Seem Wonky

Don't try to match different types or sources of data, because it isn't always measuring the exact same thing.

For example, your Pinterest clicks probably won't match your Google Analytics clicks from Pinterest.

There are lots of very technical reasons for this, so don't go down the rabbit hole trying to figure out why.

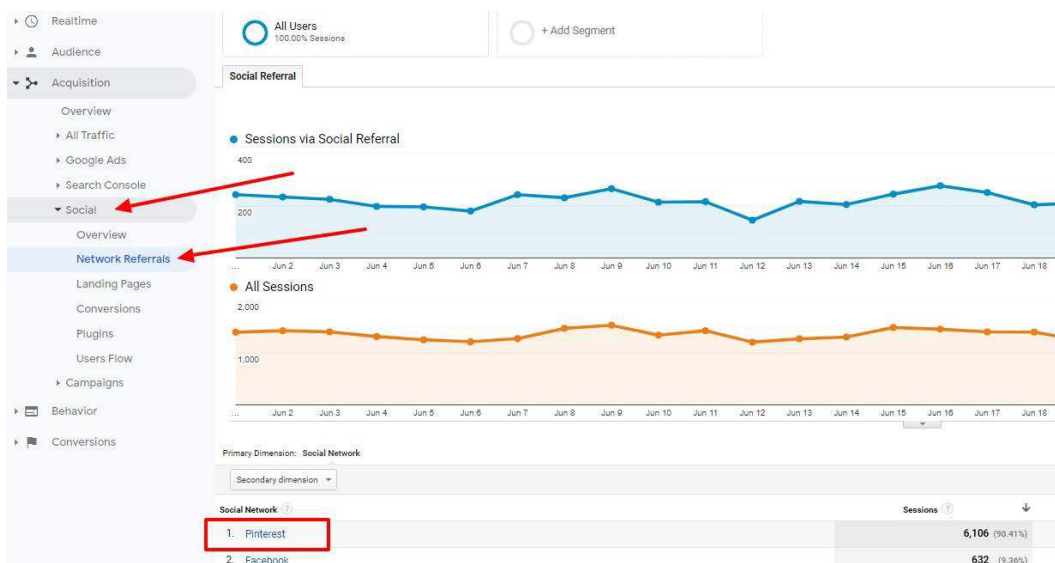
Use Google Analytics as your standard, and don't worry if it doesn't match other data sources.

4. Make Sure All Pinterest Traffic is Included

Depending on how people are using Pinterest, the source/medium can be different. If I only looked at the first Pinterest entry, I would think that I had only gotten 4,200 sessions during this time period. But if I include all of the Pinterest entries, I have 5,900 sessions.

Source / Medium	Acquisition		
	Users	New Users	Sessions
	33,302 % of Total: 100.00% (33,302)	30,526 % of Total: 100.01% (30,523)	40,909 % of Total: 100.00% (40,909)
1. google / organic	15,078 (44.51%)	13,717 (44.94%)	18,999 (46.44%)
2. (direct) / (none)	9,361 (27.64%)	9,147 (29.96%)	10,125 (24.75%)
3. pinterest.com / referral	3,398 (10.03%)	2,795 (9.16%)	4,240 (10.36%)
4. pinterest / social	1,366 (4.03%)	1,208 (3.96%)	1,555 (3.80%)
5. bing / organic	988 (2.92%)	839 (2.75%)	1,218 (2.98%)
6. facebook_page / Cub Scout Ideas	592 (1.75%)	426 (1.40%)	895 (2.19%)
7. email / email	577 (1.70%)	388 (1.27%)	806 (1.97%)
8. yahoo / organic	507 (1.50%)	426 (1.40%)	618 (1.51%)
9. m.facebook.com / referral	483 (1.43%)	451 (1.48%)	504 (1.23%)
10. pushengage / pushnotification	245 (0.72%)	24 (0.08%)	398 (0.97%)
11. duckduckgo / organic	195 (0.58%)	177 (0.58%)	246 (0.60%)
12. digitaltrends.com / referral	142 (0.42%)	138 (0.45%)	161 (0.39%)
13. www.digitaltrends-com.cdn.ampproject.org / referral	61 (0.18%)	59 (0.19%)	74 (0.18%)
14. l.facebook.com / referral	57 (0.17%)	40 (0.13%)	61 (0.15%)
15. classroom.google.com / referral	55 (0.16%)	48 (0.16%)	67 (0.16%)
16. pinterest.ca / referral	54 (0.16%)	50 (0.16%)	60 (0.15%)
17. pinterest.co.uk / referral	43 (0.13%)	37 (0.12%)	47 (0.11%)
18. twitter / CubIdeas	36 (0.11%)	27 (0.09%)	54 (0.13%)

If you want to make sure you have all your Pinterest traffic, go to Acquisition > Social > Network Referrals.



