

November 2018

# Google My Business Tips & Best Practices

Explore Asheville



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# Accessing Google My Business

Google My Business is a free, easy-to-use tool for businesses and organizations to manage their online presence across Google’s products, including Search and Maps. Google My Business is the only way you can control the information that appears about your business on Google.

There are 5 business types that use Google My Business:

- Storefront Location
- Service Area Business (you serve customers but do not have a public location)
- Hybrid Business (storefront address and a designated service area)
- Individual practitioners (public-facing professional)
- Departments or businesses within another business (i.e. universities, medical facilities, and government offices).

## SIGNING IN OR SIGNING UP

You will need a valid Google account to begin, and the account you choose will become the “owner” of your business within Google’s products. Any @gmail.com account will work, or you may set up an account using your own email address. To create a Google account, follow this link: <https://accounts.google.com/SignUp>. Note that you can switch to using an existing email address with the link directly below the “choose your username” field.

## CLAIMING YOUR BUSINESS

Once you’ve logged into your Google account, you’ll need to verify your business. Verification is a security measure that Google uses to ensure that the people managing a business’s information are the actual owners.

If your business has a listing on Google already, try a search on [www.google.com](http://www.google.com) or [maps.google.com](http://maps.google.com) for your business name and click the link “Own this business?” in the Knowledge Panel for your business. (see example to the right).

**Rodney's Kitchen** ★

4.6 ★★★★★ 23 Google reviews  
Restaurant · 1.7 mi

[Website](#) [Directions](#)

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**Address:** 624 Sycamore St, Waterloo, IA 50701  
**Hours:** Closed today ▾  
**Phone:** (319) 234-3663

[Suggest an edit](#) · [Own this business?](#)

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**Know this place?** [Answer quick questions](#)

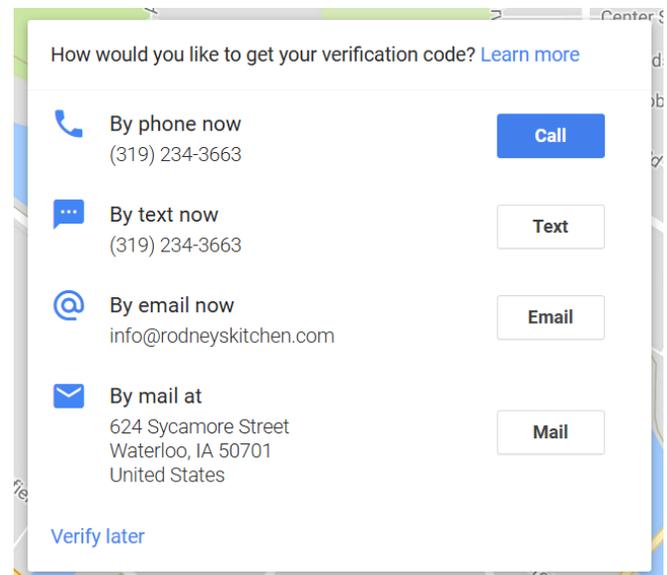
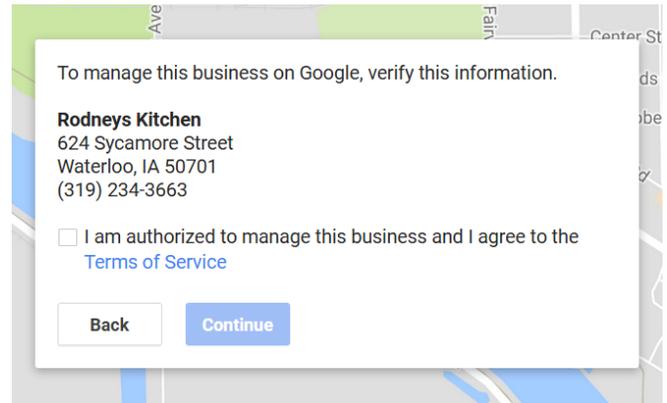
This link will take you to the confirmation screen shown below. Check the box to indicate that you are authorized to manage this business and click “continue.”

Then you’ll choose how you will verify the business. Choosing by phone, by text or by email will send a confirmation code to the contact information listed. In some cases, these options may not be available to you and you will have to use the “by mail” option which sends a postcard with the confirmation code to your listed address. The postcard generally arrives in 3-5 business days.

You won’t be able to control or access many of the features of the Google My Business dashboard until you are verified.

