Glossary of Metrics Used in Google Analytics (GA)

In order to understand the metrics used in Google Analytics (GA), it is first necessary to understand the relationship between dimensions and metrics.

A dimension is a descriptive attribute that can be ascribed values, while metrics are the measurable values of that attribute. Where a dimension describes and defines data, metrics measure data. In the All Pages Report, in the content section of GA, the default dimension is Page, and the default metrics include Pageviews, Unique Pageviews, Entrances, etc. Below is a table showing more examples of dimensions and possible corresponding metrics:

Dimension	GA Report Section	Possible Corresponding Metrics
City	Audience	Visits, Pages per Visit, Bounce Rate
Browser	Audience	New Visits, Bounce Rate, Average Visit Duration
Referral Source	Traffic Sources	Visits, Unique Visitors, Bounce Rate
Page	Content	Pageviews, Unique Pageviews, Average Time on Page
Landing Page	Content	Pageviews, Bounces, Bounce Rate
Visitor Type	Custom	Visits, Visits with Site Search, Percentage Search Refinement

GA has a very long list of metrics, some of which are only useful in e-commerce. The glossary below defines the metrics most commonly found in GA reports.

Metric	Definition	Application
Bounces	A Bounce represents a Visit with only one Pageview.	Whether a Bounce is negative or not depends entirely on the content of the Web page. Some Bounces occur because Visitors enter the site on the page that provides the content they want. ☺ However, you want to limit Bounces from pages that are meant only to direct Visitors to other pages on the website. ☹
Bounce Rate	The Bounce Rate represents the percentage of single-page Visits (Total Bounces divided by total Visits).	**See Bounces**
Entrances	Entrances represent the number of Visits that started on a specific Web page or group of Web pages.	Entrances can show you how often specific Web pages serve as Landing Pages for Visitors. NOTE: if you mistakenly apply Visits to the Page dimension, the data will actually

		represent Entrances, rather than Visits, since Visits cannot be applied at the page-level.
Events	Events represent custom actions that are distinct to a particular GA account. Events can include actions like clicking hyperlinks, images, or stop and play buttons in video players.	EPA tracks clicks on - links to downloadable documents, - email links, - and external links as part of its GA implementation. You can add your own Event tags to track specific actions that are unique to your Web pages.
Exits	Exits represent the number of Visits that ended on a specific Web page or group of Web pages.	Exits are distinct from Bounces: Exits occur in all Visits, but Bounces denote only single page Visits. You want to limit Exits on pages that are meant only to direct Visitors to other pages on the website.
New Visits	New Visits represent the number of first-time Visits during a specified time period. The presence of cookies in the Web browser determines whether it is a New or Return Visit.	New and Return Visits **can be used as metrics or dimensions** (i.e. Visitor Type) to help you understand how Visitor behavior differs across your website. Remember that some Visitors delete cookies and use multiple devices. Both of these factors can inflate New Visit counts.
Page Value	Page Value is used in e-commerce to assign a relative value to any page viewed prior to a monetary transaction.	You are unlikely to use Page Value at EPA.
Pages per Visit	Pages Per Visit represents the average number of Pageviews during the course of a Visit (Total Pageviews divided by Total Visits).	Pages per Visit measures the depth of a Visit and can be a measure of engagement, depending on the content of your website. **Pages per Visit is an average**, and should be measured across different segments to help understand Visitor behavior.
Pageviews	A Pageview represents an HTML file being loaded in a Web browser. Multiple views of the same Web page are counted in this metric. Non-HTML files, such as PDF documents, are typically counted using Events, rather than Pageviews.	Pageviews measure **traffic volume over time at the page-level**, whereas Visits measure traffic at the Visit- or session-level. You can use Pageviews to measure aggregate traffic for groups of Web pages and subsites.
Return Visits	Return Visits represent the number of repeat Visits during a specified time period. The presence of cookies in the Web browser determines whether it is a New or Return Visit.	**See New Visits**

Percentage Search Refinements	% Search Refinements represent the percentage of internal search queries that resulted in at least one additional search in the same Visit.	% Search Refinements can be an indicator of Visitors not finding what they need in one search attempt. Use % Search Refinements carefully, though, because some Visitors may perform multiple searches for different information during the same Visit.
Time on Page	Time on Page represents the average amount of time, in seconds, a Visitor spends on a particular page. Technically, it represents the time between the start time of a given Pageview and the start time of the subsequent Pageview or Event.	EPA tracks external links as Events, so they are used in Time on Page calculations. However, Visits that include only one Page View and no subsequent Events (**see Bounces**), will have a Time on Page of zero seconds. Zeros will lower the average, so Time on Page should be used carefully.
Unique Events	Unique Events represent the number of Visits during which the specified Event (e.g. PDF download), or group of Events, was triggered at least once. Duplicated Events are not included in this metric.	Visitors can trigger the same Event countless times in a single Visit, but it will count as only one Unique Event. Compare Total Events to Unique Events to analyze how Visitors interact with different Web pages.
Unique Pageviews	Unique Pageviews represent the number of Visits during which the specified page, or group of pages, was viewed at least once. Multiple views of the same page and page refreshes are not included in this metric.	Unique Pageviews is an important metric because it functions similar to Visits, only at the page-level. Each Web page can garner many Pageviews per Visit, but only one Unique Pageview, per Visit. Compare Total Pageviews to Unique Pageviews to analyze how Visitors interact with different Web pages.
Unique Visitors	Unique Visitors represent the number of unique Web browsers that access a website during a specified time period. The presence of cookies in those browsers determines whether they have visited the site before. Ideally, each browser is counted as a Unique Visitor only once in a given time period.	Unique Visitors should not be used with short time periods since most Visitors will be unique over the course of a few days. Remember that some Visitors delete cookies and use multiple devices and browsers. These factors can inflate Unique Visitor counts. Like most metrics, it is most helpful for long-term trend analysis.
Visit Duration	Visit Duration represents the average amount of time, in seconds, of a Visit. Technically, it represents the time between the start time of the first Pageview and the start time of the last Pageview or Event.	If the final Pageview of a Visit does not include an Event, like an external link click, there is no way to calculate the amount of time spent on that page. Similarly, Visits with only one Pageview and no Events (**see Bounces**) will have a Visit Duration of zero seconds. Consider measuring Visit Duration for Visits of two or more Pageviews.

Visits	A Visit, or session, represents the full timespan that a Visitor spends on a particular website, starting when the first Web page of that site is loaded in the browser and ending when the Visitor either leaves the website, closes their browser, or the Visit times out after 30 minutes of inactivity.	Visits measure website traffic volume over time and form the foundation for many important Web traffic metrics. Since Visits encompass the full range of activity Visitors perform while on a website, they are not typically used to measure single Web pages or subsites.
Visits with Search	Visits with Search represent the number of Visits in which the Visitor utilized EPA's internal search tool. A successful search is recorded each time the Search Results page loads and the URL string includes the parameter "querytext."	Visits with Search is an important metric because it shows the percentage of Visitors that use EPA search as part of their Visit. Compare this metric across different segments to help understand what audiences are most likely to use internal search.