Free guide 1 of 3: Google Maps

Google Maps quick wins

The listing checklist, in the order Google weighs it. Done on your phone, backed by published research.

When someone in Leeds types **plumber Leeds** into Google or Maps, three businesses come up on the map first. This guide is how to become one of them, in the order of what actually moves you up. Everything here can be done on your phone, in the Google Maps app (tap your profile picture, then **Your business profile**). Tick the box as you go.

Before you start: see where you sit

Open a private (incognito) tab so Google isn't showing you your own listing out of habit. Search your trade and your city, for example **electrician Sheffield** or **roofer Glasgow**. Write down the three businesses on the map: how many reviews each has, the date of their latest review, roughly how many photos, and the one-line category under their name. That's your target list. Come back to it after each item below.

The checklist, in order of weight

- [ ] **1. Primary category: the exact trade**

  Do this: Edit profile, then Business category. Pick the most specific one that fits: **Chimney sweep** not Cleaning service, **Electrician** not Contractor, **Roofing contractor** not Construction company. Then add two to four extra categories for things you genuinely do (a plumber who fits boilers adds Boiler installer and Heating contractor).

  Why: The yearly survey of local search professionals ranks the primary category as the single strongest thing you control on the listing. A vague category is the most common reason a good business sits on page two of the map.

  Source: Whitespark, Local Search Ranking Factors survey, 2026

- [ ] **2. Business name: what's on the van, nothing added**

  Do this: Your name exactly as it appears on invoices and the van. Not Manchester Best Plumber 24hr. Not your name with the city bolted on.

  Why: Adding keywords to the name breaks Google's rules and listings get suspended for it. A suspended listing shows nothing at all, and getting it back can take weeks.

  Source: Google Business Profile guidelines (representing your business)

3. Hours: the hours you actually answer

Do this: If you pick up from 7am to 8pm, put 7am to 8pm. If you don't work Sundays, say closed. Only choose 24 hours if someone genuinely answers at 3am.

Why: Google checks whether you're open at the moment the person is searching, and shows open businesses first for urgent searches. An open listing that rings out loses the job and the trust in one go.

Source: Google Business Profile Help (opening hours); Whitespark 2026 (openness confirmed as a ranking signal)

4. Address and service areas

Do this: If customers don't come to you, hide the address (Edit profile, Location, turn off Show business address) and set service areas to the places you'll really drive to: **Bristol, Bath, Weston-super-Mare**, not South West England.

Why: Google shows you to people inside the area you say you serve. A huge area spreads you thin; an address you don't trade from is another suspension trigger.

Source: Google Business Profile Help (service-area businesses)

5. Services: every one, with a line each

Do this: Edit profile, then Services. Add each thing you do as its own entry with one plain sentence: what it is, who it's for, and a from price if you're comfortable. A plumber's list looks like: Boiler repair, Boiler installation, Bathroom fitting, Emergency leaks, Radiators.

Why: This is the text Google reads to decide which searches you match. A listing that just says Plumber matches plumber Birmingham. A listing with Boiler repair, Bathroom fitting and Emergency leaks matches all three searches, and those are the ones people ring from.

Source: Google Business Profile Help (services)

6. Description: three or four sentences, said how you'd say it

Do this: Who you are, what you do, where, and the one thing that makes you the safe choice (years, accreditation number, a guarantee). Example: Gas Safe registered heating engineer covering Liverpool and the Wirral. Boiler repairs, installs and annual services since 2011. Fixed prices in writing before any work starts.

Why: Google's AI (AI Mode, and Ask Maps which is rolling out now) reads this when someone asks who's a good heating engineer in Liverpool. A vague description gives it nothing to repeat.

Source: Google I/O, May 2026 (AI Mode and AI Overviews merged); Whitespark, AI Mode guide, 2026

7. Photos: ten to fifteen now, then a couple a week

Do this: Go through your camera roll and add the last ten to fifteen jobs: finished work, close-ups, the van, one of you. Then add one or two a week straight from jobs. Real photos only, no stock, no logo saved as a photo.

Why: Google's own figures: businesses with photos get 42% more requests for directions and 35% more clicks to their website than those without. Recent photos also show the listing is alive.

Skip: geotagging photos and keyword-naming the files. Controlled tests found no ranking effect either way.

Source: Google (Business Profile insights)

8. Reviews: get to twenty, keep them recent

Do this: After every paid job, one text: Hi [name], thanks for [job]. If you've got a minute, an honest review helps other people in Nottingham find me: [link]. No pressure either way. [Your name]. Send it to everyone, not just the ones you think will be glowing. Reply to every review in a sentence or two, including the bad ones, calmly and factually. To get your link: open your profile, tap **Ask for reviews**, copy.

Why: 47% of people rule out a business with under 20 reviews, and 74% only read reviews from the last three months. A listing with 60 reviews and none since last year loses to one with 25 and three from this month. Perfect 5.0 ratings actually convert slightly worse than 4.5 to 4.9, so don't fear the odd honest four.

Never offer money, a discount or a prize for a review, and never send the request only to people you expect to be positive. Both are illegal under the Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act 2024, with fines of up to 10% of turnover.

Source: BrightLocal, Local Consumer Review Survey 2026; Spiegel Research Center, Northwestern University

9. Questions and answers: fill them in yourself

Do this: On your listing, add the five questions people ring you with and answer them: Do you do emergencies? Do you cover Wolverhampton? Is the quote free? Are you NICEIC registered? How soon can you come out?

Why: Anyone can post a question on your listing, and anyone can answer it. If you haven't, a stranger's wrong answer sits there. Google's AI reads these too.

Source: Google Business Profile Help (questions and answers)

10. Same details everywhere

Do this: Same business name, same phone number, same address or areas, spelled the same way, on: Yell, Checkatrade, Thomson Local, Bing Places, Apple Business Connect, Facebook and your own website. Apple Business Connect is free and is what Siri and Apple Maps use.

Why: Google and its AI cross-check you against other sites. A business described five different ways gets trusted less than one that's consistent, and consistency is one of the main things AI answers are built from.

Source: Whitespark, AI Mode guide, 2026

11. Website link, call button, booking link

Do this: Add your website (even a single page), make sure the call button is on, and add a booking link if you have one.

Why: The call button is how most people ring from the map. A missing website link makes the listing look like a part-timer next to one that has it.

Things people waste time on (skip them)

Google Posts to climb the map (nice to have, no ranking effect in controlled tests). Geotagged photos. Keywords in the business name. Buying reviews or review swaps. Marking yourself open 24 hours when you're not. All of these either do nothing or get the listing suspended.

Source: Sterling Sky controlled studies; Google statements, 2023 onwards

Come back to your target list

Search your trade and city again in a private tab in two to three weeks. Category, hours and services show up fast; reviews and photos build over a month or two. Note what changed. If nothing has after six weeks and the items above are all ticked, the gap is usually reviews: the three above you have more, more recent, or both.

If you'd rather not do any of this yourself

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