

Chapter 4

Picking Powerful Keywords

In This Chapter

- ▶ Thinking up keyword phrases
 - ▶ Using a free keyword tool to find more keywords
 - ▶ Using Wordtracker for more detailed analyses
 - ▶ Sifting through the list to pick the right keywords
-

I was talking with a client the other day who wanted to have his site rank well in the search engines. (I've changed the details of this story a tad to protect the client's privacy.) Let's say the client is a company with annual revenues in the millions of dollars (as indeed this client is), in the business of, oh, I dunno . . . staging rodent-racing events.

I did a little research and found that most people searching for rodent-racing events use the keywords *rodent racing*. (Big surprise, huh?) I took a look at the client's Web site and discovered that the words *rodent racing* didn't appear anywhere on the site's Web pages.

"You have a little problem," I said. "Your site doesn't use the words *rodent racing*, so it's unlikely that any search engine will find your site when people search for that."

"Oh, well," was the client's reply, "our marketing department objects to the term. We have a company policy to use the term *furry friend events*. The term rodent is too demeaning, and if we say we're racing them, the animal-rights people will get upset."

This is a true story, well, except for the bit about rodent racing and the furry friends thing. But in principle it happened. This company had a policy not to use the words that most of its potential clients were using to search for it.

You may be asking yourself how it's possible that a company can build a Web site only to discover later that the keywords its potential clients and visitors are using are not in the site. Well, I can think of a couple of reasons:

- ✓ Most sites are built without any regard for the search engines. The site designers simply don't think about the search engines or have little background knowledge about how search engines work.
- ✓ The site designers do think about the search engines, but they guess, often incorrectly, what keywords they should be using.

I can't tell you how the client and I resolved this problem because, well, we haven't yet resolved it. But I am going to tell you how to pick keywords that make sense for your site, as well as how to discover what keywords your potential site visitors are using to search for your products and services.

Understanding the Importance of Keywords

When you go to a search engine and try to find something, you type in a word, or several words, and click the Search button. The search engine then looks in its index for those words.

Suppose that you used the words *rodent racing*. Generally speaking, the search engine will look for various things:

- ✓ Pages that contain the exact phrase *rodent racing*
- ✓ Pages that don't have the phrase *rodent racing*, but do have the words *rodent* and *racing* in close proximity
- ✓ Pages that have the words *rodent* and *racing* somewhere, though not necessarily close together
- ✓ Pages with word stems; for instance, pages with the word *rodent* and the word *race* somewhere in the page
- ✓ Pages that have links pointing to them, in which the link text contains the phrase *rodent racing*
- ✓ Pages with links pointing to them with the link text containing the words *rodent* and *racing*, although not together

The process is actually a lot more complicated than this. The search engine doesn't necessarily show pages in the order I just listed — all the pages with the exact phrase, then all the pages with the words in close proximity, and so

on. Rather, when considering the order in which to rank pages, the search engine takes into consideration other characteristics of the keyword or keyword phrase:

- ✓ Is the keyword phrase found in bold text?
- ✓ In italic text?
- ✓ In bulleted lists?
- ✓ In text larger than most of the other text on the page?
- ✓ In heading text (<H> tags)?
- ✓ . . . and hundreds of other criteria, all of which are secret!

Despite all the various complications, however, one fact is of paramount importance: If a search engine can't relate to your Web site the words that someone searches for, it has no reason to return your Web site as part of the search results.

Picking the right keywords is critical. As Woody Allen once said, "Eighty percent of success is showing up." If you don't play the game, you can't win. And if you don't choose the right keywords, you're not even showing up to play the game.



Understanding how to search helps you understand the role of keywords. Check out the Bonus Chapter to find out the different ways you can search using the search engines in general and Google in particular.

Thinking like Your Prey

It's an old concept: You should think like your prey. Companies often make mistakes with their keywords because they pick keywords based on how they — rather than their customers — think about their products or services. You have to stop thinking that you know what customers call your products. Do some research to find out what consumers really do call your products.

Do a little keyword analysis — check to see what people are actually searching for on the Web. You'll discover that words that you were positive people would use are rarely searched, and you'll find that you've missed a lot of common terms. Sure, you may get some of the keywords right, but if you're spending time and energy targeting particular keywords, you might as well get 'em all right!



The term *keyword analysis* can have several meanings:

- ✓ When I use it, I'm referring to what I'm discussing in this chapter: analyzing the use of keywords by people searching for products, services, and information.
- ✓ Some people use the term to mean *keyword-density* analysis, finding out how often a keyword appears in a page. Some of the keyword-analysis tools that you run across are actually keyword-density-analysis tools.
- ✓ The term also may be used to refer to the process of analyzing keywords in your Web site's access logs.

Starting Your Keyword Analysis

You have to do a keyword analysis — a check of what keywords people use to search on the Web — or you're wasting your time. Imagine spending hundreds of hours optimizing your site for a keyword you think is good, only to discover that another keyword or phrase gets two or three times the traffic. How would you feel? Sick? Stupid? Mad? Don't risk your mental health — do it right the first time.

Identifying the obvious keywords

Begin by typing the obvious keywords into a text editor or word processor — the ones you've already thought of, or, if you haven't started yet, the ones that immediately come to mind. Then study the list for a few minutes. What else can you add? What similar terms come to mind? Add them, too.

When you do your analysis, you'll find that some of the initial terms you think of aren't searched for very often, but that's okay. This list is just the start.

