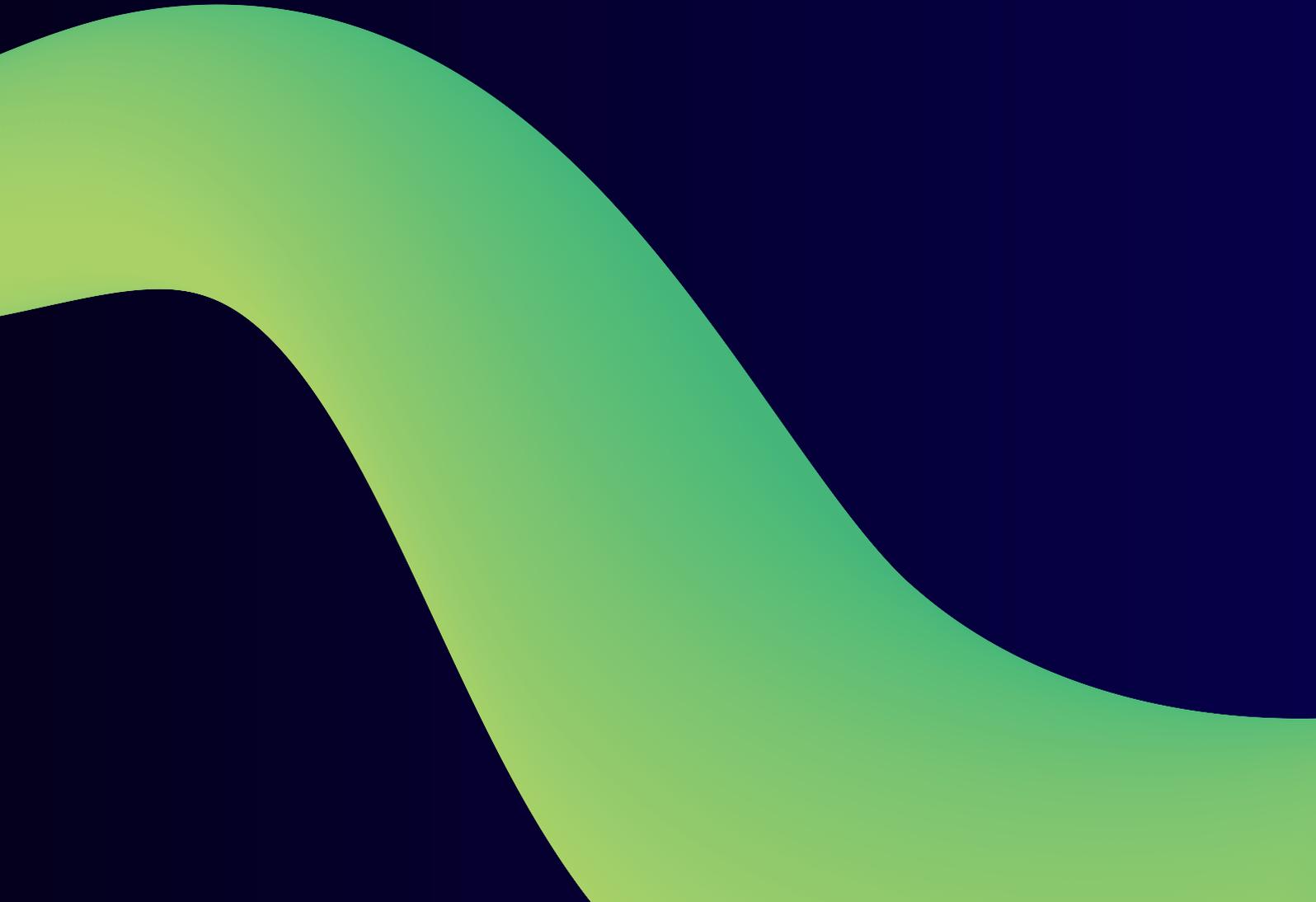


# GA4 Guidance Update



## What is GA4?

Google first released GA4 in October 2020, and in the announcement post, Google cited changes in user behaviour and privacy standards as major reasons for the switch.

