Local SEO setup checklist

For businesses that serve customers in a town, city or area. Get your Google Business Profile right first, then make your website agree with it, then build reviews and mentions.

Start here: the 10 steps that matter most

If you only have an hour or two, do these first. The full list, with how to check each one, follows.

1. Claim and verify your profile
   The profile shows as verified and the owner account is a company email you control.
2. Use your real-world business name, nothing added
   The profile name is exactly the name on your sign and invoices.
3. Set the address correctly, or hide it if customers don't visit
   Storefront: exact address shown. Service-area business: address hidden, service areas set.
4. Choose as few categories as possible, the most specific first
   A specific primary category, and secondary ones only for real core services.
5. Show name, address and phone on every page, as text
   Footer shows the same name, address (or service area) and phone as the profile, as text.
6. Add LocalBusiness structured data
   One LocalBusiness block (or a specific subtype) with name, address, telephone, url and openingHoursSpecification.
7. Make one strong page for each main service
   Each main service has its own page: what's included, who it's for, price range, area, FAQ, how to book.
8. Make calling and booking easy on phones
   Tap-to-call (tel:) links, a visible phone number at the top, a short contact form.
9. Ask every happy customer for a review, with your direct link
   Your review link (from the profile's "Ask for reviews") goes out after every completed job.
10. Never pay for reviews or filter who you ask
    Everyone is asked the same way, with no discount, gift or prize.

How to use this checklist

Every step has a priority (**Start here**, **Important**, **When you have time**), who usually does it (**You** or a **developer**) and a rough time. **Done when** says what finished looks like, **How to check** tells you how to confirm it yourself, and **Common mistake** is the slip we see most. Tick the box when a step passes its check.

Steps marked with a free tool can be checked in seconds at rrwebservices.com/tools/. Sources are numbered at the end; every fact was checked against them on November 9, 2026.

Your score: _____ of 25 steps done Date: _____

Google Business Profile, by the rules

- [ ] **1. Claim and verify your profile**

  Start here · You · 30 min plus verification

  An unclaimed profile can be edited by anyone and can't be managed by you.

  Done when: The profile shows as verified and the owner account is a company email you control.

  How to check: Search your business name on Google Maps and look for "Own this business?".

  Common mistake: An agency or ex-employee as the only owner.

  Source 1

- [ ] **2. Use your real-world business name, nothing added**

  Start here · You · 5 min

  Google's guidelines say the name must match your signs, website and stationery, without taglines, locations, services or phone numbers. Adding keywords can get a profile suspended.

  Done when: The profile name is exactly the name on your sign and invoices.

  How to check: Compare the profile name with your shopfront or business registration.

  Common mistake: "Mile High Heating & Air | Furnace Repair Denver".

  Source 1

- [ ] **3. Set the address correctly, or hide it if customers don't visit**

  Start here · You · 10 min

  Google says to use a precise address. Service-area businesses that go to customers should hide their address and set a service area instead. P.O. boxes, remote mailboxes and virtual offices aren't allowed.

  Done when: Storefront: exact address shown. Service-area business: address hidden, service areas set.

  How to check: Look at your profile as a customer in Google Maps.

  Common mistake: A virtual office address to appear in a city you don't operate from.

  Source 1

- [ ] **4. Keep the service area realistic**

  Important · You · 10 min

  Google's guidelines say a service area generally shouldn't go beyond about two hours' drive from where you're based.

  Done when: Service areas are towns or regions you actually serve.

  How to check: Compare the list with where your jobs came from last year.

  Common mistake: Adding every city in the state.

  Source 1

- [ ] **5. Choose as few categories as possible, the most specific first**

  Start here · You · 10 min

  Google asks for as few categories as possible, describing what the business is, not what it sells.

  Done when: A specific primary category, and secondary ones only for real core services.

  How to check: See which primary category the top-ranked competitors use.

  Common mistake: Using categories as keywords.

  Source 1

- [ ] **6. Use a local phone number you control**

  Important · You · 5 min

  Google asks for a number that reaches your location directly, under your control, local rather than a central call center where possible. Premium-rate numbers aren't allowed.

  Done when: A local number that rings your business and matches the website.

  How to check: Call the number on your profile.

  Common mistake: Tracking numbers that change on the website but not the profile.

  Source 1

7. Link to the right page of your website

Important · You · 5 min

Google asks for a website that represents your location, not a social media page or a redirect.

Done when: The profile links to your homepage, or to the location page for multi-location businesses.

How to check: Click the website button on your profile.

Common mistake: Linking to Facebook or a booking platform instead of your site.

Source 1

8. Fill in hours, services, description and photos, and keep them current

Important · You · 1 hour

A complete profile answers customers' questions before they call. Google says businesses that work by appointment only shouldn't list hours.

Done when: Regular and holiday hours, services with descriptions, a description without links or promotions, real photos.

How to check: Compare with the profiles of the top three competitors.

Common mistake: Stock photos and holiday hours never updated.

Source 1

9. Post updates and answer questions on the profile

When you have time · You · 15 min a week

Fresh posts and answered questions show the business is active.

Done when: A post at least monthly; every question answered.

How to check: Look at the date of your last post.

Common mistake: Letting others answer your customers' questions.

Make your website agree with your profile

10. Show name, address and phone on every page, as text

Start here · You + developer · 20 min

Matching details on your site and profile help Google connect them.

Done when: Footer shows the same name, address (or service area) and phone as the profile, as text.

How to check: Compare the footer with the profile, character by character.

Common mistake: Contact details only inside an image.

11. Add LocalBusiness structured data

Start here · You + developer · 30 min

Google requires name and address, and recommends telephone, url, opening hours and geo coordinates. Use the most specific type, such as Plumber or Dentist.

