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PRACTICAL LOCAL SEO / 2026 EDITION

GOOGLE BUSINESS PROFILE

MADE SIMPLE

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A step-by-step guide anyone can follow
- from first setup to advanced local SEO.

01 SET UP

02 GET FOUND

03 GROW SMARTER

Research-checked against official Google guidance | November 2026
Simple words. Real examples. Honest advice. No ranking guarantees.

Find the right page fast

Start at the top if this is your first listing. If you already manage a profile, jump straight to the part you need. Every page uses simple words and real actions.

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Tip: the contents entries are clickable inside a PDF viewer.

This handbook is an educational guide and not an official Google publication.

START HERE

How to use this handbook

You do not need to be an SEO expert. Follow the basic steps first, then use the advanced pages when you are ready.

Choose your starting point

I am new

Start with the 15-minute checklist. Then follow the setup and verification chapters.

I already have a listing

Skip straight to the profile audit, correct important details, and use the 30-day plan.

What the labels mean

GOOGLE RULE

A requirement or statement that comes from Google's official documentation.

PRACTICAL TIP

A sensible action that can help customers. It is not a promised Google ranking shortcut.

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What you will learn

- Set up a legitimate listing and keep control of it.
- Fill in every important profile field using honest information.
- Ask for reviews without breaking the rules.
- Use simple website improvements to support local visibility.
- Check which changes bring real calls and enquiries.

GOOGLE RULE

There is no fee to create and manage a Google Business Profile. Paying someone or buying ads does not buy better unpaid local ranking.

OFFICIAL REFERENCES: G25 | Full clickable links at the end of this guide.

START HERE

Your first 15 minutes

Want a quick result today? Complete these six checks before doing any advanced SEO.

01

Find your listing

Search for your exact business name on Google Maps. Check whether the listing exists and whether you can manage it.

02

Check the business name

It should be the name on your real sign and business materials. Remove extra city names or service keywords.

03

Confirm the main category

Choose the one category that best explains what the business mainly does.

04

Correct the contact details

Make sure the phone, website, address or service area, and opening hours are right.

05

Check the public view

Open the profile like a customer. Can someone quickly see what you do and contact you?

06

Save your starting numbers

Write down profile views, calls, website clicks and direction requests, where available.

PRACTICAL TIP

Choose accuracy over speed. A complete, truthful profile is more useful than a profile filled with marketing words.

OFFICIAL REFERENCES: G01, G06 | Full clickable links at the end of this guide.

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UNDERSTAND THE BASICS

What is Google Business Profile?

It is the free business listing people may see on Google Search and Google Maps. It used to be called Google My Business.

A simple example

Someone searches **"tailor near me"**. Google may show nearby tailors with their names, ratings, photos, hours, directions, and phone buttons. Your Business Profile is the information you can manage for your own business.

Three things affect local results

01

Relevance = do you match the search?

A bakery should clearly be listed as a bakery, with accurate services and useful details.

02

Distance = how close are you?

Google considers how far the business is from the location of the person searching, or the place they search for.

03

Prominence = how established are you?

Google uses information such as reviews, links and other signals that help it understand how well known the business is.

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GOOGLE RULE

Google publicly names relevance, distance and prominence as the main local ranking considerations. No one can promise the number-one place for every person or every search.

PRACTICAL TIP

Aim to be the obvious, trustworthy choice for real nearby customers - not to trick the map.

OFFICIAL REFERENCES: G01, G25 | Full clickable links at the end of this guide.

PART 01 / SET UP

Step 1 - Check if your business is eligible

Not every website or online company qualifies for a local Google Business Profile.

01

Ask: do customers meet this business in person?

A shop, clinic, restaurant, or a plumber who visits customers may qualify. A business that only sells online usually does not.

02

Choose your business type

Storefront: customers visit your signed location. Service-area: you visit customers and do not serve them at your address. Hybrid: both.

03

Check your location is real

A rented mailing address, fake office, or a virtual office without genuine staffing is not a valid shortcut.

04

Check for duplicates

Search Google Maps for the business name, address and phone before making a second listing.

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GOOGLE RULE

A business that only operates online is generally not eligible. A visible storefront address normally needs permanent fixed signage and must represent a real customer-facing location.

PLAIN EXAMPLES

Tailor with a walk-in shop: storefront. AC repair technician who visits homes: service-area. Furniture showroom that also delivers and visits customers: hybrid.

OFFICIAL REFERENCES: G02, G21 | Full clickable links at the end of this guide.

PART 01 / SET UP

Step 2 - Find, add or claim your listing

Do not make a new listing if the correct business already exists.

01

Open Google Search or Maps

Sign in using your own Google Account. Search the exact public business name.

02

See if it already exists

If you find the right listing, choose a visible claim or ownership option, if available. If you already manage it, open its management panel.

03

If missing, create a profile

Go to business.google.com and follow the Add your business process.

04

Enter real business facts

Use the genuine name, suitable category, actual location or service area, and contact information.

05

Check before submitting

Compare the form with your storefront sign, documents, website and phone. Correct mistakes now.

