

ShowUpLocal

A GUIDE FOR LOCAL BUSINESS OWNERS

Your Google listing is losing you customers — here's how to fix it in 20 minutes

A guide for local business owners

If you run a small local business that relies on foot traffic and local customers, your Google Business Profile is probably doing more work than your website.

A lot of customers are not finding you through your website first. They are finding you on **Google Maps**, in the **local 3-pack** (*the three businesses Google often shows at the top of Maps results when someone searches nearby*), or by searching things like "**best breakfast Tingalpa**", "**cafe with outdoor seating Mt Gravatt**", or "**physio near me**".

When that happens, your Google listing often decides whether they walk in, call, book, or head somewhere else.

The good news is you do not need a full rebrand or some big marketing plan to improve it. Most businesses just need to get the basics right.

We'll use a cafe as the running example throughout, because it is easy to picture in real life — but the same principles apply whether you run a cafe, a hair salon, a physio clinic, a bakery, or another local service business.

This guide walks you through the main things to fix in about 20 minutes.

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Why your Google listing matters more than you think

01

Google is usually the first place people check when they want something nearby.

They are looking for quick answers:

- Are you open?
- Are you close?
- Does the place look good?
- Do other people rate it?
- Does it feel worth the stop or booking?

For local businesses, that choice is often made in under a minute.

If your profile looks half-finished, out of date, or neglected, people assume the business is the same.

A strong profile helps you:

- show up in more local searches
- look more trustworthy at a glance
- turn searchers into walk-ins, calls, bookings, and orders
- compete better against bigger businesses nearby

It is not just about Google either. More search tools are now using AI to recommend local businesses, and they rely on the same signals — clear descriptions, accurate details, recent activity, and strong reviews.

Even if you run a great business, an average listing can quietly cost you customers every week.

Illustrative local search decision window

Approximate time many customers spend deciding between nearby businesses after a local search.



QUICK TIP

People are not comparing you to your best intentions. They are comparing you to the two or three places sitting next to you on Google.

The 6 things most local businesses are missing

02

Most local businesses set up their Google listing once and never touch it again. These are the gaps that show up almost every time — and each one is fixable in a few minutes.

1. A proper business description

03

Your business description tells Google and customers what you do, who you are, and why someone should choose you.

A lot of businesses either leave this blank or write something vague like: *"Family owned local business offering great service."*

That tells people almost nothing.

A better description should include:

- what kind of business you are
- your main offer
- your suburb or area
- a few natural search terms people would actually use

For example:

EXAMPLE

Local breakfast and brunch cafe in Tingalpa serving specialty coffee, fresh bagels, loaded brekkie plates, and easy lunch options for locals, tradies, school-run parents, and weekend catch-ups.

A non-food version could be:

EXAMPLE

Friendly physio clinic in Carindale helping locals with back pain, sports injuries, rehab, and mobility treatment with easy parking and online bookings.

That sounds like a real business. It also gives Google more context.

Good

Write like a normal person

Avoid

stuffing in keywords

Good	Avoid
Say clearly what you offer	all caps
Mention your suburb naturally	fluffy lines that could describe any business
Keep it specific and easy to understand	big claims you cannot back up

Google gives you limited space, so make it count.

QUICK TIP

If someone reads your description without seeing your photos, they should still get a clear feel for what kind of business you are. This also matters for AI. More search engines are using AI to recommend local businesses, and a clear, specific description helps AI understand and surface your business.

1. Google attributes

04

Attributes are the little tags and filters that give people extra information about your business.

Depending on your category, these might include things like:

- dine-in
- takeaway
- delivery
- wheelchair accessible entrance
- outdoor seating
- online appointments
- good for kids
- accepts cards

These matter more than most owners realise.

Customers use filters, and Google uses that information to match your listing to the right searches.

If someone is looking for a **cafe with outdoor seating in Mt Gravatt**, a salon that takes card payments, or a physio clinic with wheelchair access, missing attributes can mean you do not show up properly — or you get skipped.

What to do

- ✓ Open your Google Business Profile
- ✓ Check every available attribute
- ✓ Turn on the ones that are true
- ✓ Leave off anything that is not accurate

Do not guess. Do not tick boxes because they sound good. If you say you offer something and people show up expecting it, that becomes your problem.

Photos do more than make your listing look nice — they help people decide if your business feels worth visiting. For cafes and food businesses, photos are one of the biggest trust signals on the whole profile, but the same applies to salons, clinics, gyms, and other local businesses where people want to know what to expect before they arrive.

At a minimum, you want:

- **Exterior photos** — so people recognise the shopfront
- **Interior photos** — so they can see the vibe
- **Product, service, or space photos** — fresh, clear, and current
- **Team photos** — optional, but good for warmth
- **Counter, treatment room, or display shots** — useful if presentation matters

A practical baseline

If your listing is thin, aim to have at least:

- 3 exterior photos
- 3 interior photos
- 6 to 10 product, service, or space photos
- 1 to 3 team or in-action photos

Then keep adding fresh ones.

