

FOR NEW & GROWING BUSINESSES

# How to List Your Business on *Google*

A step-by-step guide for getting found on Google Search  
and Google Maps — for free.

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## WHY THIS MATTERS

# Your free *storefront* on Google.

A Google Business Profile is the panel that shows up when customers search your business name or services like "café near me" or "plumber in Aurora." It's free to set up, takes about 30 minutes, and is the single highest-leverage local marketing move most small businesses can make.

### Same tool, new name.

Google Business Profile was previously called *Google My Business*. The product is the same — Google rebranded it in 2021 — but you'll still see both names in older articles and forums.

Once verified, your profile controls how your business appears in three high-traffic places:

- Google Search** — the knowledge panel that appears on the right side when someone searches your business name

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- Google Maps** — your pin, photos, hours, and reviews when customers explore the area

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- AI-powered answers** — Google's AI Overview and Gemini's "Ask Maps" pull directly from Business Profiles in 2026, so an inactive profile means the AI skips you entirely

### What this guide covers

Steps 1–7 walk you through creating and verifying a brand-new profile. The final pages cover the six SEO basics that turn a verified profile into one that actually drives calls, visits, and direction requests.

## BEFORE YOU START

# Get these *ready first.*

Gather everything below before opening the setup page. Having it on hand turns a 30-minute task into a 30-minute task — instead of a 3-day one with stops and starts.

- A Gmail account you'll always have access to.** *Use a primary business Gmail — not a personal one — and keep the login details somewhere safe.*

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- Your exact business name.** *No keyword stuffing. Google can suspend listings that include things like "Best Plumber in Aurora" in the name.*

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- A physical address OR service area.** *Service-area businesses can hide the address publicly but still need to enter one for verification.*

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- A business phone number that can answer calls and texts.** *Automated systems (IVRs) can't receive verification codes.*

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- Your business hours.** *Including weekends and any seasonal variations.*

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- A short business description.** *Up to 750 characters — write it in advance so you're not staring at a blinking cursor.*

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- 5–10 photos to upload.** *Mix exterior; interior; team, and products or services in action. Skip stock images.*

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- Your website URL, if you have one.** *Optional — Google can also create a free starter site from your profile info.*

# 1

SIGN IN & START

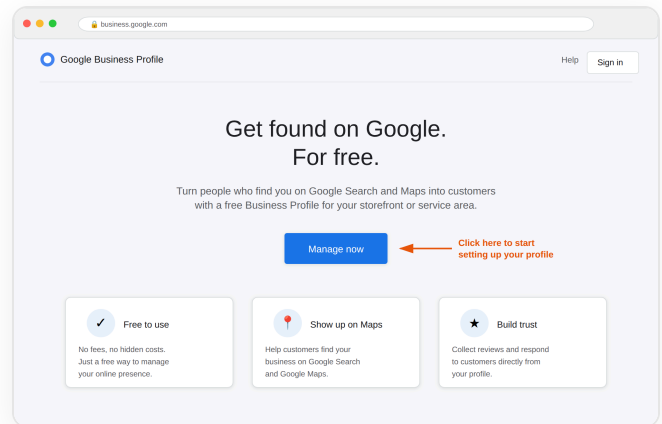
## Open Google Business Profile

Go to **business.google.com** and sign in with the Gmail account you want to use to manage the profile. Click the **Manage now** or **Sign in** button.

If you're already signed in to a personal Google account, switch accounts before starting — whichever account is signed in becomes the owner, and changing that later is much harder than picking the right one upfront.

### Use the email you'll always have access to.

If you ever lose access to this Gmail account, regaining ownership of your listing takes weeks. Pick a primary business email tied to your domain if possible.



# 2

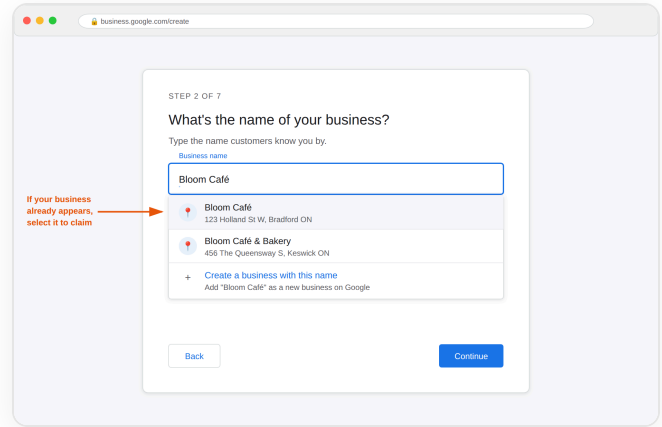
## BUSINESS NAME

# Search and claim — don't duplicate

Type your business name **exactly as customers know it**. As you type, Google checks if a listing already exists.

