

MOZ The SEO's Local Search Cheat Sheet



Location Data Checklist

Before you begin marketing a client, brand, or business, be sure you have all of the following information:

- Current, real-world business name, address, and phone number for each location
- Name, address & phone number for each public-facing department (if applicable)
- Name, address & phone number for each public-facing independent practitioner (if applicable)
- Hours of operation for each location, department, and practitioner
- Email addresses, fax numbers, toll-free numbers, and any secondary numbers for each entity
- Google My Business (GMB) landing page URLs for all locations, departments, and practitioners
- Existing or desired GMB categories for each location, department, and practitioner
- Existing or desired GMB description for each location, department, and practitioner
- Access to Google My Business, Google Search Console, and other relevant platforms
- Access to each location's highest-quality images
- List of all relevant social media profiles for the brand and its locations
- Documentation of any past penalties or suspensions
- Names, job titles, and contact information for any staff members you'll need to work with
- A contract/agreement and statement of goals



Google My Business Eligibility Guidelines

Eligible:

- Legitimate physical addresses
- Face-to-face contact with customers
- ATMs, video and food kiosks, express mail drop boxes ([mz.cm/kiosks](https://moz.com/kiosks))
- Seasonal businesses with year-round signage
- Independently operated co-located brands each with their own listing (not combined listings/branding)
- Public-facing departments within businesses, universities, hospitals, and government institutions
- Public-facing multi-practitioners contactable at published hours
- Food trucks with permanent locations
- Some co-working spaces ([mz.cm/cowork](https://moz.com/cowork))
- Rental/for sale property offices

Ineligible:

- PO boxes, virtual offices, and mailboxes at remote locations
- No face-to-face contact with customers
- Rental/for sale units
- Services/classes/meetings at properties you don't own or officially represent
- Personal, non-business addresses belonging to employees/family/friends
- Multiple listings representing brands carried, specialties, services, or support staff
- Phone numbers that refer users to entities other than the actual business
- Website URLs that refer users to social media landing pages
- Separate listings for brands and solo practitioners



Check your online presence with Moz Local: [mz.cm/check](https://moz.com/check)



Local Website Checklist

Content

- Basic pages with clear, unique selling propositions and clear CTAs:
 - Home
 - About
 - Contact
 - FAQ
 - Guarantee/Policy/Disclaimer pages

- Complete contact info on Contact Page or location landing pages
 - Pages use local business schema markup (schema.org/LocalBusiness)
 - Include accurate hours, maps, and written driving directions

- Unique pages for:
 - Every location of a multi-location business
 - Every key service and product offered
 - Every public-facing practitioner or expert (if applicable)

- Reviews/testimonials page or reviews embedded in location landing pages

- Unique title tag on each page, between 50–60 characters

- Social media, local business profile, and review profile links

- High-quality, accessible media
 - Compressed photos with alt tags
 - Videos with transcripts

- Proofs of local community involvement/civic benefit

Technical

- Usable navigation and strong internal linking structure

- Mobile-friendliness and fast load speed

- Secure HTTPS URLs

- Proper HTTP redirects in place

- Proper URL canonicalization

- Consistent header tag structure/usage

- Short, optimized, human-readable URLs

- Unique meta description for each page, around 160 characters



Optimizing Local Reputation

To develop and maintain a positive reputation, you need:

- An active review acquisition program
- Continuous review monitoring and a fast response strategy
- Review spam detection and reporting
- An in-store strategy to catch and resolve complaints 1:1, before they turn into reviews
- A resolution plan to turn negative reviews into positives
- Sentiment analysis to identify and combat emerging issues
- Customer-centric policies
- Robust staff hiring and training practices
- Strict adherence to platform and review guidelines
- To cultivate and maintain good PR



Troubleshooting Local Ranking Issues

Evaluate for:

- GMB ineligibility, guideline violations, suspensions, and duplicates
- Reports of new Google bugs or algorithm updates
- Filters like Possum ([mz.cm/possum](https://moz.com/possum))
- Technical website errors and penalties
- Review count, rating, and recency vs. competitors
- GMB categorization problems and missing fields
- Organic signals vs. competitors (PA/DA, on-page SEO, links, unstructured citations)
- Content quality, publication rate, and expertise
- Presence of competitive GMB spam
- Structured citation consistency, accuracy, and spread ([mz.cm/check](https://moz.com/check))



Publication & PR

Linktations: Listings on formal directories are called "structured citations." When other types of platforms (like online news sites, blogs, best-of lists, etc.) reference a local business's complete or partial contact information, that's called an "unstructured citation." The best unstructured citations include links. We refer to these as "linktations." ([mz.cm/linktations](https://moz.com/linktations))

Write about:

- Company USP
- Products/services
- Customer guarantees
- Customer FAQs
- Company history
- Staff
- Civic participation
- Directions
- Nearby attractions
- Company news
- Accreditations
- Customer stories
- Sales/events
- Loyalty programs
- Local business allies
- Green practices

Win linktations via:

- Local B2B alliances
- Trade associations
- Exceptional content
- Sponsorships
- Donations
- Civic participation
- Contests
- Newsworthiness
- Breaking local news
- Guest interviews
- Guest articles
- Scholarships
- HARO
- Press releases
- Hosting events
- Social media campaigns



Hyperlocal Marketing

Understand your geographic markets

Key definitions

- **Your location** is your physical address. It serves a specific local market based on geographic location.
- **Your market** is made up of the physical locations of your customers when they search for your brand and its offerings. Google shapes results based on the location of the customer in your market and the perceived intent of their search. Your position and the positions of your true market competitors change based on searcher and keyword.
- **Geo-located keywords** are keywords tracked from a specific location, i.e. vegan pizza searched from the University District in Seattle, WA. Depending on the competitiveness of your market, you may have different competitors for each geo-located keyword search.
- **Geo-modified keywords** are keywords with location modifiers included in the phrase, i.e. vegan pizza Seattle. Your competitors for each geo-modified keyword can also vary from search to search in competitive markets.

Finding your local competition

Every geographic market you serve is subject to different competitors. To dominate your markets, you should analyze and track the unique competitive landscape for each one.

- **Who:** Determine your main geographic competitors for each market. Complete a manual competitive audit ([mz.cm/local-competitors](https://moz.com/local-competitors)) or use software like Moz Local Market Analytics ([mz.cm/local-market-analytics](https://moz.com/local-market-analytics)).
- **Where:** Verify that you're targeting the right keywords using hyperlocal keyword research, including local keyword volume. Then, identify where you rank amid competitors for each keyword target in each market.
- **Why:** Analyze why each market competitor outranking you is winning a SERP based on an audit of their total presence. Understand why competitors may be dominating a certain market and which of their tactics are most effective.



Track, analyze, and dominate your geographic markets with the Local Market Analytics Beta:

[mz.cm/local-market-analytics](https://moz.com/local-market-analytics)



Google Support & Reporting

Entity

Twitter GMB Support

Facebook GMB Support

GMB Chat

Google My Business Help Community Forum

Business Redressal Complaint Form

Report Inappropriate Reviews Form

Request Listing Ownership Form

Verification Issues Form

Incorrect Summary on Business Page Form

GMB Local Reinstatement Request

Purpose

Tweet or DM for 1:1 support for general GMB questions

Message or Post for 1:1 support for general GMB questions

Private GMB support

Publicly post full details of GMB problems for volunteer and staff support

Fully fill out the report to request action on spam listings

Make your case for why a review should be removed

Request ownership of a listing someone else has verified

Request help with listing verification problems

Request editing of factually incorrect business summaries

Request help with reinstatement of suspended listings

Link

twitter.com/GoogleMyBiz

facebook.com/GoogleMyBusiness

mz.cm/gmb-help

support.google.com/business/community

mz.cm/report-spam

mz.cm/gmb-help

mz.cm/listing-request

mz.cm/gmb-issues

mz.cm/gmb-issues

mz.cm/reinstate