

### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**



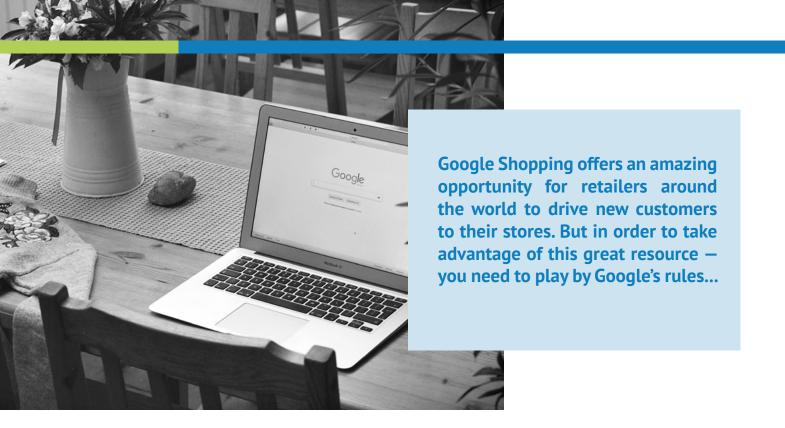
### MAGDALENA KICZEK

Feed Marketing specialist, with an affinity for digital communication and marketing in all shapes and forms — content-based in particular.

She is a Marketing Associate at DataFeedWatch: a prominent international player in feed management and optimization that helps online retailers optimize their product ads on more than 1000 channels in more than 50 countries.

Before starting with DataFeedWatch, Magdalena worked with media buying and campaign analysis & optimization across various platforms such as DoubleClick, Google AdWords, and BrightRoll.

In her free time, she's a keen enthusiast of traveling, psychology books and cinema.



First step to do that?

### **Correct & Optimized Feed**

### Why is the Feed so important?

Unlike Google Search Ads, the Shopping Ads don't get triggered by the keywords you choose to bid on.

It is the product data included your feed, that helps Google decide whether your ad should be displayed or not.

The feed is, in fact, the backbone of your Google Shopping Campaign:

- it influences the relevancy of your ads
- it's a base for campaign segmentation

### **Feed Issues**

Have you ever logged onto your Google Merchant Center account only to discover your products have been disapproved?

As the exact cause is not always clear, we've seen many Merchants struggling to get their products onto the Google Shopping carousel.

In order to help you get your feeds in great shape, we have created a comprehensive guide on how to tackle some of the most common Google Merchant Center Errors.

After all, what doesn't kill your feed, will only make it stronger;)

### **Table of content:**

now do I identity feed issues?	5
DataFeedWatch - Feed Review Google Merchant Center - Feed Upload Google Merchant Center - Diagnostics	6 7 7
Errors, warnings, and notifications	8
Most Common Google Merchant Center Errors	10
#1 Missing or incorrect required attribute [price]	11
#2 Missing shipping information	14
#3 Invalid or missing GTIN value	15
#4 Product identifiers provided, but 'identifier_exists' set to false	18
#5 Invalid or missing required attribute [color]	21
#6 Unknown 'google product category' value	24
#7 Invalid or missing required attribute: availability	26
#8 Encoding problem in attribute: description	28
#9 Item disapproved due to policy violation	29
An Exclusive Offer for our eBook Readers	30
Recommended further reads	31

# How do I identify feed issues?

Identifying and troubleshooting feed issues can be quite cumbersome at times. It gets much easier once you know where to look for key information.

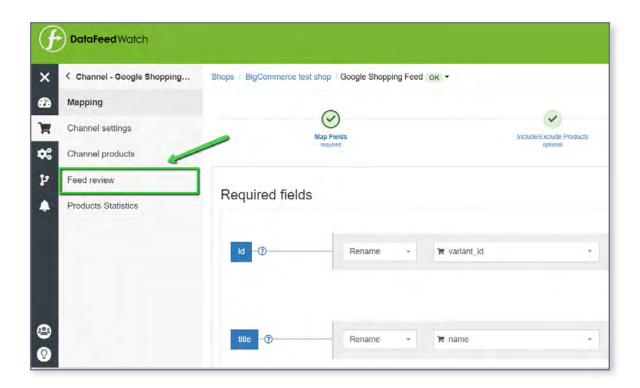
Let's take a look at a few resources that can help us get on the right track with our product feed:

### DataFeedWatch - Feed Review

Why fix the Google Merchant Center errors if you could avoid them in the first place?

