

# Getting started with local listings

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SEO Resource



# Introduction

Services like Google Business Profile and Apple Business Connect have their own user guides. These will help you understand and stay up to date with each service as they evolve or new features are launched.

- **Google Business Profile**
- **Apple Business Connect**
- **Bing Maps**

# Things to consider

If your charity has a large number of locations that would be hard to manage, there are services that will manage this process for you. For most small charities however, it's likely that having the person who manages your marketing look after this, with the appropriate training if needed, will be the most cost effective route.



## Verification

Mapping services have verification processes when new places are created. This prevents spam and ensures only legitimate business owners can claim their locations. It's worth familiarising yourself with these processes before you start.



## Location

For places where people normally would want to visit you, be precise over where map-markers are displayed. Using a generic location or incomplete postcode could lead people to the wrong location.



## Photography

Upload a good quality image of your shop or location. These are used as thumbnails when your profile is shown in search. Consider when or how often these might need to be updated  
– for example, if you change your branding.



## Contact details

Give thought to how people want to contact you at each location. Provide the most appropriate details that will help them do this. For example, if they are likely to want to phone a shop, providing a head-office number won't be as helpful.

# Maintaining your presence

Your profiles will perform better if you keep them updated and curate them. Remember, people use Google to research an organisation's reputation and get answers to specific questions. Helping them find what they need quickly will improve their experience.



## Seek citations

Sites such as Yelp or Thomson Local also offer directories that can be useful. Use these to link to your business website or maps listings.

- Don't spam – think about what's relevant to your charity. Would you expect a potential donor or service user to find that listing useful?
- Be wary of businesses offering SEO link building packages. They could be using practices that will do significant harm to your organisation in the long-run. Services that are promoted as cheap and/or offer fast results are likely too good to be true.



## Positive reviews

These help build trust, so it's a good idea to find ways to encourage people (within reason!) to leave a brief review on your profiles. You don't need to force people to use a specific platform.



## Negative reviews

An occasional negative review is to be expected and not to be afraid of showing.

- Most people understand that mistakes happen. Research shows they are more likely to be suspicious of profiles that only have 5-star reviews – resist the temptation to delete anything less than glowing!
- Rather than deleting or ignoring them, try to engage constructively and professionally. If other people can see that you respond appropriately, it could actually give them a good impression

# Maintaining your presence



## Stay up-to-date

If your business hours or contact details change, it's a good idea to update your profile details ASAP. People get frustrated if your map listing is out of date



## Post regularly

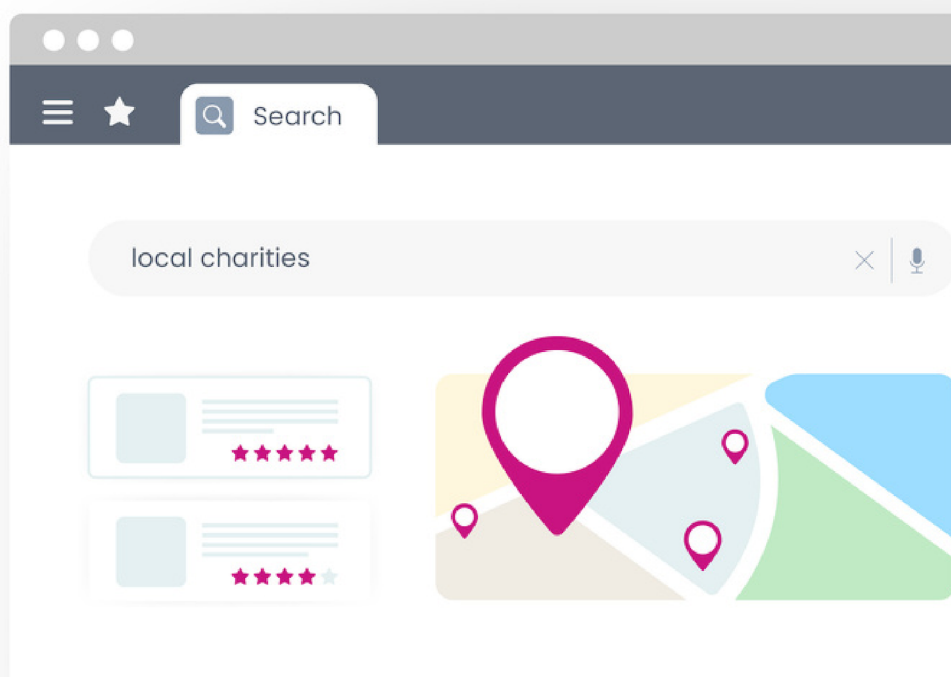
Use features like Google's Posts to add relevant content to your profile. For example, if you have a special event or a one-off closure, this could be a good way to keep people informed.

- There's no rule for how often you should post. Think about what's suitable for you or your audience. Little and often is good, but be realistic about what you can manage



## Be helpful

Look out for Google's Q&A feature. Are people posting questions you can helpfully answer? Sometimes these questions can be very specific – such as *"is there disabled access here"*



# Improve your website

Some local information is best housed on your website. For example, you might run events in places you don't have ownership of. Some people might go straight to your website to look for that information there. Whatever the case, it's good to consider the role your website plays in keeping people informed.



## Local pages

If you have multiple locations where people can visit or access services, it may be worthwhile to have pages on your site with the details of each.

- Think about the things people might need or want to know before they visit and make that information clear and easy to find



## Easy to find contact details

If people want to phone or email, make it easy for them to find the right information on your website. For phone numbers, have your HTML code configured so that mobile phones can initiate a call straight from your page.

- For SEO, focus on providing helpful information and experiences for the people you are trying to reach. Think about their needs and how to optimise for those above what search engines might be looking for

# Be data informed

Good data can help you get the best from your efforts. Understanding how your audience seek information online or what type of content is most helpful to them is invaluable.

Aside from the ubiquitous Google Analytics, consider how the following tools can help you:

## **Apple Business Connect**

Provides a dashboard that shows how people found and interacted with your map listings.

## **Google Business Profile insights**

Reports the keywords your listings were shown for, how people interacted with your profiles and key actions such as phone calls or bookings.

## **Google Search Console**

Doesn't include local data but is a great source of insight into how a website appears and performs in Google search, plus error reports from Google's crawling activity.

## **Google Trends**

Another useful tool which you can use to compare trends for specific keywords or groups of keywords related to topics or organisations.

At the same time, data isn't everything. Sometimes the best insights come from knowing your customers or supporters and speaking to them directly. This can add invaluable context to those spreadsheets and metrics and help you make better decisions.



# Useful resources

## For local listings

Setup and manage your listings; find resources, help guides and tools.

- [Google Business Profile](#)
- [Apple Business Connect User Guide](#)
- [Bing Maps documentation](#)

## For general understanding of search engines

Google provides an excellent hub full of information that will help you understand the modern search environment.

- [Google - How Search Works](#)
- [Google Search Central](#) - More specific advice for site owners and marketers
- See also - [How Bing delivers search results](#)

## For additional tools and data

- [Google Search Console](#)
- [Bing Webmaster Tools](#)
- [Google Trends](#)



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