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## Pay-per-click search engines

### How they work

Pay-per-click search engines allow companies to bid on keywords that relate to their sites. Companies submit their site's descriptions and titles, along with a list of keywords to the engine. They also specify the amount of money that they're willing to spend on each keyword.

After a pay-per-click search engine processes the company's request, their results start showing up when someone searches for a keyword that the company paid for. Depending on how much money others paid, rankings for a particular keyword maybe very high or low.

For example, if you choose to pay \$.20 for the keyword "puppy food," while others pay only \$.19, your site would rank first. If, on the other hand, you pay \$.02, you may rank low.

For most pay-per-click engines, **companies pay only when a visitor clicks on their web site from the search results (clickthrough)**. Most engines specify a minimum amount of money needed for a company to open an account.

### Aren't the results irrelevant?

Many think that paid rankings will decrease the relevance of search results by allowing any site with money to rank high for any keyword. Pay-per-click engines understand that they will lose searchers, and eventually advertisers, with irrelevant results, and therefore, make relevance a priority. However, pay-per-click engines will provide results with commercial, not informational information. Relevance doesn't guarantee the quality of the site.

Many pay-per-click engines utilize editors to review incoming requests for bidding. These editors are responsible for making sure that the submitted keywords relate to the site's content.

Pay-per-click engines, however, are mostly commercial. Most non-for-profits don't have the resources for advertising. As a searcher, **choose another search engine if you're looking for noncommercial information**. Non-profit organizations should think twice before bidding at a pay-per-click search engine. Chances are their audience won't be using it.

### Should I use pay-per-click engines?

This decision is individual for every company. You should check keywords and prices for your site before answering this question.

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Pay-per-click engines may prove to be cheap advertising for your web site. The most popular pay-per-click engine, [Overture.com](http://Overture.com), is one of the Top 10 search engines. [Overture.com](http://Overture.com) attracts many searchers and advertisers. Since search engine optimization may be a long, expensive and fruitless process for some sites, [Overture.com](http://Overture.com) presents a perfect opportunity for a high ranking on a Top 10 search engine. Traffic generated by pay-per-click engines is usually more targeted than from other engines (this is because webmasters can control keywords they are found under).

**Note:** [Overture.com](http://Overture.com) also distributes its top 3 results on Altavista, MSN, Yahoo, Lycos, Hotbot and other major search engines. If you're in a top 3 position at [Overture.com](http://Overture.com), watch your campaign carefully. Because of so much exposure, these listings can get more clickthroughs than you expected.

Another highly regarded pay-per-click program is **Google's AdWords Select**. Google uses both customer's per click dollar amount and click-through rates to rank the ads. Google also offers many useful tools, such as an automatic discounter, which lowers your bid amount every time there's a gap.

Joining the pay-per-click landscape is the former directory [LookSmart.com](http://LookSmart.com). [LookSmart](http://LookSmart.com) recently converted all of its directory customers into pay-per-click customers. Those who wish to submit to [LookSmart](http://LookSmart.com), must pay a \$49 registration fee and then purchase keywords.

#### **More benefits of pay-per-click**

Another benefit of pay-per-click engines is instant traffic. Achieving high rankings may take a long time, but with pay-per-click engines people find you immediately after you set up your account and your bidding request is approved.

If you're considering using a pay-per-click engine as part of your online advertising campaign, visit our next section and read more about specific engines and procedures.

#### **An Overview**

##### **Pay-per-click engines**

- Work by letting companies bid for keywords
- Can be relevant for commercial content
- Provide instant traffic

Next: Specific information about pay-per-click engines >>>