## ADDING A NEW BUSINESS

If your business is not already listed on Google maps, you should instead visit the GMB site here: <https://business.google.com> and look for the “start now” button which will walk you through the process of setting up your new business. You can also do this by “adding a missing place” within the desktop or mobile Google maps app.



## ACCESSING YOUR BUSINESS INFO

Once you’ve set up your account and claimed your business, you can access the GMB portal via: <https://business.google.com>

If you have multiple locations, it’s possible to add all of those as separate locations under one main account. You’d just repeat the verification steps for each location while logged into your account.

# Photo Management & Best Practices

Managing images of a business can have a significant impact on the quality of content users find when researching travel online. It is possible to add or remove photos from your account at any time. There are also ways to flag inappropriate images added by other users.

## Adding Images of your Business

Data from Google shows that businesses with high-quality, relevant images receive higher levels of engagement from users and are more likely to be visited by consumers who have viewed that business's listing online. Having photography that includes the exterior and interior of your location as well as photos of products or services available can be beneficial to attracting customers.

To add an image or images, simply log into your Google My Business account and select the "Photos" tab from the menu bar on the left side of the screen. From this section, you'll be able to add and manage images, including selecting the cover image, identifying specific subjects (such as food photos for a restaurant) and other actions. You can add photos from your device or from Google Photos.

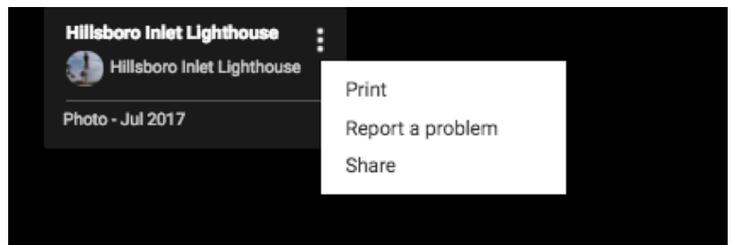
## How to Remove an Image From Your Listing

### Removing an Image Added to Your Account

Sign into your Google My Business account and choose the listing you'd like to manage. Select "Photos" from the menu on the left. Click the image you want to remove and then click the trash can icon in the top-right corner. This will delete the image from your listing.

### Flagging Images from Other Users for Removal

To flag an image from another user for removal, navigate to your location's photo gallery in Google Maps. Click on a photo to pull up the photo gallery image panel, and click on the three-dot menu icon in the top left corner. Select "Report a Problem." Complete the information on the form about why the photo should be flagged and then click "Submit." **A photo must be in violation of Google's photo policy in order to be removed.** Sometimes it is necessary to flag an image a second time, if it is not removed after an initial period of 7-14 days.



## Photo Best Practices

### Photo Orientation

Orientation is important for photo selection, and it's best to keep this in mind when photographing a location. Horizontal images are preferred. Vertical images are acceptable if they have sufficient resolution to be cropped horizontally. Avoid using extreme angles or tight crops on images. For example, when photographing a building's exterior, try to find a direct shot that includes as much of the façade as possible. When shooting food or small details, it may be more practical to use an overhead angle or a close crop.

### Clarity

The location should be the focal point of the photo. Users should be able to easily recognize what they are seeing. Photos should be sharply focused and without blurriness. Images should look real and be high-quality without being heavily doctored.

### Lighting

You want to add images that showcase the focal point in the best manner possible, including quality lighting. It's generally a best practice to capture things during the day, unless you are highlighting a location specifically known for its nightlife. Subtle differences in lighting quality can make notable differences in visibility of photos within Google products.

### Color

Choose images that have bright, vibrant colors because these often generate better visibility and more engagement. Your image may be competing against hundreds of other photos of a given location for a user's attention. While photos should not be heavily doctored, modestly boosting the saturation of images may be beneficial in some cases.

### Seasonality

As much as possible, images should be relevant year-round. This means avoiding seasonal photos (i.e. Christmas decorations or colorful fall shots). However, seasonal shots may be utilized if the location is season-specific like ski slopes.