GA4 stands for “**Google Analytics 4**,” and is the new version of Google Analytics.

## GA4 and its features

Unlike its predecessor, it collects both website and app data to better understand your customers. It also makes use of event-based data rather than the previous session-based data.

It also has improved privacy controls, including cookieless measurement and behavioural and key event modelling. For larger businesses, it also has predictive analytical capabilities and direct integrations with platforms, including Meta.

## GA4 channels & criteria

There are more default channel groupings available in GA4 compared to Universal Analytics, which makes reporting easier than before. Channels are assigned based on rules, typically based on the traffic source or UTM. These definitions can be found in the table below:

Channel	Description
<b>Affiliates</b>	Affiliates is the channel by which users arrive at your site/app via links on affiliate sites.
<b>Audio</b>	Audio is the channel by which users arrive at your site/app via ads on audio platforms (e.g. podcast platforms).
<b>Cross-network</b>	Cross-network is the channel by which users arrive at your site/app via ads that appear on a variety of networks (e.g., Search and Display).
<b>Direct</b>	Direct is the channel by which users arrive at your site/app via a saved link or by entering your URL.
<b>Display</b>	Display is the channel by which users arrive at your site/app via display ads, including ads on the Google Display Network.
<b>Email</b>	Email is the channel by which users arrive at your site/app via links in email.

<b>Mobile Push Notifications</b>	<p>Mobile Push Notifications is the channel by which users arrive at your site/app via links in mobile-device messages when they're not actively using the app.</p>
<b>Organic Search</b>	<p>Organic Search is the channel by which users arrive at your site/app via non-ad links in organic-search results.</p>
<b>Organic Shopping</b>	<p>Organic Shopping is the channel by which users arrive at your site/app via non-ad links on shopping sites like Amazon or ebay.</p>
<b>Organic Social</b>	<p>Organic Social is the channel by which users arrive at your site/app via non-ad links on social sites like Facebook or Twitter.</p>
<b>Organic Video</b>	<p>Organic Video is the channel by which users arrive at your site/app via non-ad links on video sites like YouTube, TikTok, or Vimeo.</p>
<b>Paid Other</b>	<p>Paid Other is the channel by which users arrive at your site/app via ads, but not through an ad identified as Search, Social, Shopping, or Video.</p>
<b>Paid Search</b>	<p>Paid Search is the channel by which users arrive at your site/app via ads on search-engine sites like Bing, Baidu, or Google.</p>
<b>Paid Shopping</b>	<p>Paid Shopping is the channel by which users arrive at your site/app via paid ads on shopping sites like Amazon or ebay or on individual retailer sites.</p>

<b>Paid Social</b>	Paid Social is the channel by which users arrive at your site/app via ads on social sites like Facebook and Twitter.
<b>Paid Video</b>	Paid Video is the channel by which users arrive at your site/app via ads on video sites like TikTok, Vimeo, and YouTube.
<b>Referral</b>	Referral is the channel by which users arrive at your site via non-ad links on other sites/apps (e.g., blogs, news sites).
<b>SMS</b>	SMS is the channel by which users arrive at your site/app via links from text messages.

The following definitions are provided for your reference and may evolve as the market changes.

Channel	Analytics definition
<i>Channels for Google Ads traffic</i>	
<b>Paid Shopping</b>	Source platform is "Google Ads" AND Google Ads campaign type is "Shopping"
<b>Paid Search</b>	Source platform is "Google Ads" AND Google Ads ad network type is one of ("Google Search", "Google Partners")
<b>Paid Video</b>	Source platform is "Google Ads" AND Google Ads ad network type is one of ("YouTube")
<b>Display</b>	Source platform is "Google Ads" AND Google Ads ad network type is one of ("Google Display Network", "Google TV")
<b>Cross-network</b>	Source platform is "Google Ads" AND Google Ads ad network type is one of ("Cross-network", "Google owned channels") Cross-network includes Demand Gen, Performance Max and Smart Shopping.