If you'd like to check your Google Shopping feed for potential errors prior to submitting products — here's a way to do it!

DataFeedWatch Feed Review is a separate tab in your Channel Mapping Interface. Request a channel feed review, and verify whether product data you're about to send to Google Shopping is complete.



### The review will check your feed for the following:

### O Missing data:

Are the required or optional fields populated with values?

#### Uniqueness validator:

Do your unique identifiers, SKU, UPC, have duplicates?

#### O Pre-defined fields validator:

Checks if fields with predefined values are mapped correctly

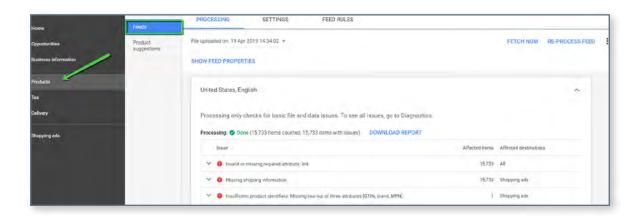
#### O GTIN validator:

Checks if your GTINs are valid

There is a list of affected items provided for each potential issue. Accessible in the form of a summary and a downloadable report.

### **Google Merchant Center - Feed Upload**

The very first thing Google does once your feed is uploaded is to check for basic product data correctness. If issues are found, they will provide you with a **brief report summarizing the errors.** 



Items that successfully pass this verification, will enter the next stage of the review process. The 2nd phase can expose issues undetected during initial processing.

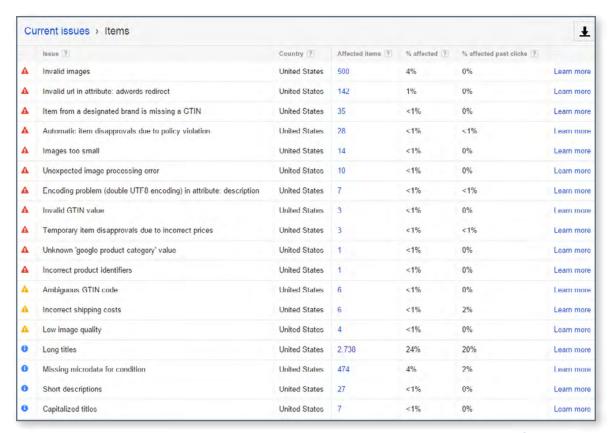
For a complete overview — refer to the Diagnostics section.

### **Google Merchant Center - Diagnostics**

'Diagnostics' is a separate section in Google Merchant Center, accessible from the side navigation bar. It offers detailed issue reporting across your account & feeds.

Diagnostics show all the errors, warnings, and notifications that need to be addressed to make your products eligible for Google Shopping. Along with a full report on affected items, which you can download as CSV.

## Errors, warnings, and notifications



Source: Volusion

In order to help you prioritize issues — Google split them up into **3 types:** 



#### **ERRORS**

**Errors indicate critical feed issues.** They lead to product disapprovals and, consequently, prevent you from showing ads of the affected items. In some cases, errors might result in account suspension and disrupt your marketing efforts for a longer period of time.



#### **WARNINGS**

Warnings are far less severe than errors, and typically don't cause Google to reject your items. Those issues will negatively impact feed quality and can decrease the performance of the affected items in your shopping campaign.

May lead to disapprovals if unaddressed for a long time.



#### **NOTIFICATIONS**

**Tips from Google**, letting you know which parts of your feed could use adjustments for better performance. Merchants don't need to resolve them, but why say 'no' to a suggestion coming straight from the horse's mouth?