### Photo Rights and Watermarks

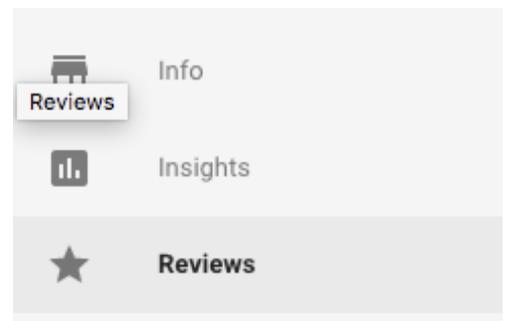
When adding photos, you want to avoid intellectual property violations. Make sure the photos you are uploading belong to you. Try to add a variety of unique images rather than uploading the same images repeatedly. If your photos have a watermark, it should be small and limited to one corner to avoid distracting from the overall image. Photos should never include inappropriate or dangerous content, including child endangerment, harassment or threats, and personal or confidential information. Photos should not be an invasion of privacy.

# Reviews Management & Best Practices

Google My Business allows you to see the reviews of your business users have created on Google. Within Google My Business, you have the ability to respond reviews directly or flag something that may be inappropriate.

## Why Reviews are Important

Reviews from customers provide valuable feedback about a business to the owner and other customers. Many consumers decide whether or not to engage with a business based on reviews left by previous customers. 73% of customers trust a business more if it has positive reviews, according to BrightLocal's 2017 Consumer Review Survey. Positive reviews and interactions can help set your business apart from competitors. The quantity and quality of reviews are also an important ranking signal for your business in Google. Having a high volume of positive reviews can improve the discoverability of your business within Google products. Likewise, a drop in reviews can limit your visibility.



## How to Respond to a Review

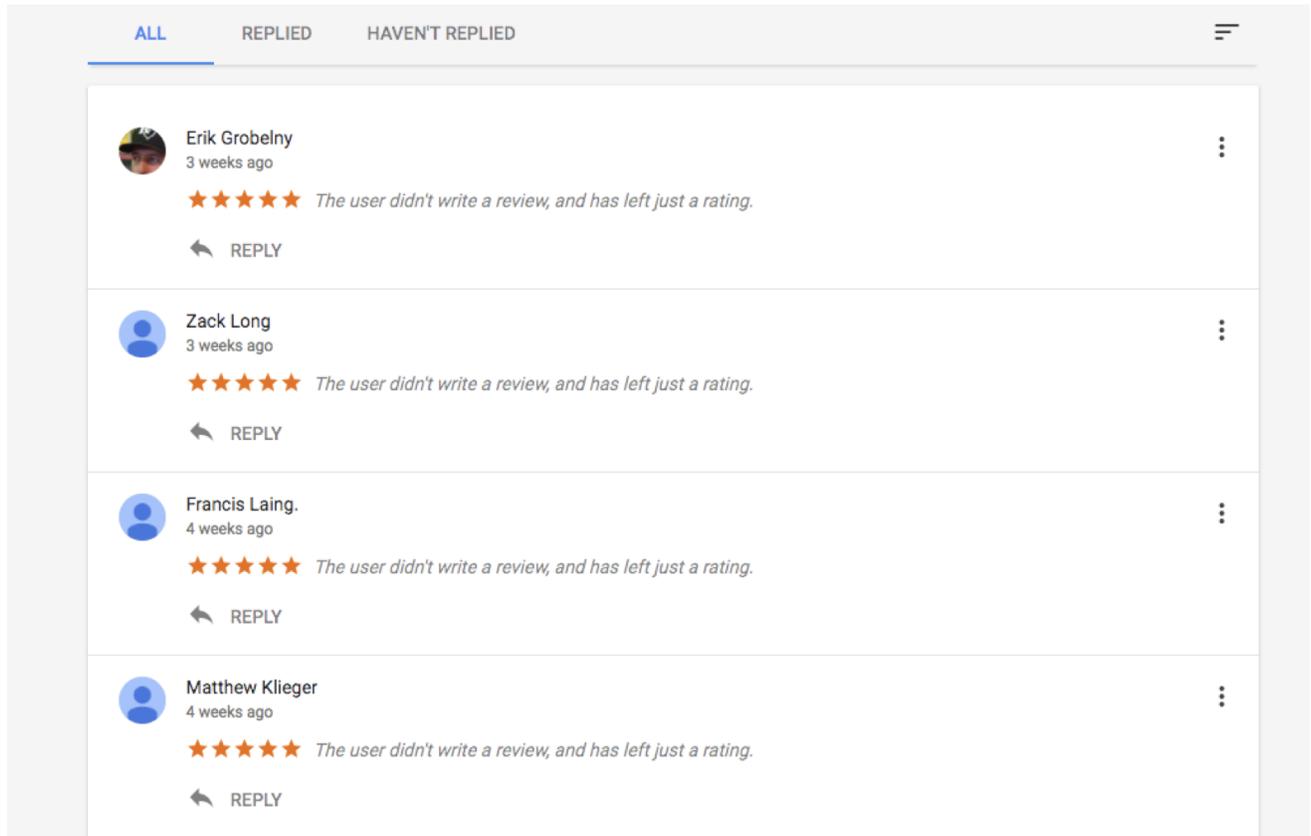
Sign in to your Google My Business account. If you have more than one location, select the location you'd like to manage. Click "Reviews" from the menu on the left. Locate the review you would like to respond to and click "Respond." Once you written your response, click "Submit" and it will be posted.