<b>Paid Social</b>	Source platform is "Google Ads" AND Google Ads ad network type is one of ("Social")
<i>Channels for Display &amp; Video 360 traffic</i>	
<b>Display</b>	Source platform is "DV360" AND DV360 creative format is one of ("Standard", "Expandable", "Native site square", "Backdrop", "Templated app install interstitial", "Deprecated", "Native app install", "Native app install square", "Native site", "Templated app install", "Lightbox")
<b>Paid Video</b>	Source platform is "DV360" AND DV360 creative format is one of ("Native video", "Video", "Templated app install video", "Flipbook")
<b>Audio</b>	Source platform is "DV360" AND DV360 creative format is one of "Audio".
<b>Paid Other</b>	Source platform is "DV360" AND DV360 creative format is one of ("Standard", "Expandable", "Native site square", "Backdrop", "Templated app install interstitial", "Deprecated", "Native app install", "Native app install square", "Native site", "Templated app install", "Lightbox")
<i>Channels for Campaign Manager 360 traffic via Floodlight integration</i>	

<p><b>Display</b></p>	<p>Source platform is "CM360" AND CM360 creative format is one of ("Display redirect", "Custom display", "Custom display interstitial", "Rich Media display banner", "Display", "Internal Redirect", "Interstitial internal redirect", "Flash in-page", "HTML5 Banner", "Rich Media display banner with floating", "Rich Media IM expand", "Rich Media display expanding", "Rich Media mobile in-app", "Rich Media display interstitial", "Rich Media display multi-floating interstitial", "Rich Media peel-down", "Display image gallery", "Image").</p>
<p><b>Paid Video</b></p>	<p>Source platform is "CM360" AND CM360 creative format is one of ("In-Stream Video", "Streaming Real", "Streaming Windows", "Streaming Flash", "In-Stream Tracking", "Streaming Silverlight", "Video Redirect", "VPAID linear video", "VPAID non-linear video")</p>
<p><b>Audio</b></p>	<p>Source platform is "CM360" AND CM360 creative format is one of ("In-Stream Audio", "Audio Redirect")</p>
<p><b>Paid Other</b></p>	<p>Source platform is "CM360" AND CM360 creative format is one of ("Tracking", "Tracking Image", "Tracking HTML")</p>

*Channels for Search Ads 360 traffic*

*(The following are channels for non Google Ads traffic; the channels for Google Ads traffic are the same as those listed at the beginning of this table under "Channels for Google Ads traffic")*

<b>Paid Search</b>	Source platform is "SA360" AND SA360 engine account type is one of ("bing", "yahoo gemini", "yahoo.jp", "baidu", "admarketplace", "naver", "360.cn", "yandex")
<b>Paid Social</b>	Source platform is "SA360" AND SA360 engine account type is one of ("facebook", "twitter")
<i>Channels for Merchant Center traffic</i>	
<b>Organic Shopping</b>	Source platform is "Shopping Free Listings"
<i>Channels for manual traffic</i>	
<b>Direct</b>	Source exactly matches "(direct)" AND Medium is one of ("(not set)", "(none)")
<b>Cross-network</b>	Campaign Name contains "cross-network" Cross-network includes Demand Gen, Performance Max and Smart Shopping.
<b>Paid Shopping</b>	Source matches a list of shopping sites OR Campaign Name matches regex <code>^(.*([a-df-z] ^).*)</code> AND Medium matches regex <code>^(.*cp.* ppc retargeting paid.*)\$</code>
<b>Paid Search</b>	Source matches a list of search sites AND Medium matches regex <code>^(.*cp.* ppc retargeting paid.*)\$</code>

