Scruffymonkey

Google Business Profile The Complete Setup & Maintenance Guide



Section 1: What is Google Business Profile?

Google Business Profile (formerly Google My Business) is a free tool from Google that allows you to manage how your organisation appears across Google Search and Google Maps. When someone searches for your business — or businesses like yours nearby — your profile displays key information: address, opening hours, phone number, website, photos, and customer reviews.

It is the single most powerful free marketing channel available to any local business or organisation. Setting it up correctly and maintaining it actively can deliver results that rival paid advertising at zero ongoing cost.

Why It Matters

Visibility — Appear in the Local Pack

The Local Pack refers to the three businesses shown in the map results at the very top of a Google Search results page. This prime real estate attracts the majority of clicks and is primarily determined by the quality and completeness of your Google Business Profile.

Trust — Build Credibility Instantly

Reviews, photos, and verified information signal legitimacy to potential customers before they even visit your website. A strong, complete profile converts searchers into real-world visitors and customers.

Free — Zero Cost, Highest ROI

Unlike paid advertising, Google Business Profile is completely free to use. For local businesses and organisations it is consistently the highest return-on-investment marketing channel available — particularly for 'near me' searches which have grown significantly in recent years.

Insights — Real Data on Your Audience

GBP provides detailed analytics showing how customers find you, what actions they take, where they come from geographically, and how you compare to similar businesses in your local area.

Section 2: Step-by-Step Setup Guide

Step 1 — Claim Your Profile

Go to business.google.com and sign in with a Google account dedicated to your organisation. Search your business name first — it may already exist in Google's database as an unverified listing. If found, click 'Claim this business.' If not found, select 'Add your business to Google.' Always claim before creating a brand new listing to avoid creating duplicate entries.

Step 2 — Choose Your Business Category

Your primary category is the single most important ranking factor in local search. Choose the most specific, accurate category available rather than a broad umbrella term. You can add up to 9 secondary categories to cover additional services you offer. Research competitor profiles to understand which categories are being used in your sector.

Step 3 — Enter Your Location Details

Add your full address if customers visit your premises in person. If you operate as a service-area business (for example, mobile services, delivery, or home visits), hide your address and define your service area by city, postcode, or radius instead. Both options are fully supported by Google.

Step 4 — Verify Your Listing

Google must confirm you are the legitimate owner of the business. Verification methods available include: postcard sent to your address (5–7 business days), phone call, email, video call with a Google representative, or instant verification for eligible accounts. Your listing will not appear publicly until verification is complete.

Important: Do not make major changes to your profile before verification completes — this can restart the entire process and cause significant delays.

Section 3: Profile Optimisation — The Essentials

Aim for 100% profile completeness. Google rewards complete profiles with higher placement in local search results and the Local Pack. Complete Profile Checklist

Business Name

Use your real-world trading name exactly as it appears on your signage and official documents. Never add keywords into the name field (e.g. 'Best Plumber Bolton') — this violates Google's guidelines and can lead to suspension or ranking penalties.

Business Description (750 characters)

Use all available space. Include your key services, location, what makes you different, and natural keywords. Write for humans first and search engines second. Avoid keyword stuffing — focus on a genuinely useful description that helps potential customers understand what you offer and why they should choose you.

Opening Hours

Keep your hours accurate and update them for bank holidays, seasonal changes, and any special events. Inaccurate opening hours are a leading cause of customer complaints and negative reviews — Google may also display a warning on your profile if customers report your hours as wrong.

Phone Number

Use your local geographical number rather than a national 0800 or 03 number where possible. A local number significantly boosts local search relevance and builds greater trust with nearby customers.

Website URL

Link to a specific, relevant landing page where possible — for example, your contact page, location page, or the most relevant service page — rather than simply linking to your homepage. This improves conversion rates from profile visitors.

Products and Services

List every service or product you offer with a name, description, and price if applicable. This content is indexed by Google and can appear directly in search results, giving you additional visibility for searches related to your specific offerings.

Attributes

Select every applicable attribute from the options Google provides for your category. These might include: wheelchair accessible, free Wi-Fi, accepts card payments, women-led business, outdoor seating, and many more. Attributes filter directly into Google's search results and help customers find businesses that meet their specific needs.

Section 4: Photos and Visual Content

Businesses with more photos receive significantly more calls and direction requests than those with few or no images. Visual content is one of the most impactful and underinvested areas of most Google Business Profiles.

Photo Types to Include

Cover Photo and Profile Photo

Your cover photo is the first image people see on your profile and should ideally show your storefront, premises, or team in action. Your profile photo should be your logo. Both should be a minimum of 720x540 pixels and of professional quality.

Interior and Exterior Shots

Help customers recognise your location before they arrive. Show the exterior so they can find you easily, and the interior so they know what to expect. Bright, well-lit photography works best. Avoid heavy filters or editing that misrepresents the space.