Responses should be concise and cordial. You want to avoid getting personal when responding to a review because responses are public and remain visible on the business's Knowledge Panel. Try to keep your responses helpful, clear, and courteous. Remember to thank your reviewers, since each response can reach many customers. You don't need to include incentives or advertisements. Reviewers are already your customers. Instead, you could tell them something new about your business or share something they may not have been aware of their previous visit. Responding to reviews encourages your customers to post additional reviews.

## Requesting to Remove a Review

Before flagging a review, you should familiarize yourself with Google's policy for reporting reviews. You shouldn't flag a review because you don't like it. To flag a review in your account, sign in to your Google My Business account. If you have more than one listing, click "Manage location" and select the

location you want to manage. Click “Reviews” from the menu. Find the review you want to flag, and click the three-dot menu to the right of the review, then select “Flag as inappropriate.” You can also flag a review from Maps. Navigate to Google Maps and find your business listing. Find the review you want to remove and click the three-dot menu, and “Flag as inappropriate.”



## Why a Review Can Be Removed

A review can be removed for various reasons. Reviews should not be used as advertisements. If a review has links to other websites or phone numbers, it can be removed. Reviews from multiple accounts with the same content are considered spam. If a review is off-topic or is based on someone else's experience, the review can be flagged. Reviews are not meant for political or social commentary or personal rants. A review should be honest and unbiased. Reviews should not come from the business owner or employees of the business and should not be on behalf of others. If a review has inappropriate content it can be flagged for removal: illegal or copyrighted content, sexually explicit material, personal and confidential information, or hate speech.

# Insights Data from Google My Business

Insights is the section of Google My Business that provides valuable data and analytics about your business's visibility in search results and Maps as well as user interactions with your information. Data is available in increments of one week, one month, and quarterly.

## Accessing Google Insights Data

Sign in to your Google My Business account. If you have more than one listing, select "Manage location" for the listing you want to view. Click "Insights" from the menu on the left.

## Reviewing Available Data

There are several sections showing the different ways customers are finding or interacting with your listing.

### How Customers Search for Your Business

This shows the total and percentage of customers that found your listing through either Direct search (by searching for your business name or address) or a Discovery search (searching for a category, product or service that lead them to your listing).

### Where Customers Find You on Google

This highlights how many users found you via Google Search or Google Maps. You can see the number of views your listing receive in both products for the selected timeframe. You can click on the check boxes to the right to isolate particular information.

### Customer Actions

This indicates what customers did after they found your listing on Google. "Total actions" is the tally of all of the actions that customers took on your listing during that time period. Customer actions are broken down into **visit your website, request directions, call you, or view photos**. You can slide your cursor over a specific date to see how many actions took place on a particular day.