Looking at your Web site's access logs

Take a quick look at your Web site's access logs (often called *hit logs*), a subject I discuss in Chapter 18. You may not realize it, but most logs show you the keywords that people used when they clicked a link to your site at a search engine. (If your logs don't contain this information, you probably need another program!) Write down the terms that are bringing people to your site.

Examining competitors' keyword tags

You probably know who your competitors are (you should, anyway). Go to their sites and open the source code of a few pages at each site — just choose View⇨Source from the browser's menu bar to get a peek. Look for the `<META NAME="keywords">` tag and see if you find any useful keywords there. Often the keywords are garbage, or simply not there, but if you look at enough sites, you're likely to come up with some useful terms you hadn't thought of.

Brainstorming with colleagues

Talk to other friends and colleagues to see if they can come up with some possible keywords. Ask them something like, "If you were looking for a site at which you could find the latest scores for rodent races around the world, what terms would you search for?"

Give everyone a copy of your current keyword list and ask if they can think of anything to add to it. Usually, reading the terms will spark an idea or two, and you'll end up with a few more terms.

Looking closely at your list

After you've put together your initial list, go through it looking for more obvious additions. Don't spend too much time on this; all you're doing here is creating a preliminary list to run through a keyword tool, which will also figure out some of these things for you.

Obvious spelling mistakes

Scan through your list and see if you can think of any obvious spelling mistakes. Some spelling mistakes are incredibly important, with 10, 15, or 20 percent of all searches containing the word being misspelled, sometimes even more! For example, about one-fifth of all Britney Spears-related searches are misspelled, spread out over a dozen misspellings — which might allow me to take a cheap shot, but I have no intention of doing so.

The word *calendar* is also frequently misspelled. Look at the following list, an estimate of how often the single word *calendar* is searched for each day, in its various permutations:

calendar: 10,605 times
calender: 2,721
calander: 1,549
calandar: 256

Thirty percent of all searches on the word *calendar* are misspelled! (Where do I get these estimates, you're wondering? You find out later in this chapter, starting at "Using a keyword tool.")



If the traffic from a misspelling is significant, you may want to create a page on your site that uses that misspelling. Some sites contain what I call "Did You Mean" pages, such as the one shown in Figure 4-1. Some sites contain pages using misspellings in the TITLE tags, which can work very well. These don't have to be pages that many people see. After all, the only people who will see the misspelled titles in a search results page are those who misspelled the words in the first place!

One nice thing about misspellings is that often competitors have missed them, so you can grab the traffic without much trouble.

Synonyms

Sometimes similar words are easily missed. If your business is a home-related business, for instance, have you thought about the term *house*? Americans may easily overlook this word, using *home* instead, but other English-speaking countries use the word often. Still, add it to the list because you may find quite a few searches related to it.



Figure 4-1:
A page designed for the spelling-challenged!

You might even use a thesaurus to find more synonyms. However, I show you some keyword tools that will run these kinds of searches for you — see “Using a keyword tool.”

Split or merged words

You may find that although your product name is one word — RodentRacing, for instance — most people are searching for you using two words, rodent and racing. Remember to consider your customer’s point of view.

Also, some words are employed in two ways. Some people, for instance, use the term *knowledgebase*, while others use *knowledge base*. Which is more important? Both should be on your list, but *knowledge base* is used around four to five times more often than *knowledgebase*. If you optimize your pages for *knowledgebase* (I discuss page optimization in Chapter 6), you’re missing out on around 80 percent of the traffic!

Singulars and plurals

Go through your list and add singulars and plurals. Search engines treat singulars and plurals differently. For example, searching on *rodent* and *rodents* provides different results, so it’s important to know which term is searched for most often. A great example is to do a search on *book* (1,635 searches per day, according to Wordtracker, which is discussed later in this chapter) and *books* (16,475 searches per day) in Google. A search on *book* returns Barnes and Noble as the number-one result, while *books* returns Amazon.com.



You don’t need to worry about upper- versus lowercase. You can use *rodent* or *rodent* or *RODENT*, for example. Most search engines aren’t case sensitive. If you search for *rodent* (and probably almost 90 percent of all searches are in lowercase), virtually all search engines will find *Rodent* or *RODENT* — or *rODENT* or *ROdent*, for that matter.

Hyphenated words

Do you see any hyphenated words on your list that could be used without the hyphen, or vice versa? Some terms are commonly used both ways, so find out what your customers are using. Here are two examples:

- ✓ The terms *ecommerce* and *e-commerce* are fairly evenly split, with a little over 50 percent of searches using the latter term.
- ✓ The dash in *e-mail* is far less frequently used, with *email* being the most common term.

Find hyphenated words, add both forms to your list, and determine which is more common because search engines treat them as different searches.



Search engines generally treat a hyphen as a space. So searching for `rodent-racing` is the same as searching for `rodent racing`. However, there is a real difference between `e-commerce` and `ecommerce`, or `rodentracing` and `rodent-racing`.

Geo-specific terms

Is geography important to your business? Are you selling shoes in Seattle or rodents in Rochester? Don't forget to include terms that include your city, state, other nearby cities, and so on.

Your company name

If you have a well-known company name, add that to the list, in whatever permutations you can think of (Microsoft, MS, MSFT, and so on).

Other companies' names and product names

If people will likely be searching for companies and products similar to yours, add those companies and products to your list. That's not to say you should use these keywords in your pages — you can in some conditions, as I discuss in Chapter 6. But it's nice to know what people are looking for and how often they're looking.