### Most Common Google Merchant Center Errors

### #1

### Missing or incorrect required attribute [price]

Price plays a key role in Product Listing Ads — no need to convince anyone of that... But how do you get the price attribute right in your feed?

We will consider **2 possible reasons** you might have received this error:

- No currency assigned
- Incorrect price provided / No price provided

### No currency assigned

If 'missing price' error is accompanied by another one: 'Unsupported currency in attribute price' — there's a high likelihood that both errors have their source in missing currency.

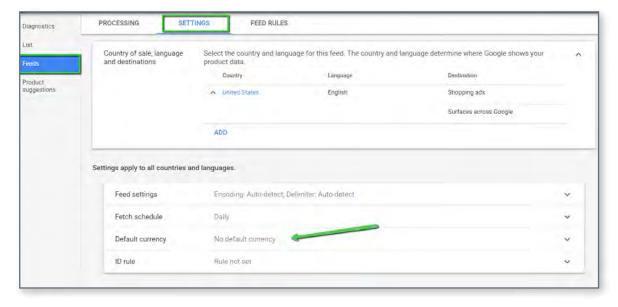
You may have sent over the correct prices, but including the currency is just as important.



To add currency in the feed — proceed to 'Edit values', and use 'add a suffix' option. Remember to include the currency code (USD) and not the sign (\$).



You may also assign currency directly in Google Merchant Center, in the feed settings section:



### Incorrect prices provided / No price provided

It's a common misbelief that Google displays this error due to discrepancies between the prices provided and those found in your online shop.

In truth, being one of the initial error messages you receive upon uploading your feed — the issue is connected with not fulfilling Google's basic requirements for the price attribute.

### **Unsupported price values:**

X 0.00; X blank field; X wrong input field selected

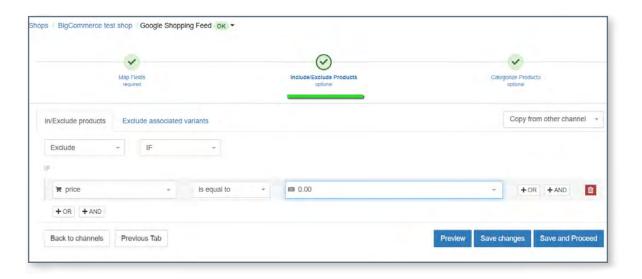
### First step — check the report for affected items and review your current mapping.



You may do so in the 'Include/Exclude products' section by setting up a rule based on price:



### Solution: correct the mapping for price attribute



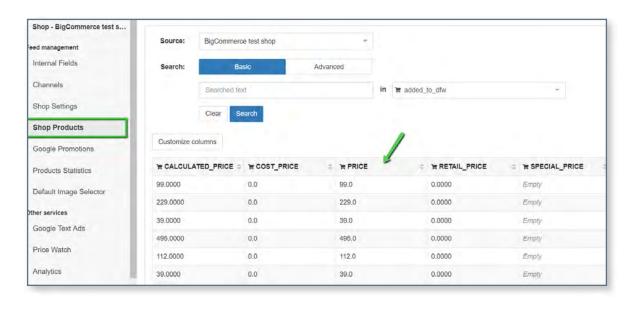


If you don't offer free products you might have used the wrong input field.

The price attribute can bear a different name depending on the shopping cart your store is based on. Some platforms will even operate on multiple price fields, such as:



In DataFeedWatch, you can **review all the price fields** we downloaded from your store in the 'Show products' section and pick the one with correct pricing.



Then, in the mapping panel, assign the selected price field.

### Missing shipping information

Receiving this error means you haven't provided your shipping rates to Google yet. It's a required attribute for all Merchants, no matter the location or vertical. It also applies to retailers offering free shipping.



