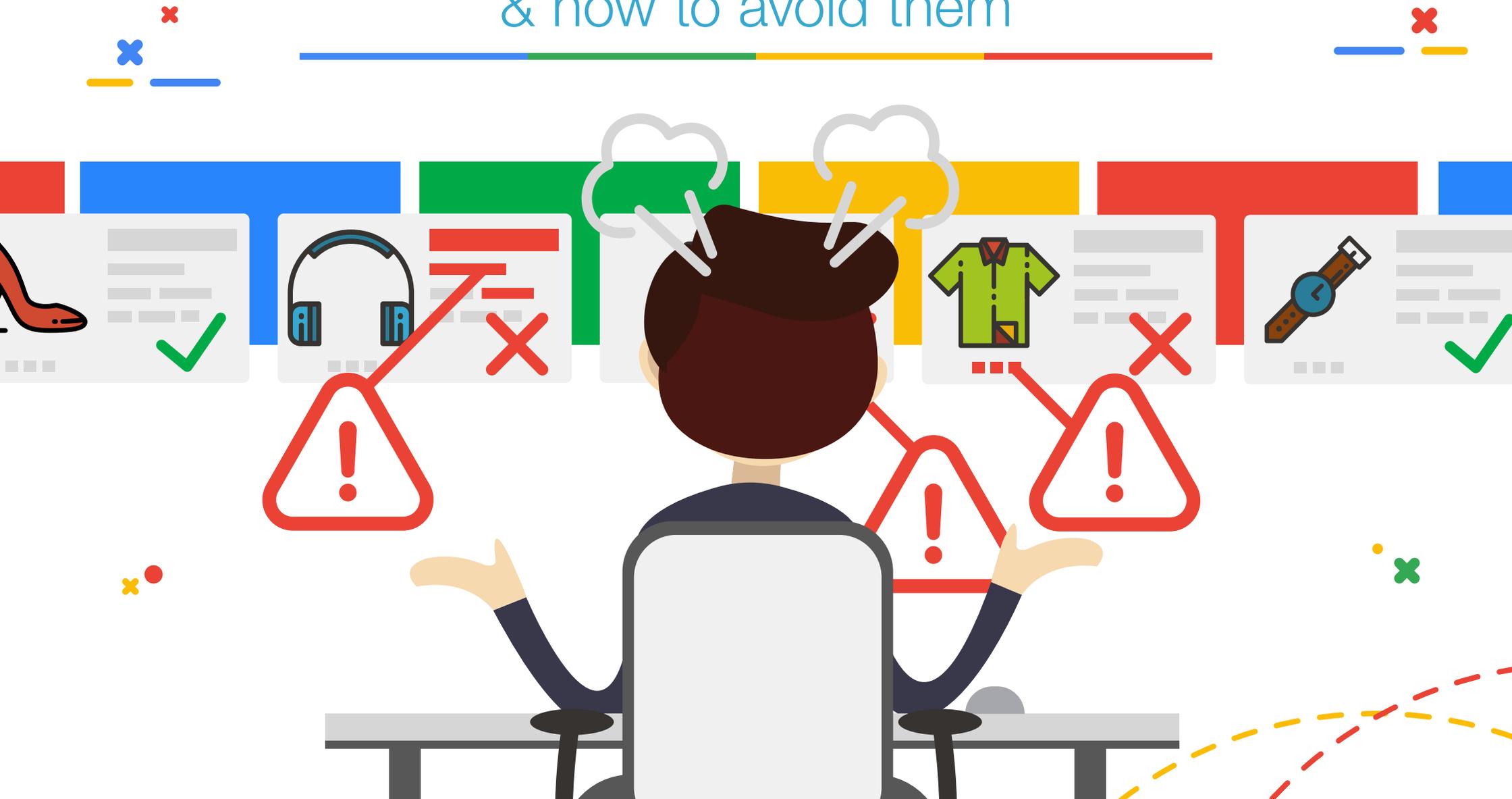


11 Common Google Shopping Feed Errors & how to avoid them

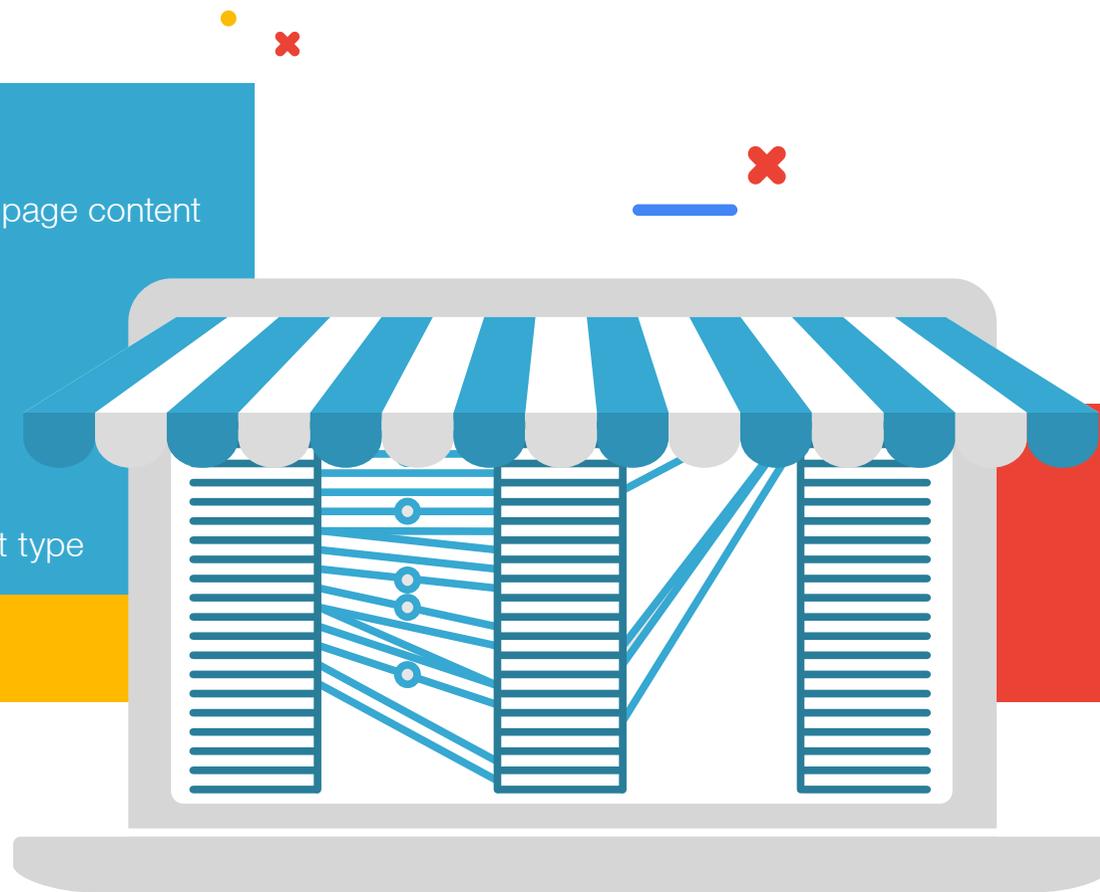


> Introduction

Google prides itself on delivering reliable, quality information to its users, including online shoppers.

This is why, if you've run Google Shopping campaigns, you'll know that it has very specific requirements for your product feed. If your feed does not comply, or if there's a discrepancy between it and the product information on your website, Google Merchant Center will penalize you and may even disapprove your products. In this guide, we cover the 11 most common Google Shopping feed errors and mistakes that we've witnessed over the years. Read on to learn what they are and how to avoid them.

- **Error 1:** Missing required attributes
- **Error 2:** Duplicate product titles
- **Error 3:** Discrepancy between Shopping feed & landing page content
- **Error 4:** Empty product categories
- **Error 5:** Adding custom columns to the Google feed
- **Error 6:** Images are either invalid or too small
- **Error 7:** Adding redirect parameters to the "link" column
- **Error 8:** Incorrect format for "tax"
- **Error 9:** Missing GTIN
- **Error 10:** Faulty shipping values
- **Error 11:** Keyword stuffing or promotional text for product type



➤ ERROR 1: Missing required attributes

Sometimes fashion retailers are missing key product attributes, like brand, color and size in their Shopping feed. For Google, however, it is mandatory to provide this information for certain product categories, such as Apparel products. Why? Because they are vital, purchase-influencing criteria. So, if these attribute fields are blank, your products will be disapproved.

HOW TO AVOID THIS

If you sell apparel products, make sure you analyze feed *before* submitting it to Google Merchant Center to check for any missing values for brand, color and size.

With Productsup this is really quick and easy:

- Our **feed analysis** function will scan your entire product range within seconds and notify you of any blank fields. Should values be missing in the color column, you can use our special rule box that will see if the color is mentioned in your product description. If yes, it will automatically extract and add it to your color column. The same applies for product brand.
- Productsup also lets you combine multiple data sources to create a complete and compelling Shopping feed. So, if your description does not contain the missing values, you can provide these in an additional data feed. Remember to include the product ID, so that the attributes can be applied to the respective product. Alternatively, you can update your main feed with the complete set of values and re-import it to Productsup.



