

Start from the question, not the tool. Buy data before you know the question and you pay for dashboards.

This page goes with the spreadsheet [seo-data-budget-calculator.xlsx](#). Unit prices are as of Oct 2026 — check current pricing before you rely on them. The example plan is for a made-up coffee equipment shop, [example-shop.test](#).

1 The minimal data stack

Part	Source	Cost	What it can't tell you
1 · Traffic	Google Search Console (API)	Free	What happens after the click, searches where you don't appear, hidden (private) queries.
1 · Traffic	Google Analytics 4 (API)	Free	Which search query brought the visitor. Counts bots and old domains until you filter it.
2 · SERP	DataForSEO Live SERP	≈ \$0.003 / keyword (top 10) ≈ \$0.006 (top 30)	Anything about your own clicks. It is one snapshot — store it to compare over time.
3 · Gap	Search volume (Google Ads data)	≈ \$0.09 / task of up to 1 000 keywords	Real demand below ~10 searches a month (reported as 0).
3 · Gap	DataForSEO Labs (competitor rankings)	≈ \$0.012 / task + \$0.00012 / row	Today's truth — it's a database snapshot that can be weeks old. Verify key positions live.

2 A realistic monthly budget (illustrative plan)

Plan for example-shop.test	Calculation	Per month
Weekly SERP check, 200 keywords, depth 10	$200 \times \$0.003 \times 4 \text{ runs}$	\$2.40
Monthly volume refresh, 1 000 keywords	$1 \text{ task} \times \$0.09$	\$0.09
Quarterly competitor export, $3 \times 1\,000$ rows	$3 \times (\$0.012 + 1\,000 \times \$0.00012) \approx \$0.40 / \text{quarter}$	≈ \$0.13
Search Console + Analytics	Your own data	\$0.00
Total — roughly three dollars a month, not three hundred		≈ \$2.62

Not on the list: a daily rank tracker for thousands of keywords, a backlink database subscription, an all-in-one dashboard. Add them only when a specific question needs them.

3 Four habits that keep the bill small

VALIDATE

Before a big run, send one small task — e.g. singular and plural of your main term. Wrong form = wrong dataset.

CACHE

Save every raw response to disk before you parse it. A crashed parser re-reads the file; it never pays twice.

DEPTH

Top 10 unless you have a reason. Deeper results cost more and are rarely needed.

GATE

Every paid run shows an estimated cost and waits for a yes — also when an AI assistant runs the script.

4 Using the calculator

- ☐ Check the **unit prices** (yellow cells) against the current price list.
- ☐ Fill in only the plans you need: **keywords, depth, frequency**.
- ☐ Read the summary: **cost per month**, safety margin, yearly budget, months your balance lasts.
- ☐ Check your **real balance** (free account endpoint) before each big run.