MIDNIGHT WEBS

FREE RESOURCE · LOCAL SEO CHECKLIST

Local SEO Checklist for Small Businesses

When someone searches "plumber near me" or "dentist in Chișinău", Google ranks nearby businesses by relevance, distance and prominence. You can only control two of those. This checklist covers the profile, pages, reviews and tracking that move them.

Updated November 2026 | 11 min read | 41 checks

WHO SHOULD USE IT	WHAT IT COVERS	HOW GOOGLE DECIDES
Businesses that serve customers in a specific town or region	6 areas, from your profile to tracking calls	Relevance, distance and prominence (Google's own wording)

START HERE

Claim and complete your Google Business Profile this week. For most local businesses it is the single biggest source of calls from search, and it is free.

TICK THE BOX WHEN DONE · MUST DO = HIGHEST IMPACT

01 Define your business details and keep them consistent

Google compares what your website, your profile and directories say about you. Matching information builds confidence; conflicts create doubt.

- [ ] MUST DO **Write one official version of your name, address and phone number (NAP)**
  Use it character for character everywhere: "Str. Mihai Eminescu 12" and "Mihai Eminescu Street 12" look like two different places to software.

- [ ] MUST DO **Use your real business name**
  Adding keywords to your Google Business Profile name ("Best Cheap Plumber Chișinău") breaks Google's guidelines and can get your profile suspended.

- [ ] **Decide how you serve customers**
  At your address, at theirs, or both. Service-area businesses can hide their street address in the profile and list the areas they cover.

- [ ] **List services you really provide in areas you really serve**
  Over-claiming leads to irrelevant enquiries and weaker trust.

- [ ] **Find and merge duplicate listings**
  Search your phone number and old business names. Duplicates split reviews and confuse rankings.

- [ ] **Use a local phone number**
  A number with the local dialling code tells customers (and search engines) you are really there.

HOW TO CHECK

Search your phone number in quotes on Google. Every result should show the same name, address and number.

02 Complete and maintain Google Business Profile

Your profile is usually the first thing customers see, before your website. Treat it as a living page.

- [ ] MUST DO **Verify the profile**
  Without verification you cannot control what appears. Google offers phone, email, video or postcard verification depending on the business.

- [ ] MUST DO **Choose the most specific primary category**
  It is among the strongest relevance signals. Pick "Italian restaurant", not "Restaurant", then add secondary categories for other services you offer.

- [ ] **Fill in every field**
  Opening hours (including holidays), phone, website, booking link, services, products, attributes and a clear description written for people.

- [ ] **Add real photos regularly**
  Exterior, interior, the team, finished work and products. Genuine photos outperform stock images and tell customers what to expect.

- [ ] **Add services or products with descriptions and prices**
  This gives Google more to match to searches and answers customers' first questions.

- [ ] **Post updates and offers**
  Posts do not directly rank you, but they keep the profile current and give customers a reason to act.

- [ ] **Check the profile monthly**
  Others can suggest edits, so confirm hours, phone and website have not been changed.

HOW TO CHECK

Search your business name and a service plus your city on a phone. See what a customer sees and fix the first thing that looks wrong.

03 Build useful service and location pages

Pages should exist because people look for them, not because a keyword list says so.

- [ ] MUST DO **Create one page per core service**
  Explain what you do, who it is for, how it works, what it costs (or a range), how long it takes and show real examples.
- [ ] MUST DO **Write location pages only when you have something local to say**
  Local projects, a team in that town, a distinct address, directions or area-specific information. Near-identical pages with the town name swapped are doorway pages, which Google's spam policies target.
- [ ] **Put city and service in title, H1 and opening paragraph**
  Naturally, once each. Do not repeat the phrase.
- [ ] **Show your address, hours, phone and a map on the contact page**
  Embed the map after the page is useful without it.
- [ ] **Link related pages**
  Services to locations, locations to projects, and everything to the contact page.
- [ ] **Add FAQs from real customer questions**
  Prices, timing, parking, preparation. These pages tend to win long, specific searches.
- [ ] **Include reviews and case studies on the page**
  Specific local proof is persuasive and unique to you.