<b>Paid Social</b>	Source matches a regex list of social sites AND Medium matches regex ^(.*cp.* ppc retargeting paid.*)\$
<b>Paid Video</b>	Source matches a list of video sites AND Medium matches regex ^(.*cp.* ppc retargeting paid.*)\$
<b>Display</b>	Medium is one of ("display", "banner", "expandable", "interstitial", "cpm")
<b>Paid Other</b>	Medium matches regex ^(.*cp.* ppc retargeting paid.*)\$
<b>Organic Shopping</b>	Source matches a list of shopping sites OR Campaign name matches regex ^(.*([a-df-z] ^)shop shopping.*)\$
<b>Organic Social</b>	Source matches a regex list of social sites OR Medium is one of ("social", "social- network", "social-media", "sm", "social network", "social media")
<b>Organic Video</b>	Source matches a list of video sites OR Medium matches regex ^(.video.*)\$
<b>Organic Search</b>	Source matches a list of search sites listed under "SOURCE_CATEGORY_ SEARCH" OR Medium exactly matches organic
<b>Referral</b>	Medium is one of ("referral", "app", or "link")

**Continued...**

<b>Email</b>	Source = email e-mail _mail e mail OR Medium = email e-mail _mail e mail
<b>Affiliates</b>	Medium = affiliate
<b>Audio</b>	Medium exactly matches audio
<b>SMS</b>	Source exactly matches sms OR Medium exactly matches sms
<b>Mobile Push Notifications</b>	Medium ends with "push" OR Medium contains "mobile" or "notification" OR Source exactly matches "firebase"

## GA4 reports

There are some key differences between the standard reports in GA4 and universal analytics. The main one is related to the attribution models where users can now better understand the role each channel plays in a customer's purchase journey. No longer are you limited to non-direct-last-click attribution, as was previously the case in universal analytics. You now have three different reporting views in GA4:

- First user
- Session
- Data-driven

## First User

When a user first visits your website or app, they are assigned to the channel they arrived with. This doesn't change whilst your data retention timeframe remains active for that user regardless of the number of times they subsequently return to the website before converting. This reporting view is particularly useful in understanding the impact of your top-of-funnel activity in generating initial interest in your business and its products and services.

## Session

This view acts the most like the universal analytics reporting view, as conversions are assigned based on the channel which the conversion took place during that session. This helps you gain a clearer picture of the role each channel plays at the bottom of the funnel.

## Data-driven

This is found under the Advertising tab in your GA4 account and provides a data-driven attribution throughout the conversion process. It also helps you understand the lead-time between first interaction and conversion as well as the number of intervening touchpoints the user takes during their conversion journey on average. This helps you better understand the role each channel plays during a conversion journey, which can help you with campaign optimisation.

**Note:** you need to be running Google Ads and have linked your account to your GA4 account for this to be available.

How this breaks down according to the reports based on the following user behaviour is as follows:

### User: Sam

**Session 1:** Unpaid search → first\_visit (key event) → session\_start → view\_item → signup

**Session 2:** Email marketing – session\_start → purchase (key event)

**Session 3:** Paid search → session\_start → Affiliate with UTM parameters → view\_item → add\_to\_cart (key event)

**Session 4:** (none) – session\_start → purchase (key event)

User	First user source / medium
Sam (User)	google / organic

Session	Session source / medium
Session 1	google / organic
Session 2	email / newsletter
Session 3	google / cpc
Session 4	partner / affiliate

Session source / medium is assigned at the session level and represents what originated the session. Sessions initiated by direct entrance are attributed to the UTM values for that user.

Event name	Event count	Key events	Key event paths
First_visit	1	1	google / organic
Purchase	2	2	google / organic › email / newsletter google / organic › email / newsletter › google / cp › partner / affiliate

add_to_cart	1	1	google / organic › email / newsletter › google / cpc › partner / affiliate
view_item	2	0	-

In this example, we used the default data-driven attribution model. The attribution for source / medium only applies to events marked as key event:

Source / medium	Key events
google / organic	1.3
email / newsletter	1.1
google / cpc	0.6
partner / affiliate	1
direct / (none)	0

**Note:** Google Analytics puts different weights on each touch point along a user’s path to key event. These numbers are illustrative and don’t necessarily represent the exact weights that Google puts on each touchpoint.

## Reporting delays

One thing to bear in mind is the “unassigned” channel, this can appear for a variety of reasons. However, one of the main reasons is due to a delay in the data being attributed in the reports. This delay can take up to 72 hours to finalise on its attribution, however, in many instances it is resolved within a day.