If a match appears in the dropdown — even one you didn't create — **select it to claim**. Don't click "Create a business with this name" on top of an existing listing. Duplicates almost always get suspended.

If nothing matches, click **Continue** to create a fresh profile.



### ⚠ Don't add keywords to your name.

Names like "Joe's Plumbing — Best in Aurora" or "Bloom Café & Bakery in East Gwillimbury" can get your listing suspended. Use only your real, registered business name.

# 3

## BUSINESS TYPE & CATEGORY

# Tell Google how you serve customers

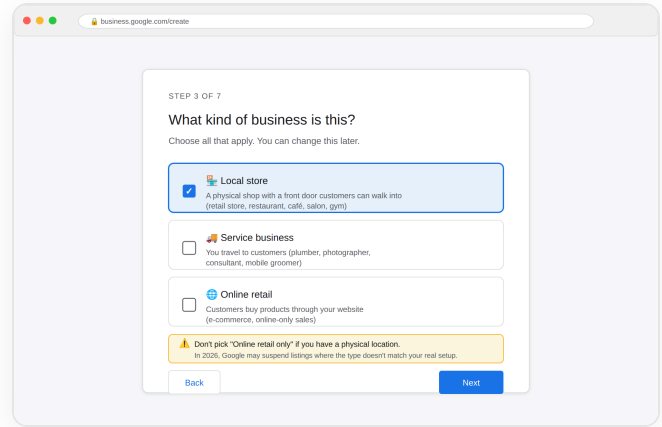
Google will ask how customers interact with your business. Select **all that apply**:

- Local store** — *Customers visit a physical shop*
- Service business** — *You travel to customers*
- Online retail** — *Customers buy through your website*

Then choose your **primary category** — pick the most specific accurate option. *"Personal Injury Attorney"* ranks better than *"Law Firm."* This is one of the strongest local-search ranking factors.

### ▲ New step in 2026

Google added a business model classification step. Picking *"Online retail only"* when you actually have a physical location can trigger a suspension later — match what you really are.



# 4

## LOCATION

# Add your address or service area

Enter the address customers will see on your profile. Make sure it matches the address on your website, your social profiles, and any directories — Google rewards consistency.

If you serve customers **at their location** instead of yours (mobile groomer, electrician, photographer), check **"I also serve customers outside this address"** and list the cities or regions you cover — for example, Georgina, East Gwillimbury, Bradford, Aurora.

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL 'business.google.com/create'. The page is titled 'STEP 4 OF 7' and asks 'Where are you located?'. Below this, it says 'Enter the address customers will see on your profile.' The form includes several fields: 'Country / Region' (set to Canada), 'Street address' (19034 Leslie Street), 'City' (East Gwillimbury), and 'Postal code' (L9N 0L1). There is also a 'Province' dropdown menu set to Ontario. At the bottom, there is a checkbox for 'I also serve customers outside this address' with a subtext 'Add the cities or regions you serve (Georgina, Bradford, etc.)'. 'Back' and 'Next' buttons are visible at the bottom of the form.

### Service-area businesses

You can hide your address publicly but still need to enter one for verification. Google uses it internally to confirm you exist, but customers won't see it on your listing.

# 5

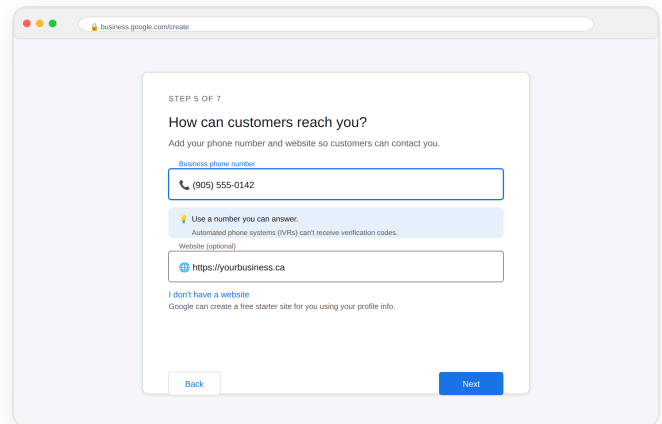
## CONTACT INFO

# Phone & website

Add your business phone number and website URL.

The phone number must be one you can **actually answer**. Automated phone systems (IVR menus, call-routing services) won't be able to receive Google's verification code via phone or SMS, which can lock you out of the easiest verification path.

