## ALGORITHM OVERVIEW

In May of 2021, Google will launch an algorithm update to incorporate new page speed metrics, called Core Web Vitals, into their existing 'page experience' ranking metrics. The addition of Core Web Vitals will provide specific page speed and performance metrics along with action items for webmasters to best optimize their website content. It is quite rare for Google to announce an algorithm update, particularly with details of the change, so it's wise for webmasters and digital marketers to heed their advice.

WHY IS GOOGLE MAKING THIS UPDATE?

Scores of studies and industry research show that users prefer websites that deliver great page experiences and allow them to engage easily with relevant content. To this end, including Core Web Vitals in the ranking algorithm helps both Google and website developers prioritize the user experience and remove technical friction that may be impacting site speed.

WHO DOES THIS UPDATE AFFECT?

Unlike some previous updates, this algorithm update is not targeted to specific industries or technologies. The new page experience metrics will apply to all websites, and likely impact rankings across all industries. Often with an update of this magnitude, Google will roll it out slowly, but there is currently no indication of how severe the ranking impacts may be. Apiary's advice is to work diligently to implement optimizations prior to the May algorithm update and monitor these elements going forward.
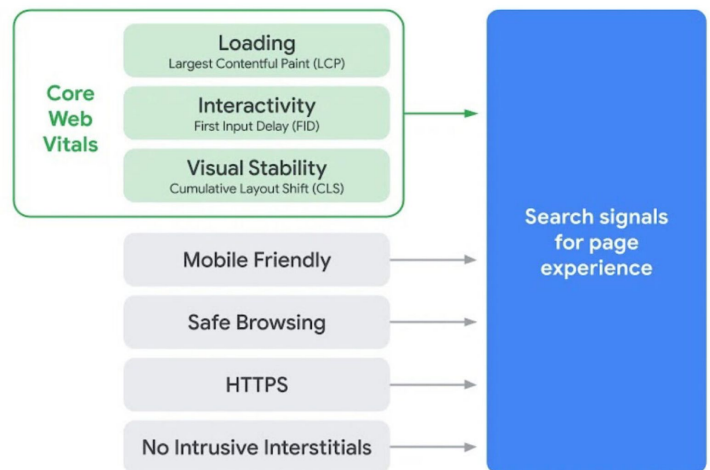
CORE WEB VITALS: FAST FACTS

- **Timing:** First announced May 2020; Updates announced November 2020; Projected Rollout May 2021

- **Market Readiness:** Studies in late 2020 show that less than 15% of all websites would currently pass the Core Web Vitals tests

- **SERP Additions:** Google has discussed including a visual tag on the search results page, labeling sites that provide a good page experience. This would likely lead to increased CTRs for sites that qualify.

HOW TO OPTIMIZE CORE WEB VITALS

SO WHAT ARE CORE WEB VITALS?

The Core Web Vitals are user experience metrics. They are a group of metrics that Google chose to represent how well a web page downloads and presents a good user experience for site visitors. There are 3 main Core Web Vitals factors:

(loading)

LCP

Largest Contentful Paint

| GOOD | NEEDS IMPROVEMENT | POOR |

2.5 sec   4.0 sec

1. Largest Contentful Paint (LCP)
How fast a web page is perceived to load. Websites should aim to have LCP occur within 2.5 seconds of landing on the page

(interactivity)

FID

First Input Delay

| GOOD | NEEDS IMPROVEMENT | POOR |

100 ms   300 ms
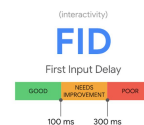
2. First Input Delay (FID)
How long it takes for a web page to become interactive. An ideal FID measurement is less than 100ms

(visual stability)

CLS

Cumulative Layout Shift

| GOOD | NEEDS IMPROVEMENT | POOR |

0.1   0.25

3. Cumulative Layout Shift (CLS)
How stable web page elements (like buttons, text and images) are while the page is loading. Cumulative Layout Shift (CLS) is the most relevant to digital advertising since varying ad heights and delays in load time cause the content on the page to move unintentionally. Ideal CLS is less than .1

HOW CAN WE TEST, UNDERSTAND, AND OPTIMIZE CORE WEB VITALS?

Using Google's provided tools is the most important step in understanding your current Core Web Vitals performance and building a strategy to address any performance issues holding you back.

AUDIT
Use Google Search Console's Core Web Vitals Report to Find Pages That Have Issues

→

INVESTIGATE
Use Pagespeed Insights & Lighthouse to Get Actionable Guidance on What to Fix

→

IMPLEMENT & TEST
Use Web.dev/measure for Guidance & Lighthouse CI to Check for Regressions Before You Deploy

WHAT TO KEEP IN MIND GOING FORWARD...

- A website must pass all 3 Core Web Vitals test in order to get the rankings boost and the possible SERP label

- Test scoring is based on field test results from the previous 28-day cycle, so timing is important when considering the May algorithm update timeline

- Prepare for the May algorithm update! Reach out to sales@apiarydigital.com for a custom Core Web Vitals audit and action plan