Improving user experience with the Better Ads Standards

Bad ads are bad for everyone. Some annoy users because they cover up content or aren't relevant, and others disrupt users by slowing browsing. Though they come in many shapes and sizes, bad ads lead to a common outcome — a degraded online experience.
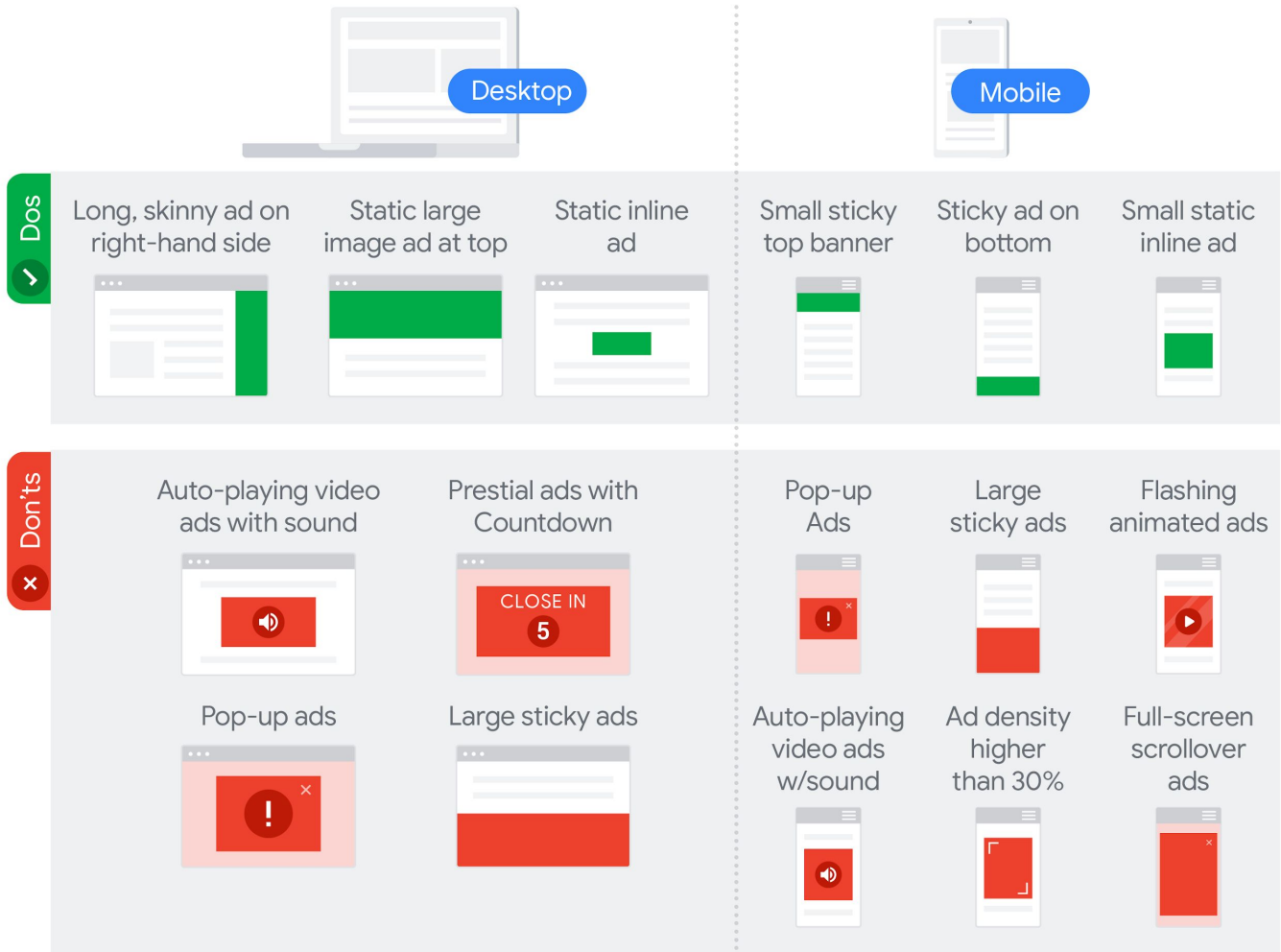
Some people who are understandably frustrated with these experiences install ad blockers — software that prevents ads, good and bad, from appearing. When this happens, every publisher pays the price, as it means they earn less money to pay for the content we all enjoy. For advertisers who create good ads, ad blockers make it challenging to connect with customers. And for consumers, it means they'll no longer see useful, relevant ads.

