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Get Found Locally: Local SEO and Google Business Profile

A plain-English guide to showing up on Google Maps and local search when nearby customers are looking for you

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Introduction

This guide is for owners of local businesses such as barber shops, cafés, clinics, salons, tutors, repair shops, restaurants and service providers who visit customers at home. It is also for freelancers and marketers who help these businesses get more calls, visits and bookings. You do not need technical skills. If you can use a smartphone and edit a simple website, you can do almost everything in this book.

By the end of this eBook you will be able to:

- Understand how Google decides which local businesses to show
- Create, claim and verify a Google Business Profile
- Choose the right categories and fill in services, hours and photos
- Use posts and customer questions to keep your profile active
- Get more genuine reviews and reply to them professionally
- Keep your business name, address and phone number consistent across the web
- Build local landing pages and use local keywords on your website
- Add a map embed and basic local schema
- Track calls, direction requests and website visits
- Follow a practical 30-day plan

Throughout the book we use hypothetical examples, such as a barber shop in Karachi, a café in Lahore and a dental clinic. These businesses are invented to illustrate the steps.

Chapter 1: How Local Search Results Work

What people see

When someone searches "barber near me", "café in Gulberg" or "dentist in Clifton", Google often shows a map with a small group of businesses, sometimes called the local pack, above or among the normal website results. Tapping "more places" opens a full list on Google Maps. Appearing in this map section can bring calls and visits directly, often without the person ever visiting your website.

The three main factors

Google explains that local results are based mainly on three things:

1. **Relevance:** How well your profile matches what the person searched for. A complete profile with accurate categories and services helps Google understand what you do.
2. **Distance:** How far your business is from the searcher, or from the location mentioned in the search. You cannot change where you are, but you can make your address and service areas clear.
3. **Prominence:** How well known and trusted your business is. This includes reviews, ratings, links and mentions across the web, and how well your website is known in general.

What this means for you

- You cannot pay to rank higher in the free local results. Ads are separate and clearly labelled.
- A business closer to the searcher may appear above you even if you have more reviews. That is normal.
- You can improve relevance and prominence a great deal by doing the basics well and consistently.

> Tip: Search for your main service from your phone while standing near your shop, and again from a few kilometres away. You will see how much distance changes the results.

Chapter 2: Creating, Claiming and Verifying Your Google Business Profile

Check if a profile already exists

Search Google Maps for your business name and area. Sometimes a profile already exists because a customer or Google created it. If you find it, look for a link such as "Own this business?" or "Claim this business" to request ownership. If none exists, you can create a new one.

Creating a new profile

1. Go to the Google Business Profile website and sign in with a Google account you control long term. Use a business account rather than an employee's personal account.
2. Enter your business name exactly as it appears on your signboard and documents. Do not add extra keywords such as "Best Haircut Karachi".
3. Choose your primary category (see Chapter 3).
4. Decide whether customers visit you at a location. If yes, add your address. If you serve customers at their homes or offices and do not want to show an address, set up service areas instead.
5. Add your phone number and website.
6. Follow the steps to verify.

Verification

Google needs to confirm that you are the real business. Depending on your business type and location, options may include a phone call or text, email, a video recording showing your signage, shop and proof of management, or a postcard sent to your address. Google decides which methods are offered, and this changes over time, so check the platform's current settings and instructions.

For video verification, prepare in advance:

- Show the outside of the business, including permanent signage with the business name
- Show the street or nearby landmarks to confirm the location
- Show something only an owner or manager can access, such as the cash counter, tools of the trade, or business documents

Managers and access

Add a second trusted person as a manager so you do not lose access if one account has problems. Never share your Google password; use the profile's own manager invite feature

instead.

Chapter 3: Filling In Your Profile Properly

Categories

Your **primary category** is one of the most important choices on your profile. Pick the most specific category that describes your main business. A hypothetical barber shop should choose "Barber shop" rather than a general beauty category. Then add a few **secondary categories** only if they truly apply, such as "Hair salon" if it also offers women's haircuts.

