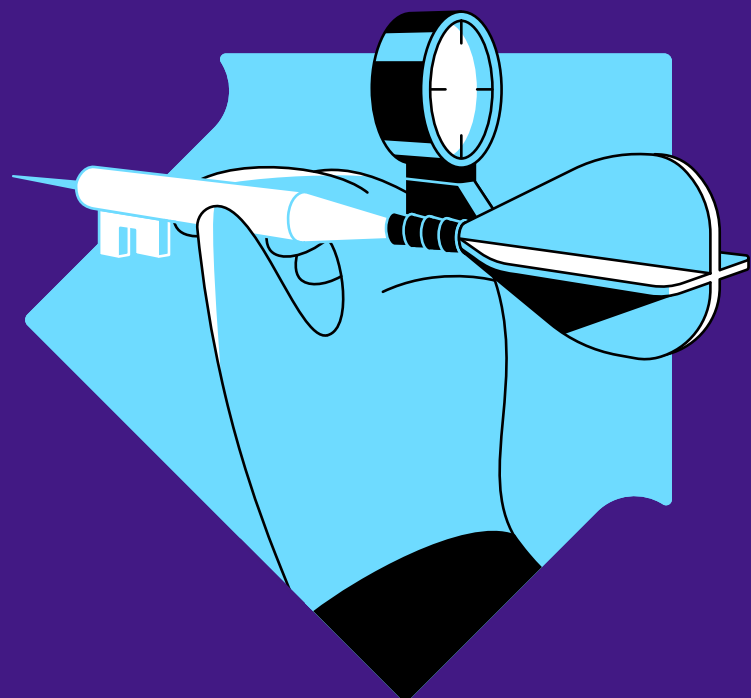# Semrush Keyword Difficulty

Why It is the Most Accurate
and How to Use It
For Your SEO Strategy

SEMRUSH

What is Keyword Difficulty?

Keyword difficulty is one of the essential metrics when it comes to carrying out keyword research. This metric helps marketers evaluate their potential to get to the top of the SERPs when building their master keyword list for their overall SEO strategy.

Simply put, if KD=90, any attempts to win the top positions for this keyword will be hindered by stiff competition. By the same token, a lower KD score, for example, one that equals 25, means there will be relatively higher chances to get to the top of the SERP via SEO.

A digital marketer or an SEO specialist needs to see the most accurate metrics in order to base their strategy on reliable and consistent data. In reality, keyword difficulty calculations do vary, sometimes significantly,
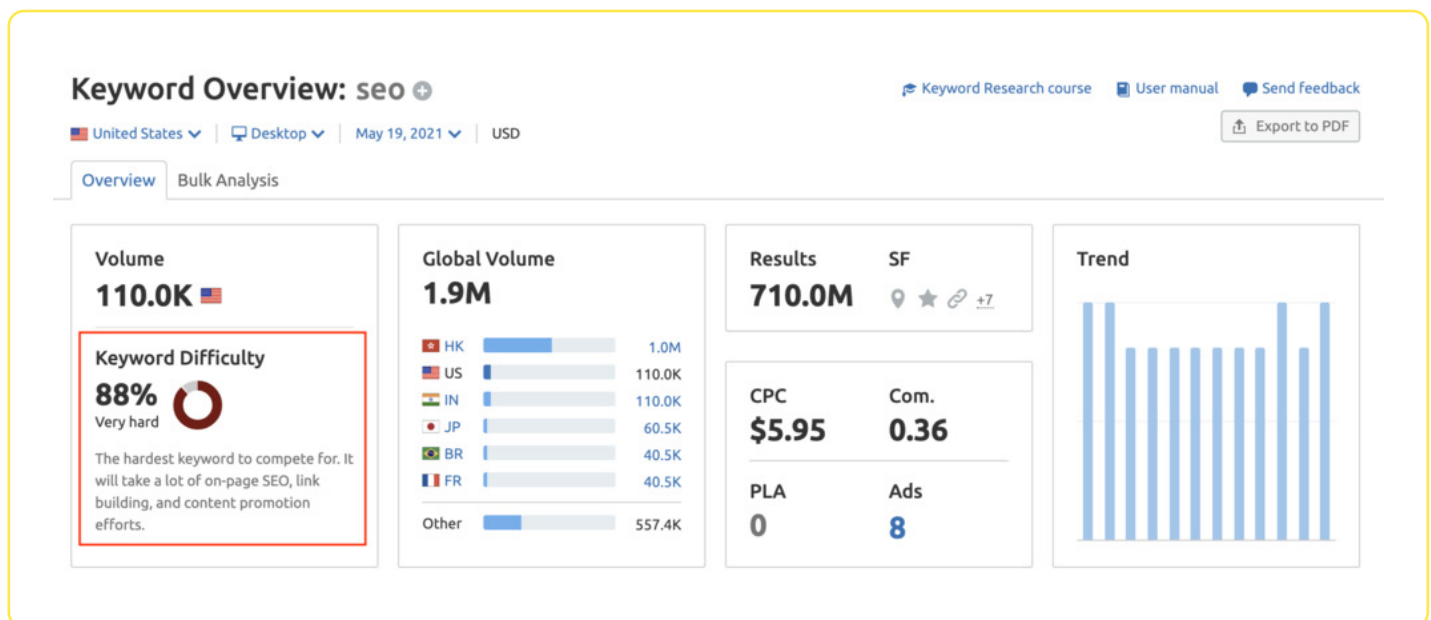
between different tools that are available now on the market. Most tools use a limited number of parameters to calculate keyword difficulty. Eventually, important data is missed out, thus impacting the final calculations.

