



# The eTailer's Get-Ready Guide for **BLACK FRIDAY** 2021



**Nov. 26**

Black Friday 2021

**Nov. 29**

Cyber Monday 2021

**Nov. 25 – 29**

Cyber Five or Black Week  
or Cyber Week

## Coming Soon to Your Store

### Black Friday, Cyber Monday, Cyber 5, Black Week, Cyber Week

Black Friday, Cyber Monday, Cyber 5, Black Week, Cyber Week. Whatever you call it, it's about driving revenue with pre-holiday sales. And even though Black Friday falls on the day after the US Thanksgiving Day holiday, it's not an US event. Nor is Cyber Monday, which happens the following Monday.

Black Friday used to be a brick-and-mortar event reserved for shopping at (and fighting for entry into) physical stores. Cyber Monday was Black Friday's online counterpart. Outside of the US though, and increasingly in the US too, Black Friday is also an online event.

But Black Friday 2021 is an unknown. Will a worsening pandemic make it look like last year or will the easing of restrictions send more shoppers in-store? No one knows.

What we do know is that online shopping became the norm in 2020. eCommerce globally grew 25.7% in 2020 and is projected to rise another 16.8% in 2021. <sup>1</sup> So regardless of what happens in 2021, Black Friday offers **huge opportunities for eCommerce brands**.



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## Shoppers Will Stay Online in 2021

The COVID-19 pandemic drove more shoppers online. As early as May 2020, shoppers in Germany, the UK, and the US were buying more online than before.<sup>2</sup> They were also buying items online that they hadn't before.<sup>2</sup>

In 2021, global eCommerce sales are forecast to rise to USD \$4.9 trillion — a 14.3% increase over 2020.<sup>3</sup> And in a repeat of 2020, Black Friday 2021 looks to be largely an online event with many US brick-and-mortar stores already announcing they won't be open November 26.<sup>4</sup>

So just like 2020, in 2021, shoppers will be looking for Black Friday and Cyber Monday deals online! Data for the 2020 online holiday shopping season include:

- **US shoppers spent \$5.1 billion online on Thanksgiving Day 2020** (Nov. 26) itself, and more than \$3 billion each day of the week before Thanksgiving.<sup>5</sup>
- **Amazon Sellers worldwide made more than \$4.8 billion** in sales between Nov. 27 and Dec. 1, 2020 (Black Friday through Cyber Monday) — a 60% increase over 2019.<sup>6</sup>
- **Shopify reported that its clients' sales were up 76% over 2019's sales** by the end of day Nov. 28.<sup>7</sup>
- **Cyber Monday sales in the US hit \$10.8 billion — in one day** — a 15.1% increase over 2019.<sup>7</sup>

Add those figures to shoppers staying online in 2021, and 2021 will be as big for eCommerce as it was in 2020 if not bigger.

**\$8.92 billion**  
in US sales on Black Friday 2020<sup>8</sup>

**\$10.78 billion**  
In US sales on Cyber Monday 2020<sup>9</sup>



## Are You Ready for All That Opportunity?

Added opportunity includes added challenges. The logistics challenges that plagued eTailers in 2020 have largely been resolved. But the added competition from brick-and-mortar stores going online is still a factor and maybe an even bigger one in 2021.

2020 gave eCommerce newbies a chance to work out the kinks, which means 2021 may be more competitive online than ever.

And while planning for Black Friday 2020 is like planning for any promotion, you want to answer some key questions, so you're ready for what 2021 has in store.

The first thing to ask yourself is do you want to do promotions for Black Friday and/or Cyber Monday at all? Advertising costs for Black Friday promotions can be three times more than normal. Granted, revenues can be five times higher too.<sup>10</sup>

If you decide to run promotions, read on for how to prep for maximum success.

