

Google Business Profile Optimization Guide

Step-by-step instructions to fully optimize your GBP listing and rank higher in the Map Pack. Follow each step in order for the fastest results.

STEP 1 — Claim & Verify Your Listing

Go to business.google.com and search for your business. If it exists, claim it. If not, create a new listing. Google will verify you by postcard (5-7 days), phone, or video call. Until verified, your listing will not rank. This is the single most important step — do not skip it.

STEP 2 — Choose the Right Primary Category

Your primary category is the most important ranking signal on your GBP. Choose the most specific category that accurately describes your core service. For example, a plumber should select "Plumber" not "Contractor." Add up to 9 secondary categories for additional services, but never add categories that do not describe what you do.

TIP: Search your top competitor's GBP to see which category they use, then match or be more specific.

STEP 3 — Write a Keyword-Rich Business Description

You have 750 characters. Use them. Your first sentence should contain your primary keyword and city. Example: "Reilly Plumbing is a licensed plumber serving Chicago and the North Shore suburbs." Do not stuff keywords unnaturally. Write for the customer first, Google second. Avoid promotional language like "best" or "cheapest" — Google may suppress these.

STEP 4 — Add Every Service You Offer

Use the Services section to list every individual service with its own name, description, and price (or price range). This feeds Google's AI with structured data about what you do and helps match you to more search queries. Aim for at least 8-10 services if your business offers them.

STEP 5 — Upload Photos the Right Way

Photos signal activity and build trust. Follow this structure:

Photo Type	Minimum	What to Show
Exterior	3	Storefront or vehicle, daytime, clear signage
Interior	3	Work area, reception, or job site in progress
Team	2	Real staff, no stock photos
Work Examples	10+	Before/after, completed jobs, happy customers
Logo & Cover	1 each	Clean, branded, correct dimensions

STEP 6 — Publish Weekly Google Posts

Google Posts expire after 7 days (offers last longer). Publish at least one post per week. Use the "What's New" type for general updates, "Offer" for promotions, and "Event" for time-sensitive announcements. Each post should include: a clear photo, 150-300 words of copy with your keyword and city, and a call-to-action button linking to your website or booking page.

STEP 7 — Set Up Q&A; Proactively

Anyone can ask questions on your GBP — and anyone can answer. Get ahead of this by posting the most common questions yourself and answering them. Think: "Do you offer free estimates?", "Are you licensed and insured?", "Do you serve [city]?" Upvote your own Q&As; so they appear at the top.

STEP 8 — Respond to Every Review Within 24 Hours

Google has confirmed that responding to reviews improves local ranking. For positive reviews: thank by name, mention the service, include your keyword naturally. For negative reviews: apologize, take it offline ("please call us at..."), never argue. A professional negative-review response often impresses future customers more than a 5-star review.

STEP 9 — Enable Messaging & Booking

Turn on the messaging feature in GBP and respond within 24 hours or Google will disable it. If you use a booking platform (Calendly, Acuity, etc.), connect it under the "Bookings" tab. This adds a direct booking button to your listing and increases conversion significantly.

GBP Maintenance Schedule

Keep your listing active and outperform competitors who set it and forget it.

Frequency	Task
Weekly	Publish one new Google Post
Weekly	Check for and respond to new reviews
Weekly	Check for and answer new Q&A questions
Monthly	Upload 3-5 new photos
Monthly	Review and update services list if anything changed
Quarterly	Audit all GBP info for accuracy (hours, phone, address)
Quarterly	Check that categories still reflect your core services
Yearly	Full audit against competitors — compare categories, photos, reviews