To get ideas, look at the categories used by similar businesses that appear in local results, but only choose ones that describe what you really offer.

Services and products

Most profiles let you list services, sometimes with descriptions and prices. A hypothetical clinic in Lahore might list "General check-up", "Child vaccination" and "Blood pressure monitoring". A café might add menu items or a menu link. Use plain words that customers search for.

Business description

Write a short description of what you do, who you serve, where you are and what makes you different. Keep it honest and readable. Avoid stuffing it with keywords or putting links and promotional offers in it.

Example description for a hypothetical café in Lahore: "A cosy neighbourhood café in Johar Town serving fresh coffee, breakfast and homemade desserts. Free Wi-Fi, quiet corners for working, and family seating. Open seven days a week."

Hours

- Add regular opening hours for every day
- Add special hours for public holidays, Ramadan timings and Eid closures
- Update immediately if you close temporarily

Wrong hours lead to frustrated customers and negative reviews.

Attributes

Attributes are extra details such as "wheelchair accessible", "free Wi-Fi", "outdoor seating" or "women-owned". The options depend on your category and country. Select the ones that are true.

Photos and videos

Photos help people decide whether to visit. Add:

1. Your logo and a clear cover photo
2. The outside of your business, so people can recognise it from the street
3. The inside, showing the space clearly
4. Your products, dishes or work, such as finished haircuts with the customer's permission
5. Your team at work

Use real photos, not stock images. Take them in good natural light, keep them sharp, and add new ones every few weeks.

> Tip: Take a photo of your entrance from the direction most customers arrive. It helps first-time visitors find you, especially in busy markets.

Chapter 4: Posts, Questions and Messages

Google posts

Many profiles can publish short updates, offers and events that appear on the profile. Ideas include a new menu item, a weekend offer, extended hours for Eid, or a short tip related to your service. Keep posts short, use one clear photo and add a button such as "Call now" or "Learn more" where available. Aim for a regular rhythm, such as one post a week.

Features in this area change over time and can differ by country, so check the platform's current settings to see which post types are available for your profile.

Customer questions

Where available, people can ask public questions on your profile or in Maps, and other users can answer them. Check your profile regularly so you can give accurate answers about parking, prices, booking or opening times. If your profile does not show this feature, put your answers in your description, services and website FAQ page instead.

Messaging and bookings

Depending on your country and category, you may be able to turn on messaging, booking links or a WhatsApp link through your website. Only switch on messaging if someone will reply quickly. A slow reply can lose a customer.

A weekly profile routine

☐ Reply to new reviews

☐ Answer any new questions or messages

☐ Publish one post if the feature is available

☐ Add two or three new photos

☐ Check that hours and phone number are still correct

Chapter 5: Getting and Replying to Reviews Ethically

Why reviews matter

Reviews affect both prominence and whether people choose you. A steady flow of genuine reviews that mention your services and area is valuable. A sudden burst of short, similar reviews looks suspicious and may be removed.

What not to do

Google's policies prohibit fake engagement. Do not:

- Write reviews for your own business or ask staff, friends or family to pose as customers
- Pay for reviews or buy review packages
- Offer discounts, gifts or freebies in exchange for reviews
- Ask only happy customers to leave reviews while steering unhappy ones away (sometimes called review gating)
- Post negative reviews on competitors

Breaking these rules can lead to reviews being removed, profile restrictions or suspension. Check Google's current review policies, as they are updated from time to time.

Ethical ways to get more reviews

1. **Ask at the right moment.** Right after a good haircut, meal or appointment, ask politely: "If you were happy with today, a review on Google would really help us."
2. **Make it easy.** Your profile offers a review link. Turn it into a short link or a QR code and put it on a counter card, receipt or appointment reminder.
3. **Follow up once.** Send a single short message after the visit with the link, by SMS, email or WhatsApp if the customer has agreed to hear from you.
4. **Ask everyone.** Invite all customers, not only those you think will give five stars.