## Pros

### of Offering Black Friday Promotions

- Customer acquisition and retention
- Brand awareness
- Incremental sales
- Earlier fulfillment can help you avoid last-minute holiday rush orders
- Inventory reduction/clearance
- Sales and revenue

## Cons

### of Offering Black Friday Promotions

- Lower margins
- Increased product returns
- High competition
- Higher bid and ACoS requirements
- Negative brand and revenue impact if a problem occurs, such as a site crash



66%

of shoppers expect  
a free-shipping  
option<sup>11</sup>

36%

of shoppers have chosen  
same-day delivery from  
eCommerce brands<sup>12</sup>

## If You Advertise, Are You Covered Logistically?

Once you decide to offer Black Friday and/or Cyber Monday deals, make sure you cover the non-marketing side of things.

### Do You Have Enough Inventory on Hand and Can You Ship Quickly?

Even if you have a good inventory management system and staff covering logistical challenges already, keep in mind that you need to be able to deliver what you sell.

- Make sure you **have enough of the items you're planning to promote in stock** and can ship them out quickly — ideally the day they're ordered or the very next day.
- Plan for **higher demand for best-selling, seasonal and discounted items**.
- **Get your shipping plan in order** and find out what your competitors are doing. Know that a ShipStation's Last Touch, Lasting Impact: The 2020-2021 Edition study found that two-thirds of North American shoppers expect a free-shipping option.<sup>11</sup>

Also, make sure your website is ready. Read on to find out how.



40%

of US eCommerce purchases on Black Friday 2020 were made on mobile phones<sup>16</sup>

≤ 3 sec

is the ideal page load time online

90%

of online shoppers won't wait for a slow web page to load<sup>15</sup>

## Is Your Website Ready?

More online shoppers combined with successful promotions can increase your web traffic. If that results in slow website performance and load times or your site crashing, you lose the opportunity for added revenue. Not to mention create a potential public relations nightmare.

On Black Friday 2019, US retailer Nordstrom Rack's site went down.<sup>13</sup> Angry customers took to social media to complain and made a bad situation even worse. Many likely spent their dollars elsewhere too.

Another US retailer, Costco lost an estimated USD 11 Million due to an outage and extended slow site performance.<sup>14</sup>

### Check Page Speed

Visitors want fast load times. Up to 90% won't wait for a slow page to load.<sup>15</sup> The ideal load time is 3 seconds or less. As you plan for Black Friday, make sure your development team knows to expect more traffic and that you need fast load times now and when that traffic hits. An easy way to test your page speed is with [Google PageSpeed Insights](#).

### Provide a User-Friendly Checkout Process

Users want a quick, easy checkout process. Consider making users click as few times as possible and avoid anything that slows them down during the process. Don't make users click a link to see shipping costs, for example, show them right on the page they're on.

### Think Mobile

40% of all US eCommerce purchases on Black Friday 2020 were made on mobile phones.<sup>16</sup> Don't stop at optimizing your page load times for desktop, think mobile too! In fact, think [mobile first!](#)



## What's Your Strategy?

To maximize your return on Black Friday, you need a strategy that includes:

- What you want to accomplish
- What your competition looks like
- What your website can handle
- What your inventory levels can handle
- What's worked for previous Black Friday or other promotions
- What your budget is
- What your plan is if you run out of inventory or have other issues
- What your campaigns are going to look like: single-day event, multi-day event, different offers each day, countdowns, coupons, percent or dollars off, free shipping, etc.
- What channels you'll run promotions on

## What's Your Competitive Landscape?

In 2021, just like in 2020, you aren't just competing with your traditional competitors. You're competing with brick-and-mortar retailers moving their sales into the omnichannel model, which outperformed eTailers in 2020 and consumed 44% of US Commerce sales.<sup>17</sup> You're competing with more and more brands selling direct to consumers (D2C) too. D2C sales grew 44.5% during the pandemic and were expected to go up another 15.9% in 2021.<sup>18</sup> And as the number of sellers competing for dollars grows, the need to stand out and get customers' attention is high.



At Finch, paid media strategists use Google Ads Auction Insights, SEMrush, and Google's Industry Report to do competitive analyses for clients and help determine the right competitive strategy.