Since a myriad of companies are fighting for the same audience's attention, they need high-quality, targeted content to cut through the clutter and reach potential customers.

Why is Semrush's Keyword Difficulty the Most Accurate?

In 2021, Semrush relaunched its keyword difficulty metric based on a formula that takes into account all important parameters, ensure the contextual balance, and finally provide the most accurate KD value for a particular keyword. The new metric was extensively lab tested and is now available in all Semrush keyword suite tools. Learn more about the KD comparison research between different KD metrics here ↗

Keyword Overview: seo ⊕

🚩 Keyword Research course   📖 User manual   💬 Send feedback

🇺🇸 United States ⌄ | 🖥 Desktop ⌄ | May 19, 2021 ⌄ | USD

⬆ Export to PDF

Overview   Bulk Analysis

Volume
110.0K 🇺🇸

Keyword Difficulty
88%
Very hard

The hardest keyword to compete for. It will take a lot of on-page SEO, link building, and content promotion efforts.

Global Volume
1.9M

🇭🇰 HK   1.0M
🇺🇸 US   110.0K
🇮🇳 IN   110.0K
🇯🇵 JP   60.5K
🇧🇷 BR   40.5K
🇫🇷 FR   40.5K
Other   557.4K

Results   **SF**
710.0M   📍 ★ 🔗 +7

CPC   **Com.**
$5.95   0.36

PLA   **Ads**
0   8

Trend

How Semrush Keyword Difficulty Is Calculated

Step 1: SERP Analysis

Identification of the median value for three metrics across the URLs on the 1st page of search results:

- The median number of referring domains pointing to the URLs that are ranking.

- The median Authority Score of the domains that are ranking.

- The median ratio of follow/nofollow links pointing to the URLs that are ranking.

## Step 2: Keyword Parameters Analysis

In addition to the SERP-related factors above, we also look at some qualities of the keyword itself. Each factor carries a different weight in our formula based on how much they are likely to impact the challenge of ranking on the first page.

Weight Share	Parameter
41.22%	Median # of referring domains for ranking URLs
16.99%	Median Authority Score for ranking domains
9.47%	Search volume
9.17%	Median follow/no-follow ratio for ranking URLs
4.74%	Featured snippet
4.07%	Instant answer
3.50%	Branded keyword
3.39%	Local pack
2.71%	Knowledge panel
2.03%	Top stories
1.36%	People also ask
1.36%	Site links
-2.24%	Word count in keyword
-8.59%	No SERP features
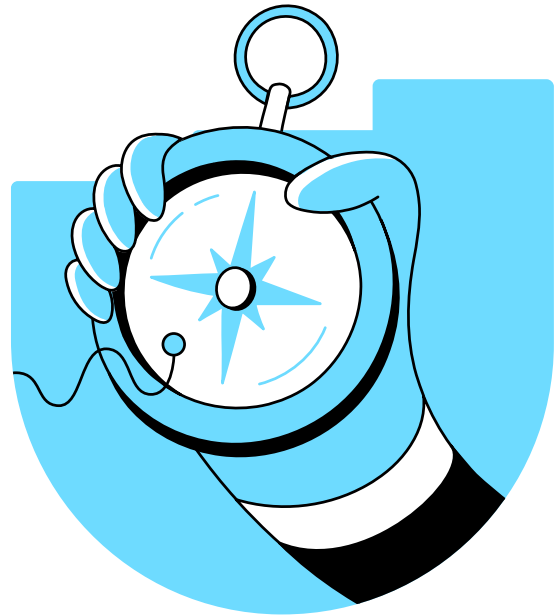
Step 3: Calculation

Finally, after calculating KD% for a keyword, we then will weigh the score based on what regional database it's in. This helps us avoid outliers and inflated/deflated scores in less populated countries.

Methodology

1 To inform the formula, our data scientists and engineers ran extensive research into patterns of SERP movement **among 120,000 keywords in our database.**

2 We then took this data and analyzed volatility and movement among SERPs to identify which were most difficult to break into the first page via SEO.