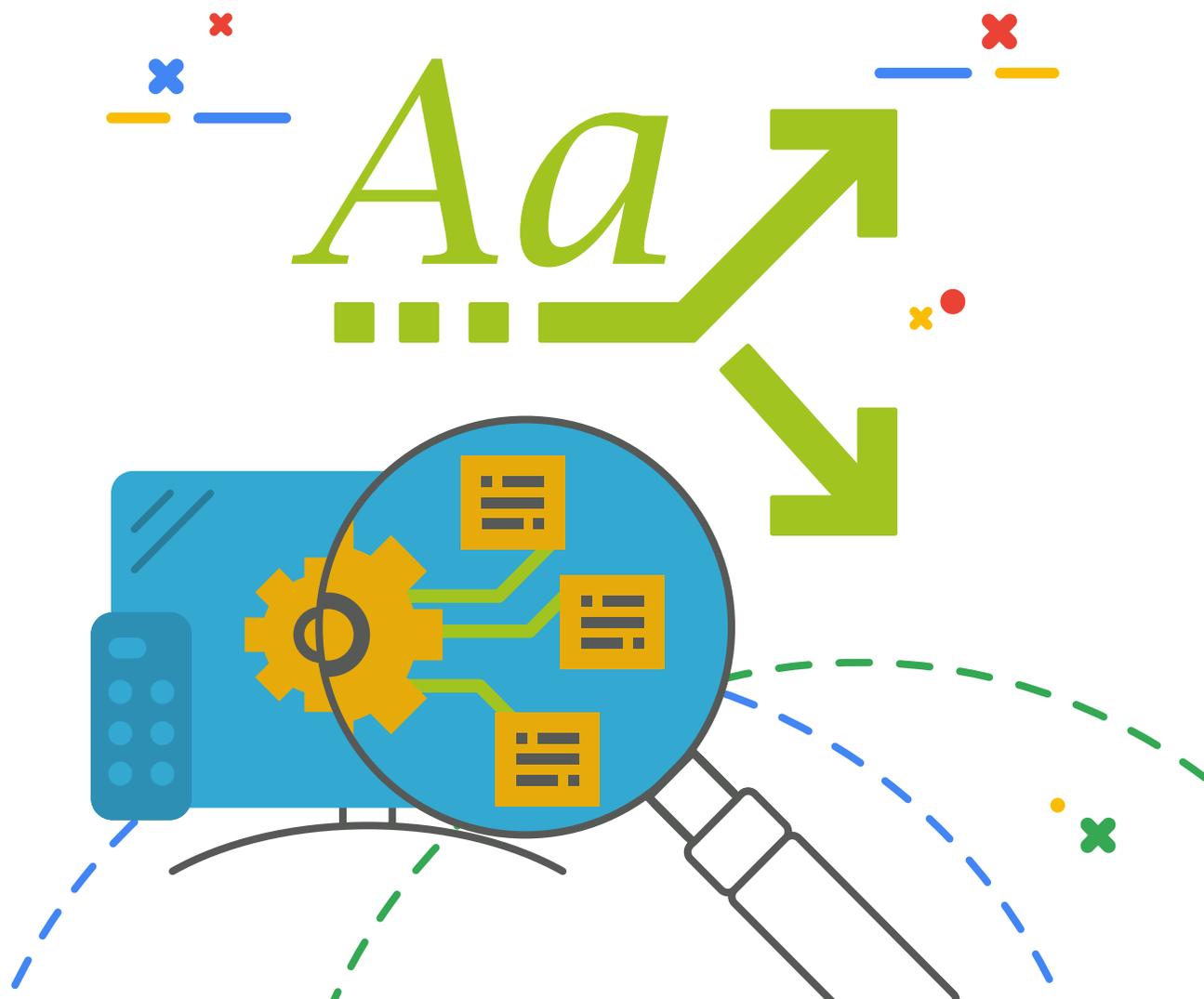
➤ ERROR 2: Duplicate product titles

Never use the same product title for multiple items in your feed. Aside from the product image, the product title is the most important opportunity to capture the shopper's attention. By communicating the unique product details and attributes that differentiate each item, you can help them quickly find what they're looking for.

HOW TO AVOID THIS

Enrich your titles with the different product features and attributes. But be sure to focus on the attributes that will influence the purchase decision. For example, think of how important size becomes when shopping for a television.

On Productsup, it's really easy to append or prepend values to your product titles. Simple rules allow you to add product attributes like the brand, size, color, style or even size type (petite, maternity), for all your products in one go.



➤ ERROR 3: Discrepancy between Shopping feed & landing page content

Shoppers expect the product offer in your Shopping ad to match the details on the landing page. If there is a mismatch, you'll create a poor shopping experience, a decline in shoppers' trust and an increase in shopping cart abandonment. Since the product ad draws the information from your Shopping feed, this is the source against which the landing page content is checked.

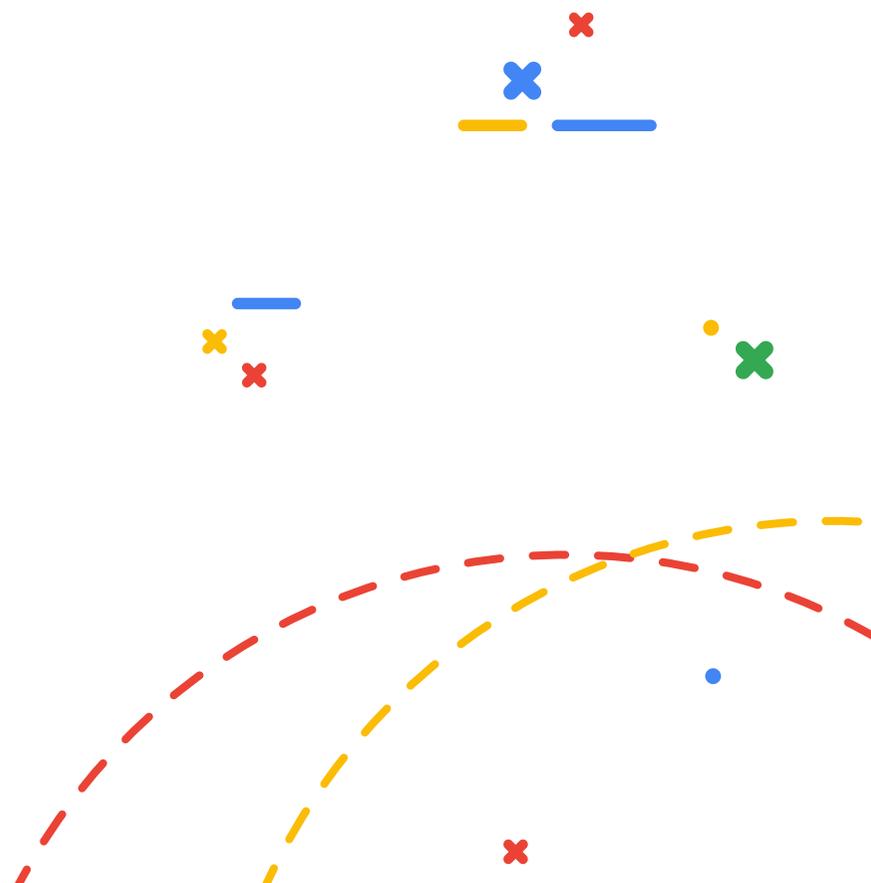
Most commonly, it's the product price and/or availability in a merchant's feed that does not match the value displayed on the online shop. As a result, international shoppers see prices displayed in inaccurate currencies, or shoppers land on a page where the price of an item is more than what was advertised. Another popular mismatch between feed and landing page content is the product color. Why? Contrary to popular belief, your product color should *not* always be standardized.