5. A Low Bounce Rate is Bad

This may seem counterintuitive, but it's true for bloggers.

Think about why people come to your site. They either found your post through a Google search or from a social media post.

If they found it through search, they were probably looking for the answer to a specific question. For example, "how do I make cheesecake?" or "what are the Cub Scout ranks?"

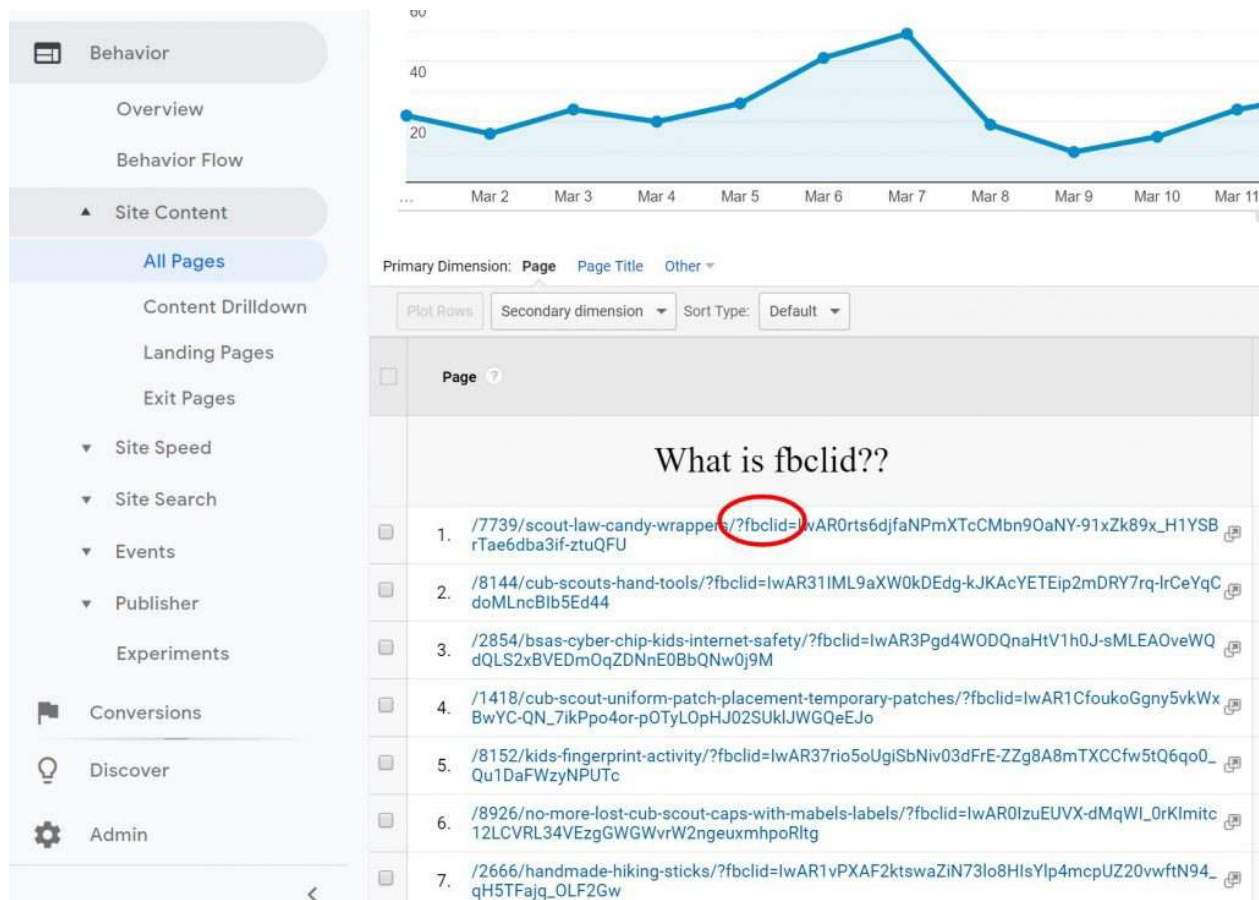
They can probably get their answer by visiting one blog post. They may look around more on your site, but if they don't, that's OK.

In fact, a low bounce rate can be bad for bloggers. It's usually an indication that your Analytics code is installed twice.

A low bounce rate is good for an ecommerce site. It means that people are shopping around, looking at lots of products.

6. Exclude FBCLID Tracking

Have you ever seen URLs that have fbclid in them? That's a tracking code that Facebook adds.