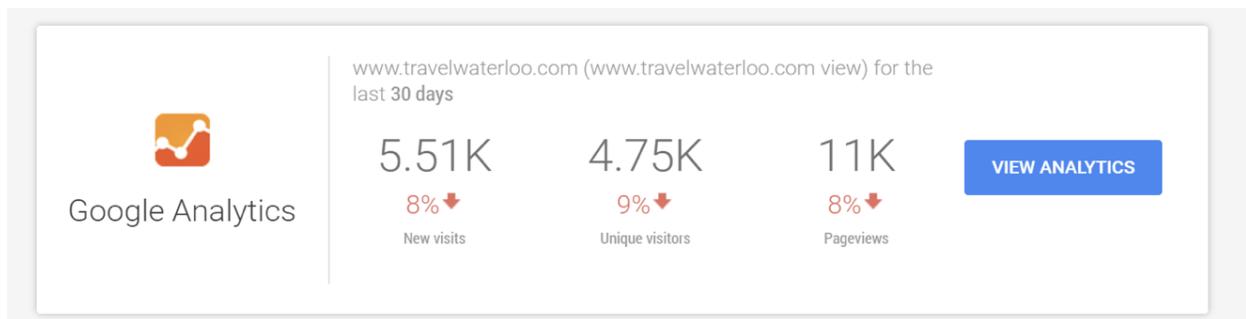


- **Direction request** shows where on the map people are requesting directions to your business. The map shows your location pinned and the most popular places where users are asking Google Maps for directions to your business. You may also see the number of requests broken down by city or neighborhood.
- **Phone calls** allows you to see when and how many times customers have called your business from your GMB listing. You can view the trends either by “Day of the week” or “Time of day.”
- **Photos** show the number of times your business photos have been viewed and offer a comparison to photos of other businesses like yours. The “Photo views” graph depicts the number of times your photos were viewed by Google users and the “Photo quantity” graph shows the number of photos you’ve uploaded.

## Connecting Google Analytics

By connecting Google Analytics to your Google My Business, you’ll be able to view your website data in your Google My Business dashboard. *The same account has to be used for both Google Analytics and Google My Business.*

Enabling Google Analytics is relatively simple. If you are using the same account for both Google My Business and Google Analytics, and the website property you have listed in Analytics exactly matches the primary website listed on your Google My Business listing then Google Analytics will display New visits, Pageviews, and Unique visitors on your Google My Business dashboard.



# How to Use Posts in Google My Business

Posts allow a business to share information about sales, promotions, upcoming events, announcements, or new products directly on the business's Knowledge Panel in search and map results. These function as a relatively simple and fast way to deliver content directly to users searching for your business. You can access and manage Posts via your Google My Business account.

## Creating a Post

Sign in to your Google My Business Dashboard. If you have multiple locations, select "Manage Location" to choose the location in which you want to create a post.

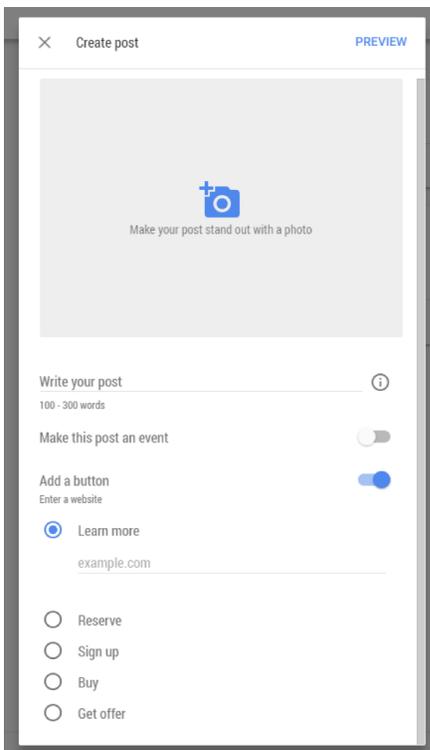
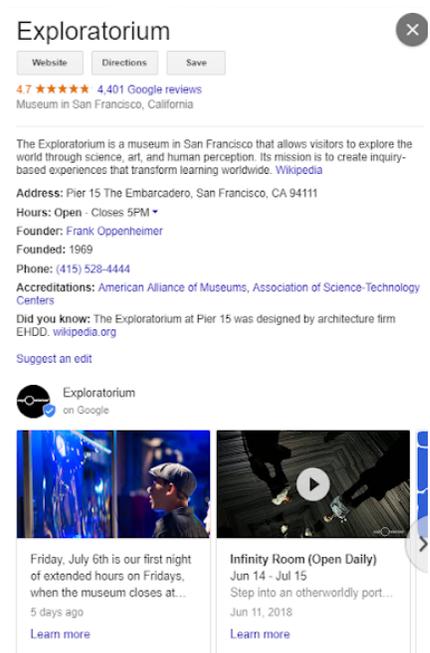
On the dashboard on the left, select "Posts." Click "Create Post" and the Post box to the right will appear for you to add the information. A complete post includes an image, brief copy, and a call to action for users. Your post can have between 100-300 words. The first 100 characters are what shows up in the Knowledge Panel (before a user clicks through to view the full post). You want to make these characters count, so communicate your message clearly to maximize engagement.