Using a keyword tool

After you've put together a decent-size keyword list, the next step is to use a keyword tool. This tool will enable you to discover additional terms you haven't thought of and help you determine which terms are most important — which terms are used most often by people looking for your products and services.

Both free and paid versions of keyword tools are available. I discuss the freebies first, but I might as well cut to the chase and tell you that I recommend that you fork over the dough and use Wordtracker, the world's top search engine keyword tool. So you can skip to that section if you want, or read on.

The Overture Search Term Suggestion tool

Overture is a pay-per-click service (you find out about these services in Chapter 15). As a service to its customers (and prospective customers), Overture provides a free tool that allows you to see how often a particular search term is used each month at Overture.

Here's how to find (and use) this tool:

1. **Point your browser to** www.overture.com.

The Overture home page duly appears.

2. **Click the Advertiser Center link (usually somewhere near the top of the page).**

3. **On the new page that appears, click the Tools link, and then on the next page, click the Term Suggestion Tool link.**

A secondary window pops up, with a text box in it.

4. **Type a search term and press Enter.**

The tool tells you how often that term was searched for throughout the Overture network during the previous month. Figure 4-2 shows the results for the search term `rodent`.

Put your search term here and press Enter. The number of times your search term was used in the Overture network in October.

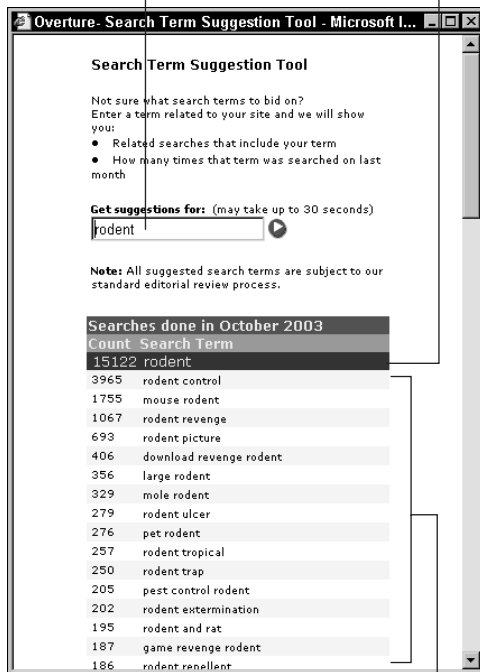


Figure 4-2:
The
Overture
Search Term
Suggestion
Tool.

Similar terms; click on one to see more similar and related terms.

The number isn't terribly important; it's the relative levels that count. If one word was searched on 15,000 times last month, and another one 10,000, you can be pretty sure that, on the Overture network or not, the first term is the most important one.

Overture provides other search terms, too. It looks for similar and related terms, lists them, and also provides the number of times that those terms were searched for. You can click one of the additional terms, and Overture searches on that term, too, bringing up similar and related terms.

For each term in your list, use the Search Term Suggestion Tool to find out how many times the term is used each month and to find related terms. Add to your list any related terms that look like they may be appropriate for you (and note the number of times they're searched for).

This process takes what is referred to in the search-engine-optimization business as *a bloody long time*. (Well, the business in England, anyway.) This is why I suggest that you use Wordtracker, which I discuss shortly.

Other keyword tools

Several other keyword-analysis tools are available. Some of the other pay-per-click services provide tools, for instance, but, unlike Overture, you generally can't get to the tool until you have already set up an account or gone through some preliminary sign-up process.

FindWhat (www.findwhat.com) has a Keyword Center, which operates much like Overture's tool. Google has a pretty good tool, too, but you have to jump through some hoops to get to it if you haven't yet set up a pay-per-click account with Google AdWords (adwords.google.com).

To find some of the other software tools and Web-based services, do a search on `keyword` or `keyword analysis`. The top tool is Wordtracker, which is discussed in the next section.

Using Wordtracker

Wordtracker (www.wordtracker.com) is the tool that virtually all SEO professionals use. (SEO professionals also like to throw the term SEO around, rather than use the more unwieldy but clearer term *search engine optimization*.) I generally don't like endorsing a product in this manner; elsewhere in this book, I

mention products and even state that they're good. But Wordtracker is a special case. I know of no other tool that matches it or that is anywhere near as popular. And it's cheap to use, so I recommend that you do so.

Wordtracker, owned by a company in London, England, has access to data from several very large *metacrawlers*. A metacrawler is a system that searches multiple search engines for you. For example, type a word into Dogpile's search box (www.dogpile.com), and the system searches at Google, Yahoo!, Ask Jeeves, AltaVista, and many others.

Wordtracker gets the information about what people are searching for from Metacrawler.com, Dogpile.com, and others, for a total of over 150 million searches each month. It stores two months of searches in its databases, somewhere around 310 million searches.

Wordtracker combines the data for the last 60 days and then allows its customers to search this database. Ask Wordtracker how often someone searched for the term `rodent`, and it will tell you that it had been searched for (at the time of writing) 77 times over the last 60 days but that the term `rodents` is far more popular, with 527 searches over the last 60 days.



Certain searches are seasonal — `pools` in the summer, `heaters` in the winter, and so on. Because Wordtracker has only the last 60 days of information, it may not be representative for a full year for some terms. And some searches may be influenced by the media. While searches for `paris hilton` were very high in November and December 2003, it's likely they'll be much lower by the time you read this. (We can hope, anyway.)