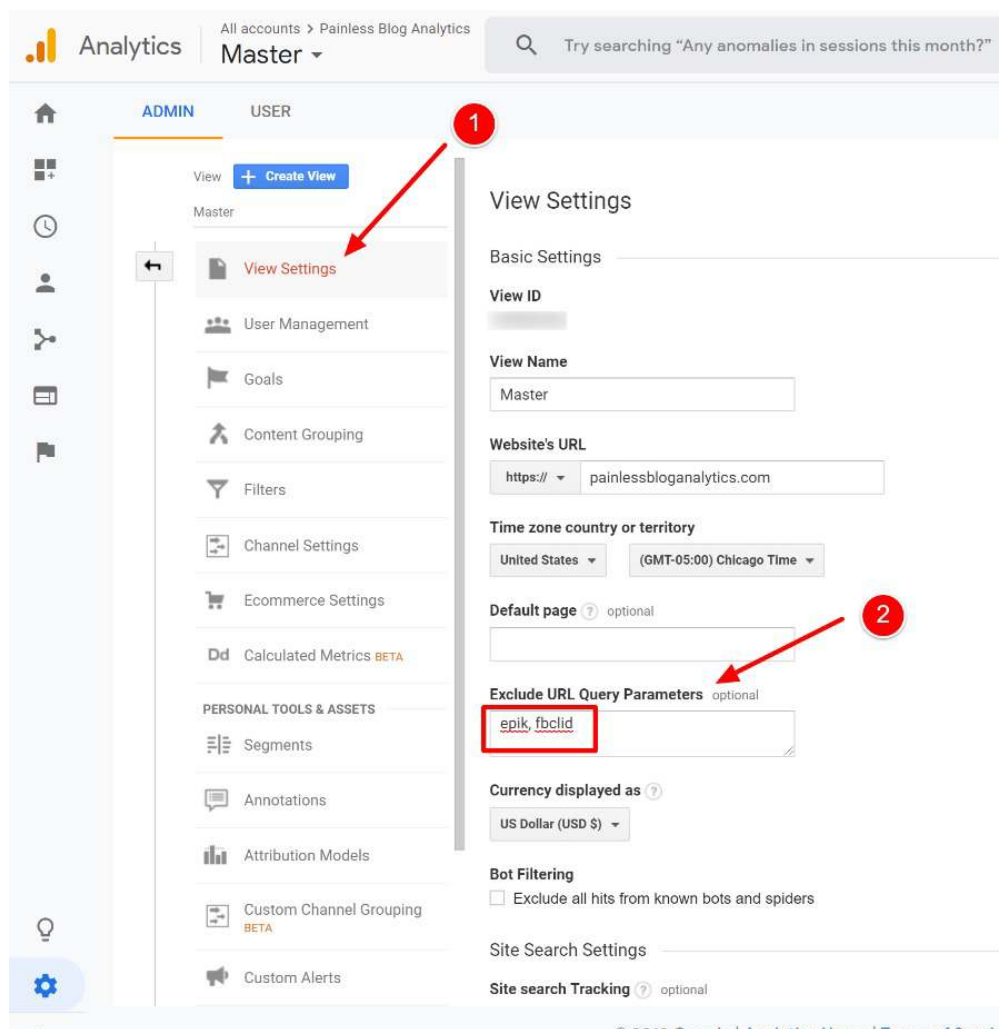
It can be very annoying because Google thinks that these are three separate posts because they have different URLs.

1. </10031/sew-on-patches-easily/?fbclid=IwAR2vEpcOm5HM3gj3-5qrc4M1rmKvrgkuMSV1hISx1rFWoYFW1SGCrRL5S4M>
2. </10031/sew-on-patches-easily/?fbclid=IwAROSfzk-TaubmhWI4EvWXBZTWlNpDbf9p1WLFkg1qarze4X-RR7JKcGMq1k>
3. </10031/sew-on-patches-easily/?fbclid=IwAR0fc7FX9WgjVDgMno3ixY1GQhs9XGc4Wnj7EVj0kgQgQsK2FTkOFFGrmX0>

But they are all the same. To get an accurate count of the pageviews for this post, we would have to find all of these and manually add them.

There is a way to correct this.

Go to your View Settings and add “fbclid” to the Exclude URL Query Parameters field.



These pageviews will still be reported and will still show Facebook as the medium, but they won't have a separate URL.

(EPIK is a similar parameter that Pinterest sometimes adds.)

There's more [information about fbclid in this post](#).

7. Other Data Sources Are Important

Google Analytics is the "gold standard" for website analytics, but it isn't the only source you should rely on.

This is particularly true for affiliate data. Use tracking codes in your affiliate links so that you'll know which links are being clicked and which are converting.

Most of the affiliate management companies such as ShareASale and Commission Junction allow you to add tracking codes.

You can also have up to 100 tracking IDs for Amazon affiliate links.