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DO NOT DO THIS

Do not open several listings for the same business to appear multiple times in Maps. One business should normally have one profile.

PRACTICAL TIP

If a correct listing is managed by someone else, use Google's ownership request process instead of creating a duplicate.

OFFICIAL REFERENCES: G03, G02 | Full clickable links at the end of this guide.

PART 01 / SET UP

Step 3 - Verify and protect the profile

Verification helps Google check that your business is real and that you are allowed to manage it.

01

Look for Get verified

In your Business Profile, choose the verification option shown to you.

02

Follow the method Google gives you

It might be a video, phone, email, mail, or live call. You cannot always choose a different method.

03

Prepare genuine proof

For a video, Google may ask to see the business location, sign, equipment and proof you manage it. Follow its live instructions.

04

Wait for the official result

Check the profile for approval or any requests to retry. Do not invent evidence.

05

Keep the owner in control

Your business should retain primary ownership. Give a trusted staff member or marketer manager access rather than sharing passwords.

06

Turn on account protection

Use two-step verification and regularly review who has access.

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GOOGLE RULE

You cannot force Google to offer a preferred verification method. Use only the methods shown in your account.

OFFICIAL REFERENCES: G04, G05, G24 | Full clickable links at the end of this guide.

PART 02 / PROFILE

Step 4 - Use the correct business name

Your name field is for your actual business name, not for search keywords.

Good name versus bad name

GOOD

"Golden Needle Tailors" - when that is what the sign, documents and customers use.

BAD

"Golden Needle Tailors - Best Blouse Stitching Kochi Cheap Tailor Near Me" - when that extra text is not the real name.

01

Check the real-world name

Look at the name shown on the shop sign, invoices and website.

02

Open Edit profile

Search for your business while signed in, then open the management controls and Business information.

03

Change only if needed

Enter the genuine name and save. Google may need to review the edit or ask for verification again.

04

Check the public listing

Make sure the published name matches your business and has no unnecessary extras.

GOOGLE RULE

Adding cities, services, slogans or keywords to a name that does not actually contain them can violate Google's naming rules.

PRACTICAL TIP

Put your services in the Services section, not inside the business name.

OFFICIAL REFERENCES: G02, G06 | Full clickable links at the end of this guide.

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PART 02 / PROFILE

Step 5 - Choose the right categories

A category tells Google and customers what kind of business you operate.

01

Choose one main service

Ask: "If customers could describe my business in just two words, what would they say?"

02

Search the categories Google offers

Open Edit profile, find Business category, and choose the closest accurate option.

03

Set the primary category carefully

Your first category should describe the main business, not a small side service.

04

Add only relevant extra categories

Use other categories only for genuine separate lines of business where available.

05

Review when the business changes

If your main business changes, update the category and related website information.

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EXAMPLE

A dental clinic should choose a category such as "Dental clinic" or the closest category offered by Google, not "Beauty salon" just because it also provides cosmetic treatment.

GOOGLE RULE

Google advises choosing the most specific category that describes the business. Category options vary by country and industry.

OFFICIAL REFERENCES: G07, G06 | Full clickable links at the end of this guide.

PART 02 / PROFILE

Step 6 - Address, map pin and service area

Customers must be able to find you, or understand where you can visit them.

01

Storefront: check the complete address

Enter the real address where customers can visit during stated business hours. Use the correct building and local address format.

02

Check the location pin

Look at the public map. If it points to the wrong place, use the available location/pin edit tools to request a correction.

03

Service-area business: hide the home address

If customers do not visit you there, do not display it as a public storefront. Set the places you actually serve.

04

Hybrid business: show both honestly

If customers visit your real signed shop and you also travel to them, keep the storefront address and real service areas.

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05

Check directions from another device

Test that the map brings a first-time visitor to the correct entrance.

GOOGLE RULE

Google allows up to 20 service areas. The overall area generally should not extend beyond about two hours of driving from the business base.

PRACTICAL TIP

Adding distant towns to the service-area field does not turn those towns into real offices and does not guarantee rankings there.

OFFICIAL REFERENCES: G02, G08 | Full clickable links at the end of this guide.

PART 02 / PROFILE

Step 7 - Hours, phone and website

Make it easy for someone to contact you without guessing.

01

Add true opening hours

Enter the times customers can normally reach or visit you, as appropriate to the business type.

02

Update holidays and special hours

Check holidays, festivals, closures and changes to normal timings in advance.

03

Add a working business phone

Use a number that reaches the actual business. Test it by calling from another phone.

04

Add the correct website page

Link to the real business website, preferably the useful page for that specific location.

05

Check available contact actions

Depending on category and region, you might be able to add booking, ordering, appointment, WhatsApp or other contact links.

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06

Test every button

Open your public profile and tap Call, Website and Directions. Fix broken or misdirected links.

PRACTICAL TIP

If a customer finds your listing on a Sunday, the hours and contact details should tell the truth about Sunday.

OFFICIAL REFERENCES: G06, G02, G23 | Full clickable links at the end of this guide.