## Black Friday Strategy Checklist

- ☐ Establish goals
- ☐ Understand your competition
- ☐ Know what your website can handle
- ☐ Ensure adequate inventory
- ☐ Know what's worked before
- ☐ Plan your budget
- ☐ Have a backup plan if you run out of inventory or have other issues
- ☐ Determine what your campaigns will look like: single-day event, multi-day event, different offers each day, countdowns, coupons, percent or dollars off, free shipping, etc.
- ☐ Determine what channels you'll run promotions on

## What's Worked Before?

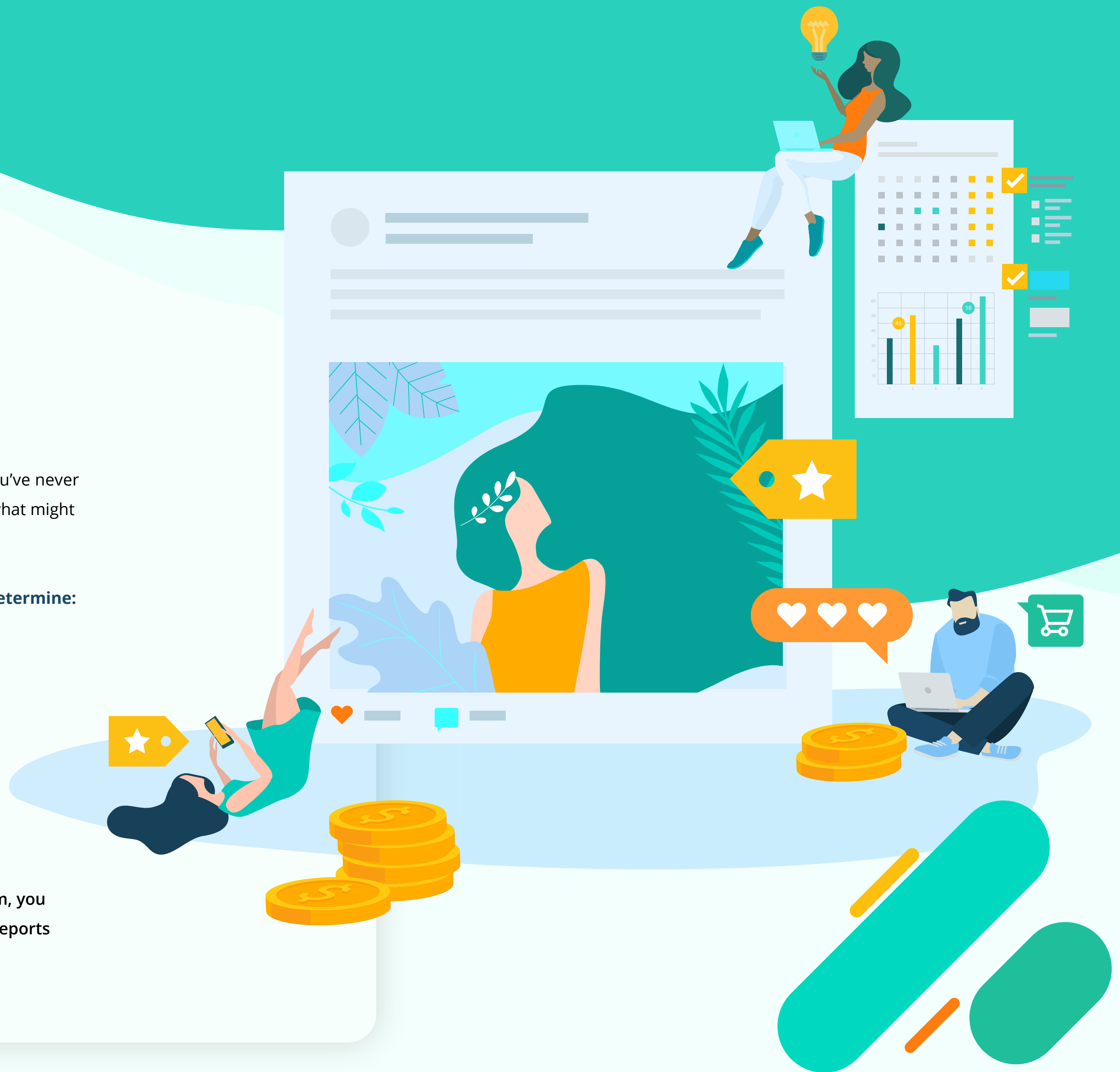
One key to success this year is looking at what worked and didn't work before. Even if you've never done Black Friday promotions, look at the data from other promotions you've run to see what might translate to Black Friday success.