If the mismatch between content in your feed and the product landing page is too frequent, your products could be disapproved.

HOW TO AVOID THIS

In essence, make sure Google always has your most up-to-date feed.

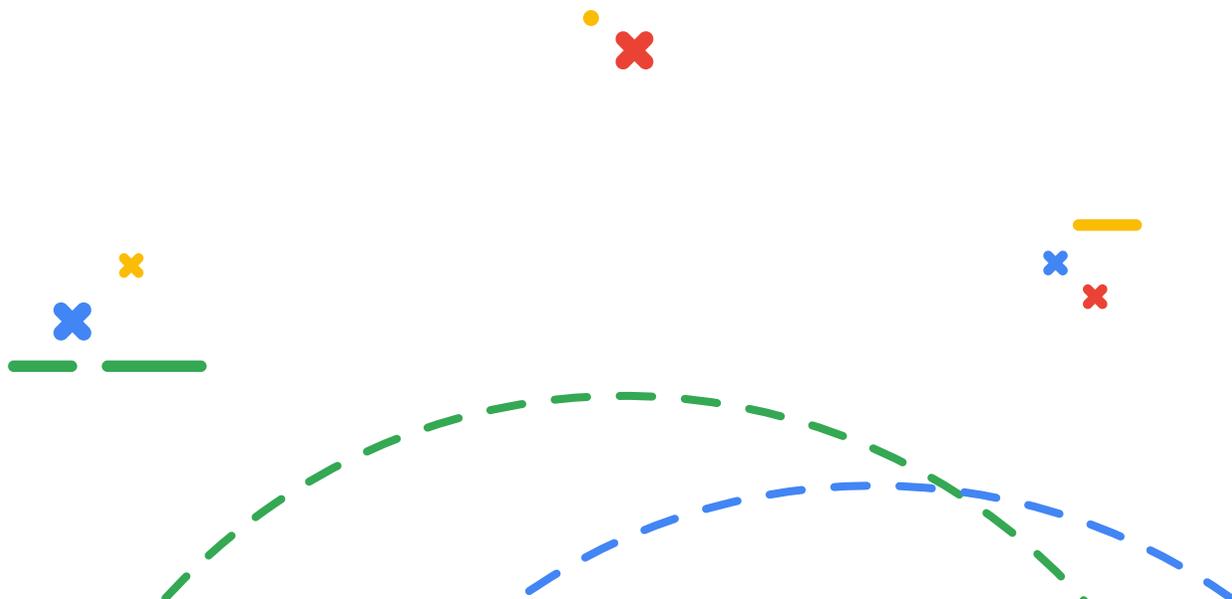
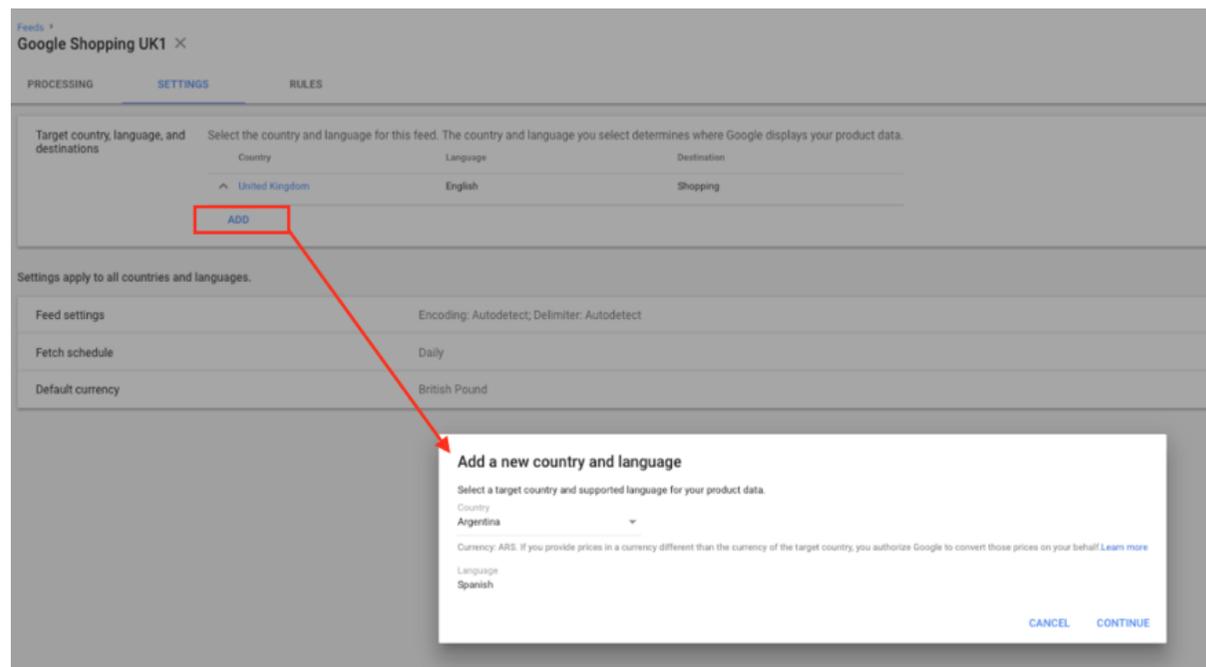
- First, make sure that *you* have the latest, correct product information. Then, make sure that you upload the latest product information into Productsup
- Pay attention to mobile navigation. This is always a little more tricky due to the screen size and often "in-transit" mode of the user. Simply landing on a different color item is enough to negatively impact the shopping experience.
- Schedule regular, daily feed exports to Google Merchant Center. Depending on how often your prices change or your rate of sale, this could be several times a day.
- Be careful of when you standardize the product color, and when it's better to keep its marketing color name. If, for example, the product in question has a unique color, such as "Midnight Sky", you should submit this value in the "color" attribute in the feed. This will ensure that it matches the color displayed on the product landing page. However, when it comes to the title, you should use terms that a shopper is more likely to use. Here it is recommended to *use a more standardized color* value, such as "dark blue". For more information, please see these [guidelines](#) on how to upload color for your inventory.
- Append all country and currency information to the URL of each item in your feed