You do not need a pro photographer every month. A clean phone photo of today's cabinet, a fresh haircut, a tidy treatment room, or a well-shot iced latte in decent light is better than leaving the profile untouched for six months.

What matters most

- bright natural light
- current photos, not old ones
- clean presentation
- real products, people, and spaces
- no blurry or over-filtered images

QUICK TIP

If your best photo still shows last year's menu board, old fit-out, or outdated treatment room, your listing already looks stale.

This sounds basic, but wrong hours lose real money.

Nothing annoys people faster than turning up because Google says you are open, then finding the place shut.

That often turns into:

- a lost visit
- a bad review
- less trust next time

What to check

- regular trading hours
- weekend variations
- public holiday hours
- temporary changes

Public holidays are where a lot of businesses get caught out. Google usually prompts you, but you still need to confirm it.

If your hours change for holidays, staffing, catering jobs, appointments, or special events, update them early.

Best habit

Check your hours once a week and before every public holiday period.

BAD

Listing says open 7am-3pm on a public holiday when you are actually closed.

GOOD

Hours updated 2 days early with a special-hours notice so customers know exactly what to expect.

1. Website link

07

Your profile should send people somewhere useful.

If you have a website, make sure the link works and goes to the right page.

That might be:

- your homepage
- menu page
- bookings page
- order page
- service page

The main thing is that it helps the customer take the next step.

If you do not have a website

That is not ideal, but it is not fatal.

At minimum, make sure your Google profile is stronger by having:

- complete business info
- plenty of good photos
- accurate hours
- recent reviews and responses

You can also use a simple one-page site, booking link, or link hub if that is what you have for now. A basic working link is still better than sending people nowhere.

QUICK TIP

Open your own website link from your profile on your phone. If it is slow, broken, or hard to use, fix that before you worry about anything fancy.

BAD

GOOD

Website link goes to a broken page or a homepage that gives no obvious next step.

Website link goes straight to your menu, booking page, service page, or enquiry form.

1. Responding to reviews

08

A lot of owners either ignore reviews or only reply when they are annoyed.

Both are mistakes.

Responding to reviews shows that:

- the business is active
- the owner is paying attention
- customer feedback matters
- there is a real person behind the business

It also helps future customers feel more confident.

Good review reply habits

- thank people for positive reviews
- keep replies short and genuine
- mention something specific if you can
- respond calmly to negative reviews
- never argue in public

Example

Instead of:

EXAMPLE

Thanks

Try:

EXAMPLE

Thanks so much for coming in, Sarah — glad you loved the coffee and the bacon and egg roll. Really appreciate you taking the time to leave a review.

A non-food version could be:

EXAMPLE

Thanks so much, Lisa — really glad we could help with your shoulder pain and get you moving more comfortably again.

For negative reviews:

- stay polite
- acknowledge the experience
- avoid blame
- offer to sort it out offline if needed

Avoid saying

- "You're wrong"
- "That never happened"
- anything defensive, sarcastic, or aggressive

Even if the review is unfair, your reply is really for the next customer reading it — and increasingly, for the systems and AI tools summarising your reputation online.

GOOD HABITS

- Thank people promptly
- Mention something specific
- Stay calm on negative reviews
- Keep replies human

THINGS TO AVOID

- Defensive replies
- One-word responses
- Public arguments
- Copy-paste tone

How to check your own listing score

09

Here is a simple self-check. Give yourself **1 point for every yes**.

ShowUpLocal 10-point GBP checklist

- Is your business description filled out properly and written clearly?
- Does it explain what you do and where you are?
- Have you selected all relevant Google attributes?
- Do you have recent exterior photos?
- Do you have recent interior photos?
- Do you have at least 6 good product, service, or space photos?
- Are your opening hours correct right now?
- Are your public holiday hours kept current?
- Does your website link work and help customers take the next step?
- Have you replied to recent reviews?

Rough scoring guide

- **9-10** = strong basics in place
- **7-8** = decent, but still leaving easy wins on the table
- **5-6** = profile needs work soon
- **0-4** = your listing is probably costing you customers already

This is not a full audit, but it is a quick way to spot obvious gaps.

What to do next

10

If you scored low, do not overthink it.

Start with the basics in this order:

1. fix your hours
2. update your description
3. add better photos
4. review your attributes
5. reply to your latest reviews
6. test your website link

That alone can make your profile look more active, more trustworthy, and more likely to turn searches into visits.

If you want someone to check this properly every month, that is what **ShowUpLocal** does.

We audit your Google Business Profile, compare it against nearby competitors, and tell you exactly what to fix so you can win more local searches without guessing.

Simple, practical, and built for local businesses that do not have time to keep fiddling with their listing.

If you want an easy next step, run your own 10-point check first, then compare your score with what a proper audit picks up. That gap is usually where the missed customers are.

YOUR NEXT STEP

Pick one item from this guide and fix it today. Then move through the rest in order — fast, practical improvements beat perfect intentions.

Want us to run this for you every month?

ShowUpLocal can audit your listing, compare it with nearby competitors, and give you a simple monthly action plan so your profile keeps improving without you having to babysit it.

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