Learn more about the research, how to implement the standards, how the industry is evolving to take on this issue by visiting the Coalition for Better Ads site — www.betterads.org.

To solve the issues with annoying and disruptive ads, an industry-wide solution was needed. Leading trade groups, publishers, marketers, agencies, and technology providers involved in online media came together to form the Coalition for Better Ads with the goal of improving consumers' experience with online advertising. Together, they developed the Better Ads Standard with the goal of creating a new standard that is backed by empirical data, clarifies how to identify and fix annoying and disruptive ad experiences, and, above all, put the user first.

The Standards

The Better Ads Standards are based on extensive user research conducted by the Coalition about which ad formats and ad experiences consumers think are the most annoying and disruptive. To date, the Coalition has conducted research with more than 66,000 consumers in countries representing 70% of global online advertising spend. The resulting standards are made up of four desktop and eight mobile web display-ad experiences that companies should avoid to maintain a good user experience.

Desktop

Mobile

Dos

| Long, skinny ad on right-hand side | Static large image ad at top | Static inline ad | Small sticky top banner | Sticky ad on bottom | Small static inline ad |

Don'ts

| Auto-playing video ads with sound | Prestial ads with Countdown | Pop-up Ads | Large sticky ads | Flashing animated ads |

CLOSE IN 5

| Pop-up ads | Large sticky ads | Auto-playing video ads w/sound | Ad density higher than 30% | Full-screen scrollover ads |

There are a number of benefits for both publishers and advertisers who implement the standard:

- Publishers who already adhere to the standard benefit from an improved ecosystem, which may result in a shift in advertising spend to good ad experiences and/or reduced user demand for ad blockers.

- Publishers who remove bad experiences to adhere to the standards will be offering their users better experiences on their sites. This has the potential to increase user engagement and brand perception.

- Advertisers who buy inventory and produce creatives that adhere to the standard will be reaching users in a more relevant, engaging way, delivering a more positive overall experience.

As more and more groups adhere to the standard, the impact scales, and it creates a better online environment for everyone.

Tools to help

In addition to being an active member of the Coalition, Google has created these tools to help publishers and support the Better Ads Standard.

- **Ad Experience Report**

  The Ad Experience Report is a new tool in the Google Search Console that lists when we've identified a set of ad experiences that violate the Better Ads Standards. Once the issues are fixed, publishers can request a re-review of their site. This video provides an overview.

- **Funding Choices**

  With Funding Choices publishers can automatically identify ad blocking visitors and ask them to disable their ad blocker on their site — or give them an alternative way to fund your content via Contributor. Which allows users to buy an ad removal pass for your properties.

- **Chrome filtering**

  Starting on Feb 15, 2018, Chrome began filtering ads on websites in the United States, Canada, and across Europe that have a failing status in the Ad Experience Report. Failing sites receive a notice to fix violating experiences 30 days before filtering begins. Filtering will begin for all other global regions on July 9, 2019.

Guidance for getting started

For some publishers, annoying ad experiences can be tempting because they often come with higher CPMs. But while you may think there is a short term revenue gain, the Coalition's research shows in the long run they will cost you if users abandon your site or download ad blockers.

It's also important to understand that you don't need to start from scratch. You can migrate annoying ad experiences to good ones. For example, if advertisers are demanding large canvas ads that you have been fulfilling with pop-ups ads, try using full-screen-inline (scroll) or postitial (click) ad experiences instead.

Google Ad Manager

Determine if your ads are compliant

Follow these steps:

1) Learn and understand what the Better Ads Standards are

2) Self-audit your ad experiences

3) Access the Ad Experience Report to check your status