## Editing or Removing a Post

You can edit or delete a post at any time. To edit or remove a post, click on the post you want to edit or remove and click "Edit" or "Delete" as appropriate. If applicable, preview your edits and "Publish" in the top right corner of the screen.

## Helpful Information

- Posts are live for seven (7) days unless you choose to delete it sooner. If a post is marked as an event, it will remain past 7 days until the date of the event has passed.



- You can add a call to action for users to further engage or find more information. These include: Learn more, Reserve, Sign up, Buy, or Get offer. The call to action can be linked to content on your website.
- You can preview the post before you publish by clicking “Preview” in the top right corner. If you are satisfied with the post, click “Publish” and the post will be visible to the public.
- If you have multiple posts, the newest ones will show first, and the older ones will show in a carousel format. Google will scroll up to 10 posts in the carousel but only the first two are shown on search results pages.
- The posts have a unique URLs and can be shared via other social media channels.

## Tips and Best Practices

### Content

Posts should be brief, helpful, and encourage action. Before creating a post, it's best to determine what the goal of the post is and the message you want to deliver. It may be encouraging a customer to navigate to a sale on your site or announcing a new product. You want to avoid using gimmicky language or excessive punctuation as Google forbids it, and your post may be removed. You want to have a complete post include as much information as possible. This includes a catchy but concise title. There is a limit of 58 characters in the title.

### Photos

Photos should be well-lit, clear and high-quality. The minimum resolution is 720px wide by 540px tall, in JPG or PNG format. Images should have a central focal point to avoid awkward cropping and reinforce your post. When adding photos, you want to avoid intellectual property violations so do not use photos that do not belong to you. Try to add a variety of unique images rather than uploading the same images repeatedly.

# The Questions and Answers Feature

Google's Questions & Answers is an interactive content unit offering FAQ information in the Knowledge Panel of a business. Business owners, Local Guides and other users can ask or answer questions directly.

## How to Ask A Question

Navigate to the Knowledge Panel of a business in Google search results or in Maps. The Question and Answer block is visible on the Knowledge Panel on mobile devices or desktop. You can see questions that have already been asked by clicking "See more questions." To ask a new question, select "Ask the community" and enter your question. When your question is answered, you will receive a notification.

## Editing or Deleting a Question

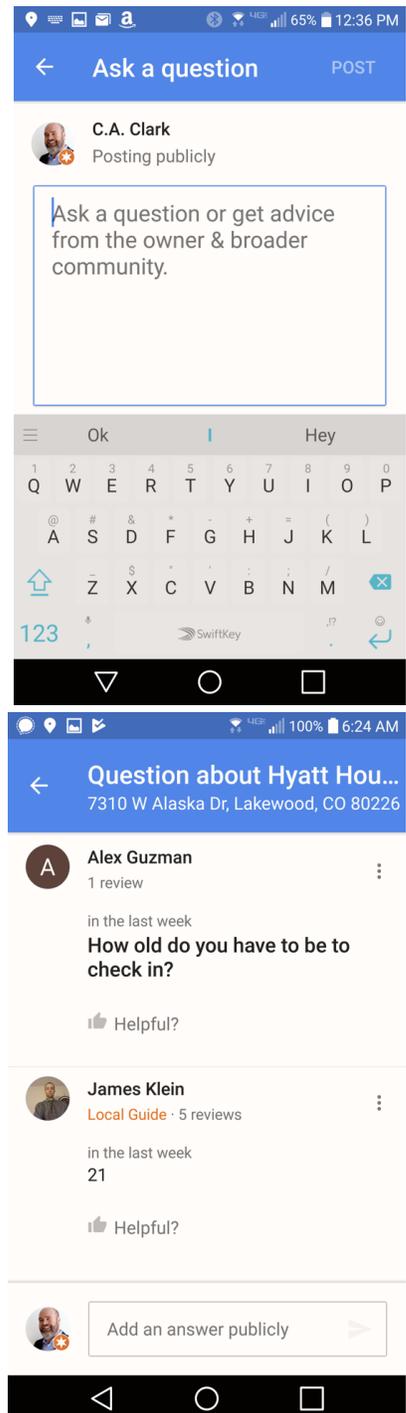
Under "Questions & Answers," click "See more questions" and navigate to your question. Next to your question, click the "More" (three vertical dots) menu and choose to Edit or Delete your question.