**Analyze your Black Friday campaigns (and/or other promotions) from 2020 to determine:**

- What keywords worked well and didn't work well?
- What product or product categories sold?
- What didn't sell?
- Which campaigns performed and which failed?
- How much did you increase spend and was it enough?
- What channels worked well?



With Finch Insights reporting in the Finch eCommere Growth Platform, you can access data down to the individual SKU using built-in or custom reports and quickly analyze campaign performance history.





90%

increase in the likelihood of a shopper visiting a website after seeing both shopping ads and search ads<sup>20</sup>

## What Channels Will You Use?

You want to define your channel strategy too. Search ads help drive high-intent, targeted searches and convert browsers into buyers. If you combine shopping campaigns with search, you can maximize conversions and awareness by having both show at the same time.

A study by Google found that seeing both shopping ads and search ads increases the likelihood of a shopper visiting a website 90%.<sup>20</sup>

Display ads help build awareness, drive retargeting and conversions, and acquire new customers. And they extend your reach because shoppers see display ads pretty much anywhere online.

And social commerce sales in the US were estimated to be USD 27 billion and rise to USD 79.6 billion by 2025. U.S. dollars.<sup>19</sup>

All four channels help drive sales. And a mix of all of them can maximize your ROAS and campaign success.



Finch strategists and the Finch eCommerce Growth Platform work across paid search, shopping, display and social campaigns. Finch also spans Google, Microsoft, Amazon, Facebook and demand-side platforms (DSPs). The Finch Platform continuously and automatically optimizes your campaigns using granular data about what's worked, what hasn't, and what you want to achieve.



## What's Your Budget?

Making money means spending money. Once you determine what you want to accomplish, you need to set your budget. And for Black Friday and Cyber Monday, you need to spend more on your advertising efforts to drive traffic and compete.

For Amazon's Prime Day, marketers spend up to three times as much to advertise than at other times. While 2021's early Prime Day on June 22 won't compete with Black Friday, consider at least doubling, if not tripling your advertising budget for Black Friday and related promotions.

### Plan on Increased Search Volume

With increased web traffic comes increased search volume. To ensure those searching end up on your offers, consider increasing your budget for search for at least Black Friday and possibly all of Cyber Week.

### Max Out Your Budget If Possible

If you can, set an unlimited budget. Doing so ensures you have maximum flexibility to compete for shoppers. With the right solution, you can set an unlimited budget and still make sure you meet your ROAS goal.

**One caution:** Don't go overboard and burn through your entire budget just for Black Friday. Even once it's over, plenty of shoppers make online purchases. So keep some budget for marketing after Black Friday. While you want to set your ROAS and ACoS targets higher for Black Friday, you want to ensure they're high enough to deliver but not so high that you spend more to advertise than you earn.

## 3x costs

for Prime Day advertising  
compared to normal  
advertising costs<sup>21</sup>

## 5x revenue

for Prime Day  
compared to normal  
revenue<sup>21</sup>



## Before Black Friday: Get Your Campaigns Ready

Now that you know what you want to accomplish and have your budget, it's time to create your campaigns. Use the following tips to help maximize success when prepping your campaigns.

### For All Channels

- **Create your audiences** in advance; audiences can include Black Friday shoppers, Cyber Monday shoppers, in-market audiences, retargeting audiences from last year's event, and others.
- **Use “Black Friday promotion” or similar language in your ad headlines.**
  - In Germany, Black Friday is a trademark. Consider using Black Week, Black Weekend, or Black Deals instead.
- **Create urgency.** For example, use countdown ads.