➤ ERROR 3: Discrepancy between Shopping feed & landing page content (continued)

- It is strongly advised to leverage your schema.org markups and turn on “Automatic Item Updates”, especially when both net and gross prices are displayed on the landing page. Ensure that your gross price for min order quantity (not unit price) is marked up with itemprop=“price”, to help Google’s systems to detect the correct price.
- For retailers that have shops selling the same products in multiple countries, you can take advantage of the following (see image to the right).
 - i) Update one *main* feed, e.g. your Great Britain Shopping Feed
 - ii) Add locations to your feed by selecting the relevant country/ies in your Merchant Center account settings
 - iii) Google Merchant Center will automatically do the currency conversion
 - iv) Use the *supplemental* feed feature to provide translations for the title, description, and other language-dependent attributes in the language of the new target country

Note: Your items in the main feed need to be suitable for the new location

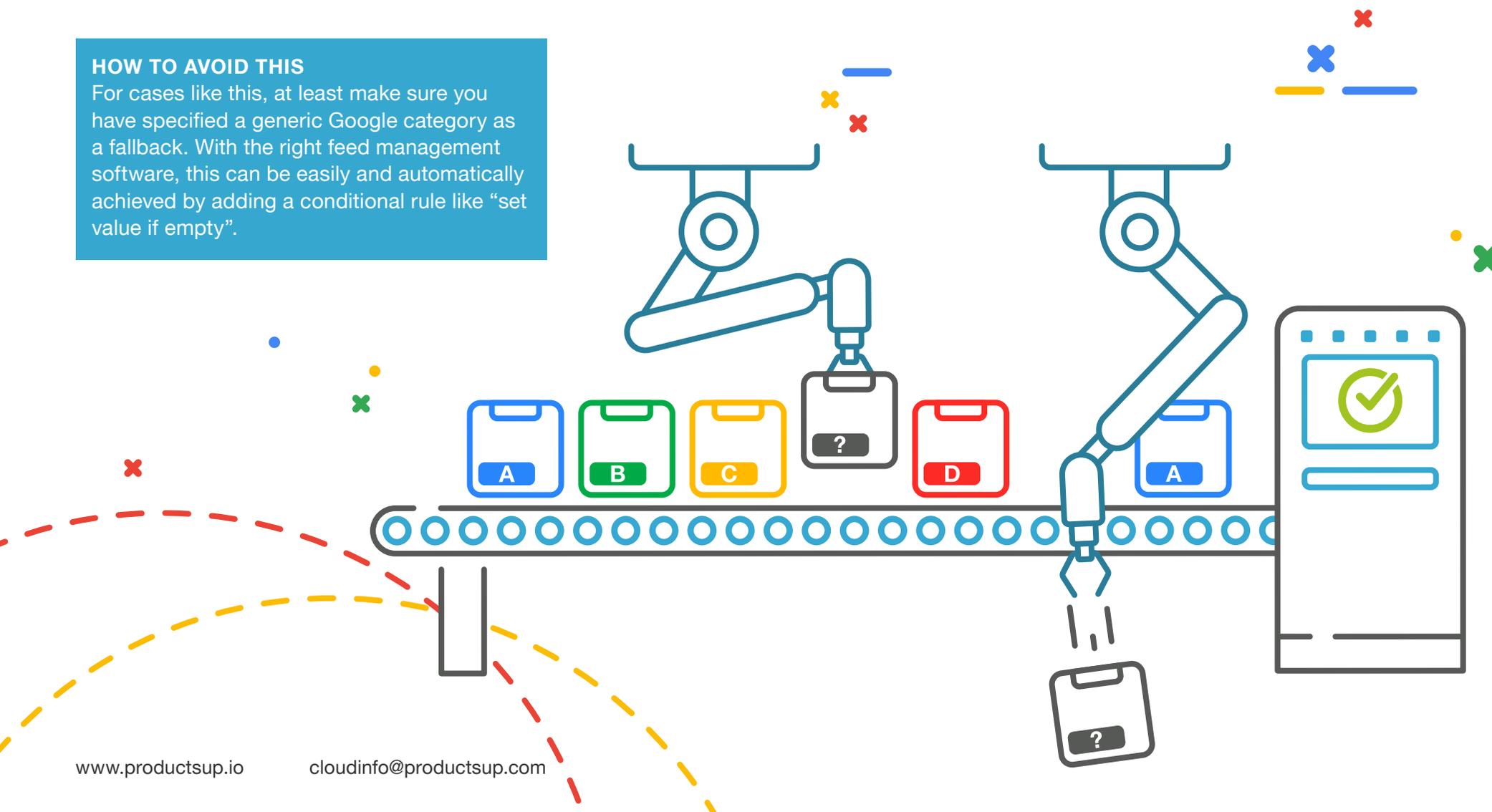


➤ ERROR 4: Empty product categories

Providing product categories is a key requirement for Google. Google has a very specific product category taxonomy and the more accurately you categorize your products accordingly, the better Google will be able to index your products in the live environment. However, sometimes clients don't maintain their category mapping lists correctly, so that when a feed is updated with new categories, these stay unmapped and, in turn, empty. If your Shopping feed has empty category fields, then these products cannot be allocated into a shopping category, so Google will disapprove them.

