

Local SEO — Workbook

This workbook turns the course into a ranking project for one real business. Work through each section as you build: confirm your business model and ranking levers, fully optimize the Google Business Profile, clean citations and stand up a review engine, then build local pages, earn local links, and measure rankings from a grid. Fill every worksheet and template with your own data, and leave totals, averages, and scores blank until you calculate them yourself.

How Local Search Actually Ranks

Confirm your business model and decide where you can realistically win on proximity, relevance, and prominence.

Exercise: Score your business against the three ranking factors

Google ranks local results on proximity, relevance, and prominence. Assess your business honestly on each so you target winnable searches instead of fighting physics.

- Proximity: within roughly how many kilometres of your address do your real customers search, and which areas are realistic to win?

- Relevance: is your primary category the most specific accurate one, and do your services and on-page text match what customers type?

- Prominence: how do your review count, citations, and local links compare to the businesses currently in the pack for your main keyword?

- Given all three, name two or three geographic areas or neighbourhoods where you can realistically rank in the pack this quarter.

Worksheet: Business model and profile decision

Your model decides your Google Business Profile setup and what is allowed. Complete this once for the business.

Business name (exact real-world name)

Model (storefront / service-area / multi-location)

Display address or hide address? (storefront shows; SAB hides)

Service areas to define (cities/postal codes, up to 20)

Number of physical locations / profiles needed

Canonical NAP — Name

Canonical NAP — Address (locked abbreviations: St/Ste etc.)

Canonical NAP — Phone (single local number)

Checklist: Local foundations confirmed

- You know whether you are storefront, service-area, or multi-location
- Service-area businesses have the address hidden and genuine service areas planned (no fake/virtual office)
- Multi-location plan is one verified profile per branch with its own landing page
- A single canonical NAP format is written down to reuse everywhere
- You can name the few areas you will realistically target, not the whole city

Mastering the Google Business Profile

Claim, verify, and fully optimize the profile that wins the map pack — categories, services, attributes, photos, posts, and Q&A.

Worksheet: Profile completeness and category plan

Plan every relevance-driving field before editing, then complete it in the profile. Fill in your choices.
Verification method and status (postcard / video / verified)

Primary category (most specific accurate option)

Secondary categories (real services only)

Services listed under each category (with one-line descriptions)

Attributes to set (e.g. wheelchair accessible, women-owned, free Wi-Fi)

Business description (up to 750 characters, what + where first)

Regular hours + holiday/special hours entered? (Y/N)

Website URL and booking/appointment URL

Exercise: Reverse-engineer competitor categories

The primary category is your biggest ranking lever. Inspect the businesses already in the pack to choose yours with evidence.

- Search your main keyword in Maps and list the top 3 competitors in the pack
- Using PlePer or GMBspy, record each competitor's primary and secondary categories
- Which specific primary category will you set, and why is it more accurate than a broad parent?
- Which secondary categories and services do competitors have that you legitimately offer but have not listed yet?

Checklist: Weekly profile engagement rhythm

- Published one Google Post this week (keeps an unexpired update live)
- Added two or three fresh photos, including an accurate exterior shot
- Seeded or answered Q&A and upvoted correct answers
- Confirmed hours for the week ahead, including any holidays
- Replied to any new reviews and checked messaging/booking still work

Citations, Reviews, and Reputation

Build consistent citations from one source of truth and run a compliant engine that lifts review rating, volume, and recency.

Worksheet: Citation build and audit tracker

Track every key citation against your canonical NAP so inconsistencies and duplicates get fixed. Fill one row per directory.

Directory / platform name

Listing claimed? (Y/N)

NAP matches canonical exactly? (Y/N)

Issue found (wrong phone / old address / duplicate / missing)

Action taken (created / corrected / merged / deleted)

Date completed

Exercise: Design your review-generation engine

Lift rating, volume, and recency with a repeatable, compliant ask. Design the process for your business.

- What is your Google review short link, and at what exact moment will you ask each customer?

- Will you ask by SMS, email, or both, and what does your short personal message say?

- How many honest review asks will you send per week to keep a steady flow?

- How will you stay compliant — confirm you are not gating by sentiment and not offering incentives?

Checklist: Review compliance and response standards

- Every customer (not only happy ones) is asked for an honest review — no gating
- No incentives, payment, or trades are offered for reviews
- Every review gets a personal reply within a day or two
- Negative reviews are handled with HEARD (Hear, Empathize, Apologize, Resolve, Diagnose)
- Only genuinely policy-violating reviews are flagged for removal

On-Page Local SEO, Links, and Measurement

Build local pages with schema, earn local links, and measure rankings from a grid instead of a single check.

Worksheet: Service-and-location keyword grid

Cross every core service with every area you serve to plan dedicated pages. Fill one row per page you will build.

Core service

City / area served

Page URL (e.g. /water-heater-repair/round-rock)

Target keyword (service + location)

Title tag (Service in Location | Brand)

Unique local content angle (landmarks, access, real examples)

LocalBusiness schema added and validated? (Y/N)

Exercise: Build a local link target list from competitors

Competitors' local links are proven attainable. Mine them and plan how you will earn each one.

- Using Ahrefs, Semrush, or Moz, list 8 to 12 local sites linking to two competitors
 - Which of these are chamber/association directories you can join for a link?
 - Which local sponsorships or events publish a linked sponsor list you could join?
 - Which local press or partnership angle will you pitch first, and via which tool (HARO/Connectively, Qwoted)?
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Checklist: Monthly measurement routine

- Re-ran the grid (Local Falcon / BrightLocal / Places Scout) and logged Average Map Rank per keyword
- Exported GBP performance: calls, direction requests, website clicks, bookings
- Checked discovery vs branded searches in the GBP performance report
- Reviewed Search Console impressions and clicks for geo keywords and location pages
- Confirmed review count, score, and recency are trending up and tied to actions taken

Your Action Plan

1. Confirm your business model and lock a single canonical NAP format to reuse everywhere
2. Claim and verify the Google Business Profile (postcard or video) before any optimization
3. Set the most specific accurate primary category, then add real secondary categories, services, and attributes
4. Complete every profile field: description, hours, holiday hours, photos, website, and booking link
5. Claim the big six citations (Google, Apple Maps, Bing Places, Yelp, Facebook, BBB) and fix data at the aggregators (Data Axle, Localeze, Foursquare)
6. Run a citation audit, then correct or delete every inconsistent and duplicate listing
7. Stand up a compliant review engine: short link, ask within 24 hours, steady weekly cadence,

reply to all

8. Build one unique page per core service and per area, with embedded map, NAP, and LocalBusiness JSON-LD schema
9. Mine two or three competitors' backlinks and earn local links via chamber, sponsorships, partnerships, and local PR
10. Set up grid rank tracking, record a baseline Average Map Rank, and run the monthly measurement routine tied to your actions