## GA4 Metrics

There are some key differences between the metrics from GA4 and Universal Analytics. We'll detail the differences between these events and what they mean for you.

### Users

Metric	UA	GA4
Total Users	Total Number of users	Total number of unique users who logged an event
New Users	Number of users who interacted with the site for the first time	Number of users who interacted with your site or app for the first time. This is measured by number of new unique user IDs that logged the first_open or first_visit event.
Active Users	N/A	Number of distinct users who visited your website or app. These are users who have an engaged session (lasted 10s or more, 1 conversion event or 1+ page views) or triggered a first_open or first_visit event

### Pageviews

Metric	UA	GA4
Pageviews	Total number of page views. Repeated views are counted.	The total number of pages your users saw. Repeated views are counted.
Unique Pageviews	Total number of pages viewed but duplicates are excluded.	N/A

## Purchases

Metric	UA	GA4
Purchases	<p>Purchase events are fired within the enhanced e-commerce model.</p> <p>Data is pulled from a product array and collected in a purchase event when you choose to send that event.</p>	<p>Collects in a similar fashion to UA but it doesn't provide additional code for array collection and it expects you to provide them with an items array when collecting the purchase event.</p>

**Note:** The transaction\_id needs to be consistently applied otherwise, noticeable differences could occur when comparing the data. Please also note that there is a reporting delay in GA4, which can take up to 48 hours to appear and up to 7 days for attribution to be finalised.

## Sessions

Metric	UA	GA4
Sessions	<p>Period when a user is actively engaged with your website.</p> <p>Has defined parameters, which may cause it to end, e.g. 30mins of inactivity.</p> <p>If a user returns after inactivity, it counts as a new session.</p> <p>If a user is on the website when midnight arrives, a new session starts.</p> <p>If a user picks up new campaign parameters, a new session starts.</p>	<p>To determine the session that each event comes from, the session_start event generates a session ID, which is associated with each subsequent event in the session.</p> <p>A session will end when there has been a 30-minute period of inactivity; depending on the settings.</p> <p>Sessions aren't restarted when midnight occurs or new campaign parameters are encountered.</p> <p>If a user returns after a session timeout, it will start a new session.</p>

## Events in GA4

Unlike in Universal Analytics, GA4 tracks “every” event rather than being able to select a particular conversion as recording one or every.

Furthermore, there is the ability to enable “enhanced measurement” in GA4. This feature allows you to track page views, scrolls, outbound link clicks, site searches, video engagements, file downloads and form interactions by default.

It should be noted that the previous event category, event action and event label structure has been replaced. As a result, you need to make use of event parameters to track specific elements. The best way to set-up event parameters is via Tag Manager due to its preview mode.

## Audiences in GA4

Like with Universal Analytics, you can create audiences in GA4. However, there are some differences between the two platforms. The biggest difference is there’s a cap of **100 audiences** for each standard GA4 property. If you run GA360, this limit is 400 audiences per property. Due to these caps, creating audiences around important interactions for your business is important.

Further to this, unlike with Universal Analytics audiences, you can set the scope of your GA4 audiences. This means that you can target people who complete an action across **all sessions, a single session or in a single event**.

Another feature available to larger brands is the availability of predictive audiences. These 5 audiences use previous visitor behaviour to predict whether a user is likely to act in a certain manner due to similarity with historical behaviour in their current behaviour. These five default audiences are:

- **Likely seven-day purchasers** – users who are likely to make a purchase in the next seven days.
- **Likely seven-day churning users** – active users who are likely to not visit your property in the next seven days.



- **Predicted 28-day top spenders** – users who are predicted to generate the most revenue in the next 28 days.
- **Likely first-time seven-day purchasers** – users who are likely to make their first purchase in the next seven days.
- **Likely seven-day churning purchasers** – purchasing users who are likely to not visit your property in the next seven days.

However, once your account is eligible for predictions, you can use these default audiences to create your own audiences with your own conditions based on those predictions.

