

Google Business Profile Setup

What it takes to show up in Google Search and Google Maps

Your Google Business Profile is often the first thing a customer sees when they search for what you do. A complete, accurate, verified profile is what puts your business in local results and on the map. Use this as your checklist, or hand the whole thing to us and we will take it from here.

1. Confirm You Are Eligible

- Your business has in person contact with customers during your stated business hours.
- If an address shows on Google, that location has permanent fixed signage.
- You operate from a real base: a storefront, an office, a warehouse, or a home base for service work.
- Virtual offices and PO boxes are not eligible.
- Working from a co-working space requires signage, a private office with a locking door used only by your business, and your own staff answering the phone during business hours.

ATMs, unmanned kiosks, seasonal businesses, and delivery only food services follow their own set of exceptions.

2. Gather What You Need

- A working business phone number.
- A website. A phone number and a website together is the strongest starting point.
- A Google account. A Google Workspace email on your own domain is best. A dedicated Gmail account also works well.

3. Claim or Create the Profile

- Sign in to Google with the account you want tied to the business, then search your business name.
- Google may already have built a listing from public information. If yours appears, select it and choose Manage Now to claim it.
- If no listing exists, create a new one under your business name.
- Use your real world business name. Keywords belong in the name only when they are genuinely part of your branding.

4. Choose Your Business Type and Category

- **Local store:** customers come to your office or storefront. You get a map pin and driving directions.
- **Service area business:** you travel to customers. You are shown by the areas you serve rather than by a pin.
- **Both:** many businesses qualify as more than one type, and that is fine.
- Your primary category is one of the strongest ranking signals, so pick the one that best defines your main business.
- To choose well, search Google Maps for the terms your customers use and note the categories the top five listings have selected.
- You can add up to 10 categories, and you can add more later as the business grows.

5. Complete the Profile

Address and service area

- Enter your address, phone number, and website, then accept the Google terms.
- Service area businesses can list up to 20 areas by city or zip code. Keep the list to areas you actively serve, generally within a two hour drive of your base.

Services

- Services have a direct effect on visibility, so complete this section fully.
- Review anything Google fills in automatically, remove what does not apply, and add custom services for anything missing.

Hours

- Hours affect when you appear. When someone searches outside your posted hours, businesses that are open can appear ahead of you.
- List 24/7 hours only when you truly offer around the clock service.
- Keep hours consistent across your website, your signage, and directories such as Yelp.

Description

- You have 750 characters. Use them to explain what you do, how you help, and why customers choose you.
- Write it for buyers rather than for keywords.

6. Add Photos and Video

- Profiles with photos earn more direction requests and more website clicks.
- Include interior and exterior shots, products, your team, and company vehicles.
- Use real photography rather than stock images, and keep adding fresh photos over time.

7. Verify and Publish

- Verification confirms the business is real, the location is accurate, and the profile belongs to you.
- Google currently uses video verification.
- Leave the profile as it is while verification is pending. Edits can restart the process.
- Once verification clears, your profile goes live on Google Search and Google Maps.

8. Manage It Going Forward

- Your dashboard is the control center for edits, new photos, and performance tracking.
- To return to it, sign in to your Google account and search for my business.
- Keep your information current, add photos regularly, and review performance every month.

Want this handled for you?

Cogo Interactive sets up, verifies, optimizes, and manages Google Business Profiles for businesses across Washington DC, Maryland, and Northern Virginia. If you would rather spend your time running the business, give us a call at (703) 885-8406 or email peg@cogointeractive.com and we will get it done.