Here's what information Wordtracker can provide:

- ✓ The number of times in the last 60 days that the exact phrase you entered was searched for out of 310 million or so searches
- ✓ An estimate of how many times each day the phrase is used throughout all the Web's search engines
- ✓ Similar terms and synonyms, and the usage statistics about these terms
- ✓ Terms used in hundreds of competing sites' `KEYWORDS` meta tags, ranked according to frequency
- ✓ Common misspellings
- ✓ A comparison of how often a term is searched for with how many pages appear for that term — a nice way to find terms with relatively little competition



Do metacrawlers provide better results? Here's what Wordtracker claims:

- ✓ **Search results at the big search engines are skewed.** Many Web site owners use them to check their sites' rankings, sometimes several times a week. Thus, many searches are not true searches. Metacrawlers can't be used for this purpose, so they provide cleaner results.
- ✓ **Wordtracker analyzes searches to find what appear to be fake, automated searches.** Some companies carry out hundreds of searches an hour on particular keywords — company or product names, for instance — in an attempt to trick search engines into thinking these keywords generate a lot of interest.

Wordtracker is well worth the price. You can pay for access by the day (£4.20, around \$7.25 currently), the week (£14/\$24.15), the month (£28/\$48.31), three months (£69/\$119.04), or the year (£140/\$241.53). Most professionals in the SEO business have a regular account with Wordtracker, but for individual sites, it may be worth just getting a day or two of access. One strategy is to build your list first, as described in this chapter, and then sign up for a day and run Wordtracker for that day. You may get enough done in a couple of hours; if not, you can always sign up for another day. (Of course these prices may change, so check the Wordtracker site.)

Anyone heavily involved in the Web and search engines can easily get addicted to this tool. Sometimes you've just got to know exactly how often people are searching for `paris hilton` (70,000 times a day), `paris hilton video` (46,000 times a day), `star warsvkid` (8,000), or `craig the dog faced boy` (14).

Creating a Wordtracker project

Wordtracker lets you create projects so you can store different groups of terms — perhaps one for each Web site or, if you're a consultant, one for each client. The first thing you should do — after plunking down your money and setting up the standard username and password stuff — is create a project. Here's how:

1. **Click the Projects button on the main navigation page (which you see after you log in).**

The Projects page appears, as shown in Figure 4-3.

2. **Give your project a name and then click the Change Project Name button to save the new name.**

Wordtracker allows you to have seven projects, storing different keyword lists. You can empty old projects and rename them as you move on to new Web projects. This may be an important feature if you're an SEO professional or a Web designer working on multiple Web sites.

3. To load your existing list into the project, click the **Import** button, copy and paste the words from the list into the large text box (one entry per line, as shown in Figure 4-4), and click the **Submit** button.

I recommend that you leave the Compressed Import option button selected. Doing so changes all the entries to lowercase, regardless of how you typed them. Remember that Google, and most other search systems, are not case sensitive anyway, so *Rodent* is the same as *rodent*.

After the list is imported, another page opens, which contains your list with a number in parentheses next to each keyword or keyword phrase; this is the count, the number of times the word or phrase appears in the database.

Type your new project name here. Click here to set the new name.

Wordtracker
Webmaster Keywords

Home Support Account News Projects Thu, December 4 2003

Current Project

Last database backup: 8am Wednesday, 3rd December 2003 (GMT)
Click any database (Wordtracker, Goto or 7Search) to be taken straight to the Keyword Universe.

Project Name: Rodents Change Project Name

Basket:	Number of Keywords			
Wordtracker	None	Reset	Export	Import
Goto	None	Reset	Export	Import
7Search	None	Reset	Export	Import

Stored Projects

To make any project the CURRENT project, simply click on 'make current'.

Name: calendar Make Current Name: gluco Make Current

Basket:	No. of Keywords	Basket:	No. of Keywords

Click here to view the words stored in the project. Click here to load the selected project.

Figure 4-3:
Word-
tracker's
Projects
page.