### Solution: add shipping details

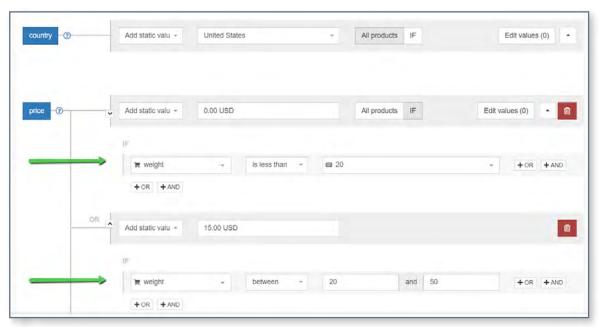
Missing shipping issue can be **resolved easily** and there are a few ways to do it:

You can quickly add shipping information to your feed in DataFeedWatch — navigate to 'Edit Feed' and scroll down to the 'Shipping' section. Then, specify location and rate.

If you offer free shipping make sure to enter 0.00 in the price field, as it will only accept numeric values.

In case you require more complex shipping set up, for example — shipping cost depends on product's weight, and:

A. Rates are determined by yourself: you can adjust the rule by adding IF statements



**B.** Rates are calculated by the shipping carrier: set up the shipping info directly in your Merchant account.

There is a separate tab in the Google Merchant Center dedicated to shipping settings. You will find it on the side navigation bar, right below 'Tax'.

To add shipping — click the + sign and complete the necessary steps.

Here you can find further instructions from Google on this process



### #3

### Invalid or missing GTIN value

Just in case you're wondering what GTIN is and how you can get it — here's an article for you.

Until recently Google required GTIN for all new products which have had the GTIN assigned by the manufacturer.

As of September 30th 2019 a new policy regarding UPIs (Unique Product Identifiers) came to life, allowing Merchants to place their products on Google Shopping, regardless of submitting the GTIN attribute.

Even in the light of the new policies, providing Google with GTINs is strongly recommended and beneficial for Merchants. Find out more about the new regulations here.

Google uses GTIN to better understand and classify your products. Thanks to that, your ads are showing for more relevant searches, which equals increased Conversion Rate.

And the icing on this GTIN's cake? :)

It contributes to a higher quality score, which in the result helps you save up on CPC.

Now that we're familiar with the perks, let's move onto the potential causes & solutions of the GTIN error:

### A. Invalid GTIN issue

Google verifies all the GTINs submitted and will notify you if yours are incorrect. It might be a matter of missing or additional characters in the code — the only way to learn would be to check the error report. If the GTINs seem alright to you, try contacting the manufacturer to request an up-to-date list of GTINs.



Various mapping functionalities in DataFeedWatch can help you get your GTINs in order.

Let us consider the 2 most common examples:

### **Example 1:** If **GTINs contains additional characters**, eg. letters which shouldn't be included - remove them in 'Edit values'.

Enter the exact characters you wish to remove or use a regular expression if appropriate.



The above rule would remove any letter-characters present in the GTIN field.

### **Example 2:** Thirteen-digit EAN codes usually start with a 0, perhaps you're missing it for some products? You can add a prefix to any GTIN that doesn't start with a 0:

Change values for "gtin"			×
Mapping type:  Add prefix	Input:	•	All products IF 面
F	→ doesn't start with	<b>w</b> 0	+ OR + AND



### **B. Missing GTIN issue**

The GTINs haven't been provided within the feed? Let's populate this field!



Solution: populate the GTIN attribute

Here's how you can include GTINs in the feed:



**Match the GTIN field** with a **corresponding attribute from your store.** Depending on your shopping cart, it might be 'barcode', 'upc', 'GTIN' or something else.

A simple 'Rename'-rule will be enough.





#### Your source file doesn't contain GTINs?

No problem, you can provide them using 'look-up table':

In a csv file, or Google Spreadsheet fill in 2 columns:

- 1st column should contain an attribute that could be used for item identification in DataFeedWatch. Good choices might be:
  - variant id;
  - SKU;
  - mpn.
- 2nd column will contain the GTIN

Connect the prepared file in DataFeedWatch & specify which attribute you've chosen to identify products. Voila!