Team Photos

People connect with people. Authentic photographs of your team build trust and humanise your organisation. Avoid using stock photography — it is easily recognisable and actively reduces credibility with potential customers.

Products and Services in Action

Show what you offer. High-quality photographs of your products, completed projects, or services being delivered help customers understand what to expect and make decisions before they even contact you.

Video Content

Short videos of up to 30 seconds (under 100MB file size) significantly boost profile engagement. A brief premises tour, a behind-the-scenes look at your work, or a simple product demonstration all perform well.

Posting Frequency

Aim to add at least one to two new photos every week. Google's algorithm favours profiles with fresh, regularly updated content as a signal of an active and trustworthy business.

Section 5: Google Posts — Your Free Content Channel

Google Posts allow you to publish updates, offers, events, and product information directly to your Business Profile. They appear in your Knowledge Panel on Search and Maps and represent one of the most underused features available to businesses — completely free of charge.

Types of Posts

Update Posts

Use these for general news, team announcements, or anything new happening in your organisation. Update posts expire after 7 days, so you need to post regularly to maintain a consistent presence. They are ideal for keeping your profile active between more structured content.

Offer Posts

Set a start and end date for your promotion, add a coupon code if applicable, and include a link for redemption. Offer posts display prominently on your profile with a badge, making them highly visible to people actively searching in your category.

Event Posts

Ideal for workshops, open days, classes, fundraisers, or any community event. Event posts remain visible until the event date passes, making them particularly useful for organisations that run regular events and activities.

Product Posts

Highlight specific products with photographs, descriptions, and prices where applicable. These feed directly into your searchable product catalogue, which is displayed prominently on your profile to potential customers.

Content Strategy for Posts

Post at a minimum of once per week. Each post should include:

- A clear call-to-action such as 'Book now', 'Call today', or 'Learn more'
- A compelling, high-quality image relevant to the post content
- Between 150 and 300 words of natural, readable copy
- Keywords used naturally — posts are indexed by Google Search and can help you rank for additional search terms

Section 6: Reviews — Your Most Powerful Asset

Reviews directly influence your local search ranking, your click-through rate, and whether potential customers choose you over a competitor. A business with 50 reviews and a 4.5-star average will almost always outrank one with 5 reviews and a perfect 5.0 score — because volume and recency both matter enormously to Google's ranking algorithm.

Getting More Reviews

The most effective approach is to ask at the right moment — immediately after a positive interaction when satisfaction is at its highest. Strategies that work well include:

- Sending a follow-up email with a direct link to your review page
- Adding a QR code linking to your review page on receipts, packaging, or in-store signage
- Including a review link in your email signature
- Training your team to ask for reviews in person at the point of sale or service completion
- Creating a simple short URL redirect for easy verbal sharing (e.g. yoursite.co.uk/review)

Responding to Reviews

Always respond to every review — both positive and negative. Responses are public and send a clear signal to potential customers about how you treat people. Best practice guidelines:

- Respond to positive reviews within 24 hours; thank the reviewer by name and mention the specific service or product
- Respond to negative reviews within 2 hours where possible — speed of response is visible to everyone reading
- Acknowledge the issue, apologise sincerely, and offer to resolve it offline through a phone call or email
- Never be defensive, dismissive, or argue publicly — potential customers reading your response are evaluating how you handle problems

What to Avoid

Never offer incentives for reviews such as discounts, gifts, or free services in exchange for a positive review. This violates Google's policies and can result in your profile being suspended. Never post fake reviews or ask friends and family to review a business they have not genuinely used.

Section 7: Q&A Section — Often Overlooked, High Value

The Questions and Answers section of your Google Business Profile is one of the most commonly ignored features, yet it offers significant value for both customer experience and search engine optimisation.

Seed Your Own Q&A

You can ask and answer your own questions using a personal Google account. Proactively populate this section with the 10 most common questions you receive from customers, covering topics such as: parking and access, pricing and payment methods, accessibility, specific services, booking processes, opening hours for specific days, and any frequently misunderstood aspects of your offering.

Monitor and Moderate

Anyone can answer questions on your profile — including members of the general public who may provide incorrect or outdated information. Set up alerts and check your Q&A section weekly. Report inaccurate answers to Google and post the correct information promptly to protect your reputation and prevent customers being misled.

SEO Benefit

Q&A content is crawled and indexed by Google and can appear directly in search results. Answers that naturally contain keywords your customers search for can help you rank for additional queries without any additional effort or advertising spend.

Section 8: Messaging and Booking Features

Enable Messaging

Google Business Profile allows customers to send you a direct message from your profile without needing to call or email. This feature can be managed through the GBP mobile app. Important: you must respond within 24 hours — Google monitors response times and may disable the messaging feature for businesses that consistently respond slowly.

Booking Integration

Connect third-party booking tools such as Calendly, Acuity Scheduling, Treatwell, or other supported platforms to enable customers to book appointments directly from your Google profile. This reduces friction significantly and can improve conversion rates from profile visitors.