Replying to reviews

Reply to every review if you can, positive or negative. Others reading the reviews see how you treat customers.

For positive reviews: Thank them by name, mention something specific and invite them back. Example: "Thank you, Ali. Glad you liked the skin fade. See you next month."

For negative reviews: 1. Stay calm and do not argue in public. 2. Thank them for the feedback and apologise for their experience. 3. Explain briefly what you are doing to fix it,

without sharing private details. 4. Offer to continue the conversation privately with a phone number or email.

Example: "We are sorry your wait was longer than expected on Saturday. We have added an extra barber on weekends to reduce waiting time. Please call us on the number above so we can make it right."

For clinics and medical practices, never confirm that a reviewer is a patient or mention any treatment details in a reply. Keep replies general to protect privacy.

If a review clearly breaks Google's policies, such as spam or hate speech, you can report it through your profile. Disagreeing with a review is not enough reason for removal.

Chapter 6: NAP Consistency and Local Citations

What NAP means

NAP stands for **Name, Address, Phone number**. Google and customers find your business details in many places, such as directories, social media, maps apps and your website. When these details match, it is easier for search engines to trust that the information is correct.

Choose one official version

Decide on one exact format and use it everywhere. For a hypothetical Karachi barber shop:

Field	Official version	Avoid mixing with
Name	Sharp Edge Barbers	Sharp Edge Barber Shop Karachi
Address	Shop 12, Block 5, Clifton, Karachi	Shop no 12, Blk-5, Clifton
Phone	+92 21 0000 0000	Different numbers on different sites

Small variations are common and not a disaster, but a different phone number or an old address can confuse customers and search engines.

Local citations

A citation is any online mention of your business name, address and phone number. Useful places include:

- Apple Maps (through Apple Business Connect) and Bing Places
- Facebook and Instagram business pages
- Trusted local and national business directories
- Industry directories, such as platforms for doctors, restaurants or salons
- Your local chamber of commerce or trade association, if you are a member

Focus on quality and accuracy rather than quantity. A handful of accurate, relevant listings is better than hundreds of low-quality directories.

Steps to clean up citations

1. Search your business name, old addresses and old phone numbers on Google.
2. Make a simple sheet listing every site where your business appears.
3. Update or claim each listing so it matches your official NAP.

4. Remove or report duplicate listings where possible.
5. Review the sheet every few months.

> Tip: If you move or change your phone number, update your Google Business Profile first, then your website, then your other listings.

Chapter 7: Your Website, Local Keywords and Schema

Local keywords

Local keywords combine a service with a place, such as "barber in Clifton", "dental clinic DHA Lahore" or "café near Liberty Market". To find them:

1. Write down your main services.
2. Add the city, neighbourhoods and landmarks you serve.
3. Type these into Google and note the autocomplete suggestions and "People also ask" questions.
4. Check your profile's performance data later to see which searches found you.

Use these phrases naturally in page titles, headings and text. Do not repeat them unnaturally.

Local landing pages

If you serve several areas or have more than one branch, create one page per location. For a hypothetical clinic with branches in Gulberg and DHA Lahore, each page should include:

- A clear heading, such as "Family Clinic in Gulberg, Lahore"
- The branch's own address, phone number and opening hours
- Doctors or staff at that branch and the services offered there
- Real photos of that branch
- Directions, nearby landmarks and parking information
- An embedded map and a call or booking button

Avoid creating many near-identical pages that only swap the area name. Each page should be genuinely useful to someone in that area. Link each Google Business Profile to its matching location page.

Map embeds

On your contact or location page, embed a Google Map showing your business. In Google Maps, find your business, choose "Share", then "Embed a map", and copy the code into your website editor. Most website builders also have a map block that does this for you.

