

DIGITAL REACH · LOCAL SEO

The 20-Step Local SEO Checklist

Every step from the checklist, in the same five parts and the same order, with a box to tick beside each one



ORIENTATION

What this is, and *how to use it*.

Twenty steps, grouped into five parts: your Google Business Profile, your website, reviews and reputation, citations and links, and physical presence. Work down the list in order.

What it is

The paper twin of the local SEO checklist on the Digital Reach site. Same twenty steps, same five parts, same order - printed so you can work through your own listing with a pen.

Who it is for

Any local business that needs to show up in the map pack: the trio of businesses Google features at the top of local results. Most of the twenty are jobs the owner can do without a developer.

How to use it

Open your own Google Business Profile and your own site in another window and go down the list. Tick only what is genuinely true today - not what is planned, and not what somebody means to get to. Then count your ticks and read the band on the scoring page.

Nothing here is gated, tracked or timed. Print it, mark it up, hand it to whoever looks after the listing.

THE CHECKLIST

Part 1 • Your Google Business Profile.

**1. Set Your Primary Google Business Profile Category**

To set your primary category, log into your GBP, navigate to your business info, and select the most fitting option from the dropdown menu. This process is straightforward, making it one of the easiest tasks on your checklist.

**2. Choose Your Secondary Categories**

To add these categories, simply click on the “add another category” button in your GBP. Aim for about five or six relevant categories to maximize your chances of being found.

**3. Complete All Details in Your Listing**

Ensure that every section is filled out with accurate and up-to-date information. This step may take some time, but it’s essential for building trust with potential clients.

**4. Maintain NAP Consistency**

To check for NAP consistency, conduct a Google search for your business address. Review each listing and ensure that all details match perfectly. This task is moderately challenging as it requires time and attention to detail.

**5. Ensure Accurate Business Hours**

Log into your GBP and update your hours accordingly. This step is quite simple and should be done regularly, especially during holidays or vacations.

**6. List All Your Services and Products**

To add services, navigate to the services or products section in your GBP and list each one with accurate descriptions. Including any relevant keywords can further enhance your visibility.

**7. Upload High-Quality Photos and Videos**

Even if your business isn’t primarily visual, like an accounting firm, consider including pictures of your team or office to humanize your brand.

**8. Leverage Google Q&A Feature**

Access the Q&A section in your GBP and start by posting common FAQs. Respond promptly to any customer inquiries to show you care about their questions and concerns.

THE CHECKLIST

Part 2 • Your website.

☐ **9. Optimize Your Website Title and Meta Description**

For example, your title could include your service name and location, while the description can highlight your unique selling points. This optimization will improve your click-through rates and overall visibility.

☐ **10. Create Dedicated Service Location Pages**

Write specific content for each page that highlights local details and benefits. Tools like ChatGPT can assist in generating content if you're short on time.

Part 3 • Reviews + reputation.

☐ **11. Encourage Google Reviews**

Send follow-up emails or texts to customers after completing a job, asking them to leave a review. Make it easy by providing a direct link.

☐ **12. Aim for High Star Ratings**

Continue to encourage reviews and maintain a high level of service to achieve this goal.

☐ **13. Include Keywords in Reviews**

While you can't dictate exact wording, suggesting they include the service they received can improve your chances of ranking for those terms.

☐ **14. Include a Booking or Appointment Link**

Make sure the link directs to the correct scheduling page rather than your homepage to ensure ease of use.

THE CHECKLIST

Part 4 • Citations, links + cleanup.

**15. List on Major Directories**

Search for local directories related to your industry and ensure you are listed there as well. This step may take time, but it's essential for building authority.

**16. Report Spam Listings**

Use the "suggest an edit" feature on Google Maps to report these businesses, providing evidence such as screenshots of their actual business names.

**17. Build Quality Backlinks**

Consider guest posting on industry-related blogs or joining business associations to earn these valuable links.

**18. Use Descriptive Business Names**

While changing your business name can be difficult, ensure that your public-facing materials reflect your services accurately.

Part 5 • Physical presence.

**19. Ensure Your Physical Address is in Your Target City**

This is a significant commitment, so weigh the options carefully.

**20. Proximity to Customers**

Target your marketing campaigns to your local area to improve the chances of being found by nearby customers.

SCORING

Count your ticks, then *read the band.*

/ 8 Google Business Profile**/ 2** Your website**/ 4** Reviews + reputation**/ 4** Citations + links**/ 2** Physical presence**/ 20** Total, out of twenty

WHAT YOUR SCORE MEANS

0 - 5**Not showing up locally**

Nothing on the list is done yet, so there is nothing telling Google which searches you belong in.

6 - 11**Findable, not yet competitive**

The basics are in place. The parts that move you up the pack are still open.

12 - 16**In the running for the three-pack**

You have done the work most local businesses skip. Close the remaining gaps.

17 - 19**Ahead of most local businesses**

One or two steps left. Finish them, then keep the profile and the reviews current.

20**Every step on the list is done**

Nothing here is set and forgotten - hours, photos, reviews and citations all drift.

WHAT TO DO WITH THIS

Work the *unticked* boxes.

Take them in the order they appear. Part 1 is the profile itself, and it is where the most ticks are available for the least work - eight of the twenty steps sit inside Google Business Profile, and most are a few minutes each.

The weakest part is the one with the smallest share of its steps done, not the one with the most boxes left. A two-step part with nothing ticked is a bigger hole than an eight-step part with one gap.

Re-run the sheet after the next round of work and compare the two counts. Hours, photos, reviews and citations all drift, so the list is worth walking again rather than filing.

The full checklist this sheet came from - including what each step is for and how to do it - is on our site.

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