PART 02 / PROFILE

Step 8 - Write a simple business description

Explain what you do as if talking to a new customer standing in your shop.

A useful four-part formula

01

Who you are

Start with your business type and a simple introduction.

02

What you offer

Mention your main services or products in natural words.

03

Who or where you serve

Add your real local area or the customers you help.

04

What makes you useful

Explain practical strengths: years of experience, delivery, accessibility, or specialist skills - only when true.

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COPYABLE EXAMPLE

"Blue Willow Home Cleaning provides house cleaning, kitchen deep cleaning and move-out cleaning in and around Thrissur. Our team offers scheduled home visits, clear pricing and support for one-time or regular cleaning. Contact us to ask about availability."

GOOGLE RULE

Google limits the business description to 750 characters. Avoid promotional claims, irrelevant keyword lists, links and information that belongs in other fields.

PRACTICAL TIP

Read it aloud. If it sounds like a real person explaining the business, you are on the right track.

OFFICIAL REFERENCES: G06 | Full clickable links at the end of this guide.

PART 02 / PROFILE

Step 9 - Add services, products and helpful details

A customer should know what you sell before they phone you.

01

Find Services or the matching section

Open your Business Profile and check the editing choices for your category.

02

List what customers can actually buy

For a cleaning company: bathroom cleaning, sofa cleaning, deep cleaning - only if offered.

03

Write plain descriptions

Explain what each service includes, who it is for and what to expect. Add price or range where supported and useful.

04

Use product or menu features when available

Shops, restaurants and other categories may have their own sections. Use only the fields available to your business.

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05

Add useful attributes

Depending on eligibility, you may see parking, accessibility, payment and other factual options.

06

Check changes on the public profile

Some features depend on your country and primary category.

BETTER SERVICE DESCRIPTION

"Sofa cleaning - We clean fabric sofas at your home. Ask us for a quote based on sofa size and fabric type."

PRACTICAL TIP

A clear services list helps customers know if they should call. It is not a reason to repeat the same location name 20 times.

OFFICIAL REFERENCES: G06, G23 | Full clickable links at the end of this guide.

www.slashford.com

PART 02 / PROFILE

Step 10 - Upload photos that build trust

Real photos help people recognise your business and feel comfortable contacting you.

What to photograph first

- [ ] Outside of the building or arrival location
- [ ] Entrance and clear sign, if you have one
- [ ] Inside area / customer seating
- [ ] Staff at work, with permission
- [ ] Real products or finished projects
- [ ] Useful equipment or service process

01 **Use a phone with good lighting**

Clean the lens. Keep photos in focus and avoid heavy filters or misleading edits.

02 **Open Add photo**

Choose the photos or videos section in your Business Profile. Add your real images.

03 **Wait for review**

Uploaded images may take time to be reviewed or may not appear immediately.

04 **Refresh photos as things change**

Replace outdated store photos and add new real work from time to time.

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GOOGLE RULE

Google specifies accepted photo formats and quality guidelines. Photos should reflect the real business and meet the current media policy.

PRACTICAL TIP

Recommended operator routine: start with 8-12 useful real photos; add new images when there is something genuinely new. There is no confirmed "post X photos weekly" ranking rule.

OFFICIAL REFERENCES: G09, G19 | Full clickable links at the end of this guide.

PART 03 / TRUST

Step 11 - Make useful Google posts

Posts help customers discover announcements, offers and events on your profile.

01 **Decide what customers need to know**

Choose a new service, seasonal hours, small announcement, event or genuine promotion.

02 **Open Add update or Posts**

The exact label can vary; choose Update, Offer or Event where those options are available.

03 **Write one clear idea**

Say what is happening, for whom and when. Avoid vague sales slogans.

04 **Add one relevant image**

Use a real photo or clean promotional image that follows Google's content guidelines.

05 **Add a helpful next step**

Use an available call-to-action button or link, then check it works.

06 **Review and publish**

Check spelling, dates and conditions. Remove out-of-date offers.

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SAMPLE POST

"Holiday timing update: We will close at 5 pm this Friday. Normal hours return on Saturday. Please call before visiting for urgent orders."

PRACTICAL TIP

A realistic routine is one helpful update when you have news - not forced daily posts for the sake of a ranking trick.

OFFICIAL REFERENCES: G10 | Full clickable links at the end of this guide.

PART 03 / TRUST

Step 12 - Ask for honest reviews

Reviews help people understand what other customers experienced.

01

Give customers a good experience first

Friendly service and clear expectations matter more than any review script.

02

Find your Google review link

Open the profile's Ask for reviews / Get more reviews area. Copy the shareable link or QR code if offered.

03

Ask every customer fairly

At a sensible time, invite real customers to describe their actual experience.

04

Make it easy

Share the link after service by message, email, invoice or a display in your store.

05

Keep asking naturally

Ask as part of your customer service process, not through repeated pressure.

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REVIEW REQUEST MESSAGE

"Thank you for choosing us today. If you have a minute, would you share your honest experience on Google? Your feedback helps other people know what to expect: [your review link]."