HOW TO AVOID THIS

For cases like this, at least make sure you have specified a generic Google category as a fallback. With the right feed management software, this can be easily and automatically achieved by adding a conditional rule like "set value if empty".



➤ ERROR 5: Adding custom columns to the Google feed

Google doesn't like it if you add custom columns that are not part of the Shopping feed template. If your Shopping feed contains a column header that Google doesn't recognize, it won't be able to display your items and your feed will be disapproved.

HOW TO AVOID THIS

If you wish to base your product listing ads structure on special product attributes, the Shopping feed provides up to five custom label columns with which you can categorize or label your products in any way.

For tab delimited feeds, using "g:" is the correct syntax for the "custom label 0-4" attributes. [Here's some documentation about custom labels that explains how to use the "g:" for these feeds.](#)

However, for custom columns not defined by Google, you can prepend a "c:" before the value in the headers. This will indicate to Google's crawlers that these are columns provided by the client and they are not part of Google Shopping. These attributes will not appear in ads, but can be used for your purposes.

File format	Example value
Text feeds	summer
XML feeds	<g:custom_label_0>summer</g:custom_label_0>
Content API v2 (JSON)	"customLabel0": "summer"
Content API v2 (XML)	<custom_label_0>summer</custom_label_0>



➤ ERROR 6: : Images are either invalid or too small

Sometimes image URLs are not formatted properly in the feed. Other times the feed contains placeholder images. And other times the image has a low resolution, contains promotional messages or logos, and has a busy, colorful background. In any of these cases, it will be marked as invalid by Google.

HOW TO AVOID THIS

- You need to capture the shopper's attention with high quality, clear, compelling images.
- For agencies, if the images are invalid, this usually needs to be resolved by the merchant themselves. Until they provide new images, you can easily skip these products from your export so that the rest of your products are still sent to Google.
- If the images are too small, Productsup has an easy rule box that lets you adjust them to the right specifications for Google's approval.

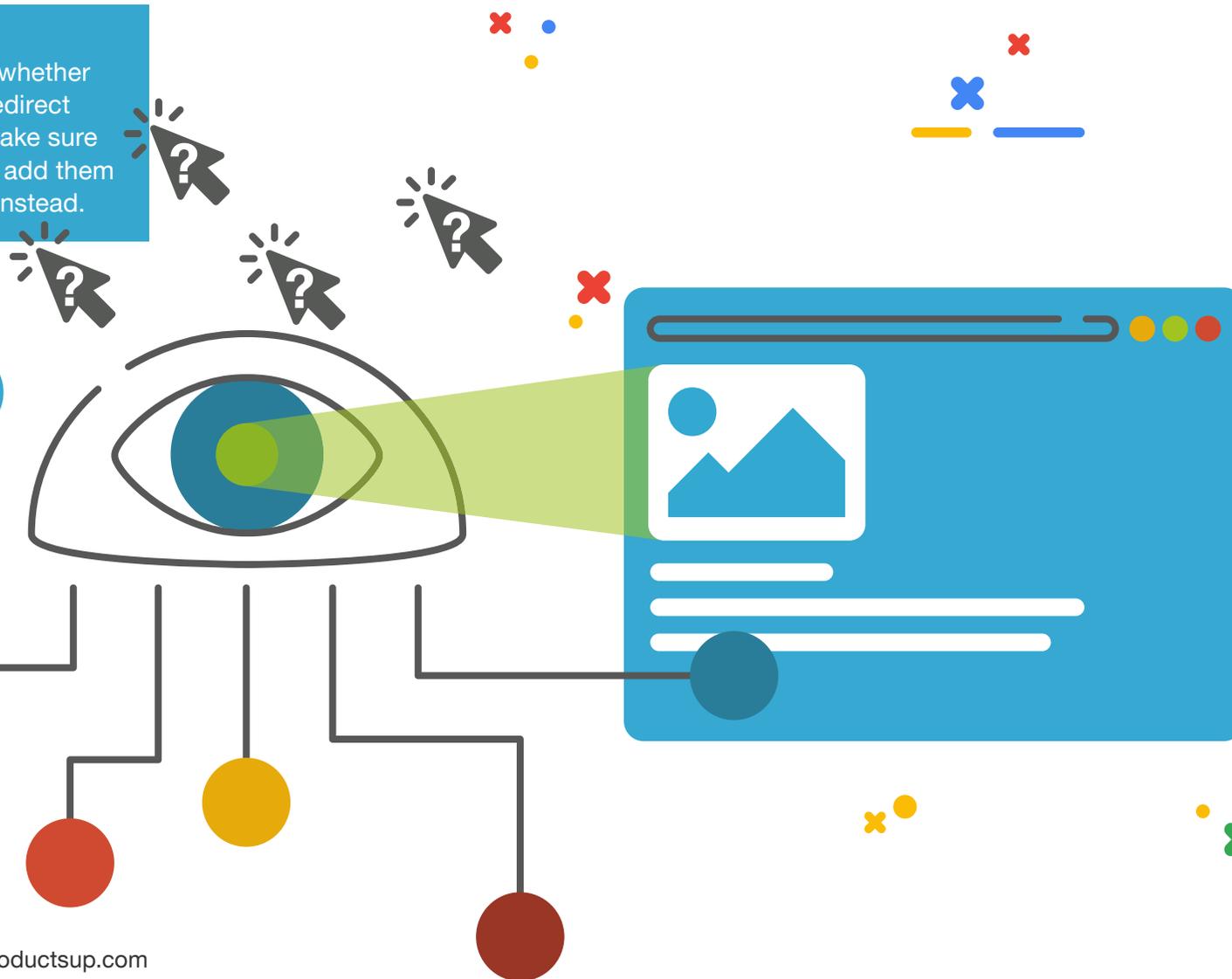


➤ ERROR 7: Adding redirect parameters to the “link” column

Your product link should always have the plain link, as it is used by the Google crawler to check prices etc. on site. If you add tracking parameters to that column, it will count as a click each time Google crawls, resulting in a substantial amount of “fake clicks”.