## Answering a Question

Navigate to the Knowledge Panel for your business in search results or in Maps. Under "Questions & Answers," select "See more questions." Next to the question, tap the Answer bubble to respond to the question. You have the option to edit or delete your answer. Next to your answer, click the "More" three dot menu and choose to Edit or Delete your question.

## Notifications

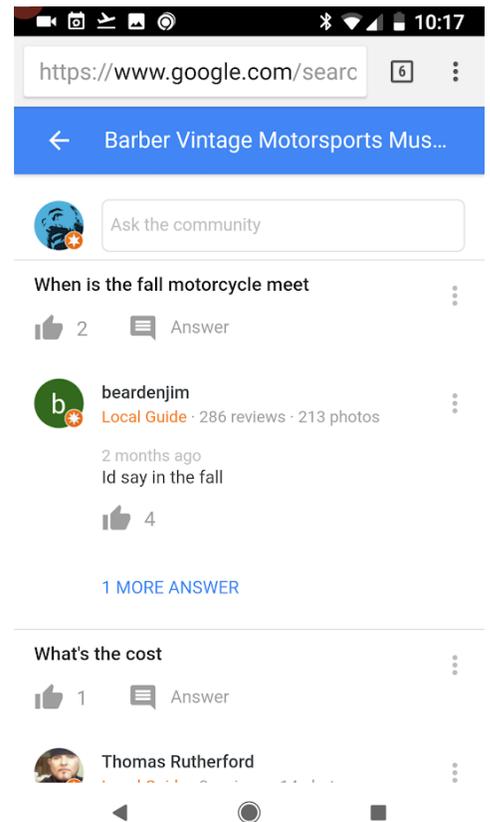
If your account is verified you have the option to receive a notification when someone asks a question about your business. You can also see if someone answers questions you've asked. To turn off notification, open the Google Maps app on an Android device. Click "Menu" and select "Settings." Under settings, click on "Notifications." To stop



receiving messages about questions you can answer, click “Your contributions” and turn off “Community questions and answers.” To not receive messages about your business, click “People and places” and select turn off “Business listings.”

## Managing Questions and Answers

The visibility of specific questions and answers on the Knowledge Panel is influenced by the number of upvotes specific questions and answers receive from users. By paying attention to the questions being asked on your listing and clicking on the thumbs-up icon for good questions and answers, it’s more likely that the most popular and helpful questions will be the ones that surface on the front of your listing (before a user clicks through to see all). By upvoting helpful questions and answers as well as flagging problematic or unhelpful content, you can manage the content that will be most visible to prospective customers.



# Understanding Local Guides

Google's Local Guide program is a structured **crowd-sourcing program** which is designed to improve the quantity and quality of data and content in Google Maps. Local Guides sign up through their own Google account and participate by adding or editing content in the Maps product. The goal of the program from Google's end is to encourage and reward users who improve the quality and coverage of content within Maps and other products.

## Points and Perks

Local Guides are not paid for their contributions. Their reward is largely the satisfaction of the visibility they achieve within Google's ecosystem and helping others discover new places. Google has gamified participation through a points system that provides recognition for local guides who contribute content regularly. The program is similar to high-level reviewers on Yelp or TripAdvisor. Local guides above certain levels may receive periodic perks from Google for their efforts.

Maps contribution	Points earned
Review	5 points per review
Rating	1 point per rating
Photo	5 points per photo
Video	7 points per video
Answer	1 point per answer
Respond to Q&As	3 points per response
Edit	5 points per edit
Place added	15 points per place added
Fact checked	1 point per fact checked

## User-Submitted Content

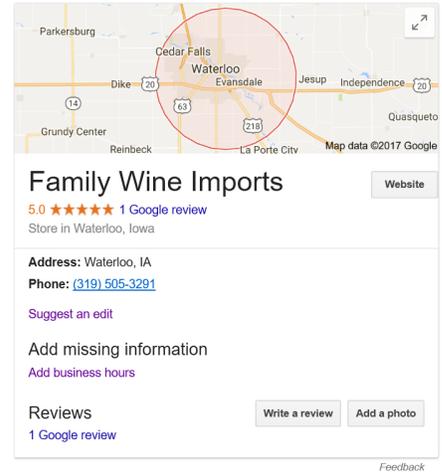
Local Guides can add a variety of content to business listings through their accounts, including ratings, reviews, photos, videos, answers and edits. In most cases, these contributions are made by well-meaning individuals that want to help other people decide where to go and what to do in their destinations. If you've created your GMB account and verified your business you can elect to have notifications sent to you each time a Local Guide uploads or edits content on your business listing.