If you don't have a website yet, you can skip the field or let Google create a free starter site for you using your profile info. You can always swap it for a custom domain later.



### NAP consistency matters

Your **Name**, **Address**, and **Phone number** should match exactly on your website, social profiles, and online directories. Even small differences ("Street" vs. "St.") can hurt your visibility.

# 6

## VERIFICATION

# Prove the business is real

This is the most important step. An **unverified profile won't fully appear** on Google Search or Maps, and you can't fully manage it. Google decides which methods you'll see based on your business type, location, and category — you don't get to pick upfront.

**MOST COMMON IN 2026**



### Video recording

Record a continuous, unedited video showing your signage, entrance, workspace, and proof you manage the business. Reviewed within 5 business days.



### Phone or SMS

Get a code via call or text. Available for businesses with strong existing online footprints. Fastest method when offered.



### Email

Get a code via your domain-based business email. Less common, available for select business types.



### Postcard by mail

Code mailed to your business address (5–14 days). Less common in 2026 — Google has shifted away from this method.

### ⚠ Don't edit your profile while verification is pending

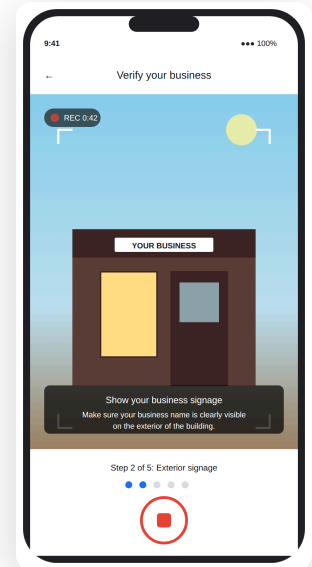
Changing the business name, address, or category before verification completes will invalidate the process and force you to start over.

# Get it right in *one take.*

Roughly 8 in 10 new listings get video verification as their default method in 2026. Plan the shot before you start recording — you can't pause, edit, or upload an existing clip.

## From your phone:

- 1 Open your Business Profile from Google Search or the Google Maps app
- 2 Tap **Get verified** → **Business video**
- 3 Allow camera, microphone, and location access
- 4 Start recording **outside** — capture exterior signage and the building
- 5 Walk to the entrance and show how you access the space (keys, code, etc.)
- 6 Enter and show your main work areas, equipment, branded items
- 7 Show proof you manage the business — keys, system access, a utility bill or business licence with your name
- 8 Stop recording and tap **Upload video**



### Common rejection reasons

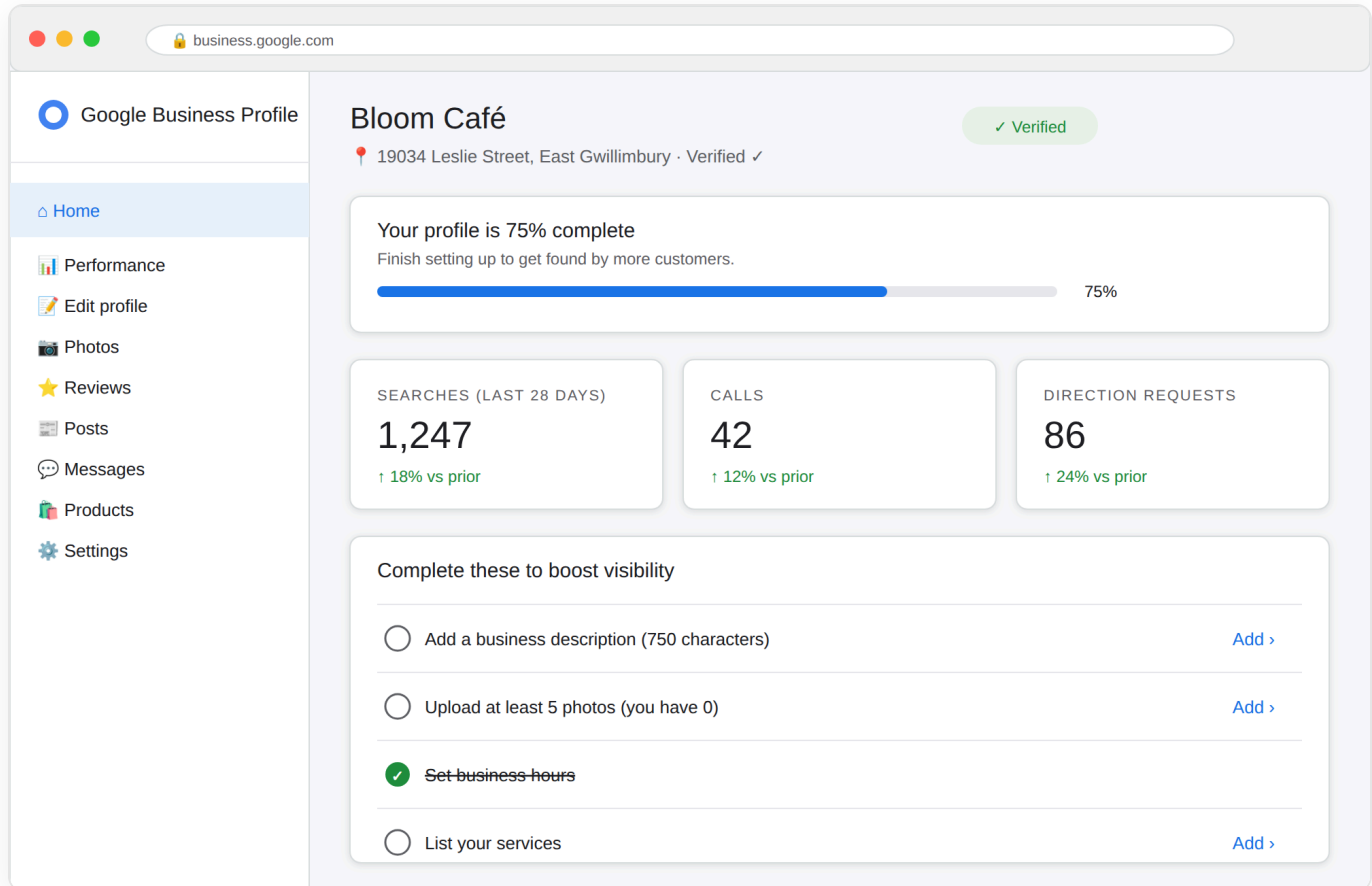
Shaky footage, no visible signage, mismatched business name, showing personal info or customer faces, gaps or pauses in the recording, the video being too short to see proof.