HOW TO AVOID THIS

Scan the link column to determine whether any of your product links contain redirect parameters. If the answer is yes, make sure you remove them from the link and add them to the “adwords_redirect” column instead.



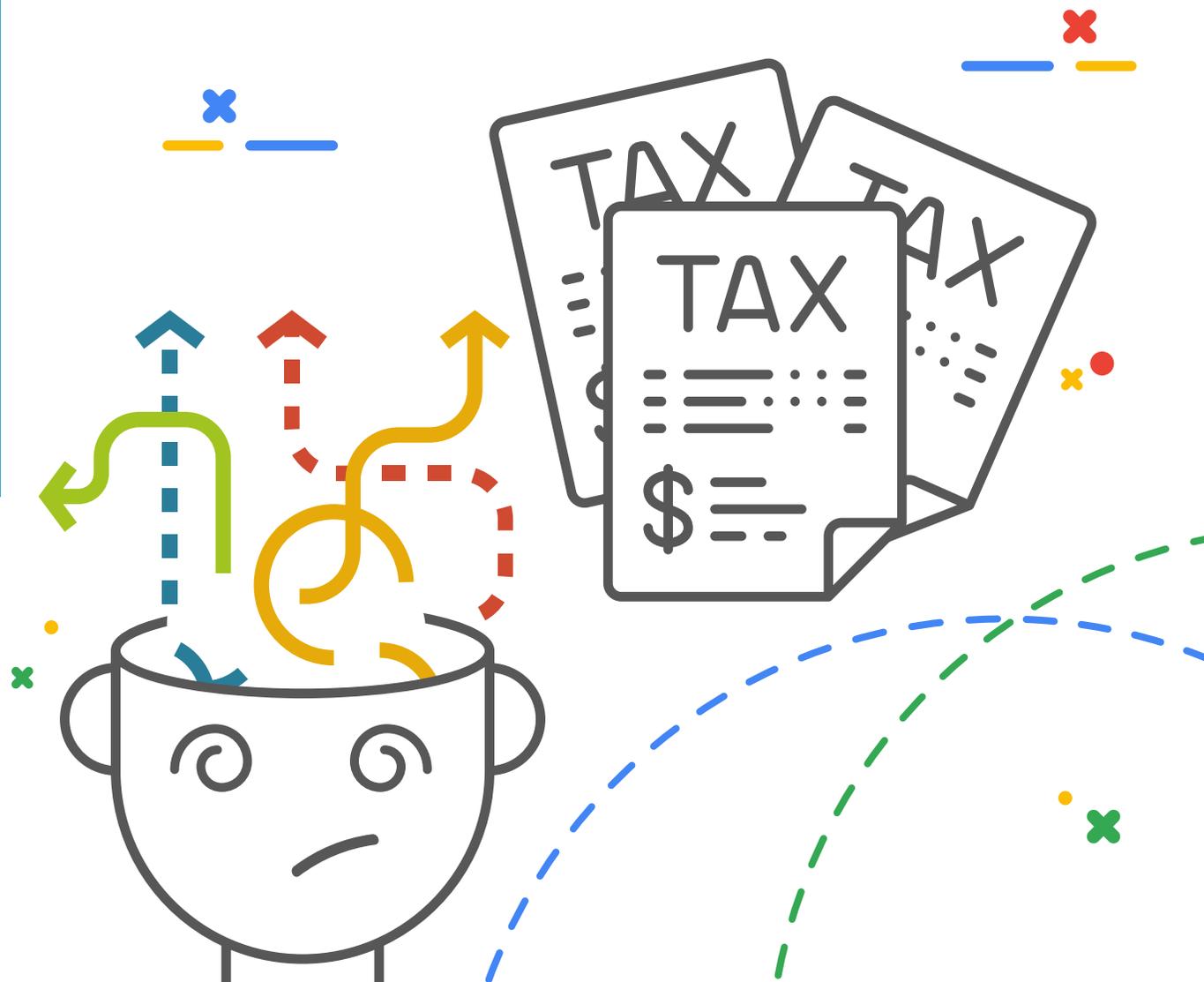
➤ ERROR 8: Incorrect format for “tax”

In the United States, the tax format varies from state to state. Up to four sub-attributes can be provided in one tax value, namely **country:state:rate:ability to charge tax on shipping** (e.g. US:CA:5.00:y). Given the complexity, it's easy to end up with the wrong tax format. The only required value here is *rate* but we've seen clients mess this order/format up and it leads to disapprovals.

HOW TO AVOID THIS

When selling nationwide, you need to make sure that for each state you have configured the accurate tax value.

Users in the US have the option of configuring taxes directly in their Merchant Center account settings, or via their Shopping feed. However, we recommend that you define your tax settings in the Merchant Center as opposed to passing them through the feed. Any value in the feed will override your Merchant Center settings, so this is only really done in unique cases.