### #4

### Product identifiers provided, but 'identifier\_exists' set to false

### For those of you unfamiliar with 'identifier\_exists':

Identifier\_exists' attribute tells Google whether universal identifiers (brand, GTIN & mpn) are available for your products. Accepted predefined values are: 'false' / 'no' and 'true' / 'yes'.

And heads up — chances are you're not gonna come across this attribute in your feed...

### Why?

It's an optional field which only has to be included if set to 'false'. Whenever not submitted, Google will assume it's default value — 'TRUE'.

Seeing the error means that 'identifier\_exists' field is set to 'TRUE', which amounts to stating you have the identifiers. And Google is expecting you to deliver on that word...

The error means that you've submitted at least one of the above attributes while informing Google that your products lack identifiers ('identifier\_exists' = false). As those are contradictory information — you receive the error.



Solution: adjust 'identifier\_exists' and relevant attributes

#### If **identifiers are available** for your products:

change the 'idetifier\_exists' value to TRUE and ensure the set-up of the relevant attributes is correct.

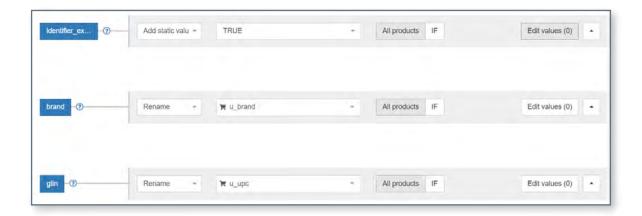
If product identifiers for your items exist you should submit the 'identifier\_exists' attribute as TRUE - even if you don't have the UPIs at hand

Indicating that the UPIs don't exist while Google verifies otherwise will result in product disapproval.

Possible combinations are:

- Brand
- Brand + GTIN
- Brand + mpn
- Brand + GTIN + mpn

You can populate those fields in DataFeedWatch by matching them with corresponding attributes from your store. You will find the mpn field in the 'Optional fields' section.



### If brand, mpn or GTIN was submitted by mistake or containing invalid information:

remove those fields from your feed, or change mapping type to 'leave empty'.

### Schedule a Demo

Take control of your data feed and improve ROI.

### We will discuss how:

- > To drive more sales with your product feeds
- To optimize your product feed to improve the quality of your listings
- > To improve conversion rates for shopping campaigns

Schedule your Demo today!





### Invalid or missing required attribute [color]:

There might be **2 reasons** you're receiving this error:

**A.** Google cannot recognize the color name could happen if you're using non-standard color names, such as 'basketball' instead of 'orange'



**B.** No colors provided for apparel items in certain countries, Google requires the color attribute for all products that fall under 'apparel & accessories' category

Here's how we can tackle it:

### A. Reason: Google cannot recognize the color name

According to one of the local radio hosts, men can only tell apart 2 colors, and those would be: pretty and ugly;)

Luckily for the advertisers, Google is quite good at recognizing colors.

#### Cobalt, indigo or even blueberry are rather safe choices.

But, let's not get carried away with creativity... because 'Pomegranate passion'? — the fancy color names are exactly what might be getting you this error.



### Solution: replace invalid color names

Check the Google Merchant Center error report for a list of color names that need to be fixed.

In the mapping panel — navigate to 'Edit Values' to replace the invalid values.

If you only have a handful of colors to replace you might want to use 'replace single value' and create a few rules, just as in the below screenshot:





#### To replace many colors in bulk — go for 'replace multiple values'.

You will need to provide a csv file, or a Google spreadsheet. Include the rejected color names in 1st column and their standardized equivalents in the 2nd column.

### Note:

when uploading a Google spreadsheet to DataFeedWatch, please make sure to use the shareable link & set the privacy of the sheet to 'anyone with the link can view'.

### B. Reason: No colors provided for apparel items

You might also see this error in your GMC account if you've forgotten to include the color attribute in your feed. For certain countries (currently Brazil, France, Germany, Japan, the UK, and the US) Google requires additional information, such as color, age\_group, gender and size (the latter for shoes and clothing only) for apparel items.



