

The Google Business Profile Ranking Checklist

28 checks across 6 areas that decide whether your business shows up in Google Maps and local search — go through it in about ten minutes.

28

things to check

6

areas that affect ranking

~10

minutes to work through

Quick answer: if your Google Business Profile isn't showing up in Maps or the local 3-pack, it's almost always one or more of the 28 things below — not a Google penalty, and not something you broke. Work through this list in order. Anything you can't tick with confidence is a real, fixable reason your profile is being held back.

Tick each one that's already true. Where you can't, the line underneath tells you what to do about it.

1 Accuracy & consistency of your details

The foundation. Google won't rank a profile it isn't confident is accurate.

☐ Your business name on Google exactly matches your real name

No extra keywords stuffed in (e.g. "Smith Joinery Kilmarnock Best Joiner") — Google can suspend profiles for this.

☐ Your address, phone number and website are identical everywhere online

Your website footer, Facebook page, and directory listings should all show the exact same details as your Google profile.

If not: pick one correct version and update it everywhere — inconsistent details are one of the most common ranking blockers.

☐ Your opening hours are correct for every day, including holidays

Wrong hours hurt trust signals and cause "closed" labels to show at the worst times.

☐ Your service area or address correctly reflects where you actually work

A service-area business claiming an area it doesn't cover weakens relevance for the areas it does.

2 Category & service alignment

This is where most profiles quietly lose visibility — and it's free to fix.

☐ Your primary category is the single most accurate match for your core business

Not the most impressive-sounding one, or the one your competitor uses — the most accurate one.

If not: this is usually the single highest-impact fix on this whole list.

☐ You've added every relevant secondary category available

Extra categories widen the searches you can appear for, at no cost.

☐ Your services or products list is filled in and specific

Named services with short descriptions beat one vague line every time.

☐ Your business description reads naturally and mentions what you actually do and where

Written for a real customer, not stuffed with search terms.

3 Visibility signals

The details that help Google (and customers) trust and understand your listing.

- ☐ **Your website link points to your homepage or the most relevant service/location page**
Sending every profile to the homepage is a missed opportunity if you have a page that matches the search better.

- ☐ **Relevant attributes are filled in**
Wheelchair access, payment types, "identifies as", opening features — whatever genuinely applies to you.

- ☐ **Your business is listed consistently on other major directories**
Facebook, Bing Places, Apple Maps, trade directories — consistency here reinforces what Google already sees.

4 Reviews & response handling

Reviews influence both rankings and whether someone actually clicks through.

- ☐ **You've had at least one new review in the last 60 days**
A steady trickle of recent reviews matters more to Google than a large number of old ones.
If not: ask your last 3–4 customers directly — in person or by text is usually more effective than email.

- ☐ **You reply to every review, positive and negative**
A short, genuine reply is a visible engagement signal, not just good manners.

- ☐ **Any negative reviews have a calm, professional reply attached**
No negative review sitting unanswered for more than a few days.

- ☐ **Your average rating and review count are ones you'd be comfortable a new customer seeing first**
If not, that's a signal to fix the underlying service issue, not just the profile.

5 Photos & credibility signals

Profiles with more (and better) photos consistently get more clicks and direction requests.

☐ You've added a photo in the last 30 days

Recency matters as much as quantity.

☐ Your logo and a cover photo are both set

The two images that show up first in search results and Maps.

☐ You have a mix of exterior, interior, team and completed-work photos

Not just one type — variety signals a genuine, active business.

☐ None of your photos are stock images or obviously outdated

Customers (and Google) can tell.

6 Profile activity & engagement

An active profile tells Google there's a real, currently-operating business behind it.

☐ You've posted a Google Post (update, offer or event) in the last 30 days

Free, and one of the easiest activity signals to keep current.

☐ The Q&A section has answers to the questions customers actually ask

You can seed this yourself — add and answer the 3–4 questions you get asked most.

☐ Messaging is switched on and you reply within a day

A live channel that's slow to answer looks worse than no channel at all.

☐ You (or someone) check the profile at least monthly for accuracy and new messages/reviews

Profiles that are set up and forgotten drift out of date quietly.

7 A two-minute competitor check

Search your main service + town, and look at the three profiles above yours.

☐ **You know which category they're using as primary**

If it's different from yours and more specific, that may be why they're ahead.

☐ **You know roughly how many reviews they have compared to you**

A large gap here is usually the clearest explanation for a ranking gap.

What this checklist won't tell you: it catches the obvious, fixable gaps. It won't tell you which category is actually performing best for your trade, why a specific competitor consistently outranks you, or what order to fix things in for the fastest result — that's judgement, not a checklist, and it's what a proper audit is for.

FOUND MORE THAN A COUPLE OF GAPS?

Get the full Google Business Profile Audit

A proper look at everything above plus competitive positioning, priority recommendations in the order that will actually move the needle, and a straight answer on whether professional optimisation is worth it for your business.

No pressure, no obligation to buy anything else afterwards.

stevewelshmarketing.com/google-business-profile-audit