A Black Friday paid search ad that uses Black Friday in the headline, creates urgency and uses all available ad extensions.

### For Paid Search



- Write your ads at least **a week in advance**.
- **Don't use generic Black Friday keywords**, which can quickly use up your budget.
- **Use Black Friday combined with product-specific keywords**, especially ones proven to work well.
- **Turn previously paused keywords back on** — keywords tend to convert better during Black Friday promotions.
- **Pause keywords** that you're not running promotions for to avoid using up your budget on searches that don't convert.
- **Use labels** on ad groups so you can easily pause pre-Black Friday ads and then pause Black Friday ads once it's over.
- **Use all available extensions**, including:
  - Promotion extensions
  - Callout extensions to highlight added promotions like free shipping
  - Price extensions
  - Relevant sitelinks, like top-selling categories
- Schedule paid search extensions to show only during specific times of the day or during Black Friday or Cyber 5.
- If you use Black Friday-specific URLs, **make sure the URL is live before you create the ad** so your ad isn't disapproved.
- **Set up automated rules** to activate your promotional paid search ads for each day and double-check the activation.

Ad · www.sports-online.com/blackfriday/deals ▾

**Buy Your Gym Equipment Online | Black Friday - up to 40% Off | Only Available Today**

4 ★★★★★ advertiser rating

Buy your pro athlete gym equipment to work out from home today. We are celebrating Black Friday by offering up to 40% off. Hurry before our offer ends.  
Professional Quality · 2 Year Warranty · Free Shipping · Never Beaten on Price

Home Gym Equipment	Pro-Gym Equipment
Yoga Mats	Strength Equipment

Kettlebells	Barbell Sets	Yoga Mats	Exe
From €20.00 Full Range	From €10.00 Limited Availability	From €15.00 Varitey of Styles	Frc Perfi



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## Before Black Friday: Get Your Campaigns Ready

### For Shopping

- Set up your campaigns at least **a week in advance**.
- Use **Google Shopping promotions** that show shoppers a “special offer” link (for example, 15% off, free shipping, etc.) to help increase your CTR.
- **Mark the products you’re running deals on in your feed.**
  - **Tip:** To optimize bidding, create a supplementary feed for all of your promo SKUs.
- To avoid having your ads disapproved, **update product prices** on your site first and then immediately in your feed.

### For Display

- Allow **6 weeks to build out successful campaigns**.
- **Create your creatives in advance**, including for multi-product, multi-day, count down, stepped or sequential messaging, etc., depending on your chosen approach.
- Display ad burnout is high during holiday events, consider **different creatives for different ad types and stepped messaging** before and during the event.

### For Social

- **Expand or combine audiences** to maximize the efficiency of your spend.
- Prepare your **ad copy and creative at least a week in advance** and consider audience cohorts for maximum effectiveness.
- **Build ads in your account at least 4 days before** you go live.
- **Set up automated rules** to switch your ads on and off. This lets you maximize ads and ensure efficiency and relevance.
- Add **promotional frames to your Dynamic Product Ads** to let your retargeting audiences know about your offers.
- **Consider adjusting ad set-level budget limitations** to ensure spend isn’t limited and **turn on Campaign Budget Optimization** if you’re not using it already.

## Promote Promotions on Your Site, Social Channels, and Elsewhere Too

Don’t forget to promote your Black Friday and Cyber Monday deals on your website, nonpaid social channels, and emails to help tell existing and prospective customers about your deals and convert them to buyers.





## On Black Friday: Run Your Campaigns

Now that you know what you want to accomplish and have your budget, it's time to create your campaigns. Use the following tips to help maximize success when prepping your campaigns.

### For All Channels

- **Regularly check your KPIs and make adjustments** as / if needed throughout the day(s), such as ROAS for search, shopping, and social and CTR or impressions for display.
- **Check your budget to make sure you don't max it out** and adjust as needed.
  - Go in knowing you may need to increase your budget cap.