DO NOT DO THIS

Never buy fake reviews, offer discounts or gifts in exchange for reviews, ask only happy customers, or pressure people to leave five stars.

OFFICIAL REFERENCES: G11, G12, G13 | Full clickable links at the end of this guide.

PART 03 / TRUST

Step 13 - Reply to both good and bad reviews

Your reply is read by the reviewer and many future customers.

A simple three-part reply

01

Thank the person

Acknowledge that they took time to share feedback.

02

Respond to the real point

Mention the service or issue without sharing private customer details.

03

Offer the next step if needed

For a complaint, invite a private conversation and explain how to reach the business.

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POSITIVE REVIEW REPLY

"Thank you for your kind feedback. We are glad the installation went smoothly. We appreciate you choosing our team."

NEGATIVE REVIEW REPLY

"Thank you for telling us about the delay. We are sorry it affected your visit. Please contact our team through our official number so we can check the details and work towards a solution."

DO NOT DO THIS

Do not argue, insult customers, reveal their personal information or offer money to remove a genuine negative review.

PRACTICAL TIP

Make time to respond regularly. Google does not promise that replying to every review instantly gives a ranking boost.

OFFICIAL REFERENCES: G22, G13 | Full clickable links at the end of this guide.

PART 03 / TRUST

Step 14 - Keep customer questions easy to answer

The aim is simple: fewer doubts and more useful enquiries.

01

Write down common questions

What is the price? Do you offer home visits? Where can I park? Are appointments required?

02

Put the answers in the right place

Use services, website FAQs, business description, hours, attributes, booking links and other available fields.

03

Check customer questions when supported

Some profiles show public question-and-answer features. These may vary by device and region.

04

Keep contact routes working

If your profile offers messaging or WhatsApp, confirm someone can reply and monitor it responsibly.

05

Update changes immediately

If a service, booking policy or phone number changes, update all public information.

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WEBSITE FAQ EXAMPLE

"Do you provide service in Aluva? Yes, our team visits selected areas near Aluva. Please send your location so we can confirm travel and booking availability."

PRACTICAL TIP

Useful information is more important than making every sentence include a search keyword.

OFFICIAL REFERENCES: G06, G25 | Full clickable links at the end of this guide.

PART 04 / WEBSITE

Step 15 - Make your website support the listing

Google Business Profile is useful on its own, but a clear website can answer the questions that do not fit in the listing.

Your basic website checklist

- [ ] Business name and real contact details
- [ ] Main services listed in plain words
- [ ] Clear areas or branches served
- [ ] Real photos and trust information
- [ ] Simple Call / Enquire / Book button
- [ ] Mobile-friendly and working website

01 **Open the website on your phone**

Can you read it without zooming? Can you quickly tap to call?

02 **Check the first screen**

Visitors should immediately know what you do and where you operate.

03 **Check the contact page**

Confirm the phone, address and opening times agree with the profile.

04 **Fix broken pages**

Make sure your Business Profile link does not send people to an error or an irrelevant home page.

PRACTICAL TIP

Put the best answer to the customer's question on the right page. A useful page beats a page filled with repeated city names.

OFFICIAL REFERENCES: G01, G16 | Full clickable links at the end of this guide.

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PART 04 / WEBSITE

Step 16 - Build helpful service and location pages

This is an advanced technique, but the idea is easy: create pages that answer real local customer questions.

01 **Choose one important service**

For example: "AC installation" or "bridal blouse stitching".

02 **Write one genuinely useful page**

Explain what you do, the steps, expected timing, honest prices or quote process, and real photos.

03 **Add a real local connection**

Say where you genuinely offer this service and what customers should know about travel or store visits.

04 **Make the next action obvious**

Add a working booking, call or contact option.

05 **Create a different page only when needed**

A second town page should have genuinely unique, helpful information for that town.

06 **Ask a customer to read it**

If they understand the service and how to contact you, the page is doing its job.

GOOD PAGE HEADING

"AC Installation in Thrissur - What Is Included, Typical Timing and How to Book"

DO NOT DO THIS

Do not publish 100 nearly identical city pages that only swap place names. They can mislead visitors and are not a reliable SEO shortcut.

OFFICIAL REFERENCES: G01, G16 | Full clickable links at the end of this guide.

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PART 04 / WEBSITE

Step 17 - Keep your business details consistent

People and search engines get confused when every website shows a different phone number or address.

The three details to compare

BUSINESS IDENTITY

Your real name, address where public, and phone number.

PUBLIC PLACES

Website, Google Maps, social profiles, trade associations, directories and major booking platforms.

01 **Search your business name**

Look for old pages with an outdated name, phone or address.

02 **Fix the pages you control**

Update your own website, social profiles and business directory accounts first.

03 **Request a correction where needed**

For trustworthy directories you do not control, use their edit or support option.

04 **Do not buy bulk listings**

Focus on respected, relevant sites rather than hundreds of low-quality directory entries.

PRACTICAL TIP

Think of this as digital housekeeping. Consistency helps customers reach the real business; no specific number of directory listings guarantees higher ranking.

