



Google My Business

AM:PM | WEB & DIGITAL

A free service that lets you provide more detail about your business when it appears in search.

Beyond a URL and description, you can add photos, videos, telephone numbers, business hours, a delivery area, and links to reservation services. A cover photo and snippets from Google Maps and Google Street View help potential customers know what to expect when they arrive for the first time. A word of warning: Users can suggest edits to your profile, so check it regularly for accuracy.

The most important starting point for getting found in local searches is your Google My Business (GMB) profile. When you search for your business on Google, your profile is what shows up in the knowledge panel, or the box on the right side of the search results page.

It's also the source of the information that shows up for your business in the map pack—the group of three listings at the top of organic search results—as well as your info that's surfaced on Google Maps.

YOUR PROFILE IS YOUR NEW HOMEPAGE

Your first impression with potential customers isn't just your website anymore: It can be your GMB profile. Websites used to get significant traffic from people who needed simple bits of info about a business, such as its address, phone number, testimonials, or photos of the location.

Today, people don't need to go to your site to get that information. Your name, address, and phone number are at the top of your profile. There's also a gallery of images of your business, and customer reviews are aggregated right under your location information. Google even shows the most popular times for visiting your business. For many local businesses, people will decide to become customers without ever visiting your business's website.

Since potential customers will also be comparing you to your competitors, it's vital that you complete and optimise your listing so you can make the best first impression and increase your chances of converting those users to customers.

HOW TO SET UP YOUR ACCOUNT

If you've already got a Google My Business account set up, skip ahead to the optimisation section. If you haven't, here's how to claim your location. Please note that Google occasionally makes updates, so some of the wording may be a little different. Just follow these easy steps:

1. Go to google.com/business.
2. Click "Manage now."
3. Enter your business name and click "Next."
4. Enter your address. If you're a service area business and don't have a physical store but deliver services (such as a plumber or electrician), click the "I deliver goods and services to my customers" and "Hide my address" checkboxes.
5. Choose your primary business category. It's important to pick the most accurate category that describes what you do.
6. Add your phone number.
7. Add your website URL.

VERIFY YOUR BUSINESS

In most cases, you won't get to choose your verification method. Google will send a postcard to the address you entered, and when it shows up (typically about a week later), you'll log back into your GMB dashboard and enter the code to verify your business.

Sometimes you might be able to choose phone verification. If you're eligible, you'll see the option to "Verify by phone" in your profile. When you click the "Verify now" link, you'll receive an automated call with a verification code. Enter the code and you're good to go.

Sometimes you won't get the postcard and will have other problems with verification. If you can't seem to figure things out, your best option is to contact Google My Business support on Twitter. Send a tweet to @GoogleMyBiz and someone on the GMB support team will get you the help you need.

Once your business is verified, you'll be able to respond to reviews and make edits to your business information.

OPTIMISE YOUR GOOGLE MY BUSINESS PROFILE

Now it's time to optimise your Google My Business profile. Sign in to your GMB dashboard and click on your business.

Because your GMB profile feeds valuable details about your business directly to Google—and the best optimisation tactic is to supply as much information as possible—fill out everything you can.

Plus, the more complete and accurate your GMB profile is, the more likely you'll show up in local searches. Here are the elements you want to optimise:

- **Use your actual business name.** Adding additional keywords is against Google's Terms of Service and can get your listing penalised.
- **List a local phone number.** It's a key signal, or ranking factor, that you're a legitimate local business. If you use a call tracking number, enter the tracking number in the primary slot. (That's what will show up to users.) Put your actual local number into the secondary slot.
- **Make sure your hours of operation are correct.**
- **Write a compelling description.** Let people know who you are. Don't stuff this section with keywords, which is the practice of loading a page with keywords to boost a site's ranking, because the description doesn't have any effect on how you rank in searches.
- **Upload lots of high-resolution photos.** This includes exterior, interior, and product shots.
- **Upload videos, if you have them.** Videos must be 30 seconds or shorter and smaller than 100 MB.

GET REVIEWS FROM HAPPY CUSTOMERS

Potential customers want to know what it's like to buy your product or service, so they're going to check out your customer reviews. Reviews are also a key element in getting more visibility in local searches.

PAY ATTENTION TO QUESTIONS

The questions and answers section is a “community” feature that shows up directly under your name, address, and phone number. It allows anyone who uses Google to ask questions about your business or answer them. Since you’re the expert, you should be answering every question that’s asked.

Questions can receive multiple answers, but the answers with the most “likes” will show as the primary answer. Then users can click the link to read more answers if they want to.

Questions work the same way. If a question gets at least 3 likes, it will show up in your GMB profile instead of the standard “See all questions” link. If multiple questions get more than 3 likes, the question with the most likes will be the one that’s displayed in your profile.

CONTROL THE CONVERSATION

Asking your own questions gives you even more control over the conversation around your business. Load your most-asked questions, then enter informative answers to set up a pre-site frequently-asked-questions page. You’ll stand out from competitors and be much more likely to convert users into customers.

Make sure you vote for your answers, too! This ensures that your “From the owner” answers are always displayed as the primary responses. Keep an eye on your questions and answers section so you can keep your answers at the top.

GRAB MORE EYEBALLS WITH GOOGLE POSTS

Posts are basically free display ads for your business. You should always post promotional offers because users can see Posts before they get to your website.

Posts display a thumbnail image and brief description that pops up to a full-sized image and more text when clicked. They show up at the bottom of your profile panel on desktop and in a dedicated tab in the Google Maps app.

Select an eye-catching image that’s at least 1200x900 pixels. Pay attention to how the image is cropped in the thumbnail version so you don’t lose an important part of the image or text.

There are four Post templates you can use when creating your own. The amount of text visible in thumbnail view depends on the template you choose and whether you decide to include a call to action (CTA).

1. **What’s New Posts** give you the most visible text in your thumbnail. Without a CTA button, you’ll get four lines of text, or about 100 characters. If you include a button, the link will replace the last line, so you’ll only have three lines of text.
2. **Event Posts** let you include an event title and a date range for the event. However, each bit of info replaces one of your four lines of text. Without a CTA button, you’ll only have two lines of text, and with the button, you’ll only have one.

3. **Offer Posts** include an offer name, a date range for the offer, and options for redemption methods such as a coupon code, visual coupon, or link to your site. You'll lose lines of text for the name and date range, so if you include a CTA button, you only get a single line for your description. (Redemption methods and coupons only show when expanded to full view.)
4. **Product Posts** include a product name and a price range. Each replaces a line of text, so when you include your CTA button, you end up with only 1 line of text.

Posts stay live for 7 days after they're published. If you have several active Posts at the same time, they'll appear in a carousel with the most recent post displayed first.

GET MORE OUT OF YOUR LISTING

Now that you know how to claim, verify, and optimise your Google My Business listing, you can make that great first impression. Whether you're setting it up for the first time or optimising a listing that already exists, you've got a guide to help you show up more often in local searches and find new customers.

A well-optimised GMB listing is one of the most important elements of local searches, so get out there and show yours off!