### For Paid Search

- **Watch your bids** to make sure your ads are showing; adjust your bids as needed.
- Keep on top of what's happening with your bids and ROAS by **analyzing your data in Google Analytics in real-time**. Google Ads doesn't offer real-time updates.

### For Social

- **Watch budget pacing** to ensure your allocated budgets are spent each day and **adjust budgets/bids/caps as needed**.
- **Consider broadening your audience** if you haven't used all your budget.
- **Avoid changing anything in your ads that might trigger a review**; reviews can slow your ad serving and hurt your spend.
- **Optimize ads and spend each day** to ensure efficiency.

### For Shopping

- **Update your feed throughout each day(s)** you run promotions.
- Check My Client Center (MCC) in Google Ads several times throughout promotion days to **ensure inventory, update promotions, and adjust your budget**.
- **Analyze your data in Google Analytics in real-time** to keep on top of what's happening with your bids and ROAS.

### For Display

- Instead of using the creative you used leading up to the event, **use new creative** to avoid banner burnout.
- **A / B test everything**: creative, content, and your audiences. Agility is key to success.
- **Consider stepped or sequential messaging**. It's effective and creates a conversation between you and the potential buyer.



## Automate Optimization

Finch Optimization in the Finch Platform lets you automatically have your ad bids dialed back to those used before Black Week.

## After Black Friday: Rewind, Learn, and Promote

Once the fervor of Black Friday is over, there are a few things you want to do to keep your digital marketing efforts flowing smoothly.

### For All Channels

- **Adjust your bids back** to levels used before Black Friday so you don't burn your budget.
- **Pause Black Friday ads and extensions** (unless already scheduled to end) and **re-enable your previous ads**.
- **Collect your audience data** and label it, so that you can use that audience again.
- **Analyze and understand what creative worked and what didn't work** to reduce time and cost for your next event.
- Consider a **post-event campaign**. People could still have money to spend or you may have some excess stock that can drive further revenue.



**67.19%**  
increase in revenue  
for Black Friday 2020  
compared to 2019<sup>22</sup>

## Master Black Friday and Grow Your Brand Online with Finch

Finch empowers growth for brands worldwide by combining industry expertise and the first adaptive growth platform built specifically for eCommerce. Work with Finch and access:

- Strategic expertise for growth
- The Finch eCommerce Growth Platform that empowers:
  - Managing and executing all campaign types across marketplaces
  - Driving cost-efficiency
  - Breaking down data silos
  - Realizing full, manageable control of your path to eCommerce growth.







<sup>1</sup> Global Ecommerce Forecast 2021, eMarketer, Jul. 7, 2021, <https://www.emarketer.com/content/global-ecommerce-forecast-2021>

<sup>2</sup> Have you deliberately purchased any of these products or services online instead of offline because of the COVID-19/coronavirus pandemic? (as of May 31, 2020), Statista, May 31, 2020, [www.statista.com/statistics/1107859/shifting-to-online-purchases-because-of-the-covid-19-pandemic-by-category/](https://www.statista.com/statistics/1107859/shifting-to-online-purchases-because-of-the-covid-19-pandemic-by-category/)

<sup>3</sup> Retail e-commerce sales worldwide from 2014 to 2024, Statista, Jul. 7, 2021, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/379046/worldwide-retail-e-commerce-sales/>

<sup>4</sup> Stores Closed on Thanksgiving Day in 2021, BlackFriday.com, Jul. 15, 2021, <https://blackfriday.com/news/stores-closed-thanksgiving>

<sup>5</sup> Black Friday online shopping comes in \$9B, \$3.6B on smartphones, TechCrunch, Nov. 28, 2020, [techcrunch.com/2020/11/28/black-friday-online-sales-numbers/](https://techcrunch.com/2020/11/28/black-friday-online-sales-numbers/)