OFFICIAL REFERENCES: G01, G02 | Full clickable links at the end of this guide.

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PART 04 / WEBSITE

Step 18 - Build real local trust

An established local business is often mentioned naturally by customers and nearby organisations.

01 **Join relevant local networks**

Consider a genuine trade association, business chamber or neighbourhood group.

02 **Participate in useful community work**

Events, workshops, partnerships and real local activities can earn honest mentions.

03 **Ask partners to mention you accurately**

If a supplier, venue or event has a genuine page about your work together, a link can help visitors discover you.

04 **Share helpful expert knowledge**

Answer common local questions on your website or in trusted community publications.

05 **Avoid paid link tricks**

Do not buy links designed only to fool rankings. Focus on real usefulness.

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PLAIN EXAMPLE

A café hosts a local reading event. The organiser lists the café's actual name, address and event information on its site. That is a genuine, useful local mention.

PRACTICAL TIP

Google says links and articles can contribute to how well known a business appears. There is no magic target of 50 or 100 links.

OFFICIAL REFERENCES: G01 | Full clickable links at the end of this guide.

PART 05 / ADVANCED

Advanced tip 1 - Track website visits from your profile

A special tracking link helps you see when a website visitor came from your Google Business Profile.

What is a UTM link?

It is your normal website address plus a short label for analytics. It helps your website analytics identify where a visit came from. If you have no analytics setup, skip this page for now.

01 **Choose the correct page**
Use the real website page linked from the Business Profile.

02 **Add tracking labels**
For example: utm_source=google, utm_medium=organic, utm_campaign=business_profile.

03 **Test the full link**
Open it in a private tab. It must still open the exact intended website page.

04 **Save it in the relevant website field**
Use the URL only where Google allows you to edit the link.

05 **Check your analytics after some traffic**
See visits from that tagged link in your configured Google Analytics reports.

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SIMPLE LINK EXAMPLE

https://example.com/?utm_source=google&utm_medium=organic&utm_campaign=business_profile

GOOGLE RULE

UTM labels are for measuring traffic; they are not a Google Maps ranking factor.

OFFICIAL REFERENCES: G18, G14 | Full clickable links at the end of this guide.

PART 05 / ADVANCED

Advanced tip 2 - Use Google Search Console

Search Console is a free report that helps you see how your website appears in Google Search.

01 **Go to search.google.com/search-console**

Sign in with a Google Account that can verify your website.

02 **Add your website property**

Follow the instructions Google gives to prove you own the website. A developer may help with DNS setup.

03 **Open Performance**

Look for the searches people use to find your pages and which pages they click.

04 **Look for real questions**

For example, "waterproofing service in Kochi" may tell you what visitors want explained.

05 **Improve useful pages**

Update unclear content and broken pages rather than copying a keyword 30 times.

06 **Check after a few weeks**

Website search data needs time and cannot guarantee that a profile will appear in Maps.

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WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Search query: "custom cake order". Website page: "Order Custom Cakes". Practical action: add clear cake sizes, lead times, ordering details and real photos.

PRACTICAL TIP

Search Console measures the website. Google Business Profile Performance measures profile activity. They are related, but they are not the same report.

OFFICIAL REFERENCES: G17, G16 | Full clickable links at the end of this guide.

PART 05 / ADVANCED

Advanced tip 3 - Explain your business to Google with schema

Schema means hidden, structured information in your website code. It can help search engines understand factual business details.

You do not need to learn coding to understand it

Imagine a short form behind the website that clearly says: "This page is about a local bakery. Here is its public address, phone, website and opening hours." A developer can add that form using **LocalBusiness structured data**.

01 **Start with a correct public contact page**
Make sure the website visibly shows the facts you want search engines to understand.

02 **Ask your web developer to add LocalBusiness markup**
Use the correct schema type and factual name, URL, phone, address where appropriate, and opening hours.

03 **Test the markup**
Use Google's supported validation tools and fix reported errors.

04 **Keep the visible page and markup consistent**
Update the code when hours or contact details change.

05 **Do not promise special display**
Schema is a way to explain data, not a guarantee of rankings or a special Google result.

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GOOGLE RULE

Structured data must match real visible content and follow Google's guidelines. Adding made-up star ratings or business information is not acceptable.

OFFICIAL REFERENCES: G15, G16 | Full clickable links at the end of this guide.

PART 05 / ADVANCED

Advanced tip 4 - Learn from other local listings

Competitor research is not about copying; it is about seeing what information customers expect.

01 **Search like a customer**

Try a service plus city, such as "mobile repair Thrissur", on Google Maps.

02 **Open three relevant businesses**

Choose genuine competitors offering similar work, not unrelated famous brands.

03 **Study the customer experience**

Do they explain services well? Are their hours clear? Do their photos show the shop?

04 **Record missing information in your profile**

Maybe your competitors list parking, menus or service booking steps that you forgot.

05 **Improve your own customer information**

Add what is true and useful for your business. Never fake services or addresses.

06 **Review again next month**

Look for new customer questions and useful changes, not a one-time ranking snapshot.