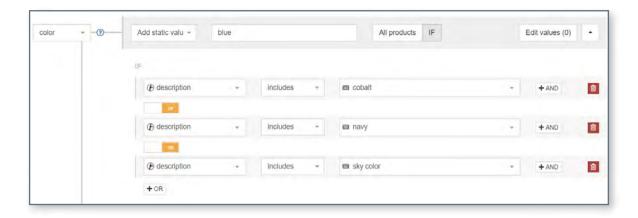
### Solution: assign colors to apparel items

If you're missing the color field in your source file/store — you can try one of the following options:

#### Use 'Add static value'

#### Are colors mentioned in titles, descriptions, tags or some other field?

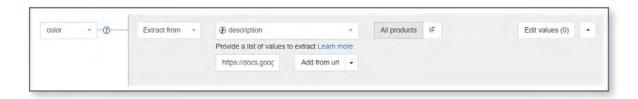
You can use those fields to build out a rule that will assign colors, specified by you, to appropriate items. Here's **an example** of how the rule could look like:



#### Use 'Extract from'

'Extract from' is another functionality allowing you to extract specific information from various fields.

First, indicate the field that contains the color info (A), then provide a list of colors in a csv file or using a Google spreadsheet. When creating the list make sure that the color names you include are exactly as they appear in your source.



### Unknown 'google product category' value

The more ways you use to explain to Google what your product is — the better! And submitting relevant 'google product category' for your items is certainly the right path... Although it's not a required attribute, there are benefits to reap for those who put in a little extra effort and get those categories in order.

### Advantage?

We've covered this topic extensively in one of our previous posts — Assigning Google Product Categories

In short: Google Product Category helps you get more relevant traffic to your ads, which should result in higher CTR & improved Conversion Rate.

#### Now, what about the error?

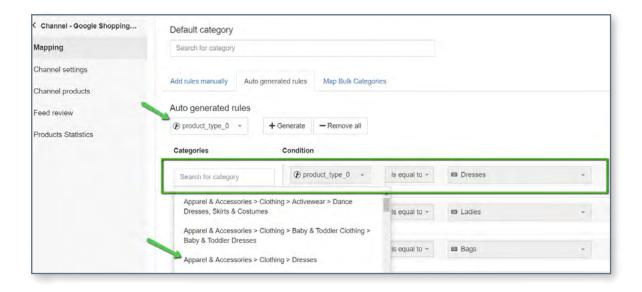
It can only mean that the category submitted doesn't match any of the predefined values, listed in Google's taxonomy. So unless you've implemented the exact same taxonomy in your store, using your product type field for Google category is not gonna cut it.



### Solution: use categories from Google's taxonomy

Fortunately, there's an easy way to assign your categories in DataFeedWatch, or even 2:

### A. Categorization via auto-generated rules



We have created a system to **match each product type to the most appropriate Google subcategory,** in a matter of seconds:

1

Choose a field from your store containing product type information

2

Start typing in a keyword & you will receive a list of categories to choose from

3

Select a proper Google category for each item group.

### B. Categorization via manual rules

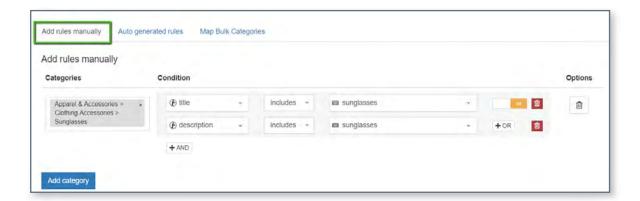
Handy if your source feed is lacking a field to base the categories on.

To add a category, proceed as follows:

- 1. Start typing in a keyword and select the best category match from the list.
- 2. Create rules to specify the products the category should be applied to

### **Example:**

You can assign categories based on certain keywords that could be found in titles or descriptions:



### The right category

Now that the 'how-to' is out of the way, it only leaves us with one question: 'What is the right category for my product?'

The answer:

The most relevant one. All in all — it would be a judgment call.