COMPLETE YOUR PROFILE

# Fill in everything that's missing

Once verified, finish setting up. Profiles that fill in **every field** appear in search results 18× more often than incomplete ones, and they get 70% more visits.



From your dashboard, work through:

- Business hours** — regular hours plus special hours for holidays and seasonal closures
- Business description** — up to 750 characters, written naturally with no keyword stuffing
- Services or products** — list every service you offer with a short description for each
- Cover photo and logo** — minimum 1080 × 608 pixels for the cover; pick something branded
- 5–10 photos minimum** — exterior, interior, team, work in progress · also add attributes (wheelchair accessible, women-owned, free Wi-Fi)

# Six ways to get *found* by more customers.

Verification is the start. These six habits are what separate profiles that quietly drive calls and visits from profiles that just sit there.

1

## Keep your information accurate, always.

Update hours immediately when they change. Add special hours for holidays in advance. Inaccurate hours are a top cause of negative reviews and lost visibility.

2

## Upload fresh photos every week.

Profiles with photos get 35% more website clicks and 42% more direction requests. Mix exterior, interior, team, and work-in-progress shots. Skip stock images.

3

## Post weekly updates.

Google Posts behave like mini-ads inside your listing. Aim for 1–2 per week — promotions, events, tips, news. You can schedule posts in advance.

4

## Respond to every review.

Be specific and personal. Generic "Thanks!" replies don't move the needle. Never offer rewards in exchange for reviews — Google can suspend you for it.

5

## Pick the narrowest accurate category.

Switching from a broad primary category to a specific one is often the single highest-impact ranking change you can make on a Business Profile.

6

## Keep NAP consistent everywhere.

Your **N**ame, **A**ddress, and **P**hone match exactly across your website, social, directories, and Google Business Profile.

### In 2026, AI search is reading your profile.

Google's AI Overview and Gemini's "Ask Maps" both pull directly from Business Profiles when answering local queries. Inactive or incomplete profiles get skipped entirely — even if you'd otherwise be a perfect match.

YSPACE YORK-SIMCOE

# Need a hand? *We're here.*

YSpace York-Simcoe supports founders and small business owners across York Region with one-on-one consultations, workshops, and a co-working community. If something on your Google Business Profile setup gets stuck, reach out.

MORE INFO ON YSPACE & BUSINESS SUPPORT

[georgina.ca/yspace](https://georgina.ca/yspace)

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YSpace and Office of the VP, Research & Innovation

Pair this guide with the companion: *"How to Claim & Manage Your Google Business Profile"* — for owners who already have a listing and need to take it over or update it.