All of the content that is submitted by Local Guides to your business listing is important to your overall ranking within Google's products. Of particular importance are ratings and reviews, so make sure you encourage your best customers to review and rate your business. You can review user-submitted content in your GMB account, if you recognize some of these contributors in your business be sure to say thanks!

Of course, there are always exceptions and occasionally you will see either irrelevant photos appearing as part of your Knowledge panel, or in rare instances malicious reviews or content posted to your business. There are several mechanisms within your GMB account to flag and respond to these types of submissions. See other sections of this document for more details.

# Listings for Service Area Businesses

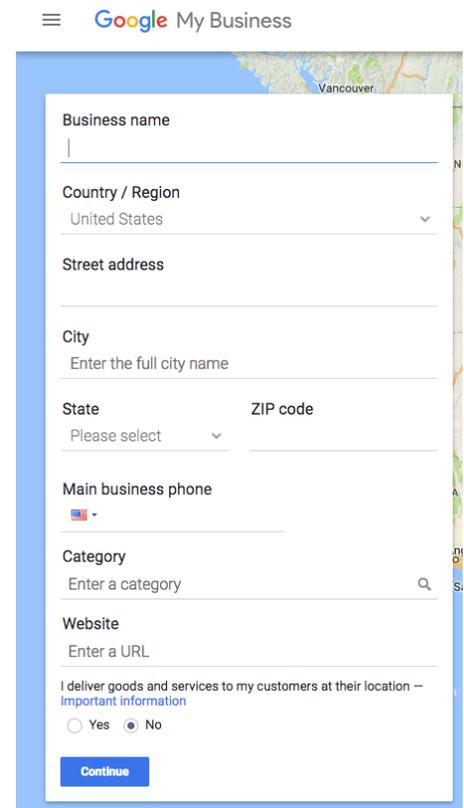
Local businesses may not serve their customers from a brick-and-mortar shop front, but operate from a home address or may be mobile and don't have a shop front that customers visit. If you have a business that serves customers at their locations, you should list it as a Service Area Business on Google. Your business will appear in Google SERPs for local search, but may not display a physical address. The radius indicates the area your business serves and can be dictated by city boundaries, zip codes or miles from your business.



## Adding a Service Area Business

Sign in to your existing Google account and navigate to [google.com/business](https://google.com/business). Click the green “Start Now” icon to add your business. Enter in the Business Name (As you type, suggestions will start to appear—if you see your business, click to select. If it’s not your business, ignore the drop downs and continue providing your business information.)

1. Add the Country and Full Address as shown on the right. You also need to include the business phone number, business category, and website.
2. As a **Service-Area Business**, select “Your business deliver goods and services to customers at their location.”
3. Click “Continue.” A pop-up will ask you to confirm your business delivers good and services and will ask the area your business serves. You can enter the city, region, or zipcode. You can also add a radius of how many miles from your business that you serve. Select if you also serve customers at your business address.
4. To submit, click “Continue.” A pop-up will ask you to verify that you are authorized to manage this business.



## Editing or Removing a Service Area Business

Sign in to your Google My Business account. Choose the listing that you'd like to manage and click "Manage location". Click "Info" at the top of the page and follow one of the prompts below.

- **EDITING A SERVICE-AREA BUSINESS:** Click the "Address" section. A pop-up will appear prompting you to select **Yes** next to "I deliver goods and services to my customers at their locations." Enter your service area information. You can set your service area based on the postcodes or cities that you serve, or on a given area around your location. Select the box next to "I serve customers at my business address" if you want your complete address to appear on Google and show you also serve customers from your business location. Click "Apply".
- **REMOVING A SERVICE-AREA BUSINESS:** On the left side of the screen, click the field that lists your service area. In the window that appears, find "I deliver goods and services to my customers at their location". Immediately under it, click the "No" button. Click "Apply".

I deliver goods and services to my customers at their location — [Important information](#)

Yes  No

My business delivers goods & services to customers within this area:

Region, city or postal code [ADD](#)

Within  km  of my business

I also serve customers at my business address. (Your address will be hidden from the public if this box isn't checked.)

[CANCEL](#) [APPLY](#)