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COMPARE FAIRLY

Do not compare a home electrician with a large home-improvement store. Compare similar businesses serving similar customers.

PRACTICAL TIP

Search rankings change by location, device, query and time. A single screenshot is not a full measurement of local performance.

OFFICIAL REFERENCES: G01, G02 | Full clickable links at the end of this guide.

PART 05 / ADVANCED

Advanced tip 5 - Handle more than one location

If you run real branches, make the information for each branch clear and separate.

01 **Check each branch is legitimate**

Each location must meet Google's eligibility and representation rules.

02 **Use the same real business identity**

Keep brand and categories consistent where accurate, but use the actual branch details.

03 **Give each branch its own contact details**

Use a suitable phone and accurate opening times for that location.

04 **Create a useful branch website page**

Show the real address, team, services, directions and contact actions for the branch.

05 **Give the right people access**

Use owner and manager permissions. The actual business should retain control.

06 **Watch reviews and performance by branch**

Each branch may have different customer needs and issues.

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DO NOT DO THIS

Do not create "branches" at virtual offices, friends' houses or towns where the business has no qualifying physical presence.

PRACTICAL TIP

A service-area business does not need a new listing for every town it visits. Eligibility depends on real operations, not marketing goals.

OFFICIAL REFERENCES: G02, G05 | Full clickable links at the end of this guide.

PART 06 / RESULTS

Step 19 - Check if your profile is helping

Views are useful, but calls, visits and booked jobs are usually more meaningful.

01 **Open Performance or its equivalent**

Sign in, select your Business Profile and look for the performance reporting area.

02 **Choose a clear time period**

Compare a full month with a similar previous month, not a random busy day.

03 **Record the basics**

Where provided, write down profile views, website clicks, calls and direction requests.

04 **Count the actual enquiries**

Record how many phone calls, bookings or customer visits became real leads.

05 **Compare with business changes**

Note holidays, road closures, new offers or seasonality before deciding what worked.

06 **Choose one next improvement**

For example, fix slow replies, a broken booking button or outdated opening hours.

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GOOGLE RULE

A Google Profile call count generally measures clicks on the call button, not confirmed completed calls or sales. Do not confuse these numbers.

OFFICIAL REFERENCES: G14 | Full clickable links at the end of this guide.

PART 06 / RESULTS

A monthly report anyone can understand

Copy this simple table once a month. It is a management tool, not a Google ranking formula.

Number to record	Last month	This month
Profile views	_____	_____
Call-button clicks	_____	_____
Website clicks	_____	_____
Direction requests	_____	_____
New Google reviews	_____	_____
Real enquiries received	_____	_____
Bookings or sales	_____	_____

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Three questions to ask

- Did more people find the business?
- Did more people contact us or visit?
- What one genuine problem should we fix next month?

PRACTICAL TIP

Profile views and actions are useful signals, but many customers may call directly, visit without clicking directions or find you elsewhere. Use your actual booking records too.

OFFICIAL REFERENCES: G14 | Full clickable links at the end of this guide.

PART 06 / RESULTS

Common myths that waste time

You can avoid many SEO mistakes simply by refusing shortcuts that sound too easy.

Claim you may hear	What to know instead
"Pay Google for a #1 Maps spot."	Ads do not purchase top unpaid local rankings.
"Add 15 keywords to the name."	The name must be your real-world business name.
"More service areas guarantee more towns."	Areas show real coverage, not guaranteed rank.
"Buy 100 five-star reviews."	Fake and incentivized reviews violate policy.
"Upload photos every day for rank."	Real photos help visitors; no confirmed daily-photo rule.
"Post daily to beat rivals."	Useful posts are good communication, not a ranking promise.
"Add fake office branches."	Fake or ineligible locations can cause restrictions.

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PRACTICAL TIP

A useful test: "Would this still help a real customer if Google ranking did not change?" If yes, it is often worth doing.

OFFICIAL REFERENCES: G01, G02, G13 | Full clickable links at the end of this guide.

PART 06 / RESULTS

Fix problems without panicking

If something looks wrong, check the facts and use Google's support process.

01 **Edit is still pending**

Some changes take time to review. Check status rather than repeatedly resubmitting random edits.

02 **The profile is not verified**

Use the verification method shown in the account. Follow official troubleshooting instructions.

03 **Wrong address or map pin**

Correct the information in your profile and check the public map.

04 **Review looks fake or abusive**

Use the official report/flag option if the review appears to violate policy. A negative opinion alone is not always a violation.

05 **Profile is suspended or disabled**

Read the reason and policy, collect honest business documents, and use the official appeals tool.

06 **Someone else controls the listing**

Use ownership request and Google's help process. Do not create a duplicate as a workaround.

DO NOT DO THIS

Never submit fake shop photos, false documents or a second "replacement" listing to bypass a restriction.

OFFICIAL REFERENCES: G04, G20, G22 | Full clickable links at the end of this guide.

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YOUR ACTION PLAN

Week 1 - Make your listing correct

Do the important groundwork before posting content or doing advanced SEO.