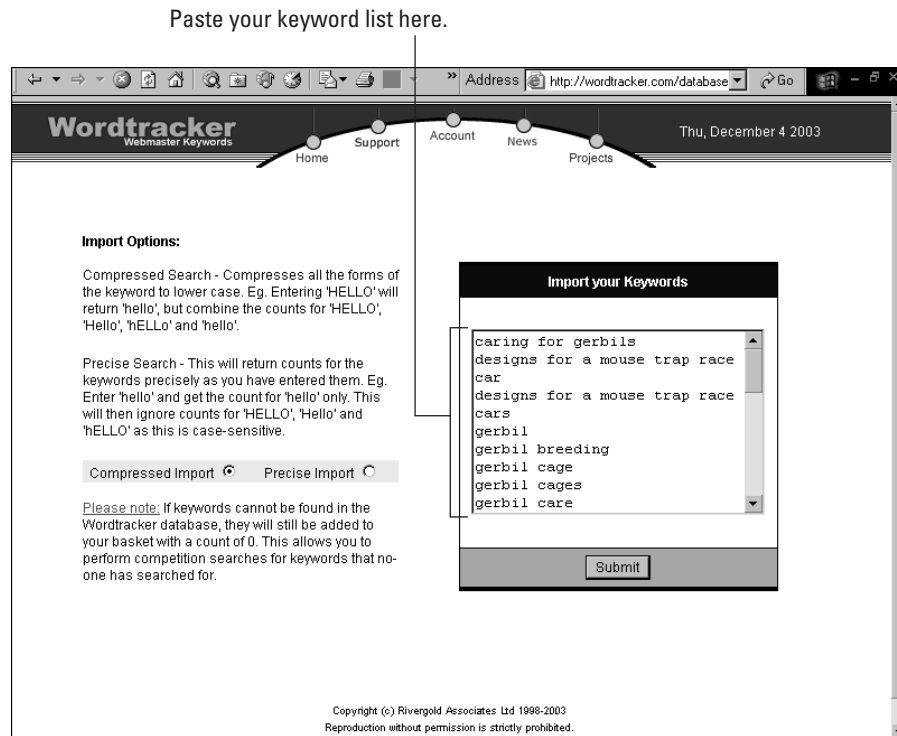


Figure 4-4:
The Import
page.

Adding keywords to your initial project list

To use Wordtracker to find more words that might be appropriate, follow these steps:

1. **Click the Home button in the navigation bar at the top of any Wordtracker page to go to the Wordtracker home page.**
2. **Click the Keyword Universe link.**
You see the page shown in Figure 4-5.
3. **Type the first keyword in your list into the box on the left and then click the Proceed button.**

Both the Lateral and Thesaurus check boxes are selected by default. Here's the lowdown on these options:

- **Lateral:** Wordtracker looks for 200 Web sites it thinks are related to the word you typed, and grabs keywords from their KEYWORDS meta tags. (You find out more about the KEYWORDS meta tags in Chapter 6.)
- **Thesaurus:** Wordtracker looks up the word in a thesaurus.

After clicking the Proceed button, wait a few minutes while Wordtracker builds a list. Then scroll down the left frame to see the list.

4. Click a word in the list in the left frame to load the corresponding table in the right frame.

The table shows you actual searches from the Wordtracker database containing the word you clicked, and other keyword phrases containing that word. So, for instance, if you click *rodent*, you see search terms such as *rodents*, *rodent control*, *rodents revenge*, *rodent*, *rodent repellent*, *rodent pictures*, and so on.



Next to each term in the table, you see two numbers:

- ✓ **Count:** The number of times Wordtracker found the search term in its database. The database contains searches for 60 days — more than 310 million of them. So the count is the number of times the term was used in the last two months in the search engines from which Wordtracker builds its database.
- ✓ **Predict:** An estimate of how many times this term is likely to be used each day, in all the Internet search engines combined.

Wordtracker simply extrapolates from the count number to arrive at the predict number. Wordtracker assumes that the search engines it's working with account for a certain percentage of all searches, so it simply takes the count number and multiplies accordingly.

I believe these numbers are too low. From what I've seen and heard, these terms may actually be searched for 50 to 100 percent more often than the predict number. However, what counts is the relative, rather than absolute, number. If one phrase has a predict value of 12,000 times a day, and another one 6,000 times a day, the actual numbers may be 24,000 and 12,000, but what really matters is that one is much more than the other.

Here's what you can do with the list of search terms in the right frame:

- ✓ Click the Click Here to Add All Keywords to Your Basket link to add all the keyword phrases to your project. (The number next to the basket in the bottom frame increases as you add phrases to the project.)
- ✓ Click a term to add just that term to the project.
- ✓ Click the shovel icon in the Dig column to see similar terms. Click the shovel in the *rodents revenge* row, for example, to see a smaller list containing *download rodents revenge*, *rodents revenge download*, *download rodents revenge game*, and so on.