Schema basics

Schema markup is a small piece of structured data added to your website code that tells search engines key facts about your business in a standard format. For local businesses, the LocalBusiness type, or a more specific type such as Dentist or Restaurant, can include your name, address, phone number, opening hours, website and location coordinates.

You do not need to write it by hand. Many SEO plugins for WordPress and apps for Shopify can add it. Ask your web developer if you are unsure. After adding it, test the page with Google's Rich Results Test or the Schema Markup Validator. Make sure the details in your schema exactly match your profile and website.

Website basics that support local SEO

- Your NAP in the footer of every page
- A fast, mobile-friendly site
- A clear click-to-call button on mobile
- A contact page with map, hours and directions
- Pages that answer common questions about prices, booking and parking

Chapter 8: Tracking Results and a 30-Day Plan

What to track

Your Google Business Profile shows performance information. Check the platform's current settings, but you can typically see:

- How many people viewed your profile on Search and Maps
- Searches that led to your profile
- Calls from the profile
- Direction requests
- Website clicks
- Messages and bookings, if enabled

Tracking website visits from your profile

Add tracking parameters (UTM tags) to the website link on your profile so you can see these visits separately in Google Analytics. For example, your website link could end with ?utm_source=google&utm_medium=organic&utm_campaign=gbp. Keep the tags generic; never put personal data in a URL.

Worked example: measuring progress

Imagine our hypothetical Karachi barber shop records its profile numbers monthly.

- Month 1: 60 calls, 90 direction requests, 30 website clicks. Total actions = 60 + 90 + 30 = **180**.
- Month 3: 75 calls, 120 direction requests, 45 website clicks. Total actions = 75 + 120 + 45 = **240**.
- Increase = 240 minus 180 = 60 actions. As a percentage: 60 divided by 180 = about **33%**.

If the shop also asks new customers "How did you find us?" and notes the answers, it can check whether more walk-ins are really coming from Google. Seasonal changes, such as Eid or wedding season, can affect numbers, so compare similar periods when possible.

Your 30-day local SEO plan

Week 1: Foundations 1. Find, claim or create your Google Business Profile and start verification. 2. Decide your official NAP format and write it down. 3. Choose your primary and secondary categories. 4. Add hours, special hours, phone number and website.

Week 2: Complete the profile 1. Write your business description. 2. Add services or menu items with clear names. 3. Upload at least ten real photos: outside, inside, products and team. 4. Select relevant attributes and add a second manager.

Week 3: Reviews and citations 1. Create your review link and a QR code card for the counter. 2. Start asking every customer for an honest review. 3. Reply to all existing reviews. 4. Update your Facebook page, Apple Maps, Bing Places and three to five key directories with your official NAP.

Week 4: Website and tracking 1. Add NAP, a click-to-call button and a map embed to your website. 2. Create or improve a location page for each branch or main area. 3. Add LocalBusiness schema and test it. 4. Add UTM tags to your profile's website link and record your first month of numbers.

After 30 days, keep going with the weekly routine from Chapter 4 and review your numbers each month. Local SEO rewards steady effort more than one big push.

Quick-Start Checklist

☐ Claim or create your Google Business Profile and complete verification

☐ Use your real business name with no added keywords

☐ Choose the most specific primary category and only relevant secondary categories

☐ Add accurate regular and holiday hours

☐ List your main services or menu items in plain words

☐ Upload at least ten real, clear photos and keep adding more

☐ Add a second trusted manager to your profile

☐ Create a review link and QR code and ask every customer honestly

☐ Reply to every review politely, including negative ones

☐ Never buy, fake or incentivise reviews

☐ Use one consistent name, address and phone number everywhere

☐ Update your key directory and social media listings

☐ Build a useful location page for each branch or service area

☐ Add a map embed and LocalBusiness schema to your website

☐ Track calls, direction requests and website clicks every month

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