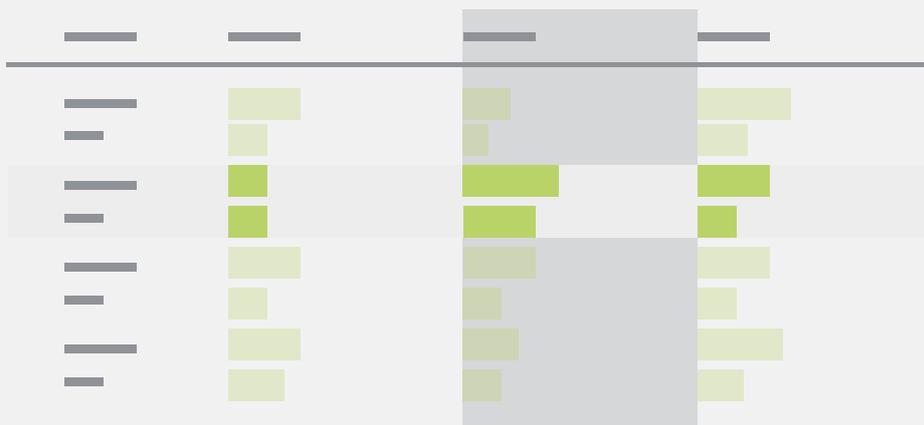
All of these predictive audiences can be used in your Google Ads or Google Marketing Platform accounts and campaigns and can be particularly useful in remarketing and re-engagement activity.

# Reporting Sandbox

In many instances, the information that you're looking for isn't readily available in the default reports in GA4. To make these reports more tailored to your needs and to speed up reporting, it is recommend you create custom reports within the explore tab in GA4.

## Free-form exploration

Explore your data in a familiar crosstab layout. You can also apply several different visualization styles in free form, including bar charts, pie charts, line charts, scatter plots and geo maps.



## Cohort exploration

Gain insights from the behavior and performance of groups of users related by common attributes.



## Funnel exploration

Visualise the steps users take to complete tasks on your site or app, and see how you can optimise user experience and identify over- or under-performing audiences.



## Segment overlap

See how different user segments relate to each other. Use this technique to identify new segments of users who meet complex criteria.



## User exploration

Examine the users that make up the segments you create or import. You can also drill down into individual user activities.

## Path exploration

Visualise the paths your users take as they interact with your website and app.



## User lifetime

Explore user behavior and value over their lifetime as a customer.

When you're creating a report, you can add various dimensions and metrics and customise the timeframe to suit your needs.

It should you see any metrics or dimensions greyed out when you're trying to add them to the report, it is due to this combination of dimensions and metrics being incompatible with each other.

## Integrations

Like with Universal Analytics, you are able to integrate GA4 with the Google suite of products including Tag Manager, Search Console, Google Ads and SA360. This will enable you to have a single source of truth and help you understand how your campaign activity performs on your website.

To help improve your data quality and reduce the discrepancy between reporting platforms, you can now integrate your Meta account with GA4. Currently, it's still in a limited beta, but you'll be able to find out whether you can integrate it by navigating to "Partner Integrations" in the "Events Manager" of your Meta Business Manager account.

## Implementing GA4

It is easier to implement GA4 through Google Tag Manager, as you can easily control the privacy permissions, events and share automatically collected and enhanced measurement events in one central hub, whilst avoiding adding more code to your website.

To set up GA4 in Tag Manager, follow these steps:

Sign into your Tag Manager account.

Create a new tag

- In Tag Configuration, choose Google Tag
  - In Tag ID, enter your Tag ID
  - This is found by going to your Google Analytics account
    - Go to admin
    - Under data collection, select data streams
    - Select the data stream you want to edit
    - Under Google tag, click configure tag settings
    - Under “Your Google tag”, click the Google tag
    - Under “Tag details”, copy the Tag ID
  - In the Trigger section, select the All Pages trigger
  - Save
- Start your Tag Manager’s preview mode by clicks on Preview and entering your website’s URL
- Click connect
- Ensure that the Tag is performing as expected and in-line with your privacy policy
- Once you’re happy with how it works, return to your Tag Manager container and click submit.

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