Menu and Service Lists

Restaurants and hospitality businesses can add detailed menus directly to their profile. Service businesses can add structured service lists with descriptions and pricing. Both of these features display prominently and help customers make informed decisions before they contact you.

Section 9: Performance Insights — Measuring What Works

The GBP Insights dashboard provides real data on how customers find and interact with your profile. Reviewing it monthly will help you identify trends, spot problems early, and understand what is working so you can do more of it.

Key Metrics to Track

How Customers Find You

Track whether searches are Direct (people searching for your business name specifically), Discovery (people searching for a category or service you offer), or Branded (variations of your brand name). A high proportion of Discovery searches indicates strong local SEO performance.

What Customers Do Next

See how many people called your number, requested directions, visited your website, or clicked to send a message after viewing your profile. These are your primary conversion metrics and should be tracked month-on-month.

Where Customers Come From

The map of direction request origins reveals your true catchment area. This data can inform decisions about advertising targeting, service area expansion, delivery zones, and future location planning.

Photo Views vs. Competitors

Google shows you how your photo view count compares to similar businesses in your area. If your figure is below the average for comparable businesses, invest immediately in adding more high-quality photographs.

Recommended Monthly Review Habit

Spend 15 minutes at the end of each month reviewing your Insights dashboard. Note your calls, direction requests, and website clicks and compare them to the previous month. If numbers drop, investigate whether there are profile issues, new competitors in your area, or Google algorithm updates that may have affected your ranking.

Section 10: Ongoing Maintenance Schedule

Active, regularly maintained profiles consistently outperform neglected ones in local search rankings. Use the schedule below to stay on top of everything without it becoming overwhelming.

Daily Tasks

- Check your messages and respond to any new enquiries
- Monitor for any new reviews that have been posted
- Respond to all reviews — aim for same-day responses especially for negative ones
- Check for any new Q&A submissions from the public

Weekly Tasks

- Publish a new post (update, offer, event, or product)
- Add one to two fresh photographs to your profile
- Check for any suggested edits made by the public to your profile and approve or reject them
- Update special hours if you have any upcoming closures or extended opening

Monthly Tasks

- Review your Insights dashboard and record key metrics
- Update your services or products list with any changes
- Refresh your business description if anything has changed
- Check competitor profiles to see what they are doing and identify any gaps in your own profile

Quarterly Tasks

- Conduct a full audit of all profile information to ensure everything remains accurate
- Refresh your cover photo with something new and seasonally relevant
- Review and update your complete product or service catalogue
- Reassess your category selections to ensure they remain the most relevant available

Advanced Tips

- Set up Google Alerts for your business name to monitor mentions across the web
- Use the GBP mobile app so you can respond to reviews and messages from anywhere
- Google's algorithm rewards engagement — the more actively you manage your profile, the higher you rank against local competitors

Section 11: Common Mistakes to Avoid

Mistake 1: Keyword Stuffing in Your Business Name

Adding search keywords to your business name field (for example, listing yourself as 'Chris's Plumbing — Best Plumber Bolton Emergency Callout' rather than simply 'Chris's Plumbing') violates Google's guidelines. This can lead to your listing being suspended, demoted in rankings, or flagged by competitors who report the violation.

Mistake 2: Ignoring Negative Reviews

Leaving a negative review unanswered signals to every potential customer reading your profile that you do not care about customer satisfaction. A professional, empathetic, and solution-focused public response can actually transform a damaging review into a trust signal that demonstrates how well you handle problems.

Mistake 3: Inconsistent NAP Data

NAP stands for Name, Address, and Phone number. These three pieces of information must be completely identical across your Google Business Profile, your website, your social media pages, and any other online directories where your business is listed. Inconsistency — even minor variations like 'St' versus 'Street' or different phone number formats — confuses Google's algorithm and actively harms your local search ranking.

Mistake 4: Setting It and Forgetting It

An inactive profile consistently ranks lower than an actively maintained one. Google monitors engagement signals including recency of posts, frequency of photo uploads, and speed and consistency of review responses. A profile that was set up thoroughly but then abandoned will gradually and steadily lose ground to competitors who maintain theirs on a regular basis.

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Still need help?

No problem at all - That's exactly what we're here for! If you'd like to chat through anything you've read in this guide, or you want some extra support with your businesses content and digital presence, we'd love to hear from you.

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About Us

Over a Decade of Award Winning Web Design and Digital Support Services in Bolton and across the UK

Scruffymonkey is a family-run business based in Bolton, dedicated to helping businesses and charities across the UK thrive online.

With over a decade of experience in delivering award-winning web design and digital support services, we pride ourselves on making the digital journey as simple and stress-free as possible.

At Scruffymonkey, we believe in a friendly, no-hassle approach, ensuring our clients feel supported and valued every step of the way.

Our passion for creating user-friendly, visually stunning websites and digital support services is matched by our commitment to building strong, lasting relationships with our clients.

Our business works because its built on making a difference