<sup>6</sup> Amazon says sellers racked up more than \$4.8 billion in sales over weekend, Reuters, Nov. 30, 2020, [www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-holidayshopping-cybermonday/cyber-monday-set-to-be-biggest-online-shopping-day-in-u-s-history-idUSKBN28A1ER](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-holidayshopping-cybermonday/cyber-monday-set-to-be-biggest-online-shopping-day-in-u-s-history-idUSKBN28A1ER)

<sup>7</sup> Cyber Monday Sales Hit \$10.8 Billion: Black Friday Weekend By The Numbers, Forbes, Dec. 1, 2020, [www.forbes.com/sites/shelleykohan/2020/12/01/cyber-monday-sales-hit-108-billion-black-friday-weekend-by-the-numbers/?sh=26dd92826eb0](https://www.forbes.com/sites/shelleykohan/2020/12/01/cyber-monday-sales-hit-108-billion-black-friday-weekend-by-the-numbers/?sh=26dd92826eb0)

<sup>8</sup> US Holiday 2020 Review and Holiday 2021 Preview, eMarketer, Feb. 27, 2021, <https://www.emarketer.com/content/us-holiday-2020-review-and-holiday-2021-preview>

<sup>10</sup> Based on Kenshoo findings from Prime Day 2019, Prime Day 2019: Amazon Advertisers' Revenue Was Up 5.8X, Kenshoo, July 17, 2019, <https://kenshoo.com/blog/prime-day-2019>

<sup>11</sup> New Data from ShipStation Reveals 2020's Impact on Consumer Shipping Expectations, SDC Supply and Demand Chain Executive, Oct 15, 2020, <https://www.sdcexec.com/transportation/press-release/21198428/shipstation-new-data-from-shipstation-reveals-2020s-impact-on-consumer-shipping-expectations>

<sup>12</sup> Online shoppers demand same-day delivery, Digital Commerce 360, Mar. 26, 2021, <https://www.digitalcommerce360.com/2021/03/16/online-shoppers-de->

[mand-same-day-delivery/](#)

<sup>13</sup> Costco, Nordstrom Rack websites crash as furious customers try to shop Black Friday sales, Business Insider, November 28, 2019. [www.businessinsider.com/costco-nordstrom-rack-sites-crash-with-black-friday-sales-2019-11?r=US&IR=T](https://www.businessinsider.com/costco-nordstrom-rack-sites-crash-with-black-friday-sales-2019-11?r=US&IR=T)

<sup>14</sup> Experts estimate Costco's website crash on Thanksgiving could reach \$11M in losses, ABC News, November 29, 2019, <https://abcnews.go.com/Business/experts-estimate-costcos-website-crash-thanksgiving-couldve-cost/story?id=673860>

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<sup>16</sup> Smartphone shopping surged 25% to \$3.6B on Black Friday, study finds, Marketing Dive, Nov. 30, 2020, <https://www.marketingdive.com/news/smartphone-shopping-surged-25-to-36b-on-black-friday-study-finds/589779/>

<sup>17</sup> Brick-and-Mortar Retail Isn't Going Away, Morningstar, May 27, 2021, <https://www.morningstar.com/articles/1041223/brick-and-mortar-retail-isnt-going-away>

<sup>18</sup> What you can learn from disruptive D2C brands, eMarketer, Jul. 19, 2021, <https://www.emarketer.com/content/what-you-learn-disruptive-d2c-brands>

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<sup>20</sup> Google Pushing Holiday Retailers to Use Both Text Ads & PLAs, Wordstream, Apr 3, 2015, [www.wordstream.com/blog/ws/2013/11/20/google-plas-plus-text-ads](https://www.wordstream.com/blog/ws/2013/11/20/google-plas-plus-text-ads)

<sup>21</sup> Based on Kenshoo findings from Prime Day 2019, Prime Day 2019: Amazon Advertisers' Revenue Was Up 5.8X, Kenshoo, July 17, 2019, <https://kenshoo.com/blog/prime-day-2019>

<sup>22</sup> Based on internal data from Finch clients for the 2020 Black Friday season (November 25 thru November 29).

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