### #7

### Invalid or missing required attribute: availability

**Certain attributes** in the shopping feed come with **predefined values only.** 'Availability' field is one of them.

- In stock
- Out of stock
- Preorder

### Those are the 3 possibilities.

Submitting any other value, such as 'available' / 'unavailable' or 'yes' / 'no', is going to land you in trouble... and you would be surprised how many Merchants have fallen into this trap!

#### Probable cause?

Several shopping carts generate availability fields containing values incompatible with Google's guidelines. For example, some platforms may be labeling products with 'true' or 'false' within 'is available' field.



### Solution: use predefined values

You may **continue using the availability field from your store**, only with a **small modification...** 

Go into 'Edit Values' for the 'availability' attribute and **swap the values.** Here's how an example rule could look like:



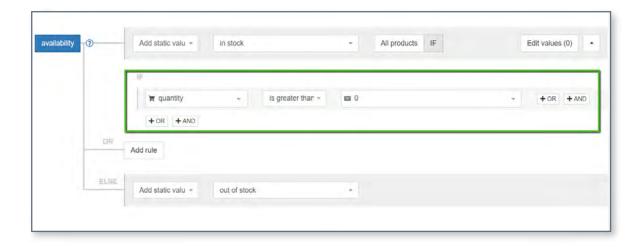
If you're unsure what values were originally included in your availability field - check out the Shop Products tab (on the side navigation bar) to find out.





### An alternative method to set up availability:

Use 'quantity' input field and build appropriate conditional statements — example below:



### Encoding problem in attribute: description

This encoding error message means that some of your descriptions contain 1 or more characters considered invalid in your current encoding setting.

According to Google's help pages, Google Merchant Center supports UTF-8, UTF-16, Latin-1, and ASCII **encoding types.** The first one being the most popular.

#### **Bad news?**

Google will only point out products that the error is connected with, they won't serve you the invalid characters on a silver platter.

It's up to you to find the ones that triggered the issue.

#### **Good news?**

We've got you covered:)

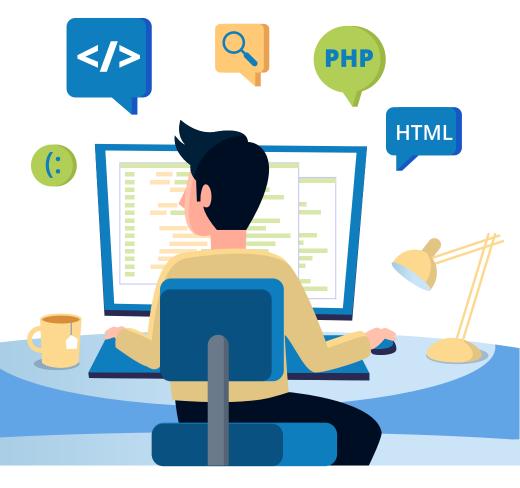


### Solution: remove / replace invalid characters

Once you've identified the products concerned, proceed to 'Shop Products' page to review their descriptions.

The default encoding setting in DataFeedWatch is UTF-8, so you should be able to detect those inaccuracies with the naked eye.

Then, proceed to the mapping section and remove / replace the unwanted characters in the 'Edit Values' section for descriptions.



### #9

### Item disapproved due to policy violation

Unlike the other errors we've covered in this article — this one doesn't give you clarity on what is wrong with your feed.

If there is 1 conclusion to be drawn from this message alone:



it would be that **Google's algorithms have found elements in your feed** (or in your online store), which are not in line with **Google Shopping policies.** 

Which elements? That remains a mystery, until...



### Solution: you contact Google

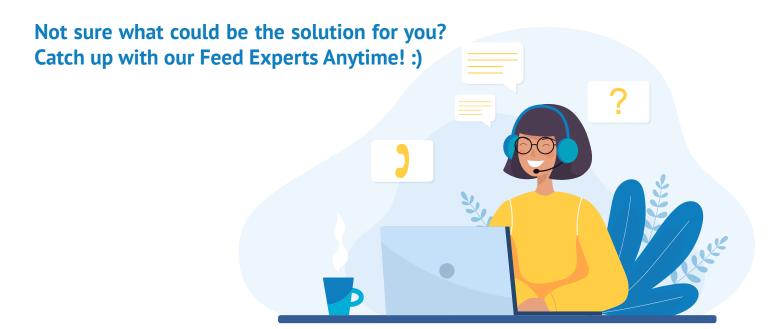
To sort out this issue, you first need to learn the answer to the most fundamental question: 'what was the policy violation on my part?'.