3 Finally, we identified patterns and correlations **between 100+ parameters for each keyword.**
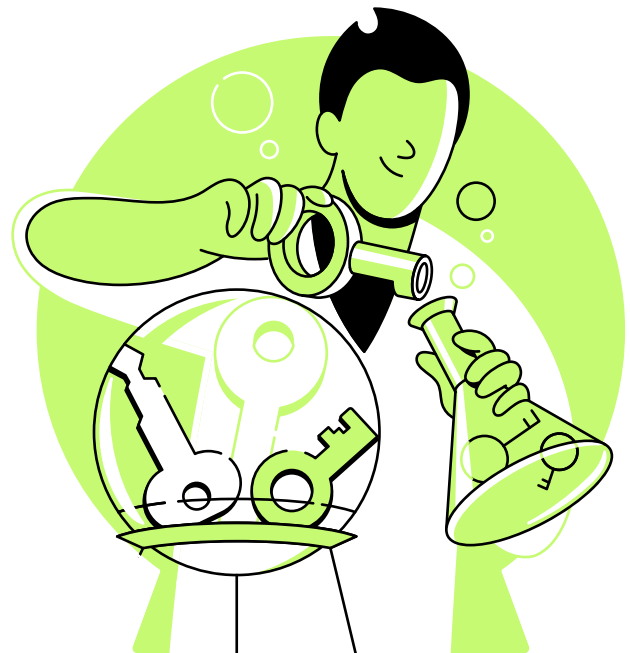
What Can You Do With the Semrush Keyword Difficulty?

✓ When building a new campaign, use KD% to find low competition keywords for the keyword list.

✓ Prioritize long-tail keywords and low hanging fruit for quicker SEO wins.

✓ In a competitive analysis, run a Keyword Gap to discover keywords in your competitor's SEO strategy that could be good targets for you.

✓ Filter away high KD% keywords that would just waste your time/budget.

✓ Audit an existing site and set keyword priorities for SEO vs. PPC.

✓ Target the more difficult keywords with PPC instead of/in addition to SEO.

What Keyword Difficulty Score You Should Look For?

0–14 = Very easy

These are the best opportunities to start ranking new webpages on Google as soon as possible without backlinks.

15–29 = Easy

These keywords have some competition but are still possible to rank for when you're starting out. To be able to rank for these, you'll need quality content focused on the keyword's intent.

30–49 = Possible

Slightly more competition. You'll need well-structured and unique content appropriately optimized for your keywords.

→

50–69 = Difficult

You'll need to have some backlinks in addition to your well-structured, helpful and optimized content in order to compete here.

70–84 = Hard

Even stiffer competition. These keywords will demand more effort in terms of getting higher authority referring domains in order to rank your well-optimized and helpful content among the top pages.

85–100 = Very hard

The absolute hardest keywords to compete for, especially for a new website. These will demand a lot of on page SEO, link building, and content promotion efforts to eventually rank and acquire traffic.
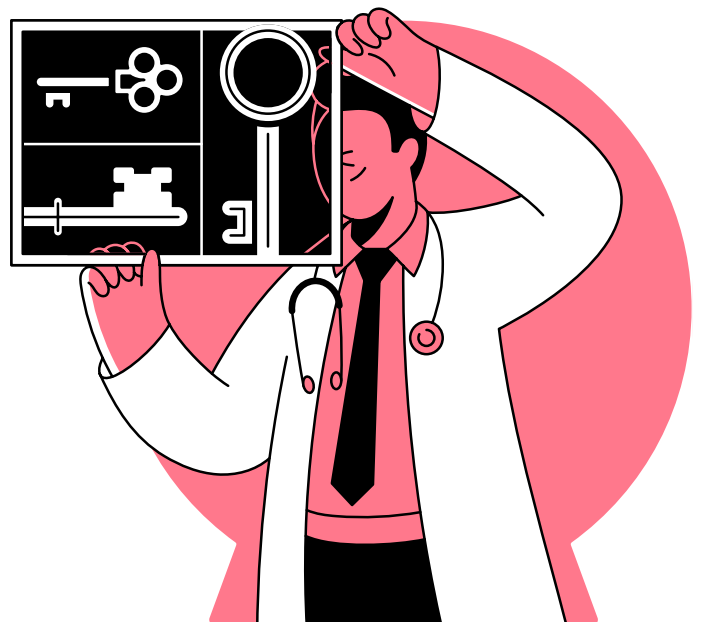
What Semrush Tools Have the KD Metric?

Keyword Magic Tool

Organic Research

Keyword Manager

Organic Traffic Insights

Keyword Overview

Advertising Research

Keyword Gap

Feel free to always let us know your thoughts and feedback at
keyword-research-feedback@semrush.com ↗