Done when: One LocalBusiness block (or a specific subtype) with name, address, telephone, url and openingHoursSpecification.

How to check: Use the Schema Generator's check or Google's Rich Results Test.

Common mistake: Adding aggregateRating with your own reviews. Google recommends review markup only for sites that review other businesses.

```
"openingHoursSpecification": [{
  "@type": "OpeningHoursSpecification",
  "dayOfWeek": ["Monday","Tuesday","Wednesday","Thursday","Friday"],
  "opens": "08:00", "closes": "18:00"
}]
```

Check it free with the Schema Generator Source 3

12. Make one strong page for each main service

Start here · You · 2 hours per page

A page per service lets you rank and get quoted for each one.

Done when: Each main service has its own page: what's included, who it's for, price range, area, FAQ, how to book.

How to check: List your services and check each has a page with that name in its title and H1.

Common mistake: One "Services" page listing everything in a paragraph.

Check it free with the AEO Analyzer

13. Create area pages only where you really work, with real local content

Important · You · 1 hour per page

Pages that only swap the town name are thin and can be treated as doorway pages.

Done when: Each area page has local specifics: jobs done there, local conditions, travel times, a local review.

How to check: Read two area pages side by side. If they're the same apart from the name, rewrite or merge.

Common mistake: Fifty near-identical city pages.

Check it free with the Content Cannibalization Checker

14. Make calling and booking easy on phones

Start here · Developer · 30 min

Most local searches happen on phones.

Done when: Tap-to-call (tel:) links, a visible phone number at the top, a short contact form.

How to check: Open your site on your phone and try to call and to send the form.

Common mistake: Forms with ten required fields.

Check it free with the SEO Health Dashboard

15. Embed a map and directions on the contact page (storefronts)

When you have time · You · 10 min

It helps visitors find you and confirms your location.

Done when: Contact page with an embedded map of your profile and directions.

How to check: Click the map: it should open your profile.

Common mistake: A map pin that points to an old address.

16. Add a short FAQ to service pages

Important · You · 30 min per page

Answers to "how much", "how soon" and "do you cover" help customers and are easy for AI answers to quote. Google stopped showing FAQ rich results in May 2026, so don't expect them in results.

Done when: Three to six real questions per service page.

How to check: Take them from calls, emails and reviews.

Common mistake: Generic questions that could be on any site.

Check it free with the AEO Analyzer Source 4

Reviews, by Google's rules

17. Ask every happy customer for a review, with your direct link

Start here · You · 5 min per customer

Steady, recent reviews help customers choose you. Google's policy allows asking for genuine reviews.

Done when: Your review link (from the profile's "Ask for reviews") goes out after every completed job.

How to check: Count reviews in the last 90 days.

Common mistake: Asking in bursts, then stopping for months.

Source 2

18. Never pay for reviews or filter who you ask

Start here · You · 10 min

Google's policy bans incentives for reviews, discouraging negative reviews, selectively asking only happy customers, and offering anything to change or remove a negative review.

Done when: Everyone is asked the same way, with no discount, gift or prize.

How to check: Read your review request email and process for any incentive or screening question.

Common mistake: "Rate us 5 stars and get 10% off", or a "Were you happy?" step that sends only "yes" answers to Google.

Source 2

19. Don’t ask staff for quotas or named reviews

Important · You · 5 min

Google’s policy bans asking employees to collect a set number of reviews or reviews that name a staff member, and reviews from current or former employees.

Done when: No review targets or name-a-staff-member requests.

How to check: Check incentive schemes for staff.

Common mistake: Staff bonuses tied to review counts.

Source 2

20. Reply to every review

Important · You · 10 min a week

Replies show future customers how you treat people.

Done when: Every review answered within a few days, negative ones calmly with a way to follow up offline.

How to check: Look for unanswered reviews on your profile.

Common mistake: Arguing with a reviewer in public.

21. Show real reviews on your site

Important · You · 30 min

Reviews on service pages build trust and give AI answers something to cite.

Done when: Two or three real, attributed reviews on each main service page.

How to check: Make sure each review on the site can be found on the original platform.

Common mistake: Edited or invented testimonials. They break advertising rules.

Citations and links

22. Get listed in the main directories for your country and industry

Important · You · 2–3 hours

Consistent listings confirm your details and are sources AI answers draw on.

Done when: Listed on the main general directories and the top industry-specific ones, all with identical details.

How to check: Search your business name and phone; ask the AI Visibility Checker which sites it cites.

Common mistake: Paying for hundreds of low-quality listings.

Check it free with the AI Visibility Checker

23. Earn local links

When you have time · You · Ongoing

Links from local organizations show you’re part of the community.

Done when: Links from local partners, suppliers, sponsorships, associations or local news.

How to check: List local organizations you already work with and ask for a link.

Common mistake: Buying links from unrelated sites.

Track it

24. Tag the profile’s website link so you can see its visits

When you have time · You · 10 min

UTM tags separate profile traffic from other Google traffic in your analytics.

Done when: Website link like ?utm_source=google&utm_medium=organic&utm_campaign=gbp.

How to check: Click the profile link and confirm the visit appears in analytics.

Common mistake: Tags that break the page or a redirect that drops them.

25. Check your homepage and top service page regularly

Important · You · 10 min a month

Small problems (a lost title, a broken form, a slow page) cost calls.

Done when: A monthly check of both pages.

How to check: Run them through the SEO Health Dashboard.

Common mistake: Only checking after a drop.

Check it free with the SEO Health Dashboard

Sources (checked November 9, 2026)

1. Guidelines for representing your business on Google
2. Prohibited and restricted content (Maps user contributed content policy)
3. Local business structured data, Google Search Central
4. Google drops FAQ rich results (May 2026), Search Engine Journal

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