Once you've established the exact reason for disapproval — it's time to fix the feed (if that's where the issue lies). Or, make suitable changes in your online store.

#### Fixing the feed will mean different things depending on what the violation is. It might involve:

- Removing products from the feed
- Replacing or removing banned words from titles or descriptions
- Changing images

And many more...

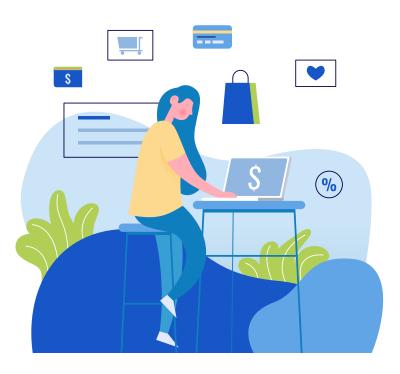


### **Get Your Free Shopping Feed Consultation**

SOLID PRODUCT FEED IS THE KEY TO BUILDING A PROSPEROUS GOOGLE SHOPPING CAMPAIGN. CONNECT WITH OUR FEED EXPERTS AND:

- optimize your feeds quick and easy;
- improve your shopping campaign performance;
- drive more happy customers to your e-shop.

**Get my FREE consultation now** 



### AN EXCLUSIVE OFFER FOR OUR EBOOK READERS:

Extended 1 Month Free Trial with DataFeedWatch.

Get started now and boost your feeds and sales in no time!

Redeem the special offer: After creating your DataFeedWatch Free Trial account, please reach out to your Onboarding Manager (who will be assigned to your account upon signing up) and request to redeem the extended Free Trial.

### Recommended further reads

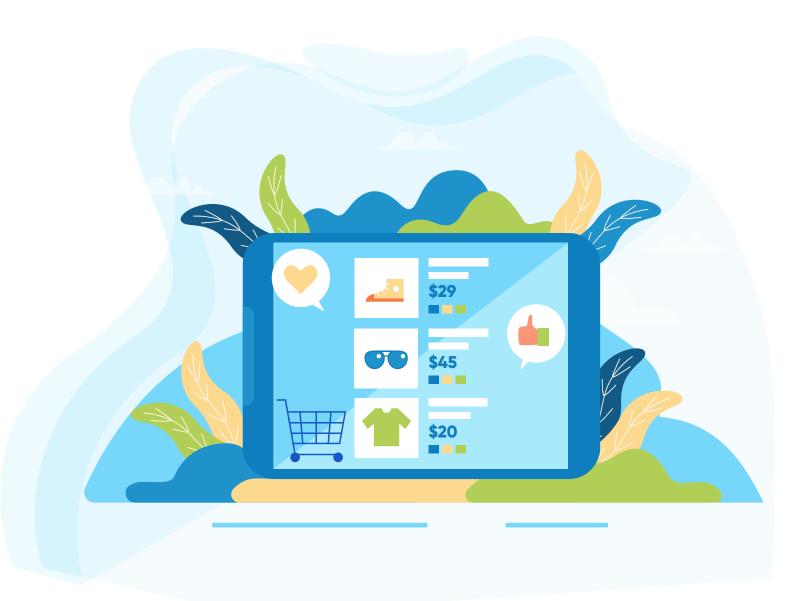
Four winning bidding strategies on Google Shopping

**Grow Your Business With Facebook and Google Ads** 

PPC Strategies for Google AdWords and Facebook [+ Tips to Reach 542% ROAS]

7 Tips for Google Shopping Feed Optimization [EXPERT Level]

14 Powerful Optimizations for Your Google Shopping Feed [with Expert Insights]



Thank you!