- [ ] Day 1: confirm business eligibility
- [ ] Day 1: find the listing and avoid duplicates
- [ ] Day 2: claim or create if needed
- [ ] Day 3: follow verification instructions
- [ ] Day 4: fix name and primary category
- [ ] Day 5: check address, pin and service area
- [ ] Day 6: check phone, website and hours
- [ ] Day 7: review the public listing

Your result at the end of week 1

A real, accurate profile that someone can recognise and contact. Verification can take longer than a week depending on the method Google provides - that is okay.

GOOGLE RULE

Do not claim the profile is fully ready if verification or required Google review is still pending.

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OFFICIAL REFERENCES: G02, G03, G06 | Full clickable links at the end of this guide.

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YOUR ACTION PLAN

Weeks 2-4 - Make the profile useful

The goal is to answer customer questions before they need to call.

Week 2 - Fill in the details

- [ ] Write a simple business description
- [ ] List genuine services
- [ ] Add accurate attributes and contact options
- [ ] Check holiday or special hours

Week 3 - Show real proof

- [ ] Add clear storefront or work photos
- [ ] Upload useful product/service images
- [ ] Ask recent genuine customers for reviews
- [ ] Reply professionally to existing reviews

Week 4 - Build an easy routine

- [ ] Publish one genuinely helpful update
- [ ] Fix confusing details on the website
- [ ] Record profile views, actions and enquiries
- [ ] Choose next month's highest-priority improvement

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PRACTICAL TIP

This timetable is a suggested work plan, not a claim that Google will raise rankings in four weeks.

OFFICIAL REFERENCES: G06, G09, G10, G11 | Full clickable links at the end of this guide.

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YOUR ACTION PLAN

Days 31-90 - Improve one thing at a time

After the basics, connect your profile to your website and real customer experience.

Days 31-60: connect the pieces

- [ ] Improve one important service webpage
- [ ] Check business details across trustworthy sites
- [ ] Create a process for review requests and replies
- [ ] Test every website and booking link
- [ ] Begin a simple monthly report

Days 61-90: try safe advanced work

- [ ] Set up Search Console if you own a website
- [ ] Add tracking labels if analytics is ready
- [ ] Discuss LocalBusiness schema with a developer
- [ ] Make helpful pages for real services or branches
- [ ] Compare enquiries, not just keyword position

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ONE-CHANGE METHOD

If the website receives clicks but few enquiries, first simplify the contact button or booking form. Recheck real enquiries before making another large change.

OFFICIAL REFERENCES: G01, G14, G17 | Full clickable links at the end of this guide.

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YOUR ACTION PLAN

Your easy weekly routine

A little genuine maintenance is better than a huge one-time editing session.

When	Action	Approx. time
Monday	Check new reviews and customer questions.	10 minutes
Tuesday	Confirm opening hours and contact links.	10 minutes
Wednesday	Add a real photo if there is something new.	10 minutes
Thursday	Update a helpful service detail or website FAQ.	15 minutes
Friday	Review important messages, bookings and issues.	10 minutes
Once a month	Record performance and pick one improvement.	30 minutes

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GOOGLE RULE

These times are an optional schedule for a small business owner, not Google requirements and not a published ranking formula.

Owner of weekly check:

Next review date:

OFFICIAL REFERENCES: G06, G09, G10, G14 | Full clickable links at the end of this guide.

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YOUR ACTION PLAN

A simple 20-point profile audit

Tick each item that is genuinely complete. Score 1 point for yes and 0 for no.

- [ ] Eligible real business
- [ ] Owner controls Google Account
- [ ] Correct real business name
- [ ] Only relevant extra categories
- [ ] Correct map pin where applicable
- [ ] Working phone number
- [ ] Accurate regular hours
- [ ] Plain-language business description
- [ ] Useful genuine photos
- [ ] Customer reviews checked regularly
- [ ] Correct listing, no duplicates
- [ ] Verification completed or in progress
- [ ] Best primary category
- [ ] Correct public address or hidden address
- [ ] Accurate service areas
- [ ] Correct website link
- [ ] Special hours reviewed
- [ ] Real services or products listed
- [ ] Honest review request process
- [ ] Monthly performance recorded

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How to read your score

0-12: FIX THE BASICS

Start with the missing core facts and policy issues before advanced work.

13-20: KEEP IMPROVING

Prioritise customer experience and measurement. A high score does not guarantee rankings.

My score: ____ / 20

My first three fixes:

OFFICIAL REFERENCES: G02, G06, G14 | Full clickable links at the end of this guide.

BONUS / TEMPLATES

Copy-and-edit messages

Use these short examples, but change them to match your real business.

REVIEW REQUEST

"Thanks for choosing [business]. If you would like to share your honest experience, you can leave a Google review here: [link]. We appreciate your feedback."

POSITIVE REVIEW REPLY

"Thank you for your feedback, [first name if appropriate]. We are happy you had a good experience with our team."

NEGATIVE REVIEW REPLY

"We are sorry to hear about this experience. Thank you for bringing it to our attention. Please contact us at [official contact] so we can look into it properly."

