Georgia Websites

Google Business Profile optimization strategy

Your Google Business Profile is often the first thing people see when they search for you. It's free, and you can set most of it up yourself in an afternoon.

1. Claim and verify your profile

Your profile only shows on Google once it's verified.

1. Sign in with a Google account you'll keep for good, ideally on your business email, not an employee's personal account.
2. Go to business.google.com and search for your business. Claim it if Google already has a profile; add it if not.
3. If someone else already verified it (a former employee, an old marketing company), choose **Request access**. The owner has 3 days to respond. If they don't, you may get the option to claim it.
4. Verify. Google decides which methods you're offered: phone or text, email, live video call, recorded video, or postcard. If video is offered, Google recommends it. Be ready to show your signage or a nearby street sign, your branded vehicle or equipment, and proof you run the business.

Waiting on a postcard? Don't edit your name, address or category, or request a second code. Google's review can take up to 5 business days.

2. Choose your categories

Google says your categories affect your local ranking.

- **Primary category:** the most specific one on Google's list for your main business. It should finish the sentence "This business **is** a…", not "This business **has** a…". A carpet cleaner should look for a carpet cleaning category, not a general cleaning one.
- **Additional categories:** up to 9 more, but Google asks you to use as few as possible. Don't use them as keywords. Changing categories later can trigger re-verification.

3. Use your real business name, and nothing else

Enter your name exactly as it appears on your truck, sign, invoices and website.

- Right: **Smith Carpet Care**
- Wrong: **Smith Carpet Care - Best Carpet Cleaning Gainesville GA**

Google's guidelines say extra words in your name could get your profile suspended. Leave off "LLC" or "Inc" unless you use them consistently in the real world and can prove it.

4. Service-area businesses: hide your address

If you go to your customers and don't serve them at your address (most carpet cleaners, floor care companies and contractors), Google says you must hide your address and list a service area.

- Go to **Edit profile > Location** and turn off **Show business address to customers**.
- Add up to 20 service areas by city, ZIP code or other area. You can't use a radius.
- Google recommends keeping your area within about 2 hours' drive of your base.
- Keep one profile. Don't create extra profiles for each town you serve.

If customers come to you, such as an insurance office with permanent signage, show your address. If you do both, show your address and set a service area. P.O. boxes and virtual offices aren't allowed.

5. Hours and special hours

- Set your regular, customer-facing hours.
- Use **Special hours** for holidays and short changes. Google suggests confirming holiday hours even when they're unchanged.
- Closed 7 days or more? Mark the business **Temporarily closed**.
- Google's guidelines say businesses that operate only by appointment shouldn't list hours.

6. Services and products

Under **Edit services**, pick from Google's suggestions for your type of business or add your own, with a short description and, if you like, a price. Keep phone numbers and prices out of service names. When customers review a service business, Google may ask which service they got, using your list.

The products editor is for businesses that sell physical goods. If you sell products, such as cleaning solutions or flooring, add them there. If you only sell services, skip it.

7. Write your description

You get up to 750 characters, shown under "From the business." Google suggests covering what you offer, what makes you different, how long you've been in business, and anything else that helps a customer decide. No links, prices or promotions. Write plain sentences for a person, not a list of towns or keywords:

> [Business name] is a family-owned carpet and upholstery cleaning company in [town], serving homes and businesses across [area] since [year]. We [what you do and how]. [Something customers can count on, like a guarantee you actually offer.] Call for a free quote.

8. Photos

Google's photo guidelines: JPG or PNG, 10 KB to 5 MB, ideally 720 by 720 pixels or larger; in focus, well lit, no heavy filters. Videos can run up to 30 seconds.

What to add:

- Your logo and a cover photo
- An exterior photo, if customers visit you
- Your team, vehicle and equipment
- Real jobs: before and after, finished rooms, work in progress

Google doesn't set a number. Start with a solid handful and keep adding as you work; your newest photos show first.

9. Reviews: ask for them, and reply to every one

Google says more reviews and positive ratings can help your local ranking, and that replying shows customers you value their feedback.

Getting reviews:

- Ask every customer, not only the happy ones. Google's policy forbids asking only for positive reviews.
- Never offer a discount or freebie for a review. Google strictly prohibits it.
- Use the review link or QR code Google lets you create, in your follow-up text, email or invoice.

Replying:

- Reply to every review, and make each reply specific. Google advises against sending everyone the same "thank you."
- For a bad review: stay calm, apologize where it's fair, explain what you can and can't do, and invite them to call. Never share private details.
- Flag reviews that break Google's rules.

10. Posts and updates

Posts still exist. You can share **Updates** (news, recent jobs, tips, with a photo and a link button), **Offers** (a special with dates) and **Events**. You can schedule posts and set them to repeat. Posts older than 6 months are archived unless they have a date range, so post now and then. Leave phone numbers out of the text, since Google may reject numbers it can't confirm; use the button instead.

11. Q&A has changed

The old public Questions and Answers section, where anyone could ask and you could post your own FAQs, has been wound down. Google's help center now describes Q&A as limited to select categories

and regions, with a US pilot where owners answer yes-or-no questions about their business. If you see a Q&A prompt, answer it.

Google Maps now has **Ask Maps**, an AI feature launched in 2026 that answers people's questions about places using information on Maps, including reviews. You can't write those answers. What you can do is keep your profile complete, describe your services clearly, earn detailed reviews, and put your common questions and answers on your website.

12. Keep your name, address and phone identical everywhere

Google builds your profile from what you enter and from other sources, including your website and licensed third-party data.

- Use the same name, address (if shown) and phone number on your profile, website, Facebook, Yelp and every directory.
- Use a local number you control that rings at your business, not a call center.
- When anything changes, update Google first, then everywhere else. Our second guide, *SEO isn't just on your website*, covers the other listings.
- Log in monthly. Google and the public can change details, so check nothing changed without you.

Checklist

- Profile claimed and verified, under a Google account you'll keep
- Most specific primary category; few extras
- Business name exactly as on your sign and invoices
- Address hidden and service areas set (if you go to customers)
- Regular hours set; holiday hours confirmed
- Services listed, with short descriptions
- Description written (under 750 characters, no links or prices)
- Logo, cover photo and real job photos; more added each month
- Review link or QR code in your follow-ups and invoices
- Every review answered, with a specific reply
- A post every few weeks
- Name, address and phone identical on your website and listings
- Monthly login to check for changes

Rather hand this off? I set up and tidy Google Business Profiles for small businesses across Georgia. Call or text me at 678-787-9183.