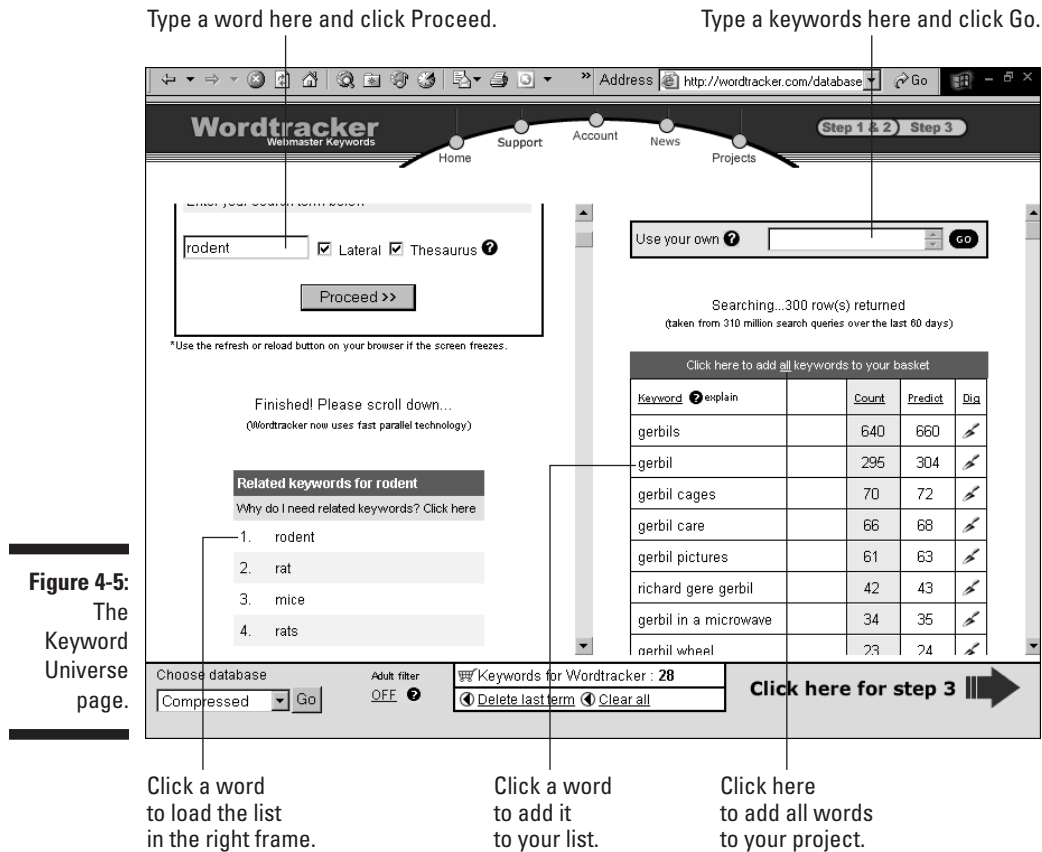


Figure 4-5:
The
Keyword
Universe
page.

Should you add all the words in the list at once, or one by one? That depends. If the list contains mostly words that seem to you to be relevant keywords, click the All link at the top to add them all — you can remove the few that are no good later. If most of the list seems to be garbage, scroll down the list and add only the useful words.

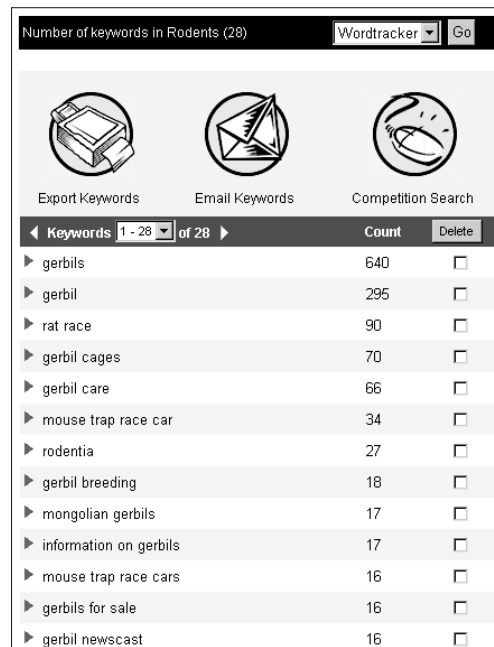
After you've finished tweaking the list, here are a couple of other things you can do:

- ✓ Click another keyword phrase in the left frame to load a new list in the right frame with search terms related to that phrase.
- ✓ Type another word from your original list into the box at the top of the left frame. Wordtracker then retrieves more terms related to it from the thesaurus and KEYWORDS meta tags.
- ✓ Type a term into the text box at the top of the right frame and click the Go button to create a list based on that term.

The left frame is handy because it runs your words through a thesaurus and grabs words from `KEYWORD` meta tags. But I also like to use the text box at the top of the right frame: I grab a few keyword phrases from my list and copy them into the box (each one needs to be on a separate line). This is a quick way to find matching phrases for the terms already in your list. Typing a word into the text box at the top of the right frame is the same thing as clicking a word in the left frame — Wordtracker looks for real search phrases that include the word. Type (or paste) multiple words into that text box, and Wordtracker looks for matches for each of those words.

Cleaning up the list

After you've worked through your list, checking for relevant terms, click the [Click Here for Step 3](#) link at the bottom of the page. On the Step 3 page, you see the first 100 words in your project, with the most common appearing first (see Figure 4-6).



Number of keywords in Rodents (28) Wordtracker Go

Export Keywords Email Keywords Competition Search

Keywords	Count	Delete
▶ gerbils	640	<input type="checkbox"/>
▶ gerbil	295	<input type="checkbox"/>
▶ rat race	90	<input type="checkbox"/>
▶ gerbil cages	70	<input type="checkbox"/>
▶ gerbil care	66	<input type="checkbox"/>
▶ mouse trap race car	34	<input type="checkbox"/>
▶ rodentia	27	<input type="checkbox"/>
▶ gerbil breeding	18	<input type="checkbox"/>
▶ mongolian gerbils	17	<input type="checkbox"/>
▶ information on gerbils	17	<input type="checkbox"/>
▶ mouse trap race cars	16	<input type="checkbox"/>
▶ gerbils for sale	16	<input type="checkbox"/>
▶ gerbil newscast	16	<input type="checkbox"/>

Figure 4-6: Clean your keyword-phrase list here.

Scroll through this list carefully. Look for any keywords that really aren't appropriate. It's possible you'll find some, especially if you clicked the All link at the top of the previous page. To delete a term, select the check box to the right of the unwanted term and click the Delete button at the top. Then scroll to the bottom of the list and work your way up; if you delete 15 terms from the page, 15 more are pulled from the next page, so you need to check them as well. Use the right-pointing triangle at the top of the list to move to the next page.

Remove only those terms that are totally inappropriate. Don't worry too much right now about terms that are not used much or terms that may be too general. I get to that topic in a moment.

Exporting the list

When you're satisfied with your list, you can export it from Wordtracker. At the top of the Step 3 page, click the Export Keywords button to open a window that contains your compiled list. The window contains a list of keyword phrases — a simple list with no numbers. To display the list with the count and predict numbers, click the Click Here to Get a Tab Delimited List of Keywords link.