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SHORT BUSINESS UPDATE

"We now offer [genuine service] at [real location or service area]. To ask about availability, use the contact button on our profile."

SERVICE DESCRIPTION

"[Service name] - We help [customer type] with [the problem]. The service includes [simple list]. Contact us to confirm price and timing."

DO NOT DO THIS

Do not add fabricated claims such as "number one" or "five-star guaranteed" without a genuine basis.

OFFICIAL REFERENCES: G11, G22, G10 | Full clickable links at the end of this guide.

Questions owners often ask

Short answers to common questions before you spend money on an agency or software.

Is Google Business Profile free?

Yes. Google offers Business Profile management without a listing fee. Someone can charge to help manage it, but a fee does not buy higher unpaid ranking.

Can I make a profile without a shop?

Sometimes. If you genuinely visit customers in person, you may qualify as a service-area business. A business that operates only online generally does not.

Will I rank first after filling every field?

No. Local results vary by search, distance, business relevance and prominence. A strong profile improves the customer experience but does not guarantee a specific position.

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How many reviews or photos do I need?

There is no single public number that guarantees ranking. Ask real customers for honest reviews, keep good photos, and make the profile useful.

How soon will changes appear?

Some changes appear quickly, while others need review or verification. Business results can take longer and should be judged over a meaningful period.

OFFICIAL REFERENCES: G01, G02, G04, G14 | Full clickable links at the end of this guide.

BONUS / WORDS

A short dictionary without jargon

If you forget a term, come back to this page.

Word	Everyday meaning
Google Business Profile	Your business listing on Google Search and Maps.
Local SEO	Helping nearby people discover your real business.
Primary category	The main type of business you run.
Service area	Places where your business travels to customers.
Relevance	How well your business matches what someone searches.
Distance	How far the business is from the searcher or searched place.
Prominence	How established and well known the business appears.
Citation	A mention of your business details on another site.
UTM tag	A label in a website link used for measuring visits.
Schema	Structured details added inside a website's code.
Search Console	Free Google reports about your website in Search.
Conversion	A valuable result, such as a booking or enquiry.

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OFFICIAL REFERENCES: G01, G14, G17 | Full clickable links at the end of this guide.

Official sources - part 1

These links lead to Google documentation used to check the practical steps and policies in this guide.

G01 How Google ranks local results
support.google.com/business/answer/7091

G02 Rules for representing your business
support.google.com/business/answer/3038177

G03 Add or claim a Business Profile
support.google.com/business/answer/2911778

G04 Verify your business
support.google.com/business/answer/7107242

G05 Owners and managers
support.google.com/business/answer/3403100

G06 Edit your Business Profile
support.google.com/business/answer/3039617

G07 Choose business categories
support.google.com/business/answer/7249669

G08 Manage service areas
support.google.com/business/answer/9157481

G09 Manage photos and videos
support.google.com/business/answer/6103862

G10 Create Business Profile posts
support.google.com/business/answer/7342169

G11 Get more genuine reviews
support.google.com/business/answer/3474122

G12 Get a review link or QR code
support.google.com/business/answer/16816815

G13 Rules for reviews and other contributions
support.google.com/contributionpolicy/answer/7400114

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Official sources - part 2

These are the remaining Google resources. Check the linked help article if an interface or feature changes.

G14 Understand profile performance
support.google.com/business/answer/9918094

G15 LocalBusiness website markup
developers.google.com/search/docs/appearance/structured-data/local-business

G16 Google Search Essentials
developers.google.com/search/docs/essentials

G17 Start using Google Search Console
support.google.com/webmasters/answer/10267942

G18 Measure links with UTM tags
support.google.com/analytics/answer/10917952

G19 Business photo tips
support.google.com/business/answer/6123536

G20 Appeal a suspended profile
support.google.com/business/answer/4569145

G21 Business Profile eligibility rules
support.google.com/business/answer/13763036

G22 Respond to customer reviews
support.google.com/business/answer/3474050

G23 Business links rules
support.google.com/business/answer/13769188

G24 Keep your account protected
support.google.com/business/answer/14509283

G25 View your profile Learning Center
support.google.com/business/answer/15697615

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FINAL PAGE

Your next three actions

You do not have to do everything today. Pick three high-value changes and work through them honestly.

1. The biggest problem with my listing is:

2. The first thing I will fix is:

3. My next review date is:

Remember the goal

The point of local SEO is not to collect tricks. It is to help the right customers find accurate information, trust your business and contact you easily. A real business, clear profile, useful website, honest reviews and simple monthly measurement are a strong place to start.

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GOOGLE RULE

No tactic in this handbook can guarantee a #1 Google Maps position. This guide is educational and follows publicly available Google documentation checked in November 2026.

OFFICIAL REFERENCES: G01, G02 | Full clickable links at the end of this guide.

Connect with Slashford ? we can do this for you.

Contact us: slashford.com/contact-us/

Prefer expert support? Our team can help with setup, optimization, and local SEO improvement.