



FREE CHECKLIST · NO EMAIL REQUIRED

The 45-minute Google tune-up.

The single highest-return hour a local business can spend online.
Print it, work down it, redo it every six months.

For a local business, your Google Business Profile outranks your website, your Instagram and your Yelp page combined. It is free. Most of the profiles I look at around Bellingham are half filled out and have not been touched in three years.

BEFORE YOU START

Go to google.com/business and sign in with the account that owns the listing. If you cannot get in, or it says it is managed by someone else, start the claim and verification now. That step alone can take a week.

The basics

- ☐ **Business name matches your sign exactly.** No added keywords. Google penalises Joe's Plumbing Bellingham Best Plumber, and nobody searches that way anyway.
- ☐ **Primary category is the most specific true one.** Taqueria beats Mexican Restaurant beats Restaurant. Add up to nine secondary categories, only ones you actually do.
- ☐ **Hours are correct today**, including the ones you changed last winter and never changed back.
- ☐ **Holiday hours set for the next three months.** An unexpected closed door costs you a customer permanently.
- ☐ **Phone number is one you actually answer.** A tracking number that rings nowhere is worse than none.
- ☐ **Website link points at a page that loads on a phone in under three seconds.**
- ☐ **Address is exact, or hidden if you are service-area only.** List the towns you serve, not a 60-mile blob.
- ☐ **Description is 750 characters**, written for a human, saying what you do and where. No keyword stuffing.
- ☐ **Services or menu items listed individually with prices** where you can. Each one is searchable.
- ☐ **Products section used**, if you sell anything with a photo and a price.
- ☐ **Attributes ticked** — wheelchair accessible, women-owned, veteran-owned, outdoor seating, free parking. These become filters people search by.
- ☐ **Messaging on only if you will answer within a day.** Otherwise leave it off.
- ☐ **Booking or quote link added** if you have one.

Photos, which is where almost everyone loses

Profiles with photos get meaningfully more clicks for directions and calls. What nobody tells you is that the photos most businesses upload are worse than nothing: dark phone shots of an empty room, a blurry logo, a screenshot of a flyer.

- ☐ Set your logo and a cover photo. The cover is the wide one at the top; make it the most flattering true image of your place.
- ☐ Upload at least ten interior and exterior photos taken in daylight. Exterior shots should show what someone sees pulling up, so they know they found it.
- ☐ Add faces. Photos with a real person working outperform empty rooms every time.
- ☐ Delete anything blurry, dark, or from a version of the business that no longer exists.
- ☐ Add three new photos a month. Recency is a ranking signal and a trust signal.

Reviews, handled properly

- ☐ Get the short review link from your dashboard and save it in your phone notes.
- ☐ Ask in person first, then send the link the same day, while the person is still happy. A cold link gets ignored.
- ☐ Reply to every review, good and bad, within a week. Replies are public and future customers read them.
- ☐ Answer a bad review once, calmly, with a fact and an offer to fix it. Never argue twice. You are writing for the person reading it six months from now.
- ☐ Never buy reviews. Google removes them and it can take the whole listing down with it.

The part almost nobody uses

Google Posts. They sit under your profile and let you publish a short update with a photo. Post once a week: a special, an event, a new arrival, a photo from a job. Four minutes, and it keeps the profile looking alive to both Google and the person deciding between you and the shop down the road.

Redo this whole checklist every six months. Put it in your calendar for the first Monday of March and September.