HOW TO CHECK

For each location page, delete the town name in your head. If the rest could belong to any town, it is not yet a local page.

04 Add structured data and local on-page signals

Make the page easy to understand for people and for software.

- [ ] MUST DO **Add LocalBusiness structured data**
  Use the most specific schema.org type (Dentist, Restaurant, Plumber) with name, address, phone, opening hours, geo coordinates and `areaServed`. Google lists it as a recommended way to help it understand your business.

- [ ] MUST DO **Make markup match the visible page**
  Details in schema that are not on the page, or ratings you made up, risk a manual action.

- [ ] **Use one H1 and descriptive subheadings**
  Search and screen readers both use them.

- [ ] **Write title tags and meta descriptions for people**
  "Emergency plumber in Chișinău – 24/7 callout | Brand" works better than a list of keywords.

- [ ] **Put click-to-call on mobile**
  A `tel:` link on the phone number turns a visit into a call in one tap.

- [ ] **Add `sameAs` links**
  Point to your Google Business Profile, Facebook, LinkedIn and other official profiles.

- [ ] **Make the site fast and mobile-friendly**
  Most local searches happen on a phone.

HOW TO CHECK

Test your pages in Google's Rich Results Test and fix errors and warnings that apply to LocalBusiness.

05 Earn reviews, citations and local links

Prominence comes from how well known and trusted you are. Reviews and local mentions are the clearest evidence.

- [ ] MUST DO **Ask every happy customer for a review**
  At the moment of satisfaction, with the direct link from your profile (Get more reviews) shared by message, receipt or QR code.

- [ ] MUST DO **Never buy, trade or filter reviews**
  Google prohibits incentivised reviews and "review gating" (only asking happy customers). Fake reviews can cost you your listings and your reputation.

- [ ] **Reply to every review**
  Thank customers by name and mention a detail. Answer negative ones calmly, factually and offer to fix it offline.

- [ ] **Keep citations accurate**
  Business directories, chambers of commerce, industry associations and map apps. Quality and accuracy matter more than quantity.

- [ ] **Earn links from local sources**
  Sponsorships, suppliers, partners, schools, charities and local media. One relevant local link outweighs dozens of generic directory links.

- [ ] **Publish something worth citing**
  A local price guide, an area-specific how-to, a seasonal checklist.

- [ ] **Track competitors**
  Look at who ranks above you and compare review counts, categories, photos and website content.

HOW TO CHECK

Count your reviews and average rating against the top three competitors in the map results, and set a monthly target.

06 Measure what local search produces

Rankings do not pay the bills. Calls, direction requests and enquiries do.

- [ ] MUST DO **Track what the profile delivers**
  Google Business Profile performance shows searches, calls, direction requests, website clicks and bookings. Record them monthly.

- [ ] MUST DO **Tag the profile's website link with UTM parameters**
  For example `?utm_source=google&utm_medium=organic&utm_campaign=gbp`, so analytics separates profile visits from ordinary search.

- [ ] **Add call tracking carefully**
  Use a tracking number as the secondary number and keep your main number as primary so NAP stays consistent.

- [ ] **Record where each enquiry came from**
  Ask "How did you find us?" on calls and forms, and save the answer.

- [ ] **Use Search Console to find local queries**
  Filter queries by your city or "near me" and look for pages with many impressions but few clicks.

- [ ] **Check rankings from where customers are**
  Local results change by street, so search from the neighbourhoods you serve, not only from your office.

- [ ] **Update before busy seasons**
  Hours, offers and photos a few weeks ahead.

HOW TO CHECK

At the end of each month, write down calls, direction requests, form leads and new reviews. After three months you will see what is working.

Sources and further reading

Google Business Profile guidelines
https://support.google.com/business/answer/3038177

Google: Improve your local ranking
https://support.google.com/business/answer/7091

Google Search spam policies (doorway pages)
https://developers.google.com/search/docs/essentials/spam-policies

Google: LocalBusiness structured data
https://developers.google.com/search/docs/appearance/structured-data/local-business

Need a hand with this?

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