

Google Business Profile

Setup & Optimization Guide

A Step-by-Step Playbook to Help You Stand Out on Google



Welcome!

If you run a local business, having a strong presence on Google is essential. A Google Business Profile (formerly Google My Business) is a powerful way to get your business found in local searches and on Google Maps. When set up and optimized correctly, it can drive more traffic to your website, generate more phone calls, and bring more customers through your doors.

This guide will walk you through everything you need to do — step by step — to set up, claim, and fully optimize your Google Business Profile so you can attract more local customers and grow your business.

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Step 1: Create or Claim Your Google Business Profile

The first step is to either create a new profile or claim an existing one for the business.

If you don't have a Google Business Profile yet:

1. Go to <https://www.google.com/business/>
2. Click “**Get Started**”
3. Enter your business name and follow the prompts to add key details like your address, phone number, website, category, and business hours.

If your business already appears on Google but you haven't claimed it yet:

1. Search for your business name on [Google](#) or [Google Maps](#)
2. Click the link that says “**Own this business?**”
3. Follow the steps to claim and verify your listing.

Tips:

- **Verification is required.** Google needs to confirm that you're the rightful owner of the business. This is typically done by sending a postcard with a verification code to your business address. In some cases, you may be able to verify by phone, text, or email.
- **Use your own Google account.** It's best that the **owner of the business** creates or claims the profile using a Google account they personally control. If you're working with a web designer or marketing agency, you can add them as a **Manager** so they can assist — while you maintain full ownership and access.



Step 2: Complete All Basic Information

Google prioritizes accurate and complete profiles. Fill in every relevant section, including:

- **Business Name** (must match real-world signage)
- **Address**
- **Phone Number**
- **Website URL**
- **Business Hours** (including special holiday hours)
- **Primary & Secondary Categories** (e.g., "Plumber" + "Drain Cleaning Service")
- **Description** – Use clear, keyword-rich text that explains what the business offers and why customers should choose them (750 character limit).



Tips:

- **Keep your information consistent.** Make sure all the details you enter — business name, address, phone number, website — are accurate and match what's listed on your website and across other online directories. This consistency helps build trust with Google and improves your local search rankings.
- **Choose the right categories.** Select the most specific and relevant **Primary Category** to describe your business. Use 1–3 **Secondary Categories** for additional services you offer. Avoid over-populating or adding unrelated categories just to try to rank for more searches — it can actually hurt your visibility.
- **Use keywords in your description.** Think like your customer: what would they type into Google to find your business? Include relevant search terms naturally in your business description — for example, “affordable locksmith in [City]” or “licensed HVAC contractor near [City].”



Step 3: Add High-Quality Photos

Photos help potential customers get to know your business and build trust before they even visit. Be sure to add:

- **Logo**
- **Cover photo**
- **Interior & exterior shots**
- **Staff photos or team members**
- **Product or service photos**



Tips:

- **Use high-resolution images.** Clear, professional-looking photos make a strong first impression and help your business stand out.
- **Showcase your personality.** Add images that reflect the vibe and personality of your business — friendly staff, happy customers, or a clean and inviting space.
- **Add new photos regularly.** Fresh images show Google (and customers) that your business is active and engaged.
- **Photos matter.** Businesses with photos get **42% more requests for directions** and **35% more click-throughs to their websites** — so don't skip this step!

Step 4: Get and Respond to Reviews

Reviews are essential for building credibility, improving your local rankings, and earning trust with potential customers.

Make it a habit to:

- **Ask satisfied customers to leave a review** (provide them with a direct link)
- **Respond to every review** — both positive and negative
- **Keep your responses professional, polite, and on-brand**

Tips:

- **Make it easy for customers to leave a review.** Add a review request form to your website to help collect reviews or generate a direct link from Google:

<https://support.google.com/business/answer/7035772>
- **Don't ignore negative feedback.** A thoughtful, respectful response to a negative review shows potential customers that you care and are willing to make things right.
- **Reviews influence ranking.** Businesses with frequent, recent, and positive reviews are more likely to appear higher in local search results.