You can highlight this list and copy and paste it into a word processor or text editor. You can also click the Email Keywords button at the top of the Step 3 page to e-mail the list to yourself or a colleague.

Competitive analysis

By doing a competitive analysis, you can identify terms that are searched for frequently but yield few results. If you then use these keywords on your pages, your pages are more likely to rank high in the search engines because you face little competition from other sites.

To do a competitive analysis, click the Competition Search button at the top of the Step 3 page. On the next page that appears (as shown in Figure 4-7), you can check various search engines and directories, two at a time. Wordtracker tells you how often the term is searched for and how often the keyword phrase appears in Web pages in the indexes you selected.

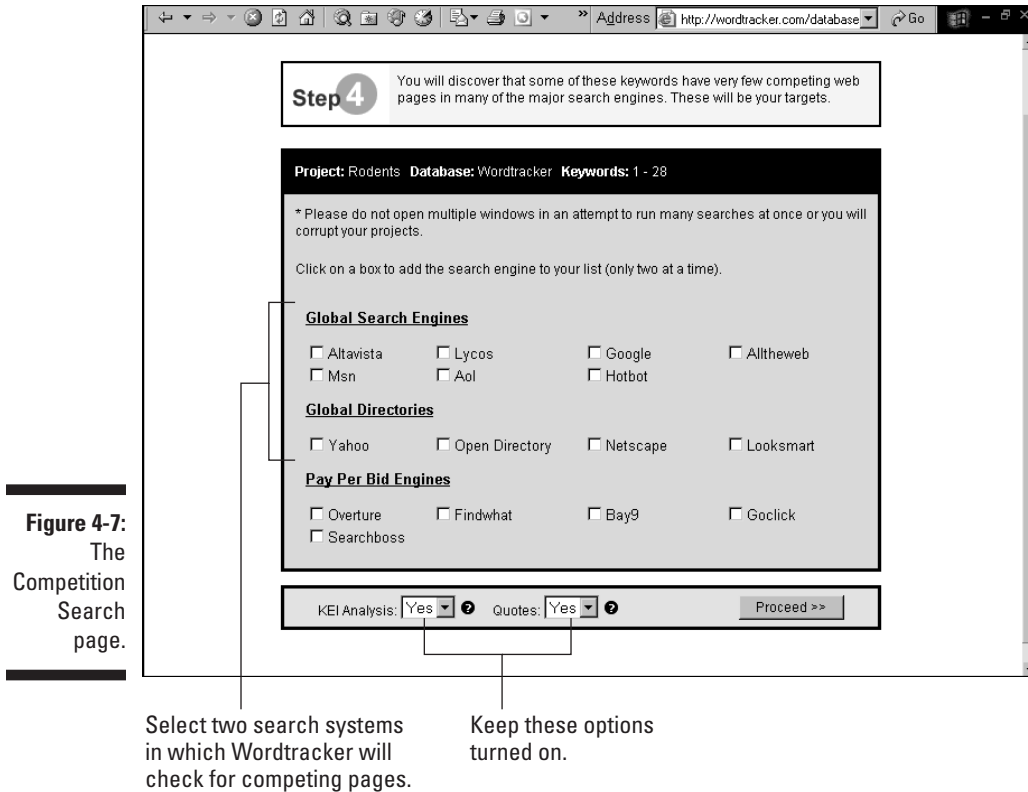


Figure 4-7:
The
Competition
Search
page.

At the bottom of the Competition Search page, you find the KEI Analysis and Quotes drop-down list boxes. You generally want to keep these options turned on:

- ✓ **Quotes:** Wordtracker encloses your search term in quotation marks when entering it into the selected search engines. For instance, if your phrase is *rodent racing*, Wordtracker searches for "rodent racing". The quotation marks tell the search engine that you want to find only those pages that contain the exact term *rodent racing*, providing a better idea of your true competition. If you search for the term without using quotation marks, you get all the pages with the word *rodent* or *racing* somewhere in the page (the terms don't necessarily appear together or in order), which returns far more results. You want to leave the Quotes option turned on because you're competing with sites that have the exact term in their pages.

✓ **KEI Analysis:** Wordtracker calculates the KEI (Keyword Effectiveness Index), which is a comparison of the number of people searching for a term and the number of Web pages returned by a search engine for that term. (See Figure 4-8.) The higher the KEI, the more powerful the term.



KEI is not always useful. A term that has few competing pages and is searched upon infrequently can generate a high KEI. This term would have little benefit to you because although the competition is low, the number of searches is also low.



The Competition Search also provides information on pay-per-click (PPC) services — services that allow you to buy a position in the search results, as discussed in Chapter 15. Wordtracker shows you the prices that you'd pay for these terms in a variety of PPC systems. Some people like to run a PPC check even if they're not doing a PPC campaign because it may give them an idea of what terms other people think are effective for sales. However, just because others are spending a lot of money on a particular term doesn't mean they're actually making money from it!

The KEI indicates a phrase with a very high Count : Competition ratio.

No.	Keyword (Why quotes? Click here)	KEI Analysis	Count	24Hrs	Competing
1	"gerbil newscast"	256.000	16	6	1
2	"how to build a mouse trap race car"	64.000	8	3	0
3	"designs for a mouse trap race cars"	36.000	6	2	0
4	"human rat race greetings"	36.000	6	2	0
5	"designs for a mouse trap race car"	36.000	6	2	0
6	"mouse trap race car designs"	25.000	5	2	0
7	"mouse trap races"	24.000	12	4	6
8	"mouse trap race cars"	18.286	16	6	14
9	"how to make a mouse trap race car"	16.000	4	1	0
10	"gerbil cages"	10.938	70	25	448
11	"gerbil in a blender"	7.682	13	5	22
12	"mouse trap race car"	6.494	34	12	178

Figure 4-8:
The
Competition
Report.