➤ ERROR 9: Missing GTINs

In May 2016, [Google released an update that required merchants to provide product GTINs](#) (Global Trade Item Numbers) for new, brand-name items. Since the update, it became apparent that most didn't have this unique product ID on record. Today many merchants still provide products with empty GTIN values in their feed. These products are in turn disapproved. This is a shame for previously best-selling or high-margin products and could ultimately impact your bottom line.

HOW TO AVOID THIS

Productsup offers special rule boxes to help you identify products that are missing a GTIN or that have a broken GTIN but the platform does not provide actual product GTINs. It is up to the retailer to find and import these, either in the main feed or as a separate, additional data source.

Often a quick research online (even Google Shopping itself) is all you need to locate your product's GTIN. You could also find this in your own inventory, as the number is printed on the product packaging, or check your supply chain system, or ask your supplier. Alternatively, there are companies who offer a service for locating GTINs.



➤ ERROR 10: Faulty shipping values

There are 4 separate shipping sub-attributes, namely:

country:region:service:price (e.g. US:CA:Overnight:16.00 USD)

It is mandatory to provide shipping costs to Google Merchant Center. However, these are often supplied in the wrong format – or they're missing entirely, and are thus a common cause for disapproved feeds. Google shipping information can be setup in the Merchant Center directly or can be passed in the feed in shipping specific columns.

HOW TO AVOID THIS

It is important that you analyze the health of this attribute. Productsup has integrated the Shipping field requirements into the platform, so that when you analyze your Shipping column, it will immediately highlight all errors. Any information passed in the feed will overwrite (i.e. take priority) the baseline shipping logic that has been defined in the Google Merchant Center.

➤ ERROR 11: Keyword stuffing or promotional text for product type

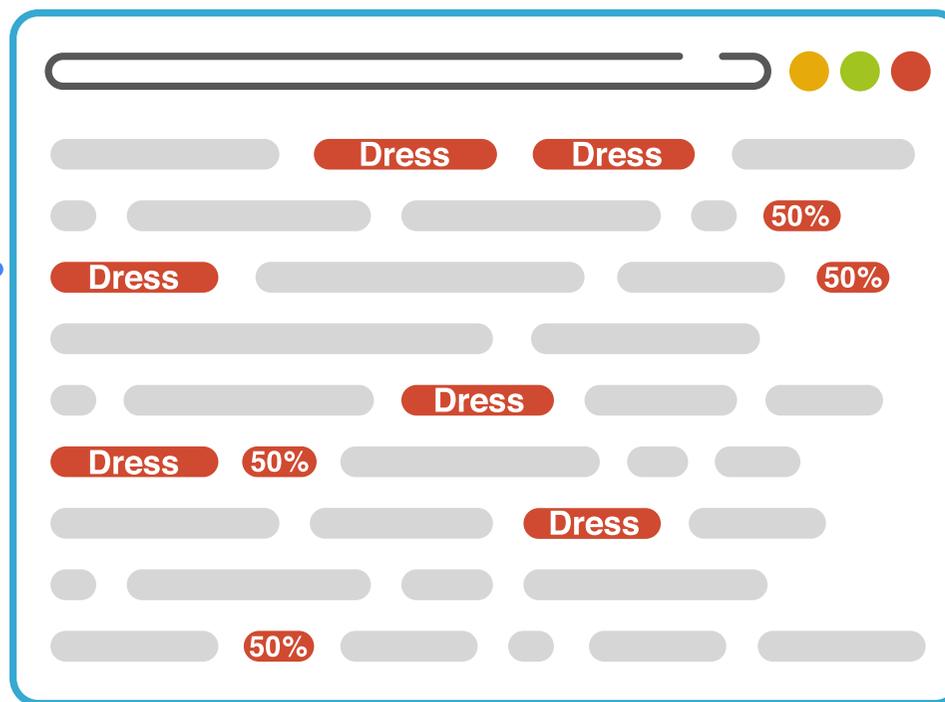
Merchants often provide one-node values for product type. While this is not an error as such, providing more specific product types will increase your search relevance, enable you to split out your campaign structure into more relevant categories and help you refine your bidding strategy more effectively. It has thus become best practice, if you wish to increase your campaign performance.

However, you need to do this in a responsible manner. Be careful of keyword stuffing or inserting promotional text. If you do either of these, Google can disapprove your products. So, stay away from examples such as these:

Casual **Dress** > Little Black **Dress** > Summer **Dress** > Cocktail **Dress**
 or
 Valentine's Day Gifts > **50%** Sale Items

HOW TO AVOID THIS

A good start or default strategy is to use the website's "bread crumbs". In other words, how does the shopper get to a particular product from the homepage? What category tabs have been clicked on?



Having trouble getting your Shopping feed accepted by Google? With Productsup, It's never been easier.

The platform comes equipped with

- › Integrated channel specs and templates with feed analysis & best practice recommendations
- › Auto-mapping of data fields thanks to machine learning technology
- › Automated category mapping using a smart list feature
- › Over 200 rules boxes to structure and enrich your feed, as well as a live preview of your data edits
- › Immediate error alerts thanks to monitoring feature & Merchant Center API integration
- › Data imports from Google Analytics, so that you can manage ROI by excluding unprofitable products
- › Delta uploads, saving you time by only processing products with updates, not your entire feed
- › Intuitive user interface with drag-and-drop logic. Yes, that means no coding is needed

Remember, submitting an error-free feed is only **one** part of a successful Google Shopping campaign. If you really want to boost performance, you should also be looking at how you can truly **optimize** your content, and take your Shopping feed to the next level.

Want to see how? We'll show you in a no-strings- attached, free demo of the platform!

REQUEST FREE DEMO



Productsup

www.productsup.io

cloudinfo@productsup.com

**Google
Partner**