? Step 5: Use the Questions & Answers Section

The **Questions & Answers** section on your Google Business Profile allows anyone to ask — and answer — questions about your business. It appears publicly, so it's important to monitor it regularly and take control of the conversation.

What you can do:

- **Ask and answer common questions yourself** using your Google account
- **Respond to customer questions quickly and accurately**
- **Use clear, helpful language that reflects your brand voice**

Tips:

- **Be proactive.** You can post frequently asked questions yourself — and then answer them — to help guide potential customers and highlight important info (like parking, service policies, or pricing). Start by adding 5-10 most common questions.
- **Use keywords naturally.** Answers that include common search phrases related to your business may help improve your local SEO.
- **Monitor regularly.** Anyone can answer a question — even people outside your business — so it's important to check in frequently and correct any misinformation.

Step 6: Post Regular Updates with Google Posts

Google Posts let you share timely updates, promotions, events, or new offerings directly on your Business Profile. These posts appear in search results and help show that your business is active and engaged.

Types of posts you can create:

- **What's New** – General updates or announcements
- **Offers** – Discounts, specials, or limited-time deals
- **Events** – Upcoming classes, webinars, or in-store events
- **Products** – Highlight specific services or items

Each post can include an image, short description, and a call-to-action button (like “Call Now,” “Learn More,” or “Book”).

Tips:

- **Be consistent.** Posting frequently helps keep your profile fresh, signals activity to Google, and can lead to better visibility in local search.
- **Use strong visuals.** Include high-quality images or graphics that capture attention.
- **Focus on value.** Highlight what's new, what's changing, or what your customers should know right now — and include a clear call-to-action.
- **Track engagement.** Monitor how your posts perform (views, clicks, etc.) through the Insights section of your profile to refine your strategy.

Step 7: Enable Messaging

For service-based businesses like contractors, salons, repair professionals, or any business where customers typically have quick questions, Google’s messaging feature can be a powerful tool. It allows potential customers to contact you directly from your Business Profile — similar to texting. It’s a fast, convenient way to start a conversation, ask about availability, or request a quote.

To turn it on:

- Log into your Google Business Profile dashboard
- Click **Messages** in the menu
- Enable messaging and set up push notifications so you don’t miss any new inquiries

You’ll receive messages through the Google Maps app or the Google Business Profile dashboard.

Tips:

- **Respond quickly.** Google recommends replying within 24 hours. Fast responses can improve your visibility and lead to more conversions.
- **Set expectations.** Use an auto-reply to let people know when they can expect a response, especially outside business hours.
- **Use it to capture leads.** Treat every message like a warm lead. Be helpful, clear, and prompt.
- **Assign responsibility.** If you’re busy, delegate messaging to someone on your team — or your marketing partner — to ensure timely replies.
- **Know if it’s right for you.** Messaging works best for businesses that can respond quickly and regularly. If you’re unable to monitor it consistently, consider keeping it turned off to avoid customer frustration.



Step 8: Monitor Insights & Keep Your Profile Updated

Once your Google Business Profile is up and running, it's important to check in regularly and make updates as needed. Google provides built-in insights so you can see how people are interacting with your profile — and use that data to make smarter marketing decisions.

In the **Performance** or **Insights** section, you can track:

- How many people viewed your profile
- Where they found it (Google Search or Maps)
- What actions they took (calls, clicks, direction requests)
- Which keywords they searched to find your business

Also be sure to keep your profile information fresh — especially your hours, photos, and posts.



Tips:

- **Review performance monthly.** Set a reminder to check your profile's insights at least once a month so you can see what's working and where to improve.
- **Update seasonal info.** Don't forget to update hours during holidays, closures, or seasonal changes — Google may even prompt you to do so.
- **Refresh photos and posts.** Regular updates show Google (and customers) that your business is active and trustworthy.
- **Watch for profile suggestions.** Google may suggest changes to your listing — but always review them carefully before accepting.

Final Thoughts

Taking control of your Google Business Profile is one of the simplest — and most effective — ways to boost your visibility online, earn trust from potential customers, and drive more traffic to your business. Whether you're a local shop, a service provider, or just getting started, keeping your profile complete, accurate, and up to date can make a significant impact on your growth.