More ways to find keywords

Wordtracker has a number of other search tools available (although I use mainly the ones I discuss earlier in the chapter):

- ✓ **Full Search:** Wordtracker returns similar terms in the same conceptual ballpark (a very large ballpark, though).
- ✓ **Simple Search:** You can dump a bunch of keyword phrases into a text box to find actual search terms that include those keywords. For example, *rat* turns up *rat terrier*, *pet rats*, *naked mole rat*, and so on.
- ✓ **Exact/Precise Search:** This is a mixture of several tools, including the Exact Search, the Compressed Exact Search, and the Precise Search.
- ✓ **Compressed Search:** This is useful for finding plurals and singulars of words from a single list.
- ✓ **Comprehensive Search:** You can dig out a few useful related terms mixed in with a large number of unrelated terms.
- ✓ **Misspelling Search:** This is a good way to find common misspellings of your keywords.

Choosing Your Keywords

When you've finished working with a keyword tool, look at the final list to determine how popular a keyword phrase actually is. You may find that many of your original terms are not worth bothering with. My clients often have terms on their preliminary lists — the lists they put together without the use of a keyword tool — that are virtually never used. You'll also find other terms near the top of the final list that you hadn't thought about. The next several sections help you clean up this list.

Removing ambiguous terms

Scan through your list for ambiguous terms, keyword phrases that probably won't do you any good for various reasons.

You missed the target

Take a look at your list to determine whether you have any words that may have different meanings to different people. Sometimes you can immediately spot such terms. One of my clients thought he should use the term *cam* on

his site. To him, the term referred to *Complementary and Alternative Medicine*. But to the vast majority of searchers, *cam* means something different. Search Wordtracker on the term *cam*, and you come up with phrases such as *web cams*, *web cam*, *free web cams*, *live web cams*, *cam*, *cams*, *live cams*, *live web cams*, and so on. To most searchers, the term *cam* refers to Web cams, cameras used to place pictures and videos into Web sites. The phrases from this example generate a tremendous amount of competition, but few of them would be useful to my client.

Ambiguous terms

A client of mine wanted to promote a product designed for controlling fires. One common term he came up with was *fire control system*. However, he discovered that when he searched on that term, most sites that turned up don't promote products relating to stopping fires. Rather, they're sites related to *fire control* in the military sense: weapons-fire control.

This kind of ambiguity is something you really can't determine from a system such as Wordtracker, which tells you how often people search on a term. In fact, it's often hard to spot such terms even by searching to see what turns up when you use the phrase. If a particular type of Web site turns up when you search for the phrase, does that mean people using the phrase are looking for that type of site? You can't say for sure. A detailed analysis of your Web site's access logs may give you an idea; see Chapter 18 for the details.

Very broad terms

Look at your list for terms that are incredibly broad, too general to be of use. You may be tempted to go after high-ranking words, but make sure that people are really searching for your products when they type in the word.

Suppose that your site is promoting *degrees in information technology*. You discover that around 40 people search for this term each day, but approximately 1,500 people a day search on the term *information technology*. Do you think many people searching on the term *information technology* are really looking for a degree? Probably not. Although the term generates 40,000 to 50,000 searches a month, few of these will be your targets. Here are a few reasons why you should forgo this term:

- ✓ It's probably a very competitive term, which means ranking well on it would be difficult.
- ✓ You may be better off spending the time and effort focusing on another, more relevant term.
- ✓ It's difficult to optimize Web pages for a whole bunch of search terms (see Chapter 6), so if you optimize for one term, you won't be optimizing for another, perhaps more appropriate, term.

Picking keyword combinations

Sometimes it's a good idea to target terms lower down on your list, rather than the ones up top, because the lower terms *include* the higher terms. Suppose that you're selling an e-commerce system and you find the following list (the numbers are the *predict* numbers, the number of times that Wordtracker believes the term is used each day):

```
1828e-commerce
1098ecommerce
881 shopping cart
574 shopping cart software
428 shopping carts
260 ecommerce software
130 ecommerce solutions
109 e-commerce software
92 e-commerce solutions
58 shopping carts and accessories
26 ecommerce software solution
```

Notice the term *e-commerce*. This is probably not a great term to target because it's very general and has a lot of competition. But lower down on the list is the term *e-commerce solutions*. This term is a combination of two keyword phrases: *e-commerce* and *e-commerce solutions*. Thus, you can combine the predict numbers: 1,828 searches a day plus 130 a day. If you target *e-commerce solutions* and optimize your Web pages for that term, you're also optimizing for *e-commerce*.

Notice also the term *ecommerce* (which search engines regard as different from *e-commerce*) and the term a little lower on the list, *ecommerce software*. A term even lower down encompasses both of these terms: *ecommerce software solution*. Optimize your pages for *ecommerce software solution*, and you've just optimized for three terms at once.

Use the keyword-analysis procedure I've described in this chapter, and you'll have a much better picture of your keyword landscape. Unlike the majority of Web site owners, you